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NIGERIA

Nigeria experienced a political vacuum for many months in 2009, as the failing health of then-president Umaru Yar'Adua kept him away from his official duties—but with no designated official holding fort in the interim. Rumors of Yar'Adua's ill health had swirled since his candidacy for president in 2007, raising questions about his fitness to lead the country. Senior officials from his party, the People's Democratic Party, dismissed swiftly any speculation that his health was too fragile. But, a few months into his presidency, with frequent trips to Germany and Saudi Arabia for medical treatment, it became apparent that Yar'Adua suffered from a serious, possibly terminal ailment. Media speculation about the nature of his ailment led to various attacks on the media, including raids on media organizations and the closure of broadcast outlets. Journalists were arrested, charged with violating national security, and slapped with civil litigation for defamation.

As the president's health apparently worsened, the media grew bolder in reporting on his health, with fewer repercussions for journalists. Ironically, with no one apparently in charge and in the ensuing political intrigues, the media enjoyed a significant measure of freedom to operate. This air of somewhat unrestrained freedom served to bolster public and media perception of an improved press freedom environment for much of 2009.

Still, the country experienced a heightened sense of general insecurity during the year, which also affected journalists. Criminal gangs engaged in violent robberies, political assassinations, and kidnapping operated with impunity, and one journalist, Bayo Ohu of *The Guardian*, was killed.

The violence touched an MSI panelist as well. A few days before the MSI panel discussion, Adolphus Okonkwo, one of the proposed panelists, was abducted at gunpoint in Aba (in southeastern Nigeria), along with three other journalists. Okonkwo, the secretary of the Lagos State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, also works with the Voice of Nigeria, Nigeria's external radio broadcasting organization. Although the abductors initially demanded a ransom of NGN 250 million (about \$1.66 million), they released the journalists after about a week, after stealing all the cash and equipment they had in their possession. Okonkwo was therefore unable to participate in the panel discussion.

Reflecting these concerns, although the overall score for Objective 1 (freedom of speech) showed robust growth, it retained its place as the lowest-scoring objective for the third year running. Objective 5 (supporting institutions), consistently the highest-scoring objective since 2007, recorded a significant increase of over a third of a point from its 2008 MSI score, to remain the highest-scoring objective. Objective 2 (professional journalism) and Objective 3 (plurality of news) received modest score increases. Objective 4 (business management) was the only objective to lose ground, coming in 0.22 point lower than last year. The net result was a modest increase in the overall score, from 2.04 last year to 2.23 this year.

NIGERIA AT A GLANCE

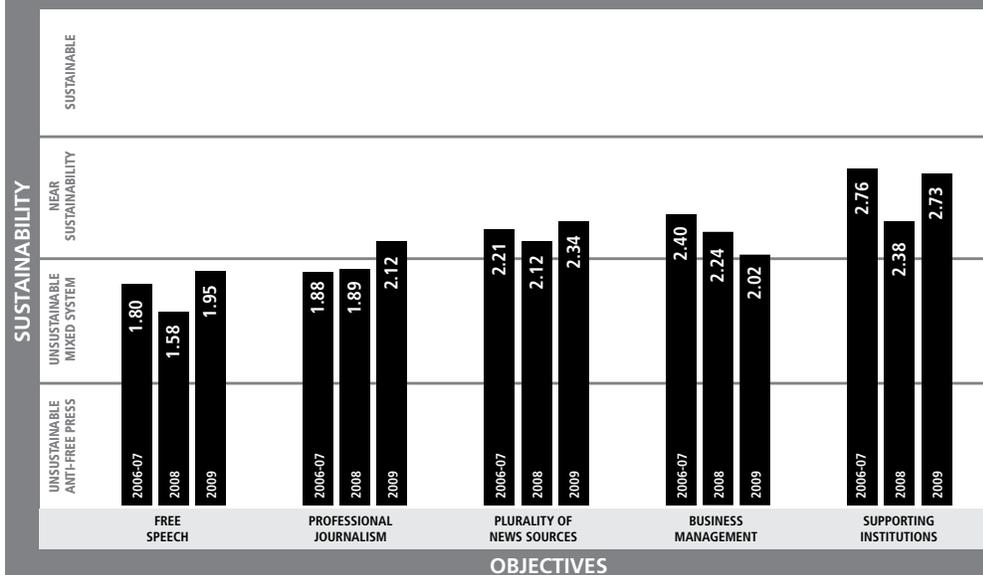
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 152,217,341 (July 2010 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Abuja
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo (Ibo), Fulani (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$175.8 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$1,980 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 68% (male 75.7%, female 60.6%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Goodluck Jonathan (since May 5, 2010)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** 95 reasonably regular newspapers (20 national dailies, 23 national weeklies, 10 regional dailies, 19 regional weeklies, 6 provincial or local dailies, and 17 provincial or local weeklies). 100 radio stations (16 privately owned, 1 not-for-profit campus radio station, 45 owned by the federal government, and 38 owned by various state governments). 144 television stations (14 privately owned, 98 owned by the federal government, and 32 are owned by various state governments). (Sources: *Media World Yearbook 2004—A Resource Guide to the Nigerian Media and National Broadcasting Commission: A Handbook*)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** No verifiable statistics exist; anecdotally *The Sun*, *The Punch*, *ThisDay*, and *The Guardian* (all privately owned) are regarded as the widest circulating newspapers
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** News Agency of Nigeria (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 11 million (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: NIGERIA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

Country minimally meets objectives, with segments of the legal system and government opposed to a free media system. Evident progress in free-press advocacy, increased professionalism, and new media businesses may be too recent to judge sustainability.

Near Sustainability (2-3):

Country has progressed in meeting multiple objectives, with legal norms, professionalism, and the business environment supportive of independent media. Advances have survived changes in government and have been codified in law and practice. However, more time may be needed to ensure that change is enduring and that increased professionalism and the media business environment are sustainable.

Sustainable (3-4):

Country has media that are considered generally professional, free, and sustainable, or to be approaching these objectives. Systems supporting independent media have survived multiple governments, economic fluctuations, and changes in public opinion or social conventions.

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Nigeria Objective Score: 1.95

Although the overall average score for this objective registered the highest score for the objective since 2007, it is still the lowest-scoring objective. The ongoing lack of security for journalists is a major reason behind this. In addition, the panelists largely agreed that although there are constitutional guarantees of free speech, they are not enforced. Most of the panelists believed that the lack of effective enforcement of the constitutional protection renders the guarantees virtually useless.

Seember Nyager, a program officer with the Kaduna-based African Radio Drama Association, observed that although the 1999 Nigerian constitution entitles everyone to freedom of expression, there is little or no protection for journalists who are willing to take risks to report on difficult subjects. Sesan Olufowobi, of *The Punch*, noted that despite the existence of legal protections for free speech, the government and its agencies, as well as individual officials, have found various ways to punish journalists over their work without any legal repercussions.

Anastasia Oguegbe, of Hot 98.3 FM radio, noted that Section 39 of Nigeria's 1999 constitution provides specific freedom-of-expression guarantees, but she added that the provision is frequently interpreted subjectively. Legal enforcement depends on the attitude of the government in power. She

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.

According to Nyager, "The National Broadcasting Commission is the regulatory body, and it is owned and controlled by the government. Approval of licenses is granted by the president alone, thereby restricting the number of broadcasting outlets."

argued that the disposition of the government toward a given issue often dictates its reaction.

In contrast, Enato Isukul Belo-Olisa, of the government-owned Bayelsa State Television in Yenogoa (in the Niger-Delta region), shared a different view. She said that Nigerian journalists are largely free and able to report without reprisals. As an example, she cited a presenter in a private television station, Gbenga Aruleba, who presents *Focus Nigeria* on Africa Independent Television. Aruleba is widely viewed as fearless in his presentation. She said that there was a time when the program could have been taken off air completely. Other panelists countered that on many occasions, both Aruleba and the program have come under attack from the government—and the program has been suspended several times under pressure from the authorities.

The panelists agreed generally that the licensing process for broadcast media is neither fair, nor competitive, nor apolitical. On the contrary, the licensing process is highly politicized. The National Broadcasting Commission does not have the power to approve or award broadcast licenses. Rather, the Nigerian constitution gives that responsibility to the president, an elected political figure. According to Nyager, "The National Broadcasting Commission is the regulatory body, and it is owned and controlled by the government. Approval of licenses is granted by the president alone, thereby restricting the number of broadcasting outlets."

Furthermore, the licensing process is neither open nor transparent, according to the panelists. Although there are legal requirements and publicly stated criteria to be fulfilled by applicants for broadcast licenses, the fulfillment of these criteria and legal requirements does not automatically guarantee the applicant a license. Other considerations that impact the decision to grant or refuse an applicant a license are neither publicly stated nor revealed to applicants denied licenses. There is also no opportunity for public participation in the licensing process, either as observers or as sources of information about the applicants.

Oguegbe suggested that the Freedom of Information bill, which has been held up in the legislative process since 1999, failed to pass because it lacks any provision to punish journalists who publish false information after gaining access to information with the proposed law.

However, Oguegbe said that despite the inadequacies of the system and processes in place, she disagreed that the law and the process are completely unfair. She noted that some organizations or institutions, such as Eternal TV (owned by the Catholic Church), have been known to obtain their broadcast licenses without political influence. This, however, sparked another debate about the propriety and legality of such a license, as the National Broadcasting Commission Act specifically prohibits the issuance of broadcast licenses to religious or political bodies. Under the prevailing law, the Catholic Church should not have been granted a broadcast license under any circumstance, some panelists charged.

The panelists were unanimous that market entry and the tax structure are generally fair across the board for all sectors, including the media—although in practice, some minor cases contradicted this general perception.

Regarding crimes against journalists, Freedom House reported the assassination of one journalist, Bayo Ohu, in September 2009. Ohu, the assistant news editor of *The Guardian* was investigating fraud in the Customs Department when he was killed by gunmen in front of his children. Freedom House also documented arbitrary arrests, death threats, and other forms of intimidation at the hands of the authorities in 2009.¹ For the most part, the panelists agreed that crimes against journalists are not often investigated vigorously and prosecuted. In the few instances where the authorities have gone through the motions to prosecute crimes against journalists, such cases were never concluded. The panelists also said that with rising attacks on journalists in Nigeria, there is a need for enhanced remuneration, security training, and insurance coverage for journalists. All of these factors led the panelists to give low scores for this indicator.

Although the panelists agreed that the government does not typically interfere directly with the editorial independence of privately owned media organizations, government-owned media cannot be considered editorially independent. Media

organizations owned by the federal government, including radio stations, television stations, and the News Agency of Nigeria, are established by specific legislation, and the laws establishing these government media empower the minister of information to issue specific or general directives that the stations are obliged to comply with. The minister, a political appointee, is granted broad enough power to cover instructions on editorial matters. Thus, it could not be said that state-owned media enjoy editorial independence by law or practice. In fact, government officials, particularly the minister of information at the federal level and the governors and commissioners of information at the state level, frequently interfere in the editorial decision-making processes of the media organizations they own.

But the panelists observed that in the case of privately owned media organizations, there is no law permitting or empowering government officials to interfere with their editorial independence.

For her part, Belo-Olisa said although the government influences editorial matters in state-owned media, the government media do not receive any preferential legal treatment. Other panelists disagreed. They pointed out that the broadcast regulator, the National Broadcasting Commission, is rarely able to sanction the government-owned media when they breach any aspect of the Nigerian Broadcasting Code or other broadcast regulations. In contrast, private stations are more easily sanctioned and face fines and suspension of their broadcast licenses. The government-owned stations also pay far less in fees for their broadcast licenses than the private stations.

In cases of libel, public officials are held to a high standard—although not higher or different from the standards that apply to ordinary citizens. An offended party must prove the falsity of the publication and the presence of malice. However, when libel is proved, public officials tend to receive more substantial damages than ordinary citizens. Additionally, although libel is covered under civil law, there are also provisions in a number of criminal laws at the federal and state levels that call for punishment of “criminal defamation.”

Although public information is reasonably available, the panelists concurred, there is no right of access to information for media and journalists or for ordinary citizens. Oguegbe suggested that the Freedom of Information bill, which has been held up in the legislative process since 1999, failed to pass because it lacks any provision to punish journalists who publish false information after gaining access to information with the proposed law. She argued that such a provision should be included in the bill to encourage passage by the National Assembly. Other panelists countered that the criminal and penal codes of both the federal

¹ Freedom House. *Freedom of the Press: Nigeria (2010)*. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2010>

and state governments already have provisions on false publication, incitement, sedition, and criminal defamation and argued that including similar provisions in the Freedom of Information Bill would serve no useful purpose. Some panelists expressed the view that in truth, legislators are uncomfortable passing a Freedom of Information law because they do not want citizens and the media to have access to a lot of information about government activities.

The panelists agreed that media outlets have unrestricted access to international news and news sources—although the cost of such access is high.

Entry into the journalism profession is free, the panelists agreed, and in practice, the government imposes no licensing restrictions or special rights for journalists. However, the panelists mentioned the Nigerian Press Council Act No. 82 of 1992, as amended by Act No. 60 of 1999, which imposes licensing requirements and restrictions for journalists—although the provisions are not being enforced, and at the time of the MSI panel the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria was challenging the constitutionality of the law before the courts.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Nigeria Objective Score: 2.12

The overall score for this objective, which climbed into the near sustainability range this year, reflects the consensus among the panelists that respect for professional standards is about average. Panelists expressed the view that although journalists try to follow recognized and accepted ethical

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).

Michael Jimoh, of the privately owned Daily Sun, raised another issue that he believes hurts professional standards for journalists: the preference for loyalty over competence or professionalism by editors and media managers as a basis for promoting or rewarding reporters.

standards, the environment they work in still poses challenges to fair, objective, and well-sourced reporting.

Emma Maduabuchi, of the *Daily Independent*, expressed his view that “journalism in Nigeria is professional in name rather than in practice. This appears to be the real reason why journalists are not getting a fair deal in the country.” But according to Juliana Francis, chief of the crime desk at *Compass*, it is difficult for journalists to balance their stories because most sources refuse to grant interviews or state their side of the story. In addition, reporters find it difficult to comply with ethical standards and requirements because salaries are too low—and usually paid several months late or not at all. Segun Fatuase, political editor of *The Spectator*, commented, “Journalism in Nigeria has yet to meet universally approved professional standards, due to low wages and a poor working environment. These factors have made fair, balanced reporting impossible, as journalists look for ways to augment their incomes.”

Additional challenges cited by Olufowobi include the pressure of deadlines, which make it difficult for journalists to properly investigate facts, as well as very low levels of awareness of ethical and professional standards among many journalists. Michael Jimoh, of the privately owned *Daily Sun*, raised another issue that he believes hurts professional standards for journalists: the preference for loyalty over competence or professionalism by editors and media managers as a basis for promoting or rewarding reporters. Other panelists corroborated this observation.

Belo-Olisa argued that the situation is not as bad as depicted, because many news reports are quite fair and objective, and, in her view, most interviews are conducted professionally. But she conceded that “most reports lack depth, and investigative reports are on the decline. Adequate background research is not conducted due to financial constraints, time constraints, the interests of the media outlet, competition to be the news breaker, etc.”

The panelists also agreed that the practice of self-censorship is widespread. Journalists in state-owned media feel compelled

“Apart from a few private news-based stations like Channels Television, most stations devote more time to entertainment,” Oguebe commented, adding that entertainment programs are mostly produced by independent producers and bring a lot of income to the stations.

to censor their work to protect their jobs when covering issues that might be unfavorable to the government. For those in the privately owned media, the main reasons behind self-censorship are the perceived need to protect business interests of the owners, or to avoid unpleasant consequences, such as attacks on their persons or media establishment.

In general, the panelists agreed that media in Nigeria cover key events and issues. Belo-Olisa said, “Journalists cover all key events and issues in Nigeria, but reports that expose high-level corruption, abuse of power, etc., may result in undesired consequences. Therefore, if a media outfit cannot use a story, a reporter will be dissuaded from covering such an event. For example, in Bayelsa State, stories involving oil companies and their abuse of our environment are difficult to report, as permits need to be obtained from the companies just to take pictures of their facilities or gas flares.”

All of the panelists pointed to low pay levels for journalists and other media professionals as the single biggest challenge to journalism standards in Nigeria and the greatest contributor to corruption in the media. Justifying this view, Ezeoke said, “Nigerian journalists are poorly paid, but what is even more disheartening is that salaries are paid irregularly. Some media organizations owe their workers for upwards of six months, and because such workers have families to care for, they feel they have no choice but to breach ethical standards and accept bribes. Nonpayment of salaries is common in the private media.” All panelists awarded low scores for this indicator.

The panelists agreed that entertainment programming is eclipsing news and information programming in broadcasting stations, with only a handful of exceptions. “Apart from a few private news-based stations like Channels Television, most stations devote more time to entertainment,” Oguebe commented, adding that entertainment programs are mostly produced by independent producers and bring a lot of income to the stations. The panelists said, however,

that newspapers and news magazines tend to provide more in-depth coverage and have more space for news content.

Regarding facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news, Belo-Olisa said that they are often not modern and efficient. She added that the situation is much worse in the state-owned media than the privately owned stations.

The panelists agreed that journalists in Nigeria have a well-established practice of niche reporting in a variety of areas, including economics and business, politics, sports, health, and the environment, but that the quality of reports was generally low. Furthermore, as Belo-Olisa noted above, investigative reporting is on the decline.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Nigeria Objective Score: 2.34

The panelists agreed that Nigeria offers its citizens a plurality of public and private news sources—in print, on the air, and online—especially in urban areas. However, daily newspapers, which sell for between \$1.00 and \$1.50 per copy, are considered expensive for the average citizen, given the relatively low income levels. Internet access is also too costly for many and largely unavailable outside major urban centers. There was general agreement among the panelists that citizens’ access to domestic and international media is not legally restricted in any way, however.

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.

According to Ezeoke, “Nigeria is a multiethnic society with diverse interests. To cover such heterogeneous interests, there are several media outlets established by individuals in addition to the government-owned media. Apart from the national networks, such as the Nigerian Television Authority and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, every state has its own television and radio stations that broadcast in local languages and also cater to the interests of the local people. All of these stations also bring foreign events to citizens’ doorsteps.”

But Nyager took a different view, arguing that although a variety of news outlets serve urban areas, “people in rural areas cannot afford all of these sources, and in the northern part of Nigeria, rural communities rely more on radio stations—which are few in number and mostly government-owned, with just a few private stations.” She noted that community broadcasting does not really exist in the country, except in some secondary educational institutions where some campus radio stations have been licensed to operate.

Panelists disagreed with the suggestion that state media reflect the views of the broad political spectrum, or that they are nonpartisan and serve the public interest. The panelists said that state-owned media across the country, without exception, lack independence in editorial matters and fail to serve the public interest, tending instead to project the views and activities of the government in power, providing almost exclusive coverage for the ruling party to the exclusion of other opposing views.

Belo-Olisa stressed the vast difference between privately owned and state-owned media: according to her, journalists in private media are largely free, compared with their counterparts in the government media. She added that for journalists in government-owned media, there are issues they cannot air or publish—and when they dare to try, they invariably encounter resistance. In her view, the freedom enjoyed by private media has earned them greater credibility with the population and has relegated government media to the background in comparison. As a result, government media have become more or less irrelevant as a source of information for people. By her account, the media landscape in Nigeria is dominated by privately owned media organizations in terms of their capacity to influence public opinion.

But most of the other panelists agreed that despite the greater credibility and significant influence enjoyed by the privately owned broadcast stations, it would be difficult to state categorically that private stations dominate the media landscape. In terms of sheer numbers, government-owned broadcast media overwhelm private outlets. The federal

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government has several radio and television stations in each of the 36 states in the country, and state governments have established at least one radio and one television station each.

According to Chuku Nwanne, a reporter with the private daily newspaper *The Guardian*, it is true that the government broadcast media clearly outnumber the privately owned stations—but the private stations are more strategically located. He noted that private outlets are concentrated in major cities and urban areas, where major government and corporate news is made. The government, in turn, has a lot of stations located in rural areas, which are not as strategic in terms of influencing policy.

Belo-Olisa added that although state-owned stations have more reach in terms of the areas they are allowed to cover with their broadcasts, the private stations tend to draw larger audiences than their government media counterparts, including patronage from governments and government agencies. She said that anecdotal evidence she has collected about which media people patronize indicates that private broadcast media are more popular. However, Juliana Ezeoke, with the private weekly magazine *TELL*, underscored the absence of reliable statistics on the size of audiences for radio and television stations in the country—noting that only when such statistics are systematically collected will it be possible to know the number of citizens who listen to privately owned stations versus state-owned media. Still, she expressed her preference for private media because they, in her opinion, tend to focus on more relevant issues.

The panelists agreed that independent news agencies gather and distribute news for both print and broadcast media but noted that the costs of the services that they offer are very high—placing an additional burden on the media organizations. Independent broadcast media mostly produce their own news programs, and therefore do not rely significantly on purchased programming—although most

The panelists agreed that a broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, but that minority-language information or information from minority-language sources rarely make the news.

foreign news reports are obtained from foreign news media sources and aired almost entirely as in their original format.

Although the panelists agreed that media concentration is not an issue in Nigeria, opinions on the transparency of media ownership varied. A few panelists said that there is a fair degree of transparency in ownership, as the proprietors of most media organizations are publicly known, while others suggested that people presented as owners of media companies are often not the true owners. According to Belo-Olisa, "media ownership is fairly transparent in Nigeria. Presently, there are no obvious monopolies or oligarchies. People who want to know who owns a particular media outlet can get that information, although media owners are not likely to reveal their profits."

But Francis disagreed. "Media ownership is not transparent, because most of the owners are politicians establishing these institutions with money siphoned or embezzled through public office," she said, adding, "They fear being quizzed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, since they were poor and now suddenly have enough wealth to establish a media house; thus, they use other people as 'fronts' so they can obtain a media license. Through this means, they [politicians] have bought and established several media houses, streamlining and manipulating news content."

Olufowobi agreed, and added that the "real owners are shrouded in mystery." Nwanne, in contrast, took the middle ground. He said, "Although some media owners do not like to be openly associated with the media they fund, some of them still see nothing wrong in being the face of the media. But the truth is that ownership of media in Nigeria influences the operation of the establishment."

The panelists agreed that a broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, but that minority-language information or information from minority-language sources rarely make the news. Most programming is in English or in the three major languages: Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo. As these majority ethnic groups constitute the largest share of the audience, in sheer numbers, most media programming caters to their interests.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Nigeria Objective Score: 2.02

The score for Objective 4 dipped slightly this year, nearly tying Objective 1 for the lowest score and just barely holding onto a place in the near-sustainability range. Media outlets and supporting firms for distribution and printing operate as profit-generating businesses, the panelists agreed, but for the most part, they are not efficient or professional.

Panelists noted that media organizations earn revenue from a limited range of sources. According to Olufowobi, "Sources of revenue for media in Nigeria are limited to advertisements, sales of copies, sponsorships of programs, and advertising inserts. Some media houses also organize awards, lectures, music festivals, etc., to augment their income. While the print media earn revenue from sales and advertisements, the broadcast media are mainly supported by commercials and sponsorships or, in the case of state-owned media, government subsidies.

Belo-Olisa argued that the private media can tap more revenue streams than state-owned media. "Private media are financed from multiple sources, including advertising, government patronage, sponsorships, and bank loans," she said. However, state-owned media, she said, lack adequate, guaranteed sources of revenue to guard against political interference in their operations. But she conceded that private media can be more susceptible to editorial influence than state media when they obtain funds from powerful nongovernmental sources, which can compromise editorial independence.

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.

The panelists agreed that advertising agencies support a media advertising market but noted that these agencies frequently fail to pay media houses their shares of revenue. Although advertising companies are well-developed in Nigeria, and the market is not dominated by international agencies, advertising agencies are mostly limited to major towns and cities. Although advertising agencies work with all media, private media organizations are considered more skilled in generating revenue from them.

The panelists agreed that advertising is very often allowed to eclipse news content. Belo-Olisa explained, “Adverts form the bulk of revenue in media outlets. Media managers, particularly in the print media, feel pressured to use more adverts, as subscriptions are slim.”

All the panelists agreed that independent media organizations do not receive any government subsidies, and they could not point to any recent examples of subsidies to independent media from the government.

However, most panelists disagreed with the suggestion that market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, or tailor media products to the needs or interests of audiences. Market research is not a widely established practice in media business, they said. In the few cases where such research is undertaken, media organizations use questionnaires, phone interviews, and other feedback systems to elicit the views of their audiences or targeted populations. But the panelists said that even in such cases, media houses do not typically follow through on the findings.

The panelists agreed that independently produced broadcast ratings, circulation figures, and Internet statistics can be found—but dismissed them as unreliable. They highlighted the dubious qualifications of companies and their personnel engaged in collecting such ratings and circulation figures or statistics. Furthermore, broadcast media houses are not usually informed of the ratings, and sometimes the figures are thought to be influenced by stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Nigeria Objective Score: 2.73

The overall score for this objective increased convincingly. As in previous years, the panelists felt strongly that professional bodies in the media and NGOs working in the areas of media development, media assistance, and freedom of expression provide significant support and assistance to independent media.

According to Francis, “The Nigeria Union of Journalists tries its best in fighting for the rights of members, especially in making owners of media institutions pay salaries. However, there is little it can do in some situations, and it remains a toothless bulldog.”

The panelists agreed that there are trade associations that represent the interests of media owners and managers and provide member services. They listed the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria, Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria, Independent Broadcasters Association of Nigeria, and the Nigerian Guild of Editors as well-known examples of such associations. An example of the kind of advocacy work they do was mentioned in Objective 1, the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria challenging the constitutionality of a law that would have imposed a licensing regime on journalists.

The panelists said professional associations exist but disagreed over their commitment to—and effectiveness in—protecting journalists’ rights. Some panelists claimed that they make no effort to project journalists’ rights, while others said such associations do their best. Besides the Nigeria Union of Journalists, which describes itself as both a trade union and a professional association of journalists, other bodies representing media professionals and media workers are the Radio, Television, and Theatre Workers Union and the National Union of Printing, Publishing, and Paper Products Workers.

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.

The panelists noted that journalism training institutions are increasingly incorporating practical experience into their training programs through various means, including using experienced journalists to deliver some of the trainings using hands-on methodology.

Although these bodies are theoretically independent unions and associations, in practice they have proved susceptible to the influence of federal and state governments. They often rely on governments for cash and gifts, either to implement specific projects, such as building or equipping press centers, or to cover operating costs.

According to Francis, "The Nigeria Union of Journalists tries its best in fighting for the rights of members, especially in making owners of media institutions pay salaries. However, there is little it can do in some situations, and it remains a toothless bulldog." For example, she pointed to a case involving several journalists from *The Guardian* who were sacked for attempting to defend their rights. The Nigeria Union of Journalists hierarchy, from the state to the national level, never stepped up to protest. She concluded, "This often makes a journalist wonder about the essence of a union or association that cannot fight for you."

For Olufowobi, although bodies like the Nigeria Union of Journalists and the Nigerian Guild of Editors protect media practitioners such as editors and journalists, the associations are not really independent because they lobby government for support.

The panelists agreed there are some NGOs working to support free speech and independent media, although only a few. Such NGOs provide a variety of services to the media, including monitoring attacks on the media and campaigning on behalf of media organizations and individual journalists under attack, providing legal assistance, training in editorial and other matters, and other forms of capacity-building activities. Belo-Olisa said, "Few NGOs work with media outlets to support media independence and freedom of speech. They are found in cities where lots of media houses are established, and they partner with the media in the areas of training, advocacy, and constitutional and legislative reviews. A few work in cooperation with international free-speech organizations." Such organizations given include Media Rights Agenda, the International Press Center, and the Center for Free Speech.

The panelists noted that journalism training institutions are increasingly incorporating practical experience into their training programs through various means, including using experienced journalists to deliver some of the trainings using hands-on methodology. They are also encouraging more newsroom internships and taking advantage of the growing number of campus radio stations to give their students practical training in various aspects of running radio stations or producing campus newspapers or journals.

The panelists agreed that opportunities for short-term, in-service training of journalists exist, but for the most part journalists must pay for their own training. Media managers have shown a lack of receptiveness to such opportunities, therefore depriving journalists of these chances to grow. There are some in-house training programs for journalists.

The panelists gave high scores to the indicator that considers whether newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted. These facilities are profit-making businesses, and the government does not interfere with them or impose any legal restrictions. However, the panelists said that tariffs and duties for the importation of newsprint and other materials remain exceedingly high.

The panelists agreed that channels of media distribution, such as kiosks, transmitters, and Internet servers, are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted. But they noted that the government controls channels of media distribution for state-owned media houses and that sometimes even facilities managed by private entities are politicized.

List of Panel Participants

Jide Alli-Balogun, senior reporter and editor, Eko FM Radio, Lagos

Emma Maduabuchi, senior correspondent, *Daily Independent*, Lagos

Juliana Ezeoke, staff writer, *TELL*, Lagos

Michael Jimoh, chief correspondent, *The Sun*, Lagos

Chuks Nwanne, reporter, *The Guardian*, Lagos

Segun Fatuase, political editor, *The Spectator*, Lagos

Juliana Francis, chief of the crime desk, *Compass*, Lagos

Tosin Omoniyi, reporter, *Newswatch*, Lagos

Victoria Ibanga, managing editor, *Daily Champion*, Lagos

Sesan Olufowobi, crime reporter, *The Punch*, Lagos

Enato Isukul Belo-Olisa, manager, News Bayelsa State Television, Yenogoa

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