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TOGO

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For roughly a decade, Togolese media have been moving in two directions at once. The number of media outlets has been booming since the late 1990s. Today the country has 79 radio stations, 11 television channels and about 40 publications. Yet despite these numbers, the Togolese media lack professionalism. In fact, a turbulent political situation, despite signs of promise, has helped to diminish the quality of journalism in the tiny West African country.

All but a few journalists have become mouthpieces of political parties, which shamelessly use them to promote their agendas. The lack of qualifications of such journalists and their ignorance of ethical rules and responsibilities expose them to all sorts of influences that compromise their integrity and undermine their work.

Free-press advocates in Togo hope that recent political developments will reverse this downward course. In 2004, Togo adopted a press law that decriminalized media-related offenses. Soon afterward, the political turmoil that followed the death of longtime dictator Gnassingbe Eyadema showed signs of abating, and Togo held parliamentary elections in October 2007 that were certified as free and fair.

Media owners created their own association in 2008, though attempts to create a single journalists group have so far been unsuccessful. Media professionals lack the organization to address many of the problems facing the media in a cohesive way.

Togo's score fell by 0.19 points to 1.56 this year and it remains in the middle of the "unsustainable, mixed system" category. Although Togo's score for Freedom of Speech and Business Management edged up slightly, the more significant losses in Professional Journalism, Plurality of News, and Supporting Institutions caused the net loss of score.

TOGO

# TOGO AT A GLANCE

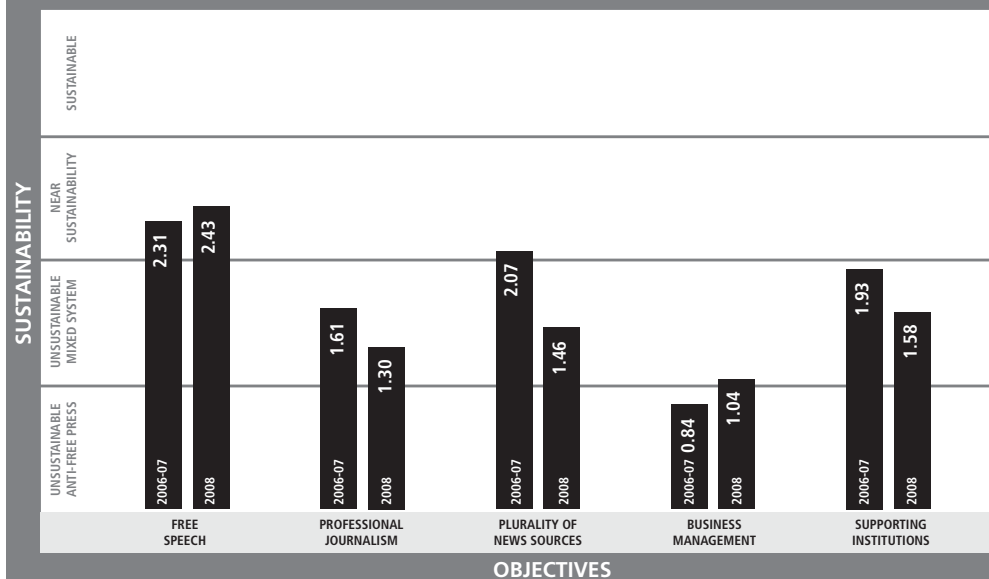
## GENERAL

- > **Population:** 5,858,673 (July 2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Lomé
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** African (40 tribes; largest and most important are Ewe, Mina, and Kabre) 99%, European and Syrian-Lebanese less than 1% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 29%, Muslim 20%, indigenous beliefs 51% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** French (official and the language of commerce), Ewe, Mina, Kabye, Dagomba (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2007-Atlas):** \$2.383 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **GNI per capita (2007-PPP):** \$800 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008)
- > **Literacy rate:** 60.9% (male 75.4%, female 46.9%) (2003 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** President Faure Gnassingbe (since May 4, 2005)

## MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 400 regularly registered publications, out of which 45 are currently operational; Radio: 98 registered radio stations, 96 operational countrywide; Television stations: 8 registered television stations, 6 fully operational, 2 on test transmission
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** N/A
- > **Broadcast ratings:** N/A
- > **News agencies:** The Togo News Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 320,000 (2006 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: TOGO



### 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

### Togo Objective Score: 2.43

The panel's score for this objective, 2.43, reflects the fact that free speech is granted by law but that the laws are only partially enforced in reality. While developments in the past years have eased political pressure on the media to a degree, overall the progress has not become entrenched and the government makes decisions that are not in line with the spirit of freedom of the press.

For example, in February 2008, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported that Daniel Lawson-Drakey, a journalist from privately-owned Nana FM, was banned from providing analysis, commentary, and other editorial material by the Higher Communications and Broadcast Authority. The Authority had determined that Lawson-Drakey had contravened "respect of the dignity of the human person and the ethics in the field of information and communication." IFJ asserted that the move was politically motivated and that regulation of journalists should not be overseen by the state, but rather the media itself.

The licensing of broadcast media is competitive and sometimes fair, but still subject to political manipulation. There is some confusion in the process because it is split between two state agencies: the Higher Communications and Broadcast Authority, which grants licenses, and the

#### 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.

*When journalists are attacked, the people behind the crimes are never punished. In rare cases, the authorities announce the opening of investigations to find the perpetrators of such attacks, but these investigations have never led to anything.*

Public Telecommunications Regulating Authority, which grants frequencies.

Broadcast media pay annual license fees, but print media do not. In general, the government does not give tax relief or other preferential treatment to the media.

When journalists are attacked, the people behind the crimes are never punished. In rare cases, the authorities announce the opening of investigations to find the perpetrators of such attacks, but these investigations have never led to anything.

State-run and public media only serve the government, although in the last two years their treatment of the news has improved slightly.

Article 58 of Togo's Criminal Code makes libel a criminal offense, but court judgments do not conform to guidelines set out in the law. Amendments in 2004 to the Criminal Code struck prison sentences for libel as part of a deal with the European Union to end sanctions.

Public information is not accessible by everyone. State media are given preferential treatment when the government releases information.

Media face no government restrictions on use of foreign press reports, however, sometimes it can be difficult for media to do so for technical reasons, such as poor Internet connectivity. There are no restrictions to entering the journalist profession.

## OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

### Togo Objective Score: 1.30

Panelists said the lack of training opportunities and journalists' disrespect of ethics and responsibilities underpinned all of the Togolese media's shortcomings.

Most reports are biased and superficial, and ethical standards are often infringed when matters of survival are at stake. Most journalists and editors practice self-censorship: it is unusual to encounter reports in which nothing is held back. Togolese journalists often refrain from reporting on major events and

*Practically all journalists, regardless of their medium, are poorly paid, if they are paid at all. This situation makes them vulnerable to corruption, political patronage, and pressures of all kinds.*

issues such as national security and defense, corruption, and anything related to the way public affairs are managed.

Practically all journalists, regardless of their medium, are poorly paid, if they are paid at all. This situation makes them vulnerable to corruption, political patronage, and pressures of all kinds.

Broadcast media devote more than 75 percent of their air time to entertainment, while real news is minimal. Television and radio stations lack the financial resources necessary for producing their own programs. Although there are no specialized programs, some media air shows on health, education, and the economy on an infrequent basis.

In an age of new information and communication technologies, technical facilities and equipment are rudimentary. Rotary presses, film cameras, and outdated recording devices are still used.

#### 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).

#### OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

##### Togo Objective Score: 1.46

Togo has a variety of news sources, but they do not thoroughly cover the whole spectrum of opinions and interests. Rather, only two points of view are available at the national level: those of the opposition and the ruling party. The news appearing in the media does not meet citizens' expectations.

Citizens have unrestricted access to national and international media. But in rural areas that lack basic infrastructure such as electricity and telephones, people have trouble getting information. Rural populations have no access to the Internet. Community radio stations are still in their early stages.

Available sources of international news include Radio France International, the BBC, Gabon's Africa 1, Agence France-Presse, Panapresse, and Reuters, as well as the Internet and cellular and fixed telephone connections. Internet access, however, remains too expensive—when it is available at all—throughout the country. Also Radio and Television Lomé, the two national stations, cannot be picked up throughout the entire country despite its small size.

Most reports on state-run media are devoted to news about the government, and these media often do not present alternative points of view. There are few cultural or educational programs.

#### 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.

The only domestic news service, the Togo News Agency, is run by the government. Media have access to news from international agencies, including AFP, Panapresse, Reuters, and the Associated Press, and their stories and content are used by all Togolese media, sometimes without accreditation or payment.

The private broadcast media produce very few news programs of their own. Instead, they rebroadcast the programs of foreign channels such as TV5-Monde, RFI, Deutche-Welle, Voice of America, the BBC, and others.

It is difficult to identify the real owners of most media outlets in Togo.

The Togolese media only address some social issues. There are no private newspapers in the national language.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

### **Togo Objective Score: 1.04**

The entire Togolese media sector functions informally in terms of business practices. Neither newspapers nor radio stations are managed as real companies, which would ensure their independence. Media owners have no knowledge of business management.

Media outlets and supporting companies are neither profitable nor professional. Advertising agencies are in reality little more than mediocre production studios or advertisement and commercial distribution outlets. The advertising market is not organized.

#### **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.

*Media outlets and supporting companies are neither profitable nor professional. Advertising agencies are in reality little more than mediocre production studios or advertisement and commercial distribution outlets. The advertising market is not organized.*

Since advertising provides little revenue, the media rely on handouts from businesses or politicians. Not even the state-run media, which must receive government subsidies according to law, have been given their due. In the local radio sector, three community radio stations are financed by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

The government-run daily newspaper, Togo-Presse, and the private written press are poorly distributed because of the lack of a distribution network. There are no real supporting enterprises for the media, hurting sales potential and reach of media outlets.

A government subsidy established by law for the private media is not yet available, though informal government grants have been made. The government granted XOF 50 million (\$95,000) to the private media in 2006 and XOF 37 million (\$76,000) in 2007, gestures that had the appearance of an attempt to buy journalists with public funds. In 2009, a state subsidy of XOF 300 million (\$650,000) is to be released.

At this time, no market research is available, and there are no organizations that measure broadcast ratings or print runs. In general, reliable statistics on the Togolese press are difficult to find.

#### **OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS**

### **Togo Objective Score: 1.58**

Togo has a large number of independent organizations that might be expected to support the development of free media, but many do not.

A new media owners' association, the National Council of Media Owners, was created about one year ago through a merger of several existing owners' groups. So far, this board has not worked to uphold the professional interests of the media. Groups of media workers—the Independent Journalists Union of Togo, the Free Union of Communication, and the Union of Information Agents, Technicians, and



*There are no national NGOs supporting the freedom and independence of the media. However, individual lawyers have helped journalists who have had to deal with the justice system.*

Journalists from the Public Media—do work for the protection and defense of the rights of journalists. These associations also train their members through seminars and workshops. But neither the government nor any of these associations has implemented a journalist-training policy.

There are no national NGOs supporting the freedom and independence of the media. However, individual lawyers have helped journalists who have had to deal with the justice system.

Almost every Togolese with a journalism degree from a quality institution has retired. There is no school of journalism in Togo, only centers and institutions that offer training in business communication. Among journalists who were hired without training, many are resistant to obtaining any type of qualification.

Private newspapers have no printing facilities of their own, but instead are published by printing firms owned by private individuals.

Newspapers are sold in the open, or occasionally in bookstores and grocery stores. Itinerant salespeople also sell them. There is no distribution network to speak of, and newspapers cannot make money through an Internet presence.

#### 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.

## List of Panel Participants

**Yacoubi Tchatchibara**, journalist, trainer, ESTAC School of Communication, Lomé

**Victor Toulassi**, journalist, communication consultant Group for Reflective Action for Democracy and Development, Lomé

**Edem Sowu**, human rights activist; ACAT-Togo, Lomé

**Ebénézer Latévi Lawson**, director CFPC Communication Training School, Lomé

**Komlan Adanlessoussi**, manager, Radio Voice of the Plateau, Danyi

**Claudine Assiba Akakpo**, manager, Togo News Agency, Lomé

**Komla Valentin Nyatika**, journalist, president, Togolese League of Voters, Lomé

**Mawuli Agbotse Kodjo**, general manager, African Cultural Entrepreneurs Network, Lomé

**Anoumou Kate-Aziaglo**, managing editor, Togopresse, Lomé

**Rita Afi Dovi Gbodui**, journalist; president, Togolese Observatory for the Image of Women in the Media, Lomé

**Kossi Dodzi Adigbo**, attorney, Lomé

**Michelle A.A. Nousseossi Aguey**, jurist, GF2D, Lomé

## Moderator

**Assiongbon Francis Pedro Amuzun**, publication manager, *Crocodile Newspaper*; secretary-general of the Togolese League of Electors, Lomé

## Observer

**Franck Ayawo Assah**, correspondent, Panapresse and Media Foundation for West Africa, Lomé

## Reporter

**Ahlin Papou Kponton**, journalist, webmaster, Lomé

*The Togo study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, Media Foundation West Africa, Accra, Ghana.*

