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MADAGASCAR

In Madagascar, 2007 has been a watershed year for politics and an opportunity for the Malagasy media to solidify their vital role as the connection between citizens and government.

The most significant national event was the beginning of the second mandate for Malagasy President Marc Ravalomanana. The December 2006 election gave Ravalomanana (who coincidentally owns the Malagasy Broadcasting System radio and television networks) a 54.8 percent electoral victory, with a turnout of 62 percent of voters. Although this election took place peacefully, it was marred by the unreliability of the computerized electoral list, the first application of its kind in Madagascar.

Further, two major political events took place in 2007: the official amendment of the Malagasy constitution in March, and the unveiling of the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP). The first was notable for its passage despite relatively low voter turnout (43.5 percent). The MAP is a presidential initiative that sets out a five-year strategic and operational framework for the country's social, economic, cultural, and political development and affects all levels from communal to regional to international relations. Finally, in the last half of 2007, Malagasy senators will be up for re-election.

In covering these developments, the media helped mobilize the Malagasy public. The media conveyed the challenges and possible rewards from the MAP and encouraged citizens to take part in its implementation. The media assisted voters by distributing information about candidates and facilitating voter participation in the democratic process, which lent credence to the election results.

Nevertheless, a paradox has emerged: Although journalists greatly contribute to publicity for state events—to the benefit of both the government and the Malagasy people—the government has not yet passed important legislation to improve working conditions for the media. For example, the communication code has not yet been implemented, despite a decade of lobbying by media professionals. In some cases, unequal treatment of private media still remains—for example, the ability of some and not others to increase their geographic reach.

This is the context in which the MSI is being applied for the first time to Madagascar. The results show an overall average of 2.14, with all objectives aligned fairly closely to that average. The “Supporting Institutions” objective scored best mark, with a 2.30; while “Professional Journalism” got the lowest mark of 2.04. This indicates that overall, Madagascar just barely falls into the “near sustainability” category. However, as the text to follow illustrates, the media still faces significant challenges and more time is needed to determine whether the level of development to date is indeed sustainable.

MADAGASCAR AT A GLANCE

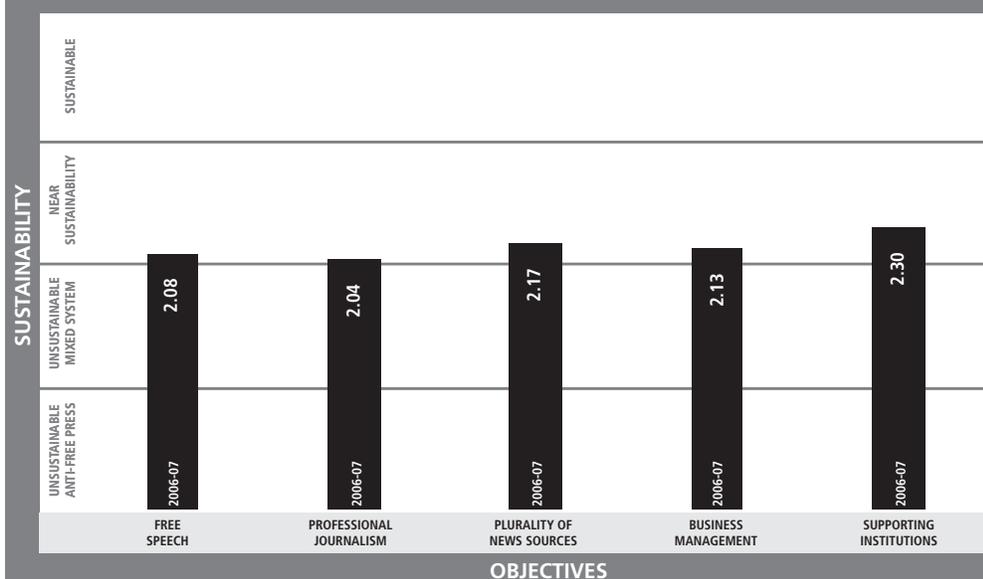
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 19,448,815 (July 2007 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Antananarivo
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Merina 27%, Betsimisaraka 15%, Betsileo 12%, Tsimihety 7%, Sakalava 6%, Vezo 5%, Antakarana, Sihanaka, Bezanozano, Tanala, Antambahoaka, Antemoro, Antefasy, Antesaka, Antanosy, Bara, Mahafaly, Antandroy, Masikoro (<http://www.france-madagascar.mg/madalmada.htm>)
- > **Religions (% of population) :** Indigenous beliefs 52 %, Christian 41%, Muslim 7% (*Country cards, Encarta*)
- > **Languages:** English (official), French (official), Malagasy (official) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$5.343 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$960 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 68.9% (male 75.5%, female 62.5%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Marc Ravalomanana (since May 6, 2002)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** 254 radio stations, with 26 public stations (including the central and regional levels), 37 television channels, with 6 public channels (including the central and regional levels), 12 daily newspapers (with 5 partially in French and 1 entirely in French), 19 bi-weekly, 20 weekly, 12 bi-monthly, 21 monthly, 4 bimestrial and 14 quarterly. (http://www.ambafrance-mada.org/article.php3?id_article=269)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** top three by circulation: *Midi – Madagascar:* 30,511, *Tribune Madagascar:* 15,000, *Express de Madagascar:* 15,000; about 200,000 daily copies total for entire country (sources : various local newspapers)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** highest-rated television outlets: TVM (Télévision Nationale Malagasy: public station), RNM (Radio Nationale Malagasy : public station), MBS (Madagascar Broadcasting system, television and private radio stations)
- > **News agencies:** ANTA- public, MADA- private
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 110,000 (2006, *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MADAGASCAR



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.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREE SPEECH

Madagascar Objective Score: 2.08

The panel agreed that generally, legal and social standards protect and promote freedom of expression, but they are sometimes hindered in their application. Most indicator scores fell close to the overall objective average. However, indicators 8 and 9 (access to international news and entry into the journalism profession) boosted the average, with significantly higher scores; while Indicator 5 (preferential treatment for state media) brought the average down.

There is little public awareness concerning the importance of freedom of the press or free speech. When abuse of these freedoms is publicized, it does not result in public uproar, although media themselves and opposition politicians do take to task the abusers as best they can.

Title II of the amended Malagasy constitution, as well as communication laws 90-031 and 92-039, are worded to promote of freedom of expression and access to public information. Law 92-039 also calls for the creation of the High Council, intended to be staffed by non-government officials and regulate broadcast media. However, the application of the laws' provisions remains spotty, and the production and dissemination of news is subject to pressures from many levels. According to James Ramarosaona, the editorial director of *La Gazette de la Grande Ile*, the High Council "is not yet operational" despite the law being passed in 1992.

The pressures extend to minutiae, according to Rahaga Ramaholimihaso, owner of the SME-Tribune publishing company. "Some local daily newspapers, namely *La Gazette*, *Les Nouvelles*, and *Tribune*, cannot be distributed on board the national airline [Air Madagascar]," Ramaholimihaso said.

In the absence of the High Council, the governmental Office of Professional Regulation and Telecommunications (known locally by the acronym OMERT) is responsible for issuing broadcast licenses and Internet service provision licenses in Madagascar. The licensing process is transparent, as the selection process is based on publicly announced requests for expressions of interests in new frequency opportunities.

Generally, the license is easy to obtain but often difficult to keep. According to Vonifanja Razanamazava, the sales and marketing manager at NEWPRINT printing house, "Some private radios have their license confiscated by authorities for political reasons." This was the case for Sky FM radio, owned by a politician from the opposition party. Sky FM was closed down and its journalists prosecuted for alleged "incitement to tribalism."

"In official documents, there is not any law that favors state media compared to private media," asserted Ruphin Rakotomaharo, the president of the Madagascar Journalists' Association. However, public media members, being under the protection of the state, benefit from many advantages, such as better equipment, assignments abroad, easy access to public information, etc.

Market entry for media is as free as in other industries. Tax advantages for the media exist at the national level in the form of VAT exemption on newspapers and books. Nevertheless, panelists, referring to the 1950 Florence Convention, said that other tax incentives should be instituted in Madagascar. For example, exemptions should be in place for some raw materials and equipment necessary for the smooth running of a media company, according to Rahaga Ramaholimihaso, the owner of the SME-Tribune publishing company.

Most of the panelists agreed that crimes against journalists are rare. Nevertheless, according to Nifaliana Rafamantanantsoa, the director of the NGO Falafa Ageco in Fianarantsoa, "some journalists get attacked after producing

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.

Access to international news sources is unrestricted. With the spread of new information technologies in Madagascar, obtaining information from international sources is easier than ever. However, the relatively high cost of accessing the Internet and of subscribing to international wire services does serve as a barrier to some media outlets.

political reports or news.” These attacks occurred in past years, and there have been no similar incidents reported in 2007. In some cases, members of parliament may take offense at media reports and verbally threaten journalists. Immunity as members of parliament emboldens them to do so; however, immunity does not extend to acts of violence.

Regarding favoritism in the media, inequity of treatments is noted in practice although not in government policy. “In official documents, there is not any law that favors state media compared to private media,” asserted Ruphin Rakotomaharo, the president of the Madagascar Journalists’ Association. However, public media members, being under the protection of the state, benefit from many advantages, such as better equipment, assignments abroad, easy access to public information, etc. They enjoy more safety in performing their jobs, as they are threatened and harassed less than private journalists for their reports. State-owned broadcast media enjoy a legislated monopoly on nationwide coverage.

Recently, journalists from *Tribune* and *La Gazette de la Grande Ile* were in jeopardy of fine and even imprisonment because of reports they produced that were perceived as defamatory. Although fines have been issued as punishment, a decade has passed since a journalist has been imprisoned for defamation. Law in Madagascar makes “flagrant” defamation a crime, and as Rakotomaharo noted, “Defamation is a matter for the civil code and the code of communication.” Defamation suits can include fines or imprisonment. However, the judiciary is independent and defendants can effectively present a defense.

Most panelists expressed frustration over accessing sources of public information. Some high officials in public institutions are unwilling to provide information that should be public, and statistics provided by the government are not always reliable. Moreover, according to Jean Eric Rakotoarisoa, editorial director of newsweekly *Dans les Médias de Demain*,

“Legislation and regulations do not specifically deal with problems of access to information.”

Nevertheless, the government has made efforts recently to improve public information flow. The government’s web portal (www.madagascar.gov.mg) is operational, and some government officials hold press conferences and encourage media attendance.

Access to international news sources is unrestricted. With the spread of new information technologies in Madagascar, obtaining information from international sources is easier than ever. However, the relatively high cost of accessing the Internet and of subscribing to international wire services does serve as a barrier to some media outlets. Further, some panelists noted that it can be difficult to convince foreign news sources to share stories, as there is a tendency to promote exclusive stories.

The government does not license or register journalists, and no state or other protectionist restrictions impede entry into the journalism profession. Although universities have journalism programs, formal education is not necessarily required to practice journalism, and there are no governmental restrictions on entry into academic programs at public or private schools.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Madagascar Objective Score: 2.04

The panelists asserted that the multiple exertions on journalists constitute one of the main causes for lower-than-ideal professional standards in the media. Indicator scores that differed greatly from the average score included a very low score for Indicator 5, regarding pay for journalists; and high scores for Indicators 4 and 8, regarding coverage of key events and niche reporting and programs.

One major shortcoming of the Malagasy press is that many journalists do not check or cross-check information from their sources. Citations are not often provided for quotes and information from articles and other written sources. According to Rakotoarisoa, “Journalists refer to a story from a local daily newspaper or private radio station without providing a reference to the exact source.”

Some reports prepared by the public media are superficial and do not necessarily present all sides of the story, particularly if the story would not present a good image of the government. Such reports are presented as short summaries. Diana Styvanley, a journalist with Malagasy National Television (TVM), stressed that, “The objectivity

or subjectivity of articles or reports depends mostly on the orientations or ideologies of the respective press directors.”

Within the private media, reports are commonly quite well done, developed, documented, and impartial. Overall, the panel felt that there exists a noticeable, if gradual, positive trend within all media regarding quality of news reports.

The panel pointed out that journalism standards and ethics similar to those found internationally exist in Madagascar, and that Malagasy journalists generally abide by these standards. However, low salaries undermine the quality of journalism, and some journalists decide to not respect these standards and the code of ethics. Low salaries constitute an open door for corruption, known in Malagasy as *felaka*. Favorable articles appear about politicians or businesses that can pay the journalists, and information is released or withheld at a price.

All the members of the panel agreed that the importance of journalists’ work is not yet appreciated in Madagascar, and Malagasy journalists are among the worst paid in the world. According to Nanou Fiankinana, a journalist and analyst at TVM, “At the end of 2006, journalists still earned around \$21, and \$65 in 2007.” The increase was attributed to salaries being based on those of civil servants, which rose considerably in 2007.

Most Malagasy journalists complain about their low income and request higher salaries, but “this cannot be done without a well-structured, dynamic, and independent Madagascar Journalists Association,” according to James Ramarosaona, editor/director at *La Gazette de la Grande ile*.

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).

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In general, self-censorship by both public and private media is commonplace for political news and stories on government performance. For example, public broadcasters rarely provide coverage of oppositional political party activity. In April 2007, The Malagasy government expelled French Jesuit priest Sylvain Urfer from the country despite his 33-year residence. This story raised a number of issues surrounding religious relations (President Ravalomanana is a Protestant), separation of church and state, and freedom of expression (Urfer claimed he was expelled for being critical of the government). But there was no follow-up coverage by the Malagasy media, and in particular, the public media were silent on the issue.

General news stories do not receive the same kind of attention by editors and are mostly free of self-censorship. Panelists asserted that self-censorship is mainly the result of journalists wanting to avoid threats and other abuse by authorities, and media managers seeking to protect themselves from closure by the government.

Key events and questions pertaining to the nation are covered by the public and private media as a whole, with depth of coverage affected by self-censorship. But local and national print media perform particularly well in this regard, taking into account all key events occurring in the country and providing appropriate coverage. Journalists from the private media constantly watch for official, private, or community events taking place in their localities and report on those events. But according to Nanou Fiankinana of TVM, “In order to get complete and detailed information on one specific topic, one must read every daily newspaper. However, not everyone has the financial means or the time to do so regularly.”

Overall, entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information content. In general, programs are scheduled depending on the intended listeners and viewers. According to Romule Raterazoelison, a journalist at Radio Quartz in Moramanga, “Entertainment programs are often planned

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while children and adolescents are still at home [in the morning, during holidays, and after classes]. As for news and information programs, they are often scheduled during the adults' spare time [at noon or late in the evening after work]."

Nevertheless, some local private radio and television stations, lacking financial means for covering news and information, limit themselves to the production of entertainment programs and do not prepare their own news.

Installations and equipment for collecting, producing, and broadcasting news are modern and efficient among public broadcasting entities and some national private broadcasters (MBS, RTA, and MATV). However, the majority of panelists said that beyond the capital or important provincial towns, most television stations' broadcasts consist of merely cassette playing because of material, financial, and staffing shortcomings. In rural areas, the lack of equipment and poor condition of what equipment is on hand delay the broadcast of information. Lastly, equipment problems at local radio stations create poor sound quality that discourages listeners.

High quality niche reporting on issues such as health, business, economics, and minority affairs exists in the media, particularly the print media. Weeklies such as *Hebdo de Madagascar* routinely prepare in-depth, lengthy articles on current trends and events, economic affairs, and social issues, including controversial topics. Broadcast media also include a limited number of in-depth and niche programs in their broadcasts, such as "The Other News" by Radio Télévision Analamanga.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

Madagascar Objective Score: 2.17

Citizens can access a multitude of information sources in the cities (Antananarivo and a few other key towns) but not in isolated rural areas. The size, the rugged and mountainous interior of the country, and the population's low purchasing power are limiting factors for access to information. Indicators 3 and 4, regarding the objectivity of public

media and strength of news agencies, received the lowest scores from the panel; while indicators 2 and 5, covering restrictions on accessing media and the in-house preparation of news reports, received the highest scores. The other three indicators fell very close to the average objective score.

Antananarivo and the important provincial towns of the country have a multitude of private and public news sources. Citizens can access a number of daily and weekly printed media, several radio and television stations that provide news programming, and the Internet. However, while the government does not actively restrict access to any information source—domestic or foreign—real limitations on access to news and information do exist in Madagascar.

The ability to access information is not equal between urban and rural populations. Because of the lack of adequate telecommunication infrastructure in the rural, isolated regions, populations there do not have the plurality of news sources enjoyed by city dwellers. Currently, only public radio and television and MBS (established and owned privately by President Ravalomanana) have rights to cover the entire nation. The existence of local private radio has somewhat improved the access of rural populations to national and international information. Despite this, according to the panel, only public radio has the capability to reach the most isolated rural areas. Dispatching newspapers to the provinces is very expensive, due mainly to transportation costs. Only the Catholic weekly, *Lakroa*, reaches rural areas. Literacy among rural populations is low (59 percent for adults). Moreover, the main media—especially magazines, daily newspapers, and TV—are mostly in French, which excludes even more who

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.

only understand Malagasy. Radio programming in Malagasy is widely available, though much of the news programming is in French.

In an effort to reverse this limited access to information, the state is collaborating with private firms and making considerable efforts to improve and modernize the telecommunications infrastructure, including the use of fiber optic cable. It is hoped in particular that schools will have increased access to the Internet.

General poverty, especially in rural regions but also in the cities, further prevents access to information. Purchasing print media and subscriptions to satellite television stations are still too expensive for most Malagasy citizens. The potential radio audience is limited, as the purchase of a radio battery is not a priority compared to that of the family's basic needs, and the supply of electricity is limited in the countryside. Few people can access the Internet because of the high equipment and connection costs.

Maksim Lucien Godefroy, an environmental journalist, sums up the situation this way: "The great majority of Malagasy citizens, who have the right to inform themselves and to be informed, limit themselves to gathering together daily in front of a kiosk to read the newspaper headlines. For a Malagasy family father, concerned with the family economy and the right to be informed and to inform his family, it is difficult to make the choice between buying a newspaper and a half kilo of rice."

The members of the panel agreed that the public media do not generally reflect the political spectrum. The ruling party is often privileged, as news programs in the public broadcast media mostly focus on their activities. As an illustration, according to Nanou Fiankinana, of TVM, "The length of a report about government or pro-government events can last more than the conventional 1 minute, 30 seconds. Events of the opposition party must be limited to less than 1 minute." (This seems to be an informal policy.)

Journalists from public broadcasters are also sometimes under pressure to omit information representing the opinions of all the political parties. But during electoral periods, public television and radio attempt to allocate equal time to each candidate.

Local news agencies exist in Madagascar, but are lacking in their ability to fully serve the media. The publicly-run Agence Nationale d'information Taratra (ANTA) was dormant until recently and is still affected by the reorganization it underwent. Its operational capacity is still limited by a reliance on financial support by the government, which has not placed a high priority on the agency's development.

Antananarivo and the important provincial towns of the country have a multitude of private and public news sources. Citizens can access a number of daily and weekly printed media, several radio and television stations that provide news programming, and the Internet.

There is also a private agency, MADA, which has a limited capacity to gather news and cannot serve as a one-stop source of news for clients.

According to Vonifanja Razanamazava of NEWPRINT, "Malagasy media do not often use these local agencies. They prefer to consult international agencies to get international news. For example, *Le Quotidien* draws information from Agence France Presse and *Les Nouvelles* from the American agency Associated Press."

Large independent radio and television stations produce their own programs, and this is aided by generally free access to information. Rural and community radio, however, use information gleaned from national newspapers and other sources to inform their audiences. Overall, the production of informative and timely news programs by independent radio and television stations depends on the means, financial and otherwise, at their disposal.

Official conglomerates do not exist in Madagascar, but two important radio and television groups have emerged, offering a wide array of products. The MBS group, owned by President Ravalomanana, includes a network of television stations, a network of radio stations, and two daily newspapers, *Le Quotidien* and *Vaovaontsika*. MATV group operates a television station, a radio station, and two daily newspapers, *Gazetiko* and *Midi-Madagascar*, all in Antananarivo. The bias shown in news production is directly related to the ideology of the owner, and the objectivity and reliability of information depends on the system established by the manager. The public is typically aware of who the media owners are and take into consideration their political bends.

Some minority-language media exist, and no government regulations limit their existence. For example, radio station *Voix de la Sagesse* (Voice of Wisdom) broadcasts in Malagasy, French, and Gujarati for the minority Muslim community. The relatively high cost of news production and distribution for a minority target audience prevents expanding this coverage, however, and subjects on minority social groups are produced rarely, according to Nifaliana Rafamantanantsoa of

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Falafa Ageco. Still, some local daily newspapers periodically dedicate space for reports or interviews of minority political or religious personalities. The media also report on taboo subjects, such as gay pride parades and sexual harassment in the workplace.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Madagascar Objective Score: 2.13

Overall, media in Madagascar are not poorly managed, but the general level of business sector development and economic performance does pose a serious hurdle to the media sector. The private media depend on private and government advertisers, and therefore media in less populated areas have serious financial challenges. Media enterprises located in major cities and holding strong market shares can expect some profitability due to the demand for information. All indicators scored above 2 in this objective, except for indicators 6 and 7, related to the use of market research by media and reliable circulation and ratings information.

Public and private media outlets and supporting enterprises are generally profitable when they receive the confidence of advertisers, who are their main source of income. For the print media, neither sales of issues nor subscription receipts cover the costs of printing, so advertisements are indeed relied upon as the key source of income, as is the case in much of Europe and North America. Low consumer purchasing power and a small market for print media, particularly in rural areas, keeps circulation and cover prices low. Additionally, every daily newspaper supplements its income by using in-house printing presses to do commercial printing work during the day, as newspapers are printed at night.

As for the radio and television stations, their revenues include advertising sales and other sponsorships. Public broadcast media enjoy an advertising sales advantage over private broadcasters because the public broadcasters reach a larger population. In rural areas, local radio and television

stations often encounter cash problems due to small audience and poor local economic conditions. According to Rahaga Ramaholimihaso of the SME-Tribune publishing company, "Given the economic stagnation prevailing in the country, attaining a multiplicity of the sources of income for the media is still elusive in Madagascar."

The importance of advertising revenue and the slim profit margins create dependence with a downside. "The government, which is an important advertiser in Madagascar, discriminates by boycotting some media outlets. The daily newspaper *La Gazette de la Grande île* is among the victims," said James Ramarosaona, editorial director of *La Gazette de la Grande île*. "The worst part is that the state does not adhere to UNESCO's Vienna Convention by continuing to tax at 5 percent the importation of products of a cultural nature [including media-related items]."

Advertising sales nevertheless constitute the main source of income for all the media, except for community media. Any media enterprise that is intent on independence and turning a profit must therefore cultivate advertising clients.

The advertising sector is fairly well developed in Madagascar, especially in the capital and major cities. Advertising agencies such as Factories, Novocomm, and the Tam-Tam agency, owned and operated by foreign concerns, dominate the sector. In general, they actively collaborate with the public and private media. The time and space allotted to advertising may vary. For example, the advertising at most radio and television stations more or less coincides with entertainment programs, such as locally produced serials. On the other hand, some other private television channels such as TV+ broadcast advertisements during radio and television news programs.

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.

According to the panel, advertising sales as a percentage of total receipts is generally in line with the accepted standards of commercial media outlets, although it depends on the policies of the media outlet. In print, for example, some allot more pages for information and fewer for advertising, while others include more advertising.

The government does not contribute any subsidies to most independent private media; only community media enjoy such an advantage. However, according to Ramaholimihaso, "In some cases, the state indirectly provides subsidies to some independent media through choosing to advertise with specific media."

Some socially and educationally oriented media receive steady subsidies. The president's office publishes a "Good Governance" periodical that is supported by UNDP, and some regional news media are funded by the European Union. Foreign donor funds do influence the editorial policies and the content of some media; for example, the French Cooperation Agency insists on the production of publications in French.

Detailed and advanced market surveys still remain expensive for most independent media. Those market surveys that are conducted are also generally untrustworthy, as no institutions specialize in this field. According to Vonifanja Razanamazava of NEWPRINT, "The Capsule agency and ATW Consultants carry out polls in Madagascar and produce some media evaluations. However, the ensuing results often raise criticisms from advertisers that the results are not reliable. These agencies are quite often influenced by the media outlets, as they often pay for the studies."

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Madagascar Objective Score: 2.30

Media support institutions exist in Madagascar, but often their support is designed to coincide closely with their respective missions and the expected contribution of the media outlet to achieving those missions. The panel felt that more emphasis should be placed on client service, with support tailored to the needs of the media, rather than the other way around. Most of the indicator scores fell close to the average, except indicators 1 and 3, regarding trade associations and NGO support, which the panel rated at just below a score of 2.

Most media support associations in Madagascar are non-profits. Speaking of the nature of media-related associations, Vonifanja Razanamazava of NEWPRINT said, "Trade associations are less numerous. One example that

According to Jean Eric Rakotoarisoa of Dans les Médias de Demain, "The Journalists Association is supposed to ensure unity and defend the whole profession. Nevertheless, because of internal dissent, it has not really played this role these last years."

comes to mind is that of the SYNAEL union [Union of Authors, Publishers, and Booksellers]." This union promotes and supports the interest of the members, such as securing exclusive publishing rights for books and other printed materials related to the implementation of MAP.

Journalist associations (such as the associations of political editors, sportswriters, and environmental reporters) and economic journalists are numerous in Madagascar. However, their ability to protect members' rights is not developed to its potential. In fact, the large number of them creates rivalries and divisions rather than unity and strength. According to Jean Eric Rakotoarisoa of *Dans les Médias de Demain*, "The Journalists Association is supposed to ensure unity and defend the whole profession. Nevertheless, because of internal dissent, it has not really played this role these last years. However, some, namely GEPIM [Association of News Editors of Madagascar], work for the defense of their members' interests when threatened by the government. In cooperation with foreign organizations, GEPIM also provides training for journalists and technicians."

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.

In Madagascar, most journalists are trained on the job and in a short period of time. They can gradually improve their skills with the numerous training opportunities available throughout their professional careers. However, the trainings are not universally beneficial, according Nanou Fiankinana of TVM.

Foreign donors also work to defend freedom of expression and independent media. "One can cite some initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the French government, and other institutions," said James Ramarosaona of *La Gazette de la Grande île*.

For example, the United Nations and others provide basic and mid-career training to journalists and technicians, and even equipment in certain cases. UNDP created a media network to promote the Millennium Development Goals, the World Bank developed economic and investigative reporting training programs, the French Cooperation Agency ran a media support project, and CITE (Economic and Technical Information Center) set up of a press center in collaboration with the Association of Madagascar Freelance Journalists.

However, the panel noted that these support efforts often have a price. Local counterparts are sometimes required to produce and/or broadcast information, educational programming, or public service announcements in return.

Other foreign NGOs with a more project-level orientation, such as the German *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* and the Canadian Cooperative Association, also support independent media. Their programs focus on capacity building of journalists and evaluation of the media in Madagascar. Local NGOs primarily offer moral support and proposals for on-the-ground cooperation with independent media.

Madagascar has university-level journalism programs, including at public institutions, such as the University of Antananarivo; religious schools, such as the Catholic Institute of Madagascar; and private institutions, such as University of Majunga. According to the panelists, these degree programs generally offer good courses of study. However, the duration of studies (two years) is sometimes insufficient to enable journalists to be operational once in the profession. According Vonifanja Razanamazava of NEWPRINT, opportunities exist abroad for degrees in journalism, but

Malagasy students do not share their knowledge once they return home.

In Madagascar, most journalists are trained on the job and in a short period of time. They can gradually improve their skills with the numerous training opportunities available throughout their professional careers. However, the trainings are not universally beneficial, according Nanou Fiankinana of TVM. "Unfortunately, it is always the same people...who attend and express their thirst to acquire new knowledge," Fiankinana said. "[And] sometimes, despite the training, the lessons are not reflected in practice as seen through their news stories."

The private sector plays a large role in Malagasy media. Sources of newsprint, the printing houses, and distribution networks, including kiosks, are all privately owned, and most print media are sold by vendors on foot. Broadcast transmitters used by the private media are in private hands, as are Internet service providers. The companies that are responsible for these services are generally apolitical, but are sometimes vulnerable to the pressures of politics and the state.

Panel Participants

The members of the panel that fully attended the process:

Rahaga Ramaholimiaso, general president, director and owner, SME-Tribune edition and printing house, Antananarivo

Diana Styvanley, journalist, Télévision Nationale Malagasy, Antananarivo

James Ramarosaona, editorial director, *Gazette de la Grande île*, Antananarivo

Nanou Fiankinana, journalist, Télévision Nationale Malagasy, Antananarivo

Vonifanja Razanamazava, commercial executive, Newprint Printing House, Antananarivo

Ruphin Rakotomaharo, president, Madagascar Journalists Association, Antananarivo

Nifaliana Rafamantanantsoa, main executive, Falafa Ageco NGO, Fianarantsoa

Panelists who did not attend the discussion, but submitted scores and made comments:

Maksim Lucien Godefroy, journalist and independent consultant, Antananarivo

Jean Eric Rakotoarisoa, editorial director, *Dans les Médias de Demain*, Antananarivo

Fara Christelle Rakotomanga, journalist, Radio Don Bosco,
Antananarivo

Rajaonary Ratianarivo, manager, Artcom Communication
Agency, Antananarivo

Moderator

Eddy Rakotomalala, governance program coordinator, Pact/
MSIS, Antananarivo

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Harijaona Andriamoraniaina, executive director, MSIS,
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