

# Correspondents

Their working conditions  
and contributions to the  
mainstream media in Kenya

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## Acknowledgements

The process of producing the Needs Assessment report on Correspondents was hatched at a workshop organised by the East Africa Media Institute (EAMI). During the workshop it was apparent that the contributions of media Correspondents in Kenya formed the backbone of media houses. Therefore AWC Features was asked to carry out a Needs Assessment Survey on the role of Correspondents in Kenya.

AWC Features worked tirelessly to produce questionnaires for the survey. We made contact with key persons in the various media houses namely, the Nation Media Group; East African Standard; People and Kenya Times. With the assistance of the Bureau-Chiefs of all media houses in Kenya. The Correspondents filled in the questionnaires. In total 100 questionnaires were sent out and 70 questionnaires were filled.

Inputs from the Correspondents' questionnaires from all the media houses formed the bulk of this survey, and the high level of deliberation contributed substantially to the content.

Participants to the correspondent's workshop held at Silver Springs Hotel are acknowledged.

We also recognised the workshop facilitators who presented very useful papers and led the discussions exploring the issues surrounding the role of Correspondents in the media industry. The following organisations offered their valuable in-put towards this research. They are: The Kenya Union of Journalists, the Editor's Guild and the Correspondents' Association of Kenya. The following resource persons also gave valuable inputs. Ezekiel Mutua, Secretary General, KUJ, Catherine Gicheru, News Editor, Nation Media Group, Martin Masai, Managing Editor, Kenya Times and David Okwembah, News Editor, East African Standard Newspapers.

We acknowledge the input from AWC Features researchers who carried out the administration of the questionnaires.

Finally, we acknowledge valuable inputs from Esther Kamweru who co-ordinated the survey and Wanjiku Mbugua, programme Officer at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation who saw the process of the publication of the report through. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation supported the realisation of the entire publication. We are thankful for FES commitment to the development of the media industry in Kenya.

We hope this survey will be useful to media houses in placing value to the importance of the Correspondents to the media industry in Kenya.

As mentioned at the onset, many people were involved in various ways in the production of this survey. Any omission in acknowledging them is gravely regretted.

## Executive Summary

The survey sought to determine the correspondents' input in the daily news in Kenya and to establish their role in media development, their plight and training needs. It covered the main media institutions in Kenya which include, The Nation Media Group, The *East African Standard*, *Kenya Times*, *People* and the *Kenya Television Network*.

The survey established that correspondents contribute mostly by writing news articles and sports columns. Although majority of them (61.8%) has undergone some training in journalism, they are paid poorly by the institutions they work for. They do not enjoy medical cover and the Kenya Union of Journalists represents only 7.3% of the correspondents.

In view of the above, correspondents need a strong body to represent their interests so that they can lobby for better pay, working conditions, respect from media institutions and availability of facilities to enable them perform professionally.

## Background

The media landscape in Kenya has undergone a lot of changes in the last decade. Perhaps some of the most spectacular features of the struggle for have been in the opening up of the media, both print and electronic.

However, these changes have also affected the way the media as an industry does its business. The liberalization of the airwaves and the coming into place of the alternative media has had its impact in the overall performance of the media. This is coupled with the new information age that is now making easier for one to access information.

These changes have affected the way journalists work. The profession is becoming more competitive than ever. This demands that all journalists embrace the new technology and go through refresher courses often to keep up with the demands of new developments. They must become and remain relevant in a world where globalization has condensed it into a village.

Within all these correspondents play a critical role in the development of the media. Their contribution to the daily news is phenomenal.

During a workshop organized by the East African Media Institute (EAMI) and sponsored by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on ***Ethics and Code of Practice for Journalists*** in 1999 held in Nyeri, participants estimated that correspondents' contribution to the was as high as 70 per cent as compared to employed journalists who contribute only 25 per cent. News from wire services and international agencies contribute 5 per cent this is a clear indication that the dailies cannot do without correspondents.

Inspite of the foregoing the issue of correspondents well being remains fluid. Many of them are untrained and rarely are they considered for a permanent position in the media they correspond for

whenever a chance occurs. They earn very little per article and the temporary nature of their situation may lead them into compromising quality in a bid to churn out more centimetres.

This being a major factor on the debate of the code of ethics for journalists, African Women and Child Features Service with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung embarked on a six month needs assessment nationwide and reviewed daily coverage by correspondents to determine the quality of their stories' content.

## **The objectives**

The following were the objectives:

- To determine the correspondents' input in the daily news in Kenya.
- To examine correspondents' role in media development
- To determine the extent of their needs
- To identify their training needs?

## **Methodology**

The project was conducted in two stages.

Stage one involved monitoring of the mainstream media (print) from September 2000 to May 2001.

In-depth research on the working environment of the correspondents was carried out.

## **Areas of study**

The research covered Central, Coast, Western and Nyanza Provinces. The vast Rift Valley province was divided into North and South Rift Valley (Nakuru/Eldoret).

In the Needs Assessment Survey, a thousand questionnaires were administered and they were sent to The Nation Media Group, *The East African Standard*, *The People*, and *Kenya Times* through their Bureau Chiefs.

## Findings of the survey

There were a total of 57 respondents from all the media houses out of the 100 questionnaires sent. There were 9 females responded compared to 47 men. One questionnaire not filled.

There were 37 correspondents aged between 24-30 years, 15 were aged between 30 and 40 years, and only one was aged between 40-50 years. Four responded in the category of others.

Twenty-five of the respondents were from the Nation Media Group and 20 from *The East African Standard*. The *Kenya Times* and *People* had five each. The *Kenya Television Network* and others had one each.

Under the category of the type of media, the print media was led with 47 respondents, followed by the electronic media with 3. Others category had three. Those correspondents who doubled as print and electronic, there were only four.

The survey revealed that 14 respondents had up to high school level of education. Twenty-nine were college/diploma graduates, 13 were university graduates and only one was under the others category.

In an attempt to find out whether most correspondents were trained as journalists or not, 34 respondents said they had trained as journalists, 21 did not have any while two did not indicate whether they were trained or not.

For those who were trained the level of training indicated that 30 were trained up to diploma level, 4 were trained up to graduate level while only one had postgraduate training.

### **The unit of analysis among the correspondents**

The survey entitled "Needs Assessment survey" captured correspondents as the units of analysis from the following media houses through their Bureau Chiefs:

The Nation Media Group, *The East African Standard*, *The People* and *The Kenya Times*.



The variables under investigations were:

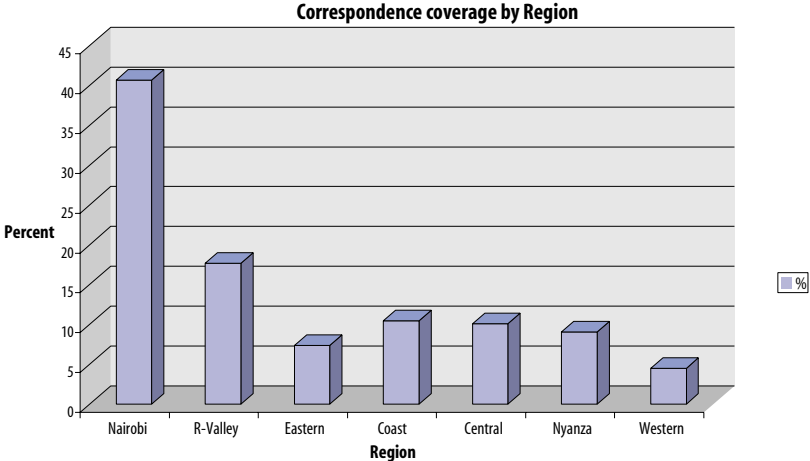
- Date of article
- Month
- Province
- Article type and grouped data

## Results of the survey

### Overall

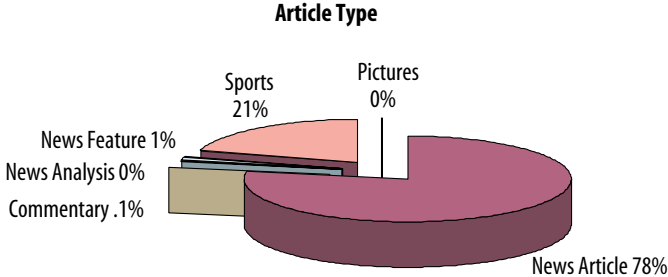
Over the period analyzed in the report, Nairobi province had the highest number of coverage by correspondents accounting for 40.7% of the total correspondence in terms of frequency followed by Rift Valley with 17.7%. Western Province had the least correspondence coverage of only 4.5%.

Fig. 1



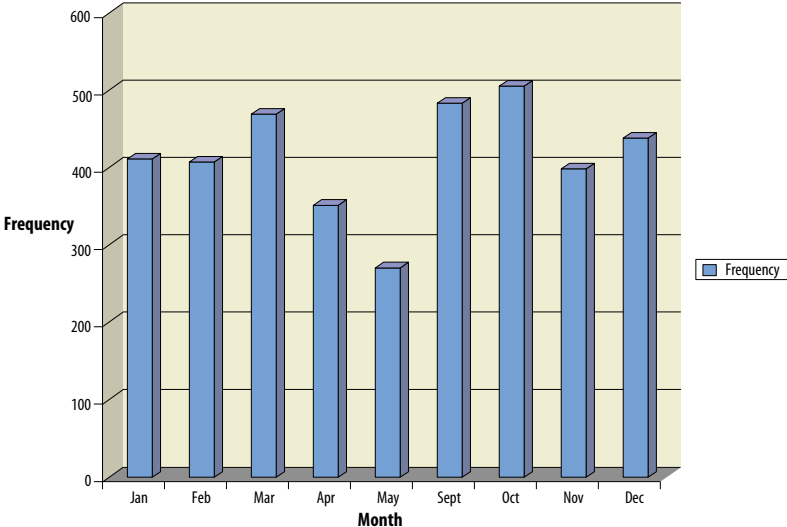
On the contribution of correspondent in-puts on the article types, the survey established that, correspondents mostly contribute towards news-articles (77.7%) followed by sports (20.6%) as shown in the following chart:

Fig.2



The survey established that on the month when the correspondents' articles appeared, it was found that articles were spread throughout the period covered by the survey as shown in figure 3 below:

Fig 3: Frequency of Articles by Correspondents



## Grouped Dates of the articles by correspondents

The articles were also grouped according to the dates they appeared during the survey period and the results are as shown in the table below:

Table 4.

Grouped Date	Frequency
1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup>	643
6 <sup>th</sup> – 10 <sup>th</sup>	705
11 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup>	651
16 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup>	637
21 <sup>st</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup>	538
26 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup>	567
<b>Total</b>	<b>3741</b>

## Distribution of correspondents by media institutions

At the national level, *Nation* has the highest number of correspondents standing at 25 (43.9%), followed by the *East African Standard* with 20 (35.1%). *Kenya Times* and *The People* have 5 correspondents each and *KTN* with only 1.

## Distribution of correspondent by gender and age at the media institutions

Males comprise the highest number of correspondents in the country, majority of who are employed by the Nation Media Group (42.6%) and the *East African Standard* 34%. In total 83.9% of the correspondents are males while females account for 16.1%.

Majority of the correspondents (91.2%) working for media institutions are young and are aged between 24-40 years. Only 1.8% of the correspondents are aged 40 years or more.

On the bureaux where they work at, the survey established that 43.9% are in Nakuru, 19.3% are in Nairobi, 21.1% in Mombasa and 15.8% are in Kisumu.

## Distribution of correspondents by level of education at media institutions

Half of the correspondents (50.8%) had a college level education. Those who had reached high school accounted for 24.6% and those with university level 22.8%. Those with other levels of education not specified in the questionnaire accounted for 1.8%. The Nation Media Group had employed the highest number of correspondents who had attained the three levels of education. It, however tied with *The East African Standard* in employing correspondents with College level of education. The distribution of correspondents by level of education for the Nation was high school, 57.1%, College 37.9% and University 46.2%). *The East African Standard* had high school, 21.4%, College 37.9% and University 38.5%). The *Kenya Times* had high school, 7.1%, College 13.8% and University 0%. *The People* had: high school, 14.3%, College 1% and University 7.7%). *KTN* 7.7% of its correspondents with University level of education.

## Distribution of correspondents at Media institutions by level of training in journalism

A total of 61.8% of correspondents working for media institutions in Kenya have background of training in journalism. The distribution of this is as shown in the table below:

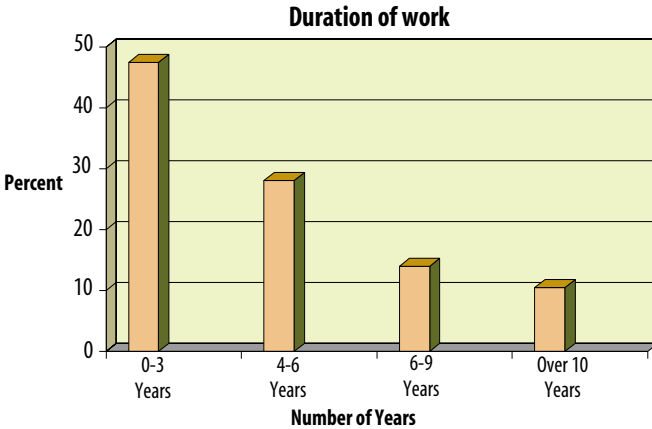
Media Institution	Trained Journalists (%)	Level of training in journalism (Diploma) %	Level of training in journalism (Graduate) %	Level of training in journalism (Post Graduate)
Nation	16 (47.1)	12 (40.0)	4 (100)	1 (100)
EA Standard	10 (29.4)	10 (33.3)	0	0
Kenya Times	5 (14.7)	5 (16.7)	0	0
People	2 (5.9)	5 (6.7)	0	0
KTN	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0	0
Others	1(2.9)	1 (3.3)	0	0
	<b>34 (100)</b>	<b>30 (100)</b>	<b>4(100)</b>	<b>1 (100)</b>

### Distribution of correspondents in Media Institutions by duration of work

Majority of correspondents (47.4%) had worked for between 0 and 3 years and was more likely (40.7%) to be in either *The Nation* or *The East African Standard*. Only 10.5% had worked for more than 10 years majority (66.7%) of who were in the Nation Media Group.

### Duration of work of correspondents of Kenya

Fig. 4



### Distribution of correspondents of Media Institutions by Payment

Fifty-two per cent said they were paid by *The Nation*, while 26.1 said they were paid by *The East African Standard*. Majority (57.4%) of the correspondents said they were not paid by the organization they worked for.

### Distribution of salary of correspondents working for media institutions

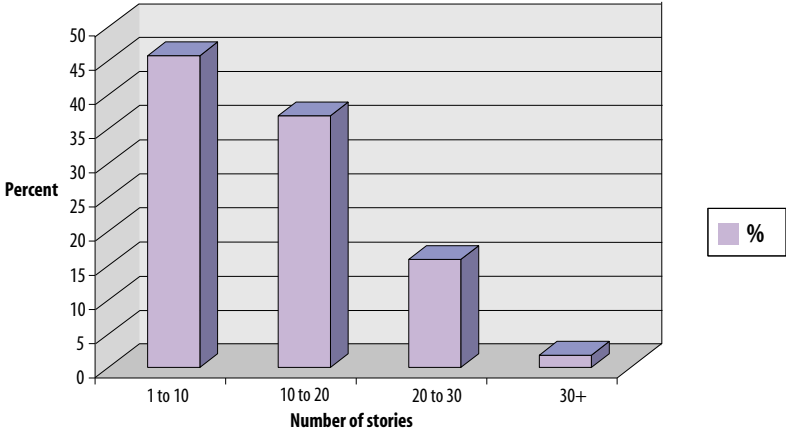
The result of the survey shows that nearly 73% of the correspondents earned between KShs.4,001 and 5,000 while 13.6% earned between KShs.10,001 and 15,000. The survey also established that there was no significant relationship between the level of education and salary earned, as there were some diploma holders who earned more than graduates.

Asked whether the payment was sufficient or not, majority (97.2%) answered the payment they receive is not sufficient while 2.8% said the payment was insufficient. This has forced 34% of the correspondents to look for other sources of funding to supplement their income.

### Proposed salary of correspondents

Thirty-two per cent of the correspondents proposed that they be paid a salary of Ksh.10,000 and 23.5% proposed a salary of Ksh 15,000.

**Fig 6. Stories by correspondents in a week**



The survey also established that the correspondents get monthly payment of between Kshs. 1,000 and Kshs. 5,000 for the stories they write to media houses. Most stories (48.1%) by correspondents earned them more than Kshs. 5,000 per month. On whether they get their payment on time or not, majority (71.4%) said they were not paid on time and only (28.6) answered in affirmative. The mode of payment is by cheque system as (92.9%) said they got paid through cheque. Those paid in cash amounted to 5.4%.

## **Stories a correspondent writes in a week**

The survey established that 82.4% of correspondents write between 1-30 stories in a week. Although correspondents produce a higher number of stories per week, only a small number get published, i.e. between 1-5 stories per week (56.1%).

## **Correspondents on specialized assignment by editors and their working relationship**

Seventy-eight point nine per cent of the correspondents gets specialized assignment from editors of media institutions. Asked about how many times in a month they can be assigned such specialized assignments, 77.8% of them said that this could range between 1-10 times in a month and 22.2% said more than 10 times in a month.

Sixty four point nine per cent of the correspondents described their working relationship with the bureau chiefs and editors, as being very good/cordial while 35.2% their working relationship with their bosses was not good/not satisfactory.

## **Editors guidance to correspondents professionally and Access to Newsroom facilities**

Majority of the correspondents (71.9%) interviewed said that they get professional guidance from the editors of main media institutions/organizations while 28.1% said they do not get such professional guidance.

On access to newsroom facilities, 89.5% of the correspondents said they normally have access to newsroom facilities and only 10.5% said they have no access to such facilities.

## **Big Headline Stories by Region**

A probe into whether stories by correspondents capture headlines or not found that 41.5% of the stories normally appear on the big headlines of media houses and 20.8% of the said that they are normally assigned small jobs that never make headlines.

## Medical Cover and KUJ representation of correspondents

The survey established that most of the correspondents (87.5%) are not medically covered while on duty and only 12.5% are medically covered. This paints a gloomy picture to journalists working as correspondents as they have to look for their own money to pay medical bills that have been suffered while on duty.

On union representation, majority (92.7%) said they are not represented by the KUJ on labour issues. The Kenya Union of Journalists represents only 7.3% of the correspondents.

## Way Forward for Media Correspondents in Kenya

Forty-seven point three of the correspondents said that media organizations should treat them with respect. 23.6% and 14.5% of them said that their working conditions/ payment should be improved and be given ready access to newsroom facilities. There should also be training programmes put in place by the media houses they work for.

## Correspondents' Challenges

Along with the awesome responsibility of doing a good job, the challenges facing the correspondent are enormous.

A Correspondent:

- Have no annual leave and off-duty days.
- Lacks adequate and appropriate working equipment
- Lacks professional support
- Lacks training opportunities
- Lacks organization support (comradeship)
- Lacks independence in the workplace
- Lacks a strong negotiation forum/position.
- Lacks resources (library) for cross reference and empowerment
- Is insecure due to the difficult working circumstances and environment