

# **SUMMARY REPORT**

## **Media Reach and Penetration Study**



**Conducted in Monrovia, Kakata and Buchanan**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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LMC extends profound gratitude to Richard Ngafuan, the ever energetic statistician whose devotion brought the research to this stage. Special praises go to Samuel Doworko for his editorial guidance and analysis of some of the findings. The project is hugely indebted to the interns and researchers who spend sleepless nights learning the coding and data entry formalities. To the faculty and departments of Mass Communication, the center is inspired by the cooperation and continue partnership it enjoys with the three leading universities offering mass communication courses, including cooperation in the execution of this project.

Finally, the Management of LMC expresses appreciation to its employee especially Cosme Pulano who did a magnificent job in organizing the research and coordinating the publication. And it will be an inexcusable omission not to indicate the very professional contribution of Lamii Kpargo who was always willing to add new perspectives to the research and assisted immensely in ensuring a quality presentation.

The project extends appreciation to many individuals for their criticism of the literature and the useful insights and twists they provided to further sharpen the focus of the work and lighten the perspectives.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Liberia Media Center (LMC) is established as a center of professional excellence to advance the growth and development of independent, plural and mass media in Liberia in the wider context of enhancing citizens' access and right to information, protection, expansion and sustenance of the evolving free expression space and promotion of an accountable, responsible, professional and sustainable media. LMC has diligently stood up to the challenge in fulfilling this responsibility in the last three years.

The 'Media Reach and Penetration Study' is part of a series of self-driven initiatives that underlines the center's vision and foresight in playing a concrete and central role in the post-transitional recovery process of the media sector in Liberia. This project, financed largely from the Center's meager resources was launched in September 2007 as a pilot project to form the basis of a more holistic, well funded and thorough research on media reach and penetration throughout Liberia and their attending implications to access to information and media consumption.

The pilot project targeted three of Liberia's populated cities and was conducted by students of the two local universities offering mass communication courses namely the African Methodist Episcopal University and the United Methodist University.

The students' stipends were paid by UNESCO, whilst LMC provided travel, communication and lodging cost for the field research. In this way, the center was able to achieve two objectives by maximizing resources from the UNESCO vocational job placement program in supporting the research, at the same time providing training and mentoring for interns on the verge of conducting their thesis research.

While the results of the findings provide useful information for donors, investors and development partners seeking to support and strengthen the post-conflict democratic agenda through a vibrant and strong media in Liberia, it does not intend to replace the vast wealth of information currently available on the sector and falls short of an exhaustive study that presents any holistic picture. It is simply a snapshot and open doors for more critical thought-processes aimed at stimulating debates to better define other parameters for researching the sector.

The results solely represent the work of the LMC and the accompany opinions and analysis are primarily based on field research data but the authors hold responsibility for the content in general. All other research studies cross-referenced in this report are dully credited to their sources and could be independently verified.

While the research in general was conducted under unfavorable circumstances, including lack of funding, adequate manpower and training, the staff involved with the exercise did a yeoman's job for which they should be credited once more. LMC appreciates comments and criticisms of the research findings directed at enhancing the quality of future research and encourage a critical review of the literature.

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## **1.1 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The media sector in Liberia is in the process of revitalization following nearly two decades of political turmoil, which devastated the country and paralyzed the media industry. The scar left behind by the destruction is so profound that media reach and penetration throughout the country is considerably low even in the absence of empirical data to validate this perception. While radio medium has blossomed over the last seven years, largely due to the proliferation of community based media, other mediums of communication are scarcely accessible. Even with the proliferation of radio, content and reach to the vast majority of rural Liberians are still scarce.

Most community based media, according to a radio concentration survey conducted by the LMC INFORMOTRAC<sup>1</sup> Team, reach no farther than 25-30 mile radius due to a number of factors including but not limited to, transmission strength, population distribution, geographical settings etc. Additionally, a content analysis from a recent needs assessment of community radio stations in Liberia jointly conducted by the LMC and the Radio Netherlands Training Center shows low incidence of self-generated content and high incidence of music, syndicated tapes, rebroadcast of national and international program, etc.

There is no national television coverage. Newspaper and other media (excluding new media sources like cell phones and satellite TVs), reach no further than 60 miles from the capital. A number of research studies on citizens' access to information attest to this situation. A recent Search for Common Ground Media Mapping Survey on two government policy papers, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (IPRS) and the National Youth Policy (NYP) show a staggering percent of respondents having no knowledge of the two papers and no prior information that they even existed. Interestingly, these were focused-group discussions targeting local government officials, key information sources, the media, etc.

This lack of access to information generally and the virtual incapacity of media channels to deliver needed information, provoked the idea of researching how far media was reaching, who were they targeting and for what purpose the target audience were mostly consuming media products. Hence, the need to conduct a research and obtain empirical data was further enforced. This study endeavors not to produce clear cut answers to these core questions on which the research was framed but to provide test results for the further analysis of the situation through a more robust, structured, well funded, and professional country-wide survey to establish in clear terms the issues raised in this pilot initiative.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVE**

The objective was to highlight in whatever limited scope, the differing challenges facing the expansion of media; citizens' access to information and the effect the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents had on consumption levels. The overall objective was to use the test results to commission a nationwide research on media reach and penetration that would inform structural, financial and institutional support to the development of the media sector in

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<sup>1</sup> INFORMOTRAC, is the Dutch Government funded Initiative for Mobile Training of community Radio executed by the Radio Netherlands Training Center

Liberia. To address the research topic, four core research questions were formulated forming the basis for the research design and methodology.

- i. How far do media reach in the areas designated?*
- ii. Who are consuming media products and for what reasons?*
- iii. What impact does the socio-demographic profile of respondents have on the reach and penetration level of media and information source?*
- iv. What roles were new media sources playing in fostering access to information?*

### **1.3 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

For all the findings in this report, three research methods were employed. The audience research on reach and penetration was a random sampling of respondents from three places, namely, Monrovia, Kakata and Buchanan. The reach targeted ordinary Liberians in the various clusters and no special preferences were accorded groups or were there designated target groups. The research methods used were:

 ***Questionnaire Interviews/Random Polling***

 ***Media Stakeholder Interview***

 ***Desk review of newspapers***

A total of 1250 respondents were interviewed representing eight polling clusters. To determine the total designation of questionnaires against the clusters, the project randomly deployed 151 questionnaires against six polling sites in Monrovia City since information on the 1985 sampling frame was not accessible before the polling. The research had intended to use the 1985 Census and Housing sampling frame to derive a statistically feasible figure for distribution across the selected clusters. One hundred seventy-one (171) respondents were interviewed in Kakata and 147 in Buchanan City. Similar reasons applied for the arbitrary allocation of questionnaires to these regions. A total of eight researchers were recruited to conduct the research, which lasted two weeks. The eight researchers were also trained to familiarize them with the research.

The media stakeholder interview was done via telephone with roughly nine newspapers, five radio stations and two television stations, selected on the basis of regularity (dailies and weeklies), content diversity, and editorial variety. The interviews were aimed at collecting baseline information on ownership, structure, institutional capacity, reach, etc and how all the above affected access to information and the reach and penetration of their respective medium.

The desk review of selected published newspapers was designed to determine some market information as to what type of information (advertisement or news content) publishers were selling most to consumers and how this affected consumers' reaction to those information as reflected in the results of the newspaper consumption levels and patterns. The review was an addendum to the initial survey and was only decided after the last internal review of the research findings. The desk review covered eight local dailies.

#### **1.4 CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS**

Primarily the survey was conducted without adequate funding. Training of surveyors and entry clerks was less exhaustive, significantly impacting the margin of error and ultimately the overall quality. The lack of vehicular support meant the researchers had to travel long distances upcountry in transport vehicles, essentially reducing overall input time. Inadequate communication resulted to more problems that would have otherwise been easily addressed. While overall weather condition was favorable, interviewers sent to the countryside were faced with the problems of lodging, though they had the funds to pay. The lack of descent lodging up-country is a serious problem for development activities.

Like Monrovia, many respondents in the rural parts of Liberia, including Buchanan and Kakata were apprehensive to conduct the interviews. Women were especially less inclined to talk and in some instances, respondents demanded compensation to talk to the interviewers. The general lack of knowledge of the purpose of surveys and public opinion polling seem to have had a toll on the process. This lack of education on baseline studies led to a lot of negative insinuations from the respondents.

Literacy was another factor affecting the polling process. Whilst the interviewers were taught to speak in simple Liberian English, a number of respondents were just far below understanding basic issues and provided a lot of contradictory responses thus invalidating a number of the questionnaires.

On the technical front, the survey was limited in scope and content due to the lack of funding and inadequate prior consultation with other stakeholders. This should have been an opportunity for the project to capture other baseline information on respondents' attitude towards access to information. The project should have diversified its target audience, providing some baseline information on the profile of various target groups and their overall attitude towards access to information. This was missing in the test phase and could possibly be considered in a national survey.

## Chapter II

### 2.0 GENERAL MEDIA SITUATION

The general media situation in Liberia as of this writing could be termed as appreciable as far as media and government relations is concerned. Except for a number of recurring incidents which underline the need to instate actions so as not to undermine the relative tolerance the media has experienced, there has been a relative degree of freedom of expression and the press. Repeated miscommunication between the various functionaries of government and the media, especially the Ministry of Information has largely contributed to an exacerbation of the situation. Even under these circumstances, press freedom and freedom of expression have received nominal institutional threat, aside from the pockets of friction mentioned above. Probably this has been the reason while a recent report by the US based Freedom House<sup>2</sup> on Liberia's press freedom standing, has been greeted with mixed reaction.

### 2.1 Press Freedom

Using economic and legal indicators, the Freedom House report rated Liberia press freedom standing as 'Not Free' under a regime that has shown a relatively tolerant position on freedom of expression and the press. Government supporters and some ordinary citizens disagree, citing amongst other things, the growth of media outlets and the freedom they enjoy publishing critical opinions without being penalized. On the other hand, freedom to exercise the right of the 'pen' has been undermined by the lack of economic resources and the legal enabling environment which is essential for the cultivation of a more open, independent and sustainable post-conflict media, a case that has been resonated by pro-media groups which believe the ranking was fair.

In a recent publication on Freedom of Expression<sup>3</sup> released by the Center for Media Studies and Peace Building, the group's Executive Director Malcolm Joseph was equally uncomplimentary of the government's press freedom standing. "That violent and unlawful attack on the media have persisted, even under a regime said to have come to power upon democratic credentials is a tragedy that needs to be stopped..." Malcolm Joseph is quoted in the report centering on attacks on freedom of expression.

It is true that media proliferation has been widespread evidence by the changing political situation; nevertheless this surge has seen little or no concrete development of the media economy, with outlets not expanding, markets shrinking due to unwarranted competition and diminishing advertorial returns.

### 2.2 Media Pluralism

According to figures contained in a recent report "Strengthening Liberia's Media: A Review of Media Support in the Post-Transitional Period and Recommendations for Future Actions" released by the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa<sup>4</sup>, there are roughly

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<sup>2</sup> Freedom House releases an annual reporting on press freedom rankings around the world

<sup>3</sup> Report: The Perennial Tragedy of Democracy: Attacks on Freedom of Expression in Liberia 2006-2007 The report catalogued over a dozen incidents of attacks on journalists and separate cases of lawsuits. CEMESP has been involved with press freedom and free expression monitoring over the last few years

<sup>4</sup> Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa exists a loose but coordinated network of media development and support organizations harnessing their diverse expertise and experience in addressing specific in-country needs

38 newspapers in Liberia although only about 15 publish with some degree of regularity. In addition, there are close to 50 registered radio stations including community radios currently broadcasting, representing almost four times the pre-war figures.

There is no national public service broadcaster, though a number of stations strive to fill this void. They include UNMIL Radio, Star Radio and the Catholic run Radio Veritas. The national radio service owned and managed by the Government is currently being resuscitated. There are four commercial television stations and none provide national coverage or reach. The TV channel of the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS) has not been operational for over a decade due to massive destruction of its facilities during the civil conflict.

There are three recognized degree-granting departments of journalism at three universities in the country, namely the University of Liberia (UL), African Methodist Episcopal University (AMEU), and the United Methodist University (UMU). In spite of this rapid growth in media training infrastructure, standard of journalism is considerably low underscoring the effects the prolonged civil conflict had on the sector. Most of the curricula of these institutions are outdated and instructors are in dire need of professionalization opportunities. There is also lack of equipment and on the job training. Only the UL has a radio station for practiced training for broadcast students.

### **2.3 Media Law and Policy Reforms**

The legal and regulatory frameworks governing the media are generally moribund and not on par with international best practices though efforts have been underway in the last twenty four months to review and reform the country's media laws and policies to suit international standards.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the absence of a national communication policy has rather stilted the flow of information from government to the media, and the media to the public. The government Ministry of Information is under resourced and lacks the technical<sup>6</sup> capacity to perform a number of its core functions. There's a conflict of function between some functionaries dealing with the media namely the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication and the recently established Liberia Telecommunication Authority. With less than a million dollar on its annual budgetary allotment, most of the ministry's work has been reactionary and concentrated in the capital, Monrovia. MICAT has approached UNESCO to support the drafting of National Communications Policy and has made efforts to synchronize flow of government information between the various Ministries and agencies.

As in their current form, statutes governing the media and access to information and freedom of expression are tilted toward state control and have rendered the media vulnerable to censorship, interference, threats and intimidation in the past.

They have in other words provided reprieve for state officials and their surrogates to carry out arbitrary actions against the media, which has had serious implications for open, transparent and

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<sup>5</sup> Source: report "Strengthening Liberia's Media: A Review of Media Support in the Post-Transitional Period and Recommendations for Future Actions" published in 2007 April, by the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with MOI Insiders

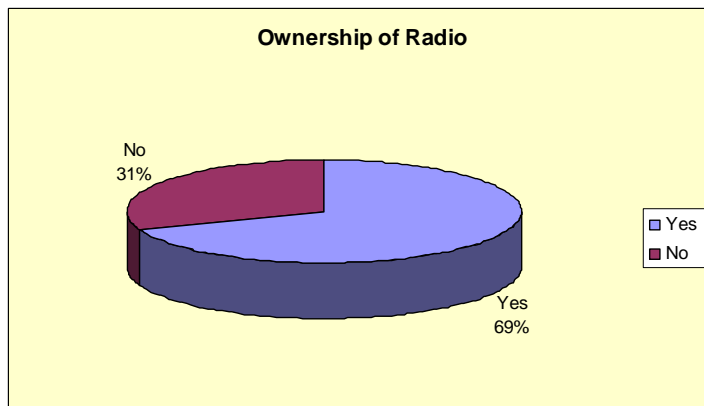
accountable administration of public trust over decades. Until late, media freedom had been severely restricted and journalists had practiced under series of intolerable conditions and regimes.

While these continue over decade, it was only in 2004 that efforts were started to comprehensively review the legal framework governing the media in the view of conducting a holistic reform. Under the direction of the Partnership for Media and Conflict Prevention in West Africa, local efforts were harnessed amongst the relevant stakeholder groups including MICAT to better articulate and define a new media policy and legal framework through a comprehensive and consultative legal and institutional reform process.

These processes sought to gather and codify the laws and statutes used in regulating the media to engender a free and conducive environment.

Subsequently in October of 2004, a National Conference on Media Law and Policy Reform was convened in Liberia. The process of media reform sought to ensure that legal and institutional framework for control and regulation of the media conform to international standards on freedom of expression. The initiative led to the drafting of two bills: Freedom of Information Act and a Broadcast Regulatory Act. A third law to transform LBS from a State broadcaster to a Public Service Broadcaster had already been commissioned by the USAID funded Liberia Transitional Initiative and was invited for validation by the Media Law Reform Working Group, bringing the bills to three.

All three bills have been validated pending a final legal review to be supported by the World Bank Development Communication Division, before they are introduced to Parliament during the first quarter of legislative business.



## 2.4 Access to Information

Citizens access to public records and information is severely restrained in Liberia. The absence of an Access to Information legislation has affected the coverage of corruption issues, citizens' participation in the democratic process and transparency in the operations of state and other corporate institutions. In a recent study conducted by the Center for

Transparency and Accountability<sup>7</sup>, the group cited corruption as the overriding impediment to access to public information after a survey of thirteen government ministries and agencies and three corporate entities. It also indicated literacy and the lack of institutional will and commitment to transparency and openness as factors grossly militating against access to information.

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<sup>7</sup> Report: Access to Information Monitoring Report- Piercing The Veil of Secrecy, released by Center for Transparency and Accountability In Liberia with funding from the Open Society Institute

Aside from the public request for information, there's limited attempt by institutions to inform the public about the quality and intent of government services, thereby leaving a huge deficit exploited by rumors, misinformation, insinuations and in some instances undue negative perception about government and its operations. A case in point was the late 2007 media reports with regarding the "Secret sale of stockpile of Iron Ore" at the Port of Buchanan. The government had actually published a bid (though it flouted PPC<sup>8</sup> regulations) for the sale of ores in three papers but made no information available to the public about the selection process, the review and the final shipment and attending transaction with the winning company. All of these information were instead, later released after a barrage of media criticism on government lack of transparency when coincidentally it was prosecuting past officials on another dubious iron ore deal at the very port of Buchanan. MICAT might be doing a good job in "damage control" and news information about programs and government activities but currently lacks the technical resources and capacity to coordinate and or provide administrative, procedural, routine and or sensitive information from the vast array of state functionaries to citizens.

While a Freedom of Information Act might address the legal barriers to citizens and media access to information, the implementation modalities and framework under which such practice can be guaranteed will be an onerous assignment. Under the current governance arrangement, state bureaucracy is so hugely entrenched in corruption that institutional reforms might be required to address the flow and delivery of information.

## **2.5 Developing the Media**

The media requires an extended period of revitalization in other to play its rightful role as the 'fourth estate,' including acting as a watch-dog, directly contributing to good governance and poverty reduction, as well as functioning as a tool for conflict resolution. There's need for reform of Ministry of Information Cultural and Tourism as well as the reform of the legal framework governing the media in Liberia. Media training institutions require concrete investment over a long period for sustained growth and institutional development.

Efforts have been underway to factor the development of the media in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. While this **as** shown some promising signs, media development needs to be seen more strategically by the international community and the government. Priorities should be given to developing a large market base under which the media will flourish and assistance to community media should be seen as crucial. Evident by the study, there is a high demand of quality community based broadcasting as shown in respondents desire for news and the competition in listenership between the very professional UNMIL Radio setup and the amateur community radio outfits. In this direction, there's a need to provide significant support to developing this sector.

## **Chapter III**

### **3.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT**

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<sup>8</sup> Public Procurement and Concession Act provides for a two-week publication of tenders for local and international bidding. The government could only show evidence that the papers had published the bids once.

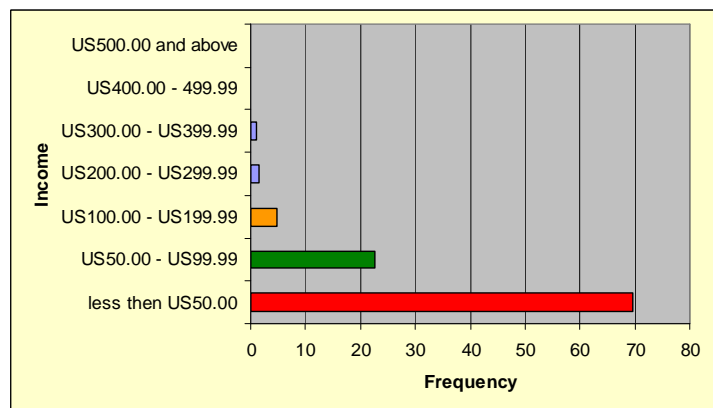
Poverty in Liberia is pervasive, acute and alarming. An average Liberian adult has an annual consumption of 357.00 USD representing food and non-food spending, a survey on Core Welfare released in December by the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-information Services (LISGIS) has revealed. In a country where GDP per capita is estimated at \$190.00, the study revealed that 63.8 percent of the population was living below the poverty line representing some 1.7 Million people. 1.3 Million people, about 48% of the population, are drenched in extreme poverty.

**Table 1.0 Percent distribution by age of respondents**

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
10-19	181	14.5
20-29	574	45.9
30-39	261	20.9
40-49	133	10.6
50-59	45	3.6
60+	56	4.5
Total	1250	100.0

Poverty seems to be hugely concentrated in rural areas where access to basic services is also severely acute or non-existent. CWIQ findings also show pockets of poverty concentration in several urban areas and a corresponding high dependency ratio.

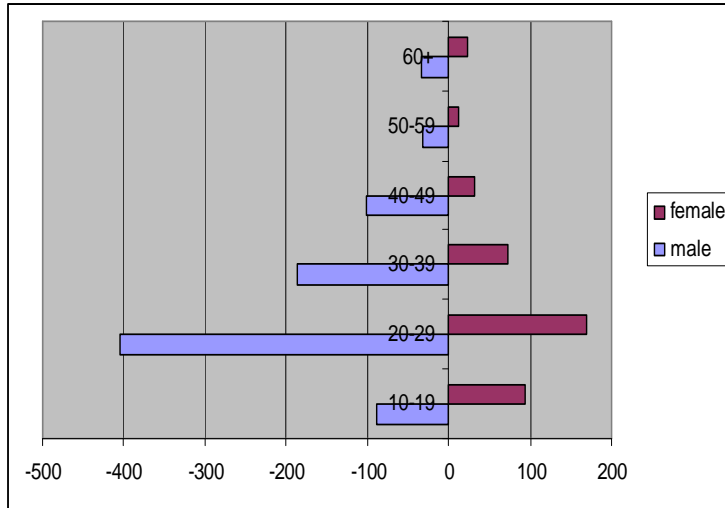
The survey conducted by LMC, considered income levels of Liberians, looking at income brackets from less than US\$50.00 to that exceeding US\$500.00. What the survey noted was that just 0.2% of Liberians made income from US\$400.00 and above. Between 1% and 1.5% of the people polled fell in the US\$200.00 to under US\$400.00 range. Nearly 5% of the people earned incomes ranging from US\$100.00 to US\$199.99. Some 27.7% of the people had incomes ranging from US\$50.00 to US\$99.00. The survey finally noted that the vast majority of the people, about 70% earned less than US\$50.00.



On the educational levels of respondents, the survey found that 74.8% had attained an education level of junior high or higher, while 25.4% had attained primary level education or lower. Of these totals 18.9% of males had attained educational levels of primary school or lower, while 38.4% of females found themselves in the same bracket.

Males again accounted for 81% of respondents who had attained an educational level of junior high or higher, while 61.6% of females had similar educational standing.

But “Provisional” data collated by LISGIS in 2007 paints a somewhat different picture from these findings. According to the LISGIS data “Primary Gross Enrollment” in schools was 86.3%, and “Primary Net Enrollment” was 37.3%. Of these figures 93.1% and 76.1%, and 47.5% and 31.7% respectively represented urban and urban poor’s “Primary Gross Enrollment” and “Primary Net Enrollment”. On the rural front the survey noted the “Primary Gross Enrollment” and “Primary Net Enrollment” respectively for rural and rural poor to be 83.3% and 74.4%, and 32.8% and 27.1%.



The LISGIS study further found that “Secondary Gross Enrollment” was 51.3% and “Secondary Net Enrollment” was 15.2%. The finding went on to indicate 74.4% and 59.3%, and 25.4% and 20.3% respectively represented urban and urban poor’s “Secondary Gross Enrollment” and “Secondary Net Enrollment”. On the rural front LISGIS noted the “Secondary Gross Enrollment” and “Secondary Net Enrollment”

respectively for rural and rural poor to be 39.7% and 31.0%, and 10.1% and 7.2%.

These figures as released by LISGIS, indicate that income levels serve as a determining factor when considering school enrollment. As per the organization’s finding, enrollment levels decreased within both rural poor and urban poor communities across the educational strata.

## CHAPTER IV:

### 4.0 MEDIA REACH AND PENETRATION

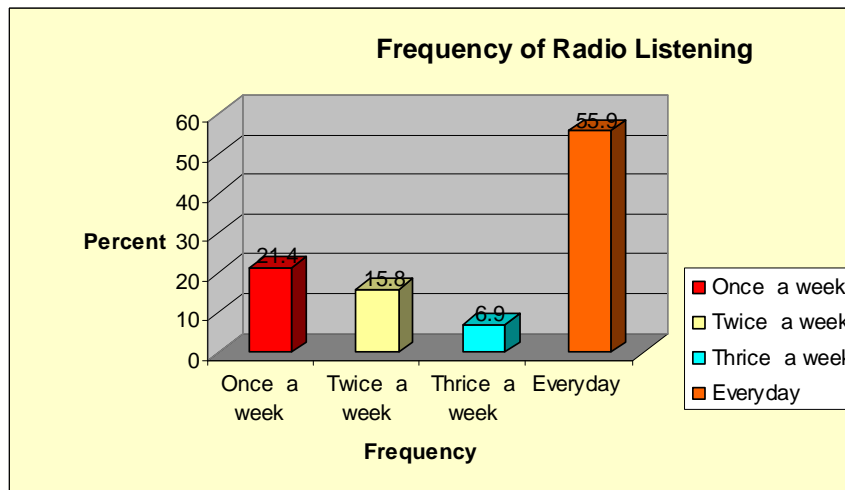
This chapter highlights media reach and penetration, focusing on radio, television, newspaper, cell phone and satellite television media landscape. Each medium will be treated separately.

#### 4.1 RADIO

Summary of findings:

- ❖ There's huge penetration level and reach of radio in the areas surveyed.
- ❖ Radio is by far the cheapest source of information with huge potential in fulfilling key development and democratic agenda indicated by “High Listening”- as most people listen to radio daily
- ❖ A viable public service broadcaster could fill the information void as there is a huge consumption and demand for news and information
- ❖ Community based radios are growing professionally and provide a good platform for information delivery and feedback to people living in rural Liberia

Radio as a medium in Liberia is not relatively new as compared to other African countries, particularly in the west. One of West Africa's oldest independent (though religious) media, the Eternal Love Winning Africa (ELWA) owned by the Sudan Interior Mission began operation in 1954. It was once heard as far as east Africa and even had a broadcast in Hausa, the most widely spoken West African language.



Generally speaking radio in Liberia has flourished and increased in plurality and diversity, with close to 50 registered radio stations in the country<sup>9</sup>. There are about fifteen radio stations in Monrovia, with almost all operating through frequency

modulation (FM) only and 47 community radio stations across the country. Of the 47 community stations outside of Monrovia, 30 are functional according to a Needs Assessment of Community Radio Stations conducted by the Radio Netherlands Training Center<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Source: report “Strengthening Liberia’s Media: A Review of Media Support in the Post-Transitional Period and Recommendations for Future Actions” Partnership

<sup>10</sup> Source: report, Liberia Media Center and Radio Netherlands Needs Assessment of Community Radio Conducted in twelve counties in Liberia in 2007 February

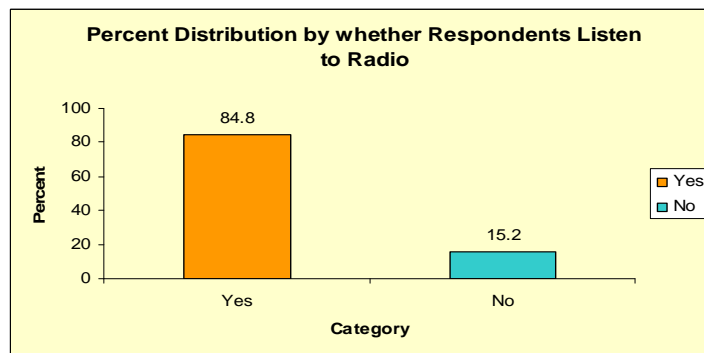
Only three stations - Radio Veritas, ELWA, and Star Radio - operate both on FM and Short Wave, whilst only one station has a national FM network - UNMIL Radio; while UNMIL, Star Radio and LBS do some form of broadcasting via the internet.

Many stations cooperate with international actors and broadcast programs such as those produced by Talking Drums Studios, UN agencies, BBC, VOA and others. For most of the stations advertisement constitutes 70 percent of revenue while the rest comes from other sources, particularly donor support.

**Table 2.0: Ownership of Radio cross-classified by Location of Residence**

	Yes	No	Total
Buchanan	85.1	14.9	100.0%
	128	22	150
Kakata	85.4	14.6	100.0%
	133	40	173
Monrovia	86.1	13.9	100.0%
	861	62	923
Total	1056	108	1246
	84.8	15.2	100.0%

Today radio is the most widely used medium for information gathering because it is the cheapest. The LMC survey shows that over 90 % of all respondents in the three cities said they listen to radio with 70% of Monrovia based respondents listening to radio. With ownership, nearly 70% said radio set. Most are found in averaging 70.4%. by Kakata with Buchanan with 2.0 above). On how many respondents majority, 55.9% said they everyday. Others give the number of times they listen as once a week, representing 21.1%; twice a week, 15.8% and thrice a week, 7.2%. Touching on the programs listened to, news dominates with 48.5%. The next is entertainment, 31.0%. The last two are religious, 12.2% and political, 8.4%.

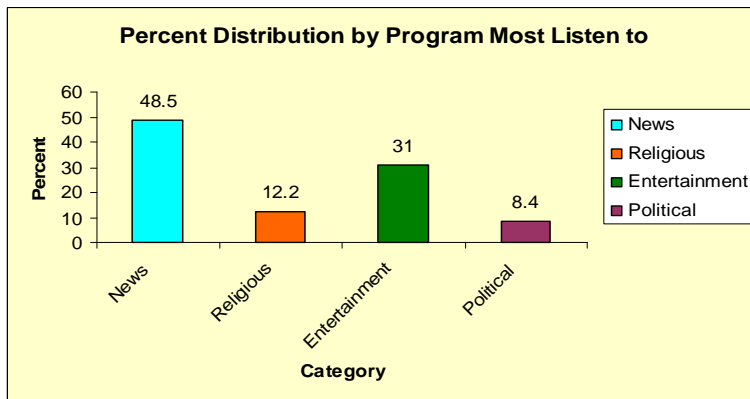


of the owners Monrovia, This is followed 68.0% and 61.9% (see Table

times the listened, the representing listened to radio

A nationwide survey conducted by LISGIS in 2007 shows that radio set is owned by 49.5% of the population<sup>11</sup>. Even in areas with poverty concentration, the LISGIS study showed that 55.9% of urban poor respondents own a radio set, while 25.7% of rural poor respondents owned a radio set. This is an interesting correlation in the two studies and cost could also be one of the reasons for this high penetration level. A pocket size FM radio can be bought for as low as L\$180.00, which is equivalent to US\$3.00.

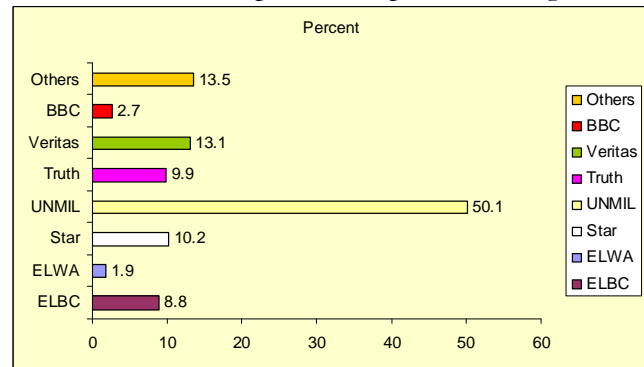
The most listened to radio station in the three surveyed areas is UNMIL Radio. UNMIL has a huge reach in almost all parts of the country. One reason accounting for a high penetration of UNMIL Radio is its network of small relay stations based in key parts of the country. Their powerful FM relays provide news in simple Liberian English and the various vernaculars. Public service competitors including Star and Radio Veritas depend on designated hours of Short Wave



broadcast to reach other parts of the country and are faced with difficulty in signal reception due to problems associated with shortwave signal and the technology.

On the other hand, Star Radio nationwide team of correspondents provides huge news resources for their partner relay stations in six of the fifteen counties which rebroadcast selected news programs.

In Monrovia, the Catholic run Radio Veritas ranked second in the survey, while in Kakata it is the locally run Radio Kakata, which was refurbished and supported by the Dutch based Radio Netherlands Training Center<sup>12</sup>. This is also the same for Buchanan where the second



is Radio Gbezhon supported by Star Radio through a USAID grant. Evident by the study, a large segment of respondents in rural Liberia listen to their local community stations, with entertainment topping the ranking. Though the results are shared between UNMIL FM relay and the local community stations, news consumption is high on the average.

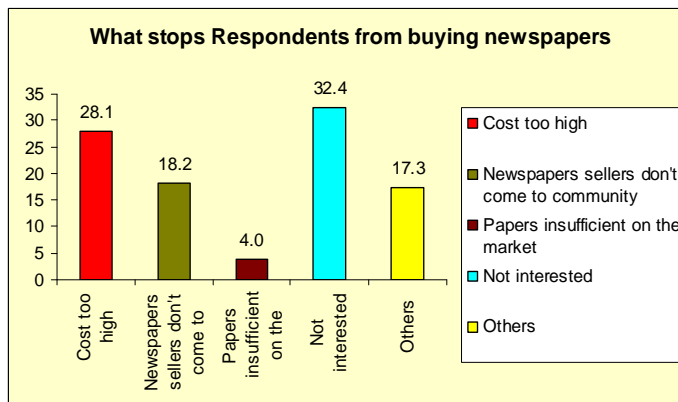
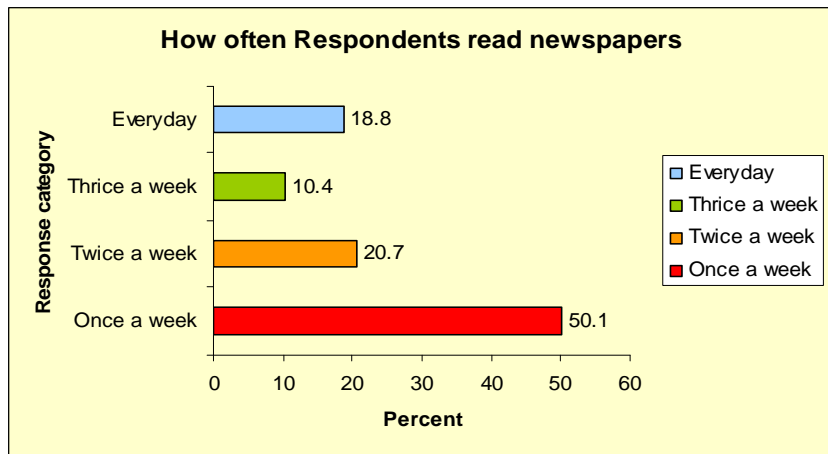
<sup>11</sup> LISGIS, Liberia Core Welfare Indicators (2007) Data 10-20 Provisional

<sup>12</sup> The Radio Netherlands Training Center supports development of community radio in eight of Liberia's fifteen counties through its regional initiative dubbed Initiative for Mobile Training of Community Radio (INFORMOTRAC)

## 4.2 NEWSPAPER

The newspaper industry has a poor penetration level even in the most urban areas surveyed

- ❖ Poor distribution and circulation and lack of diversity in content are responsible for low consumption of print media products evident by the surge in readership of internet-based content newspapers like Sportsmax and Tidings.
- ❖ Papers were devoting good number of pages to advertorial
- ❖ Literacy and poverty are high ranked issues affecting print media circulation and could as well continue without significant improvement in the overall socio-economic conditions of the country
- ❖ The rather small media market has denied the newspaper industry the require funding to develop and unless serious investment is made, standards and ethical issues associated with the print media will remain huge challenges for a good while



The newspaper industry in Liberia began long before Liberia declared independence in 1847. The first newspaper founded in sub-Sahara Africa in 1826<sup>13</sup> was *The Herald* established by a black American Charles Forte who also served as its first editor. From 1830 to 1834, John Brown Russwurm, (Jamaican-born mulatto) co-founder of *Freedom Journal*, the first black newspaper in the US and graduate from Bowdoin College

in Maine, served as editor<sup>14</sup>.

The survey shows that newspapers are read by 74.8 percent of respondents that were literate. Accessing newspapers is mainly through friends (38.0%) and others (35.5%). The others named are group reading basically at entertainment spots, libraries, schools and newsstands /sellers. Access to newspapers is also through office (work place), with 15.4%; and relative, 11.1%. Most newspaper readers read newspapers once a week, constituting 50.1%; next is twice a week with 20.7 %. The third is everyday at 18.8% and last is thrice a week at 10.4%. This is an interesting finding given that most of these papers simply reprint internet news and generate very little local

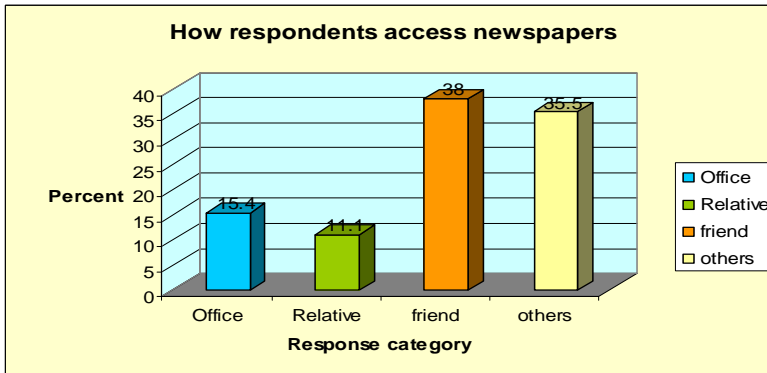
<sup>13</sup> Speech delivered by Henry Cole at an international seminar on Press and Progress in West Africa, University of Dakar, Senegal, May 31-June 4, 1960.

<sup>14</sup> <sup>3</sup> [http://www.inmotionaame.org/glossary/glossary\\_term.cfm?id=148&bhjs=0](http://www.inmotionaame.org/glossary/glossary_term.cfm?id=148&bhjs=0); January

content.

A staggering percentage of readers read internet based content newspapers like Sportsmax and Tidings. The two papers recalled a combined total of 39%, while the *Daily Observer*, *The Inquirer*, *New Democrat*, and *Heritage* 15.8%, 12.8%, 12.2% and 9.6%, respectively. *Public Agenda*, 5.4%, *the Analyst*, 3.2%, the *National Chronicle* 1.8% and *The Independent* 0.2%.

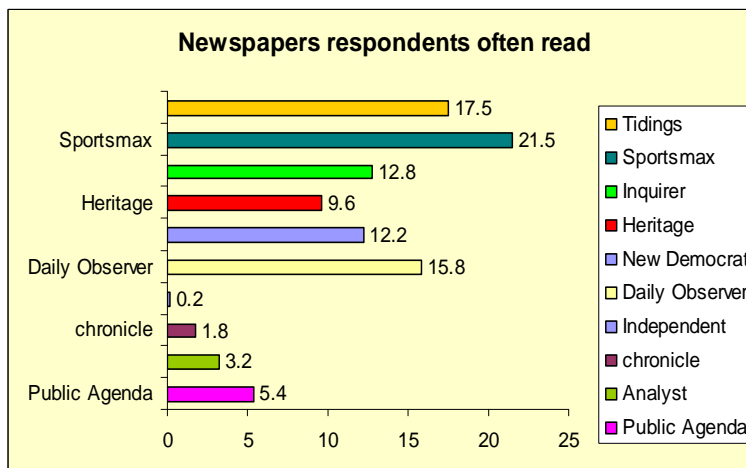
The readership of newspaper is dominated by young people. Most of the urban young readers are sports fanatics and with international soccer dominating many community discussions, the drive for news on the global soccer scene has pulled this group to the sports medium.



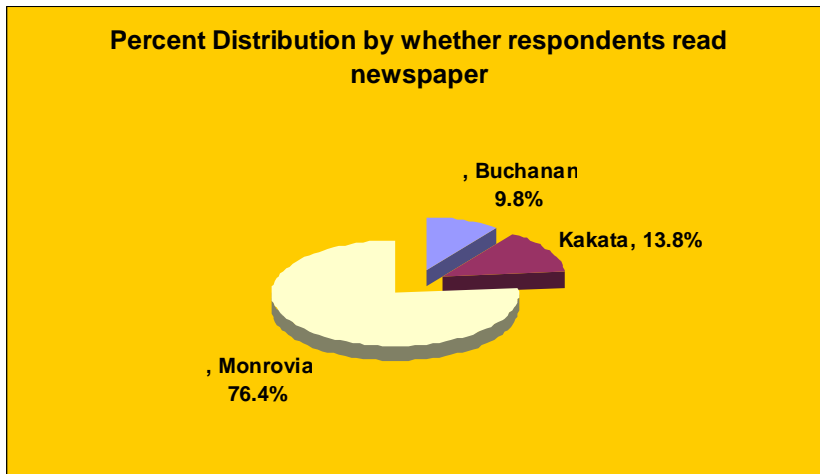
The lack of purchasing power has affected the sales and purchase of newspapers. A typical twelve page tabloid cost roughly \$20.00 Liberian Dollar, the equivalent of US\$0.25. Many respondents (32.4%) were not reading newspapers because they weren't interested. There's a relationship between purchasing power and interest to pay for

newspaper since most of the respondents were low-income earners and 28.1% cited high cost as reasons for not reading, with a corresponding 50.1 % reading only once a week.

Reading from this analysis, the newspaper has the recurring problem of sustainability and this explains for the relative high space allotment to advertisements. From the LMC Newspaper Desk review, considerable amount of space in newspapers were being devoted to advertisements, possibly to cover running cost and raise profit margins. According to the Press Union of Liberia, newspaper dominates cases of ethical transgressions compared to the broadcast media. Whether this can be linked to corruption, or proliferation, there's no doubt the industry faces far more crisis and threats of sustainability compare to the broadcast media.



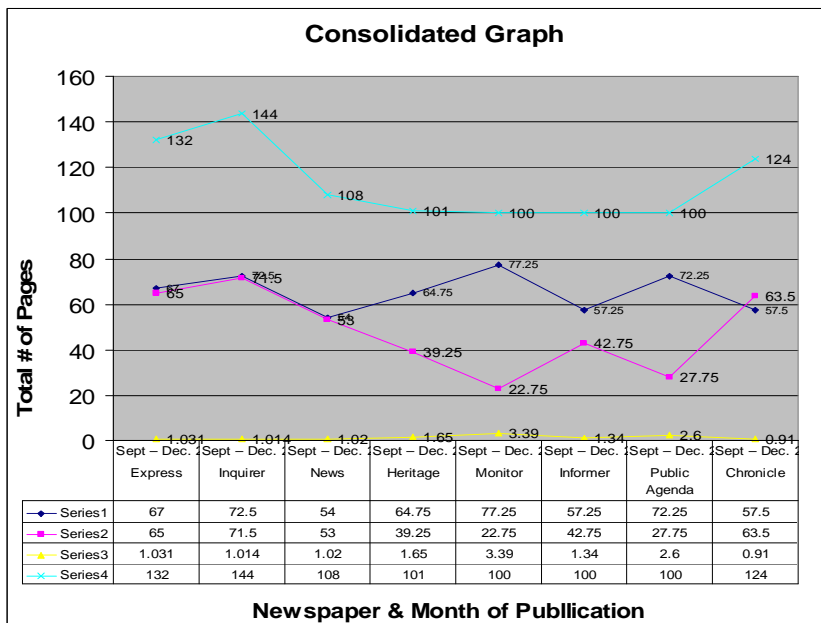
The random review of three newspapers per month from eight published papers including five dailies and three weeklies was captured from September to December 2007 was conducted in order to evaluate the papers' content publication compared to the amount of space they devoted to advertisements.



The total number of pages published for each paper during this period was noted; and the total number of pages devoted to both actual [story] content and advertisements were also noted.

According to the survey the newspapers published anywhere from one hundred (100) to one hundred forty-four pages. It was also noted that the ratio of story content to advertisement as it relates the number of pages devoted to each ranged from as low as 0.91 to as high as 3.39. But in most cases this ratio roughly showed the indication that story contents and advertisements were allocated the same amount of space with stories having a slight edge.

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**Series1 – Content**  
**Series2 – Ad**  
**Series3 – Content/Ad Ratio**  
**Series4 – Total # of Pages**

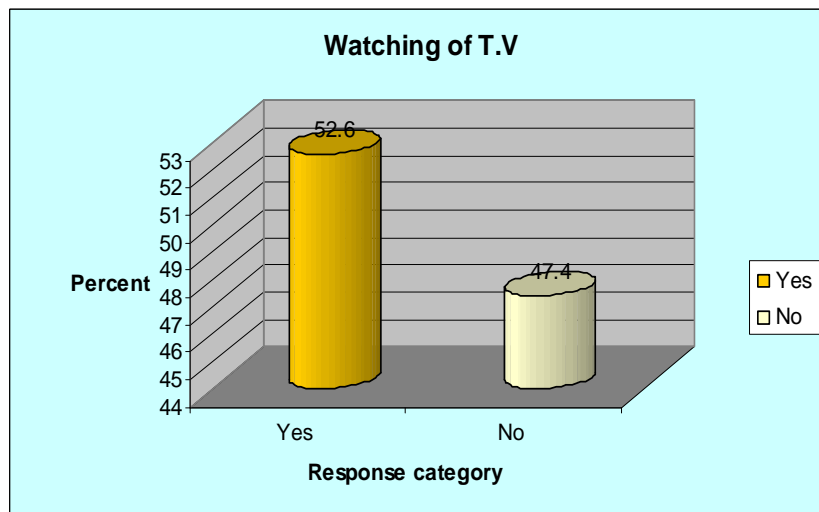
Results from the review also show varying degrees of regularity in the dedication of content and advert spaces across all eight papers during the four months review. The finding reinforces the need for a print market research that would help in developing a strong advertisement and market base.

### 4.3 TELEVISION

- ❖ Television has a stronger reach and penetration in urban areas and especially areas with stable electricity and could provide strong appeal in advancing democratic and development issues
- ❖ Ownership of the medium still remains a preserve of the working class as prices are high and electricity scarce
- ❖ Most local stations are dominated with foreign content, especially entertainment and access of the medium outside the Capital is primarily for entertainment
- ❖ Paid TV, (DSTV etc) are growing in numbers and could eclipsed domestic viewing and programming if local content generation by TV stations are not improved

Television was introduced as an information medium by the state following the introduction of the Liberia Broadcasting Service in 1960 with the coming into being by the state owned ELTV. Up until 1990, ELTV was the sole television station in the country. However during the 1990s, independent commercial television came into being, with DC TV as the first. DC TV, owned by Ducor Broadcasting Corporation, began televising in 1996. This was followed by LCN TV in 1997.

Television mostly in and a few areas of the a luxury, small group The results 27.9% of respondents television classified three cities with accounting



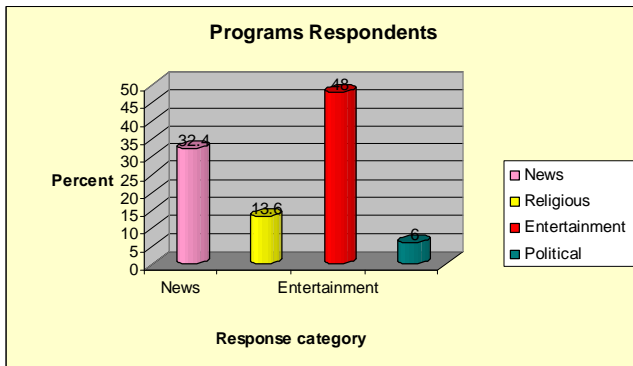
beaming, Monrovia outskirts city, is still owned by a of persons. show that own cross across the surveyed Monrovia for over

90% of the ownership. LISGIS Core Welfare Survey puts the total percentage of ownership in the Greater Monrovia area at 22.7% and puts the total number of people in the country owning television sets at 6.2% under *Ownership of IT/Telecommunications*.

Perhaps one reason for this is the price for the cheapest of television sets is just about the minimum wage of civil servants. A civil servant makes about 50.00 USD per month, the cost of a 14-inch TV. Additionally, there is also the price of electricity associated with television ownership. The public provider of electricity, Liberia Electricity Corporation, charges higher amount to supply electricity to private homes. Under the current billing, homes consuming minimum monthly electricity pay between US\$70.00 – US\$90.00. LISGIS CWIQ survey on

access to electricity show only 5.8% of household in urban areas had access to electricity<sup>15</sup> with just 2.3 percent of the population having access to power.

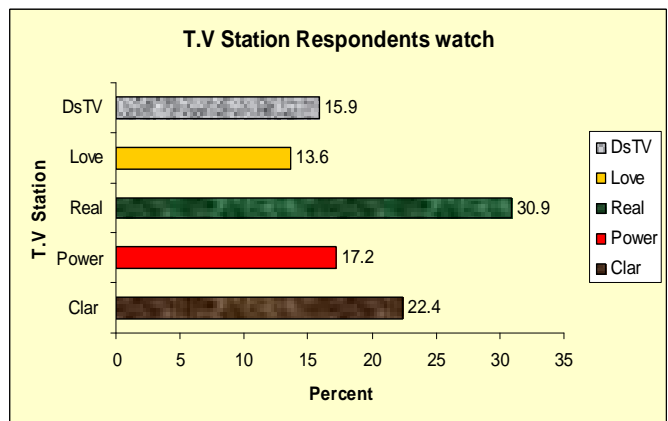
On television viewing, there was an increase in number, 52.6% of the respondents said they watch TV. Perhaps the reason for this is the fact that Liberia is still generally a communal society. Normally people who have television sets allow community members into their homes to watch movies, sports, news etc. Second, like radio, there's no literacy barrier in witnessing TV as most urban dwellers have an appreciable understanding of everyday English.



Entertainment dominates the watched, with viewers reaching 48.0%. Entertainment is followed by news 32.4%, religious 13.6% and political 6.0%. By political, viewers meant programs about national government and its officials and foreign governments and their officials. These programs are viewed on Clar, Power, Real, Love and DsTV. Most viewers named Real as the most watched television station with 30.9%

followed by Clar 22.4%, Power 17.2%, DsTV 15.9% and Love 13.6%.

All of the TV stations are saturated with foreign based content and neighboring countries like Nigeria dominate the screen with their dramas and soaps.

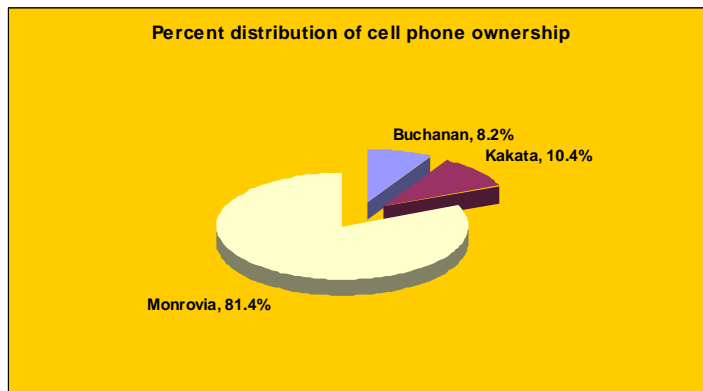


#### 4.4 CELLULAR PHONES:

- ❖ Cellular phones have grown in strong numbers in the last four years and hold promising potential in driving democratic and development agendas
- ❖ They have huge potential for the growth of local markets and could accelerate development at the local levels even in the most remote areas if issues of cost and accessibility are addressed

<sup>15</sup> Electricity refers to self-generated power or state power supplied by the Liberia Electricity Corporation but has very little residential consumption

- ❖ Widespread use of cellular phones has a strong potential in enhancing access to information, and promoting grass root platforms since they are common amongst low-income earners and even the poor
- ❖ There are prevalence of mobile phones in all fifteen counties and major districts in Liberia and strong competition amongst competitors could open more space for access to information



The cell phone revolution in Liberia began with coming into the country of ICOM in 1999. ICOM deployed an Advanced Mobile Phone System (AMPS) in the country. This entry was quickly followed by the coming of the Atlantic Wireless company, now a part of the Libercell network. AWI as it was known at the time also deployed an AMPS network.

These deployments were followed by the coming of Lone Star cell in the early 2000s. This network quickly cut on and because of its popularity put the other cell companies out of business. Lone Star had a near stangle hold of the market, since the government steadfastly refused to give any other network a GSM franschise.

But with the demise of the Taylor government in 2003, the market was liberalized. This openness saw the entries of Libercell, Comium, and Cellcom in that order in quick succession.

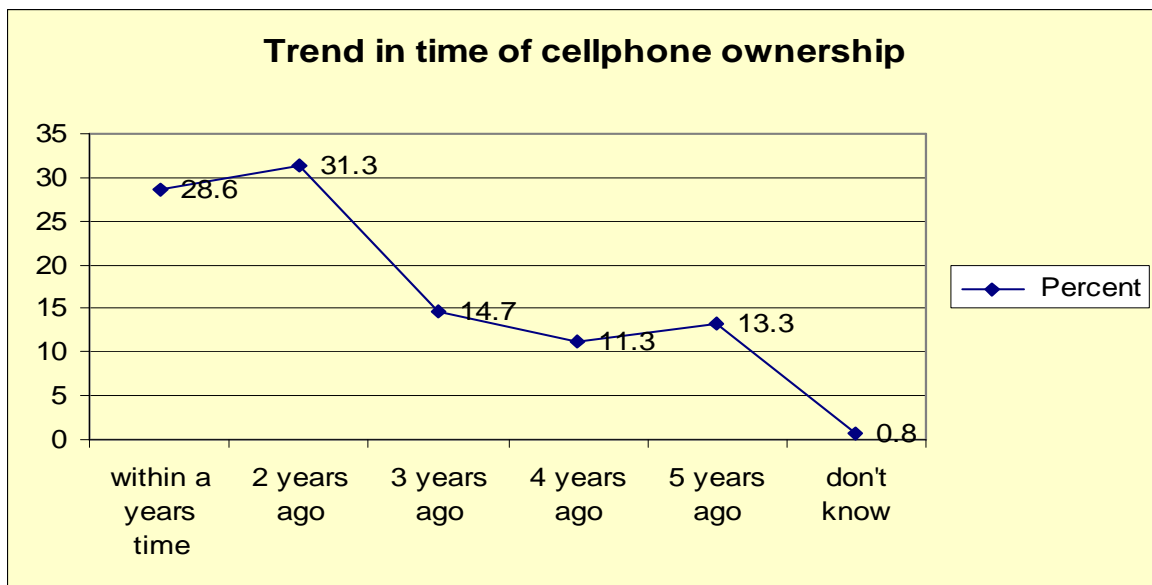
The Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) has indicated that it is going to require a new licensing regime, due to the fact that the present companies "unconventionally" entered the market.

The survey results indicated over eighty six percent (86%) of respondents have used a cell phone at some point before, while only about fourteen percent (14%) of respondents had never used a cell phone in their lives. Of these respondents around twenty one percent (21%) accessed the technology by using pay phones or call centers. Fourteen percent (14%) and seven percent (7%) of the people surveyed use phones belonging respectively to relatives and friends. A miniscule amount, 0.3% made use of cell phones belonging to their offices. The rest some fifty five percent (55%) use their own phones.

This is an impressive record of ownership and availability of access and shows that literacy had no serious impact on the usage of the technology as even illiterates with access, including marketers and street peddlers were using the technology.

While seventy percent (70%) of respondents currently owned a cell phone, only thirty percent (30%) of people surveyed lacked a phone. This figure speaks for the penetration of the cellular phone technology throughout the country with prices as low as 19.00 USD at the moment.

From the survey, it was gathered that most Liberians on the average paid around US\$100.00 for their first phone. This cluster accounted for some sixty-two percent (62%) of the people surveyed. Respondents in this category were noticed from the results to have owned phones in the last year. Twenty-eight percent (28%) and six percent (6%) of the people respectively paid between US\$100.00 – US\$199.99 and US\$200.00 – US\$299.99 for their first phones. Just four percent (4%) of those surveyed acquired their first phones for over US\$300.00. The last three groups of respondents surveyed were earlier users of cell phones.



This result may not present a comprehensive analysis of the general economic situation but provides useful indications of how purchasing power and pricing might have affected consumption over the period. A Nokia 1100 mobile phone currently cost between 40-50 USD and could probably cost as much as 100-150.00 USD then. With reduction in phone cost, mobile telephony could have a tremendous uptake in the coming years and in light of the rapid expansion and competition between phone companies in the country.

Since 2000, there has been virtually no access to fixed-line telephones and even offices and ministries use mobile desk phones and intercoms for communication. Efforts have been started to revive the state owned Telecommunication Commission.

There are four cellular GSM phone operators in Liberia. According to the survey two of these companies control between them a whopping eight-six percent (86%) of the cell phone market in Liberia. Of this forty-six percent (46%) of the people polled indicated that they subscribe with Cellcom, while forty percent (40%) used Lone Star.

The other fourteen percent (14%) of the market is shared between Comium and Libercell. Comium takes the lion share of eleven percent (11%), while Libercell has just three percent (3%).

But according to the Liberia Telecommunication Authority (LTA)<sup>16</sup>, there is an estimated four hundred thousand (400,000) cell phone subscribers in Liberia from a 2006 database and fifty percent (50%) of these users are Lone Star cell subscribers; twenty two percent (22%) use Cellcom; fifteen percent (15%) of Comium; and thirteen percent (13%) use Libercell.

Two reasons could be explained for the variation in the figures for Lone Star and Cellcom. One could be that the figures from the LTA are not current and Cellcom could have probably up taken Lone Star with its low-priced phones and unlimited validation service.

Second, the survey tended to target areas with poverty concentration and those respondents largely use unlimited validation services due to low purchasing powers, especially respondents in Grand Bassa and large parts of Greater Monrovia.

#### 4.5 INTERNET

- ❖ Internet is scarcely available in the area surveyed and purchasing power are lowest in the areas with least access
- ❖ Most of internet users rely on cyber café and there's a tendency that more people could access if subscription prices are reduced

According to the LTA there are two classes of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the country. The major players are Comium, Cellcom, Consolidated Groups, and Power Tech. The minor include....

**Table 5.0: Percentage Distribution by how Respondents usually access the internet**

	Frequency	Percent
Internet café	210	79.3
Office	40	15.1
Personal wireless company	7	2.6
Phone	1	0.4
Library	7	2.6
Total	265	100.0

The survey discovered that many Liberians have very limited access to the internet. Of the people surveyed about seventy-nine percent (79%) did not have access to the internet.

Of the few people who use the internet some seventy-nine percent (79%) got their gateway through internet cafes. Fifteen percent (15%) of these people accessed the internet at their place of work. Three percent (3%) respectively got their access through public libraries and personal home internet access. Just 0.4% used their mobile phones to access the World Wide Web.

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<sup>16</sup> The Liberia Telecommunication Authority was established in 2006 to regulate telecommunication in the country and has oversight in granting radio and television frequencies

The survey also showed that cost is a determining factor in people’s use of the internet. Fifty-three percent (53%) of people paid less than L\$60.00 to use the internet, and twenty-two percent (22%) pay between L\$60.00 and L\$75.00. There were still fewer people who browsed the internet for between L\$80.00 and L\$95.00. This price range accounted for just fifteen percent (15%), while only ten percent (10%) accounted for paying L\$100.00 and over.

When it came to what people used the internet for in Liberia, the survey noted eighteen percent (18%) of people used the internet for news, while forty-seven percent (47%) access the internet for research purposes. Ten percent (10%) of people respectively used the technology for gathering sports news and study materials. Fifteen percent (15%) of people, the survey found out, use the internet for other reasons.

From the survey, it can be seen that far fewer people access the internet in Liberia. It further noted that the amount people pay to access the technology also influences their use of it – the more they have to pay the lower their access. The survey also indicated that more people use the internet for intellectual reasons than for other reasons. This is significant, considering the fact that the majority of people in Liberia are illiterate. This may mean that the internet remains the exclusive preserve of the intellectual class.

Less than 1% of the respondents had access to the internet in Buchanan and Kakata combined. Up to this writing, internet service open to the public only existed in Kakata. Aside from banks and other institutions with private internet facilities in Buchanan, the city- second largest city in the country- had no commercial internet cafes. Service providers have complained that the cost of operating a VSAT solution was high and most cities in the country weren’t economically viable to.

**Table 6.0: Percentage Distribution by what Respondents use the internet for**

	Frequency	Percent
News	47	17.7
Research	126	47.3
Sports	25	9.6
Studies	26	9.9
Others	41	15.5
Total	265	100.0

**Table 7.0: Percentage Distribution by how much Respondents pay to access the internet**

	Frequency	Percent
<LD60	141	53.1
LD60-LD75	53	22.4
LD80-LD95	38	14.5
≥LD100	27	10.0
Total	265	100.0

## **Chapter V**

### **5.0 MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

Unlike broadcast entities, most newspaper institutions are sole proprietorship, owned and operated by journalists themselves. These practicing journalists often lack the full managerial and business skills to attract huge capital investments and have limited access to loan from banks and lending institutions. Broadcast institutions on the other hand are predominately owned by business people, politicians or partnerships.

Lending procedures in the past has been quite cumbersome and often entrenched in bureaucratic malaise. Where opportunities existed, requirements were colossal and rules stringent, preventing small businesses from accessing these facilities. To develop, the print and broadcast industries require solid investment to address a number of business expansion opportunities. In a random interview with two commercial banks, the project was told, that lending opportunities existed for small businesses but when asked whether media institutions were taking advantage, the respondents reserved answers. In an interview, the Manager Editor and owner of the Parrot Newspaper (a bi-weekly tabloid) Robert Kpadeh said he had not explored loan opportunities with any commercial bank and could be interested in doing so. He cited equipment purchase, regularity, editorial content enrichment and staff capacity development as funding priorities.

#### **5.1 PROLIFERATION VERSUS SUSTAINABILITY**

Foremost of the problem facing the media industry is sustainability. While capital infusion could bolster the industry, it is poised to make nominal impact if underlying market issues are unresolved. The print media community is severely under-resourced but the growing rise in tabloids has even further narrowed the market. The advertisement market on which the industry strives is relatively small and in often cases, scrambling for advert had denied the industry the real market value of their pages, leaving advertisers to ultimately determine and impose prices. A more compact industry could effectively deal with this kind of situation and promote an economically healthier and productive competition, hence the need for a market survey aimed at developing supplementary services to media including advertisement.

Credible information from some radio stations interviewed suggests that a number of cellular phone companies in the country were fixing advertising prices for the media outlets. The advertisers had threatened to deal with medium holding larger coverage if smaller radio stations were refusing the offer. A combined price proposal from the stations was reportedly rejected, resulting to individual stations submitting compromised price lists. Most of the respondents from the various electronic media institutions concurred that proliferation of media institutions was affecting unity of purpose. All of these developments accentuate the need for the creation of a more compact landscape.

True, a plural media system favors democracy and proliferation should be seen as public good but only when institutions are growing and flourishing. There's apprehension in certain quarters that the media growth is unparallel to development. Media institutions are not expanding, contents are relatively the same with conditions of media employees significantly unchanged because turnovers have also not improved. Generally, there's a relatively high attrition of professional media personnel to other sectors of higher earnings. This explains for the low percentage of university graduates working with media institutions in Liberia today. Just 19.6 % of all media workers in the print sector (editors, reporters, managers, accountants, business

managers etc) from a recent survey of about nine print institutions are college graduates, whilst 9.0% of the 199 staff of seven electronic media institutions surveyed was college graduates.

About roughly 31.4% of the print media workers held secondary school diplomas, whilst 12.1 % in the broadcast sector had similar level of education. An impressive 46.6% of print media personnel were in college, while 34.2 % of broadcast media workers were also in college showing a promising incremental growth in professional personnel.

## **5.2 OTHER STATS**

Two thirds (2/3) of the newspapers surveyed lacked mobile telephony in their offices; while only one did not have a local television channel. Only two of the nine papers had a cable TV service. All of them possessed computers – the least being 3 and the most being 15. On the average the papers owned between them about 6 computers each. Only 2 of the 9 papers lacked internet facilities.

Only one paper did not have circulation in at least 2 locations outside Monrovia. Two of them were even circulated in 6 or 7 other places outside Monrovia. And all of these papers had anywhere from 1 to 7 correspondents assigned to cover other parts of the country.

And the circulation strengths of the two newspapers that operated in the country prior to the beginning of the civil conflict in 1990 (Daily Observer and the News), experienced a sharp decline in their circulation since then.

Only one of the electronic media institutions surveyed lacked mobile telephony in their offices; while only 2 of the 5 radio stations did not have a local television channel. Only one of the seven institutions lacked a cable TV service. All of them had computers – the least being 4 and the most being 21. Only 1 of the 7 institutions lacked internet facilities. Most of these stations have no coverage or reach outside the Monrovia area.

## Chapter VII

### 6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 CONCLUSION

When developed to its minimum capacity, the media in Liberia could be a pivotal agent of change. The traditional Liberian media is barely surviving and will require solid investment to become truly independent. Lack of financial resources and the supporting market environment has most part left the media under resourced and at times susceptible to outside influence with potential of undermining its independence and freedom.

As the country surges to a stable democracy, there's huge reliance on the media for quality information evident by results of the study. **Examples from other study conducted by a number of institutions show high demand for information about the government and its operations that not forthcoming.** Information about government and its activities seem concentrated in the capital city, with huge penetration levels while the vast majority of the populations living in rural Liberia with an attending low penetration of media have limited access. This accentuates the enormous opportunity a far reaching media can bring to institutionalizing democratic practices. For example the survey pointed out that youths between ages 10-29 listen to radio frequently and constitute the bulk of the listening population. Newspaper readership is also dominated by respondents in this age bracket. This constituency makes up a core target group for many development issues, including health and education. While other mediums like newspaper, television and internet might have much lower penetration amongst the population, they have likely potentials of recording uptake in coming years due to the decentralization of private sector investment in the country.

The findings from this research corroborate other findings and assessment of several institutions working to improve the state of the media sector in Liberia. Like the broader African media landscape, most of the findings are common to other studies conducted in regional countries. However, the LMC hopes that new data and updated information contained in this report could complement other works that have already been done. As previously stated the research was commissioned to gather preliminary information on media reach and penetration and factors that were impeding growth and expansion. It is hoped that the results could define other parameters for a comprehensive audit of the landscape. Along those lines funding should be made available for a more comprehensive research on the reach and penetration of media across the country and how access to media sources was impacting citizens perception of government activities.

It is also important to stress that some of the recommendations contained in this report have already been stated by other organizations in previous reports on the media situation in Liberia. They have been re-emphasized as a result of their connection to this study and their importance in addressing some of the problems and findings.

#### 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 6.2.1 BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

The media sector in Liberia is under resourced. The sector will require long term investment to grow and develop. In this way, development partners will need to share information and interact more frequently to avoid duplication. Examples from the community radio development initiatives by the Radio Netherlands Training Center and the USAID funded Star Radio should

be replicated by other players as they have shown strong evidence of resource maximization and returns. Synergies should be explored and where possible partnerships should be developed for joint implementation of programs.

Ongoing efforts to reform the media laws and policies need the necessary political support from the Liberian government to demonstrate its commitment in promoting press freedom and freedom of expression. The National Legislature should apply serious urgency in reviewing the draft bills and treat the passage of the three Acts as a national priority, accorded other Acts in the past. Mechanism for the operationalization of a Freedom of Information Act, should be instituted once the bill has passed into law.

- **International Support to MD**

There's a need for a strong demonstration of will by the international donor community to support the development of the media and communication infrastructure in the country. This requires a coordinated and strategic approach to developing the sector through series of multi-year activities, which in other experiences have proven to generate better investment returns. Efforts could be directed at establishing a media development fund ideally in the context of the "Liberia's Media Development Assistance Strategy" a document drafted by the media community and the Ministry of Information as part of consultation on the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Based on all the findings of various reports, the media sector should define priorities consistent with the availability of resources to help address those gaps. Further more, international media development support institutions intervention should be needs driven and tailored to local circumstances and realities.

- **Support to the Communication Sector**

Efforts should be directed at researching problems and opportunities that exist for the growth and development of the communication sector as a whole. These could include review of the legal and policy framework governing and regulating communication, i.e, internet, mobile phone, satellite broadcast etc.

- **Government Support to the Media**

While media independence and pluralism should be strongly defended, discussions and debates over government support to the media sector should be encouraged in lieu of the crucial role the media plays in bringing government information to the public. Framework and methodology for such support could be extensively reviewed, discussed and debated ideally within the context of the global "Liberia's Media Development Assistance Strategy" framework.

Government also needs to harmonize the relationship between all its agencies responsible for dealing with the media as there are several institutions duplicating functions and often posing difficulties for media institutions.

## 6.2.2 SECTOR SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Print Media**

There's an urgent need for the initiation of a market research to help the industry. Support should be given selected institutions in developing model business development plans that could possibly be replicated depending on their outcomes;

- Special investment preferences should be accorded institutions willing to collaborate and merge resources, thereby improving quality, expanding their reach and generating profits;
- Systems of media accountability especially for the print media should be explored by editors and owners in light of repeated ethical breaches especially emanating from the print media;

- **Broadcast Media**

Since a functional Public Service Broadcaster has the potential of reaching a good segment of the population, it is important for authorities and donors to begin reviewing strategies and opportunities for this medium in light of the imminent closure of UNMIL Radio and the very valuable service being rendered by Star Radio, both of which have effectively filled the void. Once commissioned, Government should endeavour to protect and respect the independence of the PSB, in line with the Act establishing it.

Donor support should be provided community based radio stations in expanding their coverage and developing their content. With a bulk of community residents listening to news programs, content enrichment will draw huge audience and generate local support for sustainability

The Broadcast sector should rally a common agenda and strengthen the existing Broadcasters Association, with support of international organizations and partners.

- **Internet**

There's need for feasibility studies aimed at assessing the possibility of developing Community Multi Media Centers, or CMCs, in most densely populated and economically viable cities in the country. The presence of CMCs will provide citizens greater access to internet and increase penetration levels in rural Liberia. It is not likely that commercial Internet Service Providers will invest in the short to medium term due to the low level of purchasing power in those areas, prompting need for donor intervention.

