

AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER

The first home grown analysis of the
media landscape in Africa

GHANA 2013





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CONTENT

SUMMARY: 7

SECTOR 1: 11
Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is effectively protected and promoted.

SECTOR 2: 27
The media landscape, including new media, is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability.

SECTOR 3: 43
Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent; the State broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster.

SECTOR 4: 53
The media practise high levels of professional standards.

WAY FORWARD: 65

The African Media Barometer (AMB)

The African Media Barometer (AMB) is an in-depth and comprehensive description and measurement system for national media environments on the African continent. Unlike other press surveys or media indices the AMB is a self-assessment exercise based on home-grown criteria derived from African Protocols and Declarations like the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002) by the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights. The instrument was jointly developed by fesmedia Africa, the Media Project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Africa, and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in 2004.

The African Media Barometer is an analytical exercise to measure the media situation in a given country which at the same time serves as a practical lobbying tool for media reform. Its results are presented to the public of the respective country to push for an improvement of the media situation using the AU-Declaration and other African standards as benchmarks. The recommendations of the AMB-reports are then integrated into the work of the 19 country offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in sub-Sahara Africa and into the advocacy efforts of other local media organisations like the Media Institute of Southern Africa.

Methodology and Scoring System

Every three to four years a panel of 10-12 experts, consisting of at least five media practitioners and five representatives from civil society, meets to assess the media situation in their own country. For 1½ days they discuss the national media environment according to 39 predetermined indicators. The discussion and scoring is moderated by an independent consultant who also edits the AMB-report.

After the discussion of one indicator, panel members allocate their individual scores to that respective indicator in an anonymous vote according to the following scale:

1	Country does not meet indicator	
2	Country meets only a few aspects of indicator	
3	Country meets some aspects of indicator	
4	Country meets most aspects of indicator	
5	Country meets all aspects of the indicator	

The sum of all individual indicator scores will be divided by the number of panel members to determine the average score for each indicator. These average indicator scores are added up to form average sector scores which then make up the overall country score.

Outcome

The final, qualitative report summarizes the general content of the discussion and provides the average score for each indicator plus sector scores and overall country score. In the report panellists are not quoted by name to protect them from possible repercussions. Over time the reports are measuring the media development in that particular country and should form the basis for a political discussion on media reform.

In countries where English is not the official language the report is published in a bilingual edition.

Implementing the African Media Barometer the offices of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and – in SADC countries the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) – only serve as a convener of the panel and as guarantor of the methodology. The content of the discussion and the report is owned by the panel of local experts and does not represent or reflect the view of FES or MISA.

In 2009 and again in 2013 the indicators were reviewed, amended, some new indicators were added and some were replaced.¹

By the end of 2013 the African Media Barometer had been held in 30 African countries, in some of them already for the fifth time.

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¹ Consequently, the comparison of some indicators of previous reports is not applicable (n/a) in some instances in which the indicator is new or has been amended considerably. Furthermore sector scores are not applicable (n/a) as indicators have been moved.



See above 30 AMB Countries (2005-2013)

African Media Barometer

Ghana 2013

Summary

Ghana's 1992 Constitution guarantees and provides strong protection for the right to freedom of expression as well as media freedom and independence.

In very elaborate provisions relating to the media, the Constitution underscores the critical role of the media as the watchdog of society and states: "All agencies of the mass media shall, at all times, be free to uphold the principles, provisions and objectives of this Constitution, and shall uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people of Ghana."

The existence of the National Media Commission (NMC), a body established by the Constitution to regulate the media and protect media freedom and independence, is a major pillar of media independence in Ghana as it shields state-owned media organisations, as well as private media outlets, from political interference in their editorial processes.

However, freedom of expression and media freedom continue to face some legal challenges in the light of Article 164 of the Constitution, which makes some of the guarantees of these freedoms subject to "laws that are reasonably required in the interest of national security, public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons".

While these may be seen as legitimate restrictions consistent with international norms and standards, the Criminal and Other Offences Act, which has been in force since 1960, is seen as presenting a "new threat" to freedom of expression as law enforcement agents have recently restricted free speech by taking advantage of a provision in the penal law that criminalises speech or any other information dissemination that promotes fear or alarm.

Section 208 of the Criminal and Other Offences Act criminalises "any statement, rumour or report which is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturb public peace, knowing or having reason to believe that the statement, rumour or report is false".

The absence of a Broadcasting Act and the failure of the Ghanaian government and Parliament to pass the Right to Information Bill, both of which have been long in the making, considerably weaken the legal environment for media operations and the exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

The indications are that the strong constitutional framework for free speech is matched in reality by the ability of the media and ordinary citizens to express themselves freely, although examples remain of instances where administrative or arbitrary limitations are placed in the way of citizens and journalists exercising their freedom of speech.

Cultural issues, such as respect and excessive deference to people in authority; gender roles where women are seen as inferior to men; and the respect traditionally accorded to elders, are also cited as inhibiting the right to freedom of expression.

Regional and international instruments on freedom of expression do not appear to play a big role in Ghana's legal environment as most journalists and non-journalists seem unfamiliar with such instruments, either in their applicability to Ghana or in terms of the provisions of such instruments.

There is no requirement for print publications to obtain licences or permission from any state authority or institution before they can operate or publish information. However, Section 2 (f) of the National Media Commission Act and Article 167(d) of the Constitution provide for the NMC to make regulations for the registration of newspapers and other publications. Although some anxiety was expressed that this could be interpreted to imply the registration of newspaper before they can publish, it is clear from the text of the law that such regulations cannot be used to exercise any direction or control over the professional functions of any person engaged in the production of newspapers or other means of mass communication.

There is also no requirement for websites, blogs and other digital platforms to register with any government institution or to obtain permission from state authorities. It is also believed that the state does not block or filter internet content as it is not considered to have the capacity to do this.

Ghana's media landscape is characterised by diversity, with a wide range of print, broadcasting, internet and mobile news sources. Accessibility to the various media platforms varies, with radio being the most accessible and affordable. Newspapers are largely unaffordable for the masses. Accessibility also varies based on location, with urban areas having multiple sources. In rural areas, however, information sources and relevant content are limited or non-existent.

The cost of newspapers is high – between 1.50 and 3.00 Ghanaian cedis (GH) (US\$0.68 and 1.35), and they are not affordable for most Ghanaians. The revised daily minimum wage for the year 2013 is GH 5.24 (USD2.38). Because radio stations often “cannibalise” or scavenge news from the newspapers, accessibility to this news is enhanced, and most people gain their news on radio.

Radio is the most popular and widely accessed media format in Ghana, with close to 90 percent of the population having regular access to this medium. Ghanaians are able to listen in from their mobile phones, or from radio sets.

Ghana has 28 listed individual television stations. The state-run Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) operates Ghana TV (GTV), and has four digital channels, including GBC24 and GBC Life. The Multimedia Group is a single station with various channels – about 10 channels, with Joy TV, Adom TV, and Joy Sports being dedicated news channels.

According to the most recent data from the National Communications Authority, there are over 27 million mobile phone subscribers in Ghana, with MTN and Vodafone taking the biggest share of subscriptions. Of these subscribers, about 10 million use data services, indicating significant access to the internet. With so many mobile subscribers, “there are more people who own a mobile phone, than those who have access to a toilet.”

The extent to which the voices of men and women are heard depends largely on the issues being covered. On matters of health, education, and socio-economic issues, women are mostly heard, while men dominate on political issues. However, because the media landscape is dominated by politics, men’s voices are heard more than those of women. But beyond topics being seen as either a men’s or women’s issue, the real challenge for media outlets appears to be the ability and capacity to explain how various issues impact men or women differently.

There is little debate, however, about the fact that there is not enough representation of women in the media, despite “women dominating the newsrooms”, women heading several broadcast media, and 60 percent of the Ghana Journalists Association Senate being made up of women.

There is a perception that public trust in the media is waning owing to poor professional standards in many media outlets.

A number of urgent interventions have been identified as needed over the next few years to improve the media environment. Some of these include improving the knowledge and familiarity of journalists with the various code of ethics in existence in Ghana or applicable to them; addressing the low salary levels in the media, especially also as a means of helping to address corruption in the sector; improving the enforcement of applicable codes and standards; encouraging policies that promote equal opportunity and/or diversity in the media, especially in terms of gender; and advocacy for the mobilisation of funds for the Media Development Fund and the effective implementation of the plan. This refers to a government plan announced on September 9, 2011 by then Vice President John Mahama (who is now the President) to set up a Media Development Fund (MDF) to support the media industry in Ghana.



SECTOR 1:

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



Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is 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.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed as a basic right in Chapter 5 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, which guarantees this right. The freedom of the media is also guaranteed in this Chapter, wherein Article 21(1)(a) reads:

All persons shall have the right to - (a) freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media;

Media freedoms are further guaranteed in Chapter 12 of the Constitution – titled 'Freedom and Independence of the Media', which highlights the individual rights of media practitioners, protects media houses from censorship, and allows the media to carry out its function freely.

Furthermore, the Constitution observes the watchdog role of the media, with Article 162(5) noting that

All agencies of the mass media shall, at all times, be free to uphold the principles, provisions and objectives of this Constitution, and shall uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people of Ghana.

However, while freedom of expression and media freedoms are guaranteed by the Constitution, there are also certain limits on these freedoms. Within the Constitution itself, for example, media freedom and freedom of expression are subject to certain limitations, with Article 164 noting that

The provisions of articles 162 and 163 of this Constitution are subject to laws that are reasonably required in the interest of national security, public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons.

Furthermore, although it has been in force since 1960, the Criminal and Other Offences Act is seen as presenting a "new threat" to freedom of expression, with the police now resorting to it to clampdown on certain aspects of speech. Within this Act, there is a "provision which criminalises speech or any other information dissemination that promotes fear or alarm". This Act has been activated

in recent times, and “if not properly looked at, the manner in which it is applied may affect the progress that has been made to date”.

Another perceived threat which emerged during Ghana’s historic presidential election challenge in the Supreme Court was the situation where comments made outside the court were deemed as scandalising the court. This led to a 10-day jail sentence for those responsible for the comments, including a newspaper editor and a political party activist. They were convicted of “criminal contempt”. There is an ongoing debate over a proposal for a Contempt of Court Act to be passed to specify acts of contempt in order to avoid the use of this power of the court to cow journalists, in ways similar to the period of military rule which is usually referred to as “the era of the culture of silence”.

Given the guarantees of freedom within the constitution, as well as Article 162(3) provision that: “There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media”, the Ghanaian media is very liberal, to the extent that some panellists believed that media practitioners enjoy too much freedom. “While we are enjoying this freedom, we need to take into account the loopholes within this provision.”

Through the Constitution, however, the National Media Commission (NMC) is empowered to set regulations for entry into the journalism profession. Further, the National Communication Authority (NCA) has powers within its enabling law as it pertains to social media.

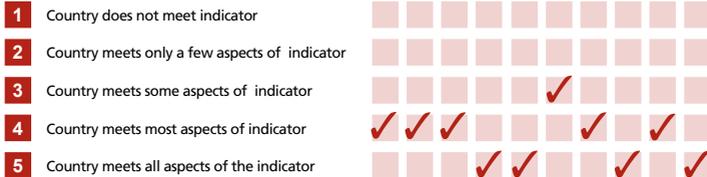
Since the AMB Ghana 2011, no new laws have been enacted to promote media freedom or freedom of expression, but the Broadcasting Bill and the Right to Information (RTI) Bill, which have been long in the making, are still awaiting passage in Parliament. Other pieces of legislation that seek to promote and support freedom of expression include the NMC Act and the Whistleblowers Act 2006.

An example of a clause in the Whistleblowers Act that promotes freedom of expression is one that nullifies any contract or clause that impedes an individual from being able to blow the whistle on corruption or the misuse of public funds.

Additionally, there is an urban/rural divide in the sense that “folks in the rural settings still haven’t come to terms with understanding that the constitution gives them the right or freedom to say what they want to say”, while in urban areas, people do not shy away from speaking their minds.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.3 (2006: 4.2; 2008: 4.5; 2011: 4.0)

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

The right to freedom of expression is being practiced by citizens, but there are a number of factors that affect people's ability to express themselves fully. This includes excessive deference to authority, including in terms of age and gender.

"We have a culture of looking up to authority, and people don't like to criticise those in powerful positions."

"[Ghanaians are raised] with the ingrained culture of speaking with deference to elders. In the workplace, if you want to secure a job, there are things you won't say, even in the field of journalism, for fear of losing your job or losing your market. Owners and journalists on the field are torn between what to do, and although the fear may not be as it was in the military days, it is there. We can't say that the right to freedom of expression is practised in the presence of this silence."

Language also affects people's ability to express themselves freely, and increasingly, more radio stations are cropping up, allowing more people to express themselves through this medium.

Further, in work environments where the culture of the organisation does not provide the space for people to express themselves freely, "people keep quiet".

"When it comes to the practise of freedom of expression, there is that 'fear and panic', and people don't want to lose their calabash (jobs)." There is also a fear that in the creation of 'fear and panic', "security agents are keeping others from expressing themselves freely".

Although these deterrents to freedom of expression exist, some panellists felt that “Ghanaians are too free to a fault. Nothing under the sun will keep them from articulating their views on every issue.”

“If you really want to test that freedom, listen to how a serial caller will speak to the president on a call-in programme... I would not say that there is excessive freedom, but rather passable freedom of expression.”

Although employees in the civil service are careful about what they give out, and those in the private sector may also be careful, overall, “people are willing to express themselves, even on heated and controversial matters.”

In terms of media expression, on the one hand panellists noted that the media is too free, while others highlighted demands by the public for the media to express themselves even more.

“People blame the media for not saying certain things! I’m not against people expressing their views, but I think that when people are talking about the rights of journalists, they need to put this into perspective.”

Some panellists felt that the public also needed to understand that “journalists are not policymakers”, but information disseminators, and that this needs to be contextualised in the practice of the media’s freedom of expression.

There have been threats to the free exercise of media freedoms. Notable examples in the past few years include an incident in February 2012 when NPP and NDC supporters stormed a radio station, causing a programme to be taken off the air. On 24 November 2012, People’s National Convention (PNC) supporters invaded Citi FM in an attempt to “deal with” lawyer Egbert Faibille for comments he made against PNC flagbearer, Hassan Ayariga. And earlier in 2013, journalists at Angel FM received death threats.

“These are issues that hamper how a journalist can express him/herself. The right to freedom of expression can’t be freely practiced in this environment,” said a panellist.

The NMC, which plays a regulatory role in the media landscape, is viewed by some as “a toothless bulldog” both in terms of media control and media freedom.

in such cases have the potential to ruin a business, as the case could have been when the Mamponghehene, a traditional chief also known as Daasebre Nana Osei Bonsu II, sued the *Daily Dispatch* over a story published in 2003. The case dragged on for eight years, and the Mamponghehene eventually lost the case.

Essentially, the outcome of a libel or defamation case is left to the judge in each case, and “it would take a human rights-conscious judge to speak to this issue.” Needless to say, “Ghanaians will agree that there is a need to review these processes, section 208 of the Criminal Code, and the issue of contempt and what it constitutes. We can’t leave this to a judge to determine.”

The issues around Section 208 of the Criminal Code, as well as the question of what constitutes contempt, have been especially concerning since the arrests of Ken Koranchie, editor of the *Daily Searchlight* newspaper, and Stephen Atubiga, a member of the communications team of the NDC in June 2013. Atubiga was sentenced to three days in prison, while Koranchie was sentenced to 10 days’ imprisonment, for making comments or publishing information that the court described as “contemptuous”.

There are no legal requirements that restrict entry into the journalistic profession. Some panellists felt that the National Media Commission (NMC) should be empowered to determine who comes into the fold (“much like entering the medical or law profession”). They were reminded, however, that international law recognises that journalism is unlike any other profession, and is the only profession protected in the Constitution. “So when you want to stifle this, it means stifling a constitutional right.”

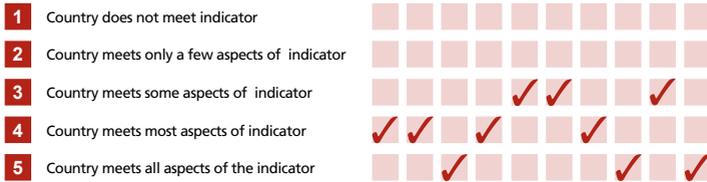
Section 280 of the Criminal Code, titled ‘Publication or Sale of Obscene Book, etc.’ criminalises the publication or sale of “any obscene book, writing, or representation”.

Illustrations in this section include:

- A. publishes a book for the use of physicians or surgeons, or of persons seeking medical or surgical information. Whatever may be the subjects with which the book deals, if they are treated with as much decency subject admits, A. is not guilty of an offence against this section.
- B. publishes extracts from the book mentioned in the last illustration, arranged or printed in such a manner as to give unnecessary prominence to indecent matters. If the Court or jury thinks that such publication is calculated unnecessarily and improperly to excite passion, or to corrupt morals, B. ought to be convicted.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 4.0 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: n/a)

1.4 The Government makes every effort to honour regional and international instruments on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

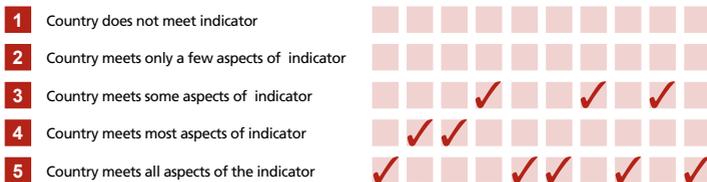
Panellists were not very knowledgeable about which regional and international instruments on freedom of expression and freedom of the media have been signed or ratified by the Ghanaian government.

However, Ghana is party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Both of these instruments list freedom of expression as a right, and the country is "making an effort to honour" them.

Further, because much of the Ghana's own legislation promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the media, panellists agreed that regional and international instruments on these freedoms are being honoured

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 4.2 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 3.3)

1.5 Print publications are not required to obtain permission to publish from state authorities.

Print publications are not required to obtain permission from state authorities to publish information.

Section 2 (f) of the National Media Commission (NMC) Act and Article 167(d) of the Constitution state that one of the function of the NMC is “to make regulations by constitutional instrument for the registration of newspapers and other publications, except that the regulations shall not provide for the exercise of any direction or control over the professional functions of a person engaged in the production of newspapers or other means of mass communication”.

However, any set regulations may not require any person to attain or maintain a licence in the practice of journalism, and content may not be controlled, as noted in the Constitution.

The effect of this function of the NMC is questionable: “It has the power to document what exists in the form of a register; but it cannot impose conditions or issue licenses.”

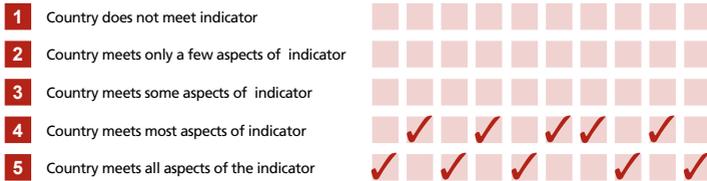
Panellists who favoured an increased and more comprehensive registration system noted that such a register should at least contain the name and a brief biography of the editor.

“We are happy for the gains that have been made in terms of media freedoms. But the media has been given so much freedom that I feel that there may be some excesses here and there.”

Examples that were noted to highlight the “need” for greater regulation included “political and local language journalists” who were reckless in their reporting practices and newspapers that publish simply for radio stations. The panellists were referring to some newspapers that only print a handful of copies and distribute them to radio stations for review on the “newspaper review” programmes. It was noted that such newspapers do not really circulate to a general audience besides the radio stations that review them.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.5 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 5.0)

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

There is no specific legislation that protects confidential sources of information. However, there are no incidences on record where journalists have been compelled to reveal sources.

There is a sense among journalists that they are protected by law not to disclose sources, but “they have realised that this is by the pain of imprisonment, or whatever the court imposes on you. It’s a choice you make, whether to disclose or not, and, if you don’t, it’s a risk that you take.”

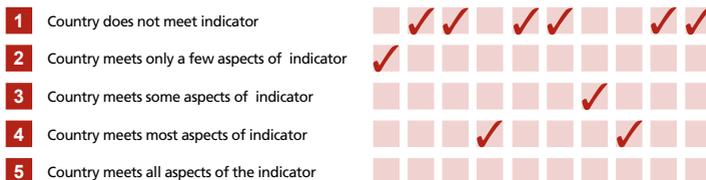
There is a specific provision protecting sources of information in the Whistleblower Act of 2006, but this act does not extend to the protection of the media’s sources. The media’s code of ethics could be used for persuasive effect in court in protecting confidential sources, but such codes are not binding on the court.

Around the 2012 elections, with “the fear and panic issue”, the police stated that they could compel journalists to reveal their sources. In one instance, the police tried to get a journalist to reveal his source, but the said journalist refused to do so, and dared the police to take him to court (wherein one cannot be compelled to testify). “The case was dismissed at the point of preparing a charge sheet.” If such a case had been taken to court, however, “the judges would be left to determine whether the source is important or not. It would then be left to the journalist to decide whether to play hero, or disclose his source.”

“When talking to young journalists, I tell them that the protection of the source makes or breaks you.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.9 (2006: 1.4; 2008: 1.1; 2011: 2.8)

1.7 Public information is easily accessible, guaranteed by law, to all citizens.

In a section on General Fundamental Rights, Article 21(1)(f) of the Constitution states: "All persons shall have the right to information, subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary in a democratic society."

However, although the Constitution guarantees the right to information, whether or not such information is easily accessible is another question.

Ghana does not have any laws that facilitate access to information, and efforts to bring about a right to information law are still ongoing.

Nevertheless, "there is measurable access to information", and most ministries provide information on their websites on a regular basis," although the information published on these websites only includes "what they want us to know".

"The websites can be deceptive, and it easy to place information simply for public relations purposes. Access to information is not easy for the general public."

In some cases, the information provided is falsified. An example of this can be seen in the case of the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) scandal, wherein monies meant for youth development loans and employment went astray. "Officers at the top found ways to use that money to spend on themselves rather than on the intended purpose. They bloated the numbers of beneficiaries and diverted money earmarked for specific projects."

The amount of information one is able to gain from government ministries and agencies also "often depends on who you know on the inside to provide this information", or on which ministry or agency one is dealing with. For example, there is no transparency on defense spending – not only in terms of weapons

being purchased, but even on issues such as the salaries of military personnel.

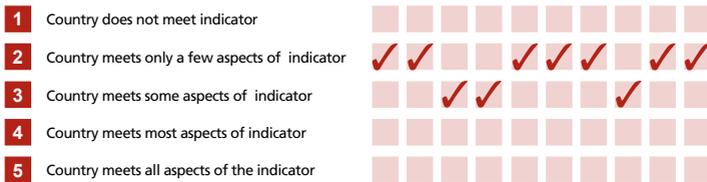
Local governments are mandated to make information available to their constituents, but it appears that few actually carry out this mandate. “People don’t even know that the information is there.”

Where information is provided, “it is not disaggregated in a manner that makes it useful”.

A non-journalist member of the panel found it shocking that accessing information was also difficult for the media. “The general public, I thought, depend on the media for their information. Are you saying it is that difficult for the media to gain that information?” the panellist asked.

Scores:

Individual scores:



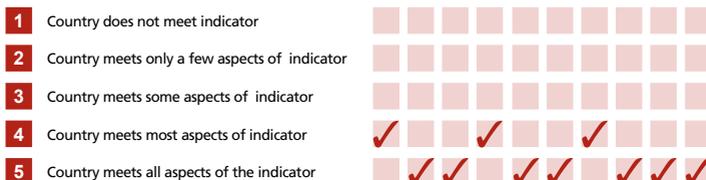
Average score: 2.3 (2006: 1.2; 2008: 1.4; 2011: 2.4)

1.8 Websites, blogs and other digital platforms are not required to register with, or obtain permission, from state authorities.

There is no requirement for websites, blogs and other digital platforms to register with or obtain permission from state authorities. This is “partially because the state authorities wouldn’t know how to impose this”.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.7 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 5.0)

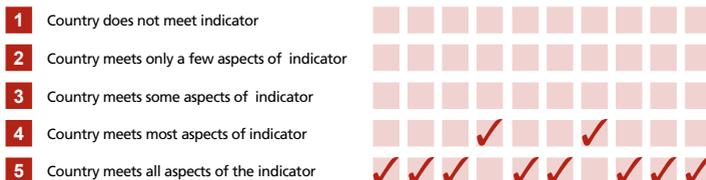
1.9 The state does not seek to block or filter Internet content unless in accordance with laws that provide for restrictions that serve a legitimate interest and are necessary in a democratic society, and which are applied by independent courts.

It is believed that the state does not have the capacity to block or filter internet content, and the general assumption is that such blocking or filtering is not happening in Ghana.

The state has sought a conversation on what can be done in terms of regulating new media, but no action has been taken as yet.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.8 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 4.8)

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

Most of the country's active civil society organisations and media lobby groups are part of the Right to Information (RTI) Coalition, the members of which include the NMC, various religious organisations, non-governmental organisations, the Ghana Bar Association, and journalists. Civil society and media lobby groups that advocate for media freedoms include the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA), and the Trade Unions Congress (TUC). The GJA and the MFWA are the most active of the media lobby groups.

There are also a few human rights groups that gravitate towards media causes, "but there are only a handful of those that really champion media rights".

Examples of issues that have mobilised civil society and lobby groups include the Right to Information (RTI) initiative, which has been a matter of concern since 2001, and prompted a symposium on this issue; and the Criminal Libel issue, which generated broad discussion.

"Every once in a while when a journalist gets into trouble, there is a groundswell of support for the journalist and the media house involved, especially where a clear case of abuse is involved."

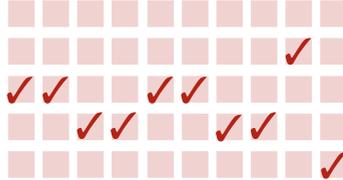
An example of this was during the 2012 elections, when a media house was "boycotted by government" because of its angle of coverage. "People came together to say that government can't keep that media house out because public information is being disseminated. The Media Foundation and various media personalities placed government under such pressure, that within a fortnight government came to the table and called a 'ceasefire'."

Media and civil society support of the NMC has been minimal; and the poor attendance by journalists and other media stakeholders at the NMC anniversary celebration was noted as being particularly disappointing.

Scores:

Individual scores:

- 1** Country does not meet indicator
- 2** Country meets only a few aspects of indicator
- 3** Country meets some aspects of indicator
- 4** Country meets most aspects of indicator
- 5** Country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

3.5 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 4.6)

Average score for sector 1:

3.8

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, mobile phones) is accessible and affordable to citizens.

Ghana's media landscape is characterised by diversity, and a wide range of print, broadcasting, internet and mobile sources exist.

Accessibility to the various media platforms varies, with radio being the most accessible and affordable. Newspapers are unaffordable for the masses. Accessibility also varies based on location, with urban areas having multiple sources. In rural areas, however, information sources and relevant content are limited. Farmers in rural areas, for example, are unable to get all the information they need, except occasionally through Farm Radio.

"In rural areas, they say they need to get information for their livelihood improvement."

Print

Several print media publications exist in the country. Government owns four newspapers: the *Daily Graphic* and *The Ghanaian Times*, which are both daily papers, and the weeklies, *The Mirror* and *Weekly Spectator*.

Privately owned papers include *The Dispatch*, *Accra Daily Mail*, *The Ghanaian Chronicle* and *The Daily Guide*.

There are a number of newspapers that produce small print runs, and cater specifically to radio stations – which are more accessible to the general public. Their content is thus included in radio media reviews.

The cost of newspapers is high – between 1.50 and 3.00 Ghanaian cedis (US\$ 0.45 and 1.35), and is not affordable for most Ghanaians. The revised daily minimum wage for 2013 (set in May 2013) is GH 5.24 (US\$ 2.38).

Because radio stations often "cannibalise" or scavenge news from the newspapers, accessibility to this news is enhanced, and most people gain their news from radio.

According to a 2012 publication, newspaper circulation figures for the larger papers in Ghana are as follows:

Newspaper	Circulation (Copies)
Daily Graphic	100 000
Ghanaian Times	80 000
Ghanaian Chronicle	45 000
Daily Guide	22 000
Daily Democrat	5 000
Daily Dispatch	5 000
New Crusading Guide	5 000
Daily Post	5 000
Daily Searchlight	1 500

Radio

Radio is the most widely accessed and the most popular media format in Ghana, with close to 90 percent of the population¹ having regular access to this medium. Ghanaians are able to listen in from their mobile phones, or from radio sets.

Very few radio stations provide their own news, and most simply “cannibalise” news from newspaper sources. Panellists noted that there are newspapers that are published solely for broadcast on radio. A newspaper publisher will publish a paper with a relatively small print run, and distribute that newspaper to radio stations, which in turn will carry some of those stories in their reportage. The panelists explained that this happened because people may not afford a newspaper. The state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) runs two national radio stations (Radio 1 and Radio 2). Radio 1 is in English and Ghanaian vernaculars, and Radio 2 is a commercial service. The state broadcaster also runs other local services in the different regions, including Accra’s Uniiq FM.

There are 257 licensed FM stations in Ghana. Popular stations include GBC’s stations, and the privately owned stations: Peace FM, Adom FM, Joy FM, Choice FM, Space FM, Gold FM and Happy FM.

Television

Ghana has 28 listed individual television stations. The state run GBC operates Ghana TV (GTV), and has 4 digital channels, including GBC24 and GBC Life. The Multimedia Group is a single station with about 10 channels, including Joy TV, Adom TV and Joy News.

Mobile

According to the most recent data from the National Communications Authority, there are more than 27 million mobile phone subscribers in Ghana, with MTN and Vodafone taking the biggest share in terms of subscriptions. This figure would

¹ The World Bank reports that in 2012, Ghana’s population stood at 25.37 million people.

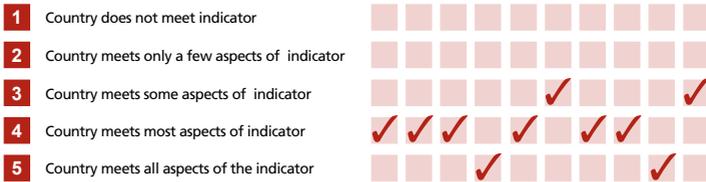
suggest a penetration rate of over 100%. Of these 27 million, about 10 million use data services, indicating significant access to the internet.

With so many mobile subscribers, “There are more people who own a mobile phone, than those who have access to a toilet.”

In addition to the media platforms noted above, there is also the state-run Ghana News Agency and state information centres.

Scores:

Individual scores:



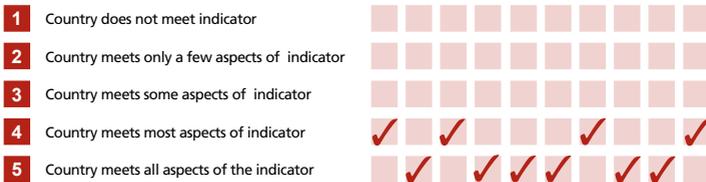
Average score: 4.0 (2006: 3.3; 2008: 3.2; 2011: 3.4)

2.2 Citizens’ access to domestic and international media sources is not restricted by state authorities

There are no restrictions on access to domestic and international media, except for a criminal restriction on the importation and circulation of “obscene material”. “Such pornographic material is, however, generated inside the country and distributed.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 4.6 (2006: 5.0; 2008: 4.8; 2011: 5.0)

2.4 Transparency of ownership of media houses in print/broadcasting is guaranteed by law and enforced.

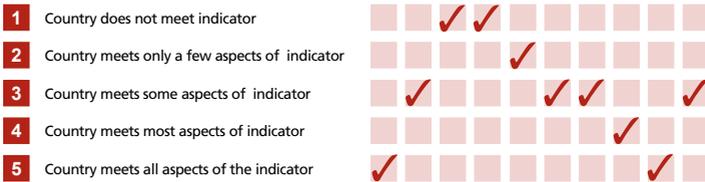
Information on the ownership of media houses can be accessed from the Register General. However, beyond finding out the names of the directors of these media houses are, little other information is available.

It is believed that complete transparency of ownership is difficult to come by, as some individuals who may be politically aligned and fear to disclose their names “hide behind other individuals in order to set up the entity”.

“It is not easy to determine who the real owners are” and “lifting the corporate veil” is impossible.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.0 (2006: n/a; 2088: n/a; 2011: n/a)

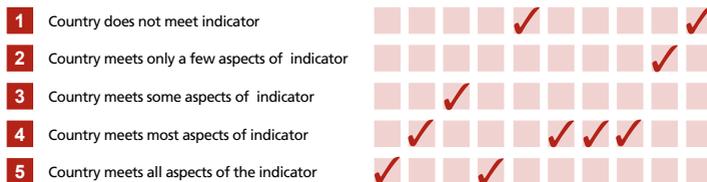
2.5 Adequate competition legislation/regulation seeks to prevent media concentration and monopolies.

Currently, there is no law preventing media concentration and monopolies.

However, “government is seeking to start this conversation” and discussions on this topic are “about to take place”. An introduction of such laws could potentially affect media groups such as the Multimedia Group, which owns several television and radio stations.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.3 (2006: 2.0; 2008: 2.5; 2011: 2.9)

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

In 2011, the government announced the creation of the Media Development Fund (MDF), with the aim of “improving capacity within the media”. The MDF has, however, been dogged by controversy, with GH 1 million (USD 455 658,-) meant for media development and training having allegedly gone missing. The scandal aside, media practitioners are sceptical of the fund, and feel that funds might simply go to those who are pro-government. No criteria have been developed as to which media houses may receive assistance.

“The media landscape is diverse, but there is the question of how to sustain it.”

Government could do more to ensure an economically diverse media landscape by diversifying its advert placements across various media – private and public – as they rely on advertising for their survival.

“The law says that advertising by government should be done through state media, but this needs to be extended to private media too”.

“The *Daily Graphic* was weaned off government subsidies after 40 years of government support.”

In the broadcasting sector, some media equipment is tax deductible. Panellists were not sure whether these waivers were being extended to other media.

Government has communicated its intent to support community radio stations, and the current administration noted the importance of local stations in its party manifesto as an important tool for development. “The plan to set up the community radios might be where there is a clear intent to develop media, but there is the question of independence once this happens.” In collaboration with

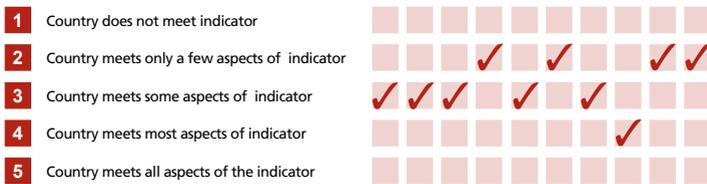
GBC, there are ongoing efforts to establish more community stations, and “in the next few months or years, we can expect to see more community stations coming into the fold.”

Some computers and notebooks have been provided to independent broadcasters and other groups to aid in information and communication technology development in the media.

Greater support can also be provided in programming, as well as in the training of journalists, in order to better sustain Ghana’s media landscape.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.7 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 1.9)

2.7 All media fairly represent the voices of both women and men.

The extent to which the voices of men and women are heard depends largely on the issues being covered. On matters of health, education, and socio-economic issues, women are mostly heard, while men dominate on political issues. However, because the media landscape is dominated by politics, men’s voices are heard more than those of women.

Beyond topics being seen as either a men’s or women’s issue, the real “challenge has to do with bringing out how different issues perhaps impact men or women differently”, and should not simply delineate issues as men’s or women’s.

“The news for the day should be determined by its relevance, and not just about whether women or men are being represented, as this may strike reverse discrimination.”

Overall, though, panellists agreed that there is not enough representation of women in media coverage, despite “women dominating the newsrooms”, women heading several broadcast media, and 60 percent of the GJA Senate comprising women. But, as one panellist noted, “to bring women’s issues out,

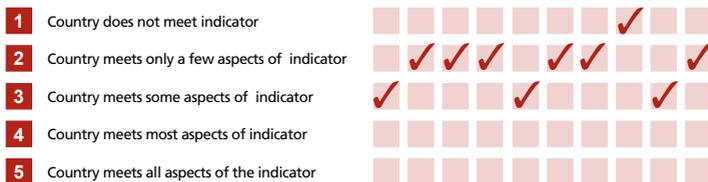
doesn't mean you have to be a woman to do that. Women also need training to show that women are not all the same."

Journalists on the panel noted the challenges presented in trying to get more women's voices on programmes, in commentary, etc, but stated that efforts are being made to increase the representation of women in media. On NewsFile, for example, since January 2013, issues that have been discussed have included good governance, education, the state of the country, and other such topics. None of these topics are exclusively men's issues, or exclusively women's. However, throughout the year, the programme "hasn't had even one woman appear on the show". Deliberate efforts are being made to correct this situation.

Panellists agreed that the fair representation of women in the media was not just about hearing their voices vocally, but also about bringing out the unique perspective of women on issues across the board.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.2 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 2.5)

2.8 All media fairly represent the voices of society and its minorities in its ethnic, linguistic, religious diversity.

In general, diverse voices of society are represented in the Ghanaian media. However, disabled people are, to a large extent, marginalised and left on the periphery.

"The visually impaired and the vocally impaired, in fact, persons with disabilities in general, are not heard."

Additionally, some minority language groups are not fully represented, and there are misconceptions that certain language groups simply belong to one group, depending on the area in which they are spoken (e.g. in the Fanti area).

With regards to religious diversity in the media, Christianity and Islam receive fair coverage, and there are "pure Christian or Muslim stations". At the NMC

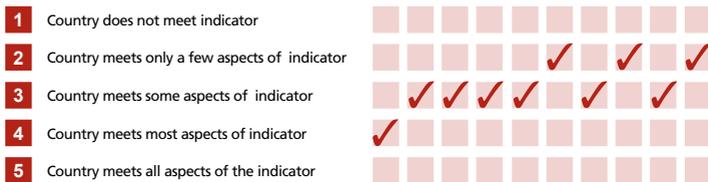
anniversary last year, media veteran Cameron Dodo commented that he was “overwhelmed by religion taking over the airwaves”. Panellists disagreed with this sentiment, but took cognisance of the increased number of religious advertisements on the airwaves.

“People shouldn’t undermine the role of religion in nation-building. Religion can do what politics can’t do.” This panellist encouraged increased religiosity in the media, and suggested that the national network have “an interfaith community that ensures all religions are covered or represented.”

Another panellist lamented that the media landscape and its coverage is “a far cry from the ideal that it is supposed to be”, and questioned whether media broadcasts actually service to educate, inform, and entertain.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.8 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 2.7)

2.9 Media cover the full spectrum of economic, cultural, political, social, national and local perspectives and conduct investigative stories.

The media is dominated by partisan politics, thereby limiting coverage of the full spectrum of stories.

One concern may be that journalists are not getting the necessary training in the area of economics.

“There is a lot of dialogue going on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), but there has been very limited coverage from journalists in terms of gaining the diverse views. There’s very poor coverage of (economic) issues.”

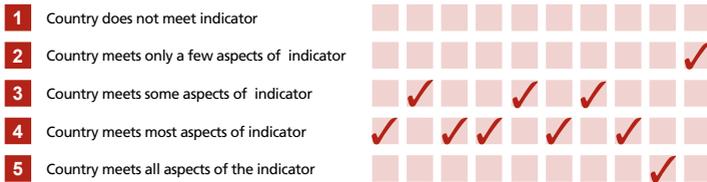
There are a range of outlets that touch on different issues, depending on their identified target audiences. Efforts are made to cover social issues.

“You won’t get everything you want from one media outlet. You need a range in order to get the full synopsis.”

There is a misperception in media coverage that everything is in Accra. As such, coverage on other areas is limited – especially in media based in the capital city – thus presenting a geographical bias in media coverage.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

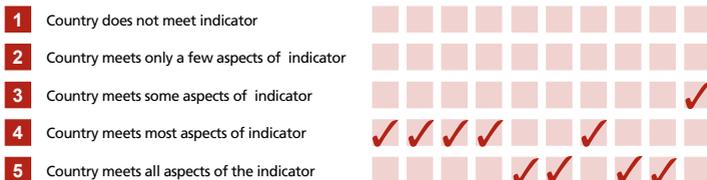
3.6 (2006: 4.0; 2008: 3.2; 2011: 2.8)

2.10 Private broadcasters deliver a minimum of quality public interest programmes.

The public interest is overshadowed by the commercial interest of private broadcasters. There are, however, a few private broadcasters, such as Joy FM, which “does excellent work on ensuring public interest”.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

4.3 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: n/a)

2.11 The country has a coherent ICT policy and/or the government implements promotional measures, which aim to meet the information needs of all citizens, including marginalised communities.

There is an ICT policy, called the Ghana ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) Policy, which was developed in 2003 under the National Development Planning Commission. There is general awareness of this policy in the general populace, but this is limited to certain sections of the policy. Increased coverage of the policy over the last two years has helped publicise the policy.

Implementation of the policy has started and is ongoing, and certain parts are only “starting to come on board now”. The automation and computerisation of government documents or processes has started, and government is “getting its business online”.

Ghana has set a 2014 deadline for the digital migration of the GBC for both radio and television broadcasting, and a national deadline of 2015. In this regard, the Ministry of Communication has earmarked 60 million GHC (USD 27 million) for changing television sets.

Because reach is limitless with digitisation, the way in which content can be diversified is also becoming a key part of this, as information can be broadcast over several channels.

In recognising the importance of the media in creating global linkages, more media entities are coming online. The *Daily Dispatch*, for example, will be launching a website in 2013, with the aim of increasingly impacting on economic and policy analysis.

The e-governance programme is being implemented in phases; and a conscious effort is made so that “the next generation is knowledgeable on ICT and is much better than five years ago”. The aspect of the policy that Ghanaians are most happy about is being integrated into education, and making sure that young people are capable in ICT use.

“There are people in government who are afraid to turn on their own PCs”.

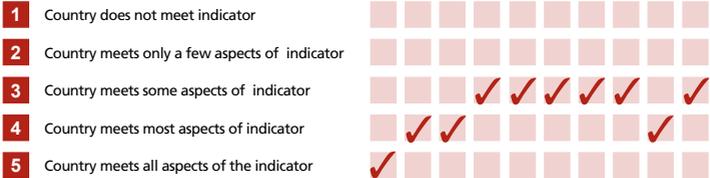
“There is a national consciousness and concrete effort towards the application of ICT in education, and the training of teachers has also been factored into this.” The government is collaborating with RLG² Ghana to supply 60,000 laptops in a year, and to train youth and teachers in ICT.

2 RLG Ghana is a Ghanaian communications company which produces communications equipment (e.g. “such as mobile handsets, electronic notebooks, tablets, laptops, LCD TV monitors and other accessories”) and provides training in ICT-related disciplines. (<http://www.rlgghana.com/index.php/about/background.html>)

Importantly, there has been some mainstreaming of the ICT policy, and banks and other private sector players are coming into the fold. ICT has also attracted donor funding in this regard.

Scores:

Individual scores:



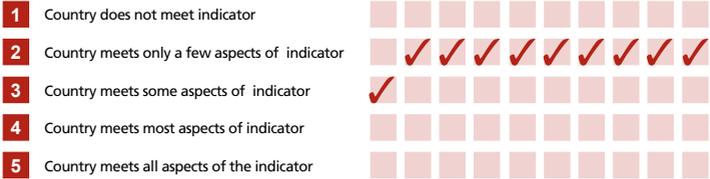
Average score: 3.5 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 3.5)

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

Some panellists felt that the government uses its power over the placement of advertisements, and that this tendency is most visible “during a change of government.” Complaints about this tendency have come up on occasion. Some private media “use the same approach and rationale for denying an advert, to deal with the press releases brought to them by government”.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.1 (2006: 4.6; 2008: 3.5; 2011: 4.6)

2.13 The advertising market is large enough to support a diversity of media outlets.

Opinions differed on the size of the advertising market, with some panellists describing it as “average”, and others characterising it as “below average” and “not big enough to support the full media landscape”. When there are increases in ad-spend, this is “not well-developed or broad enough to be spread across the media landscape”.

The biggest advertisers are the telecommunications companies, who spend a large amount on advertising. However, little information is available on how much they spend. It is also “hard to find out how much government spends on advertising, procurement” opportunities and on placing government ads.

There is a greater need for diversification in spending across both public and private media.

“If a telecoms or beer company is placing 10 full-page colour ads, they should diversify and spend some in public and some in private media.”

The survival of some state media entities is dependent on the subsidies they receive from government. Independent media do not receive government subsidies.

Additionally, the political landscape can also affect the sustainability of media.

“Some papers fold up when there is a change of power.”

There has been increased adspend on social media platforms. The level of spending on these platforms “depends on how many followers you have, how interactive you are, and your ability to find ways to get some funding from ads.” Some bloggers have been able to operate blogging businesses based on the advertising they receive.

Using SMSes as a means of advertising on mobile phones is also increasing.

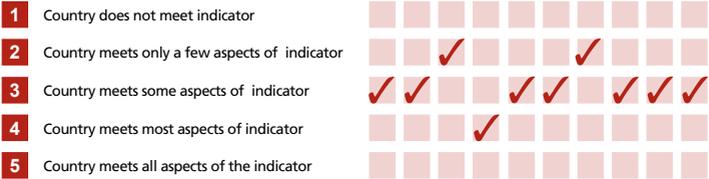
Advertisers have become “mindful of the public outcry on spending on advertising, versus their corporate social responsibility spending”, and are diverting more resources to these social responsibilities.

Smaller media houses are at the greatest disadvantage in terms of attracting advertising dollars “because in the end, if you want the greater benefit, you need to be bigger”. Some of these media houses are either “swallowed by bigger entities”, or are otherwise “on the brink of collapse”.

The strength of most private media houses are tied to their owners, and this factor may also determine the amount of advertising they attract.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 2.9 (2006: 2.6; 2008: 2.7; 2011: 2.0)

Average score for sector 2: 3.3

SECTOR 3:

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

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.

Broadcasting legislation has still not been passed, and is “so conspicuous in its absence”.

The law within which the broadcasting sector currently operates – the National Liberation Decree 226 of 1968 – does not take private broadcasters into account, allowing the private media to do as it pleases in this “free-fall system”. The decree is “limited to what the state broadcaster will do, and did not anticipate the liberalisation of the broadcasting landscape”.

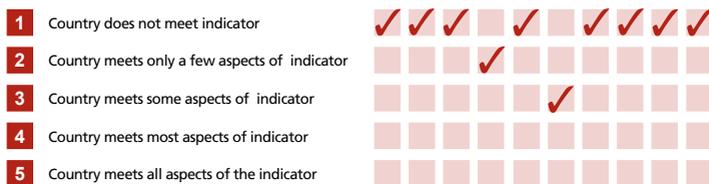
Internationally, a three-tier media structure is recognised (i.e. public, commercial and community broadcasters). In Ghana, however, these distinctions are not very clear, and various hybrids exist. The state-owned broadcaster is “not yet a true public broadcaster, as the funding mechanism is not independent of the state.” The absence of a broadcasting law “makes this distinction very blurred”.

There is a critical need for greater regulation in the industry. With the Broadcasting Bill still not a reality, there is also no legal framework for the regulation of broadcasting. The only legislated bodies that exist with some measure in regulating the Broadcasting environment include the National Communications Authority Act of 2008 and the National Media Commission Act of 1993. (see indicator 3.2 below)

It is expected that the current version of the proposed bill will be reviewed again before a final outcome.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.3 (2006: 1.2; 2008: 1.2; 2011: 1.0)

3.2 Broadcasting is regulated by an independent body that is adequately protected by law against interference and whose board is not dominated by any particular political party and is appointed – in an open way - involving civil society and not dominated by any particular political party.

As noted in Indicator 3.1 above, Ghana currently has no broadcasting legislation, but the NCA and NMA play the most significant roles in regulating this industry.

The National Communications Authority (NCA) Act establishes the NCA “as the central body to license and regulate communications activities and services in the country; and to provide for related purposes.” One of the NCA’s plethora of functions includes being responsible for issuing Broadcasting licences. In this respect, the NCA’s functions include:

- granting communication licences;
- regulating and monitoring licensees, holders of frequency authorisations in consultation with the National Media Commission where appropriate; and
- ensuring fair competition amongst licencees, operators of communications networks and service providers of public communications

The NCA allocates broadcasting frequencies, and is empowered to suspend licences. “To this end, it has to monitor compliance, and if a broadcaster breaches what it applied for, the NCA has the right to suspend its licence.”.

The structure of the NCA board, as stipulated in Section 6(1) of the NCA Act, is as follows:

The governing body of the Authority is a Board consisting of

- (a) the chairperson;
- (b) the Director-General appointed under section 16;
- (c) one representative of the
 - (i) the National Security Council,
 - (ii) the National Media Commission,
 - (iii) Ministry of Communications, not below the rank of a director;
- (d) one person with experience and expertise in communications; and
- (e) three other persons at least one of whom is a woman and each of whom has knowledge of expertise in electrical engineering, law, business or public administration.

Members of the NCA Board are appointed by the President “in accordance with article 70 of the Constitution” and although Authority is set up by the Act as a “body corporate”, it does not operate independently. Section 14 (1) of the Act clearly states: “The Minister may give written directives to the Board on matters of policy and the Board shall comply.”

Further, while the NCA is financially sound and generates money on its own. (The NCA also regulates the telecommunications companies. The fees collected in this respect, are what allow the NCA to stand on its own feet financially). This money is, however, placed in a consolidated fund, and the authority operates its finances through government.

While the NCA regulates the technical aspects of broadcasting, content is regulated by the NMC.

The NMC is a constitutional body, and it completely independent – even in the composition of its board. Even with representation from the Office of the President, the member designated in this capacity cannot overturn the decisions of the commission.

According to the NMC Act, Section 6(3), “A person who is a founding member of a political party, is a leader or a member of its executive or holds any office in a political party shall not be qualified to be a member of the Commission.”

The NMC consists of the following members, as stipulated in Section 5 of the NMC Act:

- one representative each nominated by—
- the Ghana Bar Association;
- the Publishers and owners of the Private Press;
- the Ghana Association of Writers and the Ghana Library Association;
- the Christian Group (the National Catholic Secretariat, the Christian Council, and the Ghana Pentecostal Council);
- the Federation of Muslim Councils and Ahmadiyya Missions;

- the training institutions of journalists and communicators;
- the Ghana Advertising Association and the Institute of Public Relations of Ghana;
- the Ghana National Association of Teachers;
- the National Council on Women and Development;
- the Trade Unions Congress; and
- the Association of Private Broadcasters;
- two representatives nominated by the Ghana Journalists Association;
- two persons appointed by the Parliament; and
- three persons nominated by Parliament.

According to the NMC Act, the functions of the Commission are:

(a) to promote and ensure the freedom and independence of the media for mass communication or information;

(b) to take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media;

(c) to insulate the state-owned media from governmental control;

(d) to take measures to ensure that persons responsible for state-owned media afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions;

(e) to appoint in consultation with the President, the chairmen and other members of the governing bodies of public corporations managing the state-owned media;

(f) to make regulations by constitutional instrument for the registration of newspapers and other publications, except that the regulations shall not provide for the exercise of any direction or control over the professional functions of a person engaged in the production of newspapers or other means of mass communication; and

(g) to perform such other functions as may be prescribed by law not inconsistent with the Constitution.

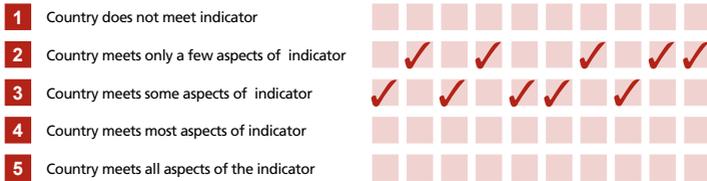
Despite the guidelines that the NMC issues, “most of the problems we have in the media come from the independent broadcast stations, especially local language stations.”

The NCA may impose sanctions on content issues based on the advice of the NMC. This arrangement has, however, never been tested. The NCA takes direction from the Minister, given various considerations such as national security, policy, and so forth. As such, the broadcast sector is not completely insulated from political interference.

The NMC is considerably under-resourced, and is making efforts to continue its function of monitoring the media. “NMC members are actively lobbying the powers that be to resource the organisation, but this is not good for our independence.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.5 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 1.3)

3.3 The body, which regulates broadcasting services and licences, does so in the public interest and ensures fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing society at large.

Both the NMC and the NCA regulate broadcasting services and licences, with the NCA charged with technical oversight, and the NMC content oversight.

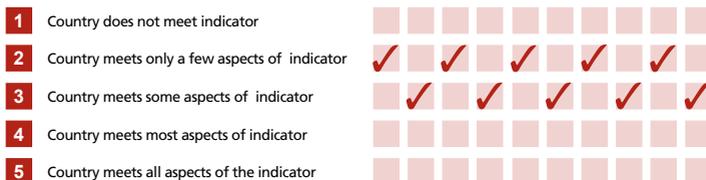
“The NCA issues licences, but does not concern itself with diversity of views. It can also issue licenses independent of the NMC. This means we don’t have a body that ensures fairness and diversity of views, so the situation of the media appears to be very vulnerable in this regard.”

The process of issuing broadcasting licences is not very transparent, and even where all the information has been provided and the requirements are met, the NCA has the discretion to grant or refuse a licence. “Sometimes the responses seem unwarranted, and it seems it is protecting the interests of the government that is in power.”

Some entities have been denied licences, with the excuse that the area applied for was already over subscribed with other broadcasters. In these cases, they were advised to move to a different region.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.5 (2006: 1.3; 2008: 3.2; 2011: 1.7)

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

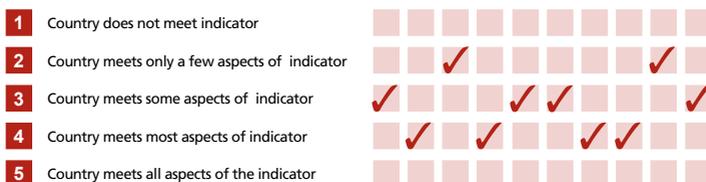
The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Board is appointed in an open and transparent manner. Each constituency is asked to nominate two people to the board, and a large pool of nominees is received. The designated subcommittee then makes a choice on the basis of set criteria decided on by the board.

The board consist of representatives with experience and training in accounting, law, labour, and media/journalism, and these criteria inform the selection. Panellists proposed ensuring greater gender balance in these selections. For example, in the call for nominations, constituencies could be asked to select one male and one female nominee.

To date, "barring a few human errors, the selection of people to the board has followed a good, independent recruitment process in every instance".

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.2 (2006: 4.3; 2008: 3.8; 2011: 2.5)

3.5 The editorial independence of the state/public broadcaster from political influence is guaranteed by law and practised to ensure balanced and fair news and current affairs programmes.

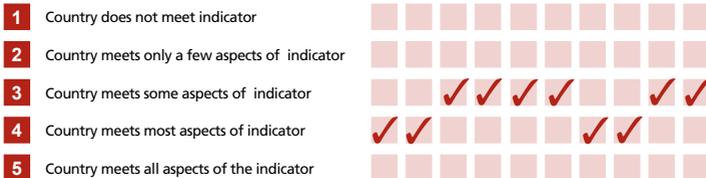
The Constitution guarantees the editorial independence of the state/public media, including the GBC. In fact, Article 167 (c) mandates the NMC to “to insulate the state-owned media from government control”.

Despite this, political interference and self-censorship does take place. “If you get a ‘phone call’ and you don’t respect it, you may not stay on the job long enough.”

The NCA Act, authorises the minister to issue directives to the NCA. Furthermore, the law states that the president should have access to state media at all times. Given this reality, the full editorial independence of the state broadcaster is debatable.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 3.4 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: n/a)

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

The government is obliged by law to fund the state broadcaster. The GBC receives subventions from government, and its survival without government funding is questionable.

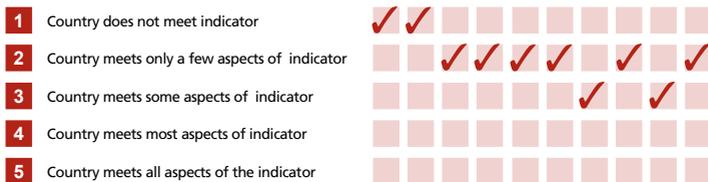
Government pays the salaries of GBC workers directly as civil servants, while the internal operations of the corporation are paid for with internally generated funds. Even with these subventions, however, “the public broadcaster is under-resourced” and is not adequately funded in a way that protects it from commercial pressure.

The director general of the GBC has noted that the corporation loses out immensely on potential advertising income, because its Supreme Court telecast from 10am to 4pm on Mondays through Thursdays take up all the commercial blocks, and advertisers are not interested in advertising during this slot. The GBC has, however, been criticised for not being innovative enough in exploring funding opportunities.

There is a need to review the TV Licence Act of 1960, which has not been amended since it first came into law. "It's very easy to get people to pay 1 GHC (USD 0.45) a month. When people use the motorway, tolls are 1 GHC, and people don't complain at all. It blows the imagination that the government has been keen on keeping the GBC dependent on it, because the TV licence itself could help break this dependence. This is an advocacy issue."

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

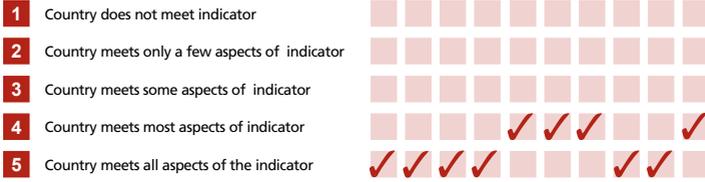
2.0 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 2.1)

3.7 The state/public broadcaster offers diverse programming formats for all interests including local content and quality public interest programmes.

The state broadcaster offers diverse programming formats including local content and quality public interest programmes. It also offers quality programming in various local Ghanaian languages.

Scores:

Individual scores:

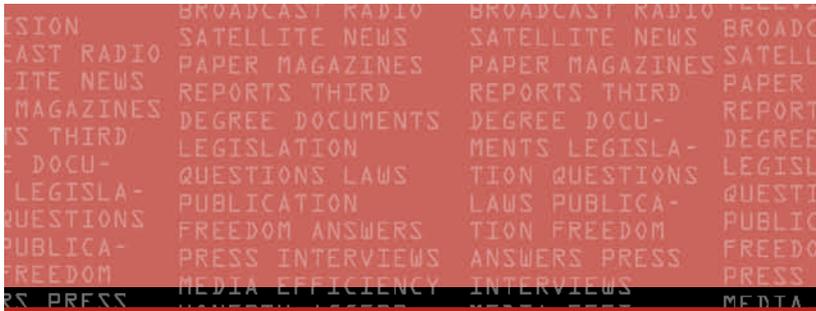


Average score:

4.6 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: n/a)

Average score for sector 3:

2.8



SECTOR 4:

The media practise high levels of professional standards.



The media practices high levels of professional standards.

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

Panellists differed on their assessment of the standard of reporting in Ghana. Some felt that the media is “doing fairly well on average”, while others felt that “the quality of the media landscape is being drained”.

“If you’re looking at accuracy and fairness as stipulated in the broadcasting standards code of ethics, the reality on the ground is that they can pronounce a person dead when the person is not yet dead. Of course, journalists make mistakes. Some correct them, but others do not.”

Article 162 (6) of the Constitution requires that:

Any medium for the dissemination of information to the public which publishes a statement about or against any person shall be obliged to publish a rejoinder, if any, from the person in respect of whom the publication was made.

However, when media houses are compelled to publish a rejoinder or apology, they often give it much less prominence than the original story received, and sometimes relegate it to the classifieds section. The radio stations are usually better with making corrections. “With a phone call, they can allow you to make a correction as long as they believe that balance is necessary.”

It is rare to find rejoinders or apologies in social media. This can be especially problematic, because mainstream media often take up topics from social media. An example of this is a case of an indecent photoshopped picture of the president being posted on social media, allegedly by an OmariWadie. Another example was a story alleging that the Asantehene, the absolute monarch of the Asante people, had been declared president.

“On social media, accuracy and fairness does not exist.”

Another problematic area is that journalists lack fairness and accuracy in reporting on allegations against people. For example, “they will call a person a rapist, when that person is alleged to have raped someone. This is pervasive across the media.”

The dramatic presentation of information in some news media, with the use of “clouded metaphors” to embellish the news as being more histrionic than it actually is, also appears to signal a focus on entertainment only, without educating and informing the public.

The need to “focus on getting it right, and not on getting it first” is critical. Media houses compete in trying to cover breaking news, and some will publish an incomplete story, and say “more soon”, simply to get the news out first, but don’t always follow up. Some of the well-established media entities ensure that a certain chain is followed before they publish. “If it happens to be inaccurate, they will find this along that chain.”

Journalists appear to be unfamiliar with a media code of ethics, and some panellists noted concern with “loose entry points” into the journalistic profession. “Anybody can enter!” The majority of journalists are untrained, the amount of training once they enter media houses is limited, and few media houses insist on hiring professionals. A notable example was that of a media owner, who went to a funeral, and offered a job to someone there based solely on his linguistic and oratory prowess in the local language of the area as a Master of Ceremony. One panellist recounted the experience of going to an FM station, and finding a group of young people who had just finished secondary school hosting the morning show. “This is the picture in many areas, including Accra. Many media houses go for cheap labour, and many pay them peanuts. In the worst case scenario, they are not trained at all.”

Accuracy is a challenge in the media, and some panellists felt that the level of accuracy often “depends on who is writing it, who it’s about, and the intention behind it. If malice is intended, the harm is already done.” Good journalists who do well and write in a fair and accurate manner are often “snapped up by non-media professions”.

Sensationalism – particularly on local language stations – appears to be the order of the day in some media entities and with this comes an insensitivity to reporting on issues such as rape or defilement³. “For example, if someone has been defiled, they will try to tell you how old the victim is, and the physical stature of the man. And they will try to describe the action, even in language that English radio is not permitted to use. You won’t find this in the print media, especially in mainstream papers, and you won’t find it on TV.”

Some media houses have also resorted to writing teasers for stories, “just to irk people”.

There is a high level of insensitivity in reporting on gender issues, or crimes against women. For example, in reporting on rape, the woman is blamed. A deep analysis of issues is seldom done.

Public trust in the media is waning, and there is not always an automatic sense of belief in the stories being published or broadcast.

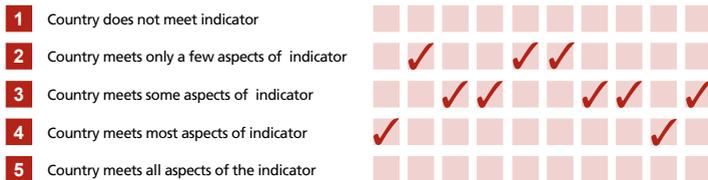
3 Defilement’ refers to statutory rape, and in some country laws (e.g. Uganda), is defined as “the act of having sex with a girl under 18, while rape is having sex with a woman without her consent, usually by force.” In Ghana, the stated age of consent is 16yrs. During the discussion, defilement and rape were referred to separately, as noted above.

"I overheard shoeshine boys having a conversation saying 'I now understand why [former president Jerry] Rawlings was jailing journalists. Because they are a bunch of liars.' People are losing confidence in the media."

"There are those who don't want to read anymore because they want accurate information."

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.9 (2006: 2.8; 2008: 2.5; 2011: 2.5)

4.2 The media follow voluntary codes of professional standards, which are enforced by independent/ non-statutory bodies that deal with complaints from the public.

The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), NMC and the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA) have their respective codes of ethics. The GJA and NMC codes apply to all journalists across the print and broadcast sector, while GIBA's code applies only to its members. There is a general consistency across all three codes.

The majority of journalists are not members of the GJA, and very few are familiar with the code of ethics. Nevertheless, the GJA has a disciplinary and ethics council made up of a seasoned lawyer and journalists who receive complaints from the public on the media. The association "tries to get journalists to internalise the values of accuracy and fairness. We seize every opportunity to get people to respect their own code of ethics and the responsibilities with which they are tasked" as media professionals.

Several media houses, such as the *Daily Graphic* and the GBC, also make use of their own professional codes and "streamline professional working conduct that will put you in check".

Article 167(b) of the constitution stipulates that one of the functions of the NMC is to:

... ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media (Article 167 (b) 1992 Constitution).

The NMC has also developed several guidelines for professional conduct and reporting. Examples include the *Guidelines for Fair and Equitable Coverage of Political Parties by State-Owned Media*, and the *Guidelines for Political Journalism*. However, these guidelines or the NMC's code of ethics are not enforced in any way, and the commission is considered weak.

A few media houses employ staff specifically to monitor content, how well it sells, and the direction of reporting to be taken in this regard. This direction may sometimes counter professional standards, as they do so in the interest of what sells, and not necessarily to ensure high standards of ethical and professional reporting.

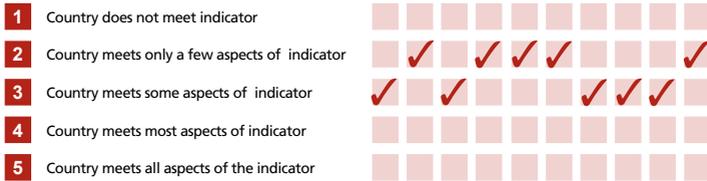
A few panellists felt that one of the challenges in setting and ensuring high professional standards of conduct is in the constitutionally protected notion of "unrestricted entry" into the profession. The NMC has not set any minimal requirements or registration processes for journalists, in line with Section 2(2) of the NMC Act which states that "In carrying out its functions the Commission shall not by regulations or any other act, require any person to obtain or maintain a licence as a condition for the establishment of a newspaper, journal or any other written publication."

Some media houses set their own minimum requirements. Joy FM, for example, requires that its employees have a first degree, or that they come from the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ).

"The difficulty for GJA is that the majority of practitioners in local language stations have either just finished secondary school, or may not have been to school at all. But because they don't have a diploma, they can't enter the Ghana Institute of Journalism. So how do you enforce a code against someone who is not a member?"

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.5 (2006: 2.8; 2008: 2.9; 2011: 2.9)

4.3 Salary levels and general working conditions, including safety, for journalists and other media practitioners are adequate.

The minimum wage in Ghana is GHC 150 to 200 (USD 67.50 to USD 90.00) per month.

However, "Some journalists don't get anything at all".

In certain cases, journalists who are attached to media houses but are not salaried receive "soli" ('solidarity) – a small stipend to cover the story – that is either requested by the journalist, or simply offered by the newsmaker to have their story published. At the Daily Dispatch, asking for money from the news source is strictly prohibited, and is grounds for dismissal, because journalists are provided with an allowance for the story coverage.

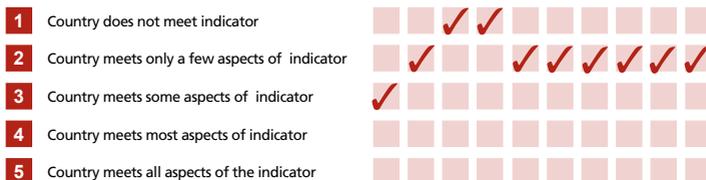
Star or celebrity journalists who are attached to broadcast media houses and are on the air for a limited amount of time, are often paid several times more than the full time journalists in salaries as well as benefits such as travel insurance. Morning show hosts are the best paid.

Freelancers or journalists working on contract are not paid well, and for them, "life is extremely precarious by most standards". There are a number of freelancers, however, who, "if they work hard, may end up being paid the same as regular staff".

To some extent, "media owners/managers are part of the problem in terms of pay and providing the necessary allowances", and need to reassess their pay structures accordingly. Media houses that take on unionised staff have to cover insurance, maternity, overtime, travel allowances, etc., but "it hasn't been easy" for them. Salaries at the Daily Graphic are said to be growing at a faster rate than at other media houses.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

1.9 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 2.2)

4.4 Journalists and other media practitioners are organised in trade unions and/or professional associations, which effectively represent their interests.

The GJA is in the process of unionising, and “has appointed a labour consultant to champion the cause of unionisation”. A resolution has been passed, and the initial groundwork has been done to this effect.

There are professional media associations such as the GJA, Women in Broadcasting (WIB) and others, “but whether they effectively represent the interests of their members is another issue”.

The Public Service Workers Union represents the interests of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and the *Daily Graphic*, and other unions such as the Media and Printing Industry Workers Union (MEDIANET) also exist. These unions are “vibrant in ensuring certain labour standards”, but many journalists outside these unions are left out. The GJA is drawing lessons from these and other unions to gain best practices.

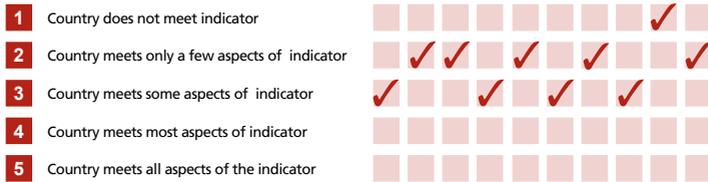
Ghanaian editors do not have a union, but they do have an Editors Forum.

To date, there have not been any complaints from media owners regarding the membership of their staff to the GJA or the proposed union. In any case, “the right to belong to an association or union is a constitutional right, and it would be against the Labour Act to prevent them from doing so. There is no evidence of media houses keeping employees from joining.” In fact, it is said that at Multimedia, as soon as a journalist is employed, he or she is encouraged to register with the GJA.

As a union, GJA will aim to “champion the cause of empowering its members, and getting others on board to form one strong body, legally empowered, to collectively bargain for members.”

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.3 (2006: 4.7; 2008: 4.0; 2011: 3.5)

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

There is a high level of corruption in Ghana's media.

Journalists overtly "ask for something" from news sources; and news sources often concede, feeling that they have no choice if they want their news published.

Some media houses have strict policies against journalists soliciting funds in this way. Multimedia, for example, has "told the whole world that their journalists should not be given any money, because they receive a travel allowance. If they take money, they are sacked". The Dispatch has a similar policy.

The corruption present in the media is not only the fault of the media, but also of the givers of these bribes or "soli" payments.

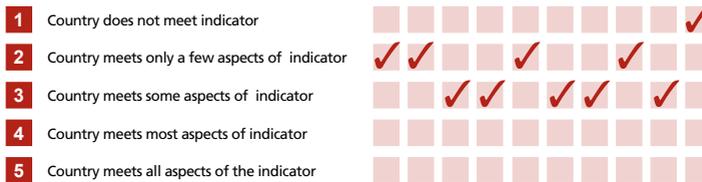
A few panellists felt that these incentives cannot be seen as bribes. "We are faced with the reality of many journalists who are not paid at all, and media houses that can't afford to pay travel allowances. If an event organiser, out of his/her generosity provides an amount, one can't turn it down."

However, the taking of such payment questions the integrity of the story, and of the journalist him/herself. One panellist differed though, saying "GHC 40 or 50 (about USD18 or USD 22.50) is not going to sway a journalist of integrity to tell a story differently". Most panellists agreed however, that it should be the employer, and not the news source, who pays the journalist.

"If a story is newsworthy, they shouldn't have to pay. Stories will not fly if they are not newsworthy," noted a panellist, adding that stories that are paid for bring down the standard of the media, because "the story is published because it is paid for, and not because it is newsworthy".

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

2.4 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 2.9)

4.6 Journalists and editors do not practise self-censorship in in the private broadcasting and print media.

For the most part, journalists and editors do not practise self-censorship.

The only situations where panellists cited that self-censorship has occurred is in cases where there is some political or religious conflict with the potential to spread. This self-censorship could also be seen as being in line with applying a professional code in looking at the public interest, For example, various media houses were very careful about reporting on the Bawku issue⁴, and the Daily Dispatch is said to have pulled a newspaper from the printers and changed the cover page images it was about to publish, to uphold national security and avoid the potential retaliation that could result from their publication.

There have also been instances where editors delayed the publication of certain stories, in order to avoid the potential “explosion”, though the information has been kept on hand.

Panellists felt that the topic of self-censorship raises the question of priority, and whether it is “professionalism or commercialism”.

Furthermore, ownership may also affect the content of some media houses, or the perception of such content, and how information is presented. For example, at a station owned by a person attached to a certain political party, journalists self-censor to suit the perceived ideology they feel they need to portray, and will outsource news stories that may be critical of that party in order to avoid repercussions. “Even so, we got calls form both sides, saying that the reportage was biased one way or the other.”

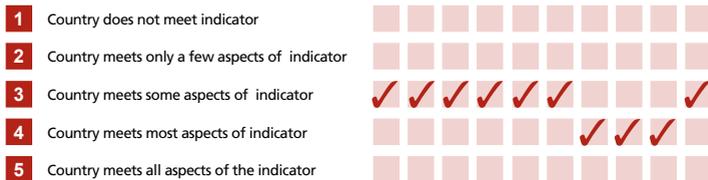
⁴ The Bawku issue is centered around inter-ethnic conflict between Kusasi and Mamprusi people in the district of Bawku, in Ghana's Upper East Region. The cause of the conflict is mainly about land ownership, chieftancy, and who the 'rightful custodians' are in the area. The first major conflict is said to have erupted in 1983, and conflict has broken out periodically since then. Reports on violence in the area can be found as late as 2013.

One panellist noted: “The greatest threat to press freedom emanates from the owners. There are situations where they interfere, and change the story to suit their interests or ideologies.”

Profit motivation is determining the standards of the news and how it is presented, and this may spur self-censorship practices.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.3 (2006: 3.7; 2008: 3.5; 2011: 2.9)

4.7 Media professionals have access to training facilities offering formal qualification programmes as well as opportunities to upgrade skills.

There are a number of training programmes for media professionals; and journalists have several opportunities to “top up” on their programmes towards attaining degrees.

Institutions that offer programmes in media include the Ghana Institute of Journalism, the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, the African University College of Communication, Jayee University College, the University of Education Winneba and the University of Cape Coast. These institutions provide quality training to their students, but while they are available, they are not necessarily affordable for students who want to pursue studies there. Furthermore, even though they “churn out enough journalists, because media owners are in it for profit, they go for secondary school graduates so that they don’t have to pay much”.

Online training courses/facilities are becoming more available, and are more affordable for students.

Many professionals trained in journalism do not end up in the newsroom, and many branch into public relations and other communications professions, as these are often better paid. Likewise, professionals trained in other areas may end

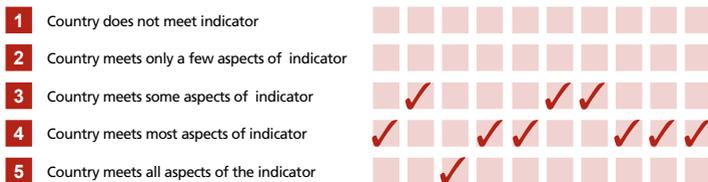
up in media, as one does not need a journalism degree to practice journalism. This is seen as a positive, as it provides scope for journalists to specialise on certain issues or topics that they know well, and allows for a “fair balance of people from other backgrounds”.

Some media houses send their journalists for additional training. At the *Dispatch*, for example, journalists are sent for training twice a year. The training of journalists is seen as being in the interest of the media house. Some media houses, however, fear that the more they invest in a journalist’s training, the more likely he/she is to leave to a higher paying media house. As such, some media houses will not assist journalists in upgrading their qualifications from a diploma to a degree, nor will they provide an allowance – including study leave – for the journalist to study. Others may “bring in people to talk about certain issues, but they don’t really send journalists out (for training)”.

Some NGOs also provide training or short courses. In the past, for example, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) conducted several training courses for journalists. Panellists noted that the GJA should be in a good position to source training for the media.

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score:

3.8 (2006: 4.7; 2008: 3.8; 2011: 3.5)

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

People with disabilities are hardly seen in the media. There is no deliberate intention or policy not to hire them. Neither is there a policy to ensure equal opportunity, not only in terms of disabilities, but across the board.

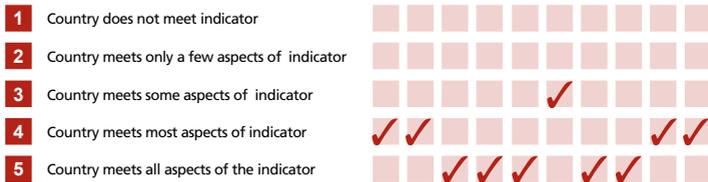
There is no gender-based discrimination in media houses, and women outnumber men in the media. However, stereotyping remains, and men are more likely to be assigned to places or on stories that have the potential for violence, although women in international media have proven themselves equally capable.

There are no opportunities that have been put in place to deliberately promote diversity, but there is no overt discrimination based on ethnicity. "It doesn't matter who you are. All you have to do is show promise. There are many examples of people who have shown promise, and been promoted quickly."

Panellists agreed that there is a need to "create a policy or statement about embracing equal opportunity, and progressively promoting equity, because it is important to reflect the diversity in society within the newsroom".

Scores:

Individual scores:



Average score: 4.4 (2006: n/a; 2008: n/a; 2011: 2.9)

Average score for sector 4: 2.9

The way forward

1. What were the developments in the media environment in the last two/three years?

Positive developments

- Since the 2012 elections, the public has subjected the media to greater scrutiny, and demanded that the media become more accountable, accurate and fair in its reporting.
- There has been greater advocacy around the Right to Information Bill, and knowledge of the bill is widespread. What is left is to ensure that the bill gets passed soon.
- Some media, including *The Graphic* and *The Times*, have become stronger, compared to the levels they were at a few years ago.
- New media is taking a stronger hold, and people are accessing the internet more through their mobile phones – which have become more affordable and available. This comes with the challenges of ensuring better standards in social media, but importantly, people have enhanced access to media through these developments.
- Ghanaians have become more media-oriented.
- The new board of the GBC appears to be better than the previous board.

Negative developments

- There is excessive political polarity in the media, and some programmes report news in a sensational way and even promote sensationalism. Stations that engage in the “proverbialisation of news” are also on the increase.
- During the period under review, Section 208 of the Criminal Code was used to arrest media practitioner Ken Koranchie for “contemptuous comments”, said to have caused “fear and alarm”. The media need to assess this issue, and question how this may be a “new judicial threat to freedom of expression”.
- The rise of “conduit journalism” is concerning, and it appears that journalists are being used to fulfil political agendas
- The media is faced with high levels of corruption, as well as challenges to its integrity. The media needs to “open our eyes” to this trend, and to address it as a matter of urgency.
- The Broadcasting Bill has still not been passed, and there hasn’t been any change in terms of regulations of the state broadcaster. This leaves the broadcasting sector in “free fall”, with limited regulation.
- The Right to Information Bill has still not been passed, despite years of advocacy, and work on this needs to be accelerated.

2. What kinds of activities are needed over the next years?

- Improve knowledge and familiarity with the various codes of ethics.
- Address the low salary levels in the media, especially in terms of helping to address corruption in the sector.
- Improve enforcement of codes and standards.
- Encourage policies that promote equal opportunity and/or diversity in the media (e.g. in terms of gender)
- Become familiar with the provisions of the Broadcasting Bill. Identify problems, if any, and begin advocacy work around getting the bill passed soon.
- Mobilise organisations to get the bill going. GJA to do a review of the bill and engage media lobby groups in getting it passed. Build stakeholder and public awareness around the Bill (e.g. support from Star Ghana, FES Ghana, and others.)
- Create and implement registration processes for the media.
- Convene a meeting of stakeholders to decide on administrative sanctions, etc to ensure compliance with professional standards that would help to improve the state of professionalism in the media.
- Educate the media on the implications of monopolies and issues of ownership.
- Advocate for the mobilisation of funds from and the work to be done by the Media Development Fund.

The panel discussion took place from 26th October to 27th October 2013, Ho, Volta Region, Ghana.

Panellists:

Media:

1. Ben Ephson, editor and MD, print media
2. Farida Khailann, broadcast journalist
3. Affail Monney, director in broadcast media / GJA president
4. Francis Tuffour, journalist, print media
5. Scofray Nana Yeboah, blogger

Civil Society:

6. Raymond Acquah, human rights activist
7. Georgina Bolah, human rights activist
8. Samson Lardy Ayenini, anchor/lawyer
9. Anna Antwi Ofei-Nkansah, activist
10. Kingsley Ofei-Nkansah, unionist

Rapporteur:

Nangula Shejavali

Moderator:

Edetaen Ojo

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