

Media Scorecard

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



March 1999

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

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Transition Programme.**

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ISSN 1119-7110

PREFACE

This report of Print Media Monitoring , the third 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 we have here deleted part of the Basis of Monitoring Exercise, and a few other parts of the first report , published in January 1999, and as well the background information on the newspapers and magazines treated in the second report in the series published in February 1999.

As was with the February report, we have here in this report, carried out our monitoring exercise on 10 national newspapers and four news feature magazines.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report was written by **Osaro Odemwingie**, Publications Officer for MRA. **Michael Ogwo**, Programme Officer and Researcher at MRA conducted the monitoring exercise for the report with the assistance of **Mercy Jones Epete**. **Bunmi Oke** provided secretarial services for the project.

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

Media Rights Agenda is grateful to the Democracy and Good Governance Program of the United States Information Service (USIS) in Lagos for providing the financial support for the research and publication of the report.

Media Rights Agenda is also grateful for the technical assistance it received from ARTICLE 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, in London, which supplied copies of its recent publication: "Election Reporting - A Practical Guide to Media Monitoring" to the project personnel and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) in Washington, D.C., which also provided copies of the "NDI Handbook - How Domestic Organisations Monitor Elections: An A to Z Guide".

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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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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the third 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 February 1 and February 28, 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 *The Punch* newspapers.

In addition, four weekly news feature 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

A detailed discuss of the basis of this monitoring exercise was established in the first report in this series published in January 1999. An abridged version of it was published in the second report published in February 1999. Suffice it to say that we established in those discuss that 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.

(c) OBJECTIVES OF EXERCISE

As in the previous reports 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 nutshell, 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 acts to ensure fair and objective coverage of political parties and candidates in news and information reporting.
- (c) How the news media acts 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

An assessment of how the government acts to ensure free media access to political news sources and protection from harassment has been discussed in the first report of this series published in January, and reproduced in the second report published in February.¹ This was addressed in terms of the General and Legal environments. Since the status quo remained during the month under review, it is not considered necessary to reproduce this aspect.

1. *See Media Scorecard - Report of the Print Media Coverage of the Political Transition Programme - January and February 1999.*

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.

The monitoring exercise being essence of this project and a daily event, there is obviously new information in this respect to report. However, the limitations set and variables identified at the beginning of the exercise still remain relevant and merit a reproduction hereunder.

(a) Limitations

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 February 1999. This is the third month of the project time frame and the third 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. Government official's 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, 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 as well as 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 as well as 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 as well as 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 four alongside the three registered political parties and the alliance between AD and APP. The parties or their members could have placed the advertisement.

(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.

The newspapers monitored for this exercise were:

1. *The Guardian*
2. *This Day*
3. *The Punch*
4. *Daily Times*
5. *Vanguard*
6. *Daily Champion*
7. *The Post Express*
8. *National 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

A detailed background discussion of the newspapers and magazines monitored, in terms of their ownership structure, ideological and philosophical persuasion, was given in our February report. The aim was to try and provide the reader a further insight into why a newspaper or magazine may have decided to report on the transition programme the way it did as we believe this could serve as a link.²

6. PRESENTATION OF RESULT FOR FEBRUARY 1999

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(i) *Vanguard*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	11	1
2.	Stories on INEC	21	4
3.	Stories on AD	36	7
4.	Stories on APP	53	11
5.	Stories on PDP	106	33
6.	Parties Combined	11	2
7.	Urban Areas Activities	278	

2. See *Media Scorecard - Report of the Print Media Coverage of the Political Transition Programme - February 1999*

	PDP	27 (Placement)	34
12.	Others	120	23
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	610	171

Other relevant information

Technical Details

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

The total number of pages published by *Post Express* for the month of February 1999, were 896

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 171, i.e. 19%

(iii) National Concord

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	10	1
2.	Stories on INEC	38	6
3.	Stories on AD	87	21
4.	Stories on APP	54	11
5.	Stories on PDP	102	21
6.	Parties Combined	6	2
7.	Urban Areas Activities	338	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	118	76
10.	Civic Education	9	1.5
11.	Advertisement	41	
	AD	0 (Placement)	
	APP	16 (Placements)	
	PDP	25 (Placements)	35
12.	Others	41	6
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	506	206

Other relevant information

Technical Details

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

The total number of pages published by *National Concord* for the month of February 1999, were 860.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999 were, 206 i.e. 24%

(iv) The Punch

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	5	3
2.	Stories on INEC	40	13
3.	Stories on AD	104	28
4.	Stories on APP	73	16
5.	Stories on PDP	145	35
6.	Parties Combined	20	8
7.	Urban Areas Activities	448	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	122	64
10.	Civic Education	5	0.84
11.	Advertisement	90	
	AD	15 (Placements)	
	APP	17 (Placements)	
	PDP	56 (Placements)	
	AD/APP Alliance	2 (Placements)	50
12.	Others	61	12
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	665	232

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 February 1999, were 896.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 232, i.e.26%

(v) This Day

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	17	3
2.	Stories on INEC	29	5
3.	Stories on AD	31	5
4.	Stories on APP	53	39
5.	Stories on PDP	104	22
6.	Parties Combined	2	0.18
7.	Urban Areas Activities	294	

8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	215	86
10.	Civic Education	2	2
11.	Advertisement	127	
	AD	4 (Placements)	
	APP	22 (Placements)	
	PDP	101 (Placements)	
	APP / AD Alliance	0 (Placement)	103
12.	Others	58	10
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	638	276

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 February 1999, were 1032
Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 276, i.e.27%

(vi) New Nigerian

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	24	4
2.	Stories on INEC	31	6
3.	Stories on AD	26	8
4.	Stories on APP	44	11
5.	Stories on PDP	77	19
6.	Parties Combined	3	0.55
7.	Urban Areas Activities	231	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	90	44
10.	Civic Education	5	3
11.	Advertisement	44	
	AD	0 (Placement)	
	APP	8 (Placements)	
	PDP	36 (Placements)	32
12.	Others	26	6
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	370	134

Other relevant information

Technical Details

Full - page 102 inches x 15.5 inches = 158 inches sq.

The total number of pages published by *New Nigerian* for the month of February 1999, were 672.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 134, i.e. 20%

(vii) *The Guardian*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	10	1.5
2.	Stories on INEC	49	9
3.	Stories on AD	78	15
4.	Stories on APP	108	10
5.	Stories on PDP	119	12
6.	Parties Combined	6	1
7.	Urban Areas Activities	416	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	322	102
10.	Civic Education	11	2
11.	Advertisement	79	
	AD	1(Placement)	
	APP	14 (Placements)	
	PDP	64 (Placements)	67
12.	Others	105	18
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	828	236

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 February 1999, were 1486.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 236, i.e. 16%

(viii) *The Diet*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	18	3

2.	Stories on INEC	19	3
3.	Stories on AD	38	7
4.	Stories on APP	40	8
5.	Stories on PDP	90	23
6.	Parties Combined	7	1.3
7.	Urban Areas Activities	267	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	77	22
10.	Civic Education	10	2
11.	Advertisement	18	
	AD	0 (Placement)	
	APP	2 (Placements)	
	PDP	16 (Placements)	17
12.	Others	55	10
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	372	97

Other relevant information

Technical Details

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

The total number of pages published by *The Diet* for the month of February 1999, were 672.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 97, i.e. 14.5%

(ix) Daily Champion

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	30	5
2.	Stories on INEC	20	3
3.	Stories on AD	37	7
4.	Stories on APP	69	11
5.	Stories on PDP	87	16
6.	Parties Combined	13	5
7.	Urban Areas Activities	354	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	126	61
10.	Civic Education	51	12
11.	Advertisement	52	
	AD	1 (Placement)	
	APP	16 (Placements)	

	PDP	35 (Placements)	36
12.	Others	98	18
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	583	173

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 February 1999, were 948.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 173, i.e. 18.2%

(x) Daily Times

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	38	5
2.	Stories on INEC	31	5
3.	Stories on AD	13	8
4.	Stories on APP	33	8
5.	Stories on PDP	75	10
6.	Parties Combined	11	2
7.	Urban Areas Activities	248	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	95	60
10.	Civic Education	66	10
11.	Advertisement	11	
	AD	0 (Placement)	
	APP	3 (Placements)	
	PDP	8(Placements)	12
12.	Others	47	7
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	420	121

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 February 1999, were 640.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 121, i.e. 19%

(b) MAGAZINES

(i) *Newswatch*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	1	0.39
2.	Stories on INEC	1	0.05
3.	Stories on AD	10	14
4.	Stories on APP	2	8
5.	Stories on PDP	8	4
6.	Parties Combined	0	
7.	Urban Areas Activities	22	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	16	37
10.	Civic Education	1	0.04
11.	Advertisement	2	
	AD	0 (Placement)	
	APP	0 (Placement)	
	PDP	2 (Placements)	2
12.	Others	0	
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	41	65

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 February 1999, were 132.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 65, i.e. 49%

(ii) *The News*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	0	
2.	Stories on INEC	1	0.05
3.	Stories on AD	10	6
4.	Stories on APP	2	12
5.	Stories on PDP	4	1.1
6.	Parties Combined	0	

7.	Urban Areas Activities	18	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	9	11
10.	Civic Education	0	
11.	Advertisement	2	
	AD	1	
	APP	0	
	PDP	1	1.2
12.	Others	1	4
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	29	36

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 February 1999, were 156.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 36, i.e. 23%

(iii) TELL

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	0	
2.	Stories on INEC	2	1
3.	Stories on AD	6	5
4.	Stories on APP	3	7
5.	Stories on PDP	4	3
6.	Parties Combined	0	
7.	Urban Areas Activities	18	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	8	14
10.	Civic Education	1	0.29
11.	Advertisement	0	
	AD	0	
	APP	0	
	PDP	0	0
12.	Others	3	0.12
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	27	29

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 February 1999, were 156.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 29, i.e. 18.6%

(iv) *The Source*

	Variables	No. of Stories	Pages
1.	Stories on Government	0	
2.	Stories on INEC	0	
3.	Stories on AD	0	
4.	Stories on APP	2	4
5.	Stories on PDP	1	3
6.	Parties Combined	0	
7.	Urban Areas Activities	4	
8.	Rural Areas Activities	0	
9.	Informed Commentaries	16	20
10.	Civic Education	1	1
11.	Advertisement	0	
	AD	0	
	APP	0	
	PDP	0	0
12.	Others	1	0.22
13.	Total No. of Pol. Stories/Pages	21	26

Other relevant information

Technical Details

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

The total number of pages published by *The Source* for the month of February 1999, were 108.

Total number of pages devoted to political stories and issues for the month of February 1999, were 26, i.e. 24%

7 TABULAR REPRESENTATION OF DATA

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS EACH MONITORED MAGAZINE FOCUSED ON EACH VARIABLE																		
Newswatch	1	1	10	2	8	0	22	0	16	1	0	0	2	2	2	0	41	65
The News	0	1	10	20	4	0	18	0	9	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	29	36
TELL	0	2	6	3	4	0	18	0	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	27	29
The Source	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	0	16	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	21	26

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS EACH MONITORED NEWSPAPERS FOCUSED ON EACH VARIABLE																			
The Punch	5	40	104	73	145	20	448	0	122	5	15	17	56	2	90	61	665	232	
Daily Times	38	31	13	33	75	11	248	0	95	66	0	3	8	0	11	47	420	121	
New Nigerian	24	31	26	44	77	3	231	0	90	5	0	8	36	0	44	26	370	134	
National Concord	10	38	87	54	102	6	338	0	118	9	0	16	25	0	41	41	506	206	
Daily Champion	30	20	37	69	87	13	354	0	126	51	1	16	35	0	52	98	583	179	
The Guardian	10	49	78	108	119	6	416	0	322	11	1	14	64	0	79	105	828	236	
The Diet	18	19	38	40	90	7	267	0	77	10	0	2	16	0	18	55	372	97	
This Day	17	29	31	53	104	2	294	0	215	2	4	22	101	0	127	58	638	276	
Vanguard	11	21	36	53	106	11	278	0	163	60	1	15	49	0	65	40	568	161	
Post Express	42	40	41	65	162	22	492	0	71	15	0	5	27	0	32	120	610	171	
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	
											ADVERTISEMENT								

8 INTERPRETATION

(a) NEWSPAPERS

(i) *Vanguard*

During the month under review, *Vanguard* published a total of 936 pages. Of these, 161 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 568 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 47 pages in 65 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for one of the placements, APP, 15 placements; PDP, 49 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *Vanguard* published, 11 were on Government spread over one page, INEC, 21, in four pages; AD, 36, in seven pages; APP, 53, in 11 pages; and PDP, 106, in 33 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, 11, in two pages; Informed Commentaries, 63, in 41 pages; Civic Education, 60, in seven pages; and “Others”, 40, in eight pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 278 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(ii) *Post Express*

During the month under review, *Post Express* published a total of 896 pages. Of these, 171 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 610 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 34 pages in 32 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for none, APP, five placements; PDP, 27 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *Post Express* published, 42 were on Government spread over seven pages; INEC, 40, in six pages; AD, 41, in nine pages; APP, 65, in thirteen pages; and PDP, 162, in 44 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, 22, in three pages; Informed Commentaries, 71, in 29 pages; Civic Education, 15, in two pages; and “Others”, 120, in 23 pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 492 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(iii) *National Concord*

During the month under review, *National Concord* published a total of 860 pages. Of these, 206 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 506 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 35 pages in 41 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for none. APP, 16 placements; PDP, 25 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *National Concord* published, 10 were on Government spread over one page, INEC, 38, in six pages; AD, 87, in 21 pages; APP, 54, in 11 pages; and PDP, 102, in 21 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, six, in two pages; Informed Commentaries, 118, in 76 pages; Civic Education, nine, in 1.5 pages; and “Others”, 41, in six pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 506 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(iv) *The Punch*

During the month under review, *The Punch* published a total of 896 pages. Of these, 232 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 665 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 50 pages in 90 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for 15 placements, APP, 17 placements; PDP, 56 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had two.

Out of the total number of stories which *The Punch* published, five were on Government spread over three pages, INEC, 46, in 13 pages; AD, 104, in 28 pages; APP, 73, in 16 pages; and PDP, 145, in 35 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, 20, in eight pages; Informed Commentaries, 122, in 64 pages; Civic Education, five, in less than a page; and “Others”, 61, in 12 pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 448 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 1032 pages. Of these, 276 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 665 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 103 pages in 127 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for four placements, APP, 22 placements; PDP, 101 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *This Day* published, 17 were on Government spread over three pages, INEC, 29, in five pages; AD, 31, in five pages; APP, 53, in 39 pages; and PDP, 104, in 22 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, two, in less than a half page; Informed Commentaries, 215, in 86 pages; Civic Education, two, in two pages; and “Others”, 58, in 10 pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 294 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 672 pages. Of these, 134 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 370 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 32 pages in 44 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for none of APP, eight placements; PDP, 36 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *New Nigerian* published, 24 were on Government spread over four pages, INEC, 31, in six pages; AD, 26, in eight pages; APP, 44, in 11 pages; and PDP, 77, in 19 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, three, in less than page; Informed Commentaries, 90, in 44 pages; Civic Education, five, in three pages; and “Others”, 26, in six pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 231 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(vii) *The Guardian*

During the month under review, *The Guardian* published a total of 1486 pages. Of these, 236 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 828 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 67 pages in 79 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for one placement, APP, 14 placements; PDP, 64 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which *The Guardian* published, 10 were on Government spread over one and half pages, INEC, 49 in nine pages; AD, 78, in 15 pages; APP, 49, in 10 pages; and PDP, 119, in 12 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, 6, in one page; Informed Commentaries, 322, in 102 pages; Civic Education, 11, in two pages; and “Others”, 105, in 18 pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 416 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 672 pages. Of these, 97 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 372 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 17 pages in 18 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for none of the placements, APP, two placements; PDP, 16 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which *The Diet* published, 18 were on Government spread over three pages, INEC, 19, in three pages; AD, 38, in seven pages; APP, 40, in eight pages; and

PDP, 90, in 23 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, seven, in one and half pages; Informed Commentaries, 77, in 22 pages; Civic Education, 10, in two pages; and “Others”, 55, in 10 pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 267 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(ix) *Daily Champion*

During the month under review, *Daily Champion* published a total of 948 pages. Of these, 173 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 583 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 36 pages in 52 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for one placement, APP, 16 placements; PDP, 35 placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *Daily Champion* published, 30 were on Government spread over five pages, INEC, 20, in three pages; AD, 37, in seven pages; APP, 69, in 11 pages; and PDP, 87, in 16 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, 13, in five pages; Informed Commentaries, 126, in 61 pages; Civic Education, 51, in 12 pages; and “Others”, 98, in 18 pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 354 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(x) *Daily Times*

During the month under review, *Daily Times* published a total of 640 pages. Of these, 121 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 420 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for 12 pages in 11 placements. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for none of the placements, APP, three placements; PDP, nine placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *Daily Times* published, 38 were on Government spread over five pages, INEC, 31, in five pages; AD, 13, in eight pages; APP, 33, in 33 pages; and PDP, 75, in 10 pages.

Others were Parties Combined, 11, in two pages; Informed Commentaries, 95, in 60 pages; Civic Education, 66, in 10 pages; and “Others”, 10, in seven pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 248 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(b) MAGAZINES

(i) *Newswatch*

During the month under review, *Newswatch* published a total of 132 pages. Of these, 65 pages

were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 41 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for two pages. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for none, so also is APP. PDP had the two pages of adverts in two placements; and AD/APP Alliance had none.

Out of the total number of stories which the *NewsWatch* published, one was on Government, in less than half a page, INEC, one in less than one-quarter of a page, AD, 10, in 14 pages; APP, two, in eight pages; and PDP, eight, in four pages.

Others were Parties Combined, none; Informed Commentaries, 16, in 37 pages; Civic Education one, in less than one-eighth of a page; and “Others”, none.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 22 of them 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, 36 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 27 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for two pages. AD as a party and its candidates accounted for one of the pages while the other was placed by PDP.

Out of the total number of stories which *The News* published, none was on Government, INEC, one, in less than one-tenth of a page; AD, six, in five pages; APP, three, in seven pages; and PDP, four, in three pages.

Others were Parties Combined, none; Informed Commentaries, nine, in 13 pages; Civic Education, none and “Others”, one, in four pages.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 18 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(iii) *TELL*

During the month under review, *TELL* published a total of 150 pages. Of these, 29 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 27 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for none of the pages.

Out of the total number of stories which the *TELL* published, none was on Government, INEC, two, in one page; AD, six, in five pages; APP, three, in seven pages; and PDP, four, in three pages.

Others were Parties Combined, none; Informed Commentaries, eight, in 14 pages; Civic Education, one, in less than a quarter pages; and “Others”, three, in less than on tenth of a page.

Out of all the stories generated from direct political activities, 18 of them were in Urban areas and none from Rural areas.

(iv) *The Source*

During the month under review, *The Source* published a total of 108 pages. Of these, 26 pages were devoted to political issues. This is made up of 21 publications.

Direct access publications, that is Advertisement, accounted for none of the pages.

Out of the total number of stories which *The Source* published, none was on Government, INEC, in AD, APP, two, in four pages; and PDP, one, in three pages.

Others were Parties Combined, nil, Informed Commentaries, 16, in 20 pages; Civic Education one, in one page; and “Others”, one, in less than one quarter of a page.

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

7 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 mentioning 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.

These 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 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 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 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 eye.

The access of government owned newspapers to government subsidies 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. This is so 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 issues 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 communicates to the public, investigations revealed that as we noted in our February report 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 report on this variable by the various newspapers monitored experienced downward and upward swing from one newspaper to the other. While *Post Express*, *Daily Champion*, *New Nigerian* and *Daily Times* showed an increase in their focus on Government, other newspapers showed a decrease. The only exceptions are *National Concord* and *Vanguard*, which did not record a difference in their focus on Government compared to what obtained in the previous month, i.e. January 1999.

As for INEC, there was on the average an increase in the focus on it by the various newspapers monitored. The same can be said of the magazines.

c. Allocation of Space to Political Parties

There was a general increase in the allocation of spaces to the political parties from what obtained last month. The increased allocation of space is more noticeable in relation APP and AD. However, PDP still enjoy the position of the highest beneficiary of space allocation. The reason for the increased allocation of space to APP and AD relative to PDP can be attributed to the controversy generated by the alliance between APP and AD, which saw the presidential candidate of AD, Chief Olu Falae, contesting on the platform of APP.

It should be noted however that *Post Express* led in the allocation of stories to PDP with 162 exclusive stories and followed by *The Punch* with 145 stories. But in terms of actual allocation of space, *Post Express* led with its allocation of 44 pages to PDP. This was followed by *This Day* with its allocation of 39 pages to 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. This follows the same pattern established in our February report. For example, there were a total of 436 pages of advertisement in all the newspapers and magazines monitored all in 563 placements. PDP as a party and its candidates had 420 placements, APP, 113; AD, 23 and; AD/APP Alliance, two. The difference is an obvious evidence of the disparities in the amount spent by each party on campaign activities.

Of this total number of adverts placed by all the three parties in the newspapers, *This Day* got the highest placements, which were 127. It is followed by *The Punch*, which got 90 placements. At the rear is *Daily Times* with 11 placements. For the magazines, *NewsWatch* and *The News* got two each and none for *TELL* and *The Source*.

d. Informed Commentaries and Civic Education

The data shows a general increase in press focus on Informed Commentaries. But sadly, there is

an inverse relationship with respect to Civic Education from what obtained in last month's report.

This on the one hand is quiet encouraging especially in relation to Informed Commentaries, which helps to explain certain unfolding events. However, this is not encouraging in terms of the latter; Civic Education. Except for *Vanguard* and *Daily Times* which allocation of stories relating to Informed Commentaries moved up from 27 in last month's report to 60 and 39 to 66, respectively, others shrieked quiet considerably. This is not encouraging.

The same trend was noticed with respect to the magazines monitored.

As was the case with the observation in our February report, some of the Informed Commentaries were decidedly biased against some parties and politicians. But being personal opinions in the main, not much can be said here.

e. Coverage of Rural and Urban Areas Political Activities

From the data above, there was a 100 percent neglect of the Rural Areas compared to February report where the ratio was 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 that other stake holder groups combined, got a fair mention in the print media as was in last month's report. While some newspapers such as *This Day*, *The Diet*, *Daily Champion* increased their focus on other stake holder groups, other newspapers monitored recorded decreased attention on the variable.

However, as for the magazines, there is on the average showed a minimal increase in their focus on 'Others'. *TELL* magazine led here with three reports.

g. Fair and Objective Reporting

As noted above, PDP has maintained the lead in media focus since the beginning of this exercise. This, however, is not synonymous with fair and objective reports. It is noted that while there were some reports considered fair and objective, there were some reports considered unfair in content and intent.

However, because of the "Beggar my Neighbour" disposition in politics, some of those "unfair" and "unobjective" reports can sail through scrutiny.

But, however, a few publications paint a picture of unfair reports that cannot be excused on the basis of healthy political rivalry. Such were noticed mostly in *New Nigeria*, incidentally a government-owned newspaper.

For example, in the front page of *New Nigeria* of February 6, in a story titled: 'Face of Rebels' alluding to the internal squabble in APP in which Chief Emeka Ojukwu was involved, a 9 x 9.5 inches size photograph of him in Bifran uniform was used. This is considered derogatory as the paper could

have used a more recent picture, rather than one capable of evoking negative sentiments.

Also, in its front page of February 18, along with a story titled: 'INEC Clears Obasanjo, Falae' only Obasanjo's photographs was used. It is considered that such a sensitive and important publication should have carried pictures of either candidates or none at all.

It was, in fact, noticed that *New Nigeria* seemed more interested in publishing crisis in APP/AD Alliance than positive aspects of it. It could be recalled that this overt support for PDP by the newspaper against APP and AD was noted in our last report published in February.

While *Daily Times* is commended for its largely balance report on the parties, like most other newspapers monitored, however, its front page report of February 27, leaves much to be desired. In the report titled: 'The D-Day is here' a picture of a despaired looking Falae was published as against that of Obasanjo looking confident and happy.

(ii) Conclusion

We affirm that though several reports that would ordinarily pass for unfair and unobjective were published in the various newspapers and magazines monitored for this report. However, most of those reports are excused on the ground that partisanship is an inherent part of politics especially given the important elections that took place during the month under review.

However, it is noted that all the partisan publications in *New Nigerian* could not be explained as a result of healthy partisan expediency. Some of the publications bear imprint of a deliberate support for one party against the other. This time, a support for PDP and its candidates.

Error Margin

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

(iii) Recommendations

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

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

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.

* The print media should improve significantly on their focus on Civic Education publications.

* 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 overt support of political parties and candidates by some newspapers specifically *New Nigerian*, 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 presenting in positive light a political party or candidates to the disadvantage of the others.

* Most importantly, since elections during this transition programme have ended, it is hereby recommended that the press should henceforth focus on investigation reporting with regards to:

- accusations of electoral fraud
- issues bothering on transparency in governance
- issues on loyal opposition ; and
- issues on post-election democratic development.



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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