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COTE D'IVOIRE

The development of the media in Côte d'Ivoire began largely after the return to a multi-party system in 1990. The immediate aftermath of this political development was the proliferation of publications staffed mainly by young academics with no real professional journalism credentials.

After the crisis of 1999-2002, which led to the partition of the country, political parties (and factions within the parties) sought to use the media to communicate their platforms and raise public awareness. As a result, the number of media outlets grew even more dramatically. As of 2001, the commission handling the processing of identity cards for professional journalists had issued 463 of them. This number is surely much higher now, given that Côte d'Ivoire, as of 2006, had 22 daily papers, 44 weeklies, 14 monthlies and eight others.

In December 2004, new and much more liberal laws concerning the press and broadcast communication were adopted. However, the decrees specifying how these texts should be enforced were not published until three years later. To-date, the press development fund stipulated by law has not been established, and freedom of operations in broadcast communications is still partial. Despite the boom of private and local radio stations, there are still no private television stations in the country.

Freedom of expression—and by extension freedom of the press—is guaranteed in the fundamental laws and legislation relating to the press and broadcasting. Prior to his election, the president had promised that prison sentences for press offenses would be eliminated, and this was formalized in a law passed in 2004. Nevertheless, given the on-going socio-political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, journalists still encounter significant obstacles.

Most media outlets are managed by journalists with little management training. Media outlets also face significant financial challenges due to the overall poor economic situation in the country. Despite the various difficulties, the press in Côte d'Ivoire has built a strong professional network, with unions and associations for journalists, publishers, and editors all dedicated to the professionalization of the sector.

Two independent regulatory administrative bodies, the National Council of the Press (NCP) and the National Council for Broadcast Communication (NBC), work alongside the professional organizations to improve the media sector.

All of the objectives scored relatively close to the overall average of 2.21. Panelists scored Objective 2, professional journalism, the lowest at 1.71, the only objective to not exceed a score of 2. Objective 5, supporting institutions, scored a 2.52 thanks to the long tradition and activity of professional and trade associations. While these scores are not bad overall, panelists highlighted a number of areas that require attention, such as passage of, and respect for, implementing regulations, in order to be solidified. Given Côte d'Ivoire's recent history, the gains highlighted below are indeed fragile.

# CÔTE D'IVOIRE AT A GLANCE

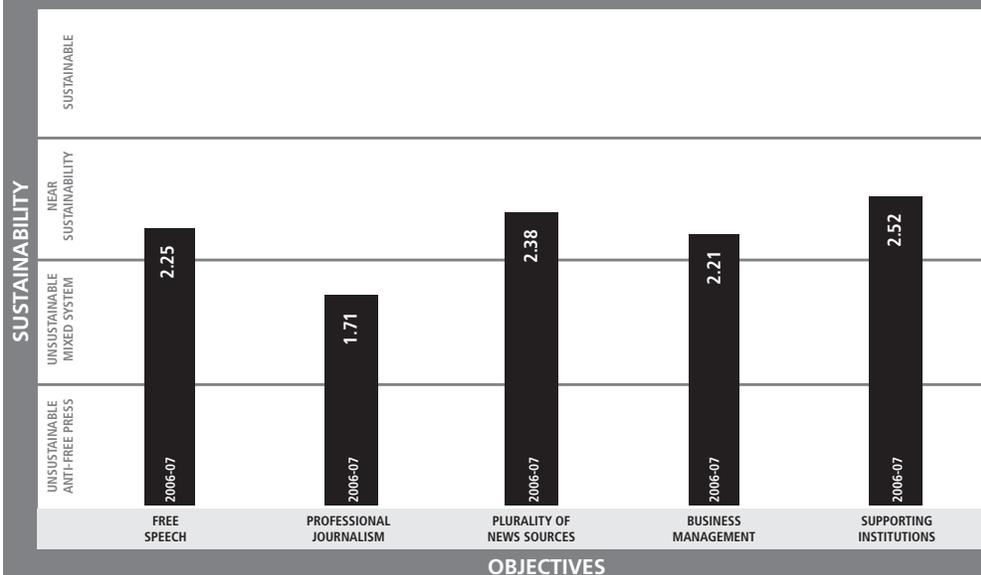
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 18,373,060 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Yamoussoukro
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Akan 42.1%, Voltaiques or Gur 17.6%, Northern Mandes 16.5%, Krous 11%, Southern Mandes 10%, other 2.8% (1998 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 35-40%, indigenous 25-40%, Christian 20-30% (2001 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official), 60 native dialects with Dioula the most widely spoken (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$16.58 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$1,580 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 50.9% (male 57.9%, female 46.3%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Laurent Gbagbo (since October 26, 2000)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 22 daily newspapers, 58 others, 8 periodicals; Radio: N/A; Television stations: N/A (Source: National Council of the Press)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *Fraternité Matin* (6,824,333 2006 circulation in 2006), *Soir Info* (4,904,498 circulation in 2006), *Le Nouveau Réveil* (3,733,010 circulation in 2006)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Ivorian Press Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 300,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: CÔTE D'IVOIRE



**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.

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## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.25

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Many indicators in this objective were spread out around the average. Panelists gave good marks to Indicators 3, 8, and 9, market entry, media access to international news sources, and ability to enter the journalism profession freely. However, Indicators 4 and 5, crimes against journalists and preferential legal treatment for state media, were the lowest scoring of the laggards.

All the panelists agreed that Côte d'Ivoire has the legal foundation to guarantee freedom of expression. Three articles are dedicated to this basic right in the Ivorian Constitution of 2000. In Article 9, the Constitution stipulates that "The freedom of thought and expression, particularly the freedom of conscience, religious, or philosophical opinion are guaranteed for all on condition that the law, the rights of others, national security, and the public order are observed." While forbidding any kind of propaganda seeking either to promote the superiority of any one ethnic or other group or to encourage racial or religious hatred, Article 10 states that "everyone has the right to express and distribute their ideas freely."

Law no. 2004-643, concerning the legal status of the press, states in Article 1 that "the publication of any newspaper or periodical is allowed." This law further stipulates in Article 68, that "press offenses will not be punished by prison sentences." However, journalists and media can be held liable through fines for any violation of law and order, crimes against persons and goods, including heads of state and foreign diplomats, fines on banned publications, and any offense against institutions and their members. Fines are steep for those found guilty of such offenses. For example, an "offense against the president of the republic (Article 74) by a defamatory allegation about his/her public as well as private life that might affect his/her dignity" is penalized by a CFAF 10,000,000 to CFAF 20,000,000 fine.

Law no. 204-644 also passed, concerning broadcast communication, states that "broadcast communication is free," subject to certain restrictions. These restrictions include breaches of national security, state secrets and national defense; the violation of human dignity or of the freedom and property of others, or of the pluralist expression of thoughts and opinions; disturbance of law and order; threatening the national union and territorial integrity, and; interfering with public service. These restrictions leave the law open to wide interpretation and may be used to the government's advantage in times of political adversity.

According to the president of the Côte d'Ivoire Federation of Consumer Organizations, Marius Comoé Brou, "freedom of expression is a reality in Côte d'Ivoire: there are no journalists in prison, news is addressed in multiple ways nowadays. As long as a story addresses both sides, we can't really say that the freedom of expression is threatened. But I should tone down this statement because the regulatory institutions in the media are not yet operational."

Dan Moussa, managing editor of the daily *Fraternité Matin* and international vice-president of the Francophone Press, pointed out that "in the last two years remarkable progress has been made in the area of the freedom of expression and the press. There is still much to be done in terms of their enforcement; things are moving slowly and there are many useless hassles to deal with."

While admitting that the existing legislation guarantees the freedom to gather, report, and distribute news, Abdoulaye Sangaré, director of the West Media Group, manager of the daily *24 Heures*, and president of the board of directors of the Newspaper Publishers Association of Côte d'Ivoire (GEPCI), deplored the politicians' intrusions in the media sector and pointed out that "the current socio-political context acts as a brake on the freedom of expression. Media outlets and journalists have often been threatened and even attacked."

Journalists' everyday work is far from being easy despite repeated statements that the freedom of expression is guaranteed. All the panelists acknowledged the difficulty that journalists sometimes encounter in terms of the access to public news. Franck Anderson Kouassi, secretary-general NBC, said that "access to public information is free in principle, but there are obstacles due to the reluctance of public, or even private, employees, who are afraid of potential reprisals from their superiors." Sangaré stated that public news, particularly statistics and data on public finances and oil, coffee, and cocoa receipts, is sometimes hard to get. Some journalists are even banned from entering some government buildings, particularly the presidential office.

According to Francis Domo, a journalist with the NCP, the problem of access to news sources is not universal; foreign journalists seem to have greater access than local journalists. "The NCP," he specified, "receives complaints regarding the difficulties that domestic journalists encounter when they try to obtain news; this is not the case with foreign journalists."

While legal protection and freedom of expression are guaranteed by law, political considerations often impede their actual enforcement. Journalists continue to defend this right every day with the help of professional organizations and human rights associations. Valérie Yao Blé, a magistrate and member of the Ivorian Human Rights League, remarked

*Nevertheless, as Yao Blé described, “violators or other offenders of freedom of the press usually go unpunished, as investigations are never followed through. The population is rather passive, even partisan: they don’t react as they should against attacks on journalists, which are barely made public by the media.”*

that “the judiciary is strongly influenced when it comes to handling issues such as the freedom of expression.”

When the broadcast spectrum was liberalized, community and local radio stations proliferated. There are now almost 100 radio stations in the country, though only two of these are commercial private stations. In Côte d’Ivoire, community radio stations are the most effective means of informing the public. As yet there is no officially licensed private television station. In the ex-rebel controlled northern territory, a private station, TV Notre Patrie, is operational.

The panelists agreed that the conditions for granting operational licenses for broadcast communication follow equitable rules for all the interested parties, even though some of them point out that NBC, the licensing body, is public and its members are appointed by the government. On this matter, Anderson pointed out that the law concerning the legal status of broadcast media clearly states the licensing procedure. Private television and radio stations are to be licensed by tender. At this point not all the sections of the law are applicable, because none of the decrees enabling implementation are complete, and thus the broadcast spectrum is not completely open.

For local radio stations, the licensing process calls for applications to be submitted and reviewed prior to a license being granted. Priority is given to local government entities as well as to NGOs and other private organizations. The licensing process has gone smoothly so far, although local stations are not allowed to address political subjects. Furthermore, the government owns and controls all transmitters and re-transmitters.

All print media companies are subject to the same conditions in terms of market access. Licensed commercial private radio operators must pay an annual fee.

In the recent past, threats against journalists and their work were everyday occurrences, but today the situation has improved. Nevertheless, as Yao Blé described, “violators

or other offenders of freedom of the press usually go unpunished, as investigations are never followed through. The population is rather passive, even partisan: they don’t react as they should against attacks on journalists, which are barely made public by the media.” During the debate on this matter, the panelists recalled events such as the 2003 assassination of RFI correspondent Jean Hélène in front of the National Security Department’s office in Abidjan, and the 2004 disappearance of Guy André Kieffer. While Jean Hélène’s murderer, a police agent, was sentenced to 17 years in prison, the investigation into Kieffer’s disappearance has stalled.

There is no special legal provision regarding the protection of journalists. Gérard Dogbemin, president of the young lawyers’ association, said that if a violent act is committed against the media the only available protection is the same as for any citizen. He posed the question, “could the state act differently when the victim is a journalist since this is a field so crucial to democracy?” The panelists agreed that the criminal acts committed against journalists do not receive the exposure they deserve.

It is clear that the public media, represented by Radiodiffusion Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI) with two national television channels and two national radio stations, plus the pro-government daily newspaper *Fraternité Matin* and the Ivorian Press Agency, enjoy preferential treatment both in financial terms and access to sources of public information. Charles Sanga, editor-in-chief of *Le Patriote*, pointed out that “this is not a legal debate, but it is about how journalists

#### 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.

address the news and how independent the journalists working for the public media are with respect to the state." The public media managers are appointed by the government and they believe they have to obey high government officials without question.

The problem of public media independence is a complicated one, one which gave way to a long debate amongst the panelists. Pointing out that the regulatory authority must work hard to guarantee the independence of the public media in their role as a public service, Franck Kouassi with NBC said, "This is the principle, but can the regulatory authority oppose a minister's order, the president's or the prime-minister's orders as long as this regulatory authority itself is a member of the state, answering in turn to a higher authority? These are the questions we must face and to which we cannot answer, without running the risk of misleading ourselves that the public media are independent."

Sangaré said that "in Africa, the government takes over the public media and uses them as instruments of influence and propaganda to their sole benefit. But everyone—the taxpayers, the NGOs—must be able to use the media as public services, as instruments of influence." This is an opinion shared by all the panelists. Anderson added, "We must admit that the public media—wherever they may be—obeys the executive power. This is real life; it's what we see in practice. Now it all depends on the strength of the managers of these media outlets. We should also keep in mind that whoever wishes to set up a media company establishes guidelines for their employees follow."

Anyone can be a journalist in Côte d'Ivoire, although accreditation may be necessary to cover certain events.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 1.71

Most indicators in this objective scored close to the average. The two outliers were Indicator 4, journalists cover key events, on the high side and Indicator 5, pay levels for journalists, which finished much lower than the average.

Two instruments can be used nationally to evaluate journalists' work in terms of professional quality. One is the Deontology Code adopted in 1992 and the other is the reading and listening scale set up by the Observatory of Freedom of the Press, Ethics and the Deontology (OLPED). OLPED, a self-regulatory body, has a triple mission: 1) protecting the public's right to free, complete, honest, and exact information; 2) maintaining the ethics code among journalists and protecting the freedom of the press, and; 3)

*According to Comoé, the legislation is clear that a collective agreement should determine pay rates. "Journalists," he said, "are paid regardless of their qualifications or experience. Can we safely say that journalists who are paid CFAF 60,000 and have families to support will do their job with their minds at rest? It's a fact that in Côte d'Ivoire journalists live from hand to mouth and are often forced to subject their writing to the financial powers that be."*

mediating between the media and the public. Alfred Dan Moussa, who was also the first president of OLPED pointed out that "the lack of professional training, the low salaries and the attempts of politicians to take over the media alter considerably that which in most cases would have been quality. But there are still journalists, both in the print and broadcast media, who honor their profession." Anderson agreed, adding that, "the shameful salaries constitute a vulnerability factor in the Ivorian Press."

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## 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).

*Yao Blé said that “journalists don’t always check the information they receive. OLPED slams them for unbalanced news reporting. They are usually disrespectful of the ethical standards that they themselves set. Our monitor’s statistics speak for themselves.”*

to mouth and are often forced to subject their writing to the financial powers that be.”

The panelists unanimously agreed with Yao Blé that “journalists expect and even require payment after they’ve covered an event. They consider that compensation for their published report. It’s a form of pressure, I would even say blackmail. This practice is widespread among young journalists.” Saly Silué Konaté, a journalist with Radio Côte d’Ivoire added, “It’s not too much to say that some journalists earn their salaries by working the field. They even live off of the payments provided by organizers. Fortunately it is not the case of most journalists,” she said.

Journalists and media owners do not seem to agree on the role and nature of a collective bargaining agreement. The former would like to have it enforced according to the law, whereas the latter would like to have it modified according to the current state of facts. The media law forces owners to conform to the salary schedule previously established by the collective bargaining agreement. This agreement however, was adopted at a time when there was only one government daily newspaper, *Fraternité Matin*, and it is now in need of revision. Negotiations are on-going between the representatives of the owners, members of the Organization of the Press Publishers of Côte d’Ivoire (OPPCI), and the journalist unions to reach a new agreement.

“Basically,” said Sangaré, “it is clear that we agree on the fact that journalists and the rest of the personnel must have decent salaries. But we need to agree on a minimum set of things and we the media owners are committed to doing everything it takes to reach a consensus on a conventional salary scale. The first victims of such an endeavor are the media outlets, because, when they pay journalists half of what they are entitled to, it makes them go out and get the remainder from other places, the quality of their work will be low and hence the company will suffer.” He and other panelists also wondered, “From what salary level on up are journalists immune to corruption?” This is a fundamental question in a society where corruption exists at all levels.

Since 2002, many politicians have accused the media of deliberately exacerbating the political tension in the country. In fact, many of the publications in the country are financed or otherwise supported by politicians, who likely control what is reported. Journalists believe they are receiving unfair blame in this situation.

For over ten years OLPED has endeavored weekly to identify errors and professional negligence throughout the media. As a senior member of this organization, Yao Blé said that “journalists don’t always check the information they receive. OLPED slams them for unbalanced news reporting. They are usually disrespectful of the ethical standards that they themselves set. Our monitor’s statistics speak for themselves.” These statistics show that in 2006, OLPED counted over 5,000 breaches of the deontology code throughout the domestic press, including a significant number of incitements to revolt and violence (more than 2,000 cases) followed by insults (more than 1,400). There were over 800 cases of professional errors, such as inaccurate reporting of information.

Training is far from sufficient, according to Sangaré who added that “as a general rule, even with proper training, journalists are prisoners of the socio-political environment, which often leads them to breach professional, ethical, and even deontological standards.”

In its 2006 report, the NCP imposed 58 warnings and 105 reprimands. Out of the 22 daily newspapers existing at the time, only six avoided statutory offenses. NCP has yet to suspend a media outlet, while the NBC used this sanction against an international radio station, RFI, for inappropriate news reporting.<sup>1</sup>

Key events affecting the country are generally covered by newspapers, though naturally according to the editorial orientation of each. It does happen, however, that reporting on certain events considered important in principle are withheld for a period of time. Francis Domo pointed out that “political events are given precedence over social news.”

While the print media tends to dedicate most of its space to political events, entertainment shows on radio and television largely overshadow news reporting. The new schedule of RTI however, strives to offer more space to talk-shows and debates.

<sup>1</sup> According to a February 2008 press release from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), panelist and NBC secretary general Franck Kouassi was quoted in an interview with CPJ as saying that RFI was guilty of “several cases of unbalanced information and analysis often out of touch with reality.” He also commented that RFI had failed to place a permanent correspondent as promised. A spokesperson for RFI was quoted as saying NBC’s penalty was “disproportional” to the cited infraction. Further, she said, security concerns had caused the delay in placing a permanent correspondent. The full text of the press release is available from CPJ: <http://www.cpj.org/news/2008/africa/ivory05feb08na.html>

The socio-political crisis of Côte d'Ivoire has had a considerable impact on the broadcasting equipment used by RTI. Since September 2002, installations in the ex-rebel-controlled area were seriously damaged, and some completely destroyed. RTI now covers only 60 percent of the national territory.

For all media, lack of equipment means it is often difficult to send more than one crew at a time. Yao Blé pointed out, "Many times journalists are forced to do rushed reports because the same reporting team must cover several events at almost the same time."

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.38

With two exceptions, panelists scored all indicators near the average. Indicator 3, state media reflect the views of the political spectrum, came in well below the average, while Indicator 5, private broadcasters produce their own news, finished more than a point ahead of the average.

The panelists recognized that there is a rich diversity of news sources for citizens. For instance, the satellite television network *Canal Horizon* offers a package including major international channels. There is no particular restriction to buying satellite dishes other than the cost, which is, however, too high for the average citizen. Internet access and use has been gradually improving in the country, with both public and private providers working to enroll new subscribers. Cyber-café proliferate in all districts of the capital. Internet

#### 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.

*Dan Moussa observed that there are "two tendencies at play: there are those who swear by their trade and its rules and those who primarily think about obeying a voice from the outside and receiving their assignments from the political powers rather than from their professional bosses."*

access is also spreading to the inland territories. This trend has improved citizen access to alternative news sources. The print media finds itself in competition with Internet news sources. In 2006 there were 22 daily newspapers and 44 weeklies fighting over a small readership.

Dan Moussa observed that there are "two tendencies at play: there are those who swear by their trade and its rules and those who primarily think about obeying a voice from the outside and receiving their assignments from the political powers rather than from their professional bosses."

A new type of news consumer has emerged from the economic difficulties caused by the crisis. "Headliners" are those who gather every morning in front of the news kiosks where all the domestic daily papers are displayed, read the front-page headlines, and then extrapolate facts or events based solely on these headlines. "Headliners" are seen as a likely point of origin of many rumors that have permeated the country since the crisis. This illustrates how dangerous the practice is of the print media to use sensationalistic headlines (sometimes having little to do with the underlying article) to sell newspapers.

There are no legal restrictions on access to media, foreign or domestic. However, rural populations have very limited access to media sources outside of the community radio stations, which provide comprehensive coverage throughout the country. Frequent power outages and limited distribution further hamper rural media access. The population living in ex-rebel-controlled areas had no access to the national press for four years. Even before the crisis broke out, the inland territories could not receive newspapers. Radio and television signals primarily reach the capital and larger cities in the inland territories.

Speaking about the public media, Franck Kouassi said "the managers of these media are still very much influenced by the executive power. However, major political parties have access to the public media." The airtime given to political parties is measured by the NBC and the respective statistics

are regularly published. The publication of this monthly barometer undoubtedly influences the journalists' behavior. But apart from their revealing effect, the data deserves to become a useful tool to raise public awareness.

In its heyday, the Ivorian Press Agency was the main source of domestic and international news. However, things have changed since then particularly with the advent of new information technology. This agency, covering the national territory thanks to its regional antennas, has not kept pace with new technology. The competition, the correspondents of various daily newspapers and RTI, are now a better source of news. Before the Internet became so widespread, international news was the exclusive domain of international press agencies such as AFP, Reuters, PANA, New China, etc. Now journalists often find international news by surfing the Internet.

Article 16 of Law No. 2004-643, concerning the legal status of the press, requires managing editors to provide information concerning shareholders, including the number of shares owned by each. This information is to be published once a year, during the first trimester of the year. Currently none of the Ivorian media outlets observe this requirement.

On this matter, Yao Blé said, "I don't think that media owners like to dwell on issues concerning the origins of money." Francis Domo with the NCP added, "Everyone knows it [media ownership] but no one is sure about it." Nevertheless, it is necessary to know financial backers of a newspaper because, as Dogbemin reminded the panel, "journalists are supposed to analyze, process, and comment on information. They can even take a stand and guide the opinion in one direction or another. Therefore it is crucial to know the owners of a newspaper so that the debate may continue. In the end, it is about the right to speak freely and that is guaranteed for every citizen. The citizens have the right to be informed and journalists have the obligation to inform them. So it is important for the citizen to know the financial supporters of a given media outlet."

The range of issues addressed in the press shows that there is an increasing openness towards general interest, even though politics continue to dominate news coverage. Dan Moussa said that "Even if the dominant subjects in newspapers are political, the fact remains that the editorial diversity leads to the press, generally, to address key issues in politics and other sectors."

In a country where sixty national languages are spoken, no periodical is published in an indigenous language. Efforts have been made by the RTI to schedule time slots for newscasts in indigenous languages. On Channel 1 of RTI TV, the noon news program is simultaneously translated for the hearing-impaired.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.21

Scoring by the panelists placed all indicators but two close to the objective score. Indicator 3, advertising agencies, finished noticeably ahead of the average, while Indicator 6, market research, finished nearly a full point behind.

Most Ivorian private media struggle to achieve profitability. Many newspapers have very high rates of unsold copies, according to data from the NCP. Sangaré admitted that, "The media companies are not really profitable, but they survive because of the current stability. It is true that 2006 was particularly nerve-racking." Based on their declared print runs and sales, a few periodicals, mostly weeklies such as *Gbich*, *Top Visage*, and *Go* magazine, seem to be profitable.

"I don't think," Konaté pointed out, "that the independent or private media in Côte d'Ivoire are well managed companies that go as far as allowing the independence of journalism, and the proof of that is the many newspapers that frequently disappear." In 2006, three dailies and 39 periodicals ceased to be published, while five new daily papers and 11 weeklies were started.

Six printing companies owning about ten rotary presses share the newspaper printing market. Only three daily newspapers have their own printing press. Most dailies must use a private printing company. The average print run of the daily press is very low, about 10,000 copies per day, which makes for high per unit printing costs. The weekly press average larger print runs at 15,000 to 50,000 copies per issue. Private printing

### 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.

companies are available to all publications on the same terms; they are considered politically neutral.

Until recently, the company Edipresse provided distribution for all domestic and international press. This company's capital is 51 percent owned by the government, through the Fraternité Matin Group, and 49 percent belongs to a French company, the New Distribution Service of the Parisian Press. For almost two years a second Ivorian company, the privately owned Distrilibre, which developed from a daily newspaper, has been trying to penetrate the distribution market. This company now distributes 20 percent of the daily press.

Daily sales of newspapers have fallen dramatically since 2002. The NCP determined that, in 2006, the total print run of the daily and weekly press was 16,724,543 copies, with nearly 50 percent of these going unsold, putting these papers at below breakeven levels. During the same time, periodicals had an unsold rate of about 35 percent. Sangaré pointed out that "Profitability has decreased since the beginning of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. For example, there were 35 million readers before the crisis erupted, whereas today we have 27 to 28 million, a net loss of about 8 million readers."

However, revenue has increased for the print media. In 1994-1995, revenue for the national print media was CFAF 4.8 billion. Ten years later, in 2006, it was CFAF 6.7 billion. Panelists were not sure of the reason for this, as several factors—or a combination—could be at play, such as inflation, more print outlets offering diverse information, etc.

Advertising forms the bulk of revenue for private media as a whole, although exact figures are lacking. For print media, it is at least about 50 percent, by Sangaré's reckoning, with the balance coming from sales of copies. The economic growth that sustained Côte d'Ivoire for several decades generated a flourishing advertising sector. This sector is regulated by the Higher Council for Advertising (HCA). Since the crisis, advertising resources have declined. Advertising spending decreased 50 percent between 2000 and 2003. In 2006, the HCA inventoried 30 approved advertising agencies and only 10 of them had a turnover of over CFAF 1 billion. In 2005, according to the Cristal Communication Agency, the print media earned CFAF 2.28 billion in advertising, compared to almost CFAF 8 billion for radio and television. The boom of the highly competitive cellular telephone sector has considerably boosted the advertising receipts of newspapers in recent months.

In discussing the small advertising market relative to the large number of newspapers, Sangaré observed, "The problem is formulated as a closed circle. Concerning the example of the cellular telephone companies, instead of four, Côte d'Ivoire now has 17 licenses. So, as far as the press is concerned,

*"I don't think," Konaté pointed out, "that the independent or private media in Côte d'Ivoire are well managed companies that go as far as allowing the independence of journalism, and the proof of that is the many newspapers that frequently disappear."*

instead of sharing the same piece of 'cake' we must make it bigger so that all Ivorian citizens may be able to buy newspapers. The cost of paper as well as that of the printing also must be recalculated. There is an entire set of problems that need to be revised."

Although stipulated by the law for over a decade, the Support and Development Fund for the Press has not yet materialized despite appeals from professional organizations and owners of media outlets. The law stipulates that "the State supports the training of journalists and professionals of communication, the distribution and the development of the press and multimedia." Dan Moussa observed that "not even the best of the independent media receive state support and are weighted down by expenses for printing and distribution." The tax exemption with respect to paper, according to the Florence Convention, is the only tax break granted to the media.

With the exception of a few studies conducted by advertising and communication agencies, no real market research has been conducted on the media. Frank Kouassi pointed out that "The media make no effort to adapt to the socio-economic environment; they do not perform market research or conduct polls. It is impossible for media promoters to know the needs of the consumers in order to adapt their products." The panelists admitted that, in most cases, newspapers are launched without any prior feasibility study or market research on their intended audience.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.52

This objective scored relatively well on the back of Indicator 2, professional associations, which panelists scored above a 3. However, Indicator 3, NGO support of press freedom, scored more than a point lower than the average, reflecting dissatisfaction on the part of panelists with the ability of NGOs to effectively support the media sector.

*Frank Kouassi pointed out, "The organizations working for the freedom of the press are fragile with respect to the government authorities. They usually lack the tools to take action and fail to develop policies that might potentially interest journalists."*

Journalists have always tried to create solidarity by creating professional organizations. Since 1991, the National Union of Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire (NUJCI) has brought journalists together and, in 1995, it set up the continent's first self-regulatory francophone body, OLPED. Other key national organizations include OPPCI, the National Conference of Managing Editors of Côte d'Ivoire, and various unions working in the private and public sectors. They all seek to increase professionalism and improve the operating and working conditions of journalists.

Seeking to promote excellence in journalism, NUJCI introduced the Ebony Award about a decade ago for excellence in journalism among radio, television, and print journalists. Over the years these awards have increased in value and journalists have started to compete vigorously for them. For the last three years, the recipient of the Super Ebony, or the best of the best in radio, television, and the print has received, among other things, a house and a car.

Since the creation of OLPED, journalists have cooperated with civil society and human rights institutions to promote freedom of the press issues. However, panelists were lukewarm on the effectiveness of these endeavors. These

#### 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.

organizations typically react to infringements on press freedom with press releases, they said. Frank Kouassi pointed out, "The organizations working for the freedom of the press are fragile with respect to the government authorities. They usually lack the tools to take action and fail to develop policies that might potentially interest journalists." Konaté said that, "These organizations give the impression that the work of journalists is not of their concern." Yao Blé, from the Ivorian Human Rights League, disagreed slightly, saying, "These human rights organizations have their role and work closely with the media."

There are many private schools providing training in the field of communication, but only four have a program dedicated specifically to journalism. According to Sangaré, "the initial, basic training is worrying. Many higher schools claim to provide journalism training without meeting all the academic and resource requirements that would allow them to offer quality training." Dan Moussa noted that "all talented students can succeed in the press. The real question," he said, "concerns the journalists themselves; their level is lower and lower in Côte d'Ivoire." For many years the Ivorian government offered training scholarships abroad (e.g., in Senegal or France), but this funding dried up a decade ago.

International institutions and professional organizations sponsor numerous training seminars to improve journalism skills. Since 1990, about fifteen training seminars and workshops have been organized by professional organizations in partnership with development agencies. Over one hundred trainees have had access to these modules. Of those who have been training, some are still in the media, but most of them now earn their living working in other fields. The result of such training courses is deceiving according to Zio Moussa, president of OLPED, in the conclusion to a study on the subject: "Too often the definition of training needs has been based on a few remarks that did not stem from prior studies or analyses. The contents of the seminars come up against other difficulties, such as the lack of previous studies that would help to figure out precisely what the expectations are, the lack of cooperation between the professional associations, media owners, and other partners with the development of the media."

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## List of Panel Participants

**Samba Kone**, chief executive officer, South Actions Media, Abidjan

**Josette Barry**, journalist, Fraternity Monitoring Group, Abidjan

**Marius Comoe Brou**, president, Côte d'Ivoire Federation of Consumer Organizations, Abidjan

**Alfred Dan Moussa**, managing editor, Fraternity Monitoring Group, Abidjan

**Gérard Dogbemin**, attorney, Association of Young Lawyers, Abidjan

**Fancis Domo**, journalist, National Commission of the Press, Abidjan

**Barthélemy Kouame**, president, Online Press Network of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

**Affoué Virginie Kouassi**, dean, Higher Institute for Communication Sciences and Techniques, Abidjan

**Franck Anderson Kouassi**, secretary general, National Broadcast Council, Abidjan

**André Ouhoi**, interim project manager, Technology Research Group, Abidjan

**Charles Sanga**, editor-in-chief, *Le Patriote*, Abidjan

**Abdoulaye Sangare**, director, West Media Press Group, manager, *24 Heures* daily, president of the board of directors, Newspaper Publishers Association of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

**Saly Silwe Konate**, journalist, RTI Radio, Abidjan

**Valérie Yao Ble**, magistrate, Ivorian Human Rights League, Abidjan

**Kriwa Zeli**, secretary general, National Union of the Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

## Moderator

**Samba Kone**, chief executive officer, South Actions Media, Abidjan

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