
The media industry in Togo has been experiencing a boom since the 1990s. Togo has 96 radio stations, seven television channels, and some 40 newspapers. Despite these impressive numbers for a geographically small country, the media have yet to attain professionalism. With a few exceptions, the media have become mouthpieces for political parties.



TOGO

Togo attained independence in 1960 after a history of German and French rule. Gnassingbé Eyadéma presided over a military government from 1967 to 2005. Upon Eyadéma's death, his son Faure Essossinam Gnassingbé became president. The opposition considered the elections that formalized this arrangement to be rigged, which touched off political violence. When the strife ended, Togo finally moved toward democracy and all political parties agreed to form a transitional national unity government. The first legislative elections to be regarded as free and fair were held in October 2007.

The media industry in Togo has been experiencing a boom since the 1990s. Togo has 96 radio stations, seven television channels, and some 40 newspapers. Despite these impressive numbers for a geographically small country, the media have yet to attain professionalism. With a few exceptions, the media have become mouthpieces for political parties.

The results of the MSI panel discussion show clearly that freedom of speech provisions have become effective in Togo and are protected by the legal framework. Based on these developments, Objective 1, freedom of speech, led all objectives with a score of 2.31. The sticking point, however, is the inadequate application of these laws by the responsible government institutions. Similarly, journalists' compliance with standards of professional ethics is one of the major weaknesses, and Objective 2 received a score of 1.61. The lowest score was Objective 4, with a 0.84, reflecting both poor economic conditions and a lack of development in business practices in the media sector.

TOGO AT A GLANCE

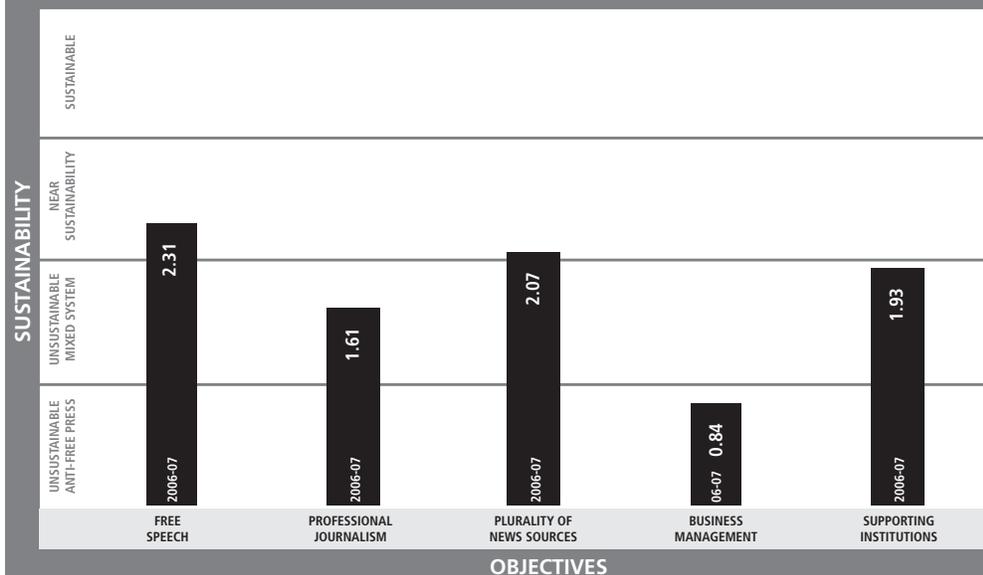
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 5,858,673 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Lomé
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** African (37 tribes; largest and most important are Ewe, Mina, and Kabre) 99%, European and Syrian-Lebanese less than 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 29%, Muslim 20%, indigenous beliefs 51% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official and the language of commerce), Ewe and Mina (the two major African languages in the south), Kabye (sometimes spelled Kabiye) and Dagomba (the two major African languages in the north) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$2.265 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$770 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 60.9% (male 75.4%, female 46.9%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Faure Gnassingbe (since May 4, 2005);

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 400 regularly registered publications, out of which 45 are currently operational; Radio: 98 registered radio stations, 96 operational countrywide; Television stations: 8 registered television stations, 6 fully operational, 2 on test transmission
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** The Togo News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 320,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: TOGO



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

Togo Objective Score: 2.31

While most indicators were near the average in their scores, panelists did recognize some particularly weak areas and other that were relatively stronger. Panelists rated Indicators 3 and 4, market entry and crimes against journalists, significantly lower than the average. Indicators 8 and 9, media access to foreign news sources and unrestricted entry into the journalism profession, lifted the overall average.

Panelists highlighted the existence of freedom of speech as defined by the laws. However, they limited their scores due to a history of the government not respecting these laws. While recent events have eased the situation somewhat—and panelists awarded relatively good scores as a result—progress is recent in this regard. The government does not regulate who may become a journalist.

Theoretically, allocation of broadcast licenses is just and competitive according to the law, but it has long been manipulated by political actors. The High Authority for Communication and Broadcasting, which grants licenses, and the Public Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, which distributes frequencies, are tools of political oppression rather than regulatory and control institutions. To maintain licenses, broadcast media pay an annual fee; print media are not subject to this regime.

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.

The perpetrators behind assaults against journalists are never punished. Although such instances are rare, investigations opened by the authorities have never been conclusive.

The state media operate exclusively at the service of the government. Panelists noted some improvement in the balance of news and information over the past year, although they stated that much room for improvement remains.

Defamation is typically treated as a criminal offense, covered by Section 58 of the Togo criminal code, and court rulings can sometimes be arbitrary. Other press offenses have been decriminalized.

Public information is not accessible to everyone, and the state media are often given preferential treatment in receiving information.

While media are legally able to access foreign news sources, such as the BBC and RFI, connections to those sources can be unreliable.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Togo Objective Overall average: 1.61

Panelists scored all indicators very close to the overall average for this objective, with the exception of Indicator 5, pay levels for journalists. Panelists pointed to the lack of training and the non-observance of the professional code of ethics as the main deficiencies in the Togolese media.

Reporting is partisan, superficial, and tendentious. The norms of professional ethics are regrettably violated in

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).

Togolese journalists do not cover all events and key issues, least of all those related to security and national defense. They avoid issues such as corruption by public officials and abuses by members of the president's family.

order to survive in the profession. Most journalists and editors practice self-censorship for fear of being chastised, dismissed, or even assaulted. Their ignorance of the rules of ethics and professionalism expose them to all manners of pressure, including lawsuits. Salaries in the profession are very low or even non-existent, creating further vulnerability to corruption, clientelism, and pressures.

Togolese journalists do not cover all events and key issues, least of all those related to security and national defense. They avoid issues such as corruption by public officials and abuses by members of the president's family.

Though broadcast media offer no specialized programming, some media outlets do broadcast basic stories on health, education, and the economy. However, entertainment programming exceeds 75 percent of broadcast time. The news information that is available tends to be superficial. Television channels in particular are woefully lacking in the financial resources necessary to produce in-depth news and information programs.

Though digital equipment is being introduced, facilities and equipment are still rudimentary. Old rotary machines, cameras, and other archaic equipment are still in use.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Togo Objective Score: 2.07

Although Indicators 1 and 2 (plurality of public and private news sources and citizen access to news) received relatively high scores from the panel, Indicator 6, which covers transparency of media ownership, received a much lower score. Other indicators fell close to the average.

Togo has multiple sources of news and current affairs, although they do not effectively cover the full political spectrum and range of opinion in the country. On the national level, essentially only two points of view are covered: that of the opposition and the ruling party. State-owned media do not often present alternative points

of view. They devote most of their reporting to stories favoring the government.

Cultural and educational programs are few and far between. Social issues are covered, even if the range is limited. Private newspapers do not publish in indigenous languages. The selection of programs broadcast by the media does not meet the expectations of citizens, according to panelists.

Among the local radio outlets, only three are community radio stations. They are funded by the International Organization of the French-Speaking World. These stations are still in their infancy, but show promise to better serve local populations.

Citizens have free access to the national and international media. However, in rural areas, which lack electricity, telephone, and Internet connections, obtaining information is difficult.

Togo has no independent national news agency. The only existing agency, The Togo News Agency, belongs to the state. International news agencies, such as AFP and Reuters, are utilized heavily by the Togolese media.

Broadcast media produce few current affairs programs of their own. They rely on foreign productions such as those from TV5-Monde, RFI, Deutsche-Welle, Voice of America, and BBC.

With a few exceptions, identifying the real owners of Togolese media outlets is difficult.

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.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Togo Objective Score: 0.84

Most indicator scores in this objective received scores similarly as low as the overall average. Only Indicator 2, media receiving revenue from a multitude of sources, scored noticeably higher. Indicators 6 and 7, market research and audience measurement and circulation figures, both scored almost 0.

The Togolese media as a whole are microenterprises or small-scale businesses. Hardly any media companies are managed as profit-making entities. Journalists who are placed in more senior positions of management have no idea how an enterprise is run. Management practices, on balance, do not meet professional standards.

Advertising agencies are mediocre production studios or simply distribution offices for advertisements. Given that the advertising market is practically non-existent, the media only benefit from token gestures of charity here and there. Further, Togo has no genuine supporting enterprises for the media.

The Togolese government offers no official subsidy for the private media, nor does any law authorize a state subsidy. However, over the past year, the state has given the private media CFAF 50 million, which panelists said that they feel is tantamount to buying journalists with state money. Generally, the state does not grant any preferential treatment, such as tax waivers, to the media.

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.

Advertising agencies are mediocre production studios or simply distribution offices for advertisements. Given that the advertising market is practically non-existent, the media only benefit from token gestures of charity here and there.

No market research, audience surveys, or other means of measuring media consumption and the habits or preferences of media consumers have been employed.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Togo Objective Score: 1.93

In this objective, panelists rated all indicators close to the overall average, with one exception. They regarded the work of professional associations as effective, and therefore Indicator 2 scored close to 1 point higher than the average.

Togo has a large number of supporting associations, but they lack sufficient influence to help the media develop. Media associations, for their part, have been working together to try and regain their lost prestige. Discussions are centering on how to unite these associations under one entity to serve a more useful purpose.

Togo does have media owner associations, such as the Togo Media Owners' Association, Organization of Directors of the Independent Media, Newspaper Publishers' Council of Togo, and Union of Free Radio and Television Stations of Togo, but they are disorganized and, at this time, ineffective for the most part. However, professional associations such as the Union of Independent Journalists of Togo, the Free Communication Union, and the Union of Information Workers, Technicians, and Journalists of Public Media Outlets do work to protect the rights and promote training of journalists. Their training programs are limited to seminars and workshops, but because few other training policies are offered, they are the best that Togolese journalists can access.

Panelists said that they felt that no national NGOs are supporting freedom and independence of the media. But some lawyers, of their own initiative, come to the aid of journalists that are being dragged into the courts.

Panelists said that they felt that no national NGOs are supporting freedom and independence of the media. But some lawyers, of their own initiative, come to the aid of journalists that are being dragged into the courts.

Togo has no school of journalism—only centers for training in business communications and public relations. Young journalists have little formal training. The qualified, high-caliber journalists from previous generations are almost all in retirement. Members of the Togolese media do not subscribe to a culture of excellence. A good number of journalists do not want to attend mid-career training; some claim that they know everything already, despite their lack of even basic journalism skills.

Private newspapers do not have printing presses, and rely on commercial printing companies. There are no real newsstands; newspapers are displayed in the open, sold in a few bookshops and grocery stores, and peddled by hawkers. The country has no formal newspaper distribution service, making for delayed and inconsistent availability of the printed press outside of Lomé.

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.

Participant List

Yacoubi Tchatchibara, trainer, ESTAC School of Communication, Lomé

Victor Toulassi, journalist, Wézon Communications, Lomé

Edem Sowu, human rights activist, ACAT-Togo, Lomé

Ebénézer Latévi Lawson, director, CFPC Communication Training School, Lomé

Mawouwoyona Gone, director, Notsé Community Radio, Notsé

Claudine Assiba Akakpo, director, Togo News Agency, Lomé

M. Daniel Lawson-Drackey, director, Press Center UJIT, Lomé

Kodjo Mawuli Agbotse, director general, Network of Africa Cultural Promoters, Lomé

Anoumou Kate-Aziaglo, director of editing, Togopress, Lomé

Agboh Komlanvi Basile, managing editor, *Le Scorpion*, Lomé

Jonas Viényéménou Forent Sokpoh, lawyer, Cabinet Me SOKPOH, Lomé

Michelle A.A. Noussouessi Aguey, jurist, Activist Groupe Femme Démocratie et Développement, Lomé

Moderator

Assiobon Francis Pedro Amuzun, managing editor, *Crocodile* Newspaper, Lomé

Observers

Franck Ayawo Assah, correspondent, MFWA, Lomé

Séraphin Ajogah, communication officer, Goethe Institute, Lomé

The Togo study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, the Media Foundation for West Africa, Accra, Ghana.

