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## MOZAMBIQUE

**A**lthough the 2009 MSI assessment reflects some improvements in certain aspects of Mozambique's media environment, there are still areas of concern and backsliding. Although the constitution of Mozambique is progressive, legislation not in keeping with that spirit remains in force, and there are critical legal gaps. According to the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) report *So This Is Democracy? 2009*, "The nonexistence of a Right to Information Law is by far the most striking gap in the legal landscape."<sup>1</sup> Many government officials completely ignore nongovernmental media when it comes to information requests. The panelists called for more legal support to the media to draft legislation to ensure that the intent of the constitution is upheld.

Independent press outlets face key challenges and stiff competition from the state media. In addition to greater obstacles in accessing information, the independent media are financially insecure and must compete with publicly funded outlets for limited advertising dollars. This has also proved to be an editorially compromising situation for the independents, which succumb to self-censorship to satisfy demands from their advertisers. The panelists also called for improvements in adherence to professional standards and financial management practices, which they traced to the lack of resources plaguing the press.

Although the government does not block access to news, there are other obstacles, including cost and geography. Independent media are a very urban phenomenon, and it does not extend across the country. Rural residents depend primarily on radio, but there are still too few rural community radio and television stations, and they are plagued by regular equipment breakdowns and low-capacity electrical grids. Although the Internet is almost nonexistent in the districts, cell phone coverage is expanding rapidly, and SMS text messaging is revolutionizing the information sector. Blogging has emerged as a forum to discuss even sensitive topics.

Therefore, despite many positive advances for Mozambique's media in terms of plurality and unrestricted access, serious shortcomings persist, which affect the independent press and rural citizens disproportionately.

<sup>1</sup> Media Institute of Southern Africa. *So This Is Democracy? 2009*. <http://www.misa.org/researchandpublication/democracy/democracy.html> (Accessed October 10, 2010)

# MOZAMBIQUE AT A GLANCE

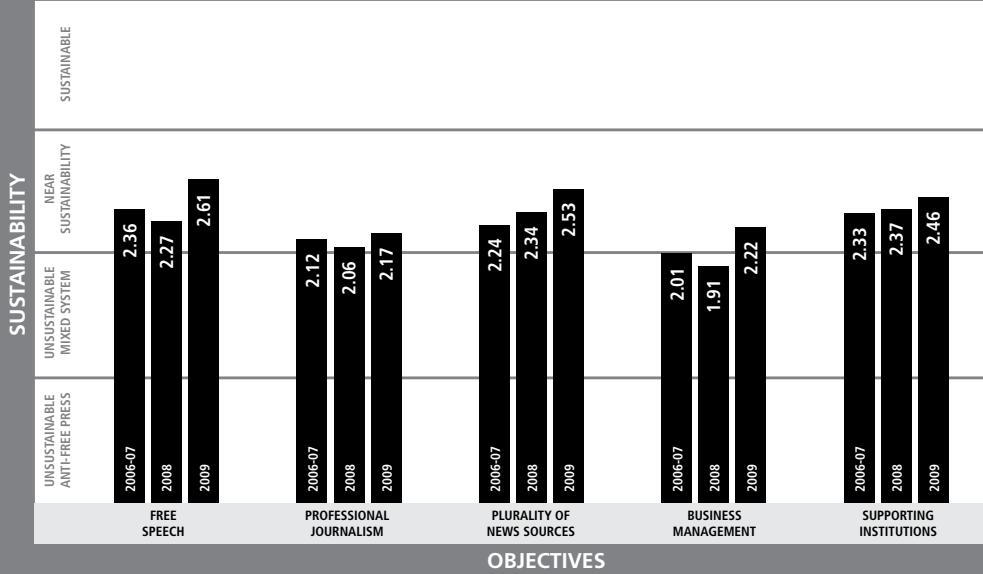
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 22,061,451 (July 2010 est., CIA World Factbook)
- > **Capital city:** Maputo
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** African 99.66% (Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, Sena, and others), European 0.06%, Euro-African 0.2%, Indian 0.08% (CIA World Factbook)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Catholic 23.8%, Muslim 17.8%, Zionist Christian 17.5%, other 17.8%, none 23.1% (1997 census, CIA World Factbook)
- > **Languages (% of population):** Emakhuwa 26.1%, Xichangana 11.3%, Portuguese 8.8% (official; spoken by 27% of population as a second language), Elomwe 7.6%, Cisena 6.8%, Echuwabo 5.8%, other Mozambican languages 32%, other foreign languages 0.3%, unspecified 1.3% (1997 census, CIA World Factbook)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$9.962 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$880 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 47.8% (male 63.5%, female 32.7%) (2003 est., CIA World Factbook)
- > **President or top authority:** President Armando Guebuza (since February 2, 2005)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 263 total; Radio: 88, including community stations; Television Stations: 5
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Mozambican Information Agency (Agência de Informação de Moçambique; state-run); GMGmedia (private)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 350,000 (2008 est., CIA World Factbook)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MOZAMBIQUE



**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

### Mozambique Objective Score: 2.61

The constitution of the Republic of Mozambique and Law 18/91 of August 10, 1991 (the Press Law) detail explicit intent to promote and protect free speech and access to public information. The existing laws conform to international standards, particularly those of the African Union<sup>2</sup> and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).<sup>3</sup> Mozambique's High Media Council (*Conselho Superior da Comunicação Social*), a state body, guarantees, among other things, the freedom of expression, the independence of news and information bodies and their professional staff, and also the right to be heard on air and the right of reply. There are other civil-society organizations and professional associations that help protect media freedom and the freedom of expression, opinion, and access to information for all Mozambicans.

Carlos Coelho, a journalist and jurist, and chairman of the board of *Wampula*, a fax newspaper in Nampula, Mozambique's third-largest city, said, "In Mozambique, the constitution and other legislation guarantee and protect free speech and access to public information. Apart from a few cases that may violate these principles, either because of a lack of knowledge on the part of public servants and society in general, or by simple abuse of power by government officials, those laws are applied." However, he noted, "Some press legislation is out of step with current reality; for example, the Press Law has been in existence for almost two decades without being updated."

In one 2009 example, officials leaned on the Law on State Secrets to protect their personal interests in a case brought by a former prime minister against *Zambeze*, an independent Portuguese-language weekly, in a dispute that lasted from 2008 through 2009. Two editors and a reporter were sentenced to prison—later reduced to fines—for raising questions about the prime minister's nationality.

Florentino Escova Chassafar, a member of the High Media Council and director of Radio Terra Verde, expressed the view—backed by other panelists—that the way cases related to crimes of abuse and violation of media freedom had been handled in 2009 revealed ignorance of the law on the part of journalists. Also, many judges did not make the link

<sup>2</sup> African Charter on Broadcasting (2001) and the (Banjul) Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002).

<sup>3</sup> SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport (2000) and the (Blantyre) Declaration on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (2001), to cite only the most significant.

among the various legal provisions, namely the Press Law, the constitution, etc.

Glória Muianga, a journalist and member of the Board of Radio Mozambique, a state-owned entity, added that although there are few crimes against press freedom in Mozambique, when they occur they are investigated very slowly. Alfredo Libombo, journalist and executive director of MISA-Mozambique in Maputo, commented that journalists often receive death threats. In one of the most widely publicized cases in 2009, the former governor of Tete province made death threats against a journalist at the Portuguese-language daily newspaper *Notícias*, based in Tete city, on three separate occasions. The newspaper made no public statements about the case to show solidarity with its staff member, although the High Media Council produced a resolution condemning the governor's actions.

On the other hand, Coelho described cases when journalists seemed to feel above the law and were either unaware of or chose to ignore basic standards of professional conduct. For example, a Nampula journalist was summoned to court but, without an explanation, failed to appear at his trial. Isaías Natal, a delegate of MISA-Mozambique and journalist at Portuguese-language weekly *O Magazine Independente*, gave another example. He described the case of Vasco da Gama, another journalist from Nampula, which generated great interest in the media. According to Natal, da Gama ended up being found guilty because he had underestimated the court's willingness to consider the case against him. That case

## 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.

*The panelists agreed that community outlets deserve special treatment but argued that private outlets should be on an equal footing with public-sector outlets in terms of market entry.*

also exposed the unfamiliarity of some judges, lawyers, and prosecutors with the Press Law.

Palmira Velasco, journalist and chair of the Association of Mozambican Women in the Media (*Associação das Mulheres Moçambicanas na Comunicação Social* or AMMCS), said the public does protest abuses of the press, as seen with the case of the "Muecate Mechanic," Aiuba Assane, who faced charges for defamation after speaking his mind about a local administrator.

As found in previous MSI studies, the print media continue to enjoy a much smoother licensing process than broadcast outlets. Various institutions are involved in the licensing process for radio and television stations in Mozambique. The Council of Ministers approves the granting of licenses to radio and television operators, while the Mozambican National Communications Institute (*Instituto Nacional das Comunicações de Moçambique*) controls frequency allocations for radio and television and the technological aspects of frequency utilization, in addition to other powers conferred on it by law. GABINFO (the Information Bureau), tasked with oversight of public-sector operators, coordinates the government's communications strategy and issues licenses for all mass media operators after they are approved by the Council of Ministers. Meanwhile, the High Media Council monitors media content for compliance with professional standards and ethics; it also responds to abuses of press freedom, breaches of the Press Law, and offenses against social ethics and public morality. Finally, the Ministry of Trade and Industry approves and issues licenses to advertising operators, although it is not considered responsible for content.

There is a specific process for dealing with community and private radio stations. The panelists said that in practice, licenses are never refused, because at every step in the process applicants are given the chance to correct any anomalies. By the time license applications reach the Council of Ministers, they have undergone extensive review. Even so, panelists expressed the view that licensing was not fair, because the public channels (Mozambican Television and Radio Mozambique) let their licenses lapse and were not pressured to comply, whereas private media outlets face stiff requirements for keeping licenses up-to-date.

Chassafar said domestic and foreign media alike encounter no difficulties in obtaining licenses, although he believes that foreign stations with signals that are free to air in Mozambique ought to be licensed separately. However, Coelho said that licensing is a complex process in Mozambique; according to him, it is difficult to open a radio station, especially compared with procedures in print media. Thus, Coop-Norte, owner of two newspapers (one tabloid and one online) reported no difficulties in obtaining either license. However, it ran up against difficulties getting its radio station licensed; it had been waiting over 10 months for a frequency.

In terms of market entry, the panelists were somewhat divided. Some considered the entry requirements no different than for other activities, which they viewed as a positive feature. Others said that while the media are indeed businesses, they ought not to be viewed purely as such: they should be treated in a way that allows people to exercise their right of access to information.

Velasco pointed to the diversity of the existing outlets as evidence that the procedures for opening up a news outlet are fair and competitive, with no preferential treatment for political reasons. She recognized that there are some restrictions that are either invisible or camouflaged but could be seen in the high rates of duty on raw materials such as newsprint, and on radio and television equipment.

In that regard, preferential treatment for the public media is indeed apparent, Velasco said. The panelists said also that the Press Law protects the national public media to ensure they receive the greatest market share. Muianga agreed that there are great disparities in taxation, with the public-sector media receiving better treatment than the private media, explained by its mission to provide a public service. The panelists agreed that community outlets deserve special treatment but argued that private outlets should be on an equal footing with public-sector outlets in terms of market entry.

Libombo argued that it is unfair that media owners are treated no differently under the tax structure than food vendors, when the media perform a public-service function and help to combat Mozambique's high illiteracy rate. For example, the panelists suggested that the media ought to receive discounts on the rate of duty on imports of paper.

Natal and Muiana, along with Sílvia Afonso, a journalist and provincial delegate of the Media Institute (*Instituto de Comunicação Social*), emphasized that there were no murders of journalists, but journalists have suffered from physical attacks, intimidation, harassment, and threats, which gave rise to the fear that attacks could escalate into something more serious. In 2009, several cases were recorded, including a physical attack in Sofala during a visit by the Mozambican

National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana or RENAMO) party leader; beatings in Nampula; imprisonment of a journalist in Dondo; and invasion of a community radio station by the administrator and police commander in Marromeu (in central Mozambique, on the Zambezi River). Natal added that although they were infrequent, the cases that did occur involved threats and intimidation. Generally, powerful people choose to respond with threats when journalists are on the trail of material that could compromise them politically, economically, or socially.

Manuel Matola, a journalist at the Lusa news agency newsroom in Maputo, described many instances of journalists hauled into court but noted that, in almost all cases, their jail sentences were converted into fines.

The panelists agreed unanimously that the law does not provide for preferential treatment for public or state representatives and that the public media's editorial independence is theoretically protected. In practice, however, the panelists said there is no such thing as editorial independence for the public media. Comparing public outlets with the private, the panelists agreed with Matola and Tomás Vieira Mário, journalist, jurist, and media consultant, chairman of the board of MISA-Mozambique, and executive director of Panos Mozambique, Maputo, to the effect that those in power are not treated objectively. In addition, officials are not equally available to the private and public media. In general, they treat private outlets as though they are of secondary importance. Furthermore, the degree of independence varies from outlet to outlet depending on various factors, such as the history of each outlet, its institutional solidity, and the professional competence of its journalists, among other things.

In Mozambique, press libel is not just a civil law issue, but a criminal law issue as well. In some cases, jail sentences are handed down but converted into fines.

Libombo said that defamation charges bring many journalists before the court. In Mozambique, he observed, there is a climate of tension between journalists and the judicial authorities, which he said appears to have realized that the judiciary is the sole entity in Mozambique with the power to silence journalists. Within a single month, three journalists had been tried in the northern province of Nampula on charges of defamation. One of the journalists had been taken to court by the leader of the political opposition, the chairman of the RENAMO party, Afonso Dhlakama. The burden of proof rests on the defendants, as demonstrated by various cases in Nampula. The panelists did note, however, that Internet service providers are not held liable for Internet content.

Afonso concluded that under Mozambican law, libel is indeed treated as a crime. One of the Nampula cases demonstrated this clearly when a journalist was obliged to produce the anonymous source of his article at court. The ruling was clearly against paragraph 1 of article 30 of the Press Law, which recognizes journalists' right to professional secrecy concerning the origins of the information that they publish or transmit, and states that silence on their part cannot be punished in any way.<sup>4</sup> The panelists also noted that disputes about the concept of anonymous sources and principles of providing evidence in legal proceedings involving journalists proved to be major obstacles; it is evident that neither the journalists nor the courts knew the law.

Regarding access to public information, Vieira Mário observed that although the Press Law stipulates that journalists should be provided with access to official sources of information, access is complicated by the government's culture of secrecy and the lack of a law on access to information held by public entities. Libombo recalled that in 2005, MISA-Mozambique submitted a preliminary draft law on access to information. The document had been put together with broad participation by civil society, but, because of a lack of political will, it had not been tabled and debated by parliament. Libombo concluded that with far-reaching corruption, those in power feared they might be compromised if the text were passed. He further noted that without an access-to-information law, the government is essentially exempt from any obligation to provide the people with any public information.

Even though politicians have paid lip service to providing effective freedom-of-information guarantees,<sup>5</sup> in practice it is very difficult to obtain public information. Trying to obtain information from official sources, journalists sometimes hear the excuse that higher-ups did not provide authorization to release a particular piece of information. Although several organizations have advocated for greater access to information, including the National Union of Journalists, MISA-Mozambique, and other human-rights organizations, the panelists said that journalists in both the public and the private sectors have rarely shown any real resolve to fight for greater access.

MISA's *So This Is Democracy?* report also noted that a Right to Information survey was conducted in Mozambique, analyzing

<sup>4</sup> The Press Law is available (in Portuguese) through the government portal at <http://www.portaldogoverno.gov.mz/Legisla/legisSectores/imprensa/>.

<sup>5</sup> See statement by the deputy minister of education and culture, Luís Covane, that the government of Mozambique "firmly and vehemently condemns all acts that attack press freedom," on the occasion of the launch, March 12, 2009, of the Annual Report on the State of Press Freedom in Mozambique by MISA-Mozambique. In *So This Is Democracy? 2009*, p.76.

the handling of information requests at four ministries and state agencies. "The results bore out the slow pace, or even complete inefficiency in most of these institutions." The report noted that only one of the four "responded to a request within a reasonable period of time."<sup>6</sup>

Coelho concluded that the press culture among agents of state authorities is weak. Many state leaders choose not to divulge information of public interest. Additionally, in some public institutions, ignorance concerning the Press Law and the role of journalists has led to poor relations with journalists. He added that the lack of press spokespersons or consultants also stands in the way of peoples' right to information.

As in previous MSI studies, the panelists agreed unanimously that the government does not restrict access to international news or news sources. Cost, however, is a prohibitive factor; Matola noted that Mozambican outlets lack the financial resources to pay for content published by the news agencies, making it very difficult to obtain foreign news. However, Internet access is growing in Mozambique's newsrooms, as seen with the Lusa News Agency. There is no specific legislation for controlling foreign publications or publications in foreign languages.

In Mozambique, there are no restrictions or licensing requirements for entry into the journalism profession. Similarly, a license is not required to cover events, other than press credentials, which can be obtained without any particular difficulty. The rights and duties of journalists are set forth in the Press Law and are no different from international standards. The government does not control entry onto journalism courses; the requirements for entry into journalism courses are academic in nature. In addition, the government does not use a definition to exclude journalists from reporting; there was no influence by political interests or by the government on the hiring of journalists, and political interests did not play a role in the hiring of journalists.

However, again this year, the panelists expressed regret over the lack of a clear and unequivocal definition of a journalist. In last year's MSI study, José Guerra, chair of Miramar Communication, noted that in Mozambique, journalism is still viewed as a profession for people who could not get jobs in other sectors; he felt that an official system of accrediting journalists could boost the reputation of journalists. Lobão João Mauele, journalist and subeditor at *Diário de Moçambique* (a national Portuguese-language daily newspaper headquartered in Beira), expressed the belief that the failure to bring in proper press cards for professional journalists opens up possibilities for press freedom to be abused.

<sup>6</sup> MISA. *So This Is Democracy?* 2009. p. 70.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Mozambique Objective Score: 2.17

According to the panelists, many reporters fail to check their facts or consult multiple sources. Vieira Mário said that the quality of journalism is generally low, except for the principal newspapers and Radio Mozambique, the public radio channel. Some journalism is apparently based on rumors, and there are only poor attempts at investigative journalism. According to Libombo, basic standards are not followed, such as consulting the parties before publication of an article. Many journalists make excuses, such as, "We are trying to get through to the cell phone number, but they didn't pick up, or it was saying, 'Not within network range.'"

One change in the past year is that more journalists have gained higher academic credentials and solid professional training, but even so the picture has not improved significantly. There has been some progress in the area of community radio broadcasting, with expansion in the network of community radio stations—but without any concomitant increase in the level of professionalism. For example, there are more than 50 community radio stations on the air in Mozambique, but journalism is taught only in public educational institutions in Maputo.

However, Coelho offered a more upbeat assessment, noting improvement in this area; he said that journalists are becoming perceptibly more responsible in Mozambique. Various news outlets strive to put out a high-quality product for their readers, listeners, or viewers. Even so, Coelho accepted that in some cases, the media publish information of a sensationalist stamp, without any investigation

## 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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whatsoever—attention-grabbing stuff to “sell newspapers.” That very problem also drags down ethical and professional conduct in journalism.

There is a code of ethics that is in line with international standards to guide journalists in Mozambique. Another text on ethics that proved helpful is the Code of Conduct for Covering Elections, approved in 2008 as a self-regulatory instrument. Nevertheless, Escova Chassafar said that journalists do not always follow international ethical and professional standards, precisely because most of them did not receive proper training, and some are not familiar with the Press Law. Others break the Press Law with full awareness, at the behest of their bosses. Natal deplored owners and publishers of various media outlets who accept vast sums of money from powerful business or political players to suppress news that could compromise them. Another ethically compromising issue is that many journalists conduct press consultancy work for companies or political parties, which in principle is not compatible with the profession.

Velasco agreed that recognized ethical standards are not always followed; she believes the problem can be explained in part by a lack of access to information, and also because the code of conduct for journalists has not been sufficiently publicized among media professionals.

Self-censorship is common, particularly in public radio and television. Matola stressed that Mozambique has no official law aimed at imposing censorship. However, there is a general perception among media professionals that media outlets excel at self-censorship, because they are dependent typically on various economic or political interests. Coelho said that self-censorship is a serious problem in Mozambique, not only among journalists but also among editors. Muianga agreed that self-censorship exists: each journalist must assess how far he or she could go in divulging all the information in his or her possession. Libombo said that in his opinion, self-censorship is practiced in many cases to please the authorities or commercial interests. Elisa Martins, journalist and head of the Department of Project and Event Planning for Television Mozambique, said that the truth of the matter is that some journalists avoid certain subjects likely to upset people with business or political clout.

The panelists concluded that by law, journalists may cover any and every type of event without restrictions. Any limitations often have more to do with the lack of technical, human, and financial means. However, journalists tend to prioritize coverage of the government’s activities at all levels (central, provincial, district, etc.). There is little in-depth reporting on subjects of interest to or about the lives of average people, and news coverage generally does not extend to the whole country, instead focusing on events in Maputo and key

cities. Reporters tend to gravitate toward more political and, sometimes, sensationalist subjects that are considered more attractive commercially. There is a heavy preponderance of official sources, such as news from the government, parliament, and the party in power.

The panelists concurred that pay levels for journalists, as for those in other professions, such as teachers, doctors, and lawyers working in the public and state sectors, are extremely low, regardless of the level of training, performance, and/or seniority. In addition, there are wage disparities within the sector—even among public companies. The known exceptions are Television Mozambique, Radio Mozambique, and *Notícias*, but there are even sharp wage disparities among those three. Furthermore, many journalists work without contracts. Escova Chassafar said that because journalists are paid so poorly, many of them sell favorable articles to boost their incomes, or they look for second jobs with companies, political parties, or leaders, which creates conflicts of interest.

Libombo and Martins affirmed resoundingly that such low wages invite corruption, mainly in the independent media. Afonso took a somewhat different stance, postulating that not just salaries, but weak oversight in Mozambique over compliance with the legislation, combined with inadequate training, render journalists vulnerable to acts of corruption, stories lacking journalistic rigor, and sensationalism.

Although she agreed that journalists’ pay is unsatisfactory, Velasco attributes the low salaries, and the disparity in journalists’ salaries in the private and the public sectors, to the state subsidies for public media. Matola said that even though the National Union of Journalists may not agree that low salaries promote corruption, it ought to be more active on this question. There really is a disparity between the salaries paid to public/state media journalists and private/independent media journalists, he said, and that situation must change if journalists want to see the Mozambican media landscape improve.

Coelho noted that some private outlets manage to pay less than the minimum salary set by law in Mozambique. He blamed this on the financial weakness of the media companies in question, with the result that their journalists become easy to corrupt. He cited cases in which journalists accepted bribes to drop an investigative report. In other cases, journalists sought free travel—paid for by parties seeking more news coverage—and supplements to their salaries.

Muianga commented that as a result of the poor pay, many journalists are leaving the profession.

In keeping with the 2008 MSI assessment, the panelists recognized that entertainment programming does in fact eclipse news and information programming at many media

outlets. Libombo said, "There is a growing trend toward sensationalism. The newspapers publish only what they say will sell." According to the panelists, although there are no reliable research studies or polls on balance in radio or television programming, anyone can see that entertainment is taking up more and more programming space—even in the public media. They blame the quest for advertising, which is supplied by major companies, principally the cellular telephone companies. In fact, some radio and television stations systematically alter their news programming to fit in with entertainment programs and soccer games.

Coelho shared his impression that journalistic responsibility and quality are improving in Mozambique, including efforts to balance news, advertising, and entertainment space, but financial difficulties sometimes lead to breaches of the balance principle.

In terms of facilities and equipment, Escova Chassafar remarked that not all media have the necessary technical resources for their journalists to do their work—particularly private and community stations. Radio transmitters have been installed but stations are not armed with other necessary equipment. Furthermore, what they do have is not maintained, and journalists are not trained properly on the equipment.

Velasco explained to the panel that generally, each media outlet creates its own technical working conditions, from news production to distribution. There is no common printing press that could serve all the private newspapers. The community media lack training, press centers, and proper infrastructure and equipment. Community information outlets, specifically community multimedia centers and community radio and television stations, simply do not have access to professional equipment and accessories that could ensure higher program quality and greater sustainability.

Regarding the media's access to new technologies, the unanimous position was that there was no way to overcome the existing difficulties or meet the challenge of technological renewal by 2012 without getting rid of the barriers to obtaining foreign capital.

The panelists reported that there is some high-quality investigative niche journalism (e.g., on the economy) and some commercial, local, and political work—but it is not enough to make much impact. Furthermore, the content of journalists' pieces is predominantly opinion, news at length, and transcriptions of financial reports or texts from the Internet. On the broadcast side, interactive programs continue to dominate—with heavy dependence on commentaries from guests and a notable absence of journalists' reportage or investigative work.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Mozambique Objective Score: 2.53

All the panelists endorsed the view that in Mozambique, there is a plurality of news sources, from printed newspapers, radio stations, and television stations to electronic media. Muanga commented, "The principal source of news for Mozambicans is Radio Mozambique, which, although it still falls short of the desired degree of coverage, is established throughout the country." On that point, Velasco said despite unbalanced distribution over the country, it is true that there is a diversity of media—although Martins noted that some of those sources are not reliable and are far from objective. Coelho also questioned whether there are enough news sources to allow people to draw comparisons, and that target rural areas as well as urban. However, freedom of expression is evident, and people are not restricted from sharing their views.

Although the government does not block access to sources, including international news, there are other obstacles to access. Generally speaking, the private press is a very urban phenomenon, and it does not cover the whole country. Although most media outlets are based in the capital, community broadcast stations and multimedia centers in the districts are increasingly adding their voices to the mix. SMS text messaging has revolutionized the information sector, unlocking public participation in the media. Although only a small part of the urban population turns to the Internet for news and information, Internet access is increasing steadily—

#### 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.

at least in the capital and other large cities. In blogs, even sensitive topics are discussed, although the panelists said that blogs and text messaging are not yet considered trustworthy ways to obtain information.

Rural areas offer far fewer news options. Rural residents depend primarily on radio—although with technical and financial limitations, rural community media still provide limited coverage. There are still too few rural community radio and television stations, and they are plagued by regular equipment breakdowns and low-capacity electrical grids. The Internet is almost nonexistent in the districts. Cell phone coverage is expanding rapidly, opening the door for SMS text messaging as a means of sharing news.

According to Muianga, while Mozambicans are free to access all types of information, both domestic and international, the percentage of the population that can pay for private media is tiny when the standard of living is taken into account. As Coelho noted, few people would prioritize buying a newspaper rather than food. Muianga commented, “Affordability is generally the greatest obstacle for accessing the media, the Internet, and services via satellite, cable, and other paying support media.” Libombo agreed that access is quite modest, as the overwhelming majority of the population is poor and illiterate. He noted that for a country with a population of a little more than 20 million, all its newspapers combined report sales of under 500,000 copies a week. Television is still considered a luxury. Radio, particularly public radio, is the most accessible medium—because it is relatively cheap, but also because it broadcasts in various Mozambican languages.

The panel agreed that in Mozambique, there is still no true public media. Escova Chassafar said that by law, the state or public media are obligated to serve the public interest, and their journalists must be impartial. In practice, however, public media are influenced by the party in power. For example, public media board chairs are appointed by the prime minister based on his political confidence in them. The panelists agreed that most public-media editors and journalists are aware of their function to serve the public interest, but even so, they sometimes stray from that principle. The public outlets (Radio Mozambique and Television Mozambique) continue to be assessed in terms of financial costs and not in terms of how well they fulfilled their public-service mission. Compared with their coverage of the opposition, the public media spent more time talking about government activities and personalities, the party in power, and its leaders. Muianga said that media consumers have no way to control the public-media bodies, which live on government support, because there are no mechanisms for them to be accountable to the public.

Other panelists tempered this criticism somewhat. Martins argued that state media reflect the view of the whole political spectrum but lean more toward the political powers. Muianga said also that the state-owned media are improving, trying to quietly convey opinions and comments of other parties as well as the ruling party. In addition, Velasco said that the public media are not totally independent but, even so, are still open to various opinions and comments from other parties and the public. As much as space and financing allow, the public media tend to promote educational and cultural programs.

The government does not overtly interfere in the private media. In some districts, community radio stations are controlled by the administrators and other government structures, but as soon as the staff at those radio stations started receiving training on the legislation, they began to stand up for themselves, pointing to the Press Law and the Electoral Law to back up their arguments.

Mozambique has a state news agency, the Mozambican Information Agency (*Agência de Informação de Moçambique* or AIM), a government body accountable to the prime minister that distributes print information in a nondiscriminatory manner. There is also a private agency, GMGmedia. Velasco added that AIM provides feeds to the public media and, in particular, to Mozambican embassies abroad. However, many media organizations do not have the financial capacity to pay for the services provided by the news agencies. Journalists are aware of the principal international news agencies, but such sources appear to be used or cited only rarely.

Muianga observed that although some media outlets air news bulletins from other radio or television stations (BBC, Voice of America, etc.) on their frequencies, in general all stations, whether large or small, central or local, produce their own news bulletins. The independent media receive news and information from various sources, including government sources. Natal said, however, that independent radio broadcasters rely heavily on news bulletins imported from abroad at the expense of Mozambican cultural, social, and economic material, but conceded that some operators produce their own news bulletins.

The panelists commented that there is no legal means of finding out who owns private media, how much capital is invested in the business, and so on. As mentioned in the 2008 MSI study, “Along with pluralism has come the emergence of conglomerates, which account for a major portion of the private media sector. The Notícias Company has three print publications: a daily, a general-interest weekly, and a sports weekly; the SOICO Group has a daily newspaper, a radio station, and a television station; and Mediacoop has a weekly

paper and daily fax and e-mail newspapers and is preparing to launch a radio station.<sup>7</sup> Those three groups—the Notícias Company, the SOICO Group, and Mediacoop—offer three distinct points of view in reporting. Generally, control of the media is not independent, and, as Muianga put it, some media belonging to conglomerates could not be described as impartial. She also raised the concern that because of legislative shortcomings, Mozambicans do not know who the masters of the media are. The panelists also noted that the amount of foreign investment allowed by law (20 percent) is very small, which also limits financing options for the independent media and the number of potential investors from abroad.

Regarding the media's coverage of social and minority issues, Muianga and Martins agreed that sources of news in minority languages are presented. However, there are no media outlets dedicated especially to minorities. In any case, there is no record of repression against journalists who wrote about minority themes.

According to data shared by Vieira Mário, female sources continue to be under-represented compared with their male counterparts, even though women form 53 percent of the Mozambican population. The voices of elderly people are also neglected, along with residents from remote areas. Muianga said some subjects are not discussed with due openness, such as homosexuality, for various reasons. More socially inclusive media coverage could encounter resistance, not only because of legal provisions but also because of the mentality of the individuals with editorial power who are very often influenced by commercial and governmental forces, but first and foremost as a result of culturally based self-censorship.

#### OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

##### Mozambique Objective Score: 2.22

Libombo said that although the independent media have profit-generating potential, and might well be the most reliable news source for the public, they are the weakest sector in terms of finances and business management. Coelho noted that most private-sector newspapers and radio stations are owned by former journalists rather than entrepreneurs, and as a result most media enterprises lack professional management or business strategy. Even if media outlets could find someone capable of drawing up a business plan, they probably could not afford to hire them. As further evidence that independent media are not well-managed, Martins noted that some newspapers have had to cut pages, and

#### 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.

some radio broadcasters air reruns about half of the time. Furthermore, in the absence of a culture of publishing audit reports in either the private or the public sectors, it is not easy to determine whether private-media financial accounting systems are up to international standards.

Muianga felt that the independent print media have trouble generating profits because Mozambicans simply do not have very much purchasing power—nor the habit of reading newspapers and magazines.

However, Afonso said that the legal environment favoring freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Mozambique is slowly turning the independent media into competitive and well-managed businesses. Escova Chassafar added that prospects for the media to become sustainable depend on their ability to generate profits, not through sales of copies but through advertising.

As for state and community media, Velasco commented that in the state community broadcasting sector, not all management committees have the ability and the knowledge needed to manage the sector. The problem became more acute with the withdrawal of the UNESCO media-support project, which left behind no legacy of sustainability in community radio and television stations.

Subscriptions are the principal sources of revenue for the print media, followed by advertising, and the media do not receive revenue from a multitude of sources. The private media must mobilize the resources they need for themselves, through equity capital, advertising, and donors. Vieira Mário said, "The independent media are facing serious financial problems because the Mozambican market is very small."

<sup>7</sup> The Mediacoop radio station went on air in 2009.

Velasco commented that without a doubt, the private media survive on their own revenues or on international donations.

Escova Chassafar described funding for both the private media and community radio stations as chaotic; he noted that Media Institute managed community radio stations were forced to shut down through lack of funding. Afonso said that community radio stations have no operating capital and base their survival on advertising. The state allocates only a few salaried technical staff to facilitate the work carried out by the voluntary staff. Coupled with the poor professional quality of the community radio stations' human resources, and the scarcity of the sustainable material and financial means, the panelists raised the possibility that a draft radio broadcasting law under study should find ways to accommodate, in depth, the question of the sustainability of community radio stations.

On the public media side, advertising is declining as the principal source of revenue; public outlets, apart from their own equity capital, depend primarily on government subsidies. Radio Mozambique and Television Mozambique also had a program contract with the government, but the funds from that contract were insufficient and did not allow them either to hire capable personnel or to train the managers they already had on board to operate those companies on a profitable business footing. The Mozambican Information Agency and the Media Institute receive their annual budgets from the state's general budget.

Also, with the exception of the businesses under the *Notícias* umbrella, media businesses in general are not flourishing because there is not enough advertising (or rather, distribution of advertising is not balanced). Given the fragility of finances, all the media, without exception, could only make use of free news agency services, although the private media are affected most deeply. However, the panelists concluded that both the public and the private media suffer from influence exerted by their revenue sources.

Martins said that the independent media compromise their principles to survive financially, publishing information to satisfy the interests of certain investors or sponsors. Afonso said that judging by the nature and frequency of advertisements, commercial interests affect editorial independence of the independent media more than political interests. The panelists agreed that over the past few years, there has been an increasing degree of interference in the media by major companies—particularly cellular telephone companies, which supply much of the advertising revenue. Their interference is visible in the growing uniformity of programming; for example, all radio and television stations display singing and dancing competitions, sponsored exclusively by those companies.

At the community level, even though community media appear to be subdivided into different categories based on their source of support (the state, UNESCO, religious institutions, the Danish NGO IBIS, or domestic NGOs), they all experience some degree of government influence.

Muianga said that advertising agencies are not used very much because they are very expensive. Velasco said also that advertising agencies are biased to a certain extent; they work only with the media that had the highest circulations, preferring *Notícias*. In fact, as Libombo put it, advertising is concentrated in the capital, and the highest volume of advertising goes to *Notícias*, believed to have the highest circulation in Mozambique. *Notícias* is considered a public newspaper, although some panelists believe it has a degree of editorial independence. No system has been defined to ensure the equitable distribution of advertising between private and public media. In the provinces, there are no advertising agencies capable of obtaining advertising for the local media.

The volume of advertising in the media is growing in step with businesses, and advertising reflects some agreement on standards among businesses, advertising agencies, and the media. However, the panelists drew attention to the predominance of misleading advertising, promoted by mobile telephone companies, which sponsor all kinds of promotional events camouflaged as entertainment programs. Panelists expressed concern that advertising is eating up more space than information and educational material, especially on television. They surmised that many media outlets are not in a position to assert themselves when negotiating time allotted to advertisements, given that they have no other means of surviving.

Muianga said that advertising revenue is very low and quality is shrinking alongside quantity. However, Velasco clarified that in the outlets with higher circulation or listenership, advertising takes up more than 60 percent of space, whereas the private and lower-circulation media struggle to obtain advertising and do not manage to reach 20 percent advertising space.

Although the government subsidizes the state media, the government does not provide subsidies for the private media. The only publicly known exception panelists could think of were cases in which state officials brought private-media journalists along in their travels—principally abroad—and paid all travel, accommodation, and other personal expenses. Velasco noted that during the electoral campaign, public information outlets received subsidies to provide coverage, while the private media had to depend on international NGOs for support.

*Panelists expressed concern that advertising is eating up more space than information and educational material, especially on television.*

Although some panelists believe that radio and television audience figures are increasing, the panelists generally agreed that market research and studies are very rare and could not be taken seriously. Velasco claimed that there have been no studies released to the public concerning circulation or audience research. Coelho said that the few known pieces of market research were carried out by certain media companies to raise their profiles. The reliability of such research leaves much to be desired, panelists said.

Ranking radio broadcasting networks is the responsibility of the Mozambican National Communications Institute, the government agency that also oversees, among other things, the technical operating conditions for radio broadcasting, mobile telephony and telecommunications in general, and frequency allocations. Print newspapers and magazines are licensed and registered with GABINFO; by law, they must declare their circulations and display them on their covers. However, the panelists said there is no way to prove that the numbers are accurate. Coelho said that for the newspapers, their declared circulations are rarely in keeping with the actual number of copies printed.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Mozambique Objective Score: 2.46

There are few true trade associations. The Community Radio Broadcasting Forum, however, provides training and institutional support to its members. An association representing print media editors, the Forum of Editors, exists in name only. The sole association designed to stand up for the interests of media bosses, the Association of Journalistic Companies, fell silent years ago. Muianga pointed out the existence of advertising associations; the Association of Advertisers provides incentives to improve advertising and awards prizes.

To benefit journalists, there is the National Union of Journalists (known by its Portuguese acronym SNJ), which although not growing, is stable. "Professional associations that represent individual media practitioners do exist, namely the Association of Editors, the National Union of Journalists, and the Association of Mozambican Women in the Media,"

said Velasco, who added that they are not as effective as they might be, for lack of resources. Muianga said the journalists' rights are protected by the SNJ, and given the weakness of the dedicated NGOs, companies defend their professional staff. Muianga characterized SNJ as "practically inactive."

Martins noted that in addition to working to protect journalists' rights, professional associations help journalists by paying for training. Any journalist can join the professional associations, but in practice extremely few media professionals, particularly the independents, join.

Velasco said that associations provide short training courses and legal support, and pitch in with costs. Some of them are independent of the government, while others are to some extent influenced by the state.

In addition to the trade and professional associations, the panelists said that MISA-Mozambique is the most outstanding NGO in the media field.

In the view of the panelists, existing academic institutions do not provide adequate practical training. To date in the public sector, there is an intermediate college and an advanced course in journalism and related areas. Private-sector institutions offer courses in communications, but few students specialize in journalism. As in the intermediate journalism college, the most popular courses are in marketing, public relations, and others that carry a guarantee of a good position in the employment market. Natal expressed regret that journalism courses are offered only in Maputo; the few universities that operate in the provinces are private schools—which are very expensive. That, in his view, hinders the development of journalism.

## 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.

Escova Chassafar said that as a matter of fact, young people who want to enter the journalism profession through training as journalists are facing the problem of vacancies, which are scarce in public education, and the expense of applying to private schools holds them back from that route. Journalists with opportunities to train abroad tend to leave the profession when they return. It is also evident that many media organizations prefer to hire poorly trained young people so that they can pay them less. Consequently, knowing how poorly paid and insecure conditions are, qualified graduates avoid such organizations.

Velasco noted that there are organizations that promote short-term theoretical and practical courses, including UNESCO, the Nordic Journalism Center (NSJ)<sup>8</sup>, and MISA-Mozambique. MISA and NSJ have both offered exchange programs for journalists between southern Africa and the Nordic countries. These training programs enable participants to acquire new skills, and the most popular courses are on reporting, photo-journalism, gender, HIV-AIDS, radio production and reporting, and training of trainers. Afonso expressed concern about the type of training that being targeted at community media, because it places greater priority on thematic coverage than on the professional rigor that professional and volunteer personnel in those institutions need most.

The panelists recognized that newspaper production and distribution companies alike are de facto free and apolitical, and driven primarily by the goal of making a profit. There are two principal newspaper printers in Mozambique; one is owned by the Notícias Company, the other by SOICO (both private-sector organizations that operate with no governmental restrictions). Despite this context of freedom, Coelho underlined serious problems in printing newspapers. Domestic prices to print a tabloid newspaper in color are prohibitive, and the printing companies effectively constitute a duopoly. Natal noted that only Maputo and Beira offer facilities for newspaper printing. Velasco confirmed that there are private and unrestricted printing companies but said they are extremely expensive.

Also, according to the panelists, with the exception of the Notícias newspaper, the printed press does not have established distribution channels. Natal emphasized that whereas distribution was free from political and governmental interference, it is nonetheless deficient. Coelho said that each newspaper must undertake its own distribution and circulation-boosting work.

## List of Panel Participants

**Palmira Velasco**, journalist and chair, Association of Mozambican Women in the Media, Maputo

**Alfredo Libombo**, journalist; executive director, Media Institute of Southern Africa Mozambique chapter, Maputo

**Carlos Coelho**, jurist; journalist and chairman of the board, *Wampula*, Nampula

**Glória Muianga**, journalist and board member, Radio Mozambique, Maputo

**Isaias Natal**, delegate, Media Institute of Southern Africa Mozambique chapter; journalist, *O Magazine Independente*, Beira

**Manuel Matola**, journalist, Lusa News Agency, Maputo

**Silvia Afonso**, journalist; provincial delegate, Media Institute, Nampula

**Tomás Vieira Mário**, journalist, jurist, and media consultant; chairman of the board, MISA-Mozambique; executive director, Panos Mozambique, Maputo

**Lobão João Mauele**, journalist and subeditor, *Diário de Moçambique*, Maputo

**Elisa Martins**, journalist and chief of project and event planning, Mozambique Television, Maputo

**Florentino Escova Chassafar**, member, High Media Council; director, Radio Terra Verde, Maputo

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<sup>8</sup> NSJ closed its Maputo secretariat in April 2009 and entered a period of restructuring. See NSJ's press release at <http://www.ngopulse.org/press-release/new-steps-building-new-nsj>.