

National Media Commission

**NATIONAL  
MEDIA POLICY**


A 05 - 04958



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	vi
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b>	vii
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	vii
<b>VISION</b>	1
<b>MISSION STATEMENT</b>	2
<b>POLICY SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS</b>	2
<b>POLICY CONTEXT</b>	3
The National Scenario	3
The Development Of The Media	18
<b>ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES</b>	20
Media As A Public Trust	20
Freedom And Independence Of Media	20
Media Pluralism	20
Universal Access, Especially Of Disadvantaged	21
Cultural Impoverishment	21
The Marginalization Of Local Languages	22
Education And Development	23
Technological Competence	23
Human Resources	24

ISBN 9988-572-65-4

Printed by  
 Gold-Type Ltd., Accra  
Tel. 715116 Fax: 712831

Institutional Capacity	24
Public Accountability	25
<b>POLICY GUIDELINES COMMON TO ALL MEDIA</b>	<b>25</b>
Common Policy Statements	26
Common Policy Implementation Guidelines	32
<b>MEDIA - SPECIFIC POLICY GUIDELINES</b>	<b>40</b>
The Print Media	41
The Broadcast Media	42
Film Industry	49
Wire Services	54
Advertising	56
Public Relations	58

## PREFACE

The National Media Commission, set up on July 7, 1993 by an Act of Parliament, National Media Commission Act 1993, Act 449 in pursuit of the provisions of Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution is enjoined among others, to take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media.

Unfortunately, there has not been any consistent yardstick for which the standards are to be measured. It is on the basis of this that the Commission engaged the services of a group of media experts to draw up a National Media Policy, which is to serve as the benchmark for measuring media performance generally.

As indicated, the Policy provides general guidelines for Print, Electronic, Film, Wire Service, Advertising and Public Relations. It equally provides for Public Service, Commercial and Community Media.

These are hortatory guidelines which nevertheless provide for a firm basis for building dynamic, free but responsible media.

**Tim Acquah-Hayford**  
Chairman

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The National Media Commission wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Messrs. Alex T. Quarmyne, Kwaw Ansah, Berifi Appenteng, K. B. Asante and Madam Dorothy Gordon and Wilna W. Quarmyne; for devoting their energies to the cause of media freedom, pluralism and responsibility in designing the document.

We are equally grateful to Nana Essilfie-Conduah, former Executive Secretary of the Commission for his contribution to the document.

Thanks must also go to Ms. Salome Owusua Osam and Ms. Joyce Irene Okailey Ofei, for typing the document. We are also indebted to the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, for accepting to bear the cost in publishing the document.

To them the joy and honour must go. If there are any flaws however, the Commission takes full responsibility for them.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ghana National Media Policy applies to the following mass communication media:-

- Print;
- Broadcasting; and
- Film.
- It also covers the following mass communication services:-
  - Wire Services;
  - Advertising; and
  - Public Relations.

A fundamental goal of the policy is that the media shall serve the well-being of all Ghanaians, especially the disadvantaged.

The policy places the print, broadcasting and film media as well as the news services into three working categories, ie:-

- Public Media
- Commercial Media
- Community Media.

It regards all media and media services as a public trust. It therefore holds that the public interest shall be paramount in the operation of all media, public, commercial and community.

The policy broadly sketches the main national and global influences that have led to the present development of the media in Ghana. It discusses the issues and principles that arise from these influences and developments. These include, in addition to the principle of the media as a public trust, the freedom and independence of the media,

media pluralism and universal access. Issues include cultural impoverishment, the marginalization of local languages, education and development, technological competence, human resources, institutional capacity and public accountability.

The actual definition of policy is in two sections: policy that is common to all the media and policy that is specific to individual media and media services. Policy statements and implementation guidelines are given in both cases. The document stresses that the common guidelines apply also to the individual media. The document also identifies areas for which implementation targets need to be fixed.

media pluralism and universal access. Issues include cultural impoverishment, the marginalization of local languages, education and development, technological competence, human resources, institutional capacity and public accountability.

The actual definition of policy is in two sections: policy that is common to all the media and policy that is specific to individual media and media services. Policy statements and implementation guidelines are given in both cases. The document stresses that the common guidelines apply also to the individual media. The document also identifies areas for which implementation targets need to be fixed.

## 1. VISION

The well-being of all our people and the continuing vitality of our culture animate our vision of communication.

Our people are the main agents of our national media policy. Their well-being is both the goal of policy and the evidence of its efficacy.

Our culture in all its rich diversity has, through our history, been both the fabric and the product of communication among our people and with others. It is our desire that technologically-mediated communication be similarly interwoven. Traditional and modern communication should interact for our people to build and maintain their own, distinctive many-roomed dwelling within the global village.

The exclusion of large segments of our population in the communication process weakens the foundations of this dwelling. These segments include the great majority of rural illiterate as well as women and children. Policy will be pro-active in fostering their participation as decision-makers, producers and consumers.

Our policy regards communication as a dynamic continuum — guided by the past, responsive to the present and anticipatory of the future. Throughout, it upholds the principles of national unity, cultural pluralism, equality, freedom of expression and access and participation. In this, it is guided by the spirit and the letter of the Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana.

All communication actors in all sectors, from origination to transmission to preservation, will have a stake in this vision. The initiatives of each will create synergy for the other.

## 2. MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to promote and ensure a free, independent, dynamic and public-spirited media that will provide access for all, and not only some, of our people to participate freely, fully and creatively at the community, national and global levels in the expression, exchange and discussion of knowledge, information and ideas and the management and operations of the institutions thereof so as to build a just, prosperous and equitable nation enriched by our diversity and informed by our values and to interact as equals and to mutual benefit with other citizens of the world

## 3. POLICY SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

This policy covers the various mass communication media and services operating or available in Ghana. Specifically, it pertains to the following mass communication media:-

- Print;
- Broadcasting; and
- Film.

It also covers the following mass communication services:-

- Wire Services;
- Advertising; and
- Public Relations.

The *print media* are here defined as comprising *newspapers and magazines* that are printed for mass readership. The policies relating to the print media also apply to newspapers and magazines that are transmitted electronically.

The *broadcast media* comprise *radio and television*. They involve the transmission by the air waves, cable or satellite of sound or images for simultaneous reception by a mass audience.

*Film* refers to the recording of moving images and sound on cellulose, video tape, disc or other recording medium for public exhibition.

*Wire services*, otherwise known as *news agencies*, are central organizations which gather and disseminate news covering a large geographical area, both national and foreign.

*Advertising* refers to the presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services paid for by an identified sponsor.

*Public relations* is the distinctive management art and social science function based on an understanding of human behaviour that identifies issues of critical relevance, analyses future trends and predicts their consequences, and establishes and maintains mutual beneficial relationships between an organization or group and its publics based on truth, full information and responsible performance.

## 4. POLICY CONTEXT

### 4.1 The National Scenario

As Ghana enters a new millennium, three major, overlapping sets of influences provide the context and shape the content of this media policy. These are:-

- The pre and post-independence media environment in Ghana;
- The restoration of Constitutional rule in 1992; and
- The globalization of information and communication.
- Information technology.

For a larger part of the early years of Ghana's post-independence years, the media have operated in an environment characterized by a combination of inherited colonial practices, statist ideology, political upheavals and economic depression. The legacy of these years have had positive aspects, particularly in the patriotism and value for the commonweal displayed by some media professionals and in the use of the media for national integration, socio-economic development and education. At the same time, this combination of characteristics spawned a number of glaring deficiencies, such as the over-centralization of the media, the stagnation of creativity, the repression of freedom of expression and institutional decay.

The restoration of Constitutional rule in 1992 provided for the liberalization of the media within the context of a democracy and a free market economy. The Constitution also vigorously supports the promotion of local culture as well as affirmative action for the empowerment of the disadvantaged majority of Ghanaians. The expansive spirit of the Constitution still has to be fully translated into other legislation and the development of strong, people-centered institutions. Already, however, the media have provided channels for democratic expression with some beneficial effects on governance.

Liberalization has brought Ghana firmly within the inevitable sweep of the globalization of information and communication. The trend is welcome for its current and potential impact on the increase and spread of knowledge and the efficient response to the technical problems of national development. However, it also brings with it cheaper access to relevant information and technologies which threaten to overwhelm local production and innovation. At the same time, it exerts an almost irresistible force that draws all towards a global marketplace of competition where information is valued as an economic commodity and not as a social good. Hence, there is the danger that the globalization of information and communication may only intensify

the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor as well as distort or even arrest the development of local culture.

The possibilities and tensions inherent in these three overlapping sets of influences present themselves amid a vacuum in media policy. They also create the impetus and rationale for such a policy. Thus, a major function of media policy is to help resolve the contradictions between these influences and to enable the selection and enactment of the best trade-off among them. In the process, it is guided by the belief that the test of policy is the quality of life of all Ghanaians.

#### **4.1.1 General Media Scenario**

##### **4.1.1.1 The Print Media**

Newspapers played an important role in Ghana's independence struggle in the late 40s and early 50s, but the post-independence development of the print media was slowed by political and economic policies that favoured state control and by a series of political upheavals. The print media were, for all practical purposes, limited mainly to state-owned publications and a few, embattled privately owned newspapers. The effort starting about the mid-80s to move the country towards a more liberal political and economic system led to the launching of a number of privately-owned newspapers and magazines as well as to a new buoyancy to the newspaper industry as a whole.

Nevertheless, the development of the print media continues to be limited. Although more than 100 periodicals are registered with the Registrar-General's Department, only about 30 newspapers and magazines are regularly produced and in circulation. Of these, only four are dailies.



Three of the four dailies, the *Daily Graphic*, the *Evening News* and the *Ghanaian Times*, are state-owned newspapers in the process of being commercialised as part of the government's programme of divestiture of state-owned enterprises. Along with their sister weekend editions, the *Mirror* and the *Weekly Spectator*, the three state-owned dailies are the only publications in the country that enjoy relatively large circulation nationwide. The fourth daily, the *Pioneer*, is privately owned and is distributed mainly in the Ashanti Region, where it is produced.

The other private newspapers appear weekly or bi-weekly and are circulated mainly in the urban areas, notably the capital city, Accra. Magazines are generally produced at monthly or longer intervals and their distribution tends to be even more urban-based. Ownership is currently in the hands of individual Ghanaian entrepreneurs, journalists or church groups and other non-governmental organizations.

The professional standards of much of the print media are low, both in terms of journalistic practice and technical considerations. Language use, breadth of content, depth of coverage, ethical practices as well as design, layout and reproduction need substantial improvement. The quality of information is also compromised by a combination of bureaucratic resistance to public disclosure and of administrative self-censorship.

Despite their limited development, the print media play an important role in information dissemination and especially in setting the agenda for debate. The present more democratic political climate also encourages the establishment of even more newspapers and magazines and thus the presentation and discussion of a greater diversity of facts, experiences, perspectives and opinions.

However, the large majority of the population is left out of this debate. Apart from their largely urban circulation, not one mass publication of note is printed in a local language. The potential utility and impact of the print media are also constrained from the onset by the high level of illiteracy.

Still, overall there is the sense that the greater pluralism of the print media has been for the good and should be nurtured in the interest of national development. This will require, in addition to the continual development of the requisite human resource base, addressing other basic problems of the industry such as the high cost of production, low capitalization, obsolete or inappropriate technology and the lack of a distribution infrastructure.

An even more fundamental issue is the ideological basis for the growth of the newspaper industry inherent in the move towards a market. At stake is the real possibility that the promise of greater diversity for equitable national development may be severely compromised by allowing an industry that is also a vital public service to be guided purely by market forces. While democratization is potentially well served by a free economy, in practice the market has a tendency to leave out the majority of the population who are not, and without appropriate interventions may never become, players of significance.

#### 4.1.1.2 The Broadcast Media

Radio broadcasting was introduced to Ghana in 1935 as a monopoly of the British colonial government. The monopoly structure and public service cast of broadcasting was maintained at independence in 1957 and through the introduction of the television service in 1965.

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) decree of 1968 converted

the service into a public corporation. The decree did not explicitly proscribe private broadcasting, but was simply silent on the issue. However, no frequencies were allocated to private applicants.

Broadcasting in Ghana remained a de facto monopoly of the state for nearly 40 years after independence. It suffered from the weaknesses of a monopoly, especially in a one-party or military state, and was perceived, and often performed, as more of a government mouthpiece than an instrument of the people. Yet it also took seriously its responsibility as a national educational and development tool and, especially in the decade or so immediately after independence, discharged it creditably. GBC relied in its early years mainly on government subvention, but has come under progressively greater pressure to generate commercial revenue while retaining its public service structure.

In 1996, in line with the relevant provision of the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, authorization was extended to a number of privately-owned FM radio stations, free-to-air television stations and cable television services in Accra, Kumasi, Sunyani and Sekondi-Takoradi. A year later, authorization was given to a number of privately-owned radio stations to operate from the rural areas. As of mid-1999, 31 stations were in operation, with several more authorized and making preparations to go on air.

The brisk transition to deregulation occurred and continues to take place in the absence of clear guidelines. In 1995, in anticipation of deregulation, the then Ministry of Information commissioned a committee, and subsequently a consultant, to prepare a set of guidelines on independent broadcasting. However, the guidelines could not be implemented before, or even after, the actual introduction of private broadcasting. Subsequently, in 1996, a National Communications Authority Act covering all technical

communications infrastructure, including broadcasting, was passed by Parliament.

Thus, the conduct of private broadcasting, both commercial and community, has been largely unregulated, both in technical and journalistic terms. At the same time, the current operational character of GBC is loosely defined, compromising its role and effectiveness as the only national broadcaster.

The new, open practice of broadcasting has beneficially broadened the arena of public discourse, albeit it is still mainly confined to the urban areas and urban issues. The unaccustomed pluralism is also insinuating new life to a national broadcasting system that had become lethargic from lack of competition, dispirited from years of external direction and that was slowly winding down from fiscal neglect.

In the absence of clear norms other than those of market competition, deficiencies and excesses arise that undermine the ethos of broadcasting as a public good:-

- The inadequate planning and regulation of the frequency spectrum permits the use of excessive transmitting power by better-endowed, usually urban-based, stations. This threatens to crowd out actual or potential channels for weaker voices, particularly of the rural poor.
- The gradual withdrawal of government subsidy from the state-owned broadcaster has been done on an ad hoc basis and without regard for costs relating to the provision of public services. The prospect arises of a broadcasting landscape with no identifiable service that focuses on the perspectives and concerns of the nation as a whole.

- The absence of effective regulation raises the danger that erstwhile statist monopoly may be replaced with a market oligopoly that serves vested interests.
- Programming tends to be urban-oriented and foreign, if not in origin and content, then in style and inflection. Local production is limited, facilitating the non-selective infusion of foreign programming and curtailing the potential for broadcasting to reflect and nurture local culture.
- The use of local languages is marginal resulting in the exclusion of the majority of the population from expressing and representing themselves and their way of life and participating in the national discourse.
- The broad array of Ghanaian talent, traditional and professional, is provided insufficient exposure and scope, resulting in a further impoverishment of Ghanaian culture. At the same time, the few who have access to the airwaves are often inadequately trained for the professional demands and societal responsibilities of broadcasting.
- In the absence of a clear national vision and strategy, local broadcasting development is either swept aside by or swept along with the fast pace of technological development and globalization and commoditization of information.
- National frequencies are widely used for the relay of foreign broadcasts and foreign broadcasting organizations have been allowed to operate on national frequencies.
- Audience have been conditioned to playing a passive or, at best, a limited participatory role and need to be educated to take up the operational challenges of broadcasting.

#### 4.1.1.3 Film Industry

Film exhibition in Ghana (the then Gold Coast) started as a private business with the opening of the first cinema in Accra in 1925. Film production, however, started as a government activity which eventually led to the establishment of the Gold Coast Film Unit in 1948. As film developed worldwide, film in Ghana also grew steadily and provided much support for government information campaigns during the colonial period.

With independence, the new Government saw film not only as a tool for disseminating information but also as a powerful communication instrument to be exploited for national integration, for social and economic development and for the preservation and further enrichment of the cultural heritage of Ghana.

To provide an institutional base for the development of film and its utilization for these purposes, the Government in 1962 established the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC). For the following 28 years, the GFIC grew considerably as it produced films and undertook the distribution and exhibition of both local and foreign films. This growth was accompanied by equally impressive advances in all other sectors of the film industry.

The most remarkable growth has been in “video-film” production where growth has been phenomenal over the past decade and where the private sector has played an outstanding leadership role. Much of this growth is attributed to the electronic revolution which has led to major technological changes in the film industry worldwide and has made it possible for film makers of varying degrees of experience to attempt productions and experimentation which would have been out of reach a decade ago.

The film industry lost a major anchor in 1996, when as part of the divestiture programme of the government, the GFIC was sold to a private company which abandoned film production and converted the technical facilities into a television station.

Although the film industry continues to grow and the number of local productions continues to rise, the industry is plagued with a number of problems which mitigate against the achievement of quality in productions and economic viability in the industry.

Poor technical, artistic and ethical standards associated with most of the current generation of films made in Ghana are attributed to the inadequate training of film personnel. The National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) is recognized as a major professional institute training film personnel not only for Ghana but also for other African countries. The inadequacy of facilities, staff and financial resources, however, do not allow the institute to expand its training programmes sufficiently to address the vast training needs which have arisen from the growth of the industry.

While there are extensive and powerful international networks for the distribution of foreign films, no such facilities cater for African film productions. The absence of effective film distribution systems both within and outside the country has been a major constraint to the achievement of economic viability in the film industry. Locally produced films do not have adequate exhibition throughout the towns and villages in the country and major local productions which have sought markets in other African markets have fared rather poorly.

Almost all films currently produced in Ghana are made on videotape. This is partly because of production costs and partly because of the lack of the relevant equipment. Cellulose equipment and other items required for complex productions are expensive and are usually hired for productions and not purchased.

A major constraint in the development of the film industry in Ghana has been the lack of funds for the purchase of equipment and materials, for laboratory charges and for other production costs. The loan facilities available elsewhere for film productions do not exist in Ghana.

Although the 1992 Constitution proscribes censorship, this is generally not regarded as incompatible with the monitoring and control of film content. However, the Film Censorship Board is not as effective as would be desired and a large number of films, both foreign and local, of questionable ethical standards are being distributed and exhibited.

#### **4.1.1.4 The Wire Services**

The Ghana News Agency (GNA) was established in 1957, soon after independence, and has the distinction of being the first news agency in sub-Saharan Africa. It was created as part of the country's nationalist and Pan-Africanist agenda and its operations were infused with the heady idealism of that vision.

It established regional offices in Kumasi, Ho, Takoradi, Cape Coast and Koforidua as well as a number of district offices throughout the country. It also opened a number of bureaux in the main capitals of the world. In 1960, the agency was made a corporate body and in 1965, it moved to its permanent head office in Accra.

GNA produces domestic, foreign and daily news summary bulletins. Despite being a state-owned service, it maintained a reasonable degree of professional independence in its early years and commanded considerable respect, particularly on the African continent. It is also, through its stringers, the most widely represented media service throughout the country.

The economic decline of the country was reflected in the deterioration of the operations of the agency. The period coincided with the limited utility of its equipment both because of age and the rapid changes in the technology of news collection and dissemination.

Subsequently, as part of the liberalization of the economy, GNA was slated along with the other state-owned media for divestiture. Even now, however, it is expected to market its services and generate maximum revenue to fund its operations. In addition to providing local and national news, GNA is the major supplier of foreign news under various agreements with international agencies like Reuters, DAP, PANA and Xinhua. Its clientele has expanded considerably with the deregulation of the media and the consequent increase in the number of newspapers and broadcasting stations.

Still, GNA is unable to generate sufficient revenue for its operations. It is also under-capitalized and under-resourced to meet the contemporary demands of a national news service, let alone compete in what has now become a global marketplace of news. In particular, the agency requires the extensive installation of computer-communication technology that has now become a staple of news collection and distribution. Its staff also need re-orientation and training not only on the new technologies and their corollary processes but also on the democratic ethos and practices that are central to the credibility and effectiveness of the agency.

Yet the original rationale for the creation of GNA remains, if anything, even more valid today. Its objectives of promoting national unity and nation-building continue to resonate. A national wire service is also a cost-effective way of connecting the entire nation, and particularly the rural areas, to the information grid, thus serving the priority goal of access. In addition, it provides the equally vital

service of presenting the experiences and perspectives of the nation through its own stories.

#### 4.1.1.5 Advertising

The 1990s have witnessed a surge of advertising in Ghana.

Although advertising was being practised for decades before then, advertising in Ghana only began to take off since the liberalization of the economy under ERP in the 1980s. Several small and medium-sized advertising agencies sprang up at that time. The volume of business in the industry was, however, relatively low until the move early in the 1990s towards divestiture and increased commercialization of the state-owned media and, subsequently, the deregulation of the media as a whole and the increase in the number of newspapers and broadcasting stations.

Perhaps even more than the other media and media services, advertising highlights the tension between the benefits of the market in a growing economy and its tendency to neglect the social dimension of development, particularly the questions of equity and cultural autonomy. This is even more true with the globalization of advertising.

The positive aspects of advertising are premised on its potential to assist consumers in exercising their right of choice in the market. While this right needs to be upheld and nurtured, it is largely abstract where the majority do not have the resources or the ability to participate fully in the market, making it even more "imperfect".

At the same time, the presentation and content of advertising do not enhance choice. Indeed, often they suggest that certain lifestyles or products are musts rather than options. Often, also, they prescribe

ways of life which may not necessarily be the desirable direction for the nation and that potentially diminish the valuation of national culture.

An issue of particular concern is the targeting of advertisements to children, who may not have developed sufficient filters to evaluate their content. Another is the effect of projecting urban consumer wants to rural populations living at subsistence levels, and especially their impact in shaping the aspirations of the youth among them. Still another is the tendency of many advertisements to promote stereotypes, especially of women and their roles. At the same time, the power of advertising is used insufficiently to propagate socially desirable ideas and behaviour.

The industry urgently requires direction and more effective regulation. Local advertising agencies need to produce output of better quality, higher ethical standards and of local character in content and formats. The products of foreign advertising agencies, on the other hand, are not subject to even the limited norms applied to local advertisements.

Advertising takes place through many media. Its overall guidance and the monitoring and enforcement of codes of ethics and standards straddle many public as well as private institutions. Policy therefore needs to be vigilant at the same time that it fosters dynamism and creativity.

#### **4.1.1.6 Public Relations**

One critical element missing from our national development effort is a comprehensive communication strategy to compliment these efforts. Targets and plans must be communicated effectively to stakeholders to enable them know what role they would be expected

to play, what sacrifices are to be made and the benefits of such sacrifices.

At the same time, a mechanism will be found to evaluate public perception of issues and feed them into the policy formulation stage right at the conception stage. This makes public relations central to the success of the policies and processes necessary for development.

In spite of its pivotal role, however, public relations practice in Ghana suffers from a lack of appreciation of what public relations can do or must do to enhance corporate and national interests and objectives.

Among the constraints that faces the practice as a result of the above are the following:-

- 1) The inability of the public to use professionally qualified practitioners skilled in the specialised function of public relations.
- 2) The absence of a regulatory body to ensure that the profession is practised in line with internationally recognised standards and the code of professional practice.

Given this scenario, it is incumbent upon us as a nation to use policy to address these difficulties in order to ensure that the nation gets the best from its public relations professionals to perform the critical task of ensuring enlightened public capable of making informal discussions on national issues and contributing to the decision making process in a meaningful way both at the corporate level and at the national level.

## 4.2 The Development Of The Media

The development of the media in Ghana reflects the three major sets of influences cited. The print and the broadcast media have, in particular, been greatly susceptible to these influences.

Until the restoration of Constitutional rule in 1992, the dominant media in the country were effectively state-owned monopolies. These included the three national daily newspapers (the *Daily Graphic*, the *Evening News* and the *Ghanaian Times*), the national broadcasting service (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation), the national wire service (Ghana News Agency) and the national film production company (the Ghana Film Industries Corporation). Their dominance was brought about not by express legal mandate but by the political and economic order of the period. Advertising and public relations have traditionally been private sector activities in Ghana. However, the growth of the two sectors was largely inhibited during the post-independence period of state control of the economy.

Constitutional rule joined with the shift to a market economy and the availability of modern technology to bring about or accelerate a number of factors that have significantly changed the character and the operations of the media in Ghana. These factors are the legal guarantee of the freedom of the press, the deregulation of the broadcast media, the entrenchment of a profit orientation, the divestiture of state-owned enterprises and the promotion of private investment. The main outcomes have been:-

- The increase in the number of privately owned newspapers and magazines.
- The proliferation of privately owned radio and television stations and services.

- The increase in video film making and exhibition.
- The requirement of existing state-owned media and services to generate revenue.
- The divestiture, actual or planned, of state-owned media.
- The withdrawal or reduction of government subsidies for the media not yet divested.
- The advent of foreign investment in the media.
- The emergence of media controlled by foreign interests.
- The burgeoning of advertising and public relations activity.

All these outcomes have occurred within a short period, alongside increasing mutual access to the sources and purveyors of global information content, practice and technology.

The net effect is a media environment in great flux with few clear and consistent guidelines. The resultant vacuum provides ample opportunity for arbitrary decisions and practices with, at best, uncertain implications for national development, the evolution and promotion of Ghanaian culture and the well being of all Ghanaians, especially the disadvantaged. This makes the need for a media policy even more imperative.

## 5. ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES

In formulating a media policy a number of key issues arising from the development of the media in Ghana need to be addressed.

### 5.1 *Media As A Public Trust*

The operation of the media is a *public trust* regardless of ownership. The strengthening of *public service media* is even more vital in a profit-oriented operating environment. The difference in *social responsibility* expected of a commercial as opposed to a public service media operator should simply be a matter of degree.

### 5.2 *Freedom And Independence Of Media*

The relevant Constitutional provisions notwithstanding, the *freedom and independence of the media* remain fragile. Because of their historical antecedents and reflexes, state-owned media continue to require vigilant *insulation from government control*. The deregulation of the media also opens up the possibility of *undue influence by other interests/groups*. At the same time, other legislation do not sufficiently safeguard, and indeed encroach, on the freedom and independence of the media and therefore need to be revised or enacted. The impact of any legislation is realized at the first level through the *active and responsible practice by media practitioners of their rights*. In the end, however, the final guarantee of the freedom of the media is the *extent to which the public values its freedom*.

### 5.3 *Media Pluralism*

*Pluralism of the media* similarly needs to be safeguarded and encouraged. *Ownership* needs to be distributed and regulated such

that state monopoly is not replaced by other monopolies. This should be true both vertically, with respect to the number of media organizations owned by any individual or entity, and horizontally, with respect to cross-media ownership. While non-Ghanaian participation in the media industry can be desirable, the principle of the media as a public good serving national interest necessitates *majority ownership and decision-making control by Ghanaians*. To ensure diversity, the registration of ownership needs to be a *transparent* process and a matter of public record.

### 5.4 *Universal Access, Especially Of Disadvantaged*

Media pluralism is an integral part of the democratization process. It therefore requires and must be characterized by a genuine *diversity of viewpoints and voices*. This is severely constrained by the production and distribution of the media that are largely confined to the urban areas or urban interests. Diversity requires not only more equitable *geographic distribution* but also, and even more important, *universal access*, particularly of *marginalized groups*. The use and development of *local languages* as well as the promotion of *literacy* are critical factors. For such groups to be suitably addressed, and indeed empowered, by the media, levels of marginalization need to be *disaggregated*, as for example, women among the generally disadvantaged rural majority or the urban poor among the relatively affluent urban community. *Community media* have a vital role to play in this process of empowerment.

### 5.5 *Cultural Impoverishment*

The deregulation of the media has brought with it the *increasing primacy of market forces*. This has, in turn led, to the fast-growing *prominence and potential dominance of foreign content*, particularly in television and film. A very real corollary is the *diminution and*



*impoverishment of local culture.* Manifestations include lesser consideration for the *vulnerability of children* and the *dignity of women* and the adoption of *violent themes and sensationalist formats*. The propagation of inappropriate content becomes even more problematic with the use of non-traditional technologies, for example satellite broadcasting and the Internet. In terms of culture, content in the mass media has been generally limited to projecting imagery and symbolic representation that promote positive national identity and confidence. However, the sustenance and growth of local culture additionally require the *inculturation of the media*, whereby not only content but also production processes and formats are innovatively informed and transformed by local cultural norms and practices to create *distinctively local forms*. Of particular importance in this regard is the *documentation and adaptation of rural practices* which are sources of local culture.

### 5.6 *The Marginalization Of Local Languages*

In terms of language, the media are characterized by the *domination of the English language*. There is not one local-language newspaper and English is the only language used by the national news agency. Until very recently, films were also produced only in English. GBC radio has had a local-language programme service dating back to the colonial days, but the multiplicity of languages against its highly centralized operation meant that only a smattering of air time could be allocated to only a few languages. The *marginalization of local languages* results in the *exclusion of the majority of the population* from participating in the national discourse. Since language is one of the major instruments for expressing and nourishing the soul of a people, the marginalization of local languages also contributes to the *atrophy of local cultures*.

### 5.7 *Education And Development*

The *power of the media to address the educational, health and other basic development needs of the country* remains grossly undertapped. Great numbers, particularly girls, continue to be out of school, while many of those in school do not receive an education of quality or relevance. The pattern is repeated at the secondary and tertiary levels, undermining the country's development ambitions to rise to a middle-income country. A majority of the population is non-literate, the greater number of them women. The same, or greater, numbers are engaged in menial activities or farming at subsistence levels. The projections for "health for all by the year 2000" will need to be extended well into the next millennium. Yet the proven efficacy of the media in *distance education*, or formal pedagogy in support or in place of classroom teaching, is still not being harnessed. At the same time, media efforts at *non-formal education* are far too meagre and insufficiently attractive, creative and audience-or-learner-centred.

### 5.8 *Technological Competence*

While some media organizations in Ghana, both new and old, are saddled with obsolete equipment, others, particularly some of the private broadcasting organizations, are equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Efforts in the past and the present at *local manufacture* of media equipment have received little support. At the same time, the *lack of current technical expertise* precludes the selection not only of *appropriate technology* but also of relevant *applications of technology*. It also undermines the proper maintenance of equipment. The combination of circumstances maintains and deepens the *technological dependence* of the media in Ghana.

## 5.9 Human Resources

Even more than in other fields, the *quality of human resources* is critical to the development and performance of the media. A common component of the shortcomings of media and media services in Ghana is the *inadequacy, or outright lack, of training* of media personnel at all levels. The situation is compounded by the growth in certain media sectors, resulting in many more personnel entering the profession. There is the *need for continuing training and re-training* across the board, given the pace of developments and the multi-faceted roles of media personnel as brokers of information, purveyors of culture and agents of change. At the same time, the media suffer from the *attrition of media practitioners with the requisite training and competence*, who tend to seek employment in better remunerated or more challenging positions outside the media. A separate issue is the *lack of representativeness* of the staff of the media and media services. As in other sectors, women continue to be under-represented, especially in the higher levels of management and in the so-called “hard” areas of media work. The rural sector is also grossly under-represented, as are the physically challenged and other disadvantaged groups. It cannot be over-emphasized that the present policy can only be satisfactorily implemented and maintained with appropriately trained, motivated and representative human resources.

## 5.10 Institutional Capacity

The ability of the media to perform their demanding and multi-faceted roles is undercut by the *weak capacity of media and media-related institutions*. The private media are extremely limited in their ability to play a developmental role. On the other hand, the state-owned media have not resolved the requirements of their hybrid status as public service and income-generating institutions. Another particularly critical need is for the *strengthening of regulatory*

*authorities*, including national agencies and the various professional associations. The *inadequacy of training facilities*, for media training, are also major constraints. Also of concern is the *harmonization of the mandates* and efforts of various media-related institutions to address the totality of the training needs of the nation and the industry. Overall, there is a great need to *build the capacity* of media and media-related institutions. Part of this process involves *orientation and training in building a democratic culture* and developing skills in providing for access and participation. It also requires effective *mechanisms for monitoring performance*.

## 5.11 Public Accountability

The best guarantee of the Constitutional safeguards for the media is a public that treasures the freedom of the media and, at the same time, demands media accountability. Yet the appreciation of the public for their critical dual role is extremely shallow, particularly among the great majority who have traditionally had little access to the media. The *media need to build a constituency* by demonstrating the benefits of their greater freedom to the concerns and aspirations of the media public. At the same time, *media education* is a broad-based responsibility that needs to be taken up by a variety of institutions.

## 6. POLICY GUIDELINES COMMON TO ALL MEDIA

The issues and principles arising from the development of the media in Ghana suggest a number of policies common to all the media.

Policy specifics may differ from medium to medium or media service. Still others pertain only to a particular medium or media service, depending on their individual characteristics.

Policy guidelines common to all media and media services are

defined in the section immediately following. Policy statements are presented first, followed by policy implementation guidelines.

## 6.1 Common Policy Statements

### 6.1.1 The challenges faced by the media, as well as the emerging institutional framework, recommend their division into three working categories:-

- Public Media
- Commercial Media
- Community Media.

- i. All three categories of media shall work together in the national interest and in pursuance of the vision, mission and principles of this policy.
- ii. However, they shall necessarily have different roles, on the basis of which they may have different prerogatives.

### 6.1.2 *All media and media services shall be regarded as a public trust. The public interest shall therefore be paramount in the operation of all media — public, commercial and community.*

- i. The public interest shall be defined in broad terms by the spirit and letter of the Constitution and the vision, mission statement and issues and principles expressed in this policy.
- ii. The public interest is served by individual choice. The media shall accordingly provide for individual choice at an economic price. The provision of such choice shall be guided by the concerns of this policy.

- iii. At the same time, the operations of the media shall take into account the limited ability of the majority of the population to exercise any choice at any price due to their socio-economic deprivation. All media shall therefore have the obligation to provide for the interests of this population.
- iv. For the maximum discharge of the public trust, there shall be at least one public institution of national scope in the print, broadcast and film media and in the wire services.
- v. All media shall co-operate in the public interest. Together, they shall enact the role of the media to inform, educate and entertain in pursuit of dynamic, equitable and culturally endowed national development.

### 6.1.3 *The freedom and independence of all media shall be upheld and protected in full measure in consonance with the letter and spirit of the Constitution.*

- i. The freedom and independence of the media shall be the condition for the people to exercise their democratic right to information. It shall also be the operating environment for media professionals to carry out their work with integrity and creativity.
- ii. The freedom shall be exercised responsibly and ethically. In particular, the media shall exert with care its influence in shaping the sensibilities of children and minors.

### 6.1.4 *A range of media representing a diverse plurality of social, cultural and economic interests and perspectives shall be encouraged and promoted. These interests shall be carefully balanced to preclude dominance by, or neglect of, any one sector.*

- i. Ownership and control shall be transparent. They shall be spread to discourage monopolies and safeguard pluralism. Accordingly, chain ownership and cross-media ownership shall be allowed only when it is clearly in the national interest.
- ii. In keeping with the nature of the media as a public trust, majority ownership and control of the media shall be held by Ghanaians. The percentage of foreign ownership allowable shall vary depending on the medium or media service and is reflected in the pertinent section of this policy. Foreign shareholders in media enterprises shall be guided by the same principles as their Ghanaian partners.

**6.1.5 *Access to the media shall be ensured and promoted at all levels and in various forms. Access shall be taken to mean not only consumption of the media but also participation in their ownership, management, production and distribution.***

- i. The provision of access shall compensate for geographic and linguistic constraints, especially for disadvantaged sectors and groups. It shall also address constraints based on social and economic relationships, for example gender or rural against urban disparities.
- ii. Community media dedicated to empowering disadvantaged groups shall be provided the necessary support to flourish.

**6.1.6 *The power of the media shall be used proactively to encourage the promotion and growth of local culture.***

- i. Accordingly, a prescribed proportion of the output of all appropriate media and media services shall be allocated to local content.

- ii. Local content shall both preserve traditional heritage and encourage contemporary works. It shall unearth, project and reward a wide range of local talent and expertise, both traditional and professional. The promotion of local content shall also be taken to include retrieving appropriate indigenous technical knowledge and restoring it to the mainstream.
- iii. Another aspect of fostering local content shall be the interaction of mass, technological media with traditional channels and media of communication. A welcome offshoot of this process shall be the development and promotion of media production methodologies that are shaped by Ghanaian cultural norms and practices.

**6.1.7 *Local languages shall be used prominently on all media.***

- i. Ghanaian languages shall be used widely to promote national unity and development. Additionally and concurrently, in the provision of media channels and outlets, care shall be taken to ensure that all languages are catered for to realize the ideals of diversity and multipluralism.
- ii. The use of Ghanaian languages in the media shall demonstrate oral and written competence. The documentation and study of oral literature and traditions shall be integrated wherever possible.

**6.1.8 *All media shall be expected to provide support to the national educational effort.***

- i. All media shall be expected to contribute to non-formal education, particularly in the fields of socio-economic development, health and the environment.

- ii. All media shall also contribute to civic education, particularly in the areas of family life, good governance, human rights and gender justice.
- iii. Media channels and technologies shall be used to support formal education.

**6.1.9 *The media shall promote technological competence and self-sufficiency, both internally, in their operations, and externally, through their output.***

- i. As part of this process, they shall judiciously select and apply the most appropriate technology or technology mix.
- ii. As much as possible, such technology shall be indigenously developed.
- iii. At the same time, the media shall keep abreast with worldwide developments in technology with a view to adapting them for optimum local use.

**6.1.10 *The operations and development of the media shall reflect the competent and committed practitioners.***

- i. The development of human resources for the media shall be linked to the total development needs of the country.
- ii. Training shall accordingly take into account, a continued need for media professionals of the highest calibre.
- iii. At the same time, training shall be developed and provided for community media practitioners.

**6.1.11 *The capacity of media institutions of various mandates and forms shall be actively developed to implement and sustain policy vigorously and democratically.***

- i. A necessary first step shall be the reappraisal and redefinition of the mandates of the various media and media-related institutions, particularly in the light of this policy.
- ii. In addition, national regulatory and capacity-building institutions shall be given the necessary orientation and resources to provide an enabling environment for the media.
- iii. Each media organization shall be encouraged to develop to the fullest to play its distinctive role as a contributor to the public interest.
- iv. Professional media associations shall be encouraged to assume first-line responsibility for the development of their members and their observance of policy.

**6.1.12 *The capacity of the public to safeguard the freedom and demand the accountability of the media shall be encouraged and actively developed.***

- i. The public shall hold the media to the responsible use of freedom and the effective discharge of the trust they hold.
- ii. The public shall be engaged as active partners of the media in safeguarding and promoting freedom of thought and expression.

## 6.2 Common Policy Implementation Guidelines

The guidelines shall be implemented primarily through the three main categories of media institutions, ie public media, commercial media and community media.

### 6.2.1 Public Media

- i. The following shall operate as nationwide, public media:-
  - State owned papers.
  - The present Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.
  - The present Ghana News Agency.
  - A film production support facility to be created.
- ii. The public media shall have a special mandate to meet the information, education and communication needs of the nation and especially of the rural majority, the urban poor and sectors, such as women and the youth, on the periphery of the national discourse.
- iii. They shall also have the primary responsibility of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the nation both in its totality and its diversity.
- iv. Public media shall not only be represented or distributed but also produced, at least in part, on a regional and, as much as possible, district level.
- v. To carry out their special mandate, the public media shall be expected to operate or produce in a variety of local languages.
- vi. Output requirements are outlined under the relevant public

medium or media service but all shall involve the use of at least one local language.

- vii. The public media shall operate as independent, competitive, professional establishments and shall be expected to observe the efficiencies of a private enterprise, but shall be not-for-profit organizations.
- viii. The public service media shall carry out their mandates by the most cost-effective means.
- ix. Ownership of the public service media shall be vested in individual public corporations with state and private organizations and individuals as shareholders. The state shall hold the majority shares. All other shareholders shall be Ghanaian citizens.
- x. As part of the cost of effective democratic governance and nation-building, Government shall provide public media with any necessary subvention and indirect assistance, such as tax breaks, access at concessionary rates to relevant government facilities and brokering preferential utility rates. Strict performance or output standards shall be applied for subvention and other assistance.
- xi. The level of government subsidy for public media organizations can differ from institution to institution. Infusion of private or commercial funding shall not diminish the first-line responsibility of the designated public media to serve the public interest.
- xii. The Boards of the public media shall be appointed, as per the Constitution, by the National Media Commission in consultation with the President.

- xiii. The operational ethos of public media shall be open, based on the right of information to the public.
- xiv. Top editorial and management staff shall be appointed by their respective Boards, based exclusively on professional competence and proven social commitment. Remuneration and conditions of service shall reflect the dual mandate and the special qualities required of staff.
- xv. In line with the Constitution, under no circumstances shall Government influence the operations or content of the public service media.

#### **6.2.2 Private/Commercial Media**

- i. The commercial media shall, as part of their undertaking to serve the public interest, be expected to allocate a demonstrable portion of their output to this end.
- ii. Ownership of commercial media organizations shall be spread to discourage monopolies and serve the interest of pluralism.
- iii. Cross-media ownership and chain media ownership shall be restricted in terms of numbers of holdings and shall be allowed only if clearly in the public interest.
- iv. At least 51% of the shares in a commercial media company shall be held by indigenous Ghanaian citizens representing themselves or by wholly-owned Ghanaian enterprises.
- v. Majority of the seat on the Board shall be held by indigenous Ghanaian citizens. The chair shall also be an indigenous Ghanaian citizen.

- vi. Foreign shareholders in media enterprises shall make the same undertaking as their Ghanaian partners to uphold the public interest above all.
- vii. To promote access, various concessions shall be offered to commercial media organizations that establish themselves outside the urban centres.

#### **6.2.3 Community Media**

- i. The ownership and operation of the media and media services by communities shall be facilitated. Such community media shall have the objective of community empowerment and shall provide access to all members of the community.
- ii. District Assemblies shall be encouraged to establish community media centres that shall provide training and reading, listening and viewing facilities.

#### **6.2.4 The Enabling Environment**

##### **6.2.4.1 Legislation**

- i. All legislation and legislative instruments shall be harmonized with the relevant Constitutional provisions guaranteeing the freedom and independence of the media.
- ii. Such laws as the Official Secrets Act, the Sedition Act and GBC Act shall be revised in line with the Constitution and this policy document.
- iii. A law on Freedom of Information that shall ensure easy access to information from all sectors of the economy shall be enacted.

#### **6.2.4.2 Training**

- i. The national budget shall support the recommendations and efforts to upgrade the present national training institutions, the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, the Ghana Institute of Journalism and the National Film and Television Institute, as well as future similar institutions.
- ii. The establishment and operation of privately owned media training institutions shall be encouraged through the provision of appropriate incentives.
- iii. The curricula of all three national and future similar institutions shall be harmonized regularly to comprehensively address national development needs and industry requirements.
- iv. Curricula shall provide for training in generalist and specialist areas.
- v. Special curricula shall additionally be developed for the unique requirements of public and community media.
- vi. Curricula shall also address the special expertise required in the use of the media for distance education.
- vii. In addition to their regular courses, training institutions shall run short-term courses for would-be and current practitioners for the various media and media services.
- viii. Individual media organizations and media services shall mount ongoing in-service and on-the-job training programmes.
- ix. A national accreditation scheme shall be developed to cover all media training.

#### **6.2.4.3 Research**

- i. Research shall be an integral part of the operations of the media.
- ii. Such research shall encompass data for regular output development and evaluation.
- iii. Every media organization shall also take part in regular audience surveys and distribution audits.
- iv. To enable the inclusion of the widest possible population, the use of participatory approaches and tools in addition to quantitative methods shall be encouraged and promoted.

#### **6.2.4.4 Technology**

- i. Technical mastery shall receive more prominence at media training institutions and in-house training programmes and shall be a component of the national accreditation scheme for media training.
- ii. Technical training shall be closely integrated with the operations and current and projected needs of media organizations and media-related institutions through regular consultations and such initiatives as internship schemes that build in cross-feedback.
- iii. Local manufacture of equipment and the local development of software shall be actively encouraged.

#### **6.2.4.5 Institutional Capacity-building**

- i. The National Media Commission shall be pro-active as the



primary support institution for media policy, practice and output and shall be provided the necessary resources to carry out its mandate.

- ii. National media and media-related institutions shall be strengthened. In particular, regulatory bodies shall be given the necessary orientation and resources both to support the democratization of the media and to ensure their orderly regulation.
- iii. Transparency shall be required in the management and operations of all media organizations and media-related services.

#### 6.2.4.6 *Professional Associations*

- ivv. All media professional associations shall adopt or revise their charters to reflect the relevant Constitutional provisions. Media associations shall also adopt or revise codes of conduct with the same intention. All such charters and codes shall emphasize the need for the media to be above all partisan interests, whether secular or religious. They shall also reflect the responsibility attendant upon the freedom of the media.
- v. The various professional associations shall establish their own internal accreditation systems for their members. Such systems shall take into account not only professional standards but also ethical behaviour as well as the developmental role of the media and the special needs of community media.

#### 6.2.4.7 *Public Education*

- i. Fora shall be organized on a regular basis through the media

and in the field to promote dialogue at the community level on the freedom and independence and responsibilities of the media. The proposed community media centres can, where applicable, be a focus for such fora.

#### 6.2.4.8 *Funding*

- ii. Among strategies that shall be considered are a special levy on media consumption; the provision of incentives and concessions, such as rebates, tax holidays and the lifting of import duty; and, in the case of public and community media, preferential arrangements such as special or exclusive tax exemptions on equipment, technical assistance from public sources or tax deductible donations from private sources, assistance in training, staff support schemes and priority access to paid announcements from public institutions.
- iii. A national fund to support the development of the media shall additionally be considered. Priority areas for the use of such a fund shall include the establishment of media in marginalized areas or for marginalized communities, the local production of culturally-based materials, local manufacture of equipment and training. Recommendations for management and administration of the fund shall emphasize output and transparency. The fund may be separate from or include the film fund defined in the relevant section of this document.

### 7. **MEDIA-SPECIFIC POLICY GUIDELINES**

The following policy guidelines are specific to the different media and media services. They should be read in conjunction with the policy guidelines which are common or apply to all media.

## 7.1 The Print Media

The *print media* are here defined as comprising *newspapers and magazines* that are printed for mass readership. The policies relating to the print media also apply to newspapers and magazines that are transmitted electronically.

### 7.1.2 Overall Policy Statement

- i. The policy challenge is to encourage and support the development of the printed media in such a way that it sustains the dynamic growth of a diversity of publications that together represent the aspirations and meet the needs of all sectors of the population.
- ii. Policy shall therefore have two parallel strands: first, to grow a reading public by addressing the information and non-formal education needs of the majority of Ghanaians and second, to grow a wide variety of indigenous newspapers and magazines by providing an enabling environment for local entrepreneurship.
- iii. All these initiatives shall be seen to support the promotion of functional literacy and of enriching formal education.
- iv. To encourage the development and sustainability of the print media, measures shall be introduced to make the cost of production and distribution more affordable.

### 7.1.3 Public Newspapers

- i. The state owned media newspaper shall operate as a nationwide, public service publication.
- ii. The newspaper shall carry out its mandate by the most

cost-effective means. These may include, *inter alia*, the publication of Ghanaian-language regional editions or of Ghanaian-language and other special-focus supplements to the national edition.

### 7.1.4 Commercial Newspapers

- i. All basic provisions with respect to private media shall apply to commercial newspapers.
- ii. Local manufacture of inputs shall be supported as part of the objective of capacity-building.
- iii. The publication by commercial enterprises of local-language newspapers or magazines at regional, district or community level shall be actively promoted.
- iv. The establishment of national distribution networks and agencies for local publications shall also be encouraged.
- v. All commercial and other publications of a certain level of capitalization shall be required to undergo an annual circulation audit.

### 7.1.5 Community Newspapers

- i. Small-scale village, community or neighbourhood newspapers shall be promoted. These shall include small format news sheets, wall newspapers, blackboard newspapers and other accessible media that can more easily be managed and sustained by small groups with limited resources.
- ii. Each District Assembly shall also be encouraged to start its

own local-language newspaper or other publications, subject to the proviso that such publications shall be operated as non-profit enterprises free from editorial interference by the Assembly.

- iii. Every school shall also be encouraged to produce its own newspaper within its means.

## 7.2 The Broadcast Media

The *broadcast media* comprise *radio and television*. They involve the transmission by the air waves, cable or satellite of sound or images for simultaneous reception by a mass audience.

### 7.2.2 Overall Policy Statement

- i. The basic resource of broadcasting, be it airwaves or the broad expanse of space, belongs to the Ghanaian people. The policy challenge for the broadcast media is to utilize this basic resource in such a way that value is added to the quality of life of all Ghanaians and to the society and economy as a whole.
- ii. Broadcasting, even more than other media, shall operate on the understanding that it is a public trust.
- iii. In the discharge of this trust in an open, democratic society, public, commercial and community broadcasting play different, but complementary roles. They are distinguished primarily by their specific objectives, the scope of their vision, the nature of their audience and specially by the degree to which they are profit-making. However, all are expected to serve the public good.

- iv. This policy and the principles expressed herein shall apply to free-to-air, cable and satellite broadcasting services. The only differences shall be in degree and manner of application, taking into account the technical and other special characteristics of each type of service.

### *Legislation*

- v To create an appropriate legislative environment for this policy, Government shall work towards ensuring that the laws regulating broadcasting are consistent with the Constitution.

### *Ownership*

- vi. Processes for the registration of ownership shall, in addition to being transparent, take into account the possibility of fronting and disguised ownership.

### *Frequency Allocation*

- vii. A comprehensive national frequency allocation plan shall be developed for all broadcasting operations jointly by the National Communications Authority and the National Media Commission in consultation with appropriate bodies.
- viii. Criteria for frequency allocation shall be unambiguous and shall include, in addition to technical requirements, comprehensive guidelines on programming.
- ix. Collaboration shall be established with neighbouring countries to co-ordinate frequency allocation plans in order to minimize compromises in spectrum utilization.

- x. In furtherance of pluralism, the national frequency allocation plan shall clearly define the geographical coverage areas of stations to enable maximization of the spectrum.
- xi. The transmission power of stations shall accordingly be limited.
- xii. Frequency assignment shall be transparent and the records accessible to the public.
- xiii. Fees for frequency assignment shall vary between profit and non-profit operations.
- xiv. Frequency assignments shall be properly documented and regularly monitored. Violation of frequency allocation conditions and/or other provisions of this policy shall constitute grounds for withdrawal of a frequency.
- xv. Foreign organizations shall not be allowed to operate on a national frequency.
- xvi. Local FM stations shall not relay foreign broadcasts. They may, however, subject to the guidelines on local content in programming, re-broadcast or otherwise use foreign material.

#### *Programming*

- xvii. Clear targets shall forthwith be met in the area of local content. Percentages shall vary according to, and are defined under, the different types of broadcasting organizations.
- xviii. A certain percentage of local content shall be aired during prime time. As shall be defined by the National Media Commission in consultation with the broadcasting industry.
- xix. It is the duty of the media to protect the identity, privacy and reputation of children.

Where they are involved in court (criminal) proceedings their identity should not be revealed.

In other instances the media should satisfy themselves that their publication will not have adverse effect on the child.

- xx. In addition, all radio and TV stations shall:-
  - a. Devote a specific percentage of air time to public affairs programmes, including national and local news and community information.
  - b. Ensure that programme content reflects and advances Ghanaian cultural aspirations and values
  - c. Promote the use of Ghanaian languages by broadcasting in at least those spoken in a station's coverage area for a defined percentage of air time
  - d. Enhance Ghanaian culture through the use of imagery, symbolism and language that promotes national and African cultural heritage, self-identity and self-esteem.
  - e. Produce programmes that protect children's rights and supports their sound psychological and social development.
  - f. Produce programmes that exhibit high moral values and standards, and consciously propagate the value that crime does not pay and must be punished.
  - g. Show a high sensibility to the dignity and respect of womanhood and defend and protect women's rights and interests.

- h. Show respect for the physically challenged.
- xxi. The guidelines for programming shall apply to music broadcast by all radio and TV stations.

### 7.2.3 Public Broadcasting

- i. In recognition of the critical importance of public broadcasting to promoting national identity and overall national development, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) shall retain its role as a public broadcasting service.
- ii. GBC shall cover and represent the entire nation and in particular, her disadvantaged peoples and less accessible areas. It shall be the frontline support for the country's socio-economic development goals. It shall be the primary showcase for the nation's culture in all its rich diversity. It shall be the arena for the nationwide discussion of issues and policies.
- iii. To this end, local content on GBC's regular radio channels shall comprise 80% of total air time. For its regular television channels, it shall comprise 60% of total air time. At least 50% of local programmes shall be aired during prime time.
- iv. GBC shall also play a leading role in supporting the country's formal education efforts. To this end it shall operate distance education channels radio and for television.
- v. GBC shall receive requisite subvention from Government to enable it effectively undertake its critical roles in support of national development.

- vi. An enabling environment shall be provided for the significant investment in local production capacity required by the various public broadcasting services.

### 7.2.4 Commercial Broadcasting

- i. Subject only to their public service obligations and the conditions for the allocation of their frequency, commercial broadcasting organizations shall operate freely as competitive, profit-making enterprises.
- ii. All free-to-air commercial radio and television stations shall respectively devote a minimum of 50% and 30% respectively of their total air time to local content, including music. Such music shall also be local.
- iii. These percentages of minimum local content shall rise to 75% and 50% respectively for free-to-air commercial radio and television stations within a specific time frame to be determined.
- iv. At least 50% of the minimum allocation for local programmes shall be aired during prime time.
- v. At least 50% of the minimum allocation for local programmes shall consist of programmes which promote local education, culture and/or development. Disc jockey type programmes shall not count against this requirement.
- vi. Broadcasting subscription stations shall operate at least one local channel subject to the same local content conditions as free-to-air stations.

- vii. Special concessions shall be given to commercial stations that establish themselves outside of the urban areas and/or that exceed the minimum quota for development programming.

### 7.2.5 Community Broadcasting

- i. Community broadcasting stations shall be established in remote areas, economically deprived or depressed geographical and social sectors and generally those areas that are not attractive to purely commercial interests.
- ii. Such community broadcasting stations shall be:-
  - a. Not-for-profit.
  - b. Non-sectarian, ie not exclusive to any particular religious sect or faith.
  - c. Non-partisan, ie not exclusive to any political party, either accessible to all political parties or absolutely closed to all at all times.
- d. Independent of any political or economic authority or institution, national, local or traditional.
- iii. The distribution of community broadcasting stations shall be such that small linguistic communities as well as marginalized social groups are adequately served. Community broadcasting stations, particularly radio, shall provide maximum opportunity for community participation in all aspects of their operations.
- iv. At least 80% of programmes on community broadcasting stations shall be originated by the stations and their target

audiences. They shall draw either on material from their community or, in the case of information, outside material expressly selected for the interests and needs of the target community. Any music making up the local community requirement shall be Ghanaian or African and preferably traditional. The remaining 20% of programmes shall comprise material of national interest, for example relays of GBC news.

- v. At least 70% of programmes on community broadcasting stations shall be in the local language or languages of its target community.
- vi. Commercial advertising shall be permissible on community broadcasting stations for purposes of sustainability and subject to internal codes that are in keeping with the overall policy ethos and the specific objectives of the station. Community broadcasting stations shall also be encouraged through priority access to paid announcements from public institutions.

### 7.3 Film Industry

*Film* refers to the recording of moving images and sound on cellulose, video tape, disc or other recording medium for public exhibition.

#### 7.3.2 Overall Policy Statement

- i. Considering the potential of film in the development of Ghanaian society, it shall be the responsibility of Government and all institutions, government and private as well as formal and informal, to provide support in all forms as may be required and appropriate for the continuing development and permanent strengthening of a viable film industry in Ghana.
- ii. In this regard, the recent growth in "video-film" production

and in the spread of video centres throughout the country shall be viewed as basically healthy developments which shall be encouraged and channeled into socially useful and culturally validating initiatives.

- iii. Recognizing the cultural and economic potential of film, all necessary steps, including self-regulation by the industry, shall be taken to:-
- a. Encourage the production of local films both on celluloid and videotape and the attainment of the highest possible standards.
  - b. Provide incentives for the production of such films.
  - c. Ensure that productions are in keeping with Ghanaian traditions and mores and promote desirable aspects of Ghanaian culture.
  - d. Encourage the extensive use and development of authentic national cultural forms and symbols in film productions.
  - e. Encourage productions by and about groups and communities that are relatively under-represented in the national film output.
  - f. Exploit the potential of film to establish the common identity and shared interests of all African and black peoples and cultures everywhere
  - g. Encourage compliance with copyright and cinematographic laws of Ghana and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

- iv. The exhibition of local films shall be actively promoted.
- v. The Film Censorship Board shall be fully functional. Its membership shall be broadened to include media houses, representatives of the National Media Commission, the National Commission on Culture, the National Commission on Culture, and the National Commission for Civic Education as well as representatives of the general public.
- vi. A system shall be developed to enable the public, and particularly parents and other guardians of minors, to participate in monitoring the content and regulating the distribution of all film, both local and imported, with a view to attaining the highest possible ethical standards.
- vii. Film training shall be accorded a higher order of priority. The resources of the National Film and Television Institute shall need to be enhanced to allow it to expand and further improve the quality of training. All effort shall also be made to encourage the participation of the private sector in film training.

### **7.3.3 Public Film Support Facility**

- i. A National Film Board shall be established as the national administrative machinery to oversee the implementation of the various policy proposals on the development of film in Ghana and maintain liaison between the film industry and Government.
- ii. In addition, the National Film Board shall establish and administer a National Film Fund to serve the entire film industry through:-
  - a. Granting of loans to commercially viable

cinematographic projects which in the judgment of the Board are capable of enhancing the national interest and cultural development of Ghana.

- b. Pro-active funding of productions by communities with relatively little access to mainstream communication of films that enhance both intra-national and international understanding.
  - c. Encouraging the production of documentaries and other films of educational nature which are normally considered by the industry to be unattractive investments.
  - d. Promoting experimentation in film production.
  - e. Collaborating with other agencies or individuals in the funding of economically viable films and film-related projects of merit.
- iii. The specific functions, as well as composition and administration, of the National Film Board shall be drawn up by the National Media Commission in consultation with the film industry and the President.

#### 7.3.4 Commercial Film Production

- i. An enabling environment shall be provided for the growth of the private film industry.
- ii. Comparable incentives and concessions to those for other commercial media shall apply.

- iii. In particular, private investors shall be encouraged to fund the production of films and to establish film production facilities that shall be available at reasonable rental to all producers.

#### 7.3.5 Community Film Production, Viewing And Support

- i. Community film production shall be promoted through community media centres and other channels.
- ii. Community film viewing facilities shall be encouraged, especially outside urban or peri-urban areas, either as part of or separate from community media centres earlier recommended. Such facilities shall include mobile cinemas.
- iii. Similar concessions and initiatives offered to other community media shall apply to the production, distribution and exhibition of film at the community level. These shall be subject to maintaining the special developmental character and role of community media. Films produced shall tell the stories and advance the interests of local communities. Films exhibited shall be predominantly national or local productions and shall in all cases meet the highest ethical standards.
- iv. The system for monitoring film content and regulating its distribution shall, working through the community media centres and other channels, encourage the development and application of community standards both in the urban and rural areas.

#### 7.4 The Wire Services

*Wire services*, otherwise known as *news agencies*, are central organizations which gather and disseminate news covering a large geographical area, both national and foreign.



#### 7.4.2 Overall Policy Statement

- i. The efficient and effective collection and distribution of news and information shall be regarded as key ingredients of the national development effort.
- ii. A national news service that is dedicated to this effort shall be a critical element not only in supporting national development but also in maintaining the country's information autonomy and sovereignty.
- iii. As many other news services as possible shall be encouraged to meet the total news and information needs of the country.

#### 7.4.3 Public News Agency

- i. The Ghana News Agency (GNA) shall be retained as a national public news collection and dissemination service.
- ii. Like other public media, it shall operate as a modern, professional, competitive service.
- iii. The thrust of its efforts shall be to provide nationwide coverage and, especially, to collect and disseminate news from the remote areas of the country.
- iv. It shall set up well-established regional offices within the country.
- v. It shall also have at least one full-time correspondent in each of the 110 Districts.
- vi. The focus of its news shall be culture, development and

education, including information, features and analysis. Such news shall be national as well as Pan-African in scope.

- vii. For the efficient gathering, collection and distribution of news, it shall be provided with equipment in keeping with the advances of information technology.
- viii. It shall distribute news both locally and abroad.
- ix. To carry out its important mandate, its main source of revenue shall be Government subvention. It shall strengthen the commercialization of its services to raise additional revenue to supplement its subvention from Government. Such commercialization shall not in any way compromise its obligations to national development.
- x. Ownership of GNA shall be a mix of Government and private interests and shall be 100% Ghanaian.
- xi. Governance of the GNA shall be as per the public print, broadcast and film media.

#### 7.4.4 Commercial News Agencies

- i. Commercial news agencies shall be encouraged to operate freely as business enterprises.
- ii. At least 30% of their output shall be on educational, cultural and development news originating outside the urban centres.
- iii. They shall enjoy the same incentives as for the commercial print media, subject to the same conditions.

- iv. Special concessions shall be awarded to commercial news agencies that establish themselves outside the urban areas and that use at least one local language on a consistent basis.

#### **7.4.5 Community News Agencies**

- i. The establishment of small-scale, local language community-based news agencies shall be encouraged.
- ii. They may operate independently or in conjunction with community newspapers and/or community broadcasting organizations.
- iii. They shall be granted the same incentives as community radio stations, subject to the same conditions.

#### **7.5 Advertising**

*Advertising* refers to the presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services paid for by an identified sponsor.

##### **7.5.2 Overall Policy Statement**

- i. Advertising shall assist the ordinary Ghanaian to make informed choices based on local values.
- ii. It shall insist on standards that promote high aesthetic and ethical values. An important element shall be the observance of the principle of truth in advertising.
- iii. It shall protect the public against practices that endanger health, morality and cultural values and sensibilities.
- iv. In particular, it shall take cognizance of the vulnerability of

children and promote the dignity of women, as well as of people who may be disabled in various ways.

- v. It shall encourage diversity of points of view in advertising.
- vi. It shall encourage the growth of the industry by encouraging local production..

##### **7.5.3 Specific Policy Implementation Guidelines**

- i. Local production of culturally appropriate advertisements using local talent shall be vigorously promoted.
- ii. The production of infomercials that provide consumers sufficient information on products shall also be actively promoted.
- iii. The propagation of contrary points of view on advertised products and ideas shall be observed, based on the fairness doctrine. Such alternative points of view shall, depending on the promoter, be carried either free of charge or at preferential rates.
- iv. A national advertising review board comprising representatives of advertisers, advertising agencies and the public shall be established to oversee the development of the industry, monitor standards and review complaints.
- v. Self-regulation shall be vigorously encouraged. To this end, the Advertising Association of Ghana shall adopt a code of ethics and standards that shall be binding on all advertising practitioners. The code shall reflect the concerns of this policy document, especially the affirmation and promotion of national

culture. It shall also include sanctions, provisions and mechanisms for enforcement.

- vi. Foreign advertising agencies shall only be allowed to operate and place advertisements if they are registered members of the Advertising Association of Ghana.
- vii. All media houses shall adopt in-house rules for advertising that reflect the spirit and direction of this policy.
- viii. The formation of consumer organizations shall be actively encouraged.

## 7.6 Public Relations

*Public relations* is the distinctive management art and social science function based on an understanding of human behaviour that identifies issues of critical relevance, analyses future trends and predicts their consequences, and establishes and maintains mutual beneficial relationships between an organization or group and its publics based on truth, full information and responsible performance.

### 7.6.2 Overall Policy Statement

- i. The overall purpose of this policy will be to strengthen the capacity and capability of Public Relations to contribute to the national development effort. This will require the following:-
  - 1) Provide a regulatory mechanism for public relations to enable the public to identify and distinguish between the professionally qualified practitioner who can help resolve problems and distinguish them from the non-professional.
  - 2) Practitioners should be expected to have undergone properly constituted formal training in the field.

- 3) An Examination/Accreditation body be established alongside the regulatory body to test, and accredit public relations professions.
- 4) Strengthen the Institute of Public Relations to play a lead role in defining field of Public Relations and in enforcing a code of ethics or code of professional practice.
- 5) The National Media Commission be organised to provide oversight authority for issues dealing with professionalism in public relations.

### 7.6.3 Specific Policy Implementation Guidelines

- i. Practitioners shall be expected to have undergone properly constituted formal training by licensed institutions.
- ii. The Institute of Public Relations, Ghana shall be strengthened to enable it to play a regulatory role in defining the field of public relations and registering and licensing practitioners through a properly constituted board of examiners.
- iii. Local/foreign Public Relations professionals shall only be allowed to practice if accredited by the Institute of Public Relations, Ghana.

