
AFRICAN MEDIA BAROMETER NAMIBIA

2007 REPORT

Sector 1: Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, are effectively protected and promoted.

1.1 *Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed in the constitution and protected by other pieces of legislation.*

ANALYSIS:

Freedom of expression is protected and guaranteed by the Namibian Constitution, but there are no other pieces of legislation, such as a Freedom to Information Act, to protect freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

Article 21 of the Constitution states: "All persons shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media."

Article 22 of the Constitution states: "Whenever or wherever in terms of this Constitution the limitation of any fundamental rights or freedoms contemplated by this Chapter is authorised, any law providing for such limitation shall:

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

(b) specify the ascertainable extent of such limitation and identify the Article or Articles hereof on which authority to enact such limitation is claimed to rest."

Article 144 of the constitution acknowledges international conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its Article 19 guaranteeing freedom of opinion and expression.

It is worth noting that a "relatively good draft media policy", written by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, was released for discussion to stakeholders at the beginning of 2007. There was consensus that this draft is so progressive that it is doubtful whether it will ever become law, but it could indicate positive change in terms of the government's attitude to the media. The draft policy recommends Constitutional changes and makes provision for a self-regulatory media body.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3

Average score: **3.2 (2005 = 3.4)**

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

ANALYSIS:

Some members of the panel felt that Namibians were not able to express themselves without fear. "Freedom of expression in Namibia is offset by some element of political fear", which is particularly strong in rural areas where tradition dominates and prevents the criticism of elders. "People are fearful of not being regarded as part of Namibia. There is fear of the ruling party [SWAPO] and an underling fear of the former president [Sam Nujoma, current president of SWAPO]."

Outspoken citizens in marginalised areas also feel that they "don't have the right to talk", and that their concerns are ignored within the broader community, where nepotism, favouritism and corruption are commonplace.

While there are no official mechanisms to counter public criticism of the ruling party, and SWAPO in particular, it is more subtly and ominously done through firing and sidelining. Recently callers to the Oshiwambo service of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) asking for Nujoma to answer to claims of being linked to the CIA were threatened by an anonymous caller warning: "Your time is numbered", thus creating a sense of fear and limiting people's ability to express themselves (see indicator 3.5 for more detail). The Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, subsequently spoke publicly about "crushing" these critical callers.

It was mentioned that: "The only radio station where you can speak freely is the NBC's Otjiherero service."

Over the last three there has been a tendency within the trade union movement to crush opposing views, particularly in relation to the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), which is linked to the ruling party.

Other members felt that citizens, especially those in urban areas, demonstrated a healthy expression of opinions through the letters pages of newspapers and radio chat shows, though there was a sense that even those using these avenues were practising self-censorship.

A sense of increased freedom of expression was evident with the arrival of the free weekly tabloid, *Informanté*, in September 2006 with its bold investigative and sensationalist reporting style, as well as the proliferation of youth-driven print and Internet publications as well as radio stations.

The May Day 2007 celebration was marked in Windhoek by a very poor turnout, indicative of the general political and social apathy prevalent in Namibia: "People don't speak because they don't care."

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 3, 2, 3, 2, 4, 4, 3, 3

Average score: **2.8 (2005 = 3.3)**

1.3 *There are no laws restricting freedom of expression such as excessive official secret or libel acts, or laws that unreasonably interfere with the responsibilities of the media.*

ANALYSIS:

One of the biggest threats to media freedom is the sluggish pace with which outdated and media-unfriendly legislation from the apartheid era is being removed from the statute books. There are some laws that restrict freedom of expression in Namibia, such as the Official Secrets Act and the Defence Law, but the question remains whether they are excessive. Most of these acts originated in the pre-independence era.

In 2005 the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting commissioned the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to investigate the laws that restrict freedom of expression and the media. To date, the ministry has made no movement to make this public.

There is currently no Criminal Libel Act: there is only the common law offence of *crimen injuria*. And in this regard there has been a noticeable increase in such civil cases with people claiming substantial damages from newspapers. In a defamation case still to be heard, former president Sam Nujoma is claiming N\$5 million from *The Namibian* newspaper and journalist Werner Menges, and there are a number of cases against *Informanté*.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3, 3, 2, 2

Average score: **2.3 (2005 = 3.3)**

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

ANALYSIS:

Legally, the ability to work as a journalist is unrestricted, although all practising journalists should register with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and carry media cards provided by the ministry. Foreign journalists also need ministerial accreditation before they can work in Namibia.

A point of concern is that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, rather than a journalists' association, is issuing media cards and providing journalists with accreditation, because this is open to abuse.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 4, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 3

Average score: **4.7 (2005 = 4.9)**

1.5 *Protection of confidential sources of information is guaranteed by law.*

ANALYSIS:

The law does not protect confidential sources of information. There are laws in place, such as the Magistrate's Court Act that could compel journalists to appear in court as witnesses by way of subpoenas. They could then be forced to give information or reveal sources of information. Refusing to do so would mean contempt of court.

In a test case for the courts, editor of the weekly *Windhoek Observer* newspaper Hannes Smit was arrested and jailed in 1998 for refusing to give information about the killer of political activist Anton Lubowski.

The issue of protection of confidential sources came to the fore with the inauguration of the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2006 when civil servants who wanted to be whistleblowers found that legally they would not be protected. President Hifikepunye Pohamba has since given the green light for a law to be created to protect whistleblowers.

The Namibian chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has been lobbying "for years" for a Freedom of Information Act, which would encompass protection of sources. "It's a matter of political will. The Minister of Information seems to imply that a media council is the pre-requisite for any positive developments within the media."

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1

Average score: **1.8 (2005 = 2.1)**

1.6 *Public information is easily accessible, guaranteed by law, to all citizens, including journalists.*

ANALYSIS:

There is no Access to Information Act. People have access to certain public information like court documents but there is no law forcing the government or companies to divulge information of public interest. Government officials often make it difficult for journalists to get information in the public interest.

“In Namibia there is such a culture of secrecy around public information that people have stopped asking. This leaves a lot of space for officials not wanting to be transparent or open.”

Investigative journalists have found that even accessing information from the Registrar of Companies can be difficult, but the question remains whether this intentional or as a result of sheer incompetence. Documents that should be in the public domain, such as the Budget, are made available only to certain individuals or institutions, while the government website, which could be a good tool for informing the public, is hopelessly outdated. A point was made that if you know the right person in government you can also get documents sent to you electronically.

Concern was raised that the 2006 Hansard [the official report of parliamentary debates] is still not available, and this should be a way for the government to disseminate information to the public. Parliament is also discussing establishing regional centres around the country, which could provide Namibians with more access to documents and information of policy.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 1

Average score: **1.7 (2005 = 2.4)**

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

ANALYSIS:

While lobby groups such as MISA Namibia and the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) are trying to advance the cause of media freedom, there was consensus that civil

Sector 2: The media landscape is characterised by diversity, Independence and sustainability.

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

ANALYSIS:

There are four national daily newspapers (*The Namibian* and *New Era* in English, *Die Republikein* in Afrikaans and *Allgemeine Zeitung* in German), four national English weekly newspapers (*Informanté*, *The Economist*, *Windhoek Observer* and SWAPO's mouthpiece, *Namibia Today*) and the bi-weekly coastal newspaper, *Namib Times*. According to *The Namibian*, its current circulation is 25 900 on Mondays-Thursdays (up from 24 500 in 2005) and 40 000 on Fridays (up from 34 000 in 2005). The free national tabloid *Informanté*, states that it prints 70 000 copies a week. There are no confirmed figures for other newspapers.

There are approximately 10 magazines in Namibia, a substantial increase from the four in 2005. It is also encouraging to note how young people are increasingly developing their own print and Internet-based magazines. *Informanté*, initially published by the Trustco Group as an in-house publication, was launched as a full-fledged weekly tabloid in September 2006 and distributed countrywide. It has had an impact on the newspaper-reading public with its investigative and sensationalist stories.

There are seven commercial radio stations and four community radio stations (four in Windhoek and one in Rehoboth), an increase from the total of nine commercial or community stations combined in 2005. The national broadcaster, the NBC, has nine local language radio services, as well as an English national radio station.

Interestingly, Radio 99 was sold to Democratic Media Holdings (DMH), owners of the Afrikaans daily *Die Republikein* and the German *Allgemeine Zeitung*, and in February 2007 South Africa's leading publishing group News24 took a 50 per cent stake in DMH.

There are three local television stations: the public/state-run NBC, the commercial One Africa Television and the community television station which broadcasts local and foreign religious programming, Trinity Broadcasting Namibia (TBN). Notably in terms of diversity, One Africa launched a daily (Monday-Friday) news bulletin at 19h30, potentially providing a good alternative to the NBC's 20h00 news bulletin. There is much diversity in terms of foreign news broadcasts on the free-to-air local channels: One Africa broadcasts a few hours a day of BBC World and BBC News, while the NBC broadcasts CNN, Deutsche Welle and CCTV.

The satellite television service, DSTV, is too expensive for most Namibian at a rate of N\$480 a month.

A new development is the sale of free-to-air satellite decoders, requiring a one-off payment of about N\$900 and a satellite dish. These decoders allow viewers to receive the South African television channels SABC1, 2 and 3, etv, Botswana's national television (BTV) as well as numerous religious channels.

Concern was noted that, while many local radio stations rely on the NBC infrastructure to broadcast their signal, numerous obstacles were placed in the way of One Africa by the NBC to prevent the private television station from broadcasting. In parts of Windhoek and in Oshakati the NBC refused to allow One Africa to use its transmitters, meaning that One Africa had to erect its own at great cost. One participant asked: "Surely this is public infrastructure and should be shared by all television services in Namibia? It is worrying that NBC sees One Africa as some sort of competition."

Concern was raised that despite the many changes in the media landscape, there has not been a new and objective survey since the seven-year-old Namibian All Media Product Survey (NAMPS). According to this survey, commissioned by the NBC, there are approximately 10 readers per copy of *The Namibian*, and seven to eight for the other newspapers.

It is worth noting that during 2006, *The Namibian* and the Trustco Group (publishers of *Informanté*) jointly launched a new printing company called Free Press Printers. Although the company has experienced extreme technical difficulties with the press, which has resulted in *The Namibian* being late on the streets a number of times, it could be a positive development in light of the long-term dominance of the printing sector by Newsprint Namibia, owned by DMH, and John Meinert Printing.

While in urban areas there is a relatively wide choice of media, including imported newspapers and magazines, in rural areas access to the media is severely limited, both in terms of availability and affordability. In some areas there is no access to print media or the Internet, and the NBC is people's only source of information. Access to the media is also limited by the fact that most publications are published in English. Newspapers also cost more than N\$3 each, which is unaffordable to most Namibians, and even the free-to-air NBC can be costly in rural areas where batteries are the only source of power.

Internet is also prohibitively expensive to most Namibians. A number of players have entered the broadband sector, providing high-speed, constant Internet connections nationwide. The country's first cellular phone service provider, MTC, has also introduced 3G wireless Internet access in all areas of the country where there is cellphone coverage.

MISA Namibia is busy with a media ownership survey.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3

Average score: **3.8 (2005 = 3.4)**

2.2 *Citizens' access to domestic and international media sources is not restricted by state authorities.*

ANALYSIS:

Access to domestic and international media is unrestricted, though it should be noted that the continuing ban on *The Namibian* with regards to government advertising and purchasing of the newspaper could impact on readers not accessing certain advertisements (see indicator 2.12).

SCORES:

Individual scores: 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 5, 2, 2

Average score: **3.6 (2005 = 4.6)**

2.3 *Efforts are undertaken to increase the scope of circulation of the print media, particularly to rural communities.*

ANALYSIS:

The scope of circulation of the print media has improved during the last two years, notably with Trustco flying *Informanté* and other newspapers, like *The Namibian*, to Katima Mulilo, Oranjemund and Aussenkehr, meaning that readers in far-flung locations receive their newspapers on the same day that they are published. It is still very difficult to get newspapers in rural areas such as Kamanjab or in the Kavango region.

Readers with Internet access can also read most of the daily newspapers online.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 3, 3, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3

Average score: **3.1 (2005 = 4.0)**

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

ANALYSIS:

The Namibian Communications Commission (NCC), which manages the country's frequency spectrum, has restricted the number of FM frequencies allocated to broadcasting operators to 24. It was noted that technically the NCC could allocate up to 32 frequencies. There was consensus that the NCC's management style was haphazard and appeared to favour commercial stations over community stations. It is notable to mention that a few years ago the last available FM broadcasting frequency in Windhoek was given to Radio France International, which broadcasts mostly in French, rather than to a local radio station.

Katatura Community Radio (KCR), which was off air for a number of years, has been resuscitated, although its good frequency was taken away by the NCC in the process and given to commercial radio station, Radio Energy.

The existing legislation regarding the NCC and its powers does not cover the public broadcaster and is very vague about community broadcasting. Commercial and community radio stations are not compelled to broadcast local news, with the result that they mostly play music but do not provide Namibians with information about their country.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 3, 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 1, 2

Average score: **3.1 (2005 = 2.9)**

2.5 *Community broadcasting enjoys special promotion given its potential to broaden access by poor and rural communities.*

ANALYSIS:

Although the NCC stipulates that community radio stations should enjoy special support, this has never been put into practice except for the fact that NCC licence fees for

community broadcasters are considerably lower than those for commercial broadcasters. The NCC does not protect community broadcasting by specifying the role and number, for example, of community radio stations.

Apart from Live FM in Rehoboth, there are no community radio stations outside Windhoek which serve poor and rural communities in Namibia. Live FM provides more of a social role than that of a community forum, as it mainly broadcasts music, religious programming, advertisements and community announcements.

There are attempts to maintain the Namibian Community Radio Network (NCRN), which is being co-ordinated by MISA Namibia and which is the only organisation providing support, training and networking for community radio stations. The NCRN, based at MISA Namibia, has been beset by sustainability and capacity issues.

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting has been pushing for community radio stations and the government is currently doing a study about setting up such ventures. The panellists noted with concern the government's interest in this sector, which could lead to 'community' radio stations pushing the government's agenda and being controlled by the state.

As the four existing community radio stations broadcast predominantly in English, they appear to be failing dismally when it comes to diversifying and empowering people to communicate in their own language.

It was felt that the lack of motivation in Namibia to set up community radio stations might be because the NBC's nine local language radio services fulfil the role of community broadcasters.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 3, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2,

Average score: **2.2 (2005 = 2.3)**

2.6 *The editorial independence of print media published by a public authority is protected adequately against undue political interference.*

ANALYSIS:

Both *New Era* and the Namibian Press Agency (NAMPA) receive state funds and have boards appointed solely by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. It is apparent that the state can interfere in the editorial independence of *New Era*. For example, D'aoud Vries, news editor of *New Era*, was suspended and subsequently fired after a politically

inflammatory letter was published in the daily newspaper. "The government didn't like what was published so he lost his job."

However, *New Era* has also demonstrated some surprising editorial independence over the past two years by publishing reports critical of the state. For example when the government curtailed the NBC English radio Chat Show (see indicator 3.5) a few days before World Press Freedom Day on May 3 2007, the *New Era* published a vicious attack on government's action.

It was noted that the government might not interfere in *New Era* because most of the newspaper's reporters are Otjiherereo-speaking and hardly any speak Oshiwambo. "The Owambo are more sensitive and prone to self-censorship. The Herero, it seems, speak more freely."

There is an impression that there is no editorial interference from government in NAMPA, and that the local news agency does not practice self-censorship. This is because NAMPA has been known to carry reports critical of government. It was mentioned that this might be a question of incompetence or a result of capacity constraints, rather than official policy.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 2, 1, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 3

Average score: **2.7 (2005 = 1.8)**

2.7 *Local or regional independent news agencies gather and distribute information for all media.*

ANALYSIS:

The Echoes specialised feature service of the Polytechnic of Namibia continues to operate, particularly through commissions. During the 2005 elections these student journalists produced "some of the best ever electoral coverage", published in the daily newspapers. Echoes was negotiating with NAMPA to include its stories in the news service for distribution to all news houses, but it is not known what the result of this is.

Concern was raised that there is no independent radio news service that collects local news for commercial radio stations. It was noted that community radio is more progressive in this regard and that the NCRN is busy with an initiative to network all community broadcasters, which could result in the sharing of sound clips, especially for news.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2

Average score: **1.6 (2005 = 1.9)**

2.8 *Media diversity is promoted through adequate competition regulation/legislation.*

ANALYSIS:

Recent developments, particularly in terms of ownership patterns in the media, show worrying signs of big business “extending its tentacles” into the media. This is evident by South African media giant News24 buying into DMH, and by the growing involvement in the media of Trustco, originally a legal insurance company that now has multiple business interests, as well as a popular and powerful weekly newspaper (*Informanté*) and a printing press with *The Namibian*. Trustco had a game show on One Africa Television until February 2007 when it gave one-day’s notice and pulled the show. The word within media circles is that Trustco is looking at establishing a television station in co-operation with the NBC.

SWAPO-owned Kalahari Holdings is still the majority shareholder of Radio Energy and subscription satellite television provider Multichoice Namibia.

There are no regulations with regards to cross-media ownership and no legislation to prevent possible monopolisation in future. A Competition Act is still being drafted and the Communications Act is not specific, as is the case in South Africa where the law limits the number of radio or television stations that one individual or company is allowed to own.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 2, 2

Average score: **2.1 (2005 = 2.3)**

2.9 *Government promotes a political and economic environment, which allows for a diverse media landscape.*

ANALYSIS:

Government does not actively promote an environment conducive for a diverse media but neither does it put any impediments in the way. If an individual or company has the money

to start a radio or television station, or a newspaper, there is no government interference, although being allocated a broadcasting frequency through the NCC might be problematic (see indicator 2.4)

Most commercial radio stations in Namibia are run by middle-aged, white men and have fewer than 25 employees, meaning that they do not have to submit affirmative action reports to the government. There are no tax incentives from the state to promote black economic empowerment in this sector.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 1, 2, 4, 2, 3, 1, 2, 1

Average score: **2.2 (2005 = 1.8)**

2.10 *Private media outlets operate as efficient and professional businesses.*

ANALYSIS:

Most private media outlets operate efficiently and professionally, and do fairly well in business terms. *The Namibian's* increased circulation over the past two years is indicative that business is booming. Although the market is very small, especially in terms of German-speakers, for example, the German newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung* can still survive because this sector has a large amount of spending power. Because this newspaper is part of the DMH stable, it may also benefit from cross-subsidisation within the group.

The Namibian publishes stories in English and Oshiwambo, while *Die Republikein* has increased its potential markets by publishing stories in Afrikaans, English and Oshiwambo.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4

Average score: **4.1 (2005 = 4.3)**

2.11 *State print media are not subsidised with taxpayers' money.*

ANALYSIS:

New Era is the only state-funded newspaper and, although it receives income from advertisements, the bulk of its funding comes from taxpayers' money.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.1 (2005 = 2.0)**

2.12 *Government does not use its power over the placement of advertisement as a means to interfere with media content.*

ANALYSIS:

The government ban on *The Namibian* newspaper, which has been in place since 2001 prohibiting government bodies from purchasing the paper or from advertising within it, is still in place. It can be seen to limit democracy and the access of *The Namibian* readers to certain advertisements or information, such as government employment opportunities, information about polio or how to vote, for example. There have been dissenting voices within the ruling party about the ban, notably from politician Hidipo Hamutenya in an article published in *The Namibian* in April 2007.

It is worth noting that while former president Sam Nujoma claimed initially that the ban was a reaction to the paper's critical reporting of the government, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting revealed this year that it was a result of criticism of Zimbabwe and its President Robert Mugabe, a close ally especially of Nujoma.

In 2006 the state decided that the government tenders would only be carried in the state-funded newspaper *New Era* and the Tender Bulletin. This could be seen as discrimination and creating an unfair advantage, as only readers of the state-funded newspaper would have access to government tenders. This is also a breach of standard tender regulations, which stipulate that government tenders should be published in at least two of the most-read newspapers in the country. As a result, one could argue that the power of advertising by the government has increased in the last two years.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.3 (2005 = 1.8)**

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

ANALYSIS:

The advertising market is more positive than it was two years ago, although there is still a great deal of control over the production and placement of advertisements from South Africa. This means that Namibian talent (advertising agencies, musicians and models/actors, for example) loses out, and that the market is saturated with generic advertisements. While the big commercial newspapers are good at getting regional advertising (through the regional advertising agency CAPRO, for example), publications with smaller circulation figures, such as magazines, struggle in this regard, as South African retail companies prefer to advertise in South African magazines, such as *Drum* and *You*, which are distributed in the region.

In terms of television, local broadcasters miss out on regional advertising, which goes instead to South African-based satellite service, DSTV.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 3, 1, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3

Average score: **2.9 (2005 = 2.4)**

Overall score for sector 2:

2.6 (2005 = 2.7)

Sector 3: Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent, the state broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster

3.1 *Broadcasting is regulated by an independent body adequately protected against interference, particularly of a political and economic nature.*

ANALYSIS:

The Namibian Communications Commission (NCC) is ostensibly an independent broadcasting regulator. However, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting is solely responsible for appointing NCC councillors, and as a result a certain level of political interference is possible.

It is worth noting that David Imbili, the present chairperson of the NCC, has no media experience although he is particularly well connected politically as he is the son-in-law of the former Namibian president, Sam Nujoma. As a result, the credibility of the NCC is tainted and could compromise the body's theoretical independence. It is also questionable whether the commissioners of the NCC are equipped to guide developments in the media landscape.

The NCC does not appear to be a proactive body in terms of monitoring adherence to its regulations, as it has no monitoring department, but waits for complaints before taking action. It was felt that there should be an independent broadcasting complaints commission.

The NCC does not regulate the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 3, 1, 2, 2

Average score: **1.9 (2005 = 1.8)**

3.2 *The appointments procedure for members of the regulatory body is open and transparent and involves civil society.*

ANALYSIS:

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting makes appointments of NCC members at her own personal discretion. These positions are not advertised and this procedure is neither open nor transparent and does not involve external and independent input from

civil society. It is notable that the current Minister of Information Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah is also the Secretary-General for Information of the ruling party, SWAPO, and it is not always clear when she speaks in her position as minister or as a senior member of SWAPO. It raises the question: how independent and neutral is she? And from whom does she take her orders? MISA has raised the issue with her, to no avail.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.2 (2005 = 1.1)**

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

ANALYSIS:

It was felt that, while the many radio and television stations certainly represent a diversity of views, this has come about by default rather than as a result of any involvement and intention of the NCC.

The NCC does not actively promote fairness and a diversity of views because it does not have a quota system for local broadcasters in terms of content. Such a quota system could stipulate the percentage of local news and music, and that the views of women and men must be equally represented. It was noted that when quotas were imposed on local content in South Africa, the local music industry experienced a phenomenal growth. There are very broad principles in the draft Communications Bill about promoting local content and culture, but it is not stipulated how it should be done.

The panellists noted that there appeared to be a paradox between the government's political policy emphasising unity in diversity, and the media policy, which does not actively encourage unity in diversity and dissenting voices. The provision exists to encourage diversity and local content but the regulatory body is not doing anything actively in this regard.

There was also concern that there is so much diversity within the media, that many communities can isolate themselves from what is happening in Namibia – by accessing only foreign broadcasters, for example.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.8 (2005 = 2.0)**

3.4 *The body's decisions on licensing in particular are informed by a broadcasting policy developed in a transparent and inclusive manner.*

ANALYSIS:

The NCC has a policy that requires it to take into account public interest and public opinion, but there have never been any public meetings to involve the public, actively, in any way.

A draft Communications Act has been in existence since 2002/3. There is no independent broadcasting policy. MISA Regional and the Namibian chapter regularly raise three issues of particular concern with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. These are: the establishment of a self-regulatory council; the Communications Bill; and the government ban on *The Namibian*. It appears that a lack of political will is inhibiting any development in these areas.

In September 2006, parastatal Telecom Namibia launched its new mobile phone service, Switch, offering calls at one-third the cost of cellphone calls. Soon thereafter existing cellphone service provider MTC objected, saying that Switch represented unfair competition and "infringed on the licensed right of mobile operators", MTC and newcomer Cell One. Cabinet had to intervene and the Switch service was subsequently, and apparently temporarily, restricted to certain towns. At the time of this report, Swakopmund had been excluded for the time being, however, because it was found that the frequency allocated to Switch at the coastal town clashed with that of TBN television station. It was expected that once the information and communications bills are passed, these issues would be resolved. The way Switch has been handled by the authorities indicates that the NCC commissioners "do not know what they are doing". Interestingly, both MTC and Telecom are owned by the Namibia Post and Telecommunications Holdings Company (NPTH), although they are in effect competing against one another. Cell One, launched in March 2007, is also majority owned by a parastatal, NamPower.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 1, 3, 2, 4, 2, 1, 1

Average score: **2.0 (2005 = 1.3)**

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

ANALYSIS:

The NBC Act of 1991 is based on old South African legislation and places the public broadcaster under the supervision of a board appointed by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. The first board of the NBC after independence was appointed in a more independent manner, but this is no longer the case. Civil society has been passive about this change in policy and allowed it to happen; therefore it has to take part of the blame.

Some members of the panel had the impression that the NBC was losing credibility, viewers and advertisers. "The irony is that if the NBC board was independently appointed and representative of a wide cross-section of society, that would go a long way to regaining the trust and confidence of the public and advertisers, and would serve to strengthen the public broadcaster."

It was shown, however, in the last Afrobarometer analysis that there is extremely high level of trust in the NBC, "more so than in the independent media", and that it is therefore a pity that the public broadcaster is not independent and more representative of the people. The board is not seen as credible and representative of the people, because its members are political appointees.

To illustrate how politicised the NBC board is within the ruling party, and how weak it is, the recent NBC 'Chat Show' controversy is notable. The NBC English service 'Chat Show' was curtailed at the end of April 2007 as a result of callers demanding that former president Sam Nujoma respond to allegations that he collaborated with the CIA. This raised much debate within civil society and government, with some politicians saying that the show allowed too much freedom of speech. This led to political interference with the Minister of Information and Broadcasting giving direct instructions to the NBC's Director General Vezera Bob Kandetu, without going through the board, to alter the 'open line' format of the 'Chat Show' and restrict daily discussions to specific themes.

There followed a public uproar. Subsequently, the state broadcaster put control mechanisms in place to cut out on-air abuse. This involves producers/gatekeepers and delay devices for all the public language services, and the 'Chat Show' is now back to the normal 'open line' format.

At no point during the 'Chat Show' controversy did the board issue a comment. The panel agreed that the NBC board is clearly very weak, divided and not independent, as it did not protect the DG.

It is worth noting that this incident showed how civil society has power and can rise up to effect change, as indicated by their vocal objections to the curtailment of the popular programme and the fact that it was later resuscitated.

Another point that came out of this incident is the lack of proper training of NBC presenters and talk show hosts, as many of them are young and inexperienced. "To expose a young person [on air] with no delay device, no presenter, political callers ... it's a recipe for disaster."

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.2 (2005 = 1.0)**

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

ANALYSIS:

The board of the NBC does not include any members with commercial interests. It is not known whether there are any office bearers with the state or political parties on the board but the mere fact that the Minister of Information and Broadcasting appoints the board members is an indicator that the board is not free from political influence.

There was consensus among the panellists that all NBC board members are SWAPO supporters, based on their appointment by the minister. The appointment of board members is related to their political affiliation rather than a diversity of skills in, for example, broadcasting, economics and civil society issues.

SCORES:

Individual score: 1, 1, 3, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.4 (2005 = 1.9)**

3.7 *The editorial independence of the public broadcaster from commercial pressure and political influence is guaranteed by law and practiced.*

ANALYSIS:

The NBC Act does not make any reference to an editorial policy. While the NCC Act makes reference to good journalistic practice, providing a list of professional standards and requirements, this does not apply to the NBC as it is a separate statutory body. It is worth noting that the draft Communications Bill aims to bring the NBC under the regulatory framework.

A chilling example of political interference took place in 2005, when, shortly after her appointment, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting told NBC staff that they must promote the SWAPO manifesto in all their programmes. While this was a Cabinet directive and happened in all ministries, it is a point of concern that NBC journalists were told to favour one party's manifesto over another when the NBC should be a neutral, public and independent broadcaster.

While there is no general editorial policy at the NBC, the panellists noted that there is a strict election-coverage policy at the state broadcaster, in terms of giving equal airtime to each party. Despite this, there are loopholes. For example, in the run-up to the last elections, former president Nujoma was known to hijack legitimate news events to promote SWAPO by wearing the party's colours.

Many of the news journalists at the NBC are young, new and very inexperienced. "To throw them in at the deep end with no support from senior journalists or management, and no internal editorial policy, results in poor editorial decisions being taken. It's a recipe for disaster."

The editorial interference appears to be subtler. "You don't have to interfere in the editorial policy when people are not doing any critical reporting. There is wide-scale self-censorship among [NBC] journalists."

Because these young journalists don't want to rock the boat, and possibly lose their jobs, investigative journalism suffers. The reason for the high degree of self-censorship might also be because some key staff members are political appointments.

There is the impression that the NBC does have some journalists capable of doing in-depth, professional interviews (notable during the recent opposition Congress of Democrats congress debacle) but this is not put into practice across the board.

There was consensus that the degree of editorial independence differs among the language services of the NBC. While the newsroom controls news centrally, the language services have a higher degree of independence when it comes to programmes. However, it was noted that the formerly hard-hitting, investigative programme, *Open File*, has been scaled down, resulting in more social commentary and soft stories.

While in the 2005 report it was noted that there was a general tendency in television and radio news to give priority coverage to the activities of the president and ministers, this has been less evident since Pohambo became president two years ago. "There does seem to be more space ... The current president doesn't have the same stature as Nujoma." The NBC now covers news about the National Society of Human Rights, something unheard of during Nujoma's reign.

The state broadcaster does appear to be bowing to commercial pressure, as is evident by local language news broadcasts being downgraded and shifted to a 07h00 slot the following day. In their place at 19h00 soap operas are now being broadcast. The NBC used to be a 24-hour station too, but it now closes at 00h00 and opens at 06h00. This is possibly related to the growth in popularity of One Africa Television, and increased competition, and DSTV's prominence among the elite.

A worrying sign is the apparent content change on radio in terms of less news and debate being broadcast in favour of more music. It signals the erosion of NBC's mission primarily to inform and educate, and lastly to entertain.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1

Average score: **1.4 (2005 = 1.5)**

3.8 *The public broadcaster is adequately funded in a manner that protects it from arbitrary interference with its budget.*

ANALYSIS:

There was consensus that the funding NBC receives from government is not adequate. In her budget speech the Minister of Information and Broadcasting threatened to curtail the mandate of the NBC even more. She also recently announced that the state broadcaster is in debt to the tune of N\$200 million. It is questionable why the NBC is in such financial trouble, since it receives at least N\$60 million a year from government and funds from license fees, while it also sells advertising. Since its infrastructure is established and salaries cost about N\$32 million a year, its only expenditure is for purchasing programming.

Notably, during the Parliamentary budget debate, SWAPO MPs spelled out that because the NBC is state-funded it must promote state activities.

It was felt that financial control at the NBC is extremely poor. There have also been many highly publicised cases of financial irregularities, corruption and the abuse of power. The General Manager for Human Resources was suspended over financial irregularities, while the Managing Director was fired over allegations of possible theft, which are still being investigated.

In another scandal, A British company is suing the state broadcaster for N\$140 million after the NBC signed a contract to build new transmitters and then reneged on the deal, allegedly because of political interference.

The other major and very costly disaster was the commercialisation of license fees, which the NBC had outsourced to a company called Penduka, with dismal results. The whole experience cost the NBC an estimated N\$20 million. The collection of license fees is now done by the NBC in co-operation with Nampost.

It is clear that the NBC is so vulnerable to political interference because of poor management, a lack of corporate governance and its reliance on government support.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1

Average score: **1.4 (2005 = 2.8)**

3.9 *The public broadcaster is technically accessible in the entire country.*

ANALYSIS:

The NBC has installed new transmitters in the last two years, but it is not known by how much they have expanded their coverage. *The Medium Term Expenditure Framework for 2007/08 to 2009/10* released by the Ministry of Finance states that the population with radio access in 2005-2006 was 94 per cent. The report forecasts that this will increase to 98 per cent in 2009-2010. The same report states that while the population with television access is 64 per cent in 2005-2006, the goal is to provide television access to 70 per cent of the population by 2009-2010.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 3, 4, 4, 5

Average score: **3.9 (2005 = 3.9)**

3.10 *The public broadcaster offers diverse programming for all interests.*

ANALYSIS:

In terms of news, the NBC does not cater to Afrikaans-speakers, for example, as there are no public broadcasts in this language, despite it being more widely spoken in Namibia than English. It was felt that perhaps this is because other media in the country adequately cater for this sector of society.

In terms of programming it was felt that the NBC does attempt to provide a broad variety of programmes for diverse interests, from women to farmers, the youth and sports fans, for example. Many of the programmes, especially the films, are outdated, although this is probably related to funding. The NBC's approach to current affairs is selective – with more

of a focus on social issues than human rights, constitutional education and media freedom.

Credit was given to the state broadcaster for catering to deaf viewers with sign language interpreters during news and current affairs broadcasts.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 3, 4, 3, 2, 4, 4, 3, 4

Average score: **3.3 (2005 = 2.4)**

3.11 *The public broadcaster offers balanced and fair information reflecting the full spectrum of diverse views and opinions.*

ANALYSIS:

It was noted that NBC coverage of opposition politics was fairer under the Pohamba regime, with parties like the Congress of Democrats being given more space. Under Nujoma, the language used on the NBC was exclusive: “my government” and “my party”. In the last two years it has become more inclusive: using language like “our government”. This is an important development as it shows the public broadcaster becoming more inclusive, which is suitable for a multi-party government governing with the consent of the minority.

Young musicians are given more airtime on NBC compared to two years ago, and it was noted that the ‘Good Morning Namibia’ programme had improved to provide a variety of views.

Panellists felt that NBC journalists generally failed to provide sufficiently balanced views in their stories. “They just report and don’t bother to source comment from outside.”

Generally, it was noted, there is very little commentary on the NBC or attempts to frame stories. Perhaps this is a result of a lack of skills or self-censorship. “This is worrying because it is not good journalism.”

Production quality at the NBC was described as mediocre, and the quality of the picture “is still not up to standard”.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 3, 2, 2, 4, 2, 2, 3

Average score: **2.4 (2005 = 2.4)**

3.12 *The public broadcaster offers as much diverse and creative local content as economically achievable.*

ANALYSIS:

Production of own programmes is still a problem because it is prohibitively expensive. While during peak viewing times, there is more local news and current affairs content than imported programming, there are no local soap operas, dramas or comedies on air. The fact that more local artists and musicians are receiving coverage on NBC was regarded as a positive development.

Another positive trend is that there are a number of independent production companies that produce documentaries for the NBC. It was noted that independent producers are sometimes asked to pay the NBC for their programming or films to be broadcast, while in fact the NBC should be doing just the opposite: paying the local producers and thereby promoting the local film and production industry.

Both radio and television charge for producing programmes, so the public can in effect “buy the NBC”. “If the show ‘Tutalení’, for example, is invited to cover a function, you must pay them ... For sports coverage, *The Namibian* paid the NBC N\$35 000 to cover the newspaper’s annual soccer tournament.”

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 3, 3, 3, 2, 4, 4, 4, 5

Average score: **3.3 (2005 = 2.8)**

Overall score for sector 3:

2.1 (2005 = 2.0)

Sector 4: The media practice high levels of professional standards.

4.1 *The media follow voluntary codes of professional standards, which are enforced by self-regulatory bodies.*

ANALYSIS:

In this regard, little has happened over the last two years. There is still no media council or other self-regulatory body. According to one of the panellists: "What is becoming worrying is that the Minister of Information, at almost every opportunity, refers to this as a prerequisite for any other positive developments within the media sector."

Because the media is very polarised, there has been great reluctance among editors to come together and discuss the establishment of a media council. MISA Namibia is trying resuscitate the debate around a code of conduct/ethics, and has had some success this year with agreement to participate in such a meeting from all the country's editors, through the Editors' Forum, except, unsurprisingly, from *Namibia Today*, the SWAPO newspaper. *Namibia Today* apparently objects to three clauses of the code of conduct that relate to issues of partiality, balance and objectivity.

After its launch in 2002, the code of conduct, developed by MISA, was publicly denounced by *Namibia Today* and thereafter received very damaging publicity on the NBC's current affairs television programme, 'Talk of the Nation'. As a result of this and the fact that MISA was driving the process and was seen to be generally antagonistic towards the government, the code of conduct was not adopted by the media sector.

The panellists agreed that reviving the self-regulatory body was a priority to prevent the government from enforcing a state-controlled regulatory body. There was consensus that MISA and the Editors' Forum should pursue the issue, without waiting for the participation of *Namibia Today*.

A media council failed to take off in the mid-1990s, while the position of a media ombudsman, created in 2002 to monitor adherence to the code of conduct, became defunct a few months later due to a lack of public response. The panellists noted that in future, the sustainability of the media council should be addressed first. There was consensus that a media council was important to protect the professional integrity of the media, and that it was important to have an advocacy campaign around the formation of both the media council and the code of conduct.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 4, 3, 1, 3

Average score: **2 (2005 = 2.3)**

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

ANALYSIS:

As in the previous report, the panellists agreed that overall the media's reporting appeared to be accurate and fair, despite some instances to the contrary.

It was noted that court reports in the daily newspapers were especially accurate because they were written by "senior and very skilled journalists".

Regular corrections in the daily newspapers were indicative of the media attempting to be accurate, while journalists also made it clear when they had not been able to get comment.

"The media is regularly castigated for not being balanced and fair and having a hidden agenda, but this might possibly be a result of people in high places not making themselves available for comment."

It is important to take into account access to public information in Namibia and how this impacts on the media's ability to report accurately and fairly.

There was the impression that analysis of issues had become more shallow, however, and that the "focus was more on the person and not the issue".

Since *Informanté* is still a relatively new player on the media scene, it remains to be seen how the generally sensationalist tabloid will fare in terms of accuracy and fairness.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 3

Average score: **3.5 (2005 = 3.0)**

4.3 *The media cover the full spectrum of events, issues and cultures, including business/economics, cultural, local and investigative stories.*

ANALYSIS:

According to the panellists, there has been a substantial improvement in the coverage the full spectrum of events in the last few years, particularly with the emergence of specialist magazines and online publications covering sports, economics, music and culture, for example.

Unfortunately most of these developments are centred in the capital, Windhoek. In this regard, it is particularly disappointing that community radio stations have not taken off in rural areas to cover local issues. Little has changed since 2005: people with money and living in Windhoek can get the full spectrum of news but the further the distance from the centre, the less choice people have.

The free-to-air local channels provide a broader perspective on global events by broadcasting BBC (One Africa Television) and CCTV, Deutsche Welle and CNN (NBC).

It was felt that the daily newspapers had not built up the capacity for specialised skills to report certain subjects in depth. On a positive note, investigative reporting has improved in the last two years, particularly by *The Namibian*, *New Era*, *Insight* and *Informanté*.

In terms of coverage there have also been some positive developments since the 2005 report with *Die Republikein*, *New Era* and *The Namibian* seemingly reinventing themselves by regularly covering areas formerly marginalised by the press: eastern and southern Namibia.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 4, 4, 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 4

Average score: **3.7 (2005 = 3.1)**

4.4 *Gender mainstreaming is promoted in terms of equal participation of both sexes in the production process.*

ANALYSIS:

It was clarified that gender mainstreaming in this sense means that both sexes have equal opportunities, professionally, in the newsroom.

The degree to which gender mainstreaming is promoted in the media in terms of equal participation of both sexes in the production process is mixed. While the staff of the NBC German service and *The Namibian* is predominantly female, most of the media houses (notably the NBC in general, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Die Republikein* and the *Windhoek*

Observer) are dominated by white men. Their staff complement is so small (less than 25), however, that they fall under the radar of affirmative action reports.

There is a sense that there have been areas of progress around gender mainstreaming in the media, but there are no official, in-house policies in this regard.

All the country's newspaper editors are men, except for Gwen Lister of *The Namibian*. *The Namibian* appears to be particularly balanced: the complement of daily journalists comprises four female and four male reporters.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 4, 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 3

Average score: **3.2 (2005 = 3)**

4.5 *Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the editorial content.*

ANALYSIS:

During the last two years there have been no new national or regional studies specifically on gender and the media. In 2005, there was a follow-up to the MISA-Genderlinks Gender and Media Baseline Study of 2003, but this was broader and looked not only at the media's coverage of gender but HIV and AIDS as well.

The panellists felt that there was little reflection on gender mainstreaming in the editorial policies of newspapers, including the editorials and opinion pieces, and "only three editorials in *The Namibian* and *New Era* in the last year addressed issues of gender-based violence in Namibia".

The international '16 Days of Activism' campaign is held from November 25 each year, and during that period gender becomes a major focus in the Namibian media, but this coverage is not sustained throughout the year.

While the mainstream media does tend to respect gender and women, *Informanté* seems to present women in a fairly sexist and degrading way with, for example, its 'Chick pic of the week'.

The impression is that the voices of women in rural areas, trapped in poverty and marginalised, are not heard in the media. Instead the media is to be blamed for focussing on the opinions of men and 'executive' and 'high-flying' women, and those who are 'politically correct' and close to the ruling party. As a result, many laudable women's initiatives in rural areas and those by Sister Namibia, for example, are not covered in the media.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3, 3, 3

Average score: **2.6 (2005 = 1.9)**

4.6 *Journalists and editors do not practice self-censorship.*

ANALYSIS:

There is the impression that cases of self-censorship do exist in both state and private media, partly as a result of ownership.

Informanté, for example, seems to be very partial to exposing others, but does not report on negative stories about the newspaper's owners: the paper ignored the story about Trustco's Managing Director Quinton van Rooyen being involved in an accident, which resulted in the death of another driver, but the paper published a story about the editor of another newspaper being arrested for drunken driving.

Compared to 2005, self-censorship, in general, seems to be less common at *New Era*, but this was tainted by the firing of D'aoud Vries (see indicator 2,6). As previously mentioned (also in indicator 2.6) there appears to be no self-censorship at NAMPA. With the advent of Pohamba as president, there also seems to be less self-censorship evident at the NBC

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3

Average score: **2.8 (2005 = 2.5)**

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

ANALYSIS:

There is a feeling that owners of private media do interfere with editorial independence, but the degree to which this happens varies according to the media house.

Panelists felt that direct and indirect interference was likely at *Informanté*, as it is a large company with many commercial interests (see indicator 4.6). Increasingly, *Die Republikein* has been writing favourably about the Republican Party, the party that started the newspaper before joining the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). Although the newspaper is now part of the DMH group, since the Republican party broke away from the DTA in late 2003, the newspaper's editorial stance has appeared to reflect the Republican voice.

Owned by a trust, *The Namibian's* trustees appear to have little say in the content or production of the newspaper. It is worth noting, however, that since the newspaper became a co-shareholder with Trustco in Free Press Printers, Trustco-related reports have received front-page priority a number a times.

It was mentioned that *Insight* appears to be run fairly democratically to the point that individual journalists do not receive credit, but remain anonymous.

Panellists felt that community media is not as impartial as it should be, with UNAM Radio having to reflect the University of Namibia (UNAM) in a positive light, and Katutura Community Radio (KCR) operating as a non-governmental organisation mouthpiece rather than truly reflecting community issues.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 3, 3, 4, 3, 3, 4, 2, 2

Average score: **2.9 (2005 = 3.0)**

4.8 *Salary levels and general working conditions for journalists and other media practitioners are adequate to discourage corruption.*

ANALYSIS:

Generally, Namibian journalists working in private media are earning good, industry-related salaries compared to many neighbouring countries, with senior journalists getting about N14 000 a month. It was noted that *Informanté* managed to poach a number of good journalists from other newspapers by increasing their salaries – some who earn up to N\$22 000 pre-tax.

Junior journalists and those working in the state media, however, receive much less. Journalists with the NBC, for example, earn N\$8 000 but have a better package overall. NBC staff, however, recently went on strike as a result of having had no increase for three years. "There have been quite a few cases of corruption at the NBC, but I am not sure if there is a link to lower salaries."

As was mentioned in the 2005 report, 'brown envelope journalism' as practised in other countries, where journalists get paid for following external directives about how to cover a particular story, is fortunately still unknown in Namibia.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, 3, 3

Average score: **3.1 (2005 = 3.6)**

4.9 *Training facilities offer formal qualification programmes for journalists as well as opportunities to upgrade their skills.*

ANALYSIS:

The University of Namibia (UNAM) offers a four-year, full-time degree in media studies as well as a two-year diploma in information studies. The Polytechnic of Namibia offers a three-year part-time diploma in media studies. The Media Arts and Technology Studies department of the College of the Arts offers a three-year Applied Arts Diploma, with a focus on electronic media.

While employees of the NBC used to have access to free training, this is no longer the case and the training department is closed.

At Namibian tertiary institutions, there are no specialised and officially recognised courses for practising journalists to develop their skills further, for instance in photojournalism or environmental reporting. It was felt that there is a need for independent, professional training for working journalists.

A point was raised that there is a lack of media text on Namibia. "Training institutions are not creating an environment where Namibian journalists can do additional research on Namibia, for a Masters degree, for example."

Due to a shortage of staff at most media houses, editors of the main newspapers are reluctant to release journalists for one-month's training in another country, for example, and prefer in-house, on-the-job training. The disadvantage of this is that those receiving training do not receive any formal qualification.

There was a feeling that the government should realise the importance of sending its journalists away for intensive training. "Government journalists are not well equipped. Perhaps they have just a diploma. They do not specialise in anything. The government should look into this for their own interests."

In an important development, both UNAM and the Polytechnic are preparing to submit their curricula for accreditation under the National Qualifications Framework, which will accredit these qualifications at appropriate levels. A key point is that these institutions are involving the industry in this process to ascertain where training is lacking and what kind of training is relevant.

It was suggested that media houses should offer bursaries or scholarships to students of media studies to enhance the profession, as is the case, for example, with banks.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 2, 3, 4, 4, 3, 4, 3, 2

Average score: **3 (2005 = 2.8)**

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

ANALYSIS:

Employees of the state-owned media belong to the Public Workers Union. Private media workers are un-unionised. The Windhoek-based press club has been inactive for years.

Some journalists are members of MISA Namibia and/or the Editor's Forum. Membership of both the Editor's Forum and MISA Namibia is less divided than was the case two years ago. The MISA board, too, is much more representative of the industry, as it has members from the state broadcaster (NBC), a state-funded newspaper (*New Era*), the private print media (*The Namibian*), private television (One Africa) and community radio (KCR). This indicates some progress in uniting a long-divided sector.

There has been much talk within the industry about establishing a media workers' trade union. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has set up a regional office in Johannesburg to try to establish unions for journalists in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It remains to be seen how this intervention will develop.

SCORES:

Individual scores: 2, 4, 3, 2, 4, 4, 3, 2, 2

Average score: **2.9 (2005 = 2.9)**

Overall score for sector 4:

3 (2005 = 2.8)

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE FOR 2007

2.6 (2005 = 2.7)

Developments since 2005 and THE WAY FORWARD

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

- The perception, at least, that the political situation in Namibia has changed with President Pohamba assuming the presidency in 2005. This new political climate has been accompanied by a new political language, which continues to emphasise unity, development and reconciliation through positive language and not the derogatory narrative under former president Nujoma. Pohamba has emphasised the importance of transparency and how the media can assist in this regard.
- The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission, as this emphasises the need for access to information legislation.
- An increase in diversity of media products, partly related to improved technology and a positive economic situation in the country.
- The strengthening of One Africa Television, especially the daily news bulletins which give local free-to-air viewers a choice.
- More areas that were neglected by the media in the past feature much more regularly now in both print and electronic media. These include culture, poverty and the youth.
- The role of the public in the 'Chat Show' debacle and how, by putting pressure on the NBC/government, the public had a positive effect by bringing the show back on air, as before.
- The fact that there has been a marginal improvement in the salaries of journalists in the private media.
- The increase in circulation of the daily newspapers, which goes against international trends.
- The advent of *Informanté*, which has "stirred up the media pot" and created more competition in the sector.
- The fact that there is healthy competition in the media industry: notably if Radio 99 had not jumped in to launch its own chat show, following the curtailment of a similar show on NBC radio, the state broadcaster might not have resuscitated its original 'Chat Show'.
- How both MISA Namibia and the Editor's Forum have become more inclusive and representative of the industry.

- There is now greater access to radio chat shows through lower prices with the introduction of Telecom's Switch and new cellphone service provider, Cell One. Coupled with that, the greater expansion of the cellphone network, particularly in rural areas.

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

- *MISA Namibia, as a lobby group, has failed to link up with civil society to make freedom of expression and access to information national issues.*
- *The perception of stagnation within MISA Namibia, in terms of the lack of progress being made on a media council and a journalists' union.*
- *The lack of transparency, poor fiscal management and governance at the NBC, as well as the escalating debt of the state broadcaster.*
- *The fact that there is an under-investment in human resource development within the media. Very few, if any, privately initiated training programmes for journalists exist.*
- *The lack of an independent broadcasting complaints commission.*
- *The fact that NCC commissioners lack an understanding of media issues.*
- *The over-commercialisation of the NBC, which results in the state-funded broadcaster neglecting its public mandate to inform, educate and entertain.*
- *The continued lack of access to the media in rural areas, and the failure of true community radio stations to be established in local languages and in rural areas.*
- *Poor gender mainstreaming.*
- *While it has improved since 2005, the amount of local content is still insufficient on local television and radio stations.*

The main drivers or actors for these positive developments?

- *The perception of a change of attitude of government and an improved political climate have made it possible to discuss media issues more openly. The democratic culture in general has become more consultative, as a result of President Pohamba's more inclusive approach.*
- *Increased competition, which drives development.*
- *Journalists who report without fear or favour.*
- *The judiciary, which has helped to protect the rights of the media.*

- *Young people making use of improved technology to create new publications and disseminate information.*
- *The National Society for Human Rights has been very active in terms of freedom of expression and human rights. Increasingly, MISA Namibia should be taking the lead in this regard.*
- *Informanté was noted as a driver of positive change for having “shaken things up”.*
- *Civil society, with regards to the public outcry that led to the NBC ‘Chat Show’ being resuscitated.*

Some of the possible obstacles for further positive change:

- *While President Pohamba emphasises a new climate of openness and inclusiveness, in reality the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Nandi-Ndaitwah, possibly as a result of her dual position in the ruling SWAPO as Secretary-General for Information, appears to hamper developments within the media, by sitting on reports, policy and legislation.*
- *Stagnation in the country’s politics and immobility in policy decisions may be a result of a schism within SWAPO, broadly comprising a faction led by Pohamba with his deliberately inclusive approach, and the more hard-line former president Nujoma, now president of SWAPO. Some critics claim that as a result of this unresolved leadership issue, Nujoma is in fact still running the country, through SWAPO.*
- *The fact that there is still outdated legislation on the statute books and the sluggish process of implementing new legislation. This could be a result of the weakness of the legislature, with the executive dominating the parliamentary process and thus undermining much of the work the legislature should do, such as the repeal of outdated laws and the introducing policies and bills, for example.*
- *MISA Namibia’s apparent inactivity.*

Some of the activities needed over the next few years:

- *MISA Namibia and the Editor’s Forum need to be strengthened and should be much more active.*
- *A media council should be established as a matter of urgency.*
- *MISA Namibia needs to involve civil society more in its activities and lobbying. The Namibian chapter needs to lobby for the creation of an independent broadcasting complaints commission, a “people’s board”.*
- *The media as a whole needs to be more active in informing civil society about issues of media freedom, freedom of expression and human rights in general.*

- *MISA Namibia and other institutions should prepare for intervention when the draft media policy goes to the public stage.*
- *Pressure should be put on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting by a united media to make the appointment of NCC commissioners an independent process.*
- *The NNC and the NBC need to be set on an independent course: a broadcasting regulating law and public broadcasting law need to be developed.*
- *FES should address the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting about the 2005 study the ministry commissioned FES to do surveying the laws that restrict freedom of expression and the media. The ministry has made none of this study public for two years. This information needs to be publicised.*
- *The draft Communication Bill should be revisited and revised by MISA Namibia.*
- *Parliament should be more involved in these debates to strengthen members of parliament by providing them with more knowledge.*
- *Government needs to update the Hansard and its official websites.*
- *Specialised/advanced training needs to be launched for practicing journalists in the fields of law, economics, photojournalism and investigative journalism, for example.*
- *The management level of media organisations needs to be strengthened to ensure that newly trained media workers do not leave the company.*
- *MISA Namibia needs to continue to campaign, with a renewed spirit, for access to information legislation.*

The panel meeting took place at Greiter's Conference Centre, May 11 – 13 2007.

The Panel:

Ms. Rachel Cloete, Civil Society Activist; Mr. Clement Daniels, Lawyer; Mr. Andre Du Pisani, Political Science Lecturer; Mr. Paul Helmuth, Civil Society Activist; Mr. Christo^f Maletsky, Journalist; Mr. Phil ya Nangolo, Human Rights Activist; Mr. Andre Strauss, Social Worker, Cultural Activist; Ms. Zoé Titus, Journalist; Mr. Robin Tyson, Media Lecturer

The Rapporteur:

Ms. Sarah Taylor

The Facilitator:

Mr. Hendrik Bussiek

External participants:

Mr. Fernando Gonzalves (facilitator for Angola and Mozambique)

and

Rolf Paasch, Head Media Project Southern African: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung