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The African Media Barometer (AMB)

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Southern African Media Project (fesmedia Africa) took the initiative together with the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) to start the African Media Barometer (AMB) in April 2005, a self assessment exercise done by Africans themselves according to homegrown criteria. The project is the first in-depth and comprehensive description and measurement system for national media environments on the African continent.

The benchmarks are to a large extent taken from the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)¹ "Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa", adopted in 2002. This declaration was largely inspired by the groundbreaking "Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press" (1991) and the "African Charter on Broadcasting" (2001).






By the end of 2008, 23 sub-Saharan countries have been covered by the AMB. In 2007 those countries which started the exercise in 2005, were revisited providing for the first time comparable data to measure developments in a country over a two-year period.

For 2009 the indicators were reviewed, amended and some new indicators such as those addressing Information Communication Technology (ICT) were added.²

Methodology: A panel of experts is formed in each country, including representatives of media and civil society at large in equal numbers. They are serving as panel members in their personal capacities, not as representatives of their respective organisations. The panel consists of not more than ten members. They will meet bi-annually for two days retreats to go in a self-assessment process through the indicators in a qualitative discussion and determine (quantitative) scores for each indicator. The meetings will be chaired by an independent consultant to ensure comparable results. The resulting reports are made public.

Scoring system: Panel members are asked to allocate their individual scores to the respective indicators after the qualitative discussion in an anonymous vote according to the following scale:

-
- 1 The ACHPR is the authoritative organ of the African Union (AU) mandated to interpret the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
 - 2 Consequently, the comparison of some indicators of the 2005 and 2007 report is not applicable (n/a) in some instances in which the indicator is new or has been amended. Evidently, this has to be taken into account too, when the overall sector scores are compared.

- 1** Country does not meet indicator 
- 2** Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator. 
- 3** Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge. 
- 4** Country meets most aspects of indicator. 
- 5** Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time. 

Scores for each sector are determined as follows: Members of the panel will, after a qualitative group discussion, attach their individual point-score (1 – 5) to each sub-indicator of a sector. The sum of all individual scores will be divided by the number of panel members. The result will then be considered the final score for the sub-indicator.

This qualitative report, including the scores, serves the purpose of measuring over time (based on bi-annual repetitions of the panel meetings) the progress or otherwise developments in the media landscape.

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AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER NAMIBIA 2009

Executive Summary

Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed by the constitution of Namibia and the country's diverse, independent and vibrant press and broadcasting landscape is testimony to this.

Individual freedom of expression, however, is perceived as being limited. After President Hifikepunye Pohamba took over from founding President Sam Nujoma in 2004, the political atmosphere appeared to become more open and citizens, for a while, felt more confident in speaking out. However, with elections scheduled for November 2009, the emergence of new political parties and evident divisions within the ruling South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), political tolerance seems to be wearing thin. The fear of expressing oneself freely seems greater in rural as opposed to urban areas, probably because of the inequitable distribution of resources and the vulnerability of poorer people who depend on government support and for whom basic needs, such as food, housing and water, often override more idealistic concerns.

The state-owned Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and the daily New Era are at pains to assure the public that they will be impartial in covering the elections but seem to be coming under increasing pressure to toe the party line. A case in point is the fate of a hugely popular talk show on NBC's National Radio. In February 2009 members of the SWAPO Elders Council demanded that the show to be taken off air because callers were criticising the party's leaders and government. The following month, in March, the NBC's Director General suspended the show. (After a public outcry it was later resumed, although in more censored fashion.)

The NBC, which operates one TV and ten radio stations, is controlled by a board whose members are appointed by government. The same goes for the board of the National Communications Commission (NCC) which licenses commercial and community broadcasters. A draft Communications Bill currently under discussion and to be passed possibly during 2009, will pave the way for the NCC to be replaced by the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia (CRAN) - also to be government-controlled. The Bill further contains highly controversial provisions that give intelligence agents the right to intercept and monitor telephone and mobile phone conversations as well as e-mail. Communications service providers will have to keep records of conversations at their own cost.

In 2007 the Congress of SWAPO called for government to establish a statutory council to regulate the media. This threat seems to have galvanised media groups into renewed action to form an independent, self-regulatory body to develop and uphold a common code of ethics and deal with complaints from the public. Earlier attempts to set up such a voluntary media council failed but it is now expected that it will be established in the second half of 2009.

In 2001, the government, under the leadership of President Sam Nujoma, imposed a ban on *The Namibian* newspaper, prohibiting any government body from placing advertisements in the daily newspaper or from purchasing it with state funds. The government claimed this was because the newspaper was too critical of its policies. The ban is still in place.

Government is making it hard for the public to get hold of information held by the state. There is no Access to Information Act and most government web sites, including that of the state broadcaster NBC, are outdated, not functional or do not contain relevant material.

The confidentiality of sources is not protected by law and court judgements handed down over the years have sent divergent signals: in certain cases a journalist cannot be forced to reveal his/her informer, in others she/he can. In 2006, President Pohamba promised legal protection of whistleblowers. However, nothing had been done in this regard by May 2009.

Despite all these obstacles, independent media flourish. With just 2.2 million citizens the country boasts four dailies with a total circulation of approximately 80,000 copies, five weeklies with a combined print run of more than 100,000, a dozen monthly magazines as well as 25 radio and three television stations. Print media, however, are expensive and thus not affordable to the majority of the population. The same goes for internet.

English dominates the print and broadcasting media, with the notable exception of the NBC radio's ten language services, *New Era* and the independent *The Namibian*, both of which regularly feature articles in other languages. Community radios could contribute to greater linguistic diversity, but up to now only six such stations are on air. Most battle to secure funding from sponsors, while some are attempting to attract more advertising. With the current global economic crisis, funding from outside Namibia is increasingly difficult to procure.

The vast majority of media are based in the capital Windhoek and events or people in rural areas are far less covered than those in towns. Most newsmakers and sources of news stories are men, reflecting the imbalance of power and influence between the sexes in the country.

The coverage of events and issues in most print media is generally regarded as accurate and fair, with most media – private and state, broadcasting and print – attempting to cover the full spectrum of life in the country. There is, however, a serious lack of investigative reporting and insufficient analysis of pertinent issues.

NBC's radio and television news bulletins have noticeably different approaches: TV news as a rule tend to report first what the president or a minister said or did and focuses on the governing SWAPO, at the expense of other political parties and organisations or individuals deemed not to be supporting the governing party. Radio news seem to be less rigidly regulated, with a strong focus on development issues. Commercial radio stations tend to avoid local political news because of possible controversy.

Media reform efforts in the coming years need to focus on the future of public broadcasting in Namibia and access to information legislation. To support such reforms and to enhance freedom of expression in general media need to find more constructive and better ways to engage with citizens in general.

Civil society appears to have lost the sense of activism and energy so visible in the struggle for independence before 1990. One of the contributing factors to the current complacency may be a lack of media literacy in the country: many people are not aware of the vital role that the media does and is meant to play in a democratic society. Media lobby groups are not pro-active enough in educating the public and enlisting their support in this regard. More often than not they seem to be confining themselves to reacting to developments and merely defending the media when it is threatened.

SECTOR 1:

Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, are effectively protected and promoted.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA, ARE EFFECTIVELY PROTECTED AND PROMOTED.

1.1 Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed in the Constitution and supported by other pieces of legislation.

Analysis:

The Namibian Constitution protects and guarantees freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, but this is not supported by other legislation.

Article 21 (1) (a) of the Constitution, under “Fundamental Freedoms”, states: “All persons shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media.”

The right to freedom of expression can be limited, however, under Article 21 (2), which states: “The fundamental freedoms referred to in Sub-Article (1) hereof shall be exercised subject to the law of Namibia, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the rights and freedoms conferred by the said Sub-Article, which are necessary in a democratic society and are required in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of Namibia, national security, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.”

Blanket provisions such as “national security” or “public order” seem problematic. They could be used to stifle individual and media freedom of speech and expression just as the vague concept of “decency or morality” – notions of what is considered moral and decent or immoral and indecent today will change over time.

This right is also subject to a limitation clause under Article 22, which states: “Whenever or wherever in terms of this Constitution the limitation of any fundamental rights or freedoms contemplated in this Chapter is authorised, any law providing for such limitation shall:

- (a) be of general application, shall not negate the essential content thereof and shall not be aimed at a particular individual;

1.2 The right to freedom of expression is practised and citizens, including journalists, are asserting their rights without fear.

Analysis:

Freedom of expression is dependent upon the way ideals, such as democracy, are exercised in society. Since President Hifikepunye Pohamba took over from Sam Nujoma in 2004, the political climate appeared to ease somewhat, and citizens seemed to feel more confident to speak out. However, with the recent emergence of new political parties, evident divisions within the ruling South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the upcoming elections in November 2009, people do not appear to be so eager to express themselves anymore. This fear of speaking out is also partly related to traditional values of not criticising elders.

“The behaviour of people shows that democracy is not deeply entrenched in Namibian society. People’s voices are being silenced. Especially in rural areas, people are not able to express themselves freely. Opposition party members are spoken of in derogatory terms. There is no tolerance, and such an environment is not good for freedom of expression.”

The fear to express oneself in rural areas seemed greater than in urban areas, because of the inequitable distribution of resources in Namibia and the vulnerability of poorer people for whom basic needs, such as food, housing and water, often override more idealistic concerns. “It is a fact that if you are a member of a party other than SWAPO, and you criticise government, you will be denied access to services.”

Incidents were mentioned of wives in rural areas being assaulted by their husbands because they held different political views; of people being denied drought aid because they belonged to political parties other than the governing SWAPO or expressed views that did not conform to the status quo.

“The behaviour of people shows that democracy is not deeply entrenched in Namibian society...”

Chat shows play a crucial role in Namibia and are of huge importance in all language services of the state-owned Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) for members of the public to comment on all spheres of life. The suspension of a morning chat show on the NBC’s English national radio service in March 2009 caused a public outcry. Some panellists felt that this action was

clearly an attempt by government to suppress opposition voices, although NBC management reportedly said it was done because the service was being “abused” and people were being insulted on air. The show, commonly referred to as the ‘People’s Parliament’, has now been curtailed: limited to certain topics or no

1.3 Laws restricting freedom of expression are narrowly defined and do not include laws such as excessive official secret or libel acts, or laws that unreasonably interfere with the responsibilities of the media.

Analysis:

A number of pre-independence laws that could restrict freedom of expression remain on the statute books in Namibia. These include the Official Secrets Act, the Key Point Act and the Defence Act.

Of concern also is the Communications Bill, which has yet to go before Parliament although it is anticipated that it will be passed during 2009. Under section 63.1, the Bill contains a new provision, not contained in earlier drafts presented to stakeholders, that gives intelligence agents the right to intercept and monitor telephone and mobile phone conversations, as well as e-mail. According to the Bill, communications service providers will be duty-bound to keep records of conversations at their own cost.

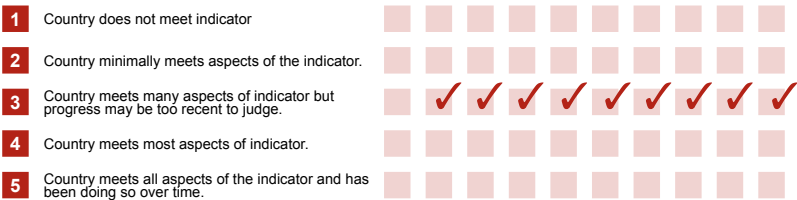
“This could definitely interfere with journalists’ ability to perform their duties and presents a real danger for freedom of expression in Namibia.”

There is no Criminal Libel Act in Namibia, but only the common-law offence of *crimen injuria*.

Defamation cases against the media have continued to increase over the past two years. Some cases, such as the N\$5 million (US\$1 = N\$8.04) lawsuit launched by former president Sam Nujoma against The Namibian newspaper and journalist Werner Menges, have been withdrawn.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3 (2005 = 3.3; 2007 = 2.3)

opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Namibia acceded to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights in 1992 and is thus bound by its provisions. Its Article 9 on freedom of expression states that every individual shall have the right to receive information and the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.

In 2002, the African Commission adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa to provide a detailed interpretation for member states of the AU of the rights to freedom of expression outlined in the African Charter. The Declaration defines freedom of expression and information as a “fundamental and inalienable human right and an indispensable component of democracy”.

The Declaration also details how such freedom of expression should be realised. Government-controlled broadcasters should be transformed into editorially independent public service broadcasters, accountable to the public through the legislature rather than the government, and the media should be professionally guided through self-regulatory, and not government-imposed, media bodies.

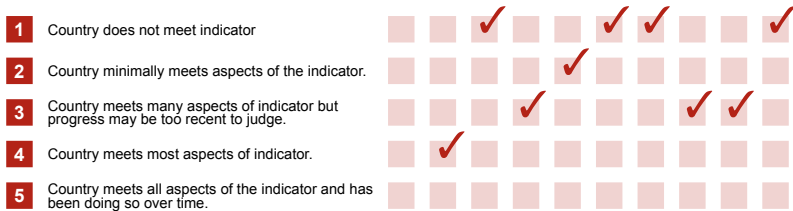
The Namibian Parliament ratified the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport in 2002 and has thus formally agreed to its provisions, although it will only become legally binding once it has been ratified by the required minimum nine member states. Among others, the Protocol encourages governments to cooperate and collaborate in the promotion, establishment and growth of independent media, as well as free flow of information. Article 20 enjoins member states to take “necessary measures to ensure the freedom and independence of the media”, with “independence of the media” being defined as “editorial independence, whereby editorial Policy and decisions are made by the media without interference”.

These documents are not widely known in Namibia and are only publicly referred to during lobbying by the Namibia chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

Recommendations made in an audit on ‘Media and Communications Legislation in the Republic of Namibia’, commissioned by the then Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in March 2005 and facilitated by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), were determined by using the above international documents benchmarks. However, most of these recommendations have still not been taken up by government.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.1 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

1.6 Entry into and practice of the journalistic profession is legally unrestricted.

Analysis:

Legally, the ability to work as a journalist in Namibia remains unrestricted. While journalists are encouraged to register with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and are thus granted media cards, this is not enforced. Media cards are also rarely denied.

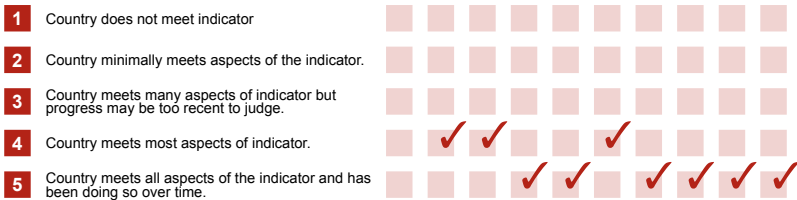
“Media cards are only really necessary if you want to cover high-security state events, such as those involving the President.”

Foreign journalists do need accreditation from the ministry before they can work in Namibia, as well as permission from the Ministry of Home Affairs. In a recent case, a journalist from the South African television programme *Carte Blanche* was held overnight by immigration officials for allegedly having worked in Namibia without the necessary work permit.

It is a point of concern that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, rather than an independent media organisation, should be issuing journalists with media cards. This makes the process open to possible abuse.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.7 (2005 = 4.9; 2007 = 4.7)

1.7 Confidential sources of information are protected by law and/or the courts.

Analysis:

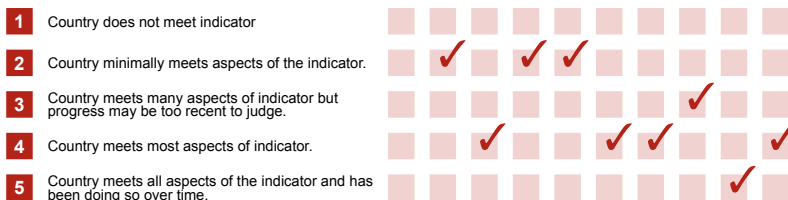
Through the Magistrate's Court Act, journalists can be forced to reveal their sources of information. Refusing to do so could mean contempt of court as the late Hannes Smith, editor of the Windhoek Observer, discovered when he was arrested and jailed in 1998 for refusing to give information about the killer of political activist Anton Lubowski. Smith was released after three days when it appeared he did in fact not have such knowledge. This is the only case to date in which a Namibian journalist has been sent to jail for not revealing his or her sources.

However, in a defamation case launched by the Windhoek mayor against the tabloid Informanté in 2009, the editor refused to divulge his sources. The High Court did not insist that he do so.

At the inauguration of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2006, President Pohamba gave the green light for a law to be created to protect whistleblowers. However, nothing had been done in this regard by May 2009.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.3 (2005 = 2.1; 2007 = 1.8)

1.8 Public information is easily accessible, guaranteed by law and/or the courts

Analysis:

Currently there is still no Access to Information Act in Namibia.

In practice public information (i.e. information in possession of the state to which the public should have access as it is in the public interest) is difficult to access by journalists, ordinary members of civil society and “even high-profile people”.

Officially, if information is requested from a particular ministry, the enquirer must go through the ministry’s Permanent Secretary to access the information. “If she or he is away, it’s too bad.”

Most government websites, including that of the state broadcaster NBC, are outdated and not functional in terms of providing current public information. An exception is the broadcasting regulator Namibian Communications Commission (NCC) that “has been quite forthcoming in making relevant documents, such as the draft Communications Bill, as well as draft policies on broadcasting and information and communication technology, available on the NCC website.” The Ministry of Finance is also making an effort to make important public documents, such as the annual budget, more readily available on its website.

People who do not have access to the internet may be able to get some documents from ministries in printed form, though often for a fee only. “Poorer people in general will not be able to afford access to such information.”

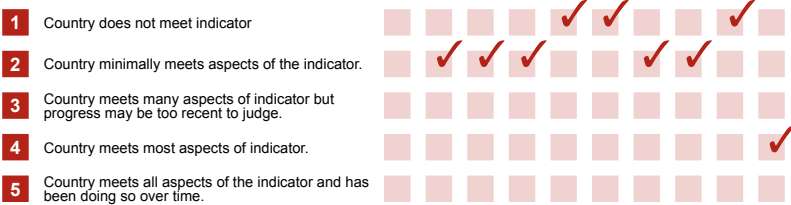
The government ban on *The Namibian* newspaper, in place since 2001, prohibits government bodies from purchasing the newspaper and from advertising in it. This ban, thus, denies a large section of civil society from accessing essential public information, such as voter education advertisements, tenders, employment offers and health notices. The Namibian has the highest newspaper circulation in the country.

While the Office of the President has launched some 17 commissions of enquiry over the past decade, mostly relating to corruption – including investigations into the Social Security Commission, the Namibian Development Corporation and the Ministry of Fisheries – the reports, or at least the recommendations, have never been made public.

Overall government is not putting much effort into making public information accessible. Even the latest copies of the Namibian Constitution have been printed and made freely available by a non-governmental organisation, the Namibia Institute for Democracy (NID).

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.9 (2005 = 2.4; 2007 = 1.8)

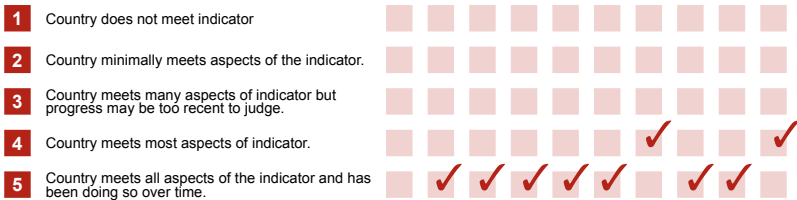
1.9 Websites or blogs are not required to register with, or obtain permission from, state authorities.

Analysis:

Internet content is not regulated in Namibia and no registration or permission is required from state authorities for websites or blogs.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.8 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

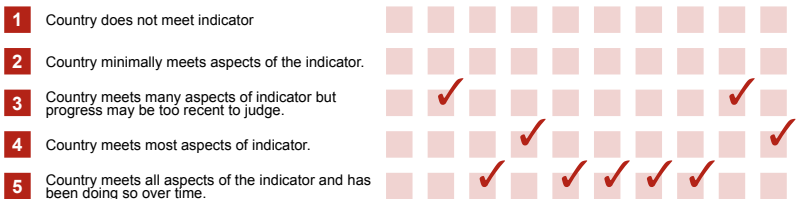
1.10 The State does not seek to block or filter internet content without legal provisions which provide for restrictions which serve a legitimate interest and are necessary in a democratic society.

Analysis:

To date, the Namibian government has not blocked internet content for the general public. However, certain state bodies and institutions, such as the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia, do filter the internet feed for users of their internet portal. These academic institutions, for example, prevent users from accessing websites such as the social networking site Facebook, conducting any internet searches around certain topics, such as “sex”, “soccer”, and downloading any video or radio feeds. While this can impact on the ability to conduct research and access information, the institutions argue that: “it is a bandwidth issue”.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.3 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

1.11 Civil society in general and media lobby groups actively advance the cause of media freedom.

Analysis:

A number of civil society and media lobby groups, including the Media Institute of Southern Africa Namibia chapter, the Namibian Editors' Forum, the Namibian Society for Human Rights and the Legal Assistance Centre, all advance the cause of media freedom. This is done often in the form of press statements, letters to the press and press conferences. For example, when the NBC took the Chat Show off English national radio service, all these groups were very vocal in their criticism of the suppression of freedom of speech.

Civil society in general, however, appears to have lost its sense of activism and energy so visible in the struggle for independence before 1990.

“Civil society seems happy to have media freedom but would not go onto the streets to protect and support this freedom. With a few exceptions, the general public appears to be quite apathetic.”

“In general, Namibians are complacent now. They feel they attained independence and they are home-and-dry. Even Workers' Day is not about workers unity and their demanding rights: it's become a political, SWAPO event.”

One of the reasons for this complacency may be a lack of media literacy in the country. Many people are not aware of what the media is meant to do for society. Media lobby groups seems to be re-active rather than pro-active by educating the public about the importance of the media, rather than just defending the media when it is threatened.

One panellist felt that MISA Namibia organises the annual media awards once a year and otherwise is “not very visible”. “However, as a lobby group MISA Namibia is effective in publicly responding to infringements on freedom of expression.”

“The media is one of the elements that support democracy but the general public doesn't see how the media protects our space and adds value to freedom of expression.”

“Civil society seems happy to have media freedom but would not go onto the streets to protect and support this freedom...”

Nevertheless, the ways in which civil society has rallied to protect the SMS pages in The Namibian and objected to the suspension of the NBC chat show indicate that the public is realising the importance of the media.

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	
2	Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.	
3	Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.	
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator.	
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.	

Average score: 2.9 (2005 = 2.8; 2007 = 3.1)

1.12 Media legislation evolves from meaningful consultations among state institutions, citizens and interest groups.

Analysis:

Government does invite stakeholders to discussions on draft policies and legislation, for example in the case of the Communications Bill. However, although there was an open invitation for the public to attend consultations on the draft over the past two years, little interest was shown by civil society and the media specifically.

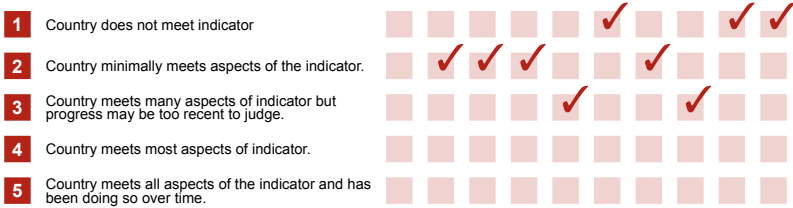
“People feel that these meetings are fake, that nothing will result from them anyway because government does not take note of outside input and therefore they are not meaningful. It comes back to democracy: how can you administer democracy if you don’t listen to the people?”

The final draft largely failed to include recommendations made. It also contains an interception clause (see 1.3 for details), which was not shown to stakeholders during these consultations.

*“...how can you
administer democracy
if you don’t listen to the
people?”*

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.9 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

Overall score for sector 1: 3.2 (2005 = 3.2; 2007 = 2.8)⁴

⁴ See the Introduction for an explanation about comparing overall sector scores for each report.

SECTOR 2:

The media landscape, including new media, is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability.

The media landscape, including new media, is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability.

2.1 A wide range of sources of information (print, broadcasting, internet) is accessible and affordable to citizens.

Analysis:

Print media

There are four national dailies in Namibia: The Namibian (English with some Oshiwambo pages), *Republikein* (predominantly Afrikaans), *Allgemeine Zeitung* (German) and *New Era* (English and some indigenous languages).

The country has five national English weeklies: the free tabloid *Informanté*, *Windhoek Observer*, *Namibia Sun*, *Namibia Economist* and SWAPO's mouthpiece, *Namibia Today*. Another weekly, the *Southern Times*, is a joint venture between the Namibian and Zimbabwe governments.

The Namibian prints 29,000 copies Monday to Thursday and 43,000 on Fridays. The *Republikein* prints on average 20,520 Monday to Thursday and 22,310 on Fridays. The *New Era* has a print run of 17,900 Monday to Thursday and 21,300 on Fridays. The *Allgemeine Zeitung* prints about 4,500 to 5,000 Monday to Thursday and 6,000 on Fridays.

Informanté prints 70,000 copies each Thursday. It is distributed freely around Namibia. Between 25,000 and 28,000 copies of the *Namibia Sun* are printed each week. The *Windhoek Observer* prints 7,000 copies each week. Some 7,000 copies of the *Namibia Economist* are printed each Friday. It was not possible to ascertain the print run of either the *Namibia Today* or the *Southern Times*.⁵

The coastal newspaper, *Namib Times*, is published bi-weekly and covers Swakopmund and Walvis Bay, while the Lüderitz community has the *Buchter News*, a monthly A4 newsletter with a print run of about 1,200 copies. There are also small community newspapers in other towns, such as Rehoboth.

⁵ Circulation figures for all publications obtained directly from media houses on May 29, 2009

There are a number of established monthly magazines in Namibia, including *Sister Namibia*, *Namibia Sports*, *Insight*, *Travel News Namibia* and the Air Namibia publication, *Flamingo*. In the past two years, new magazines have debuted, including *Gem*, *Life*, *Family Life* and *Osho*, as well as the annual *Financial Sector Review*.

Some magazines have folded in the past two years due to management and/or funding issues, including the social upliftment publication *The Big Issue Namibia*, *Space Magazine* and *Shambuka*.

An online entertainment- and fashion-focused newspaper, called *Exposé*, was launched in February 2009 but has not yet made much of an impact.

With newspapers costing between N\$3 and N\$5 and magazines often over N\$20, print media is not accessibly or affordable to the majority of the population. Most of these publications are also in English, further undermining national accessibility. Magazines are mostly found in Windhoek, while the distribution of newspapers to rural areas is often too slow (arriving a day late) or does not reach some areas at all.

Broadcasting

The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation has ten radio stations, with the San community service, !Ha Radio, having been added in 2008:

- NBC National Radio – English service
- NBC Oshiwambo
- NBC Afrikaans
- NBC German
- NBC Otjiherero
- NBC Damara>Nama
- NBC Silozi
- NBC Tirelo yaSetswana
- NBC Rukavango
- NBC !Ha Radio – San community service

NBC FM radio reaches an estimated 96 per cent of the Namibian population.⁶ In many ways, NBC radio stations fulfil the role of community radio stations for indigenous language groups. However, none of the different language services of NBC radio are broadcast throughout the entire country, but only in certain areas deemed to be where there is a concentration of particular ethnic groups.

⁶ Figures supplied by Benni Murangi, NBC Manager: Satellite Uplink and Downlink, Transmitters (FM and TV) and Electrical/Aircon. on May 29, 2009

There are nine commercial radio stations in Namibia, with two new arrivals, *Fresh FM* and *West Coast FM*, in the past two years:

- Namibia FM 99
- Omulunga Radio
- Radio Kosmos
- 100 FM Energy
- Radio France International
- Kudu FM
- Radio Wave
- Fresh FM
- West Coast FM

Commercial radio stations, all based in Windhoek except for *West Coast FM*, seem to be thriving in Namibia. None of the stations broadcast throughout the country, but mostly in large urban areas.

The country has six community radio stations which are on air, with newcomers *Live FM* and *Karas FM*:

- Base FM (formerly Katutura Community Radio)
- Channel 7 (religious community)
- Live FM (Rehoboth)
- Radio Ecclesia (religious youth in Windhoek)
- Karas FM (Keetmanshoop)
- UNAM Radio (University of Namibia student community)

At the time of the panel meeting in May 2009, *Obangwena Community Radio*, based in northern Namibia, was off air.

Most of the community radio stations appear to be battling constantly to source sufficient income through advertisements and sponsorships. Many of the community stations are “hanging in there”. An exception is *Channel 7*, which has 27 transmitters around the country and a large advertiser base as well as communities around the country that assist with purchasing and maintaining transmitters, and *UNAM Radio*, which is funded by the university.

There are three television stations in Namibia: government-owned NBC television, One Africa Television (the country’s only commercial television station) and the religious “community” station Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN).

NBC TV can reach an estimated viewership of 66 per cent of the population through analogue aerials.⁷ NBC is also available through a local DSTV satellite subscription. A number of Namibian radio stations can be heard on the DSTV audio bouquet, although not NBC radio stations. Negotiations are underway with MultiChoice Namibia to put the NBC national English service on this bouquet.

⁷ Murangi, B.

One Africa has 28 transmitters around the country and claims to be accessible to more than 90 per cent of the population in Namibia. The station's signal is also available via satellite.⁸

TBN is licensed by the Namibian Communications Commission as a community television station. It is, however, American-owned and a rebroadcast of an American faith channel and thus is not owned by a Namibian, Christian community.

Media ownership

Schenzen Communications from China currently owns 36 per cent of the shares in One Africa. A South African company, Telkom Media holds 14 per cent, while the remaining 51 per cent are in Namibian hands: senior One Africa management as well as Namibian black economic empowerment investment companies.

A report on media ownership in Namibia, commissioned by MISA and completed in June 2007, pointed to various cross-ownerships in the media market.⁹ For example, One Africa shareholder and MD Paul Van Schalkwyk also has shares in Venture Publications, which owns *Flamingo Magazine* and *Travel News Namibia*, INTV Film and Video Productions and the advertising agency Advantage McCann.

Fresh FM, *Radio Kudu* and *Omulunga Radio* are also all in the same stable of stations, with MDs also being shareholders in their respective stations.

In May 2009, *The Namibian* sold its shares in Free Press Printers, a joint-venture launched in 2006 between The Namibian and the Trustco Group, publishers of *Informanté*. Currently *The Namibian* is being printed by Newsprint Namibia, a company within the Democratic Media Holdings (DMH) group, owners of *Republikein*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Namibia Sun* and *Radio 99*. Newsprint Namibia and John Meinert Printing are the two dominant printers in Namibia, with Newsprint now printing all the daily newspapers, as well as the *Namibia Sun*.

The *Windhoek Observer* changed ownership during 2009 following the death of its founding editor Hannes Smith. It is now owned by Paragon Investments, headed by pro-SWAPO businessman Lazarus Jacobs and Desmond Amunyela. This led to a dramatic change in its political orientation from being a right-wing paper to a pro-SWAPO publication. The Paragon group also has interests in the hospitality, investment, retail and property sector, and owns the advertising agency, TBWA Hunt Lascaris Namibia.¹⁰

8 <http://www.oneafrica.tv/node/7>

9 Media Ownership and Legislation in the Republic of Namibia, 1990-2007 by Martin Buch Larsen. Windhoek, Namibia. June 2007.

10 http://www.paragonnamibia.com/new/group_structure.html

While the newspaper may have demonstrated some surprising editorial independence two years ago, it was felt that since Joel Kaapanda took over as Minister of Information and Communication Technology in early 2009, state-paid journalists have become more cautious.

Some panellists still felt that a handful of reports in the *New Era* do appear to be written “quite independently”. Letters from members of the opposition party, Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), are published and the paper’s opinion pieces are not always “pro-SWAPO”.

Other panellists said that the newspaper was, editorially, “very, very close to the SWAPO mouthpiece, *Namibia Today*”.

“There is an impression among some leaders in Namibia that the *New Era* has the mandate of the government/ruling party, SWAPO, and there is a grey area between the government and SWAPO. Others feel that because taxpayers’ are funding it, it should be the voice of all Namibians, irrespective of party lines.”

In another example of the Minister’s increasing interference in *New Era* at an editorial level, Kaapanda met with all staff in October 2008 and told them that in the run-up to the November 2009 elections he expected the newspaper to cover the government in a positive light, and he reminded the staff that government pays their salaries – as reported in *New Era* itself.¹¹ Again, as elections were referred to, panellists felt that the minister was equating government with SWAPO.

The new Chairperson of the *New Era* Board is high-ranking SWAPO ‘think tank’ member, Matthew Gowaseb. He is also the acting CEO of the *Southern Times* and, most recently, in May 2009 he was appointed the new Acting Director General of the NBC.¹² *New Era* and NAMPAs articles about his NBC appointment made no mention of his other roles.

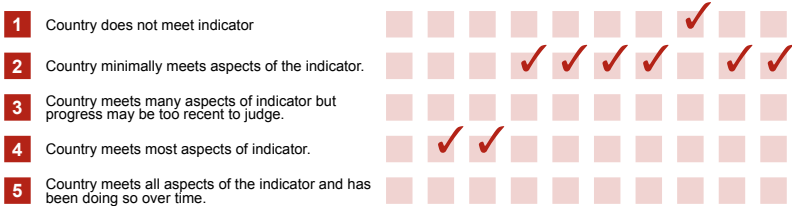
There is concern that NAMPAs journalists and editors may be exercising self-censorship in their work, and thus presenting government uncritically, by avoiding controversial topics and focusing on neither feature writing nor investigative journalism. Instead, the news agency appears to write mostly fillers and makes no effort to cover rural areas, either.

11 ‘New Era Board Chair Introduced’ by Chrispin Inambao, *New Era*, October 28, 2008

12 www.newera.com.na/article.php?articleid=4448

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.3 (2005 = 1.8, 2007 = 2.7)

2.5 Adequate competition legislation / regulation seeks to prevent media concentration and monopolies.

Analysis:

As mentioned in indicator 2.1, there are a number of incidences of concentration of ownership within the media sector in Namibia. Currently, the law does not prevent this, and all the current Namibian Communications Commission (NCC) Act stipulates with regards to ownership is that 51 per cent of the shareholding be under Namibian control. However the draft Communications Bill, which is set to replace the NCC Act, under the heading “Anti-competitive practices”, states in section 18 (7): “Sharing of directors and officers among otherwise unaffiliated providers of telecommunications or any type of broadcasting service without the approval of the Authority, is prohibited.”

Within the same Bill, under section 51 (6), on the issuing of broadcasting licenses, it states: “When considering an application for the issue of a broadcasting license, the Authority must have regard to ... the desirability or otherwise of allowing any person or associated persons to have control of or a substantial interest in – (a) more than one broadcasting or transmission service; (b) more than one radio station and one television station [or] a combination of television and radio channels and registered newspapers with a common circulation in Namibia”.

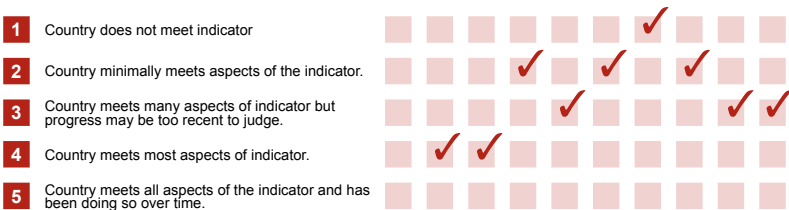
Thus, cross-ownership within the media sector may, in future, not be allowed by the new Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia, which will replace the Namibian Communications Commission once the Bill is passed, but will be only at the discretion of the authority.

A new Competition Act, which became law in 2008, is intended to cover all types of business. Its objective is to prevent unfair competition, such as mergers intended to cut out opposition businesses.

It is difficult for new media to enter the market and grow, “because often advertisers will only advertise with a magazine, for example, if the publisher has other titles under its belt. So it seems that the market encourages conglomerates and rewards them.” As a result many magazines have collapsed over the past few years.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.7 (2005 = 2.3; 2007 =2.1)

2.6 Government promotes a diverse media landscape with economically sustainable and independent media outlets.

Analysis:

Government does not actively promote a diverse media landscape with sustainable and independent media outlets, but neither does it place obstacles in its way.

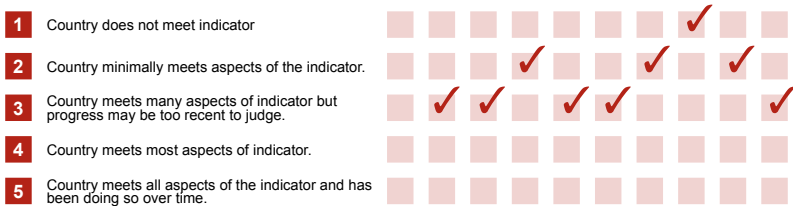
The only media sector that receives some direct state support is the film industry, through the Namibian Film Commission.

The government does have a policy to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), but media companies do not seem to consider applying for this.

Newspapers are not exempt from VAT and there is no reduction on the percentage payable by them.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.4 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

2.7 All media fairly reflect the voices of both women and men, in their ethnic, linguistic, religious, political and social diversity.

Analysis:

Most newsmakers and sources of news are men. This may be for a number of reasons: culturally, women may not be prepared to speak to the media; it may also be because fewer women than men hold positions of power. “While the media must take some of the blame for having an imbalance of men/women in their content, it also comes down to the structure of society.”

Political analysts and economists whose comments are published in the media tend to be men. “The women are there, but they are not as public as the men.”

Women’s issues are receiving more coverage, but mostly in specific dedicated sections, such as women’s programmes on radio or television stations, or women’s pages in the print media.

*“The women are there,
but they are not as public
as the men.”*

In terms of ethnic diversity, some panellists accused NBC TV of being “mostly black and hardly showing any white faces”.

Minority groups, such as the San, also receive very little coverage in privately or state-owned media, while rural people are shown far less in the media than urban dwellers.

Linguistically, English dominates the print and broadcasting media in Namibia, although notable exceptions are NBC radio’s language services, *New Era* and *The Namibian*, both of which regularly feature articles in other Namibian languages. However, the NBC radio services are not transmitted throughout the entire

Most of the acts and gazettes are not accessible electronically, unless a particular ministry or government institution takes its own initiative, such as the NCC, which has a number of working documents, such as draft policies and bills, on its website.¹³

In 2007 the government launched a 15-year education improvement plan called Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan (ETSIP). One of the aims of ETSIP is “to improve access to ICTs to enhance learning and administration including making ICT a subject and a cross-curricular tool, staff training in ICTs, and developing support services and structures for deployment and maintenance”.¹⁴ The Ministry of Education has an ICT policy for education, in existence since 2003, but it seems that government was not prioritising putting computers in schools itself, but was leaving this up to NGOs or donors.

An attempt by an NGO to provide information technology to schools around the country was stopped by government in early 2009. The SchoolNet initiative was launched in February 2000 to recycle old computers to give schools around the country access to this technology, as well as to the internet. The NGO used free and open-source (Linux) software, to keep costs down, and uses wireless networking and solar panels to link up rural schools, which were off the electricity grid. Apart from free hardware, schools also received free training on the OpenLab operating systems and subsidised telephone service for internet connectivity.¹⁵

From April 2009, however, SchoolNet was instructed to stop providing technical service support to government schools by the Ministry of Education (MoE). MoE had further decided to obtain internet connectivity from Telecom via XNet directly, and no longer wants SchoolNet as an intermediary internet service provider. This was after SchoolNet had put computers and internet connectivity into more than 400 schools around Namibia, and provided technical service.¹⁶ Some panelists expressed the suspicion that the government succumbed to pressure from Microsoft, which is fighting the use of Linux.

13 <http://www.ncc.org.na/page.php?pn=publication>

14 Draft Communications Bill, dated March 12, 2008

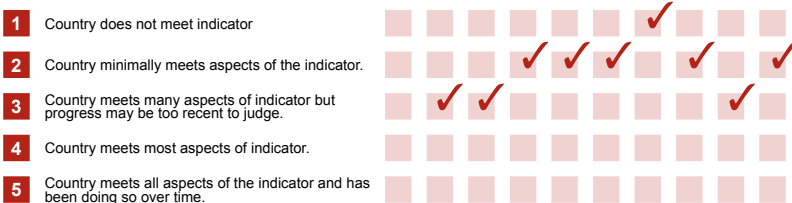
<http://74.125.77.132/search?q=cache:Tgi7CMa7NRJ:www.infodev.org/en/Document.420pdf+namibia+etsip+computers&cd=10&chl=en&ct=clnk&gl=na&client=firefox-a>

15 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_Net_Namibia

16 Additional information supplied by Joris Komen, SchoolNet Director, on May 29, 2009.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.2 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

2.9 Government does not use its power over the placement of advertisements as a means to interfere with editorial content.

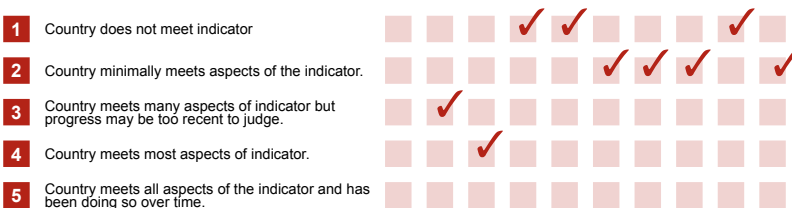
Analysis:

In March 2001, the Namibian government, under the leadership of President Sam Nujoma, imposed a ban on *The Namibian* newspaper, prohibiting any government body from placing advertisements in the daily newspaper or from purchasing it with state funds. The government claimed this was because the newspaper was too critical of its policies. This ban is still in place.

The continuing ban denies *The Namibian* readers access to important and relevant content. The fact that *New Era* publishes all government tenders, as well as most of the other government advertisements, means that government is “monopolising a portion of the advertising market and reserving it mostly for state media”.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.0 (2005 = 1.8; 2007 = 1.3)

2.10 The advertising market is large enough to maintain a diversity of media outlets.

Analysis:

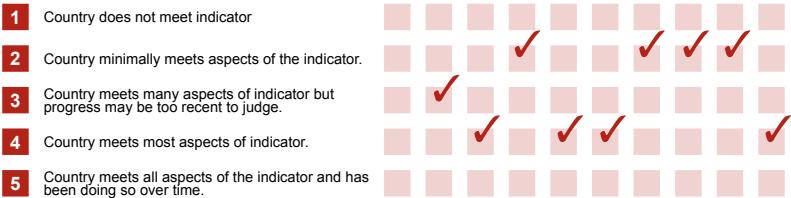
...Government is “monopolising a portion of the advertising market and reserving it mostly for state media”.

The advertising market is seemingly unaffected by the global economic crisis and no established media houses have closed down due to advertising revenue losses. In fact, if the increase in radio stations over the past two years is any indication, the advertising market appears to be growing

The Namibian magazine market is flooded with South African publications, such as *Drum*, *You* and *Huisgenoot* magazines, well-supported by Namibian readers, which is one of the reasons why new media battle to get a foothold in the market.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.0 (2005 = 2.4; 2007 = 2.9)

Overall score for sector 2:

2.7 (2005 = 2.7, 2007 = 2.6)

Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent; the state broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster.

3.1 Broadcasting legislation has been passed and is implemented that provides for a conducive environment for public, commercial and community broadcasting.

Analysis:

Broadcasting legislation in Namibia provides for public, commercial and community broadcasting. The broadcasting regulator, the Namibian Communications Commission (NCC), has in the past granted licences to applicants from the commercial and community sectors able to prove that they had the necessary financial means and the skills to operate a radio or television station. The large number of licensed radio stations in particular indicates that the NCC is indeed attempting to provide a conducive environment for these broadcasters.

Currently, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) does not fall within the ambit of the regulator, “although it is the most controversial broadcaster and doing the most important broadcasting work in the country”. The draft Communications Bill, which is expected to be passed during 2009, contains the clause 56. (1), which states that: “This chapter [on broadcasting services] shall apply to the NBC or its successor-in-title in respect of broadcasting activities carried out by that Corporation or its successor-in-title, but only if so determined by the Minister following a public consultation.” Thus, at some point in future the Minister may decide at his or her own discretion to place, or not to place, the NBC under the regulator, which will be called the Communications Regulatory Authority of Namibia.

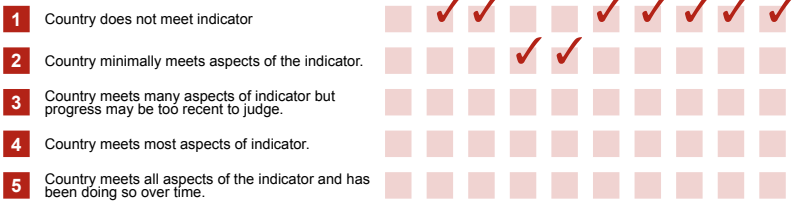
The NCC has made some choices in terms of allocating radio frequencies that are seemingly not in the interest of local broadcasters. In 2001, the regulator made available the FM frequency 107.9 to *Radio France Internationale*. This could be explained by the “mutually beneficial” agreement between RFI and the NBC.¹⁷ RFI has supplied millions of dollars worth of broadcasting equipment in the past

17 <http://blogs.rnw.nl/medianetwork/namibian-broadcasting-corporation-renews-contract-with-rfi>

of the SWAPO newspaper *Namibia Today*, in April 2009. Panellists noted that these were clearly appointments based on “political affiliation”, while the Namibia Today editor faced “a conflict of interest”.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.2 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

3.3 The body regulates broadcasting services and licenses in the public interest and ensures fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing society at large.

Analysis:

Some panellists felt that the NCC, through issuing broadcasting licenses, did attempt to represent society at large, while others thought that the regulator merely awarded available frequencies to any applicant with money and proven skills.

Neither the current legislation governing regulation nor licensing criteria seem to be based on any kind of broadcasting policy. There has never been any kind of public debate on whether such a policy should provide for quotas for the different broadcasting sectors or whether the regulator should promote certain types of radio stations (e.g. news talk) over others (e.g. pure music stations). “You could play music 100 per cent of the time as no particular type of format, not even local content, is stipulated by the NCC.”

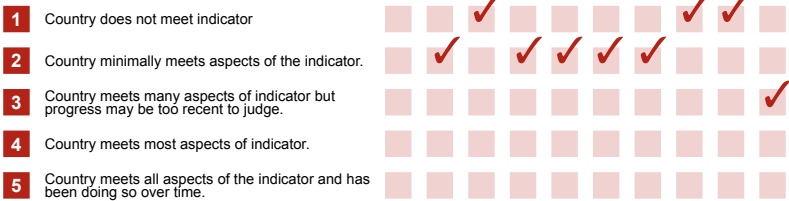
Because the different sectors are not precisely defined in the legislation, applicants themselves can decide whether to seek a community or commercial licence.

“A board representing party interests cannot act in the public interest as they are representing only part of the country’s interests.”

The composition of the NCC board as outlined under indicator 3.2 seems to be at the root of these problems: “A board representing party interests cannot act in the public interest as they are representing only part of the country’s interests.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.8 (2005 = 2.0; 2007 = 1.8)

3.4 The state/public broadcaster is accountable to the public through a board representative of society at large and selected in an independent, open and transparent manner.

Analysis:

According to the Namibian Broadcasting Act of 1991 the NBC board consists of between six and 11 persons, appointed by the Minister of Information and Communication Technology at his or her own discretion. The process of appointment is thus not independent, open or transparent. The board appoints the Director General but has to seek approval from government (cabinet).

Presently members of the board come from the Polytechnic of Namibia, the Bank of Namibia, the Ministry of Defence, the Namibian Literacy Trust and the United Methodist Church in Namibia; one member is the mayor of a town.

In the view of one panellist “the Minister was trying to make the board representative of society”, by having representatives from the educational and financial sectors, for example. Members of the board do come from different ethnic groups and there is an attempt at gender balance – two out of seven board members are women.

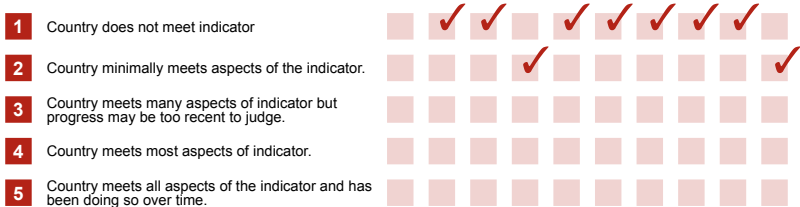
The majority on the panel, however, was adamant that “the common denominator [among NBC board members] was allegiance to SWAPO”. In what was widely seen as a political move, the minister first made the chair of the board resign after saying publicly that he had lost trust in him.

Then the board fired the Director General, Bob Kandetu. He was seen within SWAPO as supporter of the SWAPO breakaway party, the RDP, although he had denied this.

There is the sense that the board’s composition was altered to make it more supportive of the minister’s will and that the Director General had to go before the upcoming elections.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 1.2 (2005 = 1.9; 2007 = 1.2)

3.5 Persons who have a vested interest of a political or commercial nature are excluded from possible membership in the board of the state/public broadcaster i.e. office bearers with the State and political parties, as well as those with a financial interest in the broadcasting industry.

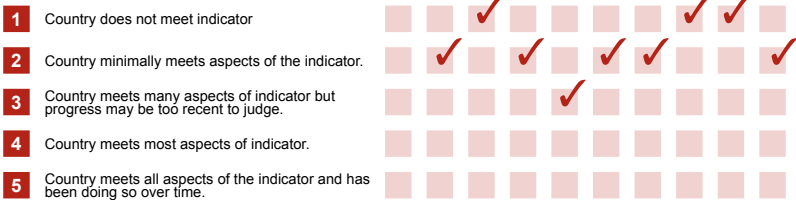
Analysis:

The NBC Act in its section 6 stipulates that members of the board of the NBC have to be Namibian citizens. The only group of persons expressly excluded from membership are members of the National Assembly (parliament).

By implication, then, other office bearers with the state or functionaries of political parties, as well as persons with a financial interest in the broadcasting industry can be appointed. One member of the present board is a mayor and another a SWAPO councillor.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.8 (2005 = 1.9; 2007 = 1.6)

3.6 The editorial independence of the state/public broadcaster from political influence is guaranteed by law and practised.

Analysis:

The Namibian Broadcasting Act of 1991 does not guarantee or restrict the editorial independence of the NBC, and is in fact silent on this matter.

The Act says, under section 3, that the objectives of the corporation are “(a) to inform and entertain the public of Namibia; (b) to contribute to the education and unity of the nation, and to peace in Namibia; (c) to provide and disseminate information relevant to the socio-economic development of Namibia; (d) to promote the use and understanding of the English language.”

The Director General of the NBC is appointed by the board, with such appointment to be approved by cabinet, while the board in turn is appointed by the Minister of Information and Communication Technology. The minister has a very direct hand in the running of the broadcaster and political interference is practised.

A case in point is the suspension of the chat show on NBC’s National Radio (see indicator 1.2). In February 2009 members of the SWAPO Elders Council called for the show to be suspended because callers were criticising the party’s leaders

and government. The following month, in March, the NBC's Director General did indeed suspend the show.

“...But where is the public who demands that the NBC become a true public service broadcaster?”

While programmes on the various language radio services seem to be “fairly independent, editorially”, especially in terms of reporting for actuality programmes, radio news broadcasts are centrally produced and tightly controlled, preventing individual radio stations from writing their own news bulletins. The English

and the Oshiwambo services appear to attract the most interest from SWAPO, possibly because they have the largest listenership, and thus are vulnerable to a higher degree of political interference.

NBC TV news is seen as biased when covering political issues and current affairs, with certain political parties or organisations that are considered anti-government not receiving any coverage at all, or being portrayed in a slanted way to indicate a lack of public support for these parties or organisations.

“The reason for this is probably because the NBC is funded by state money, so it won't go against the government's stance.”

Another reason may also be the lack of sufficient equipment such as cameras and vehicles, which makes it difficult to cover simultaneous events, especially when one of them is an undisputed priority like a speech of the president.

“There is widespread self-censorship at the NBC, with journalists being afraid to report on certain issues that contradict the stance of the government ... Generally NBC reporters are trying to be independent. The problem comes from top management and the board, which are more susceptible to political pressure from higher up. This makes the reporter fearful of a reprimand from above.”

There are some indications that things may change for the better at NBC. The General Manager for News and Current Affairs recently became a member of the Namibian Editors' Forum, a body strongly committed to professional and ethical standards. In an effort to improve the standard of TV and radio news reporting, a training agreement has been signed with Swedish Radio, an independent public service broadcaster, with a special focus on the elections. The NBC also has an election task force and says it is committed to covering the rallies of all contesting parties in the run-up to the elections.

“These developments show that the NBC is gearing up to become a real public service broadcaster. But where is the public who demands that the NBC become a true public service broadcaster? There is no picketing or toyi-toying outside the NBC offices.”

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Average score:

2.0 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

3.7 The state/public broadcaster is adequately funded in a manner that protects it from arbitrary interference through its budget and from commercial pressure.

Analysis:

The NBC receives funding from a variety of sources, including the main source, a state subsidy; annual television licenses of about N\$200 per TV set; the rental of transmitters to private radio stations; and airtime sold in the form of advertising and sponsorships.

Records from the NBC show that for the 2006–2007 financial year, the broadcaster received N\$62,5 million from the state, while it generated N\$20.2 million in advertising, N\$26.1 million in license fees and N\$3.4 million through the rental of transmitters.¹⁸ Thus, the state subsidy comprised 56 per cent of revenue, while ‘own income’ made up the remaining 44 per cent. In 2009, the state subsidy, in terms of the station’s operational budget, increased from N\$60 million in 2008 to N\$80 million.

Some panellists said that the NBC is not adequately funded. “In fact, it is totally under-funded and remains saddled with a historical debt in unpaid Pay As You Earn (PAYE) tax deductions of more than N\$200 million. Consequently, the NBC battles to fulfil its mandate as there is a shortage of equipment and vehicles, for example. The NBC may not be covering rural areas sufficiently because of a

¹⁸ Financial information made available to Sarah Taylor by NBC Chief Financial Officer Alec Kabaira in January 2009

lack of equipment and this gives people the impression that the NBC is trying to starve people of information.”

Others argued that the broadcaster was receiving sufficient funding, but that the spending priorities may be skewed, with most of the funding going to salaries in an institution that was overstaffed.

“Just in terms of television, One Africa has similar content to NBC: soccer, music, ‘soapies’ and news, but One Africa is funded totally by advertising and has a much smaller staff.”

“money will rule content”

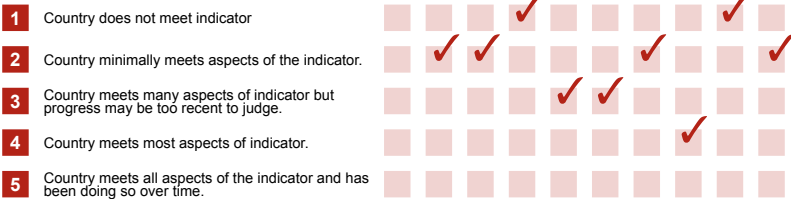
NBC TV, however, produces much more local content than One Africa and has 10 language radio stations that are on air 15 hours a day. Most of the radio stations are in fact understaffed, while the infrastructure for radio has also not been maintained and is dilapidated.

There is a sense that government has a great mistrust of the NBC and therefore did not give it sufficient money to fulfil its mandate “for fear that it would be squandered ... by giving less money, the state also maintains tighter control over the NBC”.

Advertisers do not exert commercial pressure on the NBC, although paid-for outside broadcasts (OBs) for companies can take precedence over own programming. At times “money will rule content” when NBC radio services have to focus on live, funded broadcasts, such as the opening of a new shop, rather than issues of social and public interest.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.2 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

3.8 The state/public broadcaster is technically accessible in the entire country.

Analysis:

According to the NBC, its radio services reach 89.36 per cent of the population, while NBC TV is accessible to 61.9 per cent of the population.¹⁹

This falls short of projections in the Ministry of Finance's Medium Term Expenditure Framework for 2009/10, which stated that the goal for the population to have access to radio for this period was 98 per cent and for television, 70 per cent.

As mentioned under indicator 2.1, not all the radio services broadcast by the NBC are available throughout the country,

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
2	Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
3	Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.	□ □ □ ✓ □ □ ✓ □ ✓ □ ✓ □ □ □
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator.	□ □ ✓ □ □ ✓ □ □ □ □ ✓ □ ✓ □ ✓
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.	□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Average score:

3.6 (2005 = 3.9; 2007 = 3.9)

3.9 The state/public broadcaster offers diverse programming for all interests.

Analysis:

NBC TV and radio stations do cater for a number of different groups in Namibian society, through specific programming for farmers, sports fans and young people, for example. The broadcaster does make an effort to be inclusive of people with disabilities by catering to deaf viewers through sign language interpreters during news and current affairs broadcasts.

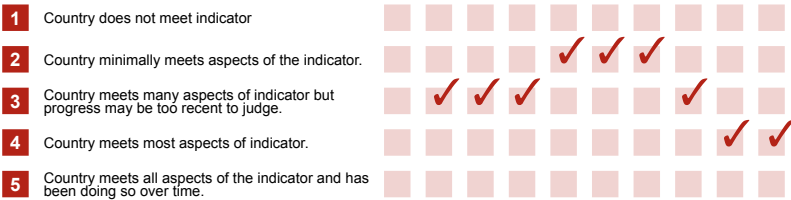
¹⁹ NBC Corporate Profile 2008

However, religious programming is only Christian and ignores other faiths practiced in Namibia. There are no programmes aimed specifically at sexual minorities, and rural people are largely left out of the broadcaster’s programming, possible as a result of lack of funding that prevents journalists from travelling to outlying areas to cover stories.

In terms of music, NBC TV caters predominantly for urban kwaito fans. The 10 radio stations, however, have a very broad music coverage overall. Members of the public can submit their own music videos to NBC TV and, as long as they meet a few basic criteria, they will be broadcast.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.9 (2005 = 2.4; 2007 = 3.3)

3.10 The state/public broadcaster offers balanced and fair information reflecting the full spectrum of diverse views and opinions.

Analysis:

NBC radio and television seem to have – as one panellist put it – a “split personality”, manifesting in radio and TV news bulletins having different angles: TV news as a rule tends to report first what the president or a minister said or did and focuses on the governing SWAPO, at the expense of other political parties and organisations or individuals deemed not to be supporting the governing party. NBC radio seems to have a less rigid approach with a strong focus on development issues. However, “burning issues of the day” are often neglected.

NBC TV journalists often fail to get different views on an issue, mostly going with the SWAPO view, and thus not creating a balanced story. This was a step back from apparent progress mentioned in the 2007 report, where it was noted

that since President Pohamba took power, coverage of opposition parties and views had become fairer. Panellists felt that with 2009 being an election year, and with the arrival of Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Joel Kaapanda, earlier in 2009, this approach had altered, so as to present SWAPO in the best possible light.

NBC radio appears to be more neutral than its TV counterpart, apart from the centrally produced news broadcasts and chat shows that seem to be often hosted by pro-SWAPO facilitators without professional training in radio journalism.

The main news bulletin on NBC TV is in English and was moved up to 19h00 from its previous 20h00 slot in 2007 when competing One Africa started its bulletin at 19h30. As a result, indigenous language news broadcasts (two a day of half an hour's duration each) are now only screened between 07h00 and 08h00 the following morning, meaning that viewers of these bulletins get old news and the audience reached is much smaller at this time of day. There are no Afrikaans (or German) news broadcasts on NBC TV, although Afrikaans is more widely spoken in Namibia than English.

There is concern that the Namibian people are being denied foreign news in the broadcaster's TV and radio bulletins, although the English national radio service does broadcast unedited BBC news feed at midday.

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	
2	Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.	
3	Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.	
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator.	
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.	

Average score:

2.2 (2005 = 2.4; 2007 = 2.4)

3.11 The state/public broadcaster offers as much diverse and creative local content as economically achievable.

Analysis:

An effort is being made at NBC TV to develop local content further, but the station still has to re-broadcast foreign news feeds as it does not produce enough own material. There are broadcasts of CCTV news from 08h00 to 09h00 as well as from 23h30 to 00h30, CNN from 13h00 to 14h00 and Deutsche Welle from 17h00 to 17h30 during the week. The NBC-made programmes include the weekday hour-long show *Good Morning Namibia*, the weekday news bulletins (07h00 indigenous language and 19h00 in English), the current affairs programmes *Voices of Namibia* and *Talk of the Nation*, the cooking show *Salt & Pepper* and the music show *Afro Connection*.

While NBC TV used to broadcast 24 hours a day, its output has decreased to 18 and a half hours, from 06h00 to 00h30, with the final hour, or half hour, usually filled by the Chinese news feed, CCTV.

While the standard of the local soap opera, *The Ties That Bind*, is not considered to be very high, initiating this show was a noble intention and an indication of the NBC trying to build up the local industry. ‘Soapies’ are very popular in Namibia, which, like One Africa, mostly procures cheap South American, dubbed versions.

However, local films, such as those presented at a recent Windhoek film festival, are hardly ever shown on NBC TV.

The Sanlam-NBC Music Awards are a good attempt by the NBC to develop and nurture the local music industry.

NBC radio stations play a high proportion of local music and feature a lot of local content, “but there is room for improvement”.

from listeners to the NBC radio stations that when they supply the information about a community meeting, for example, it is often aired too late.

In the current NCC Act, community broadcasting is not defined. Therefore, some “community broadcasters” do not operate as true community broadcasters. The religious TV channel TBN, for example, is not locally or community owned, but is operated from the USA.

The draft Communications Bill, however, will define this sector of broadcasting: “Community broadcasting’ means a broadcasting service controlled by a non-profit entity for non-profit purposes which serves a community and also encourages participation in it by the community”.

Most community stations battle to secure their own funding through sponsors, while some attempt to procure more advertising. With the current global economic crisis, funding from outside Namibia is increasingly difficult to procure.

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	
2	Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.	
3	Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.	
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator.	
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.	

Average score: 2.0 (2005 = 2.3; 2007 = 2.2)

Overall score for sector 3: 2.2 (2005 = 2.0; 2007 = 2.1)

SECTOR 4:

The media practise high levels of professional standards.

The media practise high levels of professional standards.

4.1 The media follow voluntary codes of professional standards, which are enforced by self-regulatory bodies that deal with complaints from the public.

Analysis:

In the past two years, serious and promising new efforts have been undertaken to establish a self-regulatory body for the media. The Namibian Editors' Forum (NEF) and the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) have been working to establish a body to deal with complaints from the public against the media.

A previous attempt in 2002 to introduce a code of ethics and a self-regulatory mechanism failed because the media at the time were highly polarised and editors were reluctant to come together and discuss the establishment of a media council. Another obstacle was the fact that the process was being driven by MISA Namibia, regarded by the state-owned media as generally antagonistic towards the government.

This time around there is considerable 'buy in' by all sectors of the media, be they state or privately owned. The new driving force is the Namibian Editors' Forum, formed in June 2007, which has active members from the mainstream print and broadcast media, including NBC TV, *New Era*, *Republikein*, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *The Namibian* and commercial radio stations, among others.

In November 2007, the SWAPO Congress passed a resolution calling for government to establish a media council to regulate the activities and operations of the media. This threat of a statutory media council being instituted may have galvanised the media into action to form an independent, self-regulatory body.

The complaints mechanism will work as follows: When members of the public are aggrieved by something that has been broadcast or published in the media, they will be able to approach a Media Ombudsman, who will inform the parties involved and call them together. If the Media Ombudsman is unable to resolve the matter, it will go before the Media Complaints Committee, which comprises the Ombudsman plus two members of a panel established by public invitation. If one of the parties is not happy with the outcome, there will be an appeal provision involving a retired judge.

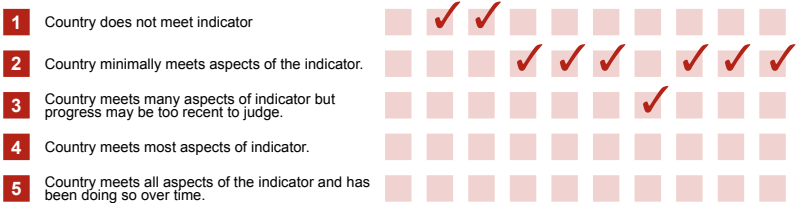
When launching a complaint through this procedure, the aggrieved party must agree not to take legal action.

The Ombudsman, Media Complaints Committee or the appeal judge will be able to order that a correction or apology be published or broadcast. Fines cannot be imposed.

“If people are after money, they must go to court.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.9 (2005 = 2.3; 2007 = 2.0)

4.2 The standard of reporting follows the basic principles of accuracy and fairness.

Analysis:

The standard of reporting in Namibia, overall, has improved over the past few years and “most stories are fairly accurate and balanced”, but it is still “not satisfactory”.

The tabloid *Informanté* was criticised for publishing “20 per cent truth, 80 per cent sensation”. The fact that the newspaper has lost numerous defamation cases in the past two years is indicative of inaccurate reporting. The tabloid publishing an article headlined ‘Sex tourism’ alongside a photograph of a Himba woman was mentioned as an instance of grave unfairness.

“*Informanté* does not have a good name. They tend to bring out some big stories, but they don’t do it very accurately and tend to take a stance, and ‘hang’ public figures before they have all the facts.”

Media practitioners often fall short in exhausting all possible sources, often due to time pressure to meet deadlines. This results in one-sided articles.

Many commercial radio stations seem to be biased towards South Africa: covering South African, instead of Namibian, news and sports, for example. This is perhaps as a result of them not having their own news teams and relying on cheap, or even free, South African news feeds.

The Namibian has further developed its business and economic news section and is focusing on the youth in the *Youthpaper* supplement, while the weekend supplements in most newspapers provide a platform for articles on social and cultural issues.

Scores:

Individual scores:

1	Country does not meet indicator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Country minimally meets aspects of the indicator.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Average score:

3.1 (2005 = 3.1; 2007 = 3.7)

4.4 Media uses language/s that reflect the linguistic diversity of the target area and that of marginalised groups.

Analysis:

The state broadcaster does attempt to reflect the linguistic diversity within Namibia with its 10 different radio services. The recent arrival on the airwaves of the NBC San station !Ah, the first of its kind in the country, is a very positive development.

The various indigenous language news broadcasts on NBC TV also help to reflect the linguistic diversity within the country. Apart from these news bulletins, however, all other programming on television is in English. TV news is not broadcast in German or Afrikaans.

The mainstream media, especially the four daily newspapers, are published mostly in English, Afrikaans and German. *The Namibian*, *Republikein* and *New Era* publish articles in various Namibian languages (see indicators 2.1 and 2.7), while

“...Journalists need to work harder to create a society that is more inclusive.”

New Era also has a monthly indigenous supplement covering most languages spoken in the country.

Because the new code of media ethics developed by the NEF includes elements relating to diversity, panellists anticipated that once this was implemented, possibly later in 2009, linguistic diversity in the

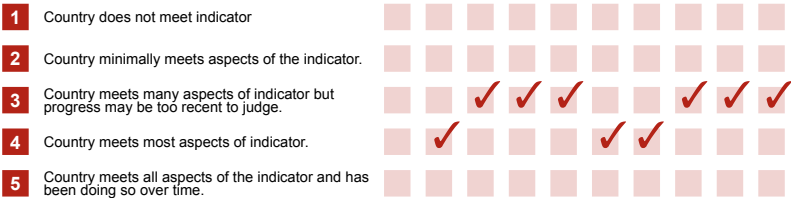
media might increase in the future.

Many marginalised groups, such as those with disabilities or HIV and AIDS, are frequently reported on in language indicative of negative bias and stereotyping.

“The choice of language often leaves such groups feeling insulted and depressed. Journalists need to work harder to create a society that is more inclusive.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.3 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

4.5 Equal opportunities regardless of race, social group, gender/sex, religion, disabilities and age are promoted in media houses.

Analysis:

Women are not equally or adequately represented in the media, professionally, although equal opportunities in terms of race, social group and gender have been created in different measure by the various media houses. At the *Republikein*, for example, all staff seem to be Afrikaner (white Afrikaans-speaking Namibians), while those in the top leadership positions (CEO, editor and news editor) at *New Era* are all Herero men, with the rest of the newsroom staff coming from diverse backgrounds with a strong bias towards women.

“Journalists tend to remain respectful, polite and friendly and this makes it difficult to get to the bottom of issues.”

New Era and *Nampa* with journalists covering government and SWAPO uncritically. In Namibia the distinction between the government and SWAPO is very unclear, and the terms are often used synonymously. The editorial opinion pieces in the *New Era* often tackle international rather than local issues, “to avoid trouble”.

“When the state is the employer, either the journalists will censor themselves or the editors will spike certain stories, such as those that are critical of the government.”

Journalists from all media houses appear to lack assertiveness when interviewing politicians and thus fail to ask challenging questions on burning issues.

“Sometimes it is very difficult to be straightforward with politicians and elders. Journalists tend to remain respectful, polite and friendly and this makes it difficult to get to the bottom of issues.”

Journalists sometimes face the challenge of either reporting thoroughly and possibly losing a valuable source, or censoring themselves and keeping the source.

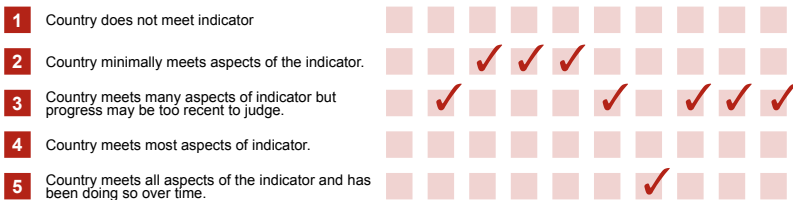
Commercial radio stations tend to avoid local political news because of possible controversy, and many of the issues they focus on are frivolous nature.

Self-censorship around political issues does not appear to be a big problem at *The Namibian*. “Because *The Namibian* is an independent newspaper it has the advantage of being able to be critical of, among other things, the government. It does not have to go out of its way to make the government look good, but at the same time it does also publish positive stories on the work of the government.”

The Namibian has been known not to deal with issues that might reflect negatively on the publication itself. It does, however, publish letters and SMSes that are critical of the newspaper.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2,9 (2005 = 2.5; 2007 = 2.8)

4.7 Owners of established mainstream private media do not interfere with editorial independence.

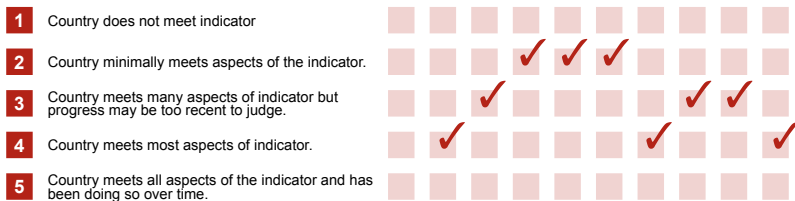
Analysis:

Owners of mainstream private media, in general, do not interfere with editorial independence. In some instances, however, the owner is also the editor, as is the case at *The Namibian* with Gwen Lister. Although *The Namibian* is owned by a trust, power, influence and control lies with Lister, who is the sole trustee.

With *Informanté* being owned by the Trustco Group, which has subsidiaries in the insurance, finance, education, property and media sectors, among others, the line between advertising and editorial content can become blurred as the publication is often used to promote the group's interests and economic agenda.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3 (2005 = 3.0; 2007 = 2.9)

4.8 Journalists and media houses have integrity and are not corrupt.

Analysis:

Generally journalists and media houses appear to have integrity and are not corrupt.

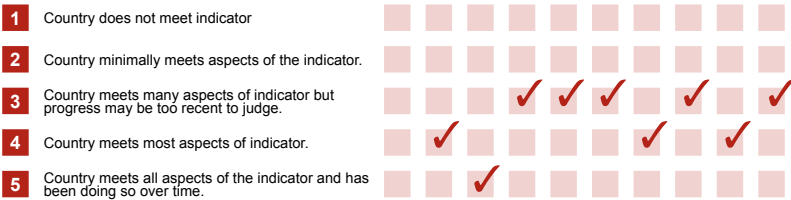
However, because journalists are not paid “very well”, they are vulnerable to fall victim to corruption, or at least for their thinking and independence to be influenced. Media trips and cocktail parties could be ways in which sources may try get journalists to portray them positively in the media.

Gifts can also influence journalists' integrity. Some media houses, however, do have policies in this regard. At *New Era*, any gift over N\$500 must be declared to the editor. At the NBC, the amount is only N\$100, but the outdated policy is being reviewed. *The Namibian*, however, has no such policy and "it's up to the individual journalist to remain impartial with regard to the story".

There is a sense that attempts are made to bribe people, although panellists did not know how widespread this was. Mention was made of a Chinese company known to offer gifts of N\$1,000 cash to New Era journalists in order to get positive coverage.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.6 (2005 = n/a; 2007 = n/a)

4.9 Salary levels and general working conditions for journalists and other media practitioners are adequate.

Analysis:

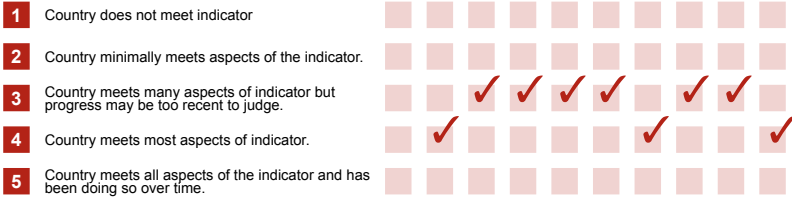
Journalists working in the private media can earn around N\$15,000 a month, but do not have as many benefits as those working in the state media. At the *New Era*, junior journalists are paid up to N\$7,000 a month, while senior journalists get about N\$15,000, with medical aid and contribution to pension funds.

Salaries at the NBC were increased in 2008, with an additional increment depending on the number of years spent working at the institution. The packages, which usually include housing subsidies, among other benefits, make the salaries relatively attractive. However, the working environment at the NBC is problematic, including outdated equipment and dilapidated premises, especially in the radio building.

The NBC training department is being revived and a senior training officer has been employed. As with many issues at the national broadcaster, one of the big problems is lack of funding. It is expected, therefore, that the training will most probably be conducted through partnerships, such as with Swedish Radio.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.3 (2005 = 2.8; 2007 = 3)

4.11 Journalists and other media practitioners are organised in trade unions and/or professional associations.

Analysis:

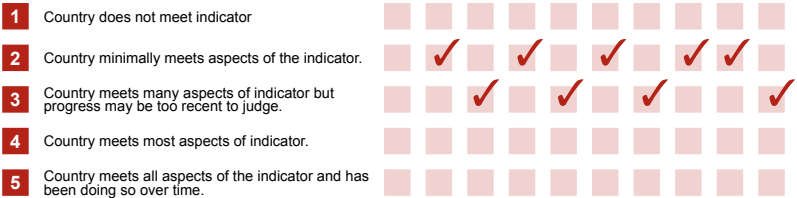
NBC staff and a small number of state media employees belong to the Public Workers' Union. Private media employees are generally not unionised.

Some journalists are members of MISA Namibia. The Namibian Editor's Forum has wide support from all mainstream media houses, private and state.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has over the past few years been in the process of setting up some semblance of a journalists' union in Namibia. This is reportedly the only attempt that has been made to establish a media workers' trade union.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.4 (2005 = 2.9; 2007 = 2.9)

Overall score for sector 4: 3.0 (2005 = 2.7; 2007 = 2.6)

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE: 2.8 (2005 = 2.7; 2007 = 2.6)

Developments since 2007 and the Way Forward

Positive developments in the media environment in the last two years:

- o There is greater diversity in the sector resulting from a proliferation of media houses in Namibia. This is evident in an increasing number of print publications, as well as commercial and community radio stations.
- o The Namibian Editors' Forum is better organised than before and more inclusive. Editors appear to be working together more and overcoming previous divisions.
- o The technical quality (such as layout and print) of the print media has improved.
- o Initiatives are being undertaken to train NBC staff.
- o The NBC has recruited new staff to fill gaps and the broadcaster has also acquired new and very necessary equipment.
- o Linkages between the University of Namibia and the media industry have been renewed.
- o Serious efforts are being made to establish a self-regulatory body.
- o Some of the media (including most newspapers and radio stations, which are streaming audio) have an improved presence on the internet.
- o The ownership of mainstream media houses is becoming more diversified, i.e. not just white and male.
- o The NBC transmission network has been expanded.
- o New Era improved its financial performance.
- o The digitalisation of equipment is coming to the NBC, albeit slowly.
- o Civil society is starting to see the importance of the media, and this is evident in the way that members of the public have been protecting the

SMS pages in The Namibian and responding to the suspension of the NBC chat show.

- o Civil society can communicate with the media (print and radio) easily with SMSes. Previously people could only do so via letters, faxes or voice calls.
- o Many of the opposition political parties that will contest the November 2009 elections have manifestos stating that the government ban on The Namibian should be rescinded.

Negative developments in the media environment in the last two years:

- o The lack of tolerance regarding opposition views/parties. This manifests in hate speech, stigmatisation and inciteful rhetoric.
- o The apparent increase in editorial interference at state media houses, which gets 'hotter' as the November 2009 elections near.
- o The increase in hostility on the part of the government and ruling party towards the media, evident in attacks on freedom of expression (i.e. suspending the NBC chat show). This is probably also related to the approaching election.
- o The interception clause in the draft Communications Bill.
- o The increase in unprofessional reporting.
- o The removal of the NBC board chairperson and the dismissal of the Director General
- o The two political appointments at the NCC and the inclusion in the decision-making structures of New Era and now in the NBC of a leading SWAPO member.

Main drivers/actors for positive change:

- o The youth in general.
- o President Pohamba's tolerant and open-minded approach, which led to an increasing feeling of freedom within society. Unfortunately, due to divisions in SWAPO, this is now being reversed.

- o The media (journalists) and the Namibian Editors' Forum.
- o The business community, which continues to invest in advertising in the media.
- o Readers, who are demonstrating an increased passion for expression through the print media.
- o The upcoming elections – people are voicing their concerns in the media and demanding change or threatening not to vote.
- o Social advocates and civil society activists who are the voice of reason and can influence opinion.
- o The accessibility of information communication technologies (ICTs), such as the internet and mobile phone technology.

Possible obstacles for further development:

- o The power struggle within the governing party, SWAPO, and the subsequent division of opinion about how to uphold development.
- o The global financial crisis, which impacts on donor funding in Namibia.
- o The interference by the Minister of Information and Communication Technology in the NBC.
- o The lack of finance for state media.
- o The fact that the media is too Windhoek-based and -focused - rural communities thus miss out on information relevant to them.
- o The lack of access to information legislation.

Activities needed over the next few years:

- o NBC: MISA Namibia should facilitate a workshop on the future of public broadcasting. Support and assist the NBC in areas of weakness. Hold a public demonstration to demand that the national broadcaster be transformed into a public broadcaster.
- o Access to Information: MISA Namibia to follow-up with the Law Reform and Development Commission on the progress being made on access to information legislation. MISA also to engage with government about the

internal communication policies at ministries, to facilitate journalists' work in accessing information.

- o Civil society: The media, possibly through the Namibian Editors' Forum (NEF), should find ways to engage more with civil society. This could be done through a regular, open forum such as a 'meet the editors' platform.
- o Elections: In the run-up to the November 2009 elections, MISA Namibia should approach all political parties about their intentions on a set number of pertinent issues. The answers could be published in the daily newspapers and there could be a public hearing.
- o Members of Parliament: Civil society should take advantage of the induction of new members of parliament to make their concerns known.

The panel meeting took place at Heja Lodge, outside Windhoek, from May 16-17, 2009.

The Panel:

Ms Rachel Cloete, Civil Society Activist; Mr Clement Daniels, Lawyer; Mr Paul Helmuth, Civil Society Activist; Ms Michaela Jaeger, Radio Programme Organiser; Mr Phil ya Nangoloh, Human Rights Activist; Ms Catherine Sasman, Journalist; Ms Nangula Shejavali, Journalist; Mr Sandi Tjaronda, Development Consultant; Mr Robin Tyson, Media Studies Lecturer

The Rapporteur:

Ms Sarah Taylor

The Facilitator:

Mr Hendrik Bussiek

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