

# **Airwaves Scorecard**

**Report of the Broadcast Media Coverage of the  
Political Transition Programme.**



January 1999

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**... promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of  
expression in Nigeria.**

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## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This report of Broadcast Monitoring Project was conducted by Media Rights Agenda (MRA), a non governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria.

The aims are to examine the extent of fairness exhibited by the broadcast media in giving each political party free, equal and uninhibited access to air their views not minding the role such party or individual might have played in previous dispensations.

This is especially important because of the invaluable role the media can play in helping to enthrone and sustain functional democracy, mostly by giving the electorate opportunities to appropriately familiarise themselves with the political process, actors and issues.

This enables citizens make informed choices whenever they enter a polling booth to perform their civic duty.

It examines also how the Government acts to ensure free media access to political news sources and protect the media from harassment.

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The project was supervised by Mr. Edetaen Ojo MRA's Executive Director.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This is a pilot report of the Broadcast Monitoring Project of Media Rights Agenda (MRA).

It is based on the monitoring of selected broadcast media to assess the coverage of political issues during the period between December 1 and December 31, 1998.

This report focuses on the coverage of the political programme by three television stations and two radio stations -

The Television Station are:

1. The Federal Government owned Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) in Abuja.
2. Private-owned African Independent Television (AIT) in Lagos.
3. MiNAJ Systems Television, a privately and owned station in Obosi, Anambra State.

The Radio Stations are:

1. Federal Government-owned Radio Nigeria in Abuja
2. Ray Power 100.5 F.M, a privately owned station in Abuja.

## **(a) BASIS OF MONITORING EXERCISE**

The legal basis for fair and effective coverage of electoral processes lies in a variety of regional and international human rights instruments, particularly those provisions which protect the rights of peoples to freely choose their leaders and to receive information. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

*The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of a government: This will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*<sup>1</sup>

In a nutshell, this simply is Representative Democracy. This is more popularly defined as the government of the people, for the people and by the people which was coined by a former American President, Abraham Lincoln.

Other international instruments mirror and elaborate upon these rights. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, for example, states that:

*Every citizen shall have the right to freely participate in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law.*<sup>2</sup>

On its part, the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Government (ARUSHA 1990), also acknowledges that:

*.....popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in the profits.*<sup>3</sup>

When citizens enter a polling booth to vote for the candidate of their choice, they are exercising one of their most fundamental rights. This right is guaranteed by a number of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In order to exercise this right fully, citizens must be able to meet, speak with, and listen to representatives, candidates and colleagues about community issues. The rights to assemble and associate freely are also protected by these same international human rights instruments.

Individuals, as potential voters, must be particularly well-informed during an election. Not only do they require information about the various candidates - their qualifications, opinions, voting records, and characters - but voters should also be familiar with the contending parties' platforms and policies. It stands to reason that in countries which do not have a long history of democratic elections, voters will need information about what the election is for and how to vote.

Gaining access to information during a campaign is an extension of the right of citizens to be well-informed and hold and express opinions about their governments' activities generally. These rights to information and free expression are also guaranteed by international instruments. For instance, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*<sup>4</sup>

To this end, the African Charter for Popular Participation for the mandated the national and regional media to

*...make every effort to fight for and defend their freedom at all cost, and make special effort to champion the cause of popular participation and publicize activities and programmes thereof and generally provide access for the dissemination of information and education programme on popular participation.* <sup>5</sup>

Even in stable democracies, there may be limitations on these rights. But these should be carefully conceived to protect democracy, not undermine it. Specifically, any restriction must be provided by law, relate to one of a small number of exceptions set out in the instrument guaranteeing the right and be necessary in a democratic society.

In certain instances limitations on these rights have been approved to maintain public order, protect privacy or ban communications that would promote religious, racial or national hatred.

To strengthen the rights to freedom of expression and information at the local level, the rights have been laid out in various regional human rights agreements. For instance, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights sets forth the principle that:

*Every individual shall have the right to receive information,... [and] to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.* <sup>6</sup>

The Inter-American Convention on Human Rights guarantees the rights of individuals to freedom of thought and expression. Similarly, the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees that:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of expression... [Including] freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.*<sup>7</sup>

It is upon this sturdy foundation that the right to be informed and to hold and impart opinions during an election campaign is built.

## **(b) FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

In order for a democracy to function, citizens must be able to make informed choices at the ballot box. To do this, they must have access to accurate and full information about the candidates, parties and issues. It is the duty of the government to

ensure that an environment exists where facts, opinions and ideas can flow freely, where all sides of an argument can be heard and where debate is robust.

Government should also create an environment where the privately owned media can express a wide variety of opinions about the issues, parties and candidates. At the same time state-owned or publicly funded media must remain unbiased when collecting and disseminating information about the election.

During an election campaign, there are three sectors of society whose rights to information and free expression must be specially protected - potential voters, the news media and the various political forces.

The point is, therefore, made that incontestable as those acknowledgements are, an essential part of any functioning democracy, is the mass media; pluralistic and unrestrained. What is implied is that, Functional Democracy is best enhanced when all contesting points of views are being fairly and equitably communicated so that the people may make informed choices.

Secondly, apart from providing a vehicle for widely expressing contrasting and conflicting views, the media helps to moderate such views and as well, present them with appropriate decorum for palatable consumption. So that what the electorate get is not the raw and rough, and sometimes unguarded, utterances of politicians and others involved in the political process, but considerably watered down, polished and non-combustible views.

Thirdly, the media also monitors elections. In addition to reporting on the various processes and final results, the media investigate allegations of abuse, conduct pre-election polls, and establish mechanisms for quickly projecting and announcing election results.

Fourthly, the mass media provides an avenue for the governed to hold the government accountable and then, if they wish, change it. Simply put, therefore, media scrutiny is indispensable in achieving genuine participatory democracy.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the prime place of Television and Radio as medium of political mobilisation is incontestable. While the television with its visual effect can create the most potent awareness and emotion, the radio is especially important in a country such as ours where illiteracy is high, where newspapers do not circulate out the towns and

where television is not widely available because of poor electricity supplies and the high cost of television set.

Even in the poorest of countries, most rural families will have access to portable radios and have sufficient funds to buy batteries.

In his introduction to “Television and Elections”, former US president, Jimmy Carter noted that television has become a principal source of news and information around the world. According to Mr. Carter, *“its rapid spread and unheard-of penetration is nothing short of phenomenal. In affecting the lives of people everywhere, and, more particularly, in communicating messages interms of changes and crisis, it can help to shape the most decisive events that move both citizens and their leaders.”*<sup>9</sup>

By this same fact, it goes without saying that any authority, be it the government or interest group, that can manipulate the mass media, will ultimately manipulate such an exercise as an election.

Nigeria is at this present time undergoing a political transition process which aims to usher in civilian democratic government after a decade and half of continuous military rule, and two failed attempts at transiting.

Determined this time to get it right emotions are decidedly high. At issue are:

Firstly, whether the military is sincerely disposed to go back to their barracks and face their constitutionally assigned role of territorial defence.

Secondly, whether the military has and does intend to foist its favoured candidate on the people.

Thirdly, the question is, anxious and suspicious as Nigerians are, is the press matures enough to be above board? Is it giving each political party free, equal and unhindered access to air their views, not minding the roles such parties / individuals might have played in previous dispensations?

Those, indeed, are the main focus of the Broadcast Media Monitoring Project of Media Right Agenda.

## **(c) LEGAL BOUNDARIES OF ELECTION REPORTING IN NIGERIA**

### **Broadcast Media**

The domestic legislation and other provisions, which regulate the coverage of elections and politics, are directed principally at the broadcast media. This is, perhaps, understandable, considering the widely held view that radio and television remain the

most effective means of mass communication in Africa having regard to the high level of poverty and illiteracy.<sup>10</sup>

The Political Parties (Registration and Activities) Decree No. 35 of 1998 gives radio and television the function of assisting members of the public in partaking of all ideas, ideals and experiences that help them live in a society that is humane and democratic. It requires that such radio and television programmes should influence members of the public to make living in society orderly and disciplined.

Under the Decree, radio and television are also to assist and sensitize Nigerians in making the right political choices, which will help in bringing into being a good and accountable government.

Other functions of radio and television under the Decree include: to foster political awareness among the political parties in Nigeria; to enlighten the public on the political provisions of the Nigerian Constitution; to promote public interest and consciousness in participatory politics; to educate Nigerians on their rights and political duties; and to encourage the evolution of broad political fronts based on national ideals and choices rather than on ethnic or other prejudices.

The Decree enjoins radio and television stations to provide a forum for competing ideas and ideals to be traded freely and publicly.

The National Broadcasting Code states the political objectives of broadcasting in Nigeria thus:

“Broadcasting shall contribute to the development of national unity and participatory democracy. Therefore, the political objectives of Broadcasting shall be to:

- (i) create and promote political awareness amongst the people to achieve a democratic society;
- (ii) inculcate in the people the spirit of tolerance of all shades of opinion; and
- (iii) promote social justice based on the responsibilities and rights of the individual in society.”<sup>11</sup>

The second schedule to Decree No. 35 of 1998 contains guidelines on political campaigns through electronic media. The Decree also contains guidelines for programming and debates on radio and television.

The Decree requires radio and television stations to allot time equally to political parties and candidates to market themselves. It also stipulates that the rates for commercials charged political parties should be the same.

It states that political party broadcasts should not exceed one hour per week per station, at pre-election times, or 30 minutes per week at other times. The duration of party talk is also limited to about 10 minutes, and preferably not more than 15 minutes.

The Decree stipulates that the sale of airtime like jingles should not exceed 60 seconds and that no voice of a member of staff of the radio or television station is to be used in political jingles.

The National Broadcasting Code outlines “the minimum standard to be observed by all operators of radio and television stations” in Nigeria. As part of these standards, it provides extensive guidelines for political coverage. Besides the broad parameters laid out in the preamble in this area, the guidelines also relate specifically to live coverage, news interviews and discussion programmes.

The Code contains a range of sanctions, which may be imposed on a station for any breach of the guidelines contained in it. These include the revocation of its license if it commits a serious breach of either the technical or non-technical aspects of the Code; reprimand or warning; light or heavy fine; reduction of broadcast hours or suspension of license, depending on the gravity of the offence.

The Code requires all political programmes to observe the provisions of extant Acts, Decrees and electoral laws. All stations are obliged to adhere strictly to the rules given by the electoral body.

It also provides that political party broadcasts, which it describes as programmes over which content political parties exercise control, should be only those in which the parties seek to explain their views and policies.

All political broadcasts are required to be in “decent language” and to be clearly identified as political broadcasts which should not be presented in a manner that would mislead the audience to believe that the programme is of any other character.

The Code stipulates that equal opportunity and airtime should be provided to all political parties or views, with particular regard to the amount of time and belt.

It seeks to regulate the conduct of broadcast producers by stipulating that “While a broadcast producer may interact with politicians in the course of his duties, this interaction shall

not be such as to lead to the belief that he is either a member or sympathizer of any political party”

It gives every station the responsibility to produce and report the activities in the political arena in news and programmes, and requires such production to be objective and fair. Panelists must also be of comparable status.

The objective of news and programmes, under the Code, shall be to promote public discussion of political issues.

For live coverage, the Code stipulates in Paragraph 4.5 generally that live coverage of public events should be fair and balanced. But specifically, it stipulates that: “The live coverage of public events, especially of demonstrations and disturbances, shall be fair and balanced and just enough for the enlightenment of the citizenry. It shall not sensationalise or glamorise the event or exploit broadcasting’s unique advantages to the detriment of national interest and security.”

With regard to news interviews, the Code requires that all such programmes should be guided by ethical standards of journalism and imposes on the station to state during the broadcast when a news interview excludes an important or newsworthy area of the issue under discussion.

Besides, the Code states, where an interview entails an agreement to submit questions in advance or to exclude an important or newsworthy area concerning the subject, or where further developments have taken place after the recording, this should be stated at the beginning of the broadcast.

For discussion programmes, panelists are required to reflect the various viewpoints and to be of comparable status.

The Code also imposes an obligation on the station to state at the beginning of the broadcast where a discussion excludes any important or newsworthy area, or where further developments have taken place after the recording.

The Code also contains guidelines on the broadcast of political advertisements.<sup>14</sup> It prohibits the commercialization of political news or coverage in the interest of fairness and balance and to prevent the monetization of political broadcasts.

It stipulates that no advertisement, including commercial news, shall be accepted in a political programme and requires the advertiser to be clearly identified in all advertisements.

The Code also stipulates that “no advertisement shall contain anything which amounts to subversion of constituted authority or compromises the unity, sovereignty and corporate existence of Nigeria as a secular state.”

**(d) OBJECTIVES OF EXERCISE**

To monitor the coverage by the broadcast media of political and human rights issues in the run up to the presidential elections and until the transition programme comes to an end, to ascertain:

- a. What guidelines for direct access programming have been laid down by the Electoral Commission?
- b. What type of direct access programming is being aired?
- c. Are the programmes live or taped?
- d. Do the programmes include “actuality” - recordings of the candidates in their own words and voices?
- e. Do the programmes allow candidates and parties to explain their platforms and views?
- f. Do the programmes give the voters the opportunity to form opinion about the character of each candidate, their platform and parties?
- g. Do all the parties and candidates have equal time and similar programme formats?
- h. Are the parties programmes aired at similar times during the day?
- i. Are the broadcasting slot given free of charge?
- j. If air time is paid for, can it be said that no discounts were given to specific parties?
- k. Are there arbitrary restrictions on the format of the materials?

Further, the objectives include:

l) To provide a barometer for the broadcast media to measure their performance in reporting on human rights and political issues and undertake adjustments to bring themselves in conformity with international standards of fairness in the coverage of such issues.

m) To publish regular reports which will draw attention to patterns of inequitable reporting, inadequacy of political coverage, and provide a framework upon which a programme of reforms in the broadcast industry can be embarked upon.

n) To provide a basis upon which the in-coming democratically elected civilian government in Nigeria can undertake comprehensive legal and structural reforms in the regulation of broadcast stations in order to enhance the democratic process.

In a summary, the project aims at identifying the ways, manner and amount of coverage the broadcast media is giving to the transition process and how disposed government is in assisting the media in this respect.

## **2 GENERAL CONSIDERATION FOR PRINT MEDIA MONITORING**

There are two principal aspects that have been considered in this project. These are:

### **(a) Government**

Considering the anxiety and suspicions of Nigerians regarding the sincerity of the military to relinquish power, analysis is made of governments' actions to determine its impartiality in conducting the political transition programme. This is specifically in relation to government's actions, or its failures, to ensure the media's right to gather and impart information.

Also considered, is the media's ability to criticise activities or inaction of the government on matters relating to the transition process, to investigate corruption, bias and to operate independently of political pressures. This could be hindered by prior restraints, usually pursuant to laws on broadcasting of materials concerning certain subjects.

Lastly, government's action or inaction to reports of persecution of broadcasters / proprietors of broadcast stations, or attacks on the press for performing legitimate professional duties. In a nut-shell, how the government acts to ensures the news media's right to gather and impart information and ideas. This shall all combine to answer the objectives number "1", "11" and "14".

We shall consider these in terms of the General and Legal Environment.

(b) **The Broadcast Media**

Considering the role of the broadcast media in helping to ensure the enthrone and sustenance of democracy, the questions to be addressed shall be as spelt-out in the objectives. In sum total it shall address the following:

(a) How the broadcast media acts to provide access to political parties and candidates so that they may effectively communicate with the public during the political transition process.

(b) How the broadcast media act to ensure fair and objective coverage of political parties and candidates in news and information reporting.

(c) How the broadcast media act to educate the electorate on how and why to vote.

### **3. ASSESSING HOW THE GOVERNMENT ACTS TO ENSURE FREE MEDIA ACCESS TO POLITICAL NEWS SOURCES AND PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT**

**(a) General Environment**

The mass media atmosphere in Nigeria is at the moment enjoying a breath of fresh air after a seemingly endless suffocating working environment that pervaded the media industry during the regime of the late Head of State, General Sani Abacha.

Upon assumption of office last June, the head of state sought a hand of fellowship with the mass media. Chief among the approaches used was the release of journalists, jailed by the Abacha regime on charges of being “accessories after the fact of treason”, as well as the general ease in the hostilities directed at the press by the previous government.

This has led to healthy atmosphere for journalists in the practice of their profession.

**(b) Legal Environment**

In spite of the cessation of hostilities, as it were, caution continues to be the watchword for the media. Journalists and media workers still see too many

landmines along their way. Just as the new Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, has eased the siege on the mass media and opened the prison doors to jailed journalists, he has retained the legal frame work and structures which made the practice of journalism under General Abacha the darkest period for the Nigerian media. The decrees employed for the arrest and detentions of journalists as well as the violation of other media rights are still intact.

With the benefit of hindsight and past experiences, applying those decrees is discretionary for the head of state. Exercising that discretion does not require an elaborate plan. Just a change of mood by the head of state over a comment, question or remark, could trigger off a rash of arrest and detention in a few days.

Indeed, indications that the press truly need to be watchful was given recently when it was reported that a decree which bars live debate among political parties candidates, is on the way. According to *The Punch* newspaper in its issue of December 23, 1998, this indication was given by the Director General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), Professor Elo Amucheazi. Should this be implemented, the broadcast media will be worst hit as such live debate with its audio and visual effect, are the broadcast media chief selling points.

Since the disclosure, government has not reacted to deny it. If, indeed, this is true, then the suspicion by Nigerians that the General Abubakar regime, like its forebearers, should not be trusted, is after all not taking pessimism to an absurd level.

For the press also, it also indicates that they may actually need a long spoon to dine with General Abubakar, late General Abacha's number three man, and the present military ruler of Nigeria.

In the interim, however, a major legislation which threatens the broadcast media freedoms in the coverage or criticism of the political transition programme, is the Transition to Civil Rule (Political Programme) Decree No. 1 of 1996.

Although, a creation of the regime of the late General Abacha, the decree remains in force to date, available for use at the government's discretion.

The decree stipulates a punishment of five (5) years imprisonment for any person who organises, plans, encourages, aids, cooperates or conspires with any other person to undermined, prevent or in any way do any act to forestall or prejudice

the realisation of the political programme; “or any person who does or attempts to do any act to counsel, persuade, encourage, organise, mobilize, pressurize or threaten another person to join with him or with any other person or persons to misrepresent, accuse or distort the details, implications or purports of any item of the political programme”.

The sweeping nature of the provisions provides wide latitude for the government or its officials to apply the decree in censoring media criticisms of the transition programme.

The Political Parties (Registration and Activities) Decree No. 35 of 1998 discussed above is also a threat to the broadcast media. While it gave the broadcast media the duty to assist and sensitise Nigerians in making the right political choices that will help in bringing into being a good and accountable government, it failed to provide legal protection against the broadcast media in the event that the government or vindictive politician, irked by revelations about it or him, sues the station.

Another decree which directly threatens the broadcast media freedom with regard to the transition programme, is the National Broadcasting Commission Decree No. 38 of 1992.

The decree which established a National Broadcasting Commission with powers to license and supervise radio and television. Its lack of genuine independence from government can be seen from the fact that its members are government appointed and the fact that the decree empowers the minister of information “to give the Commission directives of a general character relating generally to particular matters with regard to the exercise by the Commission of its functions ...and it shall be the duty of the Commission to comply with such directives.”

The Commission only recommends an application for radio or television licence to the minister of information who in turn recommends to the president on whom the power to grant or reject an approval lies. But it has powers to revoke or refuse to recommend an application for a licence where it is of the opinion that the body applying will not act or has not acted “to promote national interest, unity and cohesion”, a vague expression which gives room for politically motivated measures.

Other decrees which do not specifically restrict broadcast media access to political stories but restrict media freedoms generally, include:

1. The State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 2 of 1984 (as amended), which allows for the indefinite and incommunicado detention, without charge or trial, of any person perceived to threaten the security of the state;
2. The Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 107 of 1993, which suspends a person's constitutional rights to compensation or public apology if he is found to have been unlawfully arrested or detained;
3. The Federal Military (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree No.12 of 1994, which prohibits legal challenges to any military decree or to any action which violates the human rights provisions of the Constitution;
4. The Treason and Other Offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree No. 1 of 1986, under which some journalists were convicted on the charge of being "accessories after the fact to treason" in the 1995 and 1997 alleged coup plots;
5. Treason and Treasonable Offences Decree No. 29 of 1993, which provides for a sentence of death to be imposed upon any person who utters any word, displays anything, or publishes any material which the military interprets as capable of breaking up Nigeria;
6. The Nigerian Press Council Decree No. 85 of 1992. Although touted as an avenue for those who feel maligned by the press to seek redress, its independence is compromised by the fact that the President has power to appoint the Chairman of the Council based on the recommendation of the Minister of Information. The presence in the Council of representatives of government controlled media such as the News Agency of Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority, and by the fact that it is government funded, all point to the likely possibility of lack of independence. All these facts have been reinforced by the fact that the Council has not moved to assert its authority when extra-legal measures are adopted by the government to repress the media.

All the above considered, the only valid inference possible is that the government has not provided an enabling legal environment for unfettered media coverage of the transition process.

The truth is that any form of limitation on political advertising, does allow the authorities to interfere with the way a campaign is run. Hence, governmental rules about the format or content of political advertisements can approach censorship.

Futhermore, any limitations on the way airtime is bought or used, infringes on the broadcaster's own freedom of expression and decision about the use of airtime. In this wise, it is safe to conclude that the pletorial of legislation and decrees regulating air time allocation by broadcast houses, is a hinderance to its freedom.

The only reason why the press still performed as they did in spite of this obvious lapse, is because they have become all too familiar with working under an insecure atmosphere.

#### **4 ASSESSING THE BROADCAST MEDIA AS IT ACTS TO GIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES, ENSURE FAIR COVERAGE, AND EDUCATE THE ELECTORATE ON HOW AND WHY TO VOTE.**

In order to achieve the objectives listed above, that is to answer how the broadcast media acts to provide access to political parties and candidates to air their views, ensure fair and objective coverage of their activities, and educate the electorate on how and why to vote, the following yardstick were used.

##### **(a) Limitation**

The period to be covered shall be six months between December 1998 to May 1999 when the transition programme is deemed to have been completed.

In the same vein, rather than attempt monitoring print media focus on each and all the provisionally registered political parties, it has been decided that emphasis should be placed on only three. These are Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP)

The selection of these parties was arrived at after a careful consideration of their national spread, organisational structure, personalities involved and other characteristics which stand them in better stead.

In order to assess the broadcast media on the above considerations the followings were taken into consideration.

However, the project could not elaborately cover all the relevant political programmes in December due to some logistics problems. But it covered the local government elections of that month, some of the activities of the political parties, gubernatorial primaries and INEC's guidelines on the primaries.

The report shall, therefore, give a general overview of the performance of broadcast media during the month.

## **(b) Variables**

The issues considered include;

### **(i) Stories on government activities**

We shall consider the stories generated from government activities, conducts and programmes bordering on the transition programme and how they are broadcast.

### **(ii) Stories on INEC**

These include stories generated from the activities of the commission through press conferences, interviews by its officials and any civic education programme sponsored by the commission.

### **(iii) Stories on APP, PDP and AD.**

These include stories generated from the three main political parties, individually and jointly, through press conferences, campaigns, rallies, debates, meetings and others. The length of time given each party or candidate.

### **(iv) Informed Commentaries**

These include programmes where political analysts are interviewed on their views about particular political issues or conduct of elections or the transition programme in general. This may also include opinion polls.

### **(v) Voters Education**

This is aimed at programmes that educate the voters. It shall consider the use of the broadcast media to reach groups that may have traditionally lower voting patterns in order to encourage them to vote. Such programmes might be sponsored by the media themselves or by INEC.

**(vi) Advertisement / Direct Access**

This shall include programmes sponsored by political parties or their candidates to inform the public of their programmes or intention to contest. It will also look at advertisement taken out in between some other non-political programmes.

The Television Stations monitored for this report are:

- (1) The federal government owned Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) in Abuja.
- (2) Private-owned African Independent Television (AIT) in Lagos.
- (3) MiNAJ systems T.V, a privately owned station in Obosi, Anambra State.

The Radio Stations are:

1. Federal Government-owned Radio Nigeria in Abuja.
2. Ray Power 100.5 F.M, a privately owned station in Lagos.

## **5. PRESENTATION OF RESULT OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA MONITORING FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER, 1998.**

**(i) Radio Nigeria, Abuja**

“Platform”, a political enlightenment programme, aired a 15 minute drama in pidgin English, interspread with the three main languages in the country, Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba. The drama cut across all strata of the society as both literate and illiterate found it interesting.

The drama portrayed three men from the three main ethnic groups who were determined to exercise their civic duties on an election day, and as they went on to the polling stations, they enlightened their different people in their local languages on the guidelines of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in respect of the election.

The drama was broadcast on December 2 and 4, just before the local council chairmanship elections held on December 5, 1998.

Radio Nigeria in Abuja, usually carried advertisement by the three political parties and lots of jingles ranging from about 50 seconds to 70 seconds by INEC wherein citizens are informed of the time-table for the transition programme.

During the month of December, especially after the chairmanship election, the station's news featured mainly political stories; moreso, on the governorship elections which is slated for January 9, 1999.

The station's news broadcast of December 20, touched on issues such as the commencement, the next day, of the governorship and state assembly primaries nationwide, the arrest of 15 persons for allegedly burning down INEC office in Oju Local government of Benue State and the presentation, next day, of registration certificate to the three parties.

On its news of December 21, focus was on the presentation of the certificates by INEC's chairman Justice Ephraim Akpata (rtd) to the three party chairmen and an announcement of a ban on politicians from visiting INEC's offices on election days, purportedly to lodge complaints.

Comments of the three chairmen after the presentation was also aired on a fairly equal time basis.

The station also reported the declaration of a presidential aspirant for APP, Chief Edet Amana who spoke for about 30 seconds and the proposed declaration for the next day of another APP presidential aspirant, Chief Emmanuel Nwanyanwu.

However, in its network news half-hour of December 27, the station broadcast only the results of the governorship and House of Assembly party primaries. This was the third in the headlines after the announcement of the Provisional Ruling Council and National Council of States adjournment of the meeting on budget '99 and a story that the government would not compromise the standard of living in the country.

The programme, "Platform", aired on December 25 and 28, 1998, fell short of expectation. By omission or commission, it gave more air time to stories relating to the All Peoples Party (APP), at the expense of its People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD) counterparts.

The programme featured voices of the two National chairmen of APP and PDP from various fora across the country, while the presenter merely read a three sentence report on AD.

While the voice of APP's chairman, Senator Mahmud Waziri, who spoke against disagreements which could factionalise the party was on air for about 5 minutes, his counterpart from PDP, Chief Solomon Lar, was given about 3 minutes air time.

Lar, whose party had first emerged the overall winner of the local government elections, assured the public of a continuation of its winning streak. The AD, in a three-sentence report read by the presenter, said it was taking steps to ensure that its political stronghold remained intact.

Radio Nigeria on the same programme also carried the official declaration of an APP chieftain, Dr. Olusola Saraki, to seek nomination as the party's presidential candidate. The programme was not forthcoming on activities of presidential aspirants of the other two parties.

The news report of December 28, 1998 stated that INEC had commence the screening of gubernatorial candidates and State House of Assembly candidates for the election stated for January 9, 1999. The report gave the total number of gubernatorial candidates to be screened as 108 and those of House of Assembly as 2,967. It did not, however, give a breakdown of the figures, in respect of how many candidates each party was presenting.

Thus it can be seen that there was a deliberate attempt to provide for direct access programming at which parties and their officials were given opportunities to reach out to the electorate. This, no doubt provided most voters opportunities to be abreast of party programmes and candidates.

## **(ii) Ray Power Radio 100.5 F.M, Lagos.**

Ray Power, a Private radio station can be regarded as the radio station with the most political programmes in its base, Lagos State.

Its political programmes include "Your Rights and Duties", "Factfile", "Politics Half Hour." etc. Most of the programmes try to carry listeners along by allowing them to phone-in and state their views on issues being discussed.

In its 30 minute news programme, "News Express", of December 1, the story on INEC's reaction to crisis in PDP (Delta State) came after the stories on a Lagos high court granting permission to five persons to sue, clash between soldiers and Ojo local government officials and the expected arrival of Black Stars football club of Ghana on December 4.

Also in the same news edition AD's alarm over plans to disrupt the December 5 local government elections in Abuja was reported after the non-political stories mentioned above. Ray Power "News Express" of December 2, also placed its story on INEC's preparation for the local

government election, sixth, after “Fuel Scarcity Worsens”, “Police Halts Protest March by Women’s Group”, “Public Debate on Draft Constitution Holds Tomorrow in Lagos”, “Revival Assembly Celebrates 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” and “LOC to Acquire Motorised Carts”.

Its 4 p.m news report of December 2, followed the same pattern as that of December. 1 as the political stories came after the stock exchange report for that day.

The station’s programme, “Your Rights and Duties” a civic education forum broadcast weekly, usually features live interviews with intellectuals on various political issues and activities.

It is note worthy to observe that apart from the strictly political programmes identified above, several general interest programmes and even some specific-subject based ones, got stewed with political content.

### **(iii) MiNAJ Television , Obosi**

The station is owned by a business man and is situated in Obosi , Anambra State, in the Eastern part of the country. It’s main political programmes include “Political Diary” and “Election Watch”.

While “Political Diary,” a weekly programme is sponsored by political parties or candidates, “Election Watch” is an enlightenment programme whereby political analysts are interviewed thereby making it a programme for the elites.

“Political Diary”, therefore, favours politicians who have money to spend on campaigns, rallies etc. Usually, the station does not comment or interfere with the broadcast of the programme.

“Political Diary” of December 1, featured a declaration of PDP’s gubernatorial candidate in Delta State, Chief James Ibori who read a speech titled “My Covenant.”

The usage of actuality footage was, of course, very elaborate as pictures of women dancing and singing praises of the gubernatorial candidate dominated the screen. He was also shown reading out a list of programmes before some of the people of the state and his party faithful present at the declaration ceremony.

The second segment of the same programme, still on the same day, featured PDP’s chieftains in Anambra State, under the leadership of Dr. Alex Ekweme, on a round-the-state tour. It afforded them opportunity to interact with the people and sell the party’s programmes. The visit covered many rural areas.

Both segments were totally pro-PDP, which is expected of a direct access programme. The programme was relatively informative as it enabled the electorates meet those aspiring to rule them and actually hear them speak.

The programme “Election Watch” which was not sponsored, was quite balanced in its presentation. The December 5 edition, aired live, featured an analysis by a guest, Mr. Eugene Obiora Nwabujo, an expert in political history and international relations, and Chukwudi Chukwujekwu, a senior lecturer at the Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsukka.

The discussion was interspersed with live reports from polling stations in Obosi, Onitsha, Abuja and Lagos, where voting was generally peacefully. There were, however, complaints like absence of INEC officials as at when due and shortage of material, in some centres even as at 4.p.m.

While the interview programme, which also includes phone in by viewers, was going on, viewers were also afforded the opportunity to follow the voting patterns.

The programme was quite balanced and highly instructional as it enlightened viewers as to the exact situation of polling. The guests were also unbiased in their analysis, while the presenter did not lose ethical focus.

On its news report of December 5, 1998, MiNAJ Television reported that the conduct of the elections was characterised by problems in parts of the country.

Although, voting was reportedly peaceful and largely hitch free in Edo, Lagos and Bayelsa States, the station reported that the exercise was characterised by incidents like the late arrival of materials, impersonation, thuggery in states like Delta, Enugu, Imo and Anambra.

The station also reported a cases of illegal possession of firearms in places like Dumukafia and Nnewi and the arrest of over 20 people.

Election materials were said to have arrived as late as 3.p.m in Obosi, and voters, who had earlier returned home, were called on with the aid of public address systems to turn up for voting.

There was also a report of party officials confronting INEC officials on the alleged sudden disappearance of an electoral officer posted to Mgbidi Ward 1 as he was yet to turn up as at 11.am.

From Asaba, Delta State, the station reported that security officials stormed the INEC headquarters to ask for the electoral officer in charge of Patani Local Government

Area for failing to conduct elections in the area. He was arrested and later released on the orders of the state administrator, Navy Commander Walter Feghabo, who told him to go and conduct the elections for the area.

Anambra State Capital, Awka, also recorded pockets of protests due to the late arrival of materials for voting. Hundreds of people besieged Azozgwu in Ekwusia Local Government Area, protesting alleged attempts by INEC to deprive them of their electoral fortunes.

In Lagos State, however, it was a different story as voters trooped out early for accreditation and voting went on peacefully. Some international observers were also spoken to and they expressed satisfaction at the conduct of the elections. Some of the international observers in Enugu, however, declined commenting on the elections.

The election report was quite comprehensive with moving pictures from election venues across the country. There was no indication of bias by the station in favour of any person or political party.

In terms of giving candidates and political parties unhindered access to reach out to voters the station can be said to have performed creditably well. It also gave balance and objective views on the activities on political parties and other interest groups such as the government and INEC.

Parties were allowed the privileged of deciding the format of their adverts as well, and there was much use of “actuality”.

#### **(iv) African Independent Television (AIT), Lagos.**

The African Independent Television (AIT) is a private owned television station in Lagos. Its main political programmes include “Democracy Today”, a weekly civic education programme and “Polls Watch,” usually aired during elections.

The programme “Polls Watch” of December 5, lasted for three hours. It was based on the local government elections. Three guests were invited to analyse the conduct of the elections. Viewers were also enjoined to phone in their suggestions and observations of the election process.

The election reports on that day showed that the elections were largely free and fair and that there was a massive turn out of voters.

The programme reported that in Abuja as early as 7.30 a. m voters were already waiting at polling centres for the accreditation exercise. The Head of State, General

Abdusalam Abubakar, was shown at about 11.am casting his vote. Military administrators of Lagos and Ogun States were also shown as they went round polling stations monitoring the elections.

In Abeokuta, one of the presidential aspirants for Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd), was shown standing on a queue with his wife, waiting for his turn to cast a vote.

The station also reported that in Mushin a candidate was wounded during a fight between APP and PDP supporters and in Abeokuta some AD supporters were arrested by NDLEA officials for alleged drug related offences. The party's gubernatorial candidate for Ogun State, Chief Segun Osoba, however, claimed that the NDLEA officials were sent by a PDP bigwig to harass the supporters.

While some callers commended INEC on the conduct of the election, many complained about the INEC official's late arrival at polling centres in areas like Ikeja, Agege and some wards in Mushin.

Comparing the local government election with the ones conducted during the regime of the former Head of State, General Sani Abacha, the analysts on the programme agreed that the present election was better and that Nigerians responded positively to the elections.

Other polling areas visited were located in Victoria Island, Ikorodu and other locations in Lagos State.

On "Democracy Today" of December 6, 1998, the conduct of the previous day's election was reviewed. The presenter started off by creating a negative feeling about politicians whose parties lost in their home bases.

The presenter started with a rather negative sentence: "How are the mighty fallen!" A presidential aspirant of PDP, General Olusegun Obasanjo, was shown and the fact that he lost in his ward in Abeokuta was emphasised.

Other politicians who lost in their home bases, according to the programme, include Chief Lai Balogun of APP, Chief Richard Akinjide PDP, Chief Don Etiebet of PDP and Chief Baba Musa of PRP. The piece on them was preceded by the presenters remark; "political heavy weights are shedding their weight".

On the station's news of December 9, which was mainly political stories, it was reported that AD was under pressure to merge with either PDP or APP. Based on this

report the station concluded that a merger between AD and APP would in no wise upset PDP which won majority of the chairmanship and counselorship seats nationwide.

A press briefing where foreign observers also commented on the conduct of the election was aired and a review of the voters register and the accreditation process which they referred to as cumbersome and time consuming was recommended.

The “Democracy Today” of December 11, 1998, visited the issue of alleged rigging by some parties during the last chairmanship election. Although, party officials were interviewed, the programme was filled with allegation and counter allegations which left the viewers to make up their own minds on what to believe and what to disbelieve.

On December 14, INEC’s chairman announced the registration of the three parties that scaled through the commission’s guidelines for registration. This issue was discussed on “Democracy Today” aired on December 19, but only chairmen of two of the six parties which did not get registered were interviewed.

During the week of December 20, the political parties held their gubernatorial primaries. For some it was filled with confusion, compromises and protests, while for others it all went smoothly. In this report, a lot of air time was given to AD’s primaries said to have been characterised by protests against the results. The primaries in Lagos were given more prominence than those from other States. And the report on the dispute within the AD was quite balanced.

Like its Radio station, AIT apart from the strictly political programmes identified above, several of its other programmes such as “Kakaki” a news feature and human interest programme, also devoted much of their air time to political issues. The short coming observed in this regard was that there were no specific mass oriented civic education programmes merged to educate the mass of the people who tune unto the station daily. Although the station ones in a while prior the December 5 local government election aired a civic education slot appealing to eligible voters to avail themselves of the civic duty this was rendered in standard English which made it only useful to the literate.

There was also no specific time for the slot i.e whether it was a prime time slot or during popular programmes.

Thus it can be said that while the station provided direct access to candidates and political parties to reach the voter, engaged in much informed commentaries as well as provided viewers opportunity to be part of the programmes by the various phone-in

opportunities, it failed in giving the mass of the people the much desired civic education that would have made a lot of difference.

**(v) Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Abuja**

The Station broadcast only Network political programmes and News which are relayed by all NTA stations in the country. Surprisingly, while other NTA stations across the country have their own political programme, Abuja does not have one. So it only relays whatsoever it is fed with by the network service.

This seems quite unprofessional, especially at a period when politics is the main issue and the public are excited about the transition to democracy. It was, however, learnt that this was a new development in the station as such a situation did not occur during the past transition programmes (which were botched) undergone by the country.

No reason or explanation was given for this new policy, (unwritten though), but it is believed generally by staff of the organisation that it's all due to power tussle between two of the bosses at the station.

So, the station is depriving its viewers of comprehensive enlightenment programmes on the on-going transition programmes. The viewers have to rely on the Network news broadcast once a day at 9 p.m. and sometimes "Face the Nation", an all issue programme, which is broadcast once a week for a political slot, possibly.

On December 5, the station reported the Head of State, General Abdusallam Abubakar as voting at Ward 14, Presidential Villa Polling Centres and making unexpected appearances at some polling stations. His presence, though unexpected and unannounced, was welcomed by voters. The Chief of General Staff, Rear Admiral Mike Akhigbe, was also reported to have cast a vote. They were both shown casting their votes.

On the same day, the station also reported that some voters couldn't find their names on the register and some whose names were in the register had the wrong numbers. Some people the station interviewed attributed the mix-up to the merger of some polling stations, while other voters thought it a ploy by the political parties to rig the election.

The station reported that on the outskirts of Abuja there were inadequate enlightenment as some voters mistook accreditation for the election proper and went home after the accreditation exercise without waiting to vote.

The station also gave state by state of account of the election. There were pictures of some of the people who voted and some who couldn't exercise their right to vote due to mix-up or outright disappearance of their names from the voters' register.

State administrators in most of the states were also shown as they voted and were interviewed on their opinions about the conduct of the election. Most of them described the election as peaceful and with large turn out.

The station gave fairly equal timing to the reports on each state. The news report of that day was mainly on the election.

On December 6, the station noted that despite the passmark given to the election, few ugly incidents such as hooliganism were experienced. It, thereby, suggested a radical change of attitude (did not say on whose part) so as to ensure a "civil democratic process".

On December 11, it reported INEC's meeting with some party officials by its Bauchi State resident Electoral Commissioner, Mr. Edward Ajibodu denying allegations that resident electoral commissioners nationwide were bribed in respect of the conduct of the December 5 Local Government election as earlier alleged by APP national chairman, Solomon Lar . All party officials present at the meeting, dissociated themselves from the allegations.

Meanwhile, in its news relay of December 14, the station reported INEC's Chairman, Justice Akparta, statement on the registered political parties after the local government election. It said the registration was based on the requirement stated in Section 5 Paragraphs 10 (3) and 12 (2) of the Guidelines for Registration of Parties. Three of the nine provisionally registered political parties, APP, PDP and AD were registered.

In all, there was unarguably more report on the activities of PDP than those of other political parties and interest groups.

## **6. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(i) Analysis**

The stations monitored displayed an appreciable level of fairness in their coverage of political events during the month of December 1998. Although there were instances where more air time was allotted to one party than the others, this could not be taken as

conclusive evidence of favouritism or biased reporting as it was not observed in subsequent programmes.

One may, however, wonder why some parties were given more prominence in some programmes than others. The Radio Nigeria, Abuja, programme, “The Platform” on the average is observed to have given DPP and APP more airtime than it did AD.

These might have been influenced by other factors rather than deliberate bias or favouritism. Such factors may include the base of different parties and the location of the station relative to the party base.

Radio Nigeria because it is based in the North may have more access to PDP and APP which have a more national spread than A.D which stronghold is in the south.

The programme, “Platform” aimed at enlightening the public on their rights as voters, their duties and obligation, gets to all strata of the society through the use of drama, songs and informed views. It addresses a wide range of issues and it is directed at different section of the population from the youths to the women, the men and the elderly.

It presents information in the three main languages in the country and also in pidgin English to cater for the needs of those that are not educated. Its drama, jingles and songs removes the dreariness of hard core political stories bringing it down to the level of the not so learned people.

However it does not leave out the learned people. The 15 minute programme sometimes review what happened on the political scene in the previous week and usually enable the public to make informed choices.

Candidates of political parties are usually aired, talking about their parties, plans and aspirations.

The station, however, does not seem to have much information on AD. Their reports on the other two parties, APP and PDP, are usually fuller than those on the AD. This may be viewed by some of its viewers as favoritism. But it should be noted that AD is basically a southern-based party and seem to be more interested in consolidating its powers in the South, than up North. Although this is no excuse for the station not to seek out AD officials in Abuja in order to serve their listeners a balanced report.

The stations news stories are usually balanced as equal air time is given to party officials wherever necessarys. The station also makes use of lots of actuality, usually the voice of the official is aired.

Although Abuja seem to be one of PDP's stronghold, stories about APP seem to be aired more often than PDP on Radio Abuja. It must be noted though, that some news stories are commercial oriented and the reporter also has to use his or her discretion in determining news worthiness.

The programmes on Radio Abuja going by its news stories did a good job in creating awareness about electoral guidelines.

While a television station such as NTA Abuja deprives its viewers of political awareness due to lack of political programmes, Radio Abuja makes sure that its viewers are well informed.

MiNAJ Television in Obosi, did an extensive report on the local government election of December 5, especially in its area of location, Anambra State. The station revealed a lot of incidents in some areas of the country during the elections. It was also one of the few stations monitored that reported cases of thuggery, hooliganism and illegal possession of fire arms in some states.

Although it also agreed with other reports by other stations that the conduct of the elections was generally peaceful, through out the news reports there was no indication of bias towards any party or candidate.

The station broadcast two political programmes one of which is "Political Dairy". This is solely a commercial oriented programme sponsored by particular parties or candidates. The disadvantage of this is that only the money bags will have access to such programmes, leaving the public with limited choice. The station could, however, complement this by having a programme like "Platform" of radio Abuja and "Democracy Today" on AIT whereby parties and candidates would be discussed firmly without any bias or prejudice.

Although the political dairy is sponsored, the editions aired in December did not cast any aspersion on one party from another. The language used was civil. It's election watch on December 3, was quite balanced and mixed with live reports from polling centers in Obosi, Onitsha, Abuja and Lagos. This afforded various information on the conduct of the election. The programme was, however, targeted at the elite of the society as it was based on intellectual political discuss.

"Political Dairy" and "Election Watch" lived up to their billings one as a sponsored political programme and, the other, as a public service programme.

AIT's "Democracy Today" affords voters opportunities to be informed about the transition programme. As a weekly programme, usually it reviews happening in political circles within the week and whatever news seem relevant on the day, whether political or not.

Political candidates and analysts are usually interviewed on the programme. Although it tries to be fair, some issues considered important or relevant are left out. In its edition of December 20, 1998, the chairman of DAM and PRP were interviewed after losing their registration bid due to their poor performance in the December 5 local government elections. But chairman of the other parties who also lost; UDP, UPP and MDJ were not interviewed and no excuse was given for the lapse.

NTA Abuja presented very comprehensive report on the December 5 local government election although, this was fed them through the network service.

As a station created to inform, educate and entertain, it is doing a great disservice to its viewers by not airing its own political programmes. Such programmes will give Abuja viewers the opportunity to follow politics as being played in their locality. The network programme will cater for the need of the whole nation and, of course, this may not be fulfilling for the Abuja public who will want to know more about the candidates especially during local government elections.

While the Abuja public are well informed about political issues in other areas of the country, they are presently not able to say much about the politics in their locality.

In spite of some shortcomings in the areas of sketchy information and a dearth of analysis on some political issues, the political reports of Ray Power featured relevant events on the political scene.

No evidence of bias against one party or another was displayed generally by the station for the month of December 1998. However, the news style is rather informal and some important political stories are often buried under less important stories. This gives an impression of lack of preparation on the part of the station.

Most of Ray Power's political programme, however, depend on phone calls from listeners who offer their opinion or ask questions on the issue being discussed. Such programmes, as Fact file, Bournvita Breakfast Special, Your Rights and Duties and Politics ½ hours rely extensively on audience participation and, therefore leave the listeners with little informed commentaries. The station gets a passmark for reporting on

the conduct of election, but the guidelines are not analysed by the station to bring out its flaws and merits.

Political Update, a news programme does not live up to its name, as it gives a brief and direct reporting of the news leaving out a detailed analysis required of such a programme.

## **(ii) Conclusion**

All in all, it is state to conclude that on the part of government there was no deliberate attempt to restrict broadcast media access to political news sources except of course that the avalanche of decrees and legislation that abound is capable of installing fear and self-censorship on the broadcast stations.

Secondly, the restrictions on the sale of air time discussed above, is without much ado an attempt at censorship.

Thirdly, while the various legislation invest on a broadcaster the duty to help sensitise the voter, no effort is made to provide a broadcaster protection from legal actions by aggrieved person(s).

However, on the issues of how the broadcast media acts to ensure fair and objective coverage of political parties, if the mere number of mention is anything to go by, then some parties were more favoured than others. This is as a result of a common tendency by the broadcast media monitored to accord more mention to PDP.

In addition, the broadcast media provided direct access programming of various kinds although mostly for a fee. Also much use was made of “actuality” as well as live programmes at which candidates were allowed to explain their platforms and air their views using their voices.

## **(iii) Recommendations**

In view of the above analysis and conclusion, we, therefore, recommend as follows:

\* In view of the greater advantage of the broadcast media has over its print counterpart, government can enhance greater participation, as well as stimulate more citizen’s interest in the political transition programme by initiating policies that will make radio and television sets more affordable for the masses.

\* We further recommend that in order to make direct access programmes beneficial to all the parties, the stations should reduce its air time rate for sponsored political programmes and as well encourage a greater use of local languages and the more universal pidgin English.

\* The Government should create a more conducive legal environment for media coverage of the transition programme by repealing all laws and decrees which inhibit the capacity of the media to report freely.

In particular, the Government should revoke its reported ban on live debates.

\* The Government should provide adequate protection for journalists and media workers against intimidation and attacks by thugs, supporters and members of political parties or candidates. The government should also investigate into all reported cases and prosecute those responsible.

\* There was a reported low turn-out of voters recorded during the December 5, Local Government Polls, blamed largely on lack of awareness on the part of eligible voters on the need to avail themselves of this civic duty, and where to vote. We recommend, therefore, that the broadcast media should improve significantly on their focus on Civic Education broadcasts.

Following from the above, we recommend that the government and INEC should give more attention to political enlightenment programmes in the broadcast media.

\* A further recommendation is that the broadcast media, rather than increase their air time rates, should reduce it to enable parties and politicians have more access to the electorate.

### **Notes:**

(a) We note with satisfaction that the three parties shortlisted for this project were the three eventually registered by INEC.

(b) We note also that this report falls short of giving extensive coverage of all the political programmes available in the broadcast stations monitor. We hope to rectify this in our subsequent reports.

### **Error Margin**

We admit an error margin of plus or minus 5 in data collection and analysis.



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