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NAMIBIA

Namibia is a relatively free country with constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and expression, including the media.<sup>1</sup> The media is essentially unfettered, with a wide range of media outlets, both print and electronic, and minimal interference and regulation by the government. No publications, television, or radio stations have been closed down and no journalists detained, beaten, or killed since independence in 1990. Indeed, there has been a flourishing of radio stations (commercial and community), television stations, and print media since independence. Occasional complaints, however, include a ban on government advertising in independent newspapers and a heavy-handed stance over the public broadcaster by the previous president, Sam Nujoma.

Politically, the country has been ruled by the dominant South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) since independence. The country is politically stable, with a functioning democratic system. Free and fair elections have been held regularly for local, regional, national and presidential elections. Developments within the past year have generally been positive, with a feeling that the new regime under President Hifikepunye Pohamba is more tolerant of the media than that of former President Nujoma.

The MSI study showed greatest weaknesses in a few areas. These include: 1) the non-existence of media trade associations, with a lack of any real unity amongst the country's media and no functioning journalism trade union or media council; 2) the lack of any independent news agencies, and; 3) a lack of firm NGO support for independent media, as civil society in the country is seen as weak in its support of issues surrounding media freedom.

However, panelists highlighted a few key strengths, including: 1) free and open access by citizens to domestic or international media; 2) the free and unrestricted access by journalists to international news and news sources; 3) free entry into the journalism profession, and; 4) the freedom of independent media from any form of government subsidy. Regarding the last point, if anything the independent press (especially *The Namibian*) has been able to thrive financially without any government financing, despite a government ban on advertising with the paper or the purchasing of the paper by government officials.

<sup>1</sup> "All persons shall have the right to: freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media." (Article 21. Section 1 (a))

# NAMIBIA AT A GLANCE

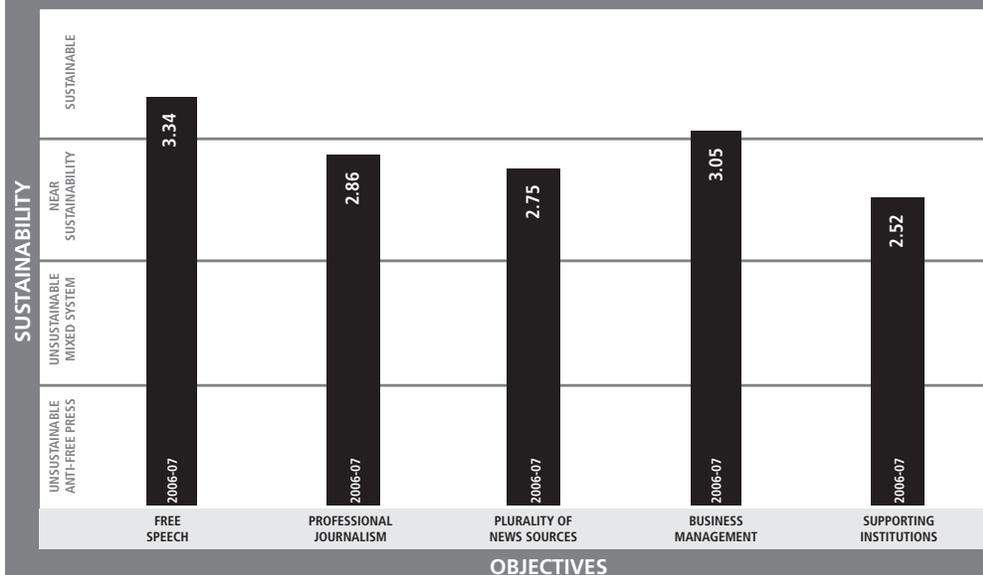
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2,088,669 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Windhoek
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** N/A
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English 7% (official), Afrikaans common language of most of the population and about 60% of the white population, German 32%, indigenous languages 1% (includes Oshiwambo, Herero, Nama) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$6.573 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$4,770 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 85% (male 86.8%, female 83.5%) (2002 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Hifikepunye Pohamba (since March 21, 2005)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**  
Print: 13 newspapers, including 4 daily; Radio: 27; Television stations: 3
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top two by circulation: *The Namibian* (25,900 daily), *Informanté* (70,000 weekly) (Source: Christof Maletsky, News Editor, *The Namibian*)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: National Radio (85%), Radio Energy (25%) Oshiwambo (42.8%) (AC Nielsen Namibia 2001)
- > **News agencies:** NAMPA
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Approximately \$175 million
- > **Internet usage:** 80,600 (2005 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: NAMIBIA



### 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: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Namibia Objective Score: 3.34

Panelists returned mostly strong scores for all indicators in this objective. Two lagged behind the others somewhat: Indicator 2, broadcast licensing, and Indicator 7, access to information.

It was felt that the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia allows for freedom of speech and of the media. To this end, nothing during the year in review suggested that these freedoms were being eroded.

Nevertheless, concern was expressed over government influence over the broadcast spectrum. The Namibia Communications Commission (NCC) was noted to be not a neutral or publicly appointed body, but essentially controlled by the government, with the board directly appointed by the minister of information and broadcasting.

It was also noted that SWAPO, the ruling party, through their holding company Kalahari Holdings, had shareholdings in commercial stations (Radio Energy and Digital Satellite Television).

However, on the positive side, Pieter Olivier, owner of Radio Live in Rehoboth, felt that the NCC was nevertheless fair in its dealing with licenses, with a spectrum of public, commercial, and community broadcasting being accommodated. "If you have money and a license the sky is the limit; it's run like a business," said Sandra Williams, director of Katutura Community Radio.

There were also concerns about the ban on the publication in *The Namibian* newspaper of government advertisements, and a ban on government departments purchasing the newspaper. "This must be seen as a gross violation of basic principles, and although we have freedom of speech and media in our constitution, practically there remain these problems," said Paul van Schalkwyk, director of One Africa TV.

Although print publications must be registered with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the amount required (N\$20) is minimal, and there have been no reported cases of the Ministry refusing permission to publish. The act regulating print publications is the Newspaper and Imprint Registration Act of 1971, the purpose of which is to: "Provide for the registration of newspapers and imprints; to regulate matters in connection with printed matter; and to provide for matters connected therewith." The Act, in Chapter II (8), forbids foreign editorial control: "No person shall print and publish in the Republic any newspaper unless the editor or acting editor or, in the event of there being more than one editor, the responsible or chief editor thereof is resident in the Republic."

Unfortunately, there are no tax benefits for publications, and printed matter—books and periodicals alike—is treated as a fully taxable item.

Crimes against journalists in the country are essentially unheard of, although some lawsuits for defamation of character against journalists and independent publications remain, led by, amongst others, former President Nujoma. Nevertheless, these remains a civil, not criminal, matter in Namibia, and are handled between the two parties in a court of law in a timely manner.

Regarding editorial independence for public media, panelists discussed the public broadcaster's, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), *Chat Show* and *Open Line*. These programs allow callers to phone in and express their viewpoint freely, whether for or against the government of the day. "NBC also provides a feedback program for people to respond to queries. Their agendas essentially can thus go on the national agenda," said Umbi Karuaihe-Upi, general manager of NBC Radio.

A salutary lesson was learned by NBC during 2007, when there was a public outcry when these open phone-in programs were taken off the air. The NBC director general had insisted on a 'new' program format, whereby open discussion would be discouraged and 'topics' would be presented to listeners each day.<sup>2</sup> Within a few days, NBC was forced to reinstate the programs in their original open format.

Mathew Hailaki, director of Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Namibia, noted that civil society has often been very subdued when their rights were infringed. He also noted that, despite the open phone-in programs on the public broadcaster, "people without a telephone are naturally restricted from taking part." With only approximately 500,000 telephone and cell phone users out of a population of 2 million, this presents a definite restriction.

There have been instances of preferential treatment for public media, in particular NAMPA. On February 13 2006, Namibian media institutions were informed in a press statement that only photographers of the national news agency would be allowed on the floor of the legislature during the opening ceremony. The press release further requested that media practitioners utilize the services of NAMPA, even though not all media outlets subscribed to the news service. After protests from the media profession, led by MISA, the ban was later rescinded.

<sup>2</sup> This was allegedly due to negative comments being expressed on the air regarding the former President. In order to prevent this 'abuse', the nature and format of these programs was changed.

Mathew Haikali noted that there is no law guaranteeing journalists access to information. Joel Haikali, an independent filmmaker, stated that if there are no such laws “forcing” people in power to comment, then there would be no open access to information.

MISA Namibia is currently engaged with the government on a push for access to information legislation, modeled on the existing legislation in South Africa. There have also been cases encountered by investigative journalists such as John Grobler, where his access to what should be public records (company information, shareholdings, etc) was made difficult.

Sarry Xoagus-Eises of the Constituency Channel, a parliamentary broadcast service, stated that it was difficult for individual journalists to have access to international news, and that they were thus reliant on the state news agency NAMPA for such coverage. Mathew Haikali reminded participants that to subscribe to NAMPA was nevertheless quite expensive. Although some broadcasters obtain direct relays of international news through CNN or BBC, Xoagus-Eises maintained that, legally, all international news distributed in Namibia should be accessed via the services of NAMPA.

Finally, there are no restrictions on entry into the journalism profession. No journalist is required to register to cover events and stories. Permission to publish in the print media is obtained from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and, thus far, this has been a routine matter, with no reports of such permission being refused for any reason whatsoever.

#### 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.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Namibia Objective Score: 2.86

All indicators scored near the final objective average. The co-leaders were Indicators 2 and 4, journalism ethics and coverage of key events, while the Indicator 3, self-censorship, brought up the rear.

There are pressures on Namibian journalists because of understaffing plus a lack of training and experience that can lead to lapses in professional journalistic standards. Nevertheless, most media outlets are ethical in their conduct, giving regular opportunities for right of reply, as well as publishing corrections/errata when errors occur.

Reporting generally is fair and balanced, although this might depend on a particular media outlet. Pressures to report in an unbalanced manner sometimes exist. “We have to stick to deadlines and there is always the fear of being scooped,” said Viola Zimunya, news editor of *New Era* newspaper. This might lead to a situation whereby checking for accuracy is rushed or the use of multiple sources is not possible. Sometimes also a lack of training leads to incorrect guests being brought in for programs, and a misunderstanding of what questions should be asked by some journalists.

There was also a feeling that young and, in some cases, part-time contract journalists are being used instead of older, full-time workers. This also could lead to self-censorship by journalists who are still unsure of their standing in a media organization. “In general the standard of the profession in Namibia has gone down. Today cadet reporters, mainly untrained and inexperienced, are being sent out on stories,” said Sandra Williams, the director of Katutura Community Radio.

Although a Code of Ethics, published by MISA Namibia, exists on paper, as yet no media outlet has formally ratified it and no media council or other such arbitration body exists in order to implement the Code.

Self-censorship is more prevalent in some media outlets than in others. In particular, the parastatal<sup>3</sup> organizations sometimes pressure journalists to ‘toe the government line.’ With many parastatal media organizations (NBC, New Era, NAMPA, etc) still dependent to a large extent on government subsidies, “it wouldn’t make sense to bite the hand that feeds

<sup>3</sup> In Namibia a parastatal is a semi-government institution, which runs on a profit-making and commercial basis, but generally the control (appointment of boards, etc) remains in government hands, and any profit or dividend made by the corporation is wholly received by government. Other examples in Namibia include the electric company (Nampower), fixed-line telephone operator (Telecom Namibia), and water company (Namwater).

you,” said Williams, and, according to Umbi-Karuaihe-Upi from NBC, “why would we play with our income?”

Nevertheless, on a positive note, even at parastatal media outlets such as *New Era*, debate is vigorous on, for instance, whether the newspaper should publish information that would embarrass the government. The fact that stories in newspapers that are critical of the government are published is a positive sign that independent journalism still exists, even under difficult and pressured circumstances.

There was some speculation as to why journalists in Namibia were generally reluctant to tackle investigative journalism. Some reasons put forward included the general culture in media outlets, a lack of training and education, a history of highly controlled, propagandistic media, and a lack of accountability by the SWAPO majority in government. “Some journalists have just given up and are demoralized because of this lack of government accountability,” observed Paul van Schalkwyk, owner of One Africa TV and Advantage McCann, who provided additional information for this study.

Panelists felt that key events and issues are generally covered, although, again, it depends on the media outlet. Generally media cover events in the capital city well, but those in rural areas receive less coverage. “The media are centralized and generally focus only on Windhoek,” said Joel Haikali. The community media have difficulties in covering key national events in Namibia because of equipment shortages, such as cameras or cassette recorders, or even staff shortages. “Certain populations don’t get coverage, or the time allocation given to them is unfair,” said Xoagus-Eises).

Some media outlets are more stringent than others in their editorial policies. Some will allow free reign to reporters to

come up with story ideas, others will be more “dictatorial” and merely send out reporters to workshops, press conferences, school openings, etc., as dictated by the news editor.

“How much is enough?” responded Joel Haikali to the issue of pay levels for journalists. It was pointed out that, again, this differed from media outlet to media outlet, although the community media in particular complained that they are underpaid. Generally, however, pay levels were adequate to prevent any form of corruption amongst journalists. However, there was a concern from panelists that pay levels are, in some institutions, low, and encouraged skilled journalists to leave and go into fields such as public relations or academia.

Regarding the entertainment-news balance, some public media outlets, such as NBC TV, have relented to pressure, and, whereas a few years ago the evening schedule was dominated by news and current affairs—in various local languages—it is now dominated by soap operas. In fact, local language news on television is now not broadcast in the evening prime time schedule, but at 7:00 in the morning.

Concern was expressed by panelists about the high level of music and entertainment programming, and minimal local news content on commercial radio stations. It was felt that NBC filled the gap by giving sufficient news and information content. “The mandate of the NBC is to stay away from these music programs and have more talk. According to this policy, at NBC it is felt that the amount of information programming must surpass that of just entertainment,” said Karuaihe-Upi. However, participants were reminded that the broadcast sector in Namibia was a spectrum ranging from commercial, through community, to public broadcasting. “There’s a good balance in the media as a whole,” said Williams.

In terms of modern facilities, panelists noted differences between parastatals, commercial, and community media. It was pointed out that, although new equipment would be bought, continuous replacement and maintenance was always necessary, and this is more difficult in rural areas with community media. “A printing press in a rural area is very difficult to obtain funding for,” said Lumamezi. Sometimes community media also face the problem of a physical office space for their operations, which can often be tenuous and taken away from them without much warning.

The question of specialized beats was highlighted by participants, who noted that there were not well-trained journalists for every beat. Instead, journalists are now expected to do everything.

Mathew Haikali noted the role of media awards, such as MISA Namibia’s “Namibia Media Awards” and the importance of acknowledging professional journalism in Namibia. Such

## 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).

awards, he believed, went a long way towards motivating journalists and encouraging professional reporting.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES

#### Namibia Objective Score: 2.75

A few indicators scored rather differently than the overall average. On the high side, panelists rated Indicators 2 and 7, citizen access to media and representation of a broad spectrum of social and minority interests, much better. In the case of Indicator 2, this was a full point higher. However, Indicator 4, independent news agencies, received a score more than a point lower, reflecting the current monopoly held by the public news agency NAMPA.

Participants generally felt that there are diverse news sources, although it depends to a large extent on several factors, including: ability to purchase a newspaper or subscribe to satellite television; urban centers have better access to varied news sources than rural areas, and; language, as most of the multiple sources are in English while citizens who only understand indigenous languages are entirely dependent on NBC Radio for their news.

Regarding public and private news sources, participants noted the lack of local news content on some commercial radio stations, which tend to depend on South African stories. However, Xoagus-Eises pointed out that there is no law to compel commercial radio to cover local news, although, she added, "surely they have a social responsibility to cover what is happening in this country."

#### 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.

It was also pointed out that newspapers, abundant and timely in the capital city, often arrive a day late in some rural areas such as Eenhana. And although news is often based on events in Windhoek, even in rural areas such as Eenhana the coverage is focused on Oshakati, the main town in the region, rather than on other areas. Even on NBC Radio, the language service news bulletins are merely repetitions and translations of what has already been broadcast in English. Access to new technology in outlying towns is difficult. In Katima Mulilo, the largest town in the Caprivi region, Internet access is difficult and expensive (N\$30 for 15 minutes at the local internet café, for example)<sup>4</sup>. Further, Risco Lumamezi, editor of the community newspaper *Caprivi Vision*, noted there are no private radio stations based in the Caprivi and that there was little diversity in television. He stated that "most radio is subject to limitations."

However, from a government and legislative point of view, and apart from the financial, geographical, or language hindrances mentioned above, there is little, if any, restriction on citizens' access to domestic or international media.

Public media are varied in their degree of independence, although they are not strictly state media, as such. Panelists noted that they do reflect a wide range of opinions as well as showing representatives from political parties other than SWAPO.

The question of an "independent" news agency was the subject of some discussion among the panelists. Namibia, like many African countries, has no independent news agency. All media rely on NAMPA to receive news. There was some disagreement about whether media are "forced" to obtain their foreign news, and pay a subscription to NAMPA, or whether they were free to source it elsewhere. According to a panelist who was a former member of NAMPA, she was quite certain that legislation compelled local media to subscribe to NAMPA and obtain, especially foreign news, solely from this source.

Local news coverage by private broadcasters has increased over the years. Most commercial stations have regular news bulletins, although, again, as stated above, much of the content comes from NAMPA. The Namibia Communications Commission Act does not specifically stipulate the extent to which broadcasters should cover local Namibian events, but states, amongst other things, that license holders are obliged to "encourage the development of Namibian expression by providing a wide range of programs that reflects Namibian attitudes, opinions, ideas values and artistic creativity by displaying Namibian talent in entertainment programs in so far as it is practicable to do so and with due regard to the nature of the service pertaining to the license holder."

<sup>4</sup> This approximates to \$4. In a rural town such as Katima Mulilo, N\$30 would cover a medium sized bag of maize meal, a basic foodstuff that would feed a family for several days.

Panelists were unclear as to whether listeners, viewers, or readers would understand the complex ownership patterns of Namibian media. There is little in their content (e.g., Radio Energy, with a majority shareholding by Kalahari Holdings, a SWAPO arm) to reveal to the listener that they have any “agenda,” political or otherwise. There is also a developing trends of certain organizations (e.g., Democratic Media Holdings) owning not only newspapers, (*Republikein* and *Allgemeine Zeitung*), but also a large printing press and, recently, a radio station. They also have a minority shareholding from News 24, a South African media company.

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Namibia Objective Score: 3.05

Most indicators scored near the average. One outlier in the lead was Indicator 5, government subsidies for private media. Indicators 6 and 7, covering market research and circulation and audience measurement, scored significantly below average.

Generally, media in Namibia are well run, with both commercial radio stations and publications thriving due to consistent advertising revenue. Community media will always struggle more, but even here, there are several examples of radio stations in particular that have survived for many years now. There is, however, little current information about broadcast ratings and only one publication (*The Namibian*) is audited transparently by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC).

According to Paul van Schalkwyk, Namibia has a skewed advertising market due to historical circumstances. Because of the government monopoly on the electronic media before, and shortly after, independence, the advertising industry focused on the independent media, in particular print. With the deregulation of the radio sector, there was a burgeoning of sales representatives for the commercial radio stations. “With five to eight radio reps selling their stations you believed it was a good medium,” van Schalkwyk said.

The loser, in the end, was print media, who rationalized in the years after independence. Shortly after independence, Namibians had three English dailies, *The Namibian*, *Windhoek Advertiser*, and *Times of Namibia*, and two German papers, *Namibia Nachrichten* and *Allgemeine Zeitung*. There was also a weekend trilingual paper, *Sondag Republikein* (later *Tempo*). Only *The Namibian* and *Allgemeine Zeitung* have survived into the 21st century.

Although there is a wide range of revenue for the commercial media, community media sometimes find difficulty in obtaining revenue. However, there does not seem to be a danger of domination by any one particular media

organization. Live FM in Rehoboth gets income from various members of the local business community, and Katutura Community Radio relies on a variety of donors and NGOs. The ongoing advertising ban, in which the government refuses to place their advertising in *The Namibian*, was also noted as a matter of some concern because it prevents the independent press from generating legitimate advertising revenue. The ban was instituted by the cabinet under former President Nujoma, seemingly because of the sometimes critical nature of the newspaper’s reporting on government matters. It was later extended to include a ban on the purchase of the newspaper by government departments and ministries.

Panelists expressed concern about the domination of the South African advertising industry in Namibia. advertisements are mostly imported from South Africa and not made locally, and even scheduling of advertising is sometimes controlled from South Africa. It was mentioned that this made it difficult for the local film or radio production industry to survive. Most local agencies, in fact, are closely connected to their South African (and international) counterparts (Ogilvy and Mather, DV8 Saatchi and Saatchi, Advantage McCann, etc).

It was also noted that the spending power of some language groups in the country (such as English, German, or Afrikaans) was extremely high compared to some other language groups. Therefore it was possible for Afrikaans commercial radio stations, for example, to exist even with a relatively small listenership, because their target audience spends money on luxury items.

The question of over-dependence on advertising was illustrated by NBC, which receives a large subsidy from the government (approximately N\$64 million), N\$10 million from the lease

#### 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.

of transmitters, and N\$23 million from advertising sales. An example of market pressure on the public broadcaster was the removal of multi-lingual news bulletins from the evening time slot, and their replacement by soap operas and other entertainment programming. However, there is a policy at NBC to guard against too much advertising on the air, limiting each broadcast hour to six minutes of advertising.

No independent or community media receive government subsidies, although Risco Lumamezi mentioned that this would be something that he personally would appreciate for his community newspaper. It was noted by MISA Namibia that this idea of government support for community media (as is the case in South Africa) is something that the government is currently planning to adopt.

No independent research has been conducted into broadcast ratings since the AC Nielsen survey, known as the Namibia All Media and Products Survey, in 2001. It was noted that costs for such an exercise—sampling the entire Namibian population—were extremely high (N\$2.1 million for the 2001 survey). A suggestion was made by Joel Haikali that students could be used to do such research. Some community media outlets (such as Live FM) have nevertheless done some innovative research by phoning up 100 residents in the town and gauging their satisfaction with the radio station.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Namibia Objective Score: 2.52

Four indicators were spread noticeably distant from the objective average. On the high side, Indicators 6 and 7, access to printing and distribution facilities and apolitical control of distribution channels, finished equally well, nearly a point higher than the average. However, panelists felt that the lack of unity in the media prevented the development of strong trade associations, and rated Indicator 1 more than a point-and-a-half lower. Indicator 3, NGO support of the media, finished more than a half-point lower than the average.

There is little unity amongst the media in Namibia, with no formal media council. The recent formation of an Editors' Forum (NEF) will perhaps change this, panelists said. NEF includes editors from the print media and the public broadcaster, although it leaves out commercial radio stations and the community media.

Currently, NEF has been vocal in challenging attempts by SWAPO to institute a Media Council to "oversee" the media in Namibia. According to a December 5, 2007 story in *The Namibian*: "The Forum said in a statement that it welcomed the interest in media matters shown by the ruling party

Congress, but rejected a view that the media had started to misuse its platform and was going against national agendas such as national reconciliation and the maintenance of peace and stability." The article quoted NEF as saying "The Congress has failed to define specifically what national reconciliation is, and has failed to provide the Namibian media with any concrete example of how any news medium has supposedly endangered peace and stability." NEF said that "it would remain 'absolutely opposed' to any Government imposed-initiative and would reject any attempt by the powers that be to regulate the media."

Regarding a professional association, the nearest entity to this is MISA Namibia, working towards lobbying the government on certain media issues. It also has a legal fund to protect the rights of journalists. However, this again is not an all-inclusive body. "Not all of the media support MISA; they are too polarized to do so," said Karuaihe-Upi. There is no journalism trade union.

The lack of unity stems from, amongst other things, historical media divisions. Some media (e.g. *The Namibian*) were traditionally viewed as fighting for Namibian independence. Others (e.g. SWABC) were seen as propaganda organs for the South African regime. Other divisions exist because the media are all fighting for an extremely limited pool of advertising. Finally, the traditional divide between broadcasters and print media also exists, with a lot of attention paid by the print media on developments at, in particular, NBC.

NGOs generally do not rally for free speech and an independent media. The two exceptions are the Legal Assistance Centre and National Society for Human Rights (NSHR), who are both very vocal advocates. Recent attempts by the director general of NBC to cancel the open phone-in

#### 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.

programs, described above, were met with loud protests by NSHR and MISA Namibia. Largely because of these efforts the programs were reinstated shortly afterwards.

However, there are NGOs who are active in using same free speech to further their organizational interests and objectives. Katutura Community Radio has several programs supported by NGOs in the country. Panelists felt that support from NGOs regarding free speech and freedom of the press benefited the NGOs in the end, as well.

It was questioned whether current training programs at the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic of Namibia, and the College of the Arts are responding to the media industry's training needs. Some panelists described the courses as "too theoretical." Further, panelists wondered whether all graduates in these programs can ever be accommodated by the media industry. "Some of them just cannot be trained to be journalists," stated Williams. Current full-time courses include a four-year B.A. in media studies program at the University of Namibia, as well as diploma programs at the University, the Polytechnic, and the College of the Arts.

Regarding in-house training, some editors, it was noted, were reluctant to release their staff to attend because of staff shortages. A recommendation was made that courses should thus be two-day short courses and very specific. Subjects could include marketing, news, radio drama, voice training, audio/video editing, features/documentaries, live reporting, newsgathering, investigative journalism, desktop publishing, media ethics, information technology and computer skills, and equipment operation and maintenance.

Panelists felt that problems arise because most printing facilities are located in Windhoek. Although these are relatively free and independent, it makes it difficult for the community media in small towns to gain access to printing facilities. For example, the new community publication in Katima Mulilo—all the way at the east end of the Caprivi Strip on the border with Zambia—has to resort to printing its edition in Windhoek.

There have also been some instances where NBC transmitter facilities have been refused to independent broadcasters. One Africa Television, for example, had to construct their own transmitter to reach Oshakati because NBC denied them access to theirs. "NBC monopolizes the broadcast infrastructure that doesn't belong to them, but to the taxpayer. All broadcasters should have equal access to this infrastructure," said van Schalkwyk. It was noted that in South Africa, for example, these distribution facilities have been commercialized and are thus accessible equally to all broadcasters, regardless of format.

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## List of Panel Participants

**Mathew Haikali**, director, MISA Namibia, Windhoek

**Pieter Olivier**, owner, Radio Live, Rehoboth

**Sandra Williams**, director, Katutura Community Radio, Windhoek

**Joel Haikali**, independent film maker, Windhoek

**Umbi Karuaihe-Upi**, general manager, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, Windhoek

**Viola Zimunya**, news editor, *New Era Newspaper*, Windhoek

**Rachel Louise Cloete**, community activist, Women's Actions for Development, Rehoboth

**Sarry Xoagus-Eises**, director, Parliament Constituency Channel, Windhoek

**Risco Lumanezi**, editor, Caprivi Vision, Katima Mulilo

## Moderator

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## Observer

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