



**Baseline Study on Media Coverage of  
Transparency &  
Accountability  
Issues in Senegal**

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# Abbreviations

ARMP- Autorité de Régulation des Marchés Publics du Sénégal

CENTIF - Cellule Nationale de Traitement des Informations Financières

CJRS - La Convention des jeunes reporters du Sénégal

CPI – Corruption Perception Index

CREI - Cour de Répression de l' Enrichissement Illicite)

DCMP - Direction Centrale des Marchés Publiques

EITI -Extractive Industrie Transparency Initiative) in French

GIABA-Le Groupe Inter-gouvernemental d' Action contre le Blanchiment d' Argent

IGE -Inspection Générale d' Etat du Sénégal

ITEI-Initiative pour la Transparence des Industries Extractives

MFWA – Media Foundation for West Africa

OFNAC -Office National de lutte contre la Fraude et la corruption

# Executive Summary

The media in Senegal has strong interest in issues related to corruption, transparency, accountability and good governance. This is evident in amount of time the media devotes to programmes and debates on these issues. The print media and news websites are not also left out as they dedicate strategic pages to information pertaining to the subject matter. The media also intensively explore reports from civil societies and state institutions engaged in promoting effective management of public resources and the fight against corruption. Talking points for public debates are often generated from these sources.

Even though the media in Senegal organise debates and other programmes on issues of accountability, transparency and corruption, they make very little efforts to initiate investigation to acquire in-depth knowledge of the issues. Hence, they rely so much on information from interlocutors without the ability to scrutinise this information.

The situation is further worsened by weak knowledge on the part of journalists on institutional and judicial instruments related to the fight against corruption and public accountability. This weakness is also a product of defects in capacity building for journalists on the policies on good governance. On the other hand, citizens believe that the major challenge emanates from the reluctance of political actors to prioritise transparency and accountability issues and to end corruption. According to them, politicians exert a lot of influence on all the institutions that are meant to oblige them to be transparent in the management of public affairs. Again, citizens are also of the opinion that the media no longer efficiently play its watchdog and interrogative role to the extent where duty bearers can be compelled to be accountable.

# 1. Introduction

Governance refers to judicial and institutional mechanisms as well as practices geared towards managing public sectors or public goods. It is closely linked to the efficiency of public policies and transparency. Corruption and negligence of accountability or inexistence of accountability mechanisms constitute major obstacles to good governance.

In a typical democratic context, accountability and transparency are inevitable prerequisites to reducing the canker of corruption through obligatory and transparent management of public resources. True to its historic role of informing citizens on the manner in which the natural endowments of the country is managed, the media in Senegal exhibits strong interest in incidence of bad governance and corruption. The media achieves this objective by generating discussions around issues uncovered in reports from relevant institutions. The editorial impact of the media in governance issues is enormously felt whenever acts of corruption is detected or when incidences wherein actors manning public affairs relegate accountability is discovered. However, not much is known on the levels on the coverage of issues on transparency and accountability, and how much knowledge the media possess on the legal and normative frameworks of the issues in the country.

The study therefore seeks to assess the level and quality of media coverage of issues of corruption, accountability and transparency in public affairs management in Senegal. It probes into issues such as the technical capacities of journalists to dissect transparency and accountability issues.

## 2. Methodological Approach

The methodology adopted in this research can be divided into three parts: editorial content monitoring for fourteen days (14) – February 19 to March 3, 2018. Selected media outlets that significantly treat topical issues and have a huge listenership potential were monitored. The monitoring focused on editorial content evaluation of information related to corruption, accountability and good governance in the target media outlets.

Second, the methodology equally assessed the quality of treatment of these issues; an approach which unravelled the technical challenges that limits the journalists in covering this issues at the required level.

For the targeted radio and television stations, besides news, the monitoring focused on other programmes that dwelled on issues of corruption and transparency in public affairs management.

In the same light, the daily content of selected web sites was also monitored. Meanwhile attention was accorded to newspaper articles that treated these issues in one way or the other.

Interviews were equally conducted with eighteen (18) journalists from the target media houses to evaluate their experiences and skills in covering governance issues. A structural interview guide was designed with the research topic in mind to extract the required information from selected journalists. In the study the interviewees were labelled Journalist Interviewee 1-18

Finally, ten (10) citizens from civil society organisations in Senegal were interviewed to sample their opinions on the media's coverage of issues on transparency and accountability. These interviewees are labelled Interviewee 1-10 in the study.

Data collected from editorial contents was outlined in a monitoring table tailored for the study. This facilitated the data analysis process.

The responses obtained from interviews with journalists and members of the civil society revealed two principal things; the trends and perceptions of these actors in terms of public authority reactivity towards corruption, transparency and accountability issues and media coverage of these issues.

### 3. Media Outlets Monitored

The contents of the following media outlets were monitored and analysed.

**Table 1: Media Outlets**

| Media Outlet         | News Editions         | Programme 1     | Programme 2     |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>TV</b>            |                       |                 |                 |
| Walf TV              | Evening               | Diné ak Diamano | Actu en 7       |
| RTS 1                | Evening               | Le Point        | Point de vue    |
| SEN TV               | Evening               | L'Essentiel     | Toute la vérité |
| TFM                  | Evening               | Faram Facce     | Face to face    |
| 2STV                 | Evening               | Decryptage      | Ça me dit mag   |
| <b>Radio</b>         |                       |                 |                 |
| Radio RFM            | Mid-day               | Remue-ménage    | Grand jury      |
| Radio Sud FM         | 6pm                   | Objection       | Perspectives    |
| Radio WALF FM        | 7pm                   | Sortie          | Opinion         |
| Radio Zik FM         | Mid-day               | Sama Gokh       |                 |
| <b>Newspapers</b>    |                       |                 |                 |
| Le Soleil            | All Editorial Content |                 |                 |
| Le Quotidien         |                       |                 |                 |
| Walfquotidien        |                       |                 |                 |
| L'Observateur        |                       |                 |                 |
| <b>News Websites</b> |                       |                 |                 |
| Aps.sn               | All Editorial Content |                 |                 |
| Seneweb.com          |                       |                 |                 |
| Leral.net            |                       |                 |                 |
| Dakaractu.com        |                       |                 |                 |

## 4. Summary of Findings

The results obtained from the study is closely connected to the context in which the research was conceived. This is evident in the extensive dominance of issues related to governance in media reportage.

### Current Issues/Information related to governance

The period February 19 to March 3, 2018 was dominated by information related to corruption and transparency. In fact, the local chapter of transparency international – the Civil Forum ad published the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Senegal on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018. A report which implicated the government of Senegal and other well identified institutional actors. The next day – Thursday, February 22, the Senegalese wing of Amnesty International published its annual report on the state of impunity and corruption in Senegal.

A week before these developments, Idrissa Seck, leader of Dit Rewmi (a political party in Senegal), had addressed a letter to President Macky Sall requesting him to publish bilateral accords signed with Mauritania on February 8, 2018. These accords were related to the exploitation of gas and fish resources discovered along Senegalese maritime borders with Mauritania.

During the same period, Honourable Ousmane Sonko called on the speaker of the national assembly to clarify issues concerning an alleged CFA10 Million Francs meant to be allocated to each of the 165 parliamentarians and the source of the funds.

In addition, controversies surrounding the establishment of an electoral system which cost Senegal over CFA52 million Francs made headlines. This was the outcome of an audit of the process by a foreign firm under the auspices of the European Union. The findings of the audit which was published in the week of 26 February to March 3, 2018 generated lots of debates on air.

Furthermore, the trial of Khalifa Ababacar Sall, mayor of Dakar, accused of syphoning Dakar city council funds had been ongoing since January 2018.

## Analysis of information

The media devotes commendable time and space to topical issues even though the angles to which the subject matter can be examined is often not fully exhausted.

### ▪ Reports and interviews

“The media does not still possess the tools necessary to treat these issues. They lack knowledge and information about legal dispositions.”

#### -Journalist Interviewee 12

The audio-visual media extensively examined the Senegalese CPI and the Amnesty International reports. In fact, these reports dominated discussions on stations such as Radio RFM, Walf, Sud and Zik FM during this period. The authors of these reports were invited to the studio and their views streamed live during news segments and other programmes throughout the day.

The Senegalese public broadcaster (RTS 1) examined the CPI report with much emphasis on the progress Senegal has made based on the different rankings for a period of 5 years. The analysis revealed that the country has not registered any improvements since 2016.

The national newspaper, *le Soleil* tackled the same report but from a much more optimistic angle under the theme: **“Classification of Less Corrupt Countries: Senegal Emerges First in the ECOWAS Zone.”**

### ▪ Programmes – Debates

Walf TV, 2STV, TFM and Sen TV channels consecrated many programmes and debates to issues of corruption and impunity in Senegal. At 2STV, civil society actors were the principal guests of the programmes “Décryptage” and “ça me dit mag” broadcasted on weekly basis.

Debates on TFM were animated by delegates from the ruling and opposition parties in the Wolof language on the weekly programme “Faram Face.” Same goes for Walf and Sen Television stations. Prominent political figures such as Ms Adama Guèye and Mr. Ousmane Sonko popularly noted to be very outspoken and objective took turns on the

programmes “Sortie”, “Opinion” and “Face to Face” to express their views on these subject matter.

Ms. Binette Ndiaye Mbengue, programme officer and head of research, Civil Forum, was guest on “Perspectives” on Saturday, February 25, 2018 on radio Sud FM, while on RFM’s “Remue-ménage” and “Grand Jury” focused on issues emanating from human rights and transparency reports from civil societies.

The different programmes also highlighted the bilateral cooperation accords signed between the government of Senegal and Mauritania. The open letter Idrissa Seck addressed to President Macky Sall requesting him to make available copies of this accords to the general public was not left out.

Discussions around these issues continued to the next week when the news of the Prime Minister of Senegal accusing Amnesty International of promoting “homosexuality” broke.

Controversies arising from the newly established electoral system that consumed about CFA 52 Million Francs of the Senegalese tax payer money following an audit sponsored by the European Union also attracted the attention of the media. Some programmes on 2STV, RFM and other media outlets were devoted to discussing issues from the electoral system saga.

Other issues on transparency that dominated the airwaves included the trial of the mayor of Dakar accused of embezzling public funds. Three days after the end of the trial (February 26), the *Walf Quotidien* newspaper analysed the issue in a four-page report in addition to making it the caption of that days newspaper edition. Other newspapers such as *Le Quotidien* and *L’observateur* did not also fail to hit the headlines with the matter.

With the lone exception of l’Agence de Presse Sénégalaise (APS), all other online news websites devoted strategic positions to the trial of the Mayor of Dakar. Less attention was not accorded to this issue in other news items. News websites including « Leeral.net », « seneweb.com », « dakaractu.com » systematically underlined the key declarations and remarks civil society actors engaged in promoting transparency and politicians made on the issue.

The APS news desk was saturated with discussions on the reports from Amnesty International, Civil Forum and findings from the electoral system audit commission.

Though greatly influenced by political authorities, one can affirm without doubt that the media in Senegal devotes commendable time to issues of corruption, good governance and accountability.

Generally, the media in Senegal has strong interest in good governance as these issues also constitute topics of interest to their listeners.

However, the media most often limit itself to reports from organisations and information derived from political sources to generate news and debates. Information generated from entrepreneurial initiatives by journalists which is very crucial to performing their role as public information platforms on issues of national resources governance is almost non-existent.

## 5. Opinions of Journalists

“The media is increasingly gaining interest in issues of good governance, corruption, public procurement and natural resources management. These are the issues that attract our attention. Besides, transparency is very important in the effective management of our natural resources and public funds. Thus, our leaders must be accountable. The media is also charged with the obligation to accurately inform the public and raise alarms where issues of bad management of our resources is detected.”

**--Journalist Interviewee 5**

**Table 2: Coverage of corruption and good governance matters**

| Questions   | Answers   |           | Dominant Responses  |
|---|-----------|-----------|---|
|   | YES       | NO        |   |
| Have you ever treated issues related to corruption, transparency and accountability?  | <b>16</b> | <b>2</b>  | <p>Reports<br/>Used reports</p> <p>Investigations (1)<br/>Reports from meeting/engagements<br/>Analysis</p>   |
| In your opinion, does the media effectively tackle or cover issues of governance, corruption, procurement and natural resources management? | <b>1</b>  | <b>17</b> | <p>A weak mastery of the issues</p> <p>The media could go beyond the conventional reporting</p> <p>They mostly work with the information derived from reports</p> <p>Lack of technical and financial support</p> <p>Mostly feedback/reports from stakeholder engagements</p> <p>Challenges emanating from accessing sources</p> <p>Complex nature of subject matter</p> |

**Table 3: Knowledge of instruments and skills**

| Questions  | Answers |    | Dominant comments/feedback  |
|--|---------|----|---|
|  | YES     | NO |   |
| Do you know some institutional and legal instruments or best practices related to transparency and corruption reduction? | 17      | 1  | <p>OFNAC, IGE, ARMP, Code of public procurement, Organic Finance Bill, Civil Forum, EITI, CENTIF, Court of Auditors, CREI</p> <p>The Penal code</p> <p>The Merida Convention</p> <p>The Asset Declaration Law – DCMP</p> <p>GIABA</p> |
| Have you ever attended a training or a capacity building workshop on the above cited instruments?                        | 6       | 12 | <p>Training workshop on the code of public procurement by ARMP and the forum of economic reporters/journalists in Senegal (COJES)</p>   |

## Lessons gathered

“The media in Senegal does not extensively cover these issues. This could be the outcome of lack of training opportunities. Moreover, our media does not undertake investigations. They focus more on the activities of political actors.”

### ---Journalist Interviewee 3

From the responses gathered, it can be deduced that a majority of journalists cover issues related to corruption and transparency in the course of performing their day to day activities. In addition, they have knowledge of at least one institutional or legal mechanism and are definitely obliged to use them. This implies that the issues are topical and of great interest in the country.

Unfortunately, most media practitioners (about 2/3) were not trained while in school and have not also been opportune to acquire or enhance their skills through training workshops to effectively cover such complex issues. As a result of the lack of basic knowledge or skills in covering issues of corruption, transparency and accountability, journalists in Senegal do not undertake investigations. They neither possess the tools that can permit them analyses certain technical information nor to expatiate on them. For this reason, findings drawn from reports are considered the absolute and ultimate. Deficiencies in knowledge on a subject matter like these under study can adversely impact objectivity and the ability to strike a balance on some information pertaining to public affairs governance at their disposal.

“The media in Senegal does not sufficiently cover good governance, corruption, public procurement and natural resources issues because they did not undergo training on reportage of such sensitive issues. And they are very few journalists who specialise in reporting on them.”

#### **---Journalist Interviewee 4**

With the exception of one journalist, all the others interviewed affirmed that they do not have a mastery of the transparency, governance and corruption landscape.

According to them, the deficiencies in editorial contents result from weak knowledge of the issues and financial challenges confronting their media houses. This, most often, plays down on their ability to prioritize “profound” coverage of transparency and accountability in governance. So therefore, the media are left with no option than to be contented with exploiting reports or accounts from relevant actors.

## 6. Perceptions of Citizens

The government is noted for responding with lot of promises but makes no effort to reduce corruption and promote transparency in the management of public affairs.

**--Interviewee 8**

The interviewee summarises the observations of other citizens interviewed in this study. They believed that the government deliberately neglects the enforcement of accountability and public resources governance irrespective of numerous declarations of their intentions to uphold these values. Generally speaking, authorities do not respect the rights of citizens to access public information.

There is no instrument/authority in place that can ensure that political actors are transparent.

**---Interviewee 7**

The actual state of good governance is guided by a firm understanding of the trajectory institutions necessary to detect corrupt practices. Besides the limitations of the media in disclosing/revealing potential culprits, state authorities also constitute a barrier in the achievement of good governance. They often bring out information relating to public policies to the general public at their convenience. If this is persistent, then “it is because journalists have not built their capacities enough and are ignorant of governance politics in relation to the development of the country” citizens iterated.

“The efforts being made are not enough. Issues of transparency are handled in a restrictive manner. Ordinary citizens do not have much understanding of what is happening.”

**--Interviewee 5**

Most of the interviewees suggest that all official institutional mechanisms and the media in their capacity as key stakeholders in promoting good governance must step up their activities geared towards fighting corruption.

## **7. Limitations**

But for the constraint of time, the researcher had wished to extend the data monitoring process over a relatively longer period of time thereby advancing the depth of the analysis.

## **8. Conclusion**

It can be emphasized that both public and private media treat information related to governance and transparency; citizens attested to this. Besides, these are topical issues that cannot be ignored given the number of institutional actors and civil society organizations advocating for good public resources governance as well as the increasing interest of citizens towards the issues.

However, it should be noted that journalists are not efficiently equipped to cover these issues with more clarity. Citizens perceive that this weakness results from pitfalls in the initial training journalists had and the absence of opportunities to improve their skills. Most journalists or media practitioners do not have access to concrete and adequate information on these issues.

## **9. Recommendations**

In this light therefore, the following is recommended to media stakeholder, media advocacy groups and journalism associations in Senegal:

1. Strengthen the technical capacity of journalists;
2. Encourage journalists to conduct investigations on acts of corruption and bad governance;
3. Educate journalists on the need to make personal efforts to research and understand institutional and legal instruments and the role of relevant actors in specific areas of public management (specialisation);

4. Organise experience/knowledge sharing and good practices forums for seasoned and experienced investigative journalists with track records of treating these issues to encourage other journalists to undertake investigative reporting.
5. Build partnerships, regional and international networks to consolidate adequate information treatment/disclosure.
6. Institute an annual prize award event to reward journalists who have successfully conducted compelling investigations on issues of corruption and transparency in Senegal.

# Annexes

1. Editorial content monitoring table - TV and radio
2. Editorial content monitoring table - Print media and Web sites
3. Interview guide for Journalists
4. Interview guide for Citizens

## Editorial Content Monitoring Table - Print media and Web sites

| Media          | Article/Sound/Video | Principal info | Position (or page) | Comments/observations |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Le Soleil      |                     |                |                    |                       |
| L'Observateur  |                     |                |                    |                       |
| Walf quotidien |                     |                |                    |                       |
| Le Quotidien   |                     |                |                    |                       |
| Seneweb.com    |                     |                |                    |                       |
| Leral.net      |                     |                |                    |                       |
| Dakaractu.com  |                     |                |                    |                       |
| Aps.sns        |                     |                |                    |                       |

## Editorial Content Monitoring Table - TV and radio

| Media Outlet | News editions/<br>Bulletins 8pm<br>/ 12pm | Programme 1        | R 1 | Programme 2     | R2 |
|--------------|---|--------------------|-----|-----------------|----|
| RTS 1        |   | Point de vue       |     |                 |    |
| TFM          |   | Faram Facce        |     | Face to face    |    |
| WALF TV      |   | Diné Ak<br>Diamano |     | Actu en 7       |    |
| 2STV         |   | Décryptage         |     | Ça me dit mag   |    |
| SEN TV       |   | L'essentiel        |     | Toute en Vérité |    |
| WALF FM      |   | Sortie             |     | Opinion         |    |
| RFM          |   | Remue-<br>ménage   |     | Yoon-wi         |    |
| SUD FM       |   | Objection          |     | Perspectives    |    |

## Interview Guide for citizens

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>First &amp; last name:</b>   |  |
| <b>Structure (s):</b>   |  |
| In your opinion, does the media effectively cover issues related to corruption, transparency and accountability?                          | Yes - No (check)<br><br><i>Explain</i> |
| Are you satisfied with the quality of media reportage on issues related to good governance, procurement and natural resources management? | YES - NO<br><br><i>Explain why</i>     |
| Does the media adequately treat public procurement issues?  | YES - NO                               |
| Does the media adequately treat public finance/funds management issues (Budgets, debt)?   | YES - NO                               |
| Do they adequately cover issues of land use/allocation?   | YES - NO                               |
| Does the media undertake effective reportage of issues of natural resource governance?  | YES - NO                               |

## Interview guide

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>First &amp; last name:</b>  |   |
| <b>Media (s):</b>  |   |
| <b>Status</b> (Reporter, Senior reporter, Head of desk, etc.):   |   |
| Have you ever treated topics/issues related to corruption, transparency and accountability?  | Yes - No (check)<br>If Yes, state the type of issue |
| Do you know some institutional and legal instruments/frameworks or best practices related to transparency and corruption reduction?        | If Yes, list them                                   |
| What is your level of knowledge on the Code of public procurement/contracts?   |   |
| What is your knowledge on public finance law (State budget)?   |   |
| What is your level of knowledge on the code of transparency in Senegal?  |   |
| What is the level of your knowledge of the Mining Code?  |   |
| Your knowledge of national laws (land issues in rural areas)?  |   |
| Have you at any point undergone some sort of training or capacity building on the above cited instruments?                                 | If Yes, indicate how and where                      |
| In your opinion, does the media effectively treat issues related to good governance, corruption, public procurement and natural resources? | If No, briefly explain why?                         |



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