

African Media  
Development  
Initiative



# Botswana

Research findings and conclusions

Sechele T. Sechele



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# Botswana

## About this report

In March 2005, the UK Government's Commission for Africa delivered a report entitled *"Our Common Interest"*, which represented a significant attempt to understand and recommend an action programme for Africa's social and economic development. A key component of the report focused on the importance of a strong media sector to support governance and development in Africa, and called for greater attention to, and resources for, media sector development as a result. The BBC World Service Trust and a number of international and African partners have subsequently set out to help develop ideas for future Africa media development initiatives.

In order to inform these efforts, the BBC World Service Trust – in collaboration with Rhodes University (South Africa) and Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria) – has undertaken an extensive, pan-African research effort in 17 African countries, of which Botswana is one. Data presented in this report is based on both secondary research gathered by local researchers in Botswana and on extensive interviews conducted locally among key media practitioners and leaders. It is presented here in three parts:

- Media Sector Developments: an examination of developments in the media sector in Botswana over the past five years;
- Challenges for Future Media Development Activities: an analysis of the perspectives of a range of key informants on media development challenges in Botswana;
- Case Study: a case study from Botswana illustrating good practice in media development.

The research was funded by a generous grant from the UK Government's Department for International Development. The research was conducted by Sechele T. Sechele in association with the BBC World Service Trust Research and Learning Group.

The BBC World Service Trust is the independent international charity set up by the BBC, which uses media to advance development. The Trust works to: raise awareness of development issues among mass audiences and opinion formers; influence attitudes, awareness and behaviour among poorer communities through a wide range of educational programming on poverty-related topics; and build capacity in the media sector in developing and transitional countries.

## Acronyms

**ABC** Audited Bureau of Circulation

**ACHPR** African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

**BOCODOL** Botswana Centre for Distance Learning

**BDP** Botswana Democratic Party

**BEF** Botswana Editors' Forum

**BESTV** Black Entertainment Satellite Television

**BMWA** Botswana Media Women's Association

**BOCONGO** Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations

**BOJA** Botswana Journalists' Association

**BTA** Botswana Telecommunications Authority

**BTV** Botswana Television

**CSO** Central Statistics Office

**GBC** Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation

**GDP** Gross Domestic Product

**ICT** Information and Communication Technology

**IFEX** International Freedom of Expression Exchange

**MISA** Media Institute of Southern Africa

**MP** Member of Parliament

**NBB** National Broadcasting Board

**NDP** National Development Plan

**NGO** Non-Governmental Organisation

**RB** Radio Botswana

**SABA** Southern African Broadcasting Association  
**SADC** Southern African Development Community  
**SAEF** Southern African Editors' Forum  
**SAIMED** Southern Africa's Institute of Media Entrepreneurship Development  
**SAMDEF** Southern African Media Development Fund  
**TAEF** The African Editors' Forum  
**TCM** Total Community Mobilisation  
**UITA** Up In The Air  
**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme



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# Botswana

## Country Report

### Context



# 1. Introduction

Botswana has no independent media research institution, so gathering data was extremely difficult, particularly as the researcher had to work to a tight schedule. Information on newspaper circulation figures in particular was very difficult to find, given that only five out of around 13 newspaper titles published in the country have their circulation independently audited by the South African-based Audited Bureau of Circulation (ABC). Therefore, for some of the major popular newspapers, such as the *Botswana Daily News* and *The Voice*, the researcher had to depend on information supplied by the newspapers themselves, which has not been independently audited and verified. The possibility cannot be ruled out that the circulation figures have been inflated as the information is based on the print run rather than how many of these newspapers were bought and read. This is especially problematic in the case of the *Botswana Daily News*, which is distributed to the nation free of charge with no mechanism in place to ensure it reaches all sections of its target audience. In fact, even its target audience is not defined.

An additional problem is that most of the country data is not up-to-date. For example, the last national literacy survey was undertaken by the Department of Non-Formal Education and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 1993 and, except for the fact that more enrolment data has been made available regularly in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, it is difficult to know what the prevailing literacy rates and other key trends are (CSO 1994-1999; 1997).



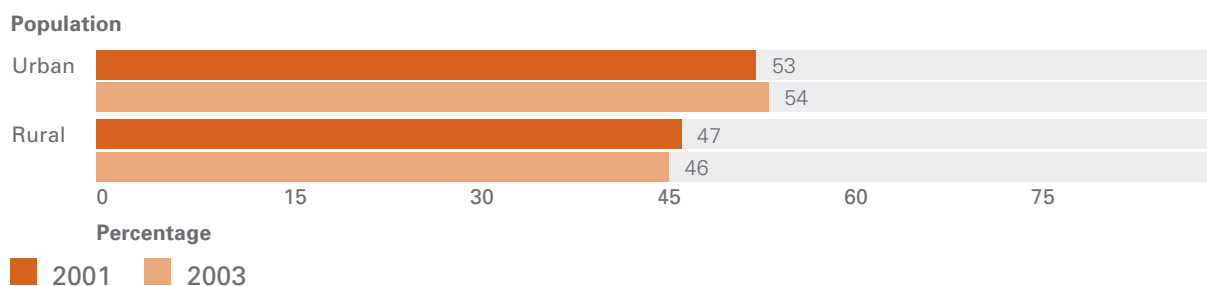
## 2. Country Overview

Botswana is a landlocked country in southern Africa, north of South Africa. It covers an area of 600,370 sq km, with a population of 1.8 million, most of whom live in the eastern part of the country (World Bank, 2004). Thirty-eight per cent of the population are under the age of 14 (United Nations Statistics Division, 2003) and 15% aged between 15 and 35 (CSO, 2003). Botswana, formerly known as Bechuanaland, adopted its new name when it became independent from Britain in 1966. It depends on imports, mainly from South Africa, for more than 70% of its goods and services – including many key information products (Government of Botswana, 2001).

The population has become more urbanised in the past five years, with most people now living in either urban towns or what are referred to in Botswana as “urban villages”. This is due to the fact that many villages have grown very big, and their physical structure and the size of their population resemble those of towns in most countries. In 2001, 47.1% of the population lived in rural areas and 52.9% in urban areas (CSO, 2001). By 2003, this had changed to 45.8% and 54.2% respectively (CSO, 2003, see Figure 1).

In addition, the population density has become more concentrated in certain areas than it was at the time of independence, in particular in the eastern part of the country where there are more communication and other infrastructural developments. More than 60% of the country is semi-arid, while around 17% of its land surface has been reserved for wildlife management areas, such as game parks and reserves (Government of Botswana, 2001).

**Figure 1: Urban vs Rural Population**



Source: CSO, 2001; CSO, 2003

Transport and communication are essential for the movement of goods and the provision of services and information in any country. For Botswana, providing more of these services in the past few years at comparatively low per capita cost has been a daunting task because of the country's large geographical area; low and unevenly distributed population; sandy terrain (the Kalahari Desert covers more than 60% of the country, extending into the Northern Cape in South Africa and becoming the Namib Desert in neighbouring Namibia); and, its landlocked position at the epicentre of the southern African region (Government of Botswana, 2001).

In the past five or so years, more transport and communications infrastructure has been developed, mainly in eastern Botswana. This has been financed by the country's mineral wealth (the country is the largest world producer of diamonds by value – thus the use of the phrase, "diamonds for development" when referring to Botswana diamonds as opposed "blood diamonds" that were being produced in some parts of Africa in the past few years). This has led to more balanced, equitable and sustainable development nationally, which has helped to bring rapid economic development and political stability.

Botswana has experienced extraordinary growth in the development of its road infrastructure. The subsequent increase in mobility of people this brought about has been blamed for the HIV/AIDS infection rates in the country, which is one of the highest in the world (CIA, 2006). But more roads and other infrastructure have also improved the socio-economic situation, facilitated communication and business development, created employment opportunities in the private sector and improved the quality of life for all Botswana.

As the regional population table shows (see Table 1 on p. 5), not only does Gaborone and its surrounding areas have the largest number of people, but there has been an increasing number of people moving to urban towns and villages, with most of them relocating to the major urban villages of the Southern, South East, Kweneng and Kgatleng Districts.

**Table 1: Regional Population in Thousands**

Regions/Provinces/States	Total Population in Thousands
Gaborone	186
Francistown	3
Lobatse	29.7
Selibe Phikwe	49.8
Southern District	171.6
South East District	60.6
Kweneng District	230.3
Kgatleng District	73.5
Central District	501.4
North East District	49.4
North West District	143
Ghanzi	33.2
Kgalagadi	42.0

Source: CSO, 2003

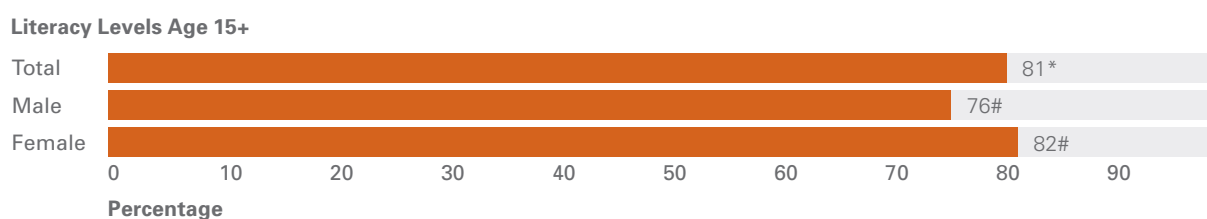
For the media sector, the developments in transport and communications in the past five years have been critical. It is estimated that more than 80% of the population now have access to good quality radio signals in MW and FM bands, and 40% have access to the national television station through terrestrial transmitter coverage (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2003). Radio and television coverage is available via satellite throughout Botswana. However, the majority of viewers still cannot afford it, hence the need to continue developing the terrestrial network, which provides an affordable mode of reception. The government has appointed the former chief engineer and director at the Department of Broadcasting on a three-year contract to develop the terrestrial network to enable up to 80% of the population to have access to it within the next three years<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This information came from a personal interview the researcher had with Marriane Nganunu, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, June 21, 2006.

It is estimated that in 2003, 81.2% of the population were literate, with a larger percentage of females (81.5%) as opposed to males (76.1%) being literate (see Figure 2). Literacy levels in urban areas, where most of the newspapers and other information channels are based, tend to be higher than in rural areas: in 2000, 83.3% of those in urban areas were literate compared with 64.1% in rural areas (UNDP, 2005, p. 108). This is important for the consumption and use of media products and services as it creates more appetite for newspaper reading and there are national newspapers in several urban centres of Botswana. This has attracted criticism from some observers, such as Paul Rantao, the late MP for Gaborone West and a former journalism lecturer at the University of Botswana. He states that the Botswana press tends to be elitist, urban-based and urban-focused as most newspapers are published in English and are all based in the main urban centres of the country. The majority of the newspapers in Botswana [11 out of 13] are published from the country's capital, Gaborone.

**Figure 2: Literacy Levels Age 15+**



Source: \* 2004 figure; 2003 figure, from World Bank (2004)

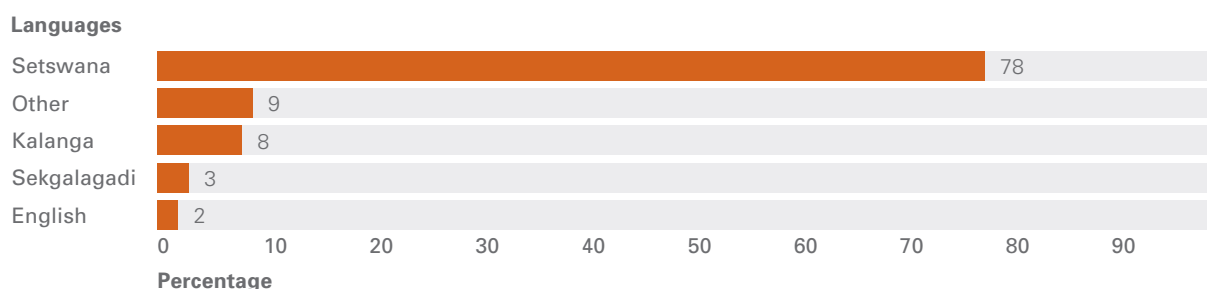
Botswana has marked disparities in the distribution of disposable income, even by international standards, and this has been attributed largely to the uneven spread of income-generating activities. For example, there is a high unemployment rate, presently estimated at 19.6 % (UNDP, 2005). There are also disparities in the ownership of cattle – a vital source of income for most Botswana, especially those in the rural areas. It is estimated that 90% of all the cattle in the country are owned by 10-20% of the population (Government of Botswana, 1993). The distribution of income is more uneven in rural areas and least uneven in urban areas (CSO, 1995).



The disparity between the income levels of male and female-headed households also merits discussion. This is most pronounced in urban areas where the CSO estimates that both the mean and median incomes of female-headed households is less than half that of their male counterparts. This disparity is critical, given that, nationally, women head about 46% of households. Whereas in towns and rural areas around 50% of households are headed by men, in urban villages 55% of the households are headed by women (UNDP, 2005). A significant proportion of the Botswanan population live below absolute poverty, although this figure fell from 47% in 2000 to 37% in 2005 (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2003). According to the CIA World Factbook (2006), poverty was 30.3% in 2003 and the GDP per capita was US\$10,000.

The national language is Setswana, which 90% of the population are able to speak, and it is the mother-tongue of 79.06% of the population (Government of Botswana, 2001). The most widely spoken languages are shown in Figure 3. Only two, English and Setswana, are official languages, with the former being the main language in government.

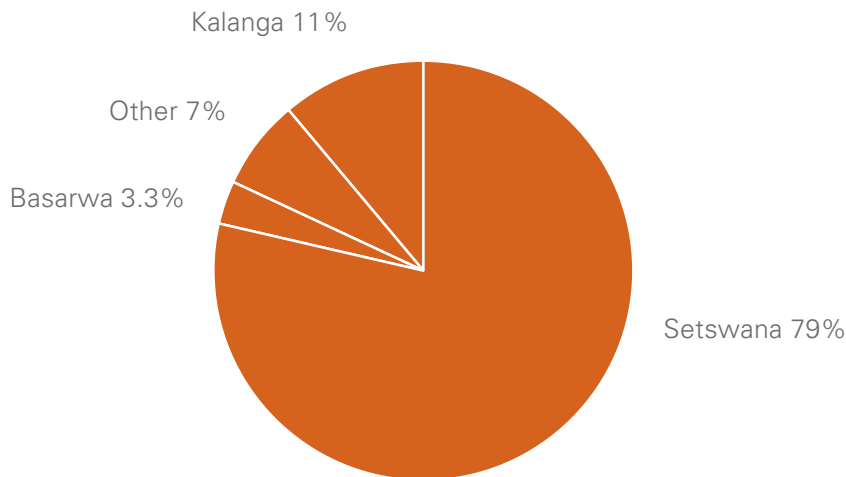
**Figure 3: Widely Spoken Languages**



Source: Government of Botswana, 2001; CSO, 2003

The main ethnic groups are the Setswana (79% of the population), and the Kalanga (11%) and the Basarwa (3%) (see Figure 4) (CIA, 2006).

**Figure 4: Main Ethnic Groups**



Source: CIA, 2006

- Christianity is the most common religion (71.6%) in Botswana, the remaining population is broken up between other religious groups including Hindus, Muslims and Badimo (CIA, 2006).

## Key Findings

- Botswana has a large geographic area with a low and unevenly distributed population.
- The country is landlocked, which gives it a distinct and somewhat disadvantageous geopolitical position. This has led to its dependence on imports, mainly from South Africa, for more than 70% of its goods and services – including many key information & technology products.
- Botswana has a highly literate population – especially in the urban areas.
- There are wide disparities in incomes and high poverty levels, with almost 37% of people living below the poverty line.
- About 80% of the population speak Setswana as their mother-tongue.



## 3. Media Health

### 3.1 Status of the laws regarding rights and access to information

The 1998 Broadcasting Act liberalised the airwaves allowing for the licensing of community and commercial broadcast media. Although the press in Botswana is relatively free, there are a number of laws, like the National Security Act, that restrict free access to information. The government has been reluctant to pass the Freedom of Information Act, although it is provided for in a number of government policies – including the national strategic vision – Vision 2016: The Long Term Vision for Botswana (Presidential Task Force for a Long Term Vision for Botswana, 1997). This document not only provides for a Freedom of Information Act by the year 2016, but it also recognises the importance of free access to information, information technology and of developing efficient information systems and networks for the support of research, education, development and communication with the rest of the world.

Balule and Maripe (2000) have written a 62-page inventory of media ‘unfriendly’ laws and practices in Botswana. On the whole, the statutory limitations to freedom of expression are manifest in two parts, namely: i) through limitations imposed by government, and, ii) those under general law. For example, Section 4 of the National Security Act of 1986 prohibits the publication or communication of any information relating to the defence or security of the state. Section 5 of the National Security Act prohibits publication of any classified material without authority.

The constitution does not include any special statute that provides for public support for media pluralism and autonomy. In the eyes of many commentators, the lack of a Freedom of Information Act means Botswana’s citizens are unable to participate fully and pro-actively in the development and democracy of the country.

Government determines which material is classified, giving it extensive and unlimited powers over the media. Any material that is in the public interest can be said to be classified simply because it may portray the government in poor light. Nothing illustrates this point better than the controversial Mass Media Communications Bill 2001, passed by cabinet, but yet to be tabled in parliament. According to the government (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2003), the Mass Media Communications Bill will be used “to publicise Botswana outside its borders... and to regulate the print media”. The law will be expected to complement the 1998 Broadcasting Act.

Although freedom of expression is enshrined in the Botswana constitution and the government welcomes the variety of media that have emerged from the public sector, the government has been known to clamp down on journalists who do not toe the line. For example, in 2001, various government departments and parastatals stopped advertising in the *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*, ostensibly to punish them for publishing articles and pictures showing the head of state and his deputy in bad light. The papers took the government to court over this and won the case. The Lobatse High Court judge, Justice Lesetedi, lifted the ban, which he stated was interfering with the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression (*Media Publishing vs Attorney General of Botswana*, MISCA 229/2001 Law Reports of Botswana – forthcoming).

According to various media activists, such as the Botswana chapter of the Media Institute for Southern Africa, if the government adopts the Draft Mass Media Communication Bill (1997) in its original form, it will deprive journalists even of the limited rights they currently have. This bill, which will soon be brought before parliament, gives the Minister sweeping and unlimited powers, and is in direct contravention of the constitution and the ideals enshrined in Vision 2016. The delay in bringing it before parliament has been due partly to the media outcry about the infringement of media rights. Briefly, the bill in its original form gives the Minister the powers to:

- register or deregister all newspapers;
- search media premises if and when the Minister deems it necessary; and,
- appoint a chairperson for a press council that would draw up a code of ethics and be responsible for ensuring compliance with them.

In addition, members of the press council would preside over any disciplinary measures against the media and their personnel, and proceedings would be filmed.

The intention of the new media law is to set up a statutory media council (a media complaints committee established by the state under an Act of Parliament). Journalists in Botswana have vigorously opposed the 1997 draft and, in 2004, established a voluntary press council (the Press Council of Botswana). Despite this, the government has not withdrawn its draft legislation for a statutory council and has recently invited “counter proposals” to the draft law from the public. The Press Council of Botswana has commissioned a special consultancy for this purpose. Some counter proposals have been put forward by the Botswana chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa; these were elaborated on in the 62-page inventory by Balule and Maripe, mentioned above.

Despite all this, Francis Nyamnjoh has observed that the Botswana media “... enjoys a degree of tolerance from government that is rare in Southern Africa, and has earned credibility for its critical and investigative journalism over the years. This does not imply the absence of legislation and practices by government aimed at curbing press freedom” (Nyamnjoh, 2002, p. 757).

That the Botswanan government is relatively more tolerant towards the press than its counterparts in the rest of the sub-region has been demonstrated by the fact that, compared to countries such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and even South Africa, fewer alerts on infringement of press freedom have been issued by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Botswana over the past five years. These violations are monitored and reported internationally on a daily basis by the Windhoek-based, MISA.

According to Minnie (2005): “In the context of the SADC region, Botswana is regarded as having a largely open freedom of expression environment. Few action alerts emanate from this country and the small sample recorded by MISA in 2003 is representative of the general kinds of media freedom violations that occur here. These include civil defamation charges against newspapers, one or two assaults of journalists during a year – not by state agencies or officials but by opposition party politicians, offended sports stars, adrenaline-charged students during protests, and so on – and a few instances of censorship in the state-owned national broadcaster by cancelling live radio panel discussions and public phone-in programmes” (Minnie, 2005).

The various government ministers responsible for the media have vigorously denied that these cancellations constitute censorship, arguing that programme presenters lack political expertise and judgement, which results in unbalanced political discussions. Should this indeed be the case, Minnie says the remedy does not lie in the censorship that has been taking place but in training such personnel, and public scrutiny through an independent and voluntary media complaints committee based on ethical codes of conduct formulated by the media industry itself without state interference.

It is in the legislative and media policy area that Botswana is more problematic. Its statutes contain a number of anti-media freedom laws that are rarely used, but which the government so far refuses to repeal. It can therefore be concluded that the state is shoring them up in case a situation arises in which they would want to exercise them (Minnie, 2005, p. 5).

### 3.2 Status of the laws regarding criminal defamation and insult

Botswana has laws on criminal defamation and insult. The government has already defended their presence in the statute book by stating that these are part of Botswanan culture and etiquette.

Minnie found that:

*“Both criminal and civil defamation laws exist in (Botswana). The former are in principle acceptable, as long as onerous financial rewards for damages that threaten the existence of the media are not made. Journalists in Botswana, however, are concerned that the high financial penalties awarded by courts or alternatively negotiated in private settlements in the last few years are moving in that direction, and concerns in this regard are also now being expressed in a number of other SADC countries, particularly in Lesotho and Tanzania. Criminal defamation, however, is completely unacceptable from a freedom of expression point of view.”*

(Minnie, 2005, p. 7)

Minnie continues:

*“Criminal defamation charges are laid by the state (not a private person) against a journalist or person, and, if found guilty, journalists can be fined and/or jailed. They also acquire a criminal record. The origins of criminal defamation arise from the rule of kings in medieval times in Europe, in which it was a crime to criticise any aspect of their rule or person. It is based on a value system that is the antithesis of democracy and the rule of the people. It also significantly inhibits the public scrutiny of officials and the state by the media and other critics.”*

(Minnie, 2005, p. 7).

Sections 90, 91 and 93 of Botswana’s Penal Code contain various provisions on “insult” laws that limit public scrutiny of officials. These provisions are in the box below.

**Section 90**

(1) Any person who in a public place or at a public gathering uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour is guilty of an offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.

(2) In this section, “public gatherings” means any meeting, gathering or concourse, whether in a public place or otherwise, which the public or any section of the public or more than 15 persons are permitted to attend, whether on payment or otherwise, and includes a procession to or from a public place.

**Section 91**

Any person who does any act or utters any words or publishes any writing with intent to insult or to bring into contempt or ridicule:

- (a) the Arms or Ensigns Armorial of Botswana;
- (b) the National Flag of Botswana;
- (c) the Standard of the President of Botswana;
- (d) the National Anthem of Botswana;

is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding P500.

**Section 93**

(1) Any person who in a public place or at a public gathering uses abusive, obscene or insulting language in relation to the President, any other member of the National Assembly or any public officer is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding P400.

(Government of Botswana, 1964)

### 3.3 Status of the laws that exist to enable media regulatory bodies to function independently

According to the Broadcasting Act of 1998, the National Broadcasting Board (NBB) is charged with the allocation of available frequency spectrum resources to broadcasting services and to ensure the widest possible diversity of programming (Government of Botswana, 2006).

Since 1999, the NBB has been run and managed from the newly formed Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology instead of the Office of the President from which it operated previously. The current functions of the Botswana Telecommunications Authority (BTA) are to serve as the Secretariat and adviser to the NBB on various technical telecommunications issues.

The BTA was established in 1996 and is responsible for regulating and monitoring all the airwaves. In addition, it is responsible for monitoring radio transmissions, issuing licences to companies that operate cellular/mobile phones, data, two-way radios and paging services. The only landline telephone provider, the Botswana Telecommunications Corporation, has recently restructured its engineering department to provide more payphones, data service and leased lines.

### 3.4 Current provisions that aim to secure the independence of publicly-owned media

The Botswanan government has no intention of loosening its grip on the state media, although there has long been talk (mainly by directors but not government ministers) of turning state media outlets into parastatal outfits. For example, in February 2006, the Minister of Communications, Science and Technology visited the offices of the government media where she lambasted the journalists for poor reporting standards, and reminded them that her office would compel them to abide by the government's general code of conduct, their departments' professional codes of conduct and the code of conduct of the Press Council of Botswana.

### 3.5 Current provisions to support community or alternative media

Although the 2003 broadcasting policy, drafted by the National Broadcasting Board provides for community radio stations and other commercial broadcasters, it is yet to be adopted by government and brought to parliament. What is also noticeable is that except for the *Ngami Times*, which is based in the tourist town of Maun, Botswana has few local and no regional newspapers. Presently, government dominates the broadcasting sector and there are no licensed or unlicensed community radio stations.

### 3.6 Regulatory obligations for public or state broadcasters to fulfil a public-service broadcasting remit

As indicated above, the Botswanan government has for six years, promised to establish a statutory media council and produced the Draft Mass Media Communications Bill of 1997 for this purpose. This is also planned for in the latest National Development Plan for the country. According to Minnie (2005, p. 8), "Statutory media councils are regarded as instruments of state control over the media by freedom of expression supporters internationally."

The state has also not yielded to the African Charter on Broadcasting, adopted by the African Commission on People's and Human Rights, which calls for statutory regulatory bodies nominated by the public to award public, private and community broadcasting licences independently from the influence of the state and political parties.

### 3.7 Regulatory obligations for private or independent broadcasters to fulfil a public-service broadcasting remit

Provisions of the draft Broadcasting Policy drawn up by the National Broadcasting Board oblige private broadcasters to fulfil a public-service broadcasting remit. The draft policy is yet to be adopted by the government.

### 3.8 Journalism

Currently, practising journalists are not registered or licensed. There is no reliable information on the numbers of journalists practising in the country today and how many of these are men or women. This is likely to change if the Botswanan government adopts the Draft Mass Media Communication Bill (1997) in its original form. This draft law also requires that media houses be registered and monitored by the minister responsible for the press in the country. The bill was delayed by the drafting of principles to guide the legislation agreed between media stakeholders in the country. These principles have since been sanctioned by cabinet, and the bill is now being drafted by the Attorney General's Chambers.

Most professional press associations in Botswana, such as the Botswana Journalists' Association (BOJA), Press Club and others have either collapsed or have not been active in the past five years. There are plans to set up a trade union for journalists. The only active professional body at the moment is the Botswana Editors' Forum (BEF), which is affiliated to the Southern African Editors' Forum (SAEF) and, by extension, the newly founded continental African Editors' Forum (TAEF). The other media organisations, including the relatively new Botswana Media Women's Association, have not been very active in the past two years.

According to Rantao (1996), journalists in Botswana display a lot of inadequacies in terms of alertness, being current, reliability and performance in public policy debates, interpretation and analysis of issues. But in an interview with the *Botswana Guardian* chief editor, Mike Mothibi, he revealed that this situation has since improved for the better<sup>2</sup>. According to Minnie, there is a connection between low standards of journalism and the reluctance of governments to bring about reforms in media freedom (Minnie, 2005). Governments, often as an excuse, argue that they need to retain control of the media to combat poor-quality or "irresponsible" journalism. But, one can argue they can still ensure that standards are maintained by allowing independent and voluntary media councils (or media complaints commissions) to be set up as well as independent associations of journalists and editors, which can formulate their own codes of ethics.

Minnie suggests that the government's excuses not to allow free and independent media are politically motivated because it does not want to introduce reforms that could result in a democratic challenge to its power. However, finding systems that could improve journalists' skills would help, as there are too many instances of journalists being charged with criminal defamation and other forms of "insult laws" (all are media freedom violations), or even with civil defamation (not a media freedom violation unless the financial penalties are too onerous), who are partly guilty of professional misconduct (Minnie, 2005).

Low standards of journalism have also been found in national state broadcasters – deficiencies that can be attributed to poor training as well as state control (Minnie, 2006). These journalists cannot work according to generally accepted codes of conduct controlling media ethics or standards because the state imposes a propaganda role on them. In Botswana, journalists in these institutions are regarded as civil servants by definition and by law, and have been transferred to other government departments if they do not comply with

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<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with Mike Mothibi, Chief Editor, *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*, June 20, 2006.



the policies and instructions of the state. This happened, for example, with the present Director of Broadcasting Services, Bapasi Mphusu, when he was moved to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the late 1990s, and before he was returned to the Department of Information and Broadcasting as Chief Information Officer. The same also happened with the former editor of the *Daily News*, Paul Rantao, and he later left the profession to enter opposition politics.

The low standard of journalistic practice is compounded by the limited number of training institutions. The only school of journalism, the Media Studies Department in the Humanities Faculty of the University of Botswana, was only set up four years ago and its first crop of undergraduates will have qualified in May 2006 (see Figure 5). The Media Studies Department is responsible for training journalists.

South Africa's proximity to Botswana has opened doors for Botswana students to study at South Africa's long-established journalism schools. In addition, various media houses in Botswana provide in-service training for their staff.

**Figure 5: Number of Journalism Training Institutes**



Source: Author's personal research, 2006

The majority of managerial positions in the various media organisations are held by men. Most female managers are found in the state broadcasting stations. Only one newspaper, *The Voice*, is edited by a woman.

## Key findings

- Botswana has no community radio stations.
- Men dominate the managerial positions in the various media houses. Most women managers are to be found in the state broadcasting stations.
- Only one weekly newspaper, *The Voice*, is edited by a woman.
- There are few local and no regional newspapers.
- Standards of journalism tend to be low to average.
- There is only one school of journalism.
- No known figures exist on the number of journalists working in Botswana or how many are women.



## 4. State of the Media – Literature Review

### 4.1 Balule & Maripe (2000)

This is a 62-page inventory of all the Botswanan laws that are ‘media-unfriendly’ or contribute to the lack of media freedom and free access to information in a country well-known for its liberal democracy. The authors of the booklet are law lecturers at the University of Botswana.

The laws include the Penal Code, National Security Act of 1986 (this gives the state powers to penalise reporting on issues that it wants to keep from the public); the Anthropological Act of 1967 (under which access to information and research is restricted); the Directorate of Corruption and Economic Crime Act (which requires journalists to hand over books, documents and computer files relating to the functions of any public or private body on the orders of the Director of Corruption and Economic Crime); the Cinematograph Act of 1972 (under which any newspaper or publication may be prohibited); the Printed Publications Act (which stipulates that every newspaper must be registered with the General Post Office, failure to comply being a criminal offence); and the National Security Act (under which the government can classify any information or document as confidential and secret. Anyone who publishes classified or secret information commits an offence, and on conviction may be sentenced to up to 25 years in prison).

Balule and Maripe conclude that, despite the constitutional guarantee of media freedom, the laws cited above and others contained in the inventory are either couched in vague language or give the government very wide discretionary powers. This creates uncertainty that affects the freedom of the media and freedom of expression.

## 4.2 Thapisa & Megwa (2002)

Professor Thapisa is a leading information management expert and researcher on the media in Botswana and Professor Megwa is a South African-based media scholar. I found the surveys and research in this study – and in Thapisa & Megwa (1998), *Situation Analysis and Profile of Mass Communication in Botswana*, Gaborone: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning – reliable and highly informative. Not only do the authors adopt a multi-disciplinary approach in their research, but they also used highly scientific and reliable statistical methods (which were overseen by Dr Frocheg, a senior statistics lecturer at the University of Botswana). Their reports have very useful findings on readership and audience levels in Botswana.

In the absence of a media research institution in Botswana, this survey, which was commissioned by the Department of Information and Broadcasting (now separated into the Department of Information Services and the Department of Broadcasting Services), offers perhaps the most up-to-date information on readership and audience levels in Botswana. The survey covered both private and public media and its findings, published in July 2002 in a booklet, are kept in the archives at the government-owned Mass Media Complex.

## 4.3 The IFEX Report on Media Ownership and Control (2000)

This report focused on the four Southern African countries of Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland. In the case of Botswana, the study found that government dominates the broadcasting sector although attempts have been made since 1998 to free up the airwaves to the private sector. It found that the government has a tight grip on the broadcasting media, and interferes on a regular basis. The research also established that the print and broadcasting sector in Botswana is still dominated by South African private commercial interests and that it has remained small because of the country's small population size and the easy access of the South African media mentioned above – which has acted as a deterrent to the further development of the Botswana media – including the small and undeveloped film and video industry in the country. The emergent new media and independent press have also remained financially weak and foreign dominated.

## 4.4 Bibliography

Balule, T & Maripe, B. (2000) *A guide to laws and practises that inhibit freedom of expression in Botswana*. Gaborone: Media Institute for Southern Africa

IFEX Report on Media ownership (2000) *Botswana*. Retrieved June 2006, from <http://www.ifex.org/botswana>

Thapisa, A.P.N. & Megwa E.R. (2002) *Report on the national survey on print and electronic media in Botswana*. Gaborone: Department of Information and Broadcasting

### Key findings

- The government has a tight grip on the broadcasting media in particular.
- The print and broadcasting sector in Botswana is still dominated by South African private commercial interests.
- New media and the emergent independent press have remained financially weak and foreign dominated.



## 5. Radio

### 5.1 Key changes and developments in the radio marketplace in the past five years

Although the Batswana were first exposed to radio broadcasting as early as the 1940s during the Second World War, broadcasting in Botswana can really be traced back to 1961 when the country inherited a 1kW medium wave transmitter that had initially been used by the Germans during the second world war to broadcast propaganda. The transmitter was originally based in Mafeking, but in 1963 it was moved to Lobatse, where it was code-named ZNB and used for public campaigns as the country geared up for national independence. Its broadcasts focused on constitutional development and other national development issues that built up to a Botswana nation state. The transmitter was brought to Gaborone in 1965, where it continued to broadcast until independence, and the station became known as Radio Botswana.

Radio Botswana was the only radio station in Botswana at independence, and it continued to enjoy a monopoly until 1997. Its only competitors were neighbouring South African radio stations, mainly Radio Tswana and Radio Bop in the former homeland of Bophuthatswana. After majority rule in South Africa, Radio Tswana was renamed Motswedding FM and was relocated to the north-west province of South Africa. Radio Botswana continued to air a diversity of programmes featuring government policy and development and various cultural programmes, news and current affairs. Since 2003, Radio Botswana has broadcast around the clock and carries 99% national content with a few foreign programmes<sup>3</sup>.

In April 1992, Radio Botswana started RB2, a commercial channel that carries advertising, and which complements Radio Botswana programming by concentrating on youth-based issues. RB2 initially catered for Gaborone and the surrounding areas, but went national in 2001 to feed a young, contemporary audience, young urban professionals and the business community. RB2 currently covers 68% of the Botswana population and went 24-hour from March 2003. It is mainly an entertainment station catering for the 15-45 age group. As well as playing a lot of popular music, it broadcasts weather reports and traffic information (Government of Botswana, 2001).

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<sup>3</sup> Researcher's estimate.

The Department of Broadcasting is responsible for Radio Botswana (RB) channels 1 and 2 as well as Botswana Television (BTV). RB1 programmes include newsreels, featuring world news, round-table discussions, music, drama, agricultural extension programmes and primary and secondary school extension programmes. These are assigned airtime in the following proportions: topical issues 12%, news 15% and education 15%, music and entertainment 54%, religious programmes 3% and announcements such as bereavements 1%. The news, which is in English and Setswana, takes the most popular time slot (Government of Botswana, 2001). RB2 is not yet licensed to broadcast, even though it has been on air since 1992. Both are based in and broadcast from Gaborone, Botswana's capital city and the centre of government, finance and business.

In 1997, the Botswanan government decided to deregulate the airwaves. The National Broadcasting Board (NBB) has been given a mandate to issue broadcasting licences. So far, the only public broadcasting licence issued has been for RB1. RB2 has not yet been awarded a licence although it is still broadcasting. Private broadcasting licences have been issued to Gabz FM and Yarona FM. So there are four radio stations broadcasting in Botswana, but only three radio licences have been awarded.

The commercial radio station Yarona FM started broadcasting in August 1999 and targeted a youth-oriented market. Early on, its lack of experience was evident, but it had a young staff with great commitment and determination. The station broadcasts a mix of urban contemporary music, including gospel, and talk. It carries six news bulletins. The music accounts for about 75% of its airtime<sup>4</sup>.

The original ethos of Yarona FM presented challenges. Parents saw it as yet another distraction for their children and a waste of time. Advertisers, on the other hand, did not believe the young audience had a disposable income and thus did not see the station as a worthwhile investment. The management therefore made a conscious decision to professionalise operations, according to Owen Rampha. The overhaul of the station started with the music, which it was felt should reflect the aspirations and ideals of the audience with a more urban and affluent direction and lifestyle, without necessarily losing its street edge. A programmes manager was hired to develop a broadcast format and maintain it so the station would sound more uniform and focused. Policies and programmes were developed to appeal directly to the target audience. This helped reposition the station as a serious player and platform for youth and their issues<sup>5</sup>.

Census figures indicate that people aged 16 to 25 dominate the population of Botswana and that most young people are concentrated in urban to semi-urban regions, where there is access to better schools, health facilities and lifestyle (CSO, 2003).

Most of the station's revenue is generated from local businesses, with South African clients coming second. This is mainly because the station has a limited audience as its broadcast radius extends only 75 kilometres from Gaborone. RB2, the main competitor to the commercial radio stations, is a national broadcaster and so it makes business sense for companies based in South Africa, with branches around Botswana, to use RB2. However, despite its limited area of coverage, Yarona FM has positioned itself as a major player. Local business now fully appreciates the power of radio as a commercial tool and, more importantly, the economic potential of the "youth" market.

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<sup>4</sup> This information came from a personal interview the researcher had with Owen Rampha, Programmes Manager, Yarona FM, May 23, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> This information was from Owen Rampha, as above.

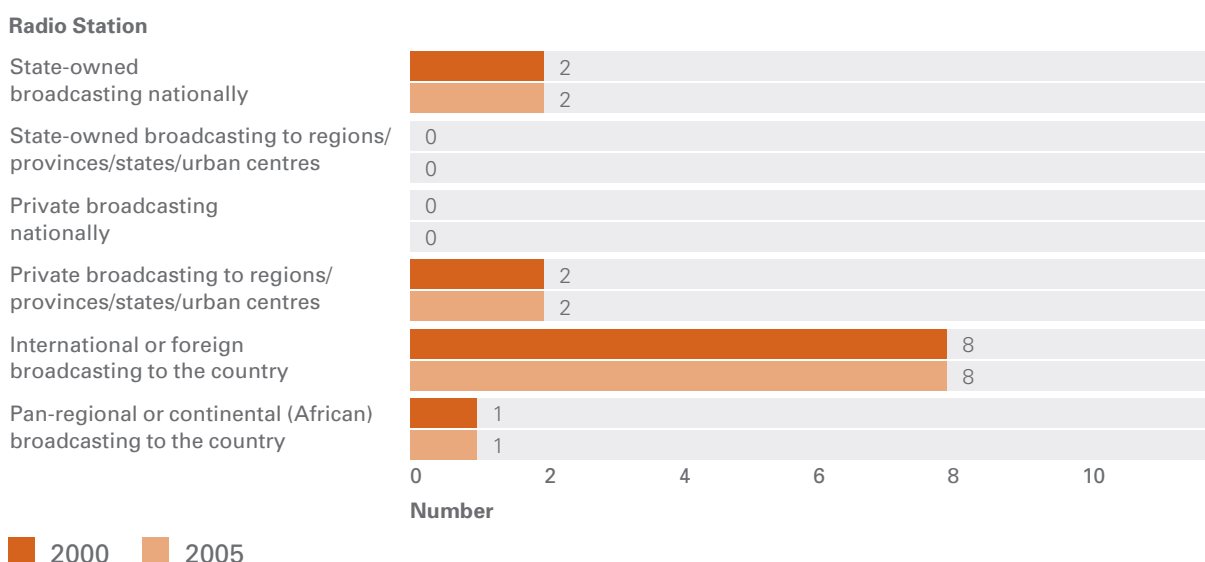
Gabz FM, which broadcasts to Gaborone and the surrounding areas, with a broadcast footprint that extends to a 90 kilometre radius of the capital, started in 1999. It broadcasts in English, with a mix of 30% talk and 70% music. Its target audience is the economically active 25-49 age group and, according to statistics from the station, it attracts 85% of the audience in its target listenership and is the leading adult commercial radio station in Botswana (Gabz FM website: [www.gabzfm.co.bw](http://www.gabzfm.co.bw)).

Both Gabz FM and Yarona FM are extremely vocal about the fact that they are not allowed to broadcast nationally. They are expected to be the front-runners for the two national radio broadcasting licences, which the NBB recently promised to issue.

Satellite is available for people who have access to the equipment, and 80% of the population are able to receive FM radio broadcasting (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2003). As a result, 72.3% of the population listen to the radio at least once a day (Thapisa & Megwa, 2002).

No community broadcasting licences have been issued as yet in Botswana, although this is provided for in the draft broadcasting policy.

**Figure 6: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Radio Stations**



Source: Author's personal research, 2006

Of the radio stations based in Botswana, only the two state broadcasters, RB1 and RB2, broadcast nationally. The two commercial stations, Gabz FM and Yarona FM, are only allowed to broadcast within a fairly small radius from Gaborone. However, there is a lot of overspill of radio signals, especially from South Africa, which allows for a wide audience for foreign radio stations. Motsweding FM broadcasts in Setswana, which is widely spoken in Botswana, while most others are in English or Afrikaans.

## 5.2 Investment and growth in the radio sector in the past five years

Except for the expected three additional national broadcasting licences promised by the NBB that might extend the radio broadcasting market, there has not been any growth in the radio sector in the past five years. It is also not clear what will happen to the two commercial licences, which are restricted to Gaborone and its surroundings, should their present holders be given national broadcasting licences.

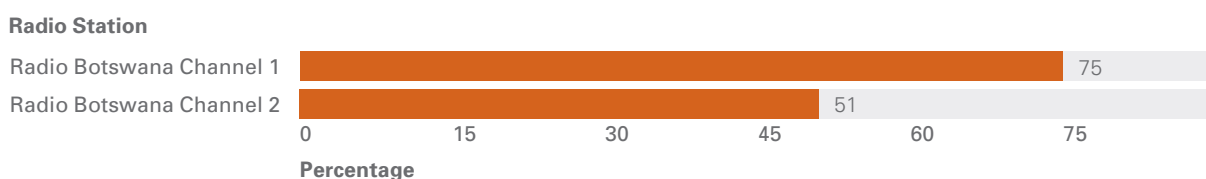
## 5.3 Plurality, ownership and control

The state owns and runs the two major radio stations while the two commercial stations are in the hands of local business interests and minority foreign shareholders. According to research from Thapisa and Megwa (2002), many people in Botswana do not favour government ownership of the media and comment negatively on the state-owned radio stations. They are especially critical of their lack of independence and see them as government mouthpieces, which affects their credibility. According to Thapisa and Megwa, this ties up with worldwide sentiment, especially in democratic systems, that the government has no business owning, operating and controlling the media. If it is to be in the media business, it must level the playing field and in some cases encourage and support the establishment of small, independent media.

## 5.4 Diversity

The largest documented and known audience share is for the state-owned RB1 and RB2 (see Figure 7). The management of Gabz FM claims a daily audience of 52,000. There are no figures for Yarona FM. According to Thapisa and Megwa (2002) the audience share in the regions for Gabz FM is 27.6% and 42.2% for Yarona FM. As indicated earlier, the two commercial radio stations can only broadcast to a limited area. Therefore, the state-owned radio stations have a captive audience because of the absence of any real competition.

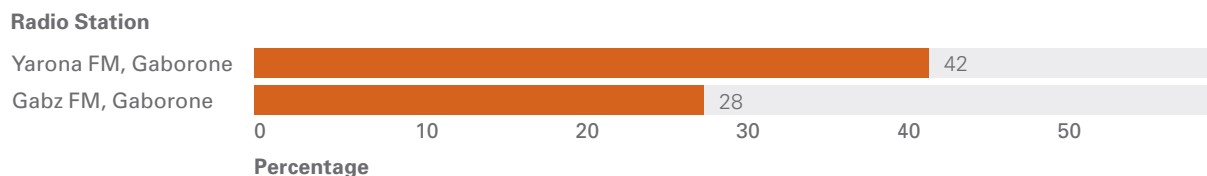
**Figure 7: Audience Share for Radio Stations Broadcasting Nationally**



Source: Thapisa & Megwa, 2002<sup>6</sup>

The audience share for the commercial radio stations is illustrated in Figure 8. Botswana does not have the diversity and plurality in radio stations that we see elsewhere in the region. This is made worse by the absence of community radio stations to cater for community and minority voices. Botswana are active radio listeners, with 90% listening to radio at least once a week (Thapisa & Megwa, 2002).

**Figure 8: Audience Share for Radio Stations Broadcasting Regionally**



Source: Thapisa & Megwa, 2002

## 5.5 Quality of radio output and programming

Although the quality of broadcasting in commercial radio stations was poor when they started broadcasting, both now have relatively more professional staff, whose talkshows and news bulletins have become increasingly popular. This is particularly the case for Gabz FM.

The best-trained broadcasters are in the government radio stations, the broadcasting signal of which covers the entire country. Its transmitters are situated so as to maximise national coverage both in the urban and rural areas, although not all rural areas can receive coverage. RB1 and RB2 broadcast on 90, 60, 49, and 41 metre bands and there is a good MW signal at night. The FM/VHT provides good-quality and reliable service throughout the country.

## 5.6 Specific challenges

The language of the media is largely English and Setswana. No minority languages are used in either television or radio. However, some of the privately-owned newspapers write some of their articles in Ikalanga.

The draft broadcasting policy has sought to represent the interests of a broad spectrum of the population and respective stakeholders in the media. A summary of the draft bill by the UITA Report for Botswana (1998) notes that the policy seeks to:

- ❑ develop and provide a diverse broadcasting system that serves the needs of the public's opinion, beliefs, views, interests and tastes;
- ❑ regulate broadcasting through an independent body;
- ❑ take into account new technological developments;
- ❑ promote freedom of expression and the participation of the public in decision-making, thus making it accountable to the public;
- ❑ reflect the full range of programmes from news to light entertainment;

<sup>6</sup> This is an average of listenership for rural and urban areas



- contribute to a “pluralistic broadcasting landscape” in which community broadcasting services can be on a non-profit basis;
- safeguard, reflect and enhance the identity, culture and character of Botswana by airing programmes that are reflective of Botswana culture in both quality and quantity;
- air programmes in languages that serve the needs of communities so that all people can participate in national discourse. However, this should not be at the expense of high professionalism based on a common code of ethics;
- ensure broadcasting contributes to economic growth while enhancing and enriching citizen empowerment; and,
- serve Botswana, in that the country should be a showcase by participating in the global broadcasting industry. To achieve this, programmes should have international appeal and the public should be involved in global broadcasting activities (UITA, 1998; Government of Botswana, 2006).

### Key findings

- There have been no new radio stations since 1999, when the two private commercial radio stations, Gabz FM and Yarona FM, both started broadcasting in Gaborone.
- Only three radio licences have been awarded, although there are four radio stations operating in the country. RB2 has not been formally licensed.
- There is no community broadcasting for radio and television.
- Commercial radio stations cover only a limited area and are not allowed to broadcast nationally.
- All radio stations in Botswana are based in Gaborone.
- State-owned radio stations have the largest audience share.



## 6. Television

### 6.1 Key changes and developments in the television marketplace in the past five years

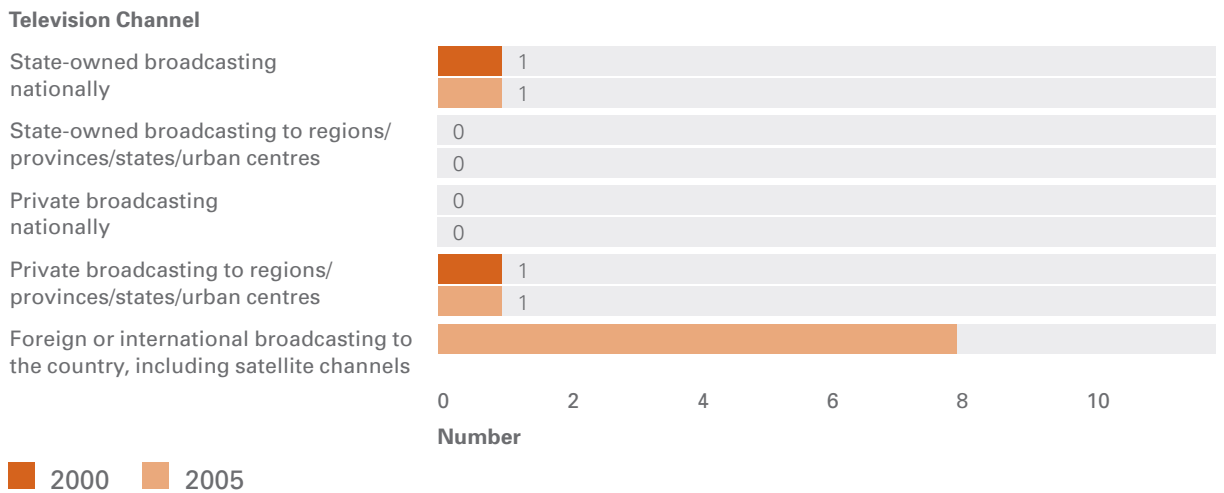
The only national television station in Botswana, Botswana Television (BTV), was established by an Act of Parliament in 1997. It was not until 31 July, 2000 that BTV was launched as a public-funded station under the then Department of Information and Broadcasting Services. According to the Botswanan government, the prime reason for establishing BTV was the need to reinforce Botswana's identity and to provide the country with its own news and current affairs coverage. It was also set up in recognition of the educational value of television and its power to promote national unity and prestige.

Besides BTV, there is the private Gaborone Broadcasting Corporation TV (GBC TV), which is based in Gaborone and broadcasts mainly to the capital city. GBC began as a local Gaborone station in the late 1980s and later included South African television broadcast in its programming. It teamed up with TV Africa to cover more sports and business programmes, but TV Africa pulled out when its South African financiers experienced cash flow problems.

Multichoice Botswana was the only satellite channel until March 2006 when the NBB awarded a broadcasting licence to a new organisation – Black Entertainment Satellite Television (BESTV). The researcher was unable to find any data about the cost of satellite services.

The researcher was unable to find any data about the total number of television viewers.

**Figure 9: Broadcasting and Ownership Status of Television Stations**



Source: UITA Report, 1998; Government of Botswana, 2001; Thapisa & Megwa, 2002

Young audiences were of primary concern for the government, as it was worried by the amount and nature of television products and services from outside. Therefore, the state-owned BTV has aimed to include young people in national development and carry them into the future. Television contributes to national development by showing achievements made by Batswana in economics, agriculture, culture and other socio-economic aspects. BTV's "motto" is to reflect Batswana back to themselves so they can see what others are doing to improve their living standards.

Originally conceived as a news and current affairs station, BTV expanded its mandate to include programmes of different genres demanded by the Batswana. It started with local, in-house magazine, sports, religion and children's programmes.

The only regional television station is the private GBC TV and there have been no new ones since it was established. The station was licensed in 2002 and its licence rights were extended to 15 years in 2005. GBC TV was bought by local businesspeople and went into partnership with MNet Africa, which has added African movie programmes to its schedule. The station has started broadcasting local news, though with limitations on pictures. It also carries South African broadcasting corporation soaps.

NBB awarded a new satellite company, Black Entertainment Satellite Television (BESTV), a broadcasting licence in March 2006. BESTV, which is not yet broadcasting, is expected to be based in Gaborone. It will operate as a pay-TV service aimed at the emerging black middle class.

## 6.2 Investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years

There has not been much investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years. No new stations came in, and advertising, which is itself limited, is mainly on BTV and the South African-based DSTV. Most of the advertising goes to radio or newspapers.

## 6.3 Plurality, ownership and control

Television in Botswana is dominated by BTV, with the audience share of 61.3% in 2002 (Thapisa & Megwa 2002). The other television stations are GBC TV and DSTV and the various music, news, sports and other satellite channels available through Multichoice Botswana. BESTV, which is expected to begin broadcasting shortly, will provide competition for Multichoice.

## 6.4 Diversity

BTV aims to give Botswana a medium through which they can participate in the government of their country. However, there is a need for a private commercial television station that will broadcast different views from those of the government. Although GBC TV is privately-owned, it broadcasts only to areas within a 50 kilometre radius of Gaborone.

Eighty-three per cent of people in Botswana are able to receive free-to-air television, which is mainly BTV (Botswana Up In The Air (UITA) Report, 1998). According to Thapisa and Megwa (2002), in 2000, 64.4% of the population watched television every day.

## 6.5 Quality of television output and programming

BTV has been widely criticised for relying too much on foreign programmes and has therefore stepped up its commissioning of local content.

## 6.6 Specific challenges

Unless government opens up television to the private sector, this sector will continue to be dominated by the state. The state monopoly has persuaded many Botswana to watch a lot of foreign stations, especially the South African SABC TV 1, 2 and 3. The absence of a vibrant Botswana television station needs to be addressed.

### Key findings

- There has not been much investment and growth in the television sector in the past five years. Although a new satellite station, BESTV, has been granted a licence, it is not yet operating.
- The state has a monopoly on television in Botswana.



# 7. Newspapers

## 7.1 Key changes and developments in the newspaper marketplace in the past five years

For almost 15 years after independence in 1966, the state-owned print media in Botswana operated virtually without challenge or competition. The only brief competition was posed by local newspapers *Linchwe* (based in Mochudi), *Mmegi Wa Dikgang* (in Serowe) and *Puisanyo*, all of which had folded by 1973. Even then, “all three exhibited loyalty and sympathy towards the government of the day as well as the absence of crystal clear, stable and easily discernible editorial policies” (Rantao, 1996, p. 8). Then in the 1980s and 1990s, five weeklies – *Mmegi*, *The Botswana Guardian*, *The Botswana Gazette*, *Midweek Sun* and *The Voice* – appeared to compete with the state-owned *Daily News*, which the government prints and distributes free of charge to the nation.

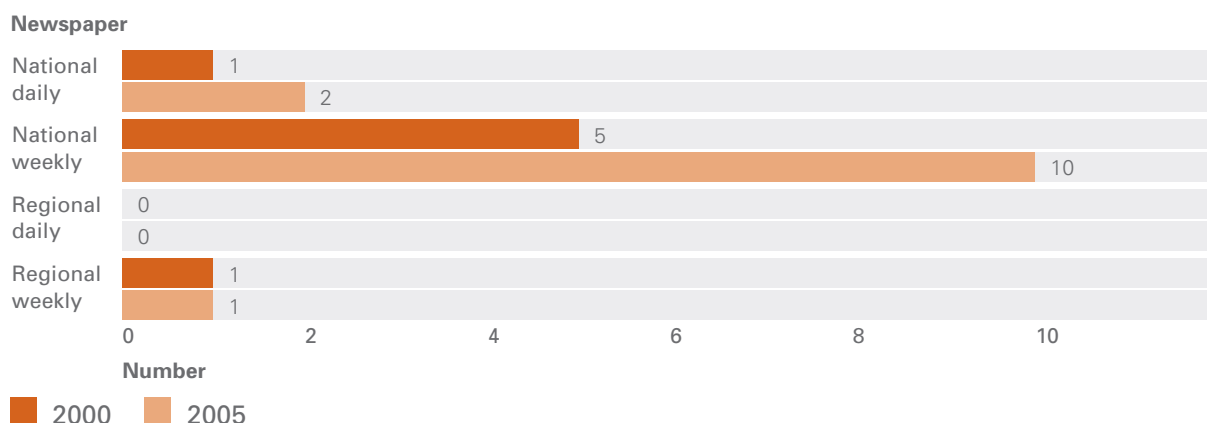
In the past five years, there has been a proliferation of new newspapers. However, there are still only two daily newspapers, the privately-owned *Mmegi* and the government-owned *Daily News*, in the country. The rest are all weeklies. This means that the Botswana print media is dominated by weekly newspapers of variable quality and focus.

The *Daily News*, which has the widest circulation, continues to be the country’s most important medium of information and communication, followed by radio. It is the only regular link connecting remote rural areas to the rest of the country free of charge.

There have been a limited number of largely unsuccessful attempts to start magazines. A few general interest magazines were started in the past five years, including *Dumela* (Hello) and *Flair*, but all folded after a year or two. Most of the surviving magazines are specialist ones covering business and finance, the environment, agriculture and mining.

Botswana has no local or community newspapers as all the papers are published as a national read.

**Figure 10: Total Number of Newspapers**

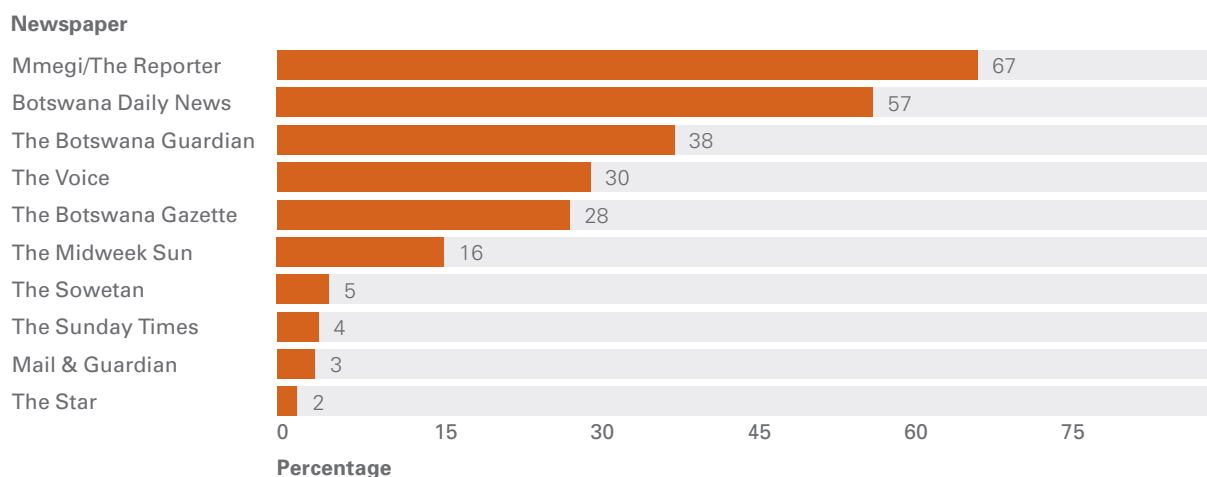


Source: Based on researcher’s own observations (counting newspapers seen on sale)

For the past few years, the five most read newspapers have been *Mmegi*, *Daily News*, *Botswana Guardian*, *The Voice* and the *Botswana Gazette* (Thapisa & Megwa, 2002). Apart from the state-owned *Daily News*, these papers are all privately-owned, and most of their revenue comes from newspaper sales and advertising. There has been a big outcry from the private newspapers over the fall in ad-spend by the Botswana government, which they accuse of putting more advertising in its own media outlets – especially the *Daily News*.

Only five newspapers out of 13 are audited by the Audited Bureau of Circulation for Southern Africa. This is a very reliable source of information on circulation figures in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and among other national African newspapers that have registered with this voluntary body. Most of the circulation figures contained in ABC reports can be relied on as accurate because they were independently audited under rigorous and internationally accepted standards and codes of practice (ABC 2005).

**Figure 11: Newspaper Readership**



Source: Thapisa & Megwa, 2002

In the past five years, there have been many new newspapers. *The Sunday Tribune* launched in April 2000 and *Monitor* started up in February 2000. *Mmegi* was turned from a weekly to a daily in October 2002, thus becoming Botswana's first private daily newspaper. Other newspapers founded in the past five years include *Echo*, *Mokgosi* (the only vernacular paper, which has since folded), *The Papparazi* and the *Sunday Standard*. Except for two newspapers, which were started in Francistown (*The Papparazi*) and Selibe Phikwe (*Mirror*), most of these newspapers were set up in Gaborone.

## 7.2 Investment and growth in the press in the past five years

According to Methaetsile Leepile<sup>7</sup>, a media consultant now working as the general manager at the CBET Publishing Company (the publishers of *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*), the advent of commercial radio stations was the most important development that added to the development of the media industry overall. He believes that radio and television were most important and that the media market share has since grown to about P150 million, of which about P80 million is probably print and the balance is spread between radio, TV and outdoor advertising. He added that outdoor advertising has also been very interesting and that, at the last count, they had about a P20 million stake in the market.

## 7.3 Plurality, ownership and control

Apart from the *Daily News*, all newspapers are privately-owned and are in the hands of a diverse collection of business interests.

<sup>7</sup> Information given in a personal interview with Methaetsile Leepile, a media consultant now working as the general manager at the CBET Publishing Company, June 21, 2006.

## 7.4 Diversity

Although a significant proportion of the people read newspapers as shown by Figure 11, most newspapers have been criticised for being elitist (partly because most of them are published in English), concentrating on urban issues and using the same sources for information. The *Daily News* and *Mmegi* carry Setswana inserts to cater for the non-English readers.

Except for the state-owned Botswana Press Agency, the country does not have any strong independent news agencies. One has been set up, but does not seem to be very active. The only other one that has been established and which focuses on long features, is *Front Page News*. There is also a lot of interest in South African newspapers. Out of the top ten most read newspapers, the bottom four are published from Johannesburg in South Africa (see Figure 11).

## 7.5 Quality of newspaper reporting

As stated in 7.4 above, newspapers are most often criticised for being elitist, concentrating on urban issues and tending to use the same sources for information.

## 7.6 Specific challenges

The private press have a tendency to report news mainly from urban areas and the elite in the society. This needs to change.

### Key Findings

- Most private newspapers serve elite and urban-based voices.
- Few news agencies operate in the country.
- Johannesburg-based newspapers are very popular in Botswana.
- Most of the newspapers are published in English.





## 8. Media Support

### 8.1 Key changes and developments in new media technologies in the past five years

Very little information is available in this area of media development in the country. As the IFEX Report referred to in 4.3 stated, there has been very little development in new media in Botswana. There is particularly little information on Internet access and use in the country – estimated at 60,000 (CIA, 2006) – although for mobile phones, there has been a lot of growth that has put the monopoly landline phone provider, Botswana Telecommunications Corporation under pressure.

### 8.2 Key changes in media support in the past five years

There is very little information available in this area.

### 8.3 Audience and readership research data

No institution in the country is doing this. However, the Audited Bureau of Circulation, South Africa, publishes newspaper readership measurement data bi-annually and mobile telephone companies, such as Orange and Mascom, occasionally publish mobile telephony data.

### 8.4 Media support, ISPs and ownership

Not much has been documented about this. According to the National Atlas of Botswana (Government of Botswana, 2001), 11% of the population had access to a fixed phone line, 35% of the population owned a mobile phone and there were only two mobile phone companies in 2000.

#### Key findings

- Little information is available about new media development.
- There is a need to step up audience and readership research capacity in Botswana.



## 9. NGO Activity

The NGO sector in Botswana is generally weak – especially in the media-related area. Very few NGOs are working in media development-related programmes and support.

### 9.1 Key changes and developments in NGO activity in the past five years

NGO activity in Botswana has been falling and has almost died out following the exodus of donors from the country after Botswana was declared a ‘middle-income’ country in the mid-1990s. The position adopted by most donors was that the Botswanan government now has enough money to support its NGOs.

### 9.2 Key NGOs involved in media development activities

Except for MISA, the Botswana Editors’ Forum and Women in the Media Association, the researcher is not aware of any other NGOs involved in media development activities.

### 9.3 Climate of opportunity for media development activities

There is a great deal of opportunity for media development activities given the wide inequalities that exist in the country in terms of income distribution, high unemployment and distribution of media outlets. There has been a noticeable growth in demand for most media products and services resulting from an expansion of the domestic market, especially in urban areas, and the international improvement in information communication technologies.

#### Key findings

- The NGO sector in Botswana is generally weak.
- Very little information is available on NGOs involved in media development initiatives.



## 10. Conclusions

For almost 15 years after independence in 1966, the state media in Botswana operated virtually without challenge or competition. The expansion of the mass media in Botswana in recent years can be attributed to the country's booming mineral-led economy, the country's political stability, with one party (the Botswana Democratic Party) ruling for 40 years and the government's policy of making information freely available to its population. There has been a noticeable growth in the effective demand for most media products and services resulting from an expansion of the domestic market and the international improvement in technology – especially in information communication technologies.

Botswana is currently a buyer of information services from other nations – especially for BTV, through the Internet and through satellite television channels. The country's political leadership has committed itself to enter the information age on an equal footing with other nations. According to the new ICT national policy, the country aspires to acquire the best available information and technology and become a regional leader in the production and dissemination of information. Community capacity in TV, radio and electronic media will be advanced. According to the long-term vision for Botswana "... each school will have access to computers or to computer-based communication, for example, the Internet" (Presidential Taskforce for a Long-Term Vision for Botswana, 1997).

The independent press in Botswana, which depends mainly on advertising revenue from the government and the rest of the private sector for survival, has remained small and financially weak, leaving the government to dominate the broadcasting sector in particular.

The fact that there is only one school of journalism also means that training journalists in Botswana is a challenge, which might account for the poor standards and the stunted growth of a vibrant, quality and dependable commercial print and electronic media. This has also affected the presence of local content in the print and electronic media – leaving the field open to South African and other foreign media products.

In general, the Botswana media sector has a short history, and has remained small because of: the country's small population; easy and wide penetration of the South African media; and, the financially weak status of the independent media – which, over the years, the government has not viewed as a viable industry capable of producing jobs and generating exports. Some of the above-mentioned reasons explain why there have been regular closures of newspapers in Botswana over the years. These have included newspapers such as *The Examiner*, *Morongwa/The Messenger* and, more recently, *Mokgosi* – the only newspaper in the Setswana vernacular in modern Botswana, which was widely seen as a cultural and informative icon.

The private media sector is dominated by weekly newspapers. There are only two dailies, one of which is privately-owned. The other, which is free, is state-owned and is bigger and more widely circulated. The broadcasting media in Botswana is under the tight grip of the government, and the privately-owned commercial radio stations are restricted in geographic reach to Greater Gaborone.



# 11. Appendices

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## Appendix 2: Individuals/organisations consulted during the research

- Marriane Nganunu, Permanent Secretary; Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Gaborone
- Owen Rampha, Programmes Manager, Yarona FM



# Botswana

## Country Report

### Way Forward





## 12. Introduction

Interviewees were selected for the research on their knowledge of and hands-on dealings with media development issues in Botswana, and on the basis of their gender (to ensure diversity of opinions). Although a lot of effort was put into getting the views of people involved with media networks or media lobbying groups, government ministers, Members of Parliament or senior members of quasi-government bodies such as broadcast and press regulatory bodies, this proved very difficult, which is why the researchers finally interviewed 12 rather than the 15 interviewees originally intended. Of these 12 people, three were women who hold very senior decision-making positions in government media organisations and the private media.

Most of the interviewees readily agreed to be interviewed and did not object to being recorded on audio tape. One senior civil servant with responsibility for the media refused to have the interview attributed directly to her by name, but was very cooperative throughout the interview. Most of the interviewees were impressed with the depth and intended geographic reach of the research project.

Since highly informed and credible interviewees are busy people – with some of them agreeing to be interviewed but having to cancel or postpone the interview appointment due to other commitments – the fieldwork took longer than expected, with the first (pilot) interview done on 21 March 2006, and the last interview conducted on 21 June 2006.

All the interviews except two were done in Botswana's capital, Gaborone. One interview was conducted in a town 200 kilometres from Gaborone, and another was done 60 kilometres from the capital.



# 13. Media Development: an organisational perspective

## 13.1 Key organisations

Interviewees selected for this research project were: a senior personnel member from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) involved in training journalists; a senior NGO personnel member involved in implementing organisational changes/influencing regulatory frameworks; a senior civil servant with responsibility for the media; a senior civil servant with responsibility for legislative frameworks supporting media structure; three senior practitioners from the private sector; two media entrepreneurs (one of whom has an interest in setting up faith-based media organisations and community radio and television stations, and the other is a co-director in an advertising agency); two practitioners responsible for training journalists and media practitioners; and an analyst/writer who is an expert on media law and human rights issues.

The key organisations approached during the study were chosen because of their interest and direct involvement in media development activities/projects or initiatives. Most of these actually regard the latter as their core business and mission. They include the Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), where the most senior official in the organisation was interviewed; NGOs involved in training journalists and advocacy work, such as the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA); and the Media Studies Department of the University of Botswana, where both the department head and a lecturer were interviewed.

Also interviewed were senior civil servants with responsibility for the media, specifically policy development and legislative frameworks supporting the country's media in the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology; and senior executives and practitioners from the print and electronic private media sector. Media entrepreneurs – one of whom is planning to set up a faith-based media organisation, community radio and television stations – were also approached for interviews. This faith-based media entrepreneur also heads and spoke on behalf of the Exporters' Association of Botswana. The other media entrepreneur we spoke to is a young woman co-director of a relatively new advertising agency called The Dialogue Group. The analyst/writer interviewed is also a senior law lecturer at the University of Botswana, and expert on media law and human rights issues.

## 13.2 Impact of media development initiatives

All the interviewees agreed that there have been significant changes in the Botswanan media in the past five years and the changes they noted included:

- i) the recent proliferation of newspapers in the country and the freeing of the airwaves by the Botswanan government – which led to the setting up of the only two commercial radio stations;
- ii) quality of content and reportage in various media;
- iii) changes in the legislative and regulatory framework prevailing in the country;
- iv) the opening up of more training opportunities and professional development of journalists, especially following the establishment of the first and only journalism school in the form of the Media Studies Department in the Humanities Faculty of the University of Botswana (prior to this, most journalists in the country were trained abroad, mainly in Australia, the UK, Canada, the US, South Africa and various other African countries. Several NGOs in the country are now also involved in the mentoring and training of journalists and media workers at various levels);
- v) developments in the areas of increased self-regulation, establishment of media pressure groups and commitment to professionalism in the media – particularly following the establishment of the Press Council of Botswana, the Media Advisory Council and the Botswana Editors’ Forum; and,
- vi) the decision by government to commercialise the government-owned Daily News and other government media outlets.

In the eyes of Norma Moremong, Co-Managing Director of The Dialogue Group, based in Gaborone, the proliferation of newspapers in the country has had a negative impact on the further development of the media in the country because, according to her,

*“ ... some are not commercially viable anymore. We have a lot of papers and a lot of similar stories, because there is not much variety. Even from an advertising perspective, you are spreading yourself too thin. If there were fewer publications, we’d know the impact our adverts were making. We used to have five main papers and that was it... even the quality of the editorial, has... become worse. People have become more sensational because they are trying to sell their paper. Many more are trying to be outrageous. Whereas before we knew the Midweek Sun or Gazette were trying to be outrageous, now there are so many players in the field, so everyone just goes overboard in their editorial content and expects it to sell... ”*

(Norma Moremong, Co-Managing Director; Media Entrepreneur: The Dialogue Group, Gaborone, Botswana)

Although he admitted that because he is relatively new to his position he could not comment authoritatively on how media developments in Botswana have affected civil society and its various sections, for Baboloki Tlale, the Executive Secretary of the Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), content development in different media organisations and analysis of how the content is affecting various media audiences should form part of media development initiatives in Botswana. He said:

*“ Only last week, the Mmegi newspaper was interviewing me about what improvements I feel they could make to their newspaper. So I guess they are continuously busy looking at training and curriculum development as significant development areas of improvement. I get a feeling that it is the area of quality where a lot of our media is lacking – quality reporting, investigative journalism and also a strategic focus on certain important issues in the country. I have talked to some of them about their reporting with the focus on things like the Millennium Development Goals, which I felt they are not doing enough of. ”*

(**Baboloki Tlale**, Executive Secretary; NGO: Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), Gaborone, Botswana)

For Professor David Kerr, who heads the Media Studies Department of the University of Botswana, the legislative and regulatory frameworks prevailing in the country provide an entry point in understanding recent media development activities in the country. He also cites training and curriculum development issues he has to deal with on a daily basis since the establishment of the Media Studies Department. He also pointed to the role NGOs are playing in media development.

*“ I think one of the interesting things here is the initiative of some of the NGO training organisations, such as SAMDEF [Southern Africa Media Development Fund], SAIMED [Southern Africa Institute for Media Entrepreneurship Development] and others. These are initiatives that would help promote media development in the country even further. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

In relation to content development, the Media Studies Department of the University of Botswana plans to introduce short courses for practising and untrained journalists,

*“ ... because from all the research that we’ve done as a department, talking to the editors, and the station managers and so on and the media houses, what we are getting as feedback is that the biggest need is for short courses to upgrade their staff. We haven’t done any short courses ourselves as a department, but we have provided skills to SAIMED for the short courses they run. One of the things we’re trying to do in our strategic planning is to look at a way in which we could have short, maybe modular courses so that if people did enough of these courses, it would build up and they could perhaps get a certificate at the end. But we would like to work closely with other training institutions in the country to make sure that we’re not treading on people’s toes. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

The Executive Director of the Botswana Exporters' Association, Loago Raditedu, who is also planning to set up a faith-based media organisation, recalled positively that when Botswana had an outspoken Minister of Communications, Science and Technology, Boyce Sebetlela, he was able to get involved as a commentator in radio talk shows and in the rest of the Botswana media. Raditedu recalls much less positively the government's decision at one point to ban government advertising in two local privately-owned newspapers, the *Botswana Guardian* and the *Midweek Sun*. Raditedu believes that the formation of various media pressure groups caused the government to regret this decision. He regards the advertising ban as one of the most retrogressive developments in the Botswana media in recent years.

Letshwiti Tutwane, a lecturer in the Media Studies Department of the University of Botswana, stated that:

*“ The media sector in Botswana is not as robust as in other places, so the founding of the Botswana Editors' Forum was a good development and [there are] also some activities which are done by MISA [Media Institute for Southern Africa] ”*

He said MISA was at the heart of many media development projects in the country.

*“ For instance, the establishment of the Press Council of Botswana [was driven] by MISA... and from time to time it still helps the Press Council with funds. The Press Council has been useful in furthering ... journalism in this country and also the enhancement of democracy, because members of the public have taken it seriously. They bring their complaints to the [Complaints Committee of the] Press Council and they are attended to, even though so far there hasn't been a finding in favour of members of the public, which might discourage some people. They may think the Council is more inclined to favour the media. But it could be just my speculation. I am not privy to the cases and the material that was brought before the Press Council and [cannot] apply my mind judiciously to it and see as to whether I agree with the findings. But I would say on the whole it is a good development. ”*

(**Letshwiti Tutwane**, Lecturer, Media Studies Department; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

The emergence of many more new newspapers was cited as important by Baboloki Tlale, who felt that there were too few print titles previously. But he also pointed to the collapse of several magazine and newspaper titles soon after they were set up. These include the only vernacular-language newspaper *Mokgosi*, the *Morongwa* newspaper and *Flair* magazine, among others. However, other recently-launched media outlets have survived:

*“ I know that there were also some small publications that came up. We also saw the emergence of independent radio stations – Gabz FM and Yarona FM – which fall in that area. ”*

(**Baboloki Tlale**, Executive Secretary; NGO: Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), Gaborone, Botswana)

Owen Rampha said he was impressed by some major developments within various media houses, including Yarona FM, the commercial radio station where he works as Programmes Manager and which he says has seen major developments in relation to growth and change of attitudes to the station (which targets mainly the youth).

*“ The growth has been impressive and the change in the attitudes of consumers of our product. I’ve seen us move from an educative position, you know, to educate people about our product... an institution like ours has moved from that to being accepted as another media outlet for information dissemination and for commercial purposes... In the print sector, I think a specific example one can give was, is the Mokgosi newspaper. I mean to see people come together and deliver a commercial indigenous-language newspaper, that was impressive stuff... It was a sad thing for the paper to finally shut down, but I think that was a very good initiative from the different quarters that came together. As young people we tend to read, to be more comfortable reading, English, and yet we were coming across stories we’d expect in all other newspapers, in Mokgosi, and I would read it sometimes and I would learn a couple of new words. ”*

(**Owen Rampha**, Programme Manager; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: Yarona FM radio station, Gaborone, Botswana)

The important contribution of radio to media development in Botswana was also cited by Methaetsile Leepile:

*“ I think the advent of commercial radio stations was the most important development that I think added to the development of the media industry overall. ”*

Mr Leepile also pointed to the importance of growth in adspend:

*“ Radio and television were most important and the national media market share has since grown to about P150 million of which about P80 million is probably print and then the balance is spread between radio, TV and outdoor advertising. I should add that outdoor has also been very interesting. At the last count it was about P20 million. ”*

(**Methaetsile Leepile**, General Manager; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: CBET Publishing Company, Botswana)

For another media practitioner (this one in the print media sector), Mike Mothibi, most notable developments in the Botswana media can be attributed to higher levels of professionalism.

*“ The level of professionalism has improved over the years. Previously what would pass for news would basically be an individual opinion. We are not seeing a lot of that at the moment. I can speak for the Guardian, that over the past five years we have not had a large number of libel cases, as was previously the case, and to me this points to improved ways of doing things... I would like to also note that this type of development has been happening because of the enhanced training that we have been receiving through NGOs and other supporting institutions. ”*

(**Mike Mothibi**, Editor; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: Botswana Guardian Newspaper and Chairman, Botswana Editors’ Forum, Botswana)

In Letshwiti Tutwane's view, the formation of the Botswana Editors' Forum and the Press Council of Botswana have been very important developments. He said the former gave editors a platform from which to talk with one another and discuss issues of concern emanating from their places of work, and issues raised by the end-users of media messages, such as government, business people, politicians and members of the public.

*“ I think it was an important development because if you look at other countries, you find that such things have been in place for a very long time and we were lagging behind. So it was a step in the right direction. ”*

(**Letshwiti Tutwane**, Lecturer, Media Studies Department; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

### 13.2.1 Strategic changes within the interviewee's own area of work

Interviewees expressed various views on the impact of media development initiatives on the media sector and on their own area of work. For example, from Norma Moremong's perspective in the advertising sector, there are now many more players in the field. She said,

*“ ... from an advertising perspective, you've got all these... well, I call them mediums, but I mean you've got a lot more newspapers out there, serious over-saturation. There are now too many of them. This was made worse after the Daily News went commercial, and also RB2 [a commercial channel at Radio Botswana] has become a serious commercial station and competitor. ”*

(**Norma Moremong**, Co-Managing Director; Media Entrepreneur: The Dialogue Group, Gaborone, Botswana)

For Professor Kerr, the greatest impact has been felt in the relationship between the private media and the government, following government attempts to control the private media. He thinks it was important that there was resistance to such controls, with the battle being won against the Mass Communications Bill of 1997 that had been tabled by the government. This resistance was furthered by the private media when two newspapers, the *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*, took the government to the High Court. The papers were successful, preventing the government from banning state advertising in the two newspapers – a ban imposed because the papers were considered too critical of government.

Loago Raditedu became involved in the media sector through his dream of starting up a community radio station, which is already registered under the name Restora FM. He also plans a television station, to be called Transformation Channel, and was responsible for the *Morongwa* newspaper, now defunct. Before that, through his role in the Exporters' Association, he had a 30-minute radio slot on Radio Botswana called *Lentswe la Mogwebi* (The Voice of Business) and he was also personally involved with the media as a preacher and through the Church Radio Council. His organisation is also a member of the newly-formed Botswana Film Producers' Association, which it joined because of the planned Transformation Channel, which is involved in film production and plans to develop into a television station. Through this work, Raditedu believes he and his organisation have been influential in the consultative process during the drafting of a broadcasting policy through the National Broadcasting Board for Botswana. He said the community radio station will also be a critical media development initiative as it will constitute part of the media development infrastructure at community level.

In the NGO sector in Botswana, the executive secretary of BOCONGO, Baboloki Tlale, said he hoped the greatest impact of the latest media development initiatives in the country would be felt in the area of quality reporting and investigative journalism since that is where a lot of the country's media outlets are lacking. He said they should take up developmental journalism by focusing on issues such as the Millennium Development Goals, which he felt they were not yet doing to a great enough extent.

Letshwiti Tutwane, media studies lecturer at the University of Botswana, who has also been instrumental in setting up the Botswana Media Workers' Union, where he is Interim Chairman, said that media workers' latest efforts to unionise have also had an impact in his area of work and interest.

*“ Even though it is not as vibrant as I would want there are still some teething problems it is an important development because the media cannot bargain for other people if they themselves are not well organised. ”*

(**Letshwiti Tutwane**, Lecturer, Media Studies Department; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

Tutwane also said the set-up of the Press Council of Botswana, with the help of the local chapter of MISA, was proving instrumental in the further development of the practice of journalism in the country and also the enhancement of democracy, because members of the public have taken the Council seriously by bringing their complaints to it.

The establishment of the Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana was also a very important development, said Letshwiti Tutwane. Before that, he said, the country was losing a lot of money sending journalists outside the country for training. Also, he said, when you send people for training elsewhere, they lose the contextual touch because all the examples and the curriculum are based on a foreign environment.

*“ For instance, if you look at the textbooks we are using even here in the Department of Media Studies, you find that all of them come from outside the country and you have to struggle to customise examples in those books. The content is not meant for the local context so it is a great challenge. The department is expected to teach [journalism] from a local point of view and to bring in local journalists who can also explain things in a way that is relevant and meaningful to the practitioners we are training. ”*

(**Letshwiti Tutwane**, Lecturer, Media Studies Department; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

Professor Kerr said that the impact of the Media Studies Department at the University of Botswana would hopefully be felt even more strongly in the future because of the department's current process of strategic planning.

*“ The most important development for us is our attempt to try and make our department more professional. We are a teaching institution and the University of Botswana has got very traditional practices about courses and how they are developed and assessed, and about recruitment of staff, and so on, and much of what our strategic planning is about and also our day-to-day struggles with administration are about ways in which we can try and make the department more professional. In particular, by establishing our own radio station on campus so that our radio students can have hands-on experience of actually running a station. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)



The department is also planning to develop a newspaper on campus and eventually, a television station, even though that is a long way off. The department has applied for a community radio licence, although all the community licences have been put on hold until the National Broadcasting Board (NBB) comes up with a policy. The NBB is working out a policy with the government and it is hoped that later this year the policy will be in place and the NBB will start issuing licences.

*“ We are dependent on getting a licence, but if we can do that we’ve got some promises of help from the US Embassy to provide us with a transmitter and we’ve already got most of the other things that we need, like a studio. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies, Academic, University of Botswana, Botswana)

Media entrepreneur Loago Raditedu of the Restora FM project and the Exporter’s Association of Botswana also said that the formation of media pressure groups, such as the Media Advisory Council, MISA, the Botswana Editors’ Forum and others, have been effective in causing the government to go back on various decisions, such as banning government advertising in the *Botswana Guardian* and *Midweek Sun*.

Tachilisa Balule, law lecturer at the University of Botswana and closely involved with media law and human rights issues, said Botswana has quite an enabling liberal democratic environment, which, for the print media in particular, does not impose restrictions, such as on the registration of newspapers, which can be found in parts of Africa. But, he added, even the liberal political environment has not stopped the government from passing a number of defamation laws and other pieces of legislation that restrict media operations and, he believes, cannot be justified in a democracy. According to Balule, some of these laws – the National Security Act, in particular – stifle the sources of information necessary for the smooth operation of the media. He stated further that some of the laws are rarely used and are just in the statute books in order to scare the media.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Marriane Nganunu, sees the establishment of Botswana Television (BTV) as the most significant development in the media sector in recent years, although she says it is still limping behind in the area of quality programming. She says this must be improved before the country can be proud of the programming from BTV. She sees training in the media sector – especially in the electronic media sector – as vital. She applauded the media development initiatives provided through the Ministry of Education by way of in-service or on-the-job-training. She said that her Ministry and the Department of Broadcasting Services have benefited greatly from the three-year, in-service programme to develop skills for all professionals in television and radio with the assistance of the Swedish radio and television service personnel, who provide on-the-job training.

Nganunu said another important development was the fact that the government has consulted widely during the drafting of what is turning out to be a positive Broadcasting Policy. She said the new policy, which was drafted after the appointment of the National Broadcasting Board, is commendable in that it provides for all types of electronic media — public, commercial and community broadcasting services. These developments, according to Nganunu, have taken place against the backdrop of a progressive media law that is still being drafted, with the principles for the law finalised in close consultation with the country's media.

*“ At the end, we will have a broadcasting policy which gives further details that will enable us to implement the Broadcasting Act, because even in the Act we talk about the state broadcaster, the commercial and community broadcaster. We implemented the state and the commercial broadcasting clauses provided for in the law. But with the community ones, we didn't implement it because we felt that we needed the policy in order to ensure that once the policy is there, that will open up the opportunities for media development. ”*

(**Marriane Nganunu**, Permanent Secretary, Government, Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Botswana)

Therefore, both Marianne Nganunu and Tachilisa Balule agree that the most significant developments overall in the Botswana media sector have been in the areas of legislation, policy and regulation.

Meanwhile, the senior official in the state-run Information Services Department said that the *Mmegi* newspaper becoming a daily paper marked a significant development, as until then the country did not have a privately-owned daily newspaper. She also said the separation of the two departments – of Information Services (responsible for the state print media) and Broadcasting Services (responsible for the electronic state media) — was a positive development for the media sector.



# 14. Media Development Initiatives

## 14.1 Review

Only two interviewees (NGO representative Modise Maphanyane and Professor Kerr) were able to refer to any media development projects or initiatives in which their respective organisations are involved, and which can be reviewed under this section.

Modise Maphanyane, the MISA Botswana national director, has some responsibility for allocation of funds to media development activities, while Professor Kerr at University of Botswana Media Studies does not.

After stating that the shortage of research is one challenge facing the media sector in Botswana, especially in the areas of audience research, systematic analysis of programming and analysis of newspaper content in terms of gender, ethnic language and region, Professor Kerr outlined his department's work in this area for a Radio Botswana drama series called *Makgabaneng*.

He said his department has collaborated with *Makgabaneng* to do a large survey that demonstrated the application of audience research techniques. This is an area where Professor Kerr sees his department playing a role in the future in terms of media development initiatives;

*“ But we are not ready for it yet because we're just surviving, trying to do the teaching, but I am sure it will happen as our research capacity increases. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

Modise Maphanyane of MISA Botswana said his organisation has been involved with a number of media development initiatives. For example, it was behind the idea of having a Media Studies Department at the University of Botswana. He also stated that MISA has been heavily involved in influencing the formulation and adoption of the various laws that relate to the media in Botswana.

*“ We were part and parcel of the rejection of the Mass Media Bill [and] the creation of an enabling media development environment through legislation, including assisting with the ongoing process of drawing up principles to guide the crafting of the Media Law. We were central to the formation of the Press Council of Botswana. We were also central to the formation of the National Broadcasting Board. So these are issues in which MISA has fought [for] nearly every element of their development. ”*

Modise Maphanyane added;

*“ We are continuing to interact with the government to improve the training that has been given in the media, and to see how best those that have been trained from other institutions can be absorbed in [various media service] industries. We are in the process of getting the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology to do research in the marketing/advertising industry and see how it impacts on the media. There is this big hullabaloo about the commercialisation of the Daily News, so we want the government to help do a study that will really bring out issues that are of value to advertising and the media industry in this country and how it impacts on the players in the industry. ”*

(**Modise Maphanyane**, National Director; NGO: Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), Botswana)

#### **14.1.1 Approaches to media development**

As for the overarching objectives of the above-mentioned initiatives, Modise Maphanyane cited the objective of people-centred and transparent democracy to enable citizens to judge the value of the powers that be. He said democracy balances the power of those in authority with the power of the people they are serving.

Professor Kerr said he sees his department's role as providing media research capacity that can benefit the development of the media and, by extension, the country as a whole.

#### **14.1.2 Funding of media development**

Commenting on the funding that MISA Botswana disburses, Modise Maphanyane said his NGO, like others in the media sector, suffers funding difficulties. The little funding MISA is responsible for is primarily directed towards media training workshops and hosting public debates on issues that MISA thinks are of interest to the nation. He said that when MISA Botswana receives its external funding, around 60% of it goes into media development and 40% into administration and overheads. He said the proportion of the funding going into administration costs is increasing slightly because of the cost of utilities in the country and because of rising staffing costs. He said MISA is always getting more and more staff to ensure it lives up to the intended goals and objectives of its media development projects. Modise Maphanyane would like to see a greater proportion of the funding available to MISA Botswana going into research on democracy and media development in general, as well as into public education on issues of national interest – through funding programmes on radio or in media that deal specifically with developmental issues.

## 14.2 Success and impact

### 14.2.1 Evaluating the success of media development projects

Of the 12 interviewees, only two — MISA Botswana's Modise Maphanyane and University of Botswana's Professor Kerr — could report that they have evaluated some of the projects they have undertaken in the past.

Modise Maphanyane said MISA Botswana first decided to place its projects into four categories:

- i) those that deal with media freedom and citizens' right to know;
- ii) those on media monitoring and alerts;
- iii) those dealing with broadcasting diversity and the opening of the airwaves; and,
- iv) those that deal with supporting elements needed to create an enabling environment, including training, media awards, media law/policy development and legal defence. He said the latter has been especially successful, although the success has been somewhat limited by poor funding.

Some of the projects MISA Botswana has evaluated on a year-to-year basis are those connected to its ongoing work on the reform of media laws in the country, including laws connected to freedom of expression and free access to information. Evaluation methods MISA Botswana uses include looking at progress on the reform of the legislation, and other indicators of whether or not the country's democracy is becoming entrenched. Another evaluation method used regularly in the past ten or so years has been the publication of an annual report, entitled *So This is Democracy?* This report published is through the MISA regional head office in Windhoek every year around World Press Freedom Day to gauge the level of media freedom and democracy in the region. The other method used by MISA to measure success is checking the progress made by the organisation in pushing forward the various core business areas it has chosen to focus on, as mentioned above. For instance, the number of lawsuits its members face can be used as an indicator of the quality of news coverage and/or of the "chilling" environment created by the country's prevailing libel laws. MISA Botswana also uses external consultants to evaluate its work regularly.

MISA also does evaluations and assessments at the beginning when it mounts projects, to assess the possible impact of the projects on the society.

*“ We look at developments as an organisation to see what new voices are [being created] and whether those voices make sense to people. I can tell you a number of people... challenge me just to assess the level of freedom of expression and opinion in the country. They see these as issues of national interest because they believe MISA has something to offer. So that is another gauge that gives us an idea of how well we are doing. The progress we are making can also be directly seen from the institutions we helped to establish – look at the Media Studies Department of the University of Botswana and the Press Council of Botswana. These are things we got off the ground and they are tangible examples of measurable achievements we have managed to complete. ”*

(**Modise Maphanyane**, National Director; NGO: Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), Botswana)

Professor Kerr said the only evaluation of projects he had been involved with was the one his Media Studies Department did for the *Makgabaneng* radio drama project, which is broadcast by the state-owned, state-run Radio Botswana.

#### 14.2.2 Factors contributing to/undermining the success of media development projects.

In terms of the main factors influencing the success or failure of media development initiatives, for MISA Botswana it is funding and an enabling legislative environment that seem to be the main factors. A key barrier to the success of efforts and initiatives by MISA Botswana is the absence of professional indemnity or insurance – particularly against libel – among media outlets.

The projects/initiatives/activities rated as successful or as having great potential for success are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Factors Contributing to the Success of Media Development Projects**

Project/Initiative	Factors for Success	Category of Interviewees
Influencing media legislation and regulatory framework	Media freedom, the right to know of citizens	NGO
<i>So This is Democracy?</i> publication	Media monitoring and alerts reaching various regional, international freedom of expression monitoring pressure groups	NGO
Influencing media legislation and regulatory framework	Broadcasting diversity, the opening of airwaves to ensure the existence of a pluralistic media in the country	NGO
Media awards, facilitating the establishment of various pressure and self-regulatory groups, arranging media training courses	Supporting elements for creating an enabling environment for media development	NGO
Media research and monitoring	National radio drama programmes	Academic
Training, teaching	Human resource development, increased professionalism in the media	Academic
Setting up the journalism school at the University of Botswana, newspapers, radio and TV stations	Human resource development, increased professionalism in the media, provision of more media outlets to university community and surrounding areas	Academic
Establishment of Press Council of Botswana	Self-regulatory media structure which negates the need for harsh state legislation	NGO; Academic
Establishment of the private daily newspaper	More competition and pluralistic daily news output	Senior government officials

**Table 2: Factors Undermining the Success of Media Development Projects**

Project/initiative	Reason for Lack of Success	Category of interviewees
Collapse of <i>Mkgosi</i> vernacular newspaper	Commercialisation of the <i>Daily News</i> and other state-owned media outlets	NGO
Media legislation and regulatory policies	Draconian or media legislation and regulatory framework, which has a negative impact on media development	Media activist, NGO
Professional indemnity or insurance of media workers	Absence of political will and insurance company or investors interest in setting up professional insurance policies for journalists and other media workers	NGO
MISA Botswana ICT resource centre	Under-capitalised and under-utilised by stakeholders, especially media workers in the country	NGO

### 14.3 Lessons learned

Clear lessons have been learned from the MISA Botswana media development initiatives. For instance, the NGO has found that engaging government in dialogue is a critical factor that greatly contributes to the success of its projects. The MISA Botswana Director stated that this dialogue has allowed the NGO and the government to move from an antagonistic relationship to one of mutual consultation and interaction.

Also, for MISA Botswana, some of the campaign activities it has mounted for media development projects have been successful because of the support it got from donor agencies and funding organisations to ensure the projects went ahead, in particular the campaign around the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on a Free and Pluralistic Press in particular. Other factors found by MISA to be critical in shaping developments are: forging strong partnerships with academics and other organisations; the perceived neutrality of the organisation; and, the involvement of the public in various activities.

All the interviewees who answered this part of the research said it was important to set measurable objectives and design projects that are sustainable. Measurable objectives are useful in demonstrating the quality of the project and the need for its continued existence. Some interviewees felt that their various projects were not yet mature enough for their success to be measured. Many projects cited were still at the drawing-board stage, while others were being developed in cooperation with other partners who had initiated them.

### 14.3.1 The importance of the cultural context in planning and designing initiatives

In terms of the importance of addressing other factors, such as the cultural context, in planning and designing initiatives in Africa, Professor Kerr, said:

*“ In a country like Botswana, where you have such strong oral traditions, the media have to think very carefully about how they relate to that particular culture because one of the biggest criticisms that media receive is that they – particularly the radio and television mediums – ignore the indigenous local culture. They tend to just absorb... let’s say Western types of programming. Obviously, with radio one does quite a bit to try and cultivate local culture to some extent, but not much with the others. [You might even] think that part of the mandate of commercial radio stations is actually to ignore [indigenous local culture]. They cultivate a young, fairly youthful, or semi-mature audience, who will be Westernised, so they can have their adverts geared to them. This is an area that needs more research...In addition, there are ways in which all methods of communication can be integrated with the media in terms of specific projects – development projects and communication strategies. We’ve talked about Makgabaneng, HIV and AIDS, but it also applies to so many other [areas]: agriculture, literacy and other health issues apart from HIV/AIDS. Communication strategies need to be developed, which aren’t just focused on the media themselves...Donor communities could link with cultural organisations like dance troupes, drama groups, radio listenership groups and so on, who would be the focus of change strategies for development purposes... a lot needs to be done there, particularly in Botswana and in other countries in the region as well. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)





# 15. Developing the Environment for Success

## 15.1 Key factors

The key factors identified as important for the success of media development were a financially and economically healthy and secure country; an enabling political environment; and a favourable legislative and regulatory framework for the media. Most interviewees also said that the fact that the country has a long liberal democratic tradition was favourable to media development.

One senior government official working in the media sector said it was important that the Botswana state/public media, in particular, are well-resourced financially and in terms of infrastructure.

Developing a robust, sustainable media with a good foundation also depends on the skills and experience of the people in the industry. This was thought to be an especially critical issue given the youthfulness of the Botswanan media; the first national television station was set up in 2000, so the most experienced person at the station has just six years' experience. Therefore, appropriate pre- and in-service media training is critical, as it leads to higher professional standards.

Another interviewee, a senior government official working in the media sector, saw the equal sharing of the advertising cake as an important factor. One media practitioner said that the small size of Botswana's population is a critical factor, as it means it will always be difficult to develop a commercially viable media. This interviewee therefore thinks more regional cooperation initiatives and institutions are needed.

A constructive attitude from politicians and government officials towards the media was seen by one interviewee in the NGO sector as critical for success, even in the private sector, because sometimes the valuable work of journalists is not recognised or understood.

## 15.2 Political and economic influences on success of media development

The following arguments were given to demonstrate why the political and economic situation prevailing in a country should be taken into account.

- A financially and economically secure environment is critical, because if there is less money to spend, there will be budget cuts causing advertising agencies and media houses to lose the revenue vital for their survival. Linked to this, one must take into account the fact that the government is a significant contributor as an advertising customer in Botswana. Financial and economic security ensure sustainability in media development. A thriving economy and media sector are also critical for increased job creation.
- In terms of political factors, favourable legislative and regulatory frameworks for the media provide an enabling environment. If the frameworks do not impose any restrictions on, for example, the registration of newspapers, then the media can thrive. Where legislation and regulations are exacting, they can restrict the operations of the media to an extent unsuited to a democracy. Even where there are harsh laws in statute books that are rarely used, one interviewee felt these can have a “chilling effect”, as they tend to scare the media.
- It was argued by some that a democratically liberal political system is vital as it allows the media to operate freely and without undue political interference. This allows more voices to be heard and gives the public a choice of what they want to listen to, read or watch.
- One interviewee said that the fact that the government is a major player in politics and the economy means that the media has to treat it with “kid gloves”, or risk losing government advertising spend.

Botswana’s small population was found to be significant as it means that there is a small consumer base.

### 15.2.1 State support for media development initiatives

In terms of state support for media activities, many interviewees were not aware of any direct state support, but others mentioned indirect support, such as the fact that government sponsors students enrolled at universities and other places of learning to train to be journalists.

Another interviewee was of the view that since the private media concentrate on urban audiences and the more affluent sections of the population, there should be full appreciation of the good work being done by the state media in reaching all sections of the population wherever they are, including rural audiences.

Direct support that was mentioned by one interviewee is the placement of government advertising in the private media houses, and the fact that government advertising not been made the exclusive preserve of the state media.

The government’s establishment of the Media Advisory Council (MAC) was also seen as an important form of state support because it allows the state to elicit the views and ideas of media practitioners in the country and to see how they can help to improve things in the sector.

## 15.3 Donor communities' role

Most of the interviewees working in the government media and some of those in the private sector do not deal directly with donors and therefore did not know much about the part played by donor communities in support of media development initiatives in Botswana. Most media development projects in the state sector are funded by the Botswana government.

It must be further noted that many donors left Botswana in the mid-1990s after it was declared a middle-income country by the international economic community.

According to Professor Kerr, donors need to look carefully at the impact the new media are going to have on the old media.

*“ Changes are happening so quickly in terms of technological development, things such as the Internet, cell phones and so on. It will have a huge impact on the media and it's going to be very important that Southern Africa keeps up. I don't mean that it has to follow exactly what has happened in the Western world. But at least it should try to come to terms with the implications of the new media. I have just been reading an interesting article about how journalists, especially photo journalists, are becoming redundant in some countries because of cell phones with cameras. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

The few interviewees who are working in the NGO sector who could point to any direct donor media support in the country mentioned support in the areas of training, promoting professional standards and encouraging quality journalism. They stated that, on the whole, this support has been positive and effective, particularly as these are seen as the greatest areas of need for the nascent Botswanan media.

### 15.3.1 A different donor approach

Loago Raditedu indicated that several media houses would want donor support to cover running costs as many are suffering financially, but the donor community is not actively giving this type of support. Donors in the region support some projects through the Southern Africa Media Development Fund (SAMDEF). But Mr Raditedu, who tried to source SAMDEF funding, said some of the requirements for support are too stiff or intimidating.

Although she said does not really know much about donor support of media initiatives in the country, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Marriane Nganunu, was of the opinion that it is important for donors who are funding media development initiatives to ensure that there is some level of quality assurance in the use of donor money and support. According to her, this will ensure that donors do not get incorrect information and do not end up funding something that is anti-democratic or unacceptable in other ways.

MISA Botswana's Modise Maphanyane stated strongly that many donors are too selective about which countries or regions are seen as priority areas, so that some areas end up getting more funding than others. Countries such as Botswana have many pockets of poverty and these are ignored because the country is regarded as a middle-income country. He said that he also suspects that too many donors look at the impact on their own countries rather than the needs of the African countries, so they end up going to the countries they think will have more impact on their countries of origin.

## 15.4 Other issues

Other issues influencing the success of media development that were mentioned by interviewees were related to NGO community support and co-operation with the existing media. The setting up of working media associations where media workers can get together to work out a common strategy was also found to be important by Tutwane and Balule, as this makes it difficult for government to divide and impose unfavourable legislation and regulations.

Furthermore, in the eyes of Balule, many of Botswana's media houses have untrained reporters and staff who are clearly struggling, and issues of media ethics and pluralism of ideas end up being of great concern.

According to Professor Kerr of the University of Botswana, there is also a need to develop home-bred professional media standards.

*“ We want pluralism but it won't be the same pluralism that you get in Europe or Japan or the United States or Canada or Mexico. It'll be a Southern African pluralism, which will have its own characteristics... this is where it would become very important to try and develop a unique Southern African type of democracy and pluralism in the media. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

For the Executive Secretary of BOCONGO, Baboloki Tlale, it is important to focus on the reading public to see whether or not they are receptive to the media in the country. He asks:

*“ Do they understand fully the role of the media? Quite often they find the media is going too far in prying into people's private affairs. We need to inculcate a culture of reading newspapers and also appreciating the role of the media. A lot of people don't have that interest to buy newspapers and books and to read them all the time. Well, some of them could be reading, but I know that very few females read as much as they could – especially on current affairs. ”*

(**Baboloki Tlale**, Executive Secretary; NGO: Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), Gaborone, Botswana)



# 16. Future Strategies

## 16.1 Strategic priorities

These are some of the strategic priorities that a new donor-backed media development initiative could address in Botswana, according to various interviewees.

- ❑ **Audience research and media monitoring:** this was found to be the biggest priority, especially for interviewees in the advertising and private broadcast media (Ms Moremong and Mr Rampha), since capacity in this area is presently lacking in Botswana. This is not as serious a problem for most newspapers as it is for the broadcast media, because many newspapers subscribe to the Audited Bureau of Circulation of South Africa.
- ❑ **Raising training and professional standards:** it was felt that if standards remain low, government and other interests might want to intervene with various forms of legislation and regulations.
- ❑ **Development of self-regulatory mechanisms for the local media.**
- ❑ **The need for community-based broadcasting and print media:** such outlets are largely absent in Botswana, unlike in much of the rest of the Southern African region – with the exception of one or two community newspapers.
- ❑ **The need for a fully-fledged public broadcasting service:** the government is not letting go of the state media and does not seem to have a clear idea of the difference between public and state broadcasting.
- ❑ **Access to capital for investment in the media.**
- ❑ **The need for debate about what the state/public media should be doing:** If these media are getting government funding, what areas are the private media neglecting and what does the public media need to do to fill those gaps?
- ❑ The stepping up of civil society activism, civic education and empowerment so the public can demand access to information and not just media freedom: It was argued that accessing information is both a right and a need, and that Botswana is not meeting these properly.
- ❑ The need for donors, as well as giving out media development support, to ensure that the Botswanan and other African governments live up to their commitments to have good governance and people-centred democratic structures.

## 16.2 Focus of support

There was general consensus that most of the possible areas of focus put to the interviewees were equally important.

**Table 3. Relative Importance of Focusing Support on Specific Areas of Media Development**

Area of focus	Success factors	Category of interviewees
Developing media frameworks (to support the media in terms of public remit)	Very important: 9 Important: 1 Not important at the moment: 1 No clear answer: 1	Most interviewees were especially in support of this because the broadcast media in Botswana in particular are dominated by the state-owned and state-focused media. Many of the interviewees also felt there was unduly heavy political control of the state media. For some, part of the problem is that the government does not have a clear idea of the difference between public and state broadcasting.
Developing local content	Very important: 9 Important: 2 No clear answer: 1	Programming, especially in the state TV station, is not up to scratch, according to most interviewees, and the only way they felt this could be dealt with was through putting more money into local productions and other content.
Supporting the growth of private and independent media	Very important: 8 Important: 3 No clear answer: 1	Some interviewees felt that donors and government could help by spending more on private media, through advertising and funding.
Raising standards of journalism	Very important: 11 Important: 1	Many interviewees felt the raising of standards could be accomplished through support for self-regulatory mechanisms. Others focussed on the need for support of quality content and developmental journalism.
Audience research and media monitoring	Very important: 1	This was a particular issue raised by a interviewee in the advertising sector, as there is currently no comprehensive media audience research organisation in the country.
Support for combining new media with old media	Very important: 1	According to one interviewee, changes are happening so quickly in terms of technological development that this will have a huge impact on the media in the future.

### 16.3 Media sector focus

Most interviewees were particularly supportive of a focus on public-service broadcasting, because the broadcast media in Botswana is currently dominated by the state-owned and state-focused media. There is perceived to be unduly heavy political control or interference with the state media. For some interviewees, part of the problem is that the government does not have a clear idea of the difference between public and state broadcasting.

Other interviewees felt that future initiatives should go to both the public and private media. According to Modise Maphanyane,

*“ ...Until resources are adequate to bring the two [onto an equal footing]... to see the role of public institutions and the role of the private as similar, we should continue funding all of them as much as possible. ”*

(**Modise Maphanyane**, National Director; NGO: Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), Botswana)

The idea of only supporting private media also was mentioned, although most support was reserved for community and state/public media. These interviewees felt that, at the moment, the state media is not struggling in any way, as it is well resourced and provided for by the government.

The media entrepreneur and promoter of faith-based media structures, Loago Raditedu, was the most specific in his prescription, suggesting that 75% of initiatives should be directed at the private media and 25% at the state media.

One interviewee from an NGO expressed disappointment with both the private and public media, saying it did not seem as if they were really developing or moving the country forward – especially given that the state media is refusing to grant the required editorial independence to its professional staff, while the private media sector is made up of commercial entities that tend to concentrate more on their commercial interest than the public interest.

Several interviewees felt that Botswana needed community-based broadcasting media to serve community interests at grassroots level, because this is absent in Botswana, unlike in other parts of the Southern African region. Community broadcasting is seen as an antidote to state broadcast media that are not interested in a public-service remit. Some interviewees who called for community media also argued that the present media landscape is highly elitist and focused on the urban population.

## 16.4 Type of support most needed/useful

Although opinions were divided on the contribution that might be made by business/commercial interests to bring about media development initiatives, several interviewees were strongly against domination by commercial support mechanisms, believing the media are too important in promoting democracy to be left just to commercial interests. Dr Balule said the latter tend to be tempted towards the,

*“ ... commercialisation of news content [and] once you do that you are no longer serving the democratic mandate... you are just serving the hand that is feeding you. ”*

(Dr Tachilisa Balule, Law Lecturer; Analyst: University of Botswana, Botswana)

The general argument of many other interviewees was that commercial supporters would only be “serving their own interests”, looking just at whether a certain community has buying power and looking at the money. They felt that this was why public-service media are needed, as they tend to address gaps, empowering people and providing public education.

The lessening of the political control the state exerts on state-funded institutions and improving the laws of access to information were other areas needing support, according to some of the interviewees. Some argued that commercial interests can even help to bring these changes about, as commercial interests know that a free media can be prosperous and help the business sector.

## 16.5 Appropriate organisational framework

There is wide agreement that harnessing existing African networks – which many interviewees were able to mention by name in the region and said were credible, had a good track record and were effective in promoting media diversity and pluralism – was the way to go in establishing any new media initiatives.

Some of the regional organisations mentioned, and about which most interviewees were familiar, were SABA, MISA, SAMDEF, SAIMED and SAEF. But, according to Mr Maphanyane and Mr Raditedu, many of these organisations have constitutional limitations that should first be dealt with before they can be relied on to assist.

Marianne Nganunu suggested that a full inventory of existing regional organisations, and even in-country ones, could be developed to try to find any synergies and possible areas and levels of cooperation. Once the mandates and objectives of the various existing regional organisations have been captured, the next step could be to bring about harmonisation for the purpose of effective programme delivery. Ms Nganunu even went as far as to suggest this could be taken up at the level of the African Union because if the issue,

*“ ... is taken at that level, heads of African states who understand media operations and why it is necessary to have the independent media in any country, will help their counterparts to see the media as a partner in development. Maybe if heads of state are educated it can trickle down from there. I think we have continental organisations that can help even regional bodies like SADC. In SADC, all we ever heard was the Protocol on Information and Culture, which has not really got off the ground and I don't think they ever involved private media in that, [just] state institutions. ”*

(Marriane Nganunu, Permanent Secretary; Government: Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Botswana)



Regional collaboration was seen by Mr Maphanyane, Ms Nganunu, Ms Moremong, Professor Kerr and Mr Tlale to be especially relevant in relation to raising capacity in media research and monitoring. It was also seen as important in developing news reporting and supporting the development of a new news agency to compete with the state-owned and state-run Botswana Press Agency (BOPA).

Regional content-sharing was of interest to some interviewees.

*“ For example, right now it’s very difficult for our news people to enter Zimbabwe. So if you have a regional news agency, they can feed us with news from Zimbabwe because we don’t have access. ”*

(**Loago Raditedu**, Executive Director; Media Entrepreneur: Botswana Exporters’ Association, Botswana)

According to Professor Kerr, this can be extended to sharing programming in broadcasting and not just for news. He said:

*“ There are so many opportunities for sharing programmes in the region... you know I’ve seen stuff on Botswana in Zambia, Namibia and elsewhere which could have been reported better. ”*

(**Professor David Kerr**, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana)

But most interviewees were at a loss as to how a new media initiative would be funded and how it would be set up to ensure that it was independent, not only of governments in the region but also from domination by donors in Europe or the United States. Interviewees felt that it was necessary to have an organisation with some degree of independence from donors and the government. Mr Raditedu suggested a national fund, which an umbrella NGO organisation such as the Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO) could host and which could receive donations and other forms of media support from government and other donors. The argument here is that a civil society organisation can reduce the pressure of political interference that is usually extended to the media in African countries.

## 16.6 Pan-regional versus country-specific initiatives

Although most interviewees said both pan-regional and country-specific initiatives are welcome, they liked the principle of pan-African initiatives because such initiatives would enable resources to be shared and organisations to learn from each other. However, interviewees warned that if countries don’t pay their membership – something that is very common with many existing pan-African initiatives – it doesn’t work. Several interviewees said there were quite a few pan-regional initiatives doing good work, but the difficulty was in coordinating all of them so that they are “singing from the same hymnbook”. They said one difficulty was that organisations have ideological differences. Overall, however, pan-regional initiatives were seen as the best route because of the impact of increasing globalisation. One example of where pan-regional initiatives are thriving is in East Africa in relation to the print media – to the extent that there is now an East African newspaper – and several interviewees said this could be emulated in the Southern African region. Modise Maphanyane also argued that pan-regional initiatives are better because they,

*“ ... look at a larger number of citizens benefiting and enhancing democracy for all people from a region. This also forms a larger perspective, which allows individual countries with serious democratic shortcomings to be subdued by a group of countries in a region. A pan-regional focus also allows for donors not to be too picky as to where to go, but to look at the region in its totality of development – which also gives impetus to a greater benefit in the long run. ”*

(**Modise Maphanyane**, National Director; NGO: Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), Botswana)

Another example of how regional benefits can be tapped was given by Marriane Nganunu, who said:

*“ [In Botswana] we have the state-of-the-art facility [in the form of the Mass Media Complex in Gaborone] and some of these facilities should be shared with the private sector. Donors can look into whether there is a facility that can be used by all stakeholders [in the region]. One example is that we are doing something in education because the current European Development Fund, which is for education or human resources development, has one project under it aimed at establishing a learning structure that will be used by the University of Botswana, Botswana Centre for Distance Learning (BOCODOL), and nursing training institutions. It is like a central facility for the nation, so if you can think of some central facility that benefits all in the region, that is the kind of things donors like to pay for... they would like a project that cuts across the SADC region. ”*

(**Marriane Nganunu**, Permanent Secretary, Government, Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Botswana)

A minority view, held by Mr Maphanyane, was that we should first start with a basis in country-specific initiatives, because countries in a given region such as southern Africa are at different levels of development.

## **16.7 Initiatives relating to developmental content**

All interviewees were agreed that, given Botswana is still a developing country (faced with many developmental challenges in areas such as health, governance and so on), content initiatives related to development goals are of critical importance. They said the place to start in emphasising this is at the level of training of media workers, so that they come as “disciples to take forward the gospel of developmental journalism” – which is increasingly being ignored in favour of sensation, entertainment and leisure media products. Dr Balule and a senior government official added that there was a lot of irresponsible reporting that could be curbed by promoting developmental journalism.

Mike Mothibi and Baboloki Tlale said a lot of media outlets are doing something about this already, as many of them carry programming and feature columns on the environment, HIV/AIDS and other health-related issues. But they called for more specialised journalism in this area, in the same way that capacity has been developed in, for example, sports and economic journalism.

## 16.8 Initiatives to develop independent media

Mr Tlale and Professor Kerr found it difficult to express views on initiatives to develop independent media, while Mr Maphanyane and a senior government official – without elaborating much, said training and infrastructure support were the best support vehicles. Ms Moremong and Mr Rampha and others argued that such support could be financed through advertising and sponsorship, as that is how non-state media pay their bills. However, Mr Tlale, Ms Moremong and a senior government official worried that for the non-state media to develop and to excel in their job, it is necessary to somehow reduce their dependence on commercial entities or interests.

## 16.9 The role of media development in the country's democratisation process

All the interviewees reaffirmed the critical role of media development in a country's democratisation process and said the media is the bedrock of democracy. Examples given were how vital the media was at general election time in: informing people about how political and economic power are being exercised in the country; shaping public opinion; and, helping overcome many cultural and traditional barriers to modernisation.

But some interviewees expressed disappointment with the performance of the local media in promoting democracy and good governance. Tachilisa Balule said:

*“ In recent years, I haven't really seen any stories that create major shake-ups in government... investigative journalism that takes out many skeletons from the cupboards. If the media were doing their work properly, they should be exposing a lot of corruption and other ills that reverse the democratic process. ”*

(Dr Tachilisa Balule, Law Lecturer; Analyst: University of Botswana, Botswana)



# 17. Summary & Conclusions

The key findings of this study can be summarised as follows.

## 17.1 Media development: an organisational perspective

- There have been significant changes in the Botswanan media in the past five years. Some of the changes noted include the recent proliferation of newspapers and the partial freeing of the airwaves by the Botswanan government, which has led to the setting up of two new commercial radio stations.
- There has been some improvement in the content and quality of reportage in various media.
- There have been changes in the legislative and regulatory framework prevailing in the country.
- More training opportunities have opened up and there is now professional development of journalists – especially following the establishment of the first and only journalism school in the form of the Media Studies Department in the Humanities Faculty of the University of Botswana. Before this, most journalists in Botswana were trained abroad, mainly in Australia, the UK, Canada, the USA, South Africa and various other African countries. Several NGOs in the country are also now involved in the mentoring and training of journalists and media workers at various levels.
- There have been developments in self-regulation, the establishment of media pressure groups, and a commitment to professionalism in the media – particularly with the establishment of the Press Council of Botswana, the Media Advisory Council and the Botswana Editors’ Forum.
- The government’s decision to commercialise the government-owned *Daily News* and other government media outlets was also seen by some interviewees as a significant development.

## 17.2 Media development initiatives

- Only two interviewees (NGO representative Modise Maphanyane and Educator Professor Kerr) were able to refer to any media development projects or initiatives that their respective organisations have been directly involved in. And Professor Kerr said that his Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana is not responsible for directly allocating any funds for media development activities.
- The Department of Media Studies at the University of Botswana collaborated with the *Makgabaneng* radio drama series to do a large survey that demonstrated the application of audience research techniques. This is an area the department is planning to work further in the future.
- MISA originated the idea of a Media Studies Department at the University of Botswana and helped see it come to fruition.
- Influence was exerted over the formulation and adoption of principles that would govern the proposed Mass Media Bill for Botswana.
- There was successful involvement in the formation of the Press Council of Botswana.
- There was successful involvement in the formation of the National Broadcasting Board.
- NGOs in the media sector suffer funding difficulties.
- Media training workshops and public debates have been successfully hosted on issues of national interest.

## 17.3 Developing the environment for success

Key factors important for the success of media development are:

- a financially, economically secure and healthy country;
- an enabling political environment;
- a favourable legislative and regulatory framework for the media;
- a liberal democratic tradition;
- growth in the skills and experience of the people in the media industry;
- the size of the population – Botswana has a small population, making it harder to develop a commercially viable media;
- more regional co-operation initiatives and institutions are important for sharing professional experience and expertise;
- NGO community support and co-operation with the existing media;
- training of professional media workers; and,
- a strong culture of reading and appetite for news products.

## 17.4 Future strategies

- Conduct audience research and media monitoring, especially in the advertising and private broadcast media sectors.
- Provide training and raise professional standards.
- Develop media self-regulatory mechanisms.
- Develop more community-based broadcasting and print media.
- Develop a fully-fledged public broadcasting service to replace state broadcasting.
- Find access to capital for investment in the media.
- Engender a debate about the role of public media in media development.
- Strengthen civil society activism and civic education and empowerment around media's role.
- Ensure potential donors pressure the Botswana government to live up to its commitment to good governance and people-centred democratic structures.



# 18. Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interviewees

Of the 12 people interviewed for this report, 11 agreed to have their names.

Modise Maphanyane, National Director; NGO: Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), Botswana

Baboloki Tlale, Executive Secretary; NGO: Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO), Gaborone, Botswana

Mike Mothibi, Editor; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: *Botswana Guardian* Newspaper and Chairman, Botswana Editors' Forum, Botswana

Loago Raditedu, Executive Director; Media Entrepreneur: Botswana Exporters' Association, Botswana

Dr Tachilisa Balule, Law Lecturer; Analyst: University of Botswana, Botswana

Marriane Nganunu, Permanent Secretary, Government, Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology, Botswana

Senior Official, Government, Botswana

Owen Rampha, Programme Manager; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: Yarona FM radio station, Gaborone, Botswana

Methaetsile Leepile, General Manager; Media Practitioner, Private Sector: CBET Publishing Company, Botswana

Norma Moremong, Co-Managing Director; Media Entrepreneur: The Dialogue Group, Gaborone, Botswana

Letshwiti Tutwane, Lecturer Media Studies Department; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana

Professor David Kerr, Department Head of Media Studies; Academic: University of Botswana, Botswana

## Appendix 2: Summary of media development projects/activities described in Section 14

Interviewee name and organisation	Specific media development project: title	Key purpose/aim of project/initiative/activity	Project time span (dates or length in months/years of project) and status (ongoing etc)	Outcome sought	Target audience	Evaluation method used (if any)	Result of evaluation	Is/was this project/activity considered by your organisation to be a success? On what basis?
Modise Maphanyane, MISA	Origination of the idea of having a Media Studies Department at the University of Botswana	Media training	Established in 2001/2 Academic Year	Training	Students	Establishment of Media Studies Department	Established	Yes, because it happened
	Formulation of principles for proposed Mass Media Bill	Legislation	Ongoing	Legislation	General, media	Adoption of the law	Ongoing	Yes, because legislation has been taken to Cabinet for approval
Professor David Kerr	Formation of Press Council of Botswana	Media self-regulation	Established in 2001	Media self-regulation	General, media	Establishment of PCB	Established	Yes, because PCB was established
	Audience research	Systematic audience analysis	Not available	Audience survey	<i>Makgabaneng</i>	Report	Done	Yes, because research was completed





# Botswana

## Country Report

### Case Study



# 19. Case Study

## Development Journalism in Action: the *Makgabaneng* Radio Drama

Botswana has the unenviable record of being a country with the second highest rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the world, surpassed only by Swaziland. The first cases in Botswana were diagnosed in 1985, and by 2003 the national prevalence rate had reached 37.4%.

Because AIDS is such a serious problem for Botswana, a great deal of financial and other critical public and private resources are needed to deal with it. This has had the consequence of diverting resources that are desperately needed to fight unemployment, poverty and other social ills. HIV/AIDS has also reversed some of the commendable socio-economic strides Botswana made from being a poor country (in 1966, it still relied on its former British colonial master for more than 90% of its budget revenue), to the middle-income country that it is today.

Meanwhile, a recent major HIV and AIDS and Gender Baseline Study, carried out as part of the Media Action Plan on HIV and AIDS (MAP) led by the Southern African Editors' Forum (SAEF), found that the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the media in Botswana and the rest of the region is extremely low. It also found that HIV/AIDS still does not get mainstream coverage. The study concluded that the voices of people with HIV/AIDS are hardly heard in the media.

Botswana has implemented a variety of HIV prevention, treatment and care initiatives. Programmes to support safe behaviours and promote behavioural changes, such as abstinence, condom use, HIV testing and uses of other health services, are part of the national strategy to fight HIV/AIDS.

In addition, Botswana's state and private media have increasingly viewed some of the most effective behavioural, communication and awareness-building avenues the country could use as part of the national strategy to fight HIV/AIDS. This conclusion was arrived at after it was realised that even with all the information on HIV/AIDS, high-risk behaviour had not reduced in many countries, such as Botswana; and that while early efforts at HIV prevention focused on giving people correct information, there was a high rate of new infections, which showed that giving people information alone, while necessary, is not enough. On the other hand, evaluations have shown that entertainment-education strategies that focus on a range of cognitive, emotional and other factors that influence behavioural change are popular and effective.

Therefore, dealing with AIDS in Botswana in the past few years has included the use of “entertainment-education” programmes through the Botswana national broadcast media to promote HIV-related behavioural changes.

One such programme is *Makgabaneng*, an entertainment-education radio drama series broadcast in Setswana. It is written, produced and acted by Batswana and is designed to support the nation’s HIV prevention and mitigation goals, by raising HIV/AIDS related issues relevant to the lives of contemporary Batswana. Since August 2001, it has been airing twice-weekly on Radio Botswana, which reaches 80% of Botswana’s population. It is broadcast on the Radio Botswana Channel 1 on Mondays and Wednesdays and repeated on Radio Botswana Channel 2 on Thursdays and Saturdays.

*Makgabaneng* is funded through a collaboration between the government of Botswana and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This partnership established the Botswana/USA (or BOTUSA) Project to mount various programmes and activities to fight HIV/AIDS and related infectious diseases in the country. The BOTUSA Project is also collaborating with Total Community Mobilisation (TCM) to help reinforce the ideas and stories presented in the drama series at community level.

TCM is a Botswana-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) that uses door-to-door peer education and community mobilisation techniques for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the promotion of HIV/AIDS-related services. Trained TCM field officers convene listeners in several communities in Botswana to listen to the radio drama and discuss the issues raised.

This modelling (role models acting in the radio drama, some of whom are struggling to adopt HIV-safe behaviours) and reinforcement programme to combat HIV/AIDS combines the *Makgabaneng* radio drama series with community-based reinforcement activities to encourage safer HIV-related behaviours (such as delaying initiation of sex, being faithful, accessing services and providing support to people living with HIV/AIDS) among Batswana aged 15 to 49.

To assess the popularity, coverage and impact of the programme in Botswana, *Makgabaneng* producers conducted a cross-sectional survey of listeners. The survey revealed that the radio drama was extremely popular and that most of the listeners thought it was both entertaining and informative. It also achieved the important objectives of reaching and sustaining listenership among large and important segments of the population (for example, the youth). The programme appears to be associated with higher levels of HIV/AIDS knowledge in key areas and with less stigmatising attitudes toward those affected by HIV/AIDS. It was also found to be associated with some key preventive behaviours, including increased intention to get tested for HIV, more discussion with partners about HIV testing, and getting tested during pregnancy.

During an interview, Maungo Mooki, the programme’s Managing Editor, revealed that *Makgabaneng* has been so successful and effective that it has attracted a lot of regional and international attention (M. Mooki, personal communication, 29 May, 2006). It has caught the attention of other countries in Africa and the Caribbean in particular. She said that plans were afoot to roll out a similar programme in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia and Malawi. The Caribbean would be reached through rolling it out in Guyana in the next few weeks.

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### Individuals consulted during the research

- M. Mooki, Managing Editor, Radio Botswana

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