



# **Report on Media Coverage of Transparency & Accountability Issues in Burkina Faso**

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## Executive Summary

The independence, freedom and quality of the media is first and foremost the product of a combination of diverse factors. These factors include: a political and constitutional environment that guarantees access to information, physical, moral and economic security of journalists. It also involves a clear understanding and appreciation of the ethics of the profession; the collective willingness and commitment to assuming social responsibilities; a strong public opinion capable of influencing national policies; a governance system that places accountability, transparency and equity at the forefront of public policies, etc.

This implies that all socio-professional groups irrespective of their orientation and the media must effectively play their roles in public life in Burkina Faso. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the country because of the disconnect between institutions and the society. Despite the profound hopes of transformation in the principles of public administration raised in Burkina Faso during the October 30-31, 2014 uprising, nothing much is changed. The former practices and institutional cultures remain prevalent through barriers to citizen's access to information.

Progressive awakening of social consciousness seem not to have played a significant role in influencing the efforts of the state and its institutions. Access to information is still at crossroads. Democratic processes have not succeeded in transforming fundamental governance in terms of prioritising public policies that uphold transparency, accountability and the fight against corruption.

At the level of the media, improvements in freedom space and other developments within the media landscape have not commendably expanded media contribution in public management which is still largely plagued by practices and non-transparent modes of public resources management and issues of transparency. However, the demand for accountability is systematically gaining more attention from the media notably through the creation of platforms through which citizens are able to hold duty bearers to account.

Radio, television, newspapers and news websites have become platforms for inquiries and discussions on accountability. These platforms offer citizens the opportunities to

question public authorities and demand for accountability in the management of public life. This is done through interactive programmes, findings from inquiries or public manifestations and deployment of public services, investigations conducted on perceived illicit management of public goods and other reports etc. Generally, despite the prevalence of professional limitations, the media manages to play its role in fostering good governance – transparency, accountability and the fight against corruption.

# Introduction

Since the return to constitutional order following the establishment of the 4<sup>th</sup> republic in the 1990s, the media in Burkina Faso especially the private/independent media have been strongly contributing in debates on the day-to-day governance of the country as well as the initiation of ethical and effective management of public goods. The progressive emergence of an independent media gave rise to the creation of new audio-visual, print and online media outlets. In recent times, many media organs in the country are driven by journalists with a great sense of innovation. These journalists establish new platforms where citizens are engaged in debates on issues of national interest. These developments have repositioned the media to gain its rightful place in state governance as they keep the citizens informed and on time. Journalism is becoming more committed to propelling equity, transparency, public policies, justice, individual and collective freedoms. However, there exist a number of internal and external hindrances that prevent the media from effectively playing its role in the society. Some of these limitations among other factors include the fragile state of the media industry, the lack of adequate professional training for journalists, challenges with accessing information and a persistent public administrative culture whereby public authorities withhold administrative documents and render access to these documents difficult.

Despite the fairly significant evolutions in the legislative and constitutional architecture,<sup>1</sup> transparency in the management of public affairs is yet to fully practice by authorities in power at the national and local levels in the country. Evolutions in the legislative and constitutional architecture led to the adoption of a number of laws such as the law on prevention and repression of corruption, law on access to information and administrative documents, the amending law on the organization and functionality of the supreme state controller general and the anti-corruption authority (ASCE/LC). But the practice of transparency at both the national and local level is still very slow. This is so because authorities are most likely to account for their duties or activities at their own convenience or when they are forced to do so by the media and civil society organizations (CSOs).

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<sup>1</sup> See an overview of evolutions in the normative framework including the laws adopted under the transition period and those emanating from the authorities of post transition below

This report seeks to analyze the media's coverage of these critical issues in public life notably through the sampling of Eight (8) media outlets. The study examined the current state of legislative and institutional architecture of the country, the level and quality of media coverage of these issues, the challenges confronting the media, the engagement of citizens in demanding for accountability and finally recommendations on how the media can improve their contribution to governance in Burkina Faso.

## **I. Background Knowledge on the Socio-political Evolution of Governance, Transparency, Accountability and the Fight against Corruption in Burkina Faso**

Generally, governance and the media in particular have faced enormous difficulties emanating from a long-standing political legacy marked by massive violations of human rights and a media culture of propaganda. This political culture is more propaganda friendly than freedom of expression poses a threat to democratic processes which has press freedom and freedom of opinion at its foundation. Such a political and institutional atmosphere dominated by the culture secrecy in public management and less transparency is definitely far from prioritizing transparency in public management and consequently the proliferation of corruption and all forms of inefficiencies.

The absence of effective governance checks and balances has over the years influence public affairs management and given way to numerous cases of power abuse and scandals. Most of these scandals are often reported by the media. The examples are many and sometimes implicate both members of government, local politicians at the sub divisional level and authorities in charge of public institutions or state owned enterprises. The incidences often reported by the media include corruption, fraud and embezzlement of public funds, custom affair issues and expropriation of citizens.

Faced with these bad governance practices, the media in Burkina Faso exploits different ways of playing their watchdog role. Sometimes, the revelations of the media provokes intensive public reactions and compel public authorities to respond. This gradually led to a protest that brought together a majority of Burkinabes to call for change and better governance in the country. The October 30 – 31, 2014 uprising which led to the fall of President Blaise Compaoré was expected to establish the conditions necessary for significant change in practices around public affairs management. Unfortunately, 4 years after the manifestation and fall of Blaise Compaorè the hopes of an ideal

governance rooted in the principles of accountability, transparency and collective commitment to fight corruption is continuously shattered by the persistent practice of corruption and the culture of withholding information from the general public. Nevertheless, there is great improvement at the level of legislative and constitutional architectures. Many laws which can be described as products of the 2014 uprising and transition were adopted although the reality on the field is still far from good governance.

## **II. Methodological Approach**

A qualitative data collection approach was adopted for the study. The process involved data collection through interviews, target research and analysis of the information gathered (content analysis). Generally, the study involved four principal stages. This included:

- preparation stage – identification of sampled media outlets, definition of type of data to be collected and resource persons
- data collection (review of documents, targeted interviews etc.)
- data analysis
- and production of the report

Mindful of the objective of this study, data was first and foremost collected through the sampling of 7 selected media outlets (three radio, two online news websites, two newspaper – one daily and one periodic specialised in investigative reporting and one television channel). An interview guide was designed to conduct interviews with officials of media outlets on issues around the content of their production. Also, interviews were held with resource persons from the civil society sector, online activists and ordinary citizens.

The process also took into consideration documentary reviews particularly key legislations/laws related to issues of accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption. It also examined the developments in normative frameworks linked to the work of the media especially access to information and administrative documents. The content analysis of the 7 target media outlets monitored for one week (12 – 18 March) was done to decipher the programmes that treat issues of accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption.

### **III. State of Media Coverage of Governance, Transparency, Accountability and Corruption Issue**

The 2014 massive uprising gave birth to hopes of political and institutional revival that respect integrity and transparency in governance in Burkina Faso. Moreover, the authorities elected in 2015 took over at a time when the legislative and institutional environment was very favourable for the establishment of good governance and citizens' access to information. It's is more than two years now since the new government was elected to power. Are these developments or evolutions living up to the expectations of the citizens in promoting ethical governance? Are the media effectively playing their role in covering issues related to public affairs management? Without claims of being extensively exhaustive, the study collates responses that can permit an appreciative understanding of the realities, track reflections and assess media contributions in promoting governance as well as recommendations to improve media coverage of the issues and fostering of effective participations of citizens in public management in Burkina Faso.

#### **1. Evolutions of Good Governance Normative Frameworks in Burkina Faso**

In terms of the institutional and legislative dispositions, the post uprising transition period has been marked by the setting of reforms indispensable to ideal public affairs management. This include the creation of conditions conducive for a breakaway from abuse, embezzlement, fraud and deviation from rules and norms which drive public life especially in the management of the state and its resources.

##### **1.2. Impressive and Approximate Judiciary Framework**

In order to mitigate liable challenges, the transition or post uprising authorities strengthen the legal and institutional environment in order to prevent and repress corruption through several laws. The most eminent of these laws is law No 04-2015/CNT of March 3, 2015. The law seeks to “prevent and repress corruption in Burkina Faso.” It took into consideration a majority if not all facets of corruption. It classified the various forms of corruption including money laundering and made it mandatory for high ranking state officials to declare their assets. The law further demand integrity at all levels of state resource management and public procurement.

The law also integrated measures to prevent and repress electoral fraud and the responsibility to be accountable.

In addition to this law, other very important and revolutionary measures were adopted as seen below:

- **Law N° 017-2015/CNT** which modifies an existing law related to the function and constituents of the high court and its applicable procedures. This operational modifications were put in place to check systematic impunity enjoyed by the president of Burkina Faso and members of the government in the course of performing their duties. Through this law several former ministers were charged for brutalising protesters during the 2014 uprising that led to the death of 30 people and hundreds wounded as well as alleged mismanagement in the ministries.
- **Law N° 049-2015/CNT** which revised the higher magistrate judiciary council in terms of composition, powers and functionality. The law terminates the exercise of executive judicial powers. Before this period, the president of Burkina Faso was automatically the chair and the minister of justice, the vice of the council. This law led to the exemption of these people from the council and the council place under the leadership of the president of the court of cassation.
- **Law N°050-2015/CNT** on the statute of the judiciary. It led to the strengthening of the independence of the judiciary, notably prosecuting attorneys who are henceforth charged with the duty to initiate proceedings upon the approval of the ASCE/LC.
- **Law N°051-2015/CNT** on access to information and administrative documents. This is one of the most revolutionary laws of the transition. An accurate implementation of this law would have terminated violations of citizen's rights to access information and other administrative documents. The law also provided for the establishment of an authority to examine cases where duty bearers or public officials violate the rights of citizens to access information. This law was not specifically tailored for journalists seeking information but also to every citizen desiring to get information on public service management.
- **Law N°082-2015/CNT** outlined the structure, responsibilities and functionality of the state controller general and the anti-corruption unit (ASCE/LC). The law extended the powers of ASCE/LC, giving it the mandate to fight corruption. Its reports are enforceable and can be directly sent to the court for the prosecutor to investigate the issues raised.

In pursuit of effective implementation of legislative dispositions in public affairs management, the post-transition administration of Burkina Faso equally instituted more reform. In 2016, several legislative laws were adopted to that effect. For instance the law which established a judiciary arm specialized in economic and financial crimes. The law seeks to accord each of the high courts in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso a judicial unit specialized in diligent and effective treatment of economic and financial crimes. Furthermore, the government on March 3, 2015 adopted three implementing decrees for law N° 004-2015/CNT with the goal of preventing and repressing corruption in Burkina Faso.

The first of the three is decree N° 2016-465/PRES/PM/MJDHPC signed on May 3, 2016 in accordance with the provisions of article 63 of law N° 004-2015/CNT of March 2015. The decree is aimed at preventing and fighting corruption. It also set up licit income threshold at 5%.

The second decree – decree No. 2016-470/PRES/PM/MJDHPC of June 2, 2016 outlined the procedure and deadline for assets and income declaration to the state controller general and the anti-corruption authority in accordance with the provisions of article 9. The decree made provisions for the anti-corruption authority – ASCE-LC to develop and put in place effective assets declaration procedures and forms. The forms designed were also made available online and on the website of the ministry of justice. Liable individuals are expected to filled and submit the forms (confidential) to the appropriate registry. Based on the information submitted, the authorities in charge will proceed to entering the citizen’s information in the appropriate database and submit to the ASCE-LC.

The third decree - Decree No. 2016-514/PRES/PM/MJDHPC of June 14, 2016, categorises gifts, donations and other benefits that were not considered in the asset declaration process. These category of gifts and benefits were covered in articles 31 and 32. A threshold was fixed at 35,000fcfa and it prohibits public officials from accepting more than one gift from the same person within one year.

In this light, one is tempted to infer that Burkina Faso has established a perfect or near perfect public management legislative and judicial framework. Unfortunately, most of these laws have not been practically implemented. Some are still pending the adoption of decrees that will enforce their implementation.

### 1.3. Legal Shortcomings of the Normative Framework

One of the major challenges in public affairs management in Burkina Faso has to do with the adoption of implementing decrees. As noted above, the country has established an impressive legal and institutional framework but many of the provisions of the framework are either not implemented or partially implemented.

The law enforcing access to information and administrative documents is one of the decrees pending implementation. In fact, the decree made provisions for the setting up of a national authority in charge of access to public information (ANAIP) and a structure to facilitate access to information. The access to information facilitation structure is also meant to act as an appeal unit for citizen whose rights to access public information and administrative documents have been violated by state officials. Unfortunately, the decree to set up this structure is yet to be issued.

The law equally provided for the adoption of an implementing decrees to classify incommunicable information or information deemed irrelevant to the secret defense unit. Here again, the decrees are still pending.

All the media authorities and journalists<sup>2</sup> interviewed unanimously affirmed that media professionals encounter numerous challenges accessing public information and administrative documents which are very important to their work. According to the boss of a media outlet interviewed, *“the primary difficulty is with accessing public information and documents.”* More so, *“it can be said that the act of withholding information has become a culture at the level of the administration.”*

In the same vein, we can refer to some dispositions of the anti-corruption law. One of the biggest innovations of the anti-corruption law is the follow up decree which made it possible to track citizens who refused to declare their assets or seems to have an imbalance in terms of their standards of living and their income levels. Still, the numerous calls on the government by the media and ordinary citizens to enact the necessary decree to investigate individuals who have become extremely rich overnight has yielded no fruits.

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<sup>2</sup>All the 8 media authorities and three journalists interviewed, reckoned that access to sources of information is one of the main challenges to the work of the media in Burkina Faso. Despite all the developments of the legal frameworks, the institutional cultures secrecy continue to dominate public administration in Burkina Faso. Transparency is therefore slow in diffusing cultures and professional practices.

It is also worth mentioning the law which stipulates that individuals assuming high profile positions in government should declare their assets before and after service (such as president, ministers, and heads of some public sectors/companies) in the country. So far, it is only the president, a few members of the first badge of his government and some deputies who have declared their assets. After the first badge of his government, all ministers appointed in 2017 did not declare their assets. Many ministers have exit the government without declaring their assets while in 2018 the outgoing and the incoming ministers are yet to respect this law.

The reformed legal framework seem to have created no impact on the judicial system. The system is still struggling with accumulated issues from the previous years. The judicial system can be said to be incapable of assuming an independent role by diligently cleaning the nasty closets of the country. Even at this point, state prosecutors are still unable to activate the powers vested in them to resolve issues affecting good governance in the country. As a matter of fact, the team seldom perform its duty to tackle issues of bad governance and corrupt practices in public administrations at both the local and national level.

## **2. State of Media Coverage of Governance, Transparency, Accountability and Corruption**

The media plays a major role in the socio-political development or in cases where institutions turn to hide incidences of public goods mal-administering in the country. The media contributes on daily bases through investigating, informing and educating the citizenry<sup>3</sup> on issues and perceptions of governance.

### **2.1. Level of Media Coverage of Key Governance Issues**

All media outlets sampled in this study are interested in these key governance issues. For newspaper and online news websites where the content is mostly news, these governance issues are treated under different topics and themes. Television and radio

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<sup>3</sup>This role was rather applied more to the community radios and to the state television through which sensitisation programmes and other public debates programmes contribute strongly to the training of the listeners and citizenship. Gradually, commercial radio and private television channels have also embarked on including programs aimed at creating awareness by giving public institutions and civil society organizations diversified platforms to inform and to educate the population on their rights and duties as well as communal life. In the process, programmes on issues of accountability, inquiry and denunciation of illicit practices in governance are produced and disseminated to the general public. Some of these programmes are popular highly followed.

stations cover the issues in the form of news, dedicated shows and interactive live debates with invited guests in the studio or programmes that allow citizens to call and speak up on perceived illegal practices in public management and negative habits of citizens.

### 2.2.1. Print Media and Online News Websites

The daily newspaper “*Le Pays*” is the oldest newspaper in Burkina Faso founded in October, 1993. According to Cheick Beld’Or Sigué, managing director of “*Le Pays*” there is no specific segment of the daily relegated to the treatment of governance, accountability, transparency and corruption issues. However, there are programmes such as “*Bonjour*”, “*Dialogue Intérieur*”, “*La Chronique du Fou*”, “*Révélation*”, “*Echos des Provinces*” and “*Droit dans les Yeux*” that treat governance related issues. From the 12 – 16 of March, 2018 the newspapers published 11 articles in which issues related to governance, transparency, corruption and accountability were effectively treated. For instance, in a report titled “*Révélation du mercredi 14 mars 2018*”, the newspaper published extracts of a report from the Supreme Judicial Council - “*Manquements aux règles d’éthique et à la déontologie: la liste des magistrats sanctionnés.*”<sup>4</sup> The report contained sanctions imposed by the disciplinary wing of the council on some of its members accused of malpractices in the course of discharging their duties.

Meanwhile the “*Echos des Provinces*” of March 15 reported on a publication orientating stakeholders at the regional level on financial laws and the 2018 fiscal year from the Ministry of economy and finance. This effort by the ministry of finance was aimed at educating and informing local administrative authorities, economic operators, civil societies and the general public on the state budget and its implementation processes.

Each edition of the newspaper contained at least 25 articles and an estimated number of 125 articles were published within a week (Monday to Friday). An estimated 8.8% of these articles treated governance, corruption and accountability. Out of 11 articles, 6 were based on reports from meetings organized by either state institutions or civil societies, an excerpt of a report from Supreme Judicial Council, four observations (from the programmes *Bonjour*, *Chronique du Fou* and *Droit dans les Yeux*). There were no stories done from the initiative of the media outlets or journalists.

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<sup>4</sup> Excerpts of this report was published in the March 10 to 24 editions of the bi-monthly newspaper “*Courrier confidentiel*”. In fact, it is a report from the disciplinary council of the CSM which sanctioned magistrates accused of illicit practices in the exercise of their duties. The Disciplinary Council did this following reports from the Commission of Inquiry set up to examine allegations of corrupt practices and influence peddling some magistrates and paralegals from the media and citizens

The bi-monthly – *L'Evenement* created in 2001 is one of the newspapers specialized in investigative reporting. The newspaper dedicates a greater portion of its space to reporting on malpractices in public management. According to Germain Nama – the director of publications, *“It can be estimated that between 80% - 90% of the content of this newspaper captures governance, accountability and corruption issues.”* The issues are mostly treated in the form of reports and editorials with very few stories generated from investigations and reports generated by journalists themselves. The stories are often published under one of the following themes: *politics, echoes, society, editorial, opinions and the citizen's views* etc.

For instance, in its publications between March 10 -24, 2018, the newspaper under the Column *The Citizens View* reported allegations of malpractices aimed at influencing audience booking at the presidency. Discussions on air about this issue forced the presidency to speak out and address the allegations. This can be considered as the only articles in this newspaper that solely handled issues of accountability and transparency in public management.

Apart from this topic, the newspaper was also dominated by the March 2, 2018 terrorist attack on the French Embassy and the Burkina Faso military headquarters. About 90% of this publication was consecrated to this issues which is considered likely to constitute a challenge to governance processes in Burkina Faso.

Lefaso.net is the first online news website in Burkina Faso. It was founded in 2003 by Dr. Cyriaque Pare, lecturer and researcher at the University of Ouagadougou. Lafaso.net is a general information online platform and has become one of the nation's number one most credible media outlet. According to Pare, governance, accountability, transparency and corruption are topics regularly treated by lefaso.net with information from reports on the activities of institutions and CSOs, *“open forums where we received lots of contributions from followers on the state of public affairs administration.”* *“There is also forums for discussions on our articles which attracts so much reactions concerning the management of public goods, there are also articles touching on issues of governance, the fight against corruption etc. Besides, it should also be noted that the citizens are the ones who send us their propositions on the angle they would want each issues to be treated from in a particular articles. It is the same thing with the discussion forums. If you read through the contributions especially those that have to do with reports from the council of ministers, you will notice that there is lots of reactions. This attest to public interest in issues of transparency, public contracting or public authority nominations etc.”*

During the monitoring period, the site published 14 articles on governance, transparency and accountability out of 96 articles. This made an average of 16 articles

published in each edition (from Monday to Saturday); making about 14.5% of publications during the period.

Bukinabe24 is another online news website that publishes news all round in Burkina Faso. Bukinabe24 was founded in June 2011 by group of Burkinabe entrepreneurs based in Canada. It's headquarter is in Ouagadougou. According to Abdou Zoure, editor in chief of the website, 10% of the outlet's publications treat issues of governance, transparency, accountability and corruption. The information treated is acquired from findings in reports from institutions such as ASCE/LC and REN-LAC. *"Some of the information is also obtained from complains from citizens and the initiatives of journalists. It is very rare for us to get information from government sources,"* he added. The information obtained is treated under the theme: *"Opinion"* where readers and other citizens can express their views on issues of good governance. We also have a column called *"Journaliste Citoyen"*, platform dedicated to citizens to discuss acts of corruption, bad governance as well as those of good governance. *"They are also conferences especially on radio B24 in the different regions where citizens can express happenings around the management of their communities and table recommendations"* says Abdou Zourè.

Contrary to the 10% estimate made by the editor in chief, during the period monitored, the site published more than 20 articles, with six (6) on issues of governance. This amounted to about 30% of the total publication. These articles are made up of reports, documents from council of ministers, statements, opinion pieces/editorials.

### 2.1.2. Radio

As indicated above, three radio stations (Omega FM, Ouaga FM and Savane FM) based in Ouagadougou were selected for the study. Even though we do not have exact figures on the number of listeners, the stations have the highest number of listeners in Burkina Faso besides Radio Nationale du Burkina Faso (public radio station). In the same light, the Burkina Faso national television channel (TBN) formerly called TNT covers the national territory and so it is automatically the highest watched station in the country.

Established in 2011, Radio Omega became famous and highly patronized following its exceptional coverage of the October 30 – 31, 2014 uprising. It was founded by Mamadou Alpha Barry, journalist and former Radio France Internationale (RFI) correspondent and current Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Omega FM is termed the *"citizen's radio specialized in information analysis."*<sup>5</sup> Omega broadcast from Ouagadougou and Bobo – Dioulasso and airs a regular hourly news

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<sup>5</sup> One of the radios' slogans

flash programme on current affairs and other issues of national interest. Some of its programmes that broadcast information on the subject under study include: – “*Ça nous concerne*” (an interactive programme broadcasted from Monday to Thursday) and “*Dimanche politique*” where one or two guests are brought to the studio to make statements and analyse on breaking issues that happened during the week or speak about key governance issues of local, national or international interest.

Out of the 5 editions of the programme “*Ça nous concerne*” aired during the monitored period, 3 treated issues related to public administration, public security governance and its consequences on public education service, health and local governance (with emphasis on the Local Authority Council that is no longer functioning properly). The edition of Thursday, March 15, 2018 treated issues of transparency and the fight against corruption. The guest of this edition was Mr. Luc Marius Ibriga – the state auditor general. Mr. Ibriga educated the general public on the work of the ASCE-LC and issues about the arrest of the wife of the former Prime Minister, Isaac ZIDA<sup>6</sup> on transit at the airport in Ottawa, Canada. She had more than 200.000 euros on her.

It is also worth noting that “*Ça nous concerne*” is also aired in the Moore language after mid-day. It is one of the highly patronized programmes in the country. The director of publications Mr. Hyacinth Sanou, affirmed that this programme is one of the activities of the station that gives them the feeling of fulfillment. “*We are always overwhelmed with calls from citizens even after the programme.*” Apart from these programmes, the radio station discusses communiqués, statements, reports from public conferences or releases from institutions and CSOs related to public management in its news segments.

During the period monitored, 10 stories on events concerning issues of governance or public affairs management (press conferences, workshops, meetings between authorities and citizens, statement from political parties or CSOs including the weekly council of ministers session etc.) were published.

The March 8<sup>th</sup> edition examined security issues and as such not directly linked to either transparency, accountability nor the fight against corruption.

Generally, an analysis of these three programmes might not be enough to establish a clear picture of the level of the stations coverage of transparency and accountability. However, its level of coverage can be evaluated at about 20% of its news aired each week. In the opinion of the director of publications, governance, transparency, accountability and corruption issues represent about 15% of the radio’s programmes.

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<sup>6</sup> Yacouba Isaac Zida, was a prime minister during the transition period and has been on exile in Canada since the end of the transition. He is being investigated by the Royal Canadian Police for alleged illicit financial transactions. His wife was caught at the airport in Ottawa on September 9, 2017 with 208,000 euros on her.

Radio Ouaga referred to as a “the radio of all generations” was created in October, 1999. The station transmits from Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. It has a network of more than 20 partner radio station spread across the national territory. These partner station rebroadcast most of its programmes especially news bulletins. Its news and other programmes equally devote attention to governance, accountability, transparency and corruption issues. During the period of monitoring two principal programmes including news were identified as the programmes almost exclusively dedicated to discussing governance challenges. The programmes are: “*Affairages*” and “*Ministère Public*.” During news segments, a total of 8 reports are broadcasted.

Concerning programmes, the two programmes were interactive. The talking points for the first programme is exclusively proposed by listeners who call to report gaps in administration or issues with public service delivery, misappropriation or abuse of public goods, dysfunction in public services such as health and education, citizens misconduct and use of public facilities etc.

The other interactive programme “*Ministère Public*” aired on weekly bases is also highly patronized. The programmes offer citizens the opportunity to assess public authority performance (Prime Minister, Ministers, heads of institutions, Mayors and MP etc.) and rate them on a scale of 5 – 20 over 20. During the edition of March 16, 2018, the minister of territorial administration and decentralization, Simèon Sawadogo who was assessed by the listeners. It can be said that these two programmes were 100% dedicated to issues of governance and accountability. The stations coverage of these issues can estimated at 15% per week. The editor in chief, Paul Miki Rouamba, pointed out that “*At least 10% of the information we broadcast on daily bases is on issues of good governance and the fight against corruption.*”

Savane FM is commercial radio station established in October, 1999 by Charlemagne Abissi and Aboubacar Zida popularly known as Sidnaaba. The station is noted for its community outreach programmes done in the Moore and Dioula languages etc. The stations broadcast from Bobo and Gourcy and its programmes are aired in all the languages spoken in the different localities in the area. The station is “the main source of information on the Rood Wooko” informal sector market.”<sup>7</sup>

The radio station covers a larger part of the national territory. It broadcast news in French and the dominant local languages. It also has programmes dedicated to discussing and reporting on issues concerning public management. Some of these

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<sup>7</sup> A term derived from the findings of the master’s degree thesis of Seydou Nacro, a student of the Pan-African Institute of Media studies and research (IPERMIC).

programmes include: “*Veneng Soonrè*” aired in the Moorè language in the mornings. They station also broadcast a programme called “*Agora*” through which citizens are given the space to reflect and made contributions in matters of governance. Through this programmes, “*we intend to train citizens to speak out and also understand the management of public goods at the local level. We equally train them to track developments and execution of municipal budgets. The objective is to awaken their consciousness to the responsibility of the different actors (authorities, citizens and even the local media)*” stated Abissi Charlemagne, director general of Savane FM.

Both programmes are interactive and the first programmes is hosted by two journalists in French and Moorè languages. Citizens call during the programme to disclose acts of bad governance, all kinds of abuses or violations of the principles of public management, dysfunction in administration etc. Almost all the topics treated during the week monitored in the study evolved around accountability, transparency or bad governance.

As the director general of Savane FM rightly posited, it is difficult to assess or evaluate the level of the station’s coverage of these issues. From observations made from the content monitored, the level of coverage of these issues can be estimated at 15%.

Due to their enormous efforts in engaging citizens to discuss issues of national interest, these three stations grabbed medals on the best interactive programmes category during the 2018 Galian media awards ceremony. Ouaga FM received the first prize for its programme “*Affairage*”, Savane FM, second prize for “*Venem Sorè*” and Radio Omèga, third prize for “*Ça Nous Concerne.*”

### 2.1.3. Television

The national TV station – Television National Burkinabe (TNT) formerly known as Vision Volta was founded in 1963. The station was the first French speaking TV station in French Africa. Despite the liberalization of the media sector and the advent of many private television stations, TNT remains the highest station state authorities patronise when it comes to coverage of their activities or events. TNT, just like other media outlets in Burkina Faso, is progressively becoming independent. It had long be labelled a propaganda tool for all the regimes that have governed Burkina Faso. By virtue of the fact that TNT is a public station, it has all the equipment and other resources necessary to operate on a wider scale and effective coverage than the other media outlets. The wind of change that blew across the nation after the 2014 popular uprising did not spare TNT. After this period, the influence wielded by state authorities is gradually under check. Presently, not even the minister of communication who previously exerted a lot

of influence on the station can push the station to violate professionalism norms and other aspects such as recruitment procedures. The station has young and talented journalists who develop programmes that take citizens interest into consideration as well as debates and other programmes on public affairs management. Apart from regular news, debates and other programmes such as “*Dialogue Citoyen*” and “*Controverse*” that were previously considered a taboo to be aired on the national television are no longer considered so.

As is the case with radio, it was also observed that the principal types of programmes that treat issues of governance on TNT are news, “*Dialogue Citoyen*” and “*Controverse*”. A total of 17 items out of which 15 were reports, treated these issues. This makes about 10% of the news broadcasted during the period under study.

The station airs a programme called “*Prèsimètre*”, a citizen’s public policy watch initiated by an NGO, Suèdoise Diakonia. Every month, this program invites one member of government to the studio to shade lights on issues concerning his or her department and respond to questions from listeners. Sometimes, the questions and issues listeners raised via phone calls are very intriguing. The program is indeed a true check on accountability from government officials and at times, Ministers are confronted with well researched and documented questions and facts which force them to recognize flaws in their administration and to commit to improving the situation. The March 13, 2018 editions had the minister of agriculture as guest on the programme. It was indeed a platform for the minister, Jacob Ouèdraogo to report on the policies and work of his ministry. In fact, the programme is 100% accountability targeting.

The programme “*Controverse*” is a household show. Issues discussed on the show are not limited to governance. The programme treats issues as they happen in the entire national territory. It is a debate programme that typically hosts a maximum of four guests at a time.

Its March 15, 2018 edition focused on national reconciliation discussed by a panel made up of 4 guests: Dr. Ablassé Ouédraogo and Amadou Traoré from opposition political parties, Mr. Guy Hervé Kam, spokesman of a civil society citizens movement - *Mouvement le Balai Citoyen*, and Noël Toé member of parliament from the ruling party.

Jean Emmanuel Ouédraogo, editor in chief of TNT advanced that the public media has the greater responsibility and capacity to furnish citizens with information that will enable them to participate in governance and influence public action than other media outlets. Apart from reporting on the activities of different stakeholders in news aired, the national television offers citizens platforms to share their views and debates issues.

#### 2.1.4. Overview of the level of media coverage of issues of governance

The analysis of the content of target media outlets monitored from March 12 to 18, 2017 gives a good glimpse of governance, transparency, accountability and corruption issues. Some heads of media outlets situate media coverage of these issues between 10% to 90%. The observations and perceptions of stakeholders are summarised in the table below.

#### Summary of the level of media coverage of governance issues by 8 media organs.

Media outlet	Type of Media Outlet	Coverage Estimate	Numbers of items or productions during the week	Observations
<i>Le Pays</i>	Daily newspaper	8.8%	11 articles during the week	Diverse issues covered
<i>L'Evènement</i>	Fortnightly newspaper	Between 80 and 90%	Newspaper specialized in investigative reporting especially on issues relating to governance	March 10 - 24, 2018 editions, devoted most of its contents to the March 2 attacks and public management issues
<i>LeFaso.net</i>	Online media	14.5%	14 articles on governance, transparency and accountability	These articles discussed issues at both national and local levels (from Editorials and external sources)
<i>Burkina 24</i>	Online media	10%	6 articles	Internal & external productions, reports and documents
Ouaga FM	Radio	10% <sup>s</sup>	14 programmes	8 regular reportage and 6 interactive programmes
Savannah FM	Radio	15%	13 programmes	Evaluation is based on monitored content (11 reports and 2 interactive programmes).
Oméga FM	Radio	15%	12 programmes	10 regular reportage in (news) and 2 interactive programmes
RTB	Television	10% (news)	17 programmes	15 regular reportage and 2 interactive programmes

As clearly seen in the table above, media outlets find it difficult to estimate their actual level of coverage of governance issues. However, a rough estimate of the level of media coverage can be done from the ratio between the total number of productions and those dedicated to the subject matter. A more conclusive evaluation can be achieved through a more intensive research. The periodic investigative newspaper – *L'Evènement* devoted to investigations and reportage on events and other activities related to governance comes first with an estimate of 90% coverage. The lowest is 10% from radio stations that cover a variety of issues. Generally, each media outlet has some programmes/segments dedicated to general issues that also treat accountability, governance especially good governance, transparency and the fight against corruption. Unfortunately, it is very challenging to evaluate media coverage of these issues just like any other news items throughout the national territory. Setting up clear scientific criteria prior to the process is very crucial to establishing such estimates. For the print media for instance, the number of articles and pages or type of issues covered in the edition are very important. For the radio, the number of items and time devoted to the issues also counts. Same to online news websites. These are some of the variables or things to lookout for in order to better establish the rate of media coverage of these issues.

## 2.2. Quality of Media Coverage of Governance

On the one hand, the media in Burkina Faso has successfully positioned itself as a credible and indisputable medium in governance affairs and citizen's strong demand for accountability and transparency in governance. On the other hand, the media is perceived as a threat by government officials who have the tendencies of hiding information and revealing only that which favours them to reinforce their legitimacy on the people. This critical role of the media contributes in amplifying the voices of the citizens and building a sense of belonging to a group with a common destiny.

The whole issue is about “democratisation” of thoughts and speech and improvement of citizen's influence in public discourse and affairs. Citizen's control over public affairs involves inclusive and participative mechanisms fostered through effective access to information. Therefore, access to information becomes an indispensable ingredient in the process. Unfortunately, all media authorities and professionals unanimously attest to the fact that accessing information in Burkina Faso is very difficult. To institutional actors such as ministers, parliamentarians, mayors and others, accountability is more of a communication activity. Hence, there exist a kind of confusion between the concepts of accountability and communication that needs to be addressed. *“Spontaneous accountability does not exist here. Authorities often do not talk about accountability issues. The media has to go to them and ask them question on specific issues to get them to make statements that reveal*

*certain things; if not, they would remain silent irrespective of the situation at hand,”* stated a journalist and editor in chief of a radio station. Other media officials and professionals are of the same opinion.

Whereas, according to a trade unionist, *“whatever the state is doing on behalf of the people must be made known to the people at every point in time. Every Burkinabe must be in the know of what the government has promised its people and whether the promises were fulfilled or not. In cases where some of the promises were not redeemed, citizens should know why it was not achieved. otherwise, citizens will as most often only hear or watch through the media that this or that country give huge sums of money but no one is seeing anything concrete that was done with the money on the field. One other worrying issue in public administration which I think must be condemned and redressed is the blockade of access to public documents and information from journalists and citizens especially at the level of the ministry of finance.”*

*This is equally the trend at the mining and land sectors where civil society actors and journalists have uncovered malpractices especially in “mining contracts that were hidden from citizens whereas for transparency sake, these contracts ought to be published for public view. With the lands sector (be it in urban or rural areas), the advent of real estate development has introduced a new group of violators whose activities do not conform to the laws in place but are operating without any opposition from either the government or the citizenry.”*

From the quality point of view, media coverage of transparency and accountability in governance should be reinforced by laying more emphasis on extensive investigations that will trigger public action than the regular reportage that often times serve as propaganda or instead misinformed the populace. In conclusion, the efforts are commendable but the media can do better.

### **2.3. Limitations of Media Contributions in Enhancing Governance**

Despite the progress noted above, it should be acknowledged that media coverage of governance issues is still lacking due to numerous hindrances. The challenges are many and result from internal and external sources.

From the internal point of view, the challenges range from gaps in training of journalists especially in investigative reporting, non-respect of the ethics and deontology of journalism to the economic setbacks in the media industry. In addition to these, the media is not keen on engaging in investigative reporting. Apart from *l’Evènement*, the other media outlets reportage on these issues are derived from reports initiated by other institutions. This implies that the information reported is not from the enterprise

initiatives of journalists. This constitute a major challenge to most media outlets in Burkina Faso.

Externally, access to information, wanton and rampant corruption that has eaten deep into every sector of the country, pressure from different stakeholders on the media and the quest to manipulate information remain serious threats to freedom of expression. Many culprits are ready to invest fortunes to stifle or frustrate any evident that can expose them or destroy those they consider as adversaries.

## Recommendations

For the media to effectively play its role and contribute in enhancing democracy and improve governance in Burkina Faso, policies in place should be revisited while the state, CSOs and even media practitioners themselves need to double their efforts.

On the part of the state, the government should as a matter of urgency facilitate access to public information and administrative documents by instituting the national authority charged with ensuring that the law guaranteeing this right is observed. We can also add that the necessity to establish an enabling legal, fiscal and economic environment favourable for media development should not be neglected. Critical measures must be deployed to ensure the safety of journalists.

At the political level, political parties should actively assume their mission of educating and informing citizens.

Being the natural allies of the media, CSOs should exert influence on public policies through follow ups, monitoring of citizens, social mobilisation, inquiries and advocacy.

Finally, media professionals should double their efforts in enhancing their capacities. They should also strive to improve the economy of their media outlets in order to pave the way for media independence and pluralism which are indispensable to quality coverage of governance, accountability, transparency and corruption. For, information is the bedrock of accountability and transparency.

## Conclusion

Generally speaking, the quality of the media is dependent on the quality of governance of a state and the society. The different stakeholders must recognise the eminent role of information in the establishment of ideal democratic societies, social justice, accountability and transparency. The promotion and sustenance of a virtuous governance system that upholds transparency, accountability and fight corruption cannot be attained without a sound, independent and credible media. Moreover, accountability is not simply a communication activity whereby actors report on what they have done well while omitting what went wrong. It does not depict the fight against corruption limited to adoption of perfect frameworks and laws without ensuring applicability. The training of citizens to be responsible, conscious and socially proactive is equally an indispensable stage in the development of a country. Unfortunately, Burkina Faso still has a long way to go to achieve all these. The media's efforts in reporting on findings from initiatives or investigations and inquiries undertaken by various actors is not enough to trigger the required public opinion and public reaction in terms of demand for accountability and transparency. In the same light, there is no established systematic format of rendering accounts in the country.



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