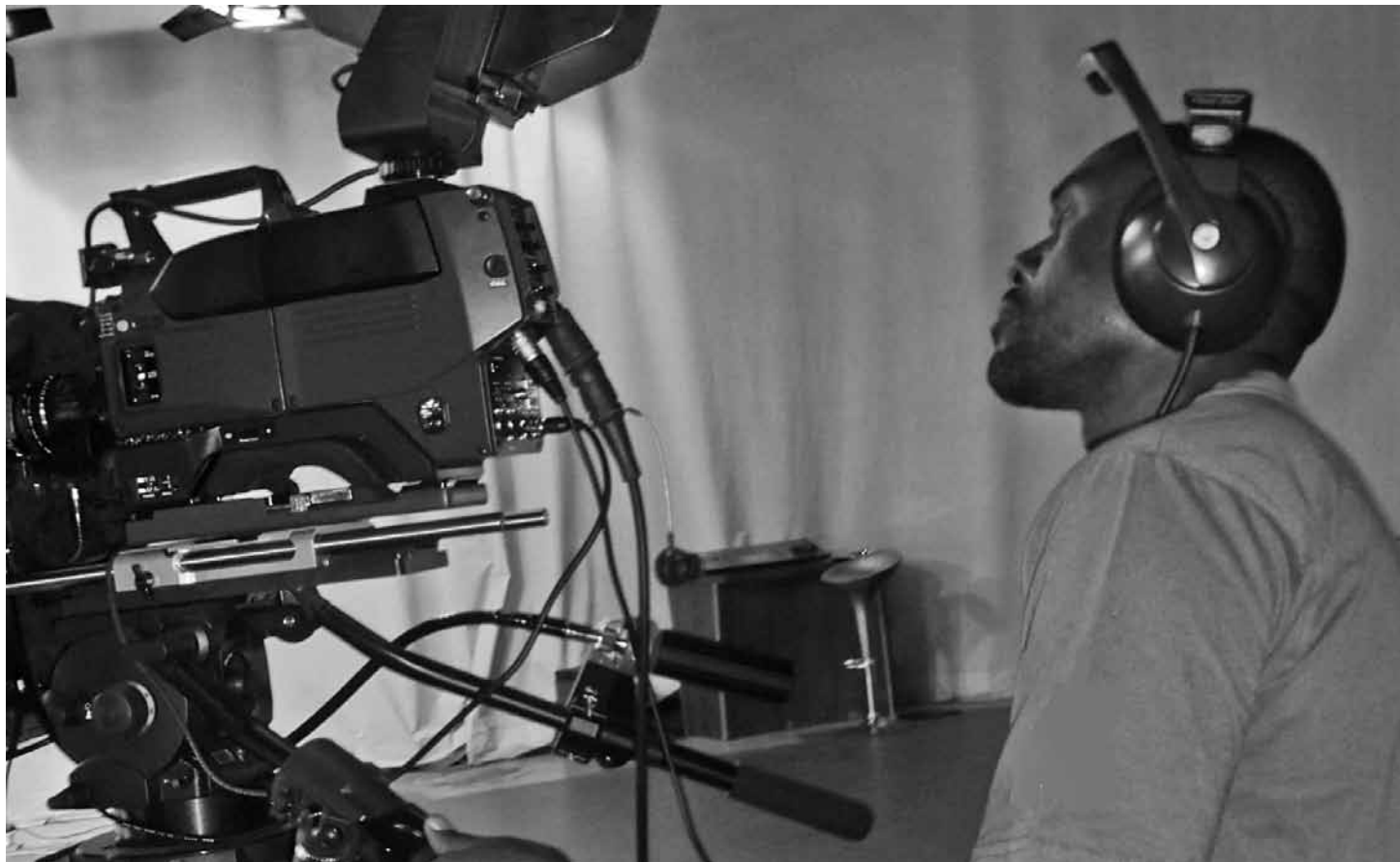

Furthermore, the government continues its economic boycotts against the independent media, such as The Namibian, by foregoing advertising and subscriptions. Demands to lift these boycotts remain unheeded.



NAMIBIA

The Namibian media generally enjoy a fair degree of freedom from government interference. However, the 2008 MSI study picked up signals that the government was adopting a more critical posture regarding the media, spurred in part by intensifying political competition. These concerns proved warranted in 2009, an election year, as the government stepped up its threats to the media to tone down critical reporting and accede to intrusive regulations invading privacy and controlling freedom of speech. The South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the country's ruling party, passed resolutions to regulate the media in the country.

As the 2008 MSI panelists feared, the government revealed its true intentions in the final tabling and passing of the 2009 Information Communications Bill. Its drafting appeared to be an open and transparent consultation process, with input from media organizations and various public meetings. But at the last minute, the government dropped in clauses that allow it to intercept electronic communications in the country—under the general banner of “crime prevention and national security.”

In previous years, Namibia had been considered a safe country for journalists, with few reported crimes. But this year, two foreign journalists attempting to cover seal clubbing on a tourist beach were attacked by the seal hunters. When the police arrived, they arrested the journalists, who were later sentenced for trespassing.

Furthermore, the government continues its economic boycotts against the independent media, such as *The Namibian*, by foregoing advertising and subscriptions. Demands to lift these boycotts remain unheeded. Additionally, the government ignores pressure from civil society to introduce pro-media legislation—for example, regarding access to information.

In another blow to free speech, the country's public broadcaster, Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), removed the famous morning *Chat Show*—one of only two daily phone-in programs, reasoning that callers were “abusing the platform” for political ends. The 2008 panelists also reported a campaign to force out NBC's director general Bob Kandetu; he was removed from his post in 2009 under a cloud of suspicion. He was accused of being a supporter of the newly formed Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), a SWAPO splinter party made up of former high-ranking ruling party comrades and led by former minister of trade and industry Hidipo Hamutenya. Eventually Kandetu paid with his job, following allegations that the RDP flag appeared on national television during President Hifikepunye Pohamba's New Year's Eve message to the nation.

Given these setbacks, Namibia's overall score slipped slightly this year, to 2.39. However, this continues a downward trend, as it scored 2.90 in the 2006/2007 study. In 2008, objectives 1 and 2 suffered the most serious setbacks; this year, although no objectives dipped dramatically, all objectives except for Objective 2 slipped at least slightly. Objectives 1 (freedom of speech) and 3 (plurality of news) each lost more than two-tenths of a point.

NAMIBIA AT A GLANCE

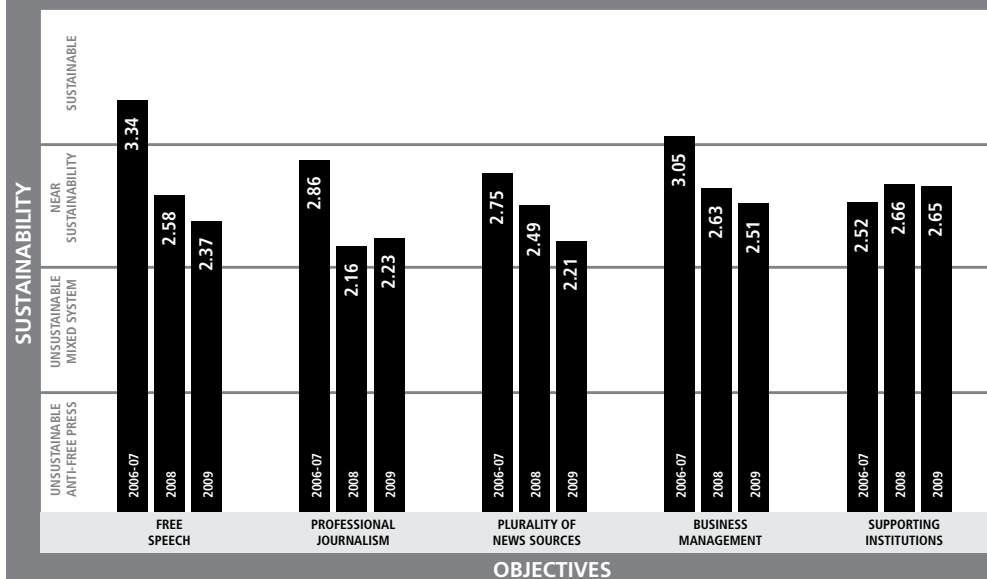
GENERAL

- > **Population:** 2,108,665 (2009 est., *CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Capital City:** Windhoek
- > **Ethnic groups (% of population):** Ovambo about 50%, Kavango 9%, Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, San 3%, Baster 2%, and Tswana 0.5% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Religions (% of population):** Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20% (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **Languages (% of population):** English 7% (official), Afrikaans common language of most of the population and about 60% of the white population, German 32%, indigenous languages 1% (includes Oshivambo, Herero, Nama) (*CIA World Factbook*)
- > **GNI (2009-Atlas):** \$9.323 billion (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **GNI per capita (2009-PPP):** \$6,410 (World Bank Development Indicators, 2010)
- > **Literacy rate:** 85% (male 86.8%, female 83.5%)
- > **President or top authority:** President Hifikepunye Pohamba (since March 21, 2005)

MEDIA-SPECIFIC

- > **Number of active print, radio stations, television stations:** 13 newspapers, including 4 daily; Radio Stations: 28; Television Stations: 3
- > **Newspaper circulation statistics:** Top two by circulation: *The Namibian* (43,000 print run, reaching 420,000 readers), *Informanté* (70,000 weekly). (Source: Nangula Shejavali, *The Namibian*)
- > **Broadcast ratings:** Top three radio stations: NBC National Radio (85%), Radio Energy (25%), NBC Oshiwambo (42.8%) (AC Nielsen Namibia 2001)
- > **News agencies:** Namibia Press Agency (state owned)
- > **Annual advertising revenue in the media sector:** Approximately \$175 million
- > **Internet usage:** 113,500 (2008 est., *CIA World Factbook*)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX: NAMIBIA



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

Namibia Objective Score: 2.37

Generally, Namibia enjoys a stable record in terms of freedom of speech, reflected in the country's past scores for Objective 1. However, panelists registered significant drops in scores for four indicators this year: indicator 2 (broadcast licensing), indicator 4 (crimes against journalists), indicator 6 (libel laws), and indicator 9 (freedom of entry into the profession). Indicator score varied rather widely. While five indicators scored rather close to the objective score, three—indicators 2, 5 (legal guarantees of editorial independence for public media), and 7 (access to information)—lagged by more than half a point. Indicator 8 (media access and use of international news reports) exceeded the objective score by more than a point.

According to the panelists Namibia's freedom of speech is under threat. Examples include stringent regulations under the new communications act for government monitoring of electronic communication (voice, Internet, e-mail), as well as NBC's cancellation of the popular *Chat Show*.

On a positive note, the huge public outcry (with numerous letters and SMSs in the local media) regarding the *Chat Show* ban showcased Namibia's strong civil society sector and general high regard for freedom of speech. In addition, the Information Communications Bill is heading from parliament's lower chamber, the National Assembly, to the upper chamber, the National Council, opening a path to further public hearings on bill content. Given the unequal balance of power

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.

Despite some restrictions, it remains true that "People are free to say what they want," according to Meke Namindo, media officer for the Namibia Premier Soccer League. "Even in the newspapers, people can make sure they are heard, and people call into radio stations—it is encouraged, and the country wants to hear from the public."

in the country, the relatively weak opposition was unable to voice any objections, and could only protest by walking out of parliament.

The panelists said that on paper, Namibia's laws favor the media, but implementation and enforcement are sometimes weak. "Without enforcement and application of the law, and full education of the people regarding the meaning of these laws, we fail," said Ngamane Karuaihe-Upi, community activist and broadcasting officer for the Media Institute of Southern Africa–Namibia Chapter (MISA). Panelists agreed that Namibia's courts and legal system exist to protect citizens and uphold media freedoms. However, although the general public can bring cases to court, filing suit is very expensive, and panelists criticized authorities for failing to make due process more affordable.

Despite some restrictions, it remains true that "People are free to say what they want," according to Meke Namindo, media officer for the Namibia Premier Soccer League. "Even in the newspapers, people can make sure they are heard, and people call into radio stations—it is encouraged, and the country wants to hear from the public."

Although panelists consider courts relatively strong, they questioned whether leaders adequately uphold the freedoms afforded by the law. For example, they cited calls for newspapers to cease SMS service in daily newspapers, where readers, for only NAD 1 (\$0.15), can send comments and opinions, often critical of the government and other public institutions. In addition, the panel debated freedoms and how far they can be applied in the Namibian context. Some panelists said, for instance, that those sending anonymous SMSs for publication in newspapers in the paper should be identified, to prevent people with hidden agendas from abusing these services.

In general, though, the panelists deemed reasonable the restrictions on freedom of speech noted in Article 21(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. Media law lecturer Yvonne Dausab said, "The Namibian constitution

Engelbrecht said that community stations frequently find themselves in a catch-22. "Without a frequency, we can't get the equipment—but without equipment, we can't get a frequency," he commented.

is in line with human rights instruments." The panel noted that the country has officially ratified most of these international instruments.

Broadcast licensing, currently administered by the Namibian Communications Commission (NCC), drew some critique. Andre Engelbrecht, the coordinator of the coastal community radio station Ocean Wave, charged that the NCC "doesn't know what it is doing." Although the NCC tells some potential applicants that it has no frequencies to distribute, it has a history of suddenly "finding" frequencies for new radio stations (for Fresh FM and Omulunga Radio, for instance). The panelists said that they sense a political motive behind these decisions, and that investigating the station owners could reveal some political connections. The panelists do not consider the licensing process to be transparent, noting that the selection criteria used for granting licenses is not shared openly. The NCC has an appeals process, but even after an appeal, the commission is not obliged to disclose reasons for refusing new applications. The panel does hope that the new structure (the Communications Authority of Namibia) proposed under the communications act will be better staffed, and offer a more transparent licensing procedure.

However, the panelists expressed concern about the appointment of NCC commissioners, noting strong political affiliations among many commissioners—such as the editor of the ruling party's newspaper, *Namibia Today*, who serves on the board. Engelbrecht said that community stations frequently find themselves in a catch-22. "Without a frequency, we can't get the equipment—but without equipment, we can't get a frequency," he commented.

Regarding the licensing of community radio stations specifically, one panelist suggested that the concept of provisional licenses could be introduced. Engelbrecht stated his support for this possibility. "This would be very helpful to the community radio sector. People are willing to sponsor us, but we need to be up and running first," he said.

According to the panel, market entry is fairly free and starting a publication is relatively easy; the government applies no restrictions. However, the media are taxed like any other industry, and although income tax legislation has provisions for exemptions, they do not apply to the media—not even community media.

Previous MSI studies reported a relatively safe environment for journalists in Namibia. However, this year's panel discussed a disturbing incident. Two foreign journalists were harassed for covering seal hunting along Namibia's coast—a story that dominated the headlines during the time that the panel convened. A British journalist and a South African photographer were restricted from covering seals being clubbed to death. According to some newspaper accounts, the hunters assaulted the journalists but were not arrested. Instead, the police arrested the journalists for trespassing, and they were given a choice between a one-year prison sentence or a fine of \$1,260 (which their organization, Eco-storm, paid). Later, in July 2009, a government ministry formally banned journalists from covering seal clubbing. The panelists claimed that the two journalists themselves never pressed charges, and thus the state could not protect their rights in this regard. Nevertheless, in the panelists' opinions, the media covered the issue well, even though the assaults did not prompt any real public outcry.

As for the treatment of the state/public media, the NBC Act remains in place, and the minister of information and communication technology continues to exert a strong influence. For instance, his office appoints the NBC board of directors. Panelists questioned the political independence of NBC, citing, for example, a workshop on election reporting attended almost exclusively by SWAPO members (along with one token opposition member). The acting director general claimed that other parties were invited but failed to arrive.

The impact of dependence on state funding can be seen in the daily running order of news stories, which follow patterns of presidential news identically. Not entirely opposing the notion of state funding of media, some panelists argued that the publicly funded *New Era* newspaper is actually at an advantage if, for instance, a controversial story on a commercial company were to emerge. Public funding, panelists argued, would mean that *New Era* would face less pressure from advertisers to withdraw such a story. Michaela Jaeger of NBC's German Radio Service argued that NBC needs continuous state funding, because that is the nature of a public broadcaster.

Generally, Namibia's legal system does not treat public media differently than private media, but according to the panel, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology has effectively endorsed the notion that state media do receive preferential treatment. One example is the case of a camera operator from the independent One Africa Television who was physically removed from the "state media area" while trying to film the visit of Cuban President Raul Castro to Namibia. An International Freedom of Expression Exchange alert said that ITC Permanent Secretary Mbeuta Ua-Ndjarakana confirmed the incident, and said that it is

normal practice to give preferential access to state-funded media during state visits. MISA strongly opposed his explanation. Panelists cited the seal clubbing issue as another example; state media are allowed to film such activities, but not private media.

Panelists noted that libel and defamation in Namibia are the same, and that defamation is not treated as a criminal case. The onus of proof lies with the person who claims to have been defamed. However, as reported in previous MSI studies, investigative journalists face civil defamation charges frequently.

Panelists agreed that access to official information continues to hinder Namibian journalists. Manfred Isaacks, of the Educational Radio Project, said that journalists have to go through too many channels to get information. Karuaihe-Upi agreed that journalists often get the run-around. The panelists said that some journalists receive preferential treatment in this respect; only those who cultivate strong relationships with ministers seem to get the information they need. Even these favored journalists often struggle, because much of the information they collect is obtained strictly off the record. Still, some journalists, like Risco Lumamezi from *Caprivi Vision Community Newspaper*, said that journalists are free to obtain information in Namibia. "We have that freedom; as long as you have a media accreditation card, you can interview anybody."

Regarding access to the Internet, cost remains an issue, with telephone calls or Internet access remaining expensive at NAD 1 (\$0.12) per megabyte. Subscriptions to news agencies through the Namibian Press Agency (NAMPA) are also expensive, as are subscriptions to international feeds from CNN or BBC. NBC focuses, possibly excessively, on Namibian content.

Regarding ease of entry into the profession, other panelists noted that although the government issues accreditation cards, there are no known incidences of journalists being refused such accreditation. However, previous MSI studies have noted that the application process is cumbersome for foreign journalists.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

Namibia Objective Score: 2.23

Namibia's scores for Objective 2 place it in the lower range of near-sustainability, and the score is much the same as last year. However, indicators 7 (modern facilities and equipment) and 8 (niche and investigative reporting) did show improvement. All other indicators remained static, and all indicators scored within a half-point of the objective score.

For instance, although NBC journalists wanted to cover the departing press conference by their ousted director general, Bob Kandetu, managers held them back.

According to the panel, most newspapers are not particularly balanced in their reporting. The panel pointedly critiqued *Informanté*, a free tabloid journal, as pure gossip. The panel stressed that journalists should balance stories in the public interest. Again this year, they cited the need for more news about the community and to move beyond the typical workshop or political stories. Some panelists said that stories in the local media are balanced to an extent. But Namindo, speaking from the perspective of a press officer, said, "Reporters sometimes go out of their way to obtain different views, but other publications do not verify information, and reporters sometimes rely on anonymous sources. They also invent reactions from people, or claim they tried to contact me but I was unavailable—when I know I was reachable! And then they put a quote in the newspaper that I did not provide."

The panel also noted a lack of vigilance about spelling, and the absence of standardized spellings across individual publications. The panel also lamented the lack of fact checking. The panel said that some publications engage in one-sided reporting, with little effort to balance by consulting with respected experts on the issue. The panel cited the reporting of an outbreak of cholera in the country as an

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).

In addition, panelists commented that commercial radio stations apparently pay their presenters well. Jaeger commented, "If journalists become corrupt, it is out of greed—not because of salaries."

example. They believe that the media covered statements by the minister of health extensively while ignoring the views of independent experts in the field. Notably, panelists said that NBC did conduct active field research to get comments from the public.

Panelists confirmed that MISA has a media code of ethics, but noted that not all media houses in the country have endorsed the code. However, the Editors' Forum of Namibia (a body representing senior editors, owners, and producers from print and electronic public, commercial, and community media) took up the initiative. It drafted clear documents on, for example, how newsrooms might discipline journalists who breach the code. The forum officially adopted a revised ethics code in early August 2009 and began the process of forming a media council. The council will outline grievance procedures to enable people with complaints about the media to take up their issues with a media ombudsman. The council will be funded by the media houses themselves, rather than depending upon funding from donors or the government.

The Ministry of Education's Joseph Kawana said that NBC is bound always to the government and constrained by the reality that "you can't bite the hand that feeds you." According to the panelists, self-censorship at NBC is on the increase—possibly in connection with the election season. Some panelists argued that this could be perceived as fear, rather than a tangible threat. Either way, it encourages cautious behavior from NBC journalists, holding them back from writing as frankly and fearlessly as they might otherwise. For instance, although NBC journalists wanted to cover the departing press conference by their ousted director general, Bob Kandetu, managers held them back.

Apart from this incident, the panelists said, the press covers most events across the country, but some areas might be neglected because they are remote and journalists lack the resources required to cover distant events. Panelists agreed that while newspapers such as *The Namibian* posts teams of reporters at the coast (in the country's southern region) and in the regional capital of Oshakati, the stories in between these places might not be covered as regularly. The vastness of the country in terms of area and distance also makes it difficult to provide adequate coverage of regional events.

In general, the panel praised NBC for covering important issues in places as far away from Windhoek as Katima Mulilo and Swakopmund—although other regions, such as the southernmost region of Karas, are neglected. However, Isaacks again said that NBC shows a bias, favoring government issues in its coverage. News conferences and other events organized by certain organizations (such as the National Society for Human Rights) are not covered, and other issues, such as the environment, seem insufficiently covered in general. The panel agreed that stepping up coverage of the environment is crucial to Namibia's sustainability, and thus deserves more attention from the press.

Regarding the payment of journalists, panelists said that NBC salaries, for instance, are adequate to discourage corruption. In addition, panelists commented that commercial radio stations apparently pay their presenters well. Jaeger commented, "If journalists become corrupt, it is out of greed—not because of salaries." Regarding outside work or engagement in activities outside the workplace, NBC's policy is that journalists may engage in activities not related to the corporation, but should avoid activities that present a conflict of interest.

Namindo, on the other hand, said that journalists are suffering deeply financially. She said that some have told her that they can only afford a car every 10 years. She expressed her concern that such unhappiness over money could lead to anger among journalists, and this might then appear in print as "aggressive" reporting and writing.

As for "freebies," or free gifts given to journalists often in return for positive coverage, panelists noted that media always provide good coverage of functions hosted by major cell phone companies, such as MTC or Cell One. One reason could be the promise of free gifts, including cell phones or airtime starter packs. Panelists commented that the same level of coverage would not apply to functions held by other groups—for example, NANGOF (the Namibia Non-Governmental Organization Forum Trust, an umbrella network of NGOs).

Namibian media continue to tilt toward entertainment over news and informative programming. However, there are exceptions. NBC, for example, has increased the duration of its main television news bulletin from 30 minutes to one hour and now includes more regional news. The station also introduced television news bulletins in Afrikaans and German this year. In another development, instead of broadcasting news from CNN or Deutsche Welle, NBC is displaying a new international perspective on the news—broadcasting *Al Jazeera English* each evening after the station closes down.

Although private radio stations in the past focused mainly on music, they show signs of change; they now include regular news headlines and they have introduced live local news material. All NBC radio services introduced hourly news bulletins, although the news, as in the past, needs to be translated from the main English news bulletin. Some panelists said that this is not enough, and suggested that different language stations should have their own editorial processes to ensure that their news suits their target audiences. Panelists noted that NBC radio language services play a vital role in communities; all feature popular programs dedicated to community events, funerals, weddings, and other social events.

NBC radio is also moving toward a digital broadcasting system, with new digital studios completed in Katima Mulilo and Rundu. Currently, equipment at radio stations is not modern or state of the art, but NBC is busy upgrading processes for all language service studios in the country, to offer, for example, universal digital music access through Dalet software. This will allow all radio language services to play current local music, saving them from fighting to obtain the single copy of a CD. There is also a push to upgrade outside broadcast facilities, including the purchase of high-quality recorders for staff. Overall, panelists said, commercial radio stations are fairly well equipped, but newspapers need some additional material support—especially quality recording devices.

This year's score assessing the strength of niche reporting improved modestly. In terms of investigative journalists, the panel praised NBC for bringing attention to the concerns of people on the ground through programs such as *Open File*. This program, broadcast weekly on NBC television, uses strong investigative journalism techniques and allows communities to tell their stories in their own voices. However, panelists noted that social and grassroots issues are not well covered. Similarly, despite the prominence of environmental problems in Namibia recently, the media provide little environmental reporting.

OBJECTIVE 3: PLURALITY OF NEWS

Namibia Objective Score: 2.21

Objective 3 scored the weakest of all the objectives. The lower score this year resulted primarily from panelists awarding lower scores to indicators 3 (objectivity of public media) and 5 (private media produce their own news). Most indicators scored within a half point of the objective score, but indicator 3 lagged by about three-quarters of a point while indicators 1 (plurality of news sources) and 2 (citizen access to news sources) both scored more than half a point higher.

The panel also called for more stories on community projects. Most commercial and community radio stations still get their news from the daily newspapers or from the state news agency, NAMPA. NAMPA does distribute news, but it is not independent.

In addition to state-run media, independent publications exist, such as *Insight*, *The Namibian*, and *Namibia Economist*, demonstrating a pluralistic media environment free of conglomerate or corporate dominance. Panelists said that Namibia can claim a plurality of private and public media sources—but their prices place them out of reach for some citizens. According to the panelists, although NBC covers an extensive swath of the country, it does neglect some parts of the country. Additionally, some areas receive only outdated editions of the daily and weekly newspapers. Citizens in major cities find an abundance of newspapers, but in more remote areas papers often arrive very late, given the long distances over land that carriers must travel. *Informanté*, for instance, hits the streets on Thursday mornings in the capital, but takes until Saturday to reach Katima Mulilo. Some villages in Caprivi do not receive *Informanté* at all.

Panelists also noted that most newspapers include regional supplements intended to address the more localized information needs of specific communities. However, the fact that most newspapers are written in English often means that

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.

Again this year, the panel reported a lack of transparency regarding the ownership structure of media houses. Most people in the country would not be able to name a media house owner, and communities continue to lack awareness of who serves on the boards of community radio stations.

older people cannot understand them. In addition, the cost of newspapers remains prohibitive for many. While the Internet is widespread in urban centers, panelists described it as an expensive luxury in rural areas.

Newer technologies, such as SMS news alerts or news blogs, are in use but not yet common. Some object to the new tendency of mobile phone companies to send SMS advertisements to people's phones. Panelists did, however, note the success of an SMS public health campaign targeted at the spread of tuberculosis. In addition, the publication of SMS messages in newspapers remains popular, with a page or more of SMS messages printed every day in *The Namibian*. However, some politicians have criticized this practice, objecting to publication of what they call "disinformation."

Digital satellite television (DSTV), although available throughout the country, is exorbitantly expensive for the average Namibian, at NAD 500 (\$62) per month. DSTV service remains out of reach despite efforts reported last year by a competing British service, GTV, to introduce cheaper packages. In a sign of the economic recession, some satellite owners have changed to the popular free-to-air "Vivid" decoders, which allow viewing of the South African public television channels of SABC—but at a one-off cost for the decoder of NAD 700 (\$86).

State media in particular should understand the difference between "government" and "ruling party," but they come up short, panelists said. The state media are essentially owned by the ruling party, not the public. People and issues are covered according to their party, not based on the strength of their speech. According to the panelists, state issues or ruling party issues take precedence over issues that are in the public interest.

The panel also called for more stories on community projects. Most commercial and community radio stations still get their news from the daily newspapers or from the state news agency, NAMPA. NAMPA does distribute news, but it is not independent. The board is appointed directly

by the authorities, and its budget is propped up by a considerable amount of government funding. In addition, international news agencies, such as Reuters, feed and flow through NAMPA. Although NAMPA effectively distributes such information, the panelists said that there is not much in the way of in-depth or investigative stories. NAMPA also does not distribute any audio or video material for electronic broadcasters.

The independent One Africa Television has a regular evening news bulletin, but most of the radio stations employ the "rip and read" technique, reporting material from NAMPA, local newspapers, or even South African sources. There were, however, some notable exceptions. Panelists praised Base FM, a community radio station in Katutura, for its innovative news coverage, and the commercial radio station Nam FM 99 (now under the ownership of Democratic Media Holdings, an influential and powerful newspaper group), which introduced a live news hour featuring in-depth interviews with leading newsmakers of the day.

Again this year, the panel reported a lack of transparency regarding the ownership structure of media houses. Most people in the country would not be able to name a media house owner, and communities continue to lack awareness of who serves on the boards of community radio stations. However, the panelists noted certain exceptions, such as *Informanté*, saying that the Trustco group obviously owns the publication, given its editorial content and advertising. With other publications or broadcasters, though, ownership is harder to pinpoint.

The panel reported that ownership of two media bodies changed direction dramatically in 2009. Trustco, an organization listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange Africa Board, branched into several directions, including the building of a printing press (originally with a 50 percent financial stake by *The Namibian*). Trustco withdrew from the venture, and DMH bought the printing press, leaving Namibians with little choice of printing facilities in the country apart from the dominant player.

Also, the death of veteran journalist Hannes Smith in 2008 opened the path for Paragon Investments, a black empowerment group (led by business owner and local comedian Lazarus Jacobs), to take over the longstanding *Windhoek Observer*. Paragon Investments radically changed the paper's editorial direction, from tabloid sensationalism to serious political and economic material, adopting the slogan, "setting the nation's agenda."

While Namibia has some minority-language information sources, language issues remain a challenge. Some panel members expressed their concerns about the dominance of

one language (SiLozi) in the Caprivi region. The panel would like to see the press make a greater effort to cover other languages there.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Namibia Objective Score: 2.51

Scores measuring efficiency and sustainability of the media in Namibia reflected the panel's relative optimism for this objective. The small drop in score came about mostly from a lower score for indicator 3 (the advertising industry). Most indicators scored quite close to the objective score, with two exceptions. Indicator 5 (government subsidy of private media) scored a point higher, while indicator 7 (circulation and audience measurement) scored almost a point lower.

Panelists generally believe that Namibia's independent and commercial media houses follow successful business management principles. Presenters on commercial radio stations (see Objective 2, above) are paid well, and radio stations have expanded their operations over the years, with some sold for considerable profits. Newspapers have settled into a profitable pattern, and the major papers (*The Namibian*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Republikein*) have long-running circulations. The "newest" of these three, *The Namibian*, has been published for 23 years without interruption.

Similarly, community media are performing well on the whole, with community radio stations (Base FM, UNAM Radio, etc.) in operation for nearly 10 years. Panelists also pointed to the success of recently launched community stations, such

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.

However, some community print media outlets, such as Caprivi Vision, reported success—despite a lack of equipment, and without reliance on government or the NGO sector. Instead, Caprivi Vision relies upon local business owners and national advertising agencies for support.

as Karas Community Radio in Keetmanshoop. The panel did raise concerns about the board of one community station that appears to be weighed down with government supporters, and panelists worried about some community stations' ongoing dependence upon donor funding.

However, some community print media outlets, such as *Caprivi Vision*, reported success—despite a lack of equipment, and without reliance on government or the NGO sector. Instead, *Caprivi Vision* relies upon local business owners and national advertising agencies for support. In this respect, Lumamezi's remarks were encouraging. He considers the paper well supported by the local community, and noted that advertisements tend to be sold on a one-on-one basis (apart from First National Bank, which uses a national advertising agency).

Magazines are another issue—with few exceptions (*Sister Namibia*, *Namibia Sport*), most have not enjoyed stability. They compete with large South African publications and find it difficult to create a niche among this small population, with an even smaller number of readers. Nangula Shejvali, formerly of the failed *Shambuka Magazine*, said that it folded "because of a lack of support from the advertising market."

The panelists marked their concerns over the recent sale of the printing press (Namibia Free Press Printers) by Trustco and *The Namibian* to the media conglomerate DMH. This company is also responsible for two large daily newspapers (*Die Republikein* and *Allgemeine Zeitung*) as well as ownership of a radio station, Nam FM 99. The dominance of such groups in the printing field has driven smaller publications to look elsewhere for more competitive rates. *Caprivi Vision*, for instance, reported that it used to be printed at Namibia Free Press Printers, but because costs have escalated, is now being printed in neighboring Botswana.

Panelists said that the public media lack the revenue to prevent political interference. NBC, some panelists noted, does not have a guaranteed source of revenue, making it easy for politicians to threaten the station with funding cuts

The presence of large South Africa-based companies operating in Namibia (supermarkets, manufacturers, or distributors) poses another threat. Although they draw large profits from the country, foreign companies typically fail to reinvest in community media through sponsorship or advertising.

if they object to its programming. Generally, NBC is criticized heavily, especially during annual parliamentary debates on the corporation.

The presence of large South Africa-based companies operating in Namibia (supermarkets, manufacturers, or distributors) poses another threat. Although they draw large profits from the country, foreign companies typically fail to reinvest in community media through sponsorship or advertising. Even local initiatives, such as *The Ties That Bind*, the locally written and performed soap opera on NBC Television, ends up on air with no advertising. Instead, a series of blank screens with the words “advertising break” appear during the gaps in the program.

Nangula Shejavali of *The Namibian* stated that the size of the paper depends on the number of advertisements coming in each day. However, she admitted that sometimes advertisers put pressure on editorial content. “Sometimes [certain] people ask for space for ads, and we have to accommodate them,” she said.

The panel also expressed concern that media dependence on advertising might lead journalists to shy away from reporting on some topics. However, Shejavali stated that she personally had “never experienced pressure from advertisers in the newsroom as a reporter.” She also gave the example of a paid-for supplement on a local company, which was then criticized by readers in the newspaper’s SMS pages the next day. However, the panelists commented that SMS comments from readers do not carry the same weight as editorial content.

MTC, the powerful mobile phone operator in the country, constitutes another example. A journalist from *The Namibian* wrote a story that criticized the company for giving out free mobile phones to journalists. The story appeared, despite MTC’s status as a major source of advertising revenue for *The Namibian* and other media outlets. The media also delivered critical reporting on the sale of another cell phone giant and powerful advertiser, Cell One, to an Egyptian conglomerate.

Reports questioned the company’s corporate social responsibility fund, among other issues. The panel concluded that advertisers generally look at the reach and distribution of the media, not necessarily the editorial content, and this approach helps preserve the editorial independence of newspapers.

The government provides no subsidies to independent media outlets. Indeed, panelists again raised concerns over the continued government “boycott” of newspapers such as *The Namibian*, under a policy that has been in effect since 2001. The panelists said that they believe that the government is denying advertising and purchasing revenue in an effort to encourage the newspaper to change its reporting style and report more positively on government activities—thus attempting to exert control over editorial content.

The last major survey of listeners and viewers in Namibia took place in 2001, conducted by AC Nielsen and funded by NBC. Since then, no similar research has taken place—which makes proper program planning very difficult. Some companies (Vision Africa, Survey Warehouse) conduct market research for commercial stations, but such services are very costly. One panelist suggested that stations could possibly pool resources in order to commission this research. Currently, NBC looks at audience feedback via faxes and telephone calls. “If we see trends emerging from these comments, then we look at our programming strategies,” Jaeger said. But as Karuaihe-Upi pointed out, the tendency will be to “change programs based on 10 people who complain, and not the 2,000 who do not comment.”

Regarding audited circulation verification, *The Namibian* is the only newspaper certified by the Audit Bureau of Circulation, an independent U.S. agency. According to Shejavali, an average print run for *The Namibian* is approximately 43,000. However, given that a single copy will be read by numerous readers, the paper reaches an estimated 420,000 readers.

OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

Namibia Objective Score: 2.65

Objective 5 is the strongest performing area in the Namibian MSI study and its score is almost identical to last year. There was some offsetting movement within the indicators, however. Indicators 1 (trade associations) and 2 (professional associations) both improved modestly; however indicator 1 remained the lowest scoring indicator and the only one to not score within a half-point of the objective score. Indicators 5 (short-term training) and 7 (apolitical sources of media distribution) both suffered noticeable declines.

Although professional associations exist in Namibia, they are limited in both number and scope. Recently, the Editors' Forum of Namibia has been instrumental in setting up a self-regulatory media council and creating the position of media ombudsman. The forum is engaged also in lobbying and commenting on media issues of the day. However, it enjoys little support from the media houses, and panelists noted the forum's failures in self-marketing.

Namibia has a community radio forum that remains incorporated into MISA. Again, the panel called for the formation of a community print media forum. But MISA has expressed reluctance; Karuaihe-Upi emphasized the need for MISA to focus on its original objectives and ensure success there before moving on to new initiatives.

The possibility of establishing a union for media workers is still alive, but stakeholders have made little movement on this front. Although a MISA fund is available to help protect journalists, some within the organization have questioned spending money to support journalists who are not MISA members. However, panelists praised MISA for its efforts in defending journalists in Namibia, and speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves. According to the panel, MISA maintains a reputation for being independent, and certainly does not seem afraid of the government. It plays an important lobbying role and releases regular statements in condemnation of violations of journalists' rights. For example, MISA issued alerts following the mistreatment of an independent camera operator at the airport and the arrests of the journalists covering seal clubbing.

However, some panelists criticized MISA for failing to come to the aid of the community newspaper *Caprivi Vision* after it was attacked by the government for publishing a message

The possibility of establishing a union for media workers is still alive, but stakeholders have made little movement on this front. Although a MISA fund is available to help protect journalists, some within the organization have questioned spending money to support journalists who are not MISA members.

from exiled Caprivan leader Mishake Muyongo. Lumamezi said that "MISA did not issue any statement on the [event], nor did the incident appear in its annual publication, *So this is Democracy.*"

Panelists said the National Society for Human Rights and the Legal Assistance Centre also come to the defense of the media, while NANGOF is supportive but unwilling to take a public stand.

Other NGOs offer material support to the media. However, the panel raised questions about funding by donors, and the expenditures on certain projects. For example, while the Namibia Institute for Democracy allegedly distributed NAD 700,000 (\$100,000) for equipment purchases, only Karas Community Radio and Ohangwena Community Radio benefited. Panelists suggested that donor organizations should also beware of dumping equipment on community media projects without providing the requisite follow-up training and capacity building. Similar comments were made about community media centers in Omaheke and Rundu, which received a public address system and other equipment without necessary training and support for staff.

Regarding the state of journalism education in Namibia, panelists said that the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Polytechnic of Namibia are the only two institutions in the country to offer media coursework. Both offer diploma and degree courses, and UNAM now offers journalism studies at a postgraduate level. UNAM provides both practical and academic training, and students from the institution are now employed in various fields. Namindo, a former UNAM student, said that after studying at UNAM, "You are prepared for the real world with the training, but there should be more programs."

Panelists said that many Namibians study in Europe or North America in order to upgrade their qualifications. They could not say with certainty whether the migration of students to Western nations could be explained by the quality of education offered, or the fact that scholarships are more readily available for study in these countries.

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.

MISA offers short-term programs that support journalists and opportunities for students to be placed in internships with media houses. These programs enable journalists to gain practical experience, improving their chances in the job market.

In terms of internships, UNESCO has an arrangement with the Polytechnic of Namibia to take in media students. The Namibian College of Open Learning takes in students from UNAM, the Polytechnic of Namibia, and the College of the Arts. But they noted the difficulties of such an arrangement, as some of the interns will accept job offers and leave before completing their internship. As Isaacks noted, that makes longer-term planning difficult.

MISA offers short-term programs that support journalists and opportunities for students to be placed in internships with media houses. These programs enable journalists to gain practical experience, improving their chances in the job market. The Centre for External Studies and the University Central Consultancy Bureau at the University of Namibia also offer short, tailor-made training programs for media houses. Karas Community Radio staff have benefited from training from Bush Radio in Cape Town, South Africa.

Despite these opportunities, Karuaihe-Upi expressed disappointment at the lack of preparedness of the third-year students that he teaches at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Editors also complain about the quality of students coming out of the tertiary institutions; they noted that some students needed to be "retrained." Kawana said that "most of the institutions are too theoretical," and that the practical training opportunities are not sufficient.

Some newspapers, such as *The Namibian*, also complain about the difficulty of obtaining quality journalists. Although the course content of existing training programs is interesting, it does not have enough focus on the career fields that students plan to enter once they graduate. However, the panelists

pointed out that the success of an institution depends on the quality of the students, not just the curriculum. Jaeger praised UNAM for engaging with NBC to determine its hiring needs and which training programs it should adopt as part of its curriculum development. She also praised the College of the Arts as a very impressive institution.

While considering printing presses, the panel debated whether DMH, now owner of the largest printing presses in the country, is entirely apolitical. The history of this company is linked to political developments, with its main Afrikaans newspaper (*Die Republikein*) named, originally, after the Republican Party—one of the smaller minority parties in the country. Panelists noted that DMH still faces competition with other smaller but well-established Windhoek presses, including John Meinert Printers, Solitaire Press, Prime Press, and Namprint. These print houses are focused mainly on magazine runs, however. The panelists said that most print outlets, and newspapers in particular, do not experience discrimination with DMH. For example, DMH is generally efficient in adhering to a pre-planned printing schedule for *The Namibian*, despite competing publications being printed on the same press.

The panel did note that increasingly, printing is being outsourced to other countries because of the high costs associated with Namibia's monopolized printing market. Examples include *Namibia Sport*, printed in South Africa; and *Caprivi Vision*, printed in Botswana.

Regarding the distribution of newspapers, there is no cooperation whatsoever. Each day, one truck for each of the three main dailies (*The Namibian*, *New Era*, and *Republikein*) leaves Windhoek separately, in order to distribute copies of its newspaper throughout the country.

Broadcast transmitters are still mainly under NBC control, and because of the corporation's structure (noted earlier), the panelists do not see this network as being totally independent from the government. Similarly with Internet access, all traffic (including private ISPs) goes through the state-owned communications monopoly, Telecom Namibia.

List of Panelists

Risco Lumamezi, editor, *Caprivi Vision*, Katima Mulilo

Joseph Kawana, Ministry of Education, Katima Mulilo

Andre Engelbrecht, coordinator, Ocean Wave Community Radio, Swakopmund

Nangula Shejavali, reporter, *The Namibian*, Windhoek

Michaela Jaeger, producer, NBC German Radio Service, Windhoek

Meke Namindo, media officer, Namibia Premier League, Windhoek

Manfred Isaacks, coordinator, Educational Radio Project, Windhoek

Yvonne Dausab, legal lecturer, University of Namibia, Windhoek

Ngamane Karuaihe-Upi, media officer, Media Institute of Southern Africa-Namibia Chapter, Windhoek

Moderator and Author

Robin Tyson, media lecturer, University of Namibia, Windhoek

The Namibia study was coordinated by, and conducted in partnership with, the Sold Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.