



AFRICAN MEDIA INITIATIVE CHARTER

Mission

1. The African Media Initiative (AMI) provides a comprehensive organisational framework for African media owners, operators, executives, practitioners, trainers and financiers to work cooperatively towards the strengthening of independent private media throughout Africa. Guiding this mission are media leaders from across the continent who have come together voluntarily to support AMI out of their shared commitment to private media that effectively serve the public interest.

2. AMI shall be a scrupulously independent, non-partisan organisation of media professionals participating in their personal capacity, free of any governmental or political alignments, and limiting its activities to its media development mission, principles, partnerships and programmatic objectives throughout Africa.

Principles

3. The core principles shared by AMI participants and supporters were articulated by media professionals from across Africa on May 3, 1991 in the UNESCO-sponsored Declaration of Windhoek, which began with these essential points:

a) Consistent with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.

b) By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control, or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.

c) By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.

4. The AMI governing principles are also in accord with the African Charter of Human Rights, which affirms the rights of all Africans to freely “receive information” and “express and disseminate opinions.” A vibrant, diverse, and economically sustainable media sector is an essential platform and guarantor for those rights.

5. The AMI community further holds that:

a) The growth and development of Africa’s independent media is primarily the responsibility of African media professionals themselves – media owners, operators, journalists and other media practitioners, educators, and support organisations.

b) Collaboration rather than competition among African media development actors is a prerequisite for analysing and resolving African media problems.

c) The media can and must play a fundamental role in national and regional economic and social development.

d) Media institutions have the responsibility and the ability to make African societies more democratic, better informed, and more responsive to the needs of all citizens.

e) A pluralistic, independent, self-sustaining media sector is an essential guarantor of freedom of expression, effective and democratic governance, and sustainable human development.

f) International development financing – in addition to private capital resources –is required for the sustainability of the media industry in Africa, as it is in other socially and economically essential areas of the private sector.

g) Consultations with governmental and inter-governmental institutions must be vigorously pursued to secure effective media participation in the formulation of media-related policies and laws.

Media Context and Partnerships

6. The AMI approach to “media development” embraces the full gamut of assistance aimed at the sector’s independence and sustainability, including reforms of government media policies and regulatory systems; the strengthening of media education and journalistic professionalism; public and private financial assistance; and capacity-building for media business management and market research.

7. AMI goals and proposals are informed by a shared analysis of the problems and prospects that affect the development of media institutions across the continent –an analysis rooted in the conclusions of the parallel African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) research project and Strengthening African Media (STREAM) consultative process conducted in 2006 and 2007.

Both studies examined the rapidly changing political, technological and economic aspects of Africa's media environment, and made it clear that Africa's independent media entrepreneurs, executives and practitioners must take the lead themselves in shaping the sector's future.

8. AMI also represents a continental response to the impact of globalisation on African media, as seen in the following phenomena:

- a) Internationalisation of media capital, skills and technology;
- b) Privatisation and commercialisation of State media companies;
- c) Policies of deregulation – and in some cases reregulation – of the media and communications sector; and
- d) Expansion of community broadcasting services, mobile-phone social networking platforms, and other citizen-based media initiatives.

9. These trends present new opportunities and challenges for African media, calling for strategically robust and coordinated intervention by media development professionals and institutions. It is critical to find a common voice and platform for articulating and responding to these globalisation-driven certainties and uncertainties, in order to ensure the sustainability of a media sector that will contribute to good governance and human development in Africa.

10. AMI recognises and addresses the many key challenges that face African media institutions, including but not restricted to:

- a) Sustainable growth models for media businesses;
- b) a paucity of editorial and business-managerial skills;
- c) Technological change and innovation in the newsroom;
- d) The imperative to produce compelling, independent reporting for development; and
- e) Access to needed media support services, such as market research tools, training programs and capital investment mechanisms

11. AMI will work in partnership with established African media development actors, seeking to support and complement but not replicate their ongoing efforts in the field. These include but are not limited to:

- a) The African Editors' Forum (TAEF).
- b) The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) – Africa Office.
- c) The African Forum for Media Development (AFMD).
- d) The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).
- e) The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA).
- f) The Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA).
- g) The Southern African Media Development Fund (SAMDEF).

12. AMI acknowledges that intergovernmental institutions can play an important role in media policies and in the economics environment for independent media. AMI is thus committed to fostering an effective and healthy dialogue with African governments – as a collective – through such intergovernmental organs as:

a) The African Union (AU), including through its African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the Investment Climate Facility for Africa (ICF);

b) The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and

c) The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), particularly now that the three sub regional trading blocs have established a common free trade zone to boost intra-regional commerce and growth.

d) The African Development Bank, which can play a more active role in expanding Africa's communications infrastructure, fostering private media investment, and promoting regulatory reforms affecting the business environment for media

e) The UN Economic Commission for Africa, which through its STREAM sponsorship identified the critical role of media in Africa's long-term market growth and in the integration of marginalized populations into national and regional economies

13. Aside from these important regional non-governmental and governmental regional and continental bodies, there are scores of country-based initiatives that run the gamut from the defence of media freedom to the encouragement of citizen journalism. To this end, AMI will seek strategic partnerships with national, regional, and global media development bodies as a way of identifying and changing state policies and laws that constrain the sustainable growth of media institutions.

Programme Objectives

14. Guided by continual analysis of the African media environment and in keeping with its agreed principles, the specific programmatic objectives of AMI are to:

a) Provide a collaborative forum for principal media development actors – owners, executives, journalists and other practitioners, trainers and educators and media support organisations – to study issues, exchange ideas, and develop solutions to common problems, as in AMI's African Media Leaders Forum.

- b) Catalyse, facilitate and sustain dialogue with national, regional and international financing institutions as a way of leveraging capital flows into the media industry, including from concessionary multilateral lending facilities.
- c) Construct a systematic capacity-building framework for media entrepreneurs and professionals through (a) training and professional opportunities, (b) assistance with acquisition of new media technologies, (c) advice on potential sources of capital, (d) assistance on resource mobilisation, and (e) media research resources and opportunities.
- d) Through advocacy efforts and technical input persuade key governmental and inter-governmental institutions to provide a more conducive business environment for private media.
- e) Promote professional journalistic practices among media institutions through (a) focused support for journalism education centres of excellence; (b) greater media industry input into journalism education curricula, including for midcareer training; (c) collaborative research and other projects between journalism educators and private media; and (d) a strong commitment by media organizations to professional ethics.
- f) Provide a mechanism for cooperation among key national, regional and international media development bodies, such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), the Southern African Media Development Fund (SAMDEF), the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA), the Media Foundation of West Africa (MFWA), the African Forum for Media Development (AFMD), the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), and the Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF), among others.

Governance, Communication and Accountability

15. AMI shall be governed by an independent board of African media executives, practitioners, and other experts in African median issues. Board members shall together represent a broad spectrum of professional expertise, and collectively reflect the regional, linguistic and cultural diversity of the continent. The Board shall be guided by the mission, values and objectives set out in this Charter.

16. AMI is registered as a not-for-profit organization in the Republic of Kenya. It enjoys the benefits of a host country agreement with the Government of the Republic of Kenya. Its projects and staff are managed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) based in Nairobi and reporting to the AMI Board; AMI projects and personnel may also be based elsewhere in Africa as needs arise.

17. AMI shall be authorized to receive funding and other support from government and intergovernmental sources, as well as corporate, philanthropical and other partners with a commitment to African media development in accord with AMI's principles.

18. While governments and partners shall have no role in AMI governance, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Board of Trustees shall keep donors and other partners informed of AMI's major strategic and implementation issues and activities.

19. AMI is committed to the principles of transparency and accountability, and shall provide full disclosure of its programmes, activities, positions, funding sources and governing statutes through its website, publications and other platforms.

20. The working languages of AMI shall be English and French; where feasible, all Communication and documentation shall be provided in both languages. This does not preclude the possibility of using other languages for the official business of AMI.