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# SOMALILAND

The first Somali-speaking radio was opened in Hargeisa in 1950, in the Somaliland British Protectorate. The first newspapers were also produced during the same period in Arabic, since the Somali language had no script until 1972. However, the progress of the print media has been hampered by twenty-one years of censorship imposed by the Barre dictatorship. Furthermore, the low literacy level of the Somali population has always been an obstacle to print media and has favored the broadcast media, especially the radio.

In 1991, when the dictatorship was defeated and the Somaliland state was reinstated in the borders of the ex-British Protectorate, the written media started mushrooming. In almost all major regional cities, a daily newspaper was published, usually composed of four pages and produced with a cyclostyle. Radio Hargeisa had been completely destroyed during the war and was not revived until several years later. Today, in the capital city of Hargeisa, there are 10 Somali-language daily newspapers and four English weeklies published. New media, including news websites, Internet radios, and blogs, are also expanding. Internet cafés are a regular feature of most Somaliland cities, benefiting from the prevailing cheap telephone and Internet rates.

There are now three television stations in Hargeisa and another two international Somali stations represented in Somaliland. Satellite television broadcasting is creating media access for the rural population, which was marginalized by the mainly capital-centered Somaliland media outlets.

According to the panelist discussion and their scores, Somaliland's strongest attribute in the media sector is freedom of speech, with an Objective 1 score of 2.11. Another two areas where developments in Somaliland augur growing strength in are plurality of news sources and supporting institutions, with Objective 3 and Objective 5 scores of 1.87 and 2.01, respectively. On the other hand, the weakest links of the MSI are in the areas of professional journalism and business management, with Objective 2 and Objective 4 scores of 1.64 and 1.54, respectively. This is an indication of the weak capacity of the education, skill, and resource base of Somaliland media outlets. Somaliland media is a young industry that is still developing and needs to be nurtured. "Considering Somaliland's situation, without [international] recognition and suffering from the effect of wars, our advancement is very impressive, but we need more international support," said a panelist.

*Somaliland has not been recognized as a sovereign country by any nation or international organization. However, the many differences between it and Somalia, including different legal and regulatory regimes, warrant a separate study of media in Somaliland.*

# SOMALILAND AT A GLANCE

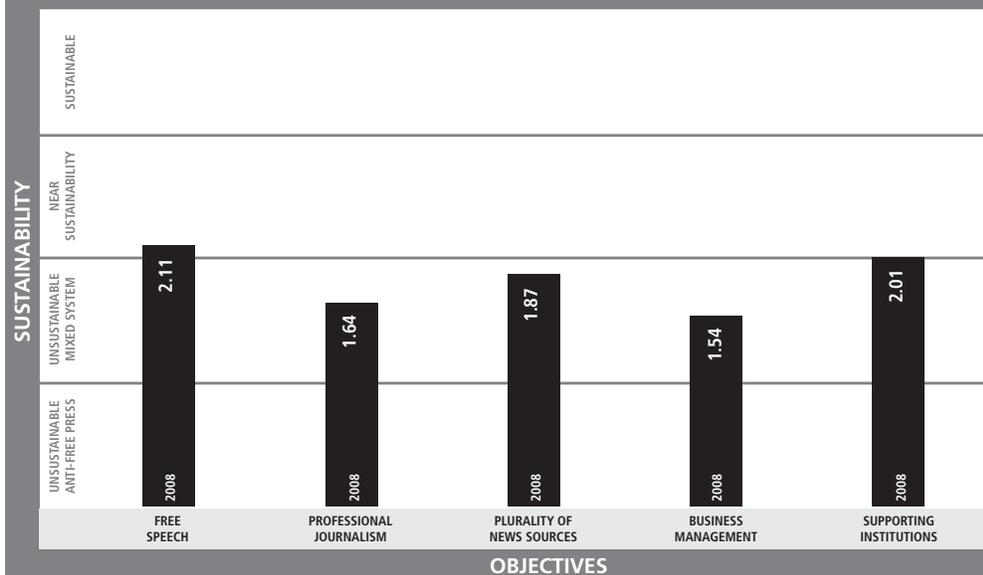
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** Estimated at between 2 and 3 million
- > **Capital city:** Hargeisa
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** 100% Somali, with 3 major clans: Isaaq (majority), Dir, and Harti
- > **Religions (% of population):** Sunni Muslim
- > **Languages (% of population):** Somali (official), Arabic and English used for business purposes
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** N/A
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** N/A
- > **Literacy rate:** N/A
- > **President or top authority:** President Daher Rayaale Kaahin (since May 5, 2002)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active media outlets:** 10 daily newspapers, 4 weekly or semi-weekly newspapers; Radio stations: 1, Radio Hargeisa; Television stations: 5 Somali language stations, 3 local (Somaliland Space Channel (satellite) and Hargeisa Cable TV are private, Somaliland National TV is government owned) and 2 international, plus global networks in the Arab-Sat and the Nile-sat; most popular of these are Al-Jazeera, BBC, and CNN in that order; Internet news sites/blogs: 22 news websites, of which 11 are Internet only news websites and 7 Internet radios—90% of the Internet-based news outlets are managed by Somaliland diaspora
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Around 1000 copies per daily issue
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** None
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** N/A

### MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: SOMALILAND



#### 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

### Somaliland Objective Score: 2.11

Media in Somaliland operate in a free space, and the society values freedom of expression. There is no practice of censorship, and the legal base exists for free speech in Somaliland; however, enforcement is weak. Panelists did point to a particular flaw in the discrepancies between the law and the prevailing practice in cases of libel as a civil law issue, as well as treatment of government officials in front of these laws. Panelists awarded Indicator 6, therefore, a score more than a half-point lower than the overall objective score. On the other hand, Indicator 8 (media access to international news sources) received a score more than two-thirds of a point higher. Other indicators scored close to the overall objective score. Therefore, the panelists concluded, despite some weaknesses Somaliland has made significant progress and is doing better some of its regional counterparts when it comes to exercising freedom of speech.

Freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 32 of the Somaliland constitution, and there is also a Press Law (Law No 27/2004) that further elaborates these freedoms and provides necessary explanation and guidelines of its application. However, the panelists have clearly expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of enforcement and government commitment to uphold these constitutional rights and the application of the Press Law. There were attempts by the government to intimidate journalists through short-term imprisonment, for example. In the case of the Press Law, the government has shown its discomfort with it as written and is trying to introduce a new law to supersede it. There is serious opposition toward this move within the parliament and from the media at large.

In the practice of registering media outlets, there are variations within the media industry and with other businesses. To register a media outlet, one must register with the Attorney General's office, as other businesses do, but also must obtain approval from the Ministry of Information. Within the industry, licensing private radios is still banned by ministerial decree, for fear of unleashing destructive clan rivalries on the airwaves. The ban is still in place despite fierce opposition from a cross-section of the society, including parliamentarians. Panelists consider the ban on private radios unconstitutional. Other than that, licensing television stations and other print media outlets is fairly straightforward. The electronic media, including Internet radios and news websites, are not so far subject to any licensing requirements.

No significant taxation barriers are imposed on media outlets. In fact, media outlets have operated so far in a tax-free

space. There is a general understanding that media in Somaliland are still in their infancy and any tax burden could be counterproductive to freedom of expression. There are now suggestions from some government circles to introduce some taxes, while on the contrary many parliamentarians are arguing to provide support to all media outlets (not only government media outlets) to encourage their development. None of the MSI panelists advocated for government subsidies, but some of them also said that government media are using taxpayers' resources without anything to show for it.

Journalists in Somaliland do not operate in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, and crimes against them are rare. But when crimes do occur, no vigorous prosecution measures are taken against perpetrators, especially if higher government officials are involved. Journalists themselves do not pursue their cases in court if crimes are committed against them, because they do not see any use in doing so. For instance, Abokor Aafi related his experience:

"Once, I was arrested in Borame because I was interviewing people at the airport who were upset because they couldn't leave the airport, and their passports were being kept by the police (customs) with demands of payments. Security and police saw me, and someone sent for 10 officers to arrest me and my cameraman. We were held at gunpoint, while my camera was still open and recording. When they came in the car, we took the tape out of the camera and handed it quickly and quietly to some bystander I knew for safekeeping. When we got to the police station, our equipment was confiscated.

#### 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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When they tried to watch the tape, it was missing. They asked about the tape, and we told the officers they took our stuff. However, when our arrest was announced, the man who had kept the tape for safekeeping came in and submitted it to the police. When they saw the evidence with police brutality and excessive force, they didn't return it. But we were released. And we were happy just to get out. So there is no fear of persecution, but once something happens, there is no desire to pursue justice."

The panelists have also raised the issue of the imprisonment of the Haatuf group for three months. As Yusuf Gabobe stated, "The court turned down the defendants' request to be tried according to the current press law, instead of the antiquated penal code." Journalists' imprisonment has caused a public outcry in the past. The Somaliland public has no tolerance for summary imprisonments, but it also does not condone what is sometimes considered journalistic excess; government heavy-handedness often blurs the balance.

Legally, there is no preferential treatment for government media, but by the prevailing practice, government officials give preferential treatment to government media outlets in the access of information from official circles. Businesspeople may also get preferential treatment. According to Mohamed-Rashid Hassan, "If businesspeople desire, they have influence over media due to their financial strength. Those with money usually have influence." Furthermore, editors and managers in the government-owned media outlets are not fully independent in their editorial responsibilities and must stick to the official line.

So far no libel cases have been filed in the Somaliland courts. That does not mean that there are no grounds for them, but the practice of using courts to seek redress is not an attractive option for Somalilanders in the present state of the judiciary. On the rare occasions that government officials took action against journalists who offended them, they treated the matter not as a civil case but started the process by putting the accused journalist behind bars. A more common practice to address defamation is to go to the customary law.

Panelist Aafi told the following story of a sultan's coronation ceremony, which was misrepresented:

"In our province it happened; there was a newspaper article claiming that the coronation has never taken place, while actually it did happen. The concerned journalist claimed that instead of a coronation, fighting took place. The family who was performing the coronation complained, and the journalist was arrested. In the end, the journalist had to retract the story, and there was a formal apology written in all the newspapers. This kind of a settlement, where a journalist retracts his/her story and publishes an apology is a common occurrence in Somaliland."

The Internet is quite problematic in the Somaliland context because there is no way of filing a libel case or even going to the customary law against somebody in a foreign country. Abuses happen, and often owners and editors do not take responsibility for that.

While government media have better access to public information, there are no laws or restrictions imposed on the independent media outlets in obtaining public information. Independent media outlets get invited to government press conferences and have access to interview public officials. It is common knowledge, though, that private media have a more cozy relationship with the opposition parties and may even act biased in favor of them.

Media outlets have unrestricted access to international news and news sources. They access the international networks and other news sources primarily through the Internet. They are free to reprint and rebroadcast international sources without violating copyright norms. The only limitation to access international sources is the cost of the sources.

Entry into the profession is free with no government impositions or controls. Some of the panelists were not happy about this state of affairs because there are no criteria or standards for somebody in Somaliland to become a journalist. That is why the quality of journalism in Somaliland leaves a lot to be desired. As Aafi put it, "Anybody can become a journalist; all that is needed is to get a camera. This is why so many young journalists without any qualifications or experience are crowding the market."

## **OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM**

### **Somaliland Objective Score: 1.64**

Since Somaliland journalism is still in its formative stages, it lacks maturity and technical experience. Its codes of conduct and professional standards are still evolving. Therefore, it

does not meet professional standards. Gabobe summed up the state of journalism: "Professional standards are often not met in Somaliland media reporting due to scarcity of both qualified journalists and financial resources. Acceptance of gifts by journalists in exchange for favorable coverage is not uncommon. Practicing of self-censorship by journalists or editors due to external or institutional pressure is rare."

His comments were reflected in the scores of the other panelists. Indicator 3 (self-censorship) scored a bit more than half a point higher than the overall objective score, while Indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists) fell short by just over half a point. Other indicators scored close to the overall score.

There is no widespread culture of unfair or non-objective reporting; however, the education and skill base of the majority of the journalists in Somaliland is limited, and therefore their reporting is often deficient and short of desirable standards. In Shukri Harir's words, "Journalists actually do not meet professional standards, partly because they do not have adequate technical skills and partly because they do not get sufficient payment to encourage them to make improvements." Despite the fact that trials from the Somaliland Journalists' Association to establish an accepted code of conduct are still shaky, under the circumstances significant progress toward this goal has been achieved in the past decade.

No formal censorship laws or practices are imposed on the media outlets in Somaliland, so journalists do not work in an atmosphere of fear or external pressure. However, the private media outlets have freer space to operate than the government media, which, panelists argued, work in a more sensitive and perhaps somewhat restricted atmosphere.

#### 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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Local broadcast media, of course, are conscious of prevailing cultural sensitivities and sensibilities in their programming.

Somaliland media provide adequate coverage to events and issues in urban population concentrations and especially in the capital city of Hargeisa. But they hardly report on issues concerning the majority rural population of pastoralists and farmers. Panelists argued that the media are obsessed with political issues at the cost of economic, social, and cultural development issues in the country. There is no convincing justification for lack of reporting on rural issues, considering the cheap and ubiquitous mobile telephone coverage provided by telecommunication companies to all corners of Somaliland. Despite these shortcomings, panelists felt that other key issues do receive coverage in the media.

Journalists' salaries in Somaliland are abysmally low. Media outlets, it is claimed, do not make enough profit to pay decent wages and to employ professional journalists and consultants. Such a state of affairs could be expected to lower the standards of media professionals and to encourage corruption among journalists. Panelist Shadia Mohamed Rooble said, "I work in private TV, which earns substantial revenues, but these revenues are not reflected in the wages of workers, and eventually a lack of truly skilled workers brought down the quality of the services. Media owners need to respect workers with good hiring practices and merit-based rewards. Underpaid, undervalued employees cannot advance institutions in the best way."

News and information programming dominate the content of both the print and broadcast media. Television stations and Radio Hargeisa usually broadcast entertainment programs, often to fill programming space and not because entertainment pays more. However, some newspaper pages are often covered more with sports and advertisements than with quality information articles.

The machinery and equipment that the Somaliland media outlets use are not modern and up to date. Printing presses are too old and uneconomical to use, and television journalists lack professional cameras and modern studios to

produce programs; radio journalists use basic equipment and archaic studios. This low technological base of the media industry is very much reflected in the technical quality of the print products in the market. Their layout techniques and use of color in the newspapers have not shown any improvement since the old printing machines were reintroduced to Somaliland after the war in the mid-1990s. It is interesting to note that all Somali-language newspapers have a total of eight pages and the same layout, whether the newspaper was in operation for the past 15 years, as with *Jamhuriya*, or is one of the recently started papers. This is a clear indication that the global technological revolution experienced by print media is bypassing Somaliland.

There is no niche reporting or programming worth mentioning in Somaliland, and the main reason is the prevailing low level of professional capacity of most journalists. According to Gabobe, "Few journalists, if any, can be described as professionally prepared in terms of education and experience to be able to do investigative journalism or produce a special feature on issues dealing with economics." Although Somaliland journalists received substantial amounts of short-term training, which journalists claim eventually repeated itself, they lack longer-term training opportunities and exposure to other more advanced journalistic environments. They also lack scholarships to external universities and professional institutes or even to the local journalism program in Hargeisa University.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

**Somaliland Objective Score: 1.87**

Somaliland's indicator scores in this objective reveal some strengths and weaknesses. Indicator 2 (citizen access to media) scored more than a point higher than the overall objective score and Indicator 6 (transparency of media ownership) scored more than half a point higher. Indicator 4 (independent news agencies) scored almost a point-and-a-half lower. Other indicators scored close to the overall objective score.

Plurality of news sources in Somaliland is taken for granted in theory. However, since literacy among the Somaliland population is low, particularly in rural areas, the easiest medium for them to use is radio; unfortunately, radio broadcasting in Somaliland today is the weakest link. The primary cause is the existing ban on private FM radio stations and the inability of the Somaliland government to provide countrywide broadcasting capability. Radio Hargeisa has not yet attained its pre-war capacity after 17 years. Furthermore, three major universities in Somaliland (Hargeisa, Amoud, and Burao Universities) all have FM radio equipment at their

disposal and are still seeking approval from the government to use them for rural access and educational purposes.

Panelist Abdirahman Yusuf Artan said of radio, "Sources are limited. Analysis is weak. The issues themselves are reported, but background information and research generally do not exist. Background research, implications, and analysis aren't in place, and this is an impediment to the delivery of news." Panelists pointed to a net marginalization of rural citizenry as a result of the divide in available, quality, and useable sources of news.

Most of the population in the villages—the pastoralists and the farming communities—relies primarily on the BBC Somali radio for their news. The BBC Somali program has served the Somali people for over half a century now and has earned their trust, despite the fact that in recent times one can argue that its freehand and overarching approach to coverage has retarded the development of local radios and their capacity.

More recently some of the satellite television stations can be watched in villages where electricity is available. Availability of computers to access the Internet is concentrated only in the major urban centers. There are a plethora of news websites, usually originating from the diaspora and often with little variety of programming and specialization.

Further, the issue of affordability for the bulk of the population is in question. The employment situation and the earning capabilities of the overwhelming majority of the population are quite limited. Over 40 percent of households in the capital city are characterized as dependent on remittances from abroad. Therefore, while diverse media sources may be

### 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.

available, their access can be out of reach for the majority lower-income population, however small the fees for subscription or price of a newspaper may be. The price of a daily newspaper is 2,000 shillings (equivalent to around 30 US cents). In the photo at the beginning of this chapter, one can see hordes of young people gathered at the city center sharing and exchanging copies of the daily papers partly due to lack of individual affordability to buy their own copies, but also demonstrating how the young are dependent on these papers for both political and sports news and job advertisements.

Affordability aside, there are no government or societal forces evident in the local or international Somaliland media market that could be construed to restrict citizens' right to free access.

There is no public media other than the government outlets. For instance, there are no community radio or television stations, nor are there outlets operated by independent public boards. Government media outlets, whether print or broadcast, are considered to reflect primarily the official policies and positions of the ruling party and the government. Despite the politicized nature of these outlets, there is no doubt that they serve the national interest of the Somaliland people.

There are no established news agencies in Somaliland, public or private. Media outlets often depend on their journalists for gathering news at the domestic market and on the international networks through the Internet. By the same token, the independent broadcast media, such as the television stations and Internet radio stations, all make their own news programs. The emergence of independent FM radio stations in Somaliland—and their ability to provide news—still depends on the lifting of the government licensing ban.

Media outlets' ownership is generally considered to be transparent, and no conglomerates monopolize the media in Somaliland. In fact, the Somaliland media outlets are scattered, and run as micro-businesses; thus, they lack the interest of serious investors as profitable businesses.

There are minorities or marginalized groups whose interests may not be reflected in the mainstream media coverage, although not by virtue of language. Sometimes a journalist may not be able to defend his or her position if powerful interests are involved, especially if it becomes a clan issue. This is clearly depicted by Aafi's example: "Lack of capability or finances do not prevent writing for the minority. There is a fear that if you attempt to defend a minority issue, you will be confronted by those who marginalized them in the first place, and you can't defend yourself successfully on the grounds of free and open journalism. For instance, I wrote about a woman who was killed by her husband. I was then told that

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I had entered into the private affairs of a family and was harassed." This is a reflection of the rule of law's being on the backburner when it comes to confronting the rule of the clan. In Somaliland and among the Somalis at large, invoking clan interests is always a sword hanging over free and independent opinion and an impediment to due processes taking their course as expected of a modern civil society.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

#### **Somaliland Objective Score: 1.54**

Business management is clearly not a strong point of Somaliland media. Indicators 1 (media are well managed businesses), 2 (multiple sources of revenue), and 3 (advertising industry) all scored close to the overall objective score, that is to say reflecting an "unsustainable mixed system." Indicators 6 (market research) and 7 (audience and circulation measurement) both scored a point or more lower. Only Indicators 4 (ratio of advertising to other revenue) and 5 (government subsidies for private media) scored above 2.00, with the latter scoring more than a point higher than the objective score.

None of the media outlets in Somaliland can be characterized as professionally managed businesses. According to Artan, the media industry remains "a below-subsistence-level business." Both the print and broadcast media started from scratch in war-devastated Somaliland in the early 1990s, where there were no decent printing facilities and no supporting infrastructure. It was started mainly by amateur journalists and diaspora groups who were driven more by patriotism than by profit-seeking motives.

Despite the fact that the media outlets have since multiplied and the technological base has somewhat improved, their organizational and management base is still basic. Independent newspapers are owned mainly by one or a collection of journalists who manage them

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as daily subsistence businesses. Television stations have some semblance of a business organization with a bit of differentiation among departments, but they also have a long way to go to be characterized as efficient and professionally managed businesses. They have hardly positioned themselves to seriously tap into the growing potential of television subscriptions and advertising markets.

The Internet media outlets themselves have also followed the same trend of one-man-owned micro-businesses. However, since the industry demands higher levels of education and skills and is in tune with the global trend, it is in a better position to maximize the advertising business opportunities not only from the Somali communities, but also from the regional and international advertising business. The verdict of the panelists, many of whom own media outlets, is that a score of 1.54 is indicative that the industry is not professionally managed and that it is not profitable in its present state. “There needs to be a change in the sense that media function as large institutions, rather than small businesses run by individuals,” said Hassan.

Sales and advertising are the only sources of revenue of any significance for the independent media outlets. Print media rely on sales, while local television stations have

#### 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.

more diversified sources. “Local television stations generate significant revenues from news advertising,” said Gabobe. With the ongoing advertising rate of \$10 per minute, television stations have the potential to generate substantial revenue, and panelists believe that the market exists. Government media is subsidized, and its employees are often paid from the state’s coffers. The government also takes revenues accruing from its media outlets.

There are no advertising agencies in Somaliland. Media outlets often have their own departments that cater to these clients. In its present state, advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with international standards, if not lower. Independent media outlets do not receive government subsidies and have no access to major investment sources and community support. Media outlets must survive in the competitive market, and many of them are barely managing.

Somaliland media outlets do not have the skills and financial resources to undertake market research. Media outlets currently operate on a daily routine basis and have hardly developed plans for growth. Client businesses formulate their own ideas for their advertisements. Audience interests and tastes often do not come into play; it is more common to introduce a product than to create choices for consumers. There are no rating agencies, and circulation figures are rarely compiled by anybody, however, a rough estimate of newspaper circulation is in the range of 750 to 1,000 copies per issue.

#### OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

#### Somaliland Objective Score: 2.01

Current weaknesses reflected in this objective are primarily developmental, i.e., many supporting institutions have yet to emerge. Indicator 1 (trade associations) and Indicator 4 (academic journalism programs) showed a particular weakness, scoring more than half a point below the overall objective score. On the other hand, both Indicator 2 (professional associations) and Indicator 6 (sources of newsprint and printing) scored slightly more than half a point higher.

There are no organized and established trade associations in Somaliland. A few trade groups, such as printers, come together on an ad-hoc basis to discuss their interests. There is no culture of trade associations, representing and organizing the industry, for a multitude of reasons. First, there is no critical mass of companies and organizations in the industry to organize themselves for their interest and advancement. Second, Somaliland emerged in 1991

from 21 years of brutal dictatorship under which there were no rights of any sort and no associations of any kind were tolerated. And third, in the past 17 years, since it was reinstated as an independent polity by its own citizens, Somaliland remains unrecognized; therefore, its media industry has minimal exposure to the international mainstream culture of trade associations and networks.

However, there are currently four professional associations: Somaliland Journalist Association (SOLJA), Somaliland Society for Journals and Websites (SSJW), Somaliland Women Journalists' Association (WIJA), and the Union of Somaliland Journalists (USLJ). None of these organizations seem to enjoy a full membership and recognition from all media outlets. SOLJA is the oldest and most established of all, with a wide working relationship with external counterparts such as the BBC and other international NGOs. The SSJW and the newly formed USLJ are considered to be competing with SOLJA. The WIJA is an individual membership organization for women journalists.

Somaliland associations usually lean to different political parties and trends, and the role of the government is never that of a neutral player; it often exerts its influence in the affairs of civil-society organizations and especially in media affairs. This produces an environment in which associations are judged to be either with or against the government. All of the above organizations aim to protect journalists' rights and to advance their interests and working conditions, but they still have to learn to work together to have any significant impact.

Local NGOs support human rights and rally behind the media when journalists are arrested. But overall, there is no focus to advocate for free speech. The diaspora is more engaged

#### 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.

*Kaize Digaale expresses the need for business-oriented trainings: "There needs to be capacity building for skills development and specifically trainings in the financial management sector of media management. If an institution does not have adequate financial and management systems, it won't have the means to train its own employees."*

in advocating for the Somaliland constitutional freedom of expression and association. After the imprisonment of Haatuf journalists, Somaliland diaspora activists formed an association named after Article 32 of the constitution; a book was also written to further publicize the need to uphold rights of freedom of expression and association in Somaliland.

There is only one journalism degree program in Somaliland. It is at Hargeisa University and is still in its early stages. The reason why there are no quality degree programs stems from Somaliland's special history. It is quite unusual that within the past 17 years of reconstruction and recovery from the war, there are already at least seven universities, some of which have attained international recognition, such as Amoud and Hargeisa Universities. None of these universities were started with international support or major investor resources. All began as a result of the collective effort of the Somaliland people and the sacrifices of individual mobilizing groups, especially in the diaspora but also among local communities. Therefore, early academic programming at these universities did not make journalism a priority. However, now there is at least one degree program at Hargeisa University, which is doing well and which has already established cooperative relationships with North American and European universities and academics. There is a potential for quality journalism as a result of these efforts, but as of yet, it is still only a hope.

Somaliland journalists have been given many short training opportunities by several organizations, such as the BBC. These trainings started in the late 1990s and have been provided repeatedly to a cross-section of journalists, who tremendously benefited from them. However, the level of the training continued to be basic, and many journalists eventually lost interest.

Furthermore, journalists may take training to use certain equipment, but the equipment was not available at the workplace. Roble, a panelist, said, "When I receive the trainings, my difficulty is that the owner did not want me to

follow through with the things I have learned; he wants to maintain his system. Furthermore, trainings are only five or seven days, but nothing longer term and with certification. There are complaints that we have not advanced despite all the trainings we received, because since 1998, there were the same trainings over and over again; there is a need for tailoring of the trainings to, for instance, the needs of senior workers.”

Kaize Digaale expresses the need for business-oriented trainings: “There needs to be capacity building for skills development and specifically trainings in the financial management sector of media management. If an institution does not have adequate financial and management systems, it won’t have the means to train its own employees.”

There are both government and private printing facilities, and newspapers have choices and are not bound to any specific facility. The printing facilities are generally private, apolitical, and unrestricted. However, even private owners sometimes feel the heat of controversial issues and try to moderate journalists’ stances and writings. Abdiweli said, “At the Berbera Port, there were once some controversial issues. We wrote about them in four issues. After two nights of printing, during the third night, the owner of the printing facility came to us and said, ‘Stop meddling in these affairs.’ When it became clear to us he was interfering with our work, we decided not to use his printing, and we went to another source. When he saw in the morning that we didn’t print from him but we managed to bring the paper out anyway, he came to us explaining his position.” The point is that journalists have a variety of printing facilities in Hargeisa to choose from.

The distribution channels of the print media are also private, apolitical, and unrestricted. However, the radio transmitters are in the hands of the government, and their use is strictly with its approval. There are no local private radio stations in Somaliland, but the BBC has an agreement with the government for FM-radio broadcasting, and there is 24-hour programming in English, Arabic, and Somali. The Internet is totally free, and therefore Internet cafés are a common feature of all Somaliland cities.

## List of Panel Participants

**Yusuf Abdi Gabobe**, editor/owner, Haatuf Media Network, Hargeisa

**Abdiweli F. Jambiiir**, editor, *Ogaal* newspaper, Hargeisa

**Muse H. Mohamed Gulaid**, secretary general, Somaliland Journalists Association, Hargeisa

**Harir Ismail Shukri**, manager, Health Unlimited and Somaliland Women Journalists Association, Hargeisa

**Mohamed–Rashid Hassan**, manager, African Renaissance Center for Social Science Research, Media, and Development, Hargeisa

**Kaize Ahmed Digaale**, senior reporter, Jamhuriya and other websites, Burao

**Abdirahman Yusuf Artan**, member of parliament, Sanaag

**AbokorHassan Aafi**, reporter, Radio Hargeisa, Borame

**Abdirizak Mohamed Dubbad**, director, Radio Horyaal, Hargeisa

**Shadia Mohamed Rooble**, television anchor, Somaliland TV, Hargeisa

**Saeed Ahmed Mahamoud**, coordinator, NEC-TEM, Hargeisa

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*The Somaliland study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, the Academy for Peace and Development, Hargeisa.*

