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COTE D'IVOIRE

An upturn in economic activity marked 2010 in Côte d'Ivoire, as did its impacts on the media landscape. The prospect of a general election helped create favorable conditions for economic growth as well. Elections had been postponed repeatedly after the Ouagadougou Political Agreement of March 4, 2007, but finally were scheduled for October 30, 2010, in the midst of a relatively peaceful social and political climate.

Election fever colored most of the year, leading up to the first round of presidential elections. Political players campaigned nonstop to win over voters. After waiting for several years for elections, many Ivoirians expressed skepticism over whether elections would actually take place. On November 28, the elections did go forward—but the uncertain results sank the country into a political crisis. The country's Independent Election Commission declared the internationally-backed Alassane Ouattara the victor; however, its Constitutional Council annulled the results and claimed that Laurent Gbagbo, the incumbent, won. As of the end of 2010, Gbagbo continued to ignore regional and international protest, clinging to power and refusing to step aside.

Also, the lead-up to the elections prompted authorities to crack down on the media, with attacks on journalists and bans on pro-opposition publications during the elections. Additionally, the authorities censored a number of foreign radio stations and television channels, including RFI, BBC, and France 24, accusing them of bias and cutting their signals amid the post-election turmoil.

Still, the media managed to take remarkable advantage of the election year, with clear gains in freedom of expression—even beyond the freedom already guaranteed in the Basic Law and supporting legislation and regulations. Many newspapers and publications kept up the heat on election coverage, and in the final quarter, new dailies cropped up specifically to cover the elections. The elections spurred efforts to train journalists and media professionals to provide high-quality coverage of the elections. Professional media organizations, in partnership with the Press Support and Development Fund (FSDP), organized a series of capacity-building workshops for media professionals and published various guides for journalists. Two media regulators, the National Press Council (CNP) and the National Broadcast Media Council (CNCA), become involved also in the media coverage of the elections. They promoted rules and procedures designed to help ensure that all candidates had fair access to the public service media.

Even with such clear signs of improvement relative to 2009 in media practice, the panelists were unanimous in recognizing the ongoing weaknesses that the media community needs to address—especially professional standards of journalism and the business management side of media companies.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE AT A GLANCE

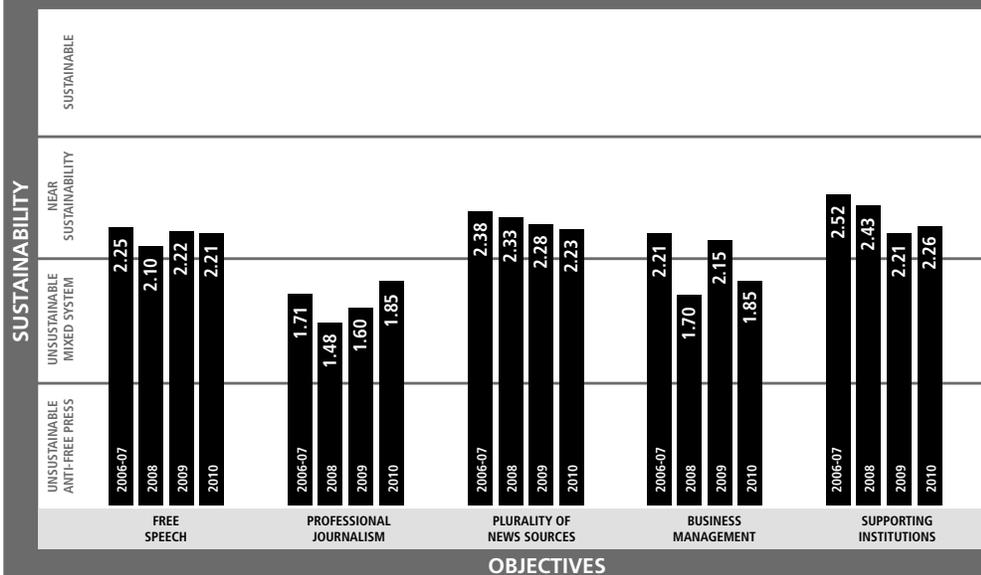
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 21,504,162 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Yamoussoukro
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Akan 42.1%, Voltaiques or Gur 17.6%, Northern Mandes 16.5%, Krous 11%, Southern Mandes 10%, other 2.8% (includes 130,000 Lebanese and 14,000 French) (1998 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 38.6%, Christian 32.8%, indigenous 11.9%, none 16.7% (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** French (official), 60 native dialects with Dioula the most widely spoken (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2010-Atlas):** \$22.97 million (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-PPP):** \$1,650 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **Literacy rate:** 48.7% (male 60.8%, female 38.6%) (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Alassane Ouattara (since October 26, 2000)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 22 daily newspapers, 58 others, 8 periodicals (National Council of the Press); Radio Stations: 5 national and about 100 local; Television Stations: 3 (including 1 fee-based)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *Fraternité Matin* (circulation: 6,824,333), *Soir Info* (circulation: 4,904,498); *Le Nouveau Réveil* (circulation: 3,733,010) (National Council of the Press 2006)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Ivoirian Press Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 967,300 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: CÔTE D'IVOIRE



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

Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.21

Apart from the Ivorian constitution, which guarantees the freedom of expression and the freedom of association, laws passed in 2004 relating both to print and broadcast media prepared the media landscape for plurality of expression. The laws in force are fairly liberal—in intent, at least. For example, since 2004, Côte d'Ivoire abolished imprisonment as a penalty for press offenses. Instead, fines are imposed of between XOF 3 million and XOF 20 million (\$6,200–\$41,200), depending on the offense committed. However, no private television stations operate in the country, and only the print media sector can be considered fully liberalized.

For radio and television, a number of limitations are itemized, despite the 2004 press law reinforcing media freedom. The law states that broadcast outlets must respect national sovereignty, state secrets, national defense, and the dignity of the human person. They must refrain from incitement to hatred, xenophobia, or violence; respect the freedom and property of others; respect the pluralistic nature of trends in thought and opinion; and safeguard public order, national unity, and territorial integrity.

In addition, radio and television stations must obtain frequencies through CNCA concessions, which are granted following council calls for applications. As noted last year, the process has been much easier for radio stations; around 100

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.

concessions have been granted to sponsors of radio stations since the broadcasting market opened up. Still, no private television stations have been authorized to broadcast in Côte d'Ivoire—despite the positive results of a 2008 feasibility study that the Ministry of Communications commissioned. In the meantime, Internet television initiatives continue to help fill the gap.

Since the outbreak of the social and political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, many initiatives in the radio and television sector have cropped up in the central northwest part of the country, but with no regard to the regulations. In 2010, that trend continued; TV Notre Patrie, which broadcasts from Bouaké, the country's second city, is a perfect illustration. CNCA attempted but failed to bring the station into compliance.

Regarding the ease of market entry, launching and distributing a newspaper or periodical publications is a relatively free process. Only a detailed statement of publication before the public prosecutor is required to publish a newspaper. Under article 6 of the 2004 media law, the statement must include supporting documentation for the legal existence of the newspaper company; the title of the newspaper or periodical; the nature and frequency of publication; the surnames, first names, parentage, nationality, and full address of the director of publication, and of the principal shareholders that own (collectively or individually) more than two-thirds of the capital; a certificate verifying that the director of publication passed a criminal background check; the geographical address of the establishment where editorial office activity is to take place; the name and address of the printers for the publication; and a written letter of commitment, dated and signed by the director of publication, to respect and implement the collective agreement governing the press sector.

The prosecutor, in turn, must provide a receipt for the statement of publication no later than 15 days after the statement has been filed. The public prosecutor must be notified of any subsequent change in the statement of publication within 30 days.

Most of the panelists acknowledged the existence of legal instruments guaranteeing freedom of expression in the country. Only two of the 13 panelists gave scores below the overall average. Guillaume Tonga Gbato, secretary-general of the National Union of Private Press Employees in Côte d'Ivoire (SYNAPPCI) and a journalist for *Notre Voie* (the newspaper of the Ivorian Popular Front [FPI] party), noted problems with law implementation. Sometimes enforcement comes up against structural difficulties, or the misplaced zeal of certain administrative officials, he said. Nevertheless, the freedom of the press has stood at the center of the long battles of the democratization process that have been underway since the

In one case, the person in charge of a news website narrowly escaped being lynched. A female reporter covering a ceremony for an Ivorian newspaper was taken for a spy and attacked by a minister's security guards.

1990s. As a result, overall legal and social norms protect and promote press freedom and access to public information.

Still, the panelists identified some serious obstacles that arose through the year, especially related to the general elections during the final quarter. According to Barthélemy Kouamé, chair of the Côte d'Ivoire Network of Online Press Professionals (REPRELICI), existing legal standards were not applied in some cases. Francis Domo, press director of CNP, discussed a number of the difficulties suffered by private press members as well as public service press members—particularly from Ivorian Radio and Television (RTI).

Salimata Silué Konaté, head of news of Radio Côte d'Ivoire, noted that the authorities banned a number of pro-opposition titles in the time surrounding the elections. Additionally, authorities cut the signals of a number of foreign radio stations and television channels—such as RFI, BBC, and France 24—accusing them of bias in their handling of the news in the final quarter of the year, amid the post-election unrest that cost many lives.

This year saw serious crimes committed against journalists, as well. Throughout 2010, the National Press Council picked up on a series of attacks on journalists in their course of duty. In one case, the person in charge of a news website narrowly escaped being lynched. A female reporter covering a ceremony for an Ivorian newspaper was taken for a spy and attacked by a minister's security guards. A photojournalist from an international agency ran into trouble with the organizers of a demonstration, and his equipment was completely destroyed. Elsewhere in greater Abidjan, militants attacked the vehicle of a team of radio and television reporters and damaged their equipment.

The case known as the *Nouveau Courrier d'Abidjan* affair became one of the year's major events. On July 13, public prosecutor Raymond Tchimou Féhou indicted three journalists, including the publication director, from that pro-government daily. They were charged for publishing the findings of a judicial inquiry into alleged instances of embezzlement in the cocoa-coffee sector, and were accused of stealing official documents.

The case caused a stir not only among the journalism community, but in the broader public as well. Local civil society and professional organizations joined regional and even international organizations—such as Media Foundation West Africa (MFWA) based in Accra, Ghana, and Reporters Without Borders—who took up the case and defended the journalists. In a press release given to the Pan-African News Agency (PANA), MFWA demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the imprisoned journalists. MFWA expressed its disappointment in the attitude of the Ivorian authorities and their forcing of journalists to reveal their sources; they noted that confidentiality and the protection of sources are key principles of journalism everywhere in the world, including Côte d'Ivoire. For its part, Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) noted in a public statement that it had not seen such coercive methods in Côte d'Ivoire in many years, and said that the theft charge did not hold water. RSF decried this serious threat to press freedom and called for the immediate release of the three journalists. In an interview with *Notre Voie*, Féhou insisted that there was a press offense and a common law offense, and said that journalists are not above the law.

The three *Nouveau Courrier d'Abidjan* journalists spent two weeks in jail, and the courts suspended the newspaper for two weeks and fined it XOF 5 million (\$10,300). Human rights organizations did react to the violations against journalists, but apart from the professional groups in the sector, reactions were weak, amounting to simple condemnations of the events. Josette Barry, a journalist and editor-in-chief of *Fraternité Matin* Éducation, said that people's reactions depend on their political affiliations. For the most part, people tend to shrug off abuses of the press outlets that lean in a different political direction from their own. Kouamé agreed that public reaction is almost non-existent.

Scores for the indicator measuring preferential legal treatment for public media ranged from 0.5 to 2.0. Overall, the panelists expressed the feeling that public service media are favored somewhat over private media. For example, journalists from private newspapers might have to cool their heels for three hours or more before getting their hands on press releases from the Council of Ministers—in stark contrast to the public *Fraternité Matin*. Furthermore, the government appoints public service media leaders.

However, Adama Koné, a *Fraternité Matin* journalist and chair of the Francophone Press Union (UPF) insisted that whenever public media leaders try to be professional, authorities stand in the way. At *Fraternité Matin*, during the last quarter of 2010, staff wanted to keep their momentum going with balanced coverage of the second round of presidential elections, but they found themselves called down—to disastrous results.

Regarding journalists' access to sources, depending on the editorial lines of their outlets, they sometimes face difficulties—although awareness campaigns on the media's role in elections campaigns throughout 2010 facilitated the work of journalists in favor of the elections. However, upon the conclusion of the presidential elections, as the country plummeted into crisis. With two decision-making poles, journalists on both sides faced serious difficulties covering all the political activities taking place in the economic capital, Abidjan. It was an unusual context that did not make the work of professional journalists any easier.

Aspiring journalists in Côte d'Ivoire encounter few restrictions entering the profession. Two career paths are open to prospective journalists: moving straight into editorial offices/newsrooms and cutting their teeth on the job, or graduating from one of the many schools offering journalism courses. Although the panelists emphasized the obligation under the law for every prospective journalist to have a diploma of higher education—a measure aimed at raising the educational and professional level of journalists—the panelists were unanimous in recognizing the diversity of training opportunities available.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 1.85

Côte d'Ivoire's media display a propensity to align with particular politicians or political parties—explaining the partisan tone so readily apparent in Ivoirian media outlets.

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 independence of the media was a subject of debate among the panelists, who concluded that the Ivoirian media are mostly partisan in their coverage of political news. Sounkalo Coulibaly, a journalist and publication director of *Le Patriote* (Groupe Mayama Éditions), a newspaper close to the Rally of Republicans (RDR), said that the country has few quality newspapers, and journalism has given way to political propaganda. Even though some journalists excel in commentary, others are smoke-and-mirrors artists, under the influence of the general intelligence services, he said.

Konaté acknowledged that, generally speaking, journalism in Côte d'Ivoire fails to meet the requisite standards of professional quality, although the panelists recognized that some exceptionally professional journalists practice in the country. The major challenge, the panelists said, is in the available training: very few journalists complete journalism studies in college.

Gbato agreed that the media sector has no room for complacency, and stressed that even though various actors in the media sector have worked hard to improve Ivoirian media's quality, it remains well below the standard that consumers deserve. That failure is attributable to many factors, in his view: the inadequate training of many journalists, the substandard working equipment, the informal nature of most press enterprises, and the poor salaries for employees. As a result, the turnover rate in the media is staggering. The best journalists tend to leave and cash in on their talents elsewhere. The panelists said that they believe that most employers fail to recognize and value experience in their employees.

Media members have a code of professional ethics and practice. As last year's report noted, the Observatory of Press Freedom, Ethics, and Standards (known by its French acronym, OLPED), has attempted to promote the code, but violations are frequent, mainly because of the political allegiances that define most newspapers. Unbalanced—even partisan—reporting results, and self-censorship is common. According to some panelists, often state media journalists, beholden to political lines, show little respect for the rules of professional conduct.

Although OLPED did not issue any reports on ethical violations in 2010, CNP statistics recorded 347 instances of professional misconduct or failure to comply with professional rules among the print media—a slight increase from last year's 315 violations. CNP issued 124 reprimands, 114 summonses for questioning, 103 warnings, and six formal notices.

The biggest offender was the pro-FPI *Le Temps*, which picked up some 60 CNP reactions—about 30 of which were

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reprimands. The paper also was charged two financial penalties totaling XOF 8 million (\$18,000). Next came *Le Mandat*, tied to the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), with 38 reactions; then *Notre Voie*, the newspaper of the ruling FPI; with the pro-opposition (RDR) *Le Patriote* and the pro-PDCI *Le Nouveau Réveil* not far behind. CNP suspended *Le Patriote* for three days. Given the number of summonses for questioning, reprimands, or warnings given to some of the daily newspapers, it was actually quite surprising that the regulator only suspended one of the outlets, observed the panelists.

The weekly press, which includes some 40 titles, received about 37 reprimands and 29 warnings from the Press Council. One weekly, *L'Œil du Peuple*, was suspended for eight issues (two months).

Jacques Silué, professor of higher education and director of the Institute of Media Sciences and Technologies (ISTC), insisted that journalists' salaries remain the weakest link in the development of the press—and the private press in particular. SYNAPPCI and the Group of Press Publishers of Côte d'Ivoire (GEPCI) agreed on a salary scale in the context of a collective agreement, yet the standards are far from being applied effectively across all media businesses in Côte d'Ivoire. Koné said that the wage levels under the agreement are nothing truly extraordinary, but even if they were respected, it would be a significant step forward compared to the current of practice of handing out gas coupons to journalists in lieu of salaries. Some companies apply the collective agreement, so one could say that the trend is headed in the right direction.

According to Barry, the poor quality of content is one of the biggest disappointments in the media sector in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly during the past 10 years. The lack of quality, she said, is attributable at least partly to the poor salaries, which give journalists a mediocre standard of living and leaves them far too insecure financially. Not only does that insecurity affect the quality of their work, but it may tempt some journalists to violate ethics. Bamba Karamoko, chair of the Union of Local Radio Stations of Côte d'Ivoire (URPCI), added that journalists do not live and develop in isolation—and the corruption that plagues Ivoirian society does not spare the media sector.

The panelists agreed, though, that the poor salaries are no excuse for the professional failings of certain journalists and press houses. That holds true even despite SYNAPPCI Secretary-General Gbato's revelation that some journalists lack the necessary means of communication to check their information. He concluded that the state, regulatory organizations, and press houses must understand that if they do not find a comprehensive solution to the salary problem, all their other efforts will be meaningless. Even when journalists graduate from the most prestigious college of journalism, once they join newspaper staffs in Abidjan, they are not able to pay for a taxi to drive them to their reporting assignments, and they cannot be sure that they will receive their salaries at the end of the month. Under these conditions, he said, journalists have difficulty upholding the rules of the profession—the survival instinct trumps the journalism instinct almost every time.

Regarding the balance of news and entertainment, programming on the national television channels reflects the diversity of the audience, the panelists said. Gérard Koné Dogbemin, a lawyer, remarked that outlets certainly offer a lot of entertainment programming, and there is something for everyone. Alongside the traditional evening news on television news at 8 p.m., stations air discussions and cultural programs.

Speaking as chair of URPCI, Karamoko pointed out that local radio stations, which produce many of their own programs, show the same diversity in programming. At radio stations operating upcountry, shows based on interviews with locals (such as the village chief or the local schoolteacher) are common. Some programs that might be considered entertainment could also have an educational, awareness-raising, or news aspect. Barry, however, shared her conviction that there is too much entertainment—with much of it bordering on indecent.

Content analysis of the Ivoirian media reveals that politics dominates. Except for the sports dailies, all daily newspapers—even while claiming to be general information newspapers—dedicated more than 80 percent of their column inches to political affairs in 2010.

Meanwhile, other topics, such as economics, suffer. Emmanuel Akani, of the Ivoirian Movement of Press Consumers of Côte d'Ivoire (MICOPCI), concluded that even when journalists broach an economic subject, they rarely go into depth or consult appropriate experts—and the resulting articles are highly subjective.

Barry pointed to another explanation for the lack of specialized articles or investigative work in the Ivoirian media: the high turnover seen in some editorial offices. Journalists

change desks two or three times in two years or less. That leaves them very little time to establish their networks or build capacities in any given field. Gbato, speaking as chair of SYNAPPCI, added that in some press enterprises, the bosses refuse to allow their employees to specialize in any particular subject, lest a reporter become irreplaceable.

On a positive note, the Côte d'Ivoire National Union of Journalists (UNJCI) Ebony Award for the best journalist, set up about 15 years ago, has continued to help spur development of journalism's major genres (reportage, investigative, and interviews) in the print media as well as the broadcast media. To encourage journalists to observe the rules of professional conduct throughout the year, the union established a Standing Committee of the Ebony Award Jury to select monthly winners for the three best investigation, reportage, and interview products in each medium (print, online press, radio, and television). For the 2010 award, the committee studied 2,352 works of journalism and selected 10 finalists. Unfortunately, the political events at the end of the year disallowed the jury from holding its deliberations.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.23

The Ivorian media landscape is extremely rich and varied, with 17 daily newspapers in the "general information" category, three sports dailies, and some 40 celebrity-oriented weeklies fighting for readership share. For radio and television, Ivoirians can choose from four public service

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.

news channels (two radio and two television). Although the absence of any private national television channel is regrettable, the FM band is nearly saturated in Abidjan. The country has two private commercial radio stations (Radio Jam and Radio Nostalgie) and a United Nations radio station (UNOCI FM), while international radio stations such as the BBC, RFI, and VOA jostle for space alongside a multitude of local stations.

Across the country, hundreds of local radio stations help people understand the country's direction and recent events. In radio and television, the great diversity of supply has proven satisfactory for viewers with subscriptions to the encrypted channels. The free sale of satellite dishes allows consumers to pick up a variety of news channels with little difficulty.

Among the media support platforms, the use of social networks is developing rapidly, especially among young people. During the election year, Twitter, YouTube and Facebook became very popular. The Ivoire-blog site lists more than 500 blogs on subjects relating to Côte d'Ivoire. However, it remains true that those blogs—whatever their news content—reflect the opinions of their authors and cannot be taken as objective news sources necessarily. Kouamé, speaking as chair of the Côte d'Ivoire Network of Online Press Professionals, noted that most bloggers and others working on the Internet do not conduct field reporting. In other words, although journalists might be bloggers, not all bloggers are journalists.

The popularization of information and communication technologies and the existence of "cybercenters" in all neighborhoods of large towns has helped people assimilate to them better and faster. The obverse of that was a certain loss of interest in printed newspapers among readers, especially young people, who by far prefer to consult their daily paper on the Internet. The cost of an hour online—ample time to review the daily press—was less than the cost of a single printed newspaper, which went for XOF 200 (\$0.41).

But Silué said that while the media are indeed pluralistic in sheer numbers, in reality, it is an artificial plurality, because the titles have political tendencies and most content drifts toward two political poles.

In terms of citizen access to news, except for periods of heavy social tension, generally citizens can access multiple sources of national and international news. Up until the elections of October 2010, people had free access to the international news sources of their choice. The only constraint was the need to pay a subscription fee to Canal+ Horizon, which offers a bundle of international channels. However, after the

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second round of presidential elections, CNCA shut down this option and suspended international news channels. Kouamé commented that these measures did not provoke outrage—or much reaction at all, apparently—from the public or civil society organizations.

The panelists also decided that, in some cases, purchasing power limits access to news sources, as in the case with accessing encrypted channels and the Internet outside of cities. Similarly, people upcountry face a number of difficulties accessing news. Like the national television channel, RTI, which does not cover the whole country, Internet access is limited to the large cities. And for the time being, the cell phone connection packages available from mobile telephony providers are unaffordable for most rural residents.

The Ivoirian press, as a whole, covered the first round of the elections relatively well, gaining satisfactory ratings from organizations such as RSF. In its preliminary findings, Reporters Without Borders saw a neutral tone in the public broadcast media, but with significantly more airtime granted to incumbent President Gbagbo than to other candidates. RSF also found that *Fraternité Matin* fulfilled its public service mission by offering its readers balanced and impartial news about the 14 candidates in the lists, while the extremely partisan coverage in *Notre Voie*, *Le Nouveau Réveil*, and *Le Patriote* sometimes led to serious professional failures.

However, after the first round of elections, the public service media in general—and RTI in particular—adopted an unprofessional attitude, the panelists said. In an interview published in the celebrity magazine *Prestige*, a star reporter from Channel 1, Hermann Aboa (paid by the RTI state media), explained that whether or not a journalist has a different opinion than the editorial line, he or she must toe the line or walk away. Neither private nor state media have to be balanced necessarily, according to the prevailing attitude, though they are expected to be professional. Even the private media have certain political leanings, panelists said.

In the context of the general elections, some media professionals were grouped into a structure called “Coordination of Volunteer Citizen Communicators for the Plebiscite of President Laurent Gbagbo.” Designed to rally communications specialists (journalists, IT professionals, webmasters, communications officers, communications consultants, marketing managers, computer graphics experts, designers, artistic directors, etc.), around the objective of “boosting election communications for its candidate,” the group organized conferences on topical issues, maintained a website, and launched awareness-raising campaigns.

The 2004 press law defines quite clearly the mission of public broadcasting services to uphold the public interest. As part of that mission, public service media bear an obligation to “provide the public, taken in all its components, with a set of programs and services that shall be characterized by their diversity and pluralism, their requirement for quality and innovation, respect for the rights of the human person and democratic principles as constitutionally defined.” (Article 106, second paragraph).

The public service media must also “promote democratic debate, dialogue between the various components of the population, and social inclusion and citizenship. They shall refrain from adopting any partisan stance.” (Article 107, second and third paragraphs).

According to the panelists, in October 2010, during the election campaign for the first round of the presidential elections, the public service outlet RTI and the daily *Fraternité Matin*, shepherded along by the regulators, proved remarkably skillful in finessing candidates’ access to those media and handling the news. The same did not hold true between the two rounds of the presidential elections. CNCA’s observed vow of silence in the face of blatant lapses by RTI spoke volumes about the actual extent of the council’s commitment to independence.

Gbato added that the public service media should offer more varied programming, and that they should make efforts to improve their governance, which depends too heavily on political authorities.

Again in 2010, no publication complied with the requirements of the 2004 press law addressing transparency of ownership. The 2004 press law stipulates that once a year, each publication must publish the name of the manager; the composition of boards of director and administration; and a list of stockholders or shareholders, with the number of stocks or shares held by each one. The law also strictly prohibits the use of dummy companies and figureheads. CNP is tasked with ensuring compliance with these obligations, and apparently has proven ineffective so far. Nevertheless, the panelists said

that ownership of particular press groups is not difficult to determine; editorial lines point to the likely owners, and clearly indicate to what political drumbeats they march.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 1.85

Through CNP's various activities and the obligations imposed by the Press Support and Development Fund (FSDP), press enterprises in Côte d'Ivoire are emerging gradually from the informal economy to play a substantial economic role.

However, with an overall average of scores for this objective still within the MSI's unsustainable, mixed-system range, the overwhelming majority of the panelists agreed that much remains to be done to achieve an acceptable standard of management. The panelists expressed the belief that many media business managers are journalists primarily, with precious little management experience. Few companies prepare projected budgets at the beginning of the year, or follow high standards of accounting.

In just one year, the print media achieved an increase of 43 percent in sales. In 2010, the print media sector generated combined sales of nearly XOF 6 billion (\$12.4 million), with a total production of over 51.5 million copies—more than 84 percent of which were daily newspapers. The dailies had sales of more than XOF 4 billion (\$8.2 million), almost XOF 1 billion (\$2.1 million) of which were for *Fraternité Matin* alone.

That growth was achieved in the last quarter in particular—when the major dailies doubled and sometimes even tripled their circulations. The total circulation of daily newspapers

increased from 30,689,994 copies in 2009 to 42,885,435 in 2010, boosted in part by election newcomers. As in 2009, the four main daily newspapers out of the 20 shared about 60 percent of sales between them.

Some of those titles receive advertising revenue as well, but despite those resources, the owners of some titles report perplexingly weak financial status—leading to questions about management and the intentions of some owners. As *Fraternité Matin's* Barry said, the independent media are not well-managed companies. Even if they enable those in charge to flourish and rise in the social or political sphere, in most cases, the journalists see little benefit. In the vast majority of editorial offices, including those best known to the public, the collective agreement is not systematically applied in media workers' interests.

Speaking as a trade unionist, Gbato agreed, and informed the panelists that one particular press enterprise, which had taken the trouble to entrust its management to a specialized firm, was doing remarkably well after only two years.

Coulibaly agreed that the way in which the various newspapers are managed is unsound. Some local press enterprises continue to operate as "mom and pop stores," with no commercial services and no accounting departments, he said. They do not compile year-end financial statements. Most newspapers are owned by journalists with no managerial aptitude—all-powerful bosses running out of control. The money from advertising and sales often goes straight into personal accounts. That has hurt some journalists' production of high-quality work and reined in their independence, often with some of them writing to order so as to please the boss's circle of acquaintances.

Clearly, publications cannot survive on proceeds from sales of copies alone, even with the rising growth, but the panelists highlighted concerns about the advertising sector. In particular, they noted ad agencies that fail to honor their payment obligations to newspapers. Dogbemin recalled that he had assisted GEPCI in recovering newspapers' advertising revenue from advertising consultancies, and conceded that the advertising environment is not healthy. As a lawyer, his view is that their practices in no way promote the development of press enterprises.

The High Advertising Council (CSP), the industry regulator, approved some 30 agencies and 50 or so editor-directors in 2010. The advertising market is estimated to be worth more than XOF 20 billion (\$41.2 million), about 30 percent of which is reported to be from cellular telephone operators. This total figure includes the traditional media—print press, radio, and television—as well as billboards and point-of-sale advertising.

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.

Silué noted also that advertising affects the independence of media outlets; she said that the private media remain organs of opinion because of the missions that sponsors assign to them.

The panelists reported that local radio stations are experiencing enormous difficulty in generating their own resources. Allowed to take in advertising for up to 20 percent of their budgets, they struggle to reach even that. Moreover, they have not yet benefited from the Press Support and Development Fund. Karamoko said that when the fund awarded its first grants, local radio stations were left out; FSDP had to be approached with the support of partners before local radio stations could make claims through the fund's umbrella organization.

Given the high rates of unsold copies for some titles that nevertheless have a continued presence in the market, it is very likely that those papers rely on hidden subsidies to cover their operating costs. Dogbemin stressed, "Some titles are not put on the market in order to meet financial goals." Publications are marketed on the basis of pure intuition, without the benefit of any market research or feasibility study.

Apart from the print media sector, in which reliable data are available on circulations and sales of each title on the market, statistics for other media platforms range from very scarce to completely lacking. The near-total absence of reliable data for radio, television, or the Internet makes it very challenging to gauge their actual influence. The panelists pointed to the lack of data on Internet users in particular, and commented that data on ISP subscribers seem to be treated as confidential.

Karamoko pointed out that the absence of statistical data on radio audiences is highly problematic for the union. Potential sponsors of community-based projects had turned to the union to weigh the effectiveness of a particular station for a given population. Unfortunately, no audience research and no opinion polls on the subject were available. Accordingly, the sector lost development opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.26

Several professional organizations, in addition to several governmental bodies, help increase the level of professionalism in the Côte d'Ivoire media sector.

On the governmental level, three regulators are specifically involved: CSP for the advertising segment, CNP in the print sector, and CNCA in the broadcast media sector. The Press

Support and Development Fund also plays a role in regulating the field.

The actors in the Ivoirian media landscape are structured around organizations such as UNJCI, OLPED, the Organization of Professional Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire, GEPCI, SYNAPPPI, the National Confederation of Directors of Publication of Côte d'Ivoire, URPCI, the Network of Women Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire, REPRELCI, and Côte d'Ivoire Women in the Media. There are also internal union organizations at some media businesses.

However, panelists argued that such a wealth of professional organizations could well dilute energies and render some organizations inoperative. Kouamé, speaking as chair of REPRELCI, noted that some associations operate in their own world, with very few members involved. Some associations have no clear goals, despite their statutes, and accomplish very little.

The panelists had differing views concerning the involvement of NGOs in the defense of media freedom of expression. One difficulty identified is in the positioning of NGOs on the political chessboard—doubtless one of the consequences of the two-way polarization of the national political so acute in the election year.

Konaté said that even though the professional associations work to protect and defend the freedom of expression, civil society organizations do not always. Some keep quiet in the face of obstacles to freedom of speech, while others simply issue statements for the media to pick up, and let it go at that.

The panel's civil society members, nevertheless, pointed out that in many cases, NGOs do intervene but discreetly—with

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 important thing being the result. As an example, they recalled the involvement of several organizations in the *Nouveau Courrier d'Abidjan* affair.

Gbato said that SYNAPPCI sees NGOs standing alongside journalists more and more in the struggle to promote the freedom of expression. Nevertheless, Karamoko, speaking for URPCI, said that for several years his union had witnessed the disputes between the rights advocacy NGOs and the professional organizations in the media, where they seemed to be waiting for the other side to blink first. In his view, those two spheres need to establish a truly collaborative relationship.

Access to the journalism profession is free for those who meet the conditions set by law, and local opportunities are quite diverse and numerous. As noted in last year's MSI, many private schools in Abidjan provide training in media, but not always specifically in the profession of journalism. The Institute of Media Sciences and Technologies (ISTC), under the auspices of the Ministry of Communication, is the only public institution that provides journalism training. Access to ISTC is open to all who pass a competitive entrance exam. In addition, ISTC has signed partnership agreements with professional organizations and press enterprises to offer training courses counting towards a qualification. However, on-the-job training is still the most common path.

Many local training facilities fold journalism programs into their curricula. Also, as noted earlier, in order to build the election coverage capacities of journalists, workshops and seminars were held throughout the year, with the assistance of professional organizations and their partners.

Previously, government scholarships once helped train the pioneers of journalism in Côte d'Ivoire. Yet, for 20 years or more, government scholarships have not been offered for young people interested in studying journalism.

Previous MSI studies demonstrated that printing houses are undergoing a decline, and the infrastructure for printing publications changed little in 2010. A total of five rotary press printers now share printing clients. Edipress, whose expertise in the field was recognized by all the panelists, continues to be the sole distributor of newspapers and periodicals.

List of Panel Participants

Josette Barry, editor, *Fraternité Matin*, Abidjan

Adama Koné, journalist, *Fraternité Matin* daily newspaper; chairman, Francophone Press Union, Abidjan

Francis Domo, journalist; press director, National Press Council, Abidjan

Barthélemy Kouamé, chairman, Côte d'Ivoire Network of Online Press Professionals, Abidjan

Soukalo Coulibaly, director of publication, *Le Patriote*, Abidjan

Salimata Silué Konaté, journalist and news director, Radio Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

Youssef Sylla, freelance journalist, Bouaké

Paul Oussou, vice-chairman, Research Group on the Democratic, Economic and Social Development of Africa, Abidjan

Tenin Diabaté Touré, chair, Network of African Muslim Women-Cote d'Ivoire Section, Abidjan

Emmanuel Akani, member, Ivorian Movement of Press Consumers of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

Guillaume Tonga Gbato, secretary general, National Union of Private Press Employees of Côte d'Ivoire; journalist, *Notre Voie*, Abidjan

Bamba Karamoko, chairman, Union of Local Radio Stations of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

Jacques Silué, director, Institute of Communication Sciences and Technologies, Abidjan

Gérard Koné Dogbemin, lawyer and author, Abidjan

Moderator and Author

Samba Koné, national coordinator and chief executive officer, Sud Actions Médias; chair, Network of African Media Self-Regulatory Bodies, Abidjan