



# **Absent voices, missed opportunities**



# Absent voices, missed opportunities

Media silence on ICT policy issues in six  
African countries

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**newmedialab**

new**media**lab

**Absent voices, missed opportunities: media silence on ICT policy issues in six African countries**

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**This research report reflects studies conducted to assess and evaluate the nature of ICT policy coverage in policy-influential media in Kenya, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Senegal. Issues raised in this research report include questions of language and appropriate content, knowledge valuations, and some of the assumptions within the global ICT discourse that impact on media understandings of, and interactions with, ICTs.**

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# Preface

Journalists in the six countries surveyed for this report are lucky to enjoy conditions of media freedom in greater or lesser degrees. In many instances, their national media have helped bring about, and to maintain, a level of democracy in their respective states. But what this study shows is little sign of media deepening its democratic role by becoming a vital link in the processes of public policy with regard to the African Information Society. Without seeking to generalise from what is primarily a qualitative research project, it does seem fair to highlight a disturbing insight that emerges. This is that, at least with regards to these country studies, the surveyed media is very far from playing a full role in terms of relevant ICT-related policy agenda-setting or debate, and policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and review.

On a matter of critical significance therefore, the continent is being short-changed. And yet, media is a means to making Information Society (IS) policy [of which ICT policy is a central part] a powerful force for African revival. Even more: its role shapes the specific content of IS policies, as well as the politics of this policy per se. Coverage – or the lack thereof – can thus make the difference between situations where policy is:

- ad hoc, or a wish-list with no relation to practice;
- a charade and a legitimising process for government action or lack of action;
- donor-driven theatre and an international industry;
- an opportunity to engage the interests and wisdom of key stakeholders like business and civil society;

- a planned and logical lynchpin that determines national law, regulation and practice, the shape of the marketplace, etc.

What this research report chronicles are the range of problems that thwart the media from playing its full role:

- The African Information Society is not seen holistically, but in fragments;
- Key issues about information such as broadcast policy, censorship, competition policy, education policy are not recognised alongside the more narrow technological issues as vital parts of a bigger picture;
- ICT is seen as a separate stand-alone story;
- ICT is viewed primarily as dealing with Internet and telecom technical or business issues; and coverage is typically blinkered about broadcasting as an ICT;
- There is a narrow horizon in the stories as regards the range of stakeholders, gender dimensions and indigenous knowledge, and few critiques of simplistic orthodoxies;
- ICT stories on telecoms and computers are presented without reference to, or understanding of, the over-determining context of policy and politics;
- Compounding all the above problems, there is negligible coverage of ICTs, and almost non-existent coverage of related policy issues. The media just don't see the importance of the story.

So, what's to be done? The answer is training, training and more training. It is in educating journalists and media workers to better understand both ICTs and related policy issues. Failing this, the quantity and quality of information society

coverage will remain flawed ... and very far from playing within the influential mainstream of media content.

Inaction will mean that an African opportunity will continue to be squandered. We owe it to the continent, and to our sense of media making a meaningful difference, to start changing this state of affairs. This booklet is a small step in this direction.

**Professor Guy Berger**  
**Head of School of Journalism and Media Studies**  
**Rhodes University**

**June 2005**

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# Acronyms

AAU – Addis Ababa University

ACP – African Caribbean Pacific Countries

ADLI – Agriculture Development-Led Industrial Strategy (Ethiopia)

AFP – Agence France Press

**APS – Senegalese Press Agency**

ATCB – Adaptive Technology Centre for the Blind

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CITAD – Centre for IT and Development

CSA – Central Statistical Authority (Ethiopia)

CTO – Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation

DBI – Digital Bridge Institute (Nigeria)

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECCOWAS – Economic Commission for West African States

EFJA – Ethiopian Free Journalists Association

EJA – Ethiopian Journalists Association

ENA – Ethiopian News Agency

EPRDF – Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front

ESTC – Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission

ETC – Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation

ETV – Ethiopian Television

FRELIMO – Mozambican Liberation Front

FWA – Fixed Wireless Access

GSM – Global Systems for Mobile Communications

H/O – Head Office

HRD – Human Resources Development

ICTs – Information and Communication Technologies

ICT4D – Information and Communication Technology for Development

IFASIC – Institut Facultaire de Sciences de

l'Information et de la Communication (Senegal)

NCM – Mozambican Communication Institute

ISP – Internet Service Provider

IT – Information Technology

ITAN – Information Technology Association of Nigeria

KLM – Dutch national airline

MADER – Mozambican Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development

MP – Member of Parliament

NEPAD – New Partnership for Africa's Development

NIID – National Information Infrastructure Development Group

NITDA – Nigerian IT Development Agency

NITPA – Nigerian IT Professionals in the Americas

NMG – Nation Media Group (Kenya)

JACITAD – Joint Action Committee on IT Awareness and Development

NBC – Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation

NICIF – National Information and Communications Infrastructure Framework

NCC – Nigerian Communication Commission

NCIC – National Computers and Information Centre (Ethiopia)

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NIIB – National Information Infrastructure Backbone

NITP – National Information and telemetric Policy Group (Ethiopia)

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SCD – Standards and Content Development Group (Ethiopia)

Sonatel – Senegalese National Society of Telecommunications

TDM – Mozambican Telecommunications Agency

TRASA – Telecommunications Regulators Association of Southern Africa  
Uemoa – West African States Monetary Union  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme  
UNECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa  
Unesco – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
VSAT – Very Small Aperture Terminal  
WIC – Walta Information Centre (Ethiopia)  
WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society

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## Biographic Briefs

Zenaida Machado is a journalist with Radio Mozambique, the state radio broadcaster. She has extensive experience in radio and has worked in a range of capacities, including children's programming, youth programming, presenting programmes and writing and editing news bulletins. Her particular interest areas are gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights. Zenaida is currently completing a translation course at the University of Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique.

Espérance Bayedila Bakanda is a senior lecturer at the Institut Facultaire de Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication in the DRC, where she teaches students of journalism. She holds several qualifications in journalism and information and communication sciences. Espérance has consulted to Unicef and other organisations on matters of women, children and communication and is president of the Business and Professional Women's Association of the DRC.

John Dada is the programmes director of the Fantsuam Foundation, a Nigerian organisation concerned with the strategic use of ICTs for development. He is an active participant in a range of African information society networks and initiatives. John holds several professional and academic qualifications in public health, education and agriculture.

Filmon Tekle is an IT columnist with Fortune newspaper in Ethiopia. He is also an IT businessman, a published poet, author, film scriptwriter and media professional. He has worked in senior positions in Ethiopian print media. Filmon holds diplomas in journalism, online research, communication and

publishing. In 2004 he was appointed editor-in-chief of an Amharic language ICT magazine.

Sophie K. Ly is executive director and editor-in-chief of Sud Quotidien, a privately owned daily newspaper in Senegal. She has served as Secretary General of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC), and has headed up the West Africa office of the Panos institute. Sophie speaks several languages fluently and holds a Master's degree in Literature and Communication from the University of Paris-Nord.

James Kigozi works at the Uganda Aids Commission as communications officer. He is currently completing his MA in Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, South Africa. Prior to this, he worked in East African print media, and taught mass communications at a Ugandan university.

Sonja Boezak has worked as a policy analyst, researcher and programmes developer in the fields of ICTs for development, gender and HIV/AIDS. She has worked as translator at the South African Parliament, as an editor at a publishing house, and has managed and edited media publications for the 6th Regional African Conference on Women, and the Beijing+5 World Conference on Women. She has published extensively on gender, HIV/AIDS, media and technology for development and has edited a book on South African women in politics.

Guy Berger has spent a decade researching, promoting and teaching the topic of media, ICTs and the African information environment. He founded

the New Media Lab at Rhodes University's Journalism and Media Studies Department in 1996, and has overseen the evolution of the annual Highway Africa conference since 1997. His research is online at <http://journ.ru.ac.za/staff/guy>

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Context/Background

by Sonja Boezak

This research report is the result of a consultative, participatory research process, conducted over six months, making almost sole use of online media for research management and communication between the researchers in seven different African locations.

This groundbreaking research, in its design and implementation, has attempted as far as possible, to 'do things right', and to act within an ethical framework. What this means in real terms is that African researchers were contracted to conduct research in their own countries – making this an example of African research for Africans by Africans, at the same time addressing assumptions around human capacity in Africa; and speaking to historical research approaches in which Africa has been treated as research object for Northern-based researchers.

On the understanding that the media is a powerful medium for social change, this research explored how particular policy-influential African media are covering, interpreting and understanding the ICT<sup>1</sup> policy debate in Kenya, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Ethiopia and Senegal.

Africa has been variously described as simply lagging and information poor, and this research reflects a more complex Africa through the experience of ICTs by the media.

ICTs and the media have been hailed as:

- Powerful – based on their utility as a tool for social change, rooted in the ability to reach large amounts of people; in the case of ICTs, this reach is sped up.
- Both have changed and are changing all aspects of life: communications, entertainment, health, culture, research, education, global security... affecting how we set both personal, community, national and continental (cf. Nepad) agendas.

The operational assumptions of the research are evident in the brief set out by the commissioning agency, CATIA, on the basis of a proposal drawn up by Guy Berger.

Thus, the exercise originally aimed to probe the quality of coverage of ICT policy with regard to:

- simple accuracy;
- understanding of issue mentioned in coverage;
- communicative skill in conveying the story;
- deeper paradigms embedded in coverage;
- extent to which coverage (and interviews) show an awareness of power, politics and gender;
- extent to which coverage (and interviews) show awareness of the gaps between policy and implementation;
- who is represented amongst stakeholders;
- informational vs. interpretational/educative balance in the story;
- legitimisation of roles for civil society, business in policy formulation;
- ignoring social and political aspects;
- ignoring impact on poor and marginalised;
- awareness of economic realism.



Most of these axes were gauged in the research, as is evident in the findings.

The deeper paradigms and story motifs were spelt out in the research guide given to researchers. Both journalists and researchers are also generally people who speak for and about the poor masses – in particular those for whose benefit development programmes are designed. We are the people who create a ‘public sphere’<sup>2</sup> image of the poor masses and their abilities.

Why focus on this African “elite” in terms of both the subjects and the objects of the research? The answer is simple: because we are the people who use the tools of ICTs and, in our capacity as media people and/or public intellectuals, have more exposure to these tools and greater potential to access them than our poor fellow citizens. In addition, we also have a kind of ‘social responsibility’ to communicate about, and assess, these tools in order to make them understandable to counterparts within the elite, and where possible to broader societies.

This research further addresses the assumptions and claims made regarding ICTs, in particular:

- Africa is behind and needs to play catch-up
- Poverty alleviation lies in ICTs
- Liberalisation of the telecoms sector will deliver better services and more affordable access to telecoms by a broader group of users, including the poor and those in underserved rural areas.

## 1.2 Objectives

This study was conducted to broadly:

- gauge the quality of media coverage of (a) contemporary ICT policy issue(s) in policy-influential media (looking at the coverage of ICT policy debates and decisions in the target countries); and at a more secondary level, to:

- gauge the quantity of coverage of ICT policy issues in policy-influential media.

This entailed the need to evaluate media based on:

- o their interest in ICT policy issues
- o what the approach is in coverage of these issues: do the media work toward bringing about change or influencing policies made by decision-makers by initiating debates in their newspapers or broadcast programmes, or do they merely report facts without commentary, analysis or critique;
- o journalists’ knowledge of ICT issues and applications.

Other aims:

The research sought to understand the level of media awareness and the understanding of ICT policy issues as expressed by journalists, editors, and in some cases, policy-makers, activists, through in-depth interviews, and as understood through the observation of these media in their coverage of ICT policy issues, in order to:

- Inform future media training and adjust these where necessary
- Understand why media coverage of ICT policy is necessary/important in terms of its impacts in the world and our understanding of the world
- Start a database of case-studies to inform future investigations and follow-up
- Start to develop a sense of general trends in the coverage of ICT policy issues in Africa (which are also to be tested during follow-up research projects)
- Frame future Highway Africa activities and create further synergies with the specific activities within the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University.

## 1.3 Methodology and Approach

Considering the complexity of qualitative research, this project provided the opportunity to think anew about the role/s we play in dealing with the life-worlds and sensitivities of other people.

ICTs were used in various ways to facilitate the process of conducting African research: email, online storing and transferring of information (to side-step difficulties with connectivity in sending large files), telephone (international phone calls to researchers, when email connections were down or too slow). Many researchers make use of free web mail services because of the costs of having paid email accounts through an ISP. In Senegal, for example, the daily at which Sophie Ly works, uses a dial-up account that is shared with other organisations, and has, as their organisational email address, a Yahoo account.

### 1.3.1 Media Monitoring and Observation

Except for Kenya, which served primarily as a pilot research experience, in each country, policy-influential<sup>4</sup> media were monitored for a period of four weeks. Where ICT policy events were held, media coverage of the event was monitored in the periods before, during and after the event. In the latter case, researchers also attended these events to further assess the media's interpretation of the event versus the realities which they themselves experienced.

### 1.3.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders in the ICT policy/media contexts of the countries under study. For the study as a whole, more than 150 people were interviewed<sup>5</sup>.

### 1.3.3 Timeframes

On average, setting up and conducting interviews took researchers about 3 weeks in addition to the 4 weeks of media monitoring. Draft reports then took a further 3-4 weeks to finalise before the final composite report could be written. This stage of the process took a further 2-3 weeks, making the overall research time 4-5 months.

Taking into account variables and diversions that stemmed from the research process – viz. language and cultural disparateness, translations – the project spanned the period from mid-February to September 2004.

## 1.4 Researchers

In-country researchers were enlisted to conduct this research. Such researchers are more familiar with the realities of their own countries, and therefore provide more useful information in their reports (information that would otherwise not have surfaced), and also show a greater understanding of media culture in their countries. As such, they also relate better to the pool of media practitioners who were observed in and through the media, and with whom interviews were conducted. This has the double-edged effect of allowing the research to be reflexive.

Researchers have largely been journalists and other media professionals, or those who work closely with the media in their countries of origin and residence. This has also meant that they have direct access to editors and other journalists, and an understanding of the hours and workloads of other journalists.



In recruiting researchers, the following criteria were used:

- Gender balance
  - o Three out of the six researchers were women
  
- Local language (spoken by the researcher in the given particular country):
  - o French in Senegal and DRC.
  - o Portuguese in Mozambique.
  - o Amharic in Ethiopia.
  
- Knowledge of the ICT policy sector in the country and knowledge of the media sector in the country:
  - o Following the Kenya pilot study (which was done by a non-resident) it was recognised that researchers who were based in the country under study, and had knowledge of both sectors were in a better position to understand and reflect on both the actions of the ICT policy sector and media.
  
- Origin/home base of researcher
  - o Since the study was conducted on limited funds which inhibited travel and subsistence expenditure, it was further found that researchers who met all of the other criteria, and who were based in the home country (consuming and interacting with the media regularly and consistently) would be given preference.
  - o The researchers selected made use of their networks in the media world – an additional advantage that facilitated good use of the limited time available to conduct the study.

## 1.5 Overall Report Structure

### Introduction

Interrogating the assumptions within the ICT policy/media nexus discourse as understood by media actors, the introduction focuses on the meanings behind the rhetoric used in relation to

ICTs. This, to better understand the context within which this research was conducted, and to frame it in broader policy discussions around media and ICTs in Africa.

### Assumptions within the media/ICT discourse

Based on research conducted on ICT discourse, this section focuses on some assumptions that have surfaced during this research, and speak to a broader set of assumptions regarding the media and ICTs.

### Discussion and analysis

This section focuses on research findings for each of the countries, with detailed discussion on and interpretation of these findings, in particular in relation to African realities, ICT discourse and training projects geared toward journalists.

### Country reports

Each of the country reports has been structured around the same main points, and is introduced by a quick profile with general information on the country. The reasoning for the kind of information that is included in this section, is explained in the Introduction below.

### Kenya – lessons learnt from a pilot

The Kenya study was the first in the series of studies conducted. As such, it was regarded as a pilot. This country report is therefore treated differently and presented in a somewhat different format to the other country reports, in that the focus is on lessons learnt for the overall approach to the research.

### Mozambique

The Mozambican study, conducted by journalist Zenaida Machado, focuses on media coverage in relation to the country's ICT policy, in particular how, and if this policy is understood by policy-influential media. For the interview section, a debate



was held with various journalists, while interviews with two of the editors of monitored media were conducted individually.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

The DRC researcher, Espérance Bayedila Bakanda, attended an event, La Fête de l'Internet en RdCongo. Media coverage of this event was monitored before, during and after the event, while interviews focused on how the media see their role, and their understanding of ICT policy.

### **Nigeria**

Research in Nigeria was conducted by John Dada, whose focus was to attempt to identify the range of ICT policy issues raised in the media, and to assess the quality of the coverage of these issues. The study period also coincided with a significant ICT event, the e-Nigeria, focusing on the role of the ECOWAS<sup>6</sup> in the WSIS<sup>7</sup> process.

### **Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, Filmon Tekle, one of very few journalists with an ICT beat, conducted the study, focusing on two daily and two weekly newspapers that had been identified as policy influential. In-depth interviews were conducted with editors, journalists, government officials and Members of Parliament on Ethiopian national ICT policy.

### **Senegal**

The Senegal study was conducted by journalist Sophie Ly who monitored five daily newspapers, two weeklies and a national press agency, focusing on their coverage of three current social and economic themes relating to ICTs. Interviews were conducted with journalists and press editors as well as political leaders, covering diverse aspects around these themes.

## 1.6 Key Findings

### **Key findings**

While the activity of the ICT sector varies in each of the countries under study, the media in general show little interest in ICTs. Ethiopia was the only country that showed a significant amount of coverage during the study period, including letters to the editor.

What holds true for all of the media monitored, is the fact that all of the ICT coverage – whether in an ICT excerpt or in the main newspaper – show no analysis or critique of ICTs or the ICT sector, pointing to a lack of understanding in the media of ICT policy issues in general.

Each of the studies revealed the following specific findings as they relate to media coverage and media engagement with ICT (policy) issues.

### **Mozambique**

- Language of ICTs being English limits engagement
- Pressing social and economic issues receive media attention over ICT coverage
- Younger people are regarded as the 'experts' in ICTs
- No access to ICTs for the media means no interest in coverage – a general scarcity of resources in newsrooms
- Editors have a discomfort with providing 'corporate space' regarding 'branded' stories (e.g. New innovations from Vodacom/ Microsoft, or, for example, these companies donating computers to a school), because they fear losing editorial integrity
- Social barriers to ICTs: there is an absence of ICTs in the daily lives of Mozambicans for two reasons: 1. Because they are not regarded as part of African culture; 2. The cost of ICTs vs the cost of living

**DRC**

- Little or no ICT policy-related coverage evident during monitoring period
- Government officials are loath to talk about ICTs
- Policy-makers and decision-makers are interested in increasing gain from telecoms operators
- ICT policy-related coverage is not a media priority
- ICTs are regarded as cultural or social phenomena by the media and are reported on as such, i.e. not as a sectoral issue on their own, but as connected to 'society' or 'economics' or 'politics' – whichever the case may be
- Journalists' working conditions and facilities are poor
- The media assumes that ICTs will solve societal problems

**Nigeria**

- ICT policy coverage can be found in inserts targeted at the IT industry
- Business/private sector interests are given priority because "they pay the piper"
- Government and industry are the main users, consumers and spokespersons of ICTs

**Ethiopia**

During the period monitored, compared to other countries monitored, Ethiopia showed a notable amount of ICT coverage, although with a marginal amount of this coverage focusing on policy issues.

- ICTs feature prominently in the media
- Editorials and letters to the editor reveal a major policy crisis with relation to telecoms policy
- Disabled people in the information society have received policy and media attention (news, but no analysis or critique)
- Government holds the monopoly in terms of telephony, and issues raised in interviews relate to the debate on privatisation/liberalisation and the assumed accompanying improved quality of service delivery. This study in particular, reveals the policy assumption that private operators equal

better service for the majority.

**Senegal**

- Despite an active ICT sector, media coverage is limited to events-related coverage
- Coverage of ICT events is treated no differently to coverage of other general events; and the press play no proactive role other than reporting on events (no engagement, analysis)
- ICT policy issues are driven by market competition
- 'Cutting & pasting' from international publications pushes a particular agenda (not necessarily in the national interest) – because the media does not understand issues surrounding ICTs (perception that it is too complex for them to understand; and that international sources hold knowledge on these matters); and linked to this,
- the press limits itself to factual and descriptive coverage (no ability to engage; an absence of sense of power, revealed by a lack of understanding)
- General limited media interest in ICTs
- "No political dynamics are exerting an influence on the development of policies, giving free reign to international institutions and foreign investors to mould the regulatory guidelines" – political dynamics are those of the global world/global forces

**Chapter Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The concept Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) includes the tools and the processes used to archive, access, retrieve, manipulate, produce, present and exchange information by electronic or other automated means. This includes hardware (physical machinery) and software (programming to make the machinery operational), telecommunications in the form of personal computers (PCs), scanners, digital cameras, digital video equipment, faxes, cellular phones, modems, Digital Versatile Disks (DVDs),

radio and TV, database programmes and multimedia programmes.

<sup>2</sup> Public sphere refers to that realm of social or political life from which public opinion can arise. This means that the media is not only a means for the spreading of news, but a “dealer in public opinion”. (Habermas, 1964:118).

<sup>3</sup> John Kay, Why the Atkins approach is bad for business. *Financial Times*, Wednesday, February 18, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Policy-influential media has been defined as those media that are consumed by opinion-makers, policy-makers and decision-makers, who would also need these media for information in order to conduct their business.

<sup>5</sup> This figure includes a public opinion poll (vox pop) that was informally conducted with 45 people in Ethiopia.

<sup>6</sup> Economic Community of West African States.

<sup>7</sup> World Summit on the Information Society.



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## 2. Introduction

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This research sought to assess media coverage of ICT issues in general, with a focus on policy issues in Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, DRC, Senegal and Ethiopia in order to ascertain the nature and levels of understanding with regard to ICTs, and the policy world that governs it as reflected in the media. Insights are drawn from national coverage with relation to ICT policy understanding in the media. This report also highlights lessons learnt and concludes with recommendations. Taking into account lessons learnt from other research regarding capacity building, research ethics, participatory approaches; and thinking through the lessons learned (reflexively) from this study as it was being conducted – are factors that informed part of the methodology, the time frames, and the realities of working on the African continent.

Accordingly, the project included making an allowance for issues of connectivity, online time, and political shifts in the country of study. This experience can further guide future research projects in terms of reasonable time frames (given the lags in online response and political barriers, and the difficulties in online access even for this elite), lessons learnt and insights gleaned from this overall approach.

Questions of power and hierarchy were considered, so as to not create or perpetuate inequitable north-south tensions around questions of knowledge, capacity and expertise, and in this sense, the research activity itself became an opportunity to exchange information.

Within the framework presented to researchers,

they were given reasonable freedom to choose the approach that would best work for them in their contexts. While this can be challenging and time-consuming, it is a process that allows for self-evaluation embedded in a cycle of learning.

The research has largely focused on the press as policy-influential medium, although print media is consumed and read by a very small percentage that represents the literate and economically powerful elite in all of the countries under study.

As qualitative researchers, we have not stood outside of the objects of our study; and have engaged with ourselves and our 'objects of study', working toward understanding better the meanings of the worlds in which we find ourselves. This meaning is conveyed through this research report, demonstrating the complex and creative processes of making sense of qualitative data in a kind of structured 'story'.

Having interpreted the role of qualitative research as understanding social actions – in this case understanding ICT policy coverage in policy-influential media – this report reflects some of the underlying perceptions that come from the rhetoric surrounding ICTs, in relation to the locations in which they find themselves.

Moves from oral communication to the African 'talking drum' to tablets, papyrus, to POTS (plain old telephone services), PANS (pretty amazing new services) to ICTs, have shown the development of storing and transmitting facts, ideas, knowledges, beliefs and creative expressions as content by different media (Adegbola & Dada, 2004). This highlights the continuing importance



of the media (in its different forms and facets) to communicate between generations, communities, individuals and across different kinds of borders (e.g. geographical, economic, sectoral, gender, class and race). As such the media is an important tool for creating and sustaining social cohesion, and can just as easily be utilised as the tools for creating social dislocation, chaos and dispersion.

Access to the tools that facilitate the flow of information in the Information Society has been identified as one of the major questions relating to the capacity of African media and their ability to participate (perhaps eventually even by their own rules and standards) in the Information Society, though a major challenge is to create, inform and communicate in ways that remain appropriate to the context of the society/ies within which the media are located. This is another point at which the media have an important role to play as mediator between policy-making processes and the public for whom these policies (whether formally constructed or informally defined through practice) are intended.

Each of the countries identified for this research shows a current adjustment or transition to democratic systems, which at their best are inclusive, representative, and provide frameworks for citizen empowerment. Some of these frameworks have come to be demonstrated in policy, documented or enacted, showing governments' attempts at moving towards putting systems in place to achieve certain goals. What is of relevance to us here, are those policies (formal or informal) relating to ICTs and the African Information Society.





### 3. Assumptions within the media/ICT discourse

Wilson (2002) in a research paper looking at the assumptions underlying the international public ICT policy and development discourse, considers the implications of these assumptions, which are usually based in language framing ICTs and their worth, and the related importance of development. If a discourse<sup>1</sup> produces sets of categories through which we come to understand the world, then it is particularly important to look at how it can guide our action in the world.

#### ICTs

1. There is an assumption, based on notions of globalisation, that ICTs provide the fastest means of joining the global world and are therefore the means for participating in accessing (though – and this is a huge gap – not contributing to) knowledge/information.

This assumption creates the perception of the need for access and bringing on board those who had not formerly been part of this new world, so locating that responsibility in the camp of those who have, and are 'developed'. Africa in particular (though other southern nations have also been included) has been described as 'information poor' and as such the creation of the African Information Society has been 'necessitated' to bridge these gaps from non/under-developed to developing to developed.

2. Linked to the above is the assumption that ICTs

and their contents are neutral, and as such can transcend the boundaries of race, power and economic hierarchies, so giving an equal voice to all who utilise ICTs.

This assumption erases the need to consider the political nature (internationally and nationally) of ICTs in forwarding global development agendas in relation to political and economic development efforts within the country itself as these speak to the history and value-sets of that country.

3. Access will increase productivity.

This notion does not take into account the fact that productivity and work ethic depend on people or that skills are needed to make access meaningful.

4. Access equals development through social integration and networking.

This implies that access will produce a historically connected, strong distribution of power in a society. While it is so that access to technology has certainly made possible the connections between previously disparate worlds in many instances, this has not happened merely through the acquisition of the tools.

5. The interchangeability of the concepts 'ICTs' and 'internet', blurs the concepts into one, creating the impression that ICTs equal access to the internet.



6. Roll-out and infrastructure equal empowerment. As with 3 above, this assumption erases the human (social, political) interface that is required to make the tools of technology functional. Technology alone does not determine the path of development or empowerment.

This assumption further does not take into account the negative and often disempowering effects that technology can have, based on language use, ability and fear of the technology.

7. ICTs are the solution to social challenges.

While it is true that the means a society or community uses to produce, process, store and distribute information, affect the patterns of information flow in that society, these patterns cannot be equated with social change; nor can the social impediments of poverty, unequal access to natural resources, illiteracy and the dominance of English as language of technology be addressed by merely providing access to ICTs.

## Values

1. Notions of the importance of internationally created and set frameworks over locally developed understandings of both knowledge and information – based on an assumption that indigenous knowledges, in comparison to these global frameworks of what constitutes knowledge, are lesser and need to be exchanged for these more ‘universal’ understandings of knowledge (where knowledge is verifiable by means of data).

This has implications for how media evaluate their role as information/knowledge producers as opposed to being brokers or agents of the knowledge/information produced by others, and how they write and report on issues of local concern within the ICT policy and media conversation.

2. Africa needs to play catch-up to Northern countries.

This assumption feeds into conceptions that because the North, or others have it, it must be of value. This means that pride and dignity are valued externally, which in itself is deprecating since what we have (as Africans) is perceived (by others and ourselves) as not being valuable.

This notion further creates the impression that there are no alternatives: Africa must either catch up now, or be excluded from the global economy forever.

Another value judgment inherent in this claim is that the greater good not only exists outside Africa, it will or should be provided by the outside world. It also creates a kind of passivity on the part of Africa – based on its being stripped of ‘knowledge’, therefore needing assistance.

Perceptions of what is efficient and desirable, and what qualifies as progress, are shaped over time within a community. These perceptions have been, to a large extent, imposed on African realities through the weight of colonial histories. This means that Africans have largely not contributed to the construction of the dominant discourse around notions of progress and development, but have been subject to these notions, and have had little recourse but to accept the meanings and implications thereof.

## The power of the media to effect policy changes

Is it the role of democratic media to reflect and influence shifting public opinion and to re-interpret questions of power?

The media is generally understood – by themselves and those who consume and engage with



them – as a powerful tool for effecting or speeding up the processes of social change. In this sense, most media are policy influential, in formal and informal ways. Print media plays a special part as a resource (and pressure) for the policy-making elite.

Cited media roles often include: keeping a check on government and others by reporting on the follow-up and follow-through of promises made; furthering societal objectives by reflecting images of how the given society sees itself; representing the interests of the elite and/or the public; providing distraction from daily life-realities through entertainment; by acting as a platform for society communing with itself interactively; by setting and framing issues for the political agenda.

While not all of these affect national policy formulation and implementation, it is nonetheless clear that the media has enormous power in negotiating the relationship between the state, the elite, civil society and – in the case of broadcasting – also the ‘general public’; in facilitating the interactions between public and political spheres, in shaping the notions of what ‘public sphere’ entails, in shaping and reflecting public opinion and public values.

By making use of the tools of technology and making information on these tools publicly accessible, media coverage of ICTs has the potential to include the public (and at least the elite public) in policy discussions around ICTs. It can also influence the utility of these tools in the public eye. In this way, new technologies could entail new ways of shaping a public sphere and possibly reshaping notions of democratic governance.

When ICTs are covered in the media to such an extent that they inform, educate and instruct by engaging readers’ understanding of ICTs, the power relations in terms of who owns knowledge on this ‘specialist’ area are shifted and can begin

to include a larger part of society. And, further, to create the possibility of public input into and scrutiny of ICT policy formulation implementation and review.

## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup> Where discourse is understood to refer to “a particular system of making sense of the social world out of which commonly accepted actions emerge” (Wilson, 2002).



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## 4. Discussion/Analysis

“The capacity to plan a course of action for one’s life and to pursue that plan is crucially effected by the knowledge environment within which one does the planning and execution. The capacity to acquire knowledge, to determine for oneself what is true and untrue, to access information from which to make that judgment, to be able to communicate or not communicate as one wills, to choose one’s mode of expression and one’s audience, are important elements of the capacity of an individual to be a source of willed choices that affect how his or her life will go.” (Benkler, 1998: 194)

If one were to take this as the basis from which to evaluate media coverage of ICT policy issues in all of the countries under study, the following could be noted at the outset:

1. The knowledge environment regarding ICT policy in Africa rests in the hands of an international elite that includes policy analysts, policy and decision makers, ministries of communication, etc. – and does not include the broader mass of society (and even business in many cases) who do not form part of these elites. In some notable cases, while the media forms part of the African elite in terms of access to information (and technology) the media itself often does not have this information to hand, and can therefore not communicate it.

2. The power of the media (taking into account what has been discussed in the previous chapter), is diminished if the knowledge environment in which it finds itself with regards to ICTs, does not make allowance for measuring and evaluating the truth or relevance of statements.

3. While it has been noted that the media has relatively greater access to the tools of technology (than the general population), this access is limited by economic factors which impact on resources, and the utility of these resources.

4. The capacity of the media to communicate information is limited by their own sense of powerlessness with regards to ICT policy issues, so including them with those who passively have to wait for information to be presented. This diminishes the power of the media to influence policy, and their power to make informed choices about the course of their life (as well as the lives of those they claim social responsibility for) based on knowledge and understanding.

Given all of what has been noted as background to and considerations for this research, other questions for analysis include: Who is represented in a story? Whose interests are served? What is the balance between the presentation of facts and the interpretation of these facts? To whom is the policy – in its presentation in the media – accountable? What have been the roles of civil society, business and other sectors in policy formulation? Is there an understanding or awareness of the economic realities versus ‘ideal’ situations? Does the policy process and the reporting on these issues (the public-making) take positive cognisance of impacts on poor and marginalised groups?

Good coverage of ICT policy stories is governed by the same set of values that make good journalism. As with every other good journalism practice, these values cover who has been sourced, whether the story is balanced (showing all sides,

not a particular bias), whether it shows consideration for the poor and marginalised (including women, older people who have by virtue of their age or status been excluded from ICT processes and utility), comparing mere policy-speak to the realities within that country; recognising public relations over informative, important news stories; and to validate the accuracy of the story.

High-level policy discussions have focused on questions of e-governance, tele-health, policy governing electronic transactions, infrastructure, content and communications regulations, and the deregulation and liberalisation that has come to be an inevitable 'side-effect' of the democratisation of access to various processes and information. Privatisation has also been hailed as the means to achieve efficient service delivery, and this notion has been echoed in much of the media. The selling off of public assets to private enterprises or individuals, makes the question of who benefits a particularly complex one (where private individuals come from historically disadvantaged communities and have now advanced into different social and economic brackets, as in Ethiopia for example).

For this reason it is important to have an awareness of ICT policy issues in the context of human interactions and human development and how media coverage of these issues has a further impact on the development and setting of policy frameworks.

The current reality is that ICT reportage is often focused on events rather than processes – because processes take long and require dedicated follow-through. Editors would rather use resources on issues directly relating to the immediate socio-political reality of their readers.

The research also highlights that any coverage of randomly selected ICT issues, without being

contextualised for its audience, does not make a meaningful story, nor does it make one that provides understanding or that links to policy questions.

Using the above as background, the analysis has been separated into five themes:

1. Socio-political context as it relates to ICT policy and newsroom capacity.
2. Media coverage of ICT policy related issues in the monitoring periods.
3. Interviews, and the underlying assumptions regarding ICTs.
4. Main findings, comparing and interpreting meanings from each of the countries.
5. General – themes indirectly related to ICT policy coverage.

## Socio-Political Context

### Mozambique

The fact that the majority of the population speaks Portuguese, not English, is a limiting factor to Mozambicans' interest in and engagement with ICTs. As is the case with most of the countries under study, mobile phone users far exceed main line subscribers (comp. 83 000 registered main lines against more than 300 000 mobile phone users).

The majority of the population (almost 13 of the 19 million) live in poverty. Literacy levels are low (47.7%), and the majority of the reading public cannot afford to buy print media, due to the high unemployment rate. The state newspaper, Jornal Noticias, is however available on walls in public spaces, making it accessible to a larger portion of the population. While the constitutional entrenchment of press freedom has encouraged the launch of many newspapers, financial constraints make it difficult to sustain, and many have closed down.

Most newsrooms have 6 – 10 computers, with 1

connected to the internet. Journalists make regular use of cell phones to which they have access.

### **DRC**

Civil war, tribal conflicts, ongoing violence and a large external debt (US\$11 billion to its US\$270 million revenue) have rendered DRC poor. Literacy in French, Kingwana, Lingala or Tshiluba is comparatively high at 65.5%, although broad access to the media (print) is limited by economic factors. Of the 58 million total population, 50 000 are internet users, and mobile phone users exceed main line users by 550 000, making engagement in ICTs the realm of a small elite. There is 1 ISP with a monopoly on internet access, pushing costs to around US\$1 700/month, way out of the range of most individuals.

The vibrant media function under severe economic and political constraints, and as such, is subsumed in focusing media attention on politics.

Newsrooms have to cope with frequent power cuts, and the cost of newspapers places them out of reach of ordinary citizens.

### **Nigeria**

Nigeria's considerable external debt places it second to DRC in terms of poverty measured by external debt against national revenues. The country is also beset by internal inter-faith tensions which have an impact on the political situation in the country.

Nigeria has a varied ethnic community, of which the Yoruba (constituting 21% of the population) are well educated, and form part of the elite. A large percentage (the highest of the countries under study, at 68%) of the population is literate, and the small margin between male and female literacy rates is notable.

The fact that English is the official language has

facilitated access to and engagement with ICTs. The print media is vibrant, although the majority of the population use radio as source of information and entertainment.

Despite the growing IT industry, Nigeria does not have a national ICT policy in place, and it does not appear to be an issue of much concern.

### **Ethiopia**

Despite half of the population living in poverty, and less than half the population literate, the Ethiopian media has a long history. As in most African countries, radio is the most accessible medium for the majority of the population.

Ethiopia is the only country of those under study, to have a higher percentage of land line telephone users than mobile phone users. As is indicated in the study, mobile phone connectivity is sporadic at best.

As is the case in DRC, 1 ISP controls access to the internet. The telecommunications monopoly rests in the hands of the state, and the poor quality of service is noted in this study in particular, revealing an unexplored policy assumption that liberalisation/privatisation will resolve the problem of poor services.

The media, for the most part, are unaware of the existence of a national ICT policy, which is currently in the draft process, although there is vibrant discussion in the media relating to ICT issues. Ethiopia reflected the highest number of ICT-related coverage (49) during the study period, putting it high on the media agenda.

### **Senegal**

The structural poverty in Senegal (largely indebted to the World Bank) provides the framework for national development. Although French is the official language of Sen-

egal, its use is limited to a small percentage living in Dakar. Wolof is the dominant language, and is spoken by more than the Wolof ethnic group. This influence has become evident in the media – in the rise of Pulaar and Sérère community radio stations, in order to preserve their own languages.

Telecommunications rest under the monopoly of Sonatel, the national agency, running efficiently. The total liberalisation of telephonic access was announced in July 2004. The Senegalese government announced its commitment to developing ICTs, and is treating this sector as a priority. Unlike any of the other countries under study, there is currently a multitude of telecentres and cyber-cafés, offering universal access to telephone and computer services.

The Senegalese press is dynamic, independent and shows a high level of professionalism, but coverage in terms of ICTs is lacking.

For reasons of literacy and cost, newspaper readership is limited to elite decision-makers.

## Media Coverage

A total of 25 media were monitored for this research. Of these, the breakdown is as follows:

- o Press: 15 dailies and 6 weeklies
- o Television: 3 (in DRC only)
- o Press agency: 1 (in Senegal only)

During the study period a total of 117 ICT-related stories were noted.

Given the general lack of interest shown by the media in ICT coverage (including event-related coverage), the majority of the stories in this study were ICT-related stories, of which the Senegal study focused solely on ICT-policy issues. In the case of the media monitored, print media is

elitist and policy-influential in so far as it reaches decision-makers.

High unemployment rates render newspapers too costly for the average citizen; and high illiteracy rates render ICT discussions elitist. Radio is the most affordable medium for the majority of the populations, but is generally in this study deemed to be less policy-relevant as regards the elite.

## Types of Stories

It is notable throughout that there is very little engagement or analysis with regards ICTs in the media monitored. The media show a general unawareness of what ICT policy means, and the complexity of its connection with social development.

While most countries either have, or are in the process of developing a national ICT policy, media interest in it is minimal. In reportage the impression is created that the implementation of national ICT policies is being taken on by the private sector.

ICTs in general are regarded as issues interesting the elite, and the media only take an interest in covering ICT policy issues if there is a simple and obvious correlation between the policy issue and the social, cultural and economic conditions in the country. They are of little or no interest to the media, except where it could mean the provision of computers or advertising revenue, e.g. Nigerian IT coverage is done for and paid by IT companies (see Nigerian interviews).

Women are largely absent from policy debates and media coverage of ICT issues.

Coverage could be divided into the following themes:

- o Telecommunications (including broadcasting,

mobile communications]

This theme is central in all of the studies, with items focusing on rural access, the expansion of telecoms infrastructure and the liberalisation of telecommunications. Universal access (seen mostly as phone lines – land and mobile), in particular as this relates to cost, telephony services, infrastructure, including access to equipment, are also central issues.

#### o Education

This coverage focused on encouraging youth to engage with the internet, and with creating possibilities for disabled members of society. In the Senegal study, education is connected with job creation or conservation (articles on ICTs and continuing education; working from home as means for the disabled to enter into the labour market); and in Ethiopia education refers more directly to policy matters from the relevant ministry.

#### o New technological developments

These included items on increasing the duration of Braille books (Mozambique, from an international source), web site development (Senegal), the promotion of new hardware or software, the development of a new multi-capacity fax system (Nigeria, from an international source). A particularly noteworthy article focused on indigenous technology development in Nigeria.

#### o ICT events

The events monitored in Kenya, Nigeria and DRC received minimal media coverage, with no follow-up. At best, items merely reproduced press releases sent to the media from the organisers of the events.

Additional themes:

- o Mozambican coverage included an item regarding crime and security.
- o Nigerian coverage included items on internet usage.

## Origin of Stories

This section in the country reports provides information on the source and focus of stories, i.e. divided into local, national, international, and for some of the countries, regional.

### National

In Ethiopia, 41 of the 49 stories were of national interest, and originated in Ethiopia. In Senegal, all of the stories were of national origin and interest, and were produced in the newsrooms of the newspapers under study. This is also true of DRC, where most of the coverage was of national interest and originated in the country itself. An article of particular interest, is one reflecting indigenous technology, developed in Nigeria for use by Nigerians.

### Regional/African

Coverage reflected few regional stories or angles, and refers to those that extend beyond the borders of the country, to the broader Africa. These include a story on a women's portal in Cameroon (DRC), and an event connected with TRASA (Mozambique). For the most part, coverage that reflects a regional interest is minimal, and does not reflect understanding or analysis, merely reporting on the items/events because awareness had been created of the importance of certain ICT developments.

### International

Most of the coverage that reflects an international focus, i.e. international private sector interest stories relating to IT developers like Microsoft, and activities relating to mobile phone companies like Vodacom or MTN, show little or no connection to the social or economic impacts of these developments for the countries themselves. In these cases, the focus is solely on the business aspect of these developments, and again, reflects little or no analysis beyond presenting information.



### Local

Local stories refer to those that relate to particular towns, or the place in which a particular event was taking place. In both Ethiopia and Mozambique this was evident, and refer to the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure outside of the capital cities.

News items were mostly produced from press briefings and press releases.

Most items were produced by male reporters, and reflect the general absence of women from both the ICT-media sector and from journalism practice. Women are generally excluded from doing the 'men's work' of writing hard news.

In general, coverage reflected little or no analysis or depth of understanding, either describing or reproducing statements, facts or plans.

This is largely because the media do not understand the social/political impacts of ICTs and therefore cannot reflect any understanding in reportage to make information clearer to policy makers let alone to ordinary people. This argument is supported by interviewees' comments on ICTs in general and ICT policy in particular.

### Interviews

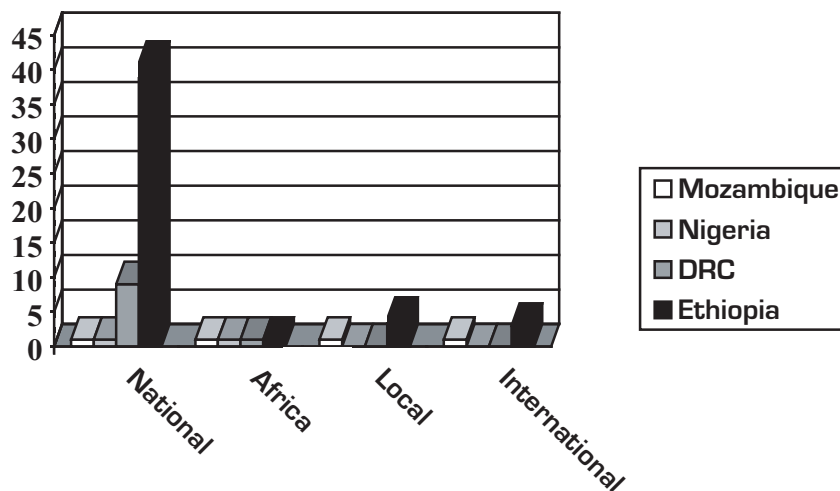
Interviews were centred around questions relating to the role and position of the media, ICT policy, and coverage related to ICT policy issues.

#### The role of the media

In general, the media seem to have a sense of their power to influence policy through their ability to direct and shift public opinion on matters of

Figure 1:

#### Spatial jurisdiction of stories by content



importance. When asked directly, interviewees also reveal some policy influence, e.g. Ethiopian airlines and KLM (see Ethiopia interviews).

Most journalists see their role as that of mediator, informer, watchdog, and populariser of knowledge.

Jérôme Sekana (Raga TV, DRC) says:  
*We serve as lampe-témoin<sup>1</sup> for decision-makers. This means that we help them to understand things and make appropriate decisions for the people...*

The editor of *Savana* (Mozambique) readily claims that his newspaper is policy influential because it has changed government behaviour on a specific issue. The attention of the newspaper is focused on social and political affairs and infrastructure that deal directly with people's lives. But ICTs are not included in this range, and they do not prioritise ICTs:

*Before talking about ICTs we should analyse whether this issue is or is not part of people's reality. To deal with ICTs we have to have at least the resources and the money. When someone does not have money to buy bread, how can you expect him to buy or speak of a computer or a cell phone?* (Fernando Gonçalves)

One exception is Amadou Bira Gueye (Senegal), who when asked about the influence of his medium, replied:

*To be honest, I know that we have very little impact.*

He goes on to explain that the regulatory context is influenced by international forces and the market economy, and that these influences make engagement difficult.

### **Understanding media coverage of ICTs**

Journalists and editors expressed a desire to improve ICT coverage, also explaining that the reasons ICT policy is rarely covered are to be found in

financial resources and the political situations in their countries. Being focused in upon politico-social matters, the connection between these matters and ICTs is not evident and therefore does not receive much interest.

Some editors reflect an understanding of the importance of ICTs, and attempt to make information accessible to the general public, but again lack the resources to continually focus on ICTs. There is, however, a separation between ICTs and current affairs.

In Mozambique in particular, editors admit to sourcing ICT-related stories from the internet, and also assert the fact that the language of ICTs being English, limits interest, since many journalists do not make use of the internet and do not speak English. The sense of ICTs not being part of Mozambican culture is further expressed as a limitation to interest in these matters.

There is a general sense of needing to be better informed on ICT matters in order to write, speak or engage with ICTs. The cost of new media is also cited as reason for lack of coverage. Some quotes from Mozambican journalists:

*We have to recognise that we don't know much about ICTs and this makes us afraid of it...  
...how can we cover ICTs when we journalists do not have access to them?*

Journalists blame directors and editors for their lack of access to ICTs, which they name as part of the barriers to writing about or understanding ICTs:

*When you go to the editor or director's office, you find a very good computer, switched off.*

*They do not care. It looks as if this issue is not important. If they do, when the computers arrive, they choose the best for themselves when they don't even know how to use them.*

Similar comments were made in DRC by the edi-

tor-in-chief of *Le Potentiel*:

*The state of media enterprises does not allow us to do something in this regard because we do not have enough money. We hardly have appropriate facilities from our employers to be able to work the way we should. For this reason, we are trying to do what we can...*

Coverage is generally uncoordinated and ad-hoc.

From the point of view of editors, ICT coverage in general seems to be evaluated in terms of how important (or its relative importance) it is for which readers. For example: how does it relate to job creation, the impacts on the environment, questions of health, governance, public service, women or other marginalised groups? The connection between ICTs and these needs, is however, not clear to editors or journalists who make the decisions on whether or not ICTs speak to daily realities.

However, in Nigeria, ICT issues are often covered from a purely economic-interest perspective, serving the private sector. In explaining the existence of a special IT pullout, a journalist explained:

*This section targets the IT industry, and sometimes that is the only section that interests them so it is important to make it easily detachable for them. The IT private sector is the main target.*

Another Nigerian journalist explained:

*ICT policy gets mentioned regularly in the Champion. The weekly 8-page ICT pullout on Thursdays has reports on industry development. Industries in Lagos are keen readers of Champion on Thursdays.*

Most of the journalists expressed a desire to be briefed on ICT events, or ICT policy, in order to report on them effectively.

## Main Findings

### Lack of Interest

Media coverage of ICT policy issues is scant and ICT coverage in general shows little understanding of the sector, and of the socio-political implications of ICTs for broader society.

While ICT coverage lacks insight and engagement, this does not necessarily reflect the state of journalism in the countries under study. In political coverage the analysis and engagement is of an entirely different level, reflecting an understanding and more thorough journalism. This is, for the most part, due to a lack of interest in matters that are not directly related to the everyday lives of their reading audience, bound up in the Catch 22 of uninterestedness based on a lack of understanding of the subject matter.

This 'lack of interest' further relates to the gap between ICTs and what has been called 'African realities' (culturally) and more immediately pressing political issues relating to the structural realities in which people find themselves.

### Quality of Coverage

Across all of the countries monitored, media coverage of ICT issues was descriptive and factual at best, following the standard hard news norms of reporting on the basic information (who, what, where, when, how). An ability to analyse, interrogate or critique ICT issues was lacking. This seriously compromises media's ability to play an informed public interest role on matters of ICT policy.

### Liberalisation/Privatisation

Telecoms liberalisation and privatisation is believed to be the answer to poor service delivery connected with the state monopoly. This is an issue taken up without nuance by most of the journalists/editors interviewed, who do not show any real understanding of the issues. The need

for an alternative to moribund state operators has meant that free market solutions have been accepted as valid in a very simplistic way. Thus there is no questioning of the impacts of private or foreign ownership and control on national assets, and no interest in the strategic value of national assets being locally owned. There is silence over issues of independent regulation and universal service obligations.

Not discussed is that privatisation does not necessarily correlate with lower costs and better services. Taken for granted is a belief that liberalisation produces efficient service delivery and lower costs of ICTs, on the assumption that an increase alone in numbers of operators will mean competition, and an associated reduction of tariffs.

This is despite the privatisation and liberalisation of telecommunication in Kenya and South Africa, for example, where there has been a price hike and questionable performance in service quality. In addition (as seems to be the trend in the countries under study) South Africa is experiencing a decline in land line subscriptions (which impacts negatively on internet connectivity, especially broadband prospects), and no new licences have been awarded to new players. This means that mere privatisation has not delivered all that it was hoped to (Gillwald, 2003). A recent (October 2004) aid review conducted by the UK Department for International Development (along with the UK Treasury and Foreign Office) found that privatisation and liberalisation policies imposed on developing countries are not necessarily good for the poor such awareness is absent from the coverage.

Related to this: in looking at these media, we get a sense of the elitist views that do not necessarily reflect concern with universal access to the general population (in these cases – the unemployed, poor masses).

### **Infrastructure**

The weakness of economies in these countries determines national and personal investment in telecoms infrastructure. This has received particular focus in coverage in countries where there is little infrastructure and telecoms development (DRC, Mozambique). The range of alternative technologies with differing strengths and weaknesses is absent from most coverage.

### **Human capacity building and education**

This is raised in the interviews with journalists and editors, who express the need for training or workshops to increase their capacity to write or speak on ICTs. Human capacity building and education is necessary for ICT policy implementation and better media coverage, and links to the 'lack of interest' cited above.

### **Economic factors**

Economic limitations are constraints to greater understanding and engaging with ICTs. While the media monitored are certainly elite and have greater access to the tools than ordinary citizens, a lack of resources and the buying power to acquire the tools limit journalists' interest and ability.

## **General Insights**

It has become clear during this research process that any communications programme to enhance and develop the media's understanding of and engagement with ICTs and ICT policy, would have to be a long term process, building on existing knowledge and networks.

There is sufficient local expertise in journalism in general, which could be strengthened with appropriate training and support to extend this expertise to reporting on ICT policy issues.

Many in the media would appear to have a fear of technology, regarding it as a tool for the younger

generation, who for the most part are 'early adopters' of technology. Older journalists have little experience of and interest in ICTs, perhaps based on their fear of these unknown tools.

At the same time, no coherent, in-depth connection is made between ICTs and issues like development, freedom of speech, media freedom, and access to information and local content, amongst others. Little understanding is evident of how telecoms and internet policy issues are part of a wider picture that includes broadcasting, censorship, technology, competition and education policies for example. Nor is there awareness of Africa's indigenous knowledge resources in relation to ICTs, let alone a grasp of the widening of the digital divide as broadband becomes a first world standard for connection. Also absent seems to be a clear understanding of the centrality of policy to national and continental development, and of the importance of transparency and public participation in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and review of policy. Education is also needed on complexity of liberalisation and privatisation.

There is a general non-awareness of ICT risks like internet abuse and cyber crime (for example: spamming, hacking into banking and other security systems, human trafficking) and cyber-crime, and these issues would also have to be included in communications/media programmes geared toward building more than a one-dimensional understanding of ICTs. In short, a lot needs to be done.

## Chapter Notes

<sup>1</sup> Directly translated, *lampe-témoin* is 'lamp-witness'. The expression therefore means that they act as both presenters of knowledge and information (lighting the way with information) and witnesses or watchdogs for the public.

## 5. Country Reports

Apart from the Kenya study, each of the country reports that follows is introduced by a 'Quick Profile'. This profile includes country statistics which are to be read as context for the country as a whole, and the place of the media in that country.

### Kenya – shifting research methodologies and lessons learned

*Study conducted by James Kigozi.*

Quick Profile:

**Population:** 32,021,856

**Ethnic groups:** Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, other African 15%, non-African (Asian, European, and Arab) 1%

**Religions:** Protestant 45%, Roman Catholic 33%, indigenous beliefs 10%, Muslim 10%, other 2%

**Language:** English (official), Kiswahili (official), numerous indigenous languages

**Literacy:**

Total population: 85.1%

Male: 90.6%

Female: 79.7%

**Population below poverty line:** 50%

**Economy**

**Currency:** Kenyan shilling (KES)

**Average exchange rates:** US\$1 = 75.9356 ['03]

**External debt:** \$5.916 billion

**Revenue:** US\$2.761 billion

**Expenditure:** US\$3.406 billion

**Media & ICT Profile<sup>1</sup>:**

Telephones – main lines in use	328 400
Mobile phone users	1 590 800
ISPs	7
Radio broadcast stations	AM 24, FM 18, shortwave 6
Television broadcast stations	8
Internet country code	.ke
Internet users	400 000 (2002)
Daily newspapers	5
Weekly newspapers	1

**Study period:** 15 March to 5 April 2004

**Media monitored:** The Daily Nation, East African Standard

As the first study in the series, the Kenya study was regarded as a pilot, in order to:

1. test the viability of the research material provided to researchers,
2. test the 'functioning' of the research tools and make adjustments where necessary, and
3. test the time frames and the feasibility of conducting the research within the given six week period (including media monitoring, conducting interviews, completing the research report).

### Lessons Learnt

- o The study was conducted by James Kigozi from Uganda, which meant that more time had to be allocated to setting up interviews through contacts previously made in Kenya. Kigozi had worked as East Africa bureau chief for Nation Media Group. However, the general lack of interest in ICT issues made interviewing difficult, since most journalists did not want to engage in this discussion.
- o This meant that the timeframes were adjusted for other researchers, and in view of findings over a three-week period, the study period was increased.
- o Following this study, the research material and packs given to researchers were extended and developed in greater detail to ensure the presentation of findings and data that would inform their final reports.
- o Data analysis was excluded from researchers' tasks, although encouraged where they felt able.
- o The scope and depth of the research was expanded following this research, given the fact that not enough material was collected for an effective comparative analysis in the pilot.

### Key Findings

- o There is widespread unhappiness among ICT stakeholders in Kenya because the Kenyan gov-

ernment did not consult with stakeholders in developing their draft national ICT policy. This emerged as a major issue of dissatisfaction at the Kenya ICT Convention, the post-WSIS ICT event chosen around which policy-related ICT media coverage was monitored and observed.

- o Another important event taking place at the same time as the Kenya ICT Convention was the Kenya Investment Conference. This event garnered significant media interest, and the TV crew present at the ICT convention was called away to cover the investment conference, deemed more newsworthy. As in most African countries, political news receives the most interest, followed by economic news. According to interviews conducted with journalists, the business desk usually covers ICT-related events, but on this occasion the business desk was preoccupied by the investment conference at which the President of Kenya was speaking.
- o One of the journalists interviewed, in explaining why ICTs received minimal coverage in Kenya, said, "ICTs do not make interesting news".
- o The same journalist argued that less interesting stories were generally assigned to junior freelance journalists, but even they were unlikely to follow a story not deemed newsworthy as they are only paid for what is published, and less important news (such as ICTs) was unlikely to make its way into the newspaper when issues deemed more important were being discussed elsewhere.
- o This researcher observed that journalists who did attend the ICT convention only stayed for opening speeches and speeches of ministers, leaving immediately afterwards, thereby missing the important discussions when 'real' issues were discussed. This tendency was noted in many of the other country studies and can be understood to be a symptom of limited resources as well as news agendas that value factual descriptive coverage (hard news), neglecting in depth analytical coverage.
- o From a media company (economic-interest)

perspective, it would be considered a waste of time and money to have a journalist spending days on end out of the newsroom at a conference not considered newsworthy, whereas attending the opening addresses generates a good photo opportunity, and a quick story quoting important movers and shakers.

- o The only notable coverage on ICTs following the Kenya ICT Convention appeared in a special pullout section to the *Daily Nation* newspaper, *Nation Special Journal – Training for Life* which focused on the myriad career opportunities in the IT sector and the need for young professionals to have IT skills in order to have a successful career. These pullouts are usually aimed at generating advertising revenue for the newspaper in question, including promotional material from sponsors and advertising.

- o *Nation TV* and *Kenya TV* network also had 30-second news inserts in their primetime news bulletin announcing the conference (no analysis or critique).

- o The majority of delegates to the conference and the majority of people sourced and quoted were male.

Kenya has a draft ICT policy, but the major concern of stakeholders is that government came up with the draft without involving them. The major issues that arose during the three week period and specifically during the Kenya National ICT Convention (22-24 March 2004) and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization workshop (25-26 March 2004) in Nairobi, stemmed from the uncertainty caused by the impact of a policy that does not consider the views and concerns of all stakeholders.

The ICT policy issues were grouped under four broad areas: national ICT strategy and ICT infrastructure, ICT investment programme, ICTs and human resources, e-commerce, e-governance and ICT professional industry bodies in Kenya.

Specific areas of concern included the need for strategies to build a viable information society, the need for a clear telecommunications policy in a rapidly evolving market, challenges for telecommunications regulators, the challenge surviving regulatory uncertainty as an operator and the prospects for liberalisation of telecoms.

Other issues that came up include the challenges for the private sector in popularising broadband communications in Kenya, accessibility and distribution of ICTs to rural areas, the role of private financial institutions in financing ICT ventures and the establishment of public partnerships based on mutual trust. The forum also discussed the question of ICTs and gender, with participants arguing that women have limited access to ICTs.

Participants also agreed that government would benefit immensely in terms of quicker service delivery if it adopted a policy based on e-governance (which refers to governments making use of electronic means to facilitate service provision to the citizens of a country).

Journalists and non-media actors were interviewed at the ICT conference, because they would not otherwise fit interviews into their schedules. In an interview conducted with *Nation Television* journalist Steven Kamau, while he was covering the conference on 25 March 2004, Kamau said: *ICT does not make interesting news. That is why the Kenya Television Network crew was called off to in the middle of the opening ceremony to go and cover another event – the Kenya investment conference.*

Delegates at the ICT Convention also shuttled between the venue of the ICT convention and the Kenyatta International Conference Centre, where Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and international investors were making headline news. This news was centred on the need to curb corruption as an



incentive to attract foreign investment, resolving questions of the country's political future, issues of the constitution and the need to safeguard private investment.

As Kamau explained: *Usually, at a time like this, less newsworthy meetings like ICTs are assigned to junior freelance reporters and are likely to be left out of the paper due to limited space; moreover, even the freelance reporters prefer to go where the bigger news is because they are paid by the articles that are published, so none of them will take chances with a less newsworthy article.*"

One of the specific policy issues highlighted throughout the conference was the survival of private ICT actors in an environment of regulatory uncertainty. Kenya has an abundance of ICT actors mainly in the service industry and the telecommunications sector, but the delay by government to put in place a concrete policy that has the input of all stakeholders remains a major cause of concern among stakeholders. New investment in the ICT sector is as a result being held back as investors wait for the regulatory framework to be put in place.

This uncertainty has affected other areas, especially the capacity by government to deliver faster services to the people. Participants at the conference argued that questions of e-governance would have been implemented much faster if government was openly and readily involving the stakeholders.

Other policy issues included the need for streamlining IT training in the various training institutions and the shortage of professionals with ICT skills to invest the sector with human capacity.

The main reason given by the journalists for this lack of interest in ICTs is that it does not make earth-shattering news, whereas media organisa-

tions sell news as their main product.

### Media Coverage

The *East African Standard* has begun to include specific ICT related columns. Under the headline "Scramble to Enter Lucrative IT Super Highway Intensifies," the author William Gitonga proposes to readers that they get trained and get "a formidable start to arm yourself with information technology (IT) knowledge and skills will catapult you to the high echelons of a fulfilling career."

The article describes in detail the various openings in the IT sector, showing the areas of specialisation that are available to anybody who is interested in an IT career. Gitonga explains why it is important for anybody pursuing a professional career to have a working knowledge of IT in order to effectively and efficiently perform his or her duties.

Three ICT items appeared during the three-week period: the main article about ICTs written by Gitonga was a feature in the special pullout published by the *Daily Nation*. The two other stories were both briefs on the home news page, and both of these originated in the newsrooms. They were buried inside the paper (p. 6 of *Daily Nation*, 25 March 2004). One was about remarks made by a representative of the Minister of Transport and Communications, Njoroge Michuki, on the need to popularise ICTs. The second was about IT training opportunities at Kampala International University.

On two occasions, during the opening ceremonies for the Kenya ICT convention and later during the CTO opening, *Nation television* and the *Kenya Television Network* (KTN) ran 30-second news items in the middle of their prime news bulletins, but this coverage simply mentioned what the guest of honour had said and did not raise substantial issues raised during the conference.

## Issues

Media coverage largely followed the need for training for the lucrative ICT sector, especially for young professionals. The main issues that the *Daily Nation* covered were the opportunities available in the IT sector, especially in banking, computer networking and web design.

The Gitonga article mentioned earlier highlights this in particular: saying that young professionals interested in advancing their careers have no option but to embark on ICT training. The article also includes information on various institutions that offer training.

## Interviews

### 1. Why is the Kenyan media not very interested in covering this conference?

Steven Kamau, *Nation Television* journalist: *ICT issues do not sell compared to other subjects, for example politics. ICT issues are largely restricted to the elite and it has no effect on the life of the common Kenyan man or woman.*

*The timing of the conference also mattered, the Kenya Investment Conference is going on at the International Conference Centre and this is the most newsworthy event right now. That is why the Kenya Television crew was called away in the middle of the opening ceremony to go and cover the investment conference.*

**Charles Onyango Obbo**, Managing Editor in Charge of Media Convergence at Nation Media Group: *Generally, questions of ICTs are covered under the Business Desk, but right now they are focused on the investment conference.*

From discussions with delegates at the conference, it became clear that ICT issues have not attracted as much media coverage as politics, for example, in most African countries. Most del-

egates agreed that the time when ICTs received prominent coverage was towards the end of 1999 when an impending Y2K phenomenon was expected to disrupt the ICT sector.

### 2. How do you see your role as a journalist?

**Kamau:** *To report newsworthy stories for my organisation that will sell. And to highlight specific issues of public interest.*

At this junior/mid-level position, it became clear that journalists do not regard themselves as movers of issues but simply as a conduit for public information.

**Kamau:** *It is not my responsibility to push for the coverage of ICT issues. My editor decides what to publish and what to leave out. My work is to report the news and the decision thereafter lies with the editor.*

[The editor declined to be interviewed on the matter, citing a very busy schedule.]

### 3. Who do you choose as sources?

**Kamau:** *Usually the newsmakers are prominent people: politicians, managers of big companies, etc. The only time when ordinary people are sources is when they are victims of accidents, misfortune, etc.*

### 4. What do you understand by 'ICT policy'?

**Kamau:** *The way government can regulate information and communication technologies and its application in the country, like we have other policies governing farming or tourism, etc.*

### 5. Why are ICT stories placed where they are in the paper?

**Kamau:** *The Nation has regular pullouts where issues of interest can be covered at length without taking space in the news pages. A pullout is almost an independent paper on its own; you can read it*

*separately without missing anything in the main newspaper. You can read it or leave it!*

**6. What is your main beat? How does this speak to your coverage of ICT policy?**

**Kamau:** *I am a general reporter who can cover any event. I came to the ICT Conference because my editor assigned me to it. I could have covered the investment conference or other events.*

**7. How powerful is the media?**

**Kamau:** *The media in Kenya has sometimes mobilised people for political change, especially during the last presidential elections when the mainstream media exposed the corruption in the KANU government. However, I believe that time had run out for the KANU government. The media only helped to speed up the process by exposing the dirt in the government.*

*However, it also depends on the media's credibility, because even KANU had its own media channels that were promoting it and portraying the opposition as self seekers. State owned electronic media would give extra time to the government, but this did not help them.*

**8. What role do the media play in policy development?**

**Kamau:** *The media can play a very prominent role in policy development especially if it helps to mobilise support for a particular cause. For example the media has helped to sensitise policy-makers about the need for a policy of non-discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and government has now made it a policy to support such people with anti-retroviral drugs.*

**9. Do you view your medium as policy-influential? Why/ why not?**

**Kamau:** *The Nation Media Group has an influential paper. The paper has built a reputation of credibility and usually people tend to take its stories seri-*

*ously. Its editorial policy of impartiality has earned it readership from all types of people.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Figures from 2003.

## Mozambique

*Study conducted by Zenaida Machado.*

### Quick Profile:

**Population:** 19 411 000

**Ethnic groups:** Indigenous: 99.66% (Shangaan, Chokwe, Manyika, Sena, Makua, and others), Europeans 0.06%, Euro-Africans 0.2%, Indians 0.08%

**Religions:** Indigenous beliefs 50%, Christian 30%, Muslim 20%

**Language:** Portuguese (in various dialects), local indigenous languages

### **Literacy:**

Total population: 47.8%

Male: 63.5%

Female: 32.7%

**Population below poverty line:** 70%

### **Economy**

**Currency:** Meticias

**Average exchange rates:** US\$1 = 23 782.3 ('03)

**External debt:** US\$966 million ('02 est.)

**Revenue:** US\$393.1 million

**Expenditure:** US\$1.025 billion ('01 est.)

### Media & ICT Profile:

<b>Telephones – main lines in use</b>	83 739*
<b>Total Mobile phone users:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Mcel</li><li>o Vodacom (according to Vodacom Mozambique)</li></ul>	297 000* 60 000
<b>Public telephones</b>	4 221*
<b>ISPs</b>	7*
<b>Radio broadcast stations</b>	11
<b>Radios</b>	15.2 million ('02)
<b>Television broadcast stations</b>	3
<b>Televisions</b>	682,000 ('02)
<b>Internet country code</b>	.mz
<b>Internet users</b>	60 000
<b>Daily newspapers</b>	1
<b>Weekly newspapers</b>	5
<b>Fax papers</b>	6

\* Figures refer to 2002 *Telecommunication of Mozambique* – TDM account report, at TDM web site: [www.tdm.mz/portdm/rc2002/rc2002.pdf](http://www.tdm.mz/portdm/rc2002/rc2002.pdf)

**National ICT Policy:** In place since December 2002

**Media Monitored:** Jornal Noticias, Savana and Zambeze newspapers

**Study Period:** 3 – 31 May 2004

**Main Findings:**

- ICT-related issues are not considered to be a priority in the Mozambican media. In media circles there is a sense that there are more pressing social and economic issues that deserve media attention and that ICTs are not particularly relevant to the lives of Mozambican people. As a result there are very few ICT-related articles in the media.
- English being the dominant language of the internet serves as a deterrent to those media personnel who do not speak the language.
- There is a general scarcity of resources in newsrooms including limited access to technology. Where internet connections do exist, server problems and other technical problems deter journalists from using the technology.
- Older journalists are afraid of using technology and many do not know how to use a computer. Journalists said that often the best computers are located in editors' offices, and often the editors do not know how to use them.
- The prohibitive costs of technology use are a major deterrent to greater use of ICTs by Mozambican media. One journalist said, "how can we cover ICTs when we journalists do not have access to them?" In the context of prioritising limited resources, ICTs are not considered as priority news over other social or economic-related news.
- ICT-related news that did feature in the selected media was news-related factual reportage, and announcements of meetings. Other local coverage related to the extension of telecoms (fixed line and mobile) services to rural areas, in line with the implementation of Mozambican ICT policy.

- Given limited media understanding of ICT policy issues, there is a tendency to rely on international sources for technology-related news.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 1992 peace accord, Mozambique has been going through a range of political changes, including multiparty elections and a multiparty parliament. Since the ruling party FRELIMO won the first election, the opposition has been criticising it for ignoring problems, such as poverty, disease, starvation and other issues. Mozambican media concentrate on covering issues that "really show the lives of people" (to quote a journalist).

Mozambique has an estimated population of 19 411 000, less than half of whom are literate. If literacy translated into a newspaper reading/buying public, then sales would be high. However, newspapers are not affordable for the majority of the population. The average salary of employed people is around 1,100 million meticias while the average newspaper price is between 10 and 15 thousand meticias.

### 1.1 ICT Policy Development

Mozambique's ICT policy was approved in December 2002 after public debate and consultations held in June of that year. The debate brought together the state, civil society, Mozambican private sector, donors, NGOs, multinational companies and agencies for cooperation and development.

The draft preparatory commission was composed of Mozambican experts and representatives of the largest Mozambican telecommunications company.

**The Mozambican government's approved ICT policy intends to:**

- Contribute to the fight against poverty and the improvement of the conditions of life for all Mozambicans;
- Ensure for its citizens access to the benefits of world-wide knowledge;
- Raise the efficacy and efficiency of state institutions and their value to the public through the provision of services;
- Improve governance and public administration;
- Make Mozambique a producer and not a mere consumer of ICTs;
- Raise Mozambique to the level of a fitting and competitive partner in the Global Information Society.<sup>1</sup>

The Information Policy Commission defines ICT as the “confluence and convergence of technologies which earlier either did not exist or existed as totally separate areas”. These technologies include personal computers and computer networks, television and radio, telephone lines with telephone operators or with automatic reply systems, fax machines, smart cards, electronic mail, the internet, video conferencing systems, commercial applications (word processors, spread sheets and databases, etc.), and proprietary systems such as systems of management support and information management.

### **Impact of Mozambican Media on ICT Policy Implementation**

The Mozambican government considers social communication media – especially radio, television and printed materials – as powerful tools to keep the public informed on fundamental matters of national and international life which includes ICT developments.

In its ICT policy implementation the government says it intends to collaborate with the media and other partners to:

a) Promote the combination or integration of traditional media technologies with ICTs in order

to ensure greater access to information for all citizens;

- b) Consolidate and develop a free, independent and pluralistic environment of expression and communication;
- c) Work to reduce the concentration and dominance of developed country agendas and stimulate the production of nationally relevant information content;
- d) Provide for social communication professionals the training required for an efficient use of ICTs in their work;
- e) Stimulate the presence on the internet of all organs of information, with information which is more up to date and of interest to the public;
- f) Promote dialogue and cooperation between multinational media, public and private information agencies and telecommunication industries; and
- g) Encourage publication by community organisations of electronic news and information bulletins that reflect their interests and concerns.

### **1.2 Media Profile**

The 10% of the population who normally read the papers in their offices are those who are employed. (Mozambique has 90% unemployment). The state newspaper *Jornal Noticias*, apart from being printed, can also be read on public walls or in public places. For the most part it is read for job vacancy advertisements.

The other most read newspapers like *Zambeze* and *Savana* are said to sell around 10 000 copies per week.

Since the 1990 constitution that entrenched freedom of the press, many newspapers have been launched and subsequently closed down because of financial problems and internal differences between partners or shareholders. Currently seven of them are still functioning, among them the state newspaper *Jornal Noticias* and some private

papers, *Savana*, *Zambeze*, *O Pais*, *Demos*, *Diário de Moçambique*, *Desafio* and other fax papers – newspapers distributed to subscribers by fax. Subscribers include NGOs, state organisations, private companies, communications companies, media, and a few individuals.

Mozambique has more than eleven radio stations, among them, *Radio Mozambique*, the state radio, which broadcasts countrywide. *Radio Mozambique* has 15 national, provincial and local channels. There are also some private stations, *Radio Miramar*, *Radio 9FM*, *Radio S-FM*, *Radio Transmundial*, *Radio Maria*, *Radio Febá*, *RTK* and community based stations such as *Radio Escola Moatize*, *Radio Encontro*, *Radio Pax* and *Radio Nova Paz*. There are three television channels: the state owned *TVM* (Television of Mozambique), *STV* from the group Soico, an independent communication company and *Miramar*, from the Christian group Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. There is also the Portuguese television channel, *RTP* for Africa.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Tools/Methods

#### 2.1.1 Media Monitored

Three newspapers' coverage of ICT policy issues was monitored for a period of three weeks in order to assess the quality and nature of ICT policy coverage. The monitored newspapers were *Jornal Noticias*, *Savana* and *Zambeze*.

Policy-influential media in Mozambique are those that are consumed by opinion-makers, policy-makers and decision-makers. In Mozambique the policy-influential media are *Jornal Noticias*, *Savana*, *Zambeze*, *mediafax* and *Diário De Noticias*. From these, *Jornal Noticias*, *Savana* and *Zambeze* have gained the attention of the public for different

reasons.

According to readers, *Savana*, *Zambeze* and *Mediafax* critique the government, pushing toward the development of appropriate policies. As a state owned newspaper, *Jornal Noticias* is read most as a channel of what the government is doing and what is happening in the country. It is mostly read for news highlights, advertising and job announcements.

*Jornal Noticias* -now state owned- was founded in 1906 by Portuguese colonialists. The same media house owns *Domingo*, a weekly Sunday paper. *Domingo* is the only newspaper distributed throughout the country. *Jornal Noticias* is also a 'wallpaper' and can be read on walls at public places.

*Savana* is a private weekly newspaper owned by the company *Mediacoop*. Launched in 2000, *Savana* has managed to get the public's attention because of its polemic nature. The editor of *Savana*, Fernando Gonçalves, says: *Definitely, Savana is a policy-influential medium. During the past few years we have managed to change some government behaviour. With our stories we show the people the other side of our government.*

*Zambeze*, also a private weekly newspaper, was launched in 2002 as a result of differences within *Savana*. *Zambeze* has also, in its turn, managed to attract the readers of Maputo, sharing buyers with *Savana*, though most people who buy one buy the other paper as well, to compare the stories.

#### 2.1.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with eight journalists (three women and five men) and editors from different Mozambican media organisations. Editors were from two of the monitored newspapers.

The interviewees were selected considering:

- Their acceptance among readers and listeners (if people like their stories, if they are well-known and respected journalists).
- Their tasks in the newsroom (if their opinion is respected or considered).
- Age (a mixture of younger and older journalists, although most of those interviewed were younger people).
- Gender balance.

The interviews were conducted in different places and in various ways. One was in a café: four journalists from different media were invited to debate the role of Mozambican media in implementing ICT policy. Related issues like the newsroom environment, editorial character, agenda, priority of stories, amongst others, were discussed.

### Newspapers

	<b>Jornal Noticias</b>	<b>Savana</b>	<b>Zambeze</b>
<b>Ownership and control</b>	State	Private	Private
<b>Location of H/O</b>	Maputo	Maputo	Maputo
<b>Frequency of publication</b>	Daily	Weekly	Weekly
<b>Language</b>	Portuguese	Portuguese	Portuguese
<b>Distribution</b>	10 000	10 000	10 000
<b># of Pages</b>	20	32	32
<b>Launched in</b>	1906	2000	2002

## 2.2 Procedure

Monitoring of the three printed media was conducted from 3 to 22 May 2004. The objective of the monitoring period was to find ICT stories and analyse them in relation to the objectives highlighted on the Mozambican ICT policy document. Stories were also evaluated according to whether or not the journalist deemed it “a big story” (having a large impact on society).

All stories were further compared to consider:

- If they were following the same events.
- If the stories were the same but written from different angles.
- If one newspaper had given more attention to a story than others.

The interviews were conducted during the week 24 – 31 May 2004, at the same time as the World Economic Forum, Africa that took place in Maputo. The ACP – Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Summit was also held during this period, making it very difficult to pin down journalists. It was difficult to find people in their newsrooms and to get lengthy interviews with the editors. All of them were busy covering the above-mentioned events.

Journalists were asked to answer questions such as:

- What is the main task of a journalist?
- When do you as journalist do your job? (When you are asked to, or when a story comes up?)
- How many stories do you write a week?
- What kinds of stories get your attention and why?
- What are your main sources?
- What do you understand by ICT policy?
- Do you help the government implement it? How?
- In your daily work, do you use ICT items? How do you feel about using them? Why?
- What makes you write an ICT story?



The editors were asked to answer questions such as:

- Do you see your paper as a policy influential medium? Why?
- To which kinds of stories do you give more attention? Why?
- Who sets up the agenda in your newsroom? Why?
- What do you understand by ICT policy?
- What have you done or tried to do to help on implementation of Mozambican ICT policy?
- When and why do you place an ICT story in your paper?

Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours.

### 3. National ICT Policy

The Mozambican national ICT policy is being implemented since it was approved in 2002. And, as with everything new, it will take time to be introduced into the culture of the Mozambican people.

Six priority areas have been identified for the establishment of the information society in Mozambique in a way that contributes effectively to the realisation of the main priorities and objectives of the government in reducing poverty, promoting and stimulating economic development and broadening democracy. These areas are: education, the development of human resources, health, universal access, infrastructure, and governance.

The government has introduced information technology in some pre-university schools, has introduced new equipment at hospitals, has launched the Ministry of Technology and is implementing an e-government strategy.

The government, however, considers that other sectors also have a role to play in the development

of the country, in particular in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, the environment, tourism, electronic commerce, business protection, public protection, academic institutions and research networks, women and youth, culture and art, and social communication and the press.

Journalists have been trying to cover ICTs although they find it difficult because of a lack of means. These means can be money, equipment such as computers, cell phones, new machines, digital cameras, etc. Most of the stories covered are about technological discoveries, mobile phones and telecoms. Most of these stories come from international sources (See *Types of stories* and *Origin of stories* below).

ICT stories from Mozambique are mostly about the impact of new technologies on the daily lives of people or about the expansion of phone lines to rural areas.

## 4. Media Coverage

### 4.1 Types of Stories

During the period 3 to 22 May 2004, the following types of ICT-related stories were noted:

- o News (4)
- o In brief (4)
- o Opinion piece (1)
- o Cartoon (1)
- o Business (2)

**News** items were mostly placed inside the newspapers and were about:

- o Developments in agriculture  
MADER quer maior integração dos camponeses nas tecnologias

*The Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development intends to introduce new technologies at national level for agricultural development,*

## PROAGRI.

The initiative will allow farmers to have access to technologies that will improve their production and incomes.

[p.3 – *Noticias*]

### o Security and crime

Evasão de Anibalzinho – Falhou o homem e não a técnica

Escape of Anibalzinho – the fault of men, not technology

The general Commandant of the Mozambican Police, Mr. Miguel dos Santos, says that Anibalzinho has managed to escape from the prison due a human error and not because of a mistake in the technologies installed at the prison, which was considered the safest in the country.

[*Noticias*]

### o Technological inventions

*Grafica inventa nova tecnologia que aumenta duração de livros*

A small Italian graphics company has launched new technology to increase the duration of Braille books, by creating products that can be used by both blind people and those with normal vision.

[p. 15 *Noticias*]

**Briefs** appeared mostly on the first page of *Noticias*, *Zambeze* had one on page 25. The issues were:

### o ICT events

INCM debate *uso de satélites a baixo custo*

INCM debates the use of satellites at lower costs *Mozambican Communication Institute, INCM, in partnership with TRASA [Telecommunications Regulators Association of Southern Africa] will organise a workshop to debate how to use VSAT at lower cost, as well as discuss norms of conduct on satellite use in SADC countries. The event will take place in Maputo on 20 and 21 May.*

[p.1 – *Noticias*]

### o Expansion of communication technologies

### • *Zonas Rurais terão telefonia movel*

Rural areas will have access to mobile phone lines *By the end of May (2004), a major part of Inhambane, Gaza, Zambezia and Tete provinces will have mobile telephone line access. Mr Gomes Zita, administrator of the national mobile phone company, Mcell, announced this project.* [p.1 – *Noticias*]

### • *Rede de telefone atinge Mandimba*

Telephone network reaches Mandimaba *The network for fixed telephone lines has just reached the northern district of Mandiba at Niassa province. The extension of the service of telecommunications to that area of Mozambique was part of the TDM programme to introduce telephones in Mozambican rural areas.*

[p.1 – *Noticias*]

### o Telecoms developments

*TMN e Vodacom acordam disponibilização da rede 3G*

*Portuguese Mobile Phone Company, TMN and Vodacom have agreed ....*

TMN and Vodacom Telecel have signed a deal to make it possible for their clients to make video calls. With this agreement, Portugal became the first country where clients from different companies can make video calls using cell phones.

[p.25 – *Zambeze*]

## Opinion Piece

*As competências do governo electrónico*

The competences of electronic government  
The human dimensions in the implementation of e-government in Mozambique, should be the main factors to be considered in terms of competitiveness among state organisations. People are fundamental in terms of decision-making and flexibility in relation to working in a technological environment. They are the most important pieces of the puzzle if objectives are to be reached to attain an excellent public service...

[p.7 – Economic supplement, *Noticias*]

The **Cartoon** that appeared on page 3 in *Zambeze* was about a rural man who was unhappy because the Minister of Technology did not invite him to participate in a competition for creators and innovators. It shows an angry man exhibiting a new kind of toilet that he has invented. He is sure that he would have won the award.

**Business** articles were on page 24 of *Savana* and page 25 of *Zambeze*. The issues were:

- o Cellular phone market

*Nokia perde terreno para rivais*

Nokia is losing buyers all over the world to its rivals Motorola, Ericsson and Samsung. Experts say that the company did not know how to launch new trends, and were getting less than they had expected.

[p. 24 – *Savana*]

- o Computer market

*Vendas Mundiais de computadores aumentam 16,5% ...*

World sales of computers increase by 16.5%  
The global sales of personal computers have increased by 16.5 per cent during the first three months of 2004, compared to the same period in 2003. According to IDC, during this period at least 41.2 million of computers were sold all over the world.

[p. 25 – *Zambeze*]

*Microsoft lança novo software para proteger direitos de autores*

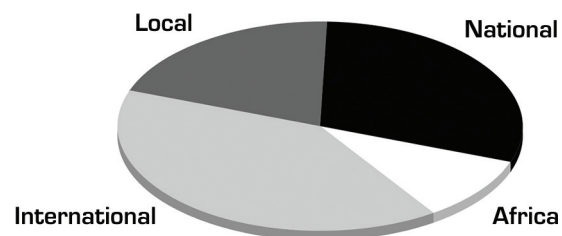
Microsoft has launched new software to protect copyright. The software will allow people to have access to movies and songs on the internet for a short period of time, controlled by the owner of the product.

[p. 25 – *Savana*, 7 May 2004]

## 4.2 Origin of Stories

The largest number of stories found in monitored papers came from international sources and were about new technological discoveries outside of Mozambique and Africa. [See figure 2].

Figure 2:



**National stories** refer to stories that apply to Mozambique. e.g.

*By end of May, the major part of Inhambane, Gaza, Zambezia and Tete provinces will be covered by mobile line.*

[*Noticias*, 24 May 2004]

**African stories** refer those that apply to the continent. e.g.

*Mozambican Communication Institute, INCM, in partnership with TRASA [Telecommunications Regulators Association of Southern Africa] will organise a workshop to debate how to use VSAT at lower cost.*

[p.1 – *Noticias*, 19 May 2004]

**International stories** refer to those that apply all over the world. e.g.

*Microsoft has launched new software to protect copyright.*

[p. 25 – *Savana*, 7 May 2004]

The story did not mention how or whether it would affect Mozambique or not.

**Local stories** refer to those limited to the location where it happened. e.g.

*The network for fixed telephone lines has just reached the northern district of Mandiba at Niassa province.*

(p.1 – Notícias, 6 May 2004)

## 5. Interviews

### 5.1 Fernando Gonçalves (Editor, Savana)

#### **Do you see your paper as a policy influential medium? Why?**

*Definitely, it is. During the past few years, we journalists from Savana have managed to change some government behaviour. Our editorial policy and the kinds of stories we do, are different from other papers'. We show the people the other side of our government. We try help to solve their problems, the people's problems, like unemployment, poverty, access to health, etc.*

#### **What kinds of stories do you give more attention to? Why?**

*Stories linked to politics, crime, corruption, social affairs, health, infrastructure, and all other aspects that deal with people's daily lives.*

#### **What do you understand by ICT policy?**

*ICT policy was established in 2002 and it is an instrument that among other benefits will give citizens access to the benefits of worldwide knowledge and also give the country a chance to compete in the global information society.*

#### **What have you done to help with the implementation of the Mozambican ICT policy? (As media, do you help people have access to the global information society? Do you show the importance of ICTs in your stories?)**

*We have done very little.*

#### **Why? Does it mean that you are not interested**

#### **in helping the government implement this policy?**

*No, it does not mean that. We recognise that there is a need for reporting ICTs but covering ICTs is not our priority. Mozambique is facing many economic and social problems and our task as policy influential media is to persuade the government to change their behaviour and concentrate efforts on improving people's lives.*

*Before talking about ICTs we should analyse whether this issue is or is not part of people's reality. To deal with ICTs we have to have at least the resources and the money. When someone does not have money to buy bread, how can you expect him to buy or speak of a computer or a cell phone?*

#### **When and why do you place an ICT story in your paper?**

*It is rare. Mozambique does not have many events on ICTs. We try to get some stories from the internet or other sources. But this takes us to another issue: the problem of language and computer skills.*

#### **How does language affect ICT coverage?**

*English is normally the language most used on the internet and web sites about technology. Some journalists who do not speak English do not want to venture to the internet.<sup>2</sup>*

#### **Some journalists complain that their newsrooms do not have technological instruments to help them in their daily work. Does this include Savana as well?**

*I don't think so. We try to give as much as possible to our staff. We have ten computers, two of them are connected to the internet, and any journalist who wants to can access the internet and email anytime they want. We also have a fax machine, cell phone line and fixed lines, and all the journalists have their own cell phones and recorders.<sup>3</sup>*

## 5.2 Lourenço Jossias (Editor, *Zambeze*)

### Do you see your paper as policy influential? Why?

*Yes. We write what people want to read. We write the truth and this helps people have open eyes.*

### To which kinds of stories do you give more attention? Why?

*Stories on politics, social affairs, education, crime, corruption, etc. These stories are part of Mozambican people's lives.*

### Who sets up the agenda in your newsroom? Why?

*All staff set up the agenda. If any journalist has a nice story he is welcome.*

### What do you understand by ICT policy?

*It is a policy that intends to help the ICT development in Mozambique in terms of people's access to technology.*

### What have you done or tried to do to help with the implementation of the Mozambican ICT policy?

*We have been trying to cover more ICT events and publish stories on this issue. But we have to understand that ICTs are not part of all Mozambicans' lives and when it comes to using our resources for a story, we wouldn't use them on an ICT story over a political or social issue.*

### You mean *Zambeze* does not cover ICT stories because of the lack of resources or because ICT is not yet part of people's lives?

*Both. We don't have many facilities at our newsroom. Telephones and the internet are very expensive and we try to save on them as much as possible, although we are trying to do our best. When Mozambique holds a very important ICT event of course we will be there covering it; like when it is*

*something that affects people directly, for example a break in a communication system, or new inventions that will change Mozambicans' lives.*

## 5.3 Debate

### Participants

José Luis Gonzaga Jeque, from daily *Diario de Mocambique*, **JL**

Ouri Pota Chapata Pacamutondo, from *Radio Cidade*, **OP**

Rosa Maciel, from *Radio Mozambique*, **RM**

Frederico Lucas Jamisse, from the Sunday paper *Domingo*, **FJ**

### From the period during which I monitored the media, I noticed that journalists are not giving much attention to ICT developments. Do you know why?

**JL:** *Access to ICTs in Mozambique is recent and not well spread. Most people, including journalists, do not have ICT skills or just do not know what it is. In my newsroom, for example, there are some people who do not know how to use a computer; but these are normally older people.*

**FJ:** *We have to recognise that we don't know much about ICTs and this makes us afraid of it. In my newsroom we have only one computer connected to the internet, the ones who know how to use it, are there all the time, and the ones who do not know just watch the others. Normally the experts are young people.*

### You mean older people (journalists) do not like ICTs?

**JL:** *Not really. But most of them are afraid of it. And if they do not know how to use them they also do not ask.*

**FJ:** *Let me give you an example: there are some famous and very good journalists who sometimes write for our paper. Do you believe that they send*

*the comments having written on a typewriter?*

**RM:** *We have been trying to cover ICTs. But how can we cover ICTs when we journalists do not have access to them? At Radio Mozambique, the internet connection is mostly broken. When the weather changes, the internet also changes. There is a big problem with the server.*

**Have you ever tried to explain this situation to your administration?**

**RM:** *They do not care. It looks that this issue is not important. If they do, when the computers arrive they choose the best for themselves when they don't even know how to use them.*

**OP:** *This happens a lot. You find newsrooms with a lot of broken computers. When you go to the editor or director's office you find a very good computer, switched off.*

**JL:** *Our directors and editors are not interested in ICTs. Even if they are interested, they find it expensive. And they prefer to ignore it and ask people to work with the conditions they have.*

**What about covering ICT events? Do you give attention to ICTs?**

**All of them:** *We try. But it is not easy.*

**Why is it not easy? Is the issue not part of the agenda? Or do you just not like it? Or have you never been sent to do so?**

**JL:** *I don't wait for someone to send me to cover a story. The problem is that there are not many ICT events in Mozambique. How many do you find in month? Two or less...*

**FJ:** *Sometimes you hear that a school was offered 20 computers by NGOs and you are surprised because no one sent you a press release announcing it.*

**RM:** *The other problem is that ICTs are mostly linked to the names of companies, and this, for*

*our editors, means publicity. If the story is about Vodacom that offered 20 free mobile lines to the police it looks that our radio station is publicising Vodacom...*

**OP:** *For me the Mozambican ICT policy is not working. The document says to give people access to ICT. That is fine. But the government keeps accepting donations of broken computers and so on. The budget for the implementation of the policy is spent mostly on workshops. Offering equipment to media, students, hospitals, that is almost impossible to see.*

[General agreement from others]

**JL:** *ICTs are a recent issue in Mozambique and as with everything new it scares people. In my newsroom, for example, people (mainly journalists with many years of experience) do not have knowledge of information technology and they do not use computers.*

**FJ:** *In some newsrooms you find only one computer connected to the internet and this computer has problems with the server.*

**RM:** *Internet servers are our big problem. We are using one server that is too slow and when we explain to our directors or editors that this problem is affecting our work they do not consider it, because they do not know how important the internet is to us. They would rather buy cars and other things than computers.*  
Antonio Moises Aide, a 45-year-old Radio Mozambique journalist said that for his job as journalist he has to use ICTs:

*I have to deal with new technology every day. Computers, cell phones are part of my daily work. But talking about ICT stories, I only write them when it is really to get the attention of the public.*

**General agreement from all on the following:**

- that Mozambique needs to develop itself more in order to compete in the global information society.
- that the absence of ICTs from Mozambican culture and daily lives makes it difficult to engage with.
- that government is doing little to help journalists to promote the use and coverage of ICTs.
- that ICTs in Mozambique are very expensive.
- that journalists need training to report on ICTs.

## 6. Analysis/Discussion

During the monitoring period a total of 12 ICT items appeared in Mozambican print media. *Journal Noticias* had the most coverage.

On 24 May, *Noticias* wrote about telecommunications developments in the country. The story was about one of the results of the workshop that was to take place on 20 and 21 May. Other print media did not follow the event. TVM and another private broadcast outlet gave some attention to the event that hosted about 120 delegates from SADC countries. They merely announced the event and went there to know what was it about and how people feel about it.

## 7. Observations

Because of the different kinds of media that exist in Mozambique, media coverage of ICTs is an issue that needs more investigation in order to fully understand the culture of Mozambican media with regards to ICTs.

If the government is doing anything about the implementation of the ICT policy, journalists are not involved in it for different reasons.

Some journalists claim that ICTs are not part of Africans' lives, and since the continent faces other problems, these should be considered a priority. Other journalists seem to be afraid of new technologies and do not want to use them. These are normally older people.

A journalist, Ouri Pota Chapata Pacamutondo, at the Youth Channel of Radio Mozambique, Radio Cidade 97.9 FM said: *The implementation of the Mozambican ICT policy is not working. Instead of training journalists, offering equipment to newsrooms, promoting the use of technologies, government is using the funds for the policy implementation on workshops.*

All newsrooms have at least 1 computer connected to the internet. These computers can be used by anyone who needs or wants to. Normally, to manage the use of the computer, editors make a timetable according to the demand of work, and this can mean that those who work in the morning can only use it during the morning, unless others are not already using it in the afternoon or evening.

The predominance of English is still a problem for people who cannot speak it. Being able to speak English is one of the quicker ways to get a job these days, but there are other costs of living to consider, rather than taking an English language course. In the past it was not difficult for people to secure work without knowing or speaking English.

Editors generally have the best computers and only a few of them know how to use them. Some editors, when they want to know how to use the computer, ask their staff, while others just pretend that they are working on it.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Source: web site of the Information Policy Commission: [www.infopol.gov.mz/simposio/politica](http://www.infopol.gov.mz/simposio/politica).

<sup>2</sup> Journalists also use Portuguese web sites but some of them have problems in accessing or searching these sites because the language of computers and technology is English.

<sup>3</sup> Other weekly media newsrooms have six to eight computers while the daily papers have more than fifteen. The weekly *Zambeze* for example, has eight computers and the daily *Diario de Mocambique* Maputo office (the newspaper head office is at the capital of the central province of Sofala, Beira) has six.



## Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

*Study conducted by Espérance Bayedila Bakanda.*

### Quick Profile:

**Population:** 58 784 400

**Ethnic groups:** Over 200 ethnic groups. The four largest tribes - Mongo, Luba, Kongo and the Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic) make up about 45% of the population.

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%, Kimbanguist 10%, Muslim 10%, other syncretic sects and indigenous beliefs 10%.

**Languages:** French (official), Lingala (a lingua franca trade language), Kingwana (a dialect of Kiswahili), Kikongo, Tshiluba.

### Literacy<sup>1</sup>:

*Total population:* 65.5%

*Male:* 76.2%

*Female:* 55.1%

**Population below poverty line:** Statistics not available

### Economy

**Currency:** Congolese Franc (CDF)

**Average Exchange Rate:** US\$1 = CDF346.49 ('02)

**External debt:** US\$1 1.6 billion ('00 est.)

**Revenue:** US\$269 million

**Expenditure:** US\$244 million

### Media & ICT Profile:

Telephones – main lines in use	10 000
Mobile phone users	560 000
ISPs	1
Radio broadcast stations	AM 3, FM 11, Short wave 2 ('01)
Television broadcast stations	4
Internet country code	.cd
Internet users	50 000
Daily newspapers	7 <sup>2</sup>
Weekly newspapers	13

**Media Monitored:** Newspapers: *Le Potentiel*, *La Référence Plus* and *l'Avenir*; Television: *Tropicana TV*, *Antenne A* and *Raga TV*

**Study Period:** 25 April to 21 June 2004

**Major Political/Social Influences/Shifts During Period of Study:** Eastern border clashes between rebel groups and government forces. There have been testimonies to Congress that neighbouring Rwanda and Uganda are stealing the DRC's resources like water and minerals.

### Main Findings:

- o Political news is the top priority on the DRC news agenda. Media attention is almost entirely focused on the protracted political process, moves towards democracy and the significant political and economic instability in DRC.
- o ICT policy-related coverage is not considered a media priority and this is borne out by media houses making use of trainee journalists to cover ICT-related news, a sign of a lack of importance. As a result, there was little ICT policy-related media coverage evident over the period monitored.
- o Coverage of the ICT-related event monitored was in the form of reproducing the press release of the organisers, quoting speakers at the conference and information about the programme of events. Coverage was thus entirely descriptive and factual, lacking any analysis or depth.
- o Other ICT-related coverage related to the DRC's suspension from satellite services due to unpaid bills and corrupt practices in the sector.
- o Journalists' working conditions and facilities are poor, and in the context of fighting to survive, ICT policy issues are not considered to be important.
- o In a context where media are struggling to survive, accepting financial support from wherever possible means that media coverage is often ethically compromised.

## 1. Introduction

This study was conducted in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kinshasa is a city with more than 6 million inhabitants facing many socio-economic problems, including the rise of unemployment due to the deterioration of the national economic infrastructure, low salary rates, not receiving a salary for months on end, the deterioration of the educational system (schools) and school loss of enrolment figures due to a lack of funding from the government (student's families

have to pay everything for the running of the schools including teachers' salaries). Formerly called Zaire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been plagued by ethnic strife and civil war, further affected by an influx of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. Joseph Kabila, son of previous head of state Laurent Kabila, was named head of state in January 2001, ten days after his father's assassination.

The economy of the DRC has suffered blows due to the war, reducing national output and revenue and increased external debt. The lack of certainty with regard to legal frameworks and a need for openness in government and economic policy have not encouraged business investments. The withdrawal of invading foreign troops in late 2002, has, however, meant some improvement in conditions in the country. In 2003 a relative amount of economic stability was reached.

Civil war, tribal conflict, and rebel gang fighting that has drawn in neighbouring states has also meant that communications infrastructure is poor and barely adequate in places.

### 1.1 Media Profile

There are 25 television channels in Kinshasa, more than 15 radio stations and more than a hundred newspapers. But despite that, the political and economic conditions make it difficult for journalists to perform their tasks well.

The press has been able to criticise government bodies, and some serve as mouthpieces for opposition parties, despite the fact that the opposition was suspended shortly after Laurent Kabila became president in 1997.

Church radio networks are growing, although the state-controlled network reaches the most citizens.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Tools/Methods

Three newspapers and three television channels were selected for monitoring, and eleven in-depth interviews were conducted with editors, organisers and policy decision-makers.

#### 2.1.1 Media Monitored

*Le Potentiel*, *La Référence Plus* and *l'Avenir* were the newspapers that were monitored, and *Tropicana TV*, *Antenne A* and *Raga TV* – TV channels – were selected for monitoring.

The newspapers were selected because:

1. They are the most regular in the market and their editors (and/or owners) the most respected. Readers mostly refer to these dailies for their professionalism and the quality of information they publish. Even if there is a problem of circulation in Kinshasa or in DRC in general, these papers still sell at least 1 000 copies per day.
2. Most of the decision-makers and opinion-makers contacted rely on these dailies and read them regularly to be informed.
3. In Kinshasa, newspapers do not sell easily because of the high purchasing price (almost USD1) which is out of reach of the vast majority. For this reason, pages from newspapers that people enjoy reading are photocopied and sold at six times less than the usual price. These three dailies are then subject to piracy. There is no legal action against those young people pirating as there is general consensus and acceptance that everybody is trying to survive and in general newspaper owners support this, since their newspapers are at least read.

According to a recent opinion polls report<sup>3</sup>, *Tropicana TV*, *Antenne A* and *Raga TV* have the biggest following in Kinshasa. Their programming

attracts viewers because they try to provide better information than the state-owned channel. The floor is given to almost everybody, mostly those who cannot access the state-owned channel. These are the channels able to influence change in the country. Government officials are among the viewers of those channels and they dread meeting these channels' journalists because of the awkward questions they are asked.

*Raga TV* also has a magazine programme called *ptt.com*, devoted exclusively to telecommunication issues.

In brief, these media were selected as policy-influential following an informal poll with ministers' advisers, Members of Parliament and other opinion-makers, decision-makers, policy-makers and after reading various opinion polls reports.

#### Television

	<b>Tropicana</b>	<b>Antenne A</b>	<b>Raga TV</b>
<b>Ownership and control</b>	Private	Private	Private
<b>Location of H/O</b>	Kinshasa	Kinshasa	Kinshasa
<b>Language</b>	French	French	French
<b>Launched in</b>	2001	1990	1990

## Newspapers

	Le Potentiel	La Référence Plus	L'Avenir
<b>Ownership and control</b>	Private	Private	Private
<b>Location of H/O</b>	Kinshasa	Kinshasa	Kinshasa
<b>Frequency of publication</b>	Daily	Daily	Daily
<b>Language</b>	French	French	French
<b>Distribution</b>	National	National	National
<b># of Pages</b>	20	12	20
<b>Launched in</b>	1983	1990	1997

### 2.1.2 ICT Event Monitored

The event, *La Fête de l'Internet en RD Congo*, formed the centre of this study, is an annual international ICT event for francophone countries which coincided with the study period. The event provides space for discussion on national policies and ICT applications. ICT-related events are rare in DRC.

The issues tackled during the event were about deregulation of telecommunications, access to ICTs, including materials and costs. The issue of e-governance was also raised as well as the necessity for the Congolese Government to develop ICT capacity through developing the country's telecommunication infrastructure.

The study began on 25 April 2004 by collecting stories on the press conference the organisers had on 22 April. Following this, the opening ceremony on 26 April, along with ten in-house conferences planned during the three days of the event and the closing ceremony on 28 April formed a reference for the study.

The selected media were then monitored to see what was published or broadcast.

### 2.1.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted by mobile phone, email and face-to-face. These were held with 9 people (1 of whom was a woman); the Vice-President of the organising committee of the event, producer of *ptt.com*, (*Raga TV* magazine programme), editor-in-chief of *La Référence Plus*, editor-in-chief of *Le Potentiel*, editor-in-chief of *Antenne*, the sub-editor of *Tropicana TV*, editor-in-chief of *L'Avenir*, director of programmes at *Tropicana TV* and director of *Renatelsat* (*Réseau national de télécommunications par satellite* – the national Satellite telecommunications network).

Apart from the fact that most of them were very busy, journalists and officials gave the impression that they were not willing to be interviewed on this matter. They had to be begged to accept an interview and also to be recorded. For media people, the subject was merely of little interest but most of the officials did not want to be interviewed, because the subject is not one they want to talk about.

It was not found to be useful to interview writers because, for the most part, they were trainees – students at IFASIC<sup>4</sup> (*Institut Facultaire de Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication*), a journalism school. Having a good sense of their abilities (simply reporting facts, with no analysis), they were not included in the pool of interviewees. When newspapers send trainees to cover events,

it often means that event is not a priority to them. Regarding the organisers of the event, an interview was conducted with the vice-president of the organising committee, an engineer who presented three conference papers during the event. With him I wanted to establish what their motivation and aims were in organising the event; what the main problems were in the sector that handicaps its development; what role they were expecting the media to play in the promotion of ICTs in DRC.

Despite numerous attempts to meet the Post, Telephony and Technology advisor to the Vice-President of the Republic, this was not possible, because he was out of the country during the period of the study. Nobody else in the Vice-President's office was willing to answer questions, arguing that the only qualified person to speak on this issue was the absent one.

### 3. National ICT Policy

*"DRC lacks an appropriate ICT policy,"* said Gabriel Shabani, President of the organising committee of *La Fête of l'Internet en RD Congo*, during the press conference held on 24 April 2004.

He went on to say: *"Despite the lightning development of ICTs all over the world, development that led to globalisation – which is raising all sorts of debates in every milieu in the world – Congolese authorities are conspicuously reckless, even thoughtless. They do not seem to realise the extent of the stakes, because they are so interested in political business in this transitional period."*

Shabani thinks that although "political business" is very important in this period, it is unstrategic not to think about ICT policies.

There is a general sense of disorder in the ICT sector in the DRC. What is important for policy-

makers and decision-makers are the following kinds of problems:

- o .cd (the domain name for the DRC), is the concern of a private group composed of non-Congolese nationals. The government is not involved.
- o The need for the rehabilitation of *Office Congolais et Post et Telephony* (OCPT) and *Renatelsat* so that they can play their role as state-owned enterprises in the field of post, telephone, telecommunication and satellite. As they are not operating properly, private operators offer access to the internet at the rate of USD1 500 for the antenna, USD100 per month subscription for one personal computer and an additional USD25 – 50 per computer per month. If these two public operators were operational, the internet could be more easily accessible and cheaper (at an average of USD25 per month).
- o The need to address high import taxes on personal computers and computer peripherals, since the country does not produce them locally. So even if one can buy them cheaply outside the country, one is likely to pay even more in taxes than what was spent on the initial purchase.
- o Government's "lack of facilities" cited as a defence to anyone who wants to see promotion of ICTs and especially the internet.
- o The lack of government vision and policy in promoting ICT usage and the development of an information society in DRC.
- o The non-usage of ICTs in government for fast and transparent administrative management. The [www.presidentrdc.cd](http://www.presidentrdc.cd) web site is very recent (less than one year and it is still being designed).

## 4. Media Coverage

### 4.1 Types of Stories

During the monitoring period, seven ICT-related news items were noted in the three newspapers.

- o Information Minister visits the N'Sele satellite station

Writer: Jean-Bosco Ndala, Trainee

Summary: *The Minister of Information is to visit the N'Sele satellite station. The station allows DRC to be connected to the world and between Kinshasa the capital and the provinces via satellite. Knowing that since 12 March 2004 DRC is no longer connected to satellite because of non-payment of bill (16 million US\$) it is easier to understand the reason behind this visit. Renatelsat, which is in charge of the satellite station, is facing serious problems with equipment and personnel. The story also mentions a meeting the same minister held with the Renatelsat personnel some days before the visit to assure them that the government is doing its best to arrange the situation of equipment and unpaid salaries. The story ends by showing the necessity and advantage offered by performance equipment for the development of the country.*

[L'Avenir, Edition n° 2088, Wednesday 21 April 2004]

- o DRC Needs a National Information Network

Writer: Ferdinand Kato

Summary: *The story reproduces the press conference of the organisers of the event observed for this study. After calling up some advantages of ICTs, such as the erasing of distance, bringing people together, the abundance of information, and underlining the fact that DRC is not in the era of the internet yet, the story summarises the major points of the organising committee president's speech, which focused on the importance of the internet for a developing country like DRC.*

*He recommended that the government create a national information system to enable people to access this information. And for that, a suitable ICT policy is needed. As the skill already exists, what is needed now is means that must come mostly from the Government. He went on to say: "With a national information network, it is possible to control elections results, rebuild the banking system and establish information economy." The story also reproduces the comments of the vice-president who presented and commented on the themes of the conference, and demonstrated that DRC must close the gap between itself and other countries. "We can't access knowledge without being connected to the internet," he said.*

[L'Avenir, Edition n° 2090, Friday 23 April 2004]

- o Web Site for the Ministry of Culture and Arts Coming Soon

Writer: José Wakadila

Summary: *A reproduction of information from the Minister of Culture and Arts' press conference held on Wednesday 21 April 2004 about the assessment of this ministry after one year of work. Although the headline suggests an ICT-related story, only the last 44 words out of a 500 word story deals with this.*

[La Référence Plus, Edition n° 3058, Saturday 24 April 2004, p. 7]

- o Organising Committee Calls for an Adapted ICT Policy

Writers: Renathe Makeza/Trainee: Déo Mulima K  
Summary: *The story reproduces the press conference of the members of the organising committee of La Fête de l'Internet en RdC.*

[La Référence Plus, Edition n° 3058, Wednesday 24 April 2004, p. 9]

- o Shabani Record Recommend the Use of Internet for Transparent Elections

Writer: Elise Kudiekila, Trainee

Summary: *A follow-up on the event La Fête de*

*l'Internet en RdC. It emphasises the words of their president regarding the advantages of the internet for DRC and its population. The writer reproduces some of the recommendations of the organisers.*

[*La Référence Plus*, Edition n° 3061, Wednesday 28 April 2004, p. 9]

o Arnaud Misuanga calls Kinshasa Youth to the Rational Use of the Internet  
 Writer: Martinez Ngyaluka  
 Summary: *Mr. Arnaud Misuanga calls Kinshasa youth to the rational use of the internet instead of misusing it, because he thinks that the youth must profit from the many opportunities the internet offers to learn, and to cultivate knowledge at a low cost. He believes that when the youth understand the internet it will bring multiple services other than mobile phones. It will be the start of an intellectual revolution in DRC. Misuanga ends by hoping that the government will sustain mobilisation initiatives to bring the people to the use of ICTs.*

[*La Référence Plus*, Edition n° 3069, Saturday 08 May 2004, p. 8]

o A gathering for Internet in DRC  
 Writer: Nathan Mpoyi, Trainee  
 Summary: *An announcement of the event La Fête de l'Internet en RdC. It includes the programme and the date of the opening ceremony, the places where the conferences will take place and their subjects.*

[*Le Potentiel*, Edition n° 3107, Saturday 24 April 2004]

o ICT: Women Engineers Open a Portal  
 Story taken from *Cameroon Tribune*, a Cameroonian newspaper  
 Summary: *This story reports the opening of a commercial portal in Yaoundé, Cameroon, by the Cameroon Women Engineers Association for African women. The story shows the advantages of this initiative: permanent circulation of informa-*

*tion on demand and supply, the possibility of online transactions and above all, exposure for selling goods in a virtual shop. The story has a gender focus.*

[*Le Potentiel*, Edition n° 3110 of Wednesday 28th April 2004]

o Internet recognised as vector of the new economy

Writers: F.M. & Patrick Bosenge, Trainee

Summary: *The article discussed the need for businessmen to integrate the internet into their strategies for the new economy. There was no comment or analysis, only a reproduction of the press release from the conference.*

[*Le Potentiel* of 21st April 2004]

## 4.2 Origin of Stories

All stories written on the event were of national origin. Not only did they focus on national interest issues but were also all written in the newspapers' newsrooms. The story dealing with the women's portal comes from the *Cameroon Tribune*, and is regional. The one dealing with youth is also of regional origin and comes from the French news agency AFP.

### Origin

Local	0
National	6
Regional	1
International	0

## 5. Interviews

### How do you see your role as journalist?

Most of the journalists interviewed unanimously claimed their roles as journalists to be that of mediator between different societal actors, as populariser of knowledge, informer, as watchdog ready to inform on every fact that is in the common interest.

### Jérôme Sekana, producer of *ptt.com*, the magazine programme on *RAGA TV*:

*We serve as "lampe-témoin" (witness/ spectator) for decision-makers (this means we help them to understand things and make appropriate decisions) and as watchdog for the people. For example, the Renatelsat, MBM and TeleConsult affair. When the CEO and the finance director resigned, we went to see them in order to know more about their actions. Then we realised that DRC was cut from satellite access since 12 March 2004 because of non-payment of the bill (16 million US dollars owed to Newsky, a private enterprise which provided satellite access to DRC). So Renatelsat had to look for a good deal with another provider. That is how Renatelsat came to approach MBM for a contract. According to that contract, MBM agreed to bring new and functional equipment for Renatelsat and install them. For that MBM received 40% of the profit and Renatelsat 60% so that it can pay for the equipment during 3 years, with prices and quality not known by Renatelsat managers. While the Renatelsat managers were preparing to send that contract to the government for signature, another contract was already being debated within government: one with TeleConsult that the government had already agreed upon. Then the Renatelsat CEO received a letter asking him to sign the contract he did not know of and was not involved in. Surprised, he wanted to understand some aspects of it. Unfortunately nobody could respond to his queries. The only thing he was asked to do was to sign the contract*

*or resign. As he realised that the quality of equipment and the prices were not known and they would only gain 20% while TeleConsult got 80% of the income, he refused to sign and preferred to resign. By handling that affair, we helped some other ministers to understand and the MP's to take over the affair. And at the same time, we acted as watchdog for the population and the Renatelsat personnel.*

### Willy Kalengayi, Editor-in-chief of *Antennae A*:

*Our channel prioritises popularisation. That is why we have a programme that focuses only on the popularisation of ICTs. Two years ago we worked with all internet providers in Kinshasa with the backing of USAID for the popularisation of the internet. We are working according to that policy because we are convinced that the future of television and even the society, which must come up through ICTs, depends on our capacity to master and popularise the use of ICTs. Even in terms of cost, if we can convince a lot of people to appropriate the new technologies, the more the people will be interested, the bigger the market will be and the cheaper the price.*

### Adèle Lukoki, Editor-in-chief of *Le Potentiel*:

*The journalist has a great role to play in shaping public opinion by serving them a lot of useful knowledge that is likely to help them ameliorate their life conditions. And looking at things this way, ICTs are one of the ways likely to help journalists play more fully that role of mediator-trainer in so far as they can select and pick up information from the internet on what readers are expecting and to publish it.*

### Mambuya Obul, sub-editor of *Tropicana TV*, Paul Massey, editor-in-chief of *La Référence Plus*, Valentin Makongo, editor-in-chief of *L'Avenir*:

*The role of a journalist is to inform viewers, listeners and readers by singling out verifiable and verified facts so that they can have sufficient capacity*



*for good behaviour in society. That is why, when there is a problem, the journalist has the professional duty to collect all the views and present them in a wise way so as not to provoke unexpected incidents. This means that journalists must act as guides to the public and analyse facts.*

#### **What do you understand by ICT-policy?**

The responses of interlocutors can be summarised this way:

*The national ICT-policy should be the government vision in this field; aiming at reducing the gap between DRC and other countries in terms of telecommunications infrastructure and the use of ICTs by the population. This vision is to be materialised through general and specific objectives that the government has to set up with the aim of implementing them by providing relevant and consistent juridical, human, material and financial support. ICT-policy is also the order and organisation the government must bring to the field so as to stop fly-by-nights as is the case now.*

#### **Why do you think stories are placed where they are in the paper?**

The three editors-in-chief told me that ICTs are a cultural phenomenon, a societal one. Hence, it is quite normal to find ICT-related stories under the item “culture” or “society” depending on the structure of each newspaper. Otherwise, if there were connections between ICTs and politics or economy, then those stories would be found under those items.

Culture and society items are usually placed on pages 6, 7, 8 and 9 depending on each newspaper and its pagination (which in Kinshasa ranges between 12 and 20 pages per edition).

#### **What is your main beat? How does this speak to your coverage of ICT policy?**

Most of the interviewees were all-purpose journal-

ists and they do not cover ICT policy specifically.

#### **Is your coverage of ICT policy merely ad hoc?**

Considering all that is said above, what they do is merely ad hoc. That is why they try to do what is somewhat easier instead of looking for what they call “complicated matters”.

#### **How powerful is the media, in your understanding?**

In the understanding of all of the interviewees media are strongly powerful; and why they are called the fourth estate. They felt that the media, when used appropriately, can bring about change in society.

*Sekana: Thanks to my magazine programmes, many problems are solved, such as the issue of interconnections between mobile phone operators. At the beginning, users had to have a mobile phone for each operator. But when the media started talking about the issue of interconnection, results were seen.*

*Mambuya Obul: That power needs to be well managed because it can be used for both good and bad. The Rwanda case illustrates very well this misuse of power, with the impact of Radio Mille Collines<sup>5</sup>. This view brings up the problem of ethics and requires carefulness. So it is very important for journalists to know what is useful for the people and use the media for that and not for something else.*

#### **Then why are you not using the power of the media to bring change to ICT policy?**

*All of them said that although ICTs are important, for the time being, political affairs are critical in DRC, which is why they are focusing on political issues.*

#### **What role does the media play in policy development?**

Again, answers were quite similar. All of them agreed that the situation of DRC is so critical that media are mainly interested in political affairs.

**Valentin Makongo:** *Politics is a strategic field with unpredictable consequences. As long as things do not work properly in that area, it is most difficult for other fields to start developing. That is why we do not play a significant role in policy development. Many subjects are left behind.*

**Adèle Lukoki:** *Playing a significant role in policy development – including ICT policy – requires many things. The state of media enterprises does not allow us to do something in this regard because we do not have enough money. We hardly have appropriate facilities from our employers to be able to work the way we should. For this reason, we are trying to do what we can...waiting for good times.*

**Paul Massey:** *Working conditions are so bad that it is a little difficult to expect very well thought through work from Congolese journalists for the time being. They have to look for food and subsist by all means. So they actually do not have time and are not sufficiently motivated to stay and think seriously.*

#### **Do you view your medium as policy-influential? Why/Why not?**

All the interviewees think their media are strongly policy-influential because of the feedback they receive and the way they are in demand from decision-makers, economic operators and opinion leaders.

**Massey:** *La Référence Plus used to be policy-influential, but now it is no longer influential because they are no longer working the way they used to do at the beginning. At least the name still carries some influence, but there is no longer content that can actually influence. If some influence can be seen from this newspaper, it might be because*

*of the political forums they organise almost every month with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.*

## 6. Analysis

To contextualise the analysis, first a summary of the main ideas from the organising committee of *La Fête de l'Internet* contained in the President's speech during the opening ceremony.

Conference 'wish list':

- The hope for the government to link all national experts so as to initiate rigorous planning aimed at the appropriation of ICTs and the popularisation of the internet in DRC.
- The conviction that the internet is a powerful vector of diffusion and popularisation of knowledge. And to utilise this tool, direct access to knowledge and information is likely to constitute an extraordinary chance for Southern countries to realise a qualitative jump ahead that can improve people's living conditions – "a chance we, as Congolese, have to capture and capitalise. Now we cannot be excused in case of failure because knowledge, history and development materials are available. What we need is the will to win. That is what we want Congolese to know."
- Their wish to see the government becoming actively involved in ICTs. "If not, all the wishes and hopes would be in vain." Government involvement should lead to a partnership between the organising committee, the Ministries of Post Telephone and Telecommunication, Education (primary and secondary level), Education (university and tertiary level institutions), Scientific Research, Culture and Arts, and Youth.

Conference recommendations:

- o The establishment of a national telecommunication system with advanced technologies to serve as infrastructure for the information highway.

- o The development of a powerful governmental information system (interactive with intranet networks) able to operate the migration of administrative management and efficiently manage transparent election operations.
- o Optimum management of the broadband that will allow DRC access to the international transmission system to avoid the recurring loss of connection in Congolese cyber-café, and facilitate fast access to the internet.

## 7. Observations

What we see in the ICT stories on the conferences is only the reproduction of press releases on the event. This echoes the findings of the UN ECA African media study<sup>6</sup>:

- o Lack of critical analysis,
- o No follow-up,
- o The absence of people's voices,
- o General silence on ICT policy and WSIS.

In summary, coverage was very poor. In particular, given what the editors themselves have said about the role of the media: it is not enough to merely report. It is also important to help readers understand what they are being told about. Journalists therefore have the duty to analyse and comment, to criticise, to deepen the understanding of readers, viewers and listeners, so they can understand and make their own opinions. That requires more than simply reproducing facts.

However, reporting on ICTs is of little interest to journalists in DRC. When I asked during the interviews if it was possible to have an ICT story as a banner headline on the front page, the answer was "impossible, unless it was related to politics" – politics being the main focus and interest.

Although the interviewed media people seem to know of their power, they do not seem to under-

stand the practical connection they have with that power to bring about change in any field.

The general political context in the country and the situation of journalists and media in general is such that it is hardly possible for anyone to think of anything apart from politics. And even regarding politics, the media's way of working is quite debatable because what they usually do is give voice to those who pay something. They hardly provide their own opinion, a critical opinion or serious analysis.

Only the organisers of the event were quoted in stories. For the most part they come from the private sector and civil society, with a few from academia who have a shared interest in ICTs; and, for the most part, they are men.

All the ideas mentioned by the organising committee members were policy issues that could be deepened by journalists.

The first idea, which consisted of seeing the government bringing together all national experts to initiate rigorous planning aimed at appropriation of ICTs and the popularisation of the internet, was an opportunity for journalists to interview one of the members of the organising committee to say much more about this initiative. For example: Who will participate in this meeting? What particular points might be discussed? What are their ideas about such a meeting or the planning itself? In so doing, journalists would be initiating debates and giving the floor to others to add their voices.

Regarding the conviction that the internet is a powerful vector of diffusion and popularisation of knowledge, what the journalists could do, for example, is ask concrete questions about the meaning of this statement: How does the internet work? What kind of knowledge can be found and how? To what extent does the internet provide an oppor-

tunity for Southern countries such as DRC? How can people express their will using ICTs? How will this improve people's lives, etc?

Again, they would be helping their readers, viewers and listeners understand the meanings behind the speech making. They would then have deepened an issue for the sake of their public.

Regarding the government's active involvement: journalists should assume that the government is not sufficiently aware of the issue, making it interesting to ask the organisers why the government should be involved, what exactly government involvement would consist of, and what it would bring.

A similar process could be applied to the each of the points raised at the conference. In addition, journalists could initiate inquiry into what people think of the phenomenon of ICTs or the internet, what they actually want, what they expect from the government, what their main concerns are, etc.

None of this was done, illustrating that Congolese journalists are less interested in such a way of working when it is about social fields other than politics, overlooking the fact that it is in their own interest to extend their interest in politics to other fields.

The researcher for the DRC has herself been working for almost ten years for the state-owned national radio. She resigned, believing there was no space to analyse or comment on facts, particularly where the government was concerned. Criticism was not allowed. When the private media emerged, they started analysing and critiquing. But with time, things started to change. Many newspapers (mostly editors) started receiving money from politicians to survive, so the editorial policy changed from what it was initially. Now, as the political sphere is composed of many parties,

newspapers now critique all parties other than theirs.

While the criticism is important, and makes it possible for change, the DRC media needs need ethical frameworks that can bring journalists to put public interests first.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Age 15 and over can read and write French, Lingala, Kingwana, or Tshiluba.

<sup>2</sup> These newspapers – daily and weekly – appear regularly in Kinshasa.

<sup>3</sup> Sondage Media, *Périodique de l'évolution des taux d'audience et de contact des médias*, published by AZIMUTS in April 2004

<sup>4</sup> This researcher is employed as a lecturer at this institute and in that capacity is familiar with the skills-levels of the trainee journalists.

<sup>5</sup> This radio station played a significant role in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, encouraging Hutus to kill Tutsis.

<sup>6</sup> Stanbridge, R. and Ljunggren, M. 2003, *African Media and ICT4D: Documentary Evidence*, pp. 145-146.

## Nigeria

*Study conducted by John Dada.*

### Quick Profile:

**Population:** 140 000 000

**Ethnic groups:** Hausa and Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5% and over 250 others

**Religions:** Sunni Muslim 43%; indigenous beliefs 19%; Protestant 15%; Roman Catholic 8%; other Christian 12%; other 3%

**Languages:** English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani

### **Literacy:**

*Total population: 68%*

*Male: 75.7%*

*Female: 60.6%*

**Population below poverty line:** 60%

### **Economy**

**Currency:** Naira

**Average Exchange Rate:** US\$1 = 128.4 Naira

**External Debt:** US\$30.9 billion (2003 est.)

**Revenue:** US\$3.4 billion

**Expenditure:** US\$3.6 billion (2000 est.)

### **Media & ICT Profile:**

<b>Telephones – main lines in use</b>	702 000
<b>Mobile phone users</b>	1 607 900
<b>ISPs</b>	28 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Radio broadcast stations</b>	AM 83, FM 36, Short wave 11
<b>Television broadcast stations</b>	3 (the government controls 2 of the broadcasting stations and 15 repeater stations)
<b>Internet country code</b>	.ng
<b>Internet users</b>	420 000
<b>Daily newspapers</b>	9
<b>Weekly newspapers</b>	2

**ICT Policy Development:** No national ICT policy

**Media Monitored:** *The Punch, Guardian, Champion and ThisDay* newspapers as well as two electronic newsletters: *the Cyberschool News* and *NigerianITexpert*.

**Study Period:** 17 May to 4 June 2004

**Major Political/Social Influences/Shifts During Period of Study:** The declaration of state of emergency in Plateau State nullified any appointments

for interviews.

### Main Findings:

- o Coverage of ICT policy-related issues is largely to be found in special pullout inserts targeted at the Nigerian IT industry or in the economic/business sections of the media.
- o There is a significant bias towards private sector/business interests in coverage of ICT issues.
- o Powerful private sector lobby has a significant influence on the nation's ICT policy direction.
- o Policy-making remains the preserve of the civil service in Nigeria and there is a perception that other stakeholders such as the media lack an understanding of the important issues at play.
- o From media coverage of ICT issues, government and industry seem to be the makers and users of ICTs. Other voices are absent.
- o Media reporting and interviews tend to be verbatim, with little attempt made at interpretation, critique or analysis of policy design, implementation and evaluation.
- o Despite Nigeria's large and growing IT industry, the country does not have an ICT policy in place. This does not appear to be an issue of much concern however. Government support for an industry-led approach to the development of an ICT sector is aptly demonstrated in public-private sector collaborations.
- o Coverage of the ICT-related event was limited and when there was coverage, this was factual and descriptive, lacking analysis.
- o Women along with many other groups are absent from the policy debates and are also absent from media coverage of ICT issues.

## 1. Introduction

Following a period of military rule, Nigeria adopted a new constitution in 1999, and a peaceful transition to civilian government was completed. Nigeria is, however, beset by longstanding ethnic and

religious tensions, and the religious divisions within the population often rule the political situation in the country, in particular with regard to incidents of violence between Muslims and Christians.

The framework of Islamic law in several states has caused Christians to flee. There is an awareness that inter-faith violence is based on poverty, unemployment and the struggle for land.

Nigeria is one of the world's largest oil producers, and, as would be expected, the industry has produced unwelcome side effects, including a trade in stolen oil, which has fuelled violence in the Niger delta. Being heavily dependent on the oil sector (accounting for 90 – 95% of export revenue), other economic reforms to be carried out by the Obasanjo administration include the privatisation of parastatals, managing the exchange rate, and phasing out subsidies. The privatisation programme, has nevertheless, met with opposition, based on fears of job losses and an increase in product prices.

Nigeria's population of over 140 million makes her one of the fastest growing ICT markets in the world and the fastest in sub-Saharan Africa; and perhaps also the most deregulated. There is therefore a high level of ICT-related activity going on or planned in Nigeria at the moment.

To construct a framework for an enabling environment for the innovation, adoption and adaptation of ICTs, the Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA, <http://www.nitda.gov.ng/>) was established in 2000. NITDA's role was to "regulate, monitor, evaluate, and verify progress on an ongoing basis under the supervision and coordination of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology". NITDA was also mandated to establish a National Information Infrastructure Backbone (NIIB) to achieve a minimum capacity of 2.5GBps, using a combination of optical fibres,

satellite communications and wireless technology. This research sets out to describe the media understanding and coverage of the policies that underpin the rapid growth of the Nigerian ICT sector.

## 1.1 Media Profile

The media scene in Nigeria is one of the most vibrant in Africa. Radio and television services reach practically nationwide. All 36 states run their own radio stations, and some TV stations.

TV stations, however, are bound by high costs and scarce advertising revenues. The key source of information for the majority of Nigerians is radio. Television viewing tends to be urban centred, among the more affluent.

There are more than numerous national and local newspapers and publications, including well-respected (influential) dailies, popular tabloids, and publications that forward or speak to the interests of particular ethnic groups. Media freedom has improved substantially under President Obasanjo, and the press is often critical of the government, even while restrictive decrees remain in force.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Tools/Methods

This study attempts to identify the range of ICT policy issues which the selected media raise, and assess the quality of the coverage of these issues within a specified period of time. The period was chosen to coincide with a significant ICT event within Nigeria. This research reports on the media coverage of a post-WSIS event, the *eNigeria*.

The *eNigeria* is a key national annual ICT event. This year, the theme reflected a growing interest

in ICTs in the sub-region. The role of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) in the WSIS process was the theme of *eNigeria* 2004.

*eNigeria* is an annual international conference on Information and Communication Technologies. The focus of the conference is to discuss current issues and developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as effective tools of national development. *eNigeria* is also used as an opportunity to recognise and reward government bodies and other institutions for their input in the development of ICTs.

### 2.1.1 Media Monitored

Media coverage of a major ICT event, the *eNigeria*, was monitored during the weeks before and after the event in *The Punch*, *Guardian*, *Champion* and *ThisDay* newspapers as well as two electronic newsletters: *the Cyberschool News*<sup>2</sup> and *Nigerian ITexpert*<sup>3</sup>.

The chosen print media were considered policy-influential because of their histories of engagement with government on policy issues in general, and their histories of 'scoops' on government policy announcements. The electronic newsletters were monitored as they are considered authoritative voices of this sector.

### 2.1.2 Interviews and Events

The *eNigeria*, a key annual national ICT event, took place in Abuja between 23 and 27 May 2004. This year, the theme reflected a growing interest in ICTs in the sub-region, the ECOWAS. The theme of the conference was to consider the role of this regional body in the WSIS process.

There were four key policy makers in attendance, the Secretary to the Federal Government, the CEO of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, the

Director of NITDA and the Executive Governor of Jigawa State. In their speeches (Ndukwe, 2004 and Ajayi, 2004) the emphasis was on the various landmark events that their various organisations have undertaken as part of the *ICT for Development* (ICT4D) agenda for Nigeria. The fact that the full national agenda is yet to be decided was not considered a major issue for debate and discussion.

The event also offered an opportunity to meet key ICT players from public, private and civil societies, like the CEO of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, Ernest Ndukwe, and two ICT journalists. Both journalists work for two policy influential media: *The Champion* and *the Punch*. The senior journalist with *the Punch*, Jonah Ibomah, is also an official of the *Joint Action Committee on IT Awareness and Development* (JACITAD), while Remmy Nweke is a Senior Reporter (and member of the Highway Africa Editorial team) covering the ICT beat for *The Champion* newspaper – the second largest selling newspaper in Nigeria. Interviews were conducted with these individuals.

The three interviews were considered adequate substitutes for original plans to interview editors and journalists of the *Guardian* newspaper, another elite daily in Nigeria, and the CEO of the *Plateau State Radio and Television* (PRTV). The outbreak of sectarian violence that led to several deaths and damage to property, is believed to be aggravated by other socio-economic factors resulted in a State of Emergency being declared. The declaration of a State of Emergency in Plateau State nullified any appointments for interviews in that state, including a follow-up interview with the CEO of the *Nigerian Broadcasting Commission* (NBC).

All interviews therefore took place during the period of the *eNigeria*. Securing a time to interview the CEO was the most difficult and we had to be satisfied with talking to him after his presentation.

The interviews of the other two respondents were also done during the conference. Neither of these journalists stayed beyond the opening ceremonies of the event.

### Newspapers

	The Punch	Guardian	Champion	ThisDay
<b>Ownership and control</b>	Private	Private	Private	Private
<b>Location of H/O</b>	Lagos	Lagos	Lagos	Lagos
<b>Frequency of publication</b>	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily
<b>Language</b>	English	English	English	English
<b># of Pages</b>	72	36		80

## 3. ICT Policy Issues

Nigeria does not have a national ICT policy as yet. The high level of ICT4D activities going on in such a policy vacuum makes Nigeria an interesting case study. Policy makers who were also speakers at the *eNigeria 2004* conference made reference to the draft policy document, 'Use IT'<sup>4</sup>, as if it were already a legal instrument.

The National IT Bill has however not been passed, although a separate bill which was tabled about the same time, two years ago, the National Telecom Bill, has been passed. This lack of legal instrument, however, does not seem to have much





impact on the supervising agency, NITDA.

When the *Nigerian Communication Commission* (NCC) ordered Nigerian ISPs to vacate the 3.5GHZ band in which they operate because the band has been re-allocated to companies that would operate *Fixed Wireless Access* (FWA), pressures by the aggrieved ISPs led to a postponement of implementation of the notice by 18 months. This incidence is an indication of the powerful private sector lobby and how much influence they have on the nation's ICT policy direction.

While there is particular interest in media coverage of issues such as connectivity, accessibility, community radio, gender participation, rural constituency, and language issues<sup>5</sup>, evidenced by the use of this jargon appearing in promotional publications for the event, throughout the duration of this study none of these issues featured in the media.

GSM coverage of rural communities is seen as largely a problem of infrastructure. The onus is placed on the operators to install and maintain these infrastructures despite the low market volume from rural areas. It is hoped that connectivity will eventually trickle down to rural areas. The long-term view is that fixed lines will be necessary if rural telephony is to be a reality. The development impacts of the rural deployment of ICTs receive little or no mention in the media.

The plethora of ICT activities in Nigeria is often cited as proof of her fast growing market (Ajayi 2004, and Ndukwe 2004). These include the country's two local computer manufacturers, proposed local assembly of solid state technology computers as a cottage industry (Fantsuam Foundation), a Silicon Valley project under the *West African Institute of Information and Communication Technologies* (WAIICT) under way in Delta State, efforts of the northern states to promote and

invest in ICT4D activities, the Nigerian Diaspora Day (24 June) – a programme of the *Nigerian IT Professionals in the Americas* (NITPA) and the *Digital Bridge Institute* (DBI). The DBI is a project that is tailored to meet the capacity needs of the private sector. The DBI reflects the growing public and private sector IT collaboration in Nigeria, and is expected to prepare students for the industry. Its curriculum is based on industry requirements.

The low literacy rate in Nigeria, coupled with strong oral traditions makes language an important ICT4D issue. Most Nigerians are more comfortable speaking than writing, and this has a significant effect on how they access or participate in the national policy discourse. Language issues therefore become the lynchpin for any serious effort at e-governance and generation of local content for most Nigerians.

## 4. Media Coverage

### 4.1 Types of Stories

During the period 17 May to 4 June, the following types of ICT-related stories were noted:

- o News (6)
- o In Brief (1)
- o Editorial (1)
- o Opinion Piece (2)
- o Business (5)
- o Photographs (2)
- o Interview (4)
- o Other: Geneva WSIS Declaration (1)
- o Other: Event-related Advertisements (3)

In media reportage, the socio economic linkages of ICT to issues of gender, poverty, environment, rural constituencies, affordability, relevance of technology and accountability were hardly explored.



Issues that did receive media attention were:

- o Private sector financial investments in telecom
- o Promotion of new hardware
- o Patterns of usage of the internet in public places such as cyber cafes
- o Coverage of Ministers' speeches at ICT-related events (seminars and workshops)
- o The regulatory environment
- o Financial deals between the likes of Econet, Vodacom, Orascom and MTN

Deregulation of telecoms received headline attention, indicating the ICT-related news considered relevant to the target audiences of the influential media. A significant bias towards private sector issues and interests was evident.

#### Select examples of media coverage to demonstrate the economic interest angle

##### o **Lagos Microsoft opens Digital Village**

By Immaculate Okwaraoho

Summary: *This article announces the opening of the Lagos Digital Village, a public-private partnership between Microsoft Nigeria and the Lagos State Government to boost Nigeria's burgeoning knowledge economy. The article focuses on the economic potential of the knowledge economy quoting the governor who says that standards of living will improve through technology use and young people's skills will be developed. Microsoft Nigeria's spokesperson is quoted, saying part of this initiative is to put Nigeria on the map as an ICT giant. All sources in the article are male. Article appearing in the Guardian Compulife section (special pullout)*

##### o **HP Unveils All-in-one fax machine**

Summary: *This article announces the launch of a new Hewlett Packard IT system focusing on its capabilities and its potential to increase efficiency and productivity. The source is international.*

##### o **Vodacom wins Africa's first 3G Licence – Record 37% profit growth**

Summary: *This article originating in South Africa, announces Vodacom being awarded the licence to provide high-speed internet access via mobile phone. It quotes the Vodacom CEO (a man) and mentions that other companies are catching up on Vodacom's dominance in the South African market. The article also mentions Vodacom's pull-out from the takeover of Econet Wireless Nigeria. There is comment on the unprecedented success of mobile telephony in Africa where according to latest ITU reports mobile phone usage in Africa is growing at 65% per annum, double the rate of growth in the rest of the world. The article also says that its SA operations account for the vast majority of revenue and growth.*

##### o **Unical Community Bank signs on enterprise banker**

Summary: *Article announces the investment in a computer banking automation system Enterprise Banker CT2003, an indigenous banking software system to improve the efficiency of banking services and systems expected from this IT investment. The article goes on to list all of the core features of the software and quotes the software developer. Sources are male. The Guardian, June 8, 2004 Compulife section*

##### o **Website on wildlife debuts**

Summary: *Article announces the launch of an internet-based project to promote Nigeria's wildlife. Targeted at the tourist market, the website will focus on conservation of wildlife. Quoting the webmaster of the site, the site focuses on the commercial aspects of the tourism industry, calling on hotel owners, tourism establishments and travel agencies to advertise on this website. The objective of the website is to provide critical information for tourists, including advertisements. All sources are male. The Guardian, June 8, 2004 Compulife section*

o **More people surf porn sites than search sites** By Jonah Iboma

Summary: *The article reports on a global report released by an online measurement company finding that the vast majority of internet users use the internet to access pornography. The report finds that porn sites receive up to three times more traffic than leading search engines such as Google and Yahoo. The research was conducted on 25 million internet users with more than 500 websites in 160 countries and found that 18.8% of all internet traffic is to porn sites.*

*The Punch*, p48 Computer and IT section

o **Digital Partners to bridge IT gap**

By Ufuoma 'Daro

Summary: *Article argues that despite the speed at which the IT industry is growing in advanced countries, it is yet to establish a foothold in Africa. It reports on a conference organised by Africans abroad, called Digital Partners Africa. The conference would explore how the combined knowledge, resources and experiences of the private and public sectors could be harnessed to promote positive and sustainable change in Africa. This conference aimed to build on the Digital Diaspora Network initiated by the UN in 2002. The conference organiser said lack of computer access and lack of computer literacy in Africa was an obstacle to the economic development of Africa.*

All sources were male.

*The Punch*, p46 Computer and IT section

o **Regulators emphasise technology at e-regulation conference** By Clara Nwachukwu

Summary: *Article reports on a US-based insurance conference. The focus was on speed-to-market ability – the speed at which new products could reach the market. Another focus of the conference was consumer protection through state regulation. The article then reports on an African insurance conference held in Tunisia, focusing on how to expand the insurance market in Africa.*

*The Punch*, p21 Business and Insurance section

o **Human resources more than training and development** By Clara Nwachukwu

Summary: *This article explores the importance of human resource development in the insurance industry and the need for companies to retain their best performing staff in the context of market volatility and fast changes to technology. Professional development was important in the context of rapid changes in business environments. It calls on the insurance industry to pay more attention to human resource issues.*

*The Punch*, p21 Business and Insurance section

o **Vodacom's pullout, Nigeria's loss**

By Ufuoma 'Daro

Summary: *Article reports on the planned Vodacom takeover of Econet Wireless Nigeria. It argues that this takeover was much awaited as customers were expecting a reduction in high mobile tariffs with the introduction of greater competition. It was also expected that Vodacom's takeover would solve some of the financial problems facing Econet Wireless.*

*The Punch*, Telecoms and Computer section

o **Ecobank packages \$53million telecom deal**

By Bukky Olajide

Summary: *The Ecobank Development Corporation announced the packaging of a telecoms transaction worth more than \$53 million in the form of a syndicated loan. This article noted Ecobank's emergence as a major financier of indigenous business, paving the way for the economic emancipation of the region.*

*The Guardian*, Wednesday, 9 June 2004

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## Observation from press clippings

As evidenced above, ICT issues in Nigeria are interpreted almost entirely as economic-interest stories – appearing in the business sections of influential media and in special computer-related pullout supplements targeted at the private sector, carrying their advertisements and promotion, thereby generating significant advertising revenue for Nigerian media. The social development aspects of ICTs receive almost no coverage.

### 4.2 Origin of Stories

Two of the stories were of national origin, and two of continental origin.

## 5. Interviews

The questions used for the interviews are reproduced below. The sequence was adjusted according to the flow of the discussion with the interviewee, and sometimes it was convenient to embed one question in another, or infer answers from other contributions made during the interview.

### 5.1 Jonah Iboma (Journalist at *The Punch*) & Remmy Nweke (Journalist at *Champion*)

**Why have you come to eNigeria?**

**RN:** *It was part of our beat.*

**What are your usual sources of news and information? Why do you use these sources?**

**Jl:** *We are both members of the Joint Action Committee on IT Awareness and Development (JACITAD). It is a forum for peer training of journalists on economic issues, eReadiness assessment, and providing feedback to NITDA.*

*I also have links to the IT industry and attend regular briefings by NITDA. We see NITDA and the private sectors as the key players in the Nigerian ICT process.*

**In the past week, the ICT stories in your paper were located on the pull out section. Why was this so?**

**RN:** *This section targets the IT industry, and sometimes that is the only section that interests them so it is important to make it easily detachable for them. The IT private sector is the main target.*

**Who is responsible for the ICT section of your news coverage? How often are you involved in this assignment? What is your main beat? How much ICT coverage do you make in your main beat?**

**Jl:** *ICT coverage is only one of the many beats a senior journalist can be assigned to cover by his editor. The emphasis is to meet the deadline for the weekly publication while covering other beats of national interest.*

**Do you view your medium as policy-influential? Why/why not?**

**Jl:** *IT and ICT means the same thing to our readers so we leave it that way. The education sector and the local IT industries are the only constituencies with interest in what the policy may say about software and hardware. For example the IT Policy draft has no mention on the need for government to encourage 'Made in Nigeria IT Products'. Issues of the GSM licenses, fixed wireless licenses, research and development, performance indicators for the IT Policy were areas our newspaper pointed out to NITDA because these had not been adequately addressed, or not at all in the draft document. The policy was first issued in 2001, and a revised version of the draft has now been produced that has taken on board our observations about the deficiencies of the first draft. Bringing a multi-stakeholder partnership and the Mobile*

*Internet Unit are new additions to the policy.*

*Our column has been instrumental as a bridge between the IT industry and the NITDA. This column brought to the attention of NITDA that the Nigerian software industry is worth close to 6 Billion USD, and emphasised the need to give as much focus to this sector as is being given to hardware. We are aware of defects in the draft policy, for example its silence on funding, youth and gender, and we intend to continue to bring these issues up under JACITAD for the attention of NITDA. The policy's intention to produce 200 000 IT professionals by 2004 is clearly not realistic, but the recent establishment of the Digital Bridge Institute shows a little movement in that direction.*

**RN:** *ICT Policy gets mentioned regularly in the Champion. The weekly 8-page ICT pullout on Thursdays has reports on industry development. Industries in Lagos are keen readers of Champion on Thursdays.*

**Jl:** *The liberalisation of the telecom environment led to an increased need of manpower. The Digital Bridge Institute, DBI will make students IT-ready. It is the Nigerian government's collaboration with the private sector and its curriculum is based on industry requirement. It is government's response to an identified need in the IT industry.*

## 5.2 Ernest Ndukwe (CEO of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation)

### **Why did you come to eNigeria?**

*I am one of the speakers at the plenary.*

### **How do you see your role?**

*I see myself as ICT policy initiator and implementer. I am also a newsmaker, and a source of information for journalists. I try to keep abreast of regional and international developments in the IT*

*industry.*

**I've heard you mention the 'IT' Policy. Is this the same as an ICT Policy? Which one does Nigeria operate at the moment?**

*Actually Nigeria does not yet have an ICT Policy. She has a draft IT Policy that is yet to be approved by the House of Assembly. But the implementing agency, NITDA, has the mandate to continue to create an enabling environment for the development of ICT in Nigeria.*

**How powerful is the media, in your understanding?**

*The government considers some media powerful and their views tend to be taken on board more than for example that of tabloids. This may be the reason why such papers tend to engage professionals such as Chris Uwaje (The Guardian)<sup>6</sup> to articulate and present their views.*

**What role do the media play in policy development?**

*Policy development is still largely a civil service exercise in Nigeria. This may not be entirely the Government's fault, because there are few journalists who really understand or appreciate the need for involvement in the policy development process. It seems rather abstract.*

## 6. Analysis

It would seem that the larger social dimension and desirable outcome of keeping the populace informed is yet to become a widely practiced activity for Nigerian journalists. The major newsmakers in all the papers were the government and industry – they constitute the visible makers and users of technology. The presence or availability of the end users appears to be incidental, and this obviously affects the quality of reporting and debate on ICT policy in Nigeria.

Media reporting and interviews tend to be verbatim, with little attempt made at interpretation or critique of policy design, implementation and evaluation. An opportunistic event during this research was a television interview of one of the ICT-savvy state governors. The Jigawa State Governor is widely known for his commitment to ICT4D in his state. As a result he is often the subject of high profile national interviews on ICT-related events. Jigawa is one of the youngest states located in the Muslim heartland. During the interview in question he was being asked if he did not see ICT as threat to *Sharia law*, to Muslim morals, to other pressing needs such as water, classrooms and access roads in his state. He was clearly ahead of his host on ICT policy issues and processes, and his efforts to redirect the host's questioning underscored this point.

Exceptions to the rule of verbatim reporting lacking interpretation and critique are few. Notable among the exceptions is a regular IT column published every Tuesday in the *Compulife* section of the Guardian newspaper by Chris Uwaje. He is an ICT consultant and is one of the respected authorities on Nigeria's ICT efforts. As President of the *Information Technology (Industry) Association of Nigeria* (ITAN), he submitted the first proposal to the establishment of a National Policy on IT. Uwaje's column has a broad readership outreach, and in the past has done in-depth analysis of diverse issues including the Senate and Challenges of IT Legislation, Knowledge Economy, Open Source, Bandwidth, IT Infrastructure, and the Nigerian Diaspora.

## 7. Observations

The first organised attempt to present a coherent policy on ICT was made by the *Information Technology Association of Nigeria* (ITAN), when they made a submission to the Ministry of Science

and Technology. The President's espousing of the virtues of ICT and his involvement in NEPAD, are not borne out by the realities on the ground. The implementing agency of the *National IT Policy*, NIT-DA, is not accorded the ministerial profile required for effectiveness of such a strategic body. It is a sub-unit of the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the CEO is answerable to a Minister, who in turn is answerable to the President. The message that this conveys is that ICT is not a priority of the Nigerian government.<sup>10</sup> This research on the Nigeria ICT policy scene reveals the impact of a policy vacuum on the ownership, participation and development of the national ICT4D plan of action.

During the period of the study, only two media had articles that dealt directly with policy issues – both electronic newsletters: *News on ICTs in Nigeria* and the *Cyberschoolnews*.<sup>11</sup> Both publications, by virtue of their internet distribution, have national and international coverage. Their views get heard in the corridors of ICT policy implementation in Nigeria. However, the limitation of the medium means that only elite readers who have internet connections have access to these sources.

It is noteworthy that the *eNigeria* event did not make it into two national newspapers until two weeks after the event.<sup>12</sup>

Invariably, journalists tend to cover only the opening and closing ceremonies of major ICT events. Some of them attend these events on the invitation of a politician who may be a main speaker at the opening of the event, and they usually depart the venue with his entourage after these ceremonies. The plenary sessions are hardly given any media coverage.

There is a pervasive lack of interest within journalism, media houses, government and large swathes of civil society on policy issues in general, and in ICTs in particular. Sometimes one detects



politically motivated ICT activism within official circles, but this may be because ICTs are seen as the current international fad. Issues of ICT policy in Nigeria seem to be largely public relations issues; a posturing that may give an impression of a grasp of the fundamental nature of the matter. Pronouncements on policy matters are regarded as the prerogative of the civil service.

The situation is not helped by the aversion of civil servants to provide information to journalists, especially on policy matters. *The Nigerian Freedom of Information Bill*, which is expected to ensure better access to information for the citizenry, is still under debate by the legislature, five years after it was first submitted.<sup>13</sup>

These professional and regulatory shortfalls undermine the media's ability to report simply and clearly. Journalists are not proficient in the tools and the processes used to archive, access, retrieve, manipulate, produce, present and exchange information by electronic or other automated means. Their reporting of issues around the use of ICTs is restricted to aspects of computer hardware and mobile telephones. Radio hardly features in their reportage and this is reflected in the widespread coverage given to the Telecoms Bill while the Community Radio Bill was given little or no mention in any of the papers.

Until now Nigeria does not have a National ICT Policy – unlike other ECOWAS member states like the Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Burkina Faso. Nigeria has a National Communications Policy and a National Policy on Information Technology; two separate documents. Policy issues which the Nigerian media are yet to place before their readers and listeners include the National IT Policy Bill at the National Assembly, a reorganisation of the NITDA to grant it executive status, an extensive review of the current IT Policy documents making multi-stakeholder involvement, especially of civil society, a prerequisite for further development

of the National ICT Policy and infrastructure.



## 8. Conclusions

Media perception and understanding and therefore reporting of ICT policy process in Nigeria is still at its infancy. There are not many incentives from the media houses or Government to make journalists' knowledge and skills development in this area a priority. The narrow commercial hardware interests of the private sector tend to predominate and drive the ad hoc unfolding of policy strategies. The ICT policy process in Nigeria remains largely hardware, and therefore industry and business-driven, with the media as onlookers. The private sector forms the bulk of newspaper readership: they pay for advertorials, pullouts etc. – they pay the piper. The newspaper industry is not the most profitable business in Nigeria: you need the private sector to pick up the bills, and their interest has to be catered for.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There are 15 private telecom operators functioning in Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup> Cyberschuul News provides training in telecommunications and InfoTech. They provide classroom teaching on-line and offline web facilities, and run seminars, workshops and conferences. They are located in Lagos, and have special programmes for youth and people with disabilities. Their weekly eNewsletter is widely read and is considered authoritative <http://www.cyberschuul.com>.

<sup>3</sup> NigerianITexpert.com aims to become a one stop Information Age Solutions Centre and a global reference point for best-practice and quality customer satisfaction IT innovations, news, creative designs and comprehensive services at both the enterprise and grassroots user levels worldwide <http://www.nigerianITexpert.com>.

<sup>4</sup> NITDA, Nigeria IT Policy <http://www.nitda.gov.ng/itpolicy.php>.

<sup>5</sup> Adegbola, T. Standardisation of orthography: An imperative of the information age. African Languages Technology Initiative (Alt I). Paper prepared for the First Hausa and related Orthographies workshop, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria 2003. Bisharat, 2004. <http://www.bisharat.net/introen.htm>.

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<sup>6</sup> Uwaje, C. The Uwaje Papers 2004 <http://www.cyberschuul.com/news.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> His comments were made in a Q&A session after his presentation at eNigeria.

<sup>8</sup> Adegbola, T. Standardisation of orthography: An imperative of the information age. African Lan-



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<sup>10</sup> Ya'u, Y. 2004, News on ICTs in Nigeria (NIN) Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) May, Vol. 3, No. 5 [www.citad.interconnection.org](http://www.citad.interconnection.org).

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<sup>11</sup> Ya'u, Y. 2004, News on ICTs in Nigeria (NIN) Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) May, Vol. 3, No. 5 [www.citad.interconnection.org](http://www.citad.interconnection.org).

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<sup>12</sup> Dada, J. Implementing the WSIS Process in West Africa, eNigeria 2004. This Day, eBusiness, 17th June 2004. p.28.

<sup>13</sup> Olukoya, S. 2004. Freedom of Information Bill Proves Elusive. <http://www.ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=24297>.

## Ethiopia

*Study conducted by Filmon Tekle.*

### Quick Profile:

**Population:** 67 851 281

**Ethnic groups:** Oromo 40%, Amhara and Tigre 32%, Sidamo 9%, Shankella 6%, Somali 6%, Afar 4%, Gurage 2%, other 1%

**Religions:** Muslim 45%-50%, Ethiopian Orthodox 35%-40%, animist 12%, other 3%-8%

**Languages:** Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromigna, Guara-gigna, Somali, Arabic, other local languages, English (major foreign language taught in schools)

### Literacy:

*Total population: 42.7%*

*Male: 50.3%*

*Female: 35.1%*

**Population below poverty line:** 50%

### Economy

**Currency:** Birr

**Average exchange rates:** US\$1 = 8.57 Birr ('02 est.)

**Note:** since 24 October 2001 exchange rates are determined on a daily basis via interbank transactions regulated by the Central Bank

**External debt:** US\$2.9 billion ('01 est.)

**Revenue:** US\$1.4 billion

**Expenditure:** US\$2.4 billion

### Media & ICT Profile<sup>1</sup>:

<b>Telephones – main lines in use</b>	353 800 ('02)
<b>Total Mobile phone users</b>	50 400 ('02)
<b>ISPs</b>	1
<b>Radio broadcast stations</b>	AM 8, FM 0, short-wave 1 ('01)
<b>Radios</b>	15.2 million ('02)
<b>Television broadcast stations</b>	1 plus 24 repeaters ('02)
<b>Televisions</b>	682 000 ('02)
<b>Internet country code</b>	.et
<b>Internet users</b>	50 000 ('02)
<b>Daily newspapers</b>	3 (Ethiopian Herald – English; Addis Zemen – Amharic; The Daily Monitor-English)
<b>Weekly newspapers</b>	51
<b>Monthly newspapers</b>	18

**National ICT Policy:** In process – draft

**Media Monitored:** *Fortune* (private, weekly); *Reporter* (private, weekly); *The Ethiopian Herald* (state, daily); *The Daily Monitor* (private, daily)

**Study Period:** 30 May – 20 June 2004

### Main Findings

- o Compared with other African countries' influential media monitored in this study, ICT issues are quite high up on the Ethiopian media agenda.
- o The major policy/practice ICT issue in Ethiopia revealed by this research relates to dissatisfaction at the quality of existing services provided by the state monopoly of the telecommunications sector including internet and mobile services.
- o There was significant media coverage of this issue in the way of front-page news, editorials, cartoons and letters to the editor.
- o At the time of this research being conducted, media coverage of this situation as well as interviews with key media decision-makers revealed a general policy assumption that a liberalisation/privatisation approach would resolve the problem of poor services.
- o It is important to be reminded that this research solicited the attitudes of elite media and elite decision-makers in Ethiopian society. There was no engagement with the potential negative aspects of adopting a liberalisation/privatisation approach for Ethiopian people.
- o This research revealed that women are not significantly involved in the Ethiopian media as media leaders or as sources of information. Ethiopian media remains largely the domain of men, and women working in media is the exception to the norm. In the one story that did make mention of women, a state minister was quoted saying that equal media access for women was a question of democracy.
- o At the policy level women's voices are absent from engaging in ICT policy discussions and proc-

esses or in critiquing and analysing policy. The women parliamentarians interviewed had not been involved in the policy-making process and felt that only after receiving appropriate training on this issue would they be able to voice opinions on it.

- o There was limited media attention to non-urban realities. The limited coverage that did consider non-urban realities was in the form of news items announcing the openings of new externally supported multimedia and telecentres, the provision of training, the provision of IT laboratories for preparatory schools and the expansion of telephone services. All of this coverage was in the form of news coverage with no analysis.
- o The issue of disabled people in the information society has received policy and media attention. At the policy level there is a policy and implementation strategy sub-act that considers the disabled. Media coverage included the announcement of special ICT training for visually impaired people. Again, these issues are dealt with as news items with no critical analysis or engagement.

## 1. Introduction

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is located in the horn of Africa, bounded on the northeast by Eritrea and Djibouti, on the east and southeast by Somalia, on the southwest by Kenya, and on the west and northwest by Sudan.

According to the constitution, the country has a federal government system consisting of regional states, zones and districts. There are 9 regional states, 2 special city administrations, 66 zone and 550 districts (known as *Wereda*) and 6 special districts.

The capital city of Ethiopia is Addis Ababa. The language most widely spoken is Amharic, the official language of the federal government. Since it is the medium of instruction in high schools and tertiary

education, only the educated elites speak English. Ethiopia is in the process of economic transformation through an *Agriculture Development Led Industrialisation strategy* (ADLI). Agriculture is the basis of Ethiopia's economy for employment creation, supply of raw materials to industry, earning foreign exchange and as a source of food for the population.

Nearly all social and economic development indicators reveal that the country is pitifully lagging behind the rest of the world. The country has neither tangible mineral resources nor rich agricultural potential to help accelerate its development. (Tsfaye & Demeke, 2001)

Nonetheless, recent government openness for improving the situation by focusing on long-term development through ADLI has showed some prospects in productivity, private investment and the mobilisation of external resources. The ADLI philosophy is that through the widespread extension of services, the promotion of fertilisers, good farming practices and the injection of better seeds, farmers can realize their potential, poverty will directly be reduced and resources will be freed for broader development goals (Adam, 2001).

In this understanding, the Ethiopian government now believes that properly planned and managed ICT applications could have a considerable role in fighting poverty, reducing the isolation of rural communities, educating more people and supporting lifelong learning.

To derive benefits from ICTs, the government has been in the process of developing a national information policy and strategy – the first move to join the knowledge based economy.

### **Development of National ICT Policy**

*A National Information and Communications Infrastructure Framework* (NICIF) Study Task Force

was set up in the Office of the Prime Minister to give direction for the establishment and implementation of an integrated, comprehensive and effective *National Information and Communication Infrastructure Framework* (NICIF).<sup>2</sup>

In January 1999 a document prepared stressed the need for an adequate ICT national policy, rules and regulations. At this time the *Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission* (ESTC) with support from the *Development Information Services Division* (DISD) of the *UN Economic Commission for Africa* (ECA) took the lead in stimulating debates and discussions on ICT policy formulation and implementation in Ethiopia.

In March 1999, the government assigned a high-level IT Development Sub-committee with the following task groups for ICT development:

1. *National Information & Telemetric Policy Group* (NITP)

Responsible body: *Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission* (ESTC)

2. *National Information Infrastructure Development Group* (NIID)

Responsible body: *Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation* (ETC)

3. *Human Resource Development Group* (HRD)

Responsible body: Addis Ababa University (AAU)

4. *Standard and Content Development Group* (SCD)

Responsible bodies: *Central Statistical Authority* (CSA) / *Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission* (ESTC)

Following that, in September 1999 a national workshop was held that brought together ICT sectoral stakeholders, government policy makers, researchers and others to facilitate the formulation of a national ICT policy. In December 1999 a National ICTs Policy and Strategies Draft Document was prepared by the ESTC.



In June 2001, amid frustration with the slow progress, the British Council in collaboration with ECA and the *UN Development Programme* (UNDP) held a successful stakeholders conference with the aim of developing an ICT vision for Ethiopia. The National ICTs Policy and Strategies Draft document was refined and in July 2001 the *National Computers and Information Centre* (NCIC) of the ESTC came up with a Draft National ICT Policy.

The draft national ICT policy put forward the objectives, visions, goals, policy statements, national strategies and priority areas. The vision, as stated in the draft policy document is:

*... to exploit ICTs for the enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness at the civil services, optimisation of the flow of information at all levels, and to maximally facilitate connectivity to the global information infrastructure and lay a firm foundation for e-business by the year 2010.*

The objectives of the ICT policy include:

- o The optimum exploitation of the role that ICT plays in national development programmes, and
- o The building up of the required capacity of national ICT infrastructure.

The document is still in a draft form. Without any further discussions between the private sector and the public, it is waiting for adoption by the Council of Ministers.

Further problems are that:

- The ICT policy draft document is available only on the internet where the majority cannot access it.
- Even though the government is involved in implementing big projects like SchoolNet<sup>3</sup>, and *woreda net*<sup>4</sup>, the government has thus far not invested adequate resources and did not commit to consult with the different stakeholders in the

area of ICT policy.

## 1.1 Media Profile

The press in Ethiopia has a glorious history of almost a century when the first newspaper, *Aemro*, was established in 1906 during the reign of Emperor Menilik. Then followed *Berhanena Selam* in 1923 by the progressive crown Prince Ras Teferi Mekonen to disseminate leftist views and as an instrument against the conservative nobility.

The media in Ethiopia has passed through the age of censorship and complete state ownership under the autocratic reigns of Emperor Haile Sellasie and the military period.

After new political order was established in 1991 by the coming of EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) a new press law was proclaimed on 21 October 1992<sup>5</sup> that guarantees a relative freedom of speech. The law has completely dealt away with censorship. However, the government proved problematic in the effective realisation of this freedom in broadcasting media by delaying the process of issuing licenses. The Information Minister was to begin issuing licenses in August 2004 this year for FM licenses only.

The Press Law is one of the biggest achievements of the current government in power. Though the law guarantees access to information on government archives and public documents, practice shows that the private press has suffered constant persecution from government officials for both justified and unjustified offences, although the law is generally considered liberal.

Immediately after the proclamation of the new Press Law, hundreds of newspapers mushroomed almost overnight. Over time, however, members of the private press have sought refuge in different countries for reasons of political inconvenience



at home. Currently there are only few responsible and honest newspapers that report fairly.

The press community is dissected into two opposing groups. Almost all members of the private press are grouped into the *Ethiopian Free Journalists Association* (EFJA) while those in state owned media are clustered as the *Ethiopian Journalists Association* (EJA). The office of the EFJA had been shut down by the government for “illegal” operation.<sup>6</sup>

The electronic media has remained the prerogative of the government. *The Ethiopian News Agency* (ENA) is the state-owned institution with correspondents throughout the country. *Walta Information Centre* (WIC) is also a newsagent not owned by the government but affiliated with the ruling party along with Radio Fana, broadcasting in Amharic, Oromifa, Somali, and Afar languages. The ownership status of the latter has been controversial since no other private electronic media has been allowed to operate so far.

The state owned *Ethiopian Television* (ETV) broadcasts at night on weekdays and full day on weekends in Amharic, Tigrigna, and Oromifa. *Radio Ethiopia* airs at different times of the day in Amharic, Oromifa, Tigrigna, English, Arabic, Afar and Somali. There is also an *FM Addis 97.1* station under *Radio Ethiopia* hosting a myriad music, call-in and talk radio programmes and advertisements. The state-owned *Ethiopian Press Enterprise* publishes five press outputs of which include the Amharic daily *Addis Zemen* and the English daily *Ethiopian Herald*.

The total number of press products circulating is 138. Of all, 99 are newspapers and 39 magazines.<sup>7</sup> Except the government-owned broadsheet daily *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald* most of them are in tabloid format with 8,12,16,20,32,56 pages and most of them are

weekly papers with a circulation of between 1500 and 30 000 copies per week.

Except for *The Daily Monitor*, *The Ethiopian Herald*, *The Reporter*, *The Sun*, *The Sub-Saharan Informer*, *Fortune*, *Capital* and *Perspective*, which are published in English, the rest are in local languages (almost all of them in Amharic).

A Broadcasting Agency has been formed and is on the way to giving licenses to private broadcasters. The Minister of Information, Bereket Simon, recently announced that the *Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency* would begin to issue FM radio licenses to private operators as of August 2004 (while presenting the ministry’s ten-month performance report to Parliament).

Most of the media houses are equipped with computers, printers and a few of them are connected to the internet. Internet service is still under the government monopoly. There is only one Internet Service Provider. The same is true for the mobile telephone network.

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Tools/Methods

The study was conducted for four consecutive weeks from 30 May to 20 June 2004. During this time, selected media was monitored, and an ICT awareness-building workshop for 40 Ethiopian Members of Parliament<sup>8</sup> was observed.

The following research methodologies and activities were utilised:

- In-depth interviews and vox pops
- Questionnaires
- Review of existing ICT related research papers and literature
- Online research

- Monitoring policy-influential media
- Observing an ICT policy related event

### 2.1.1 Media Monitored

Two weekly newspapers, *Fortune* and *Reporter* and two daily newspapers, *The Daily Monitor* and *The Ethiopian Herald* were monitored.

Policy influential media has been interpreted as media that shapes elite public opinion. A questionnaire and a random vox pop were used to ascertain which media are policy-influential.

According to the vox pop and the questionnaire that had been distributed among opinion makers, policy makers, decision makers, Members of Parliament and ordinary people, *Reporter* and *Fortune* were rated as the most influential media.

At a secondary level *The Ethiopian Herald* has also been included in the study, as it is the only government-owned daily broadsheet and has a circulation of 55 000 copies per day. Its main sources of information are the top news providers in the county — *Walta Information Centre* and the *Ethiopian News Agency*. This means that the news agencies were also indirectly monitored.

*The Daily Monitor* — the only private daily was also added to the list, because it is mainly read by NGOs, civil society and government organisations.

*See table on pg. 80*

### 2.1.2 Interviews

To carry out the study, the following were interviewed:

- 3 Media bosses
- 9 Journalists
- 5 Government Officials
- 3 Members of Parliament
- 7 Computer Science/Information System Uni-

versity/College students

- 4 University/College IT teachers
- 6 ICT professionals including the president of the Ethiopian Information Technology Professionals Association.
- The research also included a vox pop with 45 people (businesspeople, ordinary people, professionals from various fields)

Of the total 82 people interviewed, 39 were women, and all respondents were between 19 – 69 years old.

## 2.2 Procedure

The major challenges were securing meetings with government officials. It was difficult to get hold of them in their offices even after making formal appointments. Most of them were unwilling to talk to face-to-face. In these cases, interviews were conducted by fax or by mobile phone, which proved to be extremely difficult. The Ethiopian cellular phone network disconnects every 45 seconds on average, forcing one to redial over and over again.

## 3. National ICT policy

Editors and other influential people were, at the outset, asked whether Ethiopia has an ICT policy or not. Below are selected voices, representative of the majority.

**Amare Aregawi, Owner and Editor-in-chief of Reporter:** *I don't think so. I don't think the country has such policy. As far as I am concerned, there is no such policy. I don't also think that there is awareness that there should be such a policy. It is alleged that the policy is in the pipeline. But what you hear is a different story. The Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission, The Ethiopian Telecommunication Authority and The Ministry of Information all claim that they are responsible for*

this issue. If something has no specific owner, it is better to say that the thing is non-existent.

**Hilina Megersa, Editor-in-chief/Managing Editor of The Daily Monitor:** *As far as I know, I have never heard of the ICT policy. The government does not mention the issue. Thus, it is not known whether the policy exists or not.*

**Fasika Asefa, Teacher:** *I don't know whether the country has such policy or not.*

**Dr Dawit Bekele, Head of the Computer Science Department, Addis Ababa University, and owner of an IT company:** *I know that it is under a draft level. I don't know its current stage.*

**Bekele Gebre Medhin, ICT Development Authority, ICT Programme Director:** *It has a policy. Come and take it. [Angrily]*

**Kebede Alemu, ordinary citizen:** *What the hell does it mean?*

**Tewodros Abebe, Grade 10 student:** *I know what ICT means. I don't know what the policy is all about.*

**Ayele Eshetu, Journalist with Zena Admas Newspaper:** *Let alone the policy, do they really have ICT awareness? This is the country where computer and other electronic materials are considered as luxurious items.*

**Tamrat G. Giorgis, Owner and Managing Director of Fortune Newspaper:** *Has Ethiopia an ICT policy?! How could you ask me such question? I am not a policy maker. But, I don't think it has. Of course, I remember that once there was a kind of discussion on the issue. There was a talk at Economic Commission for Africa whether Ethiopia should have an ICT policy or not. I don't know an ICT policy that is properly formulated, criticised, tabled for public discussion, debated and approved*

*by the Council of Ministers or the House of Peoples Representatives.*

#### Newspapers

	Fortune	Reporter	The Ethiopian Herald	The Daily Monitor
<b>Ownership and control</b>	Private	Private	State	Private
<b>Location of H/O</b>	Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa
<b>Frequency of publication</b>	Weekly on Sunday	Weekly on Sunday	Daily, except Monday	Daily (one weekend edition)
<b>Language</b>	English	Amharic	English	English
<b>Circulation /per week</b>	6 500	25 000	55 000 / day	10 000
<b># of Pages</b>	32	56	8	10
<b>Launched in</b>	1997	1995	1943	1995

**Zahera Mustefa, Member of the House of Peoples Representatives:** *I don't have a thorough idea about this issue. I am attending training on ICT being offered to 40 Members of Parliament at ECA. I think I would have a better idea upon the completion of the training. Thus, you better ask me then.*

**(Name withheld by request), Member of the Women's Standing Committee, MP:** *I am not sure. I am beginning to understand the concept*





*of ICTs only lately thanks to the training being conducted at ECA. I have no doubt that I will have a better understanding of ICT and be an active participant of the technology in the future.*

**Eshetu Alemu, an Ethiopian journalist who lives in the USA (while he was on vacation in Ethiopia):** *I have never heard of the issue. If I, a journalist, have not heard of it, then the public has not debated over it. If no public discussion has been made, it is difficult to say that the policy exists. Anyway, I don't think it exists.*

**(Name withheld) One of the top officials of the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation:** *It is hardly possible to say that the policy exists. I am afraid that it won't be like the cart coming before the horse. The country has several ICT projects. We are trying to implement them.*

**Bogale Demisse, President of The Ethiopian Information Technology Professionals Authority:** *The Ethiopian ICT policy is under revision. It is at draft level and has not been finalised. There are some activities being carried out in this regard. A sort of interim advisory board has been established recently. The project is the initiative of an Ethiopian from abroad. This board shall examine policies. The government has planned to change the interim advisory board to a permanent advisory board. This is vital. Our association would be member of that board. The government should establish a forum for the public to participate. Anyway, an ICT Development Authority has been set up and a director has been assigned to it. In fact, both the policy and the authority are under metamorphosis. A lot has to be done to enrich the policy.*

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## On engendering the ICT policy

Due to long-standing cultural, social and economic

barriers, women are the most lacking in privilege in Ethiopia. The limited capacity of women's organisations, lack of experience, the traditional stigma and inadequate participation of girls in science and technology, are factors contributing to the marginalisation of women. What is more, women were not part of the design, implementation and evaluation of information projects in Ethiopia. (Adma, 2001)

While the issue of "disabled persons in the information society" has received considerable attention in Ethiopia, with its own full policy and implementation strategy sub-act; in the whole draft policy document, women are mentioned twice and gender is mentioned once: "it is essential that gender think-tanks be active participants in these networks." Women were not involved in the drafting of the policy document.

Below are a few women's voices on this issue:

**Sophia Bekle, lawyer:** *I don't have much of an idea about ICT policy. However, any policy is formulated taking into account the public. Thus, this ICT policy should address the interest of women.*

**Hilina Megersa, Editor-in-chief/Managing Editor of The Daily Monitor:** *Time has taught us one important lesson. Nothing could be fruitful without the participation of women. Thus, the policy needs to give due attention to the causes of women.*

**Zahera Mustefa, Member of the House of Peoples Representatives:** *It would be quite saddening if women had not participated in the formulation of the policy. If this is the case, the government should amend the policy before it is approved.*

**Messeret Teshome, Businesswoman:** *Did you say that women were not involved? This is incredible. There are a great number of women who have ample knowledge about the issue. This happened*



because of the prejudice of the society against women. It is very disappointing that the government has become collaborator of this prejudice.

**(Name withheld by request), Member of the Women's Standing Committee:** *If that is the case, it should be corrected immediately*

## 4. Media Coverage

During the four-week period of this study a total of 49 ICT-related items appeared in the two policy-influential weekly media (*Fortune* and *Reporter*) and the two dailies (*The Ethiopian Herald* and *The Daily Monitor*).

Of the total, *Reporter* published 21 items, *The Ethiopian Herald* 15 items, *The Daily Monitor* 7 items and *Fortune* 6 items.

### 4.1 Types of Stories

Note: This study does not consider certain types of stories of the "High-tech talk" page of *Fortune* newspaper, such as personal computing issues for urban computer/internet users, e.g. web information on how to recover accidentally deleted files, a 5 minute crash course in creating a mailing list in Outlook Express, various tips, freeware, etc.; and the "Science & Technology" column of *The Daily Monitor* which published stories like "Baby boy born from sperm", "Scientists produce cow immune to mad cow disease".

The majority of items appearing in the monitored newspapers were mainly related with telecommunications/mobile, broadcasting/media and Internet.

Of the total 27 ICT-related news stories, ten of them were front-page stories. All of the news

items recorded were unique, except the one, which appeared in two of the newspapers with different perspectives and facts.

#### o **Ministry to give radio broadcast licenses beginning next August**

Addis Ababa: *The Ministry of Information announced that it is to give radio broadcast licenses to private entrepreneurs beginning next August. ...Information Minister Bereket Simon made the announcement in a ten-month performance report of the ministry presented here yesterday to the House of Peoples' Representatives.* [*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 2, 2004]

#### o **Minister lambastes private press for "lack of professionalism" — Broadcasting Agency to issue FM radio license as of July**

Addis Ababa: *Minister of Information, Bereket Simon, yesterday said that the private press lacked professionalism and some private newspapers had allied themselves with "Sha'bia" (Eritrea Government).* He also disclosed that the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency would begin to issue FM radio licenses to private operators as of next July. The Minister remarked so while presenting the Minister's ten-month performance report to Parliament. [*Reporter*, June 2, 2004]

#### **Telecommunication/Mobile**

Below are a few examples from this category:

#### o **Telephone services expansion work in progress**

[May 30, 2004, *The Ethiopian Herald*]

#### o **Tele buys 5000 new payphones for over 45 million Birr**

[June 14, 2004, *The Daily Monitor*]

#### o **Telecom manager seeks establishment of a committee to identify those who supply informa-**

**tion to the Reporter newspaper.**

(June 13, 2004, *Reporter*)

**Note:** *Reporter* has reported continuously on the corrupt practices said to be committed in the corporation.

Related to this, three of the four letters to the editor were applauding the *Reporter* after the corporation admitted to the *Federal Anti-Corruption Commission* that there was rampant corruption in the corporation.

*Fortune* Editorial (May 30, 2004) **“They are victims of their own inaction”:**

*Just last week, one of our editors was on the phone with a senior official of this administration. To their dismay, they could not have a decent discussion. The terrible Ethiopian mobile phone network system frequently interrupted their conversation. In fact, they are perhaps among tens of thousands of customers who are unable to have a mobile telephone network that simply works to any reasonable level of satisfaction....what is the point of a mobile phone service if you are forced to make half a dozen attempts before you can get connected? Even then you are faced with interruptions or are likely to be disconnected every couple of minutes. It is so bad that at the end of the day you cannot even get your message across with the extremely poor voice quality. ...the question a responsible government should answer when adopting new technologies are very simple and incredibly basic: to whose benefit and at what cost are these being introduced?... Arguing against such a monopoly is not a matter of ideology, as some die-hard leftists in the administration, responsible for Ethiopia's infrastructure development effort would have us think. The problem rather lies with their argument for a policy they harbour which is too weak to even convince themselves and cause everyone else unnecessary inconvenience... Aside from their genuine motive*

*to keep the monopoly, they argue that letting ETC (Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation) into the private sector domain would disadvantage the rural community. They seem to have convinced themselves that apparently greedy, private companies would chase the profit in the urban profitable areas at the risk of neglecting the rural community.*

On June 6, 2004, *Fortune* also has a reader's letter under the title “Frustration over the Abysmal Mobile Service”.

Due to the poor mobile network and the activities of the telecommunications sector in Ethiopia, telecommunications receive significant coverage.

**Broadcasting/Media**

Most of the items recorded fit into this category. Examples:

- o **Ministry to give radio broadcast licenses beginning next August** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 2, 2004)
- o **State Minister Netsanet says equal media access to women is question of democracy** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 19, 2004)
- o **Agency receives TV programmes grant** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 15, 2004)
- o **No unlimited right to limit freedom of the press** (*Reporter*, June 16, 2004)
- o **Ministry of Information to organise a symposium on a draft press law**
- o **Draft law being presented for endorsement amidst protests** (*Reporter*, June 9, 2004)

Five out of the seven **cartoons** were directly connected with this category.

**Internet**

Little coverage has been given to the internet per se.

*Reporter*, June 16, 2004, under its Business & Economy column: writer Abebe Tadesse writes the following:

*It is not all surprising to hear people complaining day in and day out about the service provided by the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation: the messages are not clear, internet lines are very slow and disconnect frequently, cell phone lines are difficult to access and disconnect frequently, the corporation is monopolised, there is no equal distribution of service and what not... I surmise that price is a significant obstacle to broader access, particularly among medium-income people ...A high price for international telephone calls, as well as for internet access reduces the quantity of telecommunications services that urban and international consumers can afford to buy.*

On the same issue, in the same edition of *Reporter*, June 16, 2004, another writer Solomon Demeke wrote an irony piece:

*... sometimes you may be able to connect after a long wait, other times you may wait a long time and not reach your objective. It can be as difficult as a poor-fat-ugly-woman trying to flirt with a rich-handsome-gentleman. At times it doesn't work, and if it does it may take a long time to do something as simple as checking your email. I am not a computer scientist, nor am I very computer savvy but at times I think somebody should fix this problem.*

Besides this, some focus has been given to ICT-related Education topics. Below are examples:

- **Ministry of Education postpones distance-learning programme for next year**  
(*Reporter*, June 2, 2004)
- **NGO interconnecting public libraries**  
(*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 2, 2004)
- **UNESCO, ATCB to launch special training on ICT for visually impaired people**  
(*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 4, 2004)
- **UNDP, UNESCO set up tele-centres in five**

towns

(*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 13, 2004)

- **Establishment of IT laboratories for 550 preparatory schools underway**

(*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 18, 2004)

	Reporter	Herald	Monitor	Fortune	Total
News	7	15	5	0	27
In brief	2	0	0	1	3
Cartoon/ graphic	4	0	2	1	7
Editorial	2	0	0	2	4
Opinion piece	1	0	0	1	2
Business	1	0	0	0	1
Interview	1	0	0	0	1
Other	3	0	0	1	4
					49

**Other:** The four items recorded in this category are letters to the editors.

Newspaper	Total ICT items recorded
Reporter	21
The Ethiopian Herald	15
The Daily Monitor	7
Fortune	6

## 4.2 Origin of Stories

Of the total items only one was a report from Africa (“Microsoft to launch in Kiswahili”, June 19-20, 2004, *The Daily Monitor*), three were international (“Instant messaging grows up”, June 4, 2004, *The Daily Monitor*); (“New computer – aided treatment improves eyesight”, June 12, 2004, *The Ethiopian Herald*); and (“World’s first Mobile virus is not lethal, yet”, June 19 – 20, 2004, *The Daily Monitor*) and all the rest were original products of the monitored media with a focus on national/local issues.

### Africa:

- o **Microsoft to launch in Kiswahilli** (*The Daily Monitor*, June 19-20, 2004) - BBC

### International:

- o **World’s first mobile virus is not lethal, yet** (*The Daily Monitor*, June 19-20, 2004) - Reuters
- o **Instant messaging grows up** (*The Daily Monitor*, May 31, 2004) - BBC
- o **New computer-aided treatment improves eyesight** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June, 12, 2004) – Singapore DPA

### Local:

- o **Oromia state Supreme Court claims efficiency following computerisations** (*The Ethiopian*

*Herald*, June, 4, 2004)

- o **UNDP, UNESCO set up telecentres in five towns** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 13, 2004)
- o **ETC undertakes expansion in Axum town** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 15, 2004)
- o **Community multimedia centres to begin services in Amhara state** (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 16, 2004)

The rest of the items were of national origin and interest.

Origin	# of ICT items
National	41
Africa	1
International	3
Local	4

As for the sources of information, especially news, six were produced from press briefings, parliamentary hearings and press releases. Most items were not event driven.

All the items except for the two cartoons and two news stories published in *The Daily Monitor* were produced by male reporters/writers. This is because there are very few women journalists in Ethiopia. Most of the time they are not honoured/allowed to do the so-called “men’s job”: writing hard news, investigative stories and the like. Even of the few women who are better educated than their male colleagues, it is a rare case to find a woman in the top titles, especially in print media.

Currently there is only one woman Editor-in-chief/Managing Director, Hilina Megersa. When asked about it, she responded, saying:

... It's you who reminds me that I'm the only woman Editor-in-chief. But I'm not proud of this. As we have women Ministers and state Ministers, representatives of parliament, doctors, pilots, teachers and so on; we should have been more. But you know, it's really hard to be a journalist in Ethiopia, especially to be a woman journalist. Generally because of the bad environment we are just a few. And as you know, in our country journalism doesn't pay you much. So if you are not a kind of "born to be journalist" you join other professions. On top of that, the attitude towards women is still negative.

### Issues

o Article is about ICTs but does not mention ICTs explicitly (instead words like technology, information, access, telecommunications are used)

Examples:

- Frustration over the abysmal mobile service (*Fortune*, June 6, 2004)
- The Internet, mouthwash and my former employer (*Reporter*, June 16, 2004)

o Article deals with one aspect of ICTs (e.g. connectivity; access to infrastructure)

Example:

- Eluding privatisation and remaining ever incompetent (*Reporter*, June 16, 2004)

o Article includes consideration of gender

Example:

- State Minister Netsanet says equal media access to women is a question of democracy (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 19, 2004)

o Article presents ICTs as the answer to societal problems

Examples:

- Community Multimedia centres to begin services in Amhara state (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 16, 2004)
- UNDP, UNESCO set up tele-centres in

five towns (*The Ethiopian Herald*, June 13, 2004)

- UNESCO, ATCB to launch special training on ICT for visually-impaired people

o Article reflects national interest views

Example:

- Ethiopia among the marginalized low-income countries (*The Daily Monitor*, June 4, 2004)

o Article reflects the national importance of this policy issue

Example:

- They are victims of their own inaction (*Fortune*, May 30, 2004 - Editorial)

o Article reflects the role of the media as presenting the views of the public

Examples:

- No unlimited right to limit freedom of the press! (*Reporter*, June 2, 2004-Editorial)
- Freedom of press is not only agenda of 70 journalists but also the 70 million Ethiopian people (*Reporter*, June, 13, 2004- Editorial)

Most of the items recorded were presented in plain language that is understandable.

## 5. Interviews

### 5.1 The Editorial Interviews

**What is the role of the media in the development endeavours of a country?**

**Amare Aregawi (Owner and Editor-in-chief of Reporter):**

*It plays several roles. When we see it in light of ICT and policy formulation, I think the media plays a direct and indirect role. First, the media has close access to information as an institution. It can reflect its knowledge and the experience of other countries with regards to ICT issues. This is its direct influence on ICTs. On the indirect side,*

although the media has close access to information, the beneficiary is the society. When we speak of ICTs, we are not talking about 10 or 30 journalists. Instead, we are discussing about 70 million people. Thus, the media can serve as a forum where the public could deliberate on issues such as what kind of ICT policy should we pursue? Who is responsible to supervise the issue and how can we relate and associate these and other relevant concepts with the issue of African Union and NEPAD? Generally speaking, the media can play both direct and indirect roles by expressing its own views and by inviting the public to discuss and speak out their perception on the same issues.

**Tamirat G. Giorgis (Managing Editor and owner of Fortune Newspaper):**

*Come on! How could you possibly ask me such an academic kind of question? University scholars can give a better explanation than me. Let me put it this way. I am in the information business, specifically in business-oriented information business. Broadly speaking, some intellectuals define media as a device used to entertain, educate and inform the public. I don't know about that. I provide accurate, balanced, fair and objective information to my readers. It's up to them to decide whether it's entertaining, informative or educational. Some readers could say that a given news story is very educative. Some could say it is rather entertaining. Yet others describe it as informative. This is not my business. As I put it earlier my job is to give accurate, balanced and objective information.*

**What is the role of your newspaper as a media channel?**

**AA:** *The media encompasses several things. When you disseminate public problems to the readers, you are disseminating information. On the other hand, when you disseminate news stories addressing public abuse, you are acting as a watchdog. Thus, we say that we are playing the role of a watchdog by following the social, politi-*

*cal, economic and other problems of the general public. On the other hand, we are still information suppliers. Apart from this, we are not judges or policemen. We can do nothing else.*

**TGG:** *It plays the role of information dissemination. In due course, it provides the public with various kinds of information. It indicates malpractices, exposes hidden things.*

**How much attention do your newspapers give to ICT?**

**AA:** *We do not think that we play a significant role in promoting ICT; I mean the knowledge itself. We publish the newspapers, randomly giving little concern to ICT. However, now we have come to the conclusion that we should attach due attention to ICT. We are making some preliminary preparations to this effect. This is because if we fail to do so, we will be victims of the vacuum directly or indirectly in the future.*

**TGG:** *Our newspaper allocates a page to ICT. In this page, we try to present various issues related to ICT to our readers weekly. We attempt to respond to the questions of our readers concerning this issue. We have done this for the past three years weekly continuously.*

**Do ICT-related news stories have the chance to be published as front-page news?**

**AA:** *They do have. We have especially given front-page coverage to news stories related to telecommunications and broadcasting issues several times. We would also continue to do the same in the future.*

**TGG:** *Yes, we publish such stories quite often. What is different is the perspective when we publish such issues as front-page news stories. For instance, if a given government office computerises its working system through a computer network, we do not advertise the importance of the*

network. Of course, this could be part of the story. Institutions that introduce ICTs hire ICT companies through auctions. We talk about the company that won the bid. We publish news stories on the front page that go: '... such company won the bid for such amount of million Birr to undertake the ICT project of such company.' This is how we publish such stories on the front page.

**What are your criteria to publish a news story on the front page or on the inside pages?**

**AA:** First of all, the news should be timely. If the story is not timely, the gravity of the subject matter it entertains decides its place.

**TGG:** The main criterion is the timeliness of the news story. Timeliness is relative. However, it is based on the principles of journalism. The news stories that goes as 'an accident occurs on the road heading from X to Z' might have the chance to be published on the front page rather than '... the road stretching from X to Z is repaired'.

**What are the sources of your news stories? Do you use press releases and similar materials as a source?**

**AA:** We try not to use press releases as a source of news as much as possible. This is because press releases have mostly the flavour of the public relations office. Press releases are usually issued to promote the image and activities of a given organization. It is not our objective to promote institutions. If they do well, they will be promoted. If they do badly, they will be exposed. Even when we want to use press releases as a source, we do not publish it as it is. We will try to read between the lines. We start by examining how far the issues stated on the press release are true. We ask: "what is the other side of the story?" And we send our staff to check it out. Broadly speaking, our sources are individuals and organisations. We use press releases as starting points. They are not news for us.

**TGG:** We do sometimes use press releases, workshops and seminars as sources of our news stories. We largely depend on our own sources that include government officials, civil servants, diplomats, private company workers, etc.

**Can we categorise your newspaper as an influential media?**

**AA:** Well, to decide whether one media is influential or not, one should publish something and assess the impact of the published news/articles. If we go through such a course, then we can say that our newspaper is influential. We think that we are more influential than other media in the country.

**TGG:** Yes and No. Yes, in the sense that if you just take numbers, it is influential. It is the largest English weekly in the country. We have 60% or more circulation than others. If we see it from this angle, yes we are influential. The educated and elite members of the community regularly read it. They depend on the information we provide. If you also see it from this perspective, yes we are influential. Government policy makers read the newspaper, government officials; international community members, business people and you name it. On the other hand, based on the number of circulation, it is hard to say the newspaper is influential. Some 65 000 copies per week mean nothing to 4 million inhabitants of Addis Ababa, let alone 65 (I think it reaches 70 million now) people in the country. If you see it from this perspective, the newspaper is not influential.

**If we say the newspaper is influential, can you cite some examples of your stories that brought change or influenced other parties?**

**AA:** Here we can mention the story related to the Ethiopian Airlines as a case in point. We have been writing for the last three to four years that the management of the Airlines has problems. Some parties, who were disappointed by the stories we



*publish, tried to attack us through various media by accusing us of being influenced by an external party and plotting with KLM. Undaunted by such accusations, we continued to write factual news stories about the problems of the airline. At one juncture, the government became forced to consider the case. Then it changed the entire management of the Airlines. It also made some adjustments. We can also mention the case of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Recently, we wrote stories on the corruption in the Telecommunications Corporation. They tried to blackmail us. They went to the extent of buying airtime on TV to insult and attack us. But, finally they were brought before the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission and admitted that they are ridden with corruption. I can also give you other examples.*

**TGG:** *First, this country is not conducive for what you are saying. In other countries, you write something, on the next day, even a revolution could break out or an official could resign as a result of your story. You can see the consequences of your story immediately. But, in this country the reaction is very slow. Thus, you cannot claim that this or that change has occurred due to my newspaper.*

**What is the policy currently given due attention?**

**AA:** *Well, there is an underlying problem in this country. That is, a policy is not issued based on a comprehensive study. The policies and directives are immature. If you take the investment code, it has been amended seven or eight times. There is a press law. NGO and civil society laws are in the pipeline. It would be very dangerous to issue such laws with little study. You see civil society and NGOs deliberating on their draft law. When you come to the press, currently the press community is engrossed in a very controversial draft law.*

**TGG:** *The very controversial issue currently is the new draft press law.<sup>9</sup>*

**The Ethiopian ICT policy is being drafted at present. The draft has been submitted to the House of Peoples' Representatives. An office called the ICT Development Authority has been established to follow up and execute issues related to the policy and relevant projects. The policy has not yet been tabled for public discussion. What do you think should be done before the policy is approved?**

**Amare:** *As I told you earlier, the media should play its role in this regard. The relevant forum should be facilitated. The policy should go down to the grassroots level and be discussed by the concerned beneficiaries. The policy is after all issued for the public. Thus, the voice of the public on the policy should be heard. Intensive discussion should be conducted.*

**TGG:** *I don't care. Issuing a law has its own process. The formulation of every law should pass through this process. As far as the ICT policy is concerned, it should be tabled for discussion. The main issue here is to liberalise resources. Presently, the government controls the infrastructure. It is under the monopoly of the government. You reach nowhere, whatever policies you issue in an infrastructure monopolised by the government. You simply stop. The country should have wider access to the internet and other facilities. There is also another problem. For example, I have internet communication. But, if I want to use email service here in my office, it takes me 30 minutes to read one email. Imagine the time it takes me to read 10 e-mail messages! It is just a waste of time and money. Thus, what I would do is: I go to a place like ECA or the Sheraton hotel with better VSAT or leased line connections and return after enjoying swift service. I could 've done the same work without leaving my office. You could tell me about policy the whole day. What I want is a better service in my office. However, the company that offers me this service does not give me efficient service. Therefore, I have no option except sitting idle.*

This means you are directly or indirectly affected by the ICT policy. So, what do you say should be done before the policy is approved and enacted? Don't you care if it is approved under its present status?

**TGG:** *I am not interested in policies and what have you. They don't give sense to me. What I want is the liberalisation of the infrastructure. Whether they talk about ICT policy or not, the infrastructure policy must be changed.*

**The infrastructure is one part of the policy.**

**TGG:** *Then the policy should say any company can give mobile service, any company can be an internet service provider.*

**So, what would you say, as a journalist and private beneficiary, should be done before the draft policy is approved excluding yours and others' voices?**

**TGG:** *It should pass through the legislation process of the country.*

## 6. Observations

During the study period the researcher observed the following:

- Almost all journalists including media bosses do not know of the existence of the ICT policy draft document.
- Some journalists are technophobes.
- Lack of interest in covering ICT policy and none of these specific to women's issues.
- Limited awareness of the full range of opportunities afforded by ICTs.
- There is need for more interaction and more awareness with policy processes in Ethiopia.

## 7. Recommendations

**Regarding media institutions and journalists:**

- Conduct awareness-raising workshops on the benefits of ICTs.
- Provide additional funding support to promote ICTs for media in collaboration with civil society organisations.
- Create and support a network of ICT interested journalists.

**General:**

- Work with existing ICT advocacy groups.
- Create awareness on gender issues for ICT policy makers and the media.
- Sensitise media institutions to the social implications of ICT policy.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Main source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/et.html> accessed 28 August 04.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/country\\_profiles/ethiopia/ethiopol.htm](http://www.uneca.org/aisi/nici/country_profiles/ethiopia/ethiopol.htm) Accessed 6 June 2004.

<sup>3</sup> A network that promises to provide more than 450 secondary education institutions with network connectivity. It will also help them to receive broadcast TV based educational content from media agencies. The SchoolNet project is already delivering educational content on flat panel screens in schools from the Ethiopia media agency, using terrestrial and satellite networks.

<sup>4</sup> Woreda net is a network that will link almost 600 local woredas and 11 regional government offices with the federal government.

<sup>5</sup> Freedom of the Press Act-34/1992.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice, the EFJA has contravened the law by not paying their operating licence fees for the last three years. Ethiopian law requires all organisations to

be licensed and that they provide audited financial reports. The suspension of the EFJA will remain in effect until they have completed an independent audit.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Ministry of Information.

<sup>8</sup> Intensive ICT4D training which started on 12 May running for 4 months at UN ECA.

<sup>9</sup> The controversial draft press law includes sections on the establishment of a government-controlled Press Council with powers to prepare and enforce a Code of Ethics, powers vested in the courts to engage in prior censorship. Article 6 of the draft press law gives the Minister of Information the power to ban or censor foreign publications deemed contrary to the national interest. International organisation, Article 19, has argued that the law raised “key areas of concern in relation to freedom of expression”, claiming that the government is manifesting open hostility towards the private media. This law could come into effect by the end of 2004.

# Senegal

Study conducted by Sophie K. Ly.

## Quick Profile:

**Population<sup>1</sup>:** 11 000 000

- Age pyramid: the 15-25 years age bracket constitutes 50% of the population
- Percentage of children in full-time education: 78% in 2003 (45% girls; 56% boys)
- Number of declared workers: These figures are not very reliable as the informal sector forms a large part of the working population. However, the most commonly-used figures are the following: altogether 300 000 declared workers, of which 65 000 are state-employed (47 000 primary and secondary school teachers, 3 000 educators in higher education; the private sector thus officially employs 235 000 individuals)
- Estimated number of unemployed persons: Here, too, the figures have been disputed, but it is estimated that at least 100 000 people enter the labour market each year.

**Ethnic groups:** Large ethnic/linguistic diversity. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL, USA) took a census of more than 30 ethnic groups in their 1995 world report; 12 ethnic groups officially recognised by the Senegalese authorities.

**Religions:** About 95% of the population is Islamic, about 4% Christian, and around 1% animistic.

**Languages:** Six national languages are recognised and promoted by the State of Senegal, although limited resources significantly handicap political aims to promote national languages.

**Main languages:** French/Wolof

## Literacy:

*Total population: 40.2%*

*Male: 50%*

*Female: 30.7%*

**Population below poverty line:** 54%

## Economy:

**Currency:** CFA

**Average Exchange Rate:** US\$1 = CFA581.2 ('03)

**External debt:** US\$3 billion ('03 est.)

**Revenue:** US\$1.373 billion

**Expenditure:** US\$1.373 billion

## Media & ICT Profile:

<b>Telephones – main lines in use</b>	280 000 ('03)
<b>Total Mobile phone users:</b>	800 000 ('03)
<b>ISPs</b>	1
<b>Radio broadcast stations</b>	11 State radio comprising several channels, with stations in the capital and in domestic towns 10 groups of commercial radio stations on FM, with transmitting stations in the capital and in domestic towns (giving a total of about 30 stations across the country) 12 community radio stations on FM, situated in Dakar or in small domestic towns, 9 new radio stations have been authorised to broadcast

<b>Television broadcast stations</b>	1 national State station broadcast on 1 channel 1 channel rented to a private broadcaster by the public channel 1 scrambled French channel 1 foreign cable channel package
<b>Internet country code</b>	.sn
<b>Internet users</b>	105 000 ('02)
<b>Daily newspapers</b>	2 national State dailies 13 national private dailies
<b>Weekly newspapers</b>	510 national private weeklies
<b>Regional press</b>	3 weeklies or fortnightly papers
<b>Press in the national languages</b>	2 (1 in Pulaar and Wolof and 1 in Pulaar) Arab press : 3 (fortnightly, monthly, quarterly)

**Study Period:** 17 May – 18 June 2004

**Main Findings:**

- o While the Senegalese state has taken an active role in encouraging the growth and development of the ICT sector, this has not translated into media coverage of ICT-related issues outside of factual events-related coverage.
- o While Senegal boasts one of the most dynamic and independent presses in Africa, and while the media exerts considerable influence on matters of

state, coverage of ICTs remains limited to factual or descriptive reportage, lacking analysis and critique.

- o For reasons of literacy and cost, newspaper readership is limited to elite decision-makers in Senegalese society.
- o Very few media provide dedicated coverage in the form of columns to ICT matters, and those who do approach the issue from an economic interest perspective only.
- o The media's understanding of ICTs is limited by lack of resources and a lack of familiarity with ICT issues. As a result there is a tendency to rely on international sources of news information and local coverage is limited to announcements of donations of computers or donor agencies supporting ICT centres, with no analysis or engagement.
- o In the opinion of this researcher, journalists and editors lack an understanding of ICTs and for this reason feel unable to comment and critique an issue that they do not fully grasp.
- o Reputable and competent journalists claim that ICTs are not a priority for Africans, arguing that "these are matters which concern wealthy countries. It is not a priority for our populations."

## 1. Introduction

Senegal has been independent since April 4, 1960. According to its Constitution, it functions as a secular system. The governmental system is presidential. Republican institutions function quite well, even though the standard of education limits the quality of citizen participation in Parliament. Senegal is generally considered as a democratic country. This is a fair assessment considering the liberties exercised by the citizens, the press, and the private sector, and also with regard to the general respect the authorities have for institutions and citizen rights. Civil society is vibrant, but quite badly structured, which limits the effectiveness of its initiatives.

The total population of Senegal is between 9,5 and 11 million (results of the last census of December 2002 are not available). It is considered a Poor Country, heavily in debt to the World Bank since 2003. The issue of poverty has become the structural framework of development in national politics and in governmental discourse. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper drafted by countries heavily dependent on financial aid, as required by the World Bank, serves principally as a national plan of development.

French is the official language recognised by the Constitution, although it is only spoken by a minority concentrated in the region of Senegal's capital, Dakar. Wolof is the dominant language, spoken by the Wolof ethnic group who are settled in the region of Dakar, and in the centre of the country. On the whole, members of other ethnic groups speak Wolof too, or at least understand it. The other languages are generally represented in the outlying regions of Senegal, near to its borders.

Certain ethnic groups, preoccupied by the loss of identity and of their language in favour of Wolof, have articulated a resistance towards the domination of Wolof for a number of years now. One of these strategies is the growth of their influence in the media. About fifteen community radio stations have been established in the last 10 years, allowing the Pulaar and Sérère communities to preserve, revitalise and give fresh impetus to their language in the modern context.

Although secularism is stated in Senegal's Constitution, religion occupies a huge place in the life of the Senegalese. It remains their first preoccupation, and the religious calendar not only regulates the everyday life of the Senegalese, but also significantly structures the country's economy. It should be noted that, until now, Senegal has served as a model for inter-religious dialogue, which has resulted in political stability.

The Islamic community is composed of four large brotherhoods (Tidjanes, Mourides, Khadres, Layènes), very influential from a political point of view and in maintaining social stability, through dialogue between the different Islamic groups and leaders of the other communities. The Christians are mainly Catholic, and the Church plays an important role, not only in the domains of national education and health, but also in the resolution of political crises.

It is significant that Senegal, having displayed confidence in its capacity to manage diversity, has markedly tackled the liberalisation of the political scene. To date, Senegal has 80 political parties. Although a number of the parties are too small to exercise much influence, the plethora of parties on the political front seems to dilute the pertinence of public crises.

#### **Telephony and ICTs**

Senegal takes pride in the smooth running of its national society of telecommunications, Sonatel. Managed by a telecommunications engineer for more than 20 years, Sonatel has experienced constant and visionary development. Fifteen years ago Senegal received aid from the European Fund for Reconstruction and Development in order to modernise its telecommunications sector. Since 2003, the country has received support from the Digital Freedom Initiative of the United States. Telecommunications has become a key-sector in the service economy on a national level.

Sonatel, although having long exercised a monopoly, has nevertheless worked towards developing universal access:

- o In households, through a domestic line using a method adapted to the economic and social reality of extended families;
- o In towns, through the granting of franchises to small private operators who have started telecentres and cybercafés throughout the country (15

- 000 in 2003);
- o In rural areas, which have long been neglected, telephones have been installed, substantially modifying living conditions and lifestyles (connecting inhabitants who do not have access to good roads with the outside world);
  - o Instantaneous money transfers by emigrated families.

Telephonic access has increased significantly. Sonatel has 280 000 subscribers on a fixed line and 800 000 cell phone subscribers (Sonatel statistics from the year ending 2003). The government announced a total liberalisation of telephonic access on 21 July 2004.

At the beginning of the nineties, the Senegalese government announced its intention to develop ICTs and a department was proposed in order to develop this sector. Although it had been done away with, it was reinstated in 2003. Its current authority shows government's intention to treat this sector as a priority.

The President of the Republic is particularly eager to set up a digital mutual aid fund. However, the democratisation of access to ICTs has become a reality with the increase in the number of tel-centres and cybercafés. Firstly, they have been established as small private enterprises through franchises from Sonatel, and secondly, they offer universal access to telephonic and computer services. There are currently about 15 000 such enterprises in Senegal. Municipalities and the private sector have also initiated several social projects in order to offer ICT training to youth, either at no cost or at affordable rates.

Internet Service Providers have found it difficult to remain in the market. Only large companies that provide basic telephonic services have managed to survive.

The market for computer equipment experienced a rush in the middle of the nineties, but has slowed down since 2000, due to informal trade on the one hand, and the economic environment and buying power on the other. Private suppliers have had to scale down, despite a growing demand. A limited revival has taken shape in 2004. There are currently about fifteen suppliers in the formal sector.

Products without guarantee and pirated products are becoming more and more numerous. Since 2002, world manufacturers of computer equipment and software have established branches in Senegal in order to market their products more effectively and to combat piracy.

Senegal is one of Africa's countries to have taken an early decision to develop its telecommunications and information technology (IT) sectors, in light of the potential for development. Although there is still much to be done, substantial advances have been noted in terms of universal access.

This development, driven by the private and political sectors, has, however, not been influenced to a great extent by non-trading companies (i.e. companies that do not make their revenue from the sale of goods, including not-for-profit organisations), even though the latter remains the prime beneficiary or consumer of products and services put on the market. Non-trading companies do not participate in the sector and public supply models. This is largely due to a lack of information about this sector, one that evolved very rapidly in order to deal with urgent consumer needs. The information pertaining to this development and the necessary retrospective studies accompanying it has not followed the rate of consumption.

This is where the media comes into question. Senegal is home to one of the most dynamic, independent and professional presses on the African

continent. However, it is significantly behind with regards to new technology in media and communication. The coverage of questions relating to ICT sector is almost non-existent outside of events.

## 1.1 Media Profile

Out of Senegal's population of around 10 million, very few read the written press.

It has, nevertheless proven to be quite influential. Theoretical readership (literate and educated people, who are capable of reading the press) has not been assessed as yet, and is not really a potential readership in the sense that it does not have the necessary buying power to regularly purchase press publications.

Readership of the press selected for this study represents only between 1 and 3% of the total population. It is essentially comprised of people from the following categories:

- State authorities and other politicians
- Economic operators
- Academics and other intellectuals
- Union activists and activists of civil society
- Diplomats and lessors posted to Senegal
- The Senegalese Diaspora (mainly: France, Italy, USA, Canada)
- International development organisations and foreign research institutes.

Annual media audience studies show that the media selected for this particular study are read by state authorities on a regular basis. In general, the press offices of governmental departments, large enterprises, organisations and embassies peruse these titles regularly (as well as other titles not listed below, when current affairs demands it). Individual readers generally read 3 or 4 dailies each day and 1 weekly.

**The identified combinations appear as such:**  
[sources: surveys and informal discussions]

- **Authorities, intellectuals, diplomats:**

3 newspapers at 200 FCfa + 1 newspaper at 100 FCfa, i.e. *Le Soleil* + 2 of the following private publications (*SUD Quotidien*, *Wal Fadjri*, *Le Quotidien*) + *Le Populaire*

- **Economic operators:**

3 newspapers at 200 FCfa + 1 newspaper at 100 FCfa, i.e. *Le Soleil* + 2 of the following private publications (*SUD Quotidien*, *Wal Fadjri*, *Le Quotidien*) + *Le Populaire* + *Nouvel Horizon* (weekly)

- **Academics, union activists:**

1 or 2 newspapers at 200 Fcfa according to current affairs + 1 newspaper at 100 Fcfa, i.e. *Le Soleil* + 1 of the following private publications (*SUD Quotidien*, *Wal Fadjri*; *Le Quotidien*) + *Le Populaire*

- **Diaspora:** Newspapers available on the Internet (*Le Soleil*, *SUD Quotidien*, *Wal Fadjri*; *LeQuotidien*, *Nouvel Horizon*)

The Senegalese press can be presented as a textbook case in terms of influence over authorities. The impact, extent of influence and reaction time of the authorities is such that today a number of observers regard it as a problem of governance and credibility of the authorities. Frequently the press makes use of governmental projects or decisions in order to create awareness campaigns with the purpose of softening this or that aspect, or to bring about or repeal this or that measure.

The impact of this mobilisation of the media is almost immediate. The decisions of authorities are sometimes interceded within 24 hours. The opposition parties and their representatives very often trail behind on such issues introduced by the press.



The influence of the press is usually exerted over issues that have either a political or social impact on the:

- Electoral system,
- Liberties and democracy,
- Agriculture,
- Real estate,
- Housing, and
- Inter-religious dialogue.

This influence of the media does not seem to manoeuvre economic and foreign affairs issues.

The Senegalese press displays a particularly disparate congenital quirk, which has never been redressed: the marked predominance of political information, in the sense of political partisan activity, orientated towards achieving and preserving power. Economic and social issues rarely come before current affairs, except when they are of a scandalous nature.

The coverage and handling of issues pertaining to ICTs are factual. The previous Prime Minister, Idrissa Seck, in power for a year and a half, from 2002 to 2004, aimed to promote an ICT culture during his time in Parliament. This, however, was seen by many representatives and the press as simply trying to make a favourable impression.

#### **Organisations for the promotion and protection of press freedom**

Three bodies exist:

- *The Association for news and communication professionals (Synpics)*
- *The Council for research into ethics and codes of practice*
- *The Collective of private press publishers*

These three organisations seem to have been arbitrarily overtaken by the growth of the sector, the socio-economic problems of the profession and the new practices of the authorities who subsidise

certain media, to such an extent that they have become sluggish for a number of years now. Young journalists who entered the market about five years ago felt the need to create a structure alongside Synpics, in order to offer a body of consultation and training in view of today's needs. It is called the *Convention of Young Reporters*.

#### **Coverage and handling of issues by the radio stations**

Considering the level of illiteracy, the general level of education and buying power, radio remains the most popular medium. The numerous radio stations, which have existed for 10 years, have transformed Senegalese society by introducing it to a need for news and permanent education through various programmes broadcast in the national languages.

Radio stations very rarely take an interest in issues relating to ICTs. The theme of new technology pertaining to news and communication, especially in political contexts, remains a theme reserved for intellectuals, and is thus handled by the written press.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1 Tools/Methods**

For this study, five daily newspapers, two weeklies and a national press agency were observed over four weeks, from 17 May to 18 June 2004. Those selected are considered as the country's most influential media.

Focus was placed on their coverage of three social and economic themes and parameters of ICTs:

1. The electronic registration of 12 000 pirogues (fishing boats) in a country where sea fishing is the main economic activity;
2. The liberalisation of telecommunications fore-

cast for the next month (July 2004);  
3. The first lawsuit against a press organ for specifically publishing false news on the internet.

Lastly, a series of interviews with journalists and

press editors, as well as political leaders, were conducted covering diverse aspects.  
As media output was very weak at the time, this study is more an analysis of the context of the press articles rather than of their content.

### 2.1.1 Media Monitored

	<b>Le Soleil</b>	<b>SUD Quotidien</b>	<b>Wal Fadjri</b>	<b>Le Quotidien</b>	<b>Le Populaire</b>	<b>Nouvel Horizon</b>	<b>Le Journal de l'Economie</b>	<b>Senegalese Press Agency</b>
<b>Ownership and control</b>	State	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private	State
<b>Location of H/O</b>	Dakar	Dakar	Dakar	Dakar	Dakar	Dakar	Dakar	Dakar
<b>Frequency of publication</b>	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Weekly, magazine	Weekly, tabloid	Internet
<b>Language</b>	French	French	French	French	French	French	French	French
<b>Circulation per day</b>	Nation-wide & online 25 000	Nation-wide & online 8 000 - 10 000	Nation-wide & online 8 000 - 10 000	Nation-wide & online 8 000 - 10 000	Nation-wide 20 000	Nation-wide 5 000/week	Nationwide, Airlines, Online 3 500/week	Average of 900 dispatches/day
<b># of Pages</b>	28/32	12	12	12	8	46	12	—
<b>Launched in</b>	1969	1993	1993	2002	1999	1995	1994	1964
<b>ICT coverage</b>	Science & technology	No permanent ICT section	Occasional handles ICT issues	No permanent section on ICTs	No permanent ICT section	Permanent ICT section	No permanent ICT section	No permanent ICT section



### 3. Media Analysis

Very few media have a permanent column on ICTs. Only *Le Soleil*, the Senegalese state daily newspaper, and *Nouvel Horizon*, a private weekly, have created a column that they wish to make permanent. Regularity cannot be taken for granted, and these media do not yet have objectives or precise guidelines regarding the ICT coverage.

*Le Soleil* has, nevertheless, taken the line of actively reporting on activities in this new sector in Senegal. The information distributed on the subject by *Nouvel Horizon* does not centre on a local focus, and rather reports in a general fashion on the development of ICTs on a global scale. *Le Soleil* is the only paper with specialised human resources dedicated to the subject.

The treatment of questions relating to ICTs is generally factual and descriptive. With the exception of *Le Soleil*, which sometimes concentrates a whole page with interviews and explanations to a particular aspect of ICTs, most articles produced in the Senegalese press are between a quarter and half a page in length, without illustrations (or the same illustration may be used for a whole year for any article relating to the subject). The type of writing is most often reporting on meetings, seminars, or declarations made by ministers or other public figures of responsibility to announce an unexpected or un hoped-for gain made possible by some decision or new development.

Under no circumstances are the authorities called into question. The notion of the 'responsibility' of the authorities remains imprecise. A reason for this is that the public decision-makers themselves, evidently still inhibited in this regard, rarely dare to speak openly about ICTs, or, when they do refer to it, they do not invite questions on the subject. ICTs are regarded in public debate as a matter regarding technicians.

The only responsibilities that emerge with clarity are those imputed to decision-makers outside of the country: the producers of ICTs and globalisation forces that dictate the product and operations regulations of the sector. Sponsors involved in Senegal are sometimes taken to task for being responsible for insufficient access to ICTs.

In addition, if there is no event to draw coverage, the subject may be absent from the media for many days at a time.

The critical dimension is completely absent from the processing of information, and descriptions of experiments carried out elsewhere applying ICTs to socio-economic needs are practically non-existent.

An understanding of ICTs by the media is often limited by economic accessibility to computers and the Internet; hence the large number of articles on the implantation by cooperation agencies of computer production units and gifts of computers made to schools or organisations.

Social aspects linked to ICTs, such as the need for training for the introduction into the labour market, have only recently appeared in columns. Although one cannot be totally affirmative, it may be said that this aspect has appeared more forcefully in trade-union speeches relayed by the press since the *World Summit on the Information Society* (WSIS), where the president of the Republic of Senegal made an appeal for the establishment of funds for digital solidarity. Following this, he announced Senegal's contribution to the creation of such a foundation together with certain wealthy countries' municipalities. The *US Digital Freedom Initiative*, an aid foundation concerned with the reduction of the digital divide, announced Senegal to be an eligible party to the initiative.



Although topical, many potential subjects are ignored or neglected by the media. The following are some examples:

- the total liberalisation of telecommunications in July 2004;
- the persistently high cost of telecommunication, despite the public announcement of record profits in the national society of telecommunications (Sonatel) every year for many years, now;
- the monopoly held by foreign company shareholders, and the influence of the Bretton Woods institutions;
- the use of dominant languages in telephonic products and services offered in the context of attempts towards universal access (pre-recorded and interactive messages);

- the monopoly of two large telephonic companies over internet access, and the consequent folding of smaller enterprises;
- the modernisation of the postal service by ICTs and the possible social benefits;
- the development of work at home;
- internet advertising;
- health;
- the increase in numbers of radios and the use of digital technology; and
- the interest of taking part in WSIS and in the 2005 Tunis Summit.

## 4. Media Coverage

Coverage of ICT policy issues over the period Monday 17 May 2004 – Sunday 18 June 2004.

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Media	17 - 23 May	24 - 30 May	31 May - 6 June	7 - 18 June
<b>Le Soleil</b>	Electronic registration of traditional pirogues	Internet, Afrinic, technical management of African addresses	Afrinic, establishment of Board of Directors	Despite the cell phone boom, the majority of Africans do not have access to a telephone; launch of mobile 'telecentres'
<b>SUD Quotidien</b>	Electronic registration of traditional pirogues	Lawsuit: the newspaper's web master taken to court for broadcasting false news on the internet		Launch of mobile 'telecentres'; liberalisation of telecommunications

<b>Wal Fadjri</b>	Electronic registration of traditional pirogues		ICTs and the media: continuing education to salvage jobs	Voting via Internet: Senegalese nationals abroad will have to wait; West African university students and researchers have insufficient access to ICTs
<b>Le Quotidien</b>	Electronic registration of traditional pirogues		Employers propose work at home as a means of introducing disabled individuals into the labour market	
<b>Le Populaire</b>	Access to universal service: the government wishes to 'democratise the telephone'			Voting via Internet: Senegalese nationals abroad will have to wait; Launch of mobile 'telecentres'
<b>Nouvel Horizon</b>	Information Society World Summit; liberalisation of telecommunications	Digital campus	Digital divide	Launch of mobile 'telecentres'
<b>Le Journal de l'Economie</b>	Operations competition and the insufficient role played by regulation agency; the price war	Pending liberalisation of telecommunications	Relocation of call centres	Launch of mobile 'telecentres'; launch of new SMS product
<b>Senegalese Press Agency (APS)</b>	Electronic registration of traditional pirogues			Launch of mobile 'telecentres'

## 4.1 Coverage of the electronic registration of pirogues

Senegal has in total 700km of coastline. Fishing, practised at both industrial and small-scale level, is the premier national economic activity. There are an estimated 12 000 small scale fishing pirogues. The public authorities are confronted with two matters of urgency concerning these pirogues:

- the need to take a census of the small-scale pirogues in order to better monitor and protect fishing resources from over-exploitation;
- the need to improve the security of fishing expeditions of some 70 000 small-scale fisherman who use these pirogues and who often get lost at sea. The numbers of fatal accidents are growing.

However, it has transpired that the protection of maritime resources is of concern to the sponsor who offered to finance the registration operation. Hence the electronic registration of the pirogues. The security issue that would have every fisherman locatable by telecommunication in the case of emergency is neglected. Despite the intensive coverage by the press of fishermen drowned at sea, the media has hardly relayed this security concern.

When the operation was launched by the Ministry of Maritime Economy and the Swiss Cooperation in May 2004, a large portion of the press covered the events; the angle taken on the information was however more descriptive than analytical or critical.

*The following table is a review of the coverage in this field by the selected media:*

Media	Coverage	Angle taken on content
<b>Le Soleil</b>	Yes	Descriptive; government's and the principal sponsor's plans; emphasis on the registration
<b>SUD Quotidien</b>	Yes	Descriptive and analytical; emphasis on first the security issue, then on registration; the responsibilities of the ministry in charge
<b>Wal Fadjri</b>	Yes	Descriptive; government's and the principal sponsor's plans; emphasis on the registration
<b>Le Quotidien</b>	Yes	Descriptive; government's and the principal sponsor's plans; emphasis on the registration
<b>Le Populaire</b>	No	
<b>Le Nouvel Horizon</b>	No	
<b>Le Journal de l'Economie</b>	No	
<b>Senegalese Press Agency (APS)</b>	Yes	Descriptive; government's and the principal sponsor's plans; emphasis on the registration

## 4.2 Coverage of the pending liberalisation of telecommunications\*

Senegal is an agriculturally based country. In recent years, however, the public authorities have decided to develop the service economy. A central pillar of this sector is the telecommunications industry. The significant and satisfactory results in terms of the development in this area have been obtained through policies, a development plan and coherent investments. The sector had long been dominated by the national telecommunications company, which itself opened its capital to foreign investors five years ago.

The mobile sector was liberalised 4 or 5 years ago, allowing the arrival of a Swedish operator. Total liberalisation was planned for 21 July 2004. Despite the fact that this was to happen very soon, very few articles or programmes were being devoted to the subject. Except for the material produced by *Journal de l'Economie*, whose readership is relatively limited, the bulk of the information on this turnabout within the sector and the attendant price changes is to be found in the promotional inserts and press releases published by competing operators.

*The following table is a review of the coverage in this field by the selected media:*

Media	Coverage	Angle taken on content
<b>Le Soleil</b>	Yes	Reports on decisions; obvious consumer advantages to be expected
<b>SUD Quotidien</b>	Yes	Reports on decisions; obvious consumer advantages to be expected; lack of government transparency in management of liberalisation; reticence of regulation agency
<b>Wal Fadjri</b>	No	
<b>Le Quotidien</b>	No	
<b>Le Populaire</b>	Yes	Reports on decisions
<b>Le Nouvel Horizon</b>	Yes	Reports on decisions; obvious consumer and national economic advantages
<b>Le Journal de l'Economie</b>	Yes	Reports on decisions; obvious consumer advantages to be expected; lack of government transparency in management of liberalisation; reticence of regulation agency
<b>Senegalese Press Agency (APS)</b>	Yes	Reports on decisions

\* Media coverage of this issue has, since the completion of this report, increased.

### 4.3 Coverage of the court case concerning a newspaper's web master

Ever increasing numbers of newspapers written in Senegal are developing websites, offering online versions of their publications to their local and foreign readership, and to the Diaspora. As a result of lacking financial and human resources, such developments are usually made in a voluntary manner, rather than in a strategic and organised fashion.

A milestone was reached at a court case concerning the broadcasting of "false news". The judge brought specific charges against both the author of an article printed on paper and against the web master who distributed the same article. The verdict was to be made known in July 2004.

Despite the obvious interest this case holds for the press, the lawsuit was only covered by one daily newspaper.

*The following table is a review of the coverage in this field by the selected media:*

Media	Coverage	Angle taken on content (descriptive/ analytical, prospective) (technical, sponsors, registration, security, political, legislation, social, economic)
Le Soleil	No	
SUD Quotidien	Yes	Evolution of the press environment, and the impact on the freedom of the press
Wal Fadjri	No	
Le Quotidien	No	
Le Populaire	No	
Le Nouvel Horizon	No	
Le Journal de l'Economie	No	
Senegalese Press Agency (APS)	No	



## 5. Interviews

### 5.1 Modou Gnom

*Director of Communication, Ministry of Information, Sub-regional Integration and New Information and Communication Technologies*

**How would you assess the coverage and the angles taken by the national media in issues relating to ICTs?**

*If at all, journalists only cover specific events to which ICTs are incidental. There are none who focus specifically on ICTs. The coverage in this field is no different to the coverage of any other current events. They report on the facts when ICT exhibitions are organised, or on promotion days, etc. If there is a particular issue at stake in such events, then the coverage is more detailed and interesting. It all depends on the events themselves.*

**In your opinion, do the Senegalese media exert an influence on the policies devised by your ministry or by the department that you direct?**

*No. Obviously, there is growing interest in the press for these policies, which is taken into account by the authorities. These days, decision-makers are caught in a sort of vicious circle. They have aroused interest in ICTs with their announcements and commitments. Public opinion has followed these developments, and pays a certain amount of attention to the sector, expecting concrete results. The authorities must now act so as not to disappoint those expectations. The media channel this relationship with the wider public, but no information or analyses are produced in order to direct the work of the decision makers, so to speak.*

**Which aspects of ICTs do you think ought to be focussed on by the media so as to be of help to the public authorities?**

*The numerous preparatory meetings for the World Summit on the Information Society, as well as the preparatory committees and the approach-*

*ing conference in Tunis, have aroused the interest of both the public and the media themselves. Foreign media promised coverage that aroused interest. By showing the interest accorded ICTs by the United States and the United Nations system, as well as the issues linked to this sector, the media could contribute to the promotion of the sector. There is also the debate surrounding the digital gap, cyber crime, etc. which ICTs bring into a new light. Today, it is not only the so-called 'technologists' who are interested in ICTs, but also, in fact, significant sections of the national population.*

### 5.2 Mamadou Kasse

*Editor of the State daily newspaper, Le Soleil*

**The daily paper that you edit is one of the few that runs a permanent column on ICTs. What was your objective in creating this column? Your target audience?**

*Unfortunately, the column does not run regularly. As we work towards securing the readership, it remains part of an ensemble headed "Education-Science-Technology". The column is run in accordance with current events and circumstances. The objective we are pursuing is to familiarise the Senegalese with ICTs, so that they would understand the mechanisms, issues, concepts, definitions and strategies. This column seeks to show how ICTs can accelerate development. Our target audience is the general public, in order to accompany the policy of education of the youth, of the professionals of the ICT sector, of executives, and of intellectuals. The column is framed within the perspective of development, and to follow its progress and evolution.*

**What human resources do you make use of to run this column?**

*Initially, we had three journalists; now we only have one, but this person works exclusively in this area. We are, however, in the process of training*

*our entire editorial personnel in issues relating to ICTs in order to develop coverage of a transversal nature, addressing all fields: health and others... We train our personnel through practical work experience.*

**In terms of content, what themes do you prioritise?**

*We do not have any particular priorities. We cover current events. And we address all that is of interest to readers and internet users. In order to do this, we produce files on various themes: viruses; business and the Internet; telephones; health; telemedicine; agricultural markets.*

**Who directs the strategic approach of the column? The journalists, the newspaper's directors or the ministry?**

*A team led by the journalist in charge of the column, with the help of the web master. We consider what should be done in a formal or informal manner. Individually, or as a group.*

**How did you cover the operation of electronic registration of the pirogues, and why?**

*We explained the benefits of the operation – the protection of the sea and human resources.*

**How did you choose the angle taken on the question of the pending liberalisation of telecommunications? And for what reasons?**

*In that case, we decided to address and extrapolate on the issue of universal access. To show that there are preconditions to the introduction of telephones in rural areas, for example. In political or planning terms, the question of access to energy is a prior condition to take into consideration in the case of villages that are isolated and without electricity.*

**In approaching stories, what independence do you enjoy with regard to your supervisory ministry's agenda?**

*On the whole, we work according to the ministry's calendar. But the press cannot yet play an influential role, as it really does trail behind policies and companies. The subject matter is too highly specialised for the journalists.*

### 5.3 Amadou Bira Gueye

*Publications Director of Journal de l'Economie, journalist*

**The publication that you direct is the one that addresses in most detail issues relating to the ICTs. Do you think that you exert influence on the policies that are being devised?**

*To be honest, I know that we have very little impact.*

**What are the impediments?**

*There are two main obstacles:*

*1. The regulatory context is strongly influenced by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and, by extension, the West African States Monetary Union (Uemoa). The telecommunications sector is not yet a prerogative of Uemoa in terms of the angle of planning.*

*2. A single operator continues to dominate the market in the Ivory Coast and in Senegal: France Telecom. It is effectively a monopoly. In fact, the market pushes competition. Consumer associations are inefficient. They play no role in the evolution of this development.*

**In your view, what are the prospects?**

*If there were more competitors, the media and the consumer associations could become more influential. Provided, of course, that the state would create a transparent context for this development, and that the regulatory authority would become more efficient.*



## 5.4 Issa Sall

*Editor: Nouvel Horizon*

**The daily paper that you edit is one of the few that runs a permanent column on the ICTs. What was your objective in creating this column? Your target audience?**

*The ICTs had become a very important theme, and we therefore needed a column on it in order to inform our readers. Our target audiences are the general public, whom we wish to encourage to discover the theme; the professional enterprises – with an essentially commercial aim, we hope that they might come up with promotional inserts; and politicians who are still too cautious vis-à-vis these issues.*

**What human resources do you make use of to run this column?**

*We work with an external partner who runs the technical aspects of the column, and another person who takes charge of our media rubric. This person handles other aspects regarding information.*

**In terms of content, what themes do you prioritise?**

*The internet as media, the technological evolution, the people involved in the ICTs. In fact, all aspects not linked to current affairs.*

**You mention the people involved in the ICTs. Do you have a language policy regarding the handling of considerations of genre and cultural diversity?**

*No. Our only concern is the accessibility of our language.*

***Nouvel Horizon* did not cover the operation of electronic registration of the pirogues. Why not?**

*We did not have time to do so. I had vaguely heard talk of it, but I did not insist on its coverage. I did*

*not have any journalists available at the time.*

**For what reasons did you lend more importance to the coverage of the issue of the pending liberalisation of telecommunications?**

*We did not cover that issue in the ICT column. We included it in the Business section. To us, it was to be treated as a business issue.*

***Nouvel Horizon* rarely approaches ICTs in the context of the social and economic realities facing Senegal. You seem to do a fair amount of ‘cutting and pasting’ from foreign publications. Why is this?**

*Yes, to compensate for Senegal’s poor access to the internet. We want to inform people about evolutions in the rest of the world. We refuse to be left behind.*

**How would you assess national policies concerning the ICT sector, and what do you consider to be the responsibility of the press in the development of such policies?**

*There are very few media that tackle the subject. There are more media rubrics. As for the policies, we must acknowledge the political willingness to develop the sector. Senegal has certainly advanced. One has only to look at the national telecommunications company, the development of fibre optics. The prospects are numerous...*

## 6. Observations

The period chosen in which to observe the coverage by the Senegalese press of issues relating to the ICTs was not the most active period, and does not necessarily reflect the dynamic nature of the sector in the national economy and social activities.

Senegal is effectively one of the African countries that have chosen to develop this sector, and it



is possible that it will succeed. Telephone and information systems have boomed significantly in the last fifteen years under the leadership of the national and international private sectors, and the Senegalese authorities.

There were no conferences held regarding the subject in the specified period of observation, but there were significant events, however less spectacular, that did take place. Promotion through the media did not keep pace with these events. The poor coverage of these activities or of the decisions taken in this period is symptomatic of the limited interest taken by the media in the sector. The press limits itself to factual and descriptive coverage of the sector.

With the notable exception of the state national daily newspaper, none of the influential national media have an editorial policy with regard to the subject. A newspaper specialising in economic information is currently addressing this matter. In reality, even if they are not completely ignorant as to the subject, journalists and editors do not have the adequate tools to assess the themes that are presented to them both explicitly and implicitly. They are insufficiently equipped to tackle these themes. The resulting disinterest is appropriately interpreted as excessive cautiousness in handling an issue that, though considered to be both topical and representative of globalisation, they themselves have not mastered.

Often, reputable and competent journalists take refuge in the argument that “these are matters which concern wealthy countries. It is not a priority for our populations”.

In addition, the environment in which they work creates neither the stimuli nor the conditions necessary to develop a feeling of urgency to bring them up to date. In actual fact, politicians do not venture to speak out on these issues in press conferences or in any other public places. Consumer

associations, which are only in their early stages at this time, are of little help.

As a result of all of this, the coverage of activities in the ICT sector is practically non-existent. Limited to the descriptive aspects of technology and reports of official announcements, these productions have not yet brought about a reaction on the part of citizens to gain access to the ICTs or its use/adaptation to specific socio-economic needs in the country. No political dynamics are exerting an influence on the development of policies, giving free reign to international institutions and foreign investors to mould the regulatory guidelines.

## 7. Recommendations

### Regarding the Press

The most important need is obviously for training. Journalists need short seminars to learn and master the basic concepts and facts of the ICT sector. Editors need discussion seminars to improve their understanding of the issues linked to the sector. The journalists should in turn follow the same seminars.

Documentation is essential, and should be neither difficult nor costly insofar as numerous sources are available for free on the Internet. Practically all the journalists have access to the Internet in their editorial offices.

It would be very helpful if the journalists were to make visits to observe first-hand both good and bad models of various practices, so as to be able to visualise socio-economic applications when they compile their information. The productions should no longer be purely theoretical or technical.

### Regarding the Public Authorities

Seminars to keep stakeholders up to date in developments would be helpful, and practicable in



the context of training towards good governance already introduced in their environment.

In the same way, training to improve communication on the subject could be envisaged.

Specially adapted documentation, such as guides drawn up for decision-makers, could be made available to parties concerned.

Finally, it would be important to plan a meeting, the format of which could be decided on at the time, to bring together the press and all those contributing to the sector. This would provide a space for discussion and help in the work of defining the kind of information necessary for each different type of both readers and contributors in the sector.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Source: Ministry of Education, Senegal.



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## 6. Overall Findings

- o Views of spokespeople (e.g. as reproduced from press releases) are left unchallenged.
- o No debate, only acceptance of press releases.
- o Tendency for journalists to wait to be told about ICT events or possible stories. This is largely due to feeling uninformed and fearful of ICTs; and feeling that this information or discussion belongs in the realm of academia.
- o Most coverage is urban-focused, and newspapers have largely an urban readership, although there is a national interest expressed.
- o International stories have little or no bearing on policy issues within the country, except to push particular agendas relating to consumerist values.
- o There is relative silence on ICT policy and WSIS in general. Lack of coverage in this regard is based on techno-phobia and the apparent assumed complicatedness of the language of ICT policy.

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## 7. Overall Recommendations

### **Socio-political context and building newsroom capacity on ICT policy**

- ICT policy awareness training workshops with specific journalist groups (including editors) This should also be supported by continuing discussion groups on ICT policy in terms of social development issues, not simply as company information or technological developments
- Work with specific newsrooms in identifying lacks and doing 'on the job' intensive training sessions.
- Work with specific journalism schools to include ICT policy as part of the curriculum.
- Make use of media conference training sessions to have policy discussions included in plenary sessions and workshops.
- Develop an Africa-wide network of journalists interested in ICT issues to share information, and encourage dialogue and debate with the objective of improving the quality of coverage and analytical capacity of journalists to write in an informed manner. This network needs to include Francophone and Lusophone Africa.

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## 9. Appendices

### Contact Details of Interviewees

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- o José Luis Gonzaga Jeque, *Diario de Mocambique*, mobile: ++258 82 82 80 15
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#### DRC

- o Paul Massey, Chief editor, *La Référence Plus*, daily newspaper, 9946139
- o Adèle Lukoki, Chief editor, *Le Potentiel*, daily newspaper, 9929795
- o Jérôme Sekana Pene Papa, Producer of TV magazine "*ptt.com*" on *Raga TV*, 9953915

- o Willy Kalengayi, Chief editor of *Antennae A*, TV, 98110441
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