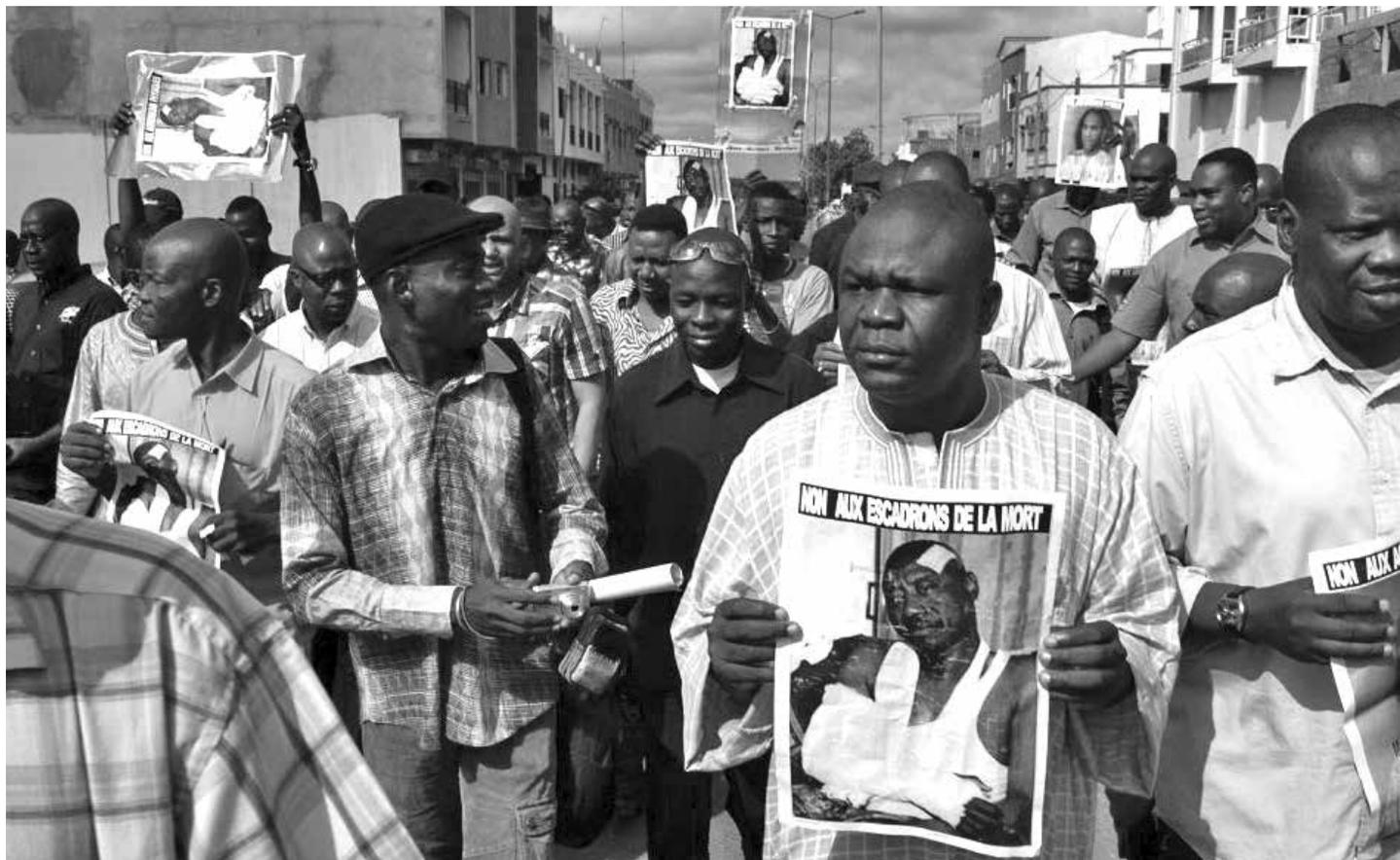


Despite the proliferation of media outlets in Mali, problems do still exist. Mali remains a difficult financial environment, and skilled media personnel are hard to find. All this is exacerbated by the political and security crises that have been shaking the country since March 2012.



MALI

M

Mali had once been considered a guidepost for democracy in Africa. This proved a mirage after March 22, 2012, when, a few weeks before the presidential election, there was a military coup. Under pressure from the international community, and with the Economic Community of West African States already mobilized, the junta signed a framework agreement on April 6 to put in place a policy for a one-year political transition. The stranglehold of rebel groups in the north of the country, especially after April 6, 2012, further aggravated the situation.

The media have been hard hit by the political and security crisis. Today, of more than 300 openly declared private newspapers in Mali, only about 30 are publishing on a fairly regular basis. According to official statistics, some 498 permits to establish FM radio stations have been issued country-wide, and about 300 of those stations are actually transmitting. These include the eight Malian Radio-Television stations in the regional capitals.

Bamako District is home to 19 private radio stations plus two public stations, while Ségou, Sikasso, and Kayes have the widest coverage among the other regions. The northern regions that were under occupation—Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal—have the poorest coverage and saw some of their local stations closed. Beyond domestic television, in Mali's major cities people receive almost 200 cable channels offered by television rebroadcasters.

In the printed press, with the exception of the national daily *L'Essor*, which covers all major cities, the private press distributes 90 percent of all its copies in Bamako. There is also a local-language press that covers the areas where Bamanan, Peul, and Soninke are spoken. The local press organs that emerged in some major towns in previous years are less frequently found in newsstands.

Despite the proliferation of media outlets in Mali, problems do still exist. Mali remains a difficult financial environment, and skilled media personnel are hard to find. All this is exacerbated by the political and security crises that have been shaking the country since March 2012.

Editor's note: The panelists' scores and contributions for this chapter largely reflect conditions in what was government-held territory, in the south, when the panel discussion was held in September 2012. Conditions in rebel- and Islamist-held areas in the north were, and continue to be, notably less conducive to a sustainable, independent media.

MALI AT A GLANCE

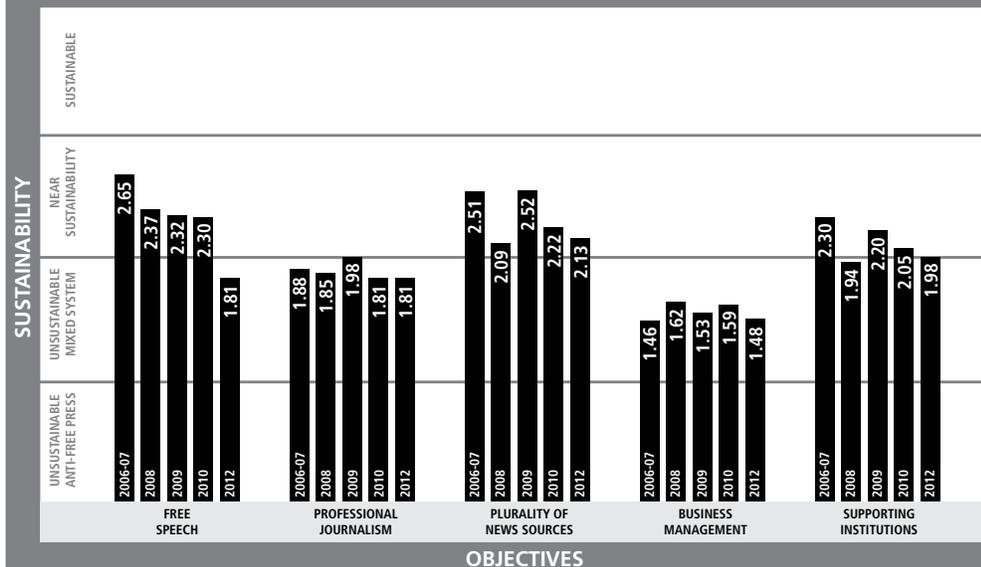
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 14,159,904 (July 2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Bamako
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Mande 50% (Bambara, Malinke, Soninke), Peul 17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg and Moor 10%, other 5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 90%, Christian 1%, indigenous beliefs 9% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** French (official), Bambara 80%, numerous African languages (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** \$9.633 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$1,050 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 46.4% (male 53.5%, female 39.6%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** Interim President Dioncounda Traore (since 12 April 2012)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 10 daily newspapers, 30 periodicals; Radio Stations: 289; Television Stations: 3 including 2 public channel and Africable
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** The Malian Press and Advertisement Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 249,800 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX MALI



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

Mali Objective Score: 1.81

In terms of both legal and social norms, freedom of expression and the access to public information are guaranteed. This guarantee is explicit in the Malian constitution and is reinforced by other legislation governing the press and access to information.

Article 4 of the constitution states: "Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, worship, opinion, expression, and creation within the law." Article 7 continues: "The freedom of the press is recognized and guaranteed. Press freedom must be exercised under the conditions established by law. Equal access for all to the state media shall be ensured by an independent organization whose statute shall be established by an organic law."

The panelists recognized that media professionals face many problems. According to Mahamane H. Cissé, journalist and director of the satirical weekly *Le Scorpion*, "Practice was not in step with the provisions of the law, and because they were aware of the situation, the authorities had started a process of reviewing all the legislation governing the sector. The process, though, had come to a grinding halt because of the situation in the country."

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.

According to Sékouba Samaké, editor-in-chief of the independent daily newspaper Info-Matin, life in Mali has become even more complex since the March 2012 coup d'état. The obstacles protecting journalists are multiplying. Attacks against freedom of the press, as diverse and poisonous as they were, have become more frequent.

Law 00-46/AN-RM of July 2000 on the governance of the press and press offenses is the primary legislation that covers freedom of the press in Mali. This law limits press offenses to cases such as racial, ethnic, or religious hate speech.

Even though, traditionally, the political authorities had not put pressure on journalists, new methods are now being used to deter the media. "Formally, legal and social norms protect press freedom. But in practice, there have been obstacles to people's enjoyment of those rights," said Abraham Bengaly, professor of law at the Bamako University of Legal and Political Sciences.

According to Sékouba Samaké, editor-in-chief of the independent daily newspaper *Info-Matin*, life in Mali has become even more complex since the March 2012 coup d'état. The obstacles protecting journalists are multiplying. Attacks against freedom of the press, as diverse and poisonous as they were, have become more frequent.

Currently, a total of some 498 radio stations are permitted, and approximately 300 or so radio stations are actually operating throughout the country. Radio stations are subject to an authorization procedure. Despite the enactment in 2011 of a new law governing radio and television, legislation remains confused. For example, Decree 92-022/PM-RM of January 1992 still applies the conditions and procedures for obtaining, suspending, and withdrawing authorizations to create private FM broadcasting services even though subsequent legislation was meant to repeal this law. The panel was of the view that frequencies are still being allocated "in the customer's head." They agree that the process is not transparent, and since the legal situation remains confusing, the ministry responsible has suspended the allocation of frequencies in order to "get a clear picture of the situation." "Despite statements of good intentions,

not one private television station has been authorized,” noted Samaké.

Media outlets do not enjoy any specific tax advantages, even though the legislation is not restrictive or discriminatory against media. There is some misunderstanding of the law, especially in the area of taxation. On the question of indirect assistance, the panelists mentioned the VAT exemption under Article 195 of the General Tax Code. The article identified the major VAT-exempt areas as the provision of services, such as revenues, less advertising, and services related to typesetting and printing. The panel noted that the VAT exemption for the press is buried among the exemptions for certain food products, making the provision to media outlets even less clear.

In 2012, several journalists were assaulted and physically injured. The perpetrators of these all-too-frequent crimes are still at large, according to the panelists. The government has done nothing about this other than condemning the attacks.

The Malian state broadcasting service, the Office of Radio and Television in Mali (commonly known by its French acronym, ORTM) and the Malian State Agency for Press and Publicity (commonly known by its French acronym, AMAP), which publishes the national daily *L’Essor*, are the two primary state media outlets. They receive grants from the state, which limits their economic independence. Their boards of directors are chaired by the minister of communications. In addition, the directors of each outlet are appointed by decree from the minister. They have privileged access to information from state institutions. Although in previous years ORTM and AMAP used to be relatively free from excessive political interference, they are beginning to succumb to pressure due to the security crisis in the country.

In Mali, defamation is a criminal offense under Article 38 of Law 00-46/AN-RM, which governs the press and press offenses. The article does not apply, however, to Internet service providers or website hosting services. Internet services were not considered when the original legislation was drafted, and authorities have subsequently attempted to amend the legislation to encompass these services going forward under the guise of national security.

Unlike other types of offenses, where the burden of proof is on the plaintiff, it is up to the accused journalist to provide evidence of good faith to establish innocence. “This kind of thing hardly ever happens, though, because the social mechanisms for conflict resolution always ensure that disputes between media professionals and consumers are settled out

of court,” said Fanta Coulibaly, head of communications for the Coordination of Women’s Associations and NGOs in Mali.

According to Bengaly, Law 98-012 of January 1998, which governs relations between administrators and users of public services, took the place of a law on access to information. However, Law 98-012 is not, strictly speaking, a law covering access to information because it does not take into account the specific concerns of the media industry.

The privacy of personal information, such as medical records or, generally, “other such information protected by law,” under Law 98-012 is ensured.

The Malian media are able to gain access to international news sources and the Internet freely and without restriction. Internet access is widely available and used in cities, where the cost is reasonably affordable. Foreign services on FM radio, such as RFI, Deutsche Welle, BBC, Radio Beijing, and VOA, are not subject to any specific regulations.

Article 4 of Law 00-46/AN-RM, which governs the press in Mali, contains the following definition: “A journalist is a person who holds a degree in journalism or a graduate degree with one year of professional experience, who has as his or her principal remunerated activity the collection, processing, and dissemination of news and information in the context of a public or private media outlet, whether in the printed press, radio, or television.” However, “In practice, many of those who have worked as journalists have not qualified because journalism has been a stopgap solution for job seekers who came to try their hand at journalism before running off elsewhere,” insisted Alexis Kalambry, publication director of the daily newspaper *Les Échos*.

Decree 892-191/P-RM, which supplemented Law 00-46/AN-RM, made a commission responsible for allocating and rescinding press cards. In the field, though, there were many who do not have press cards but manage to work nonetheless.

The government does not influence entry into the profession, and journalists are free to organize to defend their interests in accordance with the legislation governing associations.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Mali Objective Score: 1.81

At some media outlets, there are journalists who work in conformity with professional norms and standards. However, the nature of the profession has drawn many to it that are unqualified as journalists. "The media world is a refuge for the unemployed, who generally have no idea of the requirements of journalism," lamented Coulibaly.

The high number of media outlets, especially radio, has not attracted people with the skill set necessary to become journalists. Compounding the problem is the general job insecurity that comes from being a journalist and the lack of any career plan that people are able to pursue. These are all factors that contribute to the generally poor professional quality of many journalists.

"Compliance with the rules of ethics and professional conduct has not been the norm. There has been more and more self-censorship, whether simply to [keep one's job] or to avoid upsetting the advertisers," said Tiégoum Boubeye Maïga, director of the communications agency Algaita.com.

In 1991, Malian journalists adopted a declaration of rights and duties that was to have set the standard of a code of professional conduct and ethics. The self-regulatory body, the Observatory for the Professional Conduct and Ethics of the Press, was established only in 2002 and has not yet established itself as a functional organization.

However, journalists are not complying with the code of ethics because they generally are not aware of it. They

"Usually, there is no pressure. But with the security situation, journalists have changed [how they treat their coverage] and even their working habits. There is, in fact, a very pronounced fear of endangering one's own security," said Ramata Diaouré, editor-in-chief of the biweekly publication 22 Septembre.

continue to commit every ethical violation possible, including such things as having their transportation costs paid or collecting fees for covering events

According to editorial staff and policies at each outlet, certain topics are not to be covered. However, certain social, cultural, and economic reasons are usually at the root of self-censorship among journalists in Mali. "Usually, there is no pressure. But with the security situation, journalists have changed [how they treat their coverage] and even their working habits. There is, in fact, a very pronounced fear of endangering one's own security," said Ramata Diaouré, editor-in-chief of the biweekly publication *22 Septembre*.

There are always topics concerning certain aspects of society that are taboo and are never covered by journalists. Otherwise, apart from information protected under Law 98-012 of January 1998, all topics may be covered. Coverage of events relating to local and international security issues poses no problems in principle, although media often lack the resources to send journalists to cover the stories first-hand.

Naturally, low salaries, social and cultural pressures, and relationships with certain sources lead journalists toward corruption. Even journalists, acting as civil servants of the state media, are not exempt. There is a significant disparity between the salaries of private- and public-sector journalists. Private media outlets (especially radio), for the most part, receive basic monthly salaries of somewhere between XOF 20,000 (\$40) and XOF 70,000 (\$140). The public media pay salaries aligned with those of other civil servants, which start at XOF 80,000 (\$160). Salary levels are not improving with the country's security crisis, and the panelists are greatly concerned about radio stations where many staff do not receive a regular salary.

An analysis of radio and television programming shows that there is much more entertainment programming on the airwaves today. This marginalizes news programming and prevents listeners and viewers from learning about matters of real concern to them.

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).

However, Macoro Camara Diaby, chair of the Association of African Women Professionals in Communication in Mali, stated, "People are unhappy with the public media in particular, accusing them of bias and noncompliance with equal access, and especially of not meeting the public's demand for news about the political and security situation in the country."

Press outlets in Mali are generally poorly equipped. Their facilities and equipment are obsolete, with the exception of national radio and a few private radio stations in the capital that have digital technology. Radio stations in the interior have equipment that is in even more of a state of disrepair than in the capital. Aliou Djim, director of Radio Benkan and administrative secretary of the Union of Free Radio and Television Broadcasters, clarified that the digitalization process in radio is still very much in the transitional stage of frequency allocation and that digital broadcasting is not likely to be seen in the near future.

Some journalists are making strides in providing good-quality content. They are enhancing media outlets through reporting from the field, providing critical content review and producing opinion pieces. Investigative journalism is not a common practice in newsrooms. However, increasingly more journalists are specializing in this through capacity-building workshops organized by external sources.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Mali Objective Score: 2.13

There are multiple sources of domestic and international news to inform the public. Those sources are not always accessible to everyone because of problems of distribution, cost affordability, nationwide coverage and access, and similar issues. Ownership of private media outlets is still secretive, while the public media continue to depend on state support. Efforts are being made, however, to ensure that all social and political interests are reflected in the country's media industry.

There are some 30 titles published in French for the reading public in the cities and urban areas. There are additional publications in local languages (Bamanan, Peul, Soninke, etc.) that target the rural population. Mali is covered by 300

private radio stations (commercial, nonprofit, and community) and eight radio-television broadcasters that reach 80 percent of the population. ORTM broadcast news, cultural, educational, and entertainment programs in the 10 major national languages, as well as in French. The state no longer has a monopoly on television; the Africable rebroadcasting network has positioned itself, albeit without authorization, as a television provider.

There are currently four organizations that rebroadcast bundles of around 200 encrypted foreign television channels. There is also programming from five foreign radio stations. Access to domestic and international media is restricted to urban areas largely because of poor access to electricity in rural areas. Rebroadcasting of foreign radio programming is not regulated in Mali.

The charter of ORTM gives the national radio a public-service mission, and regulatory bodies are supposed to ensure equal access to state-run media. However, Macoro Camara Diaby, chair of the Association of African Women Professionals in Communication in Mali, stated, "People are unhappy with the public media in particular, accusing them of bias and noncompliance with equal access, and especially of not meeting the public's demand for news about the political and security situation in the country."

Mali has only one news agency, AMAP, which is state-owned and is the principal source of domestic news for various publications and users in Mali. It employs about 50 correspondents who cover the entire country. International agencies, such as AFP, Reuters, Xinhua, Panapress, AP, 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.

Syfia International, are among the other content providers the newspapers use.

Despite a low-skilled workforce, community radio stations broadcast their own programs that meet, to a greater or lesser degree, at least some of the needs of their local audience. State-run radio, which has relatively professional staff, produces programs at the national level that have relatively good-quality content.

Transparency of funding sources for private press outlets is lacking in Mali. Certain politicians are suspected to be the owners of some newspapers. There are certainly networks of radio stations or small press groups in the country, but they do not belong to financial consortia. As a safeguard against corruption, the law requires directors of publication to be professional journalists with professional experience.

There is a broad spectrum of available public-interest information provided in the columns and on the airwaves of media outlets. In the various regions of Mali, community radio broadcasts are carried in local languages and reflect social, economic, and cultural life. ORTM also provides programming in 10 local languages. The panelists, nevertheless, criticized the state media for not reflecting the diversity of opinion in a way that meets the demand of the entire country.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Mali Objective Score: 1.48

The media environment is not conducive to the emergence of effective media business management. The media operate

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.

“The independence of the press is unpredictable and always dependent on secret funding that allows the outlet to survive,” said Moustaph Maïga, director of the Sido community radio station in Ségou.

much more like cottage industries than well-run businesses. It was also noted that the degree of mobility that professionals enjoy undermines the effort to create a cohesive media industry. Often, people prefer creating their own media outlets so that they can become the director.

A typical problem that keeps media outlets from being viable concerns is poor financial accounting. Qualified accounting staff do not exist in most media outlets, and without external funding sources or with little operational cash on hand, they struggle to generate profits.

There is no effective distribution network for print media; in any case print runs are small, ranging from between 500 and 1,500 copies. Printing of newspapers is typically an uncertain expense for publishers, as they rarely have the money to cover their fixed costs.

“The independence of the press is unpredictable and always dependent on secret funding that allows the outlet to survive,” said Moustaph Maïga, director of the Sido community radio station in Ségou.

The government of Mali provides the press with an annual grant that is inadequate in light of the growing number of outlets in the country. Street sales and advertising are their other sources of funding. Other than street sales and advertising, public media are funded by the state, which typically covers 70 percent of their operational budgets. Occasionally, they also receive grants from technical or financial partners.

The state news agency, AMAP, holds a monopoly on selling government advertising, the largest share of the advertising market. Its publication *L’Essor* holds a mandate to carry advertising from government agencies and state-owned entities. The non-government advertising market is small.

Sometimes state officials negotiate individually with the private media outlets of their choice. This influences editorial policy. During the current crisis, the transitional authorities, following a policy of austerity, have cut the state budget and the media have suffered greatly as a result.

Samaké stated, "Because of their insecure economic positions, press associations never raise their heads above the parapet even when they could make a difference, and are therefore ineffective."

Any press outlet that fulfills the conditions established by Decree 03-264/P-RM of July 2003, which set the conditions for eligibility, allocation, and management of public assistance to the press, receives financial support from the state. The annual direct aid of XOF 200 million (\$400,000) distributed to press outlets in accordance with specific criteria has not changed since 1996, whereas the number of press outlets has increased exponentially. The distribution of the grant is carried out by a committee chaired by the Ministry of Communication. Press outlets are fighting for indirect assistance through tax breaks, among other things.

No market research contributes to the creation of any media outlet in Mali or influences programming decisions. There are no reliable statistics on media audience. The circulation figures that are advertised are generally made up, because there is no system for measuring or monitoring circulation throughout the country. There is no organization or body to measure media broadcast ratings, however, polling organizations often conduct research, for a fee, for newspapers or radio and television stations.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Mali Objective Score: 1.98

Partner organizations, which are ever scarcer today because of the country's security crisis, are involved in helping to strengthen independent media. Support comes from as many domestic institutions as international ones, and the services provided are very beneficial for professionals and for their media outlets.

Professional associations do exist and in large numbers, but they are rather reluctant to publicly support the interests of journalists. Samaké stated, "Because of their insecure economic positions, press associations never raise their heads above the parapet even when they could make a difference, and are therefore ineffective." The journalism training college that had been announced to certify professional journalists has still not been established.

There are three media associations in Mali: the Association of Private Press Publishers, the Union of Free Radio and Television Broadcasters, and the Trustees of the Printed Press. These associations are currently weakened by internal divisions that prevent them from defending the interests of their membership, and they have kept a very low profile during the current political crisis.

There are more than 50 specialized associations and professional networks that actively protect the interests of their members. Nearly all are located in Bamako. These associations are primarily members of the umbrella organization Maison de la Presse; however, they have been negatively affected by the poor economic situation exacerbated by the country's security crisis.

There are only two media-related unions in Mali. The first is the National Union of the Press and Printing Industry, which represents the public media. Since this union does not cover private-sector media, journalists created the Trade Union Federation of Press Workers in Mali. However, this union virtually dissolved shortly after it was established because of lack of membership.

There are associations and NGOs that support free speech and independent media. These include the International League for Human Rights and the Malian Association for Human Rights. The most recent association, the Observatory for the Defense of Human Rights and Peace, was established to play a role in monitoring freedom of expression and the independent media, but the panelists believe the organization lacks commitment.

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.

Currently, no national-level journalism training college exists. There are organizations that provide training, but their graduates are not well qualified when they enter the workplace. The majority of professional journalists are the products of colleges abroad who have returned to Mali to work in local media outlets before finding work in more lucrative professions.

The umbrella association of the media, the Maison de la Presse, offers training courses for various types of media professionals in order to upgrade their skills. Founded in 1996, the Maison de la Presse receives XOF 30 million (\$60,000) a year in grant funding from the government to provide in-service training for the various trades related to journalism. As part of this capacity-building, the Maison de la Presse also receives financial support from domestic and international NGO partners.

With the exception of *L'Essor* (a part of AMAP), the majority of newspapers are privately owned. AMAP has its own printing press, as does the private daily *L'Indépendant*, the weekly *Kabako*, and the cultural cooperative *Jamana*. Exclusively private printing shops in Mali operate without interference. However, the state is the largest customer, and many printers cannot afford to offend the state and risk losing business.

Media distribution channels are free from political interference. Distribution is a bottleneck even for those print media whose product is sold exclusively in Bamako. The few newspapers that are distributed in the interior of the country run late. Regional newspapers, such as the bi-monthly *Ségovien*, distributed in the Ségou region, struggle and are becoming increasingly rare on newsstands. In the absence of an independent newspaper distribution company, newspapers sell most of their copies through street vendors.

The Internet is increasingly becoming more available in Mali. It is an open venue to all who wish to make money from

it, and many content providers are becoming increasingly involved in the online market.

List of Panelists

Alexis Kalambry, journalist; publication manager, *Les Echos*, Bamako

Abraham Bengaly, professor; president, Observatory of Human Rights and Peace, Bamako

Mahamane H. Cissé, journalist and consultant, Bamako

Moustaph Maïga, founder, *Le Ségovien*, Ségou

Sékouba Samaké, journalist; secretary general, Journalists Association for the Promotion of Professionalism, Bamako

Alou Djim, secretary general, Malian Union of Free Radio and Television Broadcasters; director, Radio Benkan, Bamako

Tiégom Boubeye Maïga, journalist and director general, Algaïta Communication Agency, Bamako

Ramata Diaouré, journalist, *22 Septembre*, Bamako

Fanta Coulibaly, head of communications, Coordination of Women's Associations and NGOs in Mali, Bamako

Kassim Traoré, journalist, Radio Klédu, Bamako

Fatoumata Traoré, coordinator, Bamakan Radio Association, Bamako

Macoro Camara, journalist; president, Association of Communications Professionals, Bamako

Moderator and Author

Mahamadou Talata Maïga, journalist and trainer, Bamako

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