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GHANA

Before Ghana's return to multiparty democracy in 1993, only about a dozen poorly printed, tabloid-sized newspapers appeared sporadically on the newsstands. In contrast, the number of print media titles registered with the National Media Commission (NMC) now approaches 500. Significant growth is underway in the broadcast sector as well. From the starting point of the state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's (GBC) one television station, two national short-wave networks, and three FM stations, as of December 2008 nearly 50 television and 190 FM radio stations had received broadcast licenses, according to the National Communications Authority (NCA). In addition, the telecommunications industry has been relatively well-served by a rich deployment of ICT infrastructure and services. Currently, as many as 114 Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and five cellular service operators cater to more than a half of the total population.

This remarkable expansion in media plurality, and freedom of expression in general, can be traced largely to constitutional provisions guaranteeing the freedom and independence of the media, and insulating media practitioners and institutions against any form of interference, censorship, or control. According to the Media Foundation West Africa's 2009 report on Ghana, "The Ghanaian media are seen as 'one of the most unfettered' in Africa, operating with little restriction. The media often carry criticism of government policy without fear or restriction."¹ However, the panelists noted that this relative freedom and plurality is not always matched in quality, or in a diversity of viewpoints; many media adhere to sharp partisan loyalties.

In the past year, two major events shaped Ghana's media climate. First, several laws were passed to govern the converging technologies of telecommunication, broadcasting, and computing. Second, a flurry of political propaganda accompanied the December 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections, with the parties and candidates desperate for public platforms and courting media exposure. However, the panelists underlined serious concerns about professional standards and ethics.

On the whole, the MSI scores place Ghana in the near-sustainability range. Panelists were least impressed with the quality of professional standards. On the other hand, the panelists were impressed by the growing contributions of supporting institutions. The overall score suggests a positive, albeit not necessarily glowing, outlook for the country's media system.

¹Ghana—2009 Country Report. Media Foundation West Africa website, July 29, 2010. http://www.mediafound.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=551&Itemid=47

GHANA AT A GLANCE

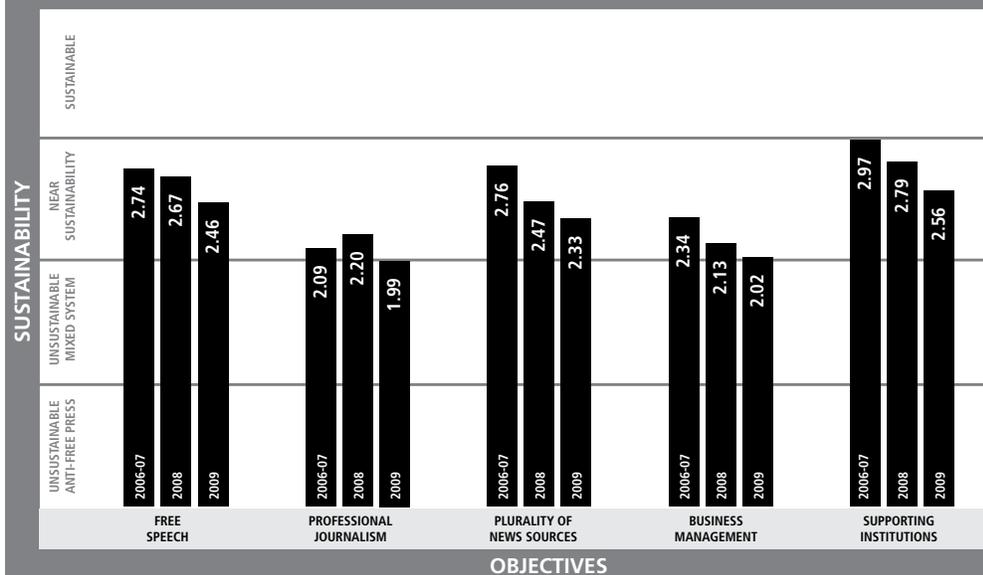
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 23,887,812 (July 2010 estimate, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Accra
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Akan 45.3%, Mole-Dagbon 15.2%, Ewe 11.7%, Ga-Dangme 7.3%, Guan 4%, Gurma 3.6%, Grusi 2.6%, MAnDe-Busanga 1%, other tribes 1.4%, other 7.8% (2000 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 68.8%, Muslim 15.9%, traditional 8.5%, other 0.7%, none 6.1% (2000 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Asante 14.8%, Ewe 12.7%, Fante 9.9%, Boron (Brong) 4.6%, Dagombe 4.3%, Dangme 4.3%, Dagarte (Dagaba) 3.7%, Akyem 3.4%, Ga 3.4%, Akuapem 2.9%, other 36.1% (includes English (official)) (2000 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$16.604 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$1,480 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 57.9% (male 66.4%, female 49.8%) (2000 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President John Evans Atta Mills (since January 7, 2009)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 466 total publications, including 11 national daily newspapers (National Media Commission, December 2006; BBC World Service Trust-AMDI 2006); Radio: 190 licensed; 146 on air (National Communications Authority Annual Report, 2008); Television stations: 47; 19 on air (National Communications Authority Annual Report, 2008)
- > **Newspaper circulation:** Top three daily newspapers: *Daily Graphic* (state-owned), *Daily Guide* (private), *The Chronicle* (private) (BBC World Service Trust-AMDI 2006)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Ghana News Agency (state-owned since 1957)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 997,000 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: GHANA



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

Ghana Objective Score: 2.46

The rights of citizens to hold and express divergent (even dissenting) views, and the plurality and independence of media institutions and practitioners, are firmly secured by the constitution and functionally enabled by supportive legislation. In particular, Article 21 (1) (a) guarantees the right to “freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media.” These legal protections compare favorably with international requirements and standards (notably Articles 19 and 21 of the UN declaration on human rights), and have actually engendered an atmosphere of open and robust (and even sometimes reckless) contest of opinions and views—not only on media platforms, but also in the court of public opinion. In fact, the panel expressed concern about growing public disapproval that some journalists and social commentators abuse the right to free expression. George Sarpong, executive secretary of the NMC, was particularly concerned about the miasma of legal strictures on media freedoms—unless practitioners themselves begin to exercise greater professional discretion and self-regulation. “While the environment is very free, public mood seems to be changing in favor of more restrictive legislation,” Sarpong lamented.

The panelists suggested that the social norms and cultural mores pose a more insidious threat. Eric Adae, president of Evolve Limited, a brand development and communications

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.

Larweh noted that some community stations have had applications pending for more than six years, during which time several individuals with obvious political connections received commercial broadcast licenses.

consultancy, affirmed this concern and pointed to Ghana’s elite as the locus of calls for stronger legislative limits on media freedom. Adae noted that some facets of Ghanaian culture tend to view as effrontery any public comments considered invidious toward “the rich, powerful, influential, and well-placed business leaders and political elites.” According to Kofi Larweh, training officer of the Ghana Community Radio Network, inhibitory traditional roles are even more pronounced within rural communities, where everybody knows everybody, and you may be called before the elders and chastised for disgracing them. Furthermore, Ghanaians are typically socialized to mind their own business, which can work against the media as well.

The panelists do not believe that the process for obtaining broadcast media licenses is sufficiently transparent or apolitical; they see a lot of bias in the system. Larweh noted that some community stations have had applications pending for more than six years, during which time several individuals with obvious political connections received commercial broadcast licenses. Samuel Bartels, a radio broadcast journalist and television program host, described the creative response of villagers in the Nzema rural area: they set up a non-frequency broadcast facility that propagates community messages via loudspeakers.

The panelists noted that the government passed several laws in 2009 to govern the converging technologies of telecommunication, broadcasting, and computing: the National Communications Act, 2008 (Act 769), the Electronic Communications Act, 2008 (Act 775), the Electronic Transactions Act, 2008 (Act 772), and the National Information Technology Agency Act, 2008 (Act 771). The new laws are designed to help attract investors, and make the NCA more transparent.

The panelists also concluded that the tax regime for importing broadcast equipment and telecommunications facilities is both prohibitive and cumbersome. This, they explained, is leading to a hegemonic control of the media by commercial and political interests. As Bartels noted, “The voices of rural dwellers are crowded out by the monopoly of big-brand stations that set up subsidiaries to relay their

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programs from urban centers, thus denying the locals their own content.” Larweh suggested the need for a tax regime that would privilege rural community radio, “...because of their potential to interface with and mobilize their listeners for participation in national development.”

As noted in last year’s MSI, serious injury or death for journalists in Ghana is extremely rare, and the panelists did not describe any serious attacks. However, low-level harassment and limited physical violence is somewhat common. The lack of public outcry or sympathy when journalists are harassed makes their position more precarious.

Although the last government under the New Patriotic Party, (NPP) repealed the criminal libel provisions of the 1960 Criminal Code (Act 29), it also initiated processes for the passage of a defamation law, which, according to the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), could impose undue closure and controls over the media. The change of governments in January 2009 may have offered some temporary reprieve. However, in the absence of a contrary public pronouncement from the National Democratic Congress government of President J. E. A Mills, the specter of a potentially restrictive defamation law will continue to blight Ghana’s otherwise forward-looking legislative environment.

Panel members contended that the NPP’s reticence when it came to promulgating a right to information law amounted to a betrayal of public faith. Again this year, the panelists also lamented that the legislature still has not approved a Right to Information Bill, jointly sponsored by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and the MFWA since 2001. As Abigail Larbi, assistant editor with the state-owned GBC radio, noted, the lack of a right to information law makes “access to public documents and information subject to the goodwill and discretion of government and public authorities.” Another concern is that the media’s constitutional duty, detailed in Article 162(5), to promote “the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people of Ghana” is substantially vitiated by the persistence of the State Secrets Act of 1962, which imposes restrictions on the right of access to public information and documents. Given these concerns,

it is hardly surprising that the question of access to public information received the lowest score in Objective 1.

The government does not require registration to access the Internet, and neither the government nor the responsible agency (the NCA) blocks or otherwise proscribes access to Internet sites or features. Access to international news and information is also free and open to the extent that supply and affordability allow.

Entry into the profession is free—even lax, to the extent that some panel members suggested a need for more clearly defined entry points for membership of the profession and minimum obligations for recognition as a journalist.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Ghana Objective Score: 1.99

As the overall average scores for the five objectives suggest, the panel was least impressed with the levels of professional output among the media and journalists in the country. To illustrate this point, Bartels pointed to the fact during the last annual Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) awards ceremony there was no award for Best Journalist. The panelists identified a litany of factors they believe contribute to the poor professional standards, including the partisanship of the private media, which leads journalists to disregard the most elementary professional ethical codes and the basic news reporting tenets of objectivity, fairness, and balance.

Journalism lecturer Timothy Quashigah enumerated a number of production weaknesses, including the preponderance of trivialities rather than serious, well-sourced, and contextually

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).

backgrounded events and issues; the woeful lack of niche reporting; and the poor state of electronic news-gathering facilities. The panel noted that there have been no significant qualitative improvements in media content or format to match the expansion in print titles and broadcast outlets. Again, the panel attributed this, in part, to the lack of any objective standard of entry qualifications for journalists. According to Dave Agbenu, vice president of the GJA, due to Ghana's high unemployment rate, there are also a number of people posing as journalists with no identifiable institutional affiliations.

Newspaper proprietor and lawyer Egbert Faibille also pointed to examples of the predilection of some newspapers with blatantly scurrilous, misleading, and sometimes vulgar headlines and stories on their front pages. He blamed the NMC for "virtually abdicating its constitutional obligation to promote 'the highest journalistic standards in the mass media'" (Article 167 (b)). "From poor grammar to poor news presentation, everything is being sacrificed in an otherwise noble profession," Faibille lamented. Sarpong, however, pointed out that the empirical evidence from the media-monitoring activities of the NMC is that more than 90 percent of stories meet a "minimalist interpretation of the principles of fairness and balance. The difficulty is that [the] occasional journalistic infractions are usually so extreme that even isolated incidents seem to provide fodder for the anti-free expression lobby which is strongly emerging—especially among the elite."

The GJA has developed a 17-point code of ethics for practitioners. However, because membership of the association itself is voluntary, not all practitioners belong, and the sense of obligation to comply with the tenets of the code of ethics seems wanting. Even for GJA members, the panel noted that violations generally attract no more than the moral sanction of a public condemnation—the occurrence of which, in the view of the panel, was rare in the first place and not of sufficient deterrent value.

Panel members observed that due to the plurality of media outlets and the express constitutional guarantees against censorship (Article 162 (2)), editors could (or ought to have the capacity to) exercise their gate-keeping functions based on objective news values. In reality, however, in the words of Loretta Vanderpuye, editor-in-chief and television news anchor for GBC, "It is not uncommon to do self-censorship so that a government in power would not mark you out as sympathetic to the opposing." The vicarious hand of proprietors and political/financial lackeys is also all too visible in the nature of stories published by the media. The panel noted, in particular, a high incidence of political propaganda-inspired coverage, especially during the peak of the December 2008 election campaigns.

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Furthermore, the panel noted that apart from a few iconic figures in the profession, most journalists are paid a pittance. This leads to a high dependence on pseudo-news stories—described by Agbenu as "he-said, she-said newsgathering and reporting." To a large extent, it is the profession's low remunerations that the political power brokers and commercial interest groups depend upon to exploit the media. In the words of Aday, "many journalists have resorted to 'stomach journalism' [and] compromise their independence and professionalism by being in bed with the political and business elites of the land." Vanderpuye also noted that "Because of low salaries, [some journalists] allow themselves to be used by political figures to settle personal scores." Not surprisingly, this indicator received the lowest average score.

Again this year, the panelists said that media content is dominated by programming that appeals to the lowest common denominator. Accordingly, there is more entertainment programming in the electronic media than news and information. Larbi said, "Entertainment seems to be gaining more air time than news because it is a major source of revenue to the media organizations—reality shows, sports, soap operas, drama, and music videos" seem to hold the most appeal for audiences.

The majority of the private press houses are poorly funded, single-owner outlets that operate with the very barest of equipment and resources—perhaps a couple of computers and recorders, but no more. What little equipment exists is certainly neither modern nor efficient. And with respect to the broadcast media, the state-owned GBC seems to suffer the greatest from resource shortages. Vanderpuye commented, "You sometimes have to wait in line to edit a story before going on air at 7:00 pm, creating a lot of tension... When Elizabeth Ohene, a former BBC journalist and minister of state in the NPP regime, saw our equipment, she commented that she thought our equipment belonged in a museum."

Niche reporting is relatively rare, partially on account of the low professional capacity of practitioners, partially on account of the low institutional capacity of newspapers in supporting specialized desks or beats, and partially because most journalists tend to gravitate toward politics.

Sarpong said, "There are multiple sources but very little diversity."

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Ghana Objective Score: 2.33

The panelists concluded that collectively, the media present a multiplicity of perspectives from a plurality of news sources. There is a plurality of avenues to facilitate the expression of varied views on issues of public interest. This optimism must be qualified, however; as such plurality does not necessarily always amount to a diversity of opinions. Sarpong said, "There are multiple sources but very little diversity." This is also partially due to the fact that most newspapers are partisan and report from a tunnel-vision perspective. Adaye noted, "Too many news stories appear to promote business and vested interests," with the effect that "The various news bulletins all sound like a chorus." Larweh also pointed out that most private newspapers and broadcast stations are mostly located within, and promote the interests of, urban city dwellers, to the relative exclusion of the majority rural populations. In addition, most private media do not send correspondents to all the regions of the country, much less internationally. Adaye added that too many news organizations tend to cull their international stories from the BBC and other open-access Internet portals.

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.

The panel also acknowledged the significant presence of international broadcast media organizations (including BBC, CNN, RFI, VOA, DW, and Al Jazeera)—available either as subscription channels or through partnerships with local media outfits. A number of international mainstream newsmagazines (including *The Economist*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Financial Times*, and *Mirror*) are found easily in supermarkets and gas stations.

Although the constitution seeks to insulate the media from political and other sectarian control (Article 162) and obliges the state media in particular to allow a diversity of shades of views (Article 163), panel members did not think that these provisions were necessarily being adhered to in practice; it cannot be said that state/public media reflect alternative views in their output or serve the public interest. Faibille underlined the largely partisan nature of most media outlets, including the state media, and Sarpong added that "There appears to be a strong influence of ownership on editorial content."

There is only one official indigenous wire service, the Ghana News Agency. Established in 1957, it has struggled to survive because of financial hardship. A number of international news-gathering services, such as Reuters and AP, are available by subscription to broadcast and print outlets in the country.

Broadcast media generally produce their own programs. There are, in fact, more than 20 independent production companies that principally produce sponsored television infomercials, documentaries, and live shows. Notable among them are Charterhouse Productions, Channel 2 Productions, Sparrow Productions, Eagle Productions, Village Communication, Premier Productions, Point Blank Media Concept, Deltrack, and Bullseye.

The ownership of media outlets is a matter of public record, accessible both at the Registrar General's department and at the two regulatory institutions in the country (the NMC and the NCA). Indeed, media owners have little reason to disguise their stakeholder interests in the media, since the constitution provides that "there shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media" (Article 162 (3)). The panel observed a growing trend of multiple ownerships and affiliations in the FM radio sector but did not yet see sufficient grounds for concern about the negative consequences of conglomerations. They generally saw the development as a product of the need for market presence.

There is only one local-language newspaper, the *Graphic Nsempa*, with limited circulation within Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti region of Ghana. On the other hand, the broadcast media provide substantial avenues for local-language programming.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Ghana Objective Score: 2.02

Although this objective slipped slightly from last year's MSI score, at the indicator level, the changes were not dramatic. The panelists viewed the business management progress of broadcast media outlets much more optimistically than the print media. Newspapers, they believe, are largely tied to the apron strings of their political benefactors and sympathizers. Panel members described the Ghanaian media as a "cottage industry." Adae said that many media outlets are essentially run by one person. Consequently, very little strategic management or evidence-based projections about medium- or long-term prospects is seen. Aside from the predominant reliance on a shrinking advertising pie, only a few broadcast stations (and to a limited extent, the state-owned *Daily Graphic*) have explored alternative revenue sources such as sponsorships, promotions, special events, and sales of kits to improve their profit margins.

Alongside the liberalization of the media market, many local advertising outlets—large and small—have sprung up. However, there is an observable lack of professional creativity or sophistication and, according to Adae, growing evidence of conflict of interests. He explained that, contrary to the Code of Advertising Practice developed by the Advertising Association of Ghana, "Many media organizations also own or control ad agencies, either directly or indirectly. This does not bode well for the industry, since it creates complex conflict-of-interest situations and also greatly obfuscates the playing field."

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.

Adae said that many media outlets are essentially run by one person. Consequently, very little strategic management or evidence-based projections about medium- or long-term prospects is seen.

The independent media in Ghana do not benefit from any state or parliamentary appropriation or fund set up for the purpose of subsidizing the industry. Most broadcast stations rely almost exclusively on advertising revenue. But, owing to the fierce competition to attract advertising, most of these outlets are pressured into cutting their ad rates and thus have to fill up their advertising breaks with many advertisements—which, the panelists said, are inordinately long.

With respect to government advertising, however, the panel concluded that political patronage, more than considerations of management efficiency or professional quality, defined the ability of various outlets to mobilize this source of revenue. Furthermore, some nongovernmental advertisers would be wary of advertising in certain newspapers for fear of being branded politically.

There are no universally subscribed media ratings services in Ghana. In their bid to position themselves as widely circulating advertising vehicles, some media organizations occasionally commission circulation assessments and audience profiles, but, of course, the credibility of their figures is suspect, compromised by their vested interests. Faibille commented, "In Ghana, everybody lies about their circulation," underlining the need for an independent auditing bureau to verify claims. The panel estimated that for some newspapers, unsold copies probably constitute 50 percent of total print runs, which might not exceed 5,000 copies per edition in most cases.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Ghana Objective Score: 2.56

Objective 5 earned the highest score, reflecting the continued commitment by journalists and media operators to organize around associations of common interests and promote the goals and aspirations of their members. In addition to the GJA, there are other associations and affiliations of media and communication practitioners, such as the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association, the Ghana Community Radio Network, the Institute of Public Relations, the

Some of the panelists traced the mediocre adherence to professional standards to what they consider the low standards of Ghana's journalism training institutions. More in-service training programs are needed to help fill the gaps, they believe.

Advertisers Association of Ghana, the Film Makers Guild, the Association of Women in the Media, Women in Broadcasting, the Internet Society of Ghana, the West Africa Journalists Association, the Sports Writers Association of Ghana, the Sports Broadcasters Association, the Environmental Club of Journalists, the Economic and Financial News Reporters Association, the Association of Past Broadcasters, the Communication Workers Union, and the Ghana Association of Writers. All these unions and associations work to preserve their professional integrity and to advocate the interests and welfare of their members.

Several media and advocacy NGOs have been pivotal to strengthening media freedom and advancing professional development of journalists. Notable among them are the MFWA, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the GJA, and the other associations of media practitioners. As noted in last year's report, the MFWA and Friedrich Ebert Foundation have provided financial and technical assistance—with an emphasis on support for journalists' associations and for rural media. The NGO community has also supported the media community with publications on media-rights violations and standards of professional and ethical practice.

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.

Journalism students can choose from at least a dozen accredited media/communication and journalism training institutions in Ghana. Some of the programs offered include the graduate School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, the Ghana Institute of Journalism, African Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication, National Film and Television Institute, Manifold Academy, Jayee Professional Institute, and the Ghana Telecom University College. Access to these training institutions is fairly open; the conditions are comparable to the general admission requirements for other secondary or tertiary institutions in Ghana. As these institutions continue to mushroom, however, the panel members expressed concern about their potential to work against efforts to improve professional standards in the country. Some of the panelists traced the mediocre adherence to professional standards to what they consider the low standards of Ghana's journalism training institutions. More in-service training programs are needed to help fill the gaps, they believe.

According to the panelists, newsprint production and printing distribution facilities are very much driven by economic interests, and they are absolutely free from political interferences or restrictions. Urban areas have plenty of printing facilities, but there are not enough to serve rural segments. Newspapers often take more than 24 hours to reach some parts of the country. Limited television coverage also excludes a large segment of the citizenry from being well-informed and participating fully in the decisions affecting national governance. To address these concerns, some of the panelists would like to see state support by way of subsidies, tax rebates, or logistics support to private investors who might be interested in helping to build up the media infrastructure in rural communities.

List of Panel Participants

Samuel A. Bartels, radio broadcast journalist and television program host, Accra

Kofi Larweh, training officer, Ghana Community Radio Network, Ada

Egbert Faibille, lawyer, publisher and editor-in-chief, *The Ghanaian Observer*, Accra

Eric K. Adae, president, Evolve Limited, Accra

George Sarpong, executive secretary, National Media Commission, Accra

Dave Agbenu, vice president, Ghana Journalists Association, Accra

Loretta Vanderpuye, editor-in-chief and television news anchor, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Accra

Abigail Larbi, assistant editor, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation radio, Accra

Timothy Quashigah, lecturer, Ghana Institute of Journalism, Accra

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