
The results indicate that the worldwide media community has more in common than we may realize or acknowledge. The MSI approach works as well in Africa as it has in Europe and the Middle East. Professional norms, the importance of laws promoting free expression, sound management practices, and the importance of supporting institutions are not bound by geography or unduly constrained by cultural differences.



I am pleased to introduce the first edition of the Africa Media Sustainability Index (MSI). This represents the third region covered by the MSI, after its 2001 introduction to Europe and Eurasia and its introduction in 2005 to the Middle East and North Africa.

The Africa MSI has shown the durability and applicability of the objectives and indicators designed for the original MSI. Minor changes in the panelist and moderator instructions ensured our results embrace uniquely African features, including the prevalence of radio—notably community radio—found in many countries.

The results indicate that the worldwide media community has more in common than we may realize or acknowledge. The MSI approach works as well in Africa as it has in Europe and the Middle East. Professional norms, the importance of laws promoting free expression, sound management practices, and the importance of supporting institutions are not bound by geography or unduly constrained by cultural differences.

The MSI has evolved into an important tool for analyzing media sectors and changes over time, and for providing cross-border comparisons. Donors, diplomats, media development implementers, and policymakers use the MSI as an assessment tool to show where efforts for reform and development would be concentrated best. Perhaps more importantly, the MSI serves as a self-assessment tool for local media professionals. Local professionals can use this analysis to advocate for focused reform through change in media laws and renewed emphasis on training.

To complete the MSI in 37 countries and to maintain our practice of capturing local perspectives, IREX relied on partnerships with 10 local organizations and two individuals. IREX wishes to thank them for their participation. This would not have been possible without their energy and dedication to media development.

The current Africa MSI was supported by funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, World Bank Institute, and USAID. We would like to thank Mark Nelson at the World Bank Institute and Mark Koenig of USAID for their strong support and input into the MSI in general and the Africa MSI in particular. At IREX, I would like to recognize the efforts of Leon Morse, the MSI project manager, for managing the completion of this ambitious project. Drusilla Menaker and Blake Saville provided important support.

We hope you find the study useful and we welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,



Mark Whitehouse

Director, Media Development, IREX

Poor practices in one objective appear to negatively reinforce poor practices in the other. For example, lack of revenue rules out living wages, which in turn creates inferior quality reporting that the public mistrusts, in turn inhibiting the growth of a reputable media outlet that citizens find valuable. Not using market research to determine what kind of news consumers want precludes in-depth reporting on issues such as health and other non-political topics.



The 2006-2007 Media Sustainability Index (MSI) for Africa is the introductory study of 37 sub-Saharan countries. The MSI uses IREX's methodology that was developed in 2001, first applied to Europe and Eurasia, and then used in the Middle East and North Africa in 2005. Baseline scores have been obtained and in-depth qualitative studies from a local perspective prepared to explain the numbers. The methodology used in Africa is the same as that used in the past, allowing for comparison. To ensure that unique features of African media were highlighted, we slightly revised our questionnaire and moderator instruction manual to remind panelists to consider, for example, community radio in their evaluation.

Applying the MSI in Africa achieved some notable results and scores that are rather telling about its state of media. In Africa, the MSI measured both a new high overall score (a 3.10 in South Africa) and a new low overall score (a 0.27 in Eritrea). Scores highlighted unfriendly media environments in other countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, and Sudan. The qualitative information in the accompanying chapter allows one to discern differences between two countries—for example, Zimbabwe and Mauritania—with similar overall scores but heading in opposite directions. In the case of the latter, recent changes have yet to take hold after years of a closed system, but panelists were hopeful for the future; in the case of the former, panelists were not particularly hopeful of change for the better in the near future.

The multidimensional nature of the methodology captured political repression in countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia. While both had comparatively weak scores for the free speech objective, relatively stronger scores in objectives such as supporting institutions or business management show that they cling to vestiges of a once heartier media sector. Such past experience could serve as the core of future development. Finally, overall scores show about a dozen countries nearly in, or in the early stages of, what our methodology defines as “near sustainability.” These countries display a certain fragility but also promise for the future.

Common Threads

The MSI highlights many common traits and trends in the African media that can be found by analyzing the numbers or reading the accompanying chapters. At the same time, the qualitative information in each chapter highlights the unique characteristics of each country. Below, we discuss a few of the salient findings: the relationship between business management and quality journalism; low wages for journalists and corruption; importance of radio, nature of the many community radio sectors, and enduring role of print media; government subsidies of private media, and; need for market research.

Looking at objective scores for individual countries and pan-African averages, one quickly notices that the two objectives consistently performing the worst are Objectives 2 and 4, professional journalism and business management. Overall objective averages for Africa break down from best to worst as follows: Objective 5, supporting institutions (2.20); Objective 3, plurality of news (2.04); Objective 1, free speech (1.94); Objective 2, professional journalism (1.81), and; Objective 4, business management (1.63).

Fourteen of the 37 countries under study fit the pattern of objectives 2 and 4 as the lowest. When the 14 are evaluated together, the average of all objective 2 and 4 scores is 1.57, versus a combined average of 2.25 for objectives 1, 3, and 5. This is a significant difference: a score of 1.57 falls in the middle of what our methodology defines as an “unsustainable, mixed system,” while 2.25 falls well within “near sustainability.” Averaging the scores of all African countries produces slightly less stark, yet still noticeable, differences: the average for objectives 2 and 4 is 1.72, versus 2.06 for objectives 1, 3, and 5.

Perhaps not surprisingly, business management finishes poorly on a continent with a generally underdeveloped business sector and widespread poverty that inhibits the consumption of media. Professional journalism scoring on the lower end is also to be expected. However, given that many indicators that make up the free speech objective—access to information, fair broadcast licensing, crimes against journalists, and libel laws—are a common problem throughout much of Africa, it is somewhat unanticipated to see professional journalism perform worse.

As indicated by the panelist comments detailed in the chapters and the additional notes of the local authors, poor practices in one objective appear to negatively reinforce poor practices in the other. For example, lack of revenue rules out living wages, which in turn creates inferior quality reporting that the public mistrusts, in turn inhibiting the growth of a reputable media outlet that citizens find valuable. Not using market research to determine what kind of news consumers want precludes in-depth reporting on issues such as health and other non-political topics. The absence of a diverse advertising base spawns self-censorship and reporting that suits a few key patrons, obviating the need for developing a business culture in the media. The results strongly imply a need for media outlets to become as financially sound as local circumstances allow.

Connected to the relationship between business management and quality journalism is what many Africans call *gombo* journalism (money exchanged for ideally favorable coverage of an event or personality). Corrupt journalism practices in many countries around the world are a poorly kept secret.

Its presence in Africa is unsurprising, as were reports of low salaries. Low wages for journalists appeared as the weakest indicator in the professional journalism objective in a majority of African countries. Interestingly, in several African countries, some journalists are paid no wages, with the full expectation that they will supplement income through such practices. A quote from a panelist in Burkina Faso illustrates this mentality well: “I had to confirm the words of a journalist with those of his employer. When he was hired, the owner offered him CFAF 70,000 [\$160] per month. He had a master's degree. And the owner added: ‘There's *gombo* available when you do field work, so you'll be able to increase your salary with it.’”

Meager salaries also contribute to high turnover. Several panels reported that young journalists gain a minimum amount of experience and then move on to public relations or related fields.

It is a commonly accepted fact that radio in Africa is the predominant source of news and information for the public at-large. Illiteracy, oral tradition, lack of electrical power for a television, and the cost of a newspaper all make radio the medium of choice. The results of the MSI reinforce the findings made by other studies regarding radio. Community radio and its importance have also been the subject of much previous research.

The MSI highlights the different nature of community radio in various African countries, and also identified countries where radio either does not exist or could be more prevalent. In Nigeria, according to the MSI panel, “...there are no proper community radio stations,” just local arms of the state broadcaster. In Niger, by law community radio stations may not broadcast news. In Senegal, community radio stations may not sell advertising. In Botswana, according to the panel there, the law provides for community radio but there are no implementing regulations; one panelist asserted the government fears outbreaks of “tribalism” should community radio take hold. Panelists in the Democratic Republic of Congo thought that many radio stations were originally set up during elections as political mouthpieces but now disguise themselves as community radio.

Despite radio's reach, the importance of newspapers in Africa should not be overlooked. In many countries, the panels reported that newspapers and magazines are for the elite, too expensive for most citizens, and/or unavailable outside of cities due to poor transportation networks. Further, numerous panels put the circulation of individual newspapers at perhaps a few thousand copies or less. However, print journalists still undertake some of the most in-depth reporting in Africa. In all African countries except Eritrea, private newspapers exist; in several countries, where the state maintains a monopoly

on broadcasting, newspapers are the only alternative voice. In such cases, they can set the news agenda and serve as the nucleus of an independent journalism corps.

Several countries in Africa, particularly Francophone Africa, provide state subsidies to private commercial media. Furthermore, in many countries, the government and state-owned enterprises are the most important source of advertising. Panelists from various countries described the amount of subsidies reaching each outlet as not significant enough to influence editorial policy. In fact, one panelist in Cameroon reported refusing the subsidy. In Burkina Faso, panelists complained that the media that receive the most government advertising also receive the largest subsidies. In other countries, laws on the books provide for a subsidy but it is not funded—or worse, when it is funded, it disappears, as panelists in Chad reported. Advertising can be misused by governments as well: in Kenya, the government ordered an official ban on state advertising with all media owned by Standard Media Group after its newspaper reported on an alleged plot by a minister to kill the former president's son. In Botswana, panelists went so far to say that so much government advertising goes to public media—to the detriment of private media's competitiveness—that it ends up subsidizing the state.

Finally, MSI panels reported that very little or no market research is used. There appears to be a misconception about market research: that it must necessarily be an expensive, comprehensive, all-market survey carried out by a multinational company. Very often, moderators and chapter authors described the occasional or one-off research in their countries in this way. However, focus group research can be carried out by individual media outlets with a relatively small number of consumers, over a couple of hours, and for a nominal cost. Even in countries without verifiable audience or circulation figures (which is the case for most countries in Africa), providing a better product can have a positive impact on sales and the ability to raise revenue.

What is Working

Several individual indicators within the objectives consistently fared better than others. For example, Indicator 1.8, “Media outlets have unrestricted access to international news and news sources,” was most often the top performer in Objective 1. Similarly, Indicator 1.9, “Entry into the journalism profession is free and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists,” also usually received better scores than other indicators. In general, governments in Africa are not resorting to measures that prevent the media from incorporating the views of, or republishing or rebroadcasting news from, international news

media. And in all but the worst press freedom environments in Africa, any citizen may decide to be a journalist and report on events as a freelancer or sole proprietor of any sort of media outlet. It should be noted that in a few cases, panelists wished for some sort of non-legal standards for journalists. Panels in many countries reported that recent gains in plurality of news were accompanied by a flood of new (and often unqualified) entrants to the profession.

Similarly, Indicator 2.6, “Journalists cover key events,” rated as a top performer in Objective 2. Panelists felt that African journalists are doing a good job of identifying and providing coverage of events that matter to the public. If, for self-censorship reasons, a media outlet does not cover an event such as an anti-government demonstration, others almost always step in to cover the event.

In Objective 3, Indicator 2, “Citizens’ access to domestic or international media is not restricted,” was most often the top performer. In only rare cases are broadcasts being jammed or foreign publications totally unavailable. Even in Eritrea, those citizens who can afford to own satellite dishes use them to watch international news programming. Very often, however, panelists reported a divide between rich and poor and rural and urban, with urban elites enjoying the best access to all foreign and domestic media.

Objective 5, supporting institutions, fared well in general. Panelists typically expressed appreciation of the work done by professional associations, NGOs, and trade associations, most often in that order. Civil society appears vibrant regarding the media profession, even if resources may be lacking. Very often, panelists said that there are no restrictions to utilizing the services of printing companies or distribution channels. However, many times distribution networks for print media were said to be insufficient or non-existent, particularly regarding delivery of print media to rural areas.

South Africa is working well. It has a strong press freedom environment and civil society has supported the growth of a media sector that is more vibrant than existed during Apartheid. The strongest economy in Africa allows for a healthy advertising market. Market research is used and trusted circulation and audience share measures exist. South Africa is a regional media power: many media-related companies based there operate in several countries in southern Africa.

The MSI in Conflict and Severe Environments

The MSI has been used to study repressive media systems in Europe and Eurasia, including Uzbekistan; and in the Middle East in such countries as Libya and Iran. However, Eritrea

presented the first case where absolutely no private media exists. Some of the panelists expressed doubt that the MSI would do justice to the dire situation in Eritrea. One wrote that the MSI methodology is not "...tailor-made to media in totalitarian states like Eritrea and North Korea. These deserve categories by themselves. The kind of comparative scoring system applied by the questionnaire simply breaks down in the face of absolutist, monopolized state media solely created for propaganda purposes."

After compiling the scores and comments and preparing the chapter, however, we feel strongly that the MSI did work in such a situation. First, the Eritrea chapter documents how the state has pervaded almost every aspect of the media sector in the country. For example, Indicator 3.5, "Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs," may at first seem not applicable, but in fact it serves as another reminder that indeed Eritrea has no independent broadcast media and no alternative voices. Almost all of Objective 4, business management, may seem pointless, but in fact looking at Eritrea through this measure shows just how far Eritrea is now from a sustainable media, and the breadth of changes that would be required should the political situation change.

Further, by comparing Eritrea to its neighbors, one can put the bleakness of the situation into context. Several other countries in Africa receive attention for government antipathy toward free media, but none are on the scale of Eritrea. Quantitatively, scores in Eritrea are far behind other countries' scores, showing the magnitude of the abuses there. Qualitatively, when read in the same sitting as any other Africa chapter, one gets a very real sense of why the numbers are in fact so low and just how bad the situation is there, even beyond the terrible human rights abuses. Indeed, the scores and chapter reflect the fate of media in an "absolutist, monopolized state."

Somalia presented an interesting study for a different reason. The media sector there suffers from being pulled in many directions by political, military, criminal, and clan interests. At the time of the MSI study, conditions were extremely challenging and dangerous; tragically illustrating this was the ambush murder of a journalist chosen to serve on the panel, before the survey took place. At that time, however, the Transitional Federal Government was extremely weak and disorganized. It did not have the wherewithal to systematically interfere with the media on a large scale. Therefore, the MSI captured a point in time when the media in Somalia proper were enjoying freedom by neglect. They were able to provide critical news for a limited period without risking closure. In the state of anarchy, anyone able to afford the equipment could set up a radio station without the trouble and potential delay of applying for a license.

After the panel was held, however, the situation rapidly changed, as the government stabilized and showed little tolerance for pluralistic views in the media. Security forces regularly occupied and closed outspoken radio stations. Violence against journalists escalated to the point of being systematic. The results from the 2008 panel will no doubt reflect an entirely different environment.

One final point worth mentioning in regard to Somalia is the role of print media. While not entirely immune from the media crackdown imposed by the Transitional Federal Government, the media has suffered much less than radio, the dominant medium in Somalia. From a certain perspective, its weakness can be viewed as a strength: it has been able to fly under the government's radar. Although not able to reach as many people in a timely way as radio, nonetheless it can still provide differing viewpoints and alternative sources of news, which can be passed along orally. Further, it allows journalists to gain valuable experience.

Media Development in Common: Africa, the Middle East, Europe & Eurasia

In closing, certain issues common to the media sector in all three studied regions—Africa, the Middle East, and Europe—begin to emerge. In the case of recently liberalized countries, the media is beginning to take off, but not without problems. Criminal libel laws, which slap fines and jail time on those convicted and force the journalist-plaintiffs to prove truth, persist despite advice and exhortation from local media associations, international media rights organizations, and various donors. Panelists in many countries said that low pay affects the quality of work and opens the door for corruption, but they note how stepping through the door to corruption is still a matter of personal ethics and choice. Panelists often cite editors and owners, who are much better paid and sometimes even more corrupt. An unfortunate commonality is that crimes against journalists, often tied to political and governmental actors, rarely result in punishment of those perpetrating the crimes.

The MSI documents the contributions that media in so many countries are making despite serious challenges. However, an unfortunate pattern of selectively implemented laws, disdain on the part of governments toward the principles of free expression and freedom of the press, weak economies, and financially vulnerable media institutions all undermine the media's ability to take on the role of the "fourth estate" in many countries. We hope that using the MSI to study Africa and other regions will serve as a useful advocacy tool for media practitioners and others trying to address these problems.

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES

Eritrea (0.27)		Cent. African Rep. (1.23)		Benin (2.28)			
		Dem. Rep. Congo (1.50)	Burkina Faso (1.92)	Burundi (2.13)			
		Djibouti (1.42)	Cameroon (1.71)	Côte d'Ivoire (2.21)			
		Eq. Guinea (1.01)	Chad (1.86)	Guinea (2.25)			
		Ethiopia (1.24)	Niger (1.97)	Kenya (2.37)			
		Mauritania (1.34)	Sierra Leone (1.95)	Madagascar (2.14)			
		Rep. Congo (1.41)	Somalia (1.68)	Mali (2.16)			
		Sudan (1.28)	The Gambia (1.62)	Mozambique (2.21)			
		Zimbabwe (1.27)	Togo (1.75)	Nigeria (2.21)			
				Rwanda (2.29)			
				Senegal (2.35)			
				Tanzania (2.21)	Botswana (2.51)		
				Uganda (2.41)	Ghana (2.58)		
				Zambia (2.25)	Namibia (2.90)	South Africa (3.10)	
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007: FREE SPEECH

Eritrea (0.09)		Cent. African Rep. (1.35)		Benin (2.45)			
Ethiopia (0.19)		Dem. Rep. Congo (1.42)		Burkina Faso (2.20)			
		Djibouti (1.45)		Burundi (2.13)			
		Eq. Guinea (1.32)	Cameroon (1.64)	Chad (2.07)			
		Rep. Congo (1.49)	Kenya (1.99)	Côte d'Ivoire (2.25)			
		Somalia (1.36)	Mauritania (1.72)	Guinea (2.22)			
		The Gambia (1.18)	Nigeria (1.80)	Madagascar (2.08)			
				Malawi (2.12)			
				Mozambique (2.36)			
				Niger (2.33)			
				Senegal (2.08)			
				Sierra Leone (2.31)			
				Tanzania (2.31)	Botswana (2.64)		
				Togo (2.31)	Ghana (2.74)		
				Uganda (2.27)	Mali (2.65)	Namibia (3.34)	
				Zambia (2.03)	Rwanda (2.53)	South Africa (3.43)	
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Eritrea (0.38)	Dem. Rep. Congo (0.83) Rep. Congo (0.70)	Cent. African Rep. (1.38) Djibouti (1.39) Mauritania (1.31) Zimbabwe (1.02)	Benin (1.95) Burkina Faso (1.65) Cameroon (1.65) Chad (1.91) Côte d'Ivoire (1.71) Eq. Guinea (1.56) Ethiopia (1.67) Guinea (1.98) Mali (1.88) Niger (1.82) Nigeria (1.88) Sierra Leone (1.68) Somalia (1.76) Sudan (1.63) Tanzania (1.70) The Gambia (1.88) Togo (1.61)	Burundi (2.36) Ghana (2.09) Kenya (2.25) Madagascar (2.04) Malawi (2.06) Mozambique (2.12) Rwanda (2.17) Senegal (2.18) Uganda (2.31) Zambia (2.15)	Botswana (2.54) Namibia (2.86) South Africa (2.89)		
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Eritrea (0.35)	Ethiopia (0.99) Zimbabwe (0.68)	Cent. African Rep. (1.50) Djibouti (1.46) Eq. Guinea (1.11) Mauritania (1.43) Sudan (1.09)	Burkina Faso (1.98) Cameroon (1.84) Chad (1.78) Dem. Rep. Congo (1.86) Somalia (1.81) The Gambia (1.76)	Burundi (2.16) Côte d'Ivoire (2.38) Guinea (2.49) Madagascar (2.17) Malawi (2.08) Mozambique (2.24) Niger (2.15) Nigeria (2.21) Rep. Congo (2.40) Sierra Leone (2.13) Tanzania (2.40) Togo (2.07) Zambia (2.22)	Benin (2.70) Botswana (2.53) Ghana (2.76) Kenya (2.62) Mali (2.51) Namibia (2.75) Rwanda (2.77) Senegal (2.60) South Africa (2.85) Uganda (2.58)		
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Cent. African Rep. (0.24)	Mauritania (0.86)	Benin (1.29)	Djibouti (1.54)	Botswana (2.02)	Kenya (2.59)		
Eq. Guinea (0.20)	Rep. Congo (0.87)	Burkina Faso (1.34)	Ethiopia (1.64)	Côte d'Ivoire (2.21)		Namibia (3.05)	
Eritrea (0.28)	Togo (0.84)	Burundi (1.35)	Tanzania (1.97)	Ghana (2.34)		South Africa (3.06)	
		Cameroon (1.29)	The Gambia (1.66)	Guinea (2.09)			
		Chad (1.03)	Zambia (1.95)	Madagascar (2.13)			
		Dem. Rep. Congo (1.06)	Zimbabwe (1.94)	Malawi (2.30)			
		Mali (1.46)		Mozambique (2.01)			
		Niger (1.36)		Nigeria (2.40)			
		Sierra Leone (1.34)		Rwanda (2.01)			
		Somalia (1.21)		Senegal (2.09)			
		Sudan (1.34)		Uganda (2.12)			
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2006/2007: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Eritrea (0.24)	Eq. Guinea (0.85)	Djibouti (1.27)	Cent. African Rep. (1.70)	Burkina Faso (2.45)	Botswana (2.82)		
		Mauritania (1.36)	Ethiopia (1.71)	Cameroon (2.11)	Burundi (2.67)		
		Sudan (1.37)	Rep. Congo (1.59)	Chad (2.50)	Côte d'Ivoire (2.52)		
			Rwanda (1.95)	Dem. Rep. Congo (2.32)	Ghana (2.97)		
			The Gambia (1.59)	Guinea (2.44)	Namibia (2.52)		
			Togo (1.93)	Kenya (2.41)	Nigeria (2.76)		
			Zimbabwe (1.94)	Madagascar (2.30)	Senegal (2.81)		
				Malawi (2.36)	Tanzania (2.68)		
				Mali (2.30)	Uganda (2.77)	Benin (3.02)	
				Mozambique (2.33)	Zambia (2.88)	South Africa (3.26)	
				Niger (2.21)			
				Sierra Leone (2.29)			
				Somalia (2.23)			
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

The MSI has been used to study repressive media systems in Europe and Eurasia, including Uzbekistan; and in the Middle East in such countries as Libya and Iran. However, Eritrea presented the first case where absolutely no private media exists.



IREX prepared the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a tool to assess the development of independent media systems over time and across countries. IREX staff, USAID, and other media development professionals contributed to the development of this assessment tool.

The MSI assesses five “objectives” in shaping a successful media system:

1. Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.
2. Journalism meets professional standards of quality.
3. Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable and objective news.
4. Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.
5. Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media.

These objectives were judged to be the most important aspects of a sustainable and professional independent media system and served as the criteria against which countries were rated. A score was attained for each objective by rating seven to nine indicators, which determine how well a country meets that objective. The objectives, indicators, and scoring system are presented below.

The scoring is done in two parts. First, a panel of experts is assembled in each country, drawn from representatives of local media, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, and media-development implementers. Panel participants are provided with the objectives and indicators and an explanation of the scoring system. Each panelist individually reviewed the information and scored each objective. The panelists then assembled to discuss the objectives and indicators, and to devise combined scores and analyses. The panel moderator, in most cases a host-country media or NGO representative, prepares a written analysis of the discussion, which is subsequently edited by IREX representatives.

The panelists’ scores are reviewed by IREX, in-country staff and/or Washington, DC, media staff, which then score the countries independently of the MSI panel. Using the combination of scores, the final scores are determined. This method allows the MSI scores to reflect both local media insiders’ views and the views of international media-development professionals.

A. Objectives and Indicators

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

B. Scoring System

I. Indicator Scoring

Each indicator is scored using the following system:

0 = Country does not meet the indicator; government or social forces may actively oppose its implementation.

1 = Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator; forces may not actively oppose its implementation, but business environment may not support it and government or profession do not fully and actively support change.

2 = Country has begun to meet many aspects of the indicator, but progress may be too recent to judge or still dependent on current government or political forces.

3 = Country meets most aspects of the indicator; implementation of the indicator has occurred over several years and/or through changes in government, indicating likely sustainability.

4 = Country meets the aspects of the indicator; implementation has remained intact over multiple changes in government, economic fluctuations, changes in public opinion, and/or changing social conventions.

II. Objective and Overall Scoring

The averages of all the indicators are then averaged to obtain a single, overall score for each objective. Objective scores are averaged to provide an overall score for the country. IREX interprets the overall scores as follows:

Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0–1): Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1–2): Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2–3): Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3–4): Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.