



BRIEFING PAPER

From crisis to transition: Media in Burkina Faso

ims

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Cover photo: A photo of posters and publications covering the story of the ousted President Compaoré.

Photo: Michelle Betz, Betz Media Consulting

Acronyms

AJB	Association des Journalistes du Burkina
APAC	Association des Professionels Africaines de la Communication
CFI	Canal France International
CNP-NZ	Centre National de la Presse Norbert Zongo
CNT	Conseil National de la Transition
CSC	Conseil Superieur de la Communication
IPERMIC	Institut Panafricain d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Médias, l'Information et la Communication
ISTIC	Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information et de la Communication
IVR	Interactive voice response
OBM	Observatoire Burkinabé des Medias
RTB	Radiodiffusion Television du Burkina
SEP	Société des Editeurs de Presse
SYNATIC	Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Information et de la Culture
UNALFA	Union Nationale de l'Audiovisuel Libre du Faso



Map data: Google

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1. Context

Landlocked Burkina Faso is a poor country, even by West African standards. The country has suffered from recurring droughts and most recently a popular uprising (*insurrection populaire*, as it is termed locally) forced long-term leader Blaise Compaoré from office at the end of October 2014. Compaoré was president for 27 years after coming to power in a coup during which the then President Thomas Sankara was killed in October 1987.

Compaoré had managed to stay in power so long in large part due to constitutional amendments. In June 1991 a new constitution was adopted establishing the fourth republic. In April 2000, the constitution was amended again, this time reducing the presidential term from seven to five years and allowing the president to be re-elected only once. Despite this, Compaoré was re-elected in April 2005 winning 80% of the vote and then again in November 2010, again with 80% of the vote. But it was this latest attempt to change Article 37 of the Constitution that led to the current situation.

Surrounded by Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Benin, Ghana, Togo and Niger has meant that the country has been prone to some instability and tensions following troubles in some of these countries. A 2013 International Crisis Group report suggested that: "Preserving Burkina Faso's stability is all the more important given that the country is located at the center of an increasingly troubled region, with the political and military crisis in neighbouring Mali possibly spilling



Riots in the streets of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in October 2014. Photo: Day Donaldson

over into Niger, another border country. Burkina Faso has been spared similar upheaval so far thanks to its internal stability and robust security apparatus, but deterioration of the political climate in the run-up to 2015 could make the country more vulnerable. A presidential election is also due in 2015 in Côte d'Ivoire, a country with which Burkina Faso has very close ties. This special relationship and the presence of a significant Burkinabé community in the country mean that a political crisis in Ouagadougou could have a negative impact on a still fragile Côte d'Ivoire."¹

Indeed, Compaoré has played a significant role in regional politics. In November 2012, for example, he mediated talks to resolve the crisis in Mali where Islamists and other rebel groups had taken control of the north.

ICG has also noted that "The opposition is divided and lacks financial capacity and charismatic, experienced leaders; and none of the key figures in the ruling party has emerged as a credible successor. If Compaoré fails to manage his departure effectively, the country could face political upheaval similar to that which rocked Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s following the death of Félix Houphouët-Boigny."²

In August 2014, the Federation of African Journalists warned of threats to press freedom and during the October protests the national TV was ransacked. It is likely that there will be ongoing threats to press freedom during the transition and run-up to the elections, expected to take place in November 2015.

This report presents the findings and recommendations following a four day mission to Ouagadougou by International Media Support from 16 – 20 November 2014. The aim of the mission was to investigate the state of the media sector in light of the crisis in the country at the time of the mission and the needs of media workers in the transitional period leading up to elections. The mission was headed by IMS consultant Michelle Betz, and was assisted by Media Foundation West Africa's Burkina Faso correspondent Youssef Ouedraogo. The team met with more than 20 journalists and media actors in the course of their mission. This report was written by Michelle Betz of Betz Media Consulting for International Media Support.

1.1 The current crisis

One could argue that the current crisis actually began in February 2011 when the death of a schoolboy in police custody provoked an uprising across the country. The timing coincided with the Arab Spring and some at the time thought that this could be the beginning of a Burkinabé Spring. Riots continued through April 2011 and were coupled with soldiers and presidential guards mutinying over unpaid housing allowances and magistrates going on strike. In addition, thousands of people protested over food prices. There were more demonstrations in December 2013 and January 2014 as Compaoré again raised the issue of changing the constitution so he could remain in power yet another term.

In October 2014, protestors hit the streets again protesting Compaoré's latest attempt to change the constitution. Following intense pressure and violent protests over the possible prolonging of his 27-year rule through a constitutional amendment Compaoré resigned on 31 October 2014.

1 International Crisis Group, "Burkina Faso: With or without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty", Africa Report No. 205, 22 July 2013. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/burkina-faso/205-burkina-faso-avec-ou-sans-compaore-le-temps-des-incertitudes.aspx>

2 ICG, Africa Report No. 205.



The parliament in Burkina Faso set ablaze. Photo: Michelle Betz, Betz Media Consulting

At issue was Compaoré's intent to change Article 37 of the Constitution which stipulates that the President of Burkina Faso cannot be re-elected more than once. Compaoré who had already been re-elected wished to change this position by putting the question to vote in the National Assembly, which was controlled by his party and his allies.

The parliament building, ruling party headquarters, state television, the presidential palace, at least two hotels and several other properties associated with the Compaorés or the ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) party were set ablaze by protesters 30 October. At least 30 people were killed during protests; the government withdrew the bill the same day. The protestors were largely young people who felt they had nothing to lose and many had known no leader other than Compaoré.

The army announced the dissolution of parliament and one week later, on 9 November 2014, opposition parties, civil society groups and religious leaders agreed on a plan for a return to civilian rule which includes the creation of an interim government. The interim government was named 23 November 2014.

At one point early on during the uprising it was unclear who would rule, as both Army chief General Honoré Traoré, and the Presidential Guard's second-in-command Lieutenant-Colonel Isaac Zida claimed to be head of state. Zida ultimately prevailed.

On 3 November, the African Union (AU) called on the Burkinabé army to return power to civilians within two weeks. One week later, opposition and civil society groups agreed on a blueprint for transition that provides for new elections in November 2015, an interim civilian president, a 25-member government and a transitional parliament (Conseil National de Transition – CNT) with 90 seats.³

By 16 November a transitional president had been named (long-time diplomat Michel Kafando) and the return to civilian rule. Kafando then named Zida as Prime Minister who in turn

³ 30 are drawn from opposition political parties, 25 from civil society, 25 from the army and 10 from the former majority party

appointed the government in which the military holds the key posts of defense (also held by Zida), interior, mines and communication. Kafando will also serve as foreign minister.

One intellectual noted that: "Kafando is a good diplomat but not the action guy; that's where Zida comes in." He also suggested that the army continues to be divided within between the elite and "the rest" who have nothing and if that's not addressed then there could be additional problems.

It is interesting to note that among the final five nominees for transitional president were two journalists: Cheriff Sy and Newton Ahmed Barry. Sy made it to the final three. This, according to several interviewees, illustrates the important role that journalists play in Burkinabé society and how they are viewed by the public.

There are several elements that need to be kept in mind as the country heads for elections expected to take place in November 2015. First, Kafando, as interim President, cannot run in the election nor can Zida unless he resigns from the military at least six months prior to the elections. In addition, opposition political parties were seriously weakened during the Compaoré years and civil society is not well organised. This has meant that the media have essentially served as the "*contre-pouvoir*" or counterweight to government and thus play a fundamental role.

Several interviewees also pointed to the fragility of the current situation. One person remarked that "Burkina Faso has always been very tolerant regarding religious differences but this could change." Yet another noted that "it is a phase of compromise now. Civil society is still not organised and the people they proposed for transitional president simply didn't have the experience to run a country" which is why the military's nomination [Kafando] was successful. "The military is better organised and disciplined and thus have serious advantages over civil society," he added.

This source also said that if Zida doesn't pursue Blaise Compaoré (who apparently is now in Morocco after fleeing originally to Cote d'Ivoire) and bring him to justice then he won't be considered serious; the people want justice. He said the media now need to put the accent on "demystifying democracy as until now there has only been a veneer of democracy".

Finally, it is important to note that many of the demonstrations were organised by young people (who make up more than half of the population) – some wearing shirts that said "Shoot me" or "Kill me" as they stood before soldiers. Young Burkinabés feel they have nothing to lose and one source said that even the military is afraid of citizens now.

1.2 The current crisis and the media

"The media were the largest actors in a positive sense [during the crisis]. People had forgotten what an important role they play."

Cheriff Sy, President, SEP

The role of the media in the current crisis has been undeniable. The media were crucial in several respects: (1) explaining the meaning of Article 37 and the stakes attached to possible amendments; (2) not giving in to the temptations of hate speech and divisive content; and,

(3) ensuring journalists were in the field and able to witness what was happening and report back to their outlets.

Virtually every interviewee suggested that the media played a significant role and was the game changer. Some have said the media verged on the edge of becoming a political actor, filling a void left by years of a fractured and weak civil society and weak political opposition. Others have said the press was the epicentre of the debate.

One senior journalist said he had no idea how the media were able to produce the coverage they did during the crisis. The radio stations brought particular praise: "They are magicians. They overcame incredible obstacles [...] If they were not around we never would have had this insurrection."

A Professor of the University of Ouagadougou believes that because the national assembly was not doing its job and the justice system was corrupt, the media essentially stepped into the roles of both of these bodies. He believes this will continue more than ever.

Others stressed that if the news media are not supported then the fundamental role they played could be at risk during the transition and they may be unable to continue the work they began.

The most important media outlets during the crisis were radio stations and while many of them self-censored during the crisis or shut down for several hours or a day or two, one station, Omega FM in Ouagadougou, broadcast continuously throughout the crisis (typically considered 30 and 31 October and 1 November). Despite this self-censorship, it does appear that journalists are more determined than ever and perhaps more courageous now that Compaoré is out.

But it was not only radio that was important. Newspapers sold out and the international community relied heavily on the local online media (such as LeFaso.net and Burkina24) despite both SMS and Internet services being shut down by the government for two days.

Journalists were essential when it came to explaining Article 37 of the Constitution and the implications of changing it. Almost all interviewees said that the media played their watchdog role and both they and the public understand the significance of this.

It was not only the public that recognized the important role the media played. In a recent meeting with media owners, Lt.-Col Zida, complemented the media: « là où dans d'autres pays la presse profite de ce genre de situation pour exacerber les antagonismes pour créer d'avantage de division, la presse burkinabé a été plus promotrice de paix qu'autre chose ».⁴

However, there were also some negative consequences of the crisis on the media. State television and radio in Ouagadougou were looted with the television being a particular target. Some journalists also received threats and at least one continues to receive daily threats due to his journalistic work and has not stayed at home since the crisis due to these threats.

Finally, some interviewees also expressed fear that Radio Mille Collines-type hate media could appear. As one person said: "We're building a new Burkina Faso and these [partisan] media present a danger. We're not living a fairy tale. It's going to be a lot of work." Another stressed the important role the media will have to play during the transition: "The media will need to alleviate tensions and calm the situation."

4 <http://www.fasozine.com/crise-au-burkina-yacouba-isaac-zida-satisfait-du-comportement-de-la-presse/>

Yet despite this, the overwhelming sentiment was one of hope for Burkina Faso's media and for the country as a whole during this transitional period. Many people see the crisis and the transitional period as an opportunity for change – for the public broadcaster, for women, for media outlets to grow audiences and for legislative changes. “We need to seize the opportunity to make changes to legislation, real qualitative changes such as the right to access to information and decriminalization,” says Cheriff Sy. “This is an occasion to pass new laws.”

The transitional period will focus on national reconciliation and justice and it is clear that the media need to play a role in this, agreed most of those interviewed.

2. Media landscape

Burkina Faso is home to a dynamic media sector with some 250 press houses across the country. As in much of sub-Saharan Africa, radio is still the preferred choice of media, although print media and television and online media are increasingly playing an important role as well.

2.1 Legal and regulatory framework

Burkina Faso's constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press. All media are under the administrative and technical supervision of the Ministry of Communications, which is responsible for developing and implementing government policy on information and communication. The Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC), a semi-autonomous body under the Office of the President, monitors the content of radio and television programs, newspapers, and internet websites to enforce compliance with professional ethics standards and government policy. In June 2012 the constitution was amended to institutionalize the CSC, which may summon journalists and issue warnings for subsequent violations. Hearings may concern alleged libel, disturbing the peace, inciting violence, or violations of state security.⁵

The President of the CSC is appointed by the President and with the current President appointed two months ago it is unlikely that she will be replaced during the transitional period.

While the CSC does monitor the media, it would seem from their 2013 Public Report that all monitoring is focused on measuring coverage of the various political parties and nothing more. Indeed, many interviewees complained that the body is not credible as it is tied to the government and not independent.

The collective agreement that exists for the media sector stipulates that all media representatives must have press cards. However, the reality is that the collective agreement itself is not enforced and most media workers do not see any added value in having the press card. They feel the identification issued by their media house is sufficient. As a result, many journalists and other media workers continue to operate without having a press card.

which they felt needed to be changed or added. This included new legislation such as an access to information law which does not currently exist; decriminalisation of media offences

5 U.S. State Department Human Rights Report 2013 <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>



A photo of posters and publications covering the story of the ousted President Compaoré.
Photo: Michelle Betz, Betz Media Consulting

such as libel; and change to the law governing the state broadcaster and the CBC to render both bodies independent of the government and to ensure that senior managers are hired based on qualifications and not appointed.

2.2 Print

There are some 70 newspapers including nine dailies, 12 weeklies and 23 bimonthlies and 25 monthlies. *L'Observateur*, established in 1973, is the oldest and most widely read newspaper in Burkina Faso.

There are several newspapers that specialize on investigative reporting and tend to be critical of the government. These are *L'Evenement*, *Le Reporter*, *Mutations*, *Bendre*. Papers close to the former President and the CDP are *L'Opinion* and *L'Hebdo*. State newspaper is *Sidwaya*.

Even the largest newspapers sell only 4,000-5,000 copies and are distributed almost exclusively in the capital due to lack of access in the interior of the country and the lack of an appropriate distribution system. In some villages, a vehicle only comes by every three days.

2.3 State broadcasting

The state broadcaster has both radio and television and broadcasts throughout much of the country with ten radio and three TV stations (only those in the capital were looted). There is little that could be considered substantive news coverage on either radio or television with much of the coverage devoted to meetings and the press conferences of various ministers and other government officials.

Many feel that the state broadcaster was irrelevant during the crisis, other than the fact that both radio and TV were looted. According to Cheriff Sy: “the government media didn’t play a role. People know what to expect from them and see them simply as a government mouthpiece.”

State television was looted on 30 October resulting in a loss of all computers in the newsroom, numerous personnel laptops, all streaming equipment and some video archives. There was also significant damage to buildings and vehicles.

In speaking to various people associated with the state broadcaster, it is clear that there is a serious disconnect between management and the journalists in the field. Already last year, journalists with state-owned media said they were being censored by the Ministry of Communication and prevented from covering some activities of the political opposition, a charge the government denied. As a result, journalists from state-owned media demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Communication in June 2013 to protest government censorship and editorial interference. The journalists also demanded better pay and benefits.

Journalists from these media have said they will continue such protests until changes are made. They are specific in what they want to see changed: they want legislation governing the broadcaster changed so that it is not tied to the state but is rather a public broadcaster along the lines of the British Broadcasting Corporation. In addition, they want all hiring based on skills, experience and competence rather than appointed by government or the hiring of friends and relatives that is rife throughout the system. One state television employee said that he would welcome the opportunity to get rid of everyone and rehire based on qualifications.



Inside the Ouagadougou-based Ouaga FM. Photo: Michelle Betz, Betz Media Consulting

2.4 Private, community, religious and associative radio

According to a 2013 report there are close to 150 radio stations across the country including 38 religious/confessional radio stations, 42 community stations, 36 commercial stations, 19 communal stations, 4 institutional stations as well as the national (state) broadcaster and international broadcasters.⁶

The one radio station that was cited time and time again was Ouagadougou-based Omega FM. The station has been dedicated to news and information since 2012 but was really noticed during the crisis as it was the only radio station that broadcast uninterrupted throughout the course of the crisis. As the editor in chief said: "If our objective is to do the news then we do the news; not broadcasting was not an option." Indeed, the crisis had a positive impact on this station and has proven to be an opportunity to grow its audience as the station had many first-time listeners during the crisis.

Many local radios had interactive (call-in) shows providing the population with an opportunity to voice their opinions. This interactivity extended not just between the journalists and the listeners but provided an opportunity for listeners to interact with other listeners, says one senior journalist.

2.5 Television

For a country the size of Burkina Faso the number of television outlets is surprising. There are 21 private TV stations of which there are six religious stations, one community station, 13 commercial stations and one international station in addition to state television.

As in most sub-Saharan African countries, there has been little, if any, audience research conducted and as such any evidence pertaining to viewership is anecdotal. Interviewees did suggest that Burkinabé turn to television news to confirm what they hear either on the streets or on the radio suggesting a certain level of credibility.

2.6 Online

In a country where only 4.4% of the population has access to the internet⁷, it is surprising that online media are relatively popular in Burkina Faso, especially in the capital, Ouagadougou.

There are 14 online news sites with the most widely visited being LeFaso.net which was started in 2004. LeFaso.net is cited as the most reliable and popular online news source. They have some 40,000 – 45,000 visitors daily and they believe that about 50% of these come from within the country.⁸ LeFaso has correspondents across the country and 10 journalists in the capital. LeFaso.net says their numbers went up significantly during and immediately following the crisis and many interviewees praised the outlet for the work they did.

6 Conseil supérieur de la communication, Rapport public 2013.

7 According to the International Telecommunication Union 2013 data. <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

8 LeFaso.net officials were unable to provide clarification as to whether these are unique visitors but it is likely that these are total visitors.

Legally, online news sites are covered by the same legislation as printed press and they pay taxes like print media. There are no government restrictions on access to the internet, although the CSC monitors internet websites and discussion fora to enforce compliance with existing regulations.

2.7 Journalism education

There are various journalism institutes including Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information et de la Communication (ISTIC) which is the state-run journalism and communication institute. ISTIC has been around for 40 years and most of its students are civil servants who come for refresher courses. All instruction is theory-based and there is no practical experience available at the school whatsoever. ISTIC is seriously lacking in the basic tools that both journalists and technicians need to learn in order to be effective when they move on to work in the media sector. There is no internet connection, no computers and no equipment for the technical students to practice on. Their funding has decreased substantially and they have been asked to raise their own funds.

There is also Institut Panafricain d'étude et de recherche sur les médias, l'information et la communication (IPERMIC) at the University of Ouagadougou run by a former Minister of Communication (under Sankara). IPERMIC offers Master's degrees in media and communications. There is also a journalism department at the university.

2.8 Media associations

There are numerous associations and organisations for media workers in Burkina Faso.

Perhaps the main focal point for all journalists is the Centre National de la Presse Norbert Zongo (CNP-NZ). The Centre's steering committee feel that all activities related to the media should go through the Centre. However, after several visits to the Center, the sense was that it was run by the old guard of journalists; very few young journalists were seen.

Some of the main organisations include:

- Syndicat Autonome des Travailleurs de l'Information et de la Culture (SYNATIC): The collective body for media workers. Under administrative tutelage of the Minister of Communication and Culture.
- Association des Journalistes du Burkina (AJB): Created in 1988, AJB is a professional organisation for journalists in Burkina. The AJB just held a congress following the mission and a new president was elected to replace outgoing president Jean-Claude Meda.
- Association des Professionnels Africaines de la Communication (APAC): a pan-African organisation focusing on women in media. Their goal is to improve the role of women working in the media sector as well as improve the image of women in media. The head is very dynamic but the organisation is not particularly active though they are in the midst of formulating their three-year action plan.
- Société des Editeurs de Presse (SEP): Association for newspaper owners. Together with AJB and SYNATIC they manage CNP-NZ.

- Observatoire Burkinabé des Medias (OBM): a recently set up self-regulatory body that would like to take on monitoring (ethics and such) but simply do not have the means to do so. They hold occasional workshops and have submitted their two year action plan to IMS.
- Union Nationale de l'Audiovisuel Libre du Faso (UNALFA): professional organisation for private broadcasters.

2.9 Mobile

Some 67% of Burkinabé have a mobile phone subscription according to the ITU.⁹ People use their phones to interact with radio stations either to call in or to send SMS. Beyond this, the media sector does not seem to use mobile technology for much more. The upcoming Internews Europe project will likely use interactive voice response (IVR) for some of their climate change project activities.

3. Challenges facing journalists and the media sector

Many of the current challenges facing the media currently are of a chronic nature and are not related to the crisis. However, it is important to note that many of these challenges may be exacerbated during the transitional period.

- Intergenerational divide: Just as was played out on the streets of Ouagadougou (and across the country) during the crisis, there appears to be a divide between the youth of Burkina and the older generations and this seems to be the case within the media sector as well. Many of the older, more established journalists find the new generation arrogant and uninterested in the profession. Indeed, many of these young journalists are educated but come to the profession with little, if any, practical hands-on experience. It would seem that bringing these generations together would do much to improve and give further weight to the media in Burkina.
- "Nomadism": Many journalists tend to move from one media outlet to another in search of reliable salaries or higher pay. This results in constant staff turnover and often little reliability in staffers.
- Poor pay: The media sector in Burkina is not financially viable and as such media workers are not well paid and as a result journalists are tempted by corruption via "envelopes" or payment to cover certain events.
- Lack of modern and digital equipment: ensuring journalists and media workers have the tools and knowledge to do their jobs responsibly and professionally during the transition.

9 <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>



Burnt out cars by National Assembly, October 2014. Photo: Michelle Betz, Betz Media Consulting

- **Legislation:** Defamation is still treated as a crime and there is no access to information law. While journalists have not tended to be charged it has resulted in significant self-censorship.
- **Collective Agreement not implemented:** It has been extremely difficult to implement (and to enforce implementation of) the collective agreement. As a result journalists continue to be paid poorly (if at all).
- **Lack of financial means:** This results in most coverage focusing almost exclusively on Ouagadougou and two other principal cities.
- **Lack of technical expertise:** There is a need for trained technicians for both printing presses and the audio-visual sector which is transitioning to digital which should be starting in 2015.
- **Lack of newspaper distribution mechanism:** There is little effective ways to distribute newspapers published in Ouagadougou to cities and towns beyond the capital resulting in a certain dearth of information in these areas.
- **Safety:** While the numbers of journalists attacked or threatened during the crisis was surprisingly low, at least one journalist has been receiving threats on a daily basis for weeks and believes this will only get worse if Zida was named Prime Minister (which he was). There have been several incidents in the past several years of media outlets being ransacked, burgled and otherwise targeted.

4. International media development organisations active in Burkina Faso

There are few international media development organisations working in-country and those that are, are primarily implementing communication for development projects. For example, Farm Radio International and Development Media both have offices and are running various projects related to agriculture and health issues.

Internews Europe is beginning a three-year DFID-funded project in early 2015 which will focus on climate change.

Canal France International (CFI) is also active in-country. CFI is working with Union Nationale de l'Audiovisuel Libre du Faso (UNALFA) to implement a regional (Senegal, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Benin) project with community radio stations addressing the Ebola outbreak. CFI will also be resuming a governance project in 2015. This project will focus on support to community radios. Finally, they will be launching an 18-month election-related project in February. They will be working with UNALFA on this as well.

5. Recommendations

Based on the information gathered during this mission, it is clear that there are specific activities that could be undertaken given the current context to strengthen the positive role of media during crisis. It is crucial, however, to bear in mind that many of the challenges as outlined above are primarily of a chronic nature. As such, the recommendations made here do not address these chronic issues, but rather are short-term initiatives focused on supporting the media during this transitional period through the elections.

It is also important to bear in mind that many of the interviewees cited training as the number one need. However, most also stressed that the typical one-off type trainings are simply not effective and have asked for mentoring or in-house coaching should training be made available.

There are some clear short- and medium-term initiatives that could be undertaken given the current transitional process and leading to the electoral process. The transitional process is one that will require constant monitoring by the media (watchdog role) as well as explanation and analysis so that the public can both understand the stakes and participate when and where necessary. The transitional process will then culminate in elections which, at the best of times, can be contentious and give the current situation in Burkina Faso the stakes are even higher. As such it is crucial that the news media be provided support to effectively and responsibly cover the transitional and electoral processes.

To begin this process journalists and representatives from the media sector should be brought together to reflect together on the positive role of the media during the crisis and how this might be best capitalized on moving forward. This information can provide important input for additional activities as described below. The initial forum could also serve as inspiration for additional and regular meetings within the media sector thereby providing further op-

opportunities to address issues as they arise. They may also be an opportunity for media and political stakeholders to gather and discuss how to move forward.

- a. **Media during transition forum:** This forum would be a starting point and would be an opportunity to bring together journalists to brainstorm on specific needs of the media during the transition and in a new Burkina Faso and how the sector's positive performance can be capitalized upon. This would ensure not only buy-in from a wide cross-section but would also provide an opportunity to address the intergenerational and other issues.
- b. **Politics and media in Burkina forum:** This would be a forum or exchange bringing together representatives from political parties and journalists allowing for an opportunity to discuss and learn about each other in the new Burkina.
- c. **Training:** Together with local partners (and possibly international partners) a training program could be developed that includes modules on CSJ, political reporting, election reporting and investigative reporting. This would allow for effective coverage of the transition and elections and providing the media with the tools needed to ensure effective coverage. In addition to the modules above, it would be useful to ensure at least one *training of trainers*. This could be developed in such a way that the new trainers are given the tools needed so they can share pertinent information with their colleagues across the country.
- d. **Election supplement or radio/online media synergy:** To build on some of the activities above, this activity would see media outlets working together to publish election-related supplements. Another option (or in addition) could be to create a radio synergy in which radio stations and possibly online news sites, would work together to cover the election. Several radio stations (including Omega FM) and online sites (eg. LeFaso.net) have expressed interest in this.
- e. **Equipment:** This is largely a chronic issue, however, to enable more effective interactive radio programming, it would be helpful for radio stations to have multi-line telephones that would allow for calls to be screened prior to airing a caller.
- f. **Study trip:** Many of those interviewed expressed an interest in study trips to neighboring countries such as Ghana. This, they said, would allow them to learn from their colleagues in the region as to how they have effectively covered elections. The challenge with this is that Ghana is Anglophone and most of the Francophone countries in the region have had their own crises and conflicts and are still embroiled in them and thus would not necessarily make for a good case study.
- g. **Safety:** Further discussions should be had with those targeted to ascertain what measures might provide them additional safety.

6. Annexes

Annex I

I. Persons interviewed

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Annex III

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