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COTE D'IVOIRE

The general elections in 2010, which were supposed to extricate Côte d'Ivoire from the crisis in which it had been plunged since September 19, 2002, instead exacerbated tensions and led to a post-electoral crisis of unprecedented proportions in this country. An official count estimated the number of people who died during the crisis at 3,000.

Throughout the entire election campaign, the protagonists found themselves in two very distinct camps. On the one hand, there were the supporters of the incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, under the banner of The Presidential Majority, and on the other, those who take inspiration from the first Ivorian president, grouped together in the Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP), who support Alassane Ouattara. The mostly partisan press was similarly divided.

The media were a hotly contested topic during both the 10-year crisis that shook Côte d'Ivoire and the more recent post-electoral crisis. The organization that controls radio and television broadcasting (CNCA) took up the cause of the incumbent president's camp, regularly doling out punishments to oppositionist local radio stations but even more so to international radio and television outlets. The announcement of the victory of the opposition candidate, Ouattara, by the Independent Electoral Commission led to a statement from the CNCA that ordered "the immediate suspension of the signals of all foreign radio and television international news stations contained in the Canal+ Horizons cluster." This press release, widely distributed by the public television station, claimed that it was a question of "maintaining the badly shaken social peace" in the country. This announcement was followed by another proclaiming the closing of the borders by the army.

This restriction on citizens' freedom of information had been preceded by a serious infringement of their freedom of speech. Indeed, at the request of the minister of the interior, the industry regulator, the Telecommunications Agency of Côte d'Ivoire, ordered "the suspension of the internal composition, transmission, or reception of SMS, inbound and outbound, on all mobile networks operating within the national territory" from October 31 to November 2, 2010.

Despite the regressions in certain areas resulting from the post-election crisis, there have been some positive notes. The growing respect for freedom of speech and media pluralism in Côte d'Ivoire is evident in the flourishing of publications that compete every morning, filling up the shelves of the newsstands. Overall, panelists pointed to progress in the media sector. However, media coverage by the private press is generally very partisan. During the election campaign, journalists repeatedly thumbed their noses at the rules of the profession, choosing instead to be political actors with no respect at all for the principles laid down in their freely adopted code of conduct.

# CÔTE D'IVOIRE AT A GLANCE

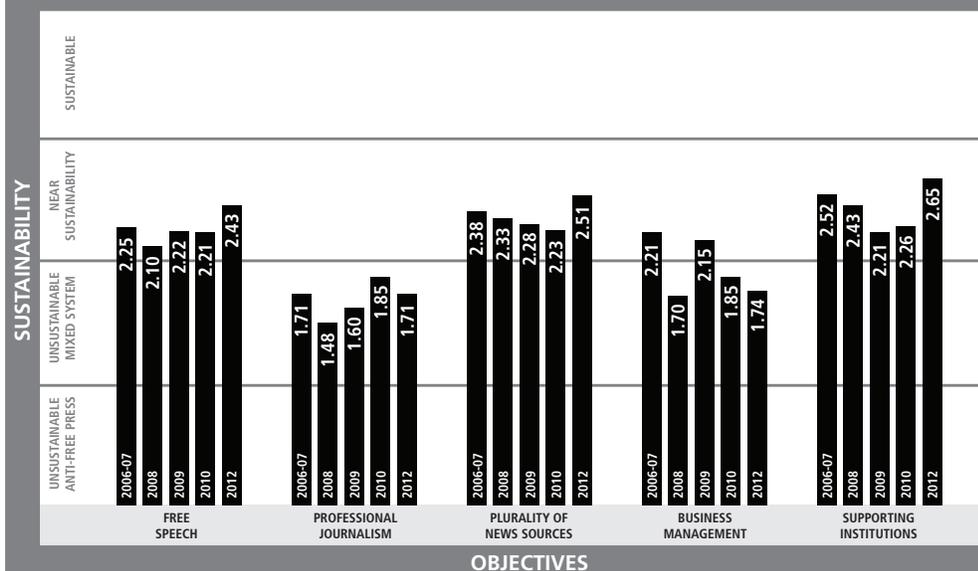
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 21,952,093 (July 2012 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 (2011-Atlas):** \$22.071 million (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$1,730 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 48.7% (male 60.8%, female 38.6%) (2000 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Alassane Ouattara (since December 4, 2010)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 21 daily newspapers, 43 others, 24 periodicals (National Council of the Press); Radio Stations: 3 national and about 150 local; Television Stations: 3 (including 1 fee-based)
- > **News paper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: *Fraternité Matin* (circulation: 3,954,109), *Soir Info* (circulation: 3,256,300); *Le Nouveau Réveil* (circulation: 2,143,533) (National Council of the Press)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Ivorian Press Agency (state-owned), AFP, Reuters, New China, APA, IRIN
- > **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: 2.43

In its constitution, Côte d'Ivoire proclaims "its adherence to the rights and freedoms as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and in the African Charter of Human and People's Rights of 1981." It expresses its attachment to the democratic values recognized by all free peoples, particularly "respect for and protection of the fundamental freedoms, both individual and collective."

This constitutional guarantee is strengthened by the so-called twin laws of 2004 (2004-643 and 2004-644) on the legal framework of the press and on the radio and television communications system. These laws clearly state, "The publication of any newspaper or print periodical as well as radio and television communications are unrestricted." In article 26, the law on the print press gives a framework to this freedom, stressing, "In the exercise of his/her activities, the professional journalist enjoys total freedom regarding the collection and use of information. However, in the exercise of this freedom, the journalist is required to comply with the laws and regulations of the republic and to respect the rights and freedoms of others as well as ethical rules."

Contrary to the 1991 law on the press, imprisonment is no longer part of the arsenal of sanctions. The twin laws stipulate, each at its own level, that "imprisonment is excluded for press offenses." This constitutes a great step

#### 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.

*"In terms of the print media, there is a rash of newspapers with discordant sounds that do not always share the views of the policymakers, thus giving readers the opportunity to be informed from different angles," noted Touré-Diabaté Tenin.*

forward that allows Côte d'Ivoire to join the still-too-small circle of countries that have adopted such a measure.

The regulation of the media and communications sector is provided by two bodies, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communications (HACA) and the National Press Council (CNP), which are independent administrative authorities.

The CNP's mission is to "ensure compliance, by news organizations and journalists, with the provisions established by the law." The CNP, which has disciplinary authority, is assigned specific objectives that aim to integrate those companies that are currently only informally organized; guarantee that the pluralism of the press is not confused with a multiplicity of outlets, but rather of ideas and editorial lines; work toward the emergence of a professional and independent press; and support and reinforce the abilities of all those in the sector.

The HACA was created in April 2011 as a replacement for the CNCA and is responsible for, among other things, guaranteeing and ensuring the freedom and protection of radio and television communications in compliance with the law; ensuring compliance with ethics and professional standards in matters relating to news and information; ensuring the equitable access and fair treatment of the republic's institutions, political parties, associations, and citizens to the official organs of information and communications; promoting and ensuring pluralism in the radio and television milieu; ensuring equal access and treatment as well as the expression of a multiplicity of opinions, especially during election periods.

The panelists were of the opinion that all legislative provisions are tailored to promote the plurality of expression and are quite successful in doing so. "In terms of the print media, there is a rash of newspapers with discordant sounds that do not always share the views of the policymakers, thus giving readers the opportunity to be informed from different angles," noted Touré-Diabaté Tenin.

Panelist Georgette Zamblé stressed, "The legal and social norms for the protection and promotion of the freedom of

*To be sure, the abuses against the press were not necessarily sponsored by the current regime, but it turns out that the perpetrators continued to target the newspapers close to the opposition. Furthermore, over the course of 2012, editors, regardless of their proximity to the current government or the opposition, were the subject of attacks by armed men.*

expression and access to public information do exist. The authority to enforce them also exists. A slight improvement in implementation has been seen, but these standards would benefit from being better inculcated into the population; furthermore, implementation remains weak, and its impact is very little perceived.”

Furthering Zamblé’s critique, it should be noted that pre- and post-election periods have been particularly trying for journalists and the freedom of speech. Many barriers have, in fact, marked these periods. Between the two rounds of the general elections, about a dozen newspapers close to the opposition were suspended by the regulatory body, the CNP. The college of advisors, chaired by Eugène Dié Kacou, was dismissed in February 2011 and was replaced by a team, led by Deby Dali, more inclined to implement the things deemed essential by the authorities. The spurned college was restored after the arrest of the outgoing president, Gbagbo.

Also, at the height of the post-election crisis, all Ivorian newspapers suspended publishing for two weeks. The premises of newspapers close to the former Ivorian authorities had been ransacked and occupied by some elements of the Republican Forces of Côte d’Ivoire.

To be sure, the abuses against the press were not necessarily sponsored by the current regime, but it turns out that the perpetrators continued to target the newspapers close to the opposition. Furthermore, over the course of 2012, editors, regardless of their proximity to the current government or the opposition, were the subject of attacks by armed men. This was the case in August 2012 for the Cyclone group, owned by the second wife of ex-President Gbagbo, and for the daily *Nord Sud (North-South)*, close to the president of the National Assembly, last November.

On the subject of licensing, the liberalization of the broadcast sector, set to begin at the end of 2012, is still not fully implemented. To guarantee transparency in the allocation of frequencies, a commission of nine members, representing

various departments and a delegate of the regulator of the telecommunications sector, was established. This commission is responsible for scrutinizing the candidacies, of course bases its decisions on criteria that focus on programming and technical, professional, and financial guarantees, and also on the project’s interest potential for the public and on the safeguarding of the pluralism of public opinion.

The freedom to publish a newspaper, stated in the first article of law number 2004-643 of December 14, is easily verified in the Ivorian media landscape. No prior authorization is required to publish a newspaper or written periodical. A preliminary declaration to the prosecutor of the republic containing the information needed to justify the legalization of the publishing company is sufficient. Also, entry into journalism as a profession is quite free, with individuals able to enter the profession easily.

The editorial policy of the public-service media aims at “providing information to the people and a balanced expression of the various political, religious, trade-union, artistic, philosophical, and cultural currents.” As for the independence of this editorial line, it is highly questionable. The recent events in Côte d’Ivoire were the occasion for becoming aware of the grip the then-current government had on the public-service media. The obvious bias of the regulator, the ex-CNCA, during the post-electoral crisis became quite evident. One panelist, Josette Barry, noted, “The law as such protects editorial independence, but there were times when the state showed that it was the boss of the media. It is up to journalists to organize themselves so as to be able to specify the rules of the trade to the government.”

RTI, the main television outlet of Côte d’Ivoire, is one institution that seems to be making progress. With the appointment of a well-respected general manager, Pascal Brou Aka, approved of by both political parties, there was significant hope that this would be a signal of the end of that institution’s use as a tool for propaganda. Upon appointment, he recalled “the harmful role of the RTI in the exacerbation of passions, which justified the harshest criticism on the subject of biased treatment. We would like,” he indicated, “to ask forgiveness from all Ivorians who suffered from our unprofessional practices. We must all take responsibility for the past and question ourselves. We all need to actively participate in the process of national reconciliation...the RTI staff have not always been an example of cohesion. Politicking took place there.”

It should, nevertheless, be remembered that this professional was dismissed from his post as general manager on July 28, 2011, barely four months later, due to “serious dysfunctions observed in the management of the RTI.” A few weeks later, on September 8, the ex-general manager found

himself at the head of the board of directors of the RTI as a representative of the president of the republic.

Both the constitution and the law guarantee citizens' right to access information. Thus, article 7, paragraph 2 of the Ivorian constitution grants the right of equal access to information. Laws that specifically regulate the press and communications sector also reaffirm the freedom of the press and of communication. These laws protect sources of information and provide for the right of reply and the right of rectification.

In addition to the judicial mechanisms (the courts) and the extra-judicial (the regulators), there is the National Commission on Human Rights, whose mission is to ensure that the rights pronounced in the constitution are respected. Thus, no legal restrictions impede citizen access to various available sources of information.

All the panelists acknowledged, to various degrees, that the legal instruments promoting the freedom of speech and access to information exist and have been implemented. Most panelists emphasized, though, that the implementation is decidedly imperfect and could use improvement. In terms of the exercise of the freedom of speech, in addition to the arrests of journalists by the criminal police or the Republican Guard during the first quarter of 2011, some cases of assaults on journalists and attacks against press companies were recorded. Various publications, of mixed editorial persuasions, have been banned from sale in some neighborhoods of Abidjan and in several cities in the interior of the country, corresponding to the different zones of influence.

Newspapers close to the RHDP, which had joined together in the framework of a collective to safeguard the gains of November 28, 2010, voluntarily decided to suspend their publications as of March 1, 2011, to protest "against the harassment by the defense and security forces (FDS) and by the prosecutor of the republic, as well as the sanctions inflicted on them by the CNP." These daily newspapers, nine in number, reappeared on newsstands a week later on March 7, 2011.

On March 10, 2011, elements of the FDS, after having cordoned off the distribution company, Edipresse, banned the distribution of newspapers close to the RHDP. In response, on March 11, wholesalers decided not to distribute any publications throughout the entire extent of Ivorian territory.

For the most part, these media outlets have access to both local and international news sources. It is important to note that while this has not been restricted by explicitly legal means, the post-election crisis and the restrictions imposed by the military during that time interrupted access for many.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 1.71

Compared with the preceding study, the majority of panelists characterize journalists' professional practices as having regressed in 2012. With regard to professional practices, panelist Jacques Silué, former director of the Institute of Communications Sciences and Technologies, noted, "The configuration of the media in Côte d'Ivoire, whether private or public, is characterized by 'combat journalism,' which is more systematic in the private and opposition press."

The ethical standard in force is the Code of Ethics for Journalists in Côte d'Ivoire. The first version, adopted in 1992 at the initiative of the National Union of Journalists of Côte d'Ivoire (UNJCI), was revised recently in 2012. This code, which contains the obligations and rights of journalists, includes the universal professional principles in force in other countries.

Like the daily *Fraternité Matin*, which pioneered in this field by adopting its Honor Code in 2002, some newspaper companies have an internal charter. However, implementation of this self-regulatory measure, as well as observance of the Code of Ethics, is not reflected consistently in editorial production.

Reporting, particularly during the lead-up to the election and the crisis that followed, was characterized more by political stumping than any semblance of fairness or objectivity. The CNP in recent years has had to issue higher and higher numbers of first- and second-degree sanctions, along with suspensions of both individuals and outlets. In its annual report, the CNP notes that the grounds for the sanctions

#### 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).

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against editorial content, which recur the most, were related to insults, damage to the honor of individuals, and violations of the right to the presumption of innocence.

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Publications close to political parties covered the general election in a very partisan way, leaving no room for professional, well-sourced treatment of the news. Due to the highly political editorial lines, it can be said that journalists and editors practiced self-censorship in the form of actively obscuring pieces of information contrary to their own editorial line. Furthermore, external censorship in the form of reprisals against pro-Gbagbo news outlets were common in the weeks following his arrest.

While the CNP fined some companies for these practices, only one, the public-service daily, *Fraternité Matin*, has paid any of the fines imposed by the regulator. In 2010, for example, the CNP imposed monetary fines 14 times, for a total of more than XOF 26 million (\$51,000), without being able to recover a single penny.

As for the respect of professional standards and the code of ethics, Sylla Youssouf, a provincial freelancer, notes: "It must be recognized that we are lagging behind. And the self-censorship imposed many times by dictate and the administration's pressure at the level of the public-service media is not done to fix things." And Silué added that "self-censorship remains the norm for both the private press and the state information organs. It is typically done to comply with either an express or implied editorial line. The

<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from *La presse en campagne (The Press on Campaign)*, Samba Koné, éditions Sud Actions Médias.

private sector is the arena of combat journalism; the public sector supports the actions of those governing. Self-censorship is done typically to preserve one's job or position."

Zamblé noted, "In the vast majority of cases, journalism does not really satisfy the standards of professional quality. It is generally noted that there is an imbalance in the presentation of news and information. The treatment of news indeed seems to be biased. Journalists too easily show their political bent, and that biases their treatment of the news."

The great diversity of the sources of information meets citizens' expectations. Radio and television programs are relatively varied, although coverage of seminars and governmental activities dominates for the most part. However, some broadcasts specifically targeting youth, women, the agricultural sector, and other niche areas are regularly produced and scheduled. Adama Koné note, "Efforts are being made in terms of news broadcasts, but you can still speak of an imbalance." In the print media, the proximity of the editors to political parties raises political news to the forefront, while niche areas are neglected.

Apart from sports and various and sundry information/trivia, there are very few journalists who specialize in the major genres or themes. Certain newsrooms, such as that of *Fraternité Matin*, publish some specialized weekly columns on topics such as society, education, the environment, health, science, and technology. If this trend continues, it will undoubtedly help to enhance the content of the Ivorian media's publications.

For Silué, the lack of specialists in the Ivorian press is partly explained by the "preponderant position given by editorial boards to sensationalism, which is perceived as more readily salable, and the lack of general education of the population, who, to become informed on specialized issues, would not go first to the media."

Working conditions in the publications are extremely variable from one title to another. So far, despite the agreements reached between the unions and the heads of the press companies, with the mediation of the CNP, the renegotiated collective agreement has not been applied by all the companies of the sector. This agreement sets the basic monthly salary of a professional journalist at XOF 140,000 (\$275). It is understood that, in present times, such a salary can in no way provide a decent living. In many cases, this low salary leads to practices that border on corruption and, for some, racketeering.

Addressing the working conditions of journalists, the press general assemblies emphasized in their report that "many media companies are located in unsuitable premises." In most cases, these are apartments or villas not meeting the

standards of a modern organization, which are transformed, in a summary manner, into newsrooms. And the insufficiency of computer equipment, communications and logistics, is gaping for some of them: many journalists continue to write their articles by hand; they have at their disposal neither a telephone line nor an Internet connection. And even when they have cell phones, they often have to pay their own bills for professional communications. Many newsrooms do not make means of transport (a car for getting a story or travel budgets) available to their reporters. This is a situation that exposes them to a dangerous dependence. They are therefore led to expect a transport “bonus” from event organizers. Assignments and trips are often at the will of demonstration organizers and not of the newsrooms, which maintain, as a result, allegiances because they are obliged to solicit or accept assumptions of financial responsibility for costs from the organizers. There are also many journalists who have never had a salary or a pay stub. Treated as day-to-day agents, they often have to “put their pen to the service of external patrons” or “monetize their writings” to live.

The practice of giving gifts to journalists has been propagated to the point that public and private organizations, who want media coverage of their demonstration, include a line item for journalists in their budgets. It is now a practice so widely accepted that Eric Tapé, a journalist for the newspaper *La Matinale (The Morning Edition)*, did not hesitate to write, “The per diem is for the journalist what the tip is for waiters and other employees of nightclubs. It makes ends meet at the end of the month as well as providing motivation.”<sup>2</sup> This is a troubling trend, particularly in terms of broad coverage of key events not being prioritized.

Pre-printing activities are carried out, more or less, with success in newsrooms, and three rotary press printers share the publications printing market. The distribution of the press was the work of the only company in this sector, Edipresse, which saw its headquarters go up in smoke during the post-election crisis. It has since outsourced its services.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Côte d’Ivoire Objective Score: 2.51

The panelists were unanimous in agreeing that there is a multiplicity of news sources. Indeed, Côte d’Ivoire can boast an extremely diverse media landscape that fully meets the right of citizens to multiple sources of information, both nationally and internationally.

<sup>2</sup> In *La Matinale* No. 029 of Friday, July 20, 2012, p.11

*Zamblé noted, “The Ivorian media make good use of existing technologies, which often provides faster access to news and information, and social networks are much used by the citizenry.”*

With many television and radio stations covering both the country as a whole and specific regions, along with newspapers published daily, weekly, and monthly across the country, the people of Côte d’Ivoire have access to any number of information sources. The unrestricted sale of decoders also facilitates access to satellite channels.

While the state has made some efforts—lower license fees, compared with commercial radio—to allow private, noncommercial radio stations to perform their mission, it appears that these broadcasters experience enormous difficulties in functioning due to a lack of the proper resources. Despite the possibility of having recourse to advertising up to a limit of 20 percent of their operating budget, these radio stations struggle to reach this limit. In some cases, this does limit access, but the large number of other radio stations can usually effectively fill in the gaps.

“Since the opening up to a multi-party system,” noted Silué, “there has indeed been a multiplicity of publications. In fact, and because of the affiliation of media groups to political cliques, the variety in the press is only too apparent. It is actually a systematic dichotomy between the opposition 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.

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the ruling party.” Because of this politicization of the press, various viewpoints are indeed available to Ivorians.

Zamblé noted, “The Ivorian media make good use of existing technologies, which often provides faster access to news and information, and social networks are much used by the citizenry. Access to the media is not restricted by law. However, economic conditions can hamper access, to a certain extent. We also note that illiteracy could be a brake at certain levels.”

The Ivorian Press Agency (AIP), which is a part of the public administration, is the only real entity with a national presence whose mission is to collect local news items for redistribution to other elements of the media. The AIP, whose clients include all the Ivorian dailies, thanks to financing from the Support Funds for the Press, tries to observe impartiality in the processing of its dispatches. Some international news agencies, such as AFP, AP, Reuters, and New China, have offices in Abidjan, but their operations mainly cover news that concerns the political capital and rarely extends to local issues. There are also some private mobile-phone news distribution initiatives that are attempting to solicit citizen participation in news gathering.

More and more, the various daily newspapers are developing their own network of correspondents in the interior of the country. They are generally secondary teachers assigned to the various localities. Despite this growth of local news sources, panelist Koné stressed, “There are no regional newspapers like those seen elsewhere. Apart from radio stations that air some local-interest productions, for the print media, the interest is more focused on national political news. It is difficult to find reporting on some cities in the interior.”

Zamblé noted, “The print media need to sell their newspapers and are not sufficiently focused on the regions; the emphasis is on what sells the paper. This is a purely economic and commercial approach. I agree that a glance could have been taken at the regions to report on how and for what people live there and on what their aspirations are.”

For several years, the Ivorian government has had a ministry in charge of ICT (information and communications technologies). In 2012, it adopted a development plan for digital regulation. It is a question of modernizing the public administration to get closer to the citizenry and to ensure transparency in the management of public affairs.

Through the portal [www.gouv.ci](http://www.gouv.ci), citizens can, on a daily basis, freely access official information. This site is hosted by the Center for Governmental Information and Communications (ICCG). Besides the activities of each ministerial department, this portal provides communiqués

from meetings of the council of ministers, declarations, and official documents.

Among the many sources of information available to citizens, the Web is making a dazzling breakthrough. The pioneer and leader in this field is indisputably [abidjan.net](http://abidjan.net), which aims to be the showcase of the news in Côte d’Ivoire. It is a content aggregator that takes articles from the national press and even the international press when the articles deal with Côte d’Ivoire.

William Gbato, the secretary general of the National Union of Agents of the Private Press in Côte d’Ivoire, sees that “the public-service media remain a part of the problem. They are partisan media outlets when they should be serving the public interest.” The representative of the consumers of the work of the press, Marius Comoé, is thinking no less of the issue when he says, “When you have a regime change, we no longer see certain personalities to whom we had become accustomed, and then there is only one bell sounding, and it is the sound box of the current regime.”

Barry spoke of the need to try to make sense of things, especially when some leaders refuse to respond to invitations from the press. “If we do not wrest our freedom, we cannot ask governments to do it for us,” she said.

In accordance with the legal texts governing the press and communications sector, the public-service media are obliged to offer all citizens, without discrimination, programs and services that are characterized by “their diversity and their pluralism, their demand for quality and innovation, respect for human rights, and constitutionally defined democratic principles.” While denying themselves a partisan stance, the public-service media should contribute to the establishment of democratic debate, to exchanges among different layers and components of the population, as well as the promotion of citizenship and social integration. However, there is considerable distance between this ideal and its practice.

Eight years after the adoption of the law on the legal framework of the press, some of its provisions are not yet observed by the companies in the industry. This is the case, for example, with article 17 of the said law, which requires, once a year, the publication of, among other things, the name of the manager, the composition of the governing and administrative bodies, the list of the shareholders with the number of shares or units of each, and the list of the practicing professional journalists in the company.

Apart from the public-service daily, *Fraternité Matin*, owned by the Côte d’Ivoire state through the SNEPCI company, all Ivorian publications are the work of private financiers. Due to the partisan editorial slants of almost all outlets, even when

it is not clear who the owners are, it is clear which party they are affiliated with.

The multiplicity of publications, which practically corresponds to a similar number of press companies, highlights the lack of concentration of media ownership in the hands of certain people. Consulting the legal notices of company startups allows any citizen to be informed about the ownership of the publications of the print media.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 1.74

In 2011 and 2012, the combined sales of all newspapers in Côte d'Ivoire rose quite a bit. While volume and sales rose, this can be misleading. Indeed, out of the 20 dailies, barely a third has outstanding results, and these garner more than half of all sales. Further, the panelists are unanimous in recognizing that newspaper companies cannot be regarded as undertakings subject to rigorous management. The low score for this objective underscores the need for these companies to comply with the principles of sound management and rational administration.

To this end, the report of the general assemblies of the press in Côte d'Ivoire notes that "of the number of factors that determine the economic viability of the press, one is directly related to the question of the abilities and the profiles of the publishers. During the early years of the Ivorian press, the trend was the profusion of publications without duly constituted publishing companies. While it appeared at the time as a real liberal breakthrough, it must be noted that the

#### 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.

absence of a management framework has compromised the development of publishing organizations and therefore the viability of the industry."

Nevertheless, the Ivorian press is developing in a difficult economic environment. In this regard, the sessions of the press general assemblies highlighted, among other things, a low degree of integration of the press in the formal economy, a lack of organizational schemes, the high costs of production and distribution, low sales, the low level of advertising and the difficulty acquiring it, and unfair competition. According to some entrepreneurs, the financial environment is characterized by tax pressures, despite the tax concessions by the state in recent years.

Funds for the Support and Development of the Press (FSDP) is active, along with other organizations, in providing seminars specifically intended for the heads of press companies. Operational since 2009, the FSDP has given, in three years, multifaceted support to companies in the sector (press, radio, and television) and to professional organizations. The fund begun by the FSDP and on deposit in a local bank, which is guaranteed up to XOF 1.3 billion (\$2.5 million), desperately awaits projects to fund. This would lead one to believe that news organizations are reluctant to resort to bank loans, unless they really do not have any truly structural projects on their to-do list.

The lack of a study on the viability of the print media is a serious hindrance in assessing the impact of efforts, made over the course of many years, to boost this sector.

Apart from sales to the public, advertisements, and subsidies granted by the FSDP, the private media officially do not receive any aid. Nevertheless, everyone conceded that some editors receive hidden funds from political circles. Naturally, such practices influence the way the news is handled. Regarding advertising resources, the Ivorian market, in a slight decline, amounts to some XOF 5 billion (\$9.8 million). This market is largely dominated by cellular telephone companies. This sector, free from any state interference, is regulated by the High Council on Advertising (CSP), which is composed of representatives of the government, professionals, and consumers.

Zamblé noted, "Media companies do not seem to be well-managed organizations. Publications are primarily financed by individuals or political parties and are therefore influenced by these 'backers,' so that very often there is political interference and the news is not dealt with in an objective manner."

Around 30 agencies and 50 management consultants occupy the Ivorian advertising arena. The behavior of certain agencies is denigrated by the backers of media companies.

Indeed, these agencies do not forward, on time, the share that goes to publications after the placement of ads. Panelist Charles Sanga nevertheless emphasizes that advertisements represent between 70 percent or even 80 percent of the revenue of private newspapers. Silué said, "The editorial policy of the state media is obviously influenced by its financial dependence on the state."

No preliminary market study precedes making new publications available to the public. As such, three sports dailies recently fought over a handful of readers. The most recent arrival on this portion of the market fizzled out quickly. This leads one to believe that publications in the marketplace do not often have the capacity to evaluate their financial prospects or even the market itself. Market research is rarely conducted, and even when it is, it is not used well.

Generally, the media landscape suffers from the lack of reliable data on radio, television, and the Internet. Only the print media are doing well in this department. The regulatory body, in partnership with the distributor, publishes quarterly figures for the distribution and sales of all publications.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Côte d'Ivoire Objective Score: 2.65

The media sector benefits from a rational system of organization that is being consolidated more and more. Though more groups are coming into existence and fighting for their constituents, they are not always effective.

Newspaper publishers, organized in the GEPCI (Côte d'Ivoire Publishers Group), are struggling to defend their interests against the state, printers, the distributor, and employees. This independent group, a member of the management board of the FSDP, intends to induce the public authorities to be much more responsive to its concerns by, for example, providing more direct and indirect subsidies to media companies. While the existence of this group is a good sign, panelist Silué noted, "This association of publishers, which remains financially weak, cannot in any way constitute a pressure group on the government." He believes that this group should undertake partnerships with some international organizations.

The National Union of Private Press Agents (Synappci), whose objective is to defend the interests of the workers, is experiencing serious difficulties in getting the companies of the sector to apply the Collective Agreement. This union finds itself up against the rigid positions of GEPCI.

The freedom of association is guaranteed by law, and there is a litany of professional organizations that all aim to work toward the professionalization of the media sector. These organizations are represented in the various regulatory and self-regulatory bodies of the industry. They are also consulted during the discussions initiated by the supervisory authority.

It should be noted that these various associations are open, without restriction, to all those involved in the sector. However, some associations exist in name only, not having conducted any activities since their inception.

According to Zamblé, "The actions of the associations should be more efficient, and their objectives do not seem to be selected in a participatory manner involving all members—hence, the existence of much misunderstanding. Sometimes members no longer see themselves as being represented by the actions of these associations."

There are no NGOs specifically involved in the defense of the media. However, organizations charged with the defense of human rights do react when the media are victimized by constraints.

In the field of training, there are various private structures of onsite training whose programs are more focused on communications. ISTC is the only public organization that truly provides an education in journalism.

Initial training costs often prove to be a real obstacle for many candidates. As for continuing training, many media outlets are reluctant to assume the costs for their employees. The employees must rely on offers of retraining initiated by the professional organizations or international groups offering retraining that is either free or costs less. It should be noted, though, that the UNJCI signed a partnership

## 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.

agreement with a training organization to reduce the tuition fees of the students. The ISTC has initiated negotiations with the unions for the same purpose.

The quality of the training in most institutions does not even adequately prepare those receiving the training for the demands of the profession. The subject matter taught varies from one institution to another, and, except in the case of ISTC, most institutions lack the materials necessary for adequate professional practice. Furthermore, ethics and professional conduct standards are rarely included in the curriculum.

For several years, the Observatory of Press Freedom, Ethics, and Deontology took on institutional leaders to try to integrate modules on ethics and standards into the curriculum, but without much success. "There were some high-level, quality journalists, but that situation seems to be getting lost in favor of a new generation of journalists of good grade 'on paper,' but with little real competence, very superficial," said Zamblé.

During 2012, thanks to the support of the FSDP, 15 editors-in-chief of the major daily newspapers of all persuasions conducted a one-month internship at l'École supérieure de journalisme de Lille [France] (the Higher School of Journalism of Lille). Business leaders have benefited from a series of workshops on administration and management funded by the FSDP. These approaches, however, need further evaluation in order to assess their relevance.

As for equipment, technical resources, and technical support, there are no special restrictions beyond economic constraints. The importation or acquisition of technical equipment is not subject to any prior notification. Côte d'Ivoire applies the measures of the Florence Convention with regard to newsprint and other printing source materials. However, it should be noted that, given the management difficulties, there are now only three printing houses with rotary presses, two of which are private, that share the newspaper-printing market.

Newspaper distribution is provided by the only company in the field, Edipresse. It is in fact a monopoly but not by way of any law. Attempts to set up companies in this sector have fizzled.

In terms of radio and television, the crisis has severely damaged collection, production, and dissemination facilities and equipment, but the authorities have begun to modernize them. The Ministry of Communications has established a working group to carefully prepare the move to digital television in 2015.

For international communications infrastructure, Côte d'Ivoire also has a national fiber-optic transmission network in the process of being constructed, of which more than 2,000 km are already available. This network provides connectivity with the countries of the sub-region and the international community. The internal networks of the country, however, also require improvement to meet the needs of the media and citizenry, particularly those in rural areas.

## List of Panel Participants

**Josette Barry**, editor, *Fraternité Matin*, Abidjan

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

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

**David Youant**, president, Press Network Online Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

**Coulibaly Sounkalo**, journalist, publication director, *Le Patriote*, *Groupe Mayama éditions*, Abidjan

**Silué Salimata 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

**Touré-Diabaté Ténin**, professor; president, Muslim Women's Network Africa, Côte d'Ivoire section, Abidjan

**Marius Comoé**, president, Ivorian Movement for Press Consumers, Abidjan

**Gbato Tonga Guillaume**, secretary general, National Union of Private Press of Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

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

**Mme Georgette Zamblé**, social psychologist, Abidjan

## Moderator and Author

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

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