

The Role of Media in Promoting Accountability:

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OUTLINE

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A few facts about Accountability

- **40%** of contradictions vs Accountability:
 - Over **40%** of citizens live on a **meal a day**;
 - Over **40%** of harvested **food is wasted** in the process of harvesting, transporting and storage;
 - Over **40%** of Africa's **wealth** is **hidden abroad** by the continent's rulers and their cronies;
 - About **40%** of national **budgets** come from **donors** (developed countries)
 - About **40%** of children in Africa are **malnourished**;

Media Landscape

- **Policy and Laws:** Constitutional guarantee of press freedom, access to information
- **Ownership:** Private, State, Public, Institutional, Community
- **Business environment:** Advertisers, circulation, price of newsprint, newspaper, radio/tv set, license, taxation, etc.
- **Professionalism:** training, philosophy, practice, Accountability.
- **Public:** who are the readers, listeners, viewers, and now citizen journalists?
- **Constraints:** Infrastructure, purchasing power, access

The Role of Media in Democracy

- Christians et al (2009) summarise media roles in society - and democratic politics in particular - as follows:
- Provision of **information** about events and their context;
- Provision of **comments** including guidance and advice in relation to events;
- Provision of a **forum** or access channels for diverse views and for political advocacy;
- Provision of a **two-way channel** between citizens and government;
- Acting as **critic** or **watchdog** in order to hold the government to account.

Roles of Media ...

- The authors contend that another dimension according to which media roles are typically differentiated draws a demarcation of media as
- **observers** of events from the media as
- **participants** in events. As such they coin the word dog to distinguish the different roles that the media plays in different societies

Roles of Media...

The authors use DOG as a metaphor to explain different roles the media ten to play:

- ***Watchdog*** controlling the power holders;
- ***Lapdog*** serving the master and;
- ***Guard dog***, looking after vested interests.

Role of Media

Nordenstreng et al (2009) on media roles in democracy :

- **MONITORIAL**
- **COLLABORATIVE**
- **FACILITATIVE**
- **CRITICAL/WATCHDOG**

Media and Accountability

- “The media in Africa are empowered to crusade against corruption, underdevelopment, diseases as well as the promotion of democracy and human rights; in promoting these ideas, the media plays the watchdog role to which it must ensure its own accountability”
- Source: Stapenhurst (2000),

Media and accountability

- **1950s Paradigm:** Communication for Development;
- **1970s Paradigm:** Development Communication
- **1980s Paradigm:** Participatory Approach
- **1990s Paradigm:** Media for Democratisation

Challenges to Media

Media in liberal democracy seen as not independent in the real sense. Why? According to Herman & Chomsky (1994):

1. Propaganda & agenda setting
2. Ownership filter
3. Advertising filter
4. Newsmaker filter
5. News shaper filter

Challenges to Media

Furthermore, media is criticised for replacing its democratic roles with:

1. Trivialities/comic content (**Jerry Springer Show**)
2. Non-stop music and Soaps (**La Mujer De Mi Vida**)
3. Scoops/sensational (**Man who died 10 years ago seen a nearby village alive**)
4. Ads that constantly promote consumerism (**Kwangua Ushinde!!! / Scratch and Win**)
5. Foreign content often irrelevant to local realities or tastes

Lessons

- **Expanded space:** number of media outlets, varied ownership, freedom of expression
- **Phone-in** programmes, ‘tell us your worries’
- **Letters to the editor**, commentaries
- **Talk shows**, Discussion or Interview programmes
- **Opinion surveys**
- **Social media:** (traditional media often pick news from social media. Social media does not have censorship)

Lessons

- **Collaboration** between civil society and media (e.g. HakiElimu and others) in PET
- **Public Awareness/Information** mechanisms (creatively made TV and Radio spots)
- **Features and Analyses** on accountability issues
- **Live coverage** of public meetings on accountability (TBC)

SOME EXAMPLES;

- The '*radio bulletin oldman*' in Sumbawanga, Tanzania;
- The citizens in a live broadcast *refusing* to be silenced. “It is our constitutional right to speak out”. And yes, they spoke out.

ASANTENI

KWA

KUSHIRIKI