
The proposed reforms still need some revisions, media professionals acknowledge, but if they are improved and adopted, the MSI panelists believe the bill will significantly advance the media in Burkina Faso.



BURKINA FASO

In February 2011, riots broke out in all regions of Burkina Faso after the murder of a young student, Justin Zongo, who was tortured to death while in police custody in Koudougou, a city located 100 kilometers west of the capital.

A mutiny within the military grew out of the riots that shook all units, including the presidential guard. On the social front, protests by trade unions and civil-society organizations against the high cost of living grew alongside the political upheaval. The crisis led to a change of government that promised to stem the social unrest and led to the acceleration of political reform proposals by a council created hastily by the authorities.

The council failed to return a finding on the fundamental question that Burkinabès want answered: Will the constitutional clock be reset in order to let President Blaise Compaoré run again at the end of his term in 2015? The hesitation and the silence Compaoré maintains on this question make for an uncertain political climate during the last three years of the current presidential term.

The sociopolitical crisis described above undeniably affected the media, although the crisis also stimulated a spate of great productivity.

Legal reforms for the media also picked up steam in 2011 and 2012, and the MSI panelists hope 2013 will bring continued progress. Specifically, their sights are set on the revision of the News Code of December 30, 1993, which news professionals and human-rights activists have criticized heavily. A new bill in the works, set to reach the National Assembly sometime in 2013, includes a press law, a law on the radio and television industries, and a law on advertising. The proposed reforms still need some revisions, media professionals acknowledge, but if they are improved and adopted, the MSI panelists believe the bill will significantly advance the media in Burkina Faso.

BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE

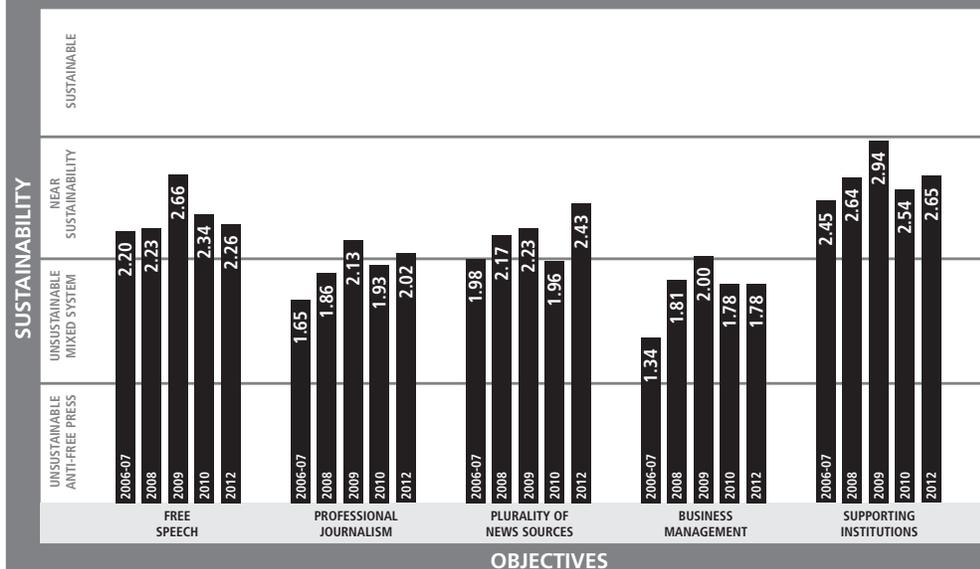
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 17,275,115 (July 2012 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Ouagadougou
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Mossi 40%, other approximately 60% (includes Gurunsi, Senufo, Lobi, Bobo, Mande, and Fulani) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 50%, indigenous beliefs 40%, Christian 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official), native African languages belonging to Sudanic family spoken by 90% of the population (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** \$9.696 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$1,310 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 21.8% (male 29.4%, female 15.2%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Blaise Compaore (since October 15, 1987)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

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

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: BURKINA FASO



Unstable, 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.

Unstable Mixed System (1-2):

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

Near Sustainability (2-3):

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

Sustainable (3-4):

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

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 2.26

According to the panelists, many contradictions and gaps remain overall, despite some concrete efforts to strengthen free speech.

Siriki Dramé, a journalist and a member of the National Union of Information and Communications Workers (SYNATIC), commented, “The constitution of Burkina guarantees the freedom of expression and association. Other similar legal texts allow access by journalists and the citizenry to public documents, except for those marked confidential.” Such provisions, however, open up a path for abuse, rendering these legal and social norms that protect and promote freedom of speech and access to public information moot.

Zenabou Tarpiliga, a Burkina Faso National Radio journalist, underscored how the laws in Burkina Faso support press freedom, noting, “There are texts, such as the constitution and the news and information code, that regulate the freedom of the press. They confirm the right to information as a fundamental right. Information is regarded as a development tool, and everything must be implemented (flexible legislation, subsidies, etc.) to allow the organs of the press to inform, educate, and entertain the public. The code allows radio stations to be profitable, thanks to advertising.”

Pierre Kaboré, deputy director at Edifice McCann Erickson, agreed that there have been huge advances in legal and social norms that protect and encourage the freedom of the

press. He said that while this is also true at the constitutional level, in reality, attitudes have not evolved alongside the written law. For example, during the military-social crisis in 2011, media outlets accused of supporting the current regime suffered threats and destruction. The Media Foundation for West Africa reported that “mutinous soldiers” vandalized Savane FM on April 15, 2011, and that Ouaga FM endured threats against radio-station personalities.

Regarding the fairness of media licensing, François Kaboré, a journalist with the state daily *Sidwaya*, said, “I believe that licensing within the media effectively protects the public interest. You don’t need to be a politician to open a radio station or to start a newspaper.” In contrast, Ahmed Newton Barry, journalist and editor-in-chief at *L’Événement*, underscored the shortcomings surrounding broadcast licensing, noting that there is no appeals procedure in case of rejection and raising questions about the neutrality of Higher Communications Council (commonly known by its French acronym, CSC) officials tasked with assigning frequencies.

In terms of market entry and the tax structure for the media, François Yessoh, the secretary general of National Union of Independent Broadcast Media, explained that he believes this indicator deserves a low score because of the crippling taxes some media outlets must pay, despite the fact that their advertising revenue margins are very meager, compared with the profits of other types of companies.

However, Cyriaque Paré, an online journalist and marketer for Faso.net, said, “I believe that under current conditions, there are no restrictions on the creation of media outlets in Burkina. There are restrictions only in areas where the resources are sparse, including broadcast frequencies, and that’s normal. But in general, there are no restrictions.”

Concerns persist over the safety of journalists. Some people have the impression that working conditions for journalists are safe, but attacks persist, especially involving the destruction of equipment, confiscation of cameras, and emptying of a camera’s memory. That is what happened to Bako from *The Voice of The Sahel*.

In 2011, according to a Norbert Zongo National Press Center report, security forces or demonstrators manhandled several journalists attempting to cover demonstrations and seized the equipment of some journalists. The panelists acknowledge that these are isolated acts, but the perpetrators are never prosecuted and the protests of the journalists’ defense organizations lead nowhere. Nobody has ever been jailed for obstructing a reporter’s work, while journalists in the field are persecuted for asking questions that some find bothersome or inconvenient.

Hortense Zida, a journalist and member of the CSC, commented that the precarious conditions in which

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.

journalists work cast a shadow on the effectiveness of the legal environment. According to Barry, media outlets must fight to strengthen legislation to improve the security of journalists so that everyone is aware of the specific penalties a citizen or official can incur for hassling journalists or impeding their reporting. It is also important that journalists have avenues of recourse.

Considering whether or not the law protects the editorial independence of state or public media, Eric Sibiri Kam, president of the League for the Defense of Press Freedom, concluded, "The constitution of Burkina Faso guarantees the freedom of speech, and the legislation is in harmony with international standards. The law also protects the public media through public-service regulations, but this does not insulate the media from political pressure." Another panelist noted that the process of selecting officials within the CSC is not transparent and appears to rest on political inclinations rather than the competence and intrinsic qualities of individuals.

Dramé, however, said he has seen some efforts in the state organs, such as radio, where he has worked for nearly 20 years. "I've seen a lot of people pass through, and there are those who have courage."

Defamation is a criminal offense in Burkina Faso, punishable by imprisonment and fines. Kam commented, "The ideal situation is a civil procedure in which only money is at stake and it is the accuser who has to prove that he was libeled and that the journalist wanted to defame him in writing." But in Burkina Faso, he said, the burden of proof rests with the defendant, while the plaintiff makes an accusation and waits. There have been some lobbying efforts to improve the libel laws by some press advocates, including the Norbert Zongo Press Center, but the efforts have not yet yielded results. The bottom line is that journalists in the field are persecuted for conducting investigations that could embarrass officials. Furthermore, Barry said, requirements to prove defamation and libel are vaguely defined in the Law on Information. Judges, in practice, tend to impose the burden of proof on the defendant.

Roger Sawadogo, the editor-in-chief of The Voice of Soum FM in Dori, also agreed that while legal standards do exist, and might appear strong on paper, their enforcement remains problematic. In particular, he noted that on the right of access to sources of information, no laws penalize agents of the public administration who refuse to share information with journalists.

Other journalists on the panel, including Paré and Barry, agreed that information access remains a problem, despite lobbying efforts to implement and raise awareness about the 2009 information code. Barry described the runaround he got from officials when he attempted to verify statements about assaults, which should be recorded in the police register and could not have been considered state secrets. Paré added

that in his experience, officials sometimes hide behind confidentiality provisions. Pierre Kaboré, however, feels that there has been a bit of an opening between the authorities and journalists in this respect, in that at least the authorities listen to the requests.

The law does not restrict access or use by media outlets to the sources of local and international news, although it is difficult to obtain. Access to the Internet is not within the reach of all newspapers—though not because the government blocks them; it is a question of resources for rural outlets.

Entry into the journalism profession is open, and the government does not impose any licensing, restrictions, or special laws on journalists. The journalism vocation is open to anyone who is able to become, or fashions oneself as, a journalist. The panelists expressed concern that this freedom enables unqualified people to become journalists, perpetuating a negative public perception of the field. Furthermore, they do not believe that a CSC license signals the professionalism or competence of the recipients.

However, Kam noted that the government sometimes restricts private media from covering certain activities of the administration.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 2.02

Relatively low scores for Objective 2 reflect the panelists' view that professional journalism standards in Burkina Faso are not up to the standards they would like to see.

Specifically, the panelists cited poorly documented reporting and a lack of varied sources. Most often, 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).

cite only official sources. Journalists frequently do not consult experts to help inform their reporting, although reporters are increasingly turning to the Internet to help boost documentation.

Dramé, however, said that while in the 1990s the proliferation of the press was marked by low-quality journalistic outlets, in more recent years, there has been noticeable improvement in the collection and processing of information.

Ethical standards are in place to help guide journalists. At least one panelist commented that many journalists in the country respect accepted and recognized ethical standards, turning out fair and objective reporting.

Bangré, however, believes that laws intended to regulate the journalism profession certainly exist, but in his view they do not encourage freedom of speech. He considers the laws constraining and overly burdensome, particularly because acts labeled press offenses are punishable by prison sentences. Coupled with social conditions that lead to little job security in the profession, these concerns open the door to self-censorship, he feels.

Reporters, editors, and/or bloggers are pushed to engage in self-censorship because of a real or perceived fear of losing their jobs, or because they believe their safety is endangered otherwise. The fear of clashing with certain political and commercial forces also leads to self-censorship.

However, despite the pervasive culture of self-censorship among some media, panelists said that journalists do address key events and issues. A panelist from the state media went so far as to say there are no taboo issues in the country.

However, Zida, of the state daily *Sidwaya*, spoke of a different experience. The day after the first mutiny early in the crisis of 2011, he went out into the field to prepare a report. For his article, he interviewed women who told him they had been raped—information he included in his article. Yet the next day, the references to rape had been scrubbed from the paper, which instead described guards who had been beaten up. “That bothered me so much that I decided not to work anymore on that subject,” Zida said, underscoring the sub-current of self-censorship and issues that may be off-limits.

Regarding pay for journalists, there is a broad sense among the panelists that wages for journalists and other media professionals are not high enough to discourage corruption and retain qualified personnel.

The related collective agreement, signed in 2009 between the media players (i.e., the press owners and the journalists), is plugging along slowly but has yet to be implemented effectively. According to Barry, the vast majority of newspaper managers do not apply the terms of the collective agreement.

The responsibility for the less-than-satisfactory pace of implementation is shared, said Fatimata Ouédraogo, chief of mission at the CSC, speaking at a press conference reported by an online paper (www.faso-tic.net). She explained that press owners are encountering financial difficulties and feel that they have not received the compensatory support from the government that they hoped for, particularly tax exemptions on the equipment used in their work. Apparently, the state implemented tax-exemption measures in 2010, but efforts to implement the provisions of the collective agreement have been quite poor. Still, according to Ouédraogo, the journalists and their unions have not put enough pressure on either the press owners or the state.

The improvement of purchasing power and of the living and working conditions of the workers in the media is the other battle to be pursued, according to the panelists. Professional journalists and media professionals, for the most part, endure precarious living conditions that expose them to corruption and misconduct in the exercise of their trade.

Addressing indicators 6 and 7, the panelists largely agreed that entertainment broadcasts continue to outweigh news reports. As for the facilities and equipment for the collection, production, and dissemination of news, several panelists believe they are modernized and effective—at least for state media. Dramé said, for example, that when it comes to state media, all sound equipment has been digitized, enabling him to file field reports as effectively as if he were in Ouagadougou. However, he noted that some other media do not have access to the same technology, and when you listen to their reports, it is evident that the recordings are still made on the Dictaphone. Other panelists agreed that while efforts are being made, not all media are enjoying improved technology.

Another panelist commented that the media’s equipment may be modern, but there are still shortcomings. For example, one panelist asked, “Why is it that Burkina, at the state level, is not yet capable of covering the whole of its territory in 2012?”

Turning to the strength of investigative journalism, Tarpiliga feels it is still little practiced or supported—and noted that the Norbert Zongo Investigative Journalism Prize, which is one of the most open prizes geographically for West African journalists, is not won by Burkinabés. Although investigative journalists particularly attempt to address the key events and issues, media managers frequently consider such investigative reporting too expensive to produce, even if they know that the public is interested in the issues. She continued to explain that in the public media, journalists are dissuaded from pursuing investigative leads with a range of excuses—whether it is a lack of available cars or resources, or staff shortages.

Another panelist commented, "It is true that here the media do not always have an agenda; they follow seminar openings and closings, but besides the dailies, there are some in the media who go back a bit, digging deeply on certain development issues."

Dramé maintained that there are investigative reports, as well as columns on specialized topics such as economics, health, and the environment. He believes it is still praiseworthy even if the treatment is more slanted, especially among the political columnists—rarely featuring any criticism of the authorities. He said, "After the murder of Norbert Zongo, it was thought that journalists were going to be discouraged or even shattered by this horror, but there are some courageous journalists in any case who continue through *Le Reporter*, *L'Evènement*, and some radio stations also."

Tarpiliga countered, "We are in the same house, but we don't see things the same way... For example, on Radio Burkina every day we have many programs, but the quality of programs and themes brought up are generalities, not to say banalities. Compared to previous years, I would say there is much to do. Currently you no longer have investigative reports; major reports are rare. We only see, perhaps, one investigation per year, whereas previously we saw at least one per month. And this is also true even in the private radio stations and investigative newspapers. It is also rare to find investigative copy in the daily newspapers."

Bangré said that these obstacles illustrate the need for better training. In the very few schools for training journalists in the country, specialization (health, environment, sports, etc.) is virtually absent.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 2.43

The panelists emphasized shortcomings in news plurality, including the lack of proper production techniques, the predominance of entertainment over news in the media, and the absence of a genuine news agency. The panelists also underscored the fact that the state-owned media do not reflect the opinions of the political spectrum and do not always serve the public interest.

Burkina Faso's media offerings did not change significantly during the period of study. There are still about 60 private radio stations, five daily newspapers, a few weeklies and periodicals, five private television stations, and a national television station (broadcasting via satellite since 2006), as well as a few newspapers in the national languages (Mossi, Jula, and Fulani). The Burkinabès can freely access satellite channels or international radio stations, including some that partner with local stations and broadcast over FM radio.

The panelists agreed that multiple media outlets exist, but some questioned whether they are reliable and objective, and furthermore, whether they are broadly accessible. Dramé pointed to the emergence of local radio and television stations in several regions as proof of the development of the media presence in Burkina. And, the state media, which have improved their reach, now cover a good part of the nation's territory. As a result, citizens can access fairly reliable information about current events. However, Bangré said the pluralism of the media is not synonymous with plurality of viewpoints, or a reflection of regional identities.

Although there are no legal restrictions on citizens' access to media, other factors, such as geography, poverty, and illiteracy, restrict access.

In the major centers, such as Ouagadougou, Bobo, Ouahigouya, and Koudougou, and in the other regional capitals, people have the ability to listen to or pick up international radio and television stations. The Internet also provides news sources via social networks to these areas. In contrast, rural citizens, who constitute the majority of the population of Burkina Faso, do not enjoy the same access. In remote communities, radio is the main media source. The cities in the interior of Burkina get newspapers late.

Most of the panelists believe that the state tightly controls its media outlets, which have more resources and can offer more extensive coverage but fail to express a diversity of opinions.

Sanou Ali noted the state media's silence during the sociopolitical and military crisis in 2011. "In a country where the soldiers go out and fire their guns and the evening newscast does not mention it, there is still a problem. In a country where women are raped and then there is not even a

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.

small story, there is a problem.” Even aside from the crisis, he added, there are additional signs of bias in the state media. According to Kam, the notion of public service is not well understood by the journalists and officials of the public media.

Furthermore, Ali said that state media do not present many interactive broadcasts, suggesting they are more interested in influencing public opinion than encouraging free expression. When there are questions of national importance, such as calls for constitutional revisions, decisions about granting amnesty, or civil-society movements, you are more likely to get a call from Radio France Internationale to ask for your opinion than the national television station, Ali remarked.

According to Tarpiliga, though, who works for state radio, the state media reflect the opinions of the political spectrum, are apolitical, and serve the public interest, though she concedes that this can be felt more in an electoral period and that state media are plagued by self-censorship.

Burkina Faso still has no national news agency. Instead, newspapers depend on Agence France-Presse, Agence Ivoirienne de Presse, Reuters, the dailies, the weeklies, and the Internet as information sources. According to Kam, the independent private media try hard to create their own news. Tarpiliga noted that the private media also often serve as relays for foreign radio stations.

Some of the panelists consider the transparency of media ownership a serious problem and expressed a wish for legislation to require disclosure of financial backers of the media. Although some panelists said the media are not concentrated in the hands of conglomerates, others pointed out that given the lack of transparency that is not a certainty.

According to Tarpiliga, the media provide news and information on local, national, and international issues. There are three primary national languages in Burkina Faso: Mossi, Jula, and Fulani. However, Radio Burkina allots 15 minutes of airtime each to 18 other dialects, considered minority languages, for national and international news.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Burkina Faso Objective Score: 1.78

Objective 4 fared the poorest of all objectives, with nearly all of the panelists agreeing that news organizations in Burkina Faso are not profitable, professional, or lucrative businesses. Furthermore, they exist in an environment devoid of measurement tools, such as audience ratings, circulation statistics, or market studies.

There are several sources of funding for media, including sales, advertising, subscriptions and the state subsidy, and sometimes printing services. But the panelists were

unanimous on this point: media management is opaque, and media companies do not speak truthfully about the sources of their funding.

Barry commented, “The press really falls behind here.” He explained that business management does not adhere to professional standards. Bangré agreed, noting, “Privately owned media tend to put their family and friends to work, rather than paying skilled workers.”

Another panelist commented that most private media outlets do not have governing bodies, such as a board of directors, and owners often fail to declare the workers to the National Social Security Fund. On the other hand, Dramé said, “The state media have been controlled by a board of directors for the past 10 years or so. Despite the state’s constant hand in the media, there is a semblance of transparency in its management. It is deplorable that the criteria for appointment of the primary officials at the head of these businesses are based on political affiliation.”

Tarpiliga commented that while many media enterprises are not managed properly, there are well-managed, editorially independent exceptions. Kam commented, “Since no media companies declared bankruptcy recently, we can say that the media are more or less well managed, but profitability does not seem to be there.”

Pierre Kaboré said he believes that accounting standards are modern, but advertisers are hampered by limits on the hours of solicitation. Overall, at the financial level, news organizations are still fragile even if a few of them (*The Paalga Observer*, *Le Pays*, and Channel3, for example) are doing well, he said. Media companies simply cannot escape the harsh realities that confront all businesses in Burkina Faso. Although state media outlets rest on support from the state, private-sector media outlets face more challenges.

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.

Some panelists believe that the media owners appear to lead prosperous lives, but others are skeptical of the profitability of their activities. Weak circulation, the high price of materials and production equipment, and the lack of legal criteria for the management and allocation of advertising all hold back profits.

Pierre Kaboré said that the advertising sector is not well organized yet. He said there are a few rare agencies that truly integrate their approach when they want to advertise, but not enough to support an advertising market that is estimated at millions of dollars. The lines between journalism and advertising are sometimes blurred, although some efforts to improve understanding of advertising models are under way.

Paré said that the market has developed enormously, at least quantitatively, in terms of the number of agencies. “Perhaps they are poorly organized,” he said, “but increasingly, there are agencies acting as intermediaries with the advertisers. I have seen it personally.”

In online media, the major advertisers are mobile telephone companies. The panelists also said that training facilities advertise heavily in the country.

The state pays a growing, direct financial subsidy to the private media. The panelists did not express reservations that the subsidies could influence the editorial line, though, because they believe the amounts are too small to pose problems: XOF 150 Million (\$302,230) in 2005, XOF 200 million (\$402,973) in 2006 and 2007, and XOF 250 million (\$503,716) since 2008.¹

The distribution of this subsidy is left to the discretion of the private media outlets. To access the state subsidies to the private press, the media must first fulfill their tax obligations and other fiscal burdens. Thus, some panelists feel that the state gives with one hand and takes with the other and that government subsidies and advertisements are not allocated fairly.

Very few media use market data to guide strategic planning; the panelists could point to only one print media example, Internet figures for online media, and a poll on radio stations by the Norbert Zongo Press Center each year—though it provides limited information and is not designed to be a conclusive, scientific source of data.

Similarly, as noted in last year’s MSI, Burkina Faso lacks independent sources compiling circulation statistics—and the print media fail to publish print-run numbers, despite a law requiring them to reveal that information.

¹ Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Communications: Report on Aid to the Press, 2008.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Burkina Baso Objective Score: 2.65

Objective 5 fared better than the other objectives in the study, with most of the indicators scoring near to the objective average—with the exception of indicator 8 (ICT infrastructure).

All the panelists agreed that journalists have professional organizations and trade unions at their disposal and that civil society is on the side of the media. Barry commented, however, that while associations of publishers and the press exist, they do not function democratically. The main associations do not elect their officers according to their own governing rules.

A number of specialized organizations support journalists, including the Association of Publishers of Newspapers and Publications in National Languages, the Association of African Women Communications Professionals, the Association of Community Media, and the Society of Private Press Publishers.

However, Bangré commented that while professional associations and organizations may seem adequate in terms of quantity, the most dynamic tend to be ideologically positioned. “The others, the most numerous, are visible only during events, ceremonies, and demonstrations,” he said. “The players are not guided by convictions but rather by personal interests, and that explains their inability to mobilize.”

Pierre Kaboré and Sanou maintained that there are several associations that act in the interest of independent media professionals and are not afraid to intervene to protect the rights of journalists and to defend press freedom.

Last year’s panelists noted the emergence of new private training programs in addition to the University of

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.

Ouagadougou's Department of Journalism, a trend that continues. Still, the panelists agreed that practical training is lacking, and there is a clear need for revised curricula. With formal programs focused excessively on theoretical training, most journalists are trained on the job.

Furthermore, continuing education remains, for geographical reasons, the preserve of the state's public media. The privately owned media do not yet see the need for it. While this is unfortunate, the panelists said, support from journalism associations and NGOs helps elevate production quality.

The Norbert Zongo Press Center, the Regional Press Union, and the Ministry of Community have all organized training sessions to help fill in gaps. However, the training needs are great, and previous MSI panels have highlighted the need for formal in-house training programs.

Sources for the acquisition of technical equipment and printing presses remain apolitical and free of limitations and monopolies. However, the panelists were unanimous that the infrastructure of information and communications technologies does not fully meet the needs of the media and citizens.

According to Barry, "The technological infrastructure is there, but there are ownership issues. Some telephone companies are too closely linked to the government. The main company was privatized under questionable conditions that limit its ability to expand and provide quality services." According to Sanou, general access to the new information and communications technologies should be improved to better meet the needs of the media and citizenry.

The geographical coverage of information and communications technologies remains limited throughout the whole national territory. Paré said that there are major infrastructure problems. Internet connections are very slow, and outages are still frequent. As an online journalist, he said, that sometimes means working until 3 am just to get 10 or 20 articles online.

List of Panel Participants

Taïrou Bangré, teacher and researcher, University of Ouagadougou, Ouagadougou

Siriki Dramé, reporter, BBC Afrique, Ouagadougou

Guezouma Sanogo, journalist; member of Association of Journalists of Burkina, Ouagadougou

Hortense Zida, journalist; member, Higher Communications Council, Ouagadougou

Ali Sanou, lawyer; member, Burkinabè Movement of the Rights of Man and the People, Ouagadougou

Cyriaque Paré, journalist, Faso.net, Ouagadougou

François Yesso, director, Radio Pulsar; secretary general, National Union of Independent Broadcast Media, Ouagadougou

Eric Kam Sibiri, lawyer, president, League for the Defense of Press Freedom, Ouagadougou

Newton Ahmed Barry, journalist, editor-in-chief of *L'Evènement*, Ouagadougou

Dramane Sougué, correspondent, *L'observateur à Dédougou*, Dédougou

Roger Sawadogo, editor-in-chief, The Voice of Soum FM, Dori

François Kaboré, journalist, regional manager, *Sidwaya*, Koudougou

ZenabouTarpiliga, journalist, Radio Burkina, Ouagadougou

Cheikh Sigué, director of publication, *Le Pays*, Ouagadougou

Pierre Kaboré, deputy director, Edifice McCann Erickson, Ouagadougou

Moderator and Author

Abdoulaye Diallo, consultant, manager, Norbert Zongo Press Center, Ouagadougou

Assistant Moderator

Sié Offi Some, journalist, independent consultant, Ouagadougou

The panel discussion was convened July 28, 2012.