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NAMIBIA

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Namibia has earned the reputation of being one of the most media-friendly countries on the African continent. A report by Reporters without Borders (Press Freedom Index 2011/2012) noted that Namibia is among the “African countries where no attempts to obstruct the media were reported in 2011.” Reasons for the positive review include the adoption of a Code of Ethics for Namibian Media, which allows for self-regulation of media outlets; and the successful establishment of a self-regulating media ombudsman, who is responsible for addressing complaints from the public. In addition, the media field remains open and transparent, with a multitude of commercial, community, and public media outlets. A new radio station, HitRadio Namibia, oriented to Namibia’s German-speaking population, hit the airwaves in July 2012, bringing the total of commercial radio stations to eight.

Perhaps the most positive recent development was the government’s lifting of its longtime advertising ban of *The Namibian* newspaper. As reported in August 2011 by menafn.com (Middle East North Africa Financial Network), for 10 years a cabinet directive had restricted government ministries and departments from advertising in *The Namibian* and had forbidden government employees from purchasing the paper because of its perceived anti-government stance and criticism of government policies. The lifting of the directive allows government staff to purchase copies and place advertisements in the newspaper, as dictated by governmental tender requirements—thus giving governmental employees access to the paper’s information coverage.

Worryingly, however, violations against the media have occurred since the 2010 MSI, including defamation suits and assaults. Even government ministers have expressed outrage at the media. As detailed on the *Namibian Sun* newspaper’s website on November 17, 2011, Youth Minister Kazenambo Kazenambo publically ripped up a copy of the paper because it had angered him.

Politically, the country remains stable, with a majority-ruling party. However, opposition party protests of the 2009 National Assembly election results dragged on, reaching the Supreme Court. As reported by the African Elections Database, the ruling party, the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), won 75.27 percent of the 2009 vote; followed by the RDP (Rally for Democracy and Progress) with 11.31 percent. Other parties received less than 4 percent of voter support.

Taken together, positive developments worked to increase slightly Namibia’s overall MSI score, from 2.40 in 2010 to 2.56 in 2012. MSI scores rose in the indicators for free speech, professional journalism, and plurality of news sources. However, lower scores in business management also reflected panelists’ concern with progress in that objective, especially the high cost of production and lack of proper market research on the media in Namibia. Supporting institutions continue their work, with little change in the corresponding score.

NAMIBIA AT A GLANCE

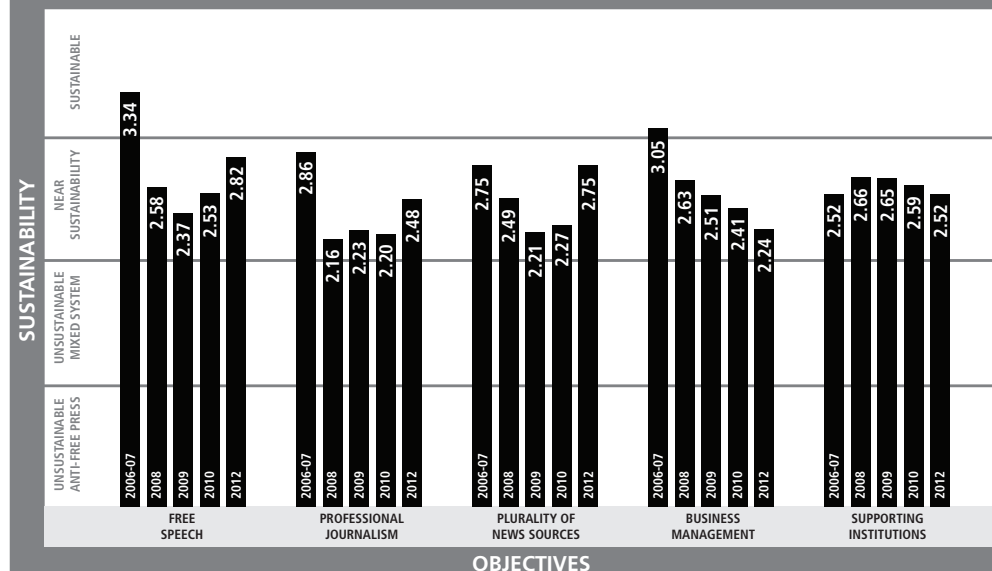
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2,165,828 (2011 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital City:** Windhoek
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Ovambo about 50%, Kavango 9%, Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, San 3%, Baster 2%, and Tswana 0.5%. (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English 7% (official), Afrikaans common language of most of the population and about 60% of the white population, German 32%, indigenous languages 1% (includes Oshivambo, Herero, Nama) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** \$10.934 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** \$6,600 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2012)
- > **Literacy rate:** 88.8% of adults over 15 years of age, 2010 estimate (*CIA World Factbook 2012*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Hifikepunye Pohamba (since March 21, 2005)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print, radio stations, television stations:** 5 daily publications (*The Namibian, Die Republikein, New Era, Allgemeine Zeitung, Namibian Sun*), 5 weeklies (*Windhoek Observer, Informanté, The Villager, Namibia Today, Confidénte*); Radio Stations: 10 public broadcasters, 8 commercial broadcasters, 5 community broadcasters; Television Stations: 1 public broadcaster (NBC TV), 1 commercial broadcaster (One Africa Television), 1 community broadcaster (Trinity Broadcasting Network)
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top two by circulation: *The Namibian* (50,000 print run, reaching 420,000 readers), *Informanté* (200,000 per month)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** Namibia Press Agency (state owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in the media sector:** Approximately \$175 million
- > **Internet usage:** 127,500 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX NAMIBIA



Unsustainable, Anti-Free Press (0-1):

Country does not meet or only minimally meets objectives. Government and laws actively hinder free media development, professionalism is low, and media-industry activity is minimal.

Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

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

Near Sustainability (2-3):

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

Sustainable (3-4):

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

OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Namibia Objective Score: 2.82

According to the panelists, Namibia has strong constitutional and legal protections of freedom of speech, but society does not apply pressure to ensure enforcement. Sheena Magenya, a freelance journalist and gender activist, said, “We simply don’t push the boundaries. We don’t dig deeply enough also in terms of investigative reporting.” She also noted that, in some cases, journalists face constraints that are based on hesitation to contradict tribal, religious, or cultural values. Some panelists referred to a “culture of fear,” but there was debate on this topic. Umbiroo Karuaihe-Upi of the national Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) pointed out that the often-controversial comments reprinted in the SMS comment pages of daily newspapers, as well as the open phone-in programs on NBC, show that people can express themselves without fear.

However, the panelists observed that Namibia is weak overall regarding legislation on access to information, and journalists tend to censor themselves out of fear of losing their jobs. Acquiring information from public institutions is also challenging, because many public workers are fearful of releasing information without bureaucratic permissions. In addition, Mathew Haikali, a media activist, noted, “Online information [is] sometimes available from ministries,

Marbeline Mwashekele, former director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)-Namibia and a media activist, noted that the government “gives the impression that they ‘own’ the NBC. Sometimes the director general has to do the checking of stories himself to see if they are ‘SWAPO-friendly’ or not!”

et cetera, but more often than not it [is] not there or [is] outdated.”

Panelists pointed to two other media challenges: the numerous cases of defamation leveled against media practitioners, and the lack of state support for information access. John Nakuta, a law lecturer and activist, noted the visit in 2009 of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa. According to achpr.org (the website of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights), the rapporteur’s report highlighted a serious gap in Namibian legislation, with the country having no act on access to information. Although the Office of the Prime Minister indicated that it is working on an act granting the right to access information, the act had not been tabled as of August 2012.

The panelists observed that generally, the government does not interfere in the process of registering print publications, and journalists are not required to register with any institution. “As a consumer, I’ve never heard of media outlets being refused a license,” said Patience Smith, a freelance journalist.

However, panelists noted the conflict of interest issue with Lazarus Jacobs, the chairperson of the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN), which registers and regulates electronic media. Jacobs also co-owns a weekly newspaper (*Windhoek Observer*) as well as a major advertising agency and other businesses. Social entrepreneur Operi Murangi, project officer of the Ounongo Technology Centre, a private ICT training hub, raised the issue of the appointment of CRAN board members. “They are appointed solely by the minister. That is not an open process,” he said. Pieter Olivier, manager of the community radio station Live FM (based in the small town of Rehoboth), stated that his station had already been waiting for eight months for permission from CRAN to expand the radius of its transmitter. “We have to keep putting pressure on them,” he said. “It does not seem to be a transparent process.” Haikali said

LEGAL AND SOCIAL NORMS PROTECT AND PROMOTE FREE SPEECH AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION.

FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

- > Legal and social protections of free speech exist and are enforced.
- > Licensing of broadcast media is fair, competitive, and apolitical.
- > Market entry and tax structure for media are fair and comparable to other industries.
- > Crimes against journalists or media outlets are prosecuted vigorously, but occurrences of such crimes are rare.
- > State or public media do not receive preferential legal treatment, and law guarantees editorial independence.
- > Libel is a civil law issue; public officials are held to higher standards, and offended parties must prove falsity and malice.
- > Public information is easily accessible; right of access to information is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Media outlets have unrestricted access to information; this is equally enforced for all media and journalists.
- > Entry into the journalism profession is free, and government imposes no licensing, restrictions, or special rights for journalists.

that while the process for registration is fairly efficient and transparent, there are issues if you live outside the capital city, and the process could be a “dragging one.”

The panelists discussed that a blurred line exists between community and commercial radio. Naita Hishoono of the Namibia Institute for Democracy noted that Channel Seven, a community religious radio station, has a huge budget and seems to operate on a commercial basis. Haikali disagreed to an extent, stating that the distinction between commercial and community radio has been aided by clearer regulations. However, he expressed some reservations about the closed nature of, for instance, CRAN’s decisions on available frequencies; the decisions have not yet been made public. The panelists also lamented the restricted number of frequencies: only 30 exist on the FM waveband in Windhoek, for instance.

Smith noted that it is costly to start a newspaper, but competition is no less fair than in other industries.

Panelists pointed out the contradiction between reality and Namibian laws on editorial independence of public media, and gave the example of NBC. The NBC Act stipulates that the broadcaster make editorial decisions independent of the government, but as Haikali pointed out, “whether that is being done or not is totally different.” The panelists said that board members should be appointed objectively and represent a wide cross-section of the public, as opposed to semi-political appointments made directly by the minister of information, communication, and technology.

Marbeline Mwashekele, former director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)-Namibia and a media activist, noted that the government “gives the impression that they ‘own’ the NBC. Sometimes the director general has to do the checking of stories himself to see if they are ‘SWAPO-friendly’ or not!” Panelists also noted that NBC journalists cover stories only if a minister or deputy minister is present. Hishoono also noted that some NGOs produce material with their own resources, but when they offer the programs to NBC, it demands payment for broadcasting them.

Nakuta noted that in Namibia libel can be a civil or a criminal crime, although no journalist has ever been brought to court on a criminal libel charge—all charges of libel have been civil matters. Court rulings have determined that comments made on websites could be considered “published” for the purposes of the libel laws, such that technically, even statements on social media sites could be declared defamatory, criminal statements. The Declaration of Table Mountain, adopted by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers in June 2007, calls for the repeal of criminal defamation and so-called insult laws across Africa, but according to Nakuta, “in Namibia, [they are] still on the statute books.”

On the positive side, the panelists stressed that Namibian law has a higher burden of proof for public figures to pursue defamation cases; those in prominent positions find it more difficult to sue for defamation of character. In addition, journalists are not the only defendants in defamation cases; some journalists have taken initiative and sued successfully for defamatory statements made against them. For example, as reported on iol.co.za on April 13, 2012, independent investigative reporter John Grobler successfully sued SWAPO for statements on its “Namibia Today” website calling him a mercenary and an “ex-Koevoet” (a counter-insurgency police unit accused of crimes against Namibian civilians during the Namibian War of Independence).

As previously noted, public information is often extremely difficult to obtain, and access to information legislation does not yet exist. The panelists said that, for instance, the police have unilaterally stopped the distribution of crime reports, and statistics are no longer made available. Journalists are often sent to various people in a ministry for requested information, but these people prove elusive. The panelists also mentioned that journalists in rural areas are often referred to a permanent secretary based in Windhoek—a tedious process that can result in a story missing a deadline. Olivier noted that, if journalists at Live FM want to get local traffic information from Rehoboth police officers, first they have to obtain a letter from Windhoek to get permission for the data to be released. Ritha Siteketa, a journalist and community newspaper publisher from the Kavango region, related an incident in which “the media were chased away” by a minister and not given information.

The panelists stressed that in an international context, Namibia is a fairly open and transparent society. They also had the opinion that sometimes media members do not understand governmental structures and are too demanding of government in asking officials to bend the rules to release information.

Although media are free to access and use various news sources, Naita Hishoono, director of the Namibia Institute for Democracy, raised concerns that some journalists tend to plagiarize news and quote without proper sourcing.

For media members to legally obtain international news feeds, they must subscribe to the Namibian news agency, NAMPA, at a cost of NAD 50,000 (about \$6,000) per month. However, NAMPA reduces the price for community news outlets.

No laws require journalists to be accredited or to register in order to practice in Namibia. However, for important state occasions (independence celebrations, opening of parliament, etc.) media are required to obtain a media card from the

Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology. The panelists debated the facts surrounding a case in which the ministry had refused to grant accreditation to NBC producers, and only accredited reporters. The explanation was that too many journalists from NBC would be attending such functions. However, Hishoono expressed strongly that the selectivity is a hindrance and “the government should not restrict producers from attending.”

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Namibia Objective Score: 2.48

The panelists agreed that professionalism among Namibian media is below standard. Gilbert Macharia, an independent freelance journalist, expressed concern that “some stories [are] shallow and not well researched, with poor cross-checking. Sometimes there will be facts that come later that contradict the story.” Magenya spoke of a noted laxness in how journalists capture information. “You will be interviewed and verbatim quotes will appear in the story—things that were never said,” he stated.

The panelists said that journalists accept gifts and favors regularly, although not money normally, while some panelists alleged that politicians give money to journalists for providing favorable coverage. Some journalists have been seen wearing the colors and clothing of certain political parties, which damage their appearance of objectivity and accuracy. Companies including MTC (a local cell phone provider), Namibian Breweries, and DsTV (the satellite television broadcaster) host popular events for the media because of the freebies that accompany such functions.

JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

- > Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced.
- > Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards.
- > Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.
- > Journalists cover key events and issues.
- > Pay levels for journalists and other media professionals are sufficiently high to discourage corruption.
- > Entertainment programming does not eclipse news and information programming.
- > Technical facilities and equipment for gathering, producing, and distributing news are modern and efficient.
- > Quality niche reporting and programming exists (investigative, economics/business, local, political).

The panelists also noted that in the private media journalists feel economic pressures. Karuaihe-Upi noted that in print “there [is] very rarely a negative story about alcohol” because of the large number of advertisements that alcoholic beverage companies place.

Some organizations (NBC, University of Namibia, Polytechnic of Namibia, and Namibian Breweries) often run full-page advertisements that are written by their public relations departments but presented to the public as editorial copy.

Murangi noted that in rural areas, journalists and media organizations sometimes expect local communities to organize accommodations. At times, even churches are expected to pay radio presenters via accommodations and even subsistence and travel allowances in order for church services to be covered.

Some areas of the country have no representation in the national broadcaster’s programming. Panelists said that in the regions of Omaheke and Hardap, coverage has to be arranged by journalists based in Windhoek. The panelists also said that often, financial constraints limit coverage of stories in rural areas.

In terms of community media, Haikali noted the economic influence on presenters and reporters. He observed that “negative reporting might affect your bottom line”—in other words, reporting negatively on the activities of a business or NGO (which might be providing essential funding for the community media) might result in funding being terminated, thus having the potential to harm the financial sustainability of the outlet.

Generally, the panelists felt that government journalists receive higher pay and compensation. According to Karuaihe-Upi, NBC is “the best-paying media house in Namibia,” with housing allowances, a pension plan, and medical aid for its employees. Commercial radio stations, however, normally pay by the hour and are regarded as “poor,” panelists said. Journalists are expected to put in many hours but receive relatively little in compensation. Freelance journalists are paid according to the quality of their work; good quality output might receive up to NAD 3 (approximately \$0.36) per word.

The panelists also noted that in the private media journalists feel economic pressures. Karuaihe-Upi noted that in print

Facebook is popular among Namibians, but the country does not have much of a culture of blogging. Smith counted this as a positive—it reflects the freedom of expression that Namibians have compared to other countries, where repression of the media forces those with dissenting voices online as bloggers, he said.

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Local broadcasters have not yet met to discuss a broadcasting code or issues such as local content, even though these topics are elements in the Communications Act of 2009. Mberira expressed concern about the large number of “talking head” shows on local television, and had the opinion that Namibian media should feature more locally produced documentaries, films, animation projects, and soap operas.

The panelists said that generally, the media strike a good balance between news and entertainment, especially since local content is often not available. The print media, panelists observed, have more news content than entertainment. Olivier reported that his community radio station Live FM runs local news three times a day, not on the hour.

Technology and equipment are regarded to be of a high standard, although some areas have a shortage of equipment. The panelists also stressed that some NBC transmitters only broadcast certain stations, and not all of the 10 languages in which the NBC broadcasts. Although Internet is available in most parts of the country, high-speed 4G service is available only in Windhoek currently.

Journalists in Namibia are general reporters rather than specialists. Little training is available on investigative journalism and the media sector has only a small number of specialized investigative journalists. The panelists also had the opinion that often, media houses do not allocate the requisite amount of time to investigate stories fully.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Namibia Objective Score: 2.75

For a country with a population of just two million, Namibia has a very competitive and pluralistic media environment. There are a multitude of newspapers, including five daily papers (three in English, one in Afrikaans, and one in German) as well as five weekly newspapers (*The Villager*, *Windhoek Observer*, *Confidénte*, *Informanté*, and *Southern Times*). There are three free-to-air television stations (public, commercial, and community) in addition to satellite television services, and many radio stations (public, commercial, and community) that serve the nation. NBC broadcasts from 10 communities in local languages.

While the urban situation is positive, rural areas have a narrower range of access to plural media. Language is also an issue, since much of the media is in English and not in other Namibian languages. However, Murangi noted, “The issue of mother tongue in education is now high on agendas, [as is] using mobile technology and Internet.”

Murangi had the view that “The government is doing fine” in rural areas, and there are many multimedia centers established in the various regions. Interestingly, he pointed out, most users of these rural facilities are of school age; generally, the centers are not used by older people.

In addition, NGOs and government ministries are embracing new technology. The panelists gave the example of the Ministry of Health and Social Services and its e-health

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.

campaign, servicing communities with information via SMS messaging.

The panelists cited some media as cost-prohibitive for ordinary citizens to purchase. The *Southern Times*, for instance, was mentioned as a publication with a lot of interesting material, but at a cost of NAD 5 (approximately \$0.60), it is too expensive for rural readers to afford.

Haikali also pointed out that, "Local content online in the various local languages is not really there." Publications that try to incorporate different languages include *New Era* and *Sister Namibia*; on the broadcast side, NBC has made efforts to incorporate various languages both on radio and television.

Facebook is popular among Namibians, but the country does not have much of a culture of blogging. Smith counted this as a positive—it reflects the freedom of expression that Namibians have compared to other countries, where repression of the media forces those with dissenting voices online as bloggers, he said. Other panelists said that perhaps people require more training to use blogs and to enjoy the benefits of e-governance.

With regard to the balance of program content, Karuaihe-Upi noted that NBC "has a multitude of cultural programming, news programming, information, and education, as well as discussion programs." Print media present information in the public interest, especially in *New Era*, on topics such as health and HIV/AIDS. The private media, panelists said, are less community oriented.

NAMPA still focuses on distributing print stories, with no audio or video material available. Although it offers a special rate for community media (as noted in the Objective 1 discussion), for such media subscribing remains cost-prohibitive. The panelists had the opinion that overall, NAMPA is fairly editorially independent, but the capacity of its reporting staff is poor. Often they compete with journalists from the national broadcaster and even local newspapers for the same stories.

With regard to broadcasting, apart from NBC, journalists rely on BBC or RFI content, or cut and paste stories from larger news organizations, according to the panelists. Base FM, a community station in the Katutura suburb, was pointed out as being an exception, and the panelists commended it for being effective in covering community stories. *Die Republikein*, a daily newspaper in Afrikaans, was noted for its good coverage as well as its high percentage of exclusive stories. Mberira made mention of the Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology's efforts to record programs in the regions, but he was concerned that the tapes would take too long to reach Windhoek for re-broadcast by NBC.

In discussing the indicator on ownership transparency, panelists said that information is not readily available. The last report on media ownership was conducted by MISA Namibia in 2007. But Smith had the opinion that "people don't really care about media ownership." For example, DsTV (the pay satellite channel) is owned to a large extent by the ruling party. However, most Namibians are unaware of this. The main publishing house, Democratic Media Holdings, is also 50 percent foreign-owned, by the South African conglomerate Media 24. In addition, as reported on July 4, 2012 in *The Namibian Sun*, recently a Black empowerment investment group (Stimulus Investments) bought out the other 50 percent of this group. It publishes three of the five daily newspapers, owns radio station Radio 99, and owns Namibia's major printing press (Newsprint). Karuaihe-Upi said that media members should play more of a role in ensuring transparency: "As journalists, we are failing to educate the audience about media ownership."

The panelists noted that sometimes owners are involved in forming editorial policies; according to Murangi, "Economic interests [interfere] with news content."

In terms of the media's coverage of multiple social interests, Magenya had the view that "as much as can be done is being done." She gave the example of *Sister Namibia* magazine that focuses on gender issues and coverage of sexual minorities. But she noted also the lack of gender balance in the mainstream media, as the people quoted are predominantly men. The weekly national broadcasting television program, *The Week That Was*, also often features Linda Baumann, an openly lesbian activist from the gay and lesbian advocacy group Outright Namibia.

Hishoono said that sometimes, certain terminology is used inappropriately in depicting minorities. She emphasized that some sensitivity training is required in this regard. She gave the example of *Allgemeine Zeitung*, a daily German newspaper, which she said often uses language that is not in line with Namibia's national identity. For instance, Namibian mixed-race musician Shishani was referred to as having a "Belgian father and Ovambo mother," which, she felt, was a misguided use of tribal affiliation to refer to the Namibian black community.

Mberira gave another example: filmmakers who cover Namibia's marginalized San communities without thinking about "how they see us through the lens." He had the view that programs should be established to empower minorities to make their own films.

Although NBC covers news from outside Windhoek to some extent, the panelists pointed out that radio phone-in programs do allow people from all over the country to

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contribute news and stories. Often, radio reporters use mobile phone technology in order to make stories from rural areas heard.

Hishoono lamented that sometimes television stations cover an event only on the morning news show, and these interesting reports “[are] never seen again.” She suggested that stations provide a weekend repeat of important news items.

The panelists said that NBC relays a variety of international television news channels, including Canal France International, Al Jazeera, CCTV (China), and CNN. Even the commercial broadcaster, One Africa Television, relays programming from both BBC and Deutsche Welle.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Namibia Objective Score: 2.24

The panelists’ opinion was that commercial print media are run efficiently and are self-sustaining. However, Namibia also seems to have a lot of fly-by-night publications, panelists noted. Magenya pointed out the high cost of production (printing, paper, distribution, etc.) and the fact that there

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.

are not enough advertisers to sustain these publications. Also leading to the demise of these publications is a lack of readership and a poor reading culture. Some panelists emphasized that salaries are not well managed in the private media; according to Magenya, “salaries [are] just not good enough.”

Panelists expressed concern also regarding the national broadcaster and its management. They said that they could not understand how shortcomings in transmitter equipment or financial problems could occur, as NBC receives money from the government, from licenses, and from advertising.

Haikali spoke of the difficulties facing community media, observing, “They are not sustainable and live hand-to-mouth.”

The panelists agreed that there is major competition for advertising revenue in Namibia, with Smith noting that “the cake is too small.” Magenya was critical of the country’s advertising industry and referred to the “vulture culture—everyone wants a piece of the few advertisers with money—Pupkewitz, Shoprite, Game, Pick ‘n Pay, MTC, et cetera.”

The panelists expressed concern about the influence that advertisers have on editorial policy. Even NBC, with its government funding, does not regard itself as having adequate financing. Siteketa said that NBC “[is] not objective regarding political reporting, possibly because of the risk of losing its funding.” However, NBC has other sources of funding, including private donations (through a program in which NBC German Service listeners donate a monthly amount), yearly television license fees, and hiring out transmitters to commercial and community broadcasters.

Other media that do not rely solely on advertising are the investigative monthly publication *Insight* and satellite broadcaster DsTV; these earn most of their revenue from subscriptions.

Because Namibia is a peripheral market, advertising agencies focus more on South Africa. In addition, the panelists said, many advertisers are not actually Namibian businesses but advertising directives coming from South African agencies. Magenya observed also that “many adverts are not relevant to Namibia because they are produced in South Africa.” The panelists also reported that often, satellite DsTV will advertise contests that are only for South African viewers, not Namibians.

NBC came under criticism from the panelists for “stealing” advertising, but Karuaihe-Upi made the point that NBC finds it difficult to make money, especially from small communities, because of the expensiveness of the programs they produce. These communities and their businesses need to be covered

but do not have money to support the stations through advertising, panelists explained. The community media also suffer because agencies prefer placing advertisements in national outlets rather than regional or community media.

Nakuta pointed out that, despite *New Era's* large circulation and emphasis on rural readers, more people read the commercial *The Namibian* as opposed to the state *New Era*.

Hishoono pointed out *Allgemeine Zeitung's* "blur" between advertising and editorial content. The paper publishes numerous print media supplements, so-called "advertorials," but often this paid content is not clearly identified as such.

According to the panelists, another daily paper, Afrikaans *Republikein*, has 60 percent news content and 40 percent advertising, although panelists stressed that the balance is cleverly arranged, with the majority of advertisements appearing at the end of the paper, with news dominating the front pages. NBC has a policy of accepting only four minutes of advertising per hour, Karuaihe-Upi said.

Magenya said that Namibia has no law or policy governing the placing of advertising. She observed that the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare place advertisements in daily newspapers but not in the gender publication *Sister Namibia*. To date, she said, the ministry has had no response about why this is so.

The country is poorly served by research, with the last major media survey conducted by A.C. Nielsen in 2001. Vision Africa currently conducts research, mainly for advertising agencies, and charges NAD 100,000 (\$12,000) for a copy of its survey. The panelists said that the Vision Africa survey is objective and produced independently, but the high cost precludes access for most media houses—especially community media. The NBC German Service publishes a survey in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, and listeners respond by completing the form and sending it to the station. Apart from this, NBC conducts no other research.

Hishoono stated that NGOs do look at listenership and distribution information before placing advertisements or announcements. Therefore, much of their advertising spending goes to NBC and *The Namibian*, rather than upstart and regional outlets.

Media houses know how many people visit websites and from where their sites are accessed. However, the panelists were unsure that media owners understand the specific terminologies (unique visits, etc.) affecting such analysis. Some publications, including *The Namibian*, have come up

with figures regarding the number of people reading one copy of their newspapers, but panelists were unclear on how these figures are derived.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Namibia Objective Score: 2.52

As an example of an association that represents the interests of media owners and managers, the panelists highlighted the Editor's Forum of Namibia. Currently, the chair is Eberhard Hofmann, deputy editor of *Allgemeine Zeitung*. The panelists said that although this group consists of managers and editors of the private and state media, it does not always represent the owners or even managers. For instance, Gwen Lister (former editor and essentially owner of *The Namibian*) was in the forum, but the owners of *Republikein* newspaper (DMH Holdings) would not be present at meetings; the editor of the newspaper would attend instead. In addition, Haikali said that the forum is "not too active at the moment." A positive aspect of this group is that the owners or managers themselves are expected to support it.

The panelists pointed to the media ombudsman, a position created and funded by the media, as an example of an office that exists to raise standards in the industry and to ensure that journalism is professional and functions within the Code of Ethics for Namibian Media.

The panelists noted The Filmmakers Association of Namibia as a body whose membership is made up of all independent filmmakers. According to Mberira, the association's aim is to "make the film industry vibrant and sustainable" and to

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.

Magenya, a former university student, said, "The university [curricula provide the] theory, but the onus is on you to go out and do the practice through volunteering and doing internships." Panelists singled out NBC and Allgemeine Zeitung for accommodating student internships.

ensure that filming takes place in line with the guidelines and regulations of the governmental Namibian Film Commission.

In terms of organizations that protect journalists' rights, panelists noted the Namibian Public Workers Union (NAPWU) as being representative of workers with the state broadcaster. In August 2012, NAPWU organized a six-day strike at NBC; all television and radio stations were off the air during that time. NAPWU had organized the shutdown in order to press for salary increases. The private or community media have no media trade union as such.

MISA Namibia does have a fund that provides legal assistance to members who run afoul of the law with their reporting. The panelists mentioned the support that MISA gave to Brigitte Weidlich and Elizabeth M'ule, who were suspended without pay from the *Informanté* newspaper in June 2011 and eventually dismissed. MISA also reacted when independent investigative reporter John Grobler was the victim of assault; it issued a statement condemning the attack.

In addition, MISA supports quality journalism by organizing an annual presentation of media awards in different categories (environment, business reporting, photojournalism, etc.) and rewards outstanding examples of journalism in each category. MISA also organizes a series of workshops for journalists, facilitating training in environmental and financial reporting as well as promoting ethical reporting. MISA also plays a strong lobbying role; for instance, it provided input on the Communications Act in 2009.

Other groups playing a role in promoting free speech and independent media include the Open Society Initiative, the Namibian Legal Assistance Centre, the Namibian Human Rights Organization, German NGOs Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Namibian Institute for Democracy, IFEX, and UNIC (United Nations Information Centre).

Mberira said that the quality of journalism education varies. For instance, no institute has practical film training as such; video or television production is more common. The

University of Namibia has a shortage of facilities (including computer labs and video studios), although the university does run a community radio station (UNAM Radio 97.4) on campus.

The College of the Arts and the Polytechnic of Namibia (both in Windhoek) have journalism training programs. Magenya, a former university student, said, "The university [curricula provide the] theory, but the onus is on you to go out and do the practice through volunteering and doing internships." Panelists singled out NBC and *Allgemeine Zeitung* for accommodating student internships.

Magenya also noted that the English language skills of students are of particular concern, but did not blame the university, noting that some students study journalism without sufficient language skills or even a real passion for the profession.

The panelists noted that the limited facilities at some schools require restrictions on the number of students. At the Polytechnic of Namibia, only 30 students are admitted each year, and at the College of the Arts, 15 students are admitted each year for each program. At the University of Namibia, however, enrollment is essentially open to all.

Karuaihe-Upi expressed concern over the lack of in-service training: private media do not offer training opportunities nor does NBC. In addition, NBC's scholarship program has been cut. However, funding from the Swedish International Development Agency is allowing ongoing radio training at NBC.

The panelists also noted that sometimes journalists seem reluctant to take advantage of training opportunities. Smith said that although NGOs offer to send reporters to training programs, journalists are just not interested, or their employers are reluctant to let them go. One exception is *Sister Namibia*, which offers in-service training opportunities through funding from the independent watchdog organization Freedom House.

In the community radio sector, personnel can pursue professional development through some constructive regional links. Presenters at Base FM and Live FM (Rehoboth) have linked up with Bush Radio in Cape Town and the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in Johannesburg, South Africa for training courses.

The panelists expressed reservations about what amounts to a monopoly on printing. Newsprint (a DMH company) is the only truly viable printing house in the country, and is seen to be quite expensive. However, Smith said that Newsprint is a good company and offers the best quality. She also noted that Namibia has no regulations that restrict sending

publications to be printed elsewhere, and some are printed in South Africa, in fact. The panelists agreed that printing houses do not engage in censorship or show political bias.

The panelists observed that distribution of print publications seems highly inefficient, with three networks distributing papers to a widely scattered readership in a physically large country. *New Era*, *The Namibian*, and DMH (publisher of *Republikein*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Namibian Sun*) all have their own distribution networks (normally by road) on a daily basis, according to Smith.

Karuaihe-upi said that NBC's transmitters still are restricted to a few services throughout Namibia—meaning that not all languages can be heard in every part of the country. She also noted that the transmitters are hired out to other commercial stations and provide part of NBC's revenue.

Murangi noted that Namibia is only the second country in Africa with 4G coverage, with an active ICT policy in place. In his view, generally Namibia has a quality Internet infrastructure and that MTC provides good coverage in rural areas. Most people, especially in more remote areas, are starting to use mobile phones to access the Internet.

However, other panelists noted restrictions on some community media. Ohangwena Community Radio has a poor coverage area, as does the Windhoek community radio station Base FM. Similarly, the coverage of Live FM in Rehoboth is only approximately 40 kilometers in radius.

Magenya clarified that although technology is available in all areas, often it is not accessible. She gave the example of media practitioners failing to embrace the new technologies and not using SMS messaging to reach the population in rural areas. The Namibia Institute for Democracy noted that it uses SMS messaging in order to get information from rural people, and this has proven to be successful.

The panelists also noted that some people have a negative attitude toward new technology; some see Facebook, for example, as a bad influence. Other panelists said that there needs to be a greater commitment towards decentralization, especially regarding broadcasting. For instance, Mberira wants the planned digital broadcasting rollout planned for December 2013 to encompass the entire country, including rural areas.

List of Panelists

Gilbert Macharia, freelance journalist, Windhoek

Patience Smith, freelance journalist, Windhoek

John Nakuta, law lecturer and social activist, Windhoek

Ritha Siteketa, journalist and community newspaper publisher, Northern Bulletin, Rundu

Pieter Olivier, manager, Live FM, Rehoboth

Naita Hishoono, director, Namibia Institute for Democracy, Windhoek

Moses Mberira, independent filmmaker, Gobabis

Operi Murangi, social entrepreneur, Ounongo Technology Centre, Gobabis

Marbeline Mwashekele, media activist, Windhoek

Mathew Haikali, media activist, Windhoek

Sheena Magenya, freelance journalist and gender activist, Windhoek

Umbiroo Karuaihe-Upi, manager, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, Windhoek

Moderator and Author

Robin Tyson, media lecturer, University of Namibia, Windhoek

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