

Assessment and Prospects for Improving the Management of Benin's State Aid to the Private Media

Blandine A. KONFO, Jean Euloge GBAGUIDI*

Department of Languages and Communication Sciences, University of Abomey-Calavi, Abomey-calavi, Benin

*Corresponding author: lepicrocco@yahoo.fr

Received September 16, 2019; Revised October 20, 2019; Accepted November 14, 2019

Abstract In Benin as elsewhere, the Media has always played a major role in transmitting, explaining and commenting on news of major political, economic, social and cultural, national and international current events. However, the vast majority of media outlets in West Africa in general and Benin in particular are not profitable. Many organs survive on meagre state subsidies or through unsavoury practices. In this essay, we assessed the State's Support to the Beninese Media. The methodology used consisted in analysing the bibliography and carrying out interviews and surveys at the level of the institutions responsible for managing state support for the press. The results show that the allocation of this aid has not fundamentally benefited media outlets, let alone media professionals, who are struggling to develop. The Beninese Media is prey to the evils that are hindering its emergence and which unfortunately discourage the actors in the field from the professionalism they should show. The authorities are aware of this and this has led to the creation of the Media Development Support/Assistance Fund (FADEM), which effectiveness has yet to be demonstrated. It is therefore essential to rethink the ways in which Media is supported.

Keywords: *private press, financing, operation, state aid/support*

Cite This Article: Blandine A. KONFO, and Jean Euloge GBAGUIDI, "Assessment and Prospects for Improving the Management of Benin's State Aid to the Private Media." *Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2020): 30-39. doi: 10.12691/jll-4-1-3.

1. Introduction

In the modern world, Media have an increasingly important place; the media are much more present in our daily lives. For almost a century, radio, then television and now the Internet have been added to the print media, which is even older [1].

In Benin, the democratic changes of the 1990s marked a spectacular turning point in the media landscape. In the mid-1990s, many newspapers disappeared before the print media experienced its second spring from 1997 onwards.

The search for means of survival in disregard of the ethics of the trade has led to a gradual shift in the profession. Unlike its beginnings, the press soon became more of a business than a matter of vocation. Faced with the nagging problem of employment, it has emerged as the biggest outlet for more than one [2].

The major problems that hinder the growth of the Beninese media are: government threats and pressure, self-censorship, poor quality of journalistic information, press legislation and, above all, the thorny problem of financing and survival that is at the root of all other problems [3]. Indeed, many media outlets are engaged in a real commodification of journalistic work.

This consists in using the media to ensure, not only the financing of the media, but also personal enrichment of

certain journalists. Current practices can be summarized as a "corruption complex", which affects both public and private media [4]. It is these difficulties that have led to reflections leading to the adoption of a law on state Aid to the press in many countries.

In the literature, very few studies have focused on the evaluation of aid in different countries [5,6,7,8]. State aid to the press means "any economic or financial support organized by the public authorities and intended for companies, in order to facilitate the management of the media, to ensure their survival if necessary, in the name of the pluralism of and communication activities [8]. It has several aims: "reduction of the expenses related to the operation of the enterprises (tax reductions or exemptions, reduction of various tariffs), partly replacing the failing market by granting subsidies from public funds; participation in the capital of certain companies (as well as in the public service media); financing related media activities (cable, satellite); taking over certain operating expenses of media companies; organization of certain financial circuits that migrate funds from one medium to another; etc. [9].

This study is a contribution to the enrichment of the literature relating to the financing of the press in the world in general and in Africa in particular. We proposed to make an assessment of the state aid management mechanism to the private press in Benin to identify the real issues and effects on the development of the media sector.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the mechanism of state aid to the private media in Benin with a view to propose to Benin a better mechanism for managing state aid to this category of media.

2. Data and Methods

In order to achieve the objectives set, we conducted a documentary research and interviews with the authorities of the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) as well as influential personalities in the audiovisual world. Thus, scientific publications (articles, memoirs and books) on the subject were read. We also had an interview with advisors at HAAC and with the president of the Media Development Support Fund (FADEM).

The information sought related to the notion of state Aid, its principles, the mechanism for implementing state Aid to the private media in Benin (selection criteria, methods for calculating the amount allocated, etc.). This study took into account the figures related to the financing of media outlets over 15 years (from 1997 to 2012).

Primary data used were taken from the exploitation of the general report on the management of State aid to the private press in Benin published by the HAAC in targeted period.

However, data from the management of the years 1998 and 2009 to 2011 were not taken into account in this study for reasons of poor archiving.

3. Results

3.1. Management Mode and Selection Criteria

Since its creation, State Aid to the private media has been managed by a commission on which representatives of the HAAC, media professionals and the government sit, in accordance with Decision No. 09-071/HAAC of 15 December 2009 on the establishment, powers and functioning of the commission responsible for studying the terms and conditions for implementing State Aid to the private media in Benin. This commission is made up of fourteen (14) persons containing five (05) representatives from the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC), two (02) representatives from the National Council for the Press and Audiovisual Employers of Benin (CNPA-Benin), three (03) representatives from the Union of Media Professionals of Benin (UPMB), one (01) representative from the Media Ethics Commission (ODEM), one (01) representative from the Media House, one (01) representative from the Ministry in charge of Communication and one (01) representative from the Ministry of Finance. The commission, headed by a board of five (05) members, is in charge of studying the terms and conditions for implementing the state Aid to the private media and is the backbone of the Aid management. It convenes in ordinary and extraordinary sessions, in accordance with its rules of procedure. It deliberates on all matters relating to the management of the Aid, in particular its distribution.

The management of the State Aid to the private media has long been entrusted to the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC). Under Article 6, 12th indent of Organic Law No. 92-021 of 21 August 1992, the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) "guarantees the conditions of State support for the public and private press". On the basis of this legal provision, it assumed since 1997, at the request of professional media associations, the supervisory role and the management of the three hundred million (300,000,000,000.00) CFA francs that the Beninese State has decided to grant each year to the private press as State Aid. This Aid increased by fifty million (50,000,000.00) CFA francs from the 2009 State Aid, increasing the Funds from 300,000,000 to 350,000,000 CFA francs.

The management is optimized by taking into account the distribution formula proposed by the Media Professionals Association, with however, some modifications and readjustments at the level of certain headings.

There are several types of state Aid/Support for media outlets. These are mainly: support for capacity building for professionals and media organizers, institutional support, support for projects common to the profession, support for the technical committee of the press card, support for the functioning of professional organizations, direct assistance, special support and support for quality, production and management. In this paper/essay we shall focus on the last three types of support.

Media organisations eligible to apply for direct assistance must meet the following conditions: Specify the location (headquarters of the body, District, Block, Plot), a complete list of journalists working on the drafting of the body with photocopies of their press cards, pay slips for the last three months and a complete indication of their status (permanent, employee, trainee) with an indication of the date of their entry into service, specify the body's tax status, declare the staff to the Benin Social Security Office (OBSS), provide a copy of the agreement signed with the HAAC for private television and radio stations, provide a copy of the receipt of the previous year's fee for private radio and television stations, provide a copy of all publications for the print media and programme schedules for the audiovisual media.

Media organizations eligible to apply for special support must justify their existence:

- with a permanent and functional head office;
- for the written press: a permanent editorial committee which list of members must be produced;
- for radios and televisions: an editorial and technical service which nominal lists of staff must be produced.

Table 1 below presents the scoring grids for the selection of media outlets receiving special support and for quality, production and management support.

3.2. State Aid to the Press

The funds allocated to the various press organs are not paid in cash to the beneficiaries. Rather, they are used to pay for the acquisition of goods and/or services of their choice.

Table 1. Selection methods of the media benefiting from quality, production and management support

N°	Criteria	Note
01	Tax status (all applicant)	30 points
	Up-to-date Tax status	30 points
	Tax status not up-to-date or failure to produce the certificate	minus 15 points
02	Annual fee (radio and television)	30 points
	Production of the payment receipt	30 points
	Non-production of the receipt of payment	0 point
03	Relationship with the National Social Security Fund (all applicant)	minus 15 points
	Failure to produce the CNSS certificate	20 points
	Written press	
	Declaration of four (04) journalists for the Weekly newspapers	20 points
	Declaration of three (03) journalists for the Daily newspapers	20 points
	Declaration of two (02) journalists for the other Periodicals	+ 2 points with a maximum of 5 staff
	Declaration of one (01) additional journalist for the daily newspapers (excluding the required number)	+ 3 points for the first two and 4 points for the third
	Declaration of one (01) additional journalist for the weeklies	+ 5 points with a maximum of 2 staff
	Declaration of one (01) additional journalist for the other periodicals	30 points
	Audiovisual Media	
	Declaration of 6 media professionals for commercial radio stations	30 points
Declaration of 12 media professionals for commercial TV stations	30 points	
	Declaration of 04 media professionals for non-commercial radio stations	+ 2 points with a maximum of 5 staff
	Declaration of one (01) additional media professional for commercial radio stations (besides the required number)	+ 1 point with a maximum of 10 staff
	Declaration of one (01) additional media professional for commercial TV stations (besides the required number)	+ 5 points with a maximum of 2 staff
04	Publication and programme Schedule	50 points
	Publication (Print media)	
	Compliance with the frequency	50 points
	Non-compliance with the frequency	0 points
	Programme schedule and compliance with the specifications	
	Preparation programme schedule	10 points
	Failure to prepare the programme schedule	0 points
	Compliance with the specifications (production of progress report...)	20 points
Non-compliance with the specifications	0 points	
05	Content of the newspapers and programmes	50 points
06	Requirement (name of the media outlet, year of creation, location, frequency, etc.)	10 points
07	List of journalists and show hosts	50 points
08	Non-compliance with the ethics marked by a condemnation of courts, a sanction of the HAAC or ODEM	Minus 70 point

Source: [10].

3.2.1. Direct Assistance to Media Organizations

From 1997 to 2004, the government included an annual amount of three hundred million CFA francs (300.000.000.000 CFAF) in the Finance Act as State Aid to the press. This funding is justified by the fact that Article 8 of the Beninese Constitution states: "The State (...) shall ensure its citizens equal access to health, education, culture, information, vocational training and employment". The right to information is thus analyzed as a right in the same way as education and health. These funds were used to organize training courses for journalists, to equip the press organs (ordering and purchasing printing paper, ordering and purchasing computer equipment (computer, printer, camera...), to pay bills and taxes (paying state taxes, settling arrears and bills (water, electricity, telephone, printing and newspaper

assembly...) [11-17]. Table 2 and Table 3 present respectively the amounts allocated to the print and audiovisual press organs benefiting from direct assistance to the organs.

From the analysis of Table 2 and 3, it appears that from 1997 to 2004, the print media outlets that regularly received government assistance were: Les Échos du jour and Le Point au Quotidien (6 years out of 7), Le Matinal, Le Matin and La Dépêche du Soir (5 years out of 7), La Pyramide, L'œil du peuple, Le Parroquet and La Gazette du Golfe (3 years out of 7). As for the audiovisual press, the most represented channels are: Radio La voix de la LAMA (6 years out of 7), Radio Golfe FM, Radio Non Sina (4 years out of 7). The other selected print or audiovisual media outlets received assistance for only 3, 2 or 1 year.

Table 2. Amount allocated to print media recipient of the Direct Aid to 2004-1997 of newspapers

No.	Media	Amounts received (CFA)						
		1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1	Le Matin	18000000	9320000	3752000	8358300	3147408		-
2	Les Échos du jour	13000000	1113200	2948000	4597950	3427871	2636000	-
3	Le Forum de La semaine	10000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Le citoyen	15000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Tam-Tam express	10000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	La Pyramide	5000000	3475000	-	-	3396708	2636000	-
7	Concorde	5000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	L'œil du peuple	5000000	4142000	1903000	-	-	900000	-
9	L'Enjeu	5000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	L'avenir	5000000	3164000	1989000	-	-	-	-
11	L'Essor	5000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	Le Pélican	1000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Le Perroquet	1000000	-	1989000		1152625	847000	-
14	La Sirène	1000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	Africa Visages	1000000	2111520	-	-	-	-	-
16	Afrique des temps nouveaux	1000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	La Gazette du Golfe	2000000	-	1421000	-	-	1784000	3000000
18	Nouvelle Vision	1000000	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	La Dépêche du Soir	2000000	3888480	2814000	5459250	2259278	-	-
20	L'Aurore	-	6343000		7605300	3459033	-	-
21	Le Point au Quotidien	-	8155000	2841000	8283000	3427871	2205000	8500000
22	Le Matinal	-	11391000	3752000	5722800	3521358	2636000	
24	Liberté	-	4660000	1745000	-	2648809	-	-
25	Le Progrès	-	9708000	3967000	-	-	-	-
26	Le Piment	-	3917000		-	-	-	-
27	La Région	-	3315000	1838192	2209200	-	-	-
28	Le Télégramme	-	2290000	2956000	-	-	1989000	-
29	La Cloche	-	-	2278000	-	-	1737000	-
30	Madame Afrique	-	-	966000	-	-	-	-
31	Le Soleil	-	-	966000	-	-	-	-
32	Nouvel Essor	-	-	852000	-	-	601000	-
33	Le Détective	-	-	22808	-	-	-	-
34	Le Canard du Golfe	-	-	-	5890800	2449328	-	-
35	Fraternité	-	-	-	5873400	3116246	2636000	
36	Le Républicain	-	-	-	-	2960434	2396000	8500000
37	L'Amazone du Golfe	-	-	-	-	1152625	1302000	-
38	J.Infos Plus	-	-	-	-	792429	-	-
39	L'informateur	-	-	-	-	-	2037000	-
40	La Nouvelle Tribune	-	-	-	-	-	1989000	-
41	La Tribune de la Capitale	-	-	-	-	-	602000	-
42	Le Magazine de L'entreprise	-	-	-	-	-	1694000	-
43	Le Municipal	-	-	-	-	-	1480000	-
44	Flash Info	-	-	-	-	-	1159000	-
45	Agriculture	-	-	-	-	-	999000	-
46	Africa Stars	-	-	-	-	-	588000	-
47	Emotion	-	-	-	-	-	107000	-
48	Fiesta	-	-	-	-	-	40000	-

Table 3. Amount allocated to audiovisual media outlets beneficiary of direct aid from 1997 to 2004 (newspapers)

No.	Media	Amounts received (CFA)						
		1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1	Radio Rurale Locale de LALO	6000000	-	-	-	-	1300000	-
2	Radio Rurale Locale d'Ouesse	6000000	-	-	-	-	1300000	-
3	Radio Rurale Locale de Tanguieta	6000000	-	-	-	-	1300000	-
4	Radio Rurale Locale d'Ouake	6000000	-	-	-	-	1300000	-
5	Radio Rurale Locale de Banikoara	6000000	-	-	-	-	1300000	-
6	Radio Golfe FM	-	9530000	8230000	-	-	5097000	15000000
7	Radio Capp FM	-	12149000	8230000	-	-	5016000	-
8	Radio Afrique Espoir	-	12149000	10129000	-	-	-	-
9	Radio La voix de la LAMA	-	4180000	8786000	54656000	3984741	5000000	7602740
10	Radio Wèkè	-	-	6331000	-	-	-	-
11	LC2	-	-	6080000	-	-	-	-
12	Radio Ilema	-	-	5491000	-	-	-	-
13	FM Solidarité Djougou	-	-	4723000	-	-	1.5 million	-
14	Radio Planète	-	-	-	10925640	8503896	5097000	-
15	Radio Carrefour	-	-	-	9932400	6431618	5097000	-
16	Radio Tokpa	-	-	-	8277000	5359599	-	-
17	Radio Star	-	-	-	3864960	-	-	-
18	Radio Alaketu	-	-	-	4099200	2490463	1.5 million	-
19	Radio FM Ahemé	-	-	-	5807200	4233787	1.5 million	-
20	Radio Cité Savalou	-	-	-	2732800	2739509	-	-
21	Radio Non Sina	-	-	-	2732800	1992370	1.5 million	7397260
22	Radio Gerddes FM	-	-	-	4440800	3237602	1.5 million	-
23	Deeman Radio	-	-	-	1572800	1145617	1.5 million	-
24	Radio FM Kufè	-	-	-	3416000	2988555	1.5 million	-
25	Radio Bénin Culture	-	-	-	2732800	-	1.5 million	-
26	Radio Adja Ouèrè	-	-	-	-	-	4693000	-
27	Radio Orè Ofè	-	-	-	-	-	1.5 million	-

3.2.2. Media Outlets Receiving Special Support from the State

This support is intended to provide some relief to a large number of media outlets in the form of one-off and transitional support in the form of the provision of small operating equipment, consumables or the payment of invoices from service providers pending the start of the central purchasing office for press inputs. This support is distributed on an equal basis, regardless of the sector of activity and the number of beneficiaries. [Table 4](#) and [Table 5](#) show respectively the print and audiovisual media outlets that received this funding from 2005 to 2012.

Fifteen (15) print media outlets received special support from the State in 2005 to the tune of approximately 665.000.00CFAF. This number increased to 19 in 2006 but was marked by a decrease in the amount (500.000.00FCFA). Between 2007 and 2012, the number of bodies receiving this support increased from 9 to 42 and

the amount was 960.525.00CFAF in 2007; 1.144.735.00 CFAF in 2008 and 616.438.35 CFAF in 2012 ([Table 4](#)). As for the audiovisual press, the number has increased from 8 in 2005 to 36 in 2012. The financial support was 1.243.720.00 CFAF in 2005; 666.665.00 FCFA in 2006, 960.525.00 FCFA in 2007, 1.144.735.00 CFAF in 2008 and 616.438.35 FCFA in 2012 ([Table 5](#)).

3.2.3. Media Outlets Receiving Support for Quality, Production and Management

This category often takes up most of the aid. The objective is to help media owners to establish the foundations of real press companies and thus create better working conditions for media professionals. The aim is to support a selection of media organizations that have made remarkable efforts to comply with laws and regulations and improve their production and management. [Table 6](#) and [7](#) show the print and audiovisual media outlets with this support from 2005 to 2012 respectively.

Table 4. Amounts allocated to print media recipients of special support to media outlets

No.	Media	Amounts received (CFA)				
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2012
01	L'Évènement précis	-	-	-	1812500	616,438.35
02	Le Temps	666665	500000	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
03	L'Avenir	666665	500000	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
04	Le Coopérant	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
05	Madame Afrique	-	500000	-	-	616,438.35
06	Le Nouvel Etalon	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
07	L'Informateur	666664	500000	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
08	La nouvelle tribune	665000	500000	-	-	616,438.35
09	Fraternité	666665	500000	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
10	Houindo Mag	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
11	Le Progrès	666664	500000	-	-	616,438.35
12	L'Actualité	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
13	Le Challenge	-	500000	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
14	Le Gongonneur	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
15	La Nouvelle Génération	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
16	Le Matinal	-	500000	-	-	616,438.35
17	Le Télégramme	666664	500000	-	-	616,438.35
18	L'Autre Quotidien	-	500000	-	-	616,438.35
19	Tribune de la capitale	665000	500000	-	-	616,438.35
20	Le Devoir	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
21	Tonner info	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
22	Le routier	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
23	Le projecteur Info	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
24	Le Potentiel	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
25	Le Perroquet	666665	500000	-	-	616,438.35
26	Honougbo	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
27	Le Meilleur	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
28	Le Quotidien	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
29	La Diaspora de Sabbat	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
30	Djakpata	-	-	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
31	Vox Populi	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
32	La Nouvelle Gazette	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
33	Le Contemporain	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
34	Palmarès	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
35	Nouvelle expression	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
36	L'Echiquier	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
37	Le Municipal	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
38	L'Indépendant	-	-	2027775	1812500	616,438.35
39	La Presse du jour	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
40	L'Autre vision	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
41	Le Béninois libéré	-	-	-	1812500	616,438.35
42	Azaro-Mag	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
43	Aurore	666319	-	2027775	1812500	-
44	La Gazette du Golfe	666 660	-	2027775	1812500	-
45	Défi Info	-	-	-	1812500	-
46	Le Matin	-	500000	-	-	-
47	La Pyramide	-	500000	-	-	-
48	La Sirène	666665	500000	-	-	-
49	Le Nouvel Essor	-	500000	-	-	-
50	Adjinankou	-	500000	-	-	-
51	L'action	666665	500000	-	-	-
52	Le Rocher Douanier	666665	-	-	-	-
53	La Chronique	666665	-	-	-	-

Table 5. Amounts allocated to audio-visual media outlets recipients of special state support

No.	Media	Amounts received (CFA)				
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2012
Non-commercial radio						
01	Radio Ilèma	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
02	Radio Naane FM	-	666665	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
03	Radio Cité Savalou	-				616,438.35
04	La Voix de Lokossa, Radio Mono	-	666665	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
05	Radio Edohoun Allodo Alomè	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
07	Urban FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
08	FM Non Sina	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
09	Radio Nanto FM	-	-	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
10	Radio Sutih Dera	1243720	666665	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
11	Radio Solidarité Djougou FM	-	666665	-	1144735	616,438.35
12	Idaadu FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
13	Radio FM Ahémé	-	666665	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
14	Tuko Sari	-	-	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
15	Plateau FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
16	Kpali FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
17	Kandi FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
18	Radio Tonignon	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
19	Radio Dinaba FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
20	Radio Colline FM	-	-	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
Commercial radio and television stations						
21	Radio Ecole APM	-	666665	-	-	616,438.35
22	Océans FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
23	La voix des rossignols		666665	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
24	Fraternité FM	-	-	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
25	Cappe FM	-	-	960 525	-	616,438.35
26	Couffo FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
27	Radio Trait d'union	-	666665	-	-	616,438.35
28	Radio Tokpa	-	-	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
30	Royal FM	-	-	-	-	616,438.35
31	Canal 3	-	-	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
32	La voix de la LAMA	1250000	666665	960 525	1144735	-
33	Ore Ofe	1241360	-	960 525	1144735	-
34	Bénin Culture	1250000	666665	960 525	1144735	-
35	Golfe FM	-	-	960 525	1144735	-
36	Deeman FM	1243720	666665	960 525	1144735	616,438.35
37	LC2		666665	960 525	1144735	-
38	Golfe TV	1247000	-	960 525	1144735	-
39	Radio sedohoun Allodalomè	-	666665	-	-	-
40	FM Non sina	1243720	666665	-	-	-
41	FM Kouffè	1243720	666665	-	-	-

Table 6. Amounts allocated to print media recipients of support for quality, production and management

N°	Media	Amounts received (CFA)				
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2012
Periodical						
01	Le municipal	-	-	-	-	1500 000
Daily						
02	Fraternités	-	2 881 060		5 948 275	3 416 470,4
03	L'Autre quotidien	-	3 389 480	7 758 620		3 416 470,4
04	L'Evènement Précis	-	-	-	-	3 261 176,3
05	La presse du Jour	-	-	-	-	3 230 117,4
06	L'Informateur	-	1 848 810	7 758 620	5 551 725	2 950 588
07	Nouvelle Expression	-	-	-	-	2 950 588
08	Le Challenge	-	-	-	-	2 919 529,2
09	La Tribune de la Capital	6 034 200	2 311 010	-	-	2 764 235,1
10	Le Progrès	4 425 080	2 233 275	-	-	2 717 646,9
11	La Nouvelle Tribune		2 233 975	-	-	2 686 588,3
12	Le Télégramme	-	-	-	-	2 686 588,3
13	Défi Infos	-	-	-	2 000 000	-
14	Adjinankou	-	2 233 975	-	-	-
15	Le Matin	-	1 617 710	-	-	-
16	La Gazette du Golfe	2 500 000	1 250 000	-	-	-
17	L'aurore	7 039 300	-	-	-	-

Table 7. Amounts allocated to audio-visual media outlets beneficiaries of support for quality, production and management

N°	Media	Amounts received in CFA				
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2012
Commercial private television						
01	Canal 3 Bénin	-	-	6 250 000	11 250 000	11 000 000
	LC2		10 000 000	3 750 000	6 750 000	-
Commercial radios						
02	Fraternité FM	-	6 944 445	5 233 880	9 369 230	4 912 707,17
03	Capp FM	-	-	3 358 210	-	4 828 729,3
04	Royal FM	-	-	-	-	3 422 099,43
05	La voix des rossignols	-	-	3 917 910	-	2 939 226,5
06	Radio Trait d'Union	-	5 555 555	-	-	2 897 237,55
Non-commercial radio						
07	FM Non Sina	4 632 300	2 073 170		-	4 696 673
08	La Voix de Lokossa, Radio Mono	-	2 012 195	5 883 620	4 945 650	4 696 673
09	Radio Nanto FM	-	-	-	-	4 657 534
10	Radio Solidarité Djougou FM	-	1 768 292	-	2 409 470	3 913 894,2
11	Radio Ilèma	-	-	-	-	3 776 907,9
12	Radio Dinaba	-	-	-	-	3 561 643,7
13	Radio Sutih Dera	-	1 890 244	5 280 170	3 677 535	2 739 725,9
14	Plateau FM	-	-	-	-	1 956 947,3
15	Mono FM Comè	-	-	-	5 130 770	-
16	La Voix de la LAMA	4 760 975	2 804 878		4 184 780	-
17	Mane FM	-	-	-	2 282 615	-
18	Naane FM	-	1 463 414	3 620 990	-	-
19	Ahémé FM	-	1 585 366	2 715 520	-	-
20	Kouffè FM	4 632 300	2 560 9775	-	-	-
22	Radio sedohoun Allodalomè	-	1 341 463	-	-	-

The analysis of [Table 6](#) and [Table 7](#) shows that 4 print media outlets had received quality, production and management support for management in 2005. This figure then went from 9 to 2 and then from 3 to 12 respectively from 2006 and 2007 to 2008 and 2012. Audiovisual media outlets were 3, 12, 9, 9, 9 and 14 respectively in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2012. The amounts had varied from 1.341.463.00 CFAF to 11.000.000.000 CFAF.

4. Discussion

4.1. Perception of State Aid to the Press by Beneficiaries

The main objective of this study is to propose a better mechanism for managing the State Aid to the private press in the Republic of Benin. To achieve this, we carried out documentary research and interviews with media actors in order to understand the real difficulties related to the management and granting of state aid to private media companies. It appears that almost all the actors interviewed are not satisfied with the way the Aid is managed. The main problems raised are: the late release and insufficiency of the allocated funds. According to Mr. Maurille CARLOS, Director Public Relation of Radio CAPP FM, "the State Aid to the private media is practically insignificant and cannot even pay the salary of staff for three (03) months" while other expenses such as

electricity bills, maintenance of equipment; payment of various taxes must be met. He adds that "media owners do not rely on assistance to run the radio". For François AWOUODO, former president of the Media Ethic Commission (ODEM), "the objective set for the creation of the Aid has not been achieved. This Aid is not managed in the best interests of the beneficiaries. It is essential to make it an important tool for professionalizing media staff. In the long term, it must be a contribution to safeguarding and promoting press freedom.

It should be noted that the majority of the media actors deplore the amount of \$300 million they find insignificant. The fund amount has been three hundred million dollars since its creation in 1997 and has never seen an increase despite the complaints of the media actors and the promise of the one billion cultural fund made by government from 2006-2016.

State Aid to the private press has not been released for two years," said Jérôme CARLOS, Beninese journalist and writer and promoter of Radio CAPP FM. He deplores the fact that there is no law requiring the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) to release the aid at the appropriate time. Finally, Mr Cyrille Videkon KOSSOUHO, journalist and editor-in-chief of "la radio Tonnasse", also joined his friends and colleagues in denouncing the delay and the insufficiency of the funds.

In sum, journalists are calling for an annual subsidy to, they say, "stabilize our editorial staff and guarantee salaries", like in Senegal (CFAF 3.6 billion, €5.4 million),

Burkina Faso (€1.1 billion, €1.6 million) or Ghana (€4 billion, €6.1 million) [18].

In addition, for the public authorities, the Aid is provided to improve the living and working conditions of journalists. However, for many media managers (Radio and Television Directors and Private Sector Publishing Directors), it [the Aid] is perceived as a repayment of the investment already made. This is why the majority make personal use of it. The money is reinvested in other sectors of activity considered more profitable. This perception means that even for equipment that is directly purchased by HAAC, some private press managers sell it to use the money from the sale on other investment sectors (Creation of schools, opening of hairdressing salons for their wives, etc.).

Like in Benin, investigations among journalists and press owners on this issue in Senegal revealed that no structural improvement of the media enterprise has been identified as the partial or total result of state support to the press. On the contrary, most media companies continue to operate in an informal way. In many of them, structures essential to the functioning of a company, such as accounting, are not taken into consideration, even in press groups that are considered serious. Nor has state support for the press led to improved governance of media companies. However, this should be the case per the spirit of the initiative [8].

4.2. Reactions from the Press Actors after Distribution of the Aid

It is common for disqualified media outlets or those that got a paltry amount to show dissatisfaction and sometimes very sharp criticisms of the members of the commission in charge of allocating the state aid funds to the press a day after its distribution to the beneficiaries.

According to an independent survey commissioned by HAAC in 2002, the various training courses organized in this context have had a definite impact on the competence of the various categories of information professionals, which has resulted in an improvement in media services [11]. The study also highlighted some notable shortcomings in the press: sensational headlines unrelated to newspaper content, insufficient investigation, prominence of political information and breaches of ethics in the journalistic profession. The results of this survey led to reforms that moved from direct support to the other two forms of support cited in this research.

Despite these reforms, several difficulties hinder the effective implementation of the various forms of the State Aid. Indeed, despite the many measures taken by the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) to ensure the participation of beneficiaries in the management and to guarantee all the transparency and rigor required, the management of the State Aid to the private press has often been the subject of criticism and frustration. For some professionals and observers, these criticisms reflect divergent and antagonistic interests in the press. For others, it reflects a lack of understanding of the objectives of the State Aid to the private press, both at the level of press owners and other actors in the sector [15].

In addition, the way the Aid is managed is often questioned by the Union of the press professionals'. For example, the National Union of Private Press Professionals of Benin (Synaprop-Bénin) often sends open letters to the President of the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC). These professionals often condemn the non-objective decisions that the regulatory institution constantly takes for the management of the State Aid to Benin's private press [19]. For Synaprop-Benin, with regard to the management of the 2006 financial year, it is not known by what miracle the institution was able to distinguish in the Print Media section, the three bodies that received respectively 7.039.300.00 CFAF, 6.034.200.00 CFAF and 4.425.080.00 CFAF as worthy. The union notes that even these three bodies use journalists to whom they promise remuneration, their leaders do not pay any salaries to any of them and therefore do not understand how HAAC has managed to recognize the merit of their support, quality, production and management, since the body must have a determined number of salaried professionals registered with the national social security fund. The same union says it knows that these bodies provide invented documents in their application for assistance. These executives, even if they declare journalists, do not pay their contributions to the fund. It is on the eve of the submission of the files to the HAAC that they arrange to have documents available. And all professionals representing the press in the aid management committee are aware of this. For them, the aid management method eliminates bodies that regularly have salaried staff [19].

4.3. Impacts of the Aid on the Living and Working Conditions of Journalists and Prospects

From the information collected during this study, government support to the press had little impact on the working conditions of journalists in media companies. Journalists' working conditions continue to be difficult and even dangerous. On the other hand, the aid has not been a factor in encouraging the regularization and improvement of journalists' social conditions. On the contrary, many Beninese journalists are in a very precarious social situation.

To overcome these problems, several proposals are made, including creation of a fund. Thus, several studies have already been carried out as part of the implementation of this tool, which remains for the media community a panacea through which the press could regain its credibility. This work led to the creation of the Media Development Support Fund (FADEM), established by law 2015-07 of 20 March 2015. The members for this Fund's management committee have already been officially installed in their functions through a ceremony presided over by the President of the HAAC. The fund is held in a bank account managed by the committee, which must ensure that it is included in the State budget [20].

In terms of prospects, the idea of merging media outlets is worth considering in order to have viable businesses and to ensure that the amount of government support for the press is no longer dispersed to a multitude of small, unprofitable media outlets struggling to survive in the market through covert financing which traceability cannot

be proven. With a view to substantial funding for the press, it would also be essential to consider other forms of funding. Indeed, in some countries, the press is allowed to accept external funding provided that it is brought to the attention of the public authorities. The objective is to ensure that the media do not receive financing from terrorism.

In addition, actions with equally important effects could also be considered, such as: tax rebate, training of journalists, best journalist award competition, creation of a fund for the best reporter or columnist, election and award of the best media outlets of the year.

5. Conclusion

This study highlighted the mechanisms for implementing of Benin's state aid to the private media, mainly: direct aid, special support and support for quality, production and management. The results revealed the selection criteria are based on the tax situation, the annual fees, and the relationship with the National Social Security Fund, the publications and program schedule, the respect of the deontology... The general trend shows that year after year, the number of media beneficiaries and the amounts allocated increase. Some media benefit continuously while others receive this support in a discontinuous manner. It should be noted that Benin's state aid to the private media has fundamentally not improved the effectiveness of the media, let alone the media professionals who run them. As a result, these media outlets are struggling to develop. The Beninese press is prey to the evils that are hindering its emergence and which unfortunately discourage the actors in the field from the professionalism they should show. The authorities seem to be aware of this and this has led to the creation of the Media Development Support Fund (FADEM), which is currently being implemented.

Acknowledgements

The authors warmly thank all the media professionals who allowed the effective realization of this study.

References

- [1] Hayles, N. K. (2004). Print is flat, code is deep: The importance of media-specific analysis. *Poetics today*, 25(1), 67-90.
- [2] Adjovi, E. V. (2003). Liberté de la presse et «Affairisme» médiatique au Bénin. *Politique africaine*, (4), 157-172.
- [3] Bourgault, L. M. (1995). *Mass media in sub-Saharan Africa*. Indiana University Press.
- [4] Les Dossiers du Canard Enchaîné, *Les Français vus d'ailleurs - Made in France - juillet 1993*
- [5] Santini, A. (1966). *L'aide de l'Etat à la presse*. Presses universitaires de France.
- [6] Derieux, E., & Granchet, A. (1985). *Aides de l'Etat à la presse*. *Droit des médias*, 119145.
- [7] Moussa, M. B. O. W. (2004). *Éthique déontologie et régulation de la presse écrite au Sénégal*. *Memoire Online > Communication et Journalisme*. Université Bordeaux 3 - Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication.
- [8] Faye, M. (2015). Bilan et perspectives de l'aide de l'état à la presse au Sénégal. *Les Enjeux de l'Information et de la Communication*, (1), 19-38.
- [9] Balle, F. (2006). *Lexique d'information communication*. Dalloz.
- [10] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (2008). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [11] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (1997). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [12] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (1999). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [13] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (2000). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [14] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (2001). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [15] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (2002). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [16] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (2003). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [17] Livre blanc de la HAAC. (2004). *Rapport général sur la gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée au Bénin*.
- [18] DÉPÊCHES AFP, 2019. <https://www.africaradio.com/news/cote-d-ivoire-les-journalistes-veulent-plus-d-aides-de-l-etat-pour-la-presse-sinistree-153940>.
- [19] *La nouvelle Tribune*, 2008. *Gestion de l'aide de l'Etat à la presse privée du Bénin*. <https://lanouvelletribune.info/archives/benin/societe/1066-gestion-de-laide-de-letat-a-la-presse-privee-du-benin>.
- [20] Hounbadji, C (2018). Bénin: installation officielle des membres du comité de gestion du Fadem. Bénin Web TV. <https://beninwebtv.com/2018/11/benin-installation-officielle-des-membres-du-comite-de-gestion-du-fadem/>. Consulté le 15/04/2019

