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GABON

The death of President Omar Bongo Ondimba was the major event that gripped Gabon in 2009. The president, who died of a heart attack, will be remembered as a big personality in post-colonial Africa, having reigned for 41 years. Rich in natural resources, Gabon gained independence from France in 1960 but retained extremely close ties with the country. Gabon headed off political strife by launching a multi-party system in 1991, and an independent and pluralistic press started to emerge after the democratization process began. However, the authorities maintained their fairly tight rein on the media.

Soon after the president's death, his son, Ali Ben Bongo Ondimba, who had long served as the minister of defense, was elected as successor. The transition promised to be rough, and the first clashes appeared ahead of the election. In one incident, the police dispersed a gathering of several hundred opponents pushing for candidate Ali Ben's cabinet to resign and demanding a more transparent election. The closer Gabon inched toward the election, the deeper the country descended into a political crisis, and a number of people lost their lives in post-election violence.

A few days after the start of the campaign season, the National Communication Council (known by its French acronym, CNC) tried to raise media professionals' awareness of their role in the campaign, with the seminar on "Ethics, Deontology, and the Communicator's Responsibility in the Electoral Campaign." Emmanuel Ondo Methodo, CNC chair, described the underlying intent: "The issues of this seminar [were] twofold: creating suitable conditions for free and transparent elections, and to uphold the credibility of the election results; and also regulating the social, ethnical, or tribal tensions that always emerge in electoral circumstances." However, according to the Committee to Project Journalists (CPJ), censorship, intimidation, and violence against reporters marred media coverage during the elections, and numerous media outlets were hassled, censored, or suspended over the period of study.<sup>1</sup>

Although new media has been slow to take off in Gabon, the election season brought small steps forward—including the emergence of SMS messaging, blogs, YouTube, and Twitter among candidates and a handful of journalists. Still, the overall climate hampers media growth and progress, and thus Gabon's score changed little from last year, not yet crossing the threshold into the near-sustainability category.

<sup>1</sup> "Gabon election marred by media censorship." Committee to Protect Journalists website, <http://cpj.org/2009/09/gabon-election-marred-by-media-censorship.php> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

# GABON AT A GLANCE

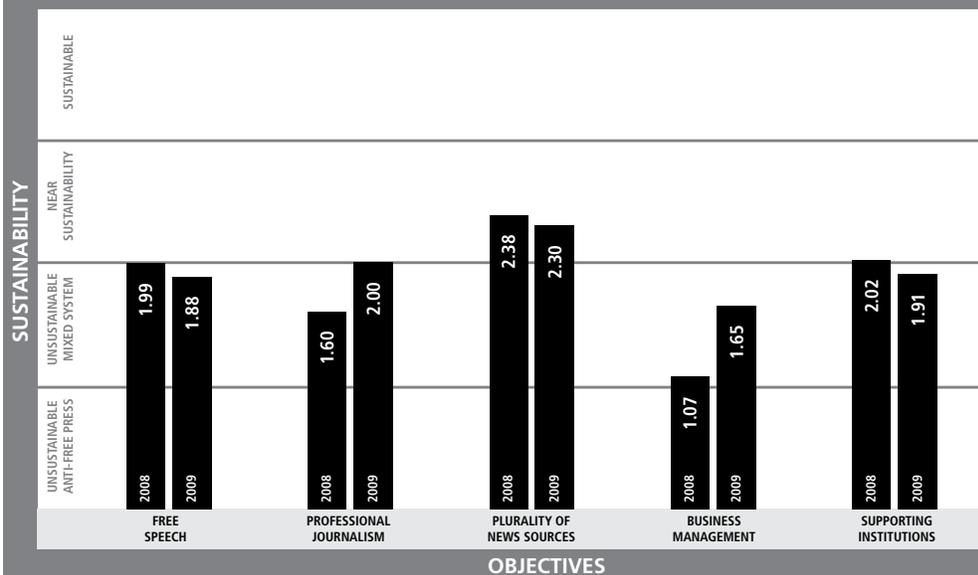
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 1,514,993 (July 2010 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Libreville
- > **Ethnic groups:** Bantu tribes, including four major tribal groupings (Fang, Bapounou, Nzebi, Obamba); other Africans and Europeans, 154,000, including 10,700 French and 11,000 persons of dual nationality (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 55%-75%, animist, Muslim less than 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** French (official), Fang, Myene, Nzebi, Bapounou/Eschira, Bandjabi (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$10.87 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$12,460 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 63.2% (male 73.7%, female: 53.3%) (1995 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Ali Ben Bongo Ondimba (since October 16, 2009)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**  
Print: 7 regularly published newspapers; Radio stations: 13; Television stations: 4
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Gabonews (private), Internet Gabon (private) (BBC Country Profile)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 90,000 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

### MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: GABON



#### 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

### Gabon Objective Score: 1.88

Like many other countries in the Central African sub-region, Gabon has created a communication code to establish a legal framework that supports the freedom of the press, and Gabon's constitution guarantees the freedom of speech generally. But as the panelists pointed out, putting legislation into practice is a challenge, and the communication code takes a repressive stance regarding alleged press offenses. The code is enforced doubly, in criminal courts and by the CNC, and according to panelists, often the code seems to be a tool to restrict the freedom of the press. Pascaline Mouango, with the Gabonese Radio-Television channel 1 (RTG 1), confirmed, "It is a fact that in Gabon there is a communication code that regulates the press. But we should point out that this act has some legal holes in regards to the legal and social standards meant to protect and advance the freedom of the press and of information access."

In November 2009, Reporters Without Borders (known by its French acronym RSF) "condemned Gabon's 'persistently repressive impulses' after the National Communications Council slapped suspensions and final warnings on eight privately-owned publications."<sup>2</sup> RSF questioned the CNC's

<sup>2</sup> "Communications Council Punishes Nine Media." Reporters sans Frontières, November 13, 2009. <http://en.rsf.org/gabon-communications-council-punishes-13-11-2009,34989.html> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

#### 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.

*Regarding broadcast licensing, Armelle Baoulé, with RTG 1, said that media creation continues to be the privilege of financially well-equipped political groups committed to controlling the content of their press outlets.*

independence from the Libreville government and detailed the punishments, which included a three-month suspension of *Echos du Nord* for an October 29 article titled, "The first fruits of a hooligan state;" and the suspension of the program *Entre Nous*, on the grounds of "numerous failings in the mastery of techniques for live broadcasting."<sup>3</sup>

Regarding broadcast licensing, Armelle Baoulé, with RTG 1, said that media creation continues to be the privilege of financially well-equipped political groups committed to controlling the content of their press outlets. Most broadcast media outlets belong to business and political groups. As a result, true media professionals are unable on their own to attain leadership positions at radio stations and television channels.

Public and private media journalists alike suffer from attacks, harassment, and threats. CPJ documented numerous acts of harassment and censorship against the media during the election season; for example, "masked gunmen riddled the satellite uplink of candidate André Mba Obame's international broadcaster, Go Africa TV, with bullets." Supporters of another candidate assaulted a copyeditor from an international broadcaster, Africa Numero 1; the attackers mistook him for an editor from a local station that they consider pro-government. Supporters of Bongo's rivals attacked four journalists from a Christian station, Radio Télévision Nazareth, CPJ also reported.<sup>4</sup> RSF pointed to the arrest of Albert Yangari, editor of *L'Union*, as evidence that the government attempted to create a climate of fear among Gabonese journalists. RSF also noted that the communication ministry ordered the seizing of equipment belonging to TV+ Gabon, a station owned by a presidential candidate.<sup>5</sup>

Given the electoral context, the participants expressed their wish that authorities allow more flexibility and autonomy for the public service media by amending their legal status,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Reporters sans Frontières. <http://en.rsf.org/gabon-fear-in-libreville-after-leading-25-09-2009,34598.html> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

<sup>4</sup> "Gabonese media under attack since election." Committee to Protect Journalists website, September 3, 2009. <http://cpj.org/2009/09/gabonese-media-under-attack-since-election.php> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

<sup>5</sup> "Fear in Libreville after leading daily's editor is arrested and questioned for several hours." Reporters sans Frontières, September 25, 2009.

*Jean Yves Ntoutoume, with the private weekly Le Temps, said that he believes that Gabonese journalists do want to cross-check their facts, but their sources are often hesitant or altogether too fearful to talk to journalists.*

continuing to liberalize the news gathering system, and guaranteeing the public media's fair and balanced inclusion of the entire spectrum of opinions in the country. Mouango commented, "Journalists working in the public media are not free inasmuch as they are forced to voice the usually pro-government editorial line set by the media manager."

Freedom House's "Freedom of the Press Report" classified Gabon as "not free," noting, "Libel can be treated as either a civil or a criminal offense, and the government is permitted to criminalize civil suits and initiate criminal cases in response to the alleged libel of government officials. Publications can be legally suspended for libel and other press offenses."<sup>6</sup>

Many panelists underscored poor access to information as another serious challenge to press freedom in Gabon. Véronique Niangui, with *L'Union*, commented, "If we really want to establish the freedom of speech in this country, we must reform the current communication framework and stop the involvement of the authorities and regulation agencies in journalists' activity; facilitate access to public information, and; create protection mechanisms for journalists, who are now tried before a criminal court and not a civil court judge."

Regarding the media's access to international and domestic news, panelists said that some access is allowed, but the government steps in to suppress news that it deems threatening, as seen in the elections. In addition, CPJ noted that during the presidential elections, the government denied accreditation to at least four international journalists.<sup>7</sup>

Although entry into the profession is relatively free, Mouango lamented that at some point, the profession became open to everyone, including people with no training whatsoever. People began to think that anyone could become a journalist, which led to the decline in professional standards, detailed below.

<sup>6</sup> Freedom of the Press: Gabon (2010); Freedom House, 2010. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2010> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

<sup>7</sup> "Gabon election marred by media censorship." Committee to Protect Journalists website, <http://cpj.org/2009/09/gabon-election-marred-by-media-censorship.php> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Gabon Objective Score: 2.00

Most of the panelists agreed with Jean Pascal Ndong, chair of the Congolese office of the Union of Francophone Press, that generally Gabonese journalists fail to meet professional quality standards. Even if they are well trained, journalists still face multiple hardships, including the financial difficulties of the private media, the involvement of government authorities in the state-run media, and the difficulty in access to information. All of these obstacles impact the quality of reporting.

Théophile Mombey Assoumou, director of *Gens d'ici*, placed the blame on questionable ethics. "Sometimes journalists do meet professional and ethical standards," he said. "But we have noticed that journalists who often resort to self-censorship avoid addressing a number of issues. We must strengthen professional capacities to allow communicators to do their job well by observing the professional ethical codes—the only guarantee for complete and balanced reports." Annie Chantal Bikene, director of the publication *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, suggested that journalists need to be trained and made aware of the professional ethical codes, to encourage them to fight corruption.

Jean Yves Ntoutoume, with the private weekly *Le Temps*, said that he believes that Gabonese journalists do want to cross-check their facts, but their sources are often hesitant or altogether too fearful to talk to journalists. Some members of the media feel forced to self-censor, given their delicate status and despite their awareness of the professional ethical rules.

### 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).

Nziengui Hasse, director of RTG 1, summarized the elements preventing the Gabonese journalists in general from meeting professional requirements: the temptation of easy money, self-censorship, and more overt censorship.

CPJ has documented widespread censorship, and self-censorship especially regarding sensitive topics, such as the former president's health or the wealth of his family. For example, in February 2009, a judge in France froze the private bank accounts of Gabon's president, and as CPJ reported, "...more than 24 hours later, the local press was mum on this development of national interest, according to local journalists. Internet-based news agency InfoPlusGabon appeared to be the only media outlet to publish an article..." A local editor told CPJ, on condition of anonymity for fear of government reprisals, "For us, it is a very dangerous topic. We prefer to keep silent, for fear of drawing unnecessary problems."<sup>8</sup>

Journalist salaries are small—particularly among those working for private-sector publications, which do not function as press enterprises and lack a business structure. Their informality prevents them from offering better financial conditions to their employees, and as a result, journalists' work quality suffers. Assoumou noted that it is true that the press must be more responsible, "but to do that, we must improve the compensation system for journalists."

Bikene linked low salaries to journalists' vulnerability to corruption. To improve salary prospects, she called for a collective work contract that would protect journalists as well as their editorial supervisors. Ntoutoume added, "We must give the salary issue some serious thought, and set up a collective work convention for journalists in the public and private sectors, aiming at creating an interdependently-supported framework. Journalists are less prone to corruption if they are well taken care of financially."

Steve Mve, with the NGO *Transparence et Gouvernance Démocratique*,<sup>9</sup> did not share this view. He blamed the absence of administrative sanctions for encouraging the corruption of journalists, and also noted that they often show complacency towards the financially or politically powerful.

<sup>8</sup> Keita, Mohamed. "Gabon media silent on French freezing president's assets." Committee to Protect Journalists Blog, February 27, 2009. <http://www.cpj.org/blog/2009/02/media-in-gabon-silent-on-french-freezing-president.php> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

<sup>9</sup> Transparency and Democratic Governance

*Assoumou said that "while it is a fact that there are multiple news and current events sources, it is also true that they sometimes fail to provide reliable and objective information—which casts a doubt on the quality of the journalists working in those media."*

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Gabon Objective Score: 2.30

Gabon has more than 10 radio stations and television channels, and almost as many regularly published newspapers, reflecting the remarkable media development since the start of the multi-party democratic process in the 1990s. The first Pan-African radio station, Africa No.1, was also created in Gabon. A number of radio stations and television channels appeared right before the first truly democratic elections in the post-Bongo era, and they were directly or indirectly under political control. New media has been slow to take off in Gabon; however, small steps were taken in this direction during the election season.

A blogger from Madagascar, Andriankoto Harinajaka Ratozamanana, covered Gabon's elections for *Global Voices Lingua* and blogged about the experience for CPJ. He noted that many of the 23 candidates boasted campaign websites,

#### 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.

*On the economic sustainability of Gabonese press enterprises, Niangui was categorical: "To our knowledge, there are few independent media. It is more accurate to speak of the private media supported by patrons or politicians who use these outlets for self-promotion or to settle scores with opponents."*

and campaigned on social networking sites including Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, and Twitter, while Ali Ben Bongo sent out SMS messages. Ratozamanana also described the presence of new media. "At first, many young people I met did not seem very interested in the Internet. In fact, the most educated told me they used the web exclusively to check e-mail and visit chat or dating sites... Nevertheless, with help, a few people took their first steps in using the web as social media, and a handful of new citizen voices slowly emerged." Ratozamanana cited several examples, including a journalist named Gaston Asséko, who broadcast his election day experience on YouTube.<sup>10</sup>

While the panelists were pleased with the dynamic evolution of the Gabonese press, they questioned the quality of content. Assoumou said that "while it is a fact that there are multiple news and current events sources, it is also true that they sometimes fail to provide reliable and objective information—which casts a doubt on the quality of the journalists working in those media."

Assoumou said also that high costs discourage citizen access to domestic and international media. Ntoutoume agreed, noting, "Yes, multiple information channels are available and unrestricted—but they are not quite affordable. Internet connections are not cheap, and unfortunately, most of the population does not have the means to buy Internet service. Satellite television channels are a luxury—the various program packages are expensive."

Expense is not the only obstacle, however. Ratozamanana noted that mobile companies suspended SMS service during the elections—effectively blocking an Ushahidi crisis reporting platform organized by The Guardian Angels of Gabon, a diaspora movement based in France.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ratozamanana, Andriankoto Harinajaka. "Gabon's bloggers struggle to take hold." Committee to Protect Journalists Blog, <http://cpj.org/blog/2009/10/gabons-bloggers-struggle-to-take-hold.php> (Accessed October 15, 2010.)

<sup>11</sup> IBID

The public media do not always reflect the diversity of opinions on a particular topic; usually they give the government point of view more than its due. According to the panelists, the private media do need to establish a more professional reputation, but they manage to fulfill their function of questioning the government. By comparison, the public media often fail to give each side the right to speak, panelists said.

On the other hand, RTG 1's Akomo Akalla Romuald could not hide his satisfaction when pointing out that "the country has started to connect to new information and communication technologies. Because it was able to diversify its press production, Gabon has now become established in the world's information community. Other countries have become interested in the shows and other programs produced by the plethora of Gabonese channels."

Akalla attributed much of this progress to what he considers the late president's support of press freedom, saying that the president believed that the press should be an efficient informational analysis tool with a public service approach. According to Akalla, public media provide citizens with objective and reliable news. They report the news with passion, he added, whereas the sources of the private press are not always reliable. However, Niangui noted, "The fact that there are multiple news sources in Gabon is indeed a guarantee for diverse news—but not objectivity, inasmuch as most of the media are owned by the politicians that rule the country or are funded by them. As a result, the public's social preoccupations are disregarded when they may affect or hurt the sponsor."

Delphine Yari, with RTG 2, shared that view, noting that the evolution of new information and communication technologies has given the public better options to become informed about domestic and international events. However, she cautioned, the public should verify all incoming information, since the partisan nature of some news produces libel and slander.

In addition to using the Internet for news gathering, the media turn to Agence France-Presse and Gabon Press Agency.

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Gabon Objective Score: 1.65

The panelists were quite divided on the topic of the economic sustainability of press enterprises, in terms of defining the very notion of a press enterprise as well as the issue of government-assigned subsidies. Ngoua Mezui Norbert, director of the *Nku'u le Messenger* and an active member

**INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.**

**BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:**

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.

of the Observatory of Gabonese Media, expressed regret that the existing press outlets do not develop business and marketing strategies as a way to improve their otherwise disastrous financial situation.

On the economic sustainability of Gabonese press enterprises, Niangui was categorical: "To our knowledge, there are few independent media. It is more accurate to speak of the private media supported by patrons or politicians who use these outlets for self-promotion or to settle scores with opponents."

In general, the independent media are ill managed, failing to ensure their sustainability. But even when private outlets are managed well, they are unable to attract the advertising they need to cover their balances. All of the panelists recognized that no media company can hope to operate as an independent business enterprise without advertising as the main income source. Some advertisers simply refuse to grant advertising to media that they consider supportive of the opposition. Bikene agreed that "no newspaper can survive for long without advertising."

Ndong pointed out that Gabon's advertising market is wide open and has no agencies. Therefore, he suggested that media outlets in need of more revenue set up an advertising agency, tasked with issuing rate cards, coordinating the price-setting policy, training marketing agents, and selling communication campaigns with a wider scope than just occasional advertising.

Assoumou said that the government has been funding the public and private written press through an annual subsidy set up in 2003. However, the government allocates the subsidy using highly subjective criteria, and discriminates

*Gabon has no institution involved in training journalists. Occasionally, there are some isolated seminars organized around specific topics, such as journalists' responsibilities for reporting during electoral campaigns.*

according to political allegiances. Niangui noted, "The written media that meet the requirements receive an annual government subsidy, which varies according to the distributor [the Ministry of Communication] and the editorial policy." Bikene suggested that the CNC and the Ministry of Communication determine a set of objective criteria for the government's allocation of media subsidies.

Mve said that the government subsidy ought to be backed by other revenue sources, particularly by advertising and individual newspaper sales. This approach would ensure at least a minimum amount of financial and editorial independence for the recipients of the subsidy, he said. Niangui added, "In fact, most newspapers are only able to survive thanks to this very subsidy (not applicable to the broadcast media yet) because the unregulated advertising market does not allow all newspapers to take advantage of it. The media have a lot of trouble becoming real press enterprises. In terms of management, the broadcast sector seems to be in better shape than the private written press."

**OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS**

**Gabon Objective Score: 1.91**

All the panelists recognized that Gabon has practically no institutions that support the media or efficiently protect the interests of members. Regarding media owners' associations, Akomo pointed out that the country has no publishers' or distributors' association.

Gabon's existing organizations fail to uphold the interests of their members or influence the government's decisions. The Observatory of Gabonese Media and Union de la Presse Francophone, for instance, are more preoccupied with journalists meeting professional ethical rules, according to the panelists. For example, Ntoutoume said, when journalists are arrested or beaten, none of these organizations lift a finger. He added that political decision-makers never consider the requests of professional associations. Further, journalists from the governmental media are often forgotten or neglected by

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the government, which explains the frequent strikes in the communication sector.

Bikene lamented the lack of solidarity, and mentioned the case involving the publication manager of *Nku'U le Messenger*. Fellow journalists answered his arrest with total indifference. Only foreign organizations, such as Reporters Without Borders and Journaliste en Danger, responded appropriately. Niangui concluded that the supporting institutions are busy protecting their own interests. Since they are private institutions, their particular mission is all that matters, he said.

Gabon has no institution involved in training journalists. Occasionally, there are some isolated seminars organized around specific topics, such as journalists' responsibilities for reporting during electoral campaigns.

Steep printing and distribution costs are suffocating press enterprises. Gabon has only one distribution service that takes 40 percent of the sales return—which the panelists deemed outrageous. Existing printing houses belong to private investors, who may be under government pressure to refuse printing of any pro-opposition newspaper.

#### 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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## List of Panel Participants

**Steve Mve**, psychologist, Transparency and Democratic Governance, Libreville

**Jean-Yves Ntoutoume**, publisher, *Le Temps*, Libreville

**Norbert Ngoua Mezui**, director, *Nku'u Le Messenger*, Libreville

**Jean Pascal Ndong**, chair, Francophone Press Union, Gabonese office, Libreville

**Armelle Baoulé**, reporter, Radiotélévision Gabonaise 1, Libreville

**Romuald Akomo Akalla**, journalist, Radiotélévision Gabonaise 1, Libreville

**Théophile Mombey Assoumou**, publication manager, *Gens d'Ici*, Libreville

**Annie Chantal Bikene**, director, *Femmes d'Aujourd'hui*, Libreville

**Nziengui Hasse**, program manager, Radiotélévision Gabonaise 1, Libreville

**Mouango Pascaline**, producer, Radiotélévision Gabonaise 1, Libreville

**Niangui Veronique**, editor-in-chief, *L'Union*, Libreville

**Yari Delphine**, journalist, Radiotélévision Gabonaise 2, Libreville

## Moderator and Author

**Tshivis T. Tshivuadi**, secretary-general, Journaliste en Danger, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

*The Gabon study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, Journaliste en Danger, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.*