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NAMIBIA

Since it gained independence in 1990, Namibia has enjoyed a stable political and economic environment, with free and fair elections dominated throughout the country by the ruling party, the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). Economically, the country is tied to South Africa, with a shared currency (the Namibian dollar is pegged one-to-one with the South African Rand) and numerous South African businesses and shops operating in the country. Despite this stability and economic growth, the country remains characterized by an immense disparity between rich and poor, with a minority of the population enjoying a high standard of living but the majority living in poverty.

Perhaps the most dramatic move in recent media developments in the country has been, after many years of discussion, the passing of the Communications Act in 2009. The final tabling and eventual passage of the bill was highly controversial, with allegations of "hidden agendas" by the government, which, despite consulting fairly widely on the bill, slipped in a so-called spy clause at the last minute. This gave government agencies the right to tap into e-mails, SMS messages, or telephone conversations in the interests of "national security" without judicial consent.

In addition, the ruptured state of the public broadcaster, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), continues to cause great concern, with funding shortfalls (leading to regular appeals to the government for further cash injections), a lack of perceived neutrality (especially noticeable during the 2009 election campaign), leadership issues, and excessive turnover.

The tenure of acting director General Mathew Gowaseb, for instance, although notable for a general strengthening of professional standards, was short-lived, and he tendered his resignation citing personality clashes with senior members of his staff, who allegedly had connections to the former president, Sam Nujoma. Unfortunately, his time at NBC was marked by two issues thought by many to degrade freedom of expression. First, two popular phone-in radio programs were dropped. Second, NBC scrapped a carefully crafted formula for coverage of political parties, resulting in zero electioneering on the public broadcaster in the all-important weeks before the election, apart from the generally government-dominated news coverage.

On the positive side, the Editor's Forum of Namibia grew in strength, drawing members from commercial, community, and public print and electronic media. Another positive move was the establishment of the Office of the Media Ombudsman and appointment of Clement Daniels (a human-rights lawyer) to the role in November 2009. This is an impartial and industry-led office independent of government to deal with complaints about the media.

NAMIBIA AT A GLANCE

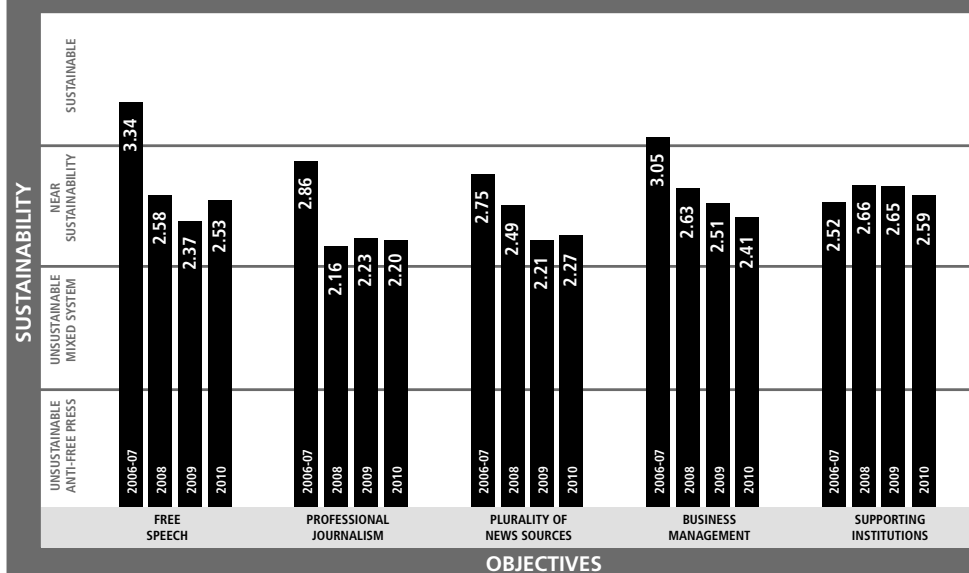
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2,165,828 (2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital City:** Windhoek
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Ovambo about 50%, Kavango 9%, Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, San 3%, Baster 2%, and Tswana 0.5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English 7% (official), Afrikaans common language of most of the population and about 60% of the white population, German 32%, indigenous languages 1% (includes Oshivambo, Herero, Nama) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2010-Atlas):** \$10.29 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **GNI per capita (2010-PPP):** \$6,580 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2011)
- > **Literacy rate:** 85% (male 86.8%, female 83.5%)
- > **President or top authority:** President Hifikepunye Pohamba (since March 21, 2005)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print, radio stations, television stations:** 9 newspapers, including 4 daily; 2 radio stations; 3 television stations
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top two by circulation: *The Namibian* (43,000 print run, reaching 420,000 readers), *Informanté* (70,000 weekly). (Source: Nangula Shejavali, *The Namibian*)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: NBC National Radio (85%), Radio Energy (25%), NBC Oshiwambo (42.8%) (AC Nielsen Namibia 2001)
- > **News agencies:** Namibia Press Agency (state owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in the media sector:** Approximately \$175 million
- > **Internet usage:** 127,500 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: NAMIBIA



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

Namibia Objective Score: 2.53

In this objective, indicators scores were separated by a wide margin. Indicator 8 (unrestricted access to international news and news sources) scored nearly a point higher than the objective score, followed by indicator 9 (free entry to the journalism profession), which was nearly three-quarters of a point higher. Indicator 2 (fair licensing of broadcasting), indicator 5 (legal guarantees of independence for public broadcaster), and indicator 7 (right of access to information), all lagged behind the objective score by half a point or more.

Overall, the panelists felt that, by international and African standards, the country enjoys freedom of speech and journalists are generally free from abuse. Journalists in Namibia have not been killed, and there are no direct threats to their lives. In addition, people are free, for instance, to express themselves openly in newspapers (letter pages and the very active SMS pages in *The Namibian* are good examples), radio stations, or television stations. Furthermore, a communication policy is in place, and freedom of speech is guaranteed as a fundamental right in the Namibian constitution.

The panelists pointed to examples of Namibian courts upholding media freedom. For example, they cited the

judgment in the case *Shikongo versus Informanté*.¹ The case concerned an allegation of the sale, below cost, of land in Windhoek, implicating the city's mayor, Matheus Shikongo. Though the judgment favored the plaintiff (also in the later appeal), the court reiterated that the onus is on the plaintiff to prove that they had been defamed.

However, panelists expressed concerns that the new Communications Act passed in 2010 threatens the freedom of speech. Despite public hearings on the bill,² the Act allows the Central Intelligence Service to view private e-mail communications and monitor all electronic communications using sophisticated hardware.³

Amon Ngavetene, a lawyer with the Legal Assistance Centre, said, "If I have information, it can now go to people whom I did not intend to receive it. If there is a threat to political dominance, then I am not sure whether freedom of speech will continue to exist." He conceded, however, that the environment is generally conducive to freedom of speech, but the Communications Act is an interesting test of public opinion on the issue and whether there would be a reaction on the limitations of freedom of speech. General public outrage to the "spy clause" in the Act, he said, is encouraging.

But Sandra Williams, chair of MISA (Media Institute of Southern Africa) Namibia and station manager of community radio station BASE FM, expressed concern that although the public has expressed its concerns and although the process of formulating the Communications Act was open, "Where there is a public outrage, nobody seems to listen. The government knows that, because of the type of society we live in, the people's views will not be heard." On the issue of defamation and the Shikongo court case, she pointed out that the case came to court only because Shikongo (the mayor of Windhoek) was relatively wealthy and could afford that route. "Most people lose out because they cannot afford to sue on matters of defamation," she said.

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.

¹ Supreme Court of Namibia. Judgment delivered on 7/7/2010. CASE SA 8/2009. Trustco Group International Ltd, Max Hamata and Free Press Printers versus Matheus Kristof Shikongo. The case ruled that "the importance of freedom of expression and the media in a constitutional democracy must be borne in mind," but this appeal reinforced the original judgment that the newspaper in question had been incorrect and could not be said to be "reasonable or constituted responsible journalism."

² Weidlich, Brigitte. "Public hearings on communications bill." *The Namibian*, April 9, 2009. [http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=59174&no_cache=1](http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=59174&no_cache=1) (Accessed August 16, 2010.)

³ Weidlich, Brigitte. "'Big brother bill' becomes real." *The Namibian*, April 6, 2009. http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=55898&no_cache=1 (Accessed August 16, 2010.)

There was also some confusion about the standpoint of Minister of Information, Communication, and Technology Joel Kapaanda, who had claimed previously to be in favor of media self-regulation. A statement released by the Editor's Forum of Namibia in August 2009 mentioned Kapaanda's applauding the appointment of the media ombudsman. But later, in Keetmanshoop, according to Elizabeth M'ule of the Editor's Forum and sub-editor at *Informanté*, he had threatened to "pass legislation" to "regulate the media."

Andre Engelbrecht of the community radio station Ocean Wave expressed concern about the licensing procedures under the Namibian Communications Commission. It is a "struggle" to obtain a license, and the process was not transparent, he said. There is no appeals process, and only written submissions are accepted, without public hearings. There is no equality between the public, commercial, and community media as per international protocol. Williams alleged that commercial media and public media are given more frequencies, or better frequencies, than community media. She went so far as to claim that the government is "stalling the development of community media in Namibia." Others said that the media owners are influenced by those with political links to the ruling party.

Panelists cited the example of the commercial radio station Fresh FM, which, despite a lack of FM frequencies in Windhoek, managed to obtain a frequency—allegedly because high-ranking figures with links to the ruling party, SWAPO, own the station.

They cited another example revealing the unfair regulation of frequencies: the FM 100 MHz frequency originally allocated to the community station Katutura Community Radio (now BASE FM). Because of political and commercial influences, the SWAPO-owned commercial station Radio Energy demanded the frequency, and KCR was forced to relinquish and move to 106.2. BASE FM is currently also embroiled in a battle with the regulator to expand transmission to other parts of the country, but the NCC insists that the station should be restricted to the "community" of two Windhoek suburbs, Katutura and Khomasdal. Williams claims that this is an anti-competitive practice and cites the concept of "community of interest" (religious groups, workers, etc.) that is used elsewhere.

Moreover, because of the new Communications Act (and a new regulator—the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia) there is currently confusion regarding licensing. The Act also states that there should be no political interest in media ownership, but panelists said it is a fact that, at least in broadcasting, political allegiances played a role.

Comparing the print and broadcast media fields, the panelists feel it is clear that it is much easier to enter the print field, although maintaining a publication successfully is a challenge.

Despite the relatively free media environment there were nevertheless some examples of intimidation. These incidents include the beating of journalist John Grobler⁴ and the expulsion of South African journalists, who were arrested for "working illegally" by filming Namibia's annual seal slaughter.⁵ The panel, however, qualified these incidents, noting that the situation regarding Grobler was complex, as his "assailants" had also laid a charge against him for assault. Similarly, panelists defended the expulsion of the South African journalists, saying it was fully within Namibian law because the journalists had failed to obtain the necessary work permits for filming.

Panelists also felt that the public broadcaster, NBC, is not fully independent from the ruling party.⁶ M'ule pointed out that the NBC board members are appointed by the minister of information, communication, and technology. Panelists also believe that there should be a distinction between public media (in the "public" interest) and what Namibia is faced with in actuality: state-funded media. The panelists also noted that NBC scrapped a carefully crafted formula for coverage of political parties (40 percent equal time and 60 percent of airtime based on previous results), resulting in zero electioneering on the public broadcaster in the all-important weeks before the election, apart from the generally government-dominated news coverage.

There have been instances of camera operators from independent television stations (such as One Africa TV) being pushed to the back of the press area, while the state-owned media (NBC) camera operators received preferential treatment.

In Namibia, libel is a civil matter and not a criminal offense. The plaintiff must prove guilt. The panelists also believe that the judiciary is independent, with little corruption among judges. The Shikongo versus *Informanté* case demonstrated that publication of matters in the "public interest" is taken into account in judgments on libel or defamation.

One glaring omission from Namibia's freedom-of-information legislation is the lack of a law to facilitate access to information legislation. Unlike South Africa, with

⁴ "Reporter embroiled in Windhoek bar fracas." *The Namibian*, January 11, 2010. [http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=63363&no_cache=1](http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=63363&no_cache=1) (Accessed on August 11, 2010.)

⁵ Foreign Journalists arrested in Namibia for filming seal clubbing. <http://www.antisealingcoalition.ca/newsstory.php?rid=553> (Accessed on August 11, 2010.)

⁶ Award ceremony for most transparent & secretive public institution in Namibia. <http://www.misa.org/awards/padlockaward.html> (Accessed on August 11, 2010.)

its Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000), one cannot demand information from Namibian government institutions. This explains why stories are often “leaked” to publications and sources are not explicitly mentioned. One prominent investigative story in *Informanté* dealt with the nonpayment of municipal accounts by prominent politicians. The information was leaked, but according to M’ule, this information should be in the public domain to begin with: “Surely we should be able to see the bills of the ministers?”

MISA Namibia’s survey of Namibian institutions in 2009—called the “Golden Padlock” award— noted that not one of the government ministries (such as the Ministry of Health and Social Services) or semi-government organizations (such as the NBC) had responded to requests for information. Murangi also noted that if information is required, there is normally a cost involved, even for national documents. This puts the information out of reach of the average Namibian.

Panelists also noted that information is sometimes given out on a personalized basis, and the extent of access depends on the specific media house or specific journalist. Thus, though public or state media can get records easily, the investigative tabloid *Informanté* would find it more difficult.

Regarding access to international news, panelists perceive this as generally open and unrestricted, with news organizations receiving regular and uncensored feeds from Reuters, AFP, AP, etc. through NAMPA (Namibian Press Agency). For citizens there is a wide range of access to international news channels (BBC World, CNN, Al Jazeera), though access requires subscription to satellite services. However, even the public and commercial (free-to-air) channels relay services such as Deutsche Welle and Al Jazeera, and the public broadcasters use international coverage feeds from CFI (France) for the main evening television news.

To attend official functions in Namibia, journalists need to be accredited. Although this is considered to be a fair process, M’ule expressed concern that “it could be used as a tool to exclude journalists from a function.” She also noted that one could have accreditation with backing only from his or her institution (an editor has to sign the application form). Furthermore, the incident involving foreign journalists covering the seal clubbing shows that foreign journalists must apply for permission to film from the Ministry of Fisheries, and they are required to apply for accreditation at the Ministry of Information.⁷

⁷ Hartman, Adam, and Brigitte Weidlich. “Foreign journalists arrested for filming seal cull.” *The Namibian*: July 17, 2009. http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=28&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=57455&no_cache=1 (Accessed November 15, 2011.)

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Namibia Objective Score: 2.20

In this objective, most indicators scored within a half-point of the objective score. The exception was indicator 3 (journalists do not practice self-censorship), which fell below the objective score by more than half a point.

The panelists expressed concern about interview programs such as “One on One” on NBC TV, saying it sometimes feels as though the journalists work from prepared, canned questions, and the shows are not objective enough.

The panelists also find that Namibian journalists show weak investigative skills, often seeking only hard copies of speeches, which, generally, they publish verbatim. Jacqueline Hindjou-Mafwila, a journalist with NBC Radio, explained, however, that there is often a lack of background information available, and journalists are sent on stories without having the time to do full research on a given topic. Therefore, journalists are forced to rely on the speeches. The panelists pointed out that the country’s lack of access-to-information legislation also affects professionalism.

Another concern is the lack of sources in some stories. “Single-source” stories appear to be the norm, and journalists rely on a small pool of experts to discuss certain issues, leading to concerns about objectivity and a narrow range of opinion.

On the positive side, panelists noted that the code of ethics for Namibian media has been fully implemented, and the government has established and filled the media ombudsman

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).

role. The next phase is to ensure that all regions of the country are aware of the mechanism for expressing concerns about the media, and information booklets have already been translated into local languages. The media ombudsman has already handled nine cases since his appointment.

However, panelists pointed out that journalists themselves are sometimes not interested in their own activities regarding ethics, and some are not aware of the code of ethics.

Regarding the ethics of payments, even when money does not change hands, journalists are generally keen to accept “freebies.” For instance, because of the generous gifts for attendees, the launch of the popular television reality series “Big Brother” was very well attended by the media. However, the panelists said that there was no overt pressure on journalists to write positive stories about this event.

Some media houses have internal policies about accepting free items for covering a story, stating that they must be declared. At *New Era*, for example, anything greater than NAD \$500 (\$60) must be declared.

Another area of ethical debate is the ongoing battle between two of the country’s cell phone operators, Mobile Telecommunications (MTC) and Leo. Panelists pointed out that MTC often gave out cell phones to journalists covering a press conference, and there would naturally then be a temptation for the journalists to write a positive story about MTC. Panelists also pointed to the issue of MTC sponsorship of the Sam Nujoma soccer stadium in Katutura, where one presenter from NBC Radio, Mario Locke, lacked objectivity on the issue, siding with MTC on air.

In terms of self-censorship, Hindjou said, “Self-censorship indeed does exist, be it in public or private media. Independent media outlets may not want to go against a particular company, whereas state-owned media may not wish to go against a particular politician or government ministry. This has the effect of policing the sector in a mute mode and going against professional ethics.”

Certain topics were covered only minimally, especially health. Journalists are perhaps “fatigued” by certain stories, the panelists surmised, especially HIV and AIDS—which are underreported, despite their status as a significant ongoing national challenge. In addition, certain key events (such as ministers’ speeches) would generally be covered, but not smaller events. “If the minister is not there, the event will not be covered. Our media tend to focus on individuals,” said Manfred Isaacks, manager of the Namibian College of Open Learning Radio Project.

Williams noted that media workers are paid poorly. There is also a disparity between private and public media, which

tends to pay more. However, even within the private media, “some media pay more than others,” said M’ule. Given low salaries, the panelists find it unsurprising that the profession is weakened by an outflow of good people moving into public relations.

Another barrier is the “ceiling” in the media. Presenters on radio or television, for instance, feel the need for growth in their careers, but such opportunities are limited. Panelists recommend that managers invest more in training their personnel and create career mobility.

Although corruption is not rife, there are instances, such as the NBC staff member who was caught using NBC’s equipment for making private videos, because she was “poorly paid.”

Regarding the balance between news and entertainment, Umbi Karuaihe-Upi, corporate communications manager at NBC, feels that, at NBC, there is sometimes too much news and not enough entertainment. However, private radio stations are generally the opposite, with too much entertainment and not enough news. There are a lot of music and listener-request shows, and little balance. The panel regards presenters on these radio stations as “DJs” rather than journalists. Isaacks, however, challenged this view. “In the past there was a lot of news and not much entertainment, but now there is more of a balance,” he said.

Yvonne Stramiss, a psychologist in private practice, expressed concern about a lack of serious information given out on radio. Information is offered, but it cannot be called educational, she noted. However, Williams said, “More than 50 percent of the population is most interested in trivial information, and we cannot deny them that.”

Regional coverage is sometimes difficult. In the Omaheke region, for instance, Murangi noted that only NAMPA has an office there, and its journalist did not have a camera or a car. He had to borrow Internet facilities in the region in order to send stories back to the head office. The lack of vehicles and no (high-speed) Internet connectivity is generally regarded as common in Namibia in the regions.

Another problem in the regions is maintenance and sustainability. Ohangwena community radio has equipment from the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID), but the equipment is not maintained. Lusina Ngashikua, manager of the Ohangwena Community Radio at Eenhana, commented that, although her station has studio equipment, there is no editing or recording equipment at the station.

The panelists feel that, although much reporting focuses on speeches or press conferences, there is some investigative reporting in the country, such as that done by freelance

journalist Grobler (who, as mentioned above, was assaulted last year). Grobler tackles corruption and the exploitation of resources in his work for *The Namibian*. There are also thriving investigative publications, including *Informanté*, *Namibia Sun*, and *Windhoek Observer*, as well as the monthly magazine *Insight*. However, the panelists suggested that there is a need for more mentoring of investigative journalists through their careers.

As for specialized reporting, there are specific reporters doing good work to cover fields such as economics; the panelists singled out Jo-Mare Duddy of *The Namibian* and Dani Booysen of *Die Republikein* for praise. Ultimately, however, Williams feels that the lack of human resources at most media houses means that “nobody can afford to have people doing niche reporting,” and thus most reporters have to be versatile and multi-skilled.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Namibia Objective Score: 2.27

In this objective, indicator 2 (citizens’ access to domestic and international media) exceeded the objective score by more than two-thirds of a point; all other indicators scored within a half-point of the objective score.

With some indicators, panelists felt there should be two separate questions. Thus, with indicator 1 (plurality of public and private news sources) they said that in the Namibian context, a distinction has to be made between the rural and urban areas. Whereas urban dwellers have a variety and

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.

plurality of both public and private media outlets, in the rural areas they are mostly limited to public broadcasting and the NBC.

Newspapers in Namibia have no “morning” or “evening” editions. M’ule pointed out that this reflects people’s low income level and their financial inability to sustain myriad editions of a newspaper.

Although panelists noted positive initiatives such as “Parliament Online” (a mobile bus moving around the country offering Internet access), they believe that the potential of these options is not maximized. The government idea of “community multimedia centers” was similarly poorly executed. Operi Murangi, of the Ounongo Technology Centre, noted that they are often “simply a computer and printer, but set up without a clear structure.” Murangi suggested also that old-age homes and schools should be provided with free Internet access. One step in this direction was the X-net development alliance, which provided the Internet to schools and hospitals at a subsidized price.

Stramiss pointed out that, if you are not literate and computer literate, these facilities are of little use. Panelists mentioned that there is a need for “localization of content” on the Internet, especially translating content to local languages.

Anthony Auchab, coordinator of the Social Call Consultancy, said, “Even for working people in Windhoek, the charge of NAD 1,000 a month (\$120) for unlimited use of the Internet is too much.” In addition, both computer and electricity supply are required. Estimates state that about 200,000 people have access to the Internet, though most have access to it at work, not at home. Access to media is therefore dependent on economic means. Those with the finances enjoy wide range of access to all forms of media, but for those with limited funds the range was much more restricted.

In other new media developments, the 2009 Media Matrix survey made note of the growing popularity of the use of the Internet on cell phones. Another development of note is the move by print publications (such as Caprivi Vision) toward online editions.

State media are perceived to be generally partisan and not serving the public interest. A distinction was made between the print and broadcast media, however, with *New Era* considered less partisan than the NBC, for instance. The 2009 election coverage on NBC was thought to be somewhat biased toward the ruling party. Panelists suggested that NBC should answer to the taxpayers and to parliament, not to the Minister of Information, Communication, and Technology.

Isaacks stated that there is a difference between state media and private media. Working for state media, one

is “sanctioned” in terms of what constitutes acceptable reporting. “But private media have the freedom to say what they want.”

Ngavetene stressed that there is no legal requirement to protect the state media, and there is no explicit legal guarantee of editorial independence. The panelists noted, during previous election coverage (2009), that some NBC reports would include journalists showing excitement in the ruling party’s victory and participating in the celebratory dancing mentioned in their reports. However, the panelists admitted that the NBC also included programming of a cultural and educational nature.

Namibia is served by a government-funded and -appointed news agency, NAMPA, and all foreign copy (Reuters, AP, etc.) is channeled through it. NAMPA is a state-owned agency and not perceived as editorially independent.

Copy from NAMPA is distributed to all media houses without favor, but only those that can afford the (considerable) cost. Subscriptions have now risen to NAD 50,000 (\$6,000) a month. Some newspapers and radio stations have begun to gather stories from the Internet, but without regard to copyright law. NAMPA distributes photos as well; however, during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, some photographs were obtained directly from FIFA—again, leading to possible copyright violations. NAMPA does not distribute other forms of media (such as audio-visual material).

In addition, NAMPA has a monopoly in the distribution of foreign newswire services such as AP and Reuters, although questions of censorship linger. Generally, however, the panelists feel that NAMPA does not censor news from foreign services.

Many radio stations in Windhoek now have their own newsrooms, including Radio Wave, Kosmos Radio, and BASE FM. BASE FM, in Katutura, includes a lot of news from that township. There are also numerous programs that are broadcast on BASE FM featuring the work of NGOs. However, Williams said, “The angle we take on stories is different compared to public or commercial stations.”

Regarding ownership transparency, the panelists said that although people may know the public figures that run a radio or television station, the “backbone” of the ownership is less clear. Most people, for instance, would not know that Radio Energy is in fact owned by the ruling party’s commercial arm, Kalahari Holdings. Sahara Sintayo, a media officer with the Nawalife Trust, noted, “It seems that there are just one or two key players in the media, and all are connected to each other in a way.”

Stramiss, another non-media panelist, feels that, from the point of view of the average consumer, there seem to be plenty of radio stations and a wide choice of media, and the average person would be happy about the apparent diversity of media available. But information about the actual people behind the scenes in terms of media ownership is lacking. The panelists also observed that media ownership in the country is becoming monopolistic. DMH (Democratic Media Holdings) runs two (soon to be three) daily newspapers,⁸ as well as the country’s only newspaper printing press and a radio station (Nam FM 99).

NBC radio has a comprehensive range of coverage, with 10 language services, including minority languages such as Tswana and German. The latest offering is !Ha radio in Tsumkwe, for the San-speaking community. On NBC TV, news bulletins and some discussion programs provide sign-language interpretation for deaf viewers. But there is concern about the “second-class” status of local languages, with news bulletins on television appearing only every second or third day offering only mere translations of what had been broadcast in English the previous evening.

Namibian newspapers cover minority issues and different languages. *The Namibian* has at least four pages each day in the country’s predominant ethnic language, Oshiwambo, and there are also stories in *New Era* each day in various languages (Otjiherero, Damara>Nama, SiLozi, etc.) However, there are no full-fledged newspapers in any Namibian language apart from Afrikaans (*Die Republikein*) and German (*Allgemeine Zeitung*).

However, panelists feel that publications and broadcasters, although translating information into languages, do not reflect minority issues. For example, gays and lesbians (who until recently had a program each week on BASE FM) are no longer featured, ostensibly due to a lack of funding from the international donor community after the closure of the NGO (Rainbow Project) that handled the interests of this minority group.

This prompted a discussion of donor funding of content. Stramiss expressed concern that this could be dangerous because “donors could then set the agenda for development.” For example, donor money funded a workshop on HIV and AIDS reporting. Karuaihe-Upi felt that journalists didn’t need that workshop, but rather one on financial reporting. Williams commented, “Donors are not that interested in minority interests.”

⁸ *Die Republikein, Allgemeine Zeitung, Namibia Sun*

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Namibia Objective Score: 2.41

Only indicator 5 (independent media do not receive subsidies) in Objective 4 scored much above the objective score, exceeding it by about a point. Indicators 6 (market research is used to formulate plans) and 7 (broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably produced) lagged behind by more than half a point.

Again, some of the indicators touch on more than one question, and the panelists noted, for example, that although commercial and private media companies operate profitably, professionally, and effectively, state/public media do not use public funds responsibly. Part of the success of commercial media houses is their emphasis on marketing, with some newspapers deploying teams of 30 people marketing their publications to potential advertisers. Marketing, it is felt, is essential to the success of media, creating a need to emphasize training and effective use of marketing professionals in the industry.

Regarding community media, Williams made it clear that although startup funding is readily available, the real issue is sustainability. "We rely on voluntary workers and need funding to sustain our existence." Development agencies are not only interested merely in their specific areas, to the exclusion of other forms of coverage, but they are also unwilling to understand the high operational costs (Internet, water, electricity, transport costs, etc.) of community media. They also failed to understand that staff turnover in these media outlets is very high, panelists noted.

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.

Isaacks spotlighted another dilemma of the community media: "Community radio cannot rely on advertising too much; otherwise it will become just another commercial radio station." Despite their commercial nature, private media houses were also able to engage in social responsibility programs, such as the sponsorship of an annual "Namibian newspaper soccer cup" by *The Namibian*.

Karuaihe-Upi feels that coverage of individuals is influenced by the businesses that advertise in the medium. The story of a prominent businessperson, Harold Pupkewitz, and his disagreements with the trade unions is a good example of biased coverage; the panelists feel that to a certain extent, he was cushioned with coverage that was less critical than it could have been.

The popular and free tabloid newspaper *Informanté*, although originally funded by the commercial organization Trustco, is now totally funded by advertising. Panelists said that because of the wide circulation and popularity, the cost of advertising in this publication is more expensive than in the mainstream media.

Advertising is based in Windhoek, Oshakati, and Swakopmund, with no advertising from the southern or eastern parts of the country. The large number of advertising agencies housed in expensive-looking buildings implies that the local advertising market is very wealthy. However, most agencies work in partnership with international agencies, and much advertising still comes from South Africa. Panelists pointed out that this is merely a reflection of Namibia's economic situation and continued dependence on and connection with South Africa. Sintayo suggested that even though the advertising is international, it should nevertheless be made more relevant. "Companies will often localize their advertising for specific countries, but that does not seem to happen in Namibia," said one panelist.

There is a racial element as well, and the media are still segregated in practice. Because the advertising industry is still perceived to be white controlled, it therefore seems to support the white-owned media outlets. Although black-owned advertising agencies exist, they are also placing most of their advertising on the existing white-owned media. Williams asked, "Why, if the bulk of listeners are black people, does the industry continue to put money into white stations?"

Panelists mentioned the high percentage of advertising in newspapers. At times nearly 40 percent of content is advertising, and on some days there is more advertising than editorial copy. Newspaper advertising rates are flexible, based on circulation. Thus, most publications charge more for certain days of the week (such as Thursday or Friday).

Despite an NBC regulation that no more than six minutes of advertising are allowed in every 30 minutes of broadcasting, Karuaihe-Upi said broadcast media are actually under this limit and have, on average, only four minutes every 30 minutes.

Although the government does not subsidize media, the issue of possible government subsidies for community media proved contentious, with some panelists arguing that it could lead to censorship. Auchab commented, "Government subsidies would persuade journalists to censor any form of open reporting on the government." However, Stramiss feels that it is not necessarily the funding that produces the effect, saying, "Even without that subsidy, community media nevertheless are walking on eggshells in their coverage of government activities."

Panelists pointed out that the ongoing government ban on the purchase of *The Namibian* as well as the ban on government advertising in that publication was, in effect, a "negative subsidy," whereby the newspaper was deprived of income that went to other publications. Isaacks said that this was a subtle attack on the independent media, designed to pressure the paper economically to be less critical of government.

In terms of market research, panelists noted that the Media Matrix survey conducted in 2009 did look at usage of the media by interviewing people on their media use, but it was extremely expensive to purchase, at NAD 100,000 (\$12,000) a copy. NBC radio popularity, according to the survey, was very high, along with One Africa Television. Soap operas were the most popular programs.

While advertisers are well informed on the results of the Media Matrix, media houses themselves are not. Advertisers also conduct numerous focus groups, but the information is not shared with the media.

Most media research is not quantitative or verifiable, concluded the panelists, and Williams was skeptical of the methodology of the Media Matrix. "Some media do not trust those figures," she stated.

Regarding newspaper circulation, *The Namibian* is the only local publication with verifiable circulation figures, courtesy of its membership in the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Namibia Objective Score: 2.59

Most indicators in this objective scored very close to the objective score. The exceptions are indicator 6 (printing facilities in private hands), which scored more than half a

point higher, and indicator 1 (trade associations represent media owners), which lagged by about two-thirds of a point.

There was confusion among the panel regarding the terminologies used in the IREX questionnaire. The Editor's Forum of Namibia, for example, did not just represent "businesses and institutions" (as stated in indicator 1) but included journalists and editors. However, individual journalists do not generally join the Editor's Forum. The Forum was not funded by donors, but by the media houses themselves.

The Editor's Forum, along with MISA Namibia and the Legal Assistance Centre, had also been a driving force in the establishment of the Code of Ethics for Namibian media and in the appointment of the Media Ombudsman. The latter was also entirely funded by media houses, not by donors.

MISA Namibia views itself as an active advocacy group and not a trade association. It works in the interests of journalists, striving for a pluralistic, independent, and diverse media development in Namibia, and operates independently of government. Individual journalists are members of MISA Namibia, and there are restrictions on becoming a member, but it was not a trade union as such. However, it did assist journalists with legal help in matters of dispute over media freedom issues, for instance. The annual MISA Media Awards were an example of how the Institute is attempting to improve professional journalism standards in the country. Williams, as its chair, reported that membership is growing.

Therefore, MISA and the Editor's Forum of Namibia are regarded as "professional associations" (indicator 2) rather than "trade associations" (indicator 1), which explains the poor score for the first indicator.

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.

Other organizations that actively support free speech are the Legal Assistance Centre as well as the National Society for Human Rights. However, there is a concern that although NGOs willingly pay for newspaper advertisements, they are reluctant to actively and financially support community media. NGOs expect to appear on community radio for free.

Journalism training is not perceived to be of high quality, although both theory and practice are taught. Graduates do not seem to have enough practical experience but are full of theory. "Most of them cannot write," said M'ule. "They also cannot speak; in broadcast media you simply cannot hear them well," added Williams. The panelists also feel that graduates are not fully trained when they reach the industry and always require extensive retraining.

Short courses are being offered for journalists, but they are not always entirely relevant. Organizations present courses, but there are few takers because the courses do not further the journalists' careers. In addition, sometimes those most qualified for training are not allowed to attend by their managers.

There is a need for courses in investigative and financial journalism, science and health coverage, content development for stories and programs, scriptwriting and voice training, and in developing a personality for the broadcast media. Such training opportunities, panelists feel, should be worked out in conjunction with the media themselves. It is also not always necessary to import training facilitators from Europe, panelists noted, as they can be sourced more effectively locally.

There is only one major printing house for newspapers in the country, Democratic Media Holdings (DMH). It is a monopoly. *Windhoek Observer* is the only newspaper printed independently; it comes from South Africa.

However, DMH does not have a reputation for bias in any way; even the government-subsidized newspaper, *New Era*, is printed there. Regarding the distribution of newspapers, in the rural areas papers in some towns (such as Gobabis) would arrive early in the morning, but in other areas (such as Henties Bay) they would arrive a day late. In Luderitz, papers sometimes arrive nearly two days late.

Panelists also raised concerns about the broadcast distribution network of the NBC, which blocked independent broadcasters from using its transmission towers.

Regarding the Internet, there is essentially a government monopoly. Panelists expressed concern about the possible interception of e-mail correspondence with the new Communication Act. Panelists also discussed the lack of VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) in Namibia; Williams feels that it is not allowed due to "political interests."

List of Panelists

Ngamane Karuaihe-Upi, broadcasting officer, MISA Namibia, Windhoek

Sahara Sintayo, media officer, Nawalife Trust, Windhoek

Anthony Williams Auchab, coordinator, Social Call Consultancy, Windhoek

Umbi Karuaihe-Upi, general manager for corporate communication, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, Windhoek

Jacqueline Hindjou-Mafwila, journalist, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, Windhoek

Operi Murangi, project officer, Ounongo Technology Centre, Gobabis

Sandra Williams, manager, BASE FM community radio station, Windhoek

Elizabeth M'ule, sub-editor, Informanté, Windhoek

Amon Ngavetene, lawyer, Legal Assistance Centre, Windhoek

Manfred Isaacks, manager, Namibian College of Open Learning Radio Project, Windhoek

Lusina Ngashikua, manager, Ohangwena Community Radio, Eenhana

Yvonne Stramiss, psychological counselor, Windhoek

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