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
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