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GUINEA

Over the past year, Guinea's media struggled to work in an unstable environment, as their country was rocked by a series of crises that included a military mutiny, a strike by police and customs officers, demands by professionals such as teachers and doctors, street protests in favor of bringing water and electricity to neighborhoods, and the existence of a drug trafficking network. Then, in December 2008—shortly after MSI panelists met to discuss the media situation—something even more cataclysmic happened: President Lansana Conte, Guinea's autocratic military ruler since 1984, died. A group of junior military officers seized power, installing a civilian prime minister and initially promising to bring democracy to Guinea within two years.

While the passing of Conte appears to herald major changes for Guinea, the future of the media is unclear. Even if the country's new leaders make good on their promises, the media will still face many of the same problems that plagued them during Conte's rule: instability, a failed economy, and a legal environment characterized by often contradictory press laws.

At the same time, there are promising signs. After Conte liberalized the airwaves in September 2005, several independent radio stations appeared, and Guineans were able to receive international channels such as RFI and the BBC. Guinea now has 17 private radio stations, at least five which are community stations. Government-run and private broadcast media both have interactive programs that give citizens and opposition parties the opportunity to speak. Media professional associations and other NGOs are more and more active in protecting their members' interests.

GUINEA AT A GLANCE

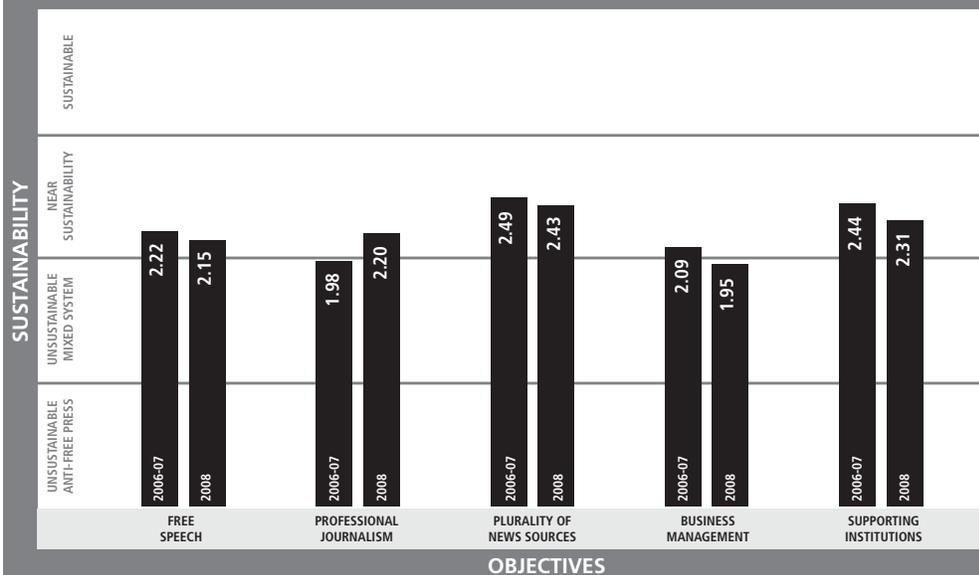
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 10,057,975 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Conakry
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Peuhl 40%, Malinke 30%, Soussou 20%, smaller ethnic groups 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 85%, Christian 8%, indigenous beliefs 7% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official); note - each ethnic group has its own language (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$3.722 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$1,190 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **Literacy rate:** 29.5% (male 42.6%, female 18.1%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Lansana Conte (since April 5, 1984)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 250+; Radio: 28, 6 of which are large commercial stations; Television stations: one public channel
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top four by circulation: *Le Lynx*, *L'Indépendant*, *L'Observateur*, *Le Diplomate*
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: FAMILIA FM (independent community radio), Espace FM (commercial), Nostalgie (commercial)
- > **News agencies:** Guinean Press Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 50,000 (2006 estimate, *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: GUINEA



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

Guinea Objective Score: 2.15

Article 7 of Guinea's constitution recognizes every citizen's right to the freedom of speech. In addition, organic law L005 is concerned with promoting freedom of the press and the creation of private media outlets. In its first version, this law still had many restrictions. "While it allowed Guineans to create press outlets, it restricted the creation of private radio and television stations," said Amara Camara, a journalist with Radio-Television Guinea (RTG).

Other factors work against a permissive legal framework for the media. The judiciary is controlled by the government. At a political level, the National Communication Council (NCC) balances freedom of speech against laws prohibiting "comments that may incite revolt or any other form of violence." A few cases of violations of the freedom of the press were recorded during the past year, including the NCC's closing of the newspapers *La Vérité*, *L'Observateur*, and *Las Croisade* for, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, "continually publishing insulting, contemptuous, and defamatory articles" of a nature to "manipulate public opinion." As for the broadcast media, the community radio station Familia FM was sanctioned by the NCC for, among other things, spreading information deemed "harmful to the national security."

The granting of operating licenses to the electronic media is controlled by the Ministry of Communication and New Information Technologies, the NCC, and the National Department of Homeland Surveillance. Despite existing telecommunications legislation and Decree No. 037/PRG/SGG issued on August 20, 2005, which established a competitive process for the granting of broadcast licenses, for political reasons it is complicated for some and simple for others. Private radio stations close to the authorities do not have much trouble getting licensed. According to Mamady Yaya Cissé, a professor at the Higher Institute of Information and Communications, "favoritism exists and is due to political reasons. Some owners are kept waiting for years, while others receive their license immediately although their applications are not well put together." The law is not preferential; the process depends on the mood of the license-granting officers. There is no appeal or other resort if the authorities deny a licensing application.

To start a private commercial radio station, an owner is required to pay up to GNF 45 million (GNF 20 million (\$3600) for the license and GNF 25 million (\$4550) for the frequency), while a community radio owner must pay GNF 2 million (\$350). Commercial and community radio stations must also

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pay annual license fees of GNF 15 million (\$2700) and GNF 2 million, respectively.

Newspapers have no such restrictions. Whoever wishes to start a print media company must apply to the Trade Registry and the Ministry of Commerce and Competition, but the only requirement is that a publication be created by a press group in order to be registered. Ismail Kabiné Camara, of the newspaper *Le Diplomate*, pointed out that "things are much easier for the written press, as it is as simple as sending an initial letter to the attorney general of the republic to have your newspaper approved and published immediately."

Unlike other businesses, the Guinean media are not subject to taxation. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, with the Guinean Independent Press Association, said that "you will never find a situation where they come and close a newspaper for not having paid its taxes."

Journalists were victims of beatings and violent acts by the police in the past year. In one such incident, police attacked journalists with the private radio station *Familia FM* while they were reporting a story. "They were ill-treated, and their equipment was confiscated," said Chaickou Balde, a government broadcaster and member of the Guinean Human Rights Organization. Attacks by private citizens are less frequent. A few rare disputes may arise between journalists and people who feel that they were victims of slander and who react by attacking the article's author with sticks. Threats of violence against reporters have also been made, usually by members of the police or security services or by individuals who wish to settle personal issues. For example, anonymous, intimidating text messages were sent to the news manager of *Familia FM* and to local correspondents of BBC and RFI. Journalists have no recourse when attacked, according to Cherif Diallo, with the community radio station of Bissikrima. "When people are attacked, I do not know what happens next," Diallo said.

Generally, the government keeps a close eye on the functioning of the public media, according to Amara

“When you contact an office...you will be sent from one official to the other, and eventually you will not get reliable information. So then we must use euphemisms and rely on rumors, because we still need to write something,” said Ismail Kabiné Camara, of the newspaper Le Diplomate.

Camara, a journalist with RTG, the public broadcaster. “News managers in the public press are under political control,” Camara said. “In the public media, managers are appointed by decree or ministerial order, so they take orders from those who appointed them.” Despite this influence, in recent months, RTG has covered sensitive subjects and given the ruling party and opposition parties balanced treatment, which is closer to the tone that prevails in the private media.

Some private newspapers are believed to be linked to political leaders, though issues of ownership are so cloudy that there is no tangible evidence.

There are several laws that cover libel. If the government brings a libel case against a media outlet, the outlet can be compelled to pay a fine. Recently, the newspapers *La Vérité* and *La Libération* were subpoenaed by the Ministry of Urbanism for allegedly spreading false news about the

ministry. “They went to court and there was a trial. The two newspapers were sentenced to pay a fee of GNF 500 million [\$91,000],” said Makalé Soumah, a television journalist with RTG. When the government was judged to be in the wrong, however, President Lansana Conte often went to the aid of the media. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said that “when journalists are victims of police blunder—as in the case of the former publication manager of *L’Observateur*, who was imprisoned without going to trial—the president intervened, and he has also done so for others.”

In addition, any citizen has the right to file a complaint against the author of a slanderous article. Citizens also have the right to reply, but if highly placed state officials are involved they often go to court without waiting for the right to reply to be published. Much more often, people file complaints with the NCC requesting the closing of the newspaper or compensation.

Gaining access to official information is extremely difficult, especially when a scandal is involved, because the government will not give out information. “When you contact an office...you will be sent from one official to the other, and eventually you will not get reliable information. So then we must use euphemisms and rely on rumors, because we still need to write something,” said Ismail Kabiné Camara, of the newspaper *Le Diplomate*.

Journalists in different media do not have equal access to information because there are no guidelines on this point. Sometimes even government journalists are denied access to information at certain levels of government. As a result of all this, journalists do not really know how to obtain public information. Panelists suggested that one solution might be creation of a press club to which journalists could invite newsmakers and let them speak freely.

There are no restrictions on the ability of Guinea’s public or private media to access international news sources. However, the government is sensitive to the news released on foreign stations, and transmissions are frequently interrupted. Internet access has improved significantly. Many newsrooms now have computers with Internet connections, making many journalists’ work easier. A partnership between the media, some cyber café owners, website owners, and radio stations has been created to find an Internet subscription solution.

The government neither restricts entry into the journalism profession nor requires individuals to be licensed. Getting hired depends entirely on the editor in chief—a process that should be made more rigorous, according to Ismail Kabiné Camara. “As long as one is qualified to practice this profession, and in order to minimize any damage, one should be qualified as a journalist and observe the ethical standards and responsibilities,” Camara said. “These elements are important.”

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

Guinea Objective Score: 2.20

Guinean journalists do not report fairly and accurately, a number of panelists said. "Reports are biased and favor one aspect to the detriment of others, thus ruining the balance," Balde said.

In general, journalists working for public media rely on information handed out by government institutions instead of checking it personally in the field. "People sit in newsrooms all day long, waiting for reports made to order; they have no initiative to go search for the news themselves. And when they do go out in the field they are paid off by event organizers," said RTG radio's Amara Camara. This attitude is often reflected in the quality and reliability, if not the credibility, of the news. Camara added: "This means that we are only acting as intermediaries between the authorities and the public. So there is no quality standard."

Guinean media do not invest in production. The very few shows produced by the public radio stations and television channels are the responsibility of the show managers, whose funding must come from individuals and institutions requesting their services. Therefore, one cannot really speak of quality shows and reports. "Show quality is a resource problem," Cissé said. "There is no production budget, no logistics for news gathering. The only means journalists have is the compensation reporters may receive from report backers. And the resulting articles or pieces will be influenced by the backers' interests."

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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The Journalists Association of Guinea, the Guinean Media Observatory and other journalists' organizations have established ethical rules and responsibilities. But the codes have not been well publicized, and are not at all known by media practitioners. On the contrary, very few Guinean journalists have the professional conscience that lets them refuse money or any other off-the-books compensation for their professional services. "All the expenses incurred by RTG reporters, for example, such as transportation, per diem allowances, accommodation, and food, are paid for by event organizers," Cissé said. "This situation limits their freedom in reporting."

Experienced journalists will eventually observe ethical rules, said Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, but "when we are rookies, we are tempted to cover events and report to order."

Guineans have widely varied perceptions of journalists' ethics. Many believe that journalists who work in the public media belong to the presidential circle of influence and those who work in the private press are part of the opposition. The presence of a journalist from the private press in a ceremony that high officials also attend is very badly seen. Another category of journalists whose behavior generates anger is those who are manipulated by pressure groups.

Self-censorship is common in the Guinean media, particularly the public media. Sometimes public media managers are under pressure from the authorities and force journalists to ignore particularly thorny issues. These managers are often afraid of losing their job if they allow certain kinds of news to go out.

Self-censorship can also be voluntarily, particularly in the broadcast media. "We are building our own fences, barriers, things we can say, things we cannot say," said Makalé Soumah, of RTG television. "When your report is done, you think: If I submit this, my editor will censor it anyway, so I'd better do it myself."

Familia FM, a community radio station, is one outlet that does address all kinds of subjects, particularly in its show called Société—débat. At the time this survey was conducted, however, the station was about to be closed because of this show, which was very popular with Guinean and foreign listeners.

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In general, key event coverage by the media is not restricted. Big events sell newspapers, though for the private media, some events are more important than others. In very rare cases, newspaper managers forbid journalists to address news such as disputes between companies. Certain events are covered selectively.

On average, journalists working in the public media currently earn GNF 400,000 (\$72) per month, which represents a fifth of what their counterparts in countries such as Senegal, Mali, and Cote d'Ivoire make.² Some journalists working in the private media are relatively better paid than their counterparts in the public media. Most members of the private written press are in fact freelance contributors and are paid by the piece. Journalists are not protected by a collective contract, and managers seem content with this situation.

When journalists are, in effect, practicing rent-paying journalism—working just to get by—this leaves them vulnerable to corruption. Soumah said that “interns who work for newspapers are perpetual interns, because their status will not change. They have no salary, not even stipends. These people live off of their reporting, especially since they are given transportation to do it. So it is impossible not to become corrupt.”

Public broadcast media maintain a balance between entertainment and news programs. Private radio stations, however, occasionally allow entertainment to predominate

¹ On November 11, 2008, NCC suspended Familia FM indefinitely for broadcasting information that it characterized as likely to “disturb the public peace.”

² Editor’s note: panelists in some of the countries listed as an example did not provide specific salary levels; however, in Senegal panelists reported a minimum monthly salary of \$400 for journalists.

for lack of financial resources. “When you listen to Radio Soleil, you’ll find that they only play music all day long, because the station’s owner simply refuses to hire professionals,” Cissé said. Amara Camara went further, saying that “80 to 90 percent of the air time is covered by music. The listeners will have trouble finding a station that airs a program they may like or landing upon a news bulletin. There are no production budgets, and if there are any, they are not given to producers.”

As a result of a panel study, RTG recently implemented a plan to reorganize its programming to meet the expectations of an increasingly demanding audience. The panel also recommended recruitment of journalism school graduates, allocation of a production budget, supporting freedom of speech by encouraging differing opinions, and development of broadcast archives.

In addition, RTG radio recently moved from analog to digital broadcasting, and efforts are being made to obtain new equipment. For example, there are computers with Internet connections in their offices. But the network is still crippled by a lack of transmitters. Efforts are also being made for the technical improvement of RTG television; technical maintenance by professionals is non-existent.

Some private radio stations, such as Familia FM, Espace FM, and Djigui FM, have modern, state-of-the-art equipment. As a result, all outlying areas of the capital can receive them.

In the print media, lack of resources hinders quality. Ismail Camara, with *Le Diplomate*, said that “there are newspapers without an office, computer, and camera. They still manage to get the papers out, week after week, just trying to get by.” In addition, many print journalists are not skilled at using word-processing or publication software.

With rare exceptions, such as with the newspaper *Le Lynx*, few Guinean media practice investigative journalism. Media managers must do more about helping journalists to specialize, for example by creating pools of journalists specializing in specific subjects. There is a need for journalist networks in fields such as the environment, the fight against corruption, AIDS, the fight against poverty, gender, and education.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Guinea Objective Score: 2.43

Not all citizens have equal access to the news. Newspapers are not accessible to all for a variety of reasons, including communication problems, the weak purchasing power of the population, and the high level of illiteracy. Newspapers are

primarily located in Conakry, the coastal capital city, but some parts of the interior are also covered by the private press. For example, the mining fields of Lower Guinea and the border cities of Koundara and Kissidougou have more press consumers than commercial cities such as Labe and Kankan. Distribution is often a problem for the private press.

Most radio stations are also based in Conakry. In the rest of the country, people receive news from rural radio stations but not from the RTG, which is known for its frequent technical problems. "A large part of the population is uninformed," said Cherif Diallo, with the community radio station of Bissikrima. "It must be said that local populations have access to community radio where they live if full coverage is available, but there are some silent areas." The number of community radio stations is increasing, reducing these constraints for the people. Community radio stations have a well shaped editorial policy and programs that are adapted to local realities, but they are not on the air all day long.

As a general rule, the government does not restrict citizens' access to news from local or international media. Access to the international press is difficult, as the costs are unaffordable. Access to television, in rural as well as urban areas, is limited by factors such as electricity and the people's purchasing power.

The public media have three goals: preserve peace and national unity; promote social, economic, and political development, and; improve the president's public image. RTG radio has been making efforts in recent months to cover events concerning all political parties and other news with no limitations. The coming months will show if this trend

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continues. "I believe that circumstances have changed," RTG's Amara Camara said. "There is competition now. Whether we like it or not, we must go down this road. We must just think: if we refuse to say something, others will say it. There are international stations that broadcast in FM; the audience rating is good. We now have private radio stations, and soon there will be private television channels. We are forced to go with the competition."

There are no independent or foreign press agencies in Guinea. The only national news service, government-run Guinean Press Agency (AGP), faces huge technical and financial problems and cannot meet the expectations of the other media in the country. The news that it produces is sent online to private media outlets and international entities. No Guinean media subscribe to this press agency regularly, but all press outlets receive official documents through AGP.

Private commercial radio stations are independent, and produce their own programs and air them with no external interference. Rural and community stations are gaining experience that has earned them a good deal of appreciation. They produce quality programs, have substantial newscasts, and are well managed. "They develop very interesting programs," Cissé said. "If you go out to the villages, you will understand how much the people love the hosts' performance." Their programming is based on local realities, explained Cherif Diallo of Bissikrima community radio. "We interview local farmers. We speak their language and only about their activities... If we are rebroadcast on national radio, we have the reports translated. So the people understand that we work for them," he said.

Individuals possibly acting on behalf of highly influential political parties or businesses control some private media. Guinea's media laws and regulations clearly state that religious groups and political parties cannot run private radio or television stations, but panelists said they really do not know who owns some private radio stations. Private newspapers are sometimes managed by an individual acting as a front for the real owners. Foreign investment in the

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.

RTG radio has been making efforts in recent months to cover events concerning all political parties and other news with no limitations. The coming months will show if this trend continues.

Guinean media is directed towards online media, whose owners usually live abroad.

The media report fairly on the social concerns of even the most remote communities. Problems such as blocked traffic on forest roads or flooding in a prefecture in upper Guinea, fires in villages or cases of cholera epidemics are covered by the media. This thorough coverage prompts the authorities to react to high-profile stories as quickly as possible.

Panelists noted that there are religious groups (mostly Christian) that sometimes accuse private newspapers of prejudice in covering events.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Guinea Objective Score: 1.95

The written media were initially created to provide jobs and also to encourage self-employment as a way to build a real business. As far as job opportunities created by media businesses are concerned, very few well-managed newspapers work with accountants and an annual balance sheet. "Many newspapers want shareholders to interfere with

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.

the newspapers' functioning and make contributions to the social security fund to prepare for their retirement," Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo pointed out.

There is no collective contract, and so no press union.

Funds for public media come directly from the government's budget and are not well managed. The public media receive all their revenue from the government but do not have enough resources to carry out their public service mission. The private media are financed by their owners and receive an annual state subsidy. Among print outlets, most funding comes from advertising, sales, and sponsors. There is no subscription system.

These income sources influence editorial policies, panelists said. Soumah said that "many newspapers are under the control of economic factors; this applies not only to newly created outlets but also to others." "This phenomenon is visible. Articles are being written and published to order, and they are not marked as advertising or editorial advertising," said Ismail Kabiné Camara.

The Guinean media are always in need of advertising because this is the only reliable source of income. Unfortunately, the advertising market is scarce, which is why newspapers often lose money. The advertising sector is handicapped by the weaknesses of Guinea's economic and financial system. In the written press, advertising agencies make a profit, to the detriment of the public and private media. The lack of professionalism in the area is prevalent.

In the public media, advertising is regulated by the Guinean Advertising Office. There is no regulatory body for advertising in the private media. Many companies appoint an agent to negotiate with press owners over advertising.

Newspapers promote advertising to an outrageously larger extent than news. "Advertising is their main income source," said Soumah. "They are putting in two or three pages worth of advertising to the detriment of news just to get through the week or the month."

The government provides an annual subsidy to private print media, which owners consider insufficient because it does not solve all the problems that newspapers face. The subsidy has enabled some publications, as in the case of *Le Diplomate*, to purchase and update their equipment and ensure the welfare of their employees. The NCC requires that recipients of the subsidy provide evidence that the money has been spent properly.

Private radio stations also receive an annual state subsidy. The subsidy for 2008 was GNF 18 million (\$3300) for commercial stations and GNF 10 million (\$1800) for community stations.

This subsidy is subject to conditions that affect the freedom of the recipient. One such condition is that any outlet that has been sanctioned even once by the NCC automatically loses the subsidy for the year. Some private media have disappeared because they were deprived of this subsidy.

Subsidies do not affect the editorial content of media outlets. Panelists felt that the subsidy is a sign that the government understands that private media are essential to democracy.

In Guinea, there is no institution that that conducts market research. Audience response to interactive shows can give broadcast media a general idea about ratings. Newspapers rely on the amount of advertising and the number of copies sold for market data. This shortcoming needs to be addressed in the future, panelists said.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Guinea Objective Score: 2.31

There are no business associations, but there are publishers' associations, such as the Association of Independent Newspaper Publishers of Guinea (AGEPI), which is in fact a publisher-owners' association, and the Guinean Online Press Association.

AGEPI is the oldest publishers' association, dating to 1991, and has contributed over the years to implementing legislation relevant to the media in Guinea. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, a member of AGEPI, noted that the association was involved in working out the language of the law that established the NCC.

Today AGEPI works closely with the on-line association to protect the interests of their members. "When the last subsidy was granted, the written press lost funds in the distribution process. Journalists appealed to these two organizations to reinstate the rights that had been infringed. Negotiations with NCC are currently under way," Ismail Kabiné Camara said.

Professional groups such as the Journalists Association of Guinea (JAG) work with other African associations such as the West African Journalists Association to strengthen the professional skills of journalists through seminars and workshop on subjects such as collective bargaining and the fundamentals of journalism. JAG also works to protect the rights of its members when they fall victim to arbitrary decisions. "When someone is arrested, we pressure the police to set them free in collaboration with AGEPI and the newspaper manager, if the written press is involved," said Kadiatou Diallo, a member of JAG.

"Every time journalists are bothered or threatened or their freedom is violated as they exercise their profession, OGDDH reacts immediately and tries to alert the appropriate authorities, makes statements, and takes the podium to condemn all aggressions against journalists," Balde said.

JAG has already started discussions with the NCC on putting together a collective contract for media workers.

NGOs, such as the Guinean Journalists' Anti-Corruption Network, also are involved in helping journalists obtain training and become aware of ethics rules. In collaboration with the Syfia agency, this NGO organized a training session focusing on the protection of journalists' interests and the coverage of news related to the development of good governance in Guinea. The Journalists Network on Population and Development often organizes workshops that focus on subjects such as reproductive health.

The Guinean Organization for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (known by its French acronym OGDDH) protects journalists in difficulty. "Every time journalists are bothered or threatened or their freedom is violated as they exercise their profession, OGDDH reacts immediately and tries to alert the appropriate authorities, makes statements, and takes the podium to condemn all aggressions against journalists," Balde said.

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.

The programs offered by the Journalism Department at HIIC focus on theoretical and practical aspects. Soumah, a graduate of the institute, recalled, "They were constantly sending us out in the field for practice. Each of us used to go through a two-month internship at RTG and private newspapers. We would write reports on our experience."

Journalism education in Guinea dates to 1993, when a degree program was created at the University of Conakry. In 2003, the government established this program in the Higher Institute of Information and Communication (HIIC). There are also institutions such as Mercure University, Kofi Annan University, the Aboubacar Camara Foundation, and Cheick Modibo Diarra University.

The only credible degree in journalism is offered by HIIC, which provides higher education programs in journalism and communication. HIIC's capacity, however, is too limited to handle the high number of applicants each year. Balde said that the admissions process for the institute is not selective enough: "Not everyone should get into the...institute," he said. "A selective exam should be put in place in order to have very competitive and professional graduates."

The HIIC Communication Department program provides a concentration in business or institutional communication and one in social communication. Their Journalism Department offers a print concentration that trains journalists who will work at newspapers, press agencies, and online media; a broadcast concentration trains those who will work in radio and television. For the broadcast concentration, a digital studio with coverage of six kilometers is available on campus. Partnership with a French project to develop professionalism in the Guinean media involves the installation of a complete radio and television studio and providing equipment for the written press.

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HIIC has partnerships with the Information Science and Techniques Research Center in Dakar, Senegal, and the Communications Institute at Lumière University Lyon 2 in

France. These two partners accept exchange students and professors from HIIC.

HIIC tracks the performance of its graduates, many of whom have created their own businesses. "The problem is that hiring a professional is expensive. We do not lack professionals at this time; we send out good products," said Mamady Yaya Cissé, a HIIC professor.

One of HIIC's concerns is the lack of short-term training opportunities for journalists. The institution plans to implement as of 2009 a retraining program for mid-career journalists. The French partnership will provide help. "We will organize short-term practical courses for our fellow journalists who need to hone their skills," Cissé said.

HIIC's lack of capacity has spurred measures to develop the professional skills of trainers by offering post-graduate study opportunities in other countries.

Printing establishments in Guinea are owned by private businesspeople that often discriminate between newspapers for financial reasons. In general, printing plants favor newspapers that print many copies, threatening the survival of those with smaller print runs. "There are important, older newspapers that may have at some point high print runs. Medium-sized or small newspapers that order 2,500 copies will automatically disappear," Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said.

Two newspapers—*Lynx* and *Indépendant*—own their own printing plants, which often suffer from technical problems, forcing them to turn to other local printing companies.

Distribution and printing businesses have no connections with media outlets. Business owners or sponsors do not manage distribution; independent contractors are the main distributors in the capital, and newspaper companies take care of their own distribution in the provinces.

Newsstands are owned by private businesspeople. The Guinean Press Distribution Society has put a 30 percent tax on the selling price, which newspapers find exorbitant. In general, if owners have easy access to bank loans or subsidies, they will have no problems distributing their newspapers on a large scale.

GIPA is now completing market research that will help in implementing a less cumbersome and less expensive press distribution system.

The government does not control or limit Internet use. The Internet is generally accessible in larger cities, thanks to USAID support. Outside the cities, however, there are not many connection solutions. "To check your e-mail, you have to travel 7 km and go back to the city," Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said.

The government does not control the transmitters of private and community radio stations.

List of Panel Participants

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Chaïckou Balde, journalist, Guinean Radio Television, Guinean Human Rights Organization, Conakry

Delphine Ouendeno, jurist, Conakry

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