

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY IN WEST AFRICA

*A Study on Media Audience Mapping and Targeting Techniques,
Capacity Building Models & Ownership Patterns in West Africa*



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Executive Summary

Background and Context

Strong and sustainable media are necessary for preserving and promoting the modest gains made for the good governance and democratic development in West Africa. To be useful, however, ideas and interventions that support media development and sustainability must be informed and inspired by empirical evidence. This is even more important within the prevailing media ecosystem – driven as it is by the dynamics of digitization, decomposition and deregulation. The media development project was supported by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and conducted by the Media Foundation for West (MFWA) to respond to such an imperative; by adducing empirical data on the nature and needs of the media in West Africa, using the evidence of six countries as case examples.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the project was to enable evidence-driven advocacy and action for media development and sustainability in West Africa. The innovativeness of this approach is its comprehensive, consultative, orientation; designed to ensure that the process and product are contextually relevant and refracted from the lived realities of the range of media development stakeholders in the countries studied. By way of scope, the project focused on three focal factors of media development:

- (1) Audience mapping and targeting techniques
- (2) Professional capacity building and institutional sustainability and
- (3) Ownership patterns and implications for democratic plurality

Design and Steps

While the conventional approach has been to assume a quantitative orientation, this project was conceptualised and conducted as cross-national, situated, exploration of the media ecosystem in West Africa. Three distinctive, yet interlinked, interview schedules were designed and administered across six purposively selected countries; namely, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal. Six key informants were interviewed under each study/thematic field; for a total of 18 interviews for each country; and an overall total of 108 individual interviews across the six countries. Interview transcripts were coded to distil key informant responses and identify and report common or contrary experiences and expectations.

Findings and Recommendations

Media Audience Mapping & Targeting Techniques in West Africa

1. **Audience measurement and ratings culture:** The culture of audience measurement and ratings is still very rudimentary in much of West Africa. Within the current media milieu, where new technologies are yielding new forms of content and channels, and given the trends towards multi-media, cross-media and trans-media models, audience insights need to be mainstreamed into the routines of media work by removing the skills deficits and logistics barriers to such effort.
2. **Media mapping agencies and activities:** There are hardly any independent, professional, audience measurement and ratings organisations in West Africa. Such an agency would be desired in order to coordinate, conduct, and produce periodic audience research and media ratings reports that would inform the effective diagnosis and objective deployment of appropriate media development support.
3. **In-house skills and logistics support:** Audience measurement skills and logistics needed to equip and enable in-house audience research are lacking. In particular, appropriate and affordable digital and internet-enabled devices and platforms could be acquired for tracking audience habits. In addition, qualitative audience engagement practices could provide idiosyncratic feedback about the nature of engagement (not just exposure) and relevance (not just reach) of tailored content.
4. **Technology affordances and audience analytics software:** The advantages of digital and social media technologies and platforms can help build audience propinquities and encourage participation in the co-production and presentation of content. This implies a need to build the skills and provide the logistics that media workers need to take effective advantage of these new technologies and tools.
5. **Partnerships and synergies:** The human and logistics burden of audience mapping could be mitigated by bundling competences and resources to take advantage of synergies. This could be done by encouraging and enabling networking and institutional collaborations among media within countries and across the region. Other areas of logistics support could include developing appropriate audience data tools and applications, computers and internet subscription support, and media literacy programs that enable public appreciation and support for media audience research.

Media Capacity Building & Institutional Sustainability in West Africa

1. **Journalism professional training:** Current journalism training activities have often not been informed by prior diagnosis of particular need, and are not designed to respond to the peculiar realities of the media in West Africa. Training models need to be more customised, coherent and comprehensive by ensuring that beneficiaries go beyond field reporters to include all actors along the value chain; combining a mix of models

that are bespoke to particular circumstances; by training and renewing the skills and competences of media practitioners to respond to the digital media ecology.

2. **Management training and capacity building:** Much of past and ongoing media development support has tended to focus on the journalistic skills (quality of service) and professional discipline (fitness to serve) of individual media practitioners. Due attention must also be paid to the structural and institutional contexts in which the journalist operates. The possibilities of training and capacity development support must be expanded to include: media management; the economics of media financing; developing funding proposals; newsroom leadership training and mentorship.
3. **Comprehensive advocacy and support:** Current media development advocacy has focused on issues of media rights and freedom of expression. There is a need to expand the scope of campaigns and support to account for the context in which the advocated freedoms would be enacted. This would entail advocacy for: improving conditions of service; challenging patriarchal cultures; provision of logistics and technical support, including tangible equipment or policy and legislative enactments for affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged media and populations; etc.
4. **Common pool for training and capacity building:** Stakeholders in media development reckon with the imperative of professional training and institutional capacity building for securing the democratic dividend. The key constraint is the lack of the logistics and resources. A way to overcome this hurdle is for the establishment of national or regional media incubation centres that offer funding, training, technical assistance, and access to shared infrastructure and facilities. Such a facility should, ideally, be managed by an independent, NGO with a demonstrated integrity and capacity within the region.
5. **Formative and summative evaluations:** A key gap in advocacy interventions and practical implementation of media capacity building efforts is the lack of a way to systematically track progress and evaluate outcomes of such efforts. In order to determine programme effectiveness and learn lessons for improving efficiencies in future interventions, there is a need to mainstream baseline and end line activities into capacity development projects. This would also enable an inventory of previous beneficiaries, and form the objective grounds for determining value chain benefits and sustainability of particular strategies.

Media Ownership Patterns & Implications for Democratic Plurality in West Africa

1. **Regulation of ownership:** There are growing concerns about a gradual and insidious hijacking of the media sphere by few dominant private owners and political patrons. Such an outcome raises the spectre of substituting state monopolies with private monopolies. There is a need for regulatory reforms to ensure that pluralism of ownership and diversity of interests are protected and promoted. This could include

regulatory restrictions on multiple ownerships, mergers and network affiliations. There must also be transparency and equity in (especially broadcast) licensing processes, and in access to ownership and stakeholder information.

2. **Funding for inclusiveness:** Investment capital and operational resource constraints constitute the greatest threat to media pluralism. This is related to the economic logics of scale; but also, to the intrinsic relations between media and social and political capital. These constraints and threats could be mitigated by extending funding support, operational logistics, and management skills training to vulnerable media.
3. **Media practitioners as stakeholders:** The overbearing influence of media owners, advertisers and political patrons could be reduced through ownership models that offer equities to media practitioners. This would invest media practitioners with a sense of ownership and stake in the institutions they work with, and encourage them to promote their autonomy and efficient operations. In addition, media unionisations, enactment or enforcement of appropriate labour laws and standards should help secure media workers against the inevitable retrenchments that arise from takeovers and consolidations.
4. **Public interest values:** The effect, if not the intent, of the ultraliberal economic model promoted in many countries of the region is the trend towards multiple ownership appropriations and the susceptibility of economically weak media to capture and control by the politically powerful benefactors. Appropriate regulation could be used to impose public interest boundaries on the tendency towards conglomerations and media empire building. In addition, legislative enactments should secure and sequester marginalised media against exclusion by the dominant players.
5. **Advocacy support:** The values of political efficacy, accountable governance, democratic development are contingent on the ability of the media to enable the plurality of media ownership types. Advocacy and activism efforts must seek to remove the constraints to, and engender conditions of inclusiveness in, the diversity of ownerships and stakes in national media systems. Issues to address would include: access to information laws; public campaigns against adverse media cultures; navigate ethnic and other sectarian influences; media literacy; gender equality in media work and output; etc.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The purpose and practice of media development and sustainability are best served when interventions are defined and driven by empirical evidence about the prevailing ecosystem. Such formative research ensures efficiencies by:

1. Informing the nature and direction of media development assistance
2. Tracking progress (or regression) in media practice and efficacy over time and
3. Serving as the basis for introspection and further action

Globally, the media have been recognized as constituting the guardrails of good governance and democratic development. This realisation explains the sustained interest among public policy makers, civil society actors, and industry practitioners in promoting free, professional and sustainable media systems around the world. Not surprisingly, ideas and initiatives for improving professional journalism capacities, for building strong media institutions, and for promoting the freedoms and responsibilities of media workers have also tended to be defined and driven by generalised notions of the watchdog role of the media and the conditions that should support the exercise of this role.

While this orientation does have normative merit, it has failed to reflect or respond to the native realities of the contemporary media ecology of West Africa. The effect has been for such interventions to expedite outcomes that are either short-lived or far removed from prevailing social systems and cultural conditions. For instance, most accounts of the challenges facing media in the sub-region have harkened to the colonial heritage, which transferred centralised control systems onto the post-colonial society and state. The passage of time may have blunted the essentiality of such a factor, given the regime of pluralism and private participation in media fare since the late 1990s.

At the same time, there have been fast-changing and far-reaching developments within the media scene, including the insinuation of digital and internet-based news (news websites, new aggregators, bloggers, social media platforms, etc.) into the content creation and consumption behaviours of audiences and advertisers. These changes have, for instance, taken away from traditional journalists and media, the exclusivity of the gatekeeping and breaking news functions; and on the other hand, accentuated the role and relevance of the citizen journalist.

The internet and new media platforms also present both opportunities and threats to the fourth estate role of the media. On one hand, citizens and governments are able to engage each other on issues of public interest. On the other hand, these platforms have become the avenue for the peddling of rumour and the phenomenon of fake news.

Furthermore, as younger generations of news users are increasingly drawn unto new media sites and platforms, advertisers are responding with changes to ad placement

decisions that put a financial strain on the traditional revenue streams of the so-called legacy (print and broadcast) media.

Finally, while there have been recent conversations around regulatory and policy responses to these technological changes in the sub-region (Tietah & Braimah 2019) – including their implications on the nature and quality of free expression rights in West Africa – these have hardly been evidence-driven or contextually nuanced.

This changing context raises a number of existential questions – about the limits and possibilities; but also, the priorities and pathways – on ways in which the dynamics of the current media ecosystem might be affecting the capacity of the media to contribute to accountable governance, democratic consolidation, and sustainable development in West Africa.

Whereas these normative roles of the media have been extensively debated and theoretically reflected, there are hardly any comprehensive research efforts directed towards understanding the contemporary (and arguably peculiar) ethnographic hues and political-economic contours that enable or constrain the media in West Africa. Recent exceptions include *A Regional Approach to Media Development in West Africa* – the report of a stakeholder consultative process commissioned by the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) and conducted by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) to inform advocacy and assistance around media policy and praxis. A turn towards empirically-informed interventions therefore represents an important and overdue research imperative.

The current effort fills the outstanding gaps in previous efforts by building an empirical understanding of the state and fate, as well as the limits and opportunities, of the media in West Africa to contribute to democracy and development. These formative studies are part of activities under the MFWA project: "Promoting Free, Quality and Independent Media in West Africa through Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building." The research, which is being implemented in six selected countries (Benin, Cot d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Senegal) across English- and French-speaking West Africa, seeks to support the media in their important governance function of bringing duty bearers into dialogue with rights holders as they render and redeem the accountability mandate.

This research is therefore designed to inform the ongoing and future free expression advocacy initiatives and media capacity development interventions. The studies sought, in effect, to produce a comprehensive, empirically informed and contextually textured understanding of how the micro and meso media ecologies of countries in West Africa impinge on media pluralism and operations; and on their consequential implications for the ability of journalists and media to: (a) act independently and professionally; (b) seek and serve their corporate and public interest goals; and (c) show a sustainable institutional growth trajectory.

1.2 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the research was to investigate the merits of these concerns and claims; to enable evidence-based interventions in media development advocacy and actions in West Africa. Specifically, it was designed to provide empirical data about the practices and problems of journalists and media institutions in the six countries that are participating in the OSIWA-sponsored media development project being implemented by the MFWA. This was done by engaging and enlisting the views of the range of industry actors and institutional development stakeholders; notably: civil society/NGO leaders, media and human rights advocates and lawyers, media industry analysts and academics, heads of regulatory bodies, respected independent journalists, and professional association leaders.

As noted above, the project sought to consolidate and expand understanding of media development stakeholders including the roles of key intermediaries and support industries such as advertisers, regulators, rights advocates across the various countries of West Africa, with a view to building synergies and forging mutually-beneficial collaborations. Such a comprehensive consultative orientation should ensure that current and future efforts at building the quality, independence and sustainability of media in the region are empirically informed and contextually relevant. The three interlinked studies were therefore designed to offer empirical evidence on the experiences and expectations of media owners and managers in particular; but also, of professional practitioners, policy and regulatory actors, and media rights advocates and academics.

To achieve this outcome, and by way of scope, the research project was designed to address the following three focal factors:

1. Audience mapping and targeting techniques
2. Professional capacity building and institutional sustainability and
3. Ownership patterns and implications for democratic plurality

The innovativeness of this research lies in the fact that the combined findings from these three interlinked studies would help define priorities and devise strategies that respond to the peculiar nature and particular needs of the media ecosystem in West Africa. They will also ensure that specific rights advocacy, professional capacity building, and institutional sustainability interventions are collectively owned, scalable and enduring beyond specific project cycles. If, as has been argued, the fate of democratic development in West Africa is tied to the state of the media, then any activities to secure and support the modest gains made for media development should be empirically driven and stakeholder owned.

2.0 Design and Steps

Given what has been identified as a gap in previous media development interventions – namely, the lack of sufficient indigenously-driven and contextually-rooted formative research – the current project was conceptualised and carried out as a cross-national, in-situ exploration of the media ecosystem in West Africa. While the conventional approach to such large scale, cross-national research designs assumes a quantitative bias, this tends to provide aggregated data that overlooks the usefulness of unique insights.

Three distinctive, yet interlinked, standardised interview schedules were designed and administered across the six purposively selected countries. The interview instruments, together with methodological notes – explaining the research purpose and protocols, and defining key constructs and usages – were translated from English into French. These steps helped to reduce the possibilities of interviewers insinuating their parochial meanings or implicit biases into the process and outcomes, as well as enable inter-comparability of country experiences.

One field researcher was recruited for each of the six countries. Field researchers were either media seasoned media scholars or experienced journalism practitioners in the countries. The use of local experts further contributed to the situated, and introspectively reflective, nature of this research project. They were given individual orientations on the research purpose and plan. Notes / explanations were also prepared to clarify the criteria to be used in deciding who and how many key informants to include in the interviews for each country.

Specifically, six key informants were interviewed under each study/thematic field; making a total of 18 interviews for each country; and a total of 108 individual interviews across the six countries. Within each of the three studies/themes, the six key informants were purposively sampled, with the view to ensure that they collectively reflected a broad spectrum of the specified categories of interviewees. Furthermore, only a maximum of two people were interviewed for more than one thematic area (ownership patterns, audience mapping, capacity building). Field researchers were instructed to ensure that interviewees were factually informed about the issues being discussed in relation to the current (not the distant past) and objective situation (rather than emotive sentiments, vested interest, or partisan position). They should also be independent-minded and able to provide clear, complete, representative information and views.

With the consent of the key informants, interviews were audio-recorded. The recordings were subsequently transcribed, and where interviews were originally in French, translated back into the English language. Data collection lasted an average of two weeks in each country. Data analysis was then carried out using Corbin and Strauss' (2008) coding strategy to distil key informant responses and identify common or contrary experiences and expectations. An axial coding of the data was then performed to develop and refine emergent themes.

These steps ensured that the findings and analyses made of the media situation and needs of the sub-region were based on the right calibre and composition of professionals and ex- perts within the media industry and support institutions in each country.

The three separate interview schedules, reflecting each perspective of the three-dimensional media sustainability prism defined under the project (audience mapping; capacity building; ownership patterns), were designed to collectively produce the empirical lens for understanding the state and guiding the course of media development in West Africa in terms of the:

1. Current practices, challenges and expectations of media managers and practitioners with defining target audiences and meeting their media needs
2. Nature of, and opportunities for, professional skills acquisition and operational efficiencies; as reflected in quality of media production, ethical reporting, and management efficiencies and
3. Current ownership patterns and implications for professional independence, diversity of interests, and democratic participation

While in practice, these factors flow from, and into, each other, their distinctions are also important for particularising and providing advocacy focus, guiding grant making decisions, and informing policy priorities. The important findings from the three key informant interview data sets are therefore reported under the respective sections in the form of descriptive discussions with illustrative quotes where appropriate. The direct quotes are attributed using their first names only; although their full names and designations are presented as an appendix to this report, as Annex C

A. MEDIA AUDIENCE MAPPING & TARGETING TECHNIQUES IN WEST AFRICA

3.0 Overview and Approach

Globally, media audience behaviours have become more erratic and less predictable; due, in part, to the changing nature of the news and information ecology; itself occasioned by the dynamics of digitization and mediatization of social, economic and political processes and actors. The media that are able to navigate these turbulent tides are those that continually adjust their compass in response to the changing needs and habits of their audiences and advertisers. To be useful, such responses must be driven by empirical evidence about the needs and behaviours of individual and institutional audiences and clients.

Within the global North, much of the traditional media have been fairly successful in staving off their predicted extinction by transitioning onto cross-media, multi-media, or even exclusively online, platforms and offerings. However, there is no empirical evidence of whether, or to what extent, this is a plausible proposition for the media in West Africa; or in any case, of whether this is a prudent pursuit; and of the limits and possibilities of this path for delivering inclusive, participatory, and sustainable development outcomes.

Among the operational paradoxes of the digital dividend is that while it enables access to multiple media forms and platforms, it also produces a highly fragmented audience whose needs and preferences must be positively established. And while audience autonomy also enables the public to (co-) create or curate content, it also invites interest in understanding their media habits.

All these realities have also further altered the fundamental economic and operational models of the media industry and resulted in increased uncertainty, shifting media attitudes, behaviour, content, discourse and ethics. A major by-product of this uncertainty is the growing emphasis on understanding the centrality of the audience within the media content production-consumption value chain. As Bright and Nichols (2014:178) point out, the media audience is no more "the ignored quantity it was in offline journalism: it has a clear impact on journalistic practice."

There are pragmatic reasons to better understand and respond to the evolving nature and needs of audiences in West Africa. For one, it enables informed editorial decisions about news values, programme placement and professional routines. At the same time, sound audience data can also improve managerial decisions about strategy vis-à-vis the balance between bottom line and public interest considerations (Currah 2009). Often, the challenge of media institutions in understanding and responding more efficiently to the needs and habits of their audiences is the constraint of resources and skills. By finding out if, and how, different types of media, across national contexts, are using audience mapping data, this project seeks to contribute to the search for effective and efficient approaches to audience analyses in the particular contexts of countries in the region.

Local field researchers identified and interviewed the range of media actors and stakeholders involved or interested in media audience mapping; notably, media managers,

editors, owners. They were required to interview across the three broad categories of traditional media/ownership types (public, private, community), and to ensure that respondents provided specific but complete thoughts – to probe for examples and explanations to support responses.

The findings should, collectively, help understand the current practices, challenges and expectations of media managers and practitioners with defining target audiences and meeting their media individual and collective needs.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

As indicated above, the study sought to understand the current practices, challenges and expectations of media organisations with defining target audiences, understanding their habits, and meeting their media needs. The underlying principle of the metaphorical fourth estate role of the media is the idea of serving the public interest. In an increasingly interactive media ecosystem, audience mapping data enables efficiencies in designing and delivering customised content to specific target audiences. Whether it is for the purpose of informing the public or to deliver audiences to advertisers and sponsors, audience engagement and feedback are the defining feature of successful media organisations.

While this would seem to make audience measurement a routine feature of media work, the lack of skills and resources have, in the past, made audience measurement a peripheral proposition for the media in West Africa. What local options and opportunities are available for overcoming the barriers to audience mapping? In what ways might new technology tools and software make audience measurement cheaper, easier and better? The insights of informants on these factors are synthesised and reported as descriptive accounts in the following paragraphs. Direct quotes are used to illustrate typical or peculiar responses, where necessary.

4.1 Audience Measurement Practices

Respondents were unanimous that given the current fast-changing media ecosystem, media institutions must periodically renew or review their corporate objectives/ orientations to keep abreast with changing audience behaviours. The trend towards audience fragmentation and niche targeting further reinforces the imperative of basing editorial and management decisions on empirical audience data.

The stated objectives of media organisations are a useful means of understanding their projected audience profiles. Informants from across the six countries shared similar sentiments about their corporate missions and mandates; including: public service, economics, education, entertainment, proselytising. The following responses are illustrative:

- "To entertain the public; but most importantly, to render a public service as well as fulfil the social responsibility to the public" (Amos, Nigeria)
- "The overall objective is to practice a new [precision] journalism; which is based on fact-checking....Basically the goal is to promote truth in the public sphere based on verifying claims... also to help equip the public [with media literacy skills]; that the public is also able to carry out rather simple verifications to avoid falling into the trap of manipulation" (Samba, Senegal);
- "Evangelism. The main objective of the radio station is to promote and improve the population's spirituality; [to] broadcast and promote biblical knowledge" (Lokenzi, Cote d'Ivoire);

- "One thing that comes to mind first is to provide training for students and staff of the University of Cape Coast; while of course serving as a laboratory for training" (Kwabena, Ghana)

Curiously, none of the respondents directly cited politics as their *raison d'être*. This is notwithstanding, as noted earlier, that many of the media are owned and operated by politicians or their agents.

Media managers and editors were asked if/how they determined that they were meeting their objectives. Across the region and range of media, there is no objective audience measurement culture. Informants explained that they generally rely on intuitive projections and anecdotal evidence to gauge audience interest or response to their programmes and presentations. Typical responses include the following:

- "This estimate is not scientific. It is based on my personal experience and years of stay in the media" (Philip, Liberia).
- "We receive feedback to stories through, say, letters to the editor and people reacting to some of the issues, then you know...If people are not following, they won't mind you" (Fortune, Ghana)
- "It is through the requests for links. People often ask me to share my links with them... Through this, I am able to assess whether or not the objective is being reached" (Jean, Cote d'Ivoire)
- "Let's say that through the programs we do on the radio people respond by participating. For example, on radio games and programs dealing with a theme, there is a reactivity that proves that the population is listening and likes what we do" (Carole, Benin)

On how they determine if, or to what extent, their objectives and mandates are being realised, the responses, again, suggest the reliance on very rudimentary and unscientific indicators:

- "There are specific instances where we have had exclusive stories that led to important changes. For instance, we uncovered the illegal re-absorption of the controversial civil servant, Abdulrashid Maina, back into the civil service... We also broke the news about the former minister, Kemi Adeosun's certificate scandal, which led to her forced resignation...we were the only Nigerian media organisation in the international [Panama Papers] investigation...we have been able to bring powerful people, otherwise perceived to be untouchable, to answer questions" (Abdulaziz, Nigeria)
- "Some 28 years after our creation, many people changed their religious confession through the radio. Many who had given up on life got more hope through the radio, more people are informed through the radio" (Lokenzi, Cote d'Ivoire).

- There is no clear basis upon which we can determine the extent to which these objectives are achieved. We are hopeful and work hard to make a difference by maintaining integrity, remaining reliable and doing our best" (Rodney, Liberia).

There are impressive exceptions on best practice, however. Some informants reported the use of systematic procedures and tools to measure audience size and quality; as well as other indicators of progress towards realising their corporate goals. These instances tended to involve the use of new media technology, commissioned studies, and the institution of impact assessment in the media organization. This is reflected in the following responses:

- We use Google-analytics, which allows us to have this audience, we also commissioned a study to get an idea of our audience not only in terms of numbers but in qualitative terms... It was a study done by an external expert which allowed us to get an idea of our notoriety but also in qualitative terms how people judge our work" (Samba, Senegal).
- "We have a board that we report to and targets are generated by the board that trickles down to various managers so that we are given target, that I have to achieve, revenue wise, audience share wise. So, at the end of the day we do periodic assessment over the years...we map out strategies and we give periodic reports, quarterly, half year" (Schandorf, Ghana)
- "We match these objectives with our operational strategies and outputs... and again we also conduct audience research whether they are satisfied with what we are doing through surveys and we do this in collaboration with the University of Cape Coast Directorate of Public Affairs" (Kwabena, Ghana)

4.2 Usefulness and Uses of Audience Data

Importantly, all informants affirmed the importance of audience mapping data for making informed journalistic judgements and prudent management decisions. Specifically, key benefits identified by respondents include the value of empirical audience information for making management decisions, attracting advertising and ensuring that corporate objectives are efficiently pursued. These decisions are even more imperative, given the peculiar realities and dynamic nature of the media ecology of West Africa.

The following responses pertain specifically to the use of audience information for purposes of advertising decisions:

- "It is important because the advertisers need this information to position themselves... We do it because of the advertisers, because the competition today is tough" (Chérif, Benin)
- People may be interested in audience information to aid in their planning. An advertiser for instance, will need such information on audience size and spread so as to know where to bring in their product and get return for his investment" (Austin, Nigeria)

Grant funding is particularly important for politically independent and community media that tend to operate on a shoestring. The evidence of audience targeting helps both the grant making organisation and beneficiary media institutions. An official of a professional journalists association made the obvious concession:

- Development partners who want to contribute grants for development will like to have such information so as to determine where to deploy funds for maximum results. (Shuaibu, Nigeria)

Other informants reflect an appreciation of the need for audience data to inform managerial and editorial decision making; including: staffing, programming and scheduling, geographical reach and niche targeting, positioning and branding. Responses illustrating these views include the following:

- "Audience data is used] for making decisions, designing programmes, focusing on the right people. Also, it affects our income. If you target people whose disposable income is low, it will affect you. And if you don't know the people who are listening, it will affect the designing of the programme" (Radio station owner, Ghana)
- "It will inform programming and it will also inform production. Because if you have for example audience characteristics like 18 and 65 years, you cannot have programmes that only target the 18-year olds. You need a mix to also target others within the different age cohorts" (Kwabena, Ghana)

At the other extreme, some informants barely show appreciation of the relevance of empirical audience data. Audience characteristics are rarely determined through objective research protocols. Rather, such indicators are often adduced from anecdotal sources and nebulous generalisations. The following examples are typical:

- "Our outlet does not have a target audience. We are open to everyone. However, I must underline that our readers are those interested in politics" (Yacouba, Cote d'Ivoire)
- "We have never done it but I admit that it is a very good idea to know who buys us and who does not buy us. At first, I did a prospecting at the level of newspaper vendors and one of them told me: 'my son there is no secret, make sure to have good content, to give real information. The market does not belong to anyone'" (Daouda, Senegal)
- "If you look at our style of writing, you would see that The Guardian is not set up for those who are not well educated. The Guardian seeks to change the policy narrative and drive policies to the benefit of the people. The language of The Guardian and house style show that it is targeted at those who are in government, those who formulate policies, the middle class and the upper class. Every newspaper has its target audience, those who read the Guardian are the academia, researchers and policy makers, diplomats" (Igho, Nigeria).

Where audience information is available – either through digital tools such as google analytics, third-party commercial data aggregators, or external research commissioned by media outlets themselves – informants conceded their inability to fully exploit and transform this data into sustainable strategic advantages.

- “They [media houses] do not have the capacity to aggregate the [audience] information to make it a real strategic information” (Mamadou, Senegal).

4.3 Challenges to Audience Mapping

Among those who appreciate the utility of empirical data, the lack of resources is the primary obstacle against gathering and using audience research information. This is reflected in the following response by one of the informants:

- “It is impossible to know the approximate audience size and scope... because we do not have the technology and capacity to determine...” (Max, Liberia).
- “Our challenges are related to the lack of resources. This does not allow us to conduct a reliable study. Related to this are other challenges such as the lack of equipment and adequate staff. This is all because we do not have money” (N'Cho, Cote d'Ivoire).

Some informants cited the lack of time as a reason for their failure to collect and use empirical data on audience media habits.

- “The big challenge is that we do not have enough time to pause and have a thorough analysis of this audience... We are more overwhelmed by the daily work than having the necessary perspective to make a good analysis of the audience even if it is true that we need it... Sometimes I do not even have the time to analyse it, I just look at the figures. For me the biggest challenge is that one!” (Samba, Senegal).

This may also be read as a lack of sufficient appreciation of the value and utility of audience mapping for editorial and management decision purposes. This lack of appreciation is also projected to audiences, who are accordingly disinclined to cooperate with such audience measurement exercises. The following informant response bears this out:

- “The people in Ghana... they don't really understand audience information and feedback; sometimes because they don't know about their power to influence programming. They think you are taking information from them to do something for your personal benefit; rather than to improve upon your services to them” (Radio station owner, Ghana).

Informants also expressed significant distrust of the commercially available audience data that is produced and sold to media organisations by market research companies. Media managers and editors entertained doubts about the reliability of such data. These concerns are reflected in the following view by one of the respondents:

- “There are times you see the reports and you tend to question the veracity of such

reports. For example, you are telling me a particular affiliate station is number two in Abuja when that station is off air. So how do I take that to the market? This made many organisations to decide to carry out their own independent survey to be sure that the report being". (Omolola, Nigeria).

In some countries, there are no independent media monitoring organisations. Rather, advertising agencies occasionally conduct such audience research to inform their ad placement decisions. Sometime they sell such data to the media organisations. Occasionally, the bigger/better resourced media organisations conduct their own audience research. However, such data tend to be useful more for programming and institutional strategy purposes, rather than for making any credible ratings claims. As one informant observed:

- "Surveys are done by advertisers to see the positioning of radio stations; to be able to make their own product placement decisions. They resell these polls to radio stations. Sometimes, the stations also conduct polls to see where they are, but there are always challenges because every press group feels that the poll that is done is self-serving" (Alassane, Senegal)

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings reported above affirm the importance and implications of encouraging and enabling audience mapping into the routines of journalism practice and media management strategies. The following conclusions and recommendations are derived from the findings reported above, and should provide informed insights for media development advocacy and action.

5.1 Audience Measurement and Ratings Culture

The culture of audience measurement and ratings is still very rudimentary in much of West Africa. This is in spite of the general acknowledgement among informants that the media are not just an arena for selling audiences and products. More importantly, in the developing countries context of West Africa the media occupy a particular political and cultural place to form and be informed by the interests and insights of their different audience segments.

This centrality of audience insights needs to be mainstreamed into the routines of media work and audience habits. It suggests, in turn, a need for media capacity building in that regard; as well as media literacy campaigns for the wider population to understand their agency in shaping the content and quality of programming. Such awareness would also help improve the efficiencies in issues of organisational structure, governance, management, infrastructure, funding, content, professionalism and ethics. It will also create relevant externalities; such as the roles of advertisers and audiences in rewarding (or punishing) media for the quality of their content and the conduct of their ethics. Within the current media milieu, where new technologies are yielding new forms of content and channels, and given the trends towards multi-media, cross-media and trans-media models, a culture of constantly collecting and analysing audience habits must be developed to keep the media relevant and responsive to the changing dynamics.

5.2 Media Mapping Agencies and Activities

There are hardly any independent, professional, audience measurement and ratings organisations in West Africa. Part of the reason is the monetization of the audience construct; suggesting that sheer numbers are the default reason to conduct audience mapping research.

In the particular context of the social, cultural and political realities of the region, there is also a value for understanding audience insights; including their response to the quality of media messages and practitioners, and their role in shaping social norms, promoting cultural values and informing the political choices that people have and make. Given this public interest orientation, it will be helpful for media development interventions to establish or encourage and support independent (state or industry-led) audience research institutions and projects. Such an agency would coordinate, conduct, and produce periodic audience research and media ratings reports that are credible, comparable, and cost effective.

Reliable audience data enables efficiencies in diagnosing and deploying appropriate support towards: promoting media rights and freedoms; improving professionalism and the quality of journalism; encouraging sustainability of business operations and the public interest.

5.3 In-house Skills and Logistics Support

Media organisations and practitioners need to appreciate the importance of audience mapping data to the contemporary reality of audience fragmentation and the turn towards narrowcasting. Where journalists and managers already appreciate the value of audience data, they are constrained by the lack of requisite skills and logistics. These mean that audience measurement capacity building must seek to provide skills training on audience metrics as well as equip organisations with appropriate and affordable tools for conducting in-house audience research. In particular, the increasing embrace of digital and internet-enabled devices and platforms by traditional media organisations suggests a need to acquire appropriate tools and software for tracking the amount of traffic being drawn.

Beyond the traditional orientation towards quantitative audience data, however, media organisations in West Africa must be encouraged and enabled to build a culture of qualitative audience engagement into their work – through community engagements, outside broadcasting (OB) programmes, focus group discussions, call-in talk programmes, open days, etc. Such strategies often have multiplier values, are relatively cheaper, and provide idiosyncratic feedback about engagement (rather than mere exposure) with defined demographic segments, and relevance (rather than mere reach) of tailored content corresponding to particular audience idiosyncrasies.

5.4 Technology Affordances and Audience Analytics Software.

The advantages of the digital and social media technologies and platforms – immediacy, multimediatization, interactivity, mobility, customisation, universality – offer unique opportunities to build audience propinquities and participation in the development and delivery of talk programmes, reality show and news reports. Audiences can be encouraged to become co-producers and promoters of multimedia journalism content. Such a strategy will be useful in an environment of shifting audience loyalties and changing business models. Importantly, it also implies a need to build the skills and provide the logistics that media workers require in order to take effective advantage of these technologies and tools if they are to remain relevant arbiters of news and information within the digital media ecosystem. Examples of available and affordable tools and software that could support such audience analytics efforts include: Crimson Hexagon, NodeXL, Audiense, Nielsen Social, Google Analytics, Google Trends, Social Mention, NfapoleonCat and crowdfire.

5.5 Partnerships and Synergies.

The weight of the human and logistics burden entailed in audience mapping activities has been commonly cited as a particular barrier against integrating audience mapping into the routines of editorial and managerial decisions. This challenge could be substantially mitigated by bundling competences and logistics resources in order to produce synergies. This could be done by encouraging and enabling networking and institutional collaborations among media organisations within countries and across the region. Beyond skills training interventions, particular areas of logistics support could include developing appropriate audience data tools and applications, computers and internet subscription support, and media literacy programs that enable public appreciation and support for media audience research.

B. MEDIA CAPACITY BUILDING & INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY IN WEST AFRICA

6.0 Overview and Approach

While the neo-liberal democratic context has led to remarkable growth in the numbers of media outlets and owners, there are observed deficits in the journalistic output of practitioners and corporate operations of institutions across West Africa. The situation is often attributed to a number of factors; including, in particular, weak professional capacities (Asante, et al. 2013) and weak corporate governance models (Ogola 2015). At the same time, global scholarly opinion has speculated the passing of the traditional agency of journalists and media as the so-called Fourth Estate (Sibeon 2004; Schudston 2010).

Within the contemporary media milieu, two intuitively opposite realities suggest a need for bespoke capacity building strategies. On the one hand, is the particular and enduring popularity of local language radio. On the other hand, is the inexorable trend towards digital- and internet- enable media forms and platforms.

Traditional media, and in particular, local language radio, continue to be the most popular means of mass communication in much of West Africa. While the opportunities this has occasioned for greater audience participation and propinquity, and for the promotion of cultural/community identity, are important benefits, there are also voices of concern about the management competences of proprietors and journalism capacities of practitioners.

There are generally no minimum thresholds of education/ training requirements for owning media, or for hiring news reporters and talk program anchors. It is easy to observe, for instance, that the majority of private media organizations across the region are owned by politicians and influential business men and women. Often, the opportunity to exert economic and political leverage, rather than the pursuit of journalistic ideals, is the primary reason for such people to own or run media organisations. Similarly, (local language) presenters are employed more on account of their eloquence (and sometimes personal patronage) than any strong qualifications or professional journalistic credentials.

On the flip side, advances in digital and online technologies have dramatically increased the options of outlets and offerings of media platforms and products; enabling greater public participation not only as users but also as co- producers of content. On the other hand, progress in media literacy generally, and the appreciation and application of journalism values within these new platforms, processes and products in particular, seems to be far off pace.

The combined consequences of these factors may include a weak economic base and the de facto control of some media by powerful political and business interest groups. There is also the possibility for journalists to exercise self-censorship; or to pander to partisan benefactors at the expense of the practice of professional ethics and journalistic objectivity.

To what extent are these observations and apprehensions borne out by the empirical evidence? The focus of capacity building as a line of inquiry was to seek answers to this

question; by identifying the nature, implications, and means of addressing any weaknesses in the institutional sustainability and professional capacities of media managers and journalism practitioners. These would include: issues of ethics and objectivity; editorial autonomy and standards of programming; governance and accountability structures; cultural, economic and political challenges to professional conduct; training levels, equipment needs and logistics deficits.

Local field researchers identified and interviewed the range of media actors and stakeholders in the media capacity building domain; including: civil society/NGO leaders, industry analysts and academics, professional association leaders, media owners, editors, managers. They were required to ensure that respondents provided specific but complete thoughts – to probe for examples and explanations to support responses. The findings should, collectively, help understand the nature of, and opportunities for, professional skills acquisition and operational efficiencies; as reflected in quality of media production, ethical reporting, and management efficiencies.

7.0 Findings and Discussion

Previous and ongoing skills training and institutional capacity building have included: training from journalism schools; exchange programs and fellowships; state support and funding; support from professional associations and affiliation networks; support from national, regional and international media-support organisations; and periodic and discretionary in-house capacity building programmes. While these activities have been instrumental in the acknowledged modest gains in specific areas of media capacity needs, the outcomes have not been as comprehensive and sustainable as could be expected. This suggests a need for introspection; to understand the peculiar barriers and needs, and suggest appropriate and efficient interventions.

These findings reported here describe the gains and gaps in the competences of journalists and capacities of media institutions in West Africa. They reinforce the idea that strong and sustainable media systems are needed in the region in order to better enable the pursuit and outcomes of democracy, peace and development. They also offer empirical evidence on the outcomes and lessons from past efforts, and provide a compass and catalyst for continuing professional and institutional capacity development interventions.

7.1 Quality of Journalism

Informants expressed concerns about what they observed to be a continuing decline in the standards of journalism and violations of codes of professional practice. Issues of particular concern included the erosion of ethical standards and a public distrust of journalists, the disproportionate focus on divisive political topics and reflection of partisan antipathy, and a general decline in the quality of journalism training. A number of informants shared their thoughts on the subject in the following examples:

- "The quality of journalism has declined terribly. There is most often lack of investigation and verification of news items before publication. Journalists transgress terribly and, in many instances, would even refuse to take responsibility. This is largely due to lack of professionalism, poor training capacity and very limited financing" (Boakai, Liberia).
- "In terms of quality it is not the same as we used to see, the same high-level regard for journalism and the practices as we see now because...the kind of rudimentary and high training that journalists used to have we are not seeing it now" (Andy, Ghana).
- "The media is very weak and lacks credibility... they are focused on politics than the real human issues that matter. This is because of poverty, lack of good pay systems and poor welfare of journalists" (Vivian, Liberia).
- "Generally, in the country all media outlets talk about the same thing and focus on the actions of the government meanwhile, a media outlet should be innovative" (Guillaume, Cote d'Ivoire).

- "I think generally, the quality of media in Nigeria is not impressive...I can confidently tell you that over 50% of those practising journalism in Nigeria are not professional journalists and many of them have not taken the pain to go through trainings to meet up with the required qualification to become professional journalists and that is a major problem" (Austin, Nigeria).

On the other hand, there are observed positive developments in terms of gains for freedom of expression and press freedoms, as well as in the diversity of backgrounds of professionals and start-up entrepreneurs entering into the field. Two informants from Ghana and Nigeria expressed these grounds for optimism as follows:

- "In 1992,...Professor P.A.V Ansah described some of them [the media] as insipid, moribund, iconoclastic, and all manner of negative epitaphs. So, if you compare that time and now, at least there has been some improvement except that we should have moved further than where we are now. Today, when a police man or a security man arrests a journalist it will be a matter of public discussion immediately and they'll be finding ways of releasing you immediately or appeasement or explaining why they arrested you...so it's a plus for journalism" (Yaw, Ghana).
- There has been a lot of improvement in the Nigerian media, even though there are claims that the quality is declining in the sense that a lot of people are in a hurry to put out news materials without necessarily carrying out thorough fact checks...Currently we have more educated people coming into the profession" (Nnamdi, Nigeria).

7.2 Training Needs

Two broad concerns were expressed about the current capacity and needs for improvement in the media ecosystem. First, there is a continued need for improvements in the journalistic skills and ethical conduct of media workers. Second, there is a need to build the capacities of media managers, media institutions and the larger media systems in countries and the region. Specific areas of priority attention include: strategic planning; personnel, logistics, operations, finance, marketing, and entrepreneurship management. Capacity building in these areas would facilitate the establishment, professional operation, and institutional viability of media in the region.

Linked with this is the view that there is a need for editors, sub-editors and even field reporters to receive management skills training and mentorship in order to be able to manage newsrooms and be adequately equipped for future media management roles. The following views from the six countries studied provide useful insights about these observations and priority needs:

- "I would say that managers of media outlets who are the first authorities need capacity building in management, because when a manager does not have good management skills and practices, it is sure that there would be challenges in managing both the people and the financial resources and materials" (Serges, Cote d'Ivoire).

- "We have to insist on the effective training of the personnel, the human resource and even the management... Training in human resource and strategic decision making should contribute to a better management of the limited resources available in the media" (Zakiath, Benin).
- "Journalists must be trained on how to manage newsrooms and an editorial team. Too often journalists focus solely on their work. They must be given some trainings in management. This is more for the future. Journalist must have some background in administration and management" (Diomande, Cote d'Ivoire).
- I would urge media owners to invest in training managers to generate money for their organisations through other means apart from advertisement and become sustainable. Second, I will recommend the capacity building be focused on enhancing the technical ability of journalists to do research and investigations" (Siantta, Liberia).

Contemporary journalism and media work are driven by new media and communication technologies. Technical and digital skills related to content capture, editing, optimisation, sharing and monitoring, fact-checking, the collection and use of audience analytics in the newsroom, data mining and journalism, are required to satisfy an increasingly empowered and tech-savvy audience. However, media practitioners in developing contexts like West Africa remain handicapped in their capacity to fully exploit and use such technical tools. This diagnosis was shared by informants:

- "I usually don't see trainings directed towards the technicians. These kinds of trainings are needed because there are new software for montage and programming. Montage for the printing press, television, and radio, new software" (Serges, Cote d'Ivoire).
- "The technical deficits are one of our biggest area Currently we don't have a lot of quality technicians in Ghana. If your transmitter breaks down, you have to bring in someone from GBC [state broadcaster] from Accra, in fact it's the greatest problem we have" (Radio station owner, Ghana).
- "Talking about equipment and logistics, many media outlets in the country have nothing. At times, some media are not able to secure computers for their staff. Some media organisations do not have cars to help the staff when going on the field. Some do not even have enough chairs. Some journalists are working in difficult conditions" (Guillaume, Cote D'ivoire).

As a priority area, the need for technological equipment and technical training in the media can be efficiently and sustainably addressed by using common tools that require relatively little financial outlay to acquire and basic technical capacity to maintain. Smart phones and mobile applications, for instance, are increasingly providing cost-effective and easy-to-use alternatives to several traditional media equipment and software. Also, arrangements that would allow media institutions pool resources to acquire, maintain and share technical tools and other logistics can be explored. Under such a mechanism, facilities and services that would ordinarily be out of the reach of individual media houses becomes available. These deficits in skills competences are reflected in the following observation:

- "You may find that a media house can acquire a new technology, but only a few staff know how to make use of that technology and are not ready to teach others for fear of losing their competitive advantage as human resource. There is the challenge of job security with media practice in Nigeria" (Nura, Nigeria).

Another important area that informants identified as needing critical attention were the levels of professional and ethical practice. Though stakeholders acknowledged the work of multiple actors in promoting professional and ethical skills and behaviours among media workers, these efforts were still deemed as inadequate. The continuous professional and ethical development of media practitioners is required throughout their careers to keep them updated on the professional developments in the field. Sustained ethical behaviour cannot also occur without consistent and institutionalised mechanisms to cultivate and reinforce such behaviour. This is a view that was unanimous across the countries studied:

- "First, no matter what level you have reached [in journalism], it requires training to master journalistic genres, journalistic writing, article construction, etiquette and ethics" (Zio, Cote d'Ivoire).
- "Practitioners have a lot of problem when it comes to how to approach stories, how to gather information, how to carry out investigative reports, how to practice within the code and ethics of the profession, how to manage ownership influence, political parties' influence, and all that" (Austin, Nigeria).
- "Today the world has evolved, the press has become multimedia; journalists must also be multimedia. They must receive ongoing training to be abreast with new technologies and trends" (Alassane, Senegal).
- "For journalist, education should and must be a continuous affair, there is nothing like this is the end of my study. New realities happen every day in the industry and without an attitude of lifelong learning, you could be left behind" (Rebecca, Ghana).
- "When you take the media professional, his first need is to bring him to immersion, to the appropriation of the Codes that govern his profession. It will seem odd and I am often scandalized to meet media professionals in Benin who cannot tell you a single article of the first Code of their profession" (Éric, Benin).
- "The more you pay, the more coverage you get in the radio, television and newspaper... It is called the brown envelop syndrome. So, in terms of prioritising the capacity building needs of the media, I will say you need more training on ethics" (Austin, Nigeria).

7.3 Institutional Resources and Service Conditions

Media institutions are generally poorly capitalised. This is reflected in their reliance on rudimentary equipment and poorly trained human resources. It also explains the lack of a research and development (R&D) culture to inform programming and contextually relevant management models. There is a need for national and regional structural reforms

and advocacy for support to improve funding to the media. Informants offered a range of views and recommendations in this regard:

- "There is no structure to fund the media. As a result, journalists are at the mercy of politicians or business people. In doing so, you are not professionally free... As long as we are not going to solve the problem of funding press companies even if we train media professionals, the results will not be what we expected" (Vincent, Benin).
- "Media houses should also think of new ways they get funds by seeking sponsorship or grants for training of their journalists. They can get to know all these by attending conferences and workshops" (Nura, Nigeria).

Informants bemoaned the poor working conditions of media workers. Many media workers receive low, and sometimes irregular, wages. The relatively weak economies of countries in the region seem to disproportionately affect the quality of remuneration journalists are given. There is, in some countries, an industry norm that suggests that the journalism tag or identity badge is "a meal ticket." It implicitly sanctions the idea that reporters would receive tips and payments at news conferences and events as incentive for publishing stories, and as a way to mitigate their poor conditions of service. Job security is also an elusive concept in the many countries and sectors of the media industry. These create vulnerabilities for professional compromises and in high rates of turnover of the most competent practitioners away from mainstream journalism into cognate fields like public relations and corporate communications. As informants expressed below, poor conditions of service in the media need to be addressed if any other interventions for media development are to be successful and sustainable:

- "Training and retraining will continue to produce the same results if certain basic things are not corrected or put in place. As a journalist, every month you are not paid, you are sent on an assignment and your fare is not given and you are expected to report news. How is it going to work? Who pays for all those expenses you are running? And you say you are building capacity, what capacity? That is why journalists go to places for training but they go to eat more than anything. So, capacity building training is just a timeout for them" (Nicholas, Nigeria).
- "Journalists still need mentorship in their offices. To be able to build capacity, they need a lot of in-house training... Most of the media interventions we have are organised by foreign bodies that just take pity on us and organise one or two trainings to build capacity of journalists. The issue is what are we doing ourselves? You don't train your staff for two or three years and yet you expect those staff to perform at optimum? Certainly not!" (Austin, Nigeria).
- Many media outlets in the country have nothing. At times, some media are not able to secure computers for their staff. Some media organisations do not have cars to help staff when going to the field. Some do not even have enough chairs. Some journalists are working in difficult conditions (Guillaume, Cote d'Ivoire).

7.4 Training Institutions

Related to the need for improvements in professional skills and ethical practice of media practitioners are the deficits observed in the educational structures that feed and support the industry. Some of the specific issues pointed out by informants included the lack of relevant and adequate curricula, poor capacities of trainers, under-resourced and logistically-challenged training institutes. These problems are compounded by the mushrooming and poor regulation of private, sub-standard media training centres. Concerted and focused professional orientation, skills training and media literacy campaigns are required to respond to these challenges, as reflected in the responses below:

- "We need to develop the best pedagogy of journalism training, to have qualified multidisciplinary trainers... educational models that respond to the teaching of journalism in the context we are in. You have to have adequate infrastructure... internet, libraries. There is a need for documents that allow trainers to better train journalists" (Zio, Cote d'Ivoire).
- "The first question we have to ask is about the trainers, the educators themselves... How often do they get workshops and training and conferences to attend? Because if we are saying that the era has changed and there are new trends...new ways of practicing journalism... It is obvious that the educators themselves lack refresher courses that will build their capacities... clearly it is going to affect the training...Let me give you an example. In my own faculty, there's no course like social media and journalism. For the courses that teach print, none of them is talking about online journalism, none of them is talking about digital journalism and so you can imagine that those who are being trained are going to go out there without the full capacity to practice what is trending in the world" (Andy, Ghana).
- "Universities also have wide technical gaps. Go to any university where they offer mass communication, then go to radio stations close to the universities, you will notice that the universities don't have the kind of equipment the radio stations have" (Nura, Nigeria).
- "The high cost of logistics... Not every media house can boast of having circulation vehicles or logistics, but what they should do now is to pool resources so they can be timely in covering news and also circulating their papers. Not every media house should have a printing press; they can make use of shared resources to cut cost" (Nnamdi, Nigeria).

7.5 Context-Relevant Reporting Skills

Local language skills are a pressing priority. Local language broadcasting continues to be the most patronised in the region. It is also the means by which sectarian emotions are easily stirred, and through which the opinions of unsuspecting audiences are formed or transformed. Yet, it is in the work of local language reporters and program hosts that the gaps in journalism skills and ethics are most manifest. Few local language media practitioners receive formal training in local languages and how to use it in media work.

This response by an informant expresses the observation and recommendation:

- "As for the local languages, we are more illiterates in the local languages than even in English...I am suggesting that as the first step is for us to hone language skills. The second is to apply the professional journalism skills and ethics in the presentation of news and talk programmes in the local language. This is important especially in this country where the most popular radio and TV stations happen to be local language stations. They boast a lot of audience following; yet they are sometimes most guilty of sensationalism, embellishment and even rumour mongering" (Yaw, Ghana)

Significant capacity building work is also required around enterprise and beat reporting that focuses on the realities and issues particular to the region. Specialisations in covering and reporting on specific subjects, including culture and religion, finance and business, development, gender and human rights, environment, conflicts, elections and health would help reporters shift away from the focus on personalities and towards issues of concern to the population. In addition to enhancing professional specialisation in the industry, investigative journalism training will help better enable the media discharge their watchdog role and support advocacy of marginalised issues or groups. These sentiments and suggestions are illustrated in the following informant responses:

- "[Journalists] must be trained to be able to handle complex issues like corruption, economics and social and political problems. They must be trained to develop content and make use of social media" (Boakai, Liberia).
- "More emphasis needs to be placed on investigative journalism skills so that the media are better equipped to collect information even in settings where access to information as a right has not been operationalised... We must also specialize, more and more in the coun- try. Journalists are in everything and finally, they are nowhere... And we also see it, we do not have a lot of thematic channels (radio and TV) in the country. Everybody is publishing general purpose daily newspapers; similar to what is happening with radio and television" (Souleymane, Benin).
- "[We need] better training on issues related to the economy, taxation and public finances...Today in Senegal whether we like it or not, the issues of hydrocarbons are important issues, we have the mining issues and it is necessary that at least journalists master these subjects" (Oumar, Senegal).
- "You know, 2 or 3 decades after liberalization, the Ghanaian media is still generalist in terms of the lack of specialization. People are writing about everything instead of people specializing" (Yaw, Ghana).

7.6 Reflections and Responses

A number of key ideas emerged from assessments of current and preferred capacity building interventions. These ideas among other things touched on funding, access to appropriate training, monitoring and evaluation, coordination of donor interventions, as well as structural and leadership reforms in media organisations.

The combination of factors – including weak support industries, changing media consumption patterns, diversion of advertising revenues to non-journalistic media platforms have made it difficult for many media organisations to keep solvent and or commercially viable. Under these circumstances, grant funding and public subvention models are important for securing the values of pluralism, competition, and the public interest.

- "There is the state funding support to the media that is available. However, we need to think of how to make that support more efficient. The challenge is about how to adequately distribute the state funds allocated to the media. (Guillaume, Cote d'Ivoire).

For such funding and grant making support to be useful, it must be disbursed by independent agencies. The eligibility criteria must be clearly defined, guaranteed by law, and transparently applied. Such funding can go beyond direct payments to cover tax reliefs and subsidies.

The idea and logic of pooling resources could also be applied towards establishing and supporting national intermediary training hubs. Such a system would draw upon experts from academia, the media industry, civil sector and other relevant fields to organise short-term, rotating training modules focused on priority topics and open to all media practitioners. Donor agencies and the private sector can also be encouraged to support a crowd funding scheme for such a project. Such coordination and collaboration are also important in order to avoid duplication and dissipation of donor resources and efforts. This is illustrated in the conclusion and recommendation of an informant:

- "The satisfaction is not total since the interventions are scattered. Each donor, each institution intervenes according to its strategy. It would have been good if all of these strategies had been integrated and aligned with a national media development strategy, which allowed for clear visibility of what is being done (in terms of capacity building)" (Souleymane, Benin).

In-house, or on-site, training is another useful capacity building model. This approach is efficient, relatively cost-effective, and provides a flexible, iterative, means of sharing knowledge and monitoring the performance of a focused number of beneficiaries in real-life work contexts. It also offers opportunity to deliver on-the-job training and mentorship, something some informants indicated is particularly lacking in newsrooms.

- "What must be done is in-situ training...What could make a difference is to have the trainer visit the media outlet. Either TV or radio and train the staff on various aspects... The trainer gets involved in the various working groups and observes how the people are working. Since he is constantly with them, he can correct them and tailor the training based on the needs of the media" (Serges, Cote d'Ivoire).

- "Having had the opportunity to lead or be the head of editorial offices in this country, I know that one of the evils of the press in Senegal is that there is no training in the newsroom. The training stops when you leave journalism school, except for journalists who do it individually based on their membership to some organisations and networks" (Samba, Senegal).

Informants also suggested the use of opportunities available for national and international affiliation to provide exposure and training to media practitioners and managers. Such opportunities afford beneficiaries an in-depth exposure to media practices and standards in other media organisations and countries. Beneficiaries also often become acquainted with the political, economic and socio-cultural contexts within which media work is performed. Ideally, beneficiaries learn or reinforce professional norms, skills and behaviour and become change agents in their home organisations and countries.

- "Another method through which we could also improve the professionalism of media practitioners is through working visits. Having journalists visit other media outlets in other countries for them to see and learn how in those outlets information is processed and broadcast" (Marie, Cote d'Ivoire).
- "We've had programmes with BBC, and the training programmes we have made arrangements and they even come down at times but not regularly, you know. We share whatever that they have to share in training programmes" (Schandorf, Ghana).
- "Another thing is that by affiliating with them [big local outlets] they render some training services for the affiliations. And we benefit from that. So, through the training they organize, it benefits us" (Radio station owner, Ghana).
- "We are a member of International fact-checking network, the international network of fact checking...you have to be certified to be a member. It is a certification that must be renewed every year...and we have a big conference every year that also allows us to improve what we do... It is a network that works pretty well!" (Samba, Senegal).
- "At our level, we signed partnership agreements with other media organisations such as Voice of America. Since trainings are expensive, we are able to secure trainings through our partners. For example, with our agreement, Voice of America staff comes down to train our staff at Yopougon" (Diomande, Cote d'Ivoire).

There is the need to create legal and regulatory regimes that enable media to flourish. Advocacy work is required to provide legal frameworks that guarantee and protect media freedoms and access to information. Regulatory authorities and mechanisms also need to be made more independent, transparent, and participatory. These views are contained in the following responses:

- "A legal framework that would allow these journalists have a clearly identified status with clearly defined boundaries should be put in place" (Bounaman, Senegal).
- "There is the urgent need to improve the ecology in which the media operates. There should also be government interventions to ease access to information" (Nnamdi, Nigeria).

To be efficient and effective, the input and outcomes of professional capacity building and institutional development interventions must be systematically tracked, reviewed and retrofitted into organisational strategy planning. Informants highlighted the importance of such monitoring and follow-up mechanisms in the responses below:

- "One of the things that we underrate is when sometimes in the Ghanaian plan lots of people go to training, they just go and eat and return to their former routines; but because we've not taken our time to measure the effect of the training offered, there is no way to determine whether or not a different strategy is needed to improve the impact of resources invested in such training" (Andy, Ghana).
- "If I take for example the initiative of the National Union of Journalists in Cote d'Ivoire that trains journalists through a partnership with the Atlantique University. At the end of the training, the journalists receive certificates as well as professional I.D. However, the intervention is not well structured and so, it is difficult to measure its impact and how the quality of journalism is improving in the country. Also, unfortunately when such trainings are provided, and when the journalists go back to their media outlets, there are no monitoring mechanism and it ends up as if nothing had been done" (Guillaume, Cote d'Ivoire).

Such monitoring and evaluation also ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources by being targeted to areas of most need and demonstrable impact. This view was elaborated by one of the informants as follows:

- "I want to be honest with you as I usually am with myself. They are not efficient. This is not due to those delivering. It is due to the model used...I think that these trainings don't yield results because we don't always have the right people to attend. We almost always have the same people at the trainings. It is not bad if after the trainings those who took part share it with their colleagues..."
- "Usually workshops and seminars are organised in Abidjan and participants who come just participate in the opening ceremony. After that they leave to their own businesses. At the end, they learn nothing". (Serges, Cote d'Ivoire).

Many media organisations do not have or follow clear human resource management policies or strategies. Staff recruitment, compensation, job definition, talent development and retainment are mostly subjectively determined. More management skills and resources need to be directed towards hiring the right people and training them well to meet the current and changing needs of media organisations.

- "I think mostly in Ghana and then from experiences, it's cheap to get someone to do radio, they don't look at whether the person is a journalist. If the person can present, so be it. And most of them are trained on the job and there's no policy largely on recruitment, hiring and development and all that" (Kwabena Antwi Konadu, Media CBS, Cape Coast, Ghana).

Some media managers and owners do not appreciate the economic logic of human resource capacity building and consider such programmes as a waste of resources. Two informant responses express the idea and value of human resource investment:

- "If radio Yopougon has for the past 5 to 6 years had the best journalists, it is because we lay an emphasis on trainings and make it very essential even to our honour. During trainings there have participants lists and I make sure that those lists are filled and also that the staff attend to trainings. Even myself I partake in those trainings. I lay an emphasis on all those because we need results" (Diomande, Cote d'Ivoire).
- "However, there are media organisations that do not allow their staff to go for trainings because once they are trained and are more efficient, they will request for better working conditions" (Guillaume, Cote d'Ivoire).

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings reported here underscore the role and relevance of the media in enabling democratic discourse and public accountability. At the same time, they reveal important fault lines in the standards of professional practice and management performance that threaten the independence and legitimacy of the media in West Africa. The following conclusions and recommendations derive from, and seek to contribute to, interventions for strengthening the standards and sustainability of the media.

8.1. Journalism Professional Training.

Current journalism training activities have tended to be ad hoc and uncoordinated. They are also not informed by prior diagnosis of particular need, and are not designed to respond to the peculiar realities of the media in West Africa. There is a need for closer cooperation and collaboration among agencies and institutions involved in journalism capacity development in order to ensure that their combined resources and efforts produce synergies, pluralise the benefits, and lead to sustained improvements in professional practice. Furthermore, the training models need to be more customised, coherent and comprehensive; by ensuring that beneficiaries go beyond field reporters to include all actors along the value chain – editors, producers, presenters, accounts managers. They should also include instructional models beyond the lecture approach to combine a mix of models that may be more suitable under different circumstances – in-situ and off site, online and in-house, case studies and practical productions, etc.

Other possibilities include partnerships that enable national and regional journalists and trainers to share experiences and resources; including exchange programmes that allow practitioners to gain access to a wider pool and diversity of skills that would have both local and international relevance. Finally, in view of the changing realities of the contemporary media ecosystem, driven as it is by digitization, decomposition and deregulation, there is a pressing need to train and constantly renew the skills and competences of media practitioners to be able to function within multi-media, cross-media and trans-media channels and platforms.

8.2 Management Training and Capacity Building.

Much of past and ongoing media development support has tended to focus on the journalistic skills (quality of service) and professional discipline (fitness to serve) of individual media practitioners. Due attention is hardly paid to the structural and institutional contexts in which the journalist must subsequently operate. There is a need to expand the possibilities of training and capacity development support to include media managers; some of who may have impressive technical competences but little ideological appreciation of the ethics and ethos of professional journalism. Training and logistic support should identify and emphasis persons in management decision making roles – from editors and media buyers to managers and media owners. Interventions could

include: structured workshops in human resource management in media organisations; internal capacity building for career growth; newsroom training and mentoring that promote a culture of strategic management thinking and the economics of media; etc. Again, in the light of the changing dynamics of the advertising industry, there would be a particular need to develop technical competences of media managers to be able to transition onto multi-media, cross-media and trans-media models and platforms, and to build competences in exploiting the economic opportunities from such platforms. It should also include capacity building and support to media and supporting organisations on how to develop funding proposals.

8.3 Comprehensive Advocacy and Support.

The current focus of media development advocacy has been on issues of media rights and freedom of expression. There is a need to expand the scope of campaigns and support to account for the context in which the advocated freedoms would be enacted. This would entail re-aligning media support interventions to focus on priority areas identified by stakeholders such as: improving conditions of service; challenging existing cultures that systematically exclude or discriminate against certain population segments on grounds of gender, or similar cultural factors; provision of logistics and technical support, including tangible equipment or policy and legislative enactments for affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged media and populations, such as fiscal/tax incentives for media equipment acquisition; etc. It will also include advocacy and media and information literacy (MIL) programmes and campaigns on issues of ethics and objectivity; editorial autonomy and public accountability structures; cultural, economic and political challenges to professional conduct. Support for media development should also include developing the capacities of NGOs and professional bodies involved in media rights and professional development activities, as well as public institutions involved in media (self-) regulation and disbursement of funding and institutional development.

8.4 Common Pool for Training and Capacity Building.

Media practitioners and managers, free expression and media development advocates, policy makers and funding organisations, all seem to reckon with the imperative of professional training and institutional capacity building as a condition for securing the democratic dividend in West Africa. They also acknowledge that the identified professional and institutional weaknesses have begun to erode public goodwill and raise existential doubts about the capacity of the media to effectively discharge the watchdog mandate – to ensure accountable governance, enable civic participation, and engender sustainable development. The key constraint, therefore, seems to be more a lack of the logistics and resources required, rather than a lack of appreciation of the capacity deficits and needs. A way to overcome this resource hurdle would be to explore the establishment of national or regional media incubation centres that offer funding, training, technical assistance, and access to shared infrastructure and facilities. It would also be resourced and responsible for developing “training- of-trainers” programmes that assess and respond to the training needs of supervisors and sub-editors and technicians within media institutions on a case-by-case basis. Such a facility should, ideally, be managed

by an independent, non-government organisation with a demonstrated track record of integrity and capacity within the region.

8.5 Formative and Summative Evaluations.

A key gap in advocacy interventions and practical implementation of media capacity building efforts in the past has been the lack of a system of systematically tracking progress and evaluating outcomes of such efforts. The feedback and insights from informants show that in order to determine programme effectiveness and learn lessons for improving efficiencies in future interventions, there is a need to mainstream baseline and endline activities into capacity development projects. This would also enable an inventory of previous beneficiaries of such support, and form the objective grounds for determining the effectiveness of particular models, the possibilities of value chain benefits, and the sustainability of particular strategies.

C. MEDIA OWNERSHIP PATTERNS & IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC PLURALITY IN WEST AFRICA

9.0 Overview and Approach

Since the early 1990s, there have been far-reaching gains made for the practice of constitutional democratic governance in West Africa. An important dividend of this political transition has been the de-monopolization of state control of national media systems and, as such, the opportunity for private proprietors to participate in the development of free and pluralistic media regimes. There is an important caveat, however. The loci of ownership controls, political patronage, and economic strings could potentially challenge the normative role of media within democratic governance architecture. In a social and cultural milieu in which patriarchy and patronage tend to determine who and how public resources (including media spectrums and spaces) are procured, it is useful to wonder whether the nature of media ownership in West Africa leads to different ends than expected under a democratic dispensation.

Scholarly discourse on the sociology of media suggests that ownership may be defined and driven by factors such as: identify politics and sectarian solidarities; bureaucratic opacity and the norm of facilitation; sponsored mobility and the logics of reciprocity (Tietaah, 2013). The intersections between these dynamics of personal agency and social or structural networks would mean that media institutions are susceptible to political and economic capture, or to intimidation or influence by powerful politicians and wealthy elites; who exercise leverage by extending the resources that most media in the region lack and need. The loose and nebulous nature of ownership identities and relational stakes could also attenuate the professionalism and independence of journalists; since practically every story implicates relationships; whether as news makers or interested parties. These considerations are further complicated by the fact that reliable ownership records are often inaccessible; or at best that the footprints in the publicly available data only lead to an ambiguous corporate address.

Beyond these traditional considerations are the implications of the new digital and internet-enabled media platforms and affordances on traditional ownership models. These platforms and possibilities have largely sidestepped the barriers to traditional media ownership – including licensing, start-up capital, institutional structures, and operating costs – and enabled a more egalitarian and participatory ownership landscape globally. These developments have also put a strain on traditional media ownership, leading to observed vertical and horizontal consolidations among commercial media, and an inexorable onslaught on public service media systems (Krumsvik 2012; McPhillips & Merlo 2008).

The study sought to understand the implications of these objective factors to the plurality of ownership stakes, and the diversity of publics served, in each of the six countries. The interviews included questions such as: What is the nature of media ownership across the region? How are all shapes and shades of economic, political and ethno-linguistic interests reflected in the ownership and control of the plurality of media in the country and region? What cultural and social factors affect institutional autonomy and journalistic independence? What is the nature and mix of media types

- Public, private, community, institutional? To what extent do the range of media enable voice and visibility for minority causes and needs? How are new media technologies and platforms affecting traditional media ownership and control systems? What legal and regulatory provisions and conditions govern media ownership?

Local field researchers identified and interviewed the range of media actors and stakeholders in the media ownership domain; including: civil society/NGO leaders, media and human rights advocates and lawyers, media industry analysts and academics/scholars, heads of regulatory bodies, respected independent journalists, professional association leaders. They were encouraged to ensure that respondents provided specific but complete thoughts. They were also encouraged to probe for examples and explanations to support responses.

The answers should, collectively, help understand current ownership patterns and implications for professional independence, diversity of interests, and democratic participation.

10.0 Findings and Discussion

Stakeholder attitudes and responses about the nature and role of media ownership in West Africa are important for understanding the conduct and capacity of the media to secure and sustain political efficacies; and as such, the principles and practices promised by democratic ideal. The findings reported here highlight: the predominance of the private media ownership model, the lack of equity and transparency in media ownership; the peddling of neopatrimonial influences in the granting of broadcast frequencies and in the recruitment of staff. All of these factors dumb down professional efficacy, editorial independence, and economic viability of media in the region. They also create the conditions for clientelism, conglomeration, and media capture by elite and political interest groups. This report presents a descriptive account of this outlook, citing specific responses to illustrate the cross-cutting views and experiences.

10.1 Diversity of Ownership Models

While government ownership and control is still notable, especially within the broadcasting sector, the growing majority of media in many of the countries are privately owned and commercially operated. As some informants observed:

- "The print media is largely owned by [private] individuals while the electronic is largely owned by government" (Peter, Nigeria).
- "There are women's radio stations and newspapers... and even religious media outlets" (Jacob, Liberia).

This has been widely celebrated as a product of the wave of democratic politics and market economic practices that swept through the region from the early 1990s. On the other hand, there is a growing phenomenon of media mergers and empire building, particularly by politicians or business moguls with partisan political interests and influences, who use journalists and the media as fronts for peddling their partisan or sectarian interests. An informant described this scenario in the following words:

- "I think there is a generation of media bosses who had a certain relationship with journalism...after that, there was a generation of businessmen who invaded the media world by investing lots of money. So, yes, it's businessmen, it is Baba Tandian, Sheikh Tall Dioum, Bara Tall, Youssou Ndour who had money... And then after, the politicians arrived too, I do not know where they got so much money to put into the media... There are also very discreet politicians behind journalists" (Ngor, Senegal).

This should raise policy and regulatory concerns in West Africa; given the visceral partisanship that characterises much public discourse; and given the spate of ethnic and religious conflicts that have stalked many parts of the region in recent years.

There is also the alternative hybrid model of joint ownerships among journalists and business investors. Some informants recounted examples of media organisations that are formed as partnerships between media practitioners and business investors. Such arrangements may be beneficial in providing access to the investment capital of business entrepreneurs while enabling media practitioners to retain sufficient editorial independence in order to practice professional journalism. This response by an informant is illustrative:

- "Journalists who work in press groups are the ones who in fact sustain these media houses, therefore it was appropriate to allow workers to have shares in the media group...we felt that things were not going as we wanted and also the editorial line of the group was perverted and family members of the owner were interfering in the management and we were not able to work anymore as professionals...We associated ourselves with Senegalese investors who, for the first time, agreed to come and work with professional journalists in creating a media group as a company where journalists are shareholders and this shareholding allows them to limit and minimize editorial line control of the group" (Alassane, Senegal).

Still, other media institutions are either privately owned and run by organized groups in society or they are operated as not-for-profit organisations. Examples of this are provided in the following account by one of the informants:

- "There are some [media houses] who belong to religious denominations and others who belong to communities"
- There were even media houses held by political groups. When I took over La Flamme, it was for the Communist Party. So, there is everything in Benin" (Virgile, Benin).

10.2 Opaque Ownership Identities

Even though media institutions are widely recognized as powerful tools for forming and moving public discourse and action, informants revealed that the lack of transparency on ownership information enables partisan interests to abuse the public interest, corrupt the watchdog role of the media, and encourage conflicts of interest and abuse of power. In the absence of clear and publicly accessible information about the ownership of media houses, anecdotes, speculation and conjecture are common. This is illustrated in the following views:

- "Little is known about media ownership... except for a few popular ones. [However] during political campaign seasons, it is easy to infer from which politicians are called the shots on particular media. Some media openly take sides" (Daniel, Liberia)
- "We need to be above board and transparent but when it comes to the media landscape in particular, it's important because of its larger implications, the fact that the media holds a certain public trust and a certain public interest... if I don't know who owns the chocolate factory it's not a big deal but the media is a public trust...I

use my knowledge of who owns it to understand the nature of what I consume... I can choose that I don't want to consume those media because of that ownership reason... it contributes to my media literacy" (Audrey, Ghana).

- "In general, there are some names that are known. In reality, they are not the only owners. There is a shareholding system...Emedia took half an hour on launch day to explain which media belongs to who. True media owners are not known...The tax system should have a section where we can go and see who the main shareholders of this or that business are" (Mamadou, Senegal).

In some cases, ownership is projected from the opinion on the publicly available information; including sometimes a resort to conspiracy theory to explain the assumptions about funding sources. The following response provides an example:

- "Everybody knows that Daily Independent is owned by James Ibori. Everybody knows that the Sun Newspaper is owned by Orji Ozor Kalu. Everybody knows that Uncle Sam Amuka is behind the Vanguard. Everybody knows that the Guardian is owned by the Ibro family. Everybody knows that John Momoh is behind Channels Television and AIT is deeply in the pockets of High Chief Raymond Dokpesi...So the ownership is very clear to most Nigerians. What people might not know is who the investors are, possibly. You could run a media outfit and have some investors who put in money through backdoor. You can't rule that out" (Desmond, Nigeria).

Best practice in media law and regulation requires transparency and public disclosure of the identities of honorees in the various countries, as expressed in the following accounts:

- "The law requires owners of the media to identify themselves to ensure transparency but it is not respected" (Ibrahima, Senegal).
- "The National Communications Authority has not been able to even clearly find out who owns which station and all that. But it appears that some of the frequencies and the stations are in the hands of political figures...and that sometimes is one of the difficulties that people face; because the ownership is political" (Yaw, Ghana).

10.3 Management and Editorial Controls

The observed monopoly of the media by political and business elites is reflected in imbalances in the representation of views and voices, and belies the repeated allusions to pluralism and other dividends incidental to democratic development. Notably, there is insufficient diversity or equity in media management and editorial content; often privileging political and social elites at the expense of gender, ethnic, religious and social minorities. These concerns are further amplified by the observed trends in media empire building and cross media content aggregations. These observations were common across national experiences:

- "There is an incredibly huge gender gap when you look at who owns media in Ghana" (Audrey, Ghana).
- "You will be surprised that one of the three dominant linguistic groups...The Igbo speaking community does not have any major national newspaper that speaks for it. But the Yoruba have papers that speak for them and protect their interests; such as the Punch, or the Tribune. The Hausas have papers that protect their interests; e.g., Daily Trust, or Leadership" (Emmanuel, Nigeria).
- "Privatisation doesn't necessarily mean plurality and diversity... And let me give you one reason why it doesn't and it will not: because media ownership is now moving towards conglomeration" (Andy, Ghana).
- "The conglomerations also serve as a hindrance to the diversity and the plurality of the media outlets and we need to look into that...whatever is broadcast from Accra is what is repeated across the country when they could have used the frequency to discuss the matters of local interest" (Yaw, Ghana).
- "I'm not sure [diversity of media ownership is reflected] ethnically or regionally... We have seen that in some newsrooms, accountability and promotions are often disputed among journalists, and some think that the only criterion for promotion is not performance, but rather it is tied to a certain consideration of cronyism and kinship" (Bounaman, Senegal).

Ownership that puts control of communicative power in the hands of political and social elites also disables diversity and choice. Therefore, these testimonies of a trend towards conglomerations and consolidations should invite public interest advocacy and action; including interventions to valorise the role of public service media within the particular context of West Africa. The merits of this view are reflected in the following responses across the different countries:

- "I think that public service media comes closest to... trying to diversify, to touch the different layers of Senegalese society. For example, when you listen to the national channel (television or radio) we have programs in the main languages of the country. The [private] press is almost exclusively about Dakar!" (Ngor, Senegal).
- "They [media houses] always have an ideology which is mostly political, regional, ethnic bias and this reflects even in their media content" (Tim, Nigeria).
- "Most of those who own private media houses in the capital are privileged business people; mostly men! This is due to the cultural and historical experiences of Liberian society" (Evangeline, Liberia).

There are observed exceptions, though these have been few; and are thought to often be inspired more by considerations of economic prudence than any remarkable public interest ideal. As one informant put it:

- "For now a lot of the stations are doing well in terms of not limiting themselves to either one religion or one party or whatever; but we expect that there will be more of such and that almost every one of them should reflect the diversity of thinking to a certain minimal level... (Yaw, Ghana).

Concerns were also expressed about the implicit substitution of state monopolies by an insidious capture of the media by political actors and business persons; either with interest or access to the levers of political power. These concerns were common among informants from the different countries; as illustrated in these examples:

- "The press today, apart from a few community media houses, is for profit. Some media outlets are illegally or directly or tacitly financed by non-public interests for political, economic or other purposes" (Blanche, Bénin).
- "In Ghana here, what is happening is media owners are trying to create a kind of conglomerate...whereby they own bits of the media and they own other businesses. And their main aim of owning media outlets is to market their other businesses" (Fifi, Ghana).
- "People are just getting approval and licenses to set up those media organisations to add it to their pedigree, a kind of bargaining power to achieve an end. We still have some shrewd businessmen among them" (Omolola, Nigeria).
- "We know that there are supposed to be for example 72 community radio stations but...how were these set up? And I was on a panel with a politician who said, 'Yes, I went into my community and I set up a community radio station for them.' How does a politician, an MP set up a radio station and call it a community radio station only because it's in a rural community?...So, there are all of those aberrations and I'm not sure that the NCA is carefully looking at the definitions of these tiers of broadcasting... and therefore people can masquerade as things that they are not" (Audrey, Ghana).

Informants suggested two broad explanations of the motivations for acquiring an interest in, and operating, media organisations in the region. The first is primarily to earn a profit for the proprietor or owner; other considerations may be implicit; but they are built into the bottom-line. This view is reflected in the following response by one informant:

- "We have the purely commercial and professional oriented ownerships. If you took an entity like Multimedia that's commercial, professional... and that also responds to the constitutional dictates for any citizen with investment capital to be able and free to set up and operate media entities ... and to seek to return equity to owners; so long as they serve the public need. the existence of the media entity" (Samson, Ghana).

The second, and more common, factor is to be able to galvanise political support or exert social clout. This will explain, as informants noted, why many media enterprise that are presumably set up as commercial ventures are often sustained by their owners and political benefactors, even though they may be economically nonviable. The following responses, by informants from four different countries, illustrate this common scenario:

- "Those who invest in the media do so in order to have a tool of political or economic pressure. Everyone knows, in Senegal, the media do not generate profit. Apart from two or three press groups, the others do not manage to sell, they fail to pay taxes, and they do not pay wages correctly...Overall, it is an investment that allows them to be influential, to be close to decision-making bodies. All media owners have precarious media houses but they are doing well individually. They have beautiful houses, pretty cars, their children are enrolled in quality schools. I tell myself that it is not the press group that brings them this wealth" (Mamadou, Senegal).
- "For me it's two things. The first is power and the second is profit. But I know that sometimes the profit doesn't happen because when they are operating in a crowded market, competing for limited advertising cedis that are not there...a lot of them [owners] are not in it because they think, 'I want to own media in order to develop the media space...to foster democracy and ultimately lead to development...' What brings them into the media space is, 'I want to own media so that I'll have power. I can use the media to drive my political interest, to cut down my political enemies'. There are only a few people who are interested in professionalism" (Audrey, Ghana).
- "The purpose is much more for influence; political influence, than any other rationale... I do not even find an economic motive" (Gérard, Benin).
- "Motivations and interests of owners are basically economic and political. Most of the people that own media houses in Nigeria are not actually practitioners. So, they are not keen on the real essence of the practice of journalism but are just there for economic and political reasons. That is why a media owner can tell you, 'I have given you a meal ticket, go and make money'. But that shouldn't be because it's not the professional and ethical way to practice journalism" (Peter, Nigeria).

10.4 Political and Economic Vulnerabilities

The reality of the media industry in West Africa is that most private enterprises operate on a shoestring. The attendant pressures to keep economically afloat often means that they become vulnerable; not only to the commercial economic interests of advertisers, but also the partisan agendas of political benefactors. In effect, while owners and editors are presumed to define the business visions and editorial values of the media, their power to call the tune is, in reality, limited by the interests of those who pay the piper. The logic of this reality is expressed in the following responses of two informants:

- "The political agenda is clear during elections when some media executives serve on campaign teams... Errant political parties and businesses are often also protected by sympathetic media entities" (Evangeline, Liberia).
- "There are some rare cases where you do not feel the direct hand of the owner behind the content produced. But this only up to the extent that the managers and editors already anticipate and satisfy the owner's vital financial and political interests. The day those interests are tested, you'll see his true face" (Virgile, Benin).

- "The journalist self-censors, because he knows his boss and his work environment: What he should or should not touch... This [media] freedom exists as long as you do not touch the interests of the boss. When you touch the interests of the boss or the boss' friends, you will be called to order...It happened to me in publishing a press release as part of a trade union struggle. I submitted the article at 7:00 pm and at 7:20 pm I was called to be informed that it will not be published because he [the owner] couldn't allow his friend to be attacked in his newspaper. We had a heated exchange; the communiqué was not published. He agreed to make it a very soft treatment" (Mamadou, Senegal).

Similarly, notwithstanding regulatory insulations from editorial influence, the state/public funded media are often prey to the control and interests of the government in power. This is attributed to the overbearing oversight of the relevant government agency; often responsible for paying for salaries and capital-intensive equipment.

- "As for the public broadcaster, it is squarely in the hands of government; to promote government agenda" (Tiawan, Liberia).
- "Most times you see government-owned media give reactions to a story they did not originally carry. If the story broke and it's against the government, you would see those media practitioners in government-owned media reporting the reaction of the government as against the original story...For the private-owned media, you can never tamper with the interest of the owners.
- "Many editors have been sacked just because they went against the interest of the owners" (Desmond, Nigeria).

Given the particular practical vulnerabilities of media in the region to the influences of owners and their political and economic patrons, the normative journalistic ideals – such as news values and independence, gatekeeping and fact checking, credibility and sourcing – tend to take a backseat; because they would always prefer money to martyrdom, as some informants implied in the following accounts:

- "Seriously there is no independence... and today even the advertisers blackmail the media. It must be said and recognized and it is a truth. Most major advertisers no longer make ad-hoc ad accounts decisions. They sign annual contracts and, in those contracts, there is a clause that prohibits the media from talking bad about the advertiser. If you do that it can be a point of termination of the contract and therefore as the media sector is very precarious, people do not take this risk, they prefer money rather than to attack" (Ibrahima, Senegal).
- "Except for a very few, journalists are compromised and influenced by either government or their media owners. Some openly take political hardlines... It is also evident in the number of top journalists recruited into the government" (Lanmi, Liberia).

There are rare exceptions, however. Media organisations that have substantial industry clout and strong professional credentials are able to hold their own against commercial pressures and political interferences. The following testimony of one informant offers some insight on how media might be better enabled to overcome threats to their editorial independence from political and commercial interest groups:

- "I was fortunate to have worked as an editor for six years and throughout the period not once has anybody dictated to me. I remember there was a time when the biggest sponsor of the entity, MTN, was in the news for negative reasons. We went ahead and did the stories without anybody querying us; even though we became aware that they were not excited about us. Their idea is that they are spending a lot of money to keep your business afloat and to be able to pay your overheads and all of that. They feel entitled to a quid pro quo of goodwill. But as a media organisation that prides itself on adhering to strict professional norms, we rise above those considerations. Of course, I'm not unaware that these considerations affect and influence some content in other organizations" (Samson, Ghana)

10.5 Weaknesses in Regulatory Systems

One of the major concerns that informants expressed is for regulatory provisions or reforms that support the plurality of ownership types and diversity of publics served. Such regulation should seek to safeguard the values of media freedom and independence against the insidious threats from political and commercial interests. The following are examples of some of the views expressed and remedies proposed:

- "The regulation of the media is terribly weak and almost non-functional. This often leads to unethical practices" (Labosicosta, Liberia).
- "Subtly, freedom of opinion seems to be compromised or taken over by new regulations, new texts... Media professionals have complained a lot about the High Authority of the Audio-visual and Communication media (HAAC) where they were only partially represented initially... and this institution is more and more perceived like an instrument to settle political disputes rather than to protect the journalism profession. There is also the Digital Code which seems to take into account technological progress, but not legal progress or human rights" (Joël, Benin)
- "Media really is supposed to be independent and there should be as little regulation as can make it functional. In other words, over regulation of the media becomes a problem...I am very hesitant to say that the response to some of the deformities ought to be regulatory" (Audrey, Ghana).
- "In the latest press code, there is a provision that hinders press freedom...This provision allows the administrative authority to shut down a press group without a judicial decision. It is written in black on white in the code. The prefect can close a press group if he judges that the press group is doing an inadequate job. On this point it is a step backwards" (Mamadou, Senegal).

Informants recommended stronger emphasis on self-regulatory systems, rather than the current situation of regulation by state institutions whose independence and objectivity are often in doubt. As one informant noted:

- "We don't need more [laws and regulations]. I think what we must address now is the self-regulation as regards the excesses we have in the system" (Samson, Ghana).

Some informants identified certain areas within their national media ecology that could be improved with new legislations and regulations. Often, either these provisions do not exist or are unduly delayed in the legislation making process. Informants from the different countries cited examples of such bottlenecks to include:

- "The law on access to information in Senegal that has not yet been enacted" (Mamadou, Senegal).
- "In the absence of a broadcasting law it is very difficult to regulate that environment so the national media commission has made attempt in the past to provide for regulations but these are all excusatory because they cannot be enforced in the absence of a broadcasting law so these are the circumstances under which we are operating" (Yaw, Ghana).
- "We need legislation that ensures transparency and disclosure on who are behind which media outlets. We only have speculations like, 'I think it belongs to him or her...' It means that we do not have the means to empirically identify these interests. For these kinds of things, you have to have figures and some clarity" (Gérard, Benin).

Informants recommended regulatory provisions that would secure or strengthen the job security and editorial independence of journalists and other media workers. These would include laws that would compel media owners to pay their workers what is due them. This would include supporting journalists and other media workers to unionise; especially in Anglophone West Africa where there is a relatively less-developed union culture. The following responses are examples of these ideas:

- "There was an attempt by the TUC because of the poor conditions of service that journalists endure...to get journalists to unionize so that they could be part of a collective bargaining arrangement so that they wouldn't be exploited but they haven't taken that forward. I get the feeling that some of the stronger players within the media industry are not interested in seeing that happen. Unless journalists themselves empower themselves to say we need to make sure that we have better conditions of service and the way to do it will be to unionize it's not going to happen" (Audrey, Ghana).
- "Most of them [owners] don't even pay their workers and they get away with it because the union that should protect journalists is not protecting them. The NUJ, for instance, doesn't care about whether a journalist is paid or not... Then, you have one contraption they call Nigerian Press Council, which is also a government puppet. There are no regulations in place to compel media owners to meet up with their obligations" (Emmanuel, Nigeria).

- "As long as the press convention with the salary grid of the personnel will not be applied *stricto sensu*, the personnel who works in the media in Benin is unfortunately being subjected. And if the staff is subject, it is difficult to talk about autonomy and independence of the press" (Baptiste, Benin).

10.6 Social and Cultural Challenges

The values and pursuit of media freedom and independence must be responsive to the prevailing social and cultural contexts of West Africa. An example of cultural exceptionalism is the adversarial role of the media, which tends to clash with considerations about decorum and deference to the elderly, and to people in traditional and religious leadership positions. The following examples illustrate this tension between normative media freedoms and social/cultural norms that seek to impose boundaries on those freedoms:

- "The socio-cultural construct of Liberia makes many things difficult. For example, people of Liberia are interrelated; as such sometime a journalist or media outlet finds it difficult to report certain stories based on family socialisation or religious doctrines" (Tiawan, Liberia).
- "I believe that the virtue of stipulating that 'one can be poor but worthy' has been abandoned. Today everyone is looking for a shortcut to wealth as the path to social mobility and validation" (Blanche, Bénin).
- "The culture of authoritarianism, the traditions of submission and obedience do not necessarily facilitate the acceptance of freedom of opinion and the press" (Joël, Benin).

Other examples of the particularity of context are in the incidences of conflict insecurity in parts of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. All these countries have experienced varying forms and degrees of conflicts and violence; such as: insurrections by militant groups, violent crime, ethno-religious clashes, kidnappings, assassinations, and rioting. This simmering climate of insecurity poses additional threats to independent, professional media performance. The normal business of news gathering, preparation and dissemination is threatened as a culture of anxiety, fear, self-censorship, and silence are created. Media workers have been victims of reprisals, threats and intimidations from sectarian and extremist groups for the subjects of their reporting:

- "We can no longer process the information as before. We have the problem of Mali, we have instability, we have all that terrorism" (Oumar, Senegal).

Other social forces and factors like religious groups and ethnic interest groups tend to wield significant power and often attempt to exert social and political control over media programming and content. Media institutions often yield to these interests; sometimes at the expense of ethical and professional prudence and propriety. Informants also identified ethnic and religious interests as important sources of external pressure on media autonomy and ethical behaviour. These concerns were particularly strongly held in Senegal and Nigeria; as shown in the following examples of responses by informants:

- "In fact, these socio-cultural factors are more related to ethnicity but also to brotherhood because we all know here that there is a very powerful brotherhood with influences all over the place. In fact, even if there is something unorthodox, journalists do not dare to talk about it or they have reports that make them self-censor. The other thing is also that the press is made up of ethnic groups, there are affinities that have been created, and people find themselves and speak their language and creates a kind of cartel" (Ibrahima, Senegal).
- "Basically, religion is what affects journalistic independence. Newspaper houses are not totally independent in some areas when it comes to discussions around the issues of religion. For instance, the punch recently sacked two editors, the daily and Saturday editors because a columnist wrote something about a pastor who was accused of rape...So matters of religion are no go areas in Nigeria" (Emmanuel, Nigeria).
- "I have noticed more and more that journalists have trouble dealing with religious information. If it is your 'marabout' [a Muslim religious leader, teacher, seer in Muslim brotherhoods], you censor yourself, if it is the marabout of other journalist as soon as you say a few things, you have a counterattack. The religious are treated quite softly in the Senegalese press. More and more, religious people swing lot of influence in the economic or political sphere" (Mamadou, Senegal).

Finally, some gendered norms and stereotypes in some societies have tended to adversely affect the opportunity for inclusiveness in media ownership and practice. The patriarchal cultural contexts of African societies have ensured that women are systematically discriminated against and underrepresented. They are also often required to conform to gendered notions and roles in the newsroom, and in their outputs. Enhancing gender equality and gender sensitive practices in the media can help to safeguard editorial independence, media pluralism, democracy and social justice in the region. As one informant noted:

- "The Nigerian society is largely patriarchal, and this has its influence on the operation of the media. In most media houses the management is mostly dominated by men and they get to dictate what happens, from media content to operation is largely favourable to men...For instance, women, especially the married ones, are restricted to the beats they can cover because their offices or spouses dictate places they are allowed to go or how long they can stay out of their homes. There is still this negative perception that women in the media are loose just because they stay out late following stories... This male dominance is also reflected in media coverage during elections where male candidates get more coverage than their female counterparts" (Tim, Nigeria)

11.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The ideas and insights of informants illustrate the intricate and inevitable links among media ownership and control, professional and institutional capacity building, and audience mapping practices in West Africa. At the journalistic and organizational level, media owners and patrons ultimately determine the recruitment and effectiveness of management and employees. At the wider, social systems, level owners decide the location and vision of the media institution, and as such, the coverage and character of audiences served. Put together, these realities imply that the strength and sustainability of media in the region depend to a large extent on the nature of ownership within the pluralistic media ecosystem. The conclusions and recommendations reported here therefore provide a useful compass for planning and implementing interventions for media development and sustainability in West Africa.

11.1 Regulation of Ownership

In practically every country studied, there have been impressive gains for the devolution of media ownership away from centralised state controls to a nominal plurality of ownership types across the range of print and broadcast media systems. However, there are growing concerns about a gradual and insidious hijacking of the media sphere by a few dominant private owners and political patrons. Such an outcome undermines the principles of democratic inclusiveness. This raises the spectre and unintended consequence of substituting state monopolies with private monopolies. There is a need for regulatory reforms to ensure that the public interest dividends of pluralism of ownership and diversity of interests are protected and promoted within the changing media ecology. This could include the options of regulatory restrictions on multiple ownerships, mergers and network affiliations. Secondly, quotas on interests in broadcast media licensing types could engineer affirmative action and inclusiveness on account of geography, ethnicity, gender, etc. Thirdly, there must be greater transparency and objectivity in (especially broadcast) licensing processes, and in disclosure and public access to information on ownership, controlling interests, investments and donations to media organisations.

11.2 Funding for Inclusiveness

Investment capital and operational resource constraints constitute the greatest vulnerabilities of many media in the region. This is related to the economic logics of scale; but also, to the intrinsic relations between media and social and political leverage. First, within the increasingly competitive and economically fragile media ecosystems of many countries, it becomes easy for the dominant actors to prey on the small players. By offering the benefits of size and scale as bait, the dominant industry actors are able to secure alliances and acquisitions that ultimately undercut the options of access available within the public sphere. Second, by patronising the vulnerable media and subventing their journalists, the powerful political players are able to exercise vicarious control over their coverage and content, and to exclude rival political views and voices from the public

sphere. By extending funding support, operational logistics, and management skills training to such vulnerable media, grant making foundations and media rights advocacy organisations can ensure their financial sustainability and contribute to a diverse and pluralistic industry in West Africa.

11.3 Media Practitioners as Stakeholders

The overbearing influence of media owners, advertisers and political patrons over the media constitute an existential threat to the promotion of press freedom, editorial independence and professional journalistic standards. They offer fertile grounds for unprofessional conduct; especially in the forms of extreme partisanship and sectarianism, embellishment and sensationalism, incitement and intolerance. The examples reported of joint ownership systems between media workers and business entrepreneurs in Senegal offer insights on possible ways to secure the institutional viability and professional integrity of the media and journalists in the region. Offering equities to media practitioners as part of their conditions of service has the added psychological benefit of investing them with a sense of ownership and stake in the institutions they work with, and encourage them to promote their autonomy and efficient operations. In addition, media unionisations, enactment or enforcement of appropriate labour laws and standards in the media could help improve their conditions of service, professional practice, and security against the inevitable retrenchments that arise from takeovers and consolidations.

11.4 Public Interest Values

Public interest arguments support a case for promoting and preserving the plurality of media ownership types in West Africa. The effect, if not the intent, of the ultraliberal economic model is the trend towards multiple ownership appropriations, convergence and concentration of ownership in the hands of economic elites. Ultimately, this results in a homogeneity of media content and the privileging of elite preferences over the public interest. At the same time the economically weak media become susceptible to capture and control by the politically powerful benefactors who are able to provide the financial support that most journalists lack and need. Appropriate regulation could be used to impose public interest boundaries on the tendency towards conglomerations and media empire building. In addition, legislative enactments should secure public appropriations and sequester industry tax revenues into a media development fund for disbursement to media that operate in or serve the economically marginalised segments of the population in each country.

11.5 Advocacy Support

The values of political efficacy, accountable governance, and democratic development are contingent on the ability of the media ecosystem to engender and support a plurality of ownership types. And yet, as demonstrated in the previous two studies, and in the conclusions above, this virtue is in constant conflict with the natural currents of the laissez-faire capitalist ideal. This suggests a need for advocacy and activism to remove the

constraints to, and engender conditions of inclusiveness in, the diversity of ownerships and stakes in national media systems. Issues of such advocacy consideration would include the promulgation and enforcement of access to information laws and the principles and protocols stipulated under international and regional conventions. It would also require advocacy and public education campaigns to change adverse media cultures, navigate ethnic and religious influences, and improve media literacy among populations. In the specific social and cultural contexts of West Africa, issues of special interest would include public dialogue and awareness-raising on legal and self-regulatory mechanisms that encourage gender equality in media work and output; including the promotion of UNESCO's Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM).

ANNEX A: MEDIA DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A West Africa Media Development Project

Research on Media Development & Sustainability in West Africa

Thank you for agreeing to facilitate this research effort in your country.

We are conducting this study in the context of growing consensus among media development stakeholders (donor organisations, advocacy groups, industry actors, regulatory agencies) that efforts at building the quality, independence and sustainability of media in West Africa must be introspectively driven, empirically informed, and contextually relevant.

Specifically, the responses we seek should offer objective evidence on experiences and expectations of media owners and managers in particular; but also, of policy and regulatory actors and academics; around three focal factors:

- (1) audience mapping and targeting techniques
- (2) professional capacity building and institutional sustainability
- (3) ownership patterns and implications for democratic plurality

The evidence is intended to help us define priorities and devise strategies for media institutional development interventions.

The success of this exercise relies entirely on the quality and integrity of responses received; and we feel confident that we could not achieve that outcome without your professional competence and local experience. Thank you, again, for your time and input.

PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COUNTRY:.....

INTERVIEWER:.....

RESPONDENT(S) & POSITION(S) HELD.....

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

TIME OF INTERVIEW :.....

PART B: AUDIENCE MAPPING & TARGETING TECHNIQUES

Administer to media owners, managers, editors. Please ensure that respondent provides specific but complete thoughts; probe for examples and explanations to support their responses [several sentences]. The answers should, collectively, help us understand current practices, challenges and expectations with defining target audiences and meeting their media needs.

Objective(s) for setting up media/organisation [list]:

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Basis for determining extent to which objectives have been realised:.....

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Target audiences [list in order of importance; i.e., primary, secondary, tertiary]

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Basis of [reasons for] such audience definition

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Approximate audience size [number] and scope [geographical spread]

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How audience size and scope are determined:

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Specific characteristics of audiences [e.g., age, gender, income, education, ethnicity, religion]

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Why audience information [size, composition, interests] is needed:

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Challenges to accurate/reliable audience measurement:

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How challenges could be overcome:

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Other media/organisations affiliated to:

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Reason(s) for affiliation:

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PART C: PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING & INSTITUTIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Administer to media industry analysts and academics, heads of regulatory bodies, professional association leaders, civil society/NGO leaders, media managers and editors. Please ensure that respondent provides specific but complete thoughts; probe for examples and explanations to support their responses [several sentences]. The answers should, collectively, help us understand the nature of, and opportunities for, professional skills acquisition and operational efficiencies; as reflected in quality of media production, ethical reporting, and management efficiencies.

Quality of journalism/media production and presentation; and reasons for views

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Most important media personnel [journalists, managers, etc.]and institutional [equipment, Logistics, etc.] capacity needs in the country

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How media capacity building needs [skills, technical, financial, Logistics] are currently met

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Extent to which current media capacity building interventions are effective; and reasons for views

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Preferences/priorities for meeting media capacity building needs; and reasons for views

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PART D: OWNERSHIP PATTERNS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC PLURALITY

Administer to civil society/NGO leaders, media and human rights advocates and lawyers, media industry analysts and academics, heads of regulatory bodies, respected independent journalists, professional association leaders. Please ensure that respondent provides specific but complete thoughts; probe for examples and explanations to support their responses [several sentences]. The answers should, collectively, help us understand current ownership patterns and implications for professional independence, diversity of interests, and democratic participation.

Nature of media ownership in this country [individuals, groups; community, commercial, public; Local, foreign – with dominant holdings, stake]:

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Extent to which identities of media owners is a matter of public knowledge; and reasons for views:

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Extent to which ownership reflects diversity of population interests and needs [geographical, political, ethnic, religious, social, economic]; and reasons for views:

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Extent to which the broad spectrum of population [geographical, political, ethnic, religious, social, economic] are reflected and represented in content of media; and reasons for views:

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Extent to which media ownership reflects multiple stakes and interests [ownership or affiliation links] in other media; associated businesses interests; sectarian groups, or political actors; and reasons for views:

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Primary motivations/interests of media owners in the country [profit, influence, etc.]; and reasons for views:

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Extent to which journalists, editors and media content are independent from control of owners, advertisers, government, political parties and other sectarian interests

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Legal and regulatory provisions and conditions that affect the institutional autonomy and journalistic independence of media and practitioners in the country

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Cultural and social factors that affect the institutional autonomy and journalistic independence of media and practitioners in the country

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ANNEX B: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

WEST AFRICA MEDIA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Research on Media Development & Sustainability in West Africa

Methodology Notes

In addition to the explanations in the square brackets/small caps, here are brief explanatory notes on some other terms we have used in the interview guide; which we think it would be useful to assure that they mean the same things to everyone.

- **Media organisation.** This refers primarily to the traditional media of newspapers/press, radio, television; but may also include media houses that use online platforms (internet, social media) to carry their content or products
- **Media owner(s).** The individual(s) who set up or bought the media house; or who is identified with the media house as exercising overall control of the institution. This may be based on official information or a matter of "public knowledge";
- **Media manager.** The executive/administrative head or director of the media organization; person of top/high decision-making status who can speak for the media organization in an official capacity.
- **Objective(s).** The primary reason why the media organization was set up; the main focus or purpose it is serving (e.g., business/commercial, educational, agriculture, community culture). This may also reflect in the content or nature of programmes, publications or output (e.g., news, talk, music, sports, entertainment, politics); or principal language(s) or audience(s)
- **Target audience(s).** A description of the people who consume or access the content of the media organisation's output; or who are the intended recipients of the media product or service. This may include their general demographic composition (e.g., men/women, young/old, education, work, students, ethnic/ cultural community, religious group) or geographical location and size (e.g., urban, rural, school/campus, national, online). They may be classified as primary (main or most important), secondary (desired but not necessarily the most preferred), or tertiary (would be good to have, but not the focus)
- **Audience measurement.** Any means by which the media organization determines the size (i.e., number) of audiences (readers, viewers, listeners) that access its content or products
- **Affiliations.** Any other media or media-related organisation(s), or other business or corporate body that has some relationship with the listed media (e.g., as part of a network, or ownership/control, or service supply, or production or business promotion).

We have also outlined a few steps to clarify the criteria to be used in deciding who and how many people to include in the interviews. The key purpose is to ensure that the analyses we make of the media situation and needs of the country are based on the responses of the right calibre and

composition of experts. If you are in doubt, or require any further clarifications, please contact the MFWA/consultant via the supplied address(es).

- Number of informants. For each of the three themes –audience mapping, capacity building, ownership patterns
 - we would need six (6) well-informed interviewees/ informants. This would give us a total of 18 good interviews for the country.
- Composition of informants. Within each of the three themes, please ensure that the six respondents collectively reflect a broad spectrum of the specified categories of interviewees/ informants; as follows:

Audience mapping (media managers, editors, owners). Interview not more than one person from any media institution or conglomerate (one media house, or one company owning multiple media outlets); interview no more than two people from any type of media/ownership (e.g. public, private, community); interview no more than two people from any geographical region; interview no more than two media managers, no more than two editors, and no more than two media owners; interview no more than two from a particular media type (i.e., print, radio, TV, online);

Capacity building (civil society/NGO leaders, industry analysts and academics, professional association leaders, media owners, editors, managers). Interview no more than two experts, media professionals and thought-leaders from each of these stakeholder groups; interview across geographical spread and industry types (i.e., print, radio, TV, online) where possible

Ownership patterns (civil society/NGO leaders, media and human rights advocates and lawyers, media industry analysts and academics/scholars, heads of regulatory bodies, respected independent journalists, professional association leaders). Interview no more than two experts, media professionals and thought-leaders from each of these stakeholder groups; interview across geographical spread where possible

- Inclusion criteria and competences. Only a maximum of two people should be interviewed for more than one thematic area (ownership patterns, audience mapping, capacity building). Ensure that interviewees are factually informed about the issues being discussed in relation to the current (not the distant past) and objective situation (rather than emotive sentiment, vested interest, or partisan position). They should be independent-minded and able to provide clear, complete, representative information and views

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