

Media Scorecard

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



February 1999

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

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PREFACE

This report of Print Media Monitoring , the second in the series, 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 print 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.

Readers will notice that this report is much bulky compared to the maiden report. Although, we have here deleted part of the Basis of Monitoring Exercise, and a few other parts of that report, we have also had to update certain information especially in relation to how the government acts to ensure free access to news sources by the media and as well protect it - media - from harassment.

Secondly, we have here in this report, carried out our monitoring exercise on 10 national newspapers and four news feature magazines, as we promised in our maiden report.

Thirdly, but by no means the least, we have here given background information on the newspapers and magazines monitored. This is with a view to providing the reader further insight into why a newspaper or magazine may have reported on the political transition process the way it did.

All in all, readers, we believe, will find the content of this publication quite educative.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the second report of the Print Media Monitoring Project of Media Rights Agenda (MRA).

It is based on the monitoring of selected newspapers to assess the coverage of political issues during the period between January 1 and January 31, 1999.

The report focuses on the coverage of the political programme by ten major independent and state-owned or controlled national newspapers. Those that are state-owned are:- *The New Nigerian* and *Daily Times* newspapers. The independent newspapers include: *The Guardian*, *This Day*, *Concord*, *Vanguard*, *The Diet*, *Post Express*, *Champion* and *Punch* newspapers.

In addition, four weekly newsfeature magazines, all privately owned were monitored. These are: *TELL*, *The Source*, *Newswatch* and *The News*.

(a) BASIS OF MONITORING EXERCISE

In the pilot report of this project, we established the legal basis for fair and effective coverage of electoral processes which derives from 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.

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.

(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.¹

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.

¹ See Article 19: Election Reporting - A Practical Guide to Media Monitoring, (1998) pp 1-2

Thirdly, the question is, anxious and suspicious as Nigerians are, is the press mature 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 Print Media Monitoring Project of Media Right Agenda.

(c) OBJECTIVES OF EXERCISE

As in the pilot report of this project, the objectives remain:

- 1) To monitor the coverage by the print 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. The extent of coverage given to political and human rights issues by state-owned and independent national newspapers and news magazines in terms of the space devoted to such issues, the kind of issues that are covered, as well as those left out and how comprehensively events relating to them are reported and analysed.
 - b. The pattern of reporting of events pertaining to government officials on state-owned newspapers such as the prominence given to them, allocation of space to opposition figures to provide different view-points from official positions.
 - c. The fairness of allocation of news space to various political parties in relation to each other and relative to the space given to government officials in independent and state-owned newspapers and magazines, as well as how these impact on the political process.
 - d. How much coverage is given to issues and events affecting rural and illiterate populations of the society.
- 2) To provide a barometer for the print 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.
- 3) 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 newspaper and magazine industries can be embarked upon.
- 4) 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 newspapers and magazines in order to enhance the democratic process.

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

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 publication of materials concerning certain subjects.

Lastly, government's action or inaction to reports of persecution of journalists / publishers, or attacks on the press for performing legitimate professional duties. In a nut-shell, how the government acts to protect the news media's right to gather and impart information and ideas.

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

(b) The Press

Considering the role of the mass media in helping to ensure the enthronement and sustenance of democracy, the questions to be addressed shall include:

- (a) How the news media acts to provide access to political parties and candidates so that they can effectively communicate with the public during the political transition process.
- (b) How the media act to ensure fair and objective coverage of political parties and candidates in news and information reporting.
- (c) How the news 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

As in the pilot report, the general atmosphere for the operation of the mass media in Nigeria was a considerable improvement on the situation that pervaded the media industry during the regime of the late Head of State, General Sani Abacha.

This has continued to provide a healthy atmosphere for journalists in the practice of their profession.

(b) Legal Environment

However, despite the general improvement in the atmosphere for journalism practice, the new Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, has continued to retain 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 detention of journalists as well as the violation of other media rights are still intact. The ability to apply those decrees remains a matter of discretion for the head of state.

A major legislation which threatens 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 a wide latitude for the government or its officials to apply the decree in censoring media criticisms of the transition programme.

Another decree which directly threatens media freedom with regard to the transition programme is the Offensive Publications (Proscription) Decree No. 35 of 1993.

Promulgated by the government of General Ibrahim Babangida, the decree provides for the proscription, seizure and confiscation of any publication which, in the opinion of the head of state, is likely to:

- “(a) disrupt the process of democracy and peaceful transition to civil rule having regard to its contents; or
- (b) hinder or prevent the progress and process of the grassroot democracy as established by the transition to civil rule programme; or
- (c) disturb the peace and public order of Nigeria”

The decree ousts the jurisdiction of the courts to inquire into any question whether any of the fundamental rights provisions in the 1979 Constitution or the African Charter on Human and People's Rights has been violated by an order made pursuant to the provisions of the decree. It remains in force to date.

Other decrees which do not specifically restrict 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.
7. The Newspapers Decree No. 43 of 1993 provides an equally grave threat to media freedom in Nigeria. This Decree provides for the establishment of a Newspaper Registration Board within the Ministry of Information. It requires that all newspapers are registered annually with the Board, which will then issue a licence to operate to registered newspapers and other publications. The cost of registration is extremely high. Newspapers have to pay a pre-registration deposit of N250,000 and a non-refundable fee of N100,000 annually. Failure by the proprietor, publisher or printer to ensure that the newspaper is registered will lead to the closing down of the newspaper and criminal prosecution of the proprietor, publisher or printer. If convicted, they can be fined N250,000 or imprisoned for up to seven years or both. The Board may refuse to licence a newspaper if it is not satisfied with its "performance" during the previous year. But the Board is not obliged to give reasons for its refusal to register a newspaper.

Although the Minister of Information announced recently that the Board has been disbanded, he was silent on the status of the enabling Decree.

Beyond those, there are a lot of other repressive laws which gravely restrict freedoms. These include the Official Secrets Act of 1962, Defamation Act of 1961 and Defamation and Offensive Publication Act of 1966.

Others are the Printing Presses (Regulation) Act of 1958 which gives the government unspecified powers to close down any printing press, the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1961, the Obscene Publication Act of 1962; and the National Economic Intelligence Committee (Establishment) Decree of 1994.

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 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 PRINT 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 three sub-general considerations in print media monitoring, that is to answer how the 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 by this project remains six months i.e December, 1998, to May, 1999. The justification being that the period is expected to witness much political engineering in Nigeria's history. However, this particular report is for the month of January 1999. This is the second month of the project time frame and the second report in the series.

(b) Variables

The variables and issues that shall hold our interest shall include :

(1) Stories on Government Activities

Here, we shall look at stories generated from activities of government officials at the local government, state and federal levels. Their conducts, pronouncements and other activities bordering on the transition programme. Also to be included here shall be activities of government agencies such as the police.

(2) Stories on INEC

These shall include stories generated directly from the activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). For example, if INEC calls a press conference and in the process gives out a list of candidates cleared for an election, this is categorised as a publication on INEC. But where the impression is created that rather than such list been given out by INEC, the newspaper obtained it by itself and published same, this is taken as a Civic Education.

(3) Stories on A D

Included here are stories generated from A.D's activities; press conferences, meetings, campaigns and others. Also are comments by party members on their party members, other parties and issues.

(4) Stories on APP

This shall include stories generated from APP's activities; press conferences, campaigns, meetings and other issues. Also are comments by party members on their party members, other parties and issues.

(5) Stories on PDP

Similarly, this shall include stories generated from PDP's activities; press conferences, campaigns, meetings and other issues. Also, are comments by party members on their party members, other parties and issues.

(6) Stories on Two Parties or The Three Combined

Included here are stories generated from activities of two or all the three parties (AD, APP and PDP) and written together.

(7) Urban Areas Activities

This shall include stories on all the other variables except publications grouped under Informed Commentaries, Civic Education, Advertisement and Rural Areas Activities, considered to have been generated from political activities which took place in urban areas.

(8) Rural Areas Activities

This shall include stories on all the other variables except publications grouped under Informed Commentaries, Civic Education, Advertisement and Urban Areas Activities, considered to have been generated from political activities which took place in rural areas.

(9) Informed Commentaries

Treated here are stories which may be related to activities of INEC, AD, PDP, APP and other issues relating to the transition process, but which are, however, not necessarily treated as news items, but as features stories. Also included are newspaper editorials, opinion page comments, analysis and letters to the editor.

(10) Civic Education

This relates to publications that are meant to educate the citizens on important aspects of the transition programme and why they should participate. For example, where a newspaper on its own goes ahead to obtain and publish a document such as the list of candidates cleared for an election by INEC without an indication that it was given out by INEC, at say a press conference, such is taken as a Civic Education. So also are news stories or features that explain the procedure for party registration, the electoral decrees etc.

(11) Advertisement

This is sub-divided into three alongside the three provisionally registered political parties. The advert could be placed by the party or any of its member.

(12) Others

These consist of publications on all other unregistered political parties. Also included are stories on comments by, and activities of bodies and persons outside the aforementioned groups of persons and interest groups in the transition process.

(13) Total number of Stories

This shall simply be all the above added together. In addition to all the above, the total available print space shall be determined.

Most importantly, unlike in the pilot report in which we did not give instances of biased reporting because there were no established pattern in that regard, we shall here indicate such. This shall be when we consider a report biased and it shall be irrespective of whether subsequent reports by the newspaper / magazine concerned could be excused of an established pattern of bias.

The newspapers monitored for this exercise were:

1. *The Guardian*
2. *This Day*
3. *The Punch*
4. *Daily Times*
5. *Vanguard*
6. *Champion*
7. *The Post Express*
8. *Concord*
9. *The New Nigerian*
10. *The Diet*

The following magazines were equally monitored:

1. *TEll*
2. *The News*
3. *The Source*
4. *Newswatch*

5 ABOUT THE NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES MONITORED

As we implied above, the coverage given by a particular newspaper and magazine to the political transition as a whole and the various variables listed above, will most likely be a function of the political and ideological bent of such a newspaper / magazine.

This itself is likely to be a function of the ownership / administrative structure of the newspaper, target audience as well as its basic philosophy. In this wise, a few words on the ownership structure, target audience and philosophy of the newspapers and magazines monitored, is hereunder presented.

But it should be noted that being privately owned, the ownership structure of most of the newspapers and all four magazines monitored, is not known for certain. What is known are all set forth below.

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(1) *Daily Times*

Established on June 1, 1926, the paper grew in leaps and bounds and by the 1970s, it had become a conglomerate that rivaled almost any multinational corporation in the country. It was professionally run and managed, and it came close to being regarded as an oracle. Such that on any national issues, Nigerians waited breathlessly for what *Daily Times* had to say.

In 1975, the General Murtala Mohammed administration took control of *Daily Times* when it acquired 60 percent interest in DTN, leaving the remaining to private investors. By the Daily Times of Nigeria Limited (Transfer of Certain Shares Decree No. 101 of 1979, the Government established a legal basis for its control of the newspaper.

The Federal Government's 60 percent was assigned to the Federal Government-owned National Insurance Corporation of Nigerian (NICON). NICON is accountable to the Finance Ministry and *Daily Times* to the Ministry of Information. With this came conflict and official middlesomeness that effectively stunted the papers' editorial vibrancy and independence.

Except for the new men at the saddle, who are trying all that they can to salvage the establishment, *Daily Times*, in the recent past, was hardly distinguishable from a bulletin desk in an information ministry.

At a point, it was not unusual for the newspaper to get to the newsstand late because stories had on be vetted before publication. Not one or two chief executive confessed after leaving office that some editorials were faxed from the ministry of information to be published.

However, with the new dispensation of a government that appears to be apolitical, a fairer treatment of political issues is to be expected from *Daily Times* during the on-going political transition process.

(2) *New Nigerian*

The New Nigerian newspaper was established in 1977 by the government of the then Northern Region. The purpose of it was to counter the “negative” press focus from the Western press. It was not surprising that the paper’s editorial bent was unapologetically Northern in bias.

Till this day, the government has, ironically, not made a great success of obliterating that bias. If anything, every successive government has not only used this to its advantages, but straightened its capacity to operate within this framework in that direction. Though its fortunes continue to dwindle due to its narrow readership base, making it difficult for it to even pay salaries, the Federal Government has continued to subsidize it.

Unless its ownership structure is deregulated to include liberal minded individuals and its focus radically changed, its fortunes will continue to dip.

However, as things stand now, the paper is not expected to harbour any sympathy for political interests different from the feudal oligarchy.

(3) *National Concord*

In 1980, the late Chief Moshood Abiola, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist, who had his fingers in virtually every sectors of the economy, veered into an entirely new terrain. He founded the Concord Press of Nigeria Limited. He had a few years before then taken to partisan politics.

Many believed that the establishment of the *National Concord* newspaper was to further his political ambition. And true to prediction, the newspaper began to devote a tremendous amount of space to reporting Abiola’s political activities and interests. This led to a fall in the fortune of the newspaper which showed tremendous promise at inception.

When, however, he quit politics because of his unsavoury experience in the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) at that time to which he belonged, a remarkable change in focus and enthusiasm was noticed in *Concord* newspaper.

A major contractor to the military, he felt obliged to safeguard his investment and military contacts by ensuring his newspaper exhibited self-censorship. But where that was not adhered to, he had no hesitation in stamping his foot to ensure that much. Thus, when his newspaper was closed down by the Federal Government in 1992, he was forthcoming with apologies to the military for the offending publication. This did not go down well with some of his editors. This led to parting of ways between him and some of his editors.

His re-entry into politics at the beginning of 1993, also saw a renewed focus on politics by *Concord* newspaper. Although its reports on politics prior the June 12 election was seen as fair, a partisan and deeply tainted flavour came into play after the annulment of the election.

Since the death of Chief Abiola, however, ownership of the paper has been uncertain. While some analysts contend that with the Conspiracy theory attached to his death, the newspaper will be

hard put to be fair to the government and the Northern Oligarchy fingered in the conspiracy theory.

But others are of the opinion that the new owners of the newspaper being largely apolitical and eager to shy away from a fight, will most likely steer the newspaper off such a confrontational course. Hence they contend that attempt at fair play will be the hallmark of the new *Nationl Concord*.

(4) *Daily Champion*

Daily Campion came on the news stand on October 1, 1988. It is onwed by Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, a multi-millioner businessman, football club proprietor and philanthropists.

His into publishing interests included *National Post* newspaper based in Owerri.

He went into active politics almost at the same time *Daily Champion* hit the news stand, seemingly following in the foot step of late Chief Abiola, who established the *National Concord* newspaper.

He assembled a team of tested hands to form *Daily Champion* so it will have a sound managerial foundation. While he paid them well, he remained the sole share holder.

Al though Prince Henry Odokunmaiye, the points man and brain behind Champion Newspapers Limited went by the title, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief, it was not a secret that it was a classic case of Esu's hand and Jacob's voice that prevailed. It was not surprising that on a few occasion, that the management wanted to assert its independence, the consequences were fatal as they came.

When in 1990 the premises of the newspaper wre sealed off for several weeks following an editorial calling for the release of some detainees and a journalist, the publisher took additional measures to contain the management.

Known to be a big time contractor to the military and eager to sustain that relationship without offending the powers that be, his will was tested yet again in early 1993. His newspaper had published a story on the foreign bank accounts of some military officers which the government frowned at. Chief Iwuanyanwu summarily sent Chief Odokunmaiye on an indefinite suspension and re-deployed the then editor.

Soon after that, he had no qualms in calling on Chief Abiola to forget his June 12 mandate and embrace the General Abacha Administration.

He was very active in the United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP), one of Abacha's five parties. But in the twilight of that administration, he lost favour with the government.

He has routinely used his paper to further his political, social and economic interest.

(5) *The Guardian*

Established in 1983 by Mr.Alex Ibru of the well known Ibru family of Agbara-Otor, Delta State.

A Business Economics graduate of the Trent Polytechnic in Britain, he has interest in hospitality (Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Federal Palace Hotel), Banking, Oil and Publishing.

Though a businessman who is largely apolitical, he was a trustee of the then ruling National Party of Nigeria, (NPN) during the Second Republic.

At the inception of the General Abacha's administration in November 1993, Mr. Ibru was appointed Internal Affairs Minister and a member of the 11- man Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), the highest ruling organ of the government.

He left the government in February 1995, after a highly publicised disagreement with the military government which expected him to use his influence to censor *The Guardian*, but were miffed to find that the contrary was the case.

The paper, which was tagged the flagship of the Nigerian print media since inception, has fought many battles for press and other freedoms.

In 1984, the paper was fined and two of its journalists jailed one year each for being in contravention of Decree No 4 of 1984, which retroactively punished it of an alleged false accusation against a public officer following the publication of ambassadorial appointments of the government in advance of formal announcement.

In 1991, *The Guardian* was shut for two weeks by the military government. Again in August 1994, the newspaper was proscribed for one year by the military government of General Abacha until reprieve came in July 1995.

On December 16 of same year, arsonists attempted to raze Rutam House premises of *The Guardian*.

On Friday February 21, 1996, its publisher was shot and wounded by unknown gunman in the traffic when he was returning home from his office at the Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos.

He has since been out of the country and only returned unannounced following the death of General Abacha.

When *The Guardian* was closed in 1994, it was widely reported that the government considered it a pro-NADECO paper. But the press also had it that the publisher was anti-NADECO. There appears to exist a curious and uncommon relationship between the publisher and the managers of *The Guardian* that is far from the "who-pays-the-piper-dictates-the-tune" theory. Thus, the will and way of the paper is at the dictate of the managers who, incidentally, are largely from the southern part of the country but with decided moderate temperament.

(6) *The Punch*

The Punch newspaper was founded in 1977 by late Chief James Olubunmi Aboderin. It promised at inception to maintain a non-partisan stand on all issues and be people oriented in approach. It was not surprising that the newspaper rose steadily both in prestige and fortune to become the second highest selling newspaper after the government owned *Daily Times* stood at the number one spot.

Along the line, it recorded a few but no major clashes with government. However, it was engulfed in a management crisis in 1982 which threatened the existence of the newspaper.

But just when it seemed to be on the way to recovery, its publisher, died in 1984. And because of the fact that ownership was concentrated in one hand, the death further threw back the newspaper into troubled water.

All these led to dwindling fortunes for the organization.

The Punch's most widely acknowledged brush with security operations was the closure it suffered alongside some other newspapers in 1994 as a fall out of the June 12 election crisis.

However, it steadily rose again to become the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria over and above the number two position it previously occupied according to a survey published last year by Research and Marketing Limited.

In its editorial orientation, the newspaper has not been able to stay impartial. Analysts contend that the newspaper has especially since 1993, when the June 12 issue began, become rabidly pro-south.

While some say this is understandable, others insist it is only proper that a newspaper maintain impartiality at all time.

But one time all are agreed is that *The Punch* has kept faith with its mass appeal orientation.

(7) *The Post Express*

The Post Express newspaper made its debut on the newsstand on July 2 1996. It was founded by a team of seasoned journalists and newspaper managers some of whom left *The Guardian* in the wake of a management crisis a few year earlier.

They include Dr. Stanley Macebuh, Dr. Chidi Amuta, Professor. Yemi Ogunbiyi, Dr. Fred Onyeoziri and Prifessor Obaro Ikime. The coming of *The Post Express* was heralded by much publicity and expectation because of the calibre of its publishers/founding team.

It claimed no link with any political cultural, ideological or ethnic group and promised accurate and fair reports as well as reasoned and informed comments.

The newspaper started with the general expectation that it would upstage *The Guardian* since two of its founding directors were part of *The Guardian's* original team and were expected would bring to bear the same Midas Touch.

The management's first news papering revolutionary step was the simultaneous printing of *The Post Express* in Lagos, Port-Harcourt and Abuja.

But beyond that and the fact that it was first newspaper in Nigeria to host a web site, it has not been able to take over the market.

It has, however, managed to retain an independent posture and remained accurate and fair in its

news report and comments. It is likely to sustain this credibility in its reports on the political transition process.

(8) *Vanguard*

Vanguard was established in 1985 by a seasoned professional journalist, Mr. Sam Amuka-Pemu. Amuka-Pemu, a rather private, unassuming and liberal minded man, was a pioneer staff of *The Punch* where he later rose to become the editor and maintained one of the most popular columns in the history of Nigerian journalism where he wrote under the Pen name of “SadSam”.

Vanguard, not surprisingly, has from inception been managed by a succession of liberal minded administrators and editors and the paper itself has a mass appeal directed predominantly at women readers. Perhaps this explains why the newspaper has had a relatively crisis- free operation since its inception apart from the usual attacks on its journalists like most others.

Neither its publisher, managers or editors are known to harbour any political interest although Amuka-Pemu has had a close relationship with successive leaders in the country. This, perhaps accounts for why the newspaper has maintained a middle-of-the-road approach to political reporting, a tradition which will likely continue through out this transition to civil rule programme.

(9) *The Diet*

The Diet newspaper was founded in 1997 by Mr James Ibori, an Urhobo man from Delta State. A graduate of Economics and Statistics from the University of Benin, he is a late starter in politics. As we were putting together this report, he won the January 9 governorship election in his home state, Delta, on the ticket of People Democratic Party (PDP).

Hitherto not a well known name in political cycles, he came to public attention during the General Sanni Abacha administration as one of General Abacha’s prominent supporters urging him to transform into civilian president.

The Diet, when it came out on the newsstand in 1997, was feared to be a pro-establishment. Such fears, however, have proved to be unfounded when it took positions critical of government on many serious issues.

Before the year ran out, *The Diet* editor, Niran Malaolu, was arrested and detained by security agents and later tried and convicted by a special military tribunal on charges of concealment of treason.

Since General Abacha is dead, the thinking now is that the publisher who is actively involved in politics and is vying for an elective position, might use the paper for political battles and self- promotion.

(10) *This Day*

This Day made its debut on the newsstand on January 12, 1995, as a weekly newspaper. Two months later, precisely on March 20, it started as a daily newspaper.

This Day is published by Nduka Obaigbena, a young but innovative and vibrant journalist, who occupies the position of Editor-in-Chief and Chairman.

He is assisted by a team of young professional journalists.

His first outing in publishing was *This Week* magazine which lasted for a few years and went under. But the brief period the magazine was on, it made tremendous impact in its high editorial and production quality.

Since coming on the newsstand, the newspaper has jolted the somewhat lethargic atmosphere noticeable in the industry. It has brought about innovations that have consistently won it various prizes at media merit award ceremonies around the country.

This Day is decidedly Business and Economy oriented. But the publisher being a politician who can be said to be on recess in this transition period, is likely to use his newspaper to promote political interest where a politician is ready.

Perhaps this may explain the fact that the newspaper has played safe on matters which may signal a different relationship with the authorities.

(b) MAGAZINES

(1) *Newswatch*

Established in 1984, by four respected journalists, Dele Giwa (late), Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed, the publication was a novel thing in Nigeria print media being the only news feature magazine in existence at the time.

On October 19, 1986, the shocking news of the murder through a panel bomb of its founding Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Dele Giwa hit the nation. This was attributed to some stories the magazine had done in the recent weeks preceding the bombing and some others that it was working on.

The magazine was to suffer a six months closure the following year over its cover story on the report of the Political Bureau.

Since then the general impression is that it has allowed such intimidation and lure of money to becloud its focus leading to sharp reduction in readership and fall in fortunes.

This view was re-enforced by the allegation of public relation jobs for General Abacha by some of its chief executives, by an Abacha-for-President campaigner. This was hotly denied by the executives.

None of its chief executives is known to harbour any political ambition.

(2) *TELL*

TELL, a Lagos based news feature magazine was founded in 1991. It has as its editor-in-chief - Nosa Igiebor; deputy editor-in-chief - Dele Omotunde; managing editor - Onome Osifo-Whiskey; and executive editors are Dare Babarinsa and Kolawole Ilori.

They are all the founding editors. The financiers and directors are not known. Investigations reveal that this is a deliberate attempt to shield the financiers from people who may want pressure such directors to prevail on the editors in the event that the magazine focuses on them.

Several things set these journalists apart from the typical publishers. They are all young, professional and practising journalists who have variously won acclaim in the profession.

Their driving spirit is not necessarily monetary, but a desire to crusade for a better society no matter whose ox is gored.

They have met with all manner of harassment ranging from detention, closure of office, seizure of materials and publications, libel suits and death threats.

None of its chief executives is known to have political ambition, but they so have an abiding sentiment for a redress of the nation to favour the south whom they believe is marginalised.

At the beginning, their print-run ran into 100,000 copies and above weekly. But today, it has witnessed a reduction in sales figures. This is not necessarily because it is losing respect, but due to the economic down-turn that the country has found itself.

(3) *The News*

Established in 1993 by a team of young, men made up of Mr Bayo Onanuga, Sani Kabir, Idowu Obasa, Dapo Olorunyomi, Babafemi Ojudu, Kunle Ajibade and Seye Kehinde, like *TELL* magazine editors, several things set them apart from the typical publishers. They are all young, professional and practising journalists.

Prior to their coming out, with *The News* magazine, some of them had brushes with state security operatives and major disagreement bothering on censorship with their previous employers.

Their driving spirit also like that of the *TELL* magazine, is not necessarily monetary, but a desire to crusade for a better society no matter whose ox is gored.

Not surprisingly, the impression seems to tilt in the direction of an agenda for a Northern bashing.

They have met with all manners of harassment ranging from detention, conviction, closure of office, seizure of materials and publications libel suits and death threats.

In 1993, barely seven months on the news stand, they suffered their first closure and had to go underground, coming out with a new title: *Tempo*.

None of its chief executives is known to have political ambition.

(4) *The Source*

The Source magazine came on the newsstand in March 31, 1997. It is often described as springing from the ashes of the defunct. *The Sunday Magazine* (TSM), which was published by Chris

Anyanwu, who last year regained her freedom from a prison sentence by the 1995 coup tribunal headed by General Patrick Aziza.

The reason for this is that its editor-in-chief, Comfort Obi, and other notable members of the editorial board are former TSM staff.

Some of its other journalists have variously won awards in the course of their journalism practice.

They too are piqued by the abysmal degredation that is affecting the society due to wantom corruption by the leader. And they have joined the crusade for a better society. Like TELL and The News magazines, its directors and financiers are unknown.

Young as the magazine is, it has had its fair share of official harassment. The last of which was in December 1998 when State Security operatives invaded their corporate headquarters in search of the original manuscript of a coup convict's confession that the magazine published a week earlier.

6. PRESENTATION OF RESULT FOR JANUARY 1999

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(i) Vanguard

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	11		
2.	Stories on INEC	8		
3.	Stories on AD	25		
4.	Stories on APP	28		
5.	Stories on PDP	41		
6.	Parties Combined	9		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	310		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	86		
10.	Civic Education	27		
11.	Advertisement	28		
	AD	0 (Placements)	0	
	APP	8 (Placements)	11	
	PDP	14 (Placements)	17	28
12.	Others	47		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	310		149

(iii) National Concord

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	10		
2.	Stories on INEC	18		
3.	Stories on AD	35		
4.	Stories on APP	28		
5.	Stories on PDP	46		
6.	Parties Combined	29		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	200		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	3		
9.	Informed Commentaries	21		
10.	Civic Education	7		
11.	Advertisement	13		
	AD	4 (Placements)	4	
	APP	2 (Placements)	2	
	PDP	7 (Placements)	7	13
12.	Others	37		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	247		148

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 13.2 inches x 10inches = 132 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *Concord* for the month of January 1999 was 916

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 148 i.e. 16%

(iv) The Punch

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	20		
2.	Stories on INEC	18		
3.	Stories on AD	47		
4.	Stories on APP	34		
5.	Stories on PDP	81		
6.	Parties Combined	12		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	245		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		

9.	Informed Commentaries	56		
10.	Civic Education	25		
11.	Advertisement	47		
	AD	11 (Placements)	11	
	APP	12 (Placements)	12	
	PDP	22 (Placements)	22	47
12.	Others	79		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	452		188

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.4 inches x 13.2 inches = 137 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *The Punch* for the month of January 1999 was 992

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 188 i.e. 19%

(v) This Day

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	25		
2.	Stories on INEC	13		
3.	Stories on AD	36		
4.	Stories on APP	49		
5.	Stories on PDP	106		
6.	Parties Combined	23		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	304		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	118		
10.	Civic Education	68		
11.	Advertisement	53		
	AD	2 (Placements)	2	
	APP	13 (Placements)	15	
	PDP	19 (Placements)	35	
	APP / AD Alliance	1 (Placement)	1	53
12.	Others	52		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	544		270

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.5 inches x 14.3 inches = 151 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *This Day* for the month of January 1999 was 967

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 270 i.e. 28 %

(vi) *New Nigerian*

Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1. Stories on Government	21		
2. Stories on INEC	12		
3. Stories on AD	12		
4. Stories on APP	18		
5. Stories on PDP	51		
6. Parties Combined	9		
7. Urban Areas Activities	164		
8. Rural Areas Activities	6		
9. Informed Commentaries	72		
10. Civic Education	11		
11. Advertisement	24		
AD	0 (Placements)	0	
APP	9 (Placements)	9	
PDP	15 (Placements)	15	24
12. Others	47		
13. Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	294		99

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.2 inches x 15.5 inches = 158 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *New Nigerian* for the month of January 1999 was 720

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 99 i.e. 14%

(vii) *The Guardian*

Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1. Stories on Government	23		

2.	Stories on INEC	44		
3.	Stories on AD	63		
4.	Stories on APP	108		
5.	Stories on PDP	57		
6.	Parties Combined	41		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	363		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	41		
10.	Civic Education	23		
11.	Advertisement	34		
	AD	1(Placements)	1	
	APP	4(Placements)	4	
	PDP	29(Placements)	29	34
12.	Others	34		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	461		177

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10 inches x 14.5 inches = 145 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *The Guardian* for the month of January 1999 was 1344

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of J a n u a r y 1999 was 177 i.e. 13%

(viii) The Diet

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	26	
2.	Stories on INEC	19	
3.	Stories on AD	33	
4.	Stories on APP	34	
5.	Stories on PDP	110	
6.	Parties Combined	10	
7.	Urban Areas Activities	272	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	8	
9.	Informed Commentaries	114	
10.	Civic Education	54	

11.	Advertisement	23		
	AD	0 (Placements)		
	APP	0 (Placements)		
	PDP	11 (Placements)	23	23
12.	Others	48		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	471		148

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.4 inches x 14.8 inches = 154 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *The Diet* for the month of January 1999 was 832

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 196 i.e. 24%

(ix) Daily Champion

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	13		
2.	Stories on INEC	7		
3.	Stories on AD	34		
4.	Stories on APP	20		
5.	Stories on PDP	90		
6.	Parties Combined	16		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	211		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	2		
9.	Informed Commentaries	58		
10.	Civic Education	43		
11.	Advertisement	16		
	AD	2 (Placements)	2	
	APP	9 (Placements)	9	
	PDP	5 (Placements)	5	16
12.	Others	33		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	332		130

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10.5 inches x 13.5 inches = 142 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *Daily Champion* for the month of January 1999 was 1144

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 130 i.e. 11.4%

(x) Daily Times

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	12		
2.	Stories on INEC	24		
3.	Stories on AD	21		
4.	Stories on APP	18		
5.	Stories on PDP	126		
6.	Parties Combined	6		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	247		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	2		
9.	Informed Commentaries	84		
10.	Civic Education	39		
11.	Advertisement	6		
	AD	2 (Placements)	2	
	APP	1 (Placements)	1	
	PDP	3 (Placements)	3	6
12.	Others	42		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	380		125

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 10inches x 12inches = 120inches sq

The total number of pages published by *Daily Times* for the month of January 1999 was 744

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 125 i.e. 16%

(b) MAGAZINES

(i) Newswatch

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	0		
2.	Stories on INEC	0		
3.	Stories on AD	0		
4.	Stories on APP	0		
5.	Stories on PDP	4		
6.	Parties Combined	0		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	5		

8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	19		
10.	Civic Education	2		
11.	Advertisement	1		
	AD	1 (Placements)	1	
	APP	0 (Placements)	0	
	PDP	0	0	1
12.	Others	1		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	27		53

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *NewsWatch* for the month of January 1999 was 127

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 53 i.e. 42%

(ii) The News

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	0		
2.	Stories on INEC	0		
3.	Stories on AD	1		
4.	Stories on APP	0		
5.	Stories on PDP	2		
6.	Parties Combined	0		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	4		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	20		
10.	Civic Education	4		
11.	Advertisement	0		
	AD	0	0	
	APP	0	0	
	PDP	0	0	0
12.	Others	1		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	28		45

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *The News* for the month of January 1999 was 156

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 45 i.e. 29%

(iii) TELL

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	0		
2.	Stories on INEC	0		
3.	Stories on AD	0		
4.	Stories on APP	4		
5.	Stories on PDP	0		
6.	Parties Combined	0		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	5		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	27		
10.	Civic Education	7		
11.	Advertisement	0		
	AD	0	0	
	APP	0	0	
	PDP	0	0	0
12.	Others	1		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	32		50

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *Tell* for the month of January 1999 was 208

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of January 1999 was 50 i.e. 24%

(iv) The Source

(Note: *The Source* published only one issue during the month under review)

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages	
1.	Stories on Government	0		
2.	Stories on INEC	0		

3.	Stories on AD	0		
4.	Stories on APP	0		
5.	Stories on PDP	0		
6.	Parties Combined	0		
7.	Urban Areas Activities	1		
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0		
9.	Informed Commentaries	6		
10.	Civic Education	1		
11.	Advertisement	0		
	AD	0	0	
	APP	0	0	
	PDP	0	0	0
12.	Others	1		
13.	Total Nos of Pol. Stories/Pages	7		7

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page - 7.4 inches x 10 inches = 74 inches sq

The total number of pages published by *The Source* in one week in the month of January 1999 was 36.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the week in the month of January 1999 was 7 i.e. 19%

7 TABULAR REPRESENTATION OF DATA

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS EACH MONITORED MAGAZINE FOCUSED ON EACH VARIABLE																		
Newswatch	0	0	0	0	4	0	5	0	19	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	27	53
The News	0	0	1	0	2	0	4	0	20	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	28	45
TELL	0	0	0	4	0	0	5	0	115	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	127	50
The Source	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	7

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS EACH MONITORED NEWSPAPERS FOCUSED ON EACH VARIABLE																			
The Punch	20	18	47	34	81	12	245	0	56	25	11	12	22	0	47	76	452	188	
Daily Times	12	24	21	18	126	6	247	2	84	39	2	1	3	0	6	42	380	125	
New Nigerian	21	12	12	18	51	9	164	6	72	11	0	9	15	0	24	47	294	99	
National Concord	10	18	35	28	46	29	200	3	21	7	4	2	7	0	13	37	247	148	
Daily Champion	13	7	34	20	90	16	211	2	58	43	2	9	5	0	16	33	332	130	
The Guardian	23	44	63	108	57	41	363	0	41	23	1	4	29	0	34	34	461	177	
The Diet	26	19	33	34	110	10	272	8	114	54	0	0	23	0	23	48	471	148	
This Day	25	13	36	49	106	23	304	0	118	68	2	15	35	1	53	52	544	270	
Vanguard	11	8	25	28	41	9	310	0	86	27	0	11	17	0	28	47	310	149	
Post Express	20	12	37	38	133	14	315	2	111	50	0	0	2	0	2	63	482	172	
VARIABLES	GOVT	INEC	AD	APP	PDP	PARTIES COMBINED	URBAN ACTIVITIES	RURAL ACTIVITIES	I. COMMENTARIES	CIVIC EDUCATION	AD	APP	PDP	AD/APP	T. ADVT	OTHERS	TOTAL NOS STORIES	TOTAL NOS PAGES	
											AD	APP	PDP	AD/APP	T. ADVT	OTHERS	TOTAL NOS STORIES	TOTAL NOS PAGES	
											ADVERTISEMENT								

8 INTERPRETATION

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(i) *Vanguard*

During the month under review, *Vanguard* published a total of 800 pages of newspaper. Of these, 149 pages were devoted to political issues pertaining to the transition programme. These were made up of 310 stories.

Of the 149 pages, 28 pages were for direct access purpose. That is Advertisement. About 17 pages of these were placed by PDP as a party and its members in 14 placements. The remaining 11 pages were placed by APP as a party and its candidates in eight placements. AD had none.

Out of this total number of stories it published during the month under review, 11 were exclusively on activities generated by government officials and functionaries.

Similarly, INEC got eight exclusive mention and AD 25. Others are APP, 28; PDP, 41 and on stories combining two or all the three parties, *Vanguard* devoted nine publications.

For Informed Commentaries, *Vanguard* had 86 publications, Civic Education, 27, while stories emanating from activities of other stake holders in the political transition programme grouped under “Others” got 47 mentions.

In all of these, all the 310 stories generated from direct political activities were sourced from events which took place in Urban centres and none from Rural areas political activities.

(ii) *Post Express*

During the month under review, *Post Express* published a total of 992 pages. Of these, 172 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 482 mentions.

Direct access publication, that is Advertisement, accounted for two pages. These were placed by PDP candidates in two placements. APP and AD had none.

Out of the total number of stories *Post Express* published, 20 were exclusively on government officials’ activities. INEC got 12; AD, 37; APP, 38 and PDP, 133.

For stories combining two or all the three political parties, *Post Express* devoted 14 stories, Informed Commentaries, 111; Civic education, 50 and “Others” 63.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 315 took place in Urban areas and two from Rural areas.

(iii) *National Concord*

During the month under review, *Concord* published a total of 916 pages. Of this, 148 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 247 stories.

Of these 148 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 19 pages. AD accounted for four of the pages in four placements, APP two pages in two placements and PDP seven pages in seven placements.

Out of the total number of stories which the *National Concord* published, 10 were on Government, INEC, 18; AD, 35; APP, 28 and PDP, 46.

Others were Parties Combined, 29; Informed Commentaries, 21; Civic Education, seven and “Others”, 37.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 203 of them were in Urban areas and three from Rural areas.

(iv) *The Punch*

During the month under review, *The Punch* published a total of 992 pages. Of these, 188 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 452 stories.

Of this 148 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 47 pages. AD accounted for 11 of the pages in 11 placements; APP, 12 pages in 12 placements, and PDP, 22 pages in 22 placements.

Out of the total number of stories *The Punch* published, 20 were on Government, INEC 18, AD 41, APP 34, and PDP 81.

Others were Parties Combined, 12; Informed Commentaries, 56; Civic Education, 25; and “Others”, 79.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 245 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(v) *This Day*

During the month under review, *This Day* published a total of 967 pages. Of these, 270 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 544 stories.

Of this 270 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 52 pages. AD accounted for two of the pages in two placements; APP, 15 pages in 13 placements, and PDP, 35 pages in 19 placements. One advert of a full page was placed by APP / AD Alliance.

Out of the total number of stories *This Day* published, 25 were on Government; INEC, 13; AD, 36; APP, 49; and PDP, 106.

Others were Parties Combined, 29; Informed Commentaries, 21; Civic Education, seven; and “Others”, 52.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 304 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(vi) *New Nigerian*

During the month under review, *New Nigerian* published a total of 720 pages. Of these, 99 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 294 stories.

Of these 99 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 24 pages. AD had none; APP,

nine pages in nine placements; and PDP, 15 pages in 15 placements.

Out of the total number of stories *New Nigerian* published, 21 were on Government, INEC 12, AD 12, APP 18, and PDP 51.

Others were Parties Combined, nine; Informed Commentaries, 72; Civic Education, 11; and “Others”, 47.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 164 of them were in Urban areas and 6 from Rural areas.

(vii) *The Guardian*

During the month under review, *The Guardian* published a total of 1344 pages. Of these, 177 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 461 stories.

Of these 177 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 34 pages. AD accounted for one of the pages in one placement; APP, four pages in four placements; and PDP, 29 pages in 29 placements.

Out of the total number of stories *The Guardian* published, 23 were on Government; INEC, 44; AD, 63; APP, 103, and PDP, 57.

Others were Parties Combined, 41; Informed Commentaries, 41; Civic Education; 29; and “Others”, 34.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 363 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(viii) *The Diet*

During the month under review, *The Diet* published a total of 916 pages. Of these, 148 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 247 mentions.

Of these 196 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 23 pages. AD and APP had none and PDP had 11 pages in 11 placements.

Out of the total number of stories *The Diet* published, 26 were on Government; INEC, 19; AD, 33; APP, 34; and PDP, 110.

Others were Parties Combined, 10; Informed Commentaries, 114; Civic Education, 54; and “Others”, 48.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 272 of them were in Urban areas and 8 from Rural areas.

(ix) *Daily Champion*

During the month under review, *Daily Champion* published a total of 1144 pages. Of these, 130 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 332 stories.

Of the 130 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took 16 pages. AD accounted for two of the pages in two placements; APP, nine pages in nine placements; and PDP, five pages in five placements.

Out of the total number of stories *Daily Champion* published, 13 were on Government; INEC, seven; AD, 34; APP, 20; and PDP, 90.

Others were Parties Combined, 16; Informed Commentaries, 58; Civic Education, 43; and “Others”, 33.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 213 of them were in Urban areas and 2 from Rural areas.

(x) *Daily Times*

During the month under review, *Daily Times* published a total of 744 pages. Of these, 125 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 380 stories.

Of the 125 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took six pages. AD accounted for two of the pages in two placements; APP, one; and PDP, three.

Out of the total number of stories *Daily Times* published, 12 were on Government; INEC had 24; AD, 21; APP, 13; and PDP, 126.

Others were Parties Combined, six; Informed Commentaries, 84; Civic Education, 39; and “Others”, three.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 247 of them were in Urban areas and two from Rural areas.

(b) MAGAZINES

(i) *Newswatch*

During the month under review, *Newswatch* published a total of 128 pages. Of these, 53 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 27 stories.

Of the 53 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, took one page. AD accounted for the page while APP and PDP had none.

Out of the total number of stories *Newswatch* published, none was on Government. INEC, AD, APP also had none while PDP had four.

Others were Parties Combined, none; Informed Commentaries, 19; Civic Education, two; and “Others”, one.

All four stories generated from direct political activities, were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(ii) *The News*

During the month under review, *The News* published a total of 156 pages. Of these, 45 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 28 stories.

Of the 45 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, had none.

Out of the total number of stories *The News* published, the Government and INEC had none. AD had one; APP had none while PDP had two.

Others were Parties Combined, none; Informed Commentaries, 20; Civic Education, four; and “Others”, one.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, four of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(iii) *TELL*

During the month under review, *TELL* published a total of 208 pages. Of these, 50 pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of 127 stories.

Of this 50 pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, had none.

Out of the total number of stories *TELL* published, none was on government, INEC or AD. APP had four while PDP also had none.

Others were Parties Combined, none; Informed Commentaries, 115; Civic Education, seven; and “Others”, one.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, five of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(iv) *The Source*

(The Source published only one issue during the month under review)

During the month under review, *The Source* published a total of 32 pages. Of these, seven pages were devoted to political issues. These were made up of seven stories.

Of the seven pages, direct access, that is Advertisement, had none.

Out of the total number of stories *The Source* published, six were on Informed commentaries, and “Others”, one.

The only story generated from direct political activities was in an Urban area.

9. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) Analysis

After a careful study of the above data, several significant inferences can be made.

First, in relation to how the government acts to ensure that the news media gather and impart

information and ideas, it is noted that there was a general air of press freedom. This is considered in relation to the absence of any physical attempt by the government to stop the press from performing its function.

But four very important things are worth monitoring here. First, the government has not deemed it fit to give legal protection to journalists in the general performance of their professional duties or with regard to the coverage of the political transition programme.

There remains a lack of legal or institutional framework by which journalists or other members of the public can have access to information as of right about the political process.

For instance, the issue of the sources of campaign funding for political parties and their candidates remained a topical and controversial one during the month under review, yet, it was impossible for the media or indeed the Federal Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission themselves to determine these sources despite the widespread public concern about the huge sums of money which political candidates routinely donated or spent in public.

The absence of a freedom of information legislation or other legal or institutional structures for accessing such information has resulted in a large measure in the lack of transparency which attended crucial aspects of the transition programme.

Conversely, the existence of several restrictive press laws has served as a limiting factor for numerous journalists against publishing information which were not confirmed by official or other credible sources.

Secondly, the fact that various legislation, decrees and edicts which restrict press freedom still exist, constitute a negation of the expressed hand of fellowship extended to mass media practitioners by the head of state.

Although none of these repressive press laws were known to have been put to use by the Government during the month under review, the fact of their existence resulted for many journalists in a situation where they had to consciously censor themselves.

Thirdly, the Minister of Information announced in December last year that Government was working at making libel a criminal offence. Such is no doubt a call to self-censorship. Although it has yet to be implemented, journalists are bound to be overly wary of what they publish henceforth. This is so because experience has shown that apart from the decree when passed taking retroactive effect as has been the case in the past with most other press freedom decrees, politicians who wish to divert press attention from themselves, will have a field day suing journalists and publishers.

Fourthly, the VAT on newspapers / magazine affected through the 1999 budget, is capable of incapacitating the operations of media houses.

The operation of government-owned and controlled newspapers remained a major source of concern. The existence of government-subsidized newspapers violates the principle of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Although governments are clearly entitled to publicise information about health, access to government services, legislation pending or enacted, or court decisions, it is inappropriate to use public funds to publicise the statements and opinions of government departments, ministers or officials.

These already have extensive access to the media by virtue of their positions in public life.

The access of government owned newspapers to government outsiders derived from public funds undermines the competitive nature of the media industry.

A retention of this practice and its carry over to the coming democratic dispensation will place the ruling party at an unfair advantage as it would be in a position to use public funds to promote the party as well as its members, officials and activities to the detriment of the other parties or opposition politicians and other dissenting voices in the country.

The practice ought to be abolished now.

On the part of the press, as it relates to how it acts to provide access to political parties and candidates to communicate to the public and report fairly, our observations are set out below.

For a proper and easier appreciation of the analysis, we shall numerically treat each issue that are considered relevant. These are:

a. How The Media Acts To Give Equal Access To Political Parties

On the part of the media, as it relates to how it acts to provide access to political parties and candidates to communicate to the public, investigations revealed that there were virtually no official policy by any of the print media monitored.

In most cases, it was strictly the reporters who used their discretion to determine what to report and what not to report. However, this discretion was in the main aided by largesse obliged reporters by politicians. For example, it was not uncommon for politicians to foot the bills of reporters who attend their campaign activities.

In a few instances, some newspapers went out of their ways to commercialise political news. News stories and interviews were monetised because of the unofficial nature of this transaction.

b. Report on Events by Government and INEC Officials

The data shows clearly that all the newspapers reports on those two stake holder groups, were on the low side. Except for *The Guardian* gave INEC 44 mentions the highest after that is 25 by *The Diet* on government. Vis-a- vis the focus on such others as Informed Commentaries, PDP etc. This is not encouraging given that the activities of these two stake holder groups are most important in ensuring a smooth transition process.

c. Allocation of Space to Political Parties

Meanwhile, there were imbalances in the focus on the political parties. The highest beneficiary of the imbalance was PDP to the detriment of other parties. Except for *The Guardian* which devoted

63 and 108 exclusive stories on AD and APP respectively and 57 on PDP, all others newspapers focused more on PDP. Some like *Post Express*, *This Day*, *The Diet* and *Daily Times*, gave thrice as much focus on PDP than AD and APP. Surprisingly, the same was *Daily Champion* whose proprietor, Chief Iwanyanwu, is a Chieftain of APP.

From investigation, PDP as a party and its candidates spent the most money on campaign both directly i. e on advertisement, and as well as unofficially on reporters. For example, in the total of 245 pages of advertisement in all the newspapers monitored, PDP as a party and its candidates placed 158 pages, APP, 63; AD, 23 and; AD/APP Alliance, one.

The difference is an obvious evidence of the disparities in the amount spent by each party on campaign activities.

Also, *This Day* got the highest number of adverts, 52, followed by *The Punch*, 47, and *The Guardian* 34.

d. Informed Commentaries and Civic Education

The data shows a general increase in press focus on these two variables from what obtained in last month's report.

This is very encouraging considering that while the Informed Commentaries helps to explain certain unfolding events, the latter, Civic Education, equip voters with basic procedure of the processes and requirements from them - voters.

In fact, the magazines monitored mostly focused on Informed Commentaries. This is quite understandable being specialists in news feature publications. Special mention must be made of *TELL* magazine which published 115 Informed Commentaries, far and above all other magazines monitored and even some daily newspapers.

However, some of the Informed Commentaries were decidedly biased to some parties and politicians. But being personal opinions in the main, not much can be said here. But some of these commentaries were, however, lacking in maturity in language.

e. Coverage of Rural and Urban Areas Political Activities

From the data above, it can easily be seen that there was a total neglect by the print media to report on political events in Rural areas.

In fact, the percentage report on Urban to Rural political activities, is 99.5 to .5.

This is not encouraging in a situation where the most of our population live in Rural areas.

f. Other Stake Holder Groups

The data shows other stake holder groups combined, got a fair mention in the print media. This is a good thing as it shows that their importance in the scheme of things is well recognised.

g. Fair and Objective Reporting

Aparts from the lopsided print media focus on PDP to the detriment of other parties, some of the reports fell far below what may qualify as fair and objective. Most newspapers openly took sides with some politicians and parties for various reasons some of which bother on economic and political interest. The worst offender in this regard is *This Day* newspaper. The newspaper, in its issues of January 4 and 5, undertook the step of endorsing some gubernatorial candidates and were thereby caught in a situation of campaigning for them.

Other cases can be cited in *The Diet* which not only gave PDP more then three times the focus it did AD and APP, but was always generous in superlatives while reporting on PDP and less so for the other parties.

New Nigerian newspaper too showed a tilt towards PDP. Apart from giving the party more mentions as did the newspapers monitored, with the axception of *The Guardian*, it similarly reported PDP positively and other parties negatively. Often times, it headlines were less than charitable to the two parties, APP and AD.

On the other hand, a newspaper like *National Concord*, even though it focused slightly more on PDP than it did AD, 46 to 35, it was also less than charitable to PDP.

(ii) Conclusion

Clearly, we affirm that there were substantiated evidences of biased reporting in favour of some political parties and candidates on the part of some of the newspapers and magazines monitored. There were instances when some stories were flavoured to suit specific political and economic interests. In some cases, such flavouring were continued overtime. The case of *This Day* newspaper noted above, is one such instances.

While instances of such flavouring were less noticeable in the news reports, they were mostly in the area of Informed Commentaries.

The commercialisation of news reports too, were noticed. Such that journalists, in most instances, treated with less enthusiasm reports emanating from poltical events at which one form of largesse or the other were not provided, than they did political events at which they had been adequately mobilised.

Error Margin

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

(iii) Recommendations

* The Government should create a condusive 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, rethink its VAT on newspapers and magazines policy and drop its reported plans to make libel a criminal offence.

As we noted earlier, it was impossible for the media to determine the sources of party funds. It is not unlikely that such inability by the press to probe such sources of fund was as a result of fear of prosecution by parties and politicians involved in those reported large fundings.

Generally, the absence of information legislation or other legal or institutional structures for accessing such expenses has resulted in the large measure in the lack of transparency which attended such crucial aspect of the transition programme.

* 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 January 9, Gubernatorial 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 note that this was the case with the December 5, 1998, Local Government Polls. We believe that had our previous recommendation to the effect that INEC and all other stake holder groups should conduct a massive voter education exercise, been taken seriously, the reported low voter turn-out would not have been the case.

We, therefore, recommend that not only the print media should improve significantly on their focus on Civic Education publications, the Government and INEC should give more attention to political enlightenment programmes both in the mass media and using informal traditional means especially in rural areas where newspapers do not circulate and illitracy is high. This is even more so important because of the nature of the elections into the national houses of assembly and presidency that lie ahead.

* A further recommendation is that the newspapers, rather than increase their advert rates, as they have done, should reduce it to enable parties and politicians have more direct access to the electorate.

* The endorsement of political parties and candidates by some newspapers specifically *This Day*, is an unhealthy development. The press is expected to be neutral in their report on the political transition process because of the role of the mass media in helping to ensure the enthronement and sustenance of democracy.

It is hereby recommended that henceforth, the press should divorce itself of the temptation to take such step as endorsing a political party or candidates.



Media Rights Agenda (MRA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation established for the purpose of promoting and protecting press freedom and freedom of expression in Nigeria. The MRA is registered under Nigerian law and has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights. MRA's Aims and Objectives are:

- a. to promote respect and recognition for press freedom of expression in Nigeria;
- b. to provide protection and support for journalists and writers engaged in the lawful pursuit of their professional duties;
- c. to promote the highest standards of professional ethics, integrity, training and conduct in the journalism profession; and
- d. to bring about a conducive social and legal atmosphere for the practice of journalism, and ensure the protection of the journalist's right not to be compelled to work against his or her conviction or disclose confidential sources of information.

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