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SOMALILAND

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Since Somaliland declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 after a decade-long civil war, the independent media have grown quickly, and continue to do so. Now, new media outlets are coming into the market, particularly newspapers and news websites. Somaliland now boasts about 30 news websites, a dozen daily and weekly journals, half a dozen online radio stations, and four local television channels. The Somaliland diaspora are contributing to the growth by funding independent media firms, particularly in the print and magazine markets. Advertisers have returned as well. Broadcast media have shown less growth, perhaps due to more stringent government licensing restrictions on them.

During the first year of the new government, which took office after the 2010 elections, tensions between officials and independent media and journalists have relaxed somewhat. In 2011, state radio and television injected greater fairness into their access and programming. There were no serious clashes or arrests of journalists. During the government's second year in office, there were some severe confrontations, including the arrests of 22 journalists, five of them female, and the closure of a major satellite television broadcaster on one day.

Somaliland's average MSI score reflected a modest improvement from the previous report, owing to a freer media climate. Somaliland's constitutional guarantee of free speech, as well as strong support for that right in society, undergirds its performance in the MSI. Free access to foreign sources, as well as free entry into the journalism profession, were also hailed by the panel as strong points for continued media sustainability.

As last year, professionalism received particularly weak scores; journalists continue to lack basic training and fail to meet basic quality standards. Journalism is a relatively new industry in Somaliland. There is no journalism faculty or college at any of its universities, and professional associations are still in their infancy.

Somaliland has not been recognized as a sovereign country by any nation or international organization. However, the many differences between it and Somalia, including different legal and regulatory regimes, warrant a separate study of media in Somaliland.

SOMALILAND AT A GLANCE

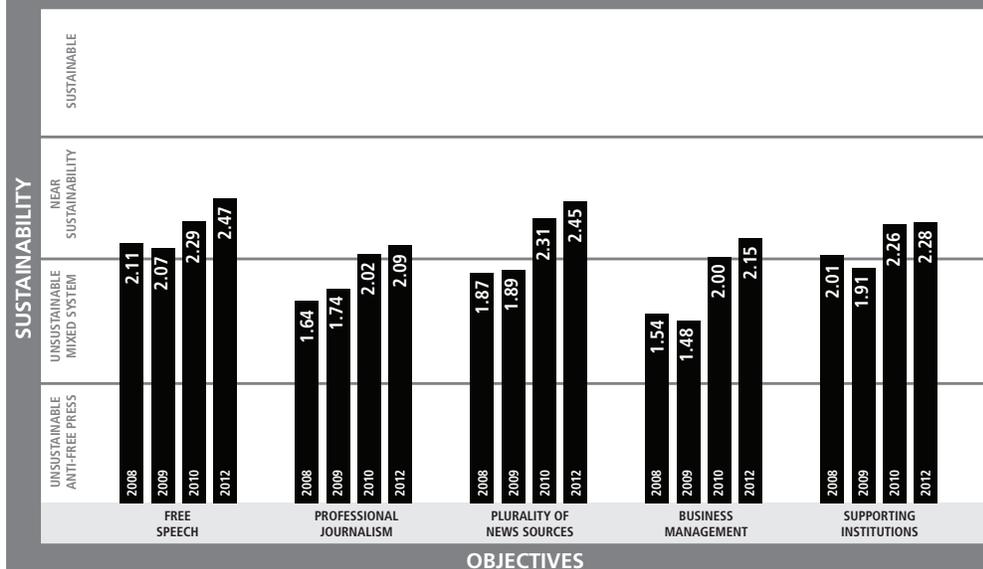
GENERAL

- > **Population:** Estimated at between 2.5 and 3 million
- > **Capital city:** Hargeisa
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** 100% Somali, with 3 major clans: Isaaq (majority), Dir, and Harti
- > **Religions:** Sunni Muslim
- > **Languages:** Somali (official), Arabic and English used for business purposes
- > **GNI (2011-Atlas):** N/A
- > **GNI per capita (2011-PPP):** N/A
- > **Literacy rate:** Estimated at 37.8%
- > **President or top authority:** President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud (Silanyo) (since June 26, 2010)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:**
Print: 8 daily newspapers; 7 weekly/semi-weekly newspapers; 3 monthly magazines. Radio Stations: 1 local station, 2 international FM stations available. Television Stations: 4 local, 2 satellite, 1 cable and 2 International.
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top three by circulation: Geeska Africa (privately owned), Waaheen (privately owned), Haatuf (privately owned)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top radio stations: Radio Hargeisa (state owned); top three television stations: Somaliland National TV (state owned), Horn Cable TV (privately owned), Universal (privately owned).
- > **News agencies:** Somaliland National News Agency (SOLNA) (state owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** N/A

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX SOMALILAND



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

Somaliland Objective Score: 2.47

The MSI panel found improvement overall in the free-speech objective from the 2010 report. Panelists poorly assessed Somaliland's legal provision for editorial independence of the state media, as well as the legal environment governing libel issues. The panel was more favorable on Somaliland's unrestricted access to foreign news sources and unrestricted access to the journalism profession.

Legal protections of free speech are guaranteed by Article 32 of Somaliland's constitution. However, Ahmed Hersi Heelo, chief editor of programs for Horn Cable Television, contended, "Legal protections are written in the constitution but are not enforced. That means it doesn't help the press in any way." A press law proposed by parliament, described in the 2010 MSI, was again raised by members of parliament with the help of a donor-sponsored international consultant. It has encountered strong opposition from most media outlets due to fears that the government may overreach and introduce strong provisions that restrict their operations. In addition, panelists agreed that there are strong social norms that protect journalists against repressions from the government. Khadar Cakule, of Radio Hargeisa, said, "It's public outcry that sets many journalists free from jail."

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.

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Initially, the new government seemed to have relaxed licensing for broadcast television stations somewhat, but as the panelists reported, no licenses have been granted since the beginning of 2012. According to Khadar Dirir, owner of *Isha* magazine, "Law 27 from 2004 deals only with print media; it does not address broadcasting media, which is why radio stations are banned." As Heelo described from his own experience, "If the government refuses to give licenses, particularly in the print media, it's mainly for two reasons: they doubt the profession of the applicants, and the applicants themselves do not know the steps of applying for the license, which takes time. And the second reason is political."

Market entry in Somaliland, especially the print media, is comparatively free. Though licenses are refused in some cases, such as Heelo's above, there are no strict legal conditions that the press has to meet for market entry. The tax structure continues to be more favorable for media companies than for other industries.

Journalists receive little official or legal protection for their right to operate and report, but rather rely on the modest social protection they receive from society, particularly in the capital. A few days before the panel was convened, one of the panelists, Hodan Caafi, a female reporter with the state television in Borama, was beaten by a police officer while reporting an event. In her own words, Hodan said, "He hit me with his mobile phone and car keys when I tried to interview a child who was stolen from Mogadishu and brought to Borama." Caafi said the officer is now under investigation and was temporarily removed from office, which rarely happens when such crimes are committed against journalists. In addition, this case was well publicized by the local media.

Mohamed Boosh, editor of Ramaasnews website, remarked, "Journalists actively report on critical issues, such as elections, protests, and even national security issues, without fear; however, editors may sometimes prefer not to cover a particular party, for political reasons."

The increase in the arrest of journalists since the last MSI report has been a negative development. The arrest of 22 journalists in one day, including five female journalists, and the closing down of a satellite television station, alarmed the population.

There are no laws in place to protect editorial independence of the state or public media. The public media are controlled by the minister of information (a political appointee of the president) and not an independent board; hence, the public media are not free from government influence. However, to some degree, the panel believes tensions between the government and the media have relaxed, such that the editors and the management of the state media do practice some sort of independence. Khadar Akule, chief of programs for the state radio network, remarked, "Nowadays when I conduct a telephone interview or invite an opposition leader to the state radio, I don't fear any government repressions." He maintained that government and opposition leaders both receive the same treatment from state television.

The panelists gave some of the lowest scores to the treatment of libel cases. Libel is a criminal offense, and journalists face jail terms in libel cases, despite the fact that Somaliland's 2004 media law treats any infringements committed by journalists as civil issues. In practice, most of these cases are settled outside the court in clan arbitration arrangements, and civil society mobilizes to advocate for the release of journalists when they are arrested. As there is no formal legal insurance market in Somaliland, compensatory payments are settled through the collective efforts of the clan of the accused.

Journalists tap officials for information through interviews, as government offices rarely have press offices. The panelists also noted that the release of public information is not equally enforced and that the state media are favored. Akule, the public radio official, believes that government officials view the state media as their own advocates, thus preferring to focus their efforts communicating with independent media instead, where their influence may be less.

Media outlets have unrestricted access to international news and sources, especially through the Internet and from international satellite television broadcasters.

Entry into the profession of journalism is virtually free, with no required qualifications or licenses for journalists. The panelists believe that becoming a journalist is the easiest thing one can do in Somaliland; getting a cheap camera and claiming to be a journalist is enough.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Somaliland Objective Score: 2.09

While the panel assessed a slight improvement in Somaliland's average Objective 2 performance, the panelists agreed that professionalism among journalists still falls short. Scores for self-censorship, coverage of key events, and the news-entertainment balance were above the objective average, while ethical standards, pay levels, and niche reporting fell short.

The panel agreed that Somaliland's journalists often fail to provide balanced coverage of issues, with one-sided or opinion-based pieces far more prevalent than objective reporting. They do not often engage experts or field reporters to provide different perspectives on issues or perform minimal fact-checking.

Professional and ethical standards are evolving slowly, primarily due to low levels of education and skills among the journalist cadre. According to Mustafe Sa'ad, director of

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).

Jamhuriya newspaper, “Media firms accept poorly educated and inexperienced young men and women to work as journalists. This discourages them from further education in journalism.”

Journalists working for the state media are more likely to practice self-censorship as a means of protecting their jobs compared with their compatriots in the private media. “When working for the state media, self-censorship is inevitable. Especially when covering the opposition, you should pick areas of less sensitivity,” said one panelist. The rest of the panel shared these sentiments. Business interests also drive informal censorship, and often to a greater extent than government officials.

The panel favorably assessed the media’s broad coverage of Somaliland’s major events and issues, saying they leave nothing of import uncovered. In some cases, individual firms may choke out stories that cover businesses from which they receive advertising revenues, or that may place a particular clan connected to the firm in a poor light. Mohamed Boosh, editor of Ramaasnews website, remarked, “Journalists actively report on critical issues, such as elections, protests, and even national security issues, without fear; however, editors may sometimes prefer not to cover a particular party, for political reasons.” However, in general, the panel unanimously agreed that Somaliland media have relative freedom to cover key events and issues. Only media professionals’ hesitation to overcome their own personal proclivities in aspiring to objectivity limited Somaliland’s score on this indicator.

Journalism remains one of the most poorly paid professions in Somaliland, which has broad negative effects for the industry. Many well-educated journalists abandoned the media sector to look for well-paid jobs in other sectors. Dirir, of *Isha* magazine, noted, “Many media professionals are now working in public-relations offices of private companies and the communications offices of NGOs, thus deserting the media sector.” The panelists agreed that pay levels for editors are sufficiently high but that journalists earn minimal salaries, which encourages corruption and bribery. “Reporters are seriously underpaid. They depend on small handouts from politicians and businesspeople for reporting ‘their’ news,” said Cakule, from state radio. As one of the panelists pointed out, journalists rarely sign contracts or enter into written agreements with media firms, undermining their job security.

Panelists agreed that entertainment programming and news programming dominate different forms of media. Broadcast media are more than 60 percent entertainment programming. News eclipses entertainment in the print and online media, where entertainment and social coverage averages about five

of 16 pages in the newspapers (about 30 percent). Television news airs according to a schedule, and people know when to expect the broadcast. However, broadcasters often air other informational programs without a clear schedule; thus, many interested viewers miss out on important programming. Panelists also noted that television broadcasters generally do not employ news updates at intervals throughout the day or during important events.

Broadcast and online media outlets in Somaliland use somewhat modern equipment, while print media continue to use basic facilities for gathering news and printing newspapers. Panelists regard the lack of advanced facilities and equipment owned by print outlets as a major challenge, as they are unable to produce colorful, quality products that spur sales. Although advanced press equipment is available commercially, few outlets can afford the high cost. Dirir, whose newspaper is the first color print weekly in Somaliland, remarked, “Our printers have been using an old, offset printing press for more than 17 years. That’s why we print our newspaper in the [United Arab] Emirates, which is really costly.”

While broadcasters have decent equipment for actual broadcasting, their ability to gather audio and video content from the field remains limited. “Due to a lack of equipment, our television stations repeat the same news over and over again, without news updates,” remarked Nimo Mohamud, of Warka News website.

In Somaliland, investigative and specialized reporting is weak, as there are few skilled reporters with specialized beats. While newspapers perform best in this indicator, the panel regarded their quality as insufficient to be considered legitimate investigative reporting.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Somaliland Objective Score: 2.45

Somaliland’s diversity of news sources has improved consistently since the MSI began analyzing Somaliland in 2009. A healthy mix of accessible public and private sources bolstered Objective 3, while the weakness of independent news agencies and narrowness of the spectrum of social interests covered by the media continued to weigh on the score.

Panelists agreed that news sources are growing by the day, with new entries in the newspaper, magazine, television, SMS media, and online media markets becoming frequent. Only

The panelists agreed that the content of private-media news and programming—whether broadcast, print, or online—is far superior to state-media productions.

radio stations remain monopolized, with the government allowing only state FM radio stations with limited reach beyond the capital. As Nura Abdi, of Caynabanews website, noted, “Although many news sources exist, distribution is still a problem, and most of them are based in the capital.”

Citizens have free access to domestic and international media without restriction. Economic challenges and geographic isolation alone divide the population from their access to information. As noted in the previous MSI report, a daily newspaper is priced at 2,000 Somaliland shillings (\$0.30), well out of reach for many. Most of the print media are concentrated in the capital city with no or limited distribution in the regions and rural areas. However, people living outside Hargeisa are served by several terrestrial FM stations, including the BBC and VOA. While these stations operate freely, their transmitters are located at the state radio compound as a requirement of the Somaliland government. Thus, the stations may be subject to government pressure or closure if conditions change.

Although not fully independent from the state or the ruling party, the panel viewed the public media as relatively independent, reflecting both opposition and government views. However, the views of the government and the

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.

leadership predominate in their reporting, undermining balance. As Cakule summarized, “Government officials view public media as their own.” To some extent, commercial broadcasters compensate for the state media’s preoccupation with such political affairs with educational and cultural programming. In early September 2012, after a serious conflict between a newly appointed minister of information and some of his directors involving financial regulations in the sector, the president fired the former and declared that state television would be independent from the ministry. It has yet to be seen whether this action and subsequent declaration lead to improved performance by state television.

In Somaliland, there is only one state-owned news agency, the Somaliland News Agency (SOLNA), which provides information largely to state media outlets. Independent media seem to be self-reliant, using their own reporters for gathering news from both local and international sources. Panelists believe that the lack of independent news agencies hinders the growth of new media entrants, as they cannot depend reliably on their internal capacities for gathering news. All outlets, especially print and online, use international news agencies such as AFP, AP, and Reuters, for news and information. Unlike in many countries in the region, media outlets generally credit the foreign agencies as sources for their reports.

The panelists agreed that the content of private-media news and programming—whether broadcast, print, or online—is far superior to state-media productions. Most of these independent media houses produce their own news and programming, while depending on international sources for reporting international news.

The panel felt that media ownership transparency is not a major problem in Somaliland, as owners abstain from using their outlets to promote their personal interests. However, citizens do have an interest in the clan membership of media outlet owners. On the other hand, media conglomerates do not dominate the sector. Media firms generally fail to attract the interest of any serious investors, as they are largely unprofitable businesses.

Coverage of social issues in the media is generally welcomed, but the panel agreed that the media focus on political issues, such as political party leadership and government officials. Somaliland media neglect social, economic, and cultural issues. The independent media cover political and urban matters extensively but hardly address issues concerning rural development and environment. There is token coverage of minority issues. Language diversity is not a problem, according to the panelists, because the population speaks Somali, and there are no major dialects, as is the case in Somalia.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Somaliland Objective Score: 2.15

Somaliland's score for business management remains largely unchanged, with the panel insisting that media enterprises are poorly managed and unprofitable. Scores were mediocre for all seven indicators, with the two covering market research and audience and circulation data scoring moderately lower than the other five.

Most media outlets in Somaliland are small businesses lacking professional management, as the owners cannot afford to hire skilled professionals for management, accounting, and human-resources functions. The staffs they can afford are either unskilled or are family members and are insufficient in number to properly run a modern media outfit. Few have or follow coherent business plans, and owners seem to dismiss fiscal sustainability as a long-term goal.

Financial instability at media firms incentivizes short-term contracts for their journalists, as managers are rarely sure whether they would be able to make payroll for regular staff. Journalists not only receive low pay for their output, but they also have few guarantees of future income.

As noted in previous MSI reports, media outlets do not receive revenue from a variety of sources, as there are no major investors in the industry and no access to credit for any industry. The panelists agreed that the limited revenue firms receive, mostly from advertisers, tends to influence editorial policies and programming. The second major source

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.

Online advertising is growing, but the quality of online advertisements was assessed as poor.

of revenue is direct financing from owners themselves. Other sources include sales, sponsored programs, paid editorials, stipends from political parties, and press releases. Most of these sources end up hampering the media's ability to operate independently. In particular, clan or political interests of the firm's ownership crop up during election season or other periods of high tension.

The panelists acknowledged the emergence of a vibrant advertising industry, with a fair number of advertising agencies in the market, including ASAL, SAGAL Jet, Kow Media Corporation, Madar Advertising, Span-Image, and Milgo Digital. These agencies mainly serve television channels and newspapers, as well as manage billboards and digital signage advertising in the capital. Online advertising is growing, but the quality of online advertisements was assessed as poor.

Small and medium businesses are increasingly using advertising agencies to develop their advertisements, while large companies, such as telecommunications and money-transfer servicers, use their own professionals to produce quality advertisements in-house. Most local television channels use advertisements from advertising agencies in their channels. The panelists confirmed the importance of advertising as a source of revenue for the media firms, though advertising money is scarce outside Hargeisa.

As their top funding source, Somaliland's private media depend almost entirely on the revenues they generate from advertising. Ninety percent of print media revenue comes from advertising. According to Dirir, from *Isha* magazine, "Newspapers do not make money from the sale of papers, as circulation is very low." Election campaigns and recruiting drives for NGO-led educational programs are other important sources of revenue for the media. State media depend more on direct funding from the government, though the state also brings in advertising revenues.

The panel agreed that the government generally does not subsidize non-state media. The Somaliland government is not a major advertiser, though what little money the state spends on advertising tends to be offered to those outlets that provide positive coverage for the government.

On the other hand, a handful of journalists who studied journalism abroad in countries such as Uganda are coming back to the country. However, as Cakule explained, "They do not serve the media sector; instead, they run quickly to other sectors for better pay."

No market research is used by any media outlet, public or private, to tailor their products to the needs and interests of their audience. The panelists concluded that media outlets are scarcely concerned about the preferences of their audience. The media firms lack the skills necessary to conduct such research; in addition, there are no independent marketing agencies to provide such services. Furthermore, there are no reliable circulation figures available publicly. Although media firms claim significant circulation and reach, newspaper circulation is generally very modest. Rough estimates suggest circulation in the range of 1,000 copies per day for the most popular dailies. For the broadcast sector, no listenership or viewership statistics are available.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Somaliland Objective Score: 2.28

Scores for Objective 5 rose slightly over the 2010 study. Indicator scores varied significantly. The panel assessed training programs and distribution channels highly, while trade associations and NGO support were found to be comparatively weak.

Somaliland has no trade association to represent the interests of owners. Although the government imposes no legal restrictions to prevent such groups from forming, none have been established. However, professional associations have emerged to represent the interests of independent media firms, including the Somaliland Journalism Association (SOLJA), Women in Journalism Association (WIJA), Media Monitoring Group, and Somaliland Online Association. These associations advocate on behalf of journalists, protesting crimes against journalists and lobbying for legal reforms that support media freedom.

Aside from these associations of professionals, the panel reported that the NGO sector provides little support to the media. According to Cakule, "There are no NGOs dedicated to

working with the media sector. Currently, local NGOs only use the services that the media provide, but neither advocate for them, nor react to any violence against the media." However, according to the panelists, there are a number of individual activists who collaborate with journalists on certain initiatives on an individual basis.

No Somaliland university offers a journalism degree.

According to Heelo, "There was a distance-learning course at Hargeisa University almost eight years ago, which served a good number of journalists, but it has been discontinued." On the other hand, a handful of journalists who studied journalism abroad in countries such as Uganda are coming back to the country. However, as Cakule explained, "They do not serve the media sector; instead, they run quickly to other sectors for better pay."

The panelists praised the short-term trainings and seminars provided by some local and international organizations and media associations, which they believe have been of great service to journalists. Opportunities for short-term trainings abroad in neighboring countries exist. Some of the panelists believed these trainings mainly benefit journalists working with big media firms, which should be able to afford to send their staff for training abroad. Basic journalism courses lasting one to four weeks and offered mainly by media associations, such as SOLJA and WIJA, have become popular with new professionals. Journalists still require training in media management, advertising, marketing, and investigative reporting, according to the panel.

Nearly all media distribution channels are in the hands of private, apolitical, unrestricted, and competitive market players. However, FM radio transmitters remain subject to total government control, a quirk of this mixed media system.

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.

Existing technology in Somaliland does not meet the needs of modern journalism. The Internet is a major problem for television channels, especially during live broadcasts. As explained by Heelo, of Horn Cable TV, "The Internet is terribly slow, and all our Internet service providers use the same source of Internet [Djibouti]. When broadcasting live programs you should have the Internet technician with you, as the link may go down anytime. Sometimes, the ISP should disconnect the Internet from one area of the city to allow a TV station to broadcast live," he opined.

Telecommunications companies offer quality SMS service options to provide news to citizens. The urban-rural digital divide is broad in terms of both accessibility and capacity. There are no legal barriers preventing access to any source of information, including the Internet. However, money, literacy, geography, and technical capabilities are limiting factors.

List of Panel Participants

Adan A. Dirir, manager, *IshaSomaliland* magazine and weekly newspaper, Hargeisa

Mustapha Sa'ad Dhibmiil, manager, *Jamhuuriya* newspaper, Hargeisa

Ubah AbdiHashi, reporter, *Warmaalnews.com*, Berbera

Nimo Mohamud, editor, *Warka News* website, Hargeisa

Mohamed Abdi Boosh, editor, *Ramaasnews* website, Hargeisa

Nura Abdi Hussein, reporter, *Caynabanews.com*, Burao

Ahmed AbdiHersi (Heelo), chief of programs, Horn Cable TV, Hargeisa

Khadar Mohamed Cakule, chief of programs, Radio Hargeisa, Hargeisa

Hodan Abokor Caafi, reporter, Somaliland National Television, Borama

Mohamed Abdi Gulleid, editor-in-chief, *Yool* newspaper, Hargeisa

Ali Jibril Hersi, manager and owner, Ali Jibril Media Productions, Hargeisa

Omer M Farah, reporter, *Dawan* newspaper, Hargeisa

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Mohamed Osman Fadal, director, Social Research and Development Institute, Hargeisa

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The Somaliland study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, the Social Research and Development Institute, Hargeisa. The panel discussion was convened on August 9, 2012.