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MALI

# M

Moussa Traore, who had seized power in a military coup, led Mali from 1968 to 1991. After his overthrow in March 1991, a democratic regime was put in place and the first free elections were organized. In the context of this opening to pluralism and freedom of the press and of expression, the Malian media landscape experienced a transformation to diversity in newspapers and radio stations.

Today there are 170 independent newspapers, with 50 appearing more or less regularly, and 200 radio stations broadcasting on FM across the nation. There are 17 radio stations in the Bamako district alone, while others operate in the provinces; Koulikoro and Ségou are the best equipped with 40 and 23 stations respectively. Other than the national television channel, operated by the Office of Radio-Television Mali (ORTM), urban Malians also receive almost 100 cable channels offered by subscription services. With the exception of *L'Essor*, which has national coverage, other newspapers are distributed almost exclusively in Bamako, however.

The state developed a more or less modern legal framework to regulate the press sector shortly after Mali's move to democracy. There is a favorable environment, although many believe that the political willpower that fueled the first hours of the democratic development of the media is weakening.

Despite the multiplication of media in Mali, in its current state of development the Malian press is confronted with many problems, such as a difficult economic context and the lack of appropriate human resources. These problems greatly influence the quality of the newspapers and the programs on the radio stations, which seem to focus more on entertainment. Panelists reflected this situation in their objective scores, which varied to a good degree. They rated Objectives 1, 3, and 5, freedom of speech, plurality of news, and supporting institutions rather well. Each of the three objectives finished with a score higher than the average of 2.16. Objective 1 finished more than a half point higher, at 2.65, with Objective 3 right behind it. However, Objectives 2 and 4, professional journalism and business management, finished well behind and 1.88 and 1.46, respectively.

# MALI AT A GLANCE

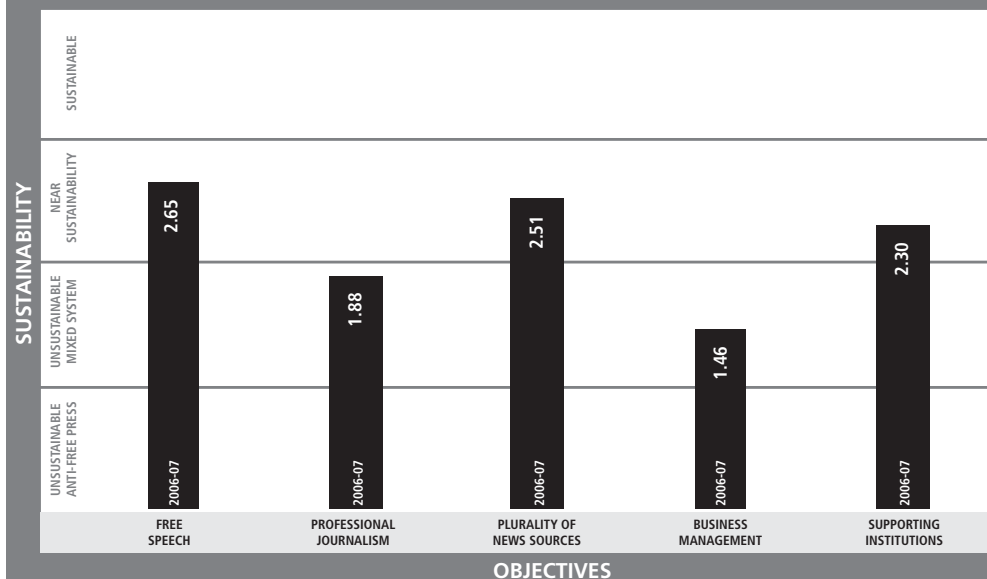
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 12,324,029 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Bamako
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Mande 50% (Bambara, Malinke, Soninke), Peul 17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg and Moor 10%, other 5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 90%, Christian 1%, indigenous beliefs 9% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official), Bambara 80%, numerous African languages (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2006-Atlas):** \$5.546 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **GNI per capita (2006-PPP):** \$1,000 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2007)
- > **Literacy rate:** 46.4% (male 53.5%, female 39.6%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Amadou Toumani Toure (since June 8, 2002)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 8 daily newspapers, 40 periodicals; Radio: 192; Television stations: 2
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** The Malian Press and Advertisement Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 70,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

### MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: MALI



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

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

#### Unsustainable Mixed System (1-2):

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

#### Near Sustainability (2-3):

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

#### Sustainable (3-4):

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

## OBJECTIVE 1: FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Mali Objective Score: 2.65

In this objective, several indicators finished noticeably apart from the objective average. On the low side, Indicators 5 and 7, preferential legal treatment of public media and freedom of information, finished equally far behind; almost a full point. However, strengths in Indicators 3, 8 and 9, market entry, media access to international news sources, and free entry into the journalism profession, helped keep the average relatively strong with scores far ahead of the average.

In Mali freedom of expression is one of the basic principles of the budding democratic system. The Malian constitution formally guarantees the freedom of expression including the freedom of the media. In article 4, it stipulates that: "any person has the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, belief, opinion, expression and creation within the confines of the law." "The freedom of the press is recognized and guaranteed. It is exercised according to the conditions established by law. An independent newspaper regulated by organic law ensures equal access for all to the state media" (article 7). This freedom is exercised within the limits set by other regulatory and legal texts. "In our country the legislation obeys the logic of the African Charter for Human Rights and of the Universal Declaration to which Mali is a member," wrote Mamdou Tiéoulé Diarra, a lawyer and university professor.

Law No. 00-46/AN-RM passed on July 7, 2000 concerning the regime of the press and of press offenses regulates the freedom of expression in Mali. Malian legislation limits this freedom in cases of racial, national, or religious hatred and incitement to murder, all of which are prohibited by law. Freedom of expression is reflected in the practice of journalism, and with respect to this the panelists recognize that there is a setback. Many cases of journalists that were beaten or otherwise interfered with while doing their job were mentioned. Panelists posed the question: are these isolated acts of overzealous agents? There are ways of appeal, but generally they are not used in cases of aggression or threat.

There are also social burdens sometimes affecting the freedom of expression, among them the secondary roles played by women. While some men consider women to be "unimportant," many women underestimate their true potential well beyond what tradition assigns to them. As a result, sometimes women do not make use of, or are in effect denied, their right to freedom of expression. However, panelists noted that these prejudices do not make their way into legal proceedings.

Edict No. 92-337/P-CTSP, concerning the license to create private broadcast communication services specifies a number of aspects regarding the granting of frequencies. Some 200 radio stations are established and broadcasting across the country. The frequency granting commission is heterogeneous and relatively objective. In order to satisfy political demands and the ever-increasing requests, the state tends to resubmit certain texts on the media to the reading committee. Among other requirements, the applicant must be Malian and be committed to use the license in the national territory by observing a set of specifications. The frequencies are granted according to a planning logic that is virtually unknown to many.

Other laws that regulate broadcasting include the following:

- Decree No. 92-022 regulating the granting, suspension, or withdrawal of the license to create a private radio broadcasting service by terrestrial waves in frequency modulation.
- Decree No. 02-22 7 /P-RM given on May 10, 2002 concerning the type-status of the private radio broadcasting services by terrestrial waves in frequency modulation.
- Inter-Ministry Order No. 92 Mc-Mat/Ctsp/Ass-Mscp establishing the specifications of the private radio broadcasting services by terrestrial waves in frequency modulation.
- Order No. 95-0331 Mfc-Cab establishing the royalties for the private audio-visual communication services.

About all of this the panelists say that many broadcasters have gotten into trouble with the local authorities about the lack of transparency. According to Nouhoum Kéita, a journalist with the Kayira Radio network (one of its stations was closed during its test period in Niono), "the frequencies are granted arbitrarily, based on who the applicant is."

In an atypical development, the media are exempt from taxes, and panelists noted that this reflects the Malian government's appreciation of the role played by media in a democratic society. Paradoxically, with the exception of computers and related equipment, inputs and other equipment used by the media are often subjected to taxes by traders and accepted by the buyers at media outlets out of ignorance.

Every once in a while in Mali offenses against journalists are committed. However, there have not been any cases of murder. Malian journalists work in an almost absolutely safe environment. They are seldom victims of aggression and, when it happens, they count on the support of public opinion. In one case in July 2007, Adama Coulibaly, a journalist with Community Radio Kafokan, was assaulted

by a candidate running in a local election over coverage on election results. Coulibaly did file charges, but the two parties settled out of court.

The government of Mali passed Law no. 92-021 on October 5, 1992 changing the status of ORTM. It is a public institution with administrative functions. It functions according to a set of requirements just as any other broadcast outlets. Officially, the public service media is free from excessive political interference. Panelists found this to be relative. Despite their status, the public media still receive a state subsidy. The board of trustees of the public broadcaster is chaired by the minister of communications who certainly protects certain political interests, while the general director is appointed by government decree upon the recommendation of the minister of communications. One common accusation levelled against ORTM is that it gives greater consideration to broadcasting stories about the government to the detriment of the other political actors who complain of lack of balance.

Government officials also tend to provide more information to ORTM because they remain more or less the state media. However, in Mali there is also cronyism between some politicians and some private media or with ORTM such that "everyone has his journalist," according to one panelist, to whom the politician will deliver information, usually for purposes of manipulation.

Defamation is a criminal offense punished by the press law of Mali. Law No. 00-46/An-Rm passed on July 7, 2000 concerns the regime of the press and press offense definitions. In article 38,

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

##### FREE-SPEECH INDICATORS:

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

defamation is defined as any allegation or charge striking a blow at the honor or reputation of a person or organization. It is the journalists who must prove that they did not defame, not the plaintiff. It is rare for Malian journalists to go to prison because, despite the mistakes for which they may be accused, they usually do not come before a judge. Even when that happens, either the plaintiffs withdraw their plea or the court lightly punishes the journalist.

A high-profile case from June 2007, where a student's fictitious essay about a president having an affair with, and impregnating, a young woman was published and landed the student's teacher and several newspaper editors in jail. The case was quickly dubbed the "president's mistress affair" and received international attention. The accused teacher and editors were charged with "complicity in offending the head of state." A short time later, all involved were given suspended sentences or "time served," and the verdict was appealed. According to lawyer Mamadou Tiéoulé Diarra, although no solid evidence has been produced, there was political influence visible in the "president's mistress affair" that led to media professionals and others being thrown in jail in the first place.

Law No. 98-012 passed on January 19, 1998, regulating the relations between the administration and public service users, limits the types of information that can be accessed. Administrative non-normative documents such as files, reports, studies, statistical reports, guidelines, or fliers that may be interpreted as positive law documents are freely accessible. On the other hand, documents that, if consulted, may be damaging to secret governmental proceedings, national defense or foreign political secrets, the state security and public safety, the secrets of private life, medical files or in a general manner items in regards to legally protected information, cannot be accessed.

While this law has existed since 1998, very few people, including journalists and government officials, know about it. Accordingly, it is not respected in practice. To remedy this ignorance, the Commission for Institutional Development, in a pilot project, set up information offices in some administrative offices in the capital. The information offices are mandated to host, guide and, provide users with the information they need. Eventually the system will be widespread throughout the government.

Access to international news is freely permitted. The Malian media have access to the Internet, which has become an important free source of all kinds of news.

"A journalist is a person who has a degree in journalism or another university degree doubled by one year of professional experience and whose main paid activity is the gathering, processing and distribution of news and

information within a public or private, written or broadcast media outlet,” according to Article 4 of the Law No. 00-46/AN-RM. Edict No. 892-191/P-RM, instituting a committee to issue press cards, implements the law in terms of granting and withdrawing the press card. The government does not influence access to the profession.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Mali Objective Score: 1.88

In this objective, most of the indicators scored similarly to the overall average. However, panelists gave much better scores to Indicators 3 and 4, self-censorship and coverage of key events. On the other hand, they rated Indicator 5, pay levels for journalists a full point lower than the average.

“In Mali we practice a rent-paying journalism,” said Isaïe Somboro, a trustee of the Free Radio and Television Stations of Mali Union. Evidently journalists—particularly those working in the printed press—neither control nor check the information they publish. “The lack of professionalism is the great scourge of the Malian press as it has become the refuge of the unemployed searching to make a living,” according to Moussa Bolly, journalist and editor-in-chief of the independent daily newspaper *Les Echos*.

Panel discussions centered on how news processing is rather subjective and not professional. This practice creates frustrated people who miss no opportunity to show their discontent. Several related examples succeeded to nail the problem particularly in the case of national television. This discussion led the panelists to talk about the angles in a story. Apart from the

lack of professionalism, panelists noted that some politicians manipulate certain journalists, using them to settle scores. However, despite the problems related to specialization, there is an obvious will to cover all fields in order to produce news. “The media must be congratulated,” one panelist said.

A professional ethics code was developed by the media profession and was adopted by all media stakeholders in 1991. There is also a self-regulatory institution, the Observatory for the Deontology and the Ethics of the Press, created in 2002 to oversee the code. But otherwise Malian journalists flout their own ethics code. Many will not hesitate to write about the private love life of citizens using unverified information. Many examples were mentioned to illustrate breaches of professional ethics. Another point was made regarding the difficult separation of the private and public life in some cases, and how in such situations the journalist could use it as an extenuating circumstance.

Self-censorship exists although the environment is not always favorable. In general Malian journalists censor themselves for social and ethical reasons, but only rarely as a result of threats. When journalists are subject to social pressure because of a piece of news they published—which is common in Mali—they tend to use self-censorship. Often managers censor a piece of news they deem subjective or not in keeping with their editorial policy.

With the exception of information protected by the access to information laws, no subject is prohibited. “As a general rule, despite the lack of professionalism, any topic is newsworthy,” according to Gamer A. Dicko, a journalist with the national daily newspaper *L’Essor*. “There is of course no taboo subject, but Malians do not accept gratuitous personal attacks. There are social aspects in which no one gets involved because our society is based on this,” said Tiégoum Boubèye Maïga, journalist and manager of the All Communication Agency. In this vein, panelists said that the media cover key events, political and otherwise.

In Mali everything is designed to incite journalists to corruption: there are social practices bordering on crime, very low salaries given the cost of living, and a large salary discrepancy between the public and the private sector (base salaries in the public media almost equal the ceiling in private media). Some barely make the minimum wage. Corruption attacks ethical values, as one may have a high pay level and still give in to temptation. “Salaries don’t even exist, there are hand-outs. You close your eyes to the wrongdoings, and thus encourage them to accept gifts. So journalists organize themselves to crawl to people,” according to Seydou Baba Traoré, director of the national radio. Turnover is very high; many join to gain some experience before going over to work in ministries or NGOs.

#### JOURNALISM MEETS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF QUALITY.

##### PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM INDICATORS:

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

Speaking of news and entertainment balance in broadcast media, Nouhoum Kéïta of Radio Kayira complained, "More space is allocated to *Dombolo*<sup>1</sup> than to programs that should educate citizens. Some efforts are being made but amusements always hold sway. There are no discussions at all." Ramata Dia, director of the Guintan Network of Community Radio Stations drove the point home: "The Malian Broadcasting Service, which should play the role of public service, has taken the bread from the mouth of these local radio stations by encroaching on their territory with entertainment programs". The national radio is strives to offer varied programming with resources that do not enable it to satisfy the demands and expectations of listeners and viewers. Panelists lamented the absence of political discussions, which they said is due to the scarcity of well-prepared staff.

There is a crying need for equipment in Mali. The private printed press is under-equipped, using obsolete technical equipment. Of course, the public media seem to be in better shape. With the exception of the national radio and a few other private radio stations in the capital that enjoy state of the art technology, the provincial stations still have to work with analog and rudimentary equipment. This affects production and efficiency.

According to the panelists all is not gloomy. Journalists are specializing more and more in the editorial offices in various fields, such as business, economics or health and are producing stories of good quality.

### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

#### Mali Objective Score: 2.51

Indicators were spread out from the average, with only Indicator 1, plurality of news sources, scoring near the average. On the high side, Indicators 2, 5, and 7, citizen access to media, private broadcasters produce their own news, and a broad spectrum of social interests are covered, all finished about three-quarters of a point higher. However, finishing about three-quarters of a point lower than the average were Indicators 3, 4, and 6, public media reflect the views of the political spectrum, news agencies, and transparency of ownership.

In Mali there is a variety of news sources but they are concentrated in the large urban centers. In the rural areas, the main news source is the radio, given the difficulty of access to other media. Ownership of the private media is blurry. The public media often appear more as government media because of the strong influence of the executive

<sup>1</sup> Music and dance from the Central African Republic.

branch on this media. However, efforts are being made so that the media reflect all the existing social and political interests in the country.

In Mali there are some 200 private radio stations, a national radio and six regional radio stations. The printed press, found in cities and, at most outlets, written in French, includes some 40 titles. The state print media include the national daily newspaper written in French and the other publications in indigenous languages intended for the rural areas. In the case of television, the state still has a monopoly even though the Africable private television channel is being set up. In addition, two companies, Multi Canal and Malivision, rebroadcast in microwave with a scrambled foreign multi-channel television package. Also an urban phenomenon, the Internet is quickly developing, yet access to it is still limited.

Access to national and international media is not restricted. There are also four foreign radio stations fully or partially relayed by both public and private outlets. However, in the rural areas, there is an additional impediment: electricity. "Any citizen who wishes to express himself can be helped. It is the only benefit we have from the quantity of media outlets in Mali," commented Belco Tamboura, journalist and manager of the bi-weekly paper *L'Observateur*.

As a general rule, the public media are open to alternative points of view, and a committee for free access to the state media is in charge of making that happen. "Beyond all consideration, the question is to what extent the journalist plays his role of public service. In this context the public media will have to be split in two groups: *L'Essor* which makes enormous efforts to make the space accessible and

#### MULTIPLE NEWS SOURCES PROVIDE CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE AND OBJECTIVE NEWS.

##### PLURALITY OF NEWS SOURCES INDICATORS:

- > A plurality of affordable public and private news sources (e.g., print, broadcast, Internet) exists.
- > Citizens' access to domestic or international media is not restricted.
- > State or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest.
- > Independent news agencies gather and distribute news for print and broadcast media.
- > Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs.
- > Transparency of media ownership allows consumers to judge objectivity of news; media ownership is not concentrated in a few conglomerates.
- > A broad spectrum of social interests are reflected and represented in the media, including minority-language information sources.

ORTM which has become an impregnable head office. Often there is more self-censorship than anything else. One must continue repeating the master's voice," noted Tiégoum Boubèye Maïga. "The set of specifications to which ORTM is subject are as clear as spring water. However there are always overzealous agents who serve those that appointed them," Séydou Baba Traoré, manager of the ORTM Radio replied.

Mali has one public press agency: the Malian Press and Advertisement Agency (AMP).<sup>2</sup> It is the main provider of national news for various publications among whose subscribers one may find foreign embassies and other institutions. "The news provided by AMP is reliable in comparison with those provided by other agencies. The only problem is that it comes with a delay," said Ramata Dia, network manager of the community radio stations of Guintan. AMP makes efforts to cover the entire national territory using limited means. International agencies such as AFP or Reuters are mostly used by journals that comb the Internet for news.

Community radios are equipped and air their own shows that meet the needs and concerns of the local people. One criticism leveled against these stations is that they rely on staff who have not received the requisite training. "Community radios appear to be the soul of the homeland," wrote Mamadou Tiéoulé Diarra. In spite of all the criticism made against it the ORTM Radio produces good quality national programs.

Media ownership is not transparent since no one forces owners to make their identity public. In practice, certain politicians are associated with certain papers. The main area of non-transparency is that of financing sources for the main private press outlets: "Lately newspapers are created by the dozen. But the snag is that not even the publication managers know for whom they work because they have been contacted by middlemen," according to Moussa Bolly, editor in chief of the independent daily newspaper *Les Echos*. On the other hand the socio-economic context makes it impossible for business conglomerates to have a stranglehold over the media in Mali.

In the programs and pages of the Malian press a large spectrum of social interests is indeed present. Community radio shows reflect the social, economic, and cultural realities of their locales. The shows of ORTM are broadcast in indigenous languages.

<sup>2</sup> Created by Law No. 92-036/ AN-RM passed on December 24, 1992, AMP is in charge of, among other things, reselling a world news service contracted by agreement or alliance with other press agencies to the national media and private users; of enforcing the regulatory legislation with respect to advertising in the Republic of Mali; of gathering, producing or facilitating production of advertisements; of ensuring the management of advertising for the State and any applicable third parties; of being a part of the functioning of all structures at work for the development of advertising in Mali.

## OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### Mali Objective Score: 1.46

Given the circumstances under which they were established, with little start-up capital, media enterprises are still lacking in efficiency and professionalism. As a result of their specific character, which accords them considerable freedom but is characterized by a lack of professional standards in their operation, these enterprises still operate on a makeshift basis. Panelists' scores reflected this reality, and Objective 4 received the lowest score of the five objectives. Most indicators scored close to the average, with Indicator 6, market research, receiving by far the lowest score. One exception was Indicator 5, government subsidies for private media, which scored a full point higher than the average.

Generally the media outlets are not sustainable as they live from hand to mouth as businesses. Living off the owner's funds, they have trouble generating profits and paying their employees properly. Their irregular income does not ensure their profitability. Printing of newspapers is never certain, as there may not be the funds to cover printing costs. "Each media outlet has its own distribution channels so they make do with what they have," stressed Mamadou Tiéoulé Diarra.

Management practices at private media are typically not rigorous. They do not use effective accounting systems. Most of the time, they do not have specialized personnel for marketing and accounting. The term "business plan" is unheard of to most.

In Mali the media receive public funding. The other less important sources are advertising, sponsorship, and street

## INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARE WELL-MANAGED BUSINESSES, ALLOWING EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INDICATORS:

- > Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses.
- > Media receive revenue from a multitude of sources.
- > Advertising agencies and related industries support an advertising market.
- > Advertising revenue as a percentage of total revenue is in line with accepted standards at commercial outlets.
- > Independent media do not receive government subsidies.
- > Market research is used to formulate strategic plans, enhance advertising revenue, and tailor products to the needs and interests of audiences.
- > Broadcast ratings and circulation figures are reliably and independently produced.



sales. "In Bamako the readership has shrunk through unfair practices by which one copy is read by 10 people. There are readers but very few buyers," explained Mahamane Hamèye Cissé, managing editor of the independent satirical newspaper *Le Scorpion*.

AMP, a state institution, has a monopoly on advertising, but it does not enforce this advantage. This explains the creation of private communication and advertisement agencies. In practice, when media outlets try to win advertising contracts, their success depends of the nature of their interpersonal relationships. It is better if the media owners' associations negotiate with the government and then distribute advertisements or commercials among the different outlets. It also happens that representatives of the government negotiate on individual basis with the media outlets of their choice. This influences the content of that media, panelists said. The media outlets do not have a culture of advertising, which is why in their system of organization one hardly finds marketing staff whose duty it is to sell advertisements.

The advertisement sector is very limited. There are but a few advertisers and always the same. "Revenues from advertising are insufficient; hence the media have a hard time getting out of the woods based only on the income generated by advertising," complained to Sékouba Samaké, editor in chief of the independent daily newspaper *Info Matin*. The national daily newspaper *L'Essor* (a subsidiary of AMP) swipes up most of the advertising, legal notices, and subscriptions. All the state agencies subscribe to *L'Essor* and all their announcements and advertisements are automatically published in it.

For 11 years the Malian government has been granting CFAF 200 million to the press. In order to be eligible for this subsidy, the media outlets must meet some requirements<sup>3</sup> according to article 7 of Decree No. 03- 264 /P-RM. All press outlets are considered based on the same criteria. Even the public outlets AMP and ORTM, already receiving subsidies to the extent of two-thirds of their budget, are considered for 10 percent of this aid. This is not agreeable to many media outlets, and they complain of unfair competition. Given the increasing number of press outlets, the share that comes back to each of them is becoming less and less significant.

<sup>3</sup> a) to hold an active status as a company, cooperation, association, economic interest group or public press institution;

b) to ensure regular bookkeeping and maintain good standing in terms of taxes;

c) to observe labor legislation, particularly registration of employees with the social security administration;

d) to ensure regular publication of the newspaper or, in case of a radio or television station, regular production of shows throughout the previous budget year.

The distribution of this subsidy was entrusted to a committee presided by the minister of communications.

Rarely does true market research precede the creation of a press outlet in Mali. The easy conditions and the rapid pace at which media enterprises are established attract Malians, who often go into it for the sake of prestige. Inadequate resources make market research a luxury. There are no reliable statistics on the activities of the media. Generally, circulation figures announced are inflated to attract advertisers.

Calculating audience ratings has not yet become a part of broadcast practices. There is no organization in charge of measuring audience ratings and media distribution. The existing polling institute occasionally conducts research, made to order, concerning newspapers, radio and television stations.

## OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

### Mali Objective Score: 2.30

As a general rule, in Mali supporting institutions act in the interest of independent media. However, their aid is insufficient and provides little help for improving journalistic professionalism. Professional associations have been more or less efficient for a decade. There is no proper school for training journalists in Mali. The existing institutions give some training on journalism in addition to their traditional programs. Everybody acknowledges the necessity and urgency of creating a training institution for the journalistic profession in Mali. Panelists reflected this state of affairs with indicator scores that fell close to the average, except for Indicator 2, professional associations, which was quite a bit higher, and Indicator 4, academic journalism programs, which ended up a full point less than the average.

#### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS FUNCTION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA.

##### SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS INDICATORS:

- > Trade associations represent the interests of private media owners and provide member services.
- > Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights.
- > NGOs support free speech and independent media.
- > Quality journalism degree programs that provide substantial practical experience exist.
- > Short-term training and in-service training programs allow journalists to upgrade skills or acquire new skills.
- > Sources of newsprint and printing facilities are in private hands, apolitical, and unrestricted.
- > Channels of media distribution (kiosks, transmitters, Internet) are private, apolitical, and unrestricted.

Two owners' associations exist in Mali: the Private Press Publishers' Association and the Union of Free Radio and Television Stations of Mali. However, they need more means so that their influence with respect to protecting the interests of the media professionals may be enhanced.

There are some 60 associations and professional networks working for the protection of their members' interests, and all are independent of the government. These include associations that specialize in specific areas of journalism, such as sports, economics, health, environment, culture, and politics. Many panelists agreed that there are even too many associations for Mali's young press. All of them are part of a centralized structure: the Press House. This is not the case of the unions, as there is only one of them that works exclusively with the public media.

Both the professional and trade associations are involved in training programs and advocacy on behalf of their members. While organized on a national level, some have local representative offices.

Civil society is active in defending freedom of the press. NGOs such as the International Human Rights League and the Malian Human Rights Association issue statements in protest against assaults or other violations of the rights of the media. They also provide legal assistance and mobilize lawyers when necessary.

Mali does not have a proper school of journalism, but there are schools offering communication and marketing training programs that include journalism courses. These training programs are of a more theoretical than practical nature and the quality of candidates sent to the job markets leaves a lot to be desired. "I taught at one of these schools for three years. I simply stopped because their program in journalism is not what it should be," said Fatoumata Maïga, a journalist with the national daily newspaper *L'Essor*. Today these schools struggle with problems related to the approval of the degrees they issue, as they have yet to meet accreditation requirements.

To fill the absence of a school of journalism, the Press House, a federative association of the media, offers advanced training programs to media professionals. Created in 1996, the Press House receives CFAF 30 million out of the 200 million subsidy granted by the state. This godsend supports continuous professional training within various media outlets. For the same capacity-increasing purpose, the Press House also receives financial support from national and international NGO partners. Based on their specific needs, the individual associations also organize training seminars.

With the exception of the national daily paper *L'Essor* and other papers published by AMP, most printing houses are private. AMP is one of the few media organizations that

possess their own printing press. The few private newspapers that own printing presses use them to generate additional revenue. In practice, there is no governmental interference or pressure at this level.

Distribution channels are apolitical and free, though disorganized. The distribution of the printed press is the bottleneck of newspapers, as they resort to having to convince owners of kiosks or informal distributors to carry their newspaper. Private radio stations own their own transmitters and towers, even if their facilities often do not conform to the latest technical standards. The Internet is no longer a monopoly of a conglomerate. Although originally it was subject to a governmental monopoly by the Telephone Company of Mali (Sotelma), it is now open to any business.

## List of Panel Participants

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**Gamer Dicko**, journalist, National Union of the Press and Publishing, Bamako

**Fatoumata Maïga**, journalist, *L'Essor*, Bamako

**Amadou Tiéoulé Diarra**, lawyer, lecturer, University of Bamako

**Seydou Baba Traoré**, manager, Mali Broadcasting Corporation, Bamako

**Tiégom Boubèye Maïga**, general manager, Algaita Communication, Bamako

**Moussa Bolly**, editor-in-chief, *Les Echos*, Bamako

**Sékouba Samaké**, journalist, *Info Matin*, Bamako

**Isaïe Somboro**, trustee, Union of Free Radio and Television Stations, Bamako

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## Moderator

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