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GUINEA

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Since the death of Guinea's president, Lansana Conté, in 2008, political upheaval has shaken Guinea. A new military regime, led by the National Council for Democracy and Development (known by its French acronym, CNDD), took over soon after his death. Initially, Guineans drew relief from the non-violent transition and welcomed the new regime, which promised elections in 2010. Before long, though, political opposition began to heat up, amid speculation that the country's new leader, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, might stand in the future elections, despite his earlier promises to the contrary.

In September 2009, the opposition coalition known as Forces Vives mobilized a demonstration at the September 28 Stadium (named for the 1958 date when Guineans voted for independence, ending Guinea's days as a French colony). Although intended to support democracy and head off a last-minute coup that would undo all the progress made in the electoral process, the demonstration turned bloody at the hands of security forces. More than 150 people lost their lives, more than a thousand were injured, women were raped, members of the press were manhandled, and the opposition political party leaders were beaten and thrown into prison. A United Nations panel investigation pinned the blame on CNDD members for their involvement in the massacre. The ordeal led many international partners to suspend investments and development activities in the country. Following an attempt on Camara's life in December 2009, Brigadier General Sékouba Konaté was named interim president. His promise of free and transparent elections in June 2010 gave Guineans cause for hope.

Despite this upheaval, the MSI revealed discernible progress in the media sector over the past year. Guinea's professional media associations, including the Guinean Union of Free Radio and Television Broadcasters (known by its French acronym, URTELGUI), launched an all-out offensive against the National Media Council (known by its French acronym, CNC) to defend democratic liberties and freedom of the press. Media associations also condemned the heavy-handed violence against reporters on September 28, 2009. Although CNC undermined press freedom by banning private radio stations from broadcasting political programs, people may express themselves freely on the airwaves and in foreign media outlets. Over the past few years, 20 or so private radio stations have joined the airwaves. Community radio stations now blanket almost all of the country, providing Guineans with a diverse range of information.

Internet affordability continues to improve, with new media options filling the gaps left by the traditional press. In the capital, people can listen to international channels easily. Much work remains, however, in the area of media professionalism and in updating the facilities of most media outlets to compete on a global scale. Further, Guinea's struggling economy and impacts business management and by extension the ability of media to upgrade equipment. Panelists showed optimism, even if overall their scores showed little overall change compared to last year.

GUINEA AT A GLANCE

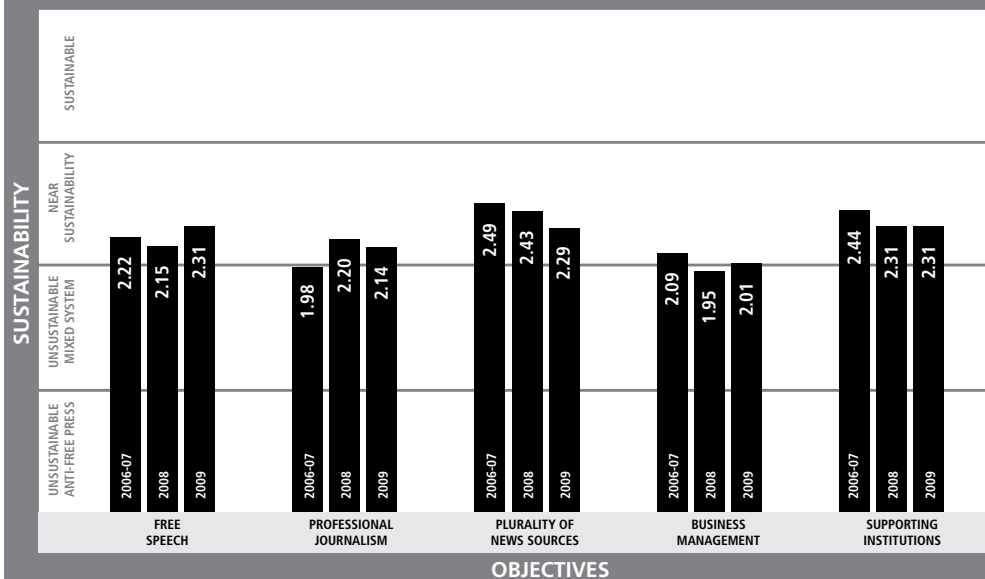
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 10,324,025 (July 2010 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital city:** Conakry
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Peuhl 40%, Malinke 30%, Soussou 20%, smaller ethnic groups 10% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Muslim 85%, Christian 8%, indigenous beliefs 7% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages:** French (official); each ethnic group has its own language (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$3.771 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$940 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 29.5% (male 42.6%, female 18.1%) (2004 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **President or top authority:** General Sekouba Konaté, Interim President (Head of the military Government since December 3, 2009)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print outlets, radio stations, television stations:** Print: 240 titles (including 15 private weeklies which appear more or less regularly and have circulations of between 1,000 and 10,000); Radio Stations: 34, including 6 public channels, 16 community radio stations and 12 private radio stations; Television Stations: 1 public channel
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top four by circulation: *Le Lynx*, *l'Indépendant*, *l'Observateur*, *Le Diplomate*
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: Familia FM (independent community radio); Espace FM (commercial); Radio Nostalgie (commercial)
- > **News agencies:** Guinean Press Agency (state-owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in media sector:** N/A
- > **Internet usage:** 90,000 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: GUINEA



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

Guinea Objective Score: 2.31

The country's fundamental law recognizes freedom of speech, but the law was suspended following the army coup d'état in December 2008. The Organic Law L005 of December 1991 backs up the law's provisions, making press outlets relatively easy to create. Additionally, this law protects Guineans against harassment for their opinions. With the proliferation of independent media, and private radio stations in particular, the panelists are seeing fewer and fewer restrictions on freedom of speech. They noted, for example, that listeners can express themselves freely on private stations.

However, a few hangovers from the dictatorship hold back the progress of the journalism profession in Guinea. Significantly, the CNC chair decided to ban mention of political subjects in all interactive broadcasts, in all languages. Ibrahima Cissé, an instructor at the Institute of Information and Communication Sciences, said that the media community and radio listeners see the decision as a violation of their freedom of expression, in contempt of the decree liberalizing the airwaves. URTELGUI reacted vehemently to the decision and called on its members to continue to air their programs as normal—bearing in mind that they must uphold the media's code of ethics.

Additionally, the panelists commented that Guinea lacks legal protections against violations of freedom of speech

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.

The second half of 2009 was characterized by frequent acts of violence against media professionals by the authorities. The tragic events of September 28, during which 157 opposition demonstrators were massacred, did not spare journalists.

legislation, as the state continues to wield influence over the judiciary. The panelists noted, however, that the government does not restrict access to the Internet.

Guinea's state structures overseeing electronic media licensing include the Ministry of Communication and New Information Technologies, CNC, and the National Department of Homeland Surveillance. The Ministry's Post and Telecommunication Regulatory Agency issues radio and television station licenses. Although Guinean law itself does not contain preferential provisions, licensing outcomes tend to depend upon the mood of the officials examining the files. Panelists expressed their impression that officials do grant licenses on a preferential basis, with Cissé commenting that a degree of wheeling and dealing is involved. Additionally, politician investment in radio stations such as Gangan FM, Soleil FM, and Continental FM raises questions about preferential treatment. Such problems notwithstanding, it is possible that some applicants for licenses do not meet the bid specifications and requirements. As noted in last year's MSI, the government provides no appeals process for those denied licenses.

After the 2005 liberalization of the airwaves, legal measures for regulating the radio and television media came into effect, setting out the conditions to establish and operate private radio and television broadcasting stations in Guinea. With the exception of religious groups and political parties, anyone could set up a radio or television station in Guinea, provided they complied with scrupulous conditions and paid GNF 15,000,000 (\$2,960) to obtain a frequency—a fee some private broadcasters consider exorbitant. Ultimately, the annual fees were set at GNF 25,000,000 (\$4,930) for commercial radio stations; GNF 2,000,000 (\$395) for community radio stations; GNF 5,000,000 (\$985) for commercial television stations, and; GNF 3,000,000 (\$590) for community television stations. Foreign radio and television broadcasting channels signed agreements with the communications ministry to set up operations in Guinea.

Regarding market entry, the panelists noted that the government imposes no restrictions, and that private

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newspapers can launch without incurring enormous costs. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, a journalist with the Guinean Independent Press Association (known by its French acronym, AGEPI), pointed out that Guinea has practically no VAT; the government does not levy taxes or charge annual fees, and essentially leaves the print media alone.

The second half of 2009 was characterized by frequent acts of violence against media professionals by the authorities. The tragic events of September 28, during which 157 opposition demonstrators were massacred, did not spare journalists. Chaikou Balde, of the Guinean Organization for the Defense of Human and Citizen's Rights, witnessed the events and said that many journalists were attacked or arrested; others lost their reporting equipment and material. Reporters from *Le Lynx* newspaper and Familia FM and Espace FM were nearly killed. Others were arrested and imprisoned, while BBC and RFI correspondents were forced into exile. Although the local media covered the events, the perpetrators were not apprehended or charged. However, Cherif Diallo, station chief of Bissikrima Community Radio in Dabola, countered that the media shied away from talking about the events, and no one had been tracked down or prosecuted because journalists have no legal recourse. Silence on the part of the victims and the media is more dangerous than the acts of the criminals themselves, he said; if journalists want protection, they must speak out when the rights of their colleagues are violated.

Although the state and independent media are treated equally legislatively, the panelists said that the state media benefit from special treatment. Cissé underscored the point that the public media are all under the thumb of those in power. The events of September 28 helped reveal to Guineans that the government controls the public media. The state radio and television stations read out incendiary scripts that day, compromising national unity and damaging hopes of cooperation with the international community. Furthermore, Cherif Diallo noted that state radio enjoys better conditions in the field than private radio stations but it fails to give the public the news it demands. The stations capable of providing

the news that citizens need lack the operational freedom to work in the field. Balde commented on the lack of objective or rational criteria in force to appoint staff in the state-run media; instead, some staffers win plum posts in reward for demagoguery and opportunism.

Curiously, reported the panelists, the government also manipulates some private stations, such as Familia FM. Panelists detect an ethnic bias in the reports of events in the field broadcast by that station, with statements likely to disturb public order—to the extent that URTELGUI issued a bulletin reminding its members of their ethical and professional obligations, and urging them to work toward bringing peace and political and social stability to Guinea.

Regarding defamation laws, if a newspaper or radio station is suspected of defamation, the CNC's professional ethics division investigates. Depending on the seriousness of the case, and after verifying the facts, CNC hands down any sanctions—suspension backed by fines, for example. Very serious cases are sent to court. The law stipulates clearly that complainants are allowed the right of reply. Any corrections must be carried *gratis* and at the top of the very next issue or broadcast in the very next edition, or in one chosen by the authority.

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Guinean law does not hold Internet service providers and web hosting companies legally responsible for content. But the panelists noted that authorities cannot control web content easily, as most sites are hosted outside the country.

Although no laws obstruct the media's access to public information, access is nonetheless a complex issue, dependent on several factors. Cissé said that in practice, authorities grant the public media favors in this area. As an example, he described how the authorities only allowed Radio Télévision Guinéenne (RTG) to cover the political activities of soldiers in their camp, while Familia FM and Sabary FM were turned away. However, Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said that the lack of skill amongst journalists is partly to blame, as well—access sometimes hinges on the attitude and network of the journalists involved, and on the reputation of their outlets. In Diallo's view, access to information becomes easier if the media behave responsibly.

Lancine Camara of *Horoya*, a national newspaper, gave a qualified response, noting that apart from media coverage of official ceremonies, the national radio or printed press do

not gain special access to information. And in some cases, the private media have greater access to information than state media; sometimes agents of the administration deliver articles to the doorstep of private outlets.

Guinea enjoys relatively open access to international news and news sources, with access to RFI, BBC and VOA programming. Some local media outlets, in particular Sabry FM and Familia FM, rebroadcast VOA programs. Oumou Hawa Sylla of Radio Kaloum Stereo warned that using programs in that way demands a high degree of professionalism; although all media houses rebroadcast or redistribute programs, they should not just parrot the news from foreign stations—they should put the information into context for their listeners, he said.

The government does not prohibit or restrict Internet access, though Balde commented that cost is a limiting factor for some. Some media outlets can afford to subscribe to an Internet service, but the high price deters most editorial offices from offering access—forcing many journalists to use cybercafés. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo noted that some private newspapers and cybercafé managers have forged partnerships; as a result, the print media have enjoyed greatly improved Internet access since 2008.

Education sector reforms in Guinea open tracks for journalists both in public sector and private sector higher education institutions. However, the panelists criticized the lack of regulations on the recruitment side, noting that the applicant selection process is not very rigorous.

The government does not restrict anyone from practicing as a journalist and does not demand licenses. The panelists noted also that the government, in keeping with the law, does allow journalists to form associations. However, Sylla lamented that anyone can become a journalist in Guinea; to break into broadcasting, one needs only the ability to speak well. In his view, radio stations that employ presenters with no journalism training are a serious problem. Aminata Tounkara, of Search for Common Ground, shared her impression that some private media outlets employ journalists without any experience or training in journalism; she suspected they obtain their jobs through nepotism.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Guinea Objective Score: 2.14

This year, the MSI panelists noted that a number of private media outlets have made significant improvements in the collection and handling of news. For example, the panel praised the private radio stations Radio Nostalgie, Djigui FM, Espace FM, and Soleil FM for their professional news

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bulletins. The panel remarked that those stations benefit from well-trained reporters who take care to check their facts before stories air. The panelists also commented that Espace FM broadcasts objective material, ensures balance of coverage, and uses its sources judiciously. Despite that progress, the panelists noted some shortcomings among producers at other private radio stations. Tounkara noted that increasingly, some of the topics that private radio stations address require a great deal of investigative work—but that journalists leading the discussions are obviously not up to the task. Sylla added that although many journalists try their best to be objective and even-handed, sometimes they simply lack the ability or the means.

Some panelists singled out *Le Lynx*, *L'Indépendant*, and *Le Populaire* as well as some online media (such as guineenews.org and tamtam.com) for their professionalism. Ismail Kabiné Camara, of *Le Diplomate*, praised tamtam.com's reporting as mostly objective, and noted that any lapses likely stem from a lack of training and professionalism rather than a desire to do harm. Lancine Camara offered a less rosy view of some of the newspapers employing under-experienced journalists, finding that they tend to enliven their scripts with "news" from café-bars.

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).

Balde stressed that the working conditions create fertile ground for corruption, and Sylla agreed, noting that the journalists have little incentive or reward for upholding ethical and professional standards.

Although generally the state media employ professional journalists, papers and programs tend to reflect the views of the authorities in power. A key example is the CNC's decision to keep leaders of political parties off official media channel airwaves for a good part of 2009.

Professional ethical standards and codes for the journalism profession exist. The Guinean Association of Journalists, the Guinean Observatory of Media Professional Ethics, and other journalist organizations in Guinea helped to develop these guidelines. The authors based some of the standards on those set by the West African Journalists Association, a sub-regional structure for monitoring media ethics and professional conduct. The low professional level of journalists, however, complicates compliance with those standards. Lancine Camara found that the standards have not been adequately disseminated or promoted within the media. They are not popular among those who know about the standards, and people are not keen to find out about them.

According to the panelists, journalists violate ethical standards most frequently out of poverty and poor working environments. Balde stressed that the working conditions create fertile ground for corruption, and Sylla agreed, noting that the journalists have little incentive or reward for upholding ethical and professional standards.

Panelists described self-censorship as a spreading cancer at some media houses, particularly among the state media. Cissé said that journalists at the state-run outlets carry anything that portrays the authorities in a good light, but they are subject to a gag on any information deemed sometimes a simple personal reaction to a story causes a journalist to cover up some information, and sometimes articles are pulled at the last minute when a minister intervenes and orders it to be removed.

Self-censorship is rare in the private media but does exist. Media such as Soleil FM have censored their own broadcasts; for example, Soleil temporarily halted the program *La Grogne* (*The Grumble*) after the events of September 28, 2009. On the other hand, stations such as Espace FM take a stance against self-censorship, airing what they feel would be of interest to

their audiences even when a story could invoke the wrath of the authorities.

Generally, the freedom to cover key events and issues depends on the status of the medium in question. In the state media, authorities' demands direct the editorial line. State journalists avoid touching on sensitive topics, such as questions of sovereignty, limiting themselves instead to safe events, such as official visits and inauguration ceremonies. In the official media, Sylla said, sometimes managing editors use the pretext of "poor timing" to block the work of journalists that write newspaper opinion pieces.

The panelists did note, however, that the private media are not subject to such restrictions in terms of covering key issues and events. Authorities do not pressure newspapers or radio stations, but newspapers tend to cover potentially sensitive topics in less detail than radio stations. In addition, in the private press, articles are sometimes embargoed until the timing improves and the issue at hand is not as controversial.

Given Guinea's weak job market, people working in the media rarely find opportunities to jump to other sectors, and incomes are low across the board. Journalists working in the public media draw civil service salaries of GNF 400,000 (\$79) on average—low relative to the cost of living. With a few exceptions, employees of media outlets such as Radio Nostalgie, Espace FM, and Familia FM and press organs such as *Le Lynx* are paid relatively well. Journalists at these stations nevertheless consider their pay insufficient to cover their everyday needs, and unfortunately, the slight advantages do not preclude journalists from the taint of corruption. Cissé pointed out that journalists have to live and have families to feed, and they would do what they have to in order to survive. For example, some journalists have been known to phone up the subject of an unflattering article to ask if he or she would ransom the piece back before it is aired. Sylla agreed that many journalists who see opportunities to make money will not hesitate to seize them.

Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo identified the need for a collective agreement to address these problems, which, he believes, also handicaps social and economic progress. The panelists suggested that the root of the problem might be the lack of solidarity among journalists themselves. For too long, journalists have let state institutions regulate the press, instead of taking collective responsibility to shape the regulatory structures.

Access to news programs improved gradually over the year. New private stations appeared on the scene that broadcast 24 hours a day, air news programs every four hours, and short newflashes of about four minutes in between. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo noted that in 2009, specialized programs

aired about health and other issues on Radio Nostalgie, Familia FM, Soleil FM, Espace FM, and Radio Kaloum Stereo. Despite that improvement, panelists said, entertainment still dominates the program schedules both of public and private stations. Balde estimated that entertainment and music account for nearly 90 percent of all programs, at the expense of news and discussion. The panelists observed that Radio Nostalgie, Soleil FM, FM Liberté, Horizon FM, Espace FM, and Djigui FM air interactive programs that provide the public's best source to explore and debate questions of national interest.

News managers have worked over the past few years to improve the quality of equipment and facilities for their journalists. Cissé said that in radio and television, digital equipment is gaining the upper hand over analog. Now that digital editing has become a familiar process, work that used to take an hour now takes only 20 or 30 minutes to complete, helping journalists understand the need to convert to newer technologies. Cherif Diallo noted gains in the community radio sector, where the transition from analog to digital is taking place visibly, with help from the Radio Netherlands Training Center Informorac program in Guinea. For the nine recipient community radio stations, the challenge ahead is to train technicians to use the new equipment properly.

Despite these improvements, an overall shortage of modern equipment persists in the media. Sylla underlined the core problem of equipment availability, and the shortage of workstations—leading journalists to have to juggle schedules to share space and computers. In some media outlets, journalists have to fall back on the Dictaphone. Balde said that given these constraints, the national radio station, and private radio stations to a certain extent, have difficulty delivering high-quality live reports. Most of the scripts are recorded in rooms away from the studios. Lancine Camara commented that most of the equipment at his national news daily, *Horoya*, is obsolete. The paper is working with ancient computer equipment and without the Internet and is suffering serious difficulties, he said.

In terms of where aid can be channeled best, the panelists suggested that the public media sector is most in need of upgraded production studios (with computers for digital editing), the community media needs transmitters and reporting equipment, and printing presses need upgrades to close the shortfall in the number of copies produced by the newspapers and to remedy the lack of speed in handling and disseminating news.

The government granted the state media support to run reports from outside the capital and cover the key issues of interest at the community level. With eight regional offices around the country equipped to help reporters

gather regional news, state television could appeal to more Guinea's minority ethnic groups. National radio has also employed correspondents in the prefectures to produce local news on a daily basis. However, only a few reporters have proven capable of producing high-quality programs from the provinces.

Among the constraints on the public media, the panelists cited the lack of training, obsolete equipment, unreliable vehicles used by teams in the field, irregular fuel supplies, and the difficulty of covering isolated areas. Private newspaper reporting from the regions, except for coverage of official ceremonies, is rare, given that they have only modest means at their disposal and that some reporters lack training.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Guinea Objective Score: 2.29

In 2009, some 10 private radio stations opened up in the capital and covered all the rural areas of lower Guinea, where about a quarter of the country's population lives. Also, a number of private radio stations set up in the provinces, including FM Liberté in the N'zérékoré region, Bambou FM—a station devoted to women's issues—in the Faranah region, and Horizon FM in the Kankan region. These stations have 300-watt transmitters that cover not only urban areas but a significant fraction of the surrounding rural communities. For the moment, no private radio station boasts a national footprint. The panelists noted that despite the government's efforts, RTG's signal covers only 16 prefectures—less than half

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.

Only a fraction of the population—generally students and public and private sector employees—use the Internet; the unavailability of electricity and the expense prevent wider access.

the country's total of 33. Approximately 20 community radio stations cover the rural areas in their regions. They broadcast in the main languages in their target areas, and produce programs that take into account local concerns.

People in the larger towns and cities (Conakry, Kindia, Labé, and N'zérékoré) have greater access than rural residents to the foreign and domestic news produced by international channels (RFI, BBC, and VOA) and by domestic public and private radio stations. Only a tenth of the population, such as decision-makers and business people, can afford to buy newspapers. Of that tenth, 75 percent read private newspapers, 21 percent read the foreign press, and four percent read *Horoya*. However, Lancine Camara, speaking as an employee of *Horoya*, pointed out the proliferating parallel market in photocopied newspaper articles, which sell for about GNF 1,000 (\$0.20) and are seriously damaging newspaper sales revenues. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo noted also that newspaper distribution is focused on the capital, leaving large numbers of Guineans without access to newspapers, and many newspaper publishers have stopped sending newspapers up country, citing financial problems.

Only a fraction of the population—generally students and public and private sector employees—use the Internet; the unavailability of electricity and the expense prevent wider access. Some people find access through public spaces (state institutions and universities), NGOs and their projects, community centers, and cybercafés. Online news sources include guineenews.org, aminata.com, kibarou.com, tamtam.com and others. Blogs are still rare, but the local telephone companies, including Sotelgui, Aeeba, Orange, and Selcom, offer text message news services. According to the panelists, only a small fraction of the population subscribe to satellite television news, which is distributed by the local companies Soditev, Makity, and Satelcom. Only a small number of people, such as civil servants and businesspeople, have the means to subscribe to cable television. Other people follow television news in public spaces.

For now, radio remains the main source of news, followed by television, the online media, and the newspapers. Sylla maintained that radio and television are more popular than the printed press because of oral traditions; Guineans tend to listen more than they read.

The government does not restrict access to domestic or foreign media. Regarding international news, the government signed agreements with foreign media to set up transmitters in the provinces: RFI in Labé, Kankan, and N'zérékoré and the BBC in Labé. The agreements allow Guineans easy access to foreign radio news in those areas. Foreign print editions can be found in kiosks, but many Guineans find the price exorbitant.

According to the panelists, the public media are in reality state media, and they reflect the views and whims of the authorities in power. The authorities have banned access to the state's airwaves by opposition political parties, in particular the Forces Vives coalition. Balde noted that Guineans face a great challenge because what are rather fantastically called "public" media are in fact neither public, nor even-handed, nor independent, and fail to uphold their programming responsibilities. Cissé agreed that it is impossible for government-appointed journalists to disassociate from the politics of the persons who appointed them. Journalists at RTG enjoy little independence; one might be told that a minister ruled that a particular piece could not be aired, and the journalist would have little recourse but to comply. However, the panelists agreed that national radio and television stations are making an effort to produce programs dealing with issues of national interest, in the areas of popular education and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Guinea has no independent or foreign news agencies. But often state media (including national radio and *Horoya*) and some private radio stations pick up stories from press agencies such as AFP, usually taking care to cite their sources.

Generally speaking, broadcast media outlets produce 95 percent of their programs based on information arising out of local concerns. A small fraction of radio programming, about five percent, results from cooperation with foreign stations or the VOA rebroadcasting agreement; that is the case with private radio stations such as Familia FM and Sabary FM. The agreement covers the main news programs of the partner stations.

According to the panelists, private media outlets have the freedom to raise many issues without restriction, including sensitive topics that reflect the concerns of their local audiences, and their reporting takes into account the views of opposing parties. Cissé pointed out, however, that the private media adhere to their own set of editorial guidelines, and sometimes turn to the public media for some facets of the news, such as official government communiqués. Community radio stations base themselves essentially on the needs of their audiences in producing their programs; to that extent, they are independent.

Regarding the question of media ownership, the state owns and controls the public media—thus, there is a degree of transparency. According to the panelists, though, the question of transparency among private newspapers is more complicated. The law outlines conditions to establish and operate private broadcasting stations, and stipulates that no private radio or television broadcasting station may directly or indirectly identify with a political party, religion, or region. Despite that regulation, panelists said, political parties and very influential businesses hide behind individuals and control some private media. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo pointed out that among a certain number of stations, transparency is a given; stations such as Radio Nostalgie, Djigui FM, Espace FM, Cheri FM, Horizon FM, FM Liberté, and Koffi FM broadcast the names of their owners. Some outlets are open even about the workings of their governing boards. For others, however, the question of ownership remains opaque.

Over the past few years, the government has made strides to include interests of all social strata, including ethnic minorities, in state radio programming. Cissé said that coverage of minorities is not a problem, as news programs are aired in more than eight languages. The community media also broadcast minority programming. Cherif Diallo cited the town of Mamou as an example. People there wanted to hear the languages of the Guinea Forestière region in their programs, so in order to effectively design such programs, the station undertook a sociological study and learned that the people of Mamou understand three main languages: Forestier, Peulh, and Malinké.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Guinea Objective Score: 2.01

Although the panelists said that some press outlets are managed fairly well, the panelists doubted that accounting practices meet international standards. Currently, of 600 newspapers registered with CNC, only 20 are published regularly—and among those 20, not even five proved capable of producing a financial statement at the year's end. Some press companies manage to make their mark in their first year. Others in existence for years still have not managed to lift themselves out of financial mediocrity.

Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo held a slightly different opinion, saying that generally media companies are profitable, depending on their editorial policies and particularly on the drive and goals of media owners.

Recently, many newspapers have started up thanks to state subsidies, but only a handful exhibit financial viability, sound

Community media survive on subsidies from local and national organizations, contribution campaigns, and by providing services. Cherif Diallo said that it is very difficult for anyone to influence community media programming, as outlets link programs to local realities and communities' development needs.

management, and formal employment agreements. Instead, most of these papers rely primarily on freelance journalists, who work without employment contracts and are paid on a piecework basis. In terms of personnel management, Lancine Camara said that the absence of a press union or a collective agreement between publication directors and reporters is a serious problem. To address the issue, some journalists have taken a stand for contracts and social security compliance, and left as soon as they could find an employer offering such benefits, slamming the door behind them.

A number of sources finance the media, and Cissé said that some financial backers influence editorial policy. There is a tendency to believe that he who pays the piper calls the media's tune. For example, *Mutation* had a contract with the bauxite mining company RUSAL, which imposed a number of conditions in exchange for its support.

The public media are dependent completely on the government for funding. Private media outlets, meanwhile, are financed primarily by their owners, copy sales, advertising,

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.

The community media's familiarity with audience research is growing through the help of the NGO Informorac, which holds on-site training sessions as part of its mobile training initiative for community radio outlets.

and sponsors, but they also receive annual state subsidies (which the panelists consider insufficient). Many media houses receive support through service contracts with local companies or institutions. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said that offers are frequently made for media campaigns; for example, the Canadian Embassy and the UNDP provide the media with "ready to wear" campaigns on targeted themes, or with articles on topics such as women's rights or participation in elections. The campaigns affect neither the editorial policies nor the conduct of the media, the panelists said.

Community media survive on subsidies from local and national organizations, contribution campaigns, and by providing services. Cherif Diallo said that it is very difficult for anyone to influence community media programming, as outlets link programs to local realities and communities' development needs.

According to the panelists, media outlets do not actively use the services of advertising agencies; generally, advertising is in the form of institutional announcements. Although an advertising market exists in Guinea, it is poorly structured, and little targeted advertising takes place. The panelists said that the media do not benefit from advertising as they might in a properly structured environment.

The country has no advertising regulatory agency; the Guinean Publicity Office (Office Guinéen de Publicité) only regulates public billposting. Advertising guidelines for newspapers restrict advertisements to 50 percent of all content in a 12-page newspaper; for private radio stations, advertising must not exceed 10 percent of programming. In most cases, advertising is not sufficient to make payroll or keep a newspaper afloat.

The government subsidy for print press and online media has grown steadily, though panelists still consider it insufficient. The first parliament, in 1996, approved the subsidy, after deciding that the media that had guided and supported the Guinean democratic process must be supported. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo justified the subsidy, saying that it was a right—not a reward from a politician or another member of government. Since the Conté regime, the media had always been critical of the government, and this stance continued

even as the subsidy increased. According to the panelists, the government does not dictate how the subsidy should be used, whether to help pay the rent or acquire equipment. Some media houses report using their subsidies to buy computers and software to make their work easier, or to upgrade their facilities.

At the invitation of CNC, Stat View International, an NGO specializing in market research and polls, conducted a pilot poll survey in Conakry in April 2009 on the perception of the Guinean media. The survey covered radio, television, print, and online media. The poll, the first of its kind in Guinea since the liberalization of radio and television, offered a baseline for more in-depth and regular audience research on public and private media. The poll aimed to identify the Guinean media's strengths and weaknesses, and to pinpoint and analyze public perception of the media's quality and performance. Additionally, Stat View International carried out many surveys in other sectors, such as health and education. Politicians, civil society workers, public administrators, journalists, and media people made up the survey sample. The panelists said that they trust that Stat View operates independently and is not subject to political pressure.

The community media's familiarity with audience research is growing through the help of the NGO Informorac, which holds on-site training sessions as part of its mobile training initiative for community radio outlets. Radio stations also use interactive programs, mail from listeners, and interviews with people in the street to assess their audiences amongst the public.

Guinea's only ratings poll is carried out by Stat View International as well. The media and audiences learned of the poll results in a feedback workshop held by Stat View. The panelists said that they expect the media concerned, including private newspapers and *Horoya*, to be able to apply lessons from the survey to improve their services.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Guinea Objective Score: 2.31

Guinea's media community boasts a number of trade associations. The country has publishers' associations, such as the Guinean Online Press Association and AGEPI. AGEPI is the oldest publishers' association, dating to 1991, and as last year's MSI reported, over the years it has helped ensure implementation of Guinea's media laws. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said that in previous years, AGEPI, in concert with *Le Lynx*, tried to establish regional newspaper distribution, but it realized that the money did not come back even though the newspapers were distributed.

URTELGUI and the Rural Print and Broadcast Network represent broadcast outlets. The panel praised URTELGUI, in particular, for being very active in 2009. URTELGUI's noteworthy contributions include defending members who suffered injustices, as seen in the case of the director of Radio Nostalgie; its rigorous application of the journalists' codes of conduct (for example, it addressed instances of gross unprofessionalism at Familia FM); and in promoting democratic freedoms.

Additionally, Guinea does have several professional media associations that operate independently from the government. Examples include the Association of African Media Professionals and the Guinean Association of Journalists. These associations protect members' interests, set up lobbying groups, and search for funding to hold seminars. They also fight more generally for press freedom and to restore order to the journalism profession.

Associations depend on membership dues, and the panelists noted that association membership is rising gradually—partially because the sole qualification for membership is achieving recognition as a working professional journalist. The associations suffer from serious operational shortcomings, though, in part because they lack the funds to carry out relevant activities.

As for NGO support to the media sector, only the Guinean Organization for the Defense of Human and Citizen's Rights (known by its French acronym OGDH) worked with media outlets in 2009 to protect and defend journalists. It recorded at least a dozen cases of journalists threatened in relation to the September 28 tragedy. Other organizations provided assistance to OGDH in that context, following OGDH's

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.

In Cissé's view, the main problem is the focus of the curriculum. During Cissé's study the University of Conakry, he experienced firsthand the mind-numbing emphasis on theory. Upon arriving at RTG, he and other journalists faced an uphill battle adapting their heavy theoretical background to a practical setting.

appeal to relevant international organizations on behalf of journalists seeking asylum outside the country.

A few educational institutions offer journalism training programs. These include the public Higher Institute of News and Media Training, and several private institutions: Mercure University, Kofi Annan University of Guinea, the Aboubacar Camara Foundation, and Sheikh Modibo Diarra University. In Cissé's view, the main problem is the focus of the curriculum. During Cissé's study the University of Conakry, he experienced firsthand the mind-numbing emphasis on theory. Upon arriving at RTG, he and other journalists faced an uphill battle adapting their heavy theoretical background to a practical setting.

Indeed, very few students opt for the formal degree route. Alternatives include the Aboubacar Camara Foundation, with its own training studio and radio station; and Familia FM, which also has its own radio journalism training center. Tounkara, speaking from experience, said that conditions in courses at the public establishments leave a lot to be desired. The Institute of Information and Communication Sciences offers a radio station, one room with a computer and small console, and a small announcer's room. There might be 200 students using one small room, and she commented that it would be impossible to expect so many people to get into one cramped studio to practice.

Short-term training opportunities do exist. EFES offers training courses for beginners, and other institutions, such as RFI Talent, organize workshops for independent radio station presenters on a generally annual basis. RTG offers courses for its journalists as well. Tounkara said that the Press Club of Lyon, France, in collaboration with the Guinean Press Club, trains individual reporters every year, including a field trip to Lyon to produce a news program. The courses focus on the radio format, and in particular the production of thematic, interactive, and roundtable programs.

A few stations give young interns practical training. Sylla said that in public radio editorial offices, it has proven necessary to give extra training on editorial style to people straight out of journalism schools—they typically arrive without the ability to conduct reporting, gather news, or write a news story.

A few stations give young interns practical training. Sylla said that in public radio editorial offices, it has proven necessary to give extra training on editorial style to people straight out of journalism schools—they typically arrive without the ability to conduct reporting, gather news, or write a news story. Cissé added that Familia FM offers short-term courses of two or three months at the station's training center, and another radio station offers similar short-term training sessions for young people, and grants certificates upon successful completion of the course.

Informorac has also organized five-day, on-site training sessions for stations, along with a week-long group training course focused on magazine programs, on-air roundtables, news production, public game programs, mini-programs, and interactive programs. In 2009, Informorac also offered training in journalistic technology, such as digital editing, preventive and curative equipment maintenance, and familiarization with information and communication technologies. Approximately 100 staff members attended from nine community radio stations from around the country.

Most of Guinea's print shops are owned privately, and their owners often discriminate between the newspapers for financial reasons, according to the panelists. In general, printing houses operate as commercial enterprises, favoring newspapers with large print runs because of their

profitability. Some newspapers, including *Le Lynx* and *L'Indépendant*, own their own printing facilities but are plagued by frequent technical problems, and they have to fall back on other local printing houses.

Although Guinea has a large number of printing houses, and the government generally does not interfere in the business, quality control is a major problem. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo commented that the printing houses do not consider themselves part of the press. They have received no formal training, picking up their skills on the job. The limited hours of operation at printing houses has also proven to be an issue for newspapers. A printer operating only from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. cannot print a newspaper, making newspapers yearn for their own printing presses. Still, the private printing houses seem to get a fair amount of work.

News kiosks are privately owned as well, and the state does not charge a sales commission for newspapers. The Guinean Press Distribution Company, however, levies a 30 percent commission on the sale price. The panelists said that the country still has no press distribution companies, although studies have been carried out to guide professionals in that direction.

The state also does not control Internet access, which is provided by private companies such as SOTELGUI, AFRIBONE, and MOUNA. The panelists reported no restrictions; users simply pay a fee and a line is made available. Newspaper distribution, however, remains a challenge. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo said that only when newspaper companies restructure to operate as well-run businesses, and introduce some rigor into organizational, editorial, and financial aspects, can the industry address changes to distribution.

The government allocates frequencies to private and community stations through the Post and Telecommunication Regulatory Agency, but does not control transmitters. Private radio station transmitters are subject to an annual utilization fee.

List of Panel Participants

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Cherif Diallo, station chief, Bissikrima Community Radio, Dabola

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