The Media Map Project

Mali

Case Study on Donor Support to Independent Media, 1990-2010

by Heather Gilberds
About the Author

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Cover photos: Community radio station Radio Fanaka, Fana. (credit: Tara Susman-Peña) Mali topographic map (credit: iStockphoto) Photographer trainee in UNICEF health caravan. (credit: Tara Susman-Peña)

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The field of media development assistance – support provided by foreign donors to promote independent, professional news media in developing and transitioning countries – dates back at least to the 1950s. Almost never recognized as a sector in its own right, media development is a relatively tiny portion of overall development assistance.\(^1\) Despite this marginal status, media development veterans passionately believe that their work plays a critical role in improving the governance and development of the countries where they work. Successful support to local media should facilitate its independence from government and other outside influences, promote freedom of information, represent the public’s needs to decision-makers, and improve the quality of the news that is produced. In turn, by maintaining a free-flow of information, improved news media should keep government transparent and hold it to account, give life to the market economy, and provide citizens with the information they need to make all kinds of critical decisions that impact them as individuals, and their families, communities, and countries.

In theory then, media development supports all other development, both directly and indirectly. However, media development stakeholders have not always been able to make a compelling, evidence-based case to the greater development community that what they do matters critically for both governance and development. Former World Bank president James Wolfensohn, Nobel prize-winning economists Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, and many other policymakers have made a strong case for the media’s importance, but this has yet to be translated widely into systematic incorporation of media development support into aid policy and budgets. The Media Map Project was created to interrogate the evidence on the connections between media and development, as well as to make global data on the media sector more accessible to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.

This series of case studies addresses more specific questions regarding the impact of donor interventions that support the media in developing countries.\(^2\) The following key questions focus on the last two decades of donor support to independent media in seven countries. Who are the major actors? What are the major activities? Which activities have a positive impact? Which activities fail? Why? Finally, we go beyond the reflective exercise of “best practices and lessons learned” to offer evidence for donors interested in improving the effectiveness and relevance of their media support. These studies are intended for donors, policymakers, and media development practitioners alike.

In a perfect world, we would have been able to identify all of the donors supporting media from 1990-2010, precisely outline their activities, goals, partners, and budgets, collect monitoring and evaluation reports, and, armed with nationally representative data measuring the many facets of the health of the media sector,\(^3\) we would have been able to determine precisely which projects had impact, the return on investment, and perhaps even the collective impact of all projects. Given the constraints of a pilot project, and the limits of the donors’ own documentation, we were not able to perform exhaustive research. Instead, our methodology was designed to build a solid foundation for understanding each country’s media development history, illuminated by rich, revealing detail. Further, we have carefully out-

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\(^1\) Estimates of current spending on media development are extremely difficult make with precision, due to poor donor documentation, and range from 0.3% of all U.S. aid (the United States is the largest bilateral donor to media development) (Mottaz, 2010) to 0.6% of all aid (as estimated by D. Kaufmann in a presentation entitled “On Media Development & Freedoms in a Governance Context: An Outsider’s Reflections, with Some Empirics,” presented at OECD DAC GOVNET meeting on June 7, 2011.)

\(^2\) The vexing question of how to define impact of a particular media development intervention, and further, how to measure that impact, is addressed in another report for the Media Map Project (Alcorn et al., 2011).

\(^3\) The Media Map Project defines the health of the media sector: “The health of the media sector refers to the extent of its development. A healthy media sector is independent from both government and business, generates quality outputs that reach citizens, and engages them to make informed decisions that impact their own lives and the lives of their community” (Roy, 2011a: 3).
lined any remaining gaps in the research. Building upon this work, we have proposed a design for quantifying the impact of donor support to the media that could be undertaken in a subsequent phase of the research.4

The original design of the project included four or five countries as case studies. We selected the countries to represent a range of development challenges, political situations, media development history, and geography (with a slight emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa). In consultation with the Media Map International Advisory Board, we selected Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Peru, Ukraine, and Indonesia. As the project progressed, we formed partnerships that enabled us to add Kenya (Center for Governance and Human Rights, Cambridge), and Cambodia (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). The basic research design includes:

1) Qualitative desk research providing context on each country’s development, political, historical, and media landscapes

2) Quantitative desk research creating a portrait of each country’s media sector progress over the last 20 years, to the extent that data is available, also some comparison between the country and its region

3) Primary data collected from in-country fieldwork, which includes interviews, focus groups, and observation

Pilot projects come with constraints, but they also come with great opportunities for exploration and creativity, and we have pursued the case study research very much in this spirit. However, while each of the countries contains all of the above components, and thus a consistent line of inquiry, there is some variation across the studies. First, as to format, the lead researcher for each country was provided with a template meant to structure the report. All of the reports cover the key areas in the template, but they do not share a perfectly uniform structure. Both the template and sampling guide are provided at the end of this report. Model discussion guides for interviews were provided, adapted for language and context, and used to guide semi-structured interviews and focus groups during the field work.

Mali and Peru were chosen to coincide with two of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) Governance Network’s (GOVNET) case studies that lay the groundwork for improving donor support to domestic accountability. We provided GOVNET with summary reports on these two countries focusing on the media’s role in domestic accountability in support of GOVNET’s preparation for the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in November 2011 in Busan, Korea.

To the Peru and Ukraine case studies, we added Network Analysis, a social science methodology that investigates connections among organizations to probe relationship patterns in areas such as information sharing, prestige, and trust. In Peru, we also piloted a methodology called Participatory Photographic Mapping, a technique that has been used principally in the U.S. and Canada to investigate community health and safety issues. This produced visual, oral, and textual data showing where people get their information and what sources they trust. The experiment yielded some insights about information sources, but was even more useful as a process to refine the methodology appropriately for future research.

In recent years, news media have been evolving and significantly overlapping with the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. An overview of the Internet and mobile phones is included in the media landscape portraits. The question of new media and social media was included in the primary research to the extent that donors support these areas. We excluded any donor assistance consisting of pure infrastructure provision. In recognition of the rapidly shifting information landscape, we chose to focus the Kenya case study more pointedly on the convergence of old and new media, and on what donors are focusing on today, rather than conducting an extensive review of the past.

Finally, each of the individual case studies is meant to illuminate the specificity of each country context, but also feed into a broader evidence base of why and how better to support the media sector around the world. Out of this research, our aim is to identify clear guidelines for donors about the best approaches to media support across a variety of contexts. The final Media Map Project report will assimilate findings from all of these components, including the seven case studies, an econometric study that demonstrates that a healthy media sector has a positive impact on political stability in the sub-Saharan Africa region (Roy, 2011b), and a study of donors’ approaches to assessing the impact of their media development projects. All of these reports, the quantitative data used in the reports, and a wealth of other data that can be used to further investigate the role of information and media in governance and development is freely available on our project website, www.MediaMapResource.org.

4 See Roy and Susman-Peña, 2011.
### ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AJPP</td>
<td>Association des Journalistes pour la Promotion du Professionnalisme</td>
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<td>AMAP</td>
<td>Agence Malienne de Presse et de Publicité</td>
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<td>AMB</td>
<td>Africa Media Barometer</td>
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<td>ARCOM</td>
<td>L'Alliance des Radios Communautaires du Mali</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>C4D</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
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<td>CDA</td>
<td>The Collaborative for Development Action</td>
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<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CMC</td>
<td>Community Media Center</td>
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<td>CORJCOD</td>
<td>Coordination des Réseaux des Journalistes et Communicateurs pour la Population et le Développement</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community for West African States</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>IREX</td>
<td>International Research and Exchange Board</td>
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<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunications Union</td>
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<td>MSI</td>
<td>Media Sustainability Index</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>ORTM</td>
<td>Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Mali</td>
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<td>RTM</td>
<td>Mali Radio and Television</td>
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<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>URTEL</td>
<td>Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres du Mali</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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Executive Summary

Many scholars and practitioners argue that freedom of the press is an essential element of a functional and sustainable democratic society. Ostensibly, a free press is a “fourth estate,” a guardian of individual rights and civil liberties. Media professionals are ultimately “watchdogs” of accurate, objective, and socially relevant information and knowledge. A vibrant and pluralistic media sector coupled with a free press are crucial in fledgling democracies, where media professionals play critical roles in monitoring institutions and interrogating critical issues (Cartmell et al., 2008).

In Mali, wide scale decentralization of social institutions occurred in the 1990s as the country underwent its transition to democracy. Devolution of governmental control of Mali’s media and communications networks occurred at the same time (Pringle, 2006). As a consequence, an explosion of private media providers erupted throughout the country; however, few Malian reporters and broadcasters have received the training necessary to perform their jobs professionally (Perret, 2005).

Radio broadcasting is of particular significance in Mali. There are more than 200 private stations that provide coverage to more than 85 percent of the country (Poncin, 2009). A lack of infrastructure to support television broadcasting or Internet provision, conjoined with high rates of illiteracy and poverty, makes radio the medium of choice among Malians.

There is a long history of donor-funded development programs in Mali, which mushroomed during the democratization period (1991-1998) as international organizations sought to strengthen the countries’ institutions. Donor funding to support the media was at its height during this period. Based on the idea that the media acts as the fourth estate, donors perceived the need to enhance democracy through increasing the diversity and plurality of media in Mali. The major donors to the media during this period were bilateral and multilateral development organizations, notably the French and Germany Embassies, Panos, the UN and USAID. Important donor-funded initiatives include the establishment of a press house (La Maison de la Presse du Mali) and a broadcast union (Union des Radiodiffuseurs et Télévisions libres du Mali).

Today, Mali’s media sector is considered an exemplar on the African continent. Freedom of the press indices and barometers consistently laud the sector for its plurality, diversity and freedom. However, great challenges still remain, including poor working conditions, lack of business management practices, indiscriminate licensing, self-censorship among journalists, lack of professionalism and inadequate training opportunities. One of the primary obstacles that remain is the absence of a school of journalism in the country. Unfortunately, donor support to the media has significantly declined in recent years, and bilateral and multilateral agencies have shifted their aid agendas to support other sectors. Donor support currently focuses on the media as tools to enhance other development priorities, such as health and livelihoods.

The growth of Mali’s independent media sector is truly impressive, and is a success story worth celebrating. Nonetheless, this report finds that in the contemporary media landscape, donor priorities and programs are not doing enough to ensure the continued development of
a strong and independent media system. Over the past 20 years, funding has shifted from programs designed to strengthen independent media to programs that see media as tools to disseminate development information. Media development initiatives need to focus both on strengthening the independent media sector and supporting the use of media for development and democratization. In Mali, it is crucial that donors support the media sector as a force for dissent and for enabling a truly democratic society to flourish.

Africable runs an unlicensed cable television service. (credit: Tara Susman-Peña)
Mali is a West African country, a member of the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). It is land-locked and borders Mauritania and Algeria in the north, Niger in the East, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast in the south, Guinea in the southwest and Senegal in the west. Sixty five percent of the country is desert. Within its 14.5 million inhabitants (2009), there are a variety of ethnic groups, including Bambaras, Bobos, Bozos, Dogons, Khassonkés, Malinkés, Minianka, Peuls, Sénoufos, Soninkés (or Sarakolés), Sonrhais and Touaregs. French is the official language, but local populations in general speak, read and write their vernacular languages of which Bambara is the most widely spoken (80 percent of the population). Islam is the main religion in Mali (90 percent), while there are also practicing Catholics and Protestants (5 percent), as well as traditional religions (5 percent).

Mali has a predominantly rural economy – around 80 percent of the population works in agriculture, fishing, and farming. Gold is the biggest export, followed by cotton and livestock. The local currency is Franc CFA with an exchange rate of 1 U.S. dollar for 454 CFA Franc. The country’s economy is heavily dependent on foreign aid and is a major recipient of both multilateral and bilateral aid. Multilateral donors include the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the European Union. Some of the prominent bilateral development partners with Mali include Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States, with some having provided official development assistance to the country since the 1960s. Other donors and investors, such as China, India, Saudi Arabia, and Libya, are increasingly present in the country as well. However, there is evidence from respondents, as well as news reports, that the latter are much more involved in land ownership and investment than traditional aid programs. For the sake of this report, international donors in Mali refer to the former, though it is important to note that contemporary funding models come in all shapes and sizes throughout Africa. According to CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA, 2009), current development programs funded by bilateral or multilateral development agencies focus in part on:

- Improving access to basic social services
- Sustainably increasing household income
- Enhancing food security and protecting the environment
- Promoting peace and security, good governance, and the rule of law

Global media indices have lauded Mali’s press freedoms in recent years, and Mali’s progress towards democracy since 1991 has been accompanied by strong commitments to freedom of speech and media pluralism, as guaranteed by the 1992 constitution. Mali is given the highest scores for press freedom on the African continent by many global organizations. It ranks 52 out of 196 on the 2010 Freedom House Press Freedom Index. The report defines the Malian media as ‘free,’ claiming, “Mali’s constitution protects the right to free speech, and the country’s broadcast and print media have ranked among the freest in Africa in recent years” (Freedom House, 2010: 96). Reporters Without Borders also praises the Malian media, ranking it 26

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out of 178 at the time of publication, stating that “Mali is not only one of Africa’s most exemplary democracies but also one of the most respectful of press freedom on the continent” (Reporters Without Borders, n.d.).

In general, media diversity is officially promoted by the state. The Mali media sector offers many sources of information via broadcast and print media and the Internet. This information is available in French and other national languages. There are 40 newspapers that appear on at least a weekly basis; most of these are printed in Bamako, with at least one exception, Le Segovien, a weekly newspaper in Ségou. Due to high illiteracy and the inability of impoverished Malians to regularly afford the cover price of most newspapers, the total average daily circulation of newspapers is below 10,000 copies (Koenig, 2007). Figure 1 shows how few Malians rely on newspapers for news.

However, newspapers remain influential among Mali’s elites, and often set the agenda for local radio news (Freedom House, 2010). The national daily newspaper, l’Essor, published by Agence Malienne de Presse et de Publicité (AMAP), has the widest circulation and has received a great deal of criticism. In his 2009 New Year address to the media, President Amadou Toumani Touré proposed the establishment of a forum on l’Essor, which he claims is the most “backward” media outlet in the sub-region (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010). AMAP is a state-run establishment, and l’Essor tends not to publish anything that criticizes the state. For example, in 2010, the newspaper refused to publish a sponsored interview with the Public Attorney, which alleged fraud and embezzlement linked to the Ministry of Health. The health minister resigned in December 2010 after charges of fraud and embezzlement were widely cited in other media sources. Given that L’Essor is the only nationally circulated paper, this casts doubt on the validity of newspapers in Mali and the ability of the print sector to fulfill its fourth estate role.

In Mali, there are 300 private radio stations, which are distinguished by the headings “associative” (community), “commercial,” and “religious.” Private radio stations have grown at an impressive pace since 1991—from the initial licensing of 18 stations in 1991-92 to 100 stations by 2000, 144 stations by late 2004, and over 300 stations today (Koenig, 2007). Perhaps the greatest success of Mali’s media landscape lies in the development of its community (associative) radio sector, which provides citizens with accessible information in local languages, including a broad range of development issues, such as health, agriculture and the environment. An associative radio station is defined as an “urban,

![Figure 1. Source: Afrobarometer](https://www.afrobarometer.org)

See www.afrobarometer.org. This survey was a nationally representative, random, stratified probability sample. In 2008 it consisted of 1,232 adult Malians.
Community radios in Mali face significant challenges stemming from difficult economic conditions coupled with outdated and limited technical equipment. These difficulties have had a significant impact on the quality of content, and many stations have been reduced to entertainment programming.

Pre-urban or rural radio station of which the main activities are essentially dedicated to the satisfaction of community needs” (Maïga, 2010: 57). As distinct from commercial private radio, community radio stations are non-profit and do not generate most of their income from advertisements. Such radio stations must broadcast national and local programs for 70 percent of their airtime and must promote local culture. However, the distinction in Mali’s radio market between commercial and other license categories (community and especially associative licenses) is blurred in practice. Community radio stations in Mali are governed by the same regulations as private, commercial stations, and are subject to the same restrictions in relation to specifications, charges and taxes. Panos West Africa lauds community radio in Mali, claiming that the widespread creation of community stations and the abundant use of national languages on the air give radio a key role in terms of social mobilization. They further argue that access to information in local languages has a considerable impact for populations in terms of quality of life and involvement in the management of their communities’ affairs (Maïga, 2010). The development of this sector is widely recognized as one of the factors assisting a successful decentralization process, through its ability to provide citizens with a venue for public discussion and to facilitate interactions between citizens and local levels of government.

Figure 2 shows the popularity of radio among the Malian public.

All private radios (commercial and associative) share an annual subsidy from the state. This subsidy was 200,000,000 CFA in 2008 for the entire media sector. Private radios receive 75,000,000 through the Union des Radios et Televisions Libres du Mali [URTEL] (Poncin, 2009). This total amount has remained the same since 1996, despite the fact that the number of private radios has increased dramatically. As a result, the amount of this subsidy is decreasing for each station each year. Community radios in Mali face significant challenges stemming from difficult economic conditions.

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5 Known in English as the Union of Free Radios and Television in Mali.

![Figure 2. How often do you listen to radio for news? (percent of respondents Mali). Source: Afrobarometer](image-url)
Currently, radio stations receive some limited support from international donors, mostly for training and equipment or to fund specific development campaigns, such as infant malnutrition, agriculture or HIV/AIDS, but this amount has been drastically reduced since the initial democratization period.

conditions coupled with outdated and limited technical equipment. For example, due to the very low salaries paid to radio journalists and hosts, they are often also employed by NGOs, so that they tend to leave radio stations once they receive training for full-time employment with these institutions. These difficulties have had a significant impact on the quality of content, and many stations have been reduced to entertainment programming (Ibid.).

There is only one television station, Mali TV, which is state-run via the Office de Radiodiffusion Television du Mali (ORTM), which also runs six public radio stations. ORTM’s television service is very limited, reaching only 35 percent of the population and having just 15 percent geographical coverage. However, Africable has been running an unlicensed service that enables Malians to access foreign stations for many years. Malians have access to a variety of satellite channels through Africable, and other multichannel operators such as Multi-Canal and Télé Klédu. However, these operators primarily televise content from ORTM or overseas broadcasters. The only original content that is produced and broadcast in Mali comes from ORTM. Attempts by private companies such as Télé Klédu to obtain licenses have been effectively stalled by bureaucratic red tape. Mali is still a far way away from liberalization of the television sector. Figure 3 (below) shows the relatively low level of television usage in Mali.

International reports consistently rate Mali’s public broadcasting sector far below international standards (Freedom House, USAID, AMB). Widespread criticism of ORTM is largely due to the fact that there are no structures in place to guarantee its independence from the State: The majority of its annual budget comes from State funding and the board of ORTM is selected without the involvement of civil society and is chaired by a designated minister (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010). While the organization can be applauded for its radio coverage, which reaches 75 percent of the population and 65 percent of the geographical area of Mali, it does not adequately represent the needs of its listeners. For

| How often do you watch television for news? (percent of respondents) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Few times a month        | Every Day                |
|                         | Less than once a month   |
|                         | Never                    |
|                         | Few times a week         |
| 2001: 6                 | 2005: 9                  |
| 2008: 8                 | 2001: 5                  |
| 2005: 8                 | 2008: 10                 |
| 2001: 5                 | 2005: 15                 |
| 2008: 17               | 2001: 36                 |

Figure 3. How often do you watch television for news? (percent of respondents Mali). Source: Afrobarometer
instance, the African Media Barometer states, “The national television station broadcasts news and opinions mostly from a Government point of view...There is a need for courageous leadership to inspire the spirit of modern public service” (Ibid: 111).

Access to the Internet is developing, both in terms of infrastructure expansion, cost reduction and users’ familiarization with the technology. There are also partnerships between Internet sites and newspapers, radio, and TV community centers. The public has free access to national and international online media, and the state does not seek to block or filter Internet content. However, Mali’s media has a very small Internet presence, and only major news outlets like l’Essor have Internet sites. More importantly, Internet access is expensive and, given that most Malians live on the equivalent of less than one U.S. dollar per day, paying for service at a community media center is a luxury they cannot afford.

Figure 4 shows growing Internet use in Mali but still very low usage compared with the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) [World Bank, 2009].

Currently, radio stations receive some limited support from international donors, mostly for training and equipment or to fund specific development campaigns, such as infant malnutrition, agriculture or HIV/AIDS, but this amount has been drastically reduced since the initial democratization period. International funds are primarily channeled through the Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres (URTEL), who distributes them to its 200 + member stations, accounting for 2/3 of all private radios. The organization is responsible for regulating radio and television operations in Mali and performs many functions that include: training, networking, distribution of radio programming, radio industry lobbying, and organizing a biannual industry festival called Waves of Liberty (Ondes de Liberté). URTEL also facilitates the coordination of donor assistance by participating on the Support Committee of Radio for Development (Comité d’Appui a la Radio pour le Développement or CARD). The donors and implementing organizations involved in CARD include: Africare, CIDA, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Helen Keller International, Panos Institute, Plan International, Population Media Center, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID. The fact that URTEL has a virtual monopoly on donor support has been a point of contention among member and non-member stations and associations, who feel that funds are not allocated equally or transparently. This has prompted some associations, notably Radio Kayira and L’Alliance des Radios Communautaires du Mali (ARCOM)7 to leave URTEL altogether.

The domestic conditions, which prioritize the radio sector, coupled with donor support, have led advocates to claim that Mali “enjoys among the best radio services on the African continent” (USAID, 2007: 5). While this may be true in terms of the regulatory environment and the sheer number of stations, there are many factors that confound this claim. For instance, the market is saturated with private stations that are unable to sustain themselves outside of donor funding, business models are poorly developed, and stations are clustered near urban centers, leaving the most rural and hostile areas of the north largely out of reach. While Mali’s media sector is clearly exemplary on the African continent in many respects, it nonetheless still faces a number of

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7 Known in English as the Alliance for Community Radios in Mali.
significant challenges, including: legal issues, working conditions, lack of professionalism, proliferation of media associations, lack of business know-how and gender disparities.

**Legal Issues**

Mali is lauded for its press freedoms. Indeed, it has one of the most liberal media systems on the entire African continent. Mali’s Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, including freedom of the media. Article 4 stipulates that: “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, cult, opinion, expression, and creation in the respect of the law” (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010: 80). Article 7 reads, “The freedom of the press is recognized and guaranteed. It exercises itself in the conditions fixed by the law” (Ibid.). However, the law limits freedom of expression with regard to statements inciting national, racial or religious hatred and such statements are punishable by law. This is problematic in that such statements are obviously open to interpretation as evidenced by the arrest and detainment of a Radio Kayira journalist for allegedly inciting riots in December, 2009 (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

Global press freedom indices decry that criminal punishments for libel still exist under the 1993 press law and, despite improvements to the law in 2000, journalists accused of libel are still presumed guilty (Freedom House, 2011). Despite the law, there have not been any prosecutions under it since 2007. In article 38, defamation is defined as any allegation or charge striking a blow at the honor or reputation of a person or organization. Accused journalists must prove that they did not defame; the plaintiff does not have to prove defamation. Nonetheless, many associations continue to lobby to have libel removed as a criminal offense given that the threat of prosecution creates an environment conducive to self-censorship. There are currently no laws in place to protect confidential sources of information (although this is not a major concern for media freedom as journalists are not compelled to reveal their sources and so far no journalist has been forced to do so), nor are there legal provisions to protect the media from political interference.

The media in Mali are exempt from taxes and this is generally seen as a token of the government’s appreciation of the role of the media. While this may be seen to be an appreciation of the media, the current government could expect favorability and support in return. The public can access positive legal documents, but not certain information that may be damaging to the current government (IREX, 2009). Again, while Malian journalists may enjoy freedom of speech, the limits

Farm Radio headquarters, Bamako. (credit: Tara Susman-Peña)
Lack of professionalism is probably the most significant challenge facing the media sector in Mali. Most training is received on-the-job or through short-term donor-supported workshops designed to provide basic journalistic training. There is no professional training center or school of journalism in the country.

Working Conditions

Overall, working conditions in the media sector are very difficult. Journalists are paid low salaries compared to the cost of living, and typically only have access to very basic equipment. There is an inequality of salaries between the public sector and the private sector. For journalists from the radio sector, the monthly salary is around 30,000 CFA (USD63) for the private sector and 50,000 CFA (USD 105) for the public. For the written press, it is around 75,000 CFA (USD 156) and 100,000 CFA (USD210) respectively (Poncin, 2009). Only a few privileged people have social security. The large discrepancy in salaries between the public and private sectors, where the highest paid wage of a private journalist is equal to the base salary of journalists in the public sector, is a significant issue in Mali. There is a terrible temptation for journalists to favor working in the public sector, which continues to be marred by heavy government influence. While Mali’s constitution guarantees freedom of expression, there are some reports that suggest that in practice journalists, activists, and human rights defenders may be fearful to enact these freedoms. Socio-cultural issues and economic conditions significantly restrict such freedoms, and the state and religious groups have been known to pressure and threaten media organizations. For example, during Mali’s 50th independence anniversary ceremony in 2010, the Chinese president visited the country and public demonstrations were forbidden. Journalists had enormous difficulty obtaining accreditation to cover the ceremony and most were prevented from doing so (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010).

Although journalists and stakeholders interviewed for this report did not indicate that they were in any way afraid to exercise freedom of expression, there are recent instances where media organizations have been instrumental in holding the government to account. For example, earlier this year, wide-scale reporting of the corruption and embezzlement of foreign funds by the previous health minister led to his resignation and to international pressure for greater accountability. In 2009, the press pressured the government to release information on how funds from the privatization of the country’s telecommunications company were being used (Freedom House, 2010). Some interview respondents lauded the independent media for exposing the scandal; however, such critical investigative reporting on behalf of journalists and media organizations is rare. While journalists generally work in a safe environment, the MSI (Media Sustainability Index)/Mali stresses that they are not free from aggression. The aforementioned examples of the arrests of journalists who represent radically oppositional organizations are cases in point. Furthermore, legal reactions to the harassment of journalists are not firm (IREX, 2009).

Lack of Professionalism

Lack of professionalism is probably the most significant challenge facing the media sector in Mali. Most training is received on-the-job or through short-term donor-supported workshops designed to provide basic journalistic training. The Maison de la Presse [literally the press
house] and the official broadcast union, URTEL, as well as ARCOM, are the primary organizations involved in coordinating and implementing donor-supported media trainings. There is no professional training center or school of journalism in the country. Typically, once journalists receive training from these organizations, they often leave the sector to work for NGOs, which pay a much higher salary. The educational level of most of “journalists” is very low and corresponds to a high school level of education. The lack of adequate training facilities seriously compromises the quality of the journalism produced. While a well-known code of journalistic principles exists, many journalists and media institutions disregard them. Unethical practices, such as breach of privacy, insults, extortion and defamation are commonplace, and journalists often fail to double-check facts and sources. A great deal of Mali’s journalism focuses on seminars and public events with little space for investigative reporting, and editorial lines are often flexible, depending on the interests of the media body concerned. Journalists are often bribed with gifts or per diems to attend and report on events, a practice that is especially difficult to eradicate given the precarious economic realities that most are faced with.

**Proliferation of Media Associations**

There are more than 50 associations and professional networks created to address some of the difficulties faced by the media sector, most of which are members of the Maison de la Presse. One of the primary reasons for the proliferation of these networks is that donors often require that assistance be channeled through associations rather than individuals in order to increase accountability. Reports suggest that this system “has spawned a proliferation of associations across the country which have come about not for the economic and social benefits of working collectively...but simply so that people can gain access to assistance” (CDA, 2010: 21). Within the media sector, conflicts within and between these associations have largely undermined their efforts. There is evidence that associations are in competition with one another, and few synergies and collaborative efforts exist between them. This conflict was best demonstrated when speaking to members from Radio Kayira, ARCOM and URTEL. The Radio Kayira network has publicly denounced URTEL, claiming that poor management and lack of transparency has violated the founding principles of the organization and has undermined its role as a union to support free broadcasters in Mali. In an interview with Mamadou Diarra of Kayira, a great deal of the discussion centered on the network’s view of the incompetence and corruption of URTEL. Similarly, when URTEL was asked about Radio Kayira and ARCOM, they claimed to know nothing about the networks or their activities and declined to speak further on the issue. Other respondents suggest that many of the associations work on the same themes and issues and are in competition with one another to obtain funds for short-term projects and training workshops.

**Unfavorable Policy Environment for Media Business**

A significant challenge to the media sector is related to the unfavorable environment for media organizations to develop business management practices. While media diversity is officially promoted by the government, the advertising market is dominated by the state and two large telecommunications companies and is “the protected hunting ground of the Malian Agency of Press and Publicity (AMAP)” (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2010: 35). While the government does not directly influence editorial policy, reports suggest that shares of the advertising market are often dependent upon a favorable state-client relationship. As a result, media organizations often have few opportunities to develop income generation strategies to sustain them over the long term.

One of the difficulties in expanding the advertising market is due to the fact that audience research is extremely underdeveloped in the media sector. Calculating audiences has not become a part of broadcast practices by individual media institutions or at national levels. Most media organizations do not have any structures in place to measure their audiences, and those that do have conducted one-off audience surveys paid for by foreign donors to assess the impact of a particular campaign. As a result of these challenges, many media organizations are not sustainable over the long-term and are in continual struggle for survival. The lack of business know-how is further confounded by contextual factors, especially the impoverished state of many of Mali’s media organizations. Many Malians enter into the media industry with insufficient resources, and establish enterprises that are unable to make monthly ends meet much less invest in market research. This is the case in the print sector, too, where print runs are often arbitrary and insignificant due to lack of financial security.

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9 See Appendix 3 for organizational profiles of URTEL and Maison de la Presse du Mali.

10 See http://www.afribone.com/spip.php?article17462
Gender Issues

Finally, women are still underrepresented in the media sector. While the media does reflect a variety of different voices of Malian society, women remain a minority in the editorial sector and the main subjects covered are mostly of concern to men. There is an exception with the “Finzam-com network,” or “women’s network.” It runs seven “Radios Guintan” that promote women’s rights. The network was created and is led by Ramata Dia, a pioneer in press freedom and it employs mostly women.11

The number of women working in media is estimated to be around 2 percent. The underrepresentation of women in the media sector is mainly due to socio-cultural issues that confine women to secondary, subordinate roles. There are a growing number of women employed in media organizations in Mali, yet, despite claims suggesting equal opportunities, in reality few have any decision-making or leadership responsibilities. Women who are employed in media organizations typically fulfill roles as animators (hosts) or news-readers, and very few occupy editorial or management positions.

Given that women do not have a say in editorial decision-making in most organizations, there is significant inequality in the representation of their voices. This problem is exacerbated by women’s family obligations, which are often incompatible with the working hours of professional journalists. Moreover, a number of interview respondents indicated that women are simply not interested in working as journalists. This lack of interest is further exacerbated by ingrained social roles and responsibilities for women.

While respondents suggested that women have the same opportunities as men, women appear much more reticent in expressing their views. This was apparent during an interview with Association des Journalistes pour la Promotion du Professionnalisme (AJPP), 12 attended by a female journalist from Radio Fanaka, one of their member stations. The male representative from AJPP tended to answer most of the questions, even those specifically about women’s roles in media, which were deliberately directed at the female interviewee.

11 Hélène Poncin, personal communication, Sept 12, 2011.

12 Known in English as the Association of Journalists for the Promotion of Professionalism.
Mali media observer Thierry Perret observes that while the Malian press played a crucial role in the democratization process, the near-total freedom of expression and the lack of professional training for journalists combined with the emergence of electoral pluralism provided a breeding ground for corruption and opportunism.

A great deal of literature published about the media sector in Mali is written by development organizations for purposes of monitoring and evaluation, independent consultants, or media development organizations that conduct global studies, such as Freedom House, the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) and Reporters Without Borders. Academic literature on the media in West Africa is generally scant. While there is a small number of articles on the media in Mali published in French, and fewer in English, in general, studies that provide rich longitudinal or analytical data are limited. Furthermore, a great deal of the body of literature available in both French and English focuses on the community radio sector, such as the studies written by Bruce Girard (2007), Hélène Poncin (2009), Martin Faye (2005), Steve Buckley (2011) and Mary Myers (1997/1998/2000). While many of these articles are unable to give a larger picture of the media landscape in Mali, particularly the print media, they nonetheless provide some important insights with regard to donor interventions to support the media over the past 20 years.

A good place to begin is with Myers’ articles (Ibid.) on the establishment of independent radio, written during the democratization period and providing a context with which to compare more recent developments. Myers describes an exciting and vibrant beginning to independent radio in Mali, one that sprung its roots even before the wave of democracy began with small, homemade ‘pirate’ stations. Media pluralism in Mali began with a passion for self-expression and a spirit of political resistance that preceded donor interventions, constitutional freedoms and liberalization of the airwaves. Myers argues that this spirit was one of the factors that attracted donors in the first place, and they saw the burgeoning independent media (primarily radio) sector as a fundamental tool in the push toward democratization.

She explains that even after the pirate stations were legalized and the airwaves opened, the “anti-authority” character of community radios seems to have attracted NGO donors. For instance, the radical urban Radio Bamakan, based originally in Bamako, has not been short of donors, although it has been temporarily closed down on several occasions by the Malian government.” (Myers, 1999: 94)

Stations like Kayira, Bamakan and Liberté created loyal listener bases by virtue of controversial debate, but these stations suffered as a result of their political nature. For instance, Radio Kayira, a network of stations that openly criticizes the government, has suffered persecution on more than one occasion. In 2003, three Kayira journalists in Ségou were imprisoned for defamation when the station aired a program in which village peasants criticized bailiffs for seizing cattle due to debt. In 2006, six Kayira staff members in Niono were arrested when police shut down the station for operating without a license (Reporters Without Borders, 2006). In 2009, a Radio Kayira journalist was arrested for inciting riots in Kita through his radio program. He was pronounced not guilty when a judge discovered he was not on air the day he allegedly incited the riots (U.S. Department of State, 2010).

In a contemporary media environment where saturation of the independent radio sector has created stiff competition among radio stations for donor funding,
number of people feel that this spirit of political resistance and anti-authoritarianism has waned. The IREX media sustainability index (MSI) argues that there is a decline in the initial spirit of the sector as a whole, citing a recent lack of political will: “There is a favorable (political and legal) environment, although many believe that the political willpower that fueled the first hours of the democratic development of the media is weakening.” (IREX, 2007: 207) Long-time Mali media observer Thierry Perret notes a similar trend. He suggests that while the Malian press played a crucial role in the democratization process, the near-total freedom of expression and the lack of professional training for journalists combined with the emergence of electoral pluralism provided a breeding ground for corruption and opportunism.

Perret argues that this is the state of the media sector today: “As increasing numbers of unqualified journalists and amateur radio stations have joined the fray, the media sector has become less and less professional. Attempts to impose some manner of order—by outside lending agencies, national regulatory bodies, and within the profession itself—have for the most part failed.” (Perret, 2005: 20) In a similar vein, Cartmell et al. claim that many of the problems with contemporary journalistic practice stem from the fact that Mali’s media and communications networks devolved from being completely-government controlled in the 1990s. They argue, “Malian media specialists need to break completely free from their history of a government-controlled press system to a democratic system focused on state accountability to the citizens of the country and to facilitate a sustainable democratic process.” (Cartmell et al., 2008: 113). Perret, Cartmell et al. and Myers all argue that economic roadblocks, such as a poor advertising base, low purchasing power due to poverty and a poor distribution network, continue to inhibit the development of the media in Mali.

The corpus of literature that deals with the media environment in Mali since the democratization period generally tends to focus on the following themes: press freedoms (including media law, policy and regulation), impact and evaluation of donor programs, and sustainability (including business practices).

Press Freedom Barometers and Indices

The Media Sustainability Index (MSI) defines 4 levels of sustainability: A score of 0-1 indicates an “unsustainable, anti-free press;” 1-2 is defined as “an unsustainable mixed system;” 2-3 is “near sustainability;” and 3-4 is considered “sustainable, professional and free.” MSI rates media systems according to the following categories: free speech, professional journalism, plurality of news sources, business management, and supporting institutions. Mali received its highest score for free speech (2.32/4) and lowest for business management (1.53). MSI notes that in recent years, ‘commitment has dampened regarding ensuring the legal support for freedom of the press’ (IREX, 2009: 235).

The African Media Barometer, on the other hand, rates Mali 4.9/5 for its constitutional and legal promotion of freedom of expression. However, it gives the country a low score (2.4/5) for enabling citizens and journalists to assert these rights without fear. It also gives Mali a very low score (1.3/5) for having laws that limit freedom of expression, citing a law that punishes for libel, and a law that determines which types of information citizens should not have access to, such as government and national defense deliberations (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010).

The Freedom House index gives Mali the highest score of all the indices, rating it a 24 out of 100 (with 0 being the best and 100 the worst), not far below Australia, France and Spain (Freedom House, 2011). There are significant reasons to take this report with a grain of salt, not the least of which is the high score awarded for the economic environment in Mali. Freedom House scores the economic environment according to the following criteria: restrictions on distribution, government control, ownership distribution, payment of journalists by private sources, and the overall economic situation. Freedom House gives Mali a score of 8/30, just shy of that given to France for the same category. However, scholars and practitioners condemn Mali’s media on a number of these points: journalists receive low wages and take per diems, the government controls the advertising market, and the economic situation negatively impacts the sustainability of many media outlets.

In comparing indicators for freedom of expression and of the press, it becomes clear that Mali is a mixed bag

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13 Mali’s score for freedom of speech is down slightly from 2007 where it received a score of 2.65 and up slightly in business management, which scored 1.46 in 2007. However, in general, the trends have remained the same over the 3-year period of MSI evaluation.

14 It is interesting to compare these scores with AMB assessments form previous years. For constitutional guarantees, AMB gave Mali a score of 4.0 in 2006 and 4.4 in 2009. In terms of exercising freedom of expression without fear, Mali received a score of 2.7 in 2006 and 2.3 in 2008. Protecting confidential sources has dropped significantly from 2.6 in 2006 and 2.9 in 2009.

15 Mali received an 8 out of a possible 30 points for the economic environment, with 0 being the highest possible score and 30 the lowest. See Freedom House, 2011.
of positives and negatives. Constitutional guarantees are crucial for ensuring a healthy, democratic and plural media system. Malian journalists, for the most part, work without fear of persecution, a right that most journalists on the African continent are still struggling for. The Malian government has ratified international agreements that support freedom of information and has incorporated many of their principles into policies and laws. The government supports independent newspapers and broadcasters and does not restrict access to foreign media. Even though private television stations are not allowed, the state does not currently exercise this regulation: a private television channel called Africable, which primarily broadcasts foreign programs, has been operating since 2004 without a license. This lack of political pressure or control is illustrated in the following chart (Figure 5) using 2008 Freedom House data, showing consistently better scores for Mali as compared with the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa between 1997 and 2008.16

However, there are a number of indications that Mali’s laudatory status should be tempered. Cultural and social norms and taboos related to interreligious problems, gender disparities, politics and the private lives of high profile individuals significantly hamper the ability of citizens and journalists to speak freely (Friedrich

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16 See http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedompress. Freedom House’s scores have been rescaled here, so that higher numbers reflect better scores.

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Impact and Evaluation of Donor Programs

A great deal of the literature that does exist is in the form of evaluations done to assess the impact of specific donor programs and to explore the positive effects of media campaigns on behavior change.

For instance, both the U.S. demographic health survey and Save the Children have conducted wide-scale listener surveys to assess the uptake of HIV/AIDS radio campaigns (Myers, 1997). While many of these evaluations do not serve to provide an overall view of the media landscape, some of them offer valuable insights.
For instance, Oumar Sangaré, former editor-in-chief of Mali Radio and Television (RTM) and current coordinator for the Mali-South Rural Radio Revival Project, describes an initiative implemented by the Malian government with funding from UNESCO, The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in 1993. The project set out to assess all radio and television FM frequencies in the country. The purpose of the study was to promote “neighborhood communication” and enable rural citizens to access the media, leading to UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)-funded projects to support the development of rural radio between 1993 and 1995. The first stage of the project aimed to establish sites for rural stations and train “radio agents” to manage them. The first stations were established at Niono, Kadiolo, Bandiagara, and Kidal after community members conducted research to determine the best sites for the stations. The second stage of the project operated between 1997 and 2000 with support from the Dutch government and the FAO and included the establishment of four more stations.

The primary goal of the program was to train community members in all aspects of operating the stations, including setting up management committees, content production, technical skills, anflugred audience research (Sangaré, 2001). Station staff was trained to create audience profiles, assess comprehension levels and establish listenership patterns to build platforms for programming. In a 2008 report about this study, Farm Radio International writes that “Today (in 2008) the focus of such evaluations is on establishing listenership patterns and preferences, and determining whether or not farming groups change their farming practices as a result” of such rural radio program resources (Farm Radio International, 2008: 6).

This was an innovative program focused on training station staff and community members to evaluate the impact of programming content on the lives and development of their communities, a key ingredient in promoting long-term sustainability. However, these initiatives do not appear to have had much of a life outside of the project period, ending in 2000, and have not become standard practice in media development initiatives. This trend is noted by Myers, who writes “listener surveys and impact assessments are infrequent have not been done methodically or over a wide range of radio stations and countries.” (Myers, 2000: 94).

While donor evaluations and assessments are indeed important to ensure that projected outcomes for particular programs are achieved, they have little impact on the activities of broadcasters and the development of communities. Even projects that claim to be participatory rarely include the participation of broadcasters and community members in evaluations. Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) carried out an interesting study in 2009 looking at civil society and community perception of donor funding in Mali. The report indicates that one of the primary complaints on the part of interview subjects was a lack of participation in the evaluation processes of donors: “Donors and INGOs, for example, prepare their reports and send them to headquarters or financial supporters, but do not send them to communities for their feedback and input. Information about results achieved, problems encountered, unintended impacts and expenses incurred is often not shared. It was the view of many people that such practices could contribute to a lack of ownership and could jeopardize the sustainability of projects in the long run.” (CDA, 2009: 19)

Business Management and Sustainability

Most of the literature that deals with sustainability or business management practices focuses on the private radio sector; however a few studies, such as the African Media Barometer, also address the sustainability of the private press. Many broadcasters have created innovative methods of generating income. As Craig Tower (2005) notes in his study of private radio in Mali, some stations have developed networks of listener clubs whose members contribute to station revenues through purchasing annual membership cards in return for a discount on announcements. Listener clubs also contribute to the identity of the station. They give suggestions and criticisms regarding content and provide ideas about themes and subjects that programs should address on the air (Poncin, 2009).

Nonetheless, despite the cost-effectiveness of many of these stations, most remain plagued by financial instability. For most community radios, “sponsorship by development agencies presents the best hope of sustained support.” (Myers, 2000: 99) However, as Bruce Girard argues, the community radio sector in Mali is less donor dependent than other sectors: “All but eight of its 121 community radio stations were financed locally, generally with a local development tax and/or with support from a local NGO (Girard, 2007: 8). Others argue that donor funding is indeed crucial to the sustainability of the private media, but that citing donor dependency is overly simplistic. Marie Soleil Frère argues, “(Donor funding) is typically not budget support but support
Although the question of donor dependence is unclear, it is apparent that the media sector suffers from a reliance on donor-funded projects and, as a result, is generally thought to be unsustainable. Most critics argue that improved business practices would go far to enable a more democratic and vibrant media sector to flourish.

Business management practices, including audience and market research, are typically condemned by studies that assess the media landscape in Mali. Myers wrote in 2000 that listener surveys were infrequent, and this is still the case for the majority of broadcasters in the country today. The situation has not changed in the interim 11 years. In the 2010 Media Sustainability Index, IREX writes, “Rarely does true market research precede the creation of a press outlet in Mali...There are no reliable statistics on the activities of the media” (IREX, 2010: 239). Furthermore, management practices, such as marketing and accounting, are virtually non-existent at most private stations. Similarly, the MSI Mali report states, “The term “business plan” is unheard of to most”(Ibid.)

There is no organization in charge of measuring audience ratings or media distribution. The existing polling institute, InfoStat, occasionally conducts research, made to order, concerning newspapers, radio and television stations. InfoStat conducted two measurements of radio audiences in the Bamako region in 2004 and 2007, which profiled audience demographics and listening times; however they have been unable to establish a rating service to attract advertisers (Koenig, 2007). While larger commercial stations like Radio Klédu in Bamako have well-established systems to measure their audiences, the majority of stations cannot verify who is listening to them. All of the studies reviewed insist that better business management practices and audience research are essential to improve the Malian private media sector. Although the question of donor dependence is unclear, it is apparent that the media sector suffers from a reliance on donor-funded projects and, as a result, is generally thought to be unsustainable. Most critics argue that improved business practices would go far to enable a more democratic and vibrant media sector to flourish.

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17 Personal communication, September 2011
Donor-Funded Media Development

The Early Democratization Period

Donor funding of media was at its height during the early democratization period in Mali. During this period (1991-1998), the media were seen by government and donors as crucial to assisting decentralization processes. Donors perceived the need to enhance democracy through increasing the diversity and plurality of media in Mali: “The first phase of media development in Mali was a push to create infrastructure and new news structures.”¹⁸ As decentralization took hold and decision-making and governmental bodies were created at local levels, there was a marked need to establish a media sector that enabled communities to voice their needs and interests to these new structures, and to ensure transparency and accountability. Many organizations felt that the establishment of media organizations that were autonomous from the state was crucial, and donors focused their efforts on supporting the development of private radio.

The major donors to the media during this period were bilateral and multilateral development organizations, notably the French and Germany Embassies, Panos, the UN and USAID. One of the earliest donors involved in specifically building the private radio sector

¹⁸ Personal communication, Modibo Coulibaly, Bamako, February 2011

This batik depicting the names of international donors and partners hangs in the conference room of the Union des Radio-diffusions et Télévisions libres du Mali (URTEL), Bamako. (credit: Tara Susman-Peña)
in Mali was USAID. Martine Keita of USAID described the agency’s support to the Malian media:

Given the context of Mali (high level of illiteracy, low levels of education, multiple vernacular languages, oral traditions, little access to electricity in some areas), USAID has strongly supported community radio over the last 15 years. They have equipped radios, trained staff (journalism), done management training and technical training. Radio was used to help support the decentralization process. It was a participatory process that way. Radio informs people, and people really listen, it’s quite striking in rural areas.19

Figure 6 (below) shows USAID’s relatively high overall investment in Mali, as compared with their average for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This includes a long-running commitment to the independent media sector.

Radio continues to be the medium of choice amongst donors. It is inexpensive, relatively easy to use, can reach people in areas with little electrification, and can disseminate news and information in areas with multiple languages and high levels of illiteracy: “The (radio’s) emphasis on local languages makes a huge difference and is really important. Only 20 percent of the people in Mali speak fluent French. Some radio stations broadcast in several local languages.”20

19 Personal communication, Martine Keita, Bamako, February 2011
20 Personal communication, Moussa Doumbia, Bamako, February 2011

The government of Mali also prioritized the development of media structures during this time, and established a body called “Mission for Decentralization.” An important part of this mission was to improve communication between the government and local communities, so they worked with local journalists, civil society groups and foreign donors, including the UN, to facilitate this. One journalism association that developed during this time to assist in carrying out this mission was the Association des Journalistes pour la Promotion du Professionnalisme (AJPP):

“The mission was very important in the democratization period. The state created many small governing bodies (as part of the decentralization mission). Panos became a partner, Germans, UNDP, UNICEF, U.S. embassy, French embassy. They worked with the embassies and the structures of the UN because it was the beginning of the democracy in Mali.”21

Donor-funded Initiatives

There have been a number of important donor-funded initiatives to strengthen the media over the past 20 years. Many interview respondents indicated that the creation of the Maison de la Presse was one of the initiatives that has had the greatest impact. The Mai-

21 Personal communication, Ibrahim Keita, Bamako, February 2011

Figure 6. Total USAID investment in Mali 1990 – 2004
son de la Presse du Mali was established in Bamako in 1995 as a center of training, information, and networking for members of the Malian press. It acts as a confederation for the other media organizations in Mali, both public and private. The Maison de la Presse was originally funded by multiple donors, including the German Embassy, the U.S. Embassy, the American Cultural Center, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Panos Institute, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Donors viewed the establishment of a press house as an important step in ensuring that freedom of information and the autonomy of journalists would be upheld. Today, donor funding is less substantial and is provided primarily by the French Embassy.

According to Makan Koné, president of the Maison de la Presse, donors withdrew funding because they did not see the results of training initiatives: “In the beginning people put a lot of money into training, but...there were no clearly defined results. We are trying to find a way to change this.” Koné also attributes a lack of good management and insufficient evaluation as reasons for limited donor support: “If international funds are well-managed they can have a good impact... (but) there have to be evaluations and follow-ups made.” Furthermore, he claims that donor initiatives can only go so far to strengthen the media in a country with no permanent training center or school of journalism.

The Maison de la Presse continues to organize a number of activities intended to strengthen the professional journalism sector – they organize training (courses, workshops and seminars) for media practitioners, generally at the request of partners, link journalists with state bodies and NGOs, and provide access to the Internet, a library, and a radio production studio. The Maison de la Presse also purports to act as a union for journalists: “(Maison de la Presse) will help defend journalists who have problems and they assist in drafting new broadcast and press laws” (Ibid.). However, the extent to which the press house is able to fulfill the role of a journalists’ union in practice remains unclear. Rokia Ba of UNESCO feels that Mali is still in desperate need of a union whose sole function is the protection and support of journalists. While the press house supports journalists through trainings and resources, they do not provide legal assistance or protection. There is one group—the Union Nationale des Journalistes du Mali

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22 Personal communication, Makan Koné, Bamako, February 2011

23 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
(National Journalists Union of Mali)—that advocates for journalists and speaks out on behalf of harassed colleagues (Fitzgerald, n.d.). However, given that not a single interview respondent mentioned this organization, it is unclear how active they are or how many journalists are members.

Other important donor funded activities include the establishment of a broadcast union—Union des Radiodiffusions et Télévisions libres du Mali (URTEL)—and the creation of community media centers (CMCs). URTEL acts as an umbrella organization for independent radio and television stations in Mali and they provide a link between these organizations and the state. The majority of radio stations in the country are members of URTEL. While some respondents indicated that the establishment of a broadcast union was a positive development for independent media, many organizations criticize the actions of URTEL and question its transparency. Some media associations have renounced their membership of URTEL altogether, notably Radio Kayira and the stations that formed ARCOM.24

In 2000, 10 community radios left URTEL to create ARCOM. This organization presents itself as an apolitical grouping of more than 50 radios throughout the country. It is a voluntary organization whose goal is to share technical and professional knowledge between animators, technicians, and journalists (Hélène Poncin, personal communication, September 2011).

Although Internet access is still growing in Mali, the creation of Internet infrastructure and the establishment of a number of community access centers were central to connecting Malian media with international organizations and further enabling a greater number of people to access news and information. USAID was instrumental in working with the government to bring the Internet to Mali in 1996. Martine Keita explains, “Mali needed the Internet – there was not much information available beforehand. Even the knowledge of people producing information (journalists) was quite low. Internet can help strengthen their knowledge.”25 Keita believes that this is an important sector to continue to support:

Farmers email their kids outside in the U.S. using inventive, Malian solutions. They go to the Internet cafes and ask the manager to write the email, come back for a response and manager reads it to them. It’s amazing that farmers who are illiterate understand how to use the technology; come up with solutions specific to their context that we could have never anticipated.

USAID insists that Internet technology should be further developed in Mali with the help of donors, and they are working to link radio with the Internet. USAID has “installed several radio stations with internet. We worked with UNESCO and collaborated on some projects in this area. We equipped small community multimedia centers (CMCs) in rural areas” (Ibid.). A CMC combines community broadcasting with community telecenter facilities. USAID has funded 13 community telecenters throughout Mali. However, their impact and the percentage of people within reach using them is unclear. Some reports have suggested that, despite the presence of CMCs, user fees are too expensive for rural Malians to afford and the Internet remains a tool used by youth and elites. The AMB states, “The internet is mostly an urban phenomenon that attracts largely the Diaspora and the youth. In the capital, the average, monthly cost of Internet connection is relatively expensive at about 25,000 CFA (around $50 USD). This is unaffordable to the majority of citizens who earn less than US $1 per day” (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2010, 2010: 27). Despite efforts to improve Internet access in Mali, usage is very low in the country, at 1.8 percent (250,000 out of 14,000,000) [UNSW Wikispaces, 2011].

While USAID feels that the establishment of community media centers is an important step to improving access to the Internet in Mali, CMCs have received a fair bit of criticism. Issues related to illiteracy, language and ac-

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24 In 2000, 10 community radios left URTEL to create ARCOM. This organization presents itself as an apolitical grouping of more than 50 radios throughout the country. It is a voluntary organization whose goal is to share technical and professional knowledge between animators, technicians, and journalists (Hélène Poncin, personal communication, September 2011).

25 Personal communication, Martine Keita, Bamako, February 2011.
cess to training have confounded the ability for CMCs to have a real impact in Mali to date. In her article on a community telecenter in Timbuktu, Stella Hughes (2003) describes some of these challenges. UNESCO equipped a community telecenter with radio equipment in order to enable local radio stations to make use of new ICTs and start radio browsing programs. However, the radio staff did not see the benefit of Internet technology and did not use the center. Moreover, computer training was insufficient to allow radio station staff to browse the Internet with ease. This was further exacerbated by a lack of content on the web in local vernacular and insufficient technical support to fix and maintain computers. The extent to which new ICTs and community telecenters can improve the lives of rural Malians remains to be seen.

The Role of Foreign Donors in Supporting the Media

Foreign donors originally funded a great deal of the infrastructure and the start-up of new media organizations, in addition to training new journalists to fill positions in the rapidly expanding sector. Donors no longer fund infrastructure or the establishment of new organizations, but are primarily involved in providing training and equipment, as well as supporting particular campaigns. Coulibaly describes this trend:

From 1991-1998 funds were primarily used to train people and the creation of new organizations. After 1998, they were theme-based. For example, UNICEF works primarily on awareness campaigns like vaccinations, female genital mutilation.26

Bilateral and multilateral donors typically channel funding through international NGOs who implement projects in partnership with local NGOs. International NGOs often work with media associations and umbrella organizations such as URTEL and the Maison de la Presse du Mali to reach out to journalists about specific campaigns: "We have worked with donors on the creation of thematic trainings around issues of health, education, and the environment. We want to help the members better understand these issues, so we propose trainings for these projects to funders such as USAID, UNICEF, Frederich Ebert Foundation and Helen Keller Foundation."27

The following examples illustrate the role that foreign donors and NGOs have played in the Malian media since the democratization period in 1998. Some examples of recent donor funded initiatives include:

- USAID funded the establishment of Radio Bélékan and, along with UNESCO, supported the creation of a community media center (CMC) in Kati (Koulikoro Region). USAID continues to fund the station and CMC in technical resources and trainings. Radio Bélékan receives other funds to help to train technicians to maintain the equipment received from donors and helps them maintain it.28

- The UN (through UNESCO and UNICEF) primarily gives support for training journalists around specific campaigns. Support for particular programs has been successful, especially in the health sector. One example is the campaign for vaccinations run by UNICEF.

- UNICEF runs media health caravans to rural areas. The health caravans are intended to help local radio hosts and community advocates to better understand and disseminate information related to health campaigns. UNICEF will train rural communicators, often those who work at community radio stations in the area, to inform their communities about health issues such as child and maternal health, HIV/AIDS, infant malnutrition, hygiene, and disease prevention (see Appendices for more details).

- URTEL partners with donors to train journalists to report on specific development issues, such as governance and accountability, health, human rights, and education.

- Coordination des Réseaux des Journalistes et Communicateurs pour la Population et le Développement (The Network for Journalists and Communicators for Population and Development or CORJCOD)29 produces programs on maternal health, promotion on national policy for population, women’s rights, and gender equality. Each year UNFPA gives them funding. In 2010, UNFPA gave 100 million CFA (roughly $210,000 USD) to support their activities.30

In contrast with organizations that are strictly donors and channel funding through various means, foreign NGOs are primarily involved as partners with local media associations, NGOs and civil society organizations. They often provide journalism training and technical

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26 Personal communication, Modibo Coulibaly, Bamako, February 2011
27 Personal communication, Isae Sombro, Bamako, February 2011
28 Personal communication, Martine Keita, Bamako, February 2011
29 Personal communication, Lamine Togola, Bamako, February 2011
30 Personal communication, Djigui Keita, Bamako, February 2011
The Media Map Project: Mali 1990-2010

support to partners, as well as funding project support for particular campaigns. For instance:

- ARCOM has a relationship with Panos, who provides equipment and technical assistance to member stations. ARCOM assisted Radio Fanaka in Fana to receive funds from Panos for a particular project aimed at sharing content with two other stations. “The stations produced programs to give to Radio Fanaka via cassette and Radio Fanaka created digital productions to broadcast on other stations within the Panos network. As a result, the radio station staff learned to create digital audio.”31

- Panos connects civil society organizations with the media through trainings. They also establish listener clubs with civil society organizations and community radio stations. The clubs organize discussions around specific themes and the stations will organize roundtables to discuss these topics. “This empowers civil society organizations to give their opinion, and they also train the radio station staff in order to enable civil society organizations to have a voice.”32

In recent years, donors and NGOs have moved toward supporting particular programs that they deem relevant according to internal priorities and the priorities of multilateral organizations. Mamadou Diarra of Kayira explains, “Partnerships with INGOs are project-based in order to promote a specific initiative, like the rooftop gardens, which was established with Foundation pour Rosa Luxembourg.”33 Jacques Dez of Radio Klédu provided other recent examples of support targeted at the development of specific programs:

- “There is a German NGO – Fredericht Ebert Foundation – who supports the funding of a program

- “The Press Club” – where they bring journalists throughout Mali for training on issues that the foundation finds interesting – democracy, anti-corruption and so forth. The show is then broadcast on stations throughout Mali every two months.”34

- “An American organization, a feminist NGO, supports programs related to women in agriculture devoted to female journalists. They have three female journalists working for them. They are trained in agriculture, farming methods, etc. so they talk about agriculture.”35

Challenges

Although there are many instances where donor support has had a significant impact in strengthening the media in Mali and promoting freedom of expression, there are significant challenges and a great deal of space for improvement. Direct donor funding to the media sector remains crucially necessary to deal with the current challenges. Major challenges include: legislation, quantity over quality, shortage of equipment, lack of adequate training opportunities, shifting donor priorities, problems with program implementation, and poor management and corruption.

Legislation

Donors and international organizations have worked with the government to develop legislation to protect the independence of journalists and to guarantee freedom of expression. However, many organizations express the view that the current legislation still does not do enough to protect journalists. Libel laws cause journalists to self-censor. Keita of AJPP feels that donors need to do more to address policy and legislation issues:

“An issue that we would like donors to address more is the laws in place. The media need to have better [sense of] responsibility. There is also the question of security for journalists.

31 Personal communication, Mme. Koné, Bamako, February 2011
32 Personal communication, Khadidia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
33 Personal communication, Mamadou Diarra, Bamako, February 2011
34 Personal communication, Jacques Dez, Bamako, February 2011
35 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
While there is an abundance of training opportunities for established journalists, many courses that are sponsored by donors or umbrella organizations are theme-based and short-term. As a result, the trainings have done little to elevate the professionalism of the sector on a broad scale.

**Quantity over quality**

While it was crucial to invest in expanding the media sector during the early democratization period, many respondents expressed the view that there has been an emphasis on quantity over quality. This emphasis is reflected in the state of the radio sector today. Jacques Dez of Radio Klédu feels that the private radio market in particular is oversaturated: “[There are] problems with an oversaturated market. Equipment is not of a professional standard. There is interference between radio stations as each has their own mast.”

There is a strong sentiment among media practitioners that the private radio sector in Mali is unsustainable because many stations compete for limited resources.

Another challenge to strengthening the media sector results from competition between organizations and associations for a limited amount of funding. There are numerous umbrella organizations and journalists’ associations, many of which perform the same functions. Consequently, these associations tend to conflict rather than collaborate with one another.

- “In the current situation, donor funded projects are very rare and are spread out between many different organizations and networks.”
- “Each year since 1996 the government gives 200 million for media, but at first there were only a few media organizations, and now there are hundreds of radio and newspapers, but there are the same funds. The government has put criteria in place to access the funding, so organizations have smaller amounts. This doesn’t even enable them to pay the electricity or printing costs.”
- “All the different associations are very disorganized, and it would be better to gather everyone in one place. For example, ad selling is very disorganized, organizations usually get advertising based on contacts rather than [audience] research.”

**Lack of Training**

Although the number of media institutions grew at an exponential pace, there was little done in the way of training new journalists to fill the newsrooms. Media or-

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36 Personal communication, Ibrahim Keita, Bamako, February 2011
37 Personal communication, Jacques Dez, Bamako, February 2011
38 Personal communication, Ibrahim Keita, Bamako, February 2011
39 Personal communication, Djigu Keira, Bamako, February 2011
40 Personal communication, Makan Koné, Bamako, February 2011
The rapid growth of the journalism sector coupled with inadequate training opportunities, plus basic development challenges and poverty, has led to a number of concerning journalism practices—sensationalism, partisan reporting and factual inaccuracies are commonplace:

The media has a low level of professionalization. Those who have a professional degree were trained in Dakar. We see lots of factually incorrect stories, made-up stories, and sensationalism about the U.S. Embassy. This is true about all topics.  

The underdeveloped business practice of most media organizations in Mali further contributes to inaccuracies in the media: “This is how the press makes money - sensationalism” (Ibid).

Respondents also expressed the view that a lack of training limits the media’s ability to act as a watchdog and hold the government to account: “Lack of training causes a problem in the relationship between the media and the government. There are some media organizations who are against the government, but they don’t know how to communicate (this).”

While there have been a number of innovative donor-funded initiatives to train journalists, including election media training, rural reporting, agriculture, health communication caravans with journalists, there is a marked need for long-term interventions that focus on teaching journalists theories of the media, journalistic principles, and reporting strategies as opposed to short-term courses that are designed to strengthen the thematic priorities of donors. Ba of UNESCO explains, “Currently donor support is going towards training, but it is primarily related to issues and campaigns rather than improving journalistic practice.”

**Shortage of Equipment**

Another issue that Malian media practitioners commonly face is a shortage of equipment. While many donors continue to support media organizations by providing technical support and equipment to radio stations and newspapers, competition is fierce for a limited amount of resources. Keita of AJPP explains, “There is a shortage of equipment. There are many pressrooms where people still write with pen and paper.” Similarly, interviewees from ARCOM said, “There is a lack of equipment. There are many FM radios, so that means high competition for resources.” After two

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41 Personal communication, Kate Kaetzer-Hodson, Bamako, February 2011
42 Personal communication, Khadidia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
43 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
or three years, equipment is obsolete and there is no possibility to replace it. Furthermore, there is a lack of technical know-how and it is difficult for media organizations to repair and maintain equipment as a result.

**Shifting Donor Priorities**

Although donor funding to the media was considered a priority in the early 1990s, more recently many key donors have shifted funding to other sectors. The aim to pluralize the media was successful, however there are now too many media organizations with too little funding. Moreover, the role of foreign donors and foreign NGOs in providing support to the media sector in Mali has been diverse and inconsistent over the past 20 years. It remains unclear what the role of many of these foreign interventions are, and there is a distinct lack of coordinated efforts on the part of bilateral and multilateral organizations and NGOs. Donors and NGOs have tended to focus on particular priority sectors. Rokia Ba of UNESCO explains, “Some sectors have been very much improved – for instance health – more than other sectors. Health programs on radio and television have had a real impact and were supported by donor funds.” However, as a result, some social issues, such as inter-racial conflict and gender discrimination, are neglected, in part due to limited support from donors.

- “In the beginning, funders were supporting liberalization of media and democracy. In the present context, Mali is seen as having an effective democracy, so they are under the impression that media is not a priority anymore.” – Isae Sombro, URTEL

- “In many donor program plans, you cannot find specifically communication as a priority. It is folded into other priorities. Just as there are pools of financial and technical partners for human rights, HIV/AIDS, and so forth, there should be a donor pool for communication for development. Many problems stem from problems related to communication.”

- “National health has a communication strategy, but other sectors are not priorities. Farming and agriculture do not have a national communication strategy... health is important for everyone, but other programs are not universally supported, so people are reluctant to support women’s rights, for instance.”

- “The issue of children, disabled people, and female mutilation are primary themes right now. Often the interests of the funders come into play. Everything that has to do with maintenance and technical support is missing. Training for engineers and maintenance workers is underfunded.”

**Implementation of Projects**

A number of interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the ways that some projects are implemented. While donors and NGOs often make grand claims about participatory development, in reality projects are not always designed in collaboration with communities and do not always take local contextual factors into account. Ba described the situation as such:

> There are many strategies used to develop content to broadcast on radio stations, but there are many challenges, such as inter-racial conflict and gender discrimination, are neglected, in part due to limited support from donors.

Mamadou Diarra of Radio Kayira similarly opined:

> Organizations such as USAID, will say they are participatory because they involve a community in building a radio, and people will feel they are owners, but it is really only on the surface. It is usually a small amount of people involved in decision-making, so the participatory sense is not real.

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44 Personal communication, Isae, Sombro, Bamako, February 2011
45 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
46 Personal communication, Khadidia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
47 Personal communication, Isae Sombro, Bamako, February 2011
48 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
49 Personal communication, Mamadou Diarra, Bamako, February 2011
Diarra feels that, in many cases, project implementers “parachute” into communities to run programs without involving local people in decision-making or planning. While there appears to be discontent among respondents with regard to the participatory nature of donor projects, they were often unable to draw on specific examples, or examples given were vague. While the dissatisfaction appears genuine, the inability to produce specific examples points to an environment where the institutional memory of projects is limited and outcomes are often transmitted via word of mouth. Stakeholders also expressed the view that donor funding detracts from an organization’s ability to truly reflect Malian interests. For instance, Keita of AJPP explains, “Many organizations protested that the Maison de la Presse was created by a French NGO. They felt that the stakeholders should be Malian.” Many respondents also expressed the view that projects fail to get off the ground due to inefficient coordination between donors, implementers, and media organizations. For example:

One project funded by UNESCO and the French Embassy was to help to distribute the newspapers outside of Bamako. That didn’t work because of coordination problems between the donors and the implementers. The French gave money and Panos wanted to manage, but there were problems coordinating it between different stakeholders. This resulted in delays in the time for implementation, so the project never got off the ground and French withdrew funding. This was part of why AJPP and others left the Maison de la Presse.

### Poor Management and Corruption

Other significant issues include poor management, lack of transparency, and corruption involving donor funds. A number of respondents expressed the view that the current system of channeling donor funds through umbrella associations such as URTEL has led to corruption and inequitable distribution.

- “There is no transparency in the funds received from international donors. While they do training financed by UNICEF and USAID, the board of URTEL will do what they want with the funds. There are always people who are dissatisfied...URTEL has a monopoly on donor support for the media sector. Donors sign a contract with URTEL and they (URTEL) distribute the funds. Organizations outside of URTEL are not considered.”

### Successes

Although there remain a number of significant challenges that need to be addressed by donors and NGOs involved in strengthening the media sector in Mali, the past 20 years have seen many successes worth celebrating.

#### Plurality and Diversity of the Media

There has been a rapid increase in the plurality and diversity of media institutions. The establishment of community radio projects has given a voice to people previously excluded from the realm of public debate and information.

- “The number of radio stations has gone from 30 to more than 300 since 1996. Farm Radio works directly with local stakeholders, communities, associations and farmers. They give them a voice.”

- “An objective of Panos was to increase the diversity of media and now there is a high degree of diversity in the media.”

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50 Personal communication, Ibrahim Keita, Bamako, February 2011
51 Personal communication, Mamadou Diarra, Bamako, February 2011
52 Personal communication, Jacques Dez, Bamako, February 2011
53 Personal communication, Khadida Ba, Bamako, February 2011
54 Personal communication, Jacques Dez, Bamako, February 2011
55 Personal communication, Modibo Coulibaly, Bamako, February 2011
56 Personal communication, Khadidia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
“Mali has one of the best legislative frameworks for media in Africa. There are more than 400 radio stations (some of these have received licenses but are not yet operational)... There is a new proposed press law, working to decriminalize defamation. There is also the national strategy for communication and development. Much of this has been done with the support of donors.”
- Modibo Coulibaly, Farm Radio

Legal Frameworks and Professionalization

While there are still gains to be made, the past 20 years have seen dramatic improvements in legal frameworks, pluralism and constitutional supports to the media. Incremental, though at times uneven, successes have also been demonstrated in terms of standards of journalism and professionalism of the media sector.

• “There has been wide dissemination of standards and ethics of journalism. Journalists are now more accountable. Many organizations were involved in this: the government, French embassy, Maison de la Presse, and the International Union of Journalists.”

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• “Panos supported the government to establish the legal framework here.”

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• “Mali has one of the best legislative frameworks for media in Africa. There are more than 400 radio stations (some of these have received licenses but are not yet operational)... There is a new proposed press law, working to decriminalize defamation. There is also the national strategy for communication and development. Much of this has been done with the support of donors.”

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Media as Watchdog

Stakeholders also cite improvements in the ability of the media to hold the government to account and act as a Fourth Estate:

Currently the media doesn’t do a great job in holding government accountable or promoting transparency, but it is better than it was. The government knows people are watching them—with proliferation (of media), there is greater opportunity to say the official version of events, especially now that people are free to say what they think.

Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairperson of the African Union, expresses a similar sentiment, calling Mali’s independent media – the lynchpin of democracy. Konaré has seen many examples of the media holding the government to account in Mali. He describes how “The mayors of poorly performing communes who have had their budgets reduced are said to avoid recriminations from their constituents who listen to radio broadcasts (that cover the annual official performance review of their communes).” (Konaré, 2006: 4)

While the extent to which the media are able to ensure transparency and hold the government to account remains unclear, donors have started to recognize this as a priority in strengthening the media. For instance, Panos West Africa and UNESCO collaborated on a

57 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
58 Personal communication, Martine Keita, Bamako, February 2011
59 Personal communication, Ibrahim Keita, Bamako, February 2011
60 Personal communication, Khadidia Ba, Bamako, February 2011

61 Personal communication, Modibo Coulibaly, Bamako, February 2011
62 Personal communication, Rokia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
project related to media and communication for governance in Mali so the citizens can participate in good governance. Khadidia Ba describes the project as follows:

There are three objectives: capacity-building of media to inform and reinforce the voices of citizens, build the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate in public debate, and promote a legal environment that supports and protects the rights of communication. This project connects CSOs with the media through trainings. Panos supports the establishment of listener clubs, which helps CSOs to have an impact on radio stations and train radio station staff to gather grassroots opinions and give oral testimonies from grassroots organizations.63

USAID is also concerned with the media’s role in ensuring governmental accountability: “Now, Mali is selling or giving away a lot of land. People are starting to ask, they want the government to be accountable. We don’t even know what’s going on! There is no access to information about what is happening. We don’t know if it’s a transparent process.”64

63 Personal communication, Khadidia Ba, Bamako, February 2011
64 Personal communication, Martine Keita, Bamako, February 2011

Awareness-Raising Campaigns

Lastly, there is demonstrable impact of donor funding to the media in terms of its use in awareness-raising campaigns. In addition to donor interventions specifically directed at strengthening the media sector, in recent years many donor initiatives have targeted the media as a tool to address other development priorities, such as health, conflict resolution, environment, education, and poverty reduction. Increasingly, donors view media as essential tools to enhance development goals. While some interviewees feel that donor priorities negatively influence organizations on the ground, others believe that donor influence can bring positive changes. Many organizations feel that there is greater awareness among the population of issues related to health, food security, conflict resolution, and the environment. The above-mentioned UNICEF programs are one case in point. Others include USAID’s conflict prevention programs in northern Mali and agricultural campaigns aimed at improving rural livelihoods. When interviewed in Bamako, Keita of USAID described these initiatives as follows:

- “We have conflict prevention programs in the North. We just finished in November installing 10 radio stations, and trained staff in conflict resolution.”

- “We do work related to information exchange about markets. For example, farmers don’t know national market prices, but they need to know to be competitive.”
While there have clearly been considerable gains in Mali, stakeholders still see many challenges to the contemporary media sector. However, despite the challenges that still exist, there is clear evidence that international support on the part of donors and international NGOs has been crucial to advancing the media sector. Donor funding has benefited the sector in terms of supporting the establishment of: a legal environment that supports the independence of journalists and enables freedom of expression, a diverse and robust network of professional journalism associations and advocacy groups, and a plural and diverse media system that reaches even the most remote parts of the country.

Standards of journalism, business practices, working conditions and media education remain significant shortcomings. Although there is a well-known code of ethics in Mali, journalists often fail to adhere to its most basic principles of fairness and accuracy. While many journalists are aware of these codes, harsh economic realities often compromise the ability of journalists to carry them out. Journalists earn a salary that is barely above the minimum wage, and economic incentives, such as per diems to cover events, often trump professional practices and ethical codes. As a result, investigative journalism and in-depth reporting are often absent. Mali’s media remain significantly underdeveloped in terms of business management, audience research and long-term sustainability. Many media organizations remain dependent on donor funding and have done little to develop business models to attract other sources of revenue. There are more than 50 professional associations and networks that help with training and advocacy, yet they are affected by conflicts of interests that undermine their efforts. There is no school of journalism, and media-related trainings are short-term and often centered around the shifting priorities of donors. There is no union to protect the rights of journalists and to help them in circumstances of legal persecution or harassment.

It is also clear that donor priorities and programs are not doing enough to ensure the continued development of a strong independent media system. Over the past 20 years, funding has shifted from programs designed to strengthen independent media to programs that see media as tools to disseminate development information. The use of media to enhance development goals is necessary in Mali, which ranks as one of the lowest on the Human Development Index; direct support to the media is still needed. Moreover, the media should be seen as a force for dissent, for ensuring government accountability, and for enabling a truly democratic society to flourish. However, in the contemporary media environment, where saturation of the independent radio sector has created stiff competition among radio stations for donor funding, the initial spirit of political resistance and anti-authoritarianism that fueled the democratization period appears to have withered. It is difficult to determine why this is, though it may be related to the fact that, given Mali’s current political climate, which guarantees much greater liberal freedoms than it did in the 1990s, the stakes are much lower. One could also speculate that competition for funding has led stations to bend their missions and values in accordance with donor priorities, which now tend to focus more on development goals, such as health and livelihoods, than political resistance. While the Kayira network continues its critique of the government, it remains an exception and there appears to be a distinct decline in overtly oppositional programming on the part of other broadcasters.

There are a number of critical recommendations that can be made based on this study. Media development needs to focus both on strengthening the independent media sector and supporting the use of media for development and democratization. Donors should work to coordinate efforts between funders, international NGOs, and local NGOs and associations, and to support collaboration and synergies among different stakeholders. It is imperative that media development actors work to improve the working conditions of journalists, and assist existing media institutions in the development of business models to improve the chances of viability. Donors, advocates and civil society organizations should collaborate to establish a school of journalism and a union. Finally, stakeholders should work together to develop tools to assess the media’s ability to promote democracy, cultural understanding and human development, rather than rely on the assumption that press freedoms are enough.
References


Field research for the Mali case study was conducted in Bamako from Feb. 10th – Feb. 23rd, 2011. Research consisted of in-depth key informant interviews with media development organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, NGOs, journalism associations, journalists and community radio stations.¹ The research team consisted of lead researcher Heather Gilberds, Internews representative Tara Susman-Peña, and interpreter Nelly Bassily. All interviews were recorded with an audio recorder and detailed notes were also taken.

The following is the template for the research report and the sampling guide for the interviews.

**Case Study Report Template**

**For the research consultant:** This document provides the overall structure for your report. Your role is to focus primarily on the following:

1. Pulling together the evidence needed to describe how donors have contributed (or not) to media development in the country: who were the major players, what were the major trends, over the last 20 years.

2. Incorporating the perspectives of donors, local NGOs, international implementers, and aid recipients to describe in these interventions: what worked, what didn’t work, and why. When possible, collecting the reports, data and other evidence on which these conclusions are based.

3. Diagnosing the state of media as a business in the country. What are the business models? What are the major challenges? What data do people base business decisions on?

**PART ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** (1-3 pages)

I. Summary (bullet points are fine) of the major findings of the study, focusing on the areas in the box above

**PART TWO: MEDIA OVERVIEW**

II. (suggested length: 2-3 pages) Brief historical and development background – tie into information / media culture

   a. What are the key political, social, and economic events and trends that have shaped the last 20 years of the country’s history?

   b. What are the country’s key development challenges (general development, media development)?

   c. What donors are most active in the country (economic development, **not** just media development)?

   What are their development priorities for the country overall (e.g. poverty, health, governance)?

III. (suggested length: 5 pages) What does the media landscape of the country look like?

   a. *Brief overview:* What are its major features? Developments and trends over the last 20 years? Is it able to hold government and business accountable? How well does it provide essential information to the population? Who does information reach and not reach? What forms of media are most prominent?

   b. What is the state of journalism in the country? Is the media relatively free from corruption? What are average salaries for journalists? How good is the overall quality of reporting? How safe is it to be a journalist?

   c. In what ways is the political economy / enabling environment of each country supporting or detracting from the development of the media sector?

¹ See Appendix 2 for a complete list of individuals interviewed
d. Brief overview of related laws, regulations and major developments over the last 20 years

e. To what extent are laws and regulations that are in place put into practice?

f. Describe the information culture of the country. How do different groups of people get information?

What are the major challenges? Do they feel that they have a say in decision-making? How important is news vs. entertainment?

IV. (suggested length: 2-3 pages) What is the state of the business of media?

a. What are the business models? What are the major challenges?

b. What are the trends in media ownership, major issues there?

c. What do people base business decisions on? What is the state of data on media?

d. What kind of data on media is there in the media system (audience / market research)? What data do different stakeholders use? How do they use it? How did its use develop?

e. If possible, please try to get copies or access to any of this data that media enterprises are using (audience/reach for various types of media, advertising numbers, etc.)?

PART THREE: DONOR-FUNDED MEDIA DEVELOPMENT (suggested length: 20 pages)

IV. Given the media landscape, why have donors intervened in the media space? What was perceived as missing / needed?

V. What have been the donor-funded media development interventions with the most impact over the last 20 years?

a. What were the major activities? What were these activities meant to achieve, in both the short and long term? What local media or media-related organizations were created / supported (brief description – profiles of key orgs can go in the appendix)?

b. What have foreign donors’ roles been? What have foreign NGOs’ roles been?

c. How have donor investments supported or impeded media development? To what extent have these activities addressed the major challenges outlined in Part One? What approaches did they take? What worked? What didn’t work?

d. Why? How do various actors opinions’ converge or diverge about the success or failure of different MD interventions?

e. By what criteria are stakeholders judging the success or failure of interventions? How do they assess impact?

f. Any sense of interactions / conflicts in goals or direction with other forces, such as private investors, public diplomacy, strategic communication, etc.

g. What are the key issues around sustainability in donor-developed media? Differences in business model or approach between donor-developed media and the rest of the media?

h. How have the actors, activities, and impacts evolved over the last 20 years?

i. Where do donor-funded interventions seem to be going in the future?

VI. (suggested length: 1 page) Gaps, further questions that should be asked, issues to investigate

VII. (suggested length: 1 page) Conclusions: What role did donor-funded media development interventions play in shaping the overall media landscape? How do these interventions fit into the overall development of the country?

VIII. Literature review: Brief overview of previous research on media development in this country

a. What research has been done? What conclusions has it reached? What questions has it asked? How has it framed and assessed the question of impact of MD interventions? What are the gaps in the research?

b. Who has conducted the research (academics, implementers, donors, etc.) and how has this shaped the perspectives?

IX. Methodology: overview of approaches used

a. List of stakeholders interviewed

X. Profiles of key media organizations and NGOs (suggested length: one paragraph)

XI. Chart – overview of major donors, implementers, local partners, and activities
### Sampling guide - Interviews

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Ideal interview quota</th>
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<td>Umbrella organization / network</td>
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<td>Media monitoring</td>
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<td>Implementer of media development projects</td>
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Appendix 2: List of Individuals Interviewed

Alliance des Radios Communautaires du Mali (ARCOM) - The Alliance of Community Radio in Mali
Interview Respondents:
Lamine Togola, Head of Projects, ARCOM
Mme. Koné, Host, Radio Fanaka

Association de Journalistes pour la Promotion du Professionalisme (AJPP)
Interview Respondents:
Ibrahim Kéita, Vice-President
Balla Tounkara, Program Director
Tekouba Semaké, Journalist

Coordination des Réseaux des Journalistes et Communicateurs pour la Population et le Développement (CORJCOD)
Interview Respondent: Djigui Kéita, Secretary General

Farm Radio/African Farm Radio Research Initiative
Interview Respondent: Modibo Coulibaly, Coordinator for the African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFFRI)

La Maison de la Presse du Mali
Interview Respondent: Makan Koné, President

PANOS West Africa/Mali
Interview Respondent: Khadidia Ba, Coordinator of Panos West Africa in Bamako

Radio Bélékan
Interview Respondents:
Tahirou Coulibaly, Administrative and Financial Manager
Paschal Konaté, Production Manager
Kone Molobaly Diarra, CMC Officer

Radio Kayira Network
Interview Respondent: Mamadou Diarra, Coordinator
Radio Klédu
Jacques Dez, Station Manager

UNESCO
Interview Respondent: Rokia Ba, Program Specialist Information and Communication Sector

UNICEF
Interview Respondent: Ismail Maiga, Communication Specialist

Union des Radios et Televisions Libres du Mali, (URTEL)
Interview Respondents:
Damda Maiko, President
Isae Somboro, Secretary of Communications

USAID/US Embassy in Mali
Interview Respondents:
Martine Keita
Moussa Doumbia
Yacouba Konaté
Kate Kaetzer-Hodson (State Department – US Embassy)
Alliance des Radios Communautaires du Mali (ARCOM) - The Alliance of Community Radio in Mali

ARCOM is a community radio network that supports rural radio stations. ARCOM was founded in 2000 when 10 community radio stations came together to create a network that would be capable of influencing policy makers to support community radio. ARCOM is an organization that actively contributes to the emergence of a strong civil society and is committed to sharing innovative knowledge based on solidarity, responsibility and participation of communities in the development process. There are currently 30 radio stations that are a part of ARCOM’s network. Stations pay a small annual fee to become members. ARCOM provides the following technical support and training to member stations: They send out themes for radio shows to members; they compile shows produced by stations to share with other stations; members of ARCOM travel to rural stations to train staff in digital editing, production, and technical matters such as equipment repair and maintenance. The network has an elected Board of Directors that acts as the decision-making and executive structure and an Executive Branch, which is responsible for implementing daily activities. ARCOM has partnered with the following organizations: AMARC, CCI, African Development and Aid (they organize the Peoples' Forum for Alternatives), Water Aid and AM-SOP (female mutilation).

Coordination des Réseaux des Journalistes et Communicateurs pour la Population et le Développement (CORJCOD)

CORJCOD is a network of journalists and communicators who specifically work on issues related to population and development in Mali, such as child and maternal health, drought, female genital cutting, family planning and gender equality. Their direct international partners are UNFPA and USAID, but they are also involved in partnerships with smaller international organizations, such as the Network of Sahelian Journalists, and the International Committee Against Drought—a nine-country network that was created to deal with issues related to drought in the Sahel region. The network also has partnerships with a variety of national organizations, including URTEL and ARCOM. Many of CORJCOD’s activities focus on getting information from studies and research related to population and development out to Malians through media. For instance, they work with the National Association of Statistics who does research on population problems in Mali, such as housing, urbanization, migration and reproductive health, to disseminate the research results. In addition to producing programs, the network also trains journalists to report on population issues and to better understand the interrelation between population issues and development goals. They also give annual awards to journalists who display excellence in reporting on population and development themes.
Farm Radio/African Farm Radio Research Initiative (AFRRI)

Farm Radio International is a Canadian NGO that launched its AFRRI communication-for-development project in 2007, covering Mali and four other African countries. Based on extensive research, AFRRI developed radio campaigns in partnership with five rural radio stations in Mali, aimed at improving agricultural practices and innovations, such as composting, beekeeping and water-conservation. AFRRI also supports these radio stations with some equipment and training. Farm Radio has many partners, both donors and technical partners, including: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, SNV (Dutch development agency), European Union, World Food Program, AGRA (Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa based in Accra), West Africa Monetary Union, National Research for Agriculture Institute, and the National Agricultural Extension Services. AFRRI/Farm Radio is essentially a "communication for development" (C4DP) project as opposed to a media-support project. They are a typical example of the way donors want to spend their money in Mali in recent history – i.e. C4D programs rather than strengthening the sector as an end in itself.

La Maison de la Presse du Mali

The Maison de la Presse du Mali was established in Bamako in 1995 as a center of training, information and networking for members of the Malian press. It acts as a confederation for the other media organizations in Mali, both public and private. The Maison de la Presse was originally funded by multiple donors, including the German Embassy, the U.S. Embassy, the American Cultural Center, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Panos Institute, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Donors viewed the establishment of a press house as an important step in ensuring that freedom of information and the autonomy of journalists would be upheld. The Maison de la Presse du Mali continues to organize a number of activities intended to strengthen the professional journalism sector – they organize training (courses, workshops and seminars) for media practitioners, generally at the request of partners, link journalists with State bodies and NGOs, and provide access to the Internet, a library, and a radio production studio. The Maison de la Presse also purports to act as a union for journalists. All private and public media organizations are members of the press house.

PANOS West Africa/Mali

Panos has been working in Mali since 2000 as part of its West African branch based in Dakar, but established an office in Bamako in 2009. Panos was instrumen-tal in supporting the establishment of the Maison de la Presse and works with them to provide training opportunities for professional journalists. They also supported the government to establish a legal framework for radios in the early democratization period. Today, they are working to strengthen coordination between the media and civil society as a way to ensure that citizens can participate in good governance. The civil society program is a 3-year long initiative that began in 2009. The project has the following objectives: 1) Build the capacity of media institutions to inform and reinforce the voices of citizens, 2) Build the capacity of CSOs to participate in public debate, 3) Promote a legal environment that supports and protects the rights of communication. Through this project, Panos helps to establish listener clubs with civil society organizations to connect them with community radio stations, and trains station staff to work with CSOs. This initiative is supported by a number of donors and partners, including: Oxfam Novib, EU, Panos Paris, DANIDA, Free Voice, and the Gate Foundation.

Radio Bélékan

Radio Bélékan was established in Kati, Koulikoro region, central Mali, in 2000 with funding from USAID. After funding the establishment of the radio station, USAID funded the creation of a community media center (CMC) on the same site. Radio Bélékan produces radio programs with a public mission, and they broadcast shows about health, HIV/AIDS, the rights of children, agricultural techniques and market prices for farmers. The station receives a great deal of local support, especially through listener clubs where community members pay an annual fee and receive discounts on personal announcements.

Radio Kayira Network

Radio Kayira was created in 1991 as a network of associative radio stations. Today there are 11 stations in the network. Radio Kayira stations are ‘involved in the promotion of information at a political level for the population and defense of human rights’ (Diarra). Each radio station has a manager and the overall network is governed by an elected board. The head office works with civil society organizations, associations and labor unions to connect them to radio stations in the networks through debates and trainings. The network has diverse sources of funding, but revenue is primarily generated through membership fees paid by stations within the network. Radio Kayira is a decidedly political organization – they cover issues not covered by other radio stations, such as social justice issues, labor rights and sustainable agriculture. They have denounced the primary umbrella organization for broadcasters – UR-
TEL – and they work to draw attention to problems related to corruption and mismanagement of donor funds within larger organizations. Diarra says, ‘political mobilization that happens within Kayira is not found in others (organizations).’ The ‘political mobilization’ that Diarra describes primarily happens through Kayira’s listening clubs. Listener clubs work closely with radio stations to determine issues that are important to raise and to mobilize social groups in various struggles for social justice. Helene Poncin (2009) explains that the network belongs to the Sadi party, (African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence), and is directed by Cheick Oumar Sissoko who is a member of the party and Dr. Oumar Mariko, the party’s president. The Kayira radios are considered ‘opposition radios, (which) are sometimes subject to repression and aggression by those in power’ (Poncin, 2009: 56-57).

Radio Klédu

Radio Klédu is a commercial radio station located in Bamako. It was established in 1992, and has a reach of about 70 km around Bamako. Radio Klédu manages two stations – one for entertainment and one for news and speech – as well as a magazine. The station is noteworthy for its well-developed business practice and has created many innovative strategies to ensure commercial viability. There are 50 permanent staff – 25 men and 25 women. The station has accounting and marketing departments, which are unusual in the radio sector in Mali.

UNESCO

The UNESCO office opened in Bamako in 1998, but the Information and Communication program did not start until 2004. They had provided support to the media sector prior to 2004 through other UNESCO offices. For example, they provided printing presses in 2001 and helped to establish the Maison de la Presse. UNESCO’s IPDC (International Program for the Development of Communication) program partnered with Helen Keller International to establish 23 community media centers in the country with funding from USAID.65 UNESCO’s Bamako office is primarily involved in supporting the education of journalists in Mali, and organizes trainings, which are often based on enhancing the media’s role in holding the government to account, like elections and parliamentary reporting. The UNESCO information and communication office is also working to test its indicators of media development in Mali, an evaluation that was also carried out in Mozambique.

UNICEF

UNICEF in Mali has a communication for development (C4D) program that aims to collaborate with various partners and social networks to harness the power of communication for behavioral and social change. These partners include community leaders, traditional communicators (griots), service providers, NGOs, the media (mainly local radio), street theatre groups, digital and outdoor cinema and new technologies. UNICEF has been instrumental in helping the government to prepare the National Communication for Development Policy (PNCD). UNICEF works closely with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Communication and New Technologies to develop health awareness campaigns on a variety of topics, including female genital cutting, infant and maternal health, immunizations and infant malnutrition. UNICEF uses the following strategies in carrying out its C4D program:

• Studies and research (evidence)
• Mass communication and advocacy – disseminating information/messages and echoing the voices, perceptions and requests of children, women and families of vulnerable groups to influence political dialogue
• Local communication/ social mobilization – influencing families through mobilization of civil society (NGOs, grass roots communities) and leaders and involving communities.
• Interpersonal communication/ social dialogue – involving and empowering families and social networks to influence and strengthen social norms and collective behavior.66

Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres du Mali (URTEL)

The Union of Independent Radio and Television in Mali was established in 1992. They are an umbrella organization for independent radio and television broadcasters. Given that there is currently no legislation for independent television in Mali, they primarily work with community and commercial radio broadcasters and they act as the link between the state and local radio stations. 250 radio stations are currently members of URTEL. Stations must apply to URTEL for membership by writing a letter of request. Once they are officially recognized, they are required to pay an initial fee of 200,000 CFA (~$410 USD) and an annual fee of 60,000 CFA ($123 USD) per year.66


66 For more information on UNICEF’s C4D program, see http://www.unicef.org/mali/3936.html
receive assistance from URTEL to help them resolve legal and financial issues and access donor funds, radio equipment and training opportunities. URTEL has supported the sector and its members through a variety of activities, including: adoption of a code of conduct for free radio and television in Mali; establishment of a Commission of Ethics in charge of ensuring and monitoring compliance with statutes and regulations and the creation of a code of conduct; organization of training sessions, workshops, and collaborations on various themes (animation, technical, management, program schedule, administration, audience study). URTEL is affiliated with the following NGOs and donors: ACDI, Africare, Fondation Fredrich Ebert, Helen Keller International, Institut Panos, Plan International, PNUD, Population Media Center, Population Service International, SNV, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID.

**USAID/US Embassy in Mali**

USAID has worked in the IT sector in Mali since 1996. They have supported the development of community radio for 15 years, and continue to provide equipment and technical training, as well as training for community radio journalists and management. They are currently focusing on developing community radio station in northern Mali, where conflict and poverty has made it very hard for people to get information. They recently equipped 10 stations in the North and trained the staff in creating programs for conflict prevention and resolution. Since 1996, they have also been working to improve internet access in Mali, and have equipped small telecenters in rural areas. Up until four years ago, media strengthening projects were created under a special objective called ‘Communication for Development.’ This objective ended due to budgetary constraints, and communication and information programs have merged with other priority areas, such as governance. Now the importance of media and communication is integrated into all program areas, making it an important cross-cutting issue.
Business practices – Radio Klédu

Started in 1992, Radio Klédu is a commercial radio station operating in Bamako at 101.2 MHz. Its programs aimed at strengthening democracy in Mali and educating listeners on economic development earned it the Amnesty International Prize for Human Rights in 2007. Other programs focus on local women’s issues and public health. Radio Klédu is an exemplar in Mali in terms of commercial viability. Station manager Jacques Dez’s vision of Radio Klédu is to run a media organization as a business. The first step to ensuring this is to have a well-developed organizational and management structure. At Klédu, all employees sign contracts and get paid at the end of each month. The station has accounting and marketing departments. Klédu is the only radio station in Mali with an accounting department, which Dez believes is crucial for Malian businesses, where a lack of accounting leads to embezzlement and corruption. Klédu has a commercial policy to attract advertisers, including annual contracts with film production companies and NGOs. The station recently opened a web portal called Info Mali where they broadcast the radio content and publish an online version of the magazine and advertise for hotels and high-end restaurants. By the end of 2010, this portal will also sell Shea butter and other African products and artisan products for the diaspora in Europe.

Gender issues

The presence of women in the Malian media sector is growing. There are many female ‘animatrices,’ and even a few examples of women in leadership roles. For instance, the director of Kabako newspaper is a woman, the association for Cultural Journalists in Mali has a female president and a woman holds the position of rural manager at ORTM. However, there is still a long way to go. Examples of women who hold management positions are rare. While there appear to be opportunities for women to enter the media sector, there are social and cultural obstacles, and women do not gravitate toward these positions. Culturally, women are taught to be silent, and speaking out is criticized by both men and women. Work hours are often incompatible with household and family responsibilities. Furthermore, while educated women will often speak without hesitation, educational opportunities for women remain far below those of men.

Media development vs. media for development

While media development and media (or communication) for development are far from diametrically opposed, there are crucial distinctions between them that are often conflated in practice. Within the media development sector, many experts differentiate between ‘media development’ vs. ‘media for development.’ While media development seeks to develop the media sector in a country as an end in itself, media for development uses the media to convey specific messages on issues, such as health care, poverty reduction, good governance and education.67 Today, much of the funding in media development supports issue-based programming, as opposed to supporting the development of free, independent media systems. Often, ‘media development’ describes projects that aim to train communicators to convey messages about development campaigns, rather than projects that are developing independent media systems. While both types of communication are important for democratization and development, building independent media systems often takes a back seat to communication for development initiatives. The debate fuels passions on both sides - some feel that it is a distracting and irrelevant dichotomy, while others argue that social issues cannot be properly addressed without a strong independent media system. This debate relates directly to the Malian media sector. While funders were eager to support independent media during the early democratization period (e.g. the 1990s), the donor landscape today is one that prioritizes issue-based campaigns, largely at the expense of building a healthy, vibrant independent media sector.

67 See Center for International Media Assistance http://cima.ned.org/media-development/media-development-vs-media-for-development
Press freedom indices

The case of Mali’s media sector shows up the limitations of press freedom indices, such as Freedom House, Reporters without Borders and IREX. Mali has some of the highest scores for press freedoms on the African continent in all three studies, yet it still has a long way to go in terms of media quality and journalistic practice. Press freedom indices measure the environment - ‘Does Country X have a political, economic, and legal environment in which quality journalism can exist?’ (Burgess, 2010: 36). Of the three studies, only the IREX index asks questions about journalism quality in addition to environmental considerations. RSF and Freedom House leave the quality question aside and focus on the environment in which quality journalism can exist. However, what ultimately matters may not be the environment but what the media accomplishes in that environment, with whatever degree of freedom it may have. While one important aspect of that is, of course, whether or not freedoms exist in the first place, this is just one small component. In the context of development, more pressing questions need to be asked: Do citizens feel informed? Is there a full range of opinions, voices and perspectives in the public sphere? Do citizens feel that the media represents their views and interests? Are the voices of the most marginalized communities heard by policy leaders and decision makers? In indices that promote free and independent media as a good in and of itself, these questions are often ignored.
The Media Map Project is a multi-faceted two-year pilot research collaboration between Internews and The World Bank Institute, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This report is a product of that research. The findings and conclusions contained within this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank or Internews.

The Media Map Project draws together what we know and precisely defines what we do not know about the relationships between the media sector and economic development and governance. The research also examines donors’ roles in supporting the media sector over time and provides an evidence base for their future decision-making about media support. Through research, public events, and the data made available on the project website for public use and extended research, the project aims to engage the development sector in greater understanding and exploration of the role of media and information in development.