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NIGERIA



Only two years after Umaru Yar'Adua won the presidency of Nigeria based on promises of a democratic state, the media sector appears to be on a downward slide. The overall country average score fell from 2.21 in 2007 to 2.04 in 2008.

President Yar'Adua was sworn in on May 29, 2007, after eight years of rule by President Olusegun Obasanjo. A former army general, Obasanjo had ruled Nigeria as a military head of state from 1976 to 1979, then as a two-term civilian president from 1999 to 2007. Although Obasanjo came to power as the first democratically elected president after more than 15 years of continuous military rule, it was frequently difficult to tell the difference between the military government and the democratic government, given the frequent attacks on the media using the same tactics of the military.

President Yar'Adua came to power through the controversial elections of April 2007, which were roundly condemned as fraudulent by domestic and international observers. "The 2007 election process was not credible, and in view of the lack of transparency and evidence of fraud, there can be no confidence in the results," said EU's chief election observer.

Early in his administration, Yar'Adua indicated that he intended to govern the country on strong principles of respect for the rule of law and due process. Expectations were high that freedom of speech, and particularly media freedom, would be better protected under his administration than during the regime of his predecessor.

But less than two years after he took office, the commitment of the Yar'Adua administration to these principles and his sincerity have come into question. There are already numerous instances of a return to the tactics of security agents under Obasanjo's regime and during the period of military rule, including the closure of broadcast facilities and the arrest and detention of journalists. Some of these attacks on the media have resulted from intense media coverage of the president's medical condition, fueling widespread speculations that he is in very poor health. This situation has apparently impacted negatively on perceptions of the state of the media.

The slide in score is mostly due to a lower valuation of the legal framework (Objective 1) and efficacy of supporting institutions (Objective 5). Objective 5 fell from 2.76 to 2.38, but remained the highest scoring of the five objectives. Objective 1 fell from 1.80 to 1.58 and received the lowest score of the objectives again this year. Objective 4, business management, also lost some ground but remained comparatively strong at 2.24. That score is fifth highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Scores for the other two objectives remained largely unchanged.

# NIGERIA AT A GLANCE

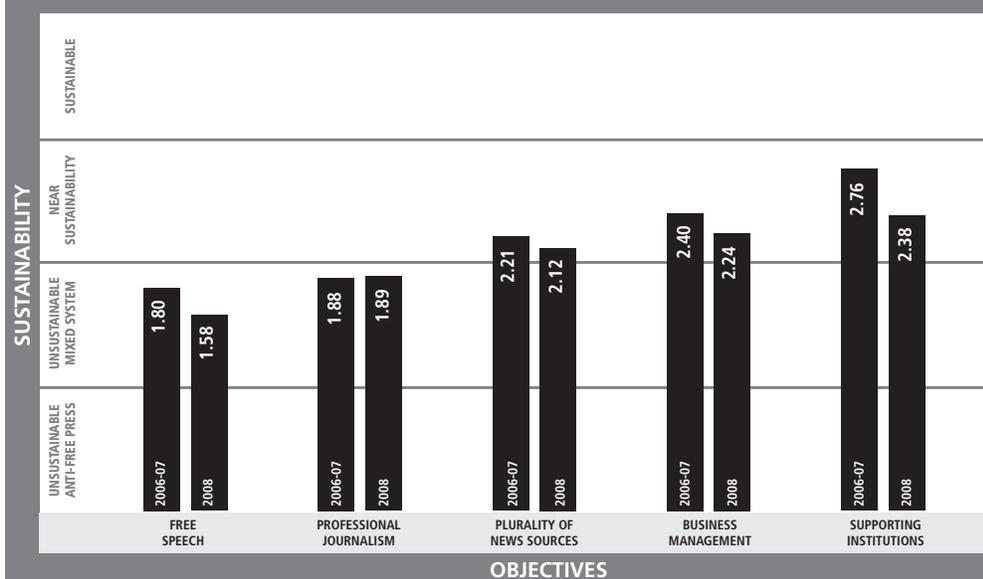
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 149,229,090 (July 2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Abuja
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$136.3 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$1,760 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2009)
- > **Literacy rate:** 68.0% (male 75.7%, female 60.6%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Umaru Musa Yar'adua (since May 29, 2007)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** 95 reasonably regular newspapers (20 national dailies, 23 national weeklies, 10 regional dailies, 19 regional weeklies, 6 provincial or local dailies, and 17 provincial or local weeklies). 100 radio stations (16 privately owned, 1 not-for-profit campus radio station, 45 owned by the federal government, and 38 owned by various state governments). 144 television stations (14 privately owned, 98 owned by the federal government, and 32 are owned by various state governments). (Sources: *Media World Yearbook 2004—A Resource Guide to the Nigerian Media*, and *National Broadcasting Commission: A Handbook*)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** No verifiable statistics exist; anecdotally *The Sun*, *The Punch*, *ThisDay*, and *The Guardian* (all privately owned) are regarded as the widest circulating newspapers
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Agency of Nigeria (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Internet usage: N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 8,000,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

### MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: NIGERIA



#### 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

### Nigeria Objective Score: 1.58

The overall score for this objective fell to 1.58 from 1.80, primarily because of lower scores in Indicator 1 (the supporting legal framework), Indicator 4 (attacks on journalists), and Indicator 6 (libel laws). Indicator 4 also scored about two-thirds of a point lower than the overall score and was the lowest of all indicators. However, indicators 8 (media access to international news) and 9 (free entry into the media profession) both scored a point or more higher.

The dominant view among the panelists was that free speech is guaranteed theoretically by the 1999 constitution, but in reality, free speech is not adequately protected because the constitutional guarantee is neither effective nor vigorously enforced. Panelist Lanre Arogundade, coordinator of the International Press Centre in Lagos, noted that only Section 39 of the 1999 constitution guarantees free speech and no other law attempts to do so. He said also that no law regarding access to information is in place. He illustrated the lack of access to information with a recent incident in which political appointees of the president were made to publicly take an oath of secrecy.

Panelist Yewande Iwuoha, a news editor at privately-owned RayPower 100.5 FM, observed that the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech is not effective in light of other laws such as the Public Order Act. She said that police use the act an excuse to harass Nigerians attempting to publicly express their views, journalists are still being attacked, and the judiciary has much work ahead to protect the right of free speech.

Most panelists agreed that professional bodies within the media have not been very helpful in fighting for a better legal and policy environment for journalists. Tony Iyare, publisher of [www.gleanernews.com](http://www.gleanernews.com) and an editorial manager at the privately-owned *Nigerian Compass* newspaper, introduced a new dimension to the discussion when he observed that on a daily basis, ordinary Nigerians are harassed and arrested for airing their personal views in public. He noted that security agents are everywhere in the country, overzealously making arrests at the slightest opportunity. He cited the case of Jonathan Elendu, the U.S.-based Nigerian publisher of [www.elendureports.com](http://www.elendureports.com). Elendu was detained on October 18, 2008, when he came to Nigeria, and arrested initially on charges of breaching national security and later on allegations of sedition.

There was a consensus among the panelists that Nigerians value freedom of speech and frequently display outrage at attacks on free speech.

Panelist Lawson Eselebor, a reporter with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria in Abuja, said that cultural perspective on age and gender affects freedom of expression. Nigerian cultures place a premium on respect for elders, and frequently put age above the right to freedom of expression. Women face pressure and harassment when they express themselves, as they are expected to be seen and not heard, Eselebor said. Although the suppression of women is more apparent in northern Nigeria than in other parts of the country, it is becoming a norm for women to defer to men while they are expressing themselves.

The panelists identified social class as another factor that affects an individual's right to free speech.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) controls licensing procedures for the broadcast media. Its processes are not fair, competitive, or apolitical, panelists said. Although the NBC processes applications, the actual issuance of broadcast licenses is done by the president, as required under Section 39 of the 1999 constitution. Political considerations, albeit unspoken, often come into play in the granting of licenses.

Only the state-owned Nigerian Television Authority and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria are allowed to operate national network services. The National Broadcasting

## 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.

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Commission Act No. 38 of 1992 does not provide for national network licenses for private stations. Those stations are instead required by the NBC to obtain separate licenses to cover the country's different geographical areas, according to Iwuoha. This process effectively limits the reach of private radio and television stations and denies Nigerians access to adequate alternative voices and opinions.

The governors in some of the 36 states are reported to have established private radio and television stations to cover their activities. This development impacts negatively on the content of supposedly private stations.

In addition, the staff of the NBC are either civil employees or political appointees and so appear to have loyalty to their appointing authority—usually the president or the minister of information and communications. Their bias is evident in the performance of their functions: There are no procedures laid down in law, no regulations, and no policies for appeal if a broadcast license application is denied.

With regard to market entry and tax structure for the media, panelist agreed that the print media market is free and fair, although a multiplicity of taxes weighs down their operations.

Panelist Pius Mordi, deputy news editor of *BusinessDay*, said that new companies, especially in the media sector, are not given tax breaks, which makes survival difficult. He recounted an experience in which he and other colleagues started a magazine specializing in the maritime industry. The moment they put up a sign in front of the magazine's rented premises, officials from the Lagos State government swooped in and demanded receipts for the various taxes that Mordi's company was required to pay before commencing operations. He and his colleagues were only able to appease the officials when they pointed out that they were operating a media house and could report negatively on the government.

Iwuoha agreed that taxes are an issue for the media. She said that members of the Independent Broadcasters Association of Nigeria frequently complain that the fees required for operating stations are too high, and that there is a discrepancy between fees paid by private stations and government-owned stations. Other industries do not need to pay the start-up fees that the broadcast media are required to pay, she said, and such an operating environment makes running a broadcast station cost-prohibitive.

The panelists agreed that crimes against journalists are numerous, not vigorously prosecuted, and hardly ever investigated. Common rights violations include arrest, detention, death threats, and assault. There are also frequent cases of oppressive criminal prosecution of journalists to intimidate or harass them.

Panelists described the Nigerian media as operating in an atmosphere of little protection of media rights, especially in the states where local governments maintain rigid control of state-owned media. However, they noted that Nigerian society is so inundated with reports of widespread violations of human rights that people have become numbed to such news, and reactions to attacks on journalists and the media are becoming more muted. Journalists and media outlets themselves do not respond adequately or publicize attacks against them, and even pro-media organizations often do not pursue cases to their conclusion, panelists said.

The panelists agreed that publicly funded or state-owned media are not editorially independent by law or in practice. By virtue of the laws establishing them, state media have better access to government information than private media. Although state media editors and managers are highly subject to political party or government influence, powerful businesses are less able to interfere with editorial content and management of state-owned media, given the government funding.

Libel is regulated by both civil and criminal law in Nigeria. Libel is criminalized under the Criminal Code and the Criminal Defamation Act. Arogundade noted that public officials are not held to higher standards, and in libel cases, journalists are made to prove the authenticity of their reports. In the cases in which journalists are found culpable, damages awarded to public officials are always higher than would likely be awarded to ordinary citizens in similar circumstances.

The panelists noted that public information is not easily accessible to journalists. Nigeria has no law on access to information and therefore no basis for enforcing the media's right to access information.

There was consensus among the panelists that Nigerian media have unrestricted access to international news and news sources both through wire services and the Internet, although access is expensive. The Internet is not generally available outside the main urban centers, and citizen access is dependent on levels of income and education. The government does not block access to any Internet site and media outlets are allowed to reprint or broadcast foreign news programming and news agency information subject to copyright laws. However, the NBC requires radio or television stations to obtain special licenses before they can do live rebroadcasts of news and programs from foreign stations.

Entry into the journalism profession is free. The Nigeria Press Council (or NPC, a statutory regulatory body) passed the Amendment Decree No. 60 of 1999, which empowers the council to maintain a register of journalists qualified to practice and requires journalists to renew their registration

annually. The decree applies to all reporters and editors, and as such assigns no special privileges or restrictions for any specific group. Although the decree is not rigorously enforced and the NPC is currently non-functional, the effect is that anyone not registered as a journalist cannot practice either as a reporter or an editor.

Special accreditation is required to cover such sensitive beats as the presidency and the governors' offices. The process of obtaining accreditation is usually time-consuming and difficult. Individual journalists or media organizations that are perceived to be critical of government have been denied accreditation in the past, although there are no reported recent examples.

Entrance to journalism schools is subject to the candidate meeting minimum educational requirements specified by the institutions. Otherwise, entrance to journalism schools is not controlled by government or any government agency. Journalists are free to organize to protect their rights and interests. Most journalists in Nigeria belong to the Nigeria Union of Journalists, although its membership is reported to be dwindling. Editors belong to the Nigerian Guild of Editors.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Nigeria Objective Score: 1.89

The overall score remained unchanged for this objective and consistent with the views of most panelists that professional standards are relatively low. There was some movement in indicator scores, as panelists gave somewhat better ratings to indicators 3 (professional ethics) and 4 (coverage of key events), while lowering their scores a bit for Indicator 6 (entertainment-news balance) and Indicator 8 (niche and investigative reporting). Nearly all indicators scored close to the objective score, except for Indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists), which scored slightly more than a half-point lower.

Most of the panelists agreed that journalists do not always verify and fact-check the information that they present to the public, because of the pressure of deadlines and the difficulty in obtaining information. Reporting is not always fair, objective, or well-sourced, often because of the influence of political interests, panelists said.

In theory, the Nigerian media is guided by the Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, developed in 1998 by the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) in collaboration with the Nigeria Press Council. The NPO is made up three principal media bodies: the Nigeria Union of Journalists, the Nigerian Guild of Editors, and the Newspaper Proprietors Association of

Nigeria. The provisions of the code conform substantially to international standards. Although the code of ethics is accepted by media organizations, it is not widely available to media professionals, they are not generally familiar with its content, and they do not strictly adhere to its provisions.

Many Nigerian journalists still accept gifts from their sources and the individuals that they cover, and the practice is reported to be widespread and cuts across all cadres of media practitioners. "Some journalists have commercialized news gathering and event coverage, as they are seen hovering around venues of an event even after the event is over, hoping that the public relations person of the organization or the organizer of such event would show some form of gratitude," Eselebor said.

Members of the Nigerian media do practice self-censorship. Reporters and editors in the state and private media alike are compelled to censor themselves for various reasons: fear of losing their jobs, fear of losing advertising patronage, and personal safety.

On the whole, Nigerian media cover all key events. But interest in particular events and issues depends on factors such as the editorial policy or orientation of the media organization, political leanings or affiliations, business interests, and the ethnic and religious groups to which the owners and/or managers belong.

Nigeria has special interest publications that focus on specific issues or sections. Minority media focus on issues that affect their regions, while the national media focus more on wider issues. Journalists are sometimes guarded in their reporting on certain subjects. Religion is a very sensitive issue in Nigeria and results in more carefulness by journalists than any other

## 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).

issue. Government-owned media are also highly cautious when writing about security matters. The panelists agreed that journalists do not have enough freedom to report on security issues, due to threats both from government security agencies and ethnic militias.

Journalists are poorly paid compared to other Nigerian professionals, particularly in the banking and oil sectors, but many journalists are also better paid than workers in some other sectors, such as civil service or education. The pay levels for journalists and other media professionals result in rampant corruption, according to the panelists. "The poor remuneration of journalists has critically affected the level of application of ethical standards," Mordi said. "The search for additional income to make ends meet has made many journalists compromise their ethical convictions."

There are pay disparities within the media, but not in a formally structured way. Although journalists working in the broadcast sector tend to be better paid than those working in the print sector, the differences are more a function of media ownership. The disparities are also not as stark between state or public ownership and private or independent ownership.

Nigerian citizens are generally able to access news and information when needed. However, news is now being eclipsed by a preponderance of entertainment reports and programs, especially in the broadcast sector.

The facilities available to the media for gathering, producing, and distributing news are neither modern nor efficient. There is a deficiency in all aspects of the process, and aid could be channeled beneficially into every aspect. From her perspective as a radio news editor, Iwuoha noted that technological deficiencies affect the quality of production, particularly audio output.

Although there is niche reporting in Nigeria, the quality is still very poor in most media establishments. Private media cover minority issues more than state-owned media. Weekly news magazines also carry out more investigative reporting than daily newspapers and the broadcast media. There are also media organizations with some focus on fashion, maritime issues, business, information technology, etc.

Panelists said that quality niche reporting suffers from obsolete equipment; inadequate training; trying to satisfy the inclinations and interests of owners; the economic conditions of media organizations; the political environment; and cultural, ethnic, and social considerations. Many reporters and editors still lack adequate professional education and experience to produce specialized reports.

## OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

### Nigeria Objective Score: 2.12

The score for this objective remained nearly unchanged compared to last year and only a few indicators received notably different scores. Panelists did award a higher score to Indicator 4 (news agencies), while lowering their scores for indicators 1 (plurality of news sources) and 3 (objectivity of state media). Most of the indicators received scores close to the overall score, but indicators 3 and 6 (transparency of media ownership) received the lowest scores, which were well more than half a point lower than the overall score. Indicator 2 (citizen access to media) scored more than a half-point higher.

Panelists agreed that Nigeria has a pluralistic media sector. Private media outlets in both the print and broadcast sectors provide local and national coverage, depending on their financial strength. Many media outlets are not readily affordable for ordinary citizens. People living and working in major cities have better access to all forms of media than those in rural areas, who have good access to radio but poor access to television and print media.

Nigeria has no community radio stations, although a few community newspapers exist. NBC has licensed a number of radio stations in journalism and mass communication departments of universities, and characterizes these campus outlets as community radio stations.

### 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.

Many Nigerians use the Internet for news and information, where they have access. Blogs, mobile phone SMS text messaging, and similar new technologies are not relied upon as regular news sources or news platforms, although many people use them to get newsworthy information sporadically.

There are no legal or other restrictions on access to international news media. Foreign news media are available, though not affordable for average citizens. As with domestic media, foreign sources are more widely available in the urban areas than in rural communities. Cable and satellite television are also not affordable for the general population, and only people of high social and economic status have access to them.

Panelists, including those representing state-owned media, were unanimous that publicly funded media are neither truly public nor do they reflect the diverse spectrum of political opinions. They frequently do not serve the public interest, as they report mainly about the government and government officials. They are invariably biased in favor of the ruling party or the official in power. They do not fill any information gap not covered by private media, although to some extent, they do promote culture.

Okwy Iroegbu of *The Nation* newspaper described the situation with state-owned media in this way: "Like the popular saying that he who pays the piper dictates the tune, editorial thrusts and policies are largely influenced by the promoters and managers of most of the outfits."

Juliana Francis, an assistant editor with the newly established, privately owned daily newspaper *Nigerian Compass*, expressed a somewhat drastic view of state-owned media. "In state or public media, everything reported is censored and must be tailored to the glory of the government," she said.

Eselebor expressed the same skepticism regarding Nigerian media in general. "A lot of ex-military men and politicians own these [private] media outfits and intend to use them way they wish, thereby restricting the editors and reporters to events that are of interest to the owner. If the event to be covered is not related to [the owner's] party affiliation, [he says] it should not be reported. If reported, it is done with great bias and a lot of negative content."

The media has access to local and international news agencies. The only local news agency is the federally-owned News Agency of Nigeria, whose management is appointed by the government and is generally sensitive to government interests. However, there are international news agencies present in Nigeria, including Reuters; Agence France Presse, the Inter Press Service, the Associated Press, and the China News Agency. Agencies distribute news in various formats, including audio, video, and text. News agencies are apolitical,

but not all media organizations can afford their services. The media that do use agencies cite them as sources.

Independent broadcast media organizations produce and buy programs aired on their stations. They generate their own programs as well as subscribe to news wires services. According to Iwuoha, the programs aired by independent broadcasters do not differ significantly from those produced by state or public media. But most media schedule a minimal amount of programming from independent producers, she said.

Media ownership is not transparent in most cases. The precise owners of some media organizations are not always known to the public and, in many cases, the professional journalists serving as directors of such media companies are seen as fronts for unknown investors. Under the National Broadcasting Commission Act, religious bodies and political parties are specifically precluded from owning broadcast media. Foreign ownership of broadcast media is also restricted, resulting in very little foreign investment in the Nigerian media. There are no apparent media monopolies, nor is media ownership concentrated in a few conglomerates. In fact, business conglomerates do not own media organizations. The dominant influence in the broadcast sector is the federal government, as it owns most of the radio and television stations in Nigeria, and only the federally-owned radio and television stations are allowed to run national network programs.

Sources of funding are also not transparent. Business interests, incomes, circulation figures or reach are shrouded in secrecy.

Panelists agreed that a broad spectrum of social issues and interests are reflected in the media, and that there is no resistance to the inclusion of any issue in the media. Media organizations and journalists are also not harassed for reporting on minorities or minority issues, except in the Niger Delta region where the government frequently claims that the violent protests by minority groups in the area over control of resources have national security implications. Minority-focused newspapers exist in parts of the country, but these are usually published in English.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Nigeria Objective Score: 2.24

Most panelists said that on the whole, media organizations are managed as businesses, although many are not editorially independent or professionally managed. Nigeria did experience a slight drop in score this year, from 2.40

to 2.24. The change can be attributed to lower scores for three indicators: Indicator 1 (media are well-managed businesses), Indicator 4 (ratio of advertising to other revenues), and Indicator 6 (market research). Most of the indicators scored close to the overall objective score, but Indicator 3 (the advertising industry) scored more than a half-point higher, while Indicator 7 (audience and circulation measurement) scored about a point lower and was again the lowest-scoring indicator.

Media outlets and supporting industries exist as profit-generating businesses, although they are not necessarily efficiently managed. Many media outlets do not develop or apply any business plan. Many also do not follow international accounting standards. Very often, they do not hire professionals to manage or run various aspects of media business requiring other professional services. Many media organizations lack appropriate personnel policies.

The sources of finance for private media are often not disclosed, although the general assumption is that they receive revenues from many different sources, including sales, subscriptions, advertising, sponsorships, and supplements. Private media do not receive any government support. "Most newspapers and broadcast media depend on advertisement revenue for their survival. So there are occasions when editorial content and programs are sacrificed for advertisement," said panelist Rachael Omoniyi, a reporter with the weekly news magazine *Newswatch*.

To Iyare, the situation is even direr at times. "The emphasis on advertisements and patronage from government, corporations, and powerful individuals tends to affect the editorial independence of the media," he said. "In some

cases, [advertiser-]paid stories are carried as news, just for the media house to survive. This is a regular feature in the electronic media, which rakes a lot of money from commercials and still projects them as news."

State-owned media, in most cases, have reasonably adequate and guaranteed sources of revenue in the form of government funding, which does not allow for editorial independence. State-owned media also get revenue from advertising, and there is no restriction at all on their advertising. Panelists agreed that all media outlets, both government and privately owned, are susceptible to some form of external influences.

The advertising market is well developed in Nigeria, and private media are very skilled in using the possibilities of advertising to earn revenues. However, the advertising market is very competitive, owing to the relatively high number of media outlets. Advertising is not as well developed in rural areas as it is in major cities and urban centers.

Advertising agencies actively work with all media, and locally-based agencies dominate the industry. Increasingly, advertising is occupying much more air time on broadcast stations, although the NBC broadcasting code stipulates that only nine advertising minutes per hour may be broadcast on any station. There are no legal limits or regulations on the percentage of revenue that a media outlet can receive from advertising, and media outlets progressively seek as much advertising revenue as possible. In the print sector, circulation and sales are very low. Newspapers depend more on advertising revenue for their survival.

Independent media do not receive subsidies from government. Most panelists agreed that the private media are better off without government funds. However, Arogundade said that given the importance of certain issues and the need to ensure adequate reach, subsidies would be helpful for coverage of such issues as elections. He suggested the setting up of an independent board to manage the government funds that would be allocated to the media for these purposes.

Other panelists expressed concern that such a mechanism would interfere with the editorial independence of privately-owned media. Iwuoha, expressing the dominant view of the panelists, said: "I see no reason why government should subsidize private media. If they do, it will amount to editorial interference." And according to Francis, such a practice should not be "encouraged because the government will want to have a say in such media outlets, making the writing of incisive and biting reports against the government impossible."

## 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.

Market research is occasionally carried out by some media organizations as part of their strategic planning, although they apply varying degrees of professionalism in the methodologies and standards. As a result, the reliability of the outcomes is also suspect. The panelists agreed that media products tailored towards market needs would result in better quality news and delivery. Advertising agencies and some other independent research agencies also do market research and, in some cases, media institutions engage such independent research agencies to carry out market research for them. Panelists identified research methods such as focus group discussions, commercial research, and call-in programs.

There are no reliable and independently produced broadcast ratings or circulation figures for the media. The data available are not widely accepted and are usually disputed.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Nigeria Objective Score: 2.38

As with last year, the panelists felt strongly that professional media bodies and NGOs function in the professional interests of independent media and provide a variety of support services. This objective received the highest score of the five, even though it fell moderately from last year. Most of the decline is attributable to lower scores in indicators 1 (trade associations), 2 (professional associations), 4 (academic journalism programs), and 5 (short-term training). Other indicator scores remained more or less the same. Like last year, Indicator 4 was the lowest-scoring indicator, coming in more than three-quarters of a point lower. Indicator 3 (supporting media NGOs) scored about a point higher than the overall objective score and again received the highest score within this objective.

Vivian-Peace Gboelo, a reporter with the Rivers State Newspaper Corporation in Port Harcourt, publishers of *The Tide* newspaper, summed up the assessment for this objective by noting that although Nigeria has many media associations and NGOs, “there is still much to be desired in terms of professionalism and independence, as the Nigerian press is still below international best practices.”

Several trade associations represent the interests of media owners and managers. These include the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria, the Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria, and the Independent Broadcasting Association of Nigeria. Their membership services involve seeking and advocating for better socio-political and economic environments in which their member businesses can thrive. However, panelists said that the trade associations are

not truly representative or supportive of members, although they sometimes lobby federal and state governments on behalf of members.

Nigeria has professional associations representing media professionals and practitioners in different sectors. They include the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), the National Union of Printing, Publishing and Paper Products Workers (NUPPPROW), and the Radio, Television, and Theatre Workers Union (RATTAWU). Theoretically, these associations are independent, but in reality they are frequently influenced by the federal and various local governments because of their high level of dependence on governments for donations, gifts, and other support.

The services provided by associations have included facilitating acquisition of landed property by their members, professional training in different areas, advocating for improved service and welfare conditions, offering legal and professional advice, and lobbying managements and government authorities. The associations have varying degrees of efficiency and utility to their members, and very often, members complain that their expectations are not being met by the associations.

To become a member of an association, an applicant must be a worker in a media organization and either be a journalist (in the case of the NUJ), an editor (for membership of the NGE), a technician or technical worker in a radio, television, or theatre company (for RATTAWU), or a printer or technical staff in a newspaper or new magazine company (for NUPPPROW). All members also must pay membership dues.

The NUJ is losing members, as new regulations give journalists the option of not joining the union. Previously, employers

## 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.

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deducted membership dues from the salaries of journalists; now, all journalists pay their dues directly to the union, removing the employer from the process. Many journalists who feel that the union does not adequately represent their interests have opted out of the union and stopped paying dues.

The NGE, however, is growing in membership, partly because of the emergence of new newspaper titles as well as new radio and television stations and the attendant increase in the number of editors in the country. In addition, according to the panelists, the NGE has a more positive public image than the NUJ and is viewed as prestigious. Editors qualified to be members therefore enthusiastically apply for membership.

There are also beat reporting associations representing specific sectors of the media profession. They include the Crime Reporters Association of Nigeria, the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria, the Aviation Correspondent Association, the Maritime Reporters Association, and the Energy Correspondents Association. However, there has been some friction between these organizations and NUJ and NGE. The latter groups view them as trying to exclude non-members from covering those sectors.

Nigeria has several active, independent NGOs that work in cooperation with media outlets to support freedom of speech and media independence. These are based mainly in cities. They partner well with media outlets and are efficient in media advocacy work. They monitor media developments and react to violations of media freedoms through press releases, legal action, local and international alerts, and other support services to media organizations and individual media professionals. They are also involved in advocacy for the reform of media laws and policies. They sometimes provide pro bono legal services to journalists and collaborate with international free speech organizations.

Panelist Tubosun Ogundare, a senior reporter with the privately-owned *Daily Champion* newspaper, said that because the services provided by these media NGOs are so highly beneficial to the industry, media outlets do not publicize their activities.

There was a general agreement that although numerous schools offer journalism or mass communications degrees, they are antiquated with regard to curricula, staffing, equipment, and technological developments.

Panelists also agreed that journalism training programs are obsolete, and that opportunities for training abroad are available, but most journalists who have the opportunity to study in foreign countries do not return to Nigeria with their new expertise and knowledge. Most media organizations cannot offer them pay packages and conditions of service

commensurate with their skill levels. The panelists also agreed that media outlets have limited space to absorb the number of journalism graduates being turned out locally, and that media companies are not satisfied with quality of the graduates. Ironically, there are not enough spots available in degree programs to meet the demand of prospective students.

Most panelists noted that local and international opportunities exist for short-term training, and are accessible to enterprising journalists. The types of courses available include writing business news, covering climate change, health, the environment, investigative reporting, and ethics. Training in ethics and investigative reporting are the most needed, panelists said.

The managers of some media organizations are hostile to in-service training because the organizations are deprived of those staff members during their absences. Such media organizations are unable to see the potential benefits that such trained and updated professionals can bring to their organizations. They also have no confidence that they can retain their journalists for any length of time after they receive training, or that the journalists will return to their jobs after the training, given the generally poor working conditions.

According to Iroegbu, "A lot of media owners frown upon training opportunities for their staff members, even though they may not directly be paying for it."

Francis agreed. "In most media outlets, short- or long-term training in service is a dream. Most outlets want to use journalists but [resist] sponsoring training in capacity building. Even in international studies, if the journalist is allowed to go, it is without pay for all the months or years that he or she will be away. The job may or may not be there for the person when he or she returns; the chances are 50-50," he said.

Nigeria has training programs in different departments and at all levels. Some of the trainings are paid for by the journalists, and in a few cases, through sponsorship by their media organizations, particularly state-owned media. Fellowships and sponsorships by donors and development agencies are also available to journalists seeking further training.

Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted. They are managed as profit-making businesses. The government does not impose any legal restrictions on these but high tariffs in the form of import duties create challenges for media business. Private printing facilities are not selective in providing services to media outlets. State-funded printing facilities are uncommon, and where they exist, they are only tasked with printing government documents.

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Some channels of media distribution are in private hands while others are under government control. Those in private hands are neither political nor restricted and are self-sustaining. There are huge differences in capacity and efficiency between the distribution networks in cities and smaller towns and villages.

Each broadcast station has its own transmitters. Privately-owned stations have independent transmitters, while the transmitters of government-owned stations are dependent on state support and subject to government interference and sometimes political influence.

Private businesses, driven by business and profit motives, control access to the Internet. The facilities are not in any way politicized.

## List of Panel Participants

**Lanre Arogundade**, director, International Press Centre, Lagos

**Lawson Eselebor**, reporter, Radio Nigeria, Abuja

**Juliana Ebere Francis**, assistant editor, *Nigerian Compass*, Lagos

**Vivian-Peace Gboelo**, reporter, *The Tide*, Port Harcourt

**Okwy Iroegbu**, assistant editor, *The Nation*, Lagos

**Yewande Iwuoha**, news editor, RayPower 100.5 FM, Lagos

**Tony Iyare**, publisher, gleanernewsonline.com; editorial manager, *Nigerian Compass*, Lagos

**Pius Mordi**, deputy news editor, *BusinessDay*, Lagos

**Rachael Omoniyi**, reporter, *NewsWatch*, Lagos

**Tubosun Ogundare**, senior reporter, *Daily Champion*, Lagos

**Emmanuel Agozino**, reporter, *Nigerian Compass*, Lagos

**Eme Eniang Offiong**, editor, Nigerian Television Authority, Calabar

## Moderator

**Edetaen Ojo**, executive director, Media Rights Agenda, Lagos