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BOTSWANA

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President Ian Khama of the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) won the parliamentary elections held in October 2009, a process that completed his succession to former president Festus Mogae. Although the BDP won 53.26 percent of the popular vote, various local media report that the ruling party is beset with deep factional rivalries, and its poor relations with the private media are believed to weaken its support. The government's 2009 decision to place the Ministry of Communications, Science, and Technology under the Office of the President, and the Media Practitioners Act (MPA), ushered in at the end of 2008, did not help to improve government-media relations.

While Botswana's constitution guarantees the freedom of expression, it is subject to limitations by statutes such as the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime Act, the Botswana Defense Force Act (BDF), and the National Security Act (NSA), along with the MPA. Furthermore, access to public information remains contentious. "There is no access to information legislation, and access to some types of information is often denied under the guise of national security," said Gladys Ramadi, a broadcasting specialist at the MISA Regional Secretariat. Along with the government's attempts to financially undercut the private media, hindering their access to advertising revenue, some MSI panelists question whether principles of a free press have been infused into modern public administration. And yet, despite these obstacles, Botswana's social norms promote and guarantee free speech, attested by the Tswana adages that translate to "everyone has the right to express his mind and thoughts freely."

Furthermore, the media community and civil-society organizations are not taking the legal attacks on press freedom lightly. The passage of the MPA prompted local civil-society and media organizations to form an umbrella organization, aptly named the Coalition for the Freedom of Expression (COFEX), in 2009 to lobby for media rights. In August 2010, the group filed a petition with the country's High Court challenging the constitutionality of the MPA.

Still, given the existence of draconian laws and uncertainty surrounding the MPA, MSI scores for Objective 1 (freedom of speech) declined. Objective 2 (professional standards of journalism) scores increased slightly, indicating that efforts were being made by local media to remain professional despite the punitive media legislative environment. Objective 3 (media plurality) scores also increased, while Objective 4 (business management) scores remained roughly the same despite concerns over the threat of emerging concentration of private media ownership in Botswana. Objective 5 (supporting institutions) increased to 2.49 compared with 2.28 in the previous period, reflecting the panelists' recognition that more NGOs have stepped up to work with Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) Botswana to challenge anti-media laws and practices.

# BOTSWANA AT A GLANCE

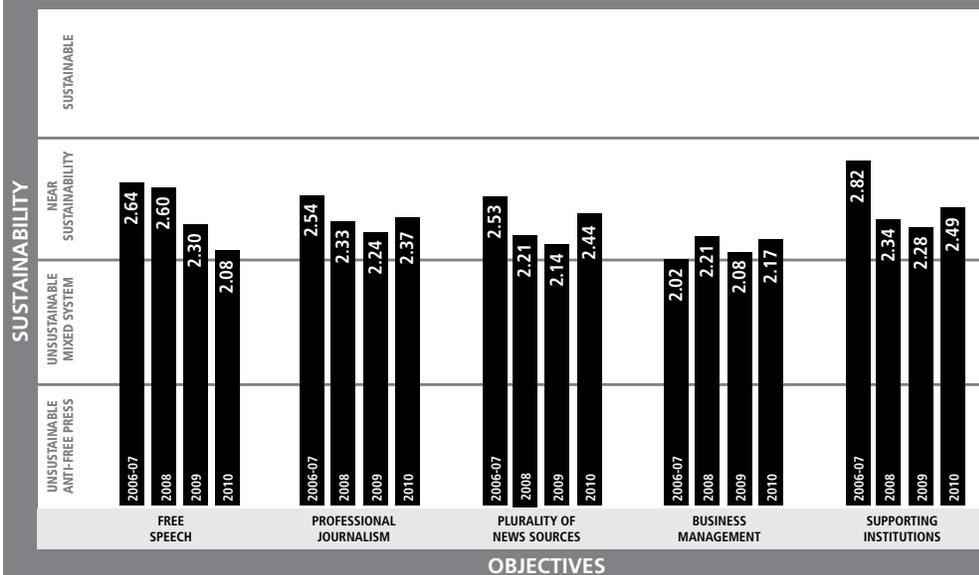
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2,065,398 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*).
- > **Capital city:** Gaborone
- > **Ethnic groups (percent of population):** Tswana (or Setswana) 79%, Kalanga 11%, Basarwa 3%, other, including Kgalagadi and white 7% (*CIA World Factbook*).
- > **Religions (percent of population):** Christian 71.6%, Badimo 6%, other 1.4%, unspecified 0.4%, none 20.6% (2001 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (percent of population):** Setswana 78.2%, Kalanga 7.9%, Sekgalagadi 2.8%, English 2.1% (official), other 8.6%, unspecified 0.4% (2001 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$13.63 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-PPP):** \$13,910 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **Literacy rate:** 81.2% (male 80.4%, female 81.8%) (2001 census, *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** : President Seretse Khama Ian Khama (since April 1, 2008)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**  
Print: 1 state-owned newspaper and 13 privately owned commercial newspapers; Radio stations: 2 national state-owned, 3 national privately owned, and 8 foreign stations. Television Stations: 1 state-owned, 3 privately owned. Newspaper ownership is mostly concentrated in Gaborone.
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top two by circulation: *Daily News* (circulation 65,000, state-owned), *The Voice* (circulation 35,000, private)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** 85% of the population has access to national (state-owned) radio. Broadcast dominated by state-owned BTV.
- > **News agencies:** Botswana Press Agency (BOPA) (State-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** Approximately \$45 million (MSI panelists).
- > **Internet usage:** 120,000 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

## MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: BOTSWANA



### 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

### Botswana Objective Score: 2.08

At 2.08, Objective 1 (freedom of speech) scored below average, with the panelists agreeing that concern lingers over a number of legal restrictions and exemptions that limit freedom of expression. While Botswana continues to enjoy the general guarantees for freedom of expression in the constitution, restrictions continue under the guise of national security, protection of human rights, protection of public order, and protection of the freedom of civil servants to perform their duties. As Bonolo Dinokopila, an attorney with the Botswana National Front, pointed out, "The statutes that limit the freedom of expression are not only limited to the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime Act, the BDF Act, the National Security Act, and the Public Health Act, but of late include the Directorate of Intelligence and Security Services (DISS) as well." The DISS is an intelligence agency with the power to make arrests without warrants if the agency suspects a person has committed or is about to commit a crime.

The consensus established among the panelists was that the constitution poorly protects the freedom of speech and the press, especially given the government's introduction of the MPA. The panelists expressed concern over the compulsory registration of journalists living in Botswana mandated by the MPA and said the MPA undermines efforts toward a

#### 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.

*As Ramadi pointed out, "The existing broadcasting regulator is not independent from government, and the licensing procedures are controlled by the minister of the day."*

self-regulatory system by the media, among other restrictions. As John Churu, editor of *Business Diary*, noted, "Freedom of expression, which has been rated high over the years in Botswana, has been increasingly restricted in the last two years following the government's passage of the Media Practitioners Act." Some NGOs, including the MISA, have joined the independent media and opposition members in criticizing the Act for restricting press freedom, especially because the government passed it without either debate or consultations with stakeholders.

Discussing Indicator 2 (broadcast licensing), the panelists feel that the challenges to license public broadcasting remain. The government continues to dominate domestic broadcasting, as it controls the state media. The view held by most participants is that media licensing is still politically driven and at times seems aimed at limiting the freedom of the press, despite the presence of the National Broadcasting Authority. As Ramadi pointed out, "The existing broadcasting regulator is not independent from government, and the licensing procedures are controlled by the minister of the day." She added, "The government refuses to license community radio stations for reasons it alone knows. In a country where the population is widely dispersed and government media have the largest reach, community media are essential to build awareness around development and strengthen democracy."

However, panelist Dikarabo Ramadubu, head of the investigation desk at the *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*, opposed this view, saying, "Despite the poor score, the broadcast media are the nascent industry in the country." He went on to argue that the processes of licensing of operators are free and fair as well as competitive," adding that "competitive bidding and tendering is strictly enforced. The law encourages citizen ownership by guaranteeing citizens majority shareholding."

In other licensing developments, panelists noted that by the end of 2009, no licenses had been withdrawn, while the first ever community broadcast initiative, the Naledi Community Media, was still under test transmission since its launch in 2008. The local, privately owned Yarona FM, Gabz FM, and Duma FM had expanded their broadcasts from Gaborone to cover most of the major towns, such as Francistown.

Regarding market entry, the panelists were unanimous that Botswana offers no special privileges to media operators; all are bound by the same tax regime, under Botswana Unified Revenue Services (BURS), as any other industry. Media owners are free to engage in peaceful business activities, without undue pressure, like any other business. The overall mandate of the BURS is to assess and collect taxes on behalf of the government, as well as to take appropriate measures to counteract tax evasion on the one hand and to improve taxpayer services on the other.

Harassment of journalists persists. Most crimes mentioned by panelists involved assault, threats, and verbal abuse; for example, publications such as the *Sunday Standard* have been summoned to court and at times restrained from covering court cases. Regrettably, according to the panelists, these incidents are not prosecuted vigorously, nor do they cause public outrage. Trials in the civil courts are public, although trials under the National Security Act may be held in secret.

State-owned media generally feature uncritical reporting on the government and are susceptible to political interference. As Maungo Mooki, director of the NGO Childline, observed, "When the opposition political parties complain that they are not getting enough coverage, the state media always explain that according to their editorial position, cabinet ministers, the president, and his deputy are given priority." Back in July 2007, the minister of communications, science, and technology stated that the licenses of journalists who did not report "correctly" would be withdrawn. The introduction of MPA soon after, in 2008, which strives to regulate journalists' conduct, reinforced this sentiment. The panelists took this as a threat to private media. Generally, concern is growing that the state wants to gag the private media, under the guise that they publish falsehoods. "Some publications in the last year, such as the *Sunday Standard*, have been summoned to court and at times blocked from covering court cases," commented Churu. Furthermore, noted Thapelo Ndlovu, director of the MISA Botswana National Chapter, state-controlled media dominate the market.

The panelists also recalled President Khama's inaugural speech on April 1, 2009, which referred to the need for "discipline" in the media. To most panelists, these thinly veiled warnings seriously compromise editorial independence and make it very difficult for private media to write solid stories.

Although the panelists noted that libel is criminalized, it is rare for journalists to be imprisoned for such violations. According to Dinokopila, "The law puts the burden of proof of libel on the complainant, and the journalist only has to prove beyond reasonable doubt that his/her report was in the public interest." Despite this, he added, "In civil proceedings, the courts continue to order newspapers to pay hefty sums in

defamation suits, as at times the reports cannot be classified as in the public interest." Defendants have the right to be present and consult with an attorney in a timely manner, but the state provides an attorney in capital cases.

As for the indicator measuring access to public information, panelists cited the government's ongoing restrictions in handing out low scores. The government relies on laws, including the National Security Act of 1986 and the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime Act of 1994, to prevent journalists from reporting on subjects under investigation until a case reaches the courts or investigations are concluded.

"The government is notorious for classifying information," noted Ndlovu. "It was sometimes more difficult for private media organizations to obtain access to government-held information, despite the introduction of public-relations officers in government ministries," he added. In the past year, lobbying efforts to improve access to information have remained low-key. Some panelists argued that these lobbying efforts have been mostly confined to commemorative days, such as Press Freedom Day, or through project support led by the MISA Botswana National Chapter. Yet the importance of access to information in Botswana, as in any other democracy, is unquestionable. The panelists were unanimous that better information access not only would improve reporting and protect whistleblowers, but also would mitigate the effects of the State Secrecy Act by shortening the time that state secrets are kept outside the public domain.

The panelists agreed that Internet access is unrestricted in Botswana. Individuals and groups can engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including via e-mail. However, they feel that media outlets have restricted access to international news and news sources via mobile telephones under the BDF Act; in 2009, the Botswana Telecommunications Authority demanded the registration of all cell phone SIM cards, including those of visitors. Those who fail to register risk losing their access to the mobile-phone services. In addition, under the Police Act, law enforcement officials monitor communication made via landlines and cellular telephones.

The panelists delivered fairly low scores on the questions of entry into the journalism profession, following changes brought by the onset of the MPA in 2008. Under the terms of the MPA, all are not free to practice, even if they meet standards agreed to by the profession. With the MPA, the government has effectively empowered the minister in charge of communications and information to define who is a journalist. To most of the panelists, this is just another way that the MPA threatens freedom of expression by any individual.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Botswana Objective Score: 2.37

The panelists unanimously argued that journalists in Botswana do meet professional standards of quality. Except for indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists are high enough to discourage corruption), which scored the lowest, and indicator 3 (self-censorship) the rest of the indicators scored above 2.00 points. Indicator 2 (ethical standards in journalism) fared the best, but still scored with a half-point of the objective score.

Weighing indicator 1 (reporting is fair, objective, and well-sourced), some panelists took the view that litigation against the media has become a fad in society—frequently following mere sloppiness on the part of journalists who fail to double-check their facts. The rush to meet newspaper deadlines and the lack of proper supervision create room for lackluster reporting. “Journalists rush for a deadline and fail to check their information. This often leads to lawsuits that could have been avoided,” said panelist Kabo Mokgoabone, a reporter with the *Sunday Standard*.

While the high scores for the related indicator indicate that journalists in Botswana adhere to ethical standards, there is room for improvement, as Dikarabo added, “The most pressing concern is the need to upgrade the skills and technical abilities of journalists to adhere to internationally accepted standards and professional ethics.” Ndlovu said that while the media operate within a code of ethics, their operations are compromised by lack of capacity. Panelists affirmed, however, that the continued development of

#### 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).

*“The quality of news reporting has increased in that the newspapers are able to cover stories that are of importance to the public, such as the recent Masire/De Beers saga and other stories,” said Dinokopila.*

the degree program at the Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana is helping to improve the professionalism of media reporting in Botswana.

The indicator measuring self-censorship scored far lower. Regarding private media, the panelists feel that generally, these media express a wide variety of views; however, they are sometimes subject to pressure from the government to portray government, and the country, in a positive light. Gwerevende Hamufari, owner and editor of *Business Diary*, pointed out, “The problem is that the private media depend on government advertising, compromising editorial independence.” Hamufari’s comment draws attention to the sentiment of most media companies that government-owned enterprises reduce their advertising in reaction to critical reporting. Panelists attributed this long-held view to local newspapers’ heavy dependence on government advertising support, which is centrally controlled by the Botswana Government Communication Information System (BG CIS). Nevertheless, individuals, including journalists, can generally criticize the government publicly or privately without reprisal. However, the government occasionally censors stories that it deems objectionable, and government journalists sometimes practice self-censorship.

Notwithstanding the above, discussions of indicator 4 (journalists cover key events and issues) revealed some optimism. “The quality of news reporting has increased in that the newspapers are able to cover stories that are of importance to the public, such as the recent Masire/De Beers saga and other stories,” said Dinokopila. In the Masire/De Beers saga, former president Ketumile Masire admitted that he received financial assistance from De Beers to stay in power.

However, concerns remain about the need for niche reporting and investigative journalism. Panelists were unanimous that the stories are made and killed by the media before their full coverage. “Reporting is not done in a manner that sees a story covered to its end,” commented Dinokopila. The state media have been accused of acting in concert with government to the extent of excluding critical information, making it difficult for private media to prove otherwise.

"[This] deprives rural communities of independent voices from the private media," pointed out Mokgoabone.

Indicator 5 (pay levels for journalists) performed poorly again. Seasoned journalists, panelists said, have left the private media over the past year for both state institutions and the private sector. Paltry remuneration and the prevalent lack of security in private media—both electronic and print—make journalists vulnerable to various external pressures. For example, "The private media lost Bashi Letsididi to the Office of the President. Award-winning sports writer Letshwiti joined the Ministry of Trade and Industry as a public-relations officer, and Moabi Phia, a reputable journalist for the *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun* newspapers and the national correspondent for Reuter's news agency, joined the parastatal Botswana Export Development and Investment Agency (BEDIA)," noted panelist Sello Motseta, editor of *The Tswana Times*. Ramadi added, "It is no wonder there is a lot of brain drain from the private media to the public-relations field. Pay levels for journalists in the private media remain low compared to government." Arguably, salaries for journalists in Botswana are estimated to be based mostly on comparable industry salary levels, between \$750 and \$2,000 per month. Yet over time in Botswana, most private media institutions have struggled to survive and keep up with payrolls due to inadequate financial cash flow.

As last year's MSI panelists underlined, the entertainment-to-news ratio has traditionally been considered a strength of Botswana's media—especially radio. Radio stations air news every hour in both Setswana and English, along with coverage of current affairs, call-in interactive programs, and sports as well as entertainment and local music.

Another strength is the facilities and equipment used by the media, which panelists consider adequately modern and efficient. As previous panels have noted, growth in the country's communication and technology sector have positively impacted the media's technical capacity.

As noted above, the panelists expressed concern that niche reporting and investigative reporting need to be strengthened, as many stories are killed before investigations are seen to completion. As reported in previous MSI studies, journalists need more specialized training to cover business, health, and other news beats. However, there are a number of local magazines in Botswana that center on specific topics, particularly *Hotel and Tourism*, the environmentally focused *Wena*, the youth publication *Lapologa*, and *Kutlwano*, a contemporary magazine published by the government.

## OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

### Botswana Objective Score: 2.44

Despite fairly high scores, the panelists claimed that Objective 3 (media plurality) remains a controversial topic in Botswana, leading to conflicting scores at the indicator level. Some panelists scored indicator 3 (state or public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest) very low, while others gave it much more favorable ratings. Similarly, indicator 7 (the media's reflection of a broad spectrum of social interests) also drew a wide range of scores. Panelists also raised concerns that most media sources do not reach rural areas. Government print and broadcast media continue to be the dominant information source for Botswana's rural residents. Internet access is typically limited to urban areas. Nonetheless, all indicators scored within a half point of the objective score.

The biggest changes to the media landscape in the past couple of years are the introduction of E-Botswana and the licensing of three private radio stations. The government *Daily News*, published by the Department of Information Services under the Ministry of Communications, Science, and Technology, continues to be distributed widely, for free, in most areas of the country. It still boasts the largest circulation, around 80,000, of any print publication in Botswana. Alternatives include 11 private weekly, mostly national newspapers, including the *Botswana Gazette*, the *Guardian*, *Echo*, *Midweek Sun*, *The Mirror*, *Monitor*, *Ngami Times*, *Sunday Standard*, and the *Sunday Tribune*. In contrast to

## MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

the government's circulation, these newspapers' circulations range from 8,000 to 28,000.

Six radio stations broadcast in Botswana:

the government-owned Radio Botswana 1 and 2 (the latter has more of a commercial focus) and the private and commercial stations Duma FM, Gabz FM, Ya Rona FM, and Voice of America. Duma FM began broadcasting within the past two years. Two local television stations are located in Gaborone: the state-owned Botswana Television (BTV) and the private Gaborone Broadcasting Company (GBC), transmitted within a 25-kilometer radius of Gaborone. Viewers can also subscribe to the South African satellite subscription service, DSTV, through Multi-Choice Botswana. There are still no community media, print, or broadcasting services in Botswana.

Despite giving high scores for plurality, panelists expressed serious concern about the predominant focus of the private media on the urban areas, creating an information gap in rural areas. Urban residents benefit from a mix of state and private media, while rural residents tend to rely on the government's *Daily News*, Botswana Television, and state radio stations.

In general, the panelists feel that the lack of access to both private and state media due to distribution limitations hurts the prospects to increase plurality of public and private news sources in the country. Botswana private broadcast media have been based primarily in cities since their inception, but the government's issuance of broadcast licenses to three private radio stations in 2007 is set to change this perception. Motseta also highlighted the well-known distribution woes in the private media: "Private media, especially newspapers, are by all means trying to reach out to the whole country. But there are limitations. They rely heavily on advertising to cover all their costs, including printing, staff salaries, and transportation costs. [Media], therefore, focus on urban areas, where there is a return on their investment."

Giving high scores to indicator 2 (citizens' access to domestic and international media), panelists cited the government's granting of national licenses to three private radio stations. To most panelists, this positive development has improved the accessibility and diversity of news sources. Some panelists, however, expressed reservations about this development. Ramadi argued, "The granting of national licenses to private radio stations was not enough, as many still rely solely on state media, whose coverage of issues is not balanced."

Panelists agreed that government media are, by extension, mouthpieces of the ruling party. As Bonolo argued, "Government media disseminate news for the benefit of members of the ruling party under the guise of public

*Motseta also highlighted the well-known distribution woes in the private media: "Private media, especially newspapers, are by all means trying to reach out to the whole country. But there are limitations."*

interest." Other panelists noted that the government media exclude coverage of certain issues. "Case in point, the state media, acting in concert with the defunct Ministry of Communications, Science, and Technology, refused to implement the ruling of the broadcast regulatory body, the National Broadcasting Board (NBB), to ensure impartial coverage of political activities after a formal complaint lodged by opposition Botswana Congress Party (BCP) in the run-up to the October 2009 general elections," noted Mooki.

As for the independence of news agencies, most panelists agreed that independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media in Botswana. Local media also depend on popular international news agencies, such as Reuters, AP, AFP, BBC, and CNN, although the expense places their services out of reach for some media houses. As a result, most journalists resort to website sources instead of subscriptions. A notable entrant in 2009 was the news agency E-Botswana, an offshoot of South Africa E-News channel, which appears to be dominated by news from South Africa. Other local news agencies include the Botswana Press Agency (BOPA), led by the government; the only active independent news agency is Silas Press Agency.

Indicator 5, concerning whether local, independent broadcast media produce their own news programs and current affairs, proved to be a source of contention among panelists. Some argued that most programs do not differ significantly from those provided by public broadcasters, while others countered that over time, independent productions have improved significantly. The panelists who see little or no improvement cited their impression that in most cases, news subjects are leading government officials from both private and public media. Panelists related indicator 5 to indicator 7, emphasizing the lack of a broad spectrum of social interests reflected and represented in the media, as well as the lack of minority-language news.

Regarding the transparency of media ownership, panelists reported that the government is still the major player, and private media ownership is intensely concentrated in a few conglomerates. The Dikgang Publishing Company is a major media conglomerate that has acquired sole

*“Media now employ accountants and general managers to run their businesses, and some media houses are owned by businesspeople who are interested in turning a profit,” said Mokgoabone.*

ownership of the *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*, two newspapers in which it previously held shares, as well as *Mmegi*, the *Monitor*, and some shares in the private radio station Gabz FM. The panelists expressed concern over the implications of this concentration of media in Botswana. The anti-competition legislation for private companies, shelved by the Ministry of Trade in 2007, remains. Yet there is no strict, enforceable legislation regulating competition in the economy as a whole—although now, there is specific legislation for the media sector, under the controversial MPA. While the MPA does provide regulation on this issue, its ability to reverse the concentration of media remains to be seen.

As indicated earlier, Botswana still has not licensed community broadcast media outlets. Ndlovu noted, “The country still does not have any space open for community media [broadcasting].” He added, “Rural people tend to access the government’s *Daily News*, Botswana Television, and state radio stations, and they are deprived of independent voices from the private media.”

Panelists delivered relatively low scores for the indicator assessing whether the media reflect a broad spectrum of social interests. As highlighted earlier, most panelists feel that media houses do not take local minority languages, like Kalanga and Sekgalagadi, seriously enough. Botswana are confined to news in English and Setswana. “We have people in Botswana who speak in San, Afrikaans, or Kalanga and do not understand Setswana or English—yet news is confined to these two languages,” stressed Mooki. Furthermore, Hamufari noted, “Societal discrimination against immigrants, especially Zimbabweans, women, people with disabilities, homosexuals, people with HIV/AIDS, people with albinism, and members of the San ethnic group, is a problem, but very little is reported on these issues—and what little reporting exists is done insensitively.” However, some panelists feel that the media have taken up a broad spectrum of social interests, especially with the new licenses to private radio stations that have national reach.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Botswana Objective Score: 2.17

For Objective 4, panelists noted signs of strengthened management systems in Botswana’s media institutions. The panelists believe that the media are conscious of the national and global economic recession and are doing everything possible to survive. Equally, the general perception of panelists is that independent media managers understand the ethos of protecting editorial independence. But the panelists continue to underline concerns over the private media’s dependence on the pool of government advertising revenue.

Delivering fairly high scores for indicator 1, panelists generally agreed that media outlets operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses. “Media now employ accountants and general managers to run their businesses, and some media houses are owned by businesspeople who are interested in turning a profit,” said Mokgoabone. Hamufari added, “Today, media houses function as businesses. Television, radio, and newspapers sell advertising space, and in return these revenues have to be applied to the costs involved in running a media house.”

The panelists agreed that media receive revenue from a multitude of sources. However, the panelists feel that the independent media are forced to compete unfairly for revenue in a minuscule market dominated by the pampered state media. “The government’s *Daily News* is subsidized by taxpayers and charges nothing for cover sales. It presents unfair competition to the private media sector,” noted Motseta. To most participants, the challenge remains in

### 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.

obtaining reasonable advertisements to sustain a media outlet, whether electronic or print. To this end, said Ndlovu, “The international standard of a 60/40 ratio of advertising to editorial is being compromised by poor demand for advertising space and dependency on government sources of advertising revenue.”

Regarding government subsidies for the private media, panelists asserted the Botswana government, through its citizens’ empowerment schemes under organizations such as the Citizen Entrepreneurship Development Agency (CEDA), has continued to be a large source of financial loans to the private media. To Mooki, this situation is not ideal, if editorial independence is the goal. “Self-censorship is almost inevitable in an economy where about 80 percent of all the support for [small, medium, and micro-enterprise] SMMEs comes from government. Because of our small economy, everyone has to suck up to the government,” Mooki said.

The panelists agreed that some market research is conducted in Botswana to inform its revenue readiness and retain its consumers (readers and listeners), but these are conducted erratically, and, in most cases, the information produced is subjective. In some cases, individual media houses take on the task, and in other cases, independent research bureaus, like the ABC of South Africa, conduct the research. Despite this research, though, Motseta said there is no evidence that advertising agencies base their advertising support on verifiable empirical data. Furthermore, Bonolo pointed out that most advertising flows from the government in the first place.

In some cases, panelists confirmed that print media outlets take circulation audits, conducted by professional circulation bureaus, seriously—but regard the results with a dose of distrust. To Churu, the upside is that “advertisers have confidence in these audits, as demonstrated by growth in the number of new advertisements every time the results are announced.”

**OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS**

**Botswana Objective Score: 2.49**

Panelists hailed the introduction of the Coalition for Freedom of Expression (COFEX), comprised of various NGOs, as a reason to return even better scores for Objective 5 this year. The COFEX aims to enhance the collaborative capacities of non-state actors for the protection of journalists and the promotion of quality journalism, especially given the threats to civil liberties posed by the MPA. Panelists also praised the steep increase in the use of social networks, such as Facebook,

and blogs to circulate information among members of the COFEX.

Indicator 1 (trade associations represent the interests of media owners and provide member services) scored fairly high, but not without controversy. Panelists feel that despite the score, a number of serious concerns remain. Mokgoabone, for example, pointed to the lack of a publishers’ association.

Although indicator 2 scored highly as well, the panelists said most civil-society actors, except for some led by women, are reluctant and unwilling to go beyond paying lip service to support the media. Individually, however, journalists are aided by MISA-Botswana and other oversight bodies, such as the Editors’ Forum and the Press Council of Botswana.

Claiming that media unions are non-existent or defunct, Ramadi added: “Media advocacy and professional organizations exist, but they are weak.” Over the years, there have been attempts to introduce a media workers’ union, but they have failed. The reasons behind the failure, according to the panelists, include rampant competition among private media and the lack of resources (both financial and human) to pull media together. On a more cynical note, Hamufari added that independent media do not want to pay membership fees.

In addition, as Ndlovu, who is at the center of the newly established COFEX, stated, “Despite some civil-society organizations coming on board to support media, most NGOs are not ready to put their heads on the block for media freedom.” Considering the introduction of the MPA in December 2008, panelists agreed on the need for media NGOs that support professional development and legal rights, such as MISA-Botswana, the Editors’ Forum, and the

**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.

*Over the years, there have been attempts to introduce a media workers' union, but they have failed. The reasons behind the failure, according to the panelists, include rampant competition among private media and the lack of resources (both financial and human) to pull media together.*

Press Council of Botswana, to strengthen their governance structures and financial resources.

Despite Ndlovu's comment above, the indicator measuring NGO support toward free speech and the independent media scored the highest of Objective 5 indicators. Yet, panelists underlined the absence of international support to fledgling independent media, citing donor fatigue and Botswana's relative prosperity within the context of Africa. "There is little apolitical support of a financial nature that is provided to the media. Donors believe that Botswana are rich and have multiple sources of revenue, but this is not true," argued Motseta.

The panelists believe that quality journalism degree programs exist in Botswana, with a perception prevalent among panelists that the Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana has helped to improve the professionalism of media reporting in Botswana. Other local institutions providing media qualifications also exist, such as Likomkwing Technical University.

Praising short-term training options as well, the panelists highlighted programs that allow journalists to upgrade their skills or acquire new skills. However, they noted that short-term training and in-service training institutions are insufficiently funded.

Indicator 6 (sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted) was found contentious. Some panelists believed that as much as printing is considered a business, it is also political. For example,

according to Motseta, "The printing and publishing industry is dominated by Mmegi, a Botswana company owned by the ruling party BDP member Satar Dada. The government has also a printing press." The panelists did concur that political interests in printing facilities ultimately hurt private media entrepreneurs, given Botswana's minuscule market size. The chances that this could be reversed in the short-to-medium term are slim, considering the costly nature of acquiring and maintaining printing machines.

The panelists also debated indicator 7 (channels of media distribution). While most Internet kiosks are in private hands, apolitical, and not restricted, they remain centered in urban areas with higher population concentrations. The government still refuses to offer any means of support for distribution or transmission to the private national broadcast operators, such as Gabz FM and Yarona FM, to reach out to rural areas—as they view these stations as competition, not complementary outlets that could help extend reach to neglected segments of the population.

The panelists feel that the print media deserved more support, as well. "The government-owned *Daily News* has a private courier for its distribution countrywide, making it the biggest distributor," said Hamufari. Regarding missed opportunities for private media to band together in the face of this competition, Ndlovu commented, "Despite the need for the local private media to work more cooperatively as a network to improve their distribution in Botswana, no effort has been made." Of all the newspapers existing in Botswana, only *The Voice* and the Dikgang Publishing Company (*Botswana Guardian*, *Midweek Sun*, *Mmegi*, etc.) had opened separate distribution outlets as of 2008. Furthermore, by 2008 some private newspapers in Botswana had reduced their print runs, due to increases in the costs for printing and distribution. *The Voice*, for example, was printing 38,000 copies per week in 2008 but reduced its print run to 30,000 by 2009. Although a few opportunities exist for local newspapers to sell in South African-owned retail outlets in Botswana, South African newspapers and magazines continue to enjoy better distribution in these outlets.

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## List of Panel Participants

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