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BURKINA FASO

Little changed on the political front in Burkina Faso in 2010, as Burkina Faso's president, Blaise Compaoré, easily won re-election in the November 2010 election, as expected. The media environment also saw few surprises. The media's strengths—such as laws that support the freedom of expression on paper, an independent media critical of the government, and few crimes against journalists—provide several important pieces for a sustainable foundation for the press. However, critical shortcomings continue to hamper progress and sustainability, and contributed to MSI scores dropping moderately during the period of study. Challenges include poor access to information; hindered investigative reporting; laws on the books that criminalize libel; widespread self-censorship; the lack of a true, independent news agency; and a public media sector that serves the government rather than the public interest.

Efforts have been underway since 2007 to provide journalists with a collective agreement and a press card to help govern the profession. The 2009 MSI panelists were encouraged that the effort finally succeeded that year: the agreement was signed into force by the Association of Journalists of Burkina (AJB) and Société des Éditeurs de la Presse¹ (SEP) under the auspices of the country's main media regulatory, Conseil Supérieur de la Communication² (CSC) in the presence of the prime minister. Yet in 2010, by the time the MSI panel convened, the agreement had still not been implemented, as SEP had not yet put in place its required accompanying measures.

At the professional level, Burkina Faso has dedicated journalists, but ethical lapses (such as accepting payments to cover stories) persist. Although formal educational opportunities continue to grow, there is a need for greater hands-on, short-term training opportunities. In particular, MSI panelists have called for formal in-house training programs.

The growth of new media has slowed somewhat, as Internet use is still quite low—around one percent—in a country with widespread poverty and illiteracy. As a result, radio remains the major source of news.

The overall average lost more than a quarter of a point, and scores for Objective 1 (freedom of speech) fell significantly, especially because panelists continue to lament poor access to information, the criminalization of libel, and the non-transparent broadcast licensing process. Although Objective 5 (supporting institutions) received the highest overall score for the study, the average fell dramatically from last year's MSI. Scores for other objectives also lost ground.

¹ Society of Press Publishers

² Higher Communication Council

BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE

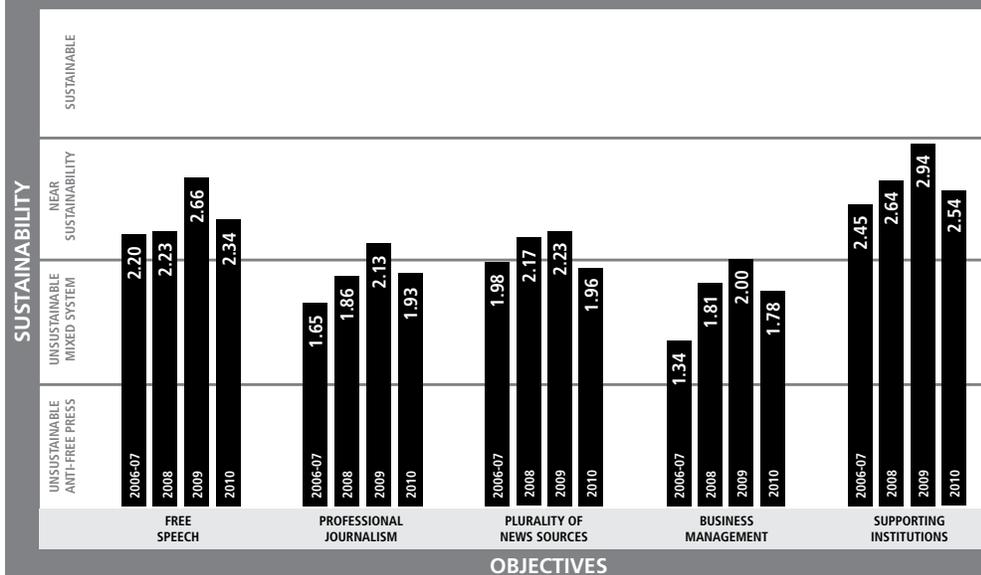
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 16,751,455 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Ouagadougou
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Mossi 40%, other approximately 60% (includes Gurunsi, Senufo, Lobi, Bobo, Mande, and Fulani) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 50%, indigenous beliefs 40%, Christian 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official), native African languages belonging to Sudanic family spoken by 90% of the population (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2010-Atlas):** \$8.036 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-PPP):** \$1,170 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **Literacy rate:** 21.8% (male 29.4%, female 15.2%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Blaise Compaore (since October 15, 1987)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 5 daily newspapers, 10 weekly publications, 17 newspapers in the national languages; Radio Stations: 12 public, 19 commercial, 23 community, 19 religious, 4 international; Television Stations: 1 public, 3 private (CSC report 2006)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top daily newspapers: *Sidwaya* (state-run), *L'Observateur Paalga* (private), *Le Pays* (private), *L'Express du Faso* (private)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** N/A
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 178,100 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: BURKINA FASO



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

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 2.34

According to Zénabou Tarpilga, a journalist with Burkina Faso National Radio, the country's legal and social norms encourage the creation of media outlets—but do not encourage anyone to be a journalist. Citizens can speak out in the media; however, their comments are only welcome if they comply with government policy. Otherwise, they are criticized or even censored. The Information Code of December 30, 1993 remains in force, even though professionals in the information field and human rights activists have criticized the code sharply.

Kassoum Kambou, a magistrate and a member of the Mouvement Burkinabè des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples³ (MBDHP), expressed the view that legal instruments are fairly well designed and protective of press freedoms. He himself had not encountered any threats to the freedom of the bench. However, in his view, often the politicization of the administration presents a serious obstacle to press freedom.

Pierre Dabiré, secretary general of AJB, said that on a positive note, Burkina Faso has legal underpinnings in favor of freedom of expression and the press that approach accordance with international standards. However, people are skeptical over the implementation of the laws; in Dabiré's

³ Burkina Faso Movement for Human Rights

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.

Libel remains a criminal offense that can lead to prison, and as an additional penalty, press outlets might face suspension. Furthermore, in libel cases, it is up to the journalists to prove their innocence, or that they acted in good faith.

view, government officials and media professionals share the responsibility for implementation. The panelists also pointed to a problem with the justice system: the insufficient separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

CSC bears responsibility for allocating frequencies—a fact that has generated controversy in previous MSI studies, as CSC is structurally and politically dependent on the government, and is made up primarily of government-appointed members. According to Kambou, CSC shows a degree of balance and independence in the granting of broadcast licenses. Yet, he noted, some applications move a little faster, while others hit roadblocks. For example, whenever a political body, a town hall, or an assembly applies for a frequency, the CSC loosens its rigor and restrictions.

Dabiré added, “The texts say that political parties are not entitled to frequencies, but when you look at the media landscape, we realize that there are political parties that have frequencies, clouding the impression of independence.”

As for the ease of market entry, Dabiré said that the media are not penalized relative to other types of businesses. Rabankhi Abou-Bakr Zida, editorial director of Sidwaya Publications, commented that a ministerial delegation with customs officers visited the state-owned *Sidwaya* to draw up a list of the material that the press uses, to report back to the minister. Later, the financial authorities and members of the media planned a meeting to exempt some of the media's materials from taxation.

Regarding crimes against journalists, Firmin Gouba, director of the Department of Journalism and Communication at the University of Ouagadougou, said that over the past three years, no journalists in Burkina Faso had been harassed for their opinions. Yet Tarpilga recounted the case of a radio journalist who covered a story about fraud related to university examinations, and found the window of his car broken.

Jacob Sou, station owner and chair of the Association of Community Radio Stations, added that the authorities

sometimes intimidate media outlets, or look for ways to shut down stations. He provided the example of a radio station that had been off the air for a few weeks because its transmission mast had fallen down. Stations have the right to go off the air for up to three months in cases of technical issues. But a regional director of culture wrote to his ministry to say that he had heard that a radio station had been off the air for ages, and without even checking, he asked his ministry to withdraw the station's subsidy. Eventually, CSC became involved, and while initially the station was permitted to continue broadcasting, eventually the authorities shut down the station.

Considering the topic of preferential legal treatment for the public media, panelists noted that political interference is evident through the appointments of those in charge of public outlets.

Libel remains a criminal offense that can lead to prison, and as an additional penalty, press outlets might face suspension. Furthermore, in libel cases, it is up to the journalists to prove their innocence, or that they acted in good faith.

Zida said that access to information remains a real obstacle course for journalists. Sophie Ouattara Traoré, a journalist with *Sidwaya* and treasurer of SYNATIC, agreed. Even though the law gives journalists the right to information, that principle is not always upheld in practice. The journalists on the panel said that despite a circular from the prime minister dating back to 2008 aimed at facilitating journalist access to public information, access has become more difficult. Before, when the sector was less formal, journalists would call someone and explain that they wanted an interview, and that did not stir any particular resistance. Journalists would meet up with their sources and write their stories. Now, however, when a journalist calls, the source will agree to a meeting, but demand that the journalist fill out an application. From there, it takes at least a week before the meeting—complicating efforts to get information quickly on a deadline. Journalists can also petition for information, but often they wait several months before they receive any answers. Tarpilga noted that the problems with information access hamper investigative journalism especially.

Franceline Oubda, a journalist with the Government Information Service, said that within the service, often staffers meet journalists at press briefings. However, now, the journalist has to make clear up front what type of information is needed.

Panelists noted one positive development—press cards, which the government began issuing in 2009, have facilitated journalists' access to some information and some places when doing their professional work. CSC launched the press card

officially on May 4, 2009. Implementing the card had proven impossible before then, even though its decree was signed into law in 1995. A technical committee of 12 members is responsible for issuing the card. The committee includes two representatives from CSC, two from the Ministry of Information, four from media professional organizations, and four from media employer organizations. In 2009, the committee issued 240 cards.

Eric Sibiri Kam, jurist and chair of Ligue de Défense de la Liberté de Presse, said that everyone recognizes that public information is not readily accessible. For example, if a student wants to know how many officials are in the administration, finding out will be an uphill battle. A proposed new law, accompanied by pleas from journalists for its passage, has failed so far.

Entry into the profession is fairly free. The downside of that, panelists noted, is that some practicing journalists have little or no training, and are almost completely ignorant of the rules of professional ethics and practices. Journalists are free to organize to defend their rights—a right they exercise.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 1.93

The panelists were highly critical of journalistic practices in Burkina Faso. Traoré had the opinion that poor initial training for journalists is at the core of the problem. Many journalists are trained on the job; they arrive without any basic training on professional ethics or practical skills. Moreover, their overall educational level is relatively low, especially among

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).

members of the community and religious media. On the other hand, well-informed and experienced journalists can be found in the public media and some private media.

Tarpilga said that selective, high-quality programming and reportage exists, but not in sufficient quantity. The private press carry out investigations on sensitive political and economic issues, whereas the public press are more oriented toward social matters.

In Dabiré's view, Burkinabè journalists are average—neither qualitatively good nor bad. Common flaws include inadequate fact checking, failure to abide by professional ethics and practice, self-censorship arising out of social and cultural pressures, and the predominance of entertainment in radio and television. Mediocre salaries, particularly in the private sector, and a lack of resources for journalists contribute to the problem.

Self-censorship persists, particularly in the public media. As an example, Kam pointed to the longstanding debate on article 37 of the constitution that sets a two-term limit for the presidency. Before the party in power took an official position on term limits, there was radio silence on the matter—hinting at censorship. The state media (in particular national television) ignored the controversy as well, until the ruling party publicly proclaimed its desire to amend the article by removing the limitation. Then the debate really got stirred behind the scenes, as though permission had been given to start the public dialogue.

Kam said that the great majority of Burkina Faso press outlets do not deal with key issues. Tarpilga questioned Burkinabè journalists' grasp of such issues. When journalists begin an investigation, all too often they base it only on the words of a single party and the direction that their supervisors urge them to pursue. The result is compromised balance and mostly superficial reporting. For example, a journalist might be assigned to cover the opening or closing of a seminar or event, but will report without delving into layers of meaning or making broader connections.

Wages are low in the media, particularly in the private sector. Media executives say that they cannot afford to pay proper salaries, but many view these claims skeptically, given the apparent prosperity of media owners. The 2009 CSC report highlighted the insecurity and poverty among media professionals, who have paltry salaries, no welfare benefits, and no career development opportunities.

Again this year, panelists agreed that entertainment outweighs news on radio and television. Last year's report

cited a poll by the Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo⁴ that confirmed that overwhelmingly, the population turns to television as an escape, not a source of news.

Local stations lack adequate equipment and technical facilities, preventing them from producing their own programs. As a panelist noted last year, the poor equipment and material resources lead to third-rate productions that are not adapted to the digital era. The 2009 CSC report also highlighted some recurring problems in this regard, including the local media's need for high-performance equipment, their inadequate facilities, and their non-compliance with technical standards.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 1.96

In discussing Objective 3, panelists emphasized the lack of home-grown production, the shortage of quality news programs, and the absence of a real news agency. Panelists also criticized the ability of the state media to reflect the views of the political spectrum and serve the public interest.

During 2009–2010, plurality of the media did not change significantly. Burkina Faso has approximately 60 radio stations; five daily newspapers; a number of weeklies and periodicals; five private television stations; and a national

⁴ "Results of a poll about the media in the four main cities of Burkina Faso: Ouagadougou, Koudougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, and Ouahigouya," Norbert Zongo National Press Center, April 2009.

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.

Dabiré said that several factors affect citizen access to news—low incomes, illiteracy, and an electrical supply that is limited to the large cities. Legally and theoretically, though, access to news is not limited.

television station that has been broadcasting via satellite since 2006, in addition to a number of newspapers in national languages. The people of Burkina Faso have free access to satellite channels and international radio stations (some of which broadcast on FM also, through local radio stations with which they have signed partnership agreements). Tarpilga noted that many community radio stations are providing local news; they take into account the social interests of local people, but their signal coverage areas are small.

In a country with widespread illiteracy, radio is still the primary source of news. Internet access is still quite low. According to Freedom House, “infrastructural deficiencies and poverty limited access to the Internet to just over 1 percent of the population in 2009, but there were no reported restrictions on content.”⁵ In its annual human rights report, the U.S. Department of State confirmed that use is low, and is attributable partly to poverty and the high illiteracy rate, not the authorities. “There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet or reports that the government monitored e-mail or Internet chat rooms. Individuals and groups could engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail,” the report stated.⁶

Dabiré said that several factors affect citizen access to news—low incomes, illiteracy, and an electrical supply that is limited to the large cities. Legally and theoretically, though, access to news is not limited. As for the public media, they still face infrastructural challenges in ensuring nationwide coverage. In some parts of the country, stations have had relatively long signal interruptions. That was the case in 2009, with major cities such as Koudougou and Gaoua.

Turning in low scores for indicator 3 (public media reflects the political spectrum and serves the public interest), panelists said that in the public media, government activities take precedence, and every effort must be made to gather, process, and disseminate news about the government at the

⁵ *Freedom of the Press: 2010*. Freedom House, 2010; p. 75. Available online from this page: http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=350&ana_page=371&year=2010

⁶ 2010 Human Rights Report: Burkina Faso. United States Department of State, April 8, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154333.htm>

expense of other news that might be of greater interest to the public. According to Tarpilga, the public media are aware of their service role, but they are not always apolitical. As CSC noted in its 2009 report, “The public media are encountering difficulties, and they are not small ones, either. The difficulties arise out of their legal status, which prevents them from really being public service media. In practice, the quest for profit easily took precedence over their cultural and other public service missions.”

Radio stations do produce some programs, often funded by UNICEF, Oubda said. Usually, this means that the productions are made to order and influenced or controlled. The radio stations are given money then asked to produce programming on a given theme.

Oubda said that most local radio stations air music until 1 p.m., then synch to national Radio Burkina’s news broadcast. After that, they return to music, or sometimes interactive programs. Even if those stations wanted to, they could not produce their own news programs, because they lack the necessary personnel, technical means, and equipment.

The media are allowed to broadcast foreign programs. In the provinces, sometimes they air Radio France Internationale (RFI). RFI has provided training as well, and given computers and memory sticks to some community radio stations to allow them to copy RFI radio programming. People appear content with the mix of national Radio Burkina and foreign programs, panelists said.

Speaking as a member of CSC, Oubda said that normally, the agreements that radio stations forge with the council set out specifications and responsibilities for each station. Unfortunately, faced with practical challenges on the ground, people do not follow through. The council has not yet managed to enforce strict observance of the program. Although the council does not tend towards laxity, she said, it does take into account of some of the realities.

Panelists underlined several concerns regarding transparency of ownership of press enterprises. Traoré expressed the belief that there is a lack of transparency even regarding private media ownership, even though most outlets are family businesses, living off the backs of their workers. Kam commented that the public at large does not always know who owners or shareholders are. Media owners, meanwhile, seek to shield their earnings.

Prométée Bako, director of publication and a journalist for *La Voix du Sahel* in Gorom-Gorom, said that rather than being concerned over the lack of transparency, he objected to the near-obsessive way that some people want to know who owns the media in Burkina Faso—using that knowledge to label the content. He said that he has been asked three or

four times in ministerial offices who is behind his newspaper. In other words, it is no longer a matter of the public seeking the information, but rather the political powers that be. In addition, the explanations that they give are never believed, according to Bako.

Government officials tend to reject the notion that a journalist might attempt to express opinions that differ from the views of media owners. Some panelists had the opinion that media owners dare to cover certain subjects only when they have political protection.

On the media's coverage of minorities and reflection of social issues, Bako's impression is that the printed press does not report sufficiently on the views of minorities. Kambou commented that in society as well as in the media, some social topics (such as homosexuality) are considered taboo or are discussed rarely. Oubda shared her view that that in matters related to sexual orientation, family planning, and reproductive health, media coverage is not prohibited, but culturally, these issues call for the media to use a sense of delicacy.

In another example of social issue coverage, the Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights was called into the United Nations over the treatment of the Fulani ethnic group, amid claims that the group is threatened with extinction. This subject appeared in the Burkina Faso press just once, despite the seriousness of issue—and even though the United Nations ordered the government of Burkina Faso to produce a report on the matter.

Regarding minority languages, Tarpilga said that Burkina Faso National Radio provides news in the majority languages (Mooré, Dioula, Fulfulde, and Gourmantchéma) in addition to French, the official language. From Monday to Friday, the national station allocates five minutes to 17 other languages, in the hope of reaching all the other languages—although this is a symbolic gesture at best.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 1.78

Panelists said that press businesses in Burkina Faso are not economically viable, professional, or profitable, and operate in an environment with no audience ratings, circulation figures, or market research. Private media management, despite some grounds for satisfaction, continues to face difficulties related to the fragility of press businesses.

Dabiré said that the private media are not subject to laws obligating them to manage their businesses effectively in

Noting the Collective Agreement, Gouba questioned how media executives claim that they are too unprofitable to pay their journalists accordingly, yet still manage to keep their businesses afloat—and some of those in charge manage to lead luxurious lifestyles.

the higher interests of editorial independence. As a result, a number of their practices—such as accepting payments for reports—are far removed from recommended professional and ethical standards, and often turn press outlets into publicity platforms.

Gouba commented that most press businesses are family owned, and not rooted in a rigorous approach or reliable data. Noting the Collective Agreement, Gouba questioned how media executives claim that they are too unprofitable to pay their journalists accordingly, yet still manage to keep their businesses afloat—and some of those in charge manage to lead luxurious lifestyles. Gouba commented that companies that do not have the means to look after their staff are not viable, but Kam said that this is not necessarily so, because the sector is mixed—some media owners do flaunt their success, but others are just scraping by.

Pierre Kaboré, deputy director and director of marketing and publications of the Edifice McCann Erikson Communication Agency in Ouagadougou, observed that Burkina Faso has many private media companies that are not profitable, but there are success stories. Some private outlets

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.

Owned by a private individual for business interests only, Impricolor is the only printer in the country with a rotary printing press.

employ journalists and manage to ensure that their staff members receive professional training and take part in international meetings.

The panelists said that they believe that the prospect of economic sustainability and profitability at least exists, with varied sources of income including sales, advertising, and subsidies. Traoré remarked that even bearing in mind the need to turn a profit, press outlets exceed the norms regarding the number of pages devoted to advertising.

Sou said that his association arrived at the conclusion that in order to be viable, media companies should not rely on their outlets' income for their existence; they must offer additional services that cover their cost of their operations. That would then free journalists to focus on content production. Otherwise, he asked, how could the media companies finance their own activities, when radio stations do not bring in even XOF 200,000 (\$400) a year? The fees that Bureau Burkinabé des Droits d'Auteurs (copyright bureau) charges alone amount to more than that, and the ARCE fees are even higher. The XOF 200,000 might just cover taxes.

Kam expressed the belief that the media ought to be able to make money than they do, given the numerous projects and NGOs that request to use press outlets. Even though the national broadcasters always say that they do not have the resources to cover their expenditures, in his view, they cannot meet the demand, given that they are so heavily sought after to provide coverage of events.

All media outlets in Burkina Faso receive government subsidies. But the panelists expressed confidence that subsidies do not influence the media, because the state does not distribute the funds to the media directly—parliament approves a package amount and a committee distributes the funds. According to Kam, it is money that passes under the table and off the books that presents the real problem. Tarpilga added that the state is the largest purchaser of advertisements, but it does not distribute ads equitably—placements are made depending on the editorial lines taken by the media outlets.

In recent years, there have been no studies or statistics on media trends to inform media businesses or content strategy. Similarly, as noted in last year's MSI, Burkina Faso does not have independent institutions publishing circulation statistics—and despite a law requiring them to publish print run numbers, the print media never follow through on the obligation.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 2.54

Again this year, the panelists awarded their highest scores to Objective 5.

The panelists said that Burkina Faso has trade associations that represent the interests of their owners and provide strong services to their members, defending them very well. Several panelists agreed that generally, publication directors and newspaper publishers are well organized. However, press owners—even if they are journalists also—are most interested in the profitability of their businesses. Furthermore, trade associations do not always represent the collective interests of owners, as often they do not agree among themselves.

The country has several general and specialized associations and media groups. The major players are SEP, Union Nationale de l'Audiovisuel libre du Faso (UNALFA)⁷ of Burkina Faso, l'Association des Radios Communautaires,⁸ Association des Médias Communautaires,⁹ Réseau des Radios et Revues

⁷ National Union of Independent Broadcast Media

⁸ Community Radio Association

⁹ Community Media Association

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.

Rurales,¹⁰ and Réseau Informel des Journalistes.¹¹ These associations lobby to improve access to public information and to decriminalize press offenses, and protest violations of the freedom of the press. Last year's MSI panelists heaped praise on some of these organizations, including UNALFA and SEP, for their efforts to pass the Collective Contract. Traoré said that some professional associations, such as AJB and the Réseau d'Initiatives de Journalistes (RIJ), are prioritizing capacity building for journalists. Still, many of these associations face criticism for lending more theoretical than practical support, sometimes doing little beyond issuing press statements.

Formal degree options continue to expand in the country, with more and more private facilities entering the mix, such as the Free University of Burkina and the Pan-African Media, Information and Communication Studies and Research Institute (IPERMIC). In addition, as noted in last year's MSI, the University of Ouagadougou's Department of Journalism offers graduate programs and a certificate course; and the Vocational Training Center of Information, run by the Ministry of Information, offers journalism courses. Also, students commonly study journalism abroad—in other African countries (Senegal, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire) and in Europe.

As for short-term training options, the Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo, the Regional Press Union, and the media development department under the Ministry of Communication have organized other training sessions for the media in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. Yet, as Dabiré noted last year, they still offer no formal in-house training programs. Sou emphasized that the training needs are great, especially for executive-level private media staff.

Some media outlets have learned that there is money to be found for training if they are proactive enough; for example, an evangelical radio station in Gaoua raised a fair portion of the funds needed to train one of its journalists, then asked the Association of Community Radio Stations to pay for the remainder. However, getting funds released for training and education can be difficult.

Dabiré said that the company Impricolor prints nearly all the country's private newspapers and even some state media (such as the state-owned *Sidwayai*), and is not biased. Owned by a private individual for business interests only, Impricolor is the only printer in the country with a rotary printing press.

Distribution services are concentrated in the capital. As last year's MSI noted, Burkina Faso is still without a national distribution service; each newspaper outlet distributes through its own sales network.

¹⁰ Rural Radio Stations and Publications Network

¹¹ Informal Journalists' Network

List of Panel Participants

Zénabou Tarpilga, journalist, Burkina Faso National Radio, Ouagadougou

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