Ghana

Research findings and conclusions

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Acknowledgements

This report could not have been prepared without the generous contributions of many individuals and organisations.

Credits

African Media Development Initiative

Ghana

About this report

In March 2005, the UK Government's Commission for Africa delivered a report entitled *"Our Common Interest"*, which represented a significant attempt to understand and recommend an action programme for Africa's social and economic development. A key component of the report focused on the importance of a strong media sector to support governance and development in Africa, and called for greater attention to, and resources for, a media sector development as a result. The BBC World Service Trust and a number of international and African partners have subsequently set out to help develop ideas for future Africa media development initiatives.

In order to inform these efforts, the BBC World Service Trust – in collaboration with Rhodes University (South Africa) and Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria) – has undertaken an extensive, pan-African research effort in 17 African countries, of which Ghana is one. Data presented in this report is based on both secondary research gathered by local researchers in Ghana and on extensive interviews conducted locally among key media practitioners and leaders. It is presented here in three parts:

☐ Media Sector Developments: an examination of developments in the media sector in Ghana over the past five years;

☐ Challenges for Future Media Development Activities: an analysis of the perspectives of a range of key informants on media development challenges in Ghana;

☐ Case Study: a case study from Ghana illustrating good practice in media development.

The BBC World Service Trust is the independent international charity set up by the BBC, which uses media to advance development. The Trust works to: raise awareness of development issues among mass audiences and opinion formers; influence attitudes, awareness and behaviour among poorer communities through a wide range of educational programming on poverty-related topics; and, build capacity in the media sector in developing and transitional countries.

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B B C WORLD SERVICE TRUST

Acronyms

AAG Advertising Association of Ghana

AJI African Journalism Institute

AMARC Association Mondiale des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires (World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters)

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation

CDD Centre for Democratic Development

CIA Central Intelligence Agency

CJA Ghana Journalists Association

CMA Centre for Media Analysis

DANIDA Danish International development Agency

DfID Department for International Development (UK)

DW Deutsche Welle

FES Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

GBC Ghana Broadcasting Association

GCBS Ghana Community Broadcasting Service

GCRN Ghana Community Radio Network

GDAC Ghana Danish Communities Association

GDCP Ghana Danish Communities Programme

GIJ Ghana Institute of Journalism

GJA Ghana Journalists Association

GTV Ghana Television

JHR Journalists for Human Rights

MDGs Millennium Development Goals

MFWA Media Foundation for West Africa

NCA National Communications Authority

NGO Non Governmental Organisation

NAFTI National Film and Television Institute

NMC National Media Commission

PANA Pan African News Agency

PSB Public Service Broadcasting

RFI Radio France International

SCS School of Communication Studies

TWN Third World Network

URTNA Union of National Radio and Television Organisations of Africa

UNESCO United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USAID United States Agency for International Development

VOA Voice of America

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1. Introduction

The researcher found gathering data for this report extremely challenging. In most cases, the necessary data did not exist or was only available in piecemeal form. In other cases, agencies that claimed to have the necessary data would not make it available without demanding a fee[1].

Information sourced from websites was often useful, recent and accurate,[2] but the Internet was only able to yield a small fraction of the information required for this project. The National Media Commission (NMC), Ghana's media regulatory body, was unable to generate data in time to meet the research deadline. In the end, much of the most valuable information was sourced with the help of a researcher from a private advertising agency,[3] and through numerous in-person interviews with media representatives and officials in relevant ministries.

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[1] The Advertising Association of Ghana (AAG) claimed to have data on media spread and strength, but requested a fee of 5 million cedis (approximately US$600) to make the information available to the researcher.

[2] GhanaWeb and the CIA's World Factbook were two of the most useful.

[3] The researcher wishes to acknowledge the assistance of researcher Kofi Akosah of the African Youth Peace Corps.

2. Country Overview

The West African nation of Ghana, well-endowed with natural resources, has roughly twice the per capita output of other poorer countries in its region. A 2005 estimate placed Ghana's per capita GDP at US$2,500 (CIA, 2006). Still, the nation remains heavily dependent on international financial and technical assistance. One of Ghana's key assets is the peace it has enjoyed since its transition to civilian, constitutional rule in 1992.

Ghana's population estimate in 2004 was 21.6 million people (World Bank, 2006). The country also has a relatively young population, with an estimated 39% of the population aged 14 years or younger in 2005 (UNSTATS, 2005; CIA, 2006).

According to 2003 estimates, just over half the population (54.6%) lives in rural areas, as illustrated in Figure 1 (UNDP, 2003).

Figure 1: Urban vs Rural Population

Rural population 55%

Urban population 45%
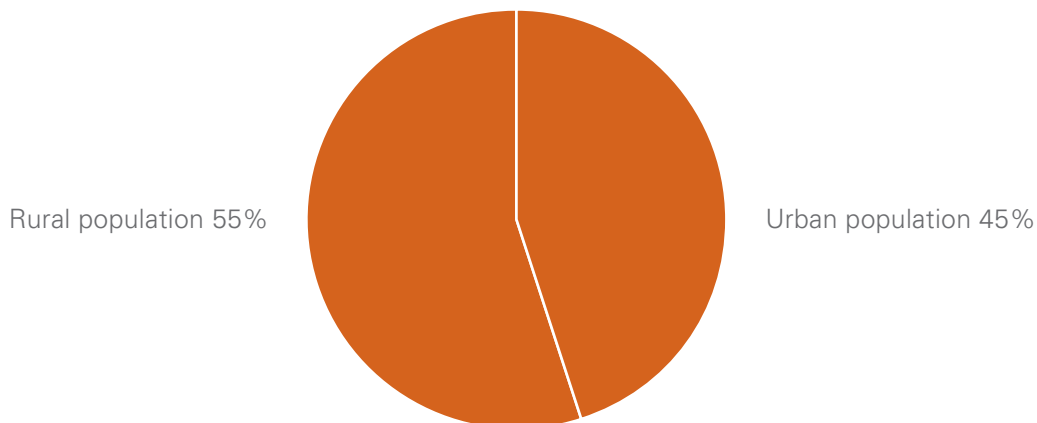
Source: UNDP, 2003

The population distribution by region is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Population Distribution by Region

Regions/Provinces/States	Total Population in Millions
AHSANTI	3.61
BRONG-AHAFO	1.82
CENTRAL	1.59
EASTERN	2.11
GREATER ACCRA	2.91
NORTHERN	1.80
UPPER EAST	0.92
UPPER WEST	0.58
VOLTA	1.64
WESTERN	1.92

Source: Obetsebi-Lamptey, 2002

The major ethnic groups in the country are the Akan (44%), Moshi-Dagomba (16%), Ewe (13%), Ga (8%), Gurma (3%) and Yoruba (1%) (CIA, 2006).

Figure 2: Main Ethnic Groups
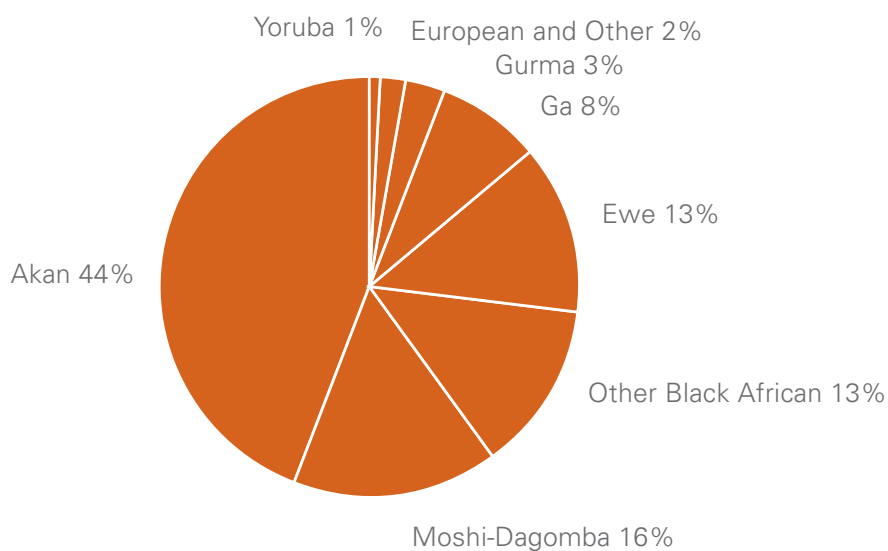
Source: CIA, 2006, based on 1998 figures

In terms of religion, 63% of the population is Christian, 16% Muslim and 21% hold indigenous beliefs (CIA, 2006).

Ghana was classified in the UNDP *Human Development Report 2004* as a country of "medium human development" (UNDP, 2004, p.279). The country has made significant improvements in recent years in key development indicators, such as life expectancy, literacy, GDP, health and education. In 2002, life expectancy was 57.8 years, up from 49.9 years in 1970-75.

Literacy is also relatively high among the country's inhabitants and, unlike in many other sub-Saharan African nations, there is a certain amount of linguistic cohesion, with three dominant languages (Akan, English and Ewe – see Figure 3) (Ethnologue, 2006).

Significantly, most Ewe and Akan-speakers also speak English. The predominance of three main languages eases efforts at public information provision and these languages dominate media output in the country.

Figure 3: Widely Spoken Languages

Languages

Language	Percentage
Akan	44
English	32
Ewe	13

Percentage
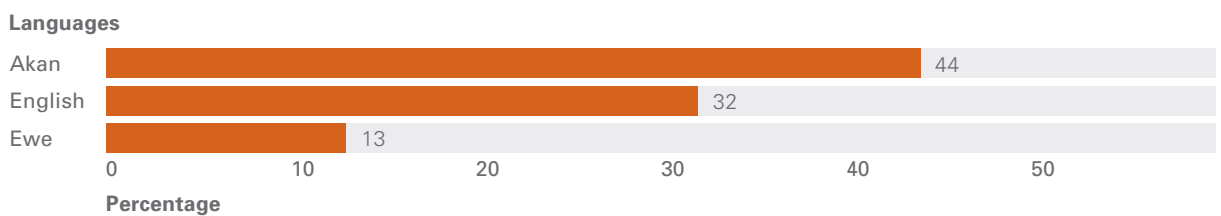
Source: Ethnologue, 2006

Adult literacy was 73.8% in 2002, up from 58.5% in 1990, while youth literacy moved from 81.8% in 1990 to 92.2% in 2002 (UNDP, 2004). The total literacy rate for the population aged 15 years and above, based on 2003 estimates, is 74.8%, with 82.7% of males and 67.1% of females being literate (CIA, 2006).

Figure 4: Literacy Levels Age 15+

Literacy Levels Age 15+

	Percentage
Total	75
Male	83
Female	67

Percentage
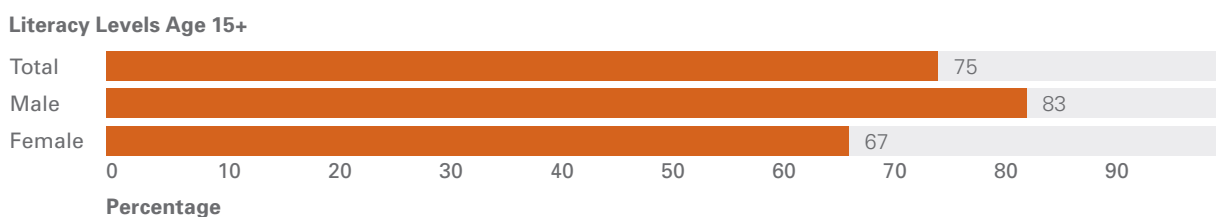
Source: CIA, 2006, based on 2003 estimates

The 1992 Constitution, initiated by President Jerry Rawlings, began the process of Ghana's transition from military to civilian rule, and this transition has been consolidated since the election of 2000, which brought in President John Kufuor. Kufuor was re-elected in 2004.

Key findings

☐ Ghana enjoys relative peace and prosperity in comparison to other West African and sub-Saharan African nations.

☐ It is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country, but has three dominant languages – Akan, English and Ewe – which are the main languages of national public life and the media.

☐ The return to civilian rule and multi-party democracy began with the Constitution of 1992, and has been consolidated since the election of the President Kufuor government in 2000; Kufuor was re-elected in 2004.

3. Media Health

The 1992 Constitution marked a watershed in Ghana's media history with its guarantee of freedom of speech and expression, including the right to freedom of the press and other media, the right to information and the establishment of the independent National Media Commission (NMC) (Republic of Ghana, 1992). The positive impact of this Constitution on media freedom was only really made possible with the country's election of 2000, which brought in President John Kufuor. The Kufuor regime has consolidated the gains of the return to civilian rule initiated by President Rawlings, and took another significant step in Ghana's media history in 2001 with the repeal of the country's Criminal Libel Law, a law that had been a key obstacle to journalistic practice in the country.

The repeal of the law in 2001 helped bring about an explosion in the media landscape, with a plethora of new newspapers and radio stations coming into existence. The key medium has been radio, which, as Karikari notes, "is, arguably, the most egalitarian of all mass media in Ghana today. Its electromagnetic signals pervade both the Castle [Office of the President] parapets of the President and the cottage attics of the marginalised rural voter" (2001, p. 5). Radio's pre-eminence is also helped by the fact that it can be broadcast in the local languages of the people.

Coupled with the expansion in newspapers and radio activity, there has been a rapid increase in mobile telephony use and some increase in Internet access. Mobile telephones, in particular, have aided the work of radio, with phone-ins and text messaging now an integral part of Ghanaian radio programming. Mobile telephony has widened audience participation and allowed for debates to be raised on radio about almost every national issue. Phone-ins are also relatively frequent in TV programming.

3.1 Status of the laws regarding rights and access to information

Chapter 5 of Ghana's Constitution, promulgated in 1992, states, in Section 21(1) (f), that: "All persons shall have the right to… information, subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary in a democratic society" (Republic of Ghana, 1992). However, at the time of this research in 2005-6, the Right to Information Bill of 2003 was still pending before Parliament.

3.2 Status of the laws regarding criminal defamation and insult

Up until 2001, Ghana was criticised as one of the few countries with a Criminal Libel Law on its books, with former President Jerry Rawlings insisting that the law was necessary. However, one of the election promises of current President John Kufuor during the 2000 election campaign was to eliminate the Criminal Libel and Seditious Laws, and the laws were duly repealed in 2001. It was an important development for Ghanaian journalists, many of whom had, in terms of the laws, been jailed (Afrol, 2001).

3.3 Status of the laws that exist to enable media regulatory bodies to function independently

The 1992 Constitution (Chapter 12) provides for the establishment of the National Media Commission (NMC) and specifies the NMC's independence in Article 172 with the provision that: "Except as otherwise provided by this Constitution or by any other law not inconsistent with this Constitution, the National Media Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority in the performance of its functions" (Republic of Ghana, 1992). The NMC was established in 1993 by the NMC Act (Republic of Ghana, 1993), which reaffirmed the NMC's independence from government.

The NMC is mandated by the Constitution and the NMC Act:

☐ to promote freedom and independence of the media;

☐ to ensure the highest journalistic standards in the mass media;

☐ to "insulate" the state-owned media from government control; and,

☐ to provide registration of newspapers and other publications, but without exercising control over these operations.

The other regulatory body for communications in Ghana is the National Communications Authority (NCA), established in 1996. The NCA is responsible for the allocation of frequency spectrum for broadcasting. The body, like the NMC, has a constitutional guarantee to be independent of government but its licensing procedures are shrouded in controversy, with a lack of clarity as to why some licences are rejected while others are granted (K. Rockson, personal communication, 29 March 2006). There are also complaints of overlaps in the duties and functions of the NMC and NCA, with some asking why one body grants licences while another body regulates the activities of those broadcast outfits already granted licences (E. Oheneba-Mensah, personal communication, 28 March 2006).

3.4 Current provisions that aim to secure the independence of publicly-owned media

The independence of state-owned media is protected by the Constitution, which, in Chapter 12, Article 167c, calls on the National Media Commission (NMC) "to insulate the state-owned media from governmental control" (Republic of Ghana, 1992). As well, Article 162 (4) of the Constitution stipulates that: "Editors and publishers of newspapers and other institutions of the mass media shall not be subject to control or interference by Government, nor shall they be penalised or harassed for their editorial opinions and views, or the content of their publications" (Republic of Ghana, 1992).

3.5 Current provisions to support community or alternative media

Currently, there are no legislative provisions that specifically support community or alternative media, even though there are several community-based FM radio stations and even a community radio network.

3.6 Regulatory obligations for public or state broadcasters to fulfil a public-service broadcasting remit

There is no specific public-service broadcasting (PSB) remit for any of the broadcasters in Ghana, but rather various clauses in the Constitution, NMC Act and NMC directives that outline some public interest notions of what broadcasters should provide. For instance, Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution stipulates that: "All state-owned media shall afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions" (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Meanwhile, the National Media Commission's *Handbook on Broadcasting Standards* (n.d.) calls on broadcasters to promote both local programming and national identity as part of cultural and social development; to promote national development; and, to promote participation of marginalised people in national decision-making (NMC, n.d., p.1-2).

3.7 Regulatory obligations for private broadcasters to fulfil a public-service broadcasting remit

As outlined above in Section 3.6, the National Media Commission's *Handbook on Broadcasting Standards* (n.d.) calls on all broadcasters to fulfil certain public interest goals, such as promoting local programming, national identity, national development and greater participation in public life by marginalised people.

3.8 Journalism

Ghana has over 2,000 practising journalists in all media fields[4]. There are no requirements for journalists to register with the government nor to have a licence. About 30% of current practising journalists are members of the GJA, which claims a membership of 666 people (B.K. Blewu, personal communication, 3 March 2006).

Journalists are, in general, not well-remunerated, but the pay structure varies from one organisation to the other. The strong government-owned Daily Graphics Newspapers group pays as high as four million Ghanaian cedis (around US$400) per month for a reporter while some of the more popular private FM stations pay as much as ten million Ghanaian cedis (around US$1,000) per month. Some weaker private newspapers are, however, said to start journalists at pay as low as less than a million Ghanaian cedis (barely US$100) per month. On average, however, Ghanaian journalists are still better paid than school teachers, whose starting salary is about 1.4 million Ghanaian cedis (just over US$100) (B.K. Blewu, personal communication, 16 May 2006).

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[4] This figure is an estimate given to the author by Bright Kwame Blewu, Secretary-General, Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA).

The University of Ghana, Legon School of Communications Studies (SCS) offers journalism training. There are also the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) and the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), while a private initiative, the African Centre for Journalism Training, also offers diploma programmes for journalists. The GIJ, which offers training diplomas, has recently upgraded itself to a fully-fledged degree-offering institution affiliated to the SCS at the University of Ghana.

Journalism training is one component of the media development work of the German NGO Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in Ghana. Foreign government embassies and development assistance agencies (for example, USAID and Denmark's DANIDA) also support journalist training to some extent. Three local NGOs have some involvement in journalist skills development: the Centre for Media Analysis (CMA), Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) and the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA). The Ghana Journalists' Association (CJA) also supports journalism training, and is currently collaborating with the FES.

Key findings

- ☐ The right to information is protected in the 1992 Constitution, but the 2003 Right to Information Bill has yet to be passed.

- ☐ The Criminal Libel Law was repealed in 2001.

- ☐ The independence of the regulator, the National Media Commission (NMC), is protected in the Constitution of 1992 and the NMC Act of 1993, but there are complaints about a lack of transparency in the NMC's licensing decisions.

- ☐ The Constitution provides for the state-owned media to be protected from government control.

- ☐ Public interest goals for media, outlined in the NMC's *Handbook on Broadcasting Standards,* include supporting more local programming, building national identity and empowering of marginalised groups.

- ☐ There is no statutory provision for community media, but several community-based radios exist.

4. State of the Media – Literature Review

4.1 Media Foundation for West Africa (2001)

This MFWA publication, *Politics in the Airwaves: How Radio Covered the 2000 General Elections in Ghana*, used audience research to gauge how radio performed in its coverage of the general elections of 2000. The questionnaires were prepared in the local languages of the areas of study, and were administered with the help of primary school teachers hired as research assistants. The research found that about 80% of the respondents owned radio sets, with 52% of males listening and 48% of females listening to radio regularly. Only 37% watched television while fewer than 30% read newspapers. The study also found that rural-based radio stations broadcast 71.1% of their programmes in non-English vernacular languages, whereas the urban-based stations broadcast only 36.7% in vernacular languages. Overall, the study found that, through radio, politicians were able to reach most of the electorate, including those who are illiterate.

4.2 Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA) (2002)

This GJA 2002 report, entitled *The Spirit of Akosombo*, was the outcome of a GJA workshop looking at principles for media coverage of the National Reconciliation Process in relation to the ethical principles contained in the *GJA Code of Ethics* (GJA, 1994). The *code* calls for journalists to observe:

☐ the people's right to true information;

☐ social responsibility;

☐ professional integrity;

☐ respect for privacy and human dignity; and,

☐ respect for national and ethnic values (GJA, 1994).

The workshop agreed that Ghanaian media outlets needed to build their capacity to engender conflict resolution, to heal and reconcile Ghanaians, to build constitutional democracy and national unity, and, to act as professionals under all circumstances, including cases of contact with aggrieved or accused persons. As well, it was agreed that professionalism must be put before profit.

4.3 Ansu-Kyeremeh (2001)

This 2001 paper, entitled *Political Power and Development*, by Professor Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh, was presented to a Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences political science symposium. Ansu-Kyeremeh, who is Director of the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, began by explaining his understanding of the French philosopher Althusser's contention that communications are "Ideological State Apparatuses", through which authority is subtly exercised by the ruling class.

Ansu-Kyeremeh's paper examines the media landscape through history and contends that Althusser's assertion will always prove true in Africa if Africans insist on conducting their media enterprises based on Western paradigms. He asserts that communications systems in Africa need to fuse African models with the Western inheritance.

Ansu-Kyeremeh cites several examples of communication systems and models in Africa that are participatory, indigenous and democratic. For the author, Ghanaian communities have alternative, non-technologically-mediated networks for interaction and discussion. These mechanisms for mobilising and galvanising public opinion are community-based, rooted in community thought and in action for development. In spite of characterisations of traditional African systems as being autocratic, traditional chiefs are compelled to consult with their citizens on a regular basis, and the chiefs are tutored in the use of language as part of their training.

4.4 Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) (2002)

This 2002 GBC document, entitled *Positioning Radio Ghana to Meet the Current Competition*, emerged from a GBC seminar convened to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the GBC radio services following the liberalisation of the airwaves and the breaking of the GBC's monopoly in 1996. The seminar drew the following conclusions about Radio Ghana's strengths and weaknesses.

☐ Network of stations: the GBC has the only national network of radio stations.

☐ Experience: the GBC has the potential advantage of experience, but needs to prove that it can delivery quality.

☐ Professionalism: the GBC has the resources and network to make high levels of professionalism possible, but needs to work harder to realise true professionalism.

☐ Training facilities: some of the new private radio stations have better equipment, making for better human resource development than at the GBC.

☐ Archives: the GBC has a large radio archive to draw on, but the archive does not necessarily have quality programming in the archive.

☐ State ownership: state ownership ensures resources but makes it hard for the GBC to establish itself as an independent voice; a key challenge is how to transform from a mouthpiece of the state to a public broadcaster.

☐ Innovation and motivation: the GBC, having been in existence for several decades, may find it more difficult than the newer radio stations to be innovative and energetic.

☐ Remuneration: many of the new private radio stations offer pay better than GBC, drawing away experienced staff.

4.5 National Media Commission (NMC) & School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon (2005)

This early 2005 edition of *Media Monitor,* a publication of the regulator NMC and the University of Ghana, contains a review of 2004 election coverage entitled *Media Coverage of the 2004 General Elections: Matters Arising*. The authors conclude that the media played an important role in ensuring a free and fair election in 2004, based on data drawn from election observers. However, there are some flaws identified in media performance. For instance, it is found that there was inequitable coverage of certain parties and candidates and unequal access to state-owned media. The media in general, and particularly the state-owned media, gave more coverage to the incumbent party than to the two main opposition parties. Meanwhile, even smaller parties were neglected to an even greater extent.

4.6 Bibliography

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Key findings

☐ Radio is potentially Ghana's most powerful communications medium.

☐ Ghanaian journalists have a primary role to play in the country's healing from conflicts of the past, and the *GJA Code of Ethnics* needs to be followed with special attention to the needs of reconciliation.

☐ Indigenous forms of Ghanaian communication must be incorporated into contemporary media practices.

☐ The GBC radio services have several strengths and weaknesses to contend with in order to succeed in the liberalised broadcast environment.

☐ Greater equity in media coverage of the various political parties is needed during election campaigns.

5. Radio

5.1 Key changes and developments in the radio marketplace in the past five years

There are officially 130 radio stations in Ghana granted licences to operate and, of this number, 96 are currently on air, mostly on FM frequencies. The vast majority of these stations have come into operation in the past ten years since the breaking of the state broadcaster GBC's monopoly in 1996. There are no pirate radio stations in the country. Around 90% of the population has listened to the radio in the past seven days, and about 69% listens at least once a day. FM is the most-used reception platform, with 82% of the population receiving radio via FM (Gadzekpo, 2005; InterMedia, 2005).

The only nationwide radio broadcaster is the state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), which has two national channels: the multilingual GBC 1; and, the more commercially-oriented, English-only GBC 2. The English-only GBC 2 is restricted to the Accra region; all other stations, including state-run GBC affiliates, broadcast at district, regional or local level.

At regional level, the state-owned GBC runs subsidiary stations in all ten regional capitals. These stations carry nationally-networked programming as well as producing their own regional shows. There are also another roughly 80 private and community stations operating at sub-national level (Gadzekpo, 2005), with many of the stations concentrated in the capital Accra and other main cities and towns. Places other than Accra with considerable media presence are Kumasi and Takoradi. There is some networking and syndication of programming among the private stations. The largest audiences in the five most populous parts of the country belong to private commercial stations established since the breaking of the GBC broadcasting monopoly in 1996 (Gadzekpo, 2005). The five stations are as follows:

☐ Peace FM (Accra);

☐ Fox FM (Kumasi);

☐ Sky Power FM (Takoradi);

☐ Space FM (Sunyani); and,

☐ Diamond FM (Northern Region)[5].

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[5] Based on estimates provided by the Centre for Media Analysis, Accra.

The success of these private commercial stations in attracting higher audiences than GBC 1, GBC 2 or the GBC regional affiliates is a significant illustration of the waning power of state-run services in the radio sector. Partly it would seem that people have reacted against the radio monopoly that the GBC held for several decades, but also the new commercial stations have been producing innovative and entertaining programmes, as well as providing large doses of foreign music favoured by many youth. As well, there is evidence to suggest that better working conditions have drawn talented radio workers away from the GBC to private stations (Y. Dzeikpor, personal communication, 28 March 2006).

As mentioned above, there are more than 80 commercial stations operating at regional and local levels, all of which have come into existence in the past ten years, and many in past five years. The exact number is difficult to determine because many licences have been granted that are currently unused, with stations springing up depending on the capacity of those granted licences to operate (Gadzekpo, 2005). Among the non-state stations licensed in recent years, eight are small-footprint community radio stations, with six of them on air at the moment. The community radio stations have lower transmission capacity than private commercial or state stations, covering smaller geographical areas that are clearly spelt out in their licences. They are also limited in the types of advertisement and sponsorship they can carry. They are run by community boards and some are affiliated to NGOs, who sponsor most of their activities. As well, there are several experimental radio stations set up on university campuses and run by students.

As well, four foreign services – Radio France International (RFI), Deutsche Welle, the BBC World Service and Voice of America (VOA) – broadcast in Ghana.

5.2 Investment and growth in the radio sector in the past five years

Before 1996, there were only 11 radio stations in Ghana (one national and 10 regional), all government-owned and part of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation network (Gadzekpo, 2005). Though liberalisation began in the late 1990s, it has really been in the past five years that the boom in radio station development has occurred. With the exception of some foreign donor support for community radios, the new non-government regional and local radios have been entirely the product of investment by Ghanaians, meaning there has been significant inward investment in this sector.

The rapid growth in the number of stations has created a fierce drive for advertising revenue. In response, the state-owned GBC has stepped up its revenue-generating attempts. Gone are the days of tasking a public station to generate at least 10% of its revenue. The GBC now generates nearly 50% of its revenue from advertising but, sadly, TV licence fees, which were an effective revenue mobilisation avenue before, have collapsed (GBC in NMC, 2004).

Thus, all stations, both state-owned and private, are heavily focused on generating advertising and sponsorship income. The major advertising players are Apple Pie Publicity and Ads Limited and, in all, there are 26 foreign advertising agencies either working independently or affiliated with a local agency. New mobile telephony operators are major advertisers, such as Areeba and Tigo[6].

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[6] Information based on data provided by the Centre for Media Analysis and researcher's own observations.

Figure 5: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Radio Stations

Radio Station

State-owned broadcasting nationally	1
State-owned broadcasting to regions/provinces/states/urban centres	11
Private broadcasting to regions/provinces/states/urban centres	84
International or foreign broadcasting to the country	4

Number
0   20   40   60   80
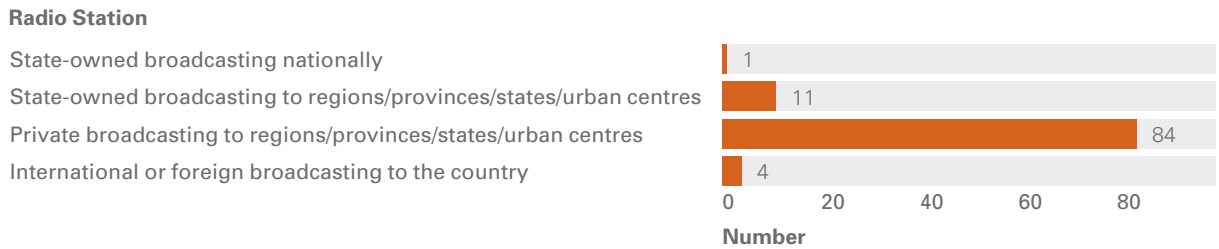
Source: Gadzekpo, 2005

5.3 Plurality, ownership and control

Apart from the state-owned GBC radio stations, the other stations represent a variety of interests in terms of ownership and control. As well as the private commercial stations, there are community-run radio stations and campus-based 'experimental' stations run by students. The non-state stations are independent of government control, but many openly support certain political affiliations.

The state broadcaster GBC, though by law insulated from government control and supposedly independent, is still sometimes perceived to be playing a partisan role, defending the party in power, perhaps, in the view of the researcher, as a carry-over from the GBC's earlier era under rigid state control.

Of the eight community-run projects, six are strictly not-for-profit while two have an element of profit-taking by local investors. Two of the six not-for-profit stations receive NGO funding support from the Ghanaian Danish Community Association and the Media Foundation for West Africa.

5.4 Diversity

The stations target all segments of Ghanaian society, with programming schedules normally consisting of news, talk shows, sports, current affairs and entertainment. The community stations focus on educating their mainly rural audiences on a wide range of issues, from health care to democracy. Most of the stations provide news in English and in vernacular Ghanaian languages.

Most of the stations have their major news in English and run a variety of other programmes in English. But a trend noticed by this researcher is that English call-in programmes, which take advantage of widespread mobile telephony access among listeners, often end up being conducted for more than three-quarters of their duration in vernacular. The community radio stations broadcast largely in the predominant languages of the areas where they operate. The regional FM stations broadcast in English and in the dominant languages of the regions in which they operate.

The programme content of state GBC radio stations is typically 30% news programming, 30% magazine programmes, 20% music, 5% drama and 5% education/children's programming (Gadzekpo, 2005).

It is also common for stations to link to programming from foreign services, such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle and VOA.

5.5 Quality of radio output and programming

The National Media Commission observes in its introduction to the *Broadcasting Standards* handbook (2000a) that: "With pluralism, there has been the need for basic standards as a way of ensuring that the liberalisation of the airwaves impacts qualitatively and positively on society" (NMC, 2000, p. 5). There is evidence to suggest that programming standards are not as high as they need to be, with too many untrained journalists in the sector resulting in "inappropriate grammar, terminology and diction, inadequate preparation of presenters, poor investigation, research and analysis, weak editing and fact-checking capacity, single source, unbalanced and unethical stories" (NMC & School of Communication Studies, 2004a, p.13).

However, one dynamic new programming phenomenon has been the growth in phone-in programmes, made possible by the explosion in the number of cellular telephony users and the ability of citizens, in the democratic era, to express their views without fear. People call in to debate and comment on a variety of topics of national importance.

Peace FM and Joy FM (Accra) can be listened to online; in addition, Joy FM has a news and current affairs archive that is accessible and free of charge. Kapitol Radio also has a website with news and current affairs stories. None of the stations are distributing their content via mobile phone platforms (Gadzekpo, 2005).

5.6 Specific challenges

In the view of this researcher, Ghana's radio stations need to improve their skills and revenue base to improve the quality of their programmes and attract the best technology. There is also an over-reliance on foreign programmes. As well, with freedom comes responsibility. With the Criminal Libel Law now gone, journalists need to obey the civil laws of defamation. Some stations are allowing their programmes to be used by individuals making unsubstantiated allegations.

Key findings

☐ Radio is the most vibrant medium in Ghana.

☐ There is a mix of state-owned, private commercial, community-run and student-run stations.

☐ The call-in format is strong, boosted by the growing number of mobile phone users.

☐ The quality of radio programming is still low, due to a lack of trained journalists.

6. Television

6.1 Key changes and developments in the television marketplace in the past five years

Ghana has six television stations. This figure includes TV Africa, the services of which are not operational. However, when it is on air, TV Africa broadcasts on a pan-regional basis with signals received as far as Nigeria and Malawi. Operational free-to-air TV stations include one broadcasting nationally, two with regional footprints and two local stations. None of Ghana's free-to-air television channels are new within the past five years.

State-owned Ghana TV, under the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), is the only station that has a national broadcast footprint. It receives money from the state but also relies on advertising revenue.

According to the National Communication Authority (NCA), the number of commercial, regional, provincial, state and/or urban television broadcasters remained constant between 2000 and 2005. At regional level, one of the three stations, Metro TV, is a joint public/private partnership between the GBC and a private company. Established in 1999, Metro TV is advertising-funded and focuses predominantly on urban areas, making it available to about 60% of the country (Gadzekpo, 2005). The other regional station, TV3, was the first private commercial television station to go on air in Ghana, and it is a joint venture between TV3 of Malaysia (which has a 70% stake) and local partners. Advertising-funded and founded in 1998, the station has an urban focus and an even smaller footprint than Metro TV. At local level, there are two stations, one each in the country's second and third largest cities, Kumasi and Takoradi.

There are also subscription TV services available in the country, including a number of cable distribution services and South African-based MultiChoice Africa's DStv satellite pay-TV service.

There are no statistics available on the viewers of television in the country, nor the number of working television sets. The unit in the GBC that used to collect television and radio licence fees, from where these statistics could easily be obtained, has closed down.

Figure 6: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Television Stations

Television Channel
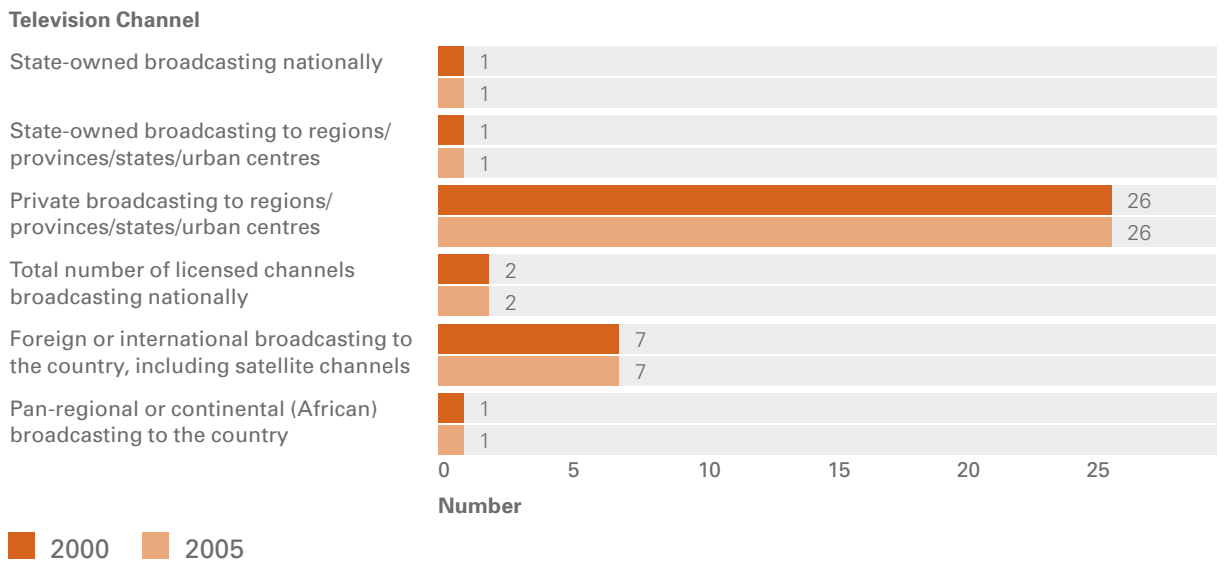
Source: Gadzekpo, 2005

6.2 Investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years

There have been no new free-to-air services started up in the past five years.

There is a strong presence and historical link with the Lebanese community and it is one of the major investors in Metro and TV3 (but it is not easy to establish the exact ratio of their investment to that of their Ghanaian business partners). TV is much more capital-intensive than radio, requiring a very strong advertising market. State-owned Ghana TV is said to attract the lion's share of the viewership and advertising, by virtue of its monopoly on national reach. As with radio, mobile telephony firms dominate the advertising landscape. Only the Advertising Association of Ghana (AAG) at the moment does TV audience research, and its data is only made available on a fee-paying basis. The stations do not have their own audience research capacity.

6.3 Plurality, ownership and controls

The state-owned TV service (Ghana TV) is supposed to be "insulated" from government control in terms of the Constitution (Republic of Ghana, 1992). However, in the view of the researcher, and as evidenced in the NMC's 2000 *Broadcasting Standards* document, it seems clear that GTV is geared towards representing the interests of the state, (NMC, 2000a). Meanwhile, the non-state stations are not known to have any obvious political affiliations, carrying news items in a non-partisan manner, from the researcher's observations.

6.4 Diversity

Ghana's TV services carry a variety of programmes, including health, entertainment, sport, politics, news and current affairs. However, there is a pervasive influence and presence of foreign programmes. It would seem that regulation of the ratio of foreign to local content, based on quotas, is necessary. For instance, one can find a local station priding itself on carrying three different Mexican soap operas. Also, in order to be able to broadcast 24 hours a

day, some stations fill their late-night hours with the foreign services of CNN, BBC World, MTV and others. Diversity of programme availability is also undermined by the urban-focused footprints of the private stations, leaving the state-owned Ghana TV as the only free-to-air viewing option in many parts of the country.

Most programming is in English, with some newscasts and discussion programmes in local languages, and a mixing of English and local languages in some locally-produced programmes. The preponderance of foreign programming tilts the balance in favour of English.

6.5 Quality of television output and programming

A key programming challenge is to move away from reliance on foreign programming. Very few programmes are actually generated by the local stations. The predominance of foreign content is true for both public and private media, but particularly the private media. While much of the foreign content is well-produced, there are some technical limitations when over-dubbing of languages occurs with, for instance, the dubbing of English over the original Spanish in the Mexican soap operas being of poor quality.

In terms of locally-produced programming, much of the content is news content, and there is much room for improvement here. There is too much focus in the news on the political elites and the goings-on in urban areas, with events and concerns in the rural areas neglected. Development issues seldom feature. Another unfortunate trend in the locally-produced current affairs programming is the over-emphasis on newspaper reviews – programmes in which presenters examine the contents of the print media on that day. Some of the more dynamic local programming, as in the radio sector, is telephone call-in based, allowing for audience participation and engagement with topical issues.

None of the Ghanaian TV stations can be accessed through the Internet.

6.6 Specific challenges

More investment needs to be drawn into the sector, and there is also a need for regulation of foreign content levels in order to foster the development of an authentically Ghanaian television. Much improvement is also needed in journalistic quality.

Key findings

☐ Unlike in radio, the TV sector has not expanded over the past five years.

☐ Only the state-owned Ghana TV, run by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), has significant coverage outside urban areas.

☐ The regional stations, Metro TV and TV3, and the two local stations, all focus on transmission to urban audiences.

☐ Foreign content levels are high, suggesting the need for local content quotas.

☐ Locally-produced information programming is generally of poor quality.

7. Newspapers

7.1 Key changes and developments in the newspaper marketplace in the past five years

According to the National Media Commission (NMC), Ghana has 106 newspapers (11 dailies, 67 weeklies, 23 bi-weeklies and five tri-weeklies) (P. Owusu Donkor, personal communication, April 2006). Many of the titles now in existence have sprung up in the past five years, providing readers with a wide range of new publications.

More than 50% of the newspapers currently in circulation have come into existence in recent years.

At national level, among the 11 national dailies, the state-owned *Daily Graphic* is the oldest and most widely-read newspaper in Ghana, and it is distributed in all 120 districts nationwide. Established in 1950 and 100% government-owned, the *Daily Graphic* currently has the highest circulation figure. The next strongest national daily, the *Daily Guide,* comes a distant second to the *Graphic* in circulation, and was launched in 1999. It is privately owned and is the only national daily paper giving the *Graphic* some form of competition. The state-owned Ghana News Agency is the only national news agency in the country. The most widely-circulated national weekly, *The Mirror*, is also government-owned. This was founded in 1953. The fourth-highest circulation belongs to a privately-owned national daily, *The Chronicle,* established in 1990. The *Accra Daily Mail*, Ghana's fifth most widely-read paper, was established in 1998 and is privately-owned. But only the government-owned *Daily Graphic* can be said to be a truly national newspaper, because it has structures in all ten regions.

There are only two regional newspapers in Ghana: *The Pioneer,* based in Kumasi (Ashanti Region), and the *Northern Advocate,* based in Tamale (Northern Region). A few other papers devote specific pages on certain days to news from particular regions, particularly the economically vibrant regions of Ashanti and Takoradi.

Figure 7: Total Number of Newspapers
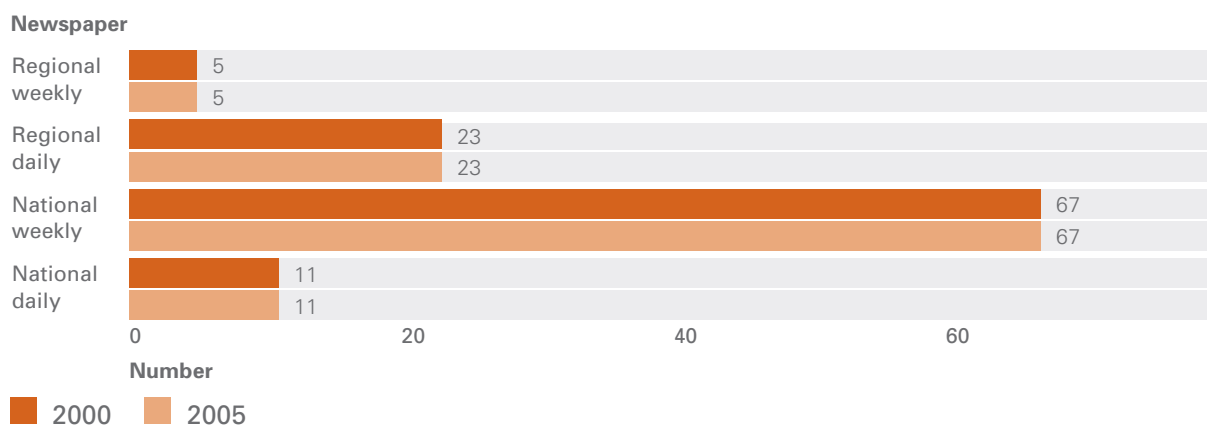
Newspaper

Source: P. Owusu Donkor, personal communication, April 2006

7.2 Investment and growth in newspapers in the past five years

As in the broadcast sectors, the gradual liberalisation of the press sector from the early 1990s onwards has made the setting up of newspapers easier, leading to a mushrooming of new titles. However, the large circulation papers are dominating advertising revenue, making it difficult for the smaller operations. For instance, over the past five years, the state-owned nationally dominant *Daily Graphic* has seen its advertising revenue base drastically improve. Almost all advertisers want to patronise the *Graphic* because of its reach, and this cuts across both public and private sector advertisers[7].

7.3 Plurality, ownership and control

A diverse range of investors have been behind the start-up of the new private papers in the past few years. However, while there is a certain degree of diversity in the voices of the privately-owned papers, there is also a degree of coalescence in the private newspapers into two broad camps: either in support of, or in opposition to, the government. Thus, on any national issue, it is easy to predict the stand a particular paper will take. The state-owned *Daily Graphic* and *Daily Independent*, meanwhile, are unambiguously pro-government on all issues.

7.4 Diversity

Over the past few years, not many of the papers have diversified in terms of their content, mostly still concentrating on politics. Many papers seem to have been set up primarily to act as mouthpieces for their owners' political views. And, as mentioned above, within the private newspapers, there seems to be a coalescing into two broad camps: pro-government and pro-opposition. More positive has been the growth in recent years in specialised pages on a wide range of topics, such as education, economics, banking, finance and aviation, with these pages generating lucrative sponsorships and expanding the revenue base of the papers.

There are no non-English, vernacular-language newspapers to the knowledge of this researcher.

7.5 Quality of newspaper reporting

The National Media Commission recently brought out a list of 52 papers that were not registered (*Daily Graphic*, 2006), revealing that many papers had simply taken advantage of

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[7] This finding comes from the Centre for Media Analysis, Accra.

the liberalised environment and started operating without any regard for the legal requirement to register. Registration of newspapers with the NMC is required by the 1992 Constitution and 1993 NMC Act, with the *proviso* that the NMC cannot exert control over newspapers. Coming into existence rapidly without a great deal of planning has meant that many papers are of sub-standard quality in terms of their journalistic output and observance of ethics. According to the NMC,

> *Before the 1992 Constitution, the print media was regulated by a licensing regime and that tended to strangulate the industry. Quite apart from this factor, editors and journalists were always on their guard lest they either had their licence withdrawn or were even arrested, detained or prosecuted. With the repeal of the Criminal Libel and Sedition Laws by Parliament in 2001, and the apparent boost that the repeal brought to the practice of journalism, there arose the need for basic standards to ensure that journalism practice impacted qualitatively on the reading public.*

(NMC, 2001)

In spite of the NMC's efforts at promoting standards, the print media field is still weak, with journalists often sensationalising issues and making unsubstantiated allegations. Many print journalists have been taken to court to face civil libel suits, with large fines imposed on their papers. This has lead some to worry that the former danger of journalist imprisonment under the Criminal Libel Law has been replaced by the danger of a newspaper's financial collapse due to a large civil libel award (NMC, 2004).

A more positive recent development in the print sector has been the placement of some of the papers on the Internet, such that one can now access the papers simultaneously in hard copy and in electronic form. However, no paper is yet providing specialised content for its Internet readers.

7.6 Specific challenges

One challenge for newspapers in Ghana over the next few years will be to see if they can "de-polarise" out of the two existing newspaper camps that currently divide publications between those who support government and those who support the opposition. There may also be a need for more papers to collaborate and share resources, instead of the present proliferation of autonomous titles each trying to capture meagre available resources. Such collaborations could reduce costs and also improve quality.

Key findings

☐ Only one paper, the state-owned *Daily Graphic,* is truly national with full distribution throughout the country, giving it a clear advantage over other titles in attracting readers and advertisers.

☐ Newspaper growth has been strong in recent years, but it may be that there are more papers than the Ghanaian market can support, suggesting that collaborations may be necessary.

☐ The freedom gains made possible by the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2001 are in some respects being undermined by irresponsible journalism and huge civil libel awards being imposed on papers.

☐ In terms of editorial stance, the newspaper sphere is polarised between two opposing camps: those in support of the government and those supporting the opposition.

8. Media Support

8.1 Key changes and developments in new media technologies in the past five years

In the year 2000, according to the National Communications Authority (NCA), around 170,000 Ghanaians, out of the total population of around 20 million, had access to the Internet, while 374,000 had fixed-line telephony and 40,000 owned a mobile phone (Gadzekpo, 2005). By 2005, the mobile phone user number had jumped dramatically to two million. At the same time, use of Internet facilities was up, due partly to increased connectivity at schools (NCA in Gadzekpo, 2005).

There are now four mobile phone firms in Ghana: Areeba, Tigo, Kasapa and the mobile service of Ghana Telecom (Gadzekpo, 2005).

8.2 Key changes in media support in the past five years

There has not been strong growth in content production firms in recent years, which can be seen as a factor in the dearth of local programming on TV and the poor quality of what is produced. As mentioned above, local content quotas may be necessary to reverse this trend. At present, Ghanaian TV viewers are more likely to be offered local content from Nigeria ('Nollywood' video drama) and Mexico (soap operas) than from Ghana.

The advertising sector is reasonably strong, with many advertising agencies in place, but there is no directory to confirm the exact number of agencies.

The main media monitoring resource was, until recently, the quarterly *Media Monitor* publication produced by the National Media Commission (NMC) and the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. The *Media Monitor* was one of the key information sources for this research, as shown in the Bibliography. However, this publication, supported by the German funder, Fredrich Ebert Stiftung, is currently not publishing.

8.3 Audience and readership research data

The main compiler of audience and market research is the Advertising Association of Ghana, but its data is only available on a fee-paying basis – hence the absence of AAG data in this report. In the past the *Media Monitor* also gathered audience data, mostly in respect of particular events, such as election campaigns.

Key findings

☐ Mobile telephone usage has grown massively, from 40,000 users in 2000 to two million users in 2005, a trend that can be seen in the rising popularity of phone call-in formats on radio and TV and the prominence of the four cellular companies in advertising.

☐ Internet penetration has been boosted by the deployment of connectivity in schools.

☐ There are several advertising agencies, but there is a dearth of easily-available audience research data.

☐ The local TV content production sector is weak.

9. NGO Activity

9.1 Key changes and developments in NGO activity in the past five years

The total number of officially-registered NGOs in Ghana is 116[8]. Over the past five years, NGOs involved in media development have operated more freely, in line with the general atmosphere of freedom from which media outlets are now benefiting. More resources and support have come in for journalists, and the focus of many current media development activities is on achieving professionalism.

9.2 Key NGOs involved in media development activities

There are three main international funders involved in media development activities in Ghana: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES); the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA); and, the US Agency for International Development (USAID)[9]. Another avenue of international support is the assistance provided by some foreign embassies in Ghana, that sponsor journalists to attend major events and periodically assist in supporting training initiatives. The Dutch Embassy, US Embassy and British High Commission are some of the foreign missions providing assistance in this regard.

Key local Ghanaian NGOs involved in media development are: the Centre for Media Analysis (CMA); Journalists for Human Rights (JHR); and, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA). Of these three local NGOs, the Media Foundation is the most regional in outlook, focusing on many West African nations, but it still carries out many activities in Ghana. The umbrella body of journalists in Ghana, the Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA), also carries out development activities from time to time, particularly in the area of ethics training and media law. Others players are the Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN) and the African regional programme of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

The most active media development NGO is the FES, which has committed substantial resources over the past few years to training journalists and supporting the development of media development publications specific to Ghana. FES has been involved to some extent with nearly every media development training initiative or publication in Ghana of recent years, and is currently involved in training journalists for electoral reporting. The regulator, the National Media Commission (NMC), has also been a major beneficiary of FES support, with

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[8] 2006 figure provided by the Centre for Media Analysis, Accra.

[9] The FES, as a non-profit, non-governmental political foundation, is an NGO, while DANIDA and USAID are their respective government's official development assistance (ODA) bodies, and thus are not strictly speaking NGOs.

the NMC using FES grants to conduct training programmes, particularly for radio journalists. According to a top NMC official contacted for this research[10], the NMC's training programme would not have been possible without FES support.

Meanwhile, DANIDA is currently supporting training for journalists in ethics and USAID, in collaboration with the local NGO Yanka and Associates, is training journalists on HIV/AIDS reporting. Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) is currently involved with training journalists on human rights and development, while the Centre for Media Analysis is providing training in online journalism.

9.3 Climate of opportunity for media development activities

The climate of opportunity for the media to flourish, created by the 1992 Constitution, the return to civilian rule and the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2001, has also opened up more space for media support efforts. Whereas in the past an NGO, foreign development assistance agency or foreign embassy could find itself accused of subversive behaviour if it was supporting media training, such training is these days openly acknowledged and supported by the Ghanaian government (B.K. Blewu, personal communication, 3 March 2006).

A significant and valuable focus of media development in recent years has been the area of ethics and professionalism. The new atmosphere of freedom is challenging journalists to increase their professionalism, a difficulty after many years of living and working in highly restricted conditions under authoritarian rule. Many had operated as 'praise singers' under the old previously have since been required to provide balanced reports. At the same time, been a countervailing tendency in the new era, with journalists becoming blindly critical of government, never finding anything positive to report. These are the shortcomings that recent media development activities have attempted to address.

Meanwhile, training institutions are struggling to cope with the increasing need for training of new personnel.

The media are also in need of equipment, especially the print media sector where many of the current outlets do not own their own printing presses or, where they do own them, the equipment is obsolete.

Key findings

- ☐ International support for media development is strong, particularly from the German non-profit foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and from the Danish and US official development assistance agencies, DANIDA and USAID.

- ☐ Key local NGOs involved in media development are the Centre for Media Analysis, Journalists for Human Rights and the Media Foundation for West Africa.

- ☐ The National Media Commission and Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA) are also involved in journalism training.

- ☐ An increase in ethics, professionalism, capacity among local training institutions, and an upgrade of equipment are cited a key needs.

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[10] Personal communication with NMC Director of Research and Monitoring, Evans Oheneba-Mensah

10. Conclusions

The media landscape in Ghana has witnessed tremendous growth in the past five years. But one has to go further back to the year 1992, when a new constitution was promulgated, ushering in a new atmosphere of freedom and heralding a new dawn for the media and society generally. Before then, the country had been under the tight grip of a military dictatorship led by Jerry Rawlings.

President Kufuor has further expanded the barriers of freedom with the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2001. Since then, there has been an explosion in the media landscape. The radio sector has witnessed the most growth, followed by newspapers and the emerging mobile telephony market. The television sector has witnessed the least growth.

Encouraging as the growth in the media landscape has been, quantity has not necessarily been met with quality. There is abundant evidence of a glaring lack of professionalism and ill-equipped, poorly motivated personnel in the various media. The direct consequences are poor programming and even self-censorship.

Meanwhile, the community radio sector, relatively young and small, is providing some ray of hope with a strong grassroots presence.

There are tremendous opportunities for investment in all sectors of the media, especially in the television sector, and, with a stable political situation, Ghana offers a generally attractive investment climate.

11. Appendices

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Appendix 2: Individuals/organisations consulted during the research

☐ Kofi Akosah, Researcher, African Youth Peace Corps

☐ Bright Kwame Blewu, Secretary General, Ghana Journalists' Association; Director, International Press Centre, Ghana

☐ Yao Dziekpor, Deputy Director, Ghana Television

☐ Evans Oheneba-Mensah, Director of Research and Monitoring, National Media Commission, Ghana

☐ Kweku Rockson, Acting Director, Ghana Institute of Journalism

☐ Peter Owusu Donker, Head of Programmes, Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana

Ghana
Country Report
Way Forward

12. Introduction

The sampling, selecting and short-listing of interviewees was challenging. Doris Adabasu Kuwornu, Head of Programmes, Ghana Television, offered much assistance. For the NGO sector, it was relatively easy to identify four people, as very few actually engage in media development. The academic sector was another easy area, since there are only three government training institutions: the School of Communication Studies (SCS) at the University of Ghana, Legon; the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ); and, the School of Film and Television. In addition, the African Journalism Institute (AJI) constitutes a private institution in this sector. For their strategic importance, the SCS and the GIJ were chosen. It was not too difficult either to settle for Gina Ama Blay of the *Daily Guide*, as she is one of only two female editors of daily newspapers in Ghana. Representatives of the Ministry of Information, the National Media Commission (NMC) and the Parliamentary Committee on Information were also short-listed.

Conducting interviews posed additional challenges. First, the research project lost the opportunity of getting the views of the Minister of Information, through an unexpected Cabinet re-shuffle; a Ministry spokesperson was interviewed instead. With the other interviewees, some refused to confirm appointments while others would change their minds about meeting for negligible reasons. All interviewees complained about the long duration of the interview, but most cooperated and answered all the questions to the best of their knowledge. All 15 interviewees agreed to be audio-recorded, 13 of the 15 agreed to be named in the report, and ten of the 15 agreed to have quotations attributed to them.

In terms of frankness, those who are in government or in organisations related to government were a bit reserved. The exceptions in this regard were the Ministry of Information's Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh and state-owned Ghana TV's Yao Dziekpor. Both were very candid. The NGO representatives were generally very frank.

The 15 interviews were conducted between 30 March and 1 June 2006. Thirteen interviewees agreed to be named in this report, while two did not. One of these interviewees is a television manager, while the other is a newspaper editor. Though unnamed, their input and views have been incorporated.

13. Media Development: an organisational perspective

The 15 interviewees were unanimous about the single most important change in the media sector over the past five years: the creation of a liberal environment for the practice of journalism through the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law in 2001. Also cited was the general liberalisation of the political environment since the 2000 election. This view cuts across all the sectors, from the NGOs to the government, from private practitioners to public commentators and academics.

13.1 Key organisations

The 13 interviewees who agreed to be named, and their level of involvement with media development, are outlined below.

☐ **National Media Commission (NMC):** This regulatory body was set up by the government to promote free, independent and responsible media and to sustain democracy and national development in Ghana. Evans Oheneba-Mensah, the Director of Research and Monitoring, was interviewed. A key function of the Commission is the recruitment and retention of skilled staff for the media. Mr Oheneba-Mensah is the gatekeeper of the quality control unit. He is heavily involved in the training activities of the Commission, which are aimed at maintaining the highest standards of journalism practice.

☐ **Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast (UCC):** one of the eight campus-based experimental radio stations in Ghana, it is distinct from public, commercial or community radio stations. The interviewee, Osabutey Anni, is the Studio Manager. He is responsible for day-to-day operations. He also edits stories and news coming out of the station. The experimental radio stations serve as avenues for people to develop talents and to join the higher media world later.

- **Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ):** as the oldest journalism training institution in Ghana, it runs diploma and degree programmes. The interviewee, Kweku Rockson, is Acting Director and serves as both the administrative and academic head of the institution. It is his duty to initiate new programmes and to develop skills for the fast-growing media industry in Ghana.

- **Ghana Journalists Association (GJA):** this organisation is the premiere association for all journalists in Ghana. It is responsible for protecting and defending the rights of journalists and ensuring the adherence to the highest standards and ethics of journalism in Ghana. The interviewee, Bright Kwame Blewu, is the Secretary-General of the Association and Director of the Ghana office of the International Press Centre. He is responsible for initiating training programmes for journalists in the various fields to ensure professionalism.

- *Daily Guide* **newspaper:** this publication, part of Western Publications Company, is the second largest circulation daily newspaper, next to government-owned *Daily Graphic*, but the largest circulation private daily newspaper in Ghana. The interviewee, Gina Ama Blay, is the Managing Editor of the paper, just one of the two woman editors in the country and also the President of Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG). She has initiated training for journalists on specialised reporting in health, business and finance in her organisation.

- **Journalists for Human Rights (JHR):** this organisation is responsible for training media workers on reporting human rights in Ghana. Ato Kwamena Dadzie, Country Director, is responsible for running the organisation's programmes in Ghana. He has supervised the organisation of many training programmes for journalists in Ghana on various aspects of human rights and violations.

- **Third World Network (TWN) Africa:** this is a pan–African research and advocacy organisation based in Accra the activities of which cover trade and investment policy with a communications component. Dr Yao Graham is Head of the network and edits the organisation's two publications: a magazine called *Public Agenda,* which comes out six times a year; and, *Public Agenda (1994-2000),* a bi-weekly newspaper. Dr Graham is also involved in the production of video documentaries, particularly on the activities of mining companies and environmental pollution. Some of his documentaries have aired on the BBC.

- **School of Communication Studies (SCS), University of Ghana, Legon:** the interviewee was Dr Audrey Gadzekpo, a lecturer. She has undertaken a number of research projects on the media in Ghana. The SCS was established in 1973 as the Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication. The School of Communication Studies (SCS) is the only university-level training institution among the three Ghanaian media training institutions. The school offers a post-graduate diploma, as well as MA and MPhil degrees, although it does not offer an undergraduate degree.

- **Ghana Television (GTV):** the interviewee was Yao Dziekpor, Deputy Director of Television. Mr Dziekpor is a senior journalist in Ghana and currently on the board of the NMC. As the Deputy Director of GTV in charge of news, he reviews the station's daily news content. The GTV is the only state-run television station in Ghana and, until 1996, it was the only television station operating in the country.

- **ADS Ltd:** the interviewee was Sylvanus Kuwornu, CEO. ADS Ltd is an affiliate of LEOBONET, a big player in the advertising industry in Ghana housing other advertising outfits. Mr Kuwornu is one of the creative forces in the advertising industry in Ghana, winning several awards with his outfit. Ads Ltd has a number of popular adverts currently running, especially in the mobile telephony market. For example, TIGO is one of the fast-growing mobile markets in Ghana.

- **Ministry of Information:** the interviewee was the Ministry's Social Services Spokesperson, Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh. The Ministry of Information is the official mouthpiece of the government. For effectiveness, it has various units, one of which is social services. As the spokesperson, Mr Bedialzoh is empowered to speak on behalf of government on all issues relating to government activities in this area.

- **Centre for Democratic Development (CDD):** the interviewee from the CDD was Peter Owusu Donkor, Head of Programmes. The CDD is one of the major institutions in Ghana that help to strengthen democracy through its activities and programmes. He is in direct contact with the media and oversees all programmes, especially the ones relating to the media.

- **Radio Central Cape Coast, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC):** the interviewee was Kwabena Sarpong Anane, Radio Central's Regional Director. Radio Central is one of the regional stations of the GBC.

13.2 Impact of media development initiatives

The Ghanaian media, which took off well at independence, suffered from the effects of persistent coup plots after the overthrow of the first civilian leader, Kwame Nkrumah. The repression and the culture of silence came to its peak under the dark days of the regime of Jerry Rawlings from 1982. However, Rawlings supervised the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution that prepared for the return to democratic rule and that gradually started opening up the media landscape. With Rawlings winning re-election twice between 1994 and 2000, the changes were initially gradual or at best minimal. However, the coming to power of President John Kufuor in 2000 marked a watershed in media development in Ghana.

All 15 interviewees were unanimous that the most important changes in the media sector over the past five years were the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law – which had been like the sword of Damocles hanging over journalists – and the liberalisation of the media landscape that has today led to the proliferation of media houses in Ghana. The Criminal Libel Law, which was a holdover from colonial times, received various forms of modification, albeit almost always with a negative impact for journalists, through successive regimes, particularly during the Rawlings years. In fact, the joke at one point was that if you did not want to go to jail, then set up a sports paper or write about sports: this was the only thing the government was likely to tolerate.

According to Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh:

" *At the time of independence… rulers continued to use [the Criminal Libel Law] against media men and women and it sort of put fear into them. Government realised that it is a great barrier to media freedom. So it made a promise to the people of this country, [if] the people of this country would elect them into power, the first thing they would do would be to repeal the Criminal Libel Law, and they have done it.* "

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

However, some of the interviewees, while agreeing with the significance of the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law, cautioned about a shift from this draconian law to a more subtle yet dangerous one: civil libel. Instead of going to jail, journalists can be punished with heavy fines imposed by the courts. As a result, news organisations can go bankrupt paying these fines. Yao Graham of TWN, Gina Ama Blay of the *Daily Guide* and Audrey Gadzekpo of SCS are worried about the use of civil libel laws. However, they also believe that some journalists in the private press are using their new-found freedom irresponsibly.

13.2.1 Strategic changes in the interviewees' own area of work arena

With regards to strategic changes within their work arena, there was a range of responses focusing on the following categories:

☐ the increase in civil libel cases;

☐ the increased demand for training;

☐ competition and liberalisation of the media sector;

☐ information programming and capacity building;

☐ free speech; and,

☐ Internet presence.

In the view of Evans Oheneba–Mensah of the NMC, the significant change in his area of work has been the dramatic increase in the number of cases brought before the arbitration committee of the Commission by aggrieved parties. He attributes this rise to the increase in the number of media houses and to the new atmosphere of freedom, which is leading some journalists to become slightly reckless. Kweku Rockson and Audrey Gadzekpo agree that professionalism is a concern. Yet training activities are starting to have an impact gradually.

Osabutey Anni said that the new orientation towards news and information on Radio Valco has been accentuated by the training received since the media environment started expanding. As a result, Radio Valco has much more credibility now. Mr Rockson of GIJ said that his organisation has had an upsurge in the number of people demanding training. Audrey Gadzekpo credits media liberalisation with a rise in not only training requests but also specialised courses. Ato Kwamena Dadzie of JHR points to the increase in the number of training programmes geared towards human rights reporting. He is cautious and believes that the success or impact of any media development activity cannot be measured scientifically. But he is happy with the new course on human rights reporting, with trained journalists resolved to henceforth approach their stories from human rights angles, and to cover topics including HIV/AIDS reporting.

Gina Ama Blay believes that training activities have enhanced professionalism and helped with the creation of specialised pages on business, health and district assemblies in the *Daily Guide*. These pages are now sponsored and self-supporting.

Yao Dziekpor of GTV sees the challenge of competition and liberalisation as the most important strategic changes. Until 1996, the TV and radio services of the GBC were the only broadcast outfits in Ghana. Liberalisation of the airwaves has brought other broadcast media outfits into the TV sector, hence breaking the monopoly enjoyed by the GBC over the years. This has served as a spur to the operators of the GBC (both radio and television divisions) to become innovative in their programming in order to stay afloat. Sylvanus Kuwornu of ADS Ltd agrees that the most important change for his organisation has been the proliferation of the media, especially radio, and the challenges of choosing from these diverse channels to reach target audiences.

For Osabutey Anni, the most important change in his area of work has been the shift towards more information programming:

" *When I joined in 2001, the motto was 'the scent of music', now it's 'we give you a reason to own a radio set'… in the sense that 'the scent of music' means 90% of music and 10% of talk, now we do 60% of talk and 40% of music…* **"**

(Osabutey Anni, Studio Manager; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

A TV manager, who did not wish to be identified, pointed to the impact of the new dispensation on state-owned GTV. GTV now adopts a more commercial orientation and collaborates with outside independent producers. This, in some cases, is resulting in better programming.

Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh said that the media now bring into focus issues affecting children, women, health, environment and education. One response from government to this new environment has been the creation of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, opened in 2001. Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh offered two examples of positive action taken by the government to address issues raised in the media. One involved young children from poor families who were sold into slavery to perform menial jobs. The other involved women who were detained in hospitals for not being able to pay fees:

" *Whenever these things come to light… the Minister responsible for Women and Children's Affairs takes it up because if you don't take it up, you are going to be taken by the same press for being irresponsible. So I think in a way, they have really helped us in this direction and we think we should continue, so as to keep the Ministry on its toes to ensure that the right thing is being done.* **"**

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

The GJA has been able to build journalists' capacity in the new environment. One example was a programme to improve finance and economic reporting skills, with funding support from the US government's bilateral development funding agency, USAID. Meanwhile, Peter Owusu Donkor has seen an increase in the CDD's advocacy and research work.

Yao Graham said that the TWN's recent focus has been on forging links with the media in an effort to report on developmental issues. There has been an impact in recent years from the TWN's capacity-building programmes with journalists and from its work with mining communities, coupled with the materials it provides to journalists and their organisations.

For Bright Kwame Blewu of the GJA, the removal of the impediments to free speech and the growing influence of the media in the shaping of democracy are the most important changes. He believes that the development of the media has had a profound impact beyond the media to democracy.

Gina Ama Blay of the *Daily Guide* said the significance of the new political climate for her has been the growing success of her newspaper:

" *It's been so tremendous. We ourselves sometimes sit back and can't believe it. From a four-page newspaper, now we publish a 16-page newspaper, which in Ghana at this time, is quite a feat for a private enterprise. We've grown very huge. It was a very small newspaper, but now we can confidently say that we are the largest private-selling newspaper in the country.* **"**

(Gina Ama Blay, Managing Editor; Private Media, Practitioner Private Sector: *Daily Guide* newspaper, Western Publications Company, Ghana)

For Kwabena Sarpong Anane, the greatest recent change has been an Internet presence for the station:

" *… now I should say, that even the whole of GBC [is] not… on the Internet. But in my region, Radio Central, we are on the Internet. We have a website. So this is a dramatic change; I mean even if you talk of the whole of GBC. So this is a… big plus for us.* **"**

(Kwabena Sarpong Anane, Regional Director, Central Region; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Central Cape Coast, Ghana)

14. Media Development Initiatives

The main type of media development talked about by the interviewees was training. Most organisations surveyed had experience conducting or participating in media training.

14.1 Review

The interviewees discussed the following key initiatives related to media development:

☐ training and improved curricula;

☐ professionalism;

☐ forums for journalists; and

☐ specialised reporting.

Training and improved curricula

The National Media Commission (NMC), in fulfilment of its mandate to raise the standard of journalism in Ghana, has been carrying out a series of training sessions for radio and television presenters in the various regions of Ghana. The NMC is also conducting ongoing research to identify the training gaps in communication education and curricula, with the aim of reviewing the training needs of journalists.

Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) has also carried out training in a wide variety of areas linked to human rights:

" *The most recent ones I will say are the regional workshops that we are organising for reporters in the different parts of the country… And we believe that in the long run, about 200 to 300 reporters [will] have been trained [in] looking out for stories… the need for human rights, to tell human rights stories.* "

(Ato Kwamena Dadzie, Country Director; NGO: Journalists for Human Rights, Ghana)

JHR also has an initiative established in collaboration with the African Institute of Journalism (AIJ) in Ghana, through which a specialised programme on human rights reporting has been mounted and should soon start producing its first set of graduates.

For its part, the Third World Network (TWN) carries out initiatives and projects to train journalists in various fields, including coverage of legislative and environmental matters.

Professionalism

One aspect of training that is receiving attention by the Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA) is improving professionalism. The GJA has been involved in many media development initiatives, mainly geared towards training its members to sharpen their skills and meet the challenges of professionalism in the fast-growing media landscape. In conjunction with a number of development partners – Fredrick Elbert Stiftung, DANIDA, USAID, DfID etc – a series of workshops has been held on a range of topics.

Forums for journalists

The Ministry of Information has instituted a forum for journalists called the 'Meet the Press Series', an initiative whereby every ministry presents its programme of activities to journalists. This effort halts the situation where only a few favoured journalists get access to top stories.

Specialised reporting

The *Daily Guide,* meanwhile, has established what it calls 'specialised reporting'. This initiative draws attention away from reporting only on politics to issues such as finance, business and banking.

14.1.1 Approaches to media development

The Ministry of Information's approach to media development, via the Meet the Press Series, is focused on generating mutual understanding between the people and government, via the media, for example:

> " Nobody is happy when fuel prices go up and they think that government should absorb it. But when we bring the figures down and explain to them why we cannot absorb [the cost], it makes sense to them. Previously in our newspapers, people did not know the figure… the rising price of the world [oil] market, so they didn't understand why prices should be going up. But when we started quoting the figures over 75 to over 73 dollars a barrel… in the news everyday, they began to realise that after all, it is an extended factor, not government… They were not happy [but] at least they were made to understand "

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

TWN seeks to build the capacity of journalists for critical intervention on issues connected to their advocacy work, as a way of intervening in society. Gina Ama Blay of the *Daily Guide* sees the overarching objective of its media development activities as achieving the highest standard of professionalism. The GJA is seeking the same objective. Meanwhile, in the view of Ato Kwabena Dadzie:

> " Broadly speaking… [the] main objective is to get journalists to report on human rights and social justice issues with intelligence, with authority and with professionalism. "

(Ato Kwamena Dadzie, Country Director; NGO: Journalists for Human Rights, Ghana)

14.1.2 Funding of media development

Only the NMC and JHR fund media development directly. Both of these organisations devote more than 70% of their funds to media development activities, and both say that the percentage is increasing.

14.2 Success and impact

14.2.1 Evaluating the success of media development projects

None of the organisations carries out any formal evaluations. At best, the organisations distribute forms at the end of each training session asking participants to give their impression and understanding of the workshop.

14.2.2 Factors contributing to the success of media development projects

The factors that most of the interviewees said contributed to the success of media development projects ranged from the following:

☐ availability of funds for training journalists;

☐ relevance of the courses;

☐ calibre of resource persons invited to training sessions;

☐ course design and delivery mode;

☐ incentives provided by the organisers, such as transportation and meals (relevant factors given the poor remuneration in many media workplaces).

14.2.3 Factors undermining the success of media development projects

While a shortage of funds is a strong factor undermining the success of projects, other potentially harmful factors include:

☐ lack of relevance or currency of a media project;

☐ lack of consultation about the project aims; and,

☐ poor planning.

According to Yao Graham:

" *I think the attitude of the leadership of the media house is also important. You see [when] they don't see an issue is important. They will send 'cub 'reporters for example, or junior people, who even if they benefit, they are not located at an influential point to feed their learning into the culture of the institution. So the types of people participating in events like that [are] very critical [to] how the learning feeds… into the work of the institution.* "

(Dr Yao Graham, Coordinator; NGO: Third World Network Africa, Ghana)

14.3 Lessons learned

Interviewees identified the following key lessons learned based on their organisations' experiences:

☐ involve journalists in planning training programmes and in defining objectives; and,

☐ identify sustainability based on the availability of funds.

Most of the interviewees indicated problems with drawing trainees properly into the detailed planning of their work. It is one thing to have a good objective, but quite another for the programme to be needed and wanted by the intended target audience. The lessons of the Ministry of Information are instructive here:

" *…we have realised that we need to involve the journalists themselves [in the planning], the media men themselves. You cannot plan and impose it on them. Anytime we are planning a programme, we call them, discuss with them. If it's a workshop, we discuss with them how they think it should go. They make their inputs, and together, we are able to design the project.* "

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

Peter Owusu Donkor related an experience of an unsuccessful training course in 2002, a course that was aimed at helping journalists organise their work.

" *You know, some of them [trainees] will come and… some of them will come and may be talking, not listening, with friends, some… may even fail to bring a writing pad to take notes.* "

(Peter Owusu Donkor, Head of Programmes; NGO: Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana)

This was a classic lesson in designing a programme and not involving those it was meant for in defining objectives.

Another problem identified by interviewees was sustainability, because the projects are largely donor-reliant. Once funds run dry, a project, no matter how good, suffers.

14.3.1 The importance of the cultural context in planning and designing initiatives

All interviewees agreed that the specific African cultural context should be addressed in project planning. However, they quickly added that media development initiatives should not shy away from addressing the negative African cultural practices that impede development, such as female genital mutilation, suppression of women or the overbearing respect for elders that can sometimes curtail freedom of speech.

Yao Graham had concerns about the context of working with donors in media development in Africa and about the danger of over-dependence on donors with uncertain agendas. He worries about Ghana becoming a "donor colony". Another concern is that journalists are sometimes sent abroad for training when it may be more appropriate for the trainers to come to Ghana and become aware of the local environment. Fortunately, this tendency is reversing.

" *The trend is beginning to change where people from other developed democracies, if you may, rather come and also experience our environment and realise that yes, the environment unfortunately might not be the same, but other means can be devised to achieve the same thing and I think that… that is a very welcome trend. I'm not saying that sometimes it's not important for others to go [overseas]… but formerly that used to dominate. Everybody going out for a course, it means he's going to the US, to London, to Germany…* "

(Bright Kwame Blewu, Secretary-General; NGO: Ghana Journalists' Association, Ghana)

15. Developing the Environment for Success

All interviewees said that the liberalised political environment had been the key factor in the success of the media in Ghana. The interviewees also pointed to the fact that new media houses have concentrated on newspapers and radios, which are cheaper to establish and to run when compared to capital-intensive television stations. One immediate danger, however, is the high attrition rate, especially among newspapers, many of which are of low quality.

15.1 Key factors

All interviewees attributed success to the stable political environment and the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law. Another factor mentioned was the positive role of the Ghana Journalists' Association and the National Media Commission in encouraging professional standards. The economic factor was another issue mentioned, although there was no agreement on this. Some think the economic conditions have been positive in terms of the explosion in the media landscape, while others think that newspapers, for instance, are poorly-funded because of low advertising revenues and because not enough people are economically able to buy the papers.

15.2 Political and economic influences

All interviewees agreed that political and economic factors are strong and thus must be taken into account, especially considering Ghana's history of military dictatorship under Jerry Rawlings from 1981 to 1992, before the new Constitution was promulgated. Real freedom and media development only started and blossomed after a truly democratic government came into power from 2000.

There was overwhelming support for the notion that the new political environment has helped media development initiatives. According to Bright Kwame Blewu:

" *[It] is quite obvious once you have a democracy that is backed by a Constitution that required press freedom… you'll see that all sorts of conferences are held in Ghana, some on very controversial issues. Why do they come? It's because they know the media can cover it without any harassment… so I'm saying that the climate is good. Well, you must give some credit to Ghanaians for wanting to abide by… their constitution.* "

(Bright Kwame Blewu, Secretary-General; NGO: Ghana Journalists' Association, Ghana)

According to Osabutey Anni:

" *We can also look at the fact that we have human rights groups in this country too and elsewhere that are also supporting the media in terms of workshops, seminars, and are becoming more like voices for the media, for example, Journalists for Human Rights, which is a Canadian-funded project which has outlets in Ghana… not too long ago, they organised a workshop for journalists [to] sort of enlighten them on media law, their responsibility to what you call their profession itself. So all these things are in a way trying to sort of help widen the scope of journalism in this country.* "

(Osabutey Anni, Studio Manager; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

Yao Graham argued that the economic conditions are not good for Ghanaian media, leading to a resource crisis for many media outlets.

" *Sadly, there's not enough clarity about how to deal with a resource challenge. I think [the] resource challenge should be seen as national investment in culture and communication, and therefore to see what can be done to make funding available. Many ideas about small business promotion and so on… different business sectors have specific needs. All those things could be part of the factors that are taken into account. If these are private sector companies in radio, in TV, in print, their access to credit must be sensitive to the needs of the industry. There's a crisis of resourcing enterprises across the board…* "

(Dr Yao Graham, Coordinator; NGO: Third World Network Africa, Ghana)

15.2.1 State support for media development initiatives

Thirteen of the 15 interviewees agreed that there is state support for media activities in Ghana, with this support coming in the form of empowering the regulatory body, the NMC, to organise workshops to train radio and television journalists across public and private media. Other state support has come via the provision of physical premises to house the Secretariat of the GJA and the International Press Centre. To this must be added the full sponsorship of the state-owned broadcast media: Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's radio and television services.

15.3 Donor communities' role

Thirteen interviewees have experienced donor presence in their work, and their views of donors are largely positive. Some are frank, saying that the media landscape in Ghana would be considerably duller, particularly in the area of training, without the presence of donors.

15.3.1 Donor Agendas

Other interviewees, however, especially those from the NGO sector, are suspicious about the actual agenda of the donor communities. Some of these interviewees said that donors do not understand Africa's cultural context well enough. Hence, they resort to stereotyping and inflexible approaches, in terms of both project conception and execution. According to Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh:

" *… some of them [donors] are of the view that any misunderstanding in Ghana may be the result of an ethnic factor… They always think that so long as the thing takes place in Africa, even if it is a genuine problem that people are talking about, they tend to look at it from the viewpoint of [ethnicity] – 'maybe this one is from here, this one is from here, that's why they don't agree'… and that is wrong.* "

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

According to Yao Graham, some donors have a preconceived agenda and are not sensitive to the environment they come into.

" *It's partly because some of our own institutions don't develop their own agenda and seek money for it. I mean people will continue to look for more funding from all sources. We get funding from all kinds of sources, but if you come to me and say: 'I have US$50,000, let us say, for you to do three months, media development training on reproductive health, on HIV/AIDS.' I will tell you, sorry, we don't work on HIV/AIDS, sorry, we have not planned to spend that much time on that media capacity building.' So, I will point to somebody else who does it. Somebody else might take the money and distort their own balance… so the agenda comes from outside and people are made to respond to it. I think also, some of the conditions that donors have given for small amounts are too stringent – reporting requirements and so and so forth. Well, maybe, they have been told that Third World countries are full of corruption.* "

(Dr Yao Graham, Coordinator; NGO: Third World Network Africa, Ghana)

15.3.2 Donor undersanding of cultural and economic realities

The general view is that donors, as useful as they are, must avoid imposing their own values on people and should be sensitive to the local context if they want their money to be well utilised.

15.3.3 A different donor approach

Most interviewees said that their first need from donors was more money, so that their projects could yield better results in:

☐ training; and,

☐ local community media.

Others said that donors should be more stable and not shift their objectives around so often. According to Audrey Gadzekpo, some donors should not conclude that:

" … oh, in Ghana, it's ten years after democratisation, training is no longer important, let's divert to something else. "

(Dr Audrey Gadzekpo, Lecturer; Academic: School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana)

Peter Owusu Donkor would like to see media development donors give more support for reporting to and from rural areas:

" [The existing media] are limited by… resources, and they wouldn't want to waste more money to go down to Komenda or some rural area in Central Region to pick up news and talk about it. So, in that regard, I think the donors should have a programme whereby reporting from rural areas or the hinterlands can also be part of… Ghanaian regular news. Instead of everything being centred on the urban centres… To me, they should make a concerted effort to try to make news reach these areas while at the same time report news from these areas in our mainstream papers. "

(Peter Owusu Donkor, Head of Programmes; NGO: Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana)

Other interviewees emphasised the need for more consultation by donors. According to Kwabena Sarpong Anane of Radio Central:

" … what they may have to do is to get in touch with the people on the ground, to understand them, what they want, even before they go back to the drawing table to plan what they will want to come and do for the people. They first have to talk to the people, 'What can we do to help raise your living standards?' Before they even sit down to plan. "

(Kwabena Sarpong Anane, Regional Director, Central Region; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Central Cape Coast, Ghana)

The view that came across was that while the interviewees appreciate the monies and support from donors, it should come on Ghanaians' own terms for maximum results.

15.4   Other issues

Other issues identified as factors that could influence the success of media development included:

☐ aggressive marketing to give existing media a more solid base from which to operate from;

☐ collaboration among existing media in order to pass on skills from one organisation to the other; and,

☐ further training for Ghanaian trainers.

According to one interviewee, who asked not to be identified:

" *… if you come to Ghana, the GIJ is a very important training institution, the School of Communication Studies at University of Ghana, Legon, is also a training centre. Why don't we also offer specialised programmes for the lecturers there, that they in turn can also be imparting the knowledge to the media personnel in this country? That is what I mean by [training] of trainers. Instead of always training the media people directly, why don't we train those who train them also to make them more resourceful?* "

Others advocated a radical overhaul of the curriculum of the academic institutions connected to the training of journalists, in order to enhance production of skilled media workers. Also suggested was the nurturing of young trainees so that they can imbibe the spirit of professionalism right from their student days and make them better journalists when they enter the workplace. Finally, there was a suggestion that experienced practitioners from media organisations abroad should come and spend some time in the local media in order to be able to design better training programmes.

16. Future Strategies

All interviewees agreed that the Ghanaian media scene can only get better, and that concerted efforts should be made to improve professional output and to prevent degeneration. Most interviewees see training as the most important factor for media development projects to address at the moment. Those interviewees, particularly in the NGO sector, supported the idea of a pan-regional initiative.

16.1 Strategic priorities

16.1.1 Training

Fourteen of the 15 interviewees said that a new donor-backed development initiative should address training as the number one priority, in order to achieve professionalism and to strengthen practice. According to one interviewee, who asked not to be identified:

" *They should support training, training of media personnel, the creation of platforms for the exchange of ideas, best practices in the media… Training is a priority because a number of researches we have conducted indicate that people other than journalists find themselves in the profession and because of that, at times the output… in terms of language, writing, begs the question, so I personally think training should be prioritised.* "

There was at least one call, from Gina Ama Blay of the *Daily Guide*, for donors to support the set-up of an additional, tertiary-level training institute. Others said that any new initiative should go further than support for training and should fund research, media monitoring and curriculum development. Two interviewees called for an initiative that would support funding and supply of equipment.

The overriding concern, however, remains the drive towards professionalism, attainable via training, including support for reporting specialisations. Bright Kwame Blewu suggested another training proposal that would concentrate on bringing top journalists from different countries to work within certain media organisations for some time and to enable Ghanaian journalists to learn under them.

16.2 Focus of support

In this section, interviewees discussed the need for support in the following areas:

- ☐ media frameworks;
- ☐ developing local content;
- ☐ supporting the growth of independent media; and,
- ☐ raising the standards of journalism.

16.2.1 Media frameworks

Interviewees focused on the need for the Ghanaian media to fulfil a public-service remit, in order to play their role as society's watchdog. But, the emphasis was less on the policy-legal frameworks needed to make this happen and more on capacity-building aimed at development of the ability to fulfil public-service goals. According to Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh:

> " … in terms of public service demands, I think that it is very important, because the media is to serve as a watchdog [for] society and if it is not fulfilling its role the way it should, then it will not help us at all. So we need to focus more. You see, it should not be a situation where we are offering training just for them to engage in their own private activities. The training should give them an orientation that will let them offer a service to the nation that will help us all to move forward. "

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

Gina Ama Blay called for training the judiciary:

> " When especially, politicians take the media to court, they [judges] give them [the media] such heavy fines – five billion, two billion cedis, I mean, who can pay that? That's over US$400,000… I think their [media development] focus should come to that, because it's really become a worry for all of us. I mean, how do you fine a media house, a poor media house, five billion cedis? "

(Gina Ama Blay, Managing Editor; Private Media, Practitioner Private Sector: *Daily Guide* newspaper, Western Publications Company, Ghana)

Her suggestion flows from the concern voiced by some interviewees that, with the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law, there is some tacit collusion between politicians and the judiciary, with heavy fines imposed as a way to dampen critical spirit among journalists.

16.2.2 Developing local content

There was overwhelming agreement by interviewees that local content is very important. There was support for the trend in Ghana at the moment towards the use of local languages in programmes. Local content was also said to be important in terms of identity construction and addressing developmental issues.

16.2.3 Supporting the growth of independent media

Again there was near-unanimous agreement among interviewees that support should be given for the growth of independent media. It was felt that many private independent media organisations, particularly the private press, need assistance with technical support and equipment in order to perform freely and not fold up or become mouthpieces of private owners. According to Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh:

> " *You see, the state-owned media tend to be weak if you have a government that is dictatorial. So if we can focus more on independent media, it will help to [expose] the bad side of a government that is not performing very well. It doesn't mean that we should also lose sight of the state-owned media. The state-owned media can operate alongside the independent private media, but the independent private media ought to be strengthened more in order to keep governments on their toes.* "

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

Osabutey Anni cautions, however, against independent media getting too much funding:

> " *The media is said to be the fourth estate of the realm and we should be as independent as possible… I think that the funding and the support should come, but the respective organisations should be conscious of the level of funding that is given, because you wouldn't want a process whereby you are getting the funding alright but at the end of the day you more or less become a kind of [a] remote control [for] some donor organisation.* "

(Osabutey Anni, Studio Manager; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

16.2.4 Raising the standards of journalism

All interviewees were in agreement that training is now the most needed support in Ghana, while raising the standards of journalism was implicit. Interviewees were of the opinion that the years in the journalistic wilderness had brought standards down, hence the need for strong initiatives that would raise them. It was felt that the crisis of civil libel litigation could be attributed to the non-adherence to basic quality standards. Journalists sometimes neglect to crosscheck their facts before going ahead and publishing damaging allegations.

16.3   Media sector focus

All but one of the interviewees said media development support should go to all the media (public/state, private commercial and local/community) based on the argument that all three sectors have roles that are vital in the overall development of society. The only dissenting view came from Kwamena Ato Dadzie of Journalists for Human Rights, who would rather see a support initiative only for private media. According to him, the state media already have too many resources and an unfair advantage over the other media.

16.4 Type of support most needed/useful

Again, most interviewees identified training as the area where support is most needed. The support should be financial. Ato Kwamena Dadzie specified that funding for training should be given to media-based NGOs to conduct the training and thus supplement offerings by formal training institutions. Meanwhile, Kweku Rockson of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) suggested that in addition to the regular training courses, there should be exchange programmes between journalists from different countries to encourage a cross-fertilisation of ideas.

Osabutey Anni added a call for improved monitoring of performance and impact of trainees:

" *… once the training is done there should also [be] a mechanism where they will be able to monitor the beneficiaries, because I think the people who are trained are [often] left on their own without any necessary guidelines.* "

(Osabutey Anni, Studio Manager; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

Several different views emerged on the role that business/commercial interests should play in media development support.

☐ Business and commercial interests are already contributing by way of advertising patronage, which constitutes a large part of the revenue of most media establishments.

☐ Business interests should not be counted on, since they are not likely to want to inject their money into something that will not bring back direct profit.

☐ The financial sector has a role to play through providing soft loans for equipment purchase and other media expenditures.

On the extreme side was the minority view that business and commercial concerns should be removed completely from the media sector.

16.5 Appropriate organisational framework

Nothing that would add value to this AMDI report emerged from the interviewees' responses to this question, with most finding the question difficult to answer.

16.6 Pan-regional versus country-specific initiatives

Many interviewees supported the idea of pan-regional initiatives, but also expressed concerns about sustainability. According to Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh:

> *Pan-regional initiative has always been good. But the problem is sustainability. You know, we set up PANA [Pan African News Agency], we have this thing we call – for radio, for television based in Nairobi – URTNA. And they are not functioning the way we want them to be. The idea was to send news across to a headquarters for distribution to all member countries, but it's not working the way it should. I was watching URTNA very often in terms of music, in terms of news and so on… But these days we don't hear about them, and it's all because of funding. PANA is not working the way it should because members are not even able to pay their subscription, their fee, membership and so on. So, cooperation at the pan-level is quite good but [only] if members will be committed to the payment of their fees for this regional effort to be sustained.*

(Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana)

According to Osabutey Anni, existing regional structures need to be strengthened:

> *… we should have more collaboration than we are seeing right now. I understand we have the West African Journalists Association or Federation, which over the years has become extremely dormant. You don't hear about them, you don't see anything. You only hear about them when somebody is arrested in a different country, but it has to be proactive. We should see them organise workshops for their own people. We have the West African Media Watch… which is trying to look at issues within the sub-region, but I think we need to go beyond and see how best we are able to expand the functions not only within West Africa sub-region.*

(Osabutey Anni, Studio Manager; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

Other interviewees favoured country-specific initiatives, on the grounds that individual countries have specific experiences tied to their own cultural, historical and colonial circumstances. The things that work in Liberia or Côte d'Ivoire may not necessarily work in Ghana.

Over all, opinion seems divided between pan-regional and country-specific initiatives. But, if one were to put it on a scale, opinion would certainly tilt in favour of pan-regional since more interviewees argue about the issue of experience sharing.

16.7 Initiatives relating to developmental content

Most of the interviewees had already spoken of the need for supporting developmental content, as part of their support for specialised reporting skills, when talking earlier about key priorities for the media. Most advocate a shift away from the over-concentration on political reporting and towards reporting on developmental issues, such as the environment, HIV/AIDS and other human interest issues. Again, the issue of training was seen as crucial here, because the success of any initiative in this area would require training in order to generate sufficient interest in developmental issues and the willingness to go out and get these stories.

16.8 Initiatives to develop independent media

The views here were similar to those in the area of contributions that might be made by business/commercial interests (see section 16.4). Support for independent commercial media was seen as not only desirable but imperative.

16.9 The role of media development in the country's democratisation process

The overwhelming view here was that the media, frequently referred to as the 'fourth estate', should be the driving force in the democratisation process. According to Gina Ama Blay:

> " *Our front page, or whatever story, becomes the focus of newspaper discussion for the whole day. And [without] that, the ordinary person would not speak to an issue, may not even listen to the issue, just get up, go to his work or something… You are in the morning, you hear people phoning in to discuss an issue. By evening time, they know about an issue. Recently, there was a re-shuffle by the government, but because of our role, very, very active role… it was discussed, it was disseminated quickly, and it makes the whole country very, very vibrant.* "

(Gina Ama Blay, Managing Editor; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: *Daily Guide,* Ghana)

Some interviewees felt that the emerging mobile telephone industry has also been a contributory factor to the media's role in democratisation, allowing for many vibrant phone-in programmes on broadcast media.

Interviewees cited at least one remaining obstacle to media's role in democratisation: the delay in passing the Right to Information Bill of 2003, which is still not law and which is giving some officials the ability to cover up public interest information, thereby hampering the job of the media as watchdog.

17. Summary & Conclusions

17.1 Media development: an organisational perspective

☐ The media sector in Ghana has witnessed some dramatic, positive changes over the past few years, made possible by the promulgation of the 1992 democratic Constitution and the election in 2000 of President Kufuor's government.

☐ All interviewees agreed that democratisation and the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law have been the most important changes for the media sector, allowing for an explosion in the number of media houses in Ghana.

☐ Training was identified as the single most important media development initiative in the individual interviewees' areas of work.

17.2 Lessons learned

☐ Only a few of the organisations surveyed carry out media development activities as a core function, but most have experience in media development by way of participation in training activities.

☐ The organisations surveyed that are directly involved in media development activities see their main objective as improving profesional standards in the sector.

☐ None of the organisations employs a systematic method of evaluation, and thus the impact of the media development activities discussed cannot readily be measured.

17.3 Developing the environment for success

☐ The new free political atmosphere was determined to be the most important reason for media development, and the media sector in Ghana is now one of the most vibrant in Africa.

☐ There is some state support for media development in Ghana through training courses provided by the state-funded regulator, the National Media Commission.

- Most interviewees had positive views of the donor community in their support for the media, but called for donors to be more responsive to local inputs and the local environment.

- There was strong agreement that the media must reflect local content.

17.4 Focus of support

- Interviewees agreed that the main focus of support should go to training in order to raise standards in the journalist profession.

- There was also agreement that some focus of support could go to strengthening the independent media and developing local content.

- In terms of support for media frameworks, interviewees talked of the need for media to fulfil a public-service remit, but interviewees saw achievement of this goal in terms of training rather than in terms of policy or legal instruments.

- The majority view was that all three media sectors (private commercial, local community and state/public) should be beneficiaries of media development initiatives.

- Training was the preferred type of support, with mention made of the need to better track the performance and impact of trainees after they have received capacity building.

- There were no specific recommendations on the desired organisational framework for a media initiative.

- A majority of interviewees favoured pan-regional initiatives, with the warning that sustainability of such initiatives must be ensured.

- There was strong support for an initiative to build developmental content through improving journalists' capacity to follow specialised reporting beats.

- Interviewees agreed that the development of independent media should be supported.

- Interviewees agreed that the media are, and must continue to be, a driving force in the democratisation process, and that the Right to Information Bill of 2003 needs to be passed to strengthen the process media's role in it.

17.5 Strategic priorities

- The top strategic priority identified was the need to increase professionalism.

The media sector in Ghana is one of the freest in Africa, but the level of freedom has not been matched by professional development. Journalists continue to write stories or make allegations on radio without recourse to an alternative view. This has resulted in aggrieved parties going to court and getting heavy damages awarded against the offending media organisations, with such compensation payments capable of crippling a media organisation. The explosion in media outlets has not been matched by development-oriented content. There is also over-concentration on urban realities and the major developed areas of Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi.

The key recommendations in this report aim to address the shortfalls in professionalism and in local, developmental content. The primary recommendation is for more and improved training, in order to raise the standard of journalism. All three media sectors are seen as needing this training support.

18. Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviewees

Kwabena Sarpong Anane, Regional Director, Central Region; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Central Cape Coast, Ghana

Osabutey Anni, Studio Manager; Media Entrepreneur: Radio Valco, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Kofi Amponsah Bediakoh, Social Services Spokesperson; Government: Ministry of Information, Ghana

Gina Ama Blay, Managing Editor; Private Media, Practitioner Private Sector: *Daily Guide* newspaper, Western Publications Company, Ghana

Bright Kwame Blewu, Secretary-General; NGO: Ghana Journalists' Association, Ghana

Ato Kwamena Dadzie, Country Director; NGO: Journalists for Human Rights, Ghana

Peter Owusu Donkor, Head of Programmes; NGO: Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana

Yao Dziekpor, Deputy Director of Television: Government: Ghana Television, Ghana

Dr Audrey Gadzekpo, Lecturer; Academic: School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

Dr Yao Graham, Coordinator; NGO: Third World Network Africa, Ghana

Sylvanus Kuwornu, CEO; Media Entrepreneur: ADS Ltd, Ghana

Evans Oheneba-Mensah, Director of Research and Monitoring; Government: National Media Commission, Ghana

Kweku Rockson, Acting Director; Academic: Ghana Institute of Journalism, Ghana

The two other interviewees, who asked not to be named, were a:

Television Manager within the Government Sector, Ghana

A Newspaper Editor within the Public Sector, Ghana

Appendix 2: Media development projects/activities described in Section 14

Interviewee name & organisation	Specific media development project/title	Key purpose of project/initiative/activity	Project time span	Outcome	Target audience	Evaluation methods used if any	Result of Evaluation	Success or otherwise
Evans Oheneba–Mensah, National Media Commission	Training for radio/TV presenters	Build the presentation skills of participants	Ongoing	Radio and TV presenters in three regions trained so far	Radio and TV presenters in public and private media	None	N/A	No measurement yet
Ato Kwamena Dazie, Journalist for Human Rights	Human rights reporting course at African Institute of Journalism	Develop a cadre of human rights reporters	Ongoing	Students undergoing the course	Students	None	N/A	Not available
	Regional workshops to train journalists on Human rights reporting	Get journalists to report on Human rights with intelligence and professionalism	Ongoing	Journalists in the various media houses are taking part	Journalists in the various media houses	None	N/A	Not available
Yao Graham, Third World Network Africa	Workshop on the reformation of the law on mining	Get journalists to support advocacy, and sensitise journalists on mining law	2005	Journalists from all media sectors and mining communities attended	Journalists from all media sectors and mining communities	None	N/A	Successful
Bright Kwame Blewu, Ghana Journalists' Association	Training on financial reporting	Get journalists to report financial news more efficiently.	Ongoing	Journalists from all media attended	Journalists from various media houses	None	N/A	Not available
Peter Owusu Donkor, Centre for Democratic Development	Training for journalists on reporting research	Get journalists to appreciate academic research and report on it	2004	Journalists from various media houses attended	Journalists from various media houses	None	N/A	Not available
	Training journalists on office management	Get journalists to manage their office environments better	2005	Journalists from various media houses attended	Journalists from various media houses	None	N/A	Failed
Gina Ama Blay, *Daily Guide*	Specialised reporting	Train journalists to start reporting on special issues	Ongoing	Select journalists within *Daily Guide* participated	Select journalists within *Daily Guide*	None	N/A	Successful

Ghana
Country Report
Case Study

19. Case Study

Simli Radio: deconstructing the myth of broadcasting

Since the advent of the deregulation of broadcasting in Ghana in 1996 – a process put in motion earlier by the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution – radio has recorded the most growth. However, this boom has concentrated largely on commercial radio, with the approval of over 137 private commercial licences. Meanwhile, the community radio sector has only eight licences[1]. The commercial radio stations are concentrated in the urban centres of Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi, thus neglecting the vast rural population. It is community radio that gives voice to marginalised rural populations.

Community radio set out its own operational guidelines and mandate even before the existence of formal government laws in support of the sector. The Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN) was established in 1999 and registered in 2003 as a subsidiary of Ghana Community Broadcasting Services (GCBS). It is an NGO that has drawn from the *African Charter on Broadcasting* adopted at a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) workshop in Windhoek in May 2001. The charter states that:

" *The programmes of community broadcasting shall reflect the needs and concerns of the community, including language, gender, cultural and demographic needs. Programming shall highlight community issues including but not limited to development issues, health care, basic information, education, local cultures and environment, local, national and international issues.* "

(UNESCO, 2001)

It is this guideline that the National Media Commission (NMC) later, in its *National Media Policy* (2000), expanded upon by stating that "such community media shall have the objective of community empowerment and shall provide access to all members of the community" (NMC, 2000).

Simli Radio, located in Dalun near Tamale in the Northern Region, was established as a community-based station in 1996 and broadcasts programmes in Dagbani, the local language of the area. It is a non-profit organisation that targets communities in the Tolon-Kumbungu and Savelugu-Nanton districts. There are a total of 376 communities in the programme area – 233 in Tolon-Kumbungu and 143 in Savelugu-Nanton – with a total population of around 280,000. Dalun is a typical northern Ghanaian village with an estimated population of around 1,000 people. The Northern region that the station serves is one of the three poorest in Ghana.

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[1] Interview with Joshua Peprah, National Communications Authority (NCA) Director for Regulation and Licensing, as cited in Gadzekpo, 2005.

A visit to Simli Radio demonstrates how community radio deconstructs one's conception of radio – from the station's philosophy through to its studio environment and its specialised cast of people who run the equipment and do the programming. The station was established in 1996 under the Ghanaian Danish Communities Programme (GDCP), a development programme aimed at enhancing self-help and self-reliance among rural populations. The GDCP is one of three programmes implemented jointly by a Ghanaian NGO, the Ghanaian Danish Communities Association (GDCA), and a Danish NGO, GV/Ghana Friendship Groups in Denmark, with funding from the Danish government's bilateral development assistance agency DANIDA.

As an offshoot of a literacy education NGO called School for Life, the station has literacy education as its number one objective. The other objectives of Simli Radio include:

☐ to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas and to facilitate feedback from the communities on plans and projects;

☐ to give the community the opportunity to relay their own experiences and to examine critically issues, processes and policies affecting their lives; and,

☐ to educate and mobilise communities around development initiatives and strategies.

But it has not all been smooth sailing for the station. It shut down broadcasting shortly after its launch in 1996, due to technical difficulties. It came back on air in 1999 but was closed down and its equipment seized by the National Communications Authority (NCA) on the grounds of non-registration. It has since applied for registration and paid the mandatory 20.4 million cedis (US$2,200). The breakdown of these fees is a US$100 application fee, a US$2,000 frequency fee and a US$800 annual fee. However, a licence has yet to be granted. The station came back on-air in 2004, and has remained on-air because, curiously, the same NCA is allowing the station to use a spare frequency (93.3 FM) designated for use by a state-owned regional radio, Radio Savannah. Simli Radio broadcasts for ten hours per day, from 5am-10am and 5pm-10pm. An audience analysis revealed that this time schedule is the most appropriate, ie, early in the morning before listeners go to their fields to farm and then later when they are back from their fields. The signal of the station travels for a radius of about 25 kilometres, and for an hour a day it is carried by the state-owned radio to a wider audience.

Governance, management and community participation

The station is managed by a Board with a two-year term-of-office, which is renewed once. Nominations to the Board are made by the GDCA, based on finding people knowledgeable in the area of communication within the community. The station manager is a communication expert and is the administrative head of Simli Radio. The head of programmes handles issues related to editorial and programming matters. The station also has two full-time producers, a technician and an assistant producer, who are all paid staff. Five volunteers support the activities of the station. They act as continuity announcers, newsreaders and programme producers. The station also has 15 other volunteers, called community-based producers (CBPs), who are located in the communities and bring news from those communities. These producers also help to organise the audience into Listeners' Clubs as a way of mobilising the communities towards the educational programmes of the station. The communities, therefore, have a clear stake in the activities of Simli Radio. The power of the communities is manifested at the annual general meeting (AGM), which is the highest decision-making body. Members of the various communities elect delegates with voting rights to the AGM. The AGM elects the Board (including the Board's Executive Committee), which is mandated to oversee the activities of the station.

Programming, language and audience

The station currently broadcasts programmes on health, education, agriculture, gender, local governance and other GDCP sectors, as well as programmes focused on specific community matters. All programming is in the local language, Dagbani. Programme sponsors include the Carter Centre in the US and the Ghanaian Ministry of Education.

Simli Radio producers sometimes spend nights in the communities collecting material for programmes. For instance, rather than inviting an expert to the station to discuss the advantages of natural manure over artificial fertiliser, the station will go out and meet the farmer in the field. This method of programme production, coupled with local language use, has made the station popular (according to Station Manager Mallam Gariba Ibrahim). The researcher also spoke to local people who corroborated Gariba's claim to popularity. The listeners spoke of their satisfaction with the programmes of the station. News items from the communities sent by the CBPs are read every evening. Members of the communities are also encouraged to write and comment on development issues in their communities and these letters are read on air every day. Members of the communities are also given the opportunity to greet whomever they want by buying coupons for a token fee. These coupons are then read on air, accompanied by local music. The station also does local and social community announcements. People pay a token fee for these announcements. Producers are encouraged to develop their programmes with the active participation of the communities, a fact confirmed by Ibrahim Alhassan, Secretary-General of the station's Fan Club.

Community member Hajia Aishatu praised the mobilisation programmes of the station, such as the one on immunisation. Hajia Aishatu says that this programme has helped her to pressure her daughters-in-law to immunise their children. Cynthia Adabo, a Community Health Nursing Officer, confirms that the station has been of great assistance through its health education programmes, making it easier to mobilise the community for immunisation and other programmes. Eric Abugri, a student in the community, said: "I listen to other stations but this one is something unique in the sense that it looks like it belongs to the community. You know almost everyone there."

Equipment and sustainability

Simli Radio is relatively well-equipped, thanks to its funders. It has a fully-digitalised studio using the latest computers. The station lacks Internet connectivity, however, which is absent because of the high cost of broadband. The station is also in need of a better phone line to replace the present wireless system, which provides poor reception. For field recording, the station uses digital flash cards, enabling producers to gather a great deal of audio material from the field. For example, a producer in the field can record continuously in MP3 format for more than 24 hours with a 1GB flash card. This would previously have required 16 cassettes of 90 minutes duration each.

Studio production is done with Adobe Audition software, which facilitates fast production of programmes. The station is, however, in need of a stronger transmitter than its current 300-watt unit. An even more pressing need, according to Station Manager Mallam Gariba Ibrahim, is for the NCA to allocate the station its own frequency.

Also worrying is the issue of sustainability. Currently, the station depends on 70% of its funding from the Danish International Development Agency. This funding is due to end in 2007. The station will then be expected to become sustainable through the sale of airtime, which may threaten the developmental orientation of its programming. So how does the station intend to cope? Mallam Gariba Ibrahim outlines three main ways in which the station intends to overcome this major hurdle and stay afloat:

☐ a continuous drive for more programme sponsorships, which at the moment constitute 30% of the station's revenue;

☐ building more local programming capacity in the community via CBPs to reduce the salary bill; and,

☐ development of comprehensive communication campaigns for each of the targets of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), an initiative that could draw significant sponsorship.

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