

# **PART I: HISTORY OF MEDIA IN ETHIOPIA**

## **CHAPTER ONE: MEDIA DURING EMPEROR MENELIK II**

### **Introduction**

This chapter covers the history of the printing enterprises and the print media sector during Menelik II. The period was known for the introduction of modernization by the king.

### **Main content**

- 1.1 The printing enterprises during Menelik II
- 1.2 Aimiro-the first Amharic newspaper
- 1.3 Berhanena Selam-the first official Amharic newspaper
- 1.4 Pro- and Anti-fascist papers
- 1.5 Timeline for the early periodicals and printing enterprises

Though Ethiopia is one of the very few countries in Africa that have long history of writing, newspapers emerged in the country very late at the end of the 19th century. The first Ethiopian newspaper came to birth around year 1900. The exact year and name of the earliest newspaper is, however, uncertain.

### **1.1 The printing enterprises during Menelik II**

The beginning of the print medium in Ethiopia, sporadic and foreign-inspired for the most part, and catering predominantly to religious subject matter, has been traced by some to the mid-nineteenth century, when the first printing press was set up in Massawa by a Lazarist missionary known as Father Lorenzo Biancheri. Later on, the Swedish Evangelical Mission established a small press at Mankullo, near Massawa was able to secure Emperor Menelik's acknowledgement, if not actual support, and expand his operations into commercial printing.

*Blatta* Gebre Egziabher Gila Maryam's handwritten sheets produced in the capital before 1900 was considered among the earlier papers in the country. *Blatta* Gebre Egziabher wrote satirical

poems on sheets that were duplicated around 50 times and circulated in the Emperor's courtyard every Sunday in a format that resembled a newspaper, although its title remains unknown.

It is reported that the Amharic printing press was imported for the first time by a French merchant in 1897. In 1900, *Bulletin de la Leprosie de Harar*, a polygraphed periodical started to be published in Harar by the French Lazarist missionaries. In 1905, the publication name of the periodical was changed to *Le Semaine d'Ethiopie* (The Ethiopian Weekly) and continued publishing occasionally French and Amharic articles. However, it may have appeared in the same city as early as 1884, 1888, 1890 or 1896, possibly under the name *Le Semeur d'Ethiopie* (The Ethiopian Sower). In 1908, the periodical continued publication by moving to Dire Dawa until 1914. It consisted mainly of health information, notably campaigns against leprosy. The main language of the publication was French, occasionally Amharic.

The two additional newspapers namely *Corrier Eritrea* published in Eritrea (Massawa) in 1891 and *Franko Ethiopien* published in Djibouti in 1899 should also be considered as the earliest papers about Ethiopia.

The reign of Emperor Menelik could, indeed, be said to have represented a crucial stage in the initiation of an Ethiopian journalism in terms, for instance, of press ownership and issues covered. The rise of a 'modernized' empire-state with its attendant consequences contributed a great deal to the expansion of the printing enterprise.

## **1.2 Aimi-ro-the first Amharic newspaper**

In the meantime, the first Amharic 4-page weekly newspaper, *Aimi-ro* (Intelligence), was established in 1902 (alternatively 1895, 1900 or 1901) owned and edited by a Greek merchant, Andrea E. Kavadia. The name of the newspaper was chosen by the Emperor himself, Menelik II. The first volumes of *Aimi-ro* had a circulation of only 24 handwritten copies. It was distributed to the king and to his aristocracy and gentry by horsemen. The newspaper was fostering the agenda of the then kingdom i.e. sovereignty and unity. *Aimi-ro* passed through periods of temporary suspension and revival, owing to financial difficulties, shortage of newsprint and the Italian aggression. With the aid of mimeograph machines, *Aimi-ro* had a weekly circulation of over two hundred copies until it ceased publication in 1916. Revived in 1924, the paper appeared weekly for several years.

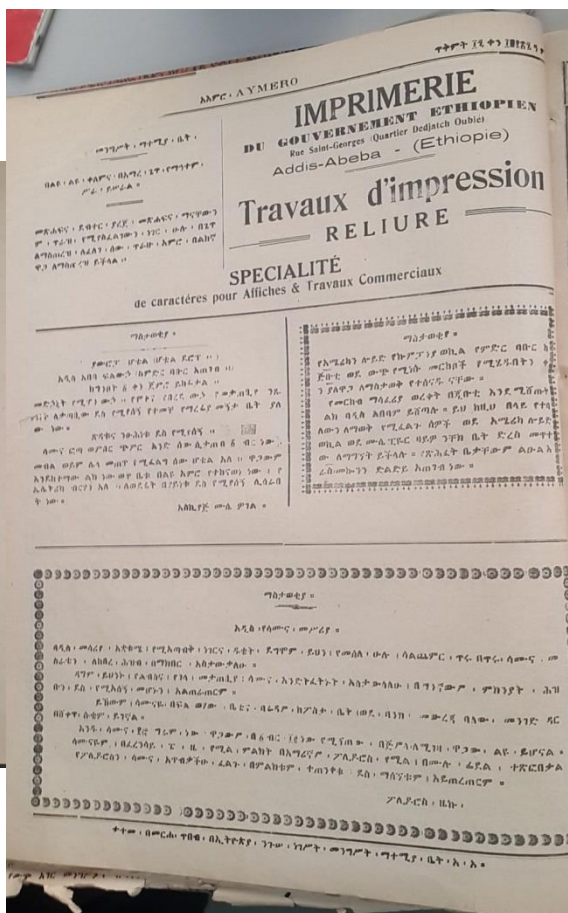


Photo 1.1 The front and back sides of Aymero Newspaper in 1934

The question of which was the first periodical is a matter of disagreement revolving around three different papers: Father Bernard's weekly *Le Semaine d'Ethiopie*, which appeared in Harar in 1905; Blatta Gebre Egziabher's handwritten sheets before 1900 and *Aimiro*, which made its first appearance contemporaneously with the above two papers. It will be difficult with the arguments regarding with the first two papers, or the question of their ownership, for lack of sufficiently conclusive evidence. This leaves us with *Aimiro* which appears to have been universally accepted as Ethiopia's first periodical.

### 1.3 Berhanena Selam-the first official Amharic newspaper

In the decades following this early period, the number of periodicals increased with the major changes and developments that took place in the country. In 1923, Emperor Haile Selassie I had established the first printing press, **Berhanena Selam (Light and Peace) Printing Press**. This was during Empress Zewditu's reign when he was Regent and known as Ras Teferi. Right after

this printing press, still the largest printing press in the country, was established, the first official Amharic newspaper, also called *Berhanena Selam* appeared in print. The newspaper was patronized by the then progressive prince Ras Tefferi, the future Emperor Haile Sellassie, had its heyday in the second half of the 1920s when it served as a forum for the progressive intelligentsia, whom Tefferi had drawn over to his side in his struggle against the conservative Empress Zawditu and the nobility allied to her. This was one of the brightest moments of the Ethiopian press, when vital national issues were freely discussed and debated. Unfortunately, it was short-lived. However many of the articles were poorly written, and that the papers were themselves less appealing in appearance, restricted in the subject matters they treated and limited in circulation in terms of both of size and areas covered. The following are

- *Melekete Selam* was established in 1915 in Massawa edited by Swedish Missionary;
- In 1917, *Kokebe Tsebah* was published in Amharic, established and edited by Blatten Geta Heruy Walda-Sellase, prolific writer, and the First Minister of Foreign Affairs;
- *Aithiopicos Kosmos* (Ethiopian World) in Greek in 1925 owned by members of the Greek community lived in Addis Ababa;
- *Le Courrier d’Ethiopie* (The Ethiopian Messenger) in French was founded in 1913 by a Frenchman Alexis Desvages.

#### **1.4 Pro- and Anti-fascist papers**

During the Italian invasion there were some newspapers served as tools to promote the Italian propaganda viz. *Corrier dell Impero*, *Corrier Eritrea* and *Somalia Fascista*. The newspapers were published and distributed in Asmara, Addis Ababa and Mogadishu. In fact it was a wonder local people read the newspapers. That is because they were published in Italian. However, their principal focus was on the three countries important to the rulers. *Berhanena Selam* newspaper was also the mouse piece of the fascists.

There were also some newspapers known for their fight against Italian fascist. The pro-fascist newspapers were releasing false information about Haile Sellassie as he died. Meanwhile, there were political and military struggle against the fascist nationally and abroad. So that in order to support the struggle the anti-fascist newspapers conducted anti-fascist propaganda as a counterattack for the false information released by the aforementioned pro-fascist newspapers to

weaken the struggle of the patriots. One of the anti-fascist newspapers was *Abessinien Korrespondanz* or *Correspondence d'Ethiopie* from 1926 to 1933 in three European languages i.e. French, English and German. The newspaper was established by the then former diplomat of Austria government council Dr. Eric Weinzing. The first two copies of the newspaper were published and distributed in Paris and Vienna towns. However, the rest eight copies were published in Addis Ababa.

Then again the newspaper continued publishing in Germany until the end of the Italian colonial rule. The other newspapers were: *The Voice of Ethiopia* published in New York by Dr. Melaku Beyan; *Ethiopian News* published in England by Silvia Pankhurst; *Ye-Ethiopia Demts* (Voice of Ethiopia) in Amharic and English. *Ye-Ethiopia Demts* was silenced by the Italian aggression on Ethiopia and was reissued in 1958; at the start of the First World War, in 1914, *YeTor Were* (War News), appeared in Amharic and disseminated underground to the Ethiopian patriots to intensify the struggle and disclaim the fascist Italian propaganda; and the weekly *BandirachinSendaq Alamachen* “Our Flag” in Amharic and Arabic; were part of the struggle. An underground press consequently arose. It distributed illegal newspapers that were printed abroad on an irregular basis.

Other newspapers and journals include *L’Ethiopie Commerciale* started in 1932 by a Greek, Christo Sakellaridis; *Il Notziario* in Italian in 1933; *Kesate Berhan* Journal in 1935; *Atbiya Kokeb* (Star of the morning) in 1935; *Il Lunedì del Medio Oriente* in Italian, and *L’Ethiopie d’Aujourd’hui* in French and Amharic.

### **Timeline for the early periodicals and printing enterprises**

- In 1863 the first printing press introduced
- In 1897 the first Amharic printing press introduced
- In 1902 the first Amharic newspaper was established
- In 1923 the first modern Printing Press called Berhanena Selam (Light and Peace) and the first official Amharic newspaper was established

## **CHAPTER TWO: MEDIA DURING EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I**

### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the history of the mainstream media: print, radio and television, and the regulatory issues during Emperor Haile Selassie I. It also discusses the golden period of the press.

### **Main content**

2.1 Print

2.2 Radio

2.3 Television

2.4 Regulatory Issues

2.5 The second golden period of the press...to be continued

### **2.1 Print**

For the attainment of full power by the young prince in 1930, when he ascended the throne, signaled at the same time the end of the utility of the progressive intellectuals and their free organ. *Berhanena Selam* survived the next five years, up to that is the Italian invasion of 1935, as a typical government paper. That became the norm for the press from 1941 to 1974, when it engaged in unabashed adulation of the emperor and blind defense of the status quo.

The progress of the Ethiopian press was interrupted for about five years (1935-1941) as the result of the country's occupation by Mussolini's force. Printing presses were demolished, as happened in Harar and Jimma, or were into centers for the production and dissemination of Fascist propaganda, as happened to those in Addis Ababa.

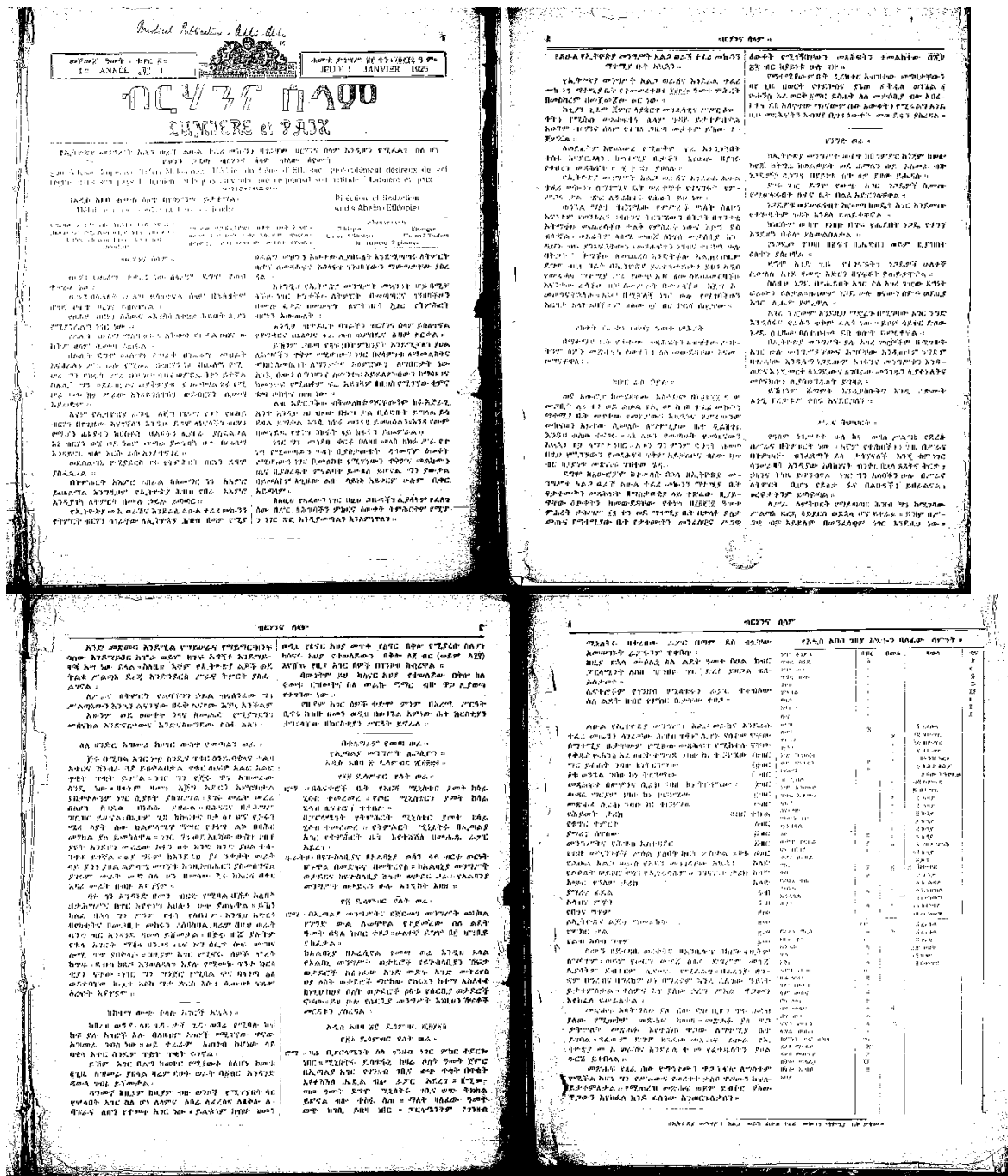


Photo 1.2 Brehanena SelamNewspaper 1932

The expansion of the capacity of the Berhanena Selam Printing Press in 1965 and the increase in the number of new printers installed were but important additions to the development of the print medium. However, the real turn for the newspaper enterprise came in the late 1960s with establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa (1958) and the Organization of African Union (1963). Of particular significance in this post-war expansion of the Ethiopian press,

especially in its early phase, was Blatta Wolde Giyorgis Wolde-Yohannes (not to be confused with Tsehafe Ti'zaz Wolde Giyorgis Wolde-Yohannes, the Emperor's Secretary at the time), a man who was given the epithet "Father of Ethiopian Journalism." His name was linked, originally, with *Berhanena Selam* as main editor, and later on and more closely, with *Addis Zemen*.

There was, in this period, a larger number of both daily and weekly newspapers and other press products, all, with the exception of a few, being government-owned and catering to a limited circle of an elite readership - mostly top bureaucrats and members of the urban-based intelligentsia.

In the post-liberation period the publication 'industry' witnessed a comparatively significant expansion in terms of the number of periodicals and the size of their circulation. Such influential and long-lasting weekly papers as *Addis Zemen* and *The Ethiopian Herald* came onto the scene in 1941 and 1943, respectively. Both became dailies after December 1958. They served as the main official press organs of the state and as the main source of information for literate people. In 1952 *Yezareyitu Etyopia'L'Ethiopie d'Audjourd'hui* (Ethiopia Today) in Amharic and French was added to the list of newspapers. In 1950 *Alemena Tebeb* (The World and Wisdom) was founded in Amharic.

Another newspaper, *Ye-Eritrea Demts* (The Voice of Eritrea) published by the Ethio-Eritrean Unionist Association, was launched in Amharic and Tigrinya. Two monthly papers, *Ethiopian Review*, in English and *Berhanena Selam* in Amharic, were published in 1946. In 1947, three Amharic and one English paper appeared. These were *Zena Bete Kristyan* (News of Churches), *Nuro BeZeday* (Living Wisely), *Tekle Haimanot* (Saint Tekle Haimanot) and *The Daily News Bulletin* in English.





**Photo 1.3 Addis Zemen Newspaper 1942 and The Ethiopian Herald Newspaper 1944**

During this post-liberation period, several quarterly and yearly departmental journals and publications, such as those of the State Bank of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education, Commerce and Industry etc. also appeared. Magazines too were published during this period. Some of these monthly magazines were: *The Ethiopian Mirror* (English), *Menen* (one each in English and Amharic re-named as *Yekatit* in Derg regime and *Zemen* in EPRDF) *Addis Reporter* (English) and others published by the Ministry of Information and *Tewahedo* (Ethiopian Orthodox Church), *Berhan* (Ethiopian Evangelical Church), and others, *Azeb* published by the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association (EWWA), and *Ethiopia Observer* published in Ethiopia and Britain and edited by Sylvia Pankhurst.

## 2.2 Radio

Radio broadcasting came to Ethiopia in 1935, just before the Italian occupation 1936–41. *Radio Addis Ababa The Voice of Ethiopia*, currently known only as The Voice of Ethiopia started its services in 1935 with one KW short wave transmitter. The new medium was only allowed a year of operation before Mussolini's forces took over the governing structures and prohibited practically all local media. Radio transmitters were destroyed by Ethiopians just in time to prevent the Italian governors from using the local media for propaganda purposes. However, the Italian forces redeveloped a broadcasting structure and spread Fascist propaganda using radio programs in addition to print material which was produced on a few surviving printing presses.

In 1953, short wave broadcasting was resumed. A transmitting station on Jimma Road fitted with 7.5-kilowatt short wave equipment was restored. This transmitter was left behind by the Italians. In 1960, two 10 KW short wave transmitters were installed, and in 1961 one KW medium wave transmitter was set up at Akaki for listeners in Addis Ababa.

One important exception for independent broadcasting (indeed the only one) was granted for Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG), (which was owned by the World Federation of Lutheran Churches) an Ethiopian based radio network which has gone into broadcasting history as one of the most successful pan-African media initiatives ever. On air in 1963, RVOG produced religious and current affairs programs in numerous African languages and transmitted its content throughout the continent and to the Middle East and Asia. RVOG had comprehensive coverage of international news, but, when reporting on domestic issues, the station showed great care. The Emperor was a regular listener of RVOG. In 1970, “Radio Ethiopia” started broadcasting in six languages.

### **2.3 Television**

The first television signals in Ethiopia were distributed on a closed circuit in Africa Hall in Addis Ababa in May 1963 on the important occasion of the first meeting of the Organization of African Unity. Ethiopian Television (ETV) began permanent broadcasting on 2 November 1964, coinciding with the 33th coronation of Haile Selassie. Hence, Ethiopia was among the first nations in Africa to establish a television service. By 1968, as many as 10,000 television sets were in operation in Addis Ababa. The program schedule had a combination of news, live drama, story-reading for children, dancing and cultural documentaries. In line with the profile of ETV at the time, the first televised Amharic drama productions represented the manner and wealth of the higher class. The two hours of evening programming in the beginning years were equally divided between Amharic and English, attesting to the ethnic and urban bias of ETV. In 1965, an educational TV broadcasting was initiated.

### **2.4 Regulatory Issues**

Realizing the importance of propaganda, Emperor Haile Selassie established the Ministry of Information after crushing the coup attempt against his government by the Imperial Bodyguard

in 1960. It was the Italians (1935-1941) who, for the first time, established “Ufficio Stampa e Propaganda”, the forerunner of the “Newspaper and Information Office” and put it under the control of the Italians political office “Ufficio Politico”. The Italians established this office to propagate their propaganda in Ethiopia. The Italian colonialist conducted their fascist propaganda through radio and through their monthly magazine known as the “The Light of Rome”. After liberation Haile Selassie’s government established a Censorship Board under the “Newspaper and Information Office”. The Censorship Board was composed of seven members.

However, censorship in Ethiopia already began in the 1930s (i.e. before the Italian invasion) as soon as Haile Selassie consolidated his rule in the country. In November 1933, the Minister of Pen (Tsehafe Tizaz) ordered that “all printed matter would thenceforth be subject to censorship by his office.” Subsequently in early 1935 the government passed a legislation authorizing the Ministry of the Interior to censor all publications.

The prime activities of the Censorship Board were to censor all the news in the radio and the newspapers and to make sure that all the information passed to the public was in line with the imperial government’s interests. The newspapers were required to publish the Emperor’s picture on their front pages (some claimed that all pictures and photos were personally checked and approved by the Emperor himself before being published in the newspapers). Issues such as unemployment, famine and drought, prostitution, inflation, high living costs, etc. which were regarded as damaging to the image of the monarchy were neither allowed to be published in the newspapers, nor broadcasted in the radio.

The Imperial government continued its tight policy on the media though there were very few sporadic attempts by some bold journalists and authors to indirectly and subtly criticize the imperial government. The best examples are the novels, *Aliwoledim* (“I Will not be Born”) written by Abe Gobegna, and *Fikir Eske Mekabir* (“Love unto the Grave”) authored by Haddis Alemayehu. Some say that this strict policy continued even in the final months of Haile Selassie’s government. The imperial government was blamed for harassing the media, and for persecuting its critics. It was rumored that the famous TV talk show host, Asaminew Gebrewold, was murdered by the security forces of the Imperial government. However, the official version of his death was a suicide after having a conflict with his married lover.

Furthermore, in 1974, the newly appointed Minister of Information, Ahadu Sabure, was forced to submit his resignation after serving only two months in office, due to his insistence for free media in the country. The media's contribution to the fall of the imperial government was very important. For instance, it was the 1973 media report titled "The Unknown Famine" by Jonathan Dimbleby, a British journalist that played a key role in undermining the imperial government by exposing the hidden famine in Wollo province of Ethiopia for the first time.

## **2.5 The second golden period of the press...to be continued**

In the meantime, the press was also free during the short period of Endalkachew Mekonnen who was the last prime minister of Haile Selassie I regime. His period took place from February 28 to July 22, 1974. Endalkachew was trying to change the bad image of the regime by being more tolerant to the revolutionists and do some political reforms including proposal of constitutional amendment.

Thus, the demise of the Ethiopian Empire left the media environment with a number of unresolved issues. Despite serious journalistic reporting and significant growth in audience figures, especially in the domain of radio broadcasting, the media had been misused by the rulers for the promotion of their own interests and the subjugation of others. A new media policy was needed. Unfortunately, the upcoming regime would only make the situation worse.

## **CHAPTER THREE: MEDIA DURING THE DERG REGIME (1974–91)**

### **Introduction**

This period of the press is known for its darkness in the history of media in Ethiopia. The chapter continued discussion of the golden period of the press. It also highlights the issue of censorship and the advent of color television.

### **Main content**

3.1 The second golden period of the press continued...

3.2 Censorship as elimination method of independent press

3.3 The advent of color television

#### **3.1 The second golden period of the press continued...**

The period of the military dictatorship from 1974 to 1991 was one of the total government control of the media and the flow of information. This was in line, for instance, with Proclamation No. 26/1967, which was issued to regulate the operation of the media (though it failed to specifically stipulate the possibility of establishing a private press); neither did the government's control of the media ease despite a provision for freedom of expression in the 1987 constitution.

In the first two or three years of the Derg regime, there were promises and hope of freedom of the press. Dialogues between opposing political groups were seen in print and electronic media, and journalists became extremely open and critical of the government. Relevant national issues such as democracy, land tenure and the form of government the country should have etc. were openly discussed in the public print media. The high point of this free expression of views was reached with the debates between the stalwarts of the two leftist parties, EPRP and MEISON, in the "Revolutionary Forum" of the Amharic daily *Addis Zemen* and in such magazines as *Goh*.

For the first time in many years, journalists could freely report from the Parliament, expose social ills such as famine, and so forth. New publications appeared, if only a few. Criticism of the Empire was also part of the picture. A weekly magazine bluntly accused Haile Selassie of being «an expensive and unnecessary luxury», a statement inconceivable in the media prior to

1974. Similarly, ETV in a very provocative presentation juxtaposed footage of drought victims from Wollo with pictures of the Emperor in his fine attire. Censorship had disappeared indeed.

Unfortunately, that period which has generally been referred to as "the golden days of Ethiopian journalism" did not last long. The Derg eventually assumed total control of the media, initially using it to denounce and humiliate the ancient regime and, subsequently, to consolidate the power of the military government. Such periodicals as '*Democracia*', '*Labader*', '*Struggle*', '*Tseday (Spring)*' and '*Ye Sefiw Hizb Dimts*', which held views incongruent with those of the regime, were eventually declared counter-revolutionary and forced to go clandestine. (These papers, in addition to being clandestine, the first two of which had, in fact, been underground all along, were limited in their distribution to members and sympathizers. There were, however, other magazines such as *Goh*, which were commercial and consequently accessible to a wider public.) Eventually, the government eliminated most such papers and, in doing so, dashed all hopes of democracy and free expression. In the process, the media ended-up being highly partisan and totalitarian socialist propaganda machine, "the worst form of Marxist mouthpiece on the continent".

### **3.2 Censorship as elimination method of independent press**

Concomitantly with the confiscation of privately-owned papers and the prohibition of establishing new ones, the government proceeded to eliminate any trace of independent exercise in the government-owned print medium. The method frequently and successfully employed was censorship. A censorship organ, which had been working under the Ministry of Information and National Guidance since 1972, was given, in 1977, special power of 'refining' all kinds of information. (Proclamation No. 127/1977 and Article 7; Proclamation No. 174/1979) After the establishment of Mengistu personal rule in 1977, the press entered its darkest period of adulation of the "infallible" ruler and cynical manipulation of the people.

Of 17 publishers that existed in 1974, only one (a church publisher) was left untouched by the media restructuring of the Derg. In 1975, correspondents belonging to Western news agencies were deported. From now on they could only visit Ethiopia on special occasions, but always under strict guidance of the militia. Communist-loyal agencies were allowed to stay, however. The Cuban news agency *Prensa Latina* accordingly opened a correspondent office in Addis

Ababa in 1978. A lot of restrictions were introduced in the newsrooms as well. Ordinary journalists could not read international news publications like Time, Newsweek and International Herald Tribune, for example. Such exposure was only allowed for a few selected senior managers. Accordingly, the Ethiopian population became only selectively informed about world events, to the extent that even important news about Ethiopia published in the international media scarcely came to the knowledge of the local population.

### **3.3 The advent of color television**

The only advancement in the Ethiopian media during the Derg was the introduction of color television in 1984. However, symptomatically, the regime linked the advances in broadcasting technology to the 10th anniversary of the revolution on 12 September 1984, conveniently coinciding with the magnificent inauguration of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia. Concurrently, foreign journalists who had come to Ethiopia to report on what soon became the world's most famous famine were prohibited from travelling outside of Addis Ababa exactly because reports on starvation could divert the attention from the festivities in the capital. Foreign correspondents also faced other problems with the regime during the reporting of the 1984 famine, such as visa denials. Evidently, the regime could hardly find any reason weighty enough to sidestep its repressive media policy.

The ideology of the Derg regime led it to make alliances with socialist governments and movements elsewhere around the globe, in politics as well as in media-related issues. Radio Ethiopia therefore lent transmission equipment to Voice of Zimbabwe to realize daily broadcasts from Addis Ababa until Zimbabwe was liberalized in 1980, and later offered the same service to the South African liberation movement and its program ANC Radio Freedom. By the same token, Ethiopia was treated favorably by the Soviet press.

Moreover, the Derg government is blamed for the persecution of many journalists and independent writers who attempted to write articles and books that exposed the regime. It is reported that the author of the Amharic book titled, *Oromai*, Bealu Girma, was executed by the Derg for criticizing high government officials. It is also claimed that the Derg government is responsible for the mysterious death of the famous novelist, Aba Gobeigna.

The regime generally portrayed as a dark chapter in the history of Ethiopian media and journalism. The regime turned all media outlets into propaganda channels and effectively forbade any opening for professional independence. The newsroom environment was marked by fear and anxiety. The media became «the worst piece of Marxist mouthpiece on the Continent».

In the end, even the advantage of clandestinely given them by their pseudonyms could not save the authors from the wrath of the "white" or "red" terrors which devoured the rival members of the left. After the establishment of Mengistu personal rule in 1977, the press entered its darkest period of adulation of the "infallible" ruler and cynical manipulation of the people.

During the 17 years of Mengistu's rule, the government-and party-owned publications Meskerem ("September"), Serto Ader ("Worker"), and the pre-Derg Yezareyitu Ethiopia ("Ethiopia Today") were published in addition to the previously mentioned Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald.

- **Major Periodicals in Ethiopia: 1974-1991**

No	Title	Language	Place of Publication	Issuance	Publisher
1	Addis Zemen	Amharic	Addis Ababa	Daily	MOI
2	A1 Alem	Arabic	"	Weekly	"
3	Berissa	Oromifa	"	"	"
4	The Ethiopian Herald	English	"	Daily	"
5	Le Progres Socialiste	French	"	Irregular	"
6	Ye Zareyitu Ethiopia	Amharic	"	Weekly	"





Photo 1.4 Berrisa Newspaper (with Ge`ez and Latino Alphabet)

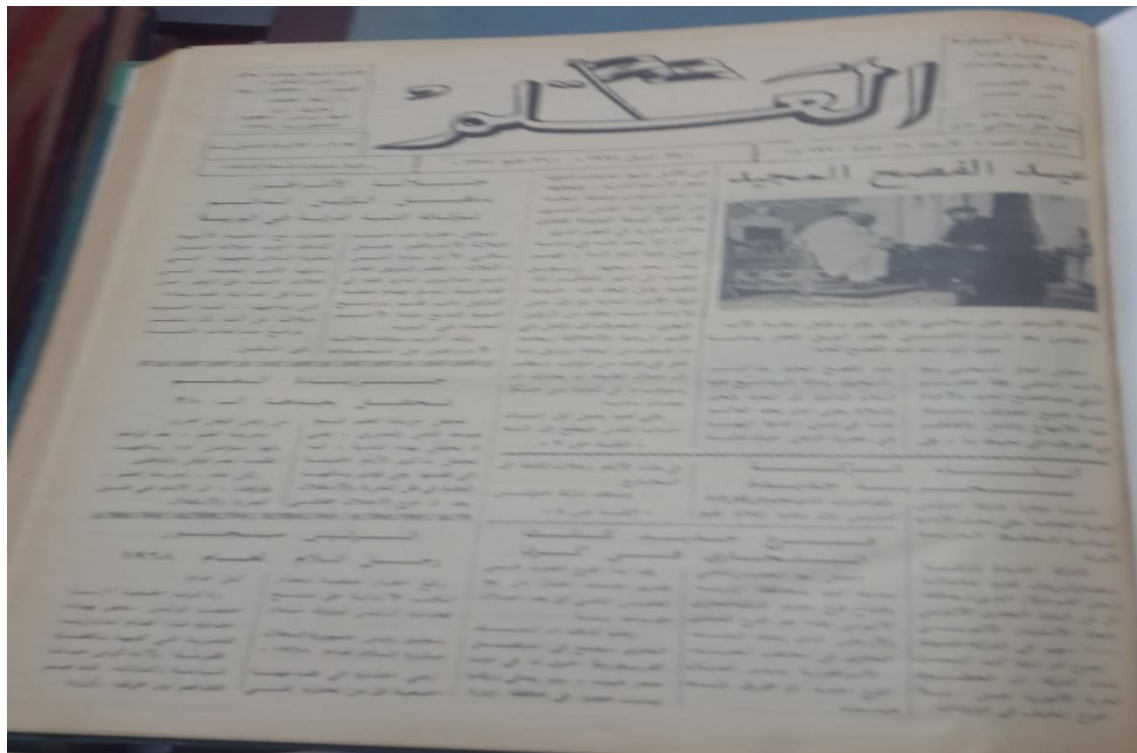


Photo 1.5 Al Alem Newspaper

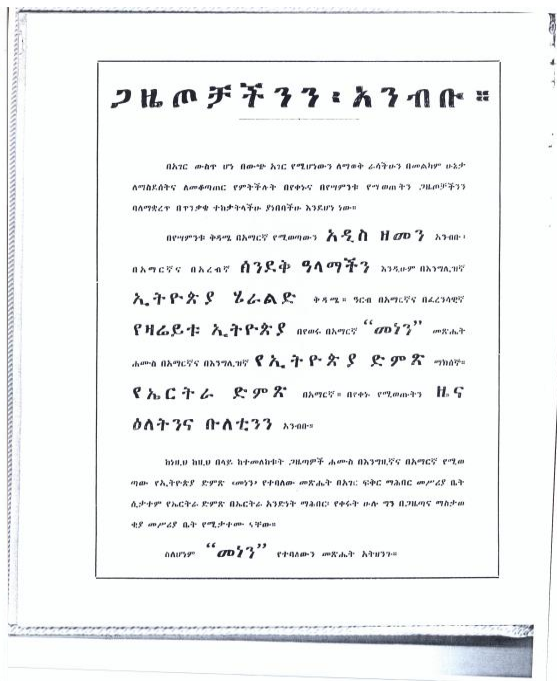
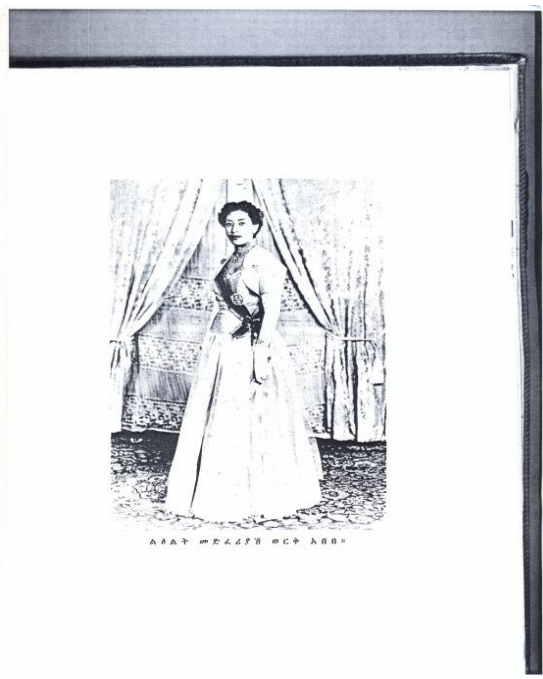


Photo 1.6 Menen Magazine 1956





## **CHAPTER FOUR: MEDIA DURING EPRDF (1991–PRESENT)**

### **Introduction**

This is the broadest chapter deals with the history of both the government and the private press during the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (from 1991-1994) and EPRDF (from 1995-present). It discusses the challenges and opportunities of media during the aforementioned periods in detail. In addition, the chapter highlights the print and broadcasting media laws; overviews the issue of media and election.

### **4.1 Initial Assumptions by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE)**

The transitional period of Ethiopia which took place from 1991 to 1994 has presented both opportunities and challenges for the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. The dismantling of the feudal system and later of the dictatorial military and Marxist government in Ethiopia heralds a historic moment, ripe with challenges and opportunities. It is a challenge because it is a test for Ethiopia's emerging democratic institutions and their ability to participate in reshaping the future of the country. It is an opportunity because it provides the means to promote democracy in the real sense of the word thus enabling the people to heighten and deepen their awareness of their fundamental rights.

With these challenges and opportunities the Transitional Government of Ethiopia has promised many democratic reforms. One of the initial promises is to liberalize Ethiopia's historical pattern of authoritarian rule and introduce a more tolerant and participatory political system including independent media and professional journalists. It would convert the state media monopoly to a genuine public corporation and allow the establishment of independent media channels/initiatives.

Moreover, it "loudly advocated democracy and the freedom of expression for a people who had lived in forced absolute silence for decades. This was like real birth of democracy. The government press and media were the front runners to herald to the millions of Ethiopians and

the world that freedom of expression and of the press had finally become a reality. The most hated system of censorship is no more.”

The commitment of Transitional Government of Ethiopia has been manifested by its first Charter, which guarantees freedom of expression and individual human rights. Article 1 and sub article 10 of Article 9 of the Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia focuses on the fundamental democratic rights which include freedom of speech that is guaranteed by Universal Declaration on Human Rights and fair usage of mass media, respectively. “This, needless to say, is a step in the right direction. In view of the democratization process the country has embarked upon, under the new leadership.”

However, most of the initial promises of democratic and good governance issues could not be achieved by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia because of many reasons. Tensions have been increased due to practical demands of the promised democratic and governance issues by the public in general and civil societies in particular. “The formality with actuality, declaration and implementation, rhetoric and reality, remains a palpable one.”

The landmark event in the history of print media in Ethiopia began after the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in May 1991. EPRDF soon declared the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its’ Charter, and freedom of the press and speech. The Censor Department of the Ministry of Information was abolished and hopes for democratization and freedom of expression emerged again. For the first time in Ethiopia’s long history, the private sector became involved in the media field with confidence. Besides this positive development, the government also announced that the state media would give time and space for different political parties to carry on free discussions and inform the public about their views. The subsequent proclamations related to the press (Proclamations No. 1/1991 and No. 6/1991, Article 4[1]) were considered by many as marking the beginning of a new period of openness and democratization in Ethiopia.

Motivated by the stated promise that the press will be democratized and that private media ownership will be guaranteed by law, monthly magazines and newspapers began to appear soon after the victorious entry of rebel forces to Addis Ababa. Subsequently, many kinds of newspapers and magazines mushroomed in Ethiopia. Most of them claim neutrality and

independence from any political organization although some are openly and adamantly advocating certain political party lines. However, the government failed to live up to its promise of freeing the press. Its democratic overtures, unrealized as they were, were rather seen by many as little more than a political ploy designed for external consumption.

Journalists in the state-owned print medium were then let loose to pursue their traditional function, which they did with great vigor and dedication: praising and glorifying the government, at times beyond reasonable proportions, and condemning and castigating actions of previous governments as well as those of current political opponents of the regime in power. This unprofessional and unethical campaign of vilification, smearing and name-calling could not be said to have been carried out without official blessing. Such a downward slide was as much a disaster for Ethiopian journalism as it was unbeneficial, in the long-run, to the political leadership itself.

In essence, the media in general could only be said to have changed masters, not the philosophy behind or the approach to the art of public information. Loss of credibility, as exemplified by a progressive plummeting in newspaper sales and readership, is a glaring indicator of the crisis in the government press in particular, and the media in general.

#### **4.2 The First Press Law and the 1994 Constitution**

The first press law in the history of the nation was adopted in 1992. According to Proclamation No. 34/1992, titled the “Proclamation to Provide for the Freedom of the Press”, the freedom of press was recognized and respected in Ethiopia and censorship of the press and any restrictions of a similar nature were prohibited (Article 3). The proclamation stated that any Ethiopian national would receive press license from the Ministry of Information or from the Information Bureau (for regions) by submitting specific information required by the proclamation. Despite its shortcomings, “There is broad agreement among informed opinion, and especially people in the media, that the press law of 1992 has opened the door to the growth of the private press in the country.”

Moreover, two principles were deemed particularly important: the abolishment of prepublication censorship (article 3(2)), and the right for any Ethiopian citizen to open a media outlet (article

5(1)). The two severest restrictions for media activity in the previous regimes were thus formally scrapped. Other principles included for instance the right of foreign correspondents to freely gather news in Ethiopia; the right of access to information; the right of reply; and the duty of government officials to cooperate with the press.

In 1994, Ethiopia adopted a new Constitution, which was the fifth Constitution in the history of the nation (The constitutional development in Ethiopia has passed many stages involving the 1931 and 1955 imperial constitutions, the 1974 aborted constitution, the 1987 Marxist (Derg) constitution, and the current federal constitution that was promulgated in 1994. Article 29 of the 1994 Constitution declares that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.” According to the Constitution, “Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed.”

Compared to the two previous regimes who had indicated in their constitutions the undeniable rights of the citizenry to freedom of expression but had forbidden its exercise and implementation, the Press Law of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (Proclamation 34/92) enacted in October 1992, is a remarkable step forward. The Press Law (PL) in principle appears to be a generous gift to this country by a regime openly committed to ensure freedom of expression in an endeavor to build a democratic culture. At the outset the Press Law has freed the press from the captivity of pre-print censorship.

One can say without exaggeration, that the Transitional Government of Ethiopia had paved the way for journalists of all colors to write freely, though within limited borders. Despite its shortcomings, the Press Law has helped to elevate public awareness and readership. It is undeniable that people are much more and better informed than any time before, thanks to the Press Law.

At closer look, the Press Law itself is a contradictory legal document promulgated primarily for political expediency than purely out of the genuine desire to promote press freedom. In its preamble it articulates the objective of the proclamation in the following lofty words: "the existence, promotion and expansion of a free and strong press are prerequisites for the full

translation into practice of freedom of expression." A number of its operative articles sound so punitive and prohibitive that what the law gives with one hand it seems to take it away with the other.

#### **4.3 The Government Media during the Transitional Government of Ethiopia**

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia has inherited from the defunct regime the entire systems of radio (40-45000000 potential listeners) and television (mainly for the major urban centers) as well as the print media. As soon as it assumed power, it started an image building campaign. This inevitably required the mobilization of the government media. It heralded that the government media would be more open and free to the general public to enable supporters and the opposition to debate freely their respective positions.

In contrast to this the Transitional Government of Ethiopia put the media under its control and supervision, fired most of the journalists and broadcasters, former members of the defunct Workers Party of Ethiopia or those who had allegedly some kind of connection with the state security organization. Like all groups who take up power by force, it redesigned the institutional structure and appointed its own political agents to run the media organizations. The new bunch of government assigned "journalists" unfortunately had little or no exposure to media management and or operation. Consequently they underwent crash courses conducted often by media experts from abroad with little or no Ethiopian experience.

The government-dominated public media has plunged into pursuing the same path left behind by the Derg. The coverage of the media, especially that of newspapers, simply followed the traditional practice of glorifying the "virtues" of the new government while engaging in an orchestrated campaign of condemning the past including the actions of the previous regime. This, at times highly excessive, exaggerated and indiscriminate campaign against the former regimes, by the public media has, contrary to the expected outcome, resulted in propaganda overkill and the undermining the legitimacy and the seriousness of purpose of the new Government.

Though the old columns and pages are still there, expressions of opinions against the government have for some time now virtually ceased to appear in the government media. Even weekly radio



and TV questions and answers program which often brought with them stinging attacks by the public on government policy, and other crucial socio-economic issues do not feature any more. One year after the Press Law has been promulgated; the public media still remain in the grips of government. This is the paradox of the new democracy.

Government papers seem to have dishonorably withdrawn from the market as they have continued to lose public confidence by becoming the most trust-worthy organ of the government. Consequently, it is noticeable that newspaper vendors in the streets of Addis Ababa these days have abandoned carrying government papers. Though the Ministry of Information continues to have government papers printed and distributed in major cities at substantial loss for the national treasury, their demand by the public has sharply declined. This has opened a favorable climate for the private press to capture a wider readership, but the different regional administrations have barred private newspapers and magazines from entering their territories because of ethnic, linguistic and even political biases and prejudices. The central government seems indifferent to such action by the regional governments because it is itself at logger heads with the private press. This situation leads one to believe that the central government attempts to show a sign of tolerance towards the private press not entirely out of conviction in the democratic principles, but out of the desire to appear democratic in the eyes of the representatives of the international community mainly based in the capital.

People discovered rather soon, or many thought so, that the government's policy of an open debate and free use of the public media by all political movements and groupings was more of a political ploy than a genuine intention to democratize the country. In an apparent response to the stinging expressions of the views of political opponents, hitherto an unknown exercise in the history of Ethiopian journalism, the government media not only tended to distort and misreport the views of the opposition, but they also continued a campaign of smear and name-calling against those who held views that seemed not to concur with the views of the new establishment.

In the process then one can say that the media has only changed masters and not the approach in the art of public information. They serve the purposes of the government of the day which claims of course to be always right. Democratic tradition has been rather slow in penetrating the government media despite the governments continued effort and avowed intention to re-shape the outlook of administrators and journalist of the public media.

Virulent attacks on one social group or another, the vilifying of one opposition group or the other has remained the sacred duty of the public media as was precisely the case in the past. The government media are mainly sought for public legal announcements by families and individuals for inheritance, by agencies for some bid/tender announcements, for governmental organizations making appeals or announcements for action, etc. rather than for their content and educational value. The street sale of government newspapers has not been all that prosperous as the papers are mainly sought by shops and kiosks as mere wrapping paper.

Besides the radio and TV stations, the print media at the disposal of the government are not many in number seven, all in all to be exact; and they cost the tax payer a lot as they are mostly subsidized. Their combined total circulation for the current year 1986 Ethiopian calendar (1993/94) was nearly nine million copies.

#### Government publications

1. *Addis Semen*--Amharic daily
2. *Ethiopian Herald* - English daily
3. *Yezareyitu Ethiopia* - Amharic weekly
4. *Berissa* - Oromiffa weekly
5. *Al Alem* - Arabic weekly
6. *Yekatit* - Amharic monthly
7. *Yekatit* - English monthly

News agencies, often government-owned, were also introduced to the country during the previous century, including the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), begun in 1942 as "Agenze Dirczion" and renamed in 1968. Walta Information Service, a more recently established news agency, is associated with EPRDF, the party in power, and is housed in the same complex as Radio Fana.

#### **4.4 The Private Press during the Transitional Government of Ethiopia**

Before the Press Law was passed, some 50 monthly magazines, such as *Tseday* (Spring), *Hibri*, *Ifoyta* (Relief), *Tobiya* and *Ruh* (Soul), appeared on the scene. The first weekly newspaper, *Eyeta* (Point of View), appeared in 1992 (Yekatit 1984 E.C.) nearly a year after EPRDF took over

control. Even after the press law was passed, some newspapers did not bother to apply for a license and were published without formal permission.

However, juvenile free media markets also tend to be volatile. Hence, most of the newfound publications in Ethiopia were short-lived. Some barely made it to the vendors before folding, while others stayed for a couple of years or more. Circulation numbers were equally unstable. *Eyeta*, newspaper pertinently illustrates the situation. Published by Paulos Publishing House, the tabloid soon printed 50,000 copies, which would be a high circulation figure at any point in time in Ethiopian media history since the press markets opened in 1991. On the event of critical news, circulation figures could rise to 70,000. However, challenged by its sensationalist profile, *Eyeta* faced several charges of defamation. The owner was accused at different times of defamation and creating political instability, and was fined Birr 13,000 at one time and Birr 2,000 at another. According to the owner, this treatment along with other persecutions was so discouraging that he closed down the paper in 1993. The circulation shrank to 5,000 copies.

Other tabloids like *Addis Dimts* (New Voice) and *Addis Tribune*, Amharic and English weeklies respectively came into existence during this period. Soon over 20 private newspapers appeared. For Addis Ababans, purchasing the maiden issues of magazines and newspapers became the fashion. Until 1994, there were over 170 daily, weekly and biweeklies published in Addis Ababa. It had grown fast not only in number, but also in diversity of using local languages i.e. Oromiffa, Tigrigna other than Amharic. Except for one or two magazines, suspected to be functioning under political clock, the rest are private.

A few have gone out of print because of the stiff competition and fast increasing paper and printing cost. Some critics would like to blame printing cost increases on what they allege is a diabolic scheme indirectly carried out by the state to frustrate the existence of the fast mushrooming private press. According to the statistics released by the Ethiopian News Agency, the following publications have acquired permission for publication from the Ministry of Information in pursuance of the Press Law.

The Ethiopian publishing industry mushroomed after the Press Bill of 1992. Figures differ, but according to the Government, 385 publications were registered between October 1992 and July 1997, of which 265 were newspapers and 120 magazines. At any one time, there are probably

about 20 different newspapers for sale in Addis Ababa. More than half of the total numbers of papers were closed down during the same five-year period, often because of limited resources. The "independent papers" are owned by private share companies (business communities, political parties or just individual business entrepreneurs). Because of a very limited middle-class, the income on advertising is also very limited. The government papers are subsidized by government funds, and partly financed by advertisements and subscribers.

Access to publications outside the capital is limited. Given Ethiopia's low literacy rate, and the relative high cost of newspapers, regular readership may be as low as one percent of the population. The Addis Ababa public consumes most of the country's newspapers. As for the demand side, illiteracy, weak economy and the near non-existence of infrastructure prevent newspapers from reaching a mass readership, especially in rural areas, where newspapers (as previously noted) cannot even be distributed.

#### **4.5 The Private Press after the Transitional Government of Ethiopia**

Some of the most stable newspapers in Ethiopia were established around year 2000. Among these are the popular Amharic *Addis Admas* (December 1999) and the two English-language financial newspapers *Capital* (December 1998) and *Fortune* (May 2000). In addition, *The Reporter*, which has both an Amharic (1995) and English (1996) edition, must be mentioned. The Reporter was started by Amare Aregawi, who, still being the owner of the newspaper, for many years has been the most famous personality in the private news industry in Ethiopia. With a past as TPLF fighter and general manager of ETV 1991–95, plus a year as general manager for Ethiopian News Agency, Amare began The Reporter as an EPRDF-friendly newspaper to balance the strongly oppositional press at the time. However, the outlet turned highly critical to the government in 1997 over a disagreement on policy towards Eritrea. Since then, The Reporter has played an ambivalent role as critical supporter of government policy. The private print media landscape, however, was found to be volatile. The number of Newspapers and Magazines in print was 180 (134 newspapers and 46 magazines in 2004/05).

#### 4.6 The Private Press during and after the 2005 election

A new vibrancy in the newspaper market surfaced as the 2005 elections were approaching. The number of publications available on the street doubled from 2003 to 2005. Confident that a political alternative was possible, the opposition-aligned press reached new heights. Some titles multiplied their circulation figures many times. *Ethop*, for example, went from its regular 5000 copies to 130,000 copies in the weeks before the Election Day 15 May 2005. Circulation figures for the state press, however, stayed the same as before. Moreover, the opposition was allowed to participate in live televised debates on the state broadcaster. 54% of the airtime on national radio and television was set aside for the opposition (although far from all the airtime was used). Large, peaceful election rallies were held. There was an unprecedented openness in public speech. It has been suggested that the government allowed this because EPRDF was confident it would win a great majority in the vote anyway. Others, advocating a more critical view, have called the vibrant period prior to the 2005 elections an orchestrated ‘liberalization intermezzo’. Clearly, the government was monitoring the situation closely, and, as it turned out, anxiously. The first signs of a new serious wave of crackdowns on the private press came only days after 15 May 2005.

The entire process led, however, to a serious setback for the critical private press. A number of publications were forced to close as a result of the detentions of their managers and editors, including critical outlets such as *Addis Zena*, *Ethop*, *Menelik*, *Meyisaw*, *Meznagna*, *Netsanet*, *Satenaw* and *Seife Nebelbal*. Of the total 85 newspapers that were in circulation in June 2005, only 51 were still being published in February 2006. Although many of the closures must also be explained by the condition of poor journalistic quality and absence of professional ethics, government pressure was severe and practically ruled out opposition-minded journalism of the kind seen during the 2005 elections.

The private newspapers that continued publication, however, were generally characterized by professional standards in terms of maintaining balance in reporting and avoiding extremism. Paradoxically the tendency to responsible reporting came after a new wave of government pressure.

According to the Ministry of Information, there were 68 newspapers and magazines published and distributed in July 2006. This is an increase from five years ago (though figures for 2000 could not be found). There are 56 newspapers and 12 magazines. Most papers were weeklies, bi-weeklies and monthlies, with only three dailies, all national, in existence. Many of the newspapers in recent years have been tabloid weeklies responding to news events, such as the 2005 elections.

#### **4.7 The period of diversification**

The period around 2007 showed diversification in the print media market as well. Several critical weeklies were established, including *AwrambaTimes*, *Fiteh* and, most notably, *Addis Neger*. The educated public embraced particularly the critical commentary style of *Addis Neger*, established October 2007. Fearlessly, the newspaper challenged both the government and the opposition. Its circulation figures soon rose to more than 25,000 copies, thus becoming one of the two most popular newspapers in the country together with *Addis Admas*. The government, however, suspecting that *Addis Neger* began publication with secret financial support from the US embassy, was critical to the success of the newspaper.

According to the pro-government media outlet *Hibre Zema*, in 2007, there were 58 newspapers, 25 magazines, three electronic publications that publish range of issues: politics (current affairs), economic and social issues, religion, sport, gender, love, health, children recreation, construction, crime etc. Of these publications 16 newspapers and three magazines publish political issues. In terms of ownership, 40 news papers and 20 magazines were privately owned; six newspapers were government-owned; three newspapers and three magazines were owned by political organization; five newspapers and two magazines by religious organizations; three newspapers by NGOs and one newspaper was owned by an association. Moreover, one daily, twenty-two weekly, three more than once, five newspapers fortnightly and seven newspapers published monthly were in Amharic language. Only one weekly newspaper was published in Oromifa, and one weekly newspaper was published in Tigrigna. Two daily and six weekly newspapers were published in English. Furthermore, fifteen monthly magazines were published in Amharic, six monthly magazines in English.

#### 4.8 The decline in number of publication

From 21 October 1992 to 7 July 2008, 1267 press products (768 newspapers, 316 magazines, 180 electronics publishers, and 3-news agencies) have been issued with licenses. Among these, 550 newspapers and 175 magazines had entered the market while 100 electronic publishers and 2 news agencies are currently working.

The number of newspapers on political matters has significantly reduced after the 2005 election crises. Opposition parties and journalists reported that they faced different bureaucratic hurdles to publish newspapers, including denial and cancellation of licenses by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Agency and refusal by the state-owned Brehanena Selam Printing Enterprise, (the only printing press with the capacity to print newspapers) to print their papers. Publishers were also asked by the Enterprise to sign an agreement stating that the printing press has the right to censor the content of ne newspapers before printing and refuse to print the same if it thinks that they contain matters that might ‘entail criminal liability’. Newspaper publishers have reported that they faced a number of bureaucratic hurdles to set up their own printing presses. The Government and the ruling party continue to have a strong monopoly of the electronic media.

The number went down to 56 (25 newspapers and 31 magazines) as of June, 2012. This figure dropped again to only 39 (16 newspapers and 23 Magazines) as of March 2013. Newspaper circulation in Ethiopia has not been encouraging. A glance at the circulation of four private newspapers with the highest circulation as of December 2011 may reveal that reality.

**Table 1: Circulation of Some of the Private Newspapers by 2011**

Name of Newspaper	Circulation (as of December 2011)	Remarks
<i>Feteh</i> (Amharic weekly)	17,500	Now defunct
<i>Addis Admas</i> (Amharic Weekly)	15,100	
<i>Reporter</i> (bi-weekly) Amharic version	11,750	
<i>Fortune</i> (English weekly)	7,750	An English weekly with the highest circulation as of that date

*Note.* Adapted from the *Ethiopian Broadcast Authority Quarterly Newsletter*, 1 (9).

The trend in the circulation of private newspapers is in a downturn as shown by recent statistics of the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority. The trend in the circulation of private newspapers is in a downturn as shown by recent statistics of the Ethiopian Broadcast Authority.

**Table 2: Circulation of Some of the Private Newspapers by 2013**

Name of Newspaper	Circulation (as of March 2013)	Remarks
<b>Reporter</b> (bi-weekly) Amharic version	10,500	Sunday Edition
<b>Addis Admas</b>	8,900	
<b>Fortune</b>	7,250	An English weekly with the highest circulation as of that date

*Note.* Adapted from the *Ethiopian Broadcast Authority Quarterly Newsletter*, 1 (14), pp 19-20.

It should be noted that the adult literacy rate is estimated at 36% (50% adult Male and 77% female are reported to be illiterate), in to account. However, the private press has been still considered as an alternative voice for those who wanted a different frame from the official line, the broadcast media and the National Dailies (Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald) are being controlled by the government.

#### **4.9 Main Features of the Earlier Papers**

Earlier most of the news and articles, mainly reported in the private press, were sensitive political issues that government papers or media dare not touch. They were information often acquired from opposition sources both at home and abroad with little news value. These seem to be the preference of the sensation seeking public. They dealt with issues that frustrate the public and were most common topics of the public but did not appear in government media (Sensational issues of a given time such as "Eritrean Referendum" - "The Brutal Massacre of Addis Ababa University Students", reports on the Massacre of Amharas in Beddeno, Arbagugu and Bale in what the private press calls an ethnic cleansing campaign and the new lease policy in the capital city are but a few to mention. Clashes between Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front forces and armed groups in different regions of the country, which would hardly or rarely be reported in the government media, usually catch the public eye in the private press).



Extensive articles on the civil servants, factory workers and former service men, victims of the structural adjustment policy, and currently in miserable condition of life often feature in the private press. Ethnic conflicts, corruption, embezzlement, power abuse, nepotism and crime were the most written about. Religious issues such as the close association of the church and mosque with the state were also very hot topics. The alleged abuse of power by the then leadership of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, especially the alleged eviction of Amhara clergymen from office and their replacement by members of a specific ethnic group, the alleged massacre of religious worshipers in Gonder by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front forces were sensitive issues that had not been recognized by the state or the concerned parties. Some of the stories might have bordered on the grotesque, but political opponents found it easy to speak through the private press.

Many of the private newspapers were politically motivated. The independent press came to life as a 'rebel'. By and large, the press was highly hostile of the new EPRDF government. The government's politics of ethnic federalism were portrayed as a grave concern, and so was the official strategy towards Eritrea. Of the 65 newspapers published in 2004, less than five per cent were positive towards the government. This is comparable with the situation in the early/mid 1990s. Many newsrooms were staffed with persons who earlier held key positions in the Derg's media edifice. The popular weekly *Tobiya* (1992–2005) is but one example. Launched as a magazine in April 1992, the publication began with 15 reporters and editors, many of whom were central media officers of the previous regime. Founding editor Mulugeta Lule, for example, was former head of the official Press Department and served as editor for the Derg's party publication *Serto Ader*. Another of *Tobiya*'s founding members, Goshu Mogus, had been in charge of the censorship office. A third well-known press personality who also worked for *Tobiya* is Kifle Mulat, whose past career included prominent positions in the government organ *Addis Zemen*. Residing in Houston, Texas, he is today (in 2012) president of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists' Association in Exile.

The professional standards of the early independent press, could be summarized as a «rampancy of misquoting, misinterpreting, and plagiarism, the focus on trivial issues, poor layout, subjectivity, sensationalism, fixation on most sordid and volatile issues, obscenity and outright lies». Irresponsible journalism notwithstanding, there were also other developments in the early

post-Derg media environment that ought to be noted. One is the rise of the current affairs oriented Islamic press.

#### **4.10 Public Reaction/Interest in Issues Covered**

The general public seems to prefer to read the private press because the sensational topics that appear in the private press are total taboo for the government media. Government paper would hardly publish investigative articles leading to the exposure of the misappropriation of funds or fraud by an incumbent official or the high handed way in the allocation of new villas to all ministers and vice ministers or the alleged provision of duty free privileges to members of the council of representatives. Such news items are extremely consumable. The private press has now become a public eye, at times seeing through colored glasses. Its popularity is ever increasing not because of the high standard of journalism they display, but because the government press has failed to offer a better alternative.

The only source of uncensored news and revelation of secrets that catch public interest are in the private press. The private press discusses at length topics like economic mismanagement, problems of private ownership and the disintegration of the country. Interviews made with prominent Ethiopian academicians and professionals on the current crises in Ethiopia and its destiny feature prominently in the private press. Some former “Derg” officials currently under arrest often and on speak about their role in and attachment with the defunct regime. This and a number of similar issues appear only in the private papers.

The private press also discloses crises and political in-fighting's among the various political organizations, ethnic groups and among government appointees. One thing must be clear. The pieces of news that appear in the private press, facts or fictitious, merit critical analysis. Some of the items exaggerated as they may be, have an element of truth in them. During the last three years the private press has vigorously advocated, and fought for national unity, press freedom, human rights and academic freedom. Clearly this has won them not only public sympathy but also genuine support. Former readers of the government press now favor the newly emerging private and free press. The most impressive genre of journalism that developed almost overnight in post-Mengistu Ethiopia is the superb art of cartoon journalism that dominates the private

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#### **4.11 Constraints of The Private Press during EPRDF**

The relationship between the government and the private press in Ethiopia has been difficult since the private press' inception during the transition period (1991-92). There have been many cases that have taken journalists from the private press to courtrooms. Top government officials denounce the role of the private press as politics-driven and partisan. Some government officials extended their argument to label the private press as "party organs."

The private press, on the other hand, condemns the government for lack of access to government held information. According to the U.S. Department of State 2006 Report, it is only twice that journalists from the private press have had the chance to attend the late Prime Minister Meles's Press conferences in the 14 years since 1991. The government states that it allows access to those private print media that are responsible and that the lack of responsibility of most of the private press is the main reason for denial of access. Denial of access is one form of.

The energetic media environment was soon harshly confronted by the government. Journalists were intimidated and detained in large numbers. For several years in the 1990s, Ethiopia was the country in Africa with the highest frequency of imprisonments of journalists. With little experience in principles of press freedom along with pressure from the government, the courts chose to interpret the law restrictively. The reactions sometimes also clearly contravened laws and regulations. Persons who were seen reading private newspapers risked being harassed because they were believed to be supporters of the opposition. Thus, political polarization had manifested itself in the media governance.

By mid-2001, 43 Ethiopian journalists were in exile. Many of them became pivotal in forming the opposition movement abroad through the use of new media channels. Back in Ethiopia, the number of publications decreased. This cannot solely be attributed to government clampdowns, however. The economy of most newspapers was poor, and the market was not strong enough to sustain a high number of outlets. With substantial increase in printing costs (90% from 1993 to 1997), and difficulties in attracting advertisers (especially for sensationalist newspapers), a number of outlets were forced to close. It did not make the situation any better when the Mass Media License Registration and Control Department in the Ministry of Information and Culture suddenly introduced a yearly license renewal fee of ETB 10,000 in 1999, which was unbearable for small businesses. Additionally, the authorities exerted restrictions on newspaper distribution outside of the capital. Government pressure combined with market constraints therefore led to the termination of vulnerable titles. The newspaper market became somewhat more stable, but it was also clear that the government would readily suppress any media activity it did not like.

The media climate suddenly eased with the Ethio-Eritrean war 1998–2000. The government began to display a softer attitude towards the private press, and for the first time, the public information office served all parts of the media, not just the state media.

The overall journalistic quality improved in this era, both in the private and state media. The private press showed tendencies to serious investigative reporting by exposing corruption and public failures based on evidence, not just hearsay. Sensationalism became a lesser problem. Notably, the state media also showed improvement. It began to report on the opposition, which was unthinkable a few years earlier.

The aftermath of the May 2005 election results the long-term detention of 14 journalists and media owners together with 62 opposition members and supporters of CUD. The journalists, together with CUD activists, were charged by the public prosecutor primarily for outrages against the Constitution, impairment of the defense forces, and attempt to commit genocide. The subsequent court process finally acquitted seven of the journalists of all charges, while the remaining seven were convicted for the specific charge pertaining to outrage against the Constitution. Additionally, nine Ethiopian journalists in exile were tried in absence, but acquitted. However, all convicted journalists were released on presidential pardon in July 2007 shortly after the announcement of the verdict. Among those detained was Serkalem Fasil, who was pregnant when she was arrested. She subsequently gave birth to a baby boy who suffers health problems.

Foreign-based media were targeted as well. Five Ethiopian journalists working for Voice of America and Deutsche Welle had their accreditation revoked; at least one foreign journalist was expelled for «tarnishing the image of the nation»; while others experienced difficulties getting work permits as foreign reporters in the country. The overall press freedom situation pushed Ethiopia down on international indexes. In their reports for 2006, Freedom House ranked Ethiopia as number 170 of 195 countries, while Reporters without Borders rated it as 150 out of 169. The release of the aforementioned journalists in July 2007 signalled a return to a softer relationship between the press and the government. Improvements took place both in legislation and in the media market. Most importantly from a regulatory perspective, the 1992 press law, which represented an achievement at the time but later became a tool for suppression, was

replaced by a new media law in 2008. This represents significant improvements from the 1992 press law, despite occasional claims of the contrary.

As the May 2010 elections were approaching, the media faced increased pressure. For the first time, the authorities went public about their jamming tactics of foreign news content. At a press conference in Addis Ababa on 18 March 2010, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi declared that the government had for some time been trying out radio jamming equipment with the intention to obstruct Voice of America's (VOA) Amharic broadcasts if deemed necessary. Meles accused the station of engaging in 'destabilizing propaganda' and compared it with the notorious Radio Mille Collines in Rwanda. EPRDF's criticism of VOA's Amharic section was not at all new, but this was the first time the government openly admitted deliberate obstruction. Only two weeks earlier, State Minister Shimelis Kemal of the Office for Government Communication Affairs (OGCA) called accusations that VOA broadcasts were jammed 'a baseless allegation', representing a typical official response to such claims. The subsequent turnaround by the Prime Minister thus seriously called into question the quality and integrity of government communications in Ethiopia.

In the months that followed, both VOA and Deutsche Welle experienced obstruction of their Amharic radio broadcasts to Ethiopia, in addition to the Amsterdam/Washington DC-based Diaspora-run Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT), which transmits its signals through Arabsat. A number of politically-aligned Diaspora websites were also blocked, a phenomenon initially reported in May 2006. The infrequent blocking of Diaspora websites purportedly makes Ethiopia the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa known to use Internet filtering technology, according to the global Internet watchdog OpenNet Initiative. The filtering is found to be conflict/politically motivated rather than social. Several researchers and commentators claim that the technology used in the blocking is imported by the Ethiopian government from China, which is supported by the fact that EPRDF in June 2012 invited the International Department of the Chinese Communist Party to learn about the experiences of China regarding «mass media capacity building, mass media institution management and Internet management».

The latest wave of crackdowns on Ethiopian media activity began in June 2011, when the authorities began to apply the anti-terrorism proclamation against journalists and opposition members. Three local journalists have thus far (June 2012) been convicted under the new law, in

addition to another six Ethiopian bloggers and journalists living in exile in Europe and North America who have been convicted or charged in absentia. Additionally, the court proceedings against two Swedish freelance journalists illegally entering the Ogaden territory in July 2011 received much attention from the international community. Notably, all these cases involve anti-terrorism legislation rather than designated media legislation. Another sign of tighter conditions for independent reporting in Ethiopia is the increase in journalists fleeing the country. According to Committee to Protect Journalists, with 49 exiled journalists over the five-year period from 2007–12, Ethiopia has the third highest defection rate of journalists in the world, after Somalia and Iran.

By 2012, most rights organizations claim to see a steady worsening of the conditions for free press operations in Ethiopia. Freedom House notes an «alarming trend in Ethiopia» and downgraded the nation to category ‘not free’ in its 2011 Freedom in the World Report. Amnesty International, Article 19 and Human Rights Watch in a joint statement declare that «Ethiopia’s once vibrant civil society has been severely decimated due to various legal and other impediments to its work imposed by the government». Committee to Protect Journalists asserts that the Ethiopian government lately has taken «an authoritarian approach to the press [...] much like that of Beijing». The Diaspora environment concurs. The Ethiopian Free Press Journalists’ Association in Exile claims that Ethiopia is «one of the leading repressive regimes in the world». On balance, Reporters without Borders (RSF) notes that there is still space for freedom of expression in the country, reporting that a number of the private newspapers are «routinely critical of government policies and at times provocative».

#### **4.12 Profiles of Some Historical Newspapers**

##### ***Courrier d’Ethiopie***

*Courrier d’Ethiopie* ('Courier of Ethiopia') was a French language weekly newspaper published from Addis Ababa 1913-1936. The first issue came out on August 2, 1913. *Courrier d’Ethiopie* was the first foreign-language newspaper in Ethiopia. The newspaper was founded by Alexis Desvages, who also served as its editor until 1924. Soon after its foundation the newspaper reached a circulation of around 700. Initially all material in the newspaper was in French (i.e. Roman font), but soon advertisements in Amharic and, later, notices in Amharic began to appear

in *Courrier d'Ethiopie*. Publication was discontinued 1914-1917, when Desvages was doing military service.

### ***Ye'Zareyitu Ethiopia***

*Ye'Zareyitu Ethiopia* (or *Yezareytu Ityopya*, "Ethiopia Today") was an Amharic language weekly newspaper in Ethiopia founded in 1952. It was also produced in a French language version *L'Ethiope d'Aujourd'hui*. In 1982 UNESCO recorded the paper as having a circulation of 30, 000. The notable Editors in Chief of the newspaper was Baalu Girma.

### ***Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts***

*Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts* (Amharic: የሰፈውሕዝብድምጽ? 'Voice of the Masses') was a newspaper in Ethiopia. It was the central organ of the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (Meison). *Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts* was launched as an underground weekly newspaper in August 1974, as the organ of the group that later became known as Meison. It was published in the capital despite the military regime's censorship of the press. Together with the rival *Democracia*, *Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts* was the most frequently distributed radical tract in Addis Ababa in the early phase of the Ethiopian revolution.

*Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts* pressured the Derg military junta to suspend the imperial constitution, depose the Emperor, nationalize industries and banks, disband the old spying networks and imprison aristocrats of the old imperial regime. In a series of articles, in particular in its October 22, 1974 and January 27, 1975 editions, *Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts* presented an elaborate criticism of the "Ethiopian Socialism" doctrine (hibrtesebawenet) of the Derg junta. The newspaper argued that there could not be "Ethiopian electricity" or "Somali electricity". Rather *Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts* argued in favor of scientific socialism. By late 1975, the feud between Meison and its main adversary on the left, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), became public and attacks on EPRP frequently appeared in *Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts*. MEISON published its withdrawal of "critical support" to the Derg in its August 19, 1977 edition of *Yäsäffiw Hezb Demts*.



## *Democracia*

*Democracia* (Amharic: ዴሞክራሲያ? 'Democracy') was the organ of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). It was launched as a clandestine weekly Amharic newspaper in July 1974, as the Central Committee of the Ethiopian People's Liberation Organization (as the EPRP was known at the time) returned to Ethiopia from exile. At the time the EPRP was often known simply as the *Democracia* group, as the existence of the party was not publicly known.

*Democracia* quickly acquired a significant readership in the student and trade union movements. Along with its sister publication *Abyot* (which had become associated with EPRP), *Democracia* played an important role in defining the Ethiopian revolution; at one point *Democracia* had a larger readership than the government publications. According to Markakis and Waller, *Democracia* "became the most avidly read publication in Ethiopia's history". But the publication was also subjected to repression. During the early phase of the revolution, possession of a copy of *Democracia* could lead to imprisonment, torture or execution. On the other hand, the fact that EPRP was able to print *Democracia* in the capital Addis Ababa in spite of tight control by the security forces has led to speculations that the party might have had sympathizers within the police ranks.

*Democracia* labelled the political rhetoric of the Derg military junta as vague, in reference to its discourses of *hibretesebawenet* (egalitarian socialism) and *itiyopia tikkem* ("Ethiopia First"). Key demands raised in *Democracia* included democratic rights for the masses, freedom to organize associations, and the transfer of power from the Derg to a provisional popular government. *Democracia* pressured the Derg to suspend the imperial constitution, depose the Emperor, nationalize industries and banks, disband the old spying networks and imprison aristocrats of the old imperial regime. *Democracia* labelled the moves taken by the Derg in this direction to be insufficient and superficial. The only positive commentaries raised by *Democracia* towards the Derg junta concerned its land reform program. However, *Democracia* considered that the Derg reform did not enable people to take direct control under a worker's government, but allowed the transfer of lands to bureaucratic capitalists. By late 1975, the feud between the EPRP and its main adversary on the left (the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement or Meison) became public, and attacks on Meison frequently appeared in *Democracia*. In the beginning of 1976, *Democracia* began to express concern regarding the plans of the Derg to build a one-party state in Ethiopia.

### ***Serto Ader***

*Serto Ader* (Amharic: ሰርቶአደር? 'Toilers') was an Amharic-language newspaper in Ethiopia, published from Addis Ababa. The newspaper was founded in June 1980, as the organ of the Central Committee of the Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia (COPWE). The newspaper sought to popularize Marxism-Leninism amongst the Ethiopian masses. *Serto Ader* had a circulation of around 100, 000. The newspaper was initially published fortnightly, but was converted into a weekly. Tesfaye Tadesse served as editor of the newspaper, Gezahegn Gebre as deputy editor. When the Workers' Party of Ethiopia was founded, replacing COPWE, *Serto Ader* became the central organ of the new party.

### **4.13 The Broadcasting Service Laws**

Though at present, broadcasting service in Ethiopia is found in a very low position in African standards, in the 1950s, while almost all African countries were under the colonial yoke Ethiopia and Egypt were the first African states to broadcast a propaganda war against colonialism. In June 1999, a Broadcasting Proclamation was promulgated to establish a Broadcasting Agency (Negarit Gazeta 29 June 1999) as an autonomous federal administrative agency. The agency got the power to issue, suspend and revoke broadcasting licenses.

In July 2007, Ethiopia replaced the then existing Broadcasting Proclamation No. 178/1999 (Negarit Gazeta 29 June 1999) by a new Proclamation, No. 533/2007 (Negarit Gazeta 23 July 2007). The new Broadcasting Proclamation established a broadcasting authority known as the “Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority” as an autonomous federal agency to regulate and supervise radio and television transmissions (Negarit Gazeta 23 July 2007). According to The Reporter (09 June 2007), “The revised Broadcasting Service Proclamation of 2007, however, is much worse than the so far slumbering law now replaced on many established issues such as the independence of the regulatory authority, the right of access to airwaves, the licensing process etc.”

### **4.14 The Second Press Law: Version 2003 and Version 2008**

The second press law titled “Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation,” which was adopted by the parliament in July 2008 was initiated for the first time in 2003 by the Ethiopian

government (i.e. Ministry of Information). The draft law has passed various stages of evaluations, and discussions since its inception in 2003.

The other (revised) version of the draft proclamation was released in 2008. In general, though the new media law included few improved articles (in comparison with the 1992 media law) such as the lifting of jail terms for journalists convicted of press offences, and the right to form an independent professional organization, it has also very repressive articles as we have already seen above (IFJ 10 July 2008).

In May 2008, the House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia discussed the draft proclamation. The "Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation" was approved by the House of Peoples' Representatives on 1 July 2008 by majority vote though 70% of the opposition MPs opposed it. In general, 290 MPs from the EPRDF supported the bill, 77 opposition MPs opposed, and 9 opposition MPs abstained.

#### **4.15 Broadcasting Service**

The provision of broadcasting proclamation in 1999 has shown hopeful sign of private commercial radio and television can be licensed and the need of reconfiguring the state broadcast media as genuine public service broadcasters by the government. Until this period of time the government broadcasting were regulated by Proclamation 6/1991 which states 'that Radio Ethiopia (RE) and Ethiopian Television (ETV), described as the "mass media", will remain state-owned and controlled by the Ministry of Information under the new political dispensation,". However, private and many community radios have come in reality lately after six years.

The recent phenomenon regarding media reform with legal frameworks is the revision of the broadcasting proclamations. Broadcasting Service Proclamation, Proclamation No. 533/2007 has been issued in 2007. Following this revision there are some improvements.

Nowadays in Ethiopia there are more than 32 radio and television stations. Many of them are owned by governments and community broadcasters. Seven of the radio stations in the country run by six private broadcasters namely Afro FM, Dimitsi Woyane Tigray (DWET), Fana Broadcasting Corporation, Sheger FM, Zami FM and Bisrat FM. Both DWET and Fana Broadcasting Corporation have historical associations with the TPLF and EPRDF respectively,

but are today legally registered as companies. The Fana Broadcasting Corporation operates two radio stations: Fana FM and Fana Radio. Ethiopia Radio, Ethiopian Television and FM Addis 97.1 are government owned and all are under the then Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) (now Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate (EBC)).

#### **4.16 An Overview of Media and Election in Ethiopia**

The 1995 and 2000 national and regional elections in the country have been dominated by the EPRDF. EPRDF has dominated the party registration process and the media. The major opposition political parties have not been participated.

However, the 2005 national and regional election was unique and very contesting. Moreover, government has opened “the state media to the political parties contesting the elections, and print space and airtime was afforded to the main coalitions challenging the ruling party. Live broadcast of debates between the main political actors permitted genuine democratic discussion and raised public interest in the electoral process throughout the country.”

Many Ethiopians have observed that “public policy appropriately receives debate, that public media cover multiple points of view, that voters’ choices can result in opposition members of parliament...This potentially represents a historic sea change in attitudes toward political power and competition in Ethiopia,”. Besides, the government and private media have been blamed by many election observers and writers for their partisan reporting to the ruling and opposition parties-respectively. The post-election period, however, has been followed by the crackdowns. The government has taken harsh measurements. “Rather than extending negotiated access to state-controlled media for opposition political parties and civil society, the ruling party tightened its grip on the private press, creating a substantial gap in coverage. “Media coverage also worsened. State media published statements by government/EPRDF personnel claiming victory in the elections, despite the fact that counting was still underway, but refused to publish opposition statements”. Concerning the private media, however, the consequences were very harsh. Many media outlets have been closed and journalists have been accused of “outrages against the constitution” and “incitement to genocide,” and handed heavy prison sentences. Additionally many of them have been exiled.

The 2010 national and regional election is quite different from the 2005 election in many aspects in relation with media. Generally, there was neutral coverage of the election campaign by the media. However, the government-owned media have failed to do so. More than 50% of its airtime has been given to the ruling party. Likewise, some criticism against the government reported by the private journalists, but with extreme caution and scarce. Some degree of self-censorship has been seen. All media have been regulated by The Code of Conduct for the Mass Media and Journalists on the Manner of Reporting about Elections Regulation Number 6/2010 that has been issued by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). The Code of Conduct has been formulated with the assumption that it would give the rights and responsibilities for the media, political parties and the electoral management body in campaign reporting. Consequently,

Ethiopian media, as a whole, ensured the coverage of the main political campaign events throughout the country, providing a range of election-related programming and content. Both private and state-owned media demonstrated their commitment to promote the NEBE's voter education messages. However, the limited outreach of print and broadcast media around the country reduced their capacity to provide all voters with sufficient elements to make an informed choice on Election Day. In addition to this, despite their partisan approaches in their coverage of the campaign, both the government-owned and private media have shown neutrality in the election-related stories. Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority was the only body that has monitored the coverage of election by the media.

# **PART II: PROFILES OF MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS IN ETHIOPIA**

## **CHAPTER FIVE: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MASS MEDIA AGENCIES**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is dedicated to cover the profiles of national and regional mass media agencies. It briefly overviews their history, current status and types of outlets they administer.

### **Main content**

- 5.1 Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA)
- 5.2 Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA)
- 5.3 Oromia Radio and Television Organization (ORTVO)
- 5.4 Amhara Regional Mass Media Agency (ARMMA)
- 5.5 Dire Dawa City Administration Mass Media Agency (DDMMA)
- 5.6 Addis Ababa City Administration Mass Media Agency (AMMA)
- 5.7 The SNNPR Government Radio and Television Agency (SNNPRGRTA)
- 5.8 Tigray Mass Media Agency (TMMA)
- 5.9 Harrari Mass Media Agency (HMMA)
- 5.10 Somali Mass Media Agency (SMMA)
- 5.11 Benshangul Gumuz Regional Government Mass Media Organization (BGRMMO)
- 5.12 Gambela Region
- 5.13 Afar Region

### **5.1 Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA)**

Re-established as Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) recently in 2014, Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency /ERTA/ is public/government owned media organization in the country. The Agency runs the three major media outlets i.e. Ethiopia Radio, Ethiopian Television and FM

Addis 97.1. It has near national coverage and can be received across the country through a network of transmitters. These stations disseminate its news and programs nationwide and overseas via Radio, Television and Online.

Ethiopian Radio and ETV were merged in 1995 forming the ERTA. ERTA is regulated by the proclamation no. 114/1995. The proclamation has laid down the legal framework for the organizational structure of ERTA. According to this proclamation a board should administer the ERTA. The Council of Representatives appointed members of the board upon presentation by the government selected from the appropriate establishments and various sections of the population and accordingly accountable to the Council of Representatives or its substitute. The organization is led by a general manager appointed directly by the Prime Minister. It is thus clear that the government is actively present in all influential organs making decisions on behalf of the official broadcasting agency.

The ERTA national TV channel Ethiopian Television broadcasts from transmitters in 27 towns and cities across the country. It claims to reach a potential audience of 25 million. However, television is essentially an urban phenomenon in Ethiopia. Most people who live in the countryside are too poor to afford a TV set. Furthermore, few rural areas have electricity and Ethiopia's mountainous terrain ensures that in most parts of the country, the geographical reach of each transmitter is quite limited.

The already mentioned merger between ETV and Ethiopian Radio was supposed to stimulate more effective and audience-friendly reporting practices, but, according to the journalists, the results so far are meager. The principle of co-reporting for radio and television has allegedly led to negligence of the radio medium. Common practice in ERTA is to dub radio items directly from video-edited packages without adjusting the content to the radio format. One of the informants explains. Radio has been ignored after the merger. Everybody focuses on television. The quality of Ethiopian Radio diminishes. The management also has to be blamed for this. They might think television is more effective when it comes to announcing a message for the people.

With the merger in 2009, ERTA introduced an organizational chart where journalistic work is shared between three program sections: news and current affairs, education, and entertainment. One of the aims of the 2009 restructuring was therefore to streamline the organization for

journalistic efficiency and professionalism. An important step in the process was the establishment of an in-house training center in 2009.

Another major step in the on-going re-organizing process of ERTA was the relocation of different language sections to regional mass media agencies. According to the scheme, production of television programs in major local languages will no longer be the responsibility of the central ERTA organization, but will take place in regional agencies closer to the geographical 'home' of each language.

However, the Agency has been criticized by many stakeholders including the government for its allegedly inefficient and ineffective services. The government often expressed the Ethiopian Radio and Television did not promote government policies and strategies and had not played a supportive role to meet its interests. According to its editorial policy, it is expected to work to link the government with the people. Similarly, there are comments from the public that indicated they are not satisfied by the contents which broadcast through the government media. Some said the content of the messages disseminated by the government media lack quality and some of them also said the message designed by the media should be impartial but most of the time programs which had political contents were unfair and biased towards government officials. The opposition political parties also accuse ERTA for not serving them fairly. Based on this, assumption, the Agency is starting to implement a new organizational structure.

With approximately 350 full-time journalists in its ranks, ERTA is the largest employer of journalists in Ethiopia. According to information prior to the merger, the support personnel (technicians and administrative staff) entail twice as many persons as the journalists, thus the total manpower of ERTA exceeds 1,000 persons in 2007.

A bill for the reformation of the Ethiopian Radio & Television Agency (ERTA) to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) has been approved by the parliament. The growing high technology and the need to generate its own revenue are among the factors that require corporate reestablishment of the agency. This corporation has powers and duties in the country, which would not only enable it to generate its own income but also target obtaining budget subsidy from the government for the success of its mission. This corporation has a board of directors, nominated by the government and appointed by Parliament. The bill repealed the currently



working laws of the ERTA establishment and authorizes the agencies to collect television set rent from society.

## **5.2 Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA)**

The Ethiopian Press Agency established in 1995 by Proclamation No. 113/1995. The proclamation has been amended in 1997 as the "Ethiopian Press Agency Establishment (Amendment) Proclamation No. 75/1997." At present, daily and weekly newspapers Addis Zemen in Amharic, *The Ethiopian Herald* in English, *Bariisaa* in Oromo and *al-Alem* in Arabic are published are under the wings of the centralized publisher Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA). The main objective of these government publications is to disseminate news, information and editorial materials. They also carry either full page or two columns of educational, health, cultural and women's issues weekly. The Press Agency publishes a monthly magazine called *Zemen* (Era) on political, social and current issues and includes arguments concerning opposition politics and different national issues. The Press and Information Department also publishes a quarterly magazine called *Merewa*.

EPA prescribes local and centralized editorial meetings twice a day for its four titles according to its editorial policy. The three other state newspapers, *Addis Zemen* (Amharic), *Bariisaa* (Oromo) and *al- Alem* (Arabic), are all situated in the same building as *The Ethiopian Herald*, but there is no routine collaboration between the publications except occasional exchange of news stories and sharing of transport resources and photographers. However, the editors of the publications meet every afternoon with the press department head of Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) to discuss daily priorities and other issues (9.5.1). The general manager of EPA may also be present, especially if important issues are at hand. There are approximately 273 full time journalists working for the Ethiopian Press Agency publications. These journalists tend to work horizontally across the four titles in various stages of the production process.

EPA has formal political connections to the Parliament similar to those of ERTA in that the House of Representatives elects the board of EPA and oversees the organization. However, the elected chairperson of the board is still a person belonging to the central government administration, Shimelis Kemal, State Minister of Government Communication Affairs. Furthermore, the general manager of EPA is appointed directly by the executive through the

Prime Minister. It is the responsibility of the general manager together with the press department head of EPA to hire editors-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief of the various publications, while the editor-in-chief of each publication hires all other journalists in the respective institutions.

### **5.3 Oromia Radio and Television Organization (ORTVO)**

Oromia Radio and Television Organization (ORTVO) is the largest regional broadcaster in Ethiopia. It was established in 2007. It is financed by Oromia Regional State and accountable to the regional council. The organization has two radio and one television stations namely Oromia Radio, FM Finfine 92.3, and Oromia Television. Oromia Radio Program started its service in 1995 on Ethiopian Radio National Service. Between 1995 and 2007 the radio program aired for one hour per week. On October 11, 2008 Oromia Radio was established under ORTVO. The station was transmitting news and different program for 42 hours per week until 2010. After 2010 the station increased the transmission time to 72 hours per week.

Currently, Oromia Radio has transmission for 77 hours per week. 447 workers (including free lancers and part timers) are working for ORTVO. Among them 140 journalists report for both radio and television programs because the two sectors were merged in 2010. News accounts for 15 % of the total transmission hour of the radio station. In addition to news, it has different programs which concentrate on socio-political, economic and cultural affairs. Oromia television is a new digital television which was established independently in 2009 as second television in this country next to ETV. The regional government communication affairs office also publishes a newspaper by the name "*Kallacha Oromia*". "*Kallacha Oromia*" is printed every week.

### **5.4 Amhara Regional Mass Media Agency (ARMMA)**

The Amhara Mass Media Agency (AMMA) is among the Regional Stakeholders to The Regional Governments' new National Building Program which has been started in 1991. This program comprises promotion of development, sustainable peace and Democratization program. The Amhara Regional State Mass Media Agency has established in 2004 also established on the basis of the proclamation 56/2009 of the Amhara National Regional State Council, and reestablished by proclamation 88/2011. The agency is autonomous; it is accountable for the

Amhara National Regional State Council. The Agency has a management board that directs its work. The Board has a membership of not fewer than seven or more than nine members. It disseminates news dealing with social, economic and political concerns of the regional government.

AMMA includes Amhara Radio, TV, FM Radio, Print Media, and online ([www.amma.gov.et](http://www.amma.gov.et)). The Amhara Radio station is broadcasting 16 hours a day locally to which nine hours program is covering the whole Region via MW transmitter and 16 hours is allocated to FM Bahar Dar 96.9 transmission for Bahir Dar town, the capital of the Regional State and its surrounding, FM Debre birhan 91.4, and Dessie FM 87.9. There is a TV program broadcasting 12 hours a day, focusing on the overall development of the regional states.

The Agency is also running the print medium publishing weekly within four local languages, to mention it a weekly tabloid Amharic language newspaper “*Bekur*” is about 6,188 copies consisting of 16 to 20 pages. There are other weekly news papers within Hirkoo, for Oromipha language, Himtagna for Wag and Cherbewa for Awi languages. The Agency has planned to broadcast 24 hours a day TV, SW and MW Radio, and FM programs. The agency has also running to launch FM stations in Gonder and Debre Markos the big Townes in the Regional State. The Agency has more than 447 Journalists and technical staffs with a broad educational background.

In the Amhara Region there are additional organizations, namely, the regional government communication affairs office and the regional AIDS Secretariat that publish and disseminate newspapers and magazines. The regional government communication affairs office publishes “*Press digest*” and “*Lisan*” magazine every quarter. The AIDS secretariat publishes a magazine titled “*Akel*”. The major topic dealt with by the magazine is the Issue of AIDS. The magazine is printed every four month.

## **5.5 Dire Dawa City Administration Mass Media Agency (DDMMA)**

The Dire Dawamass media agency owns FM Dire 106.1 and Dire TV. It has been established in 2005. FM Dire 106.1 started transmission as soon as its establishment. However Dire TV started its transmission lately in 2010.

### **5.6 Addis Ababa City Administration Mass Media Agency (AMMA)**

The Addis Ababa Administration Mass Media Agency was established in June 2003. The Agency is located in the municipal building in the 3rd floor. The agency has newspaper, radio, and TV broad casting centers under it. Thus, the new paper is called *Addis Lisan* and it is printed twice a week. The Agency also had a magazine entitled "*Addis Ababa*". The magazine was printed every quarter. Moreover, 96.3 FM radio provides 18 hours in a day and the TV offers service for six hours in a day at fulfilling the society's' need to wards information. The agency has 45, 42, and 55 employees in news paper, radio, and Television programs respectively.

### **5.7 The SNNPR Government Radio and Television Agency (SNNPRGRTA)**

The regional government communication affairs office is publishing the newspaper titled "*Debub Nigat*". The circulation of this Newspaper started in 1995 and published every two week. The content of the newspaper is focused on regional laws, agriculture, health, tourism and entertainment. The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional Government Radio and Television Agency (SNNPRGRTA) is an autonomous regional mass media institution established by Proclamation No.89/2005, which is amended and superseded by Proclamation No.152/2014. The Agency is accountable to the state council of the SNNPRS. The agency in its former name SNNPR Mass Media Organization was established in 2005 with three departments: Press, Radio and Television. The Agency has now eight branch offices and radio stations in different parts of the SNNPR. The Agency is providing information on government policies and strategies. Since 2012, the agency began 18 hours transmission in Amharic language. And the eight branch stations are transmitting programs in 47 nations, nationalities and people's languages. Moreover there is a plan to transmit news and programs in all of the rest nine languages of the region.

The eight Branch Radio stations established in different areas of the regional government: Arbaminch Branch (Gamo-Gofa Zone) 90.9MHZ; Benssa Branch (Siadama Zone) 92.3MHZ;

Bonga Branch (Kaffa Zone) 97.4MHZ; Fiseha Genet Branch (Gedeo Zone) 99.4MHZ; Jinka Branch (South Omo Zone) 87.8MHZ; Mizan Branch (Bech Maji Zone) 104.5MHZ; Waka Branch (Dawro Zone) 94.1MHZ; Welkitie Branch (Gurage Zone) 89.2MHZ. The Agency hired large number of workers. Their number is 1534. The employees are working for the main and eight branches of the station and the two upcoming stations.

The Agency inaugurates its own satellite Television Transmission in 2014. South TV (STV) broadcasts 10 hours a day in Amharic and 47 languages of the region. The television station based in the Capital of SNNPRS, Hawassa, is equipped with latest media facilities for which the regional government has spent more than 150 million Ethiopian birr. The SNNPRS is now the fifth regional state to launch its own TV broadcast. Previously, Oromia Regional state, Amhara Regional state, Dire Dawa City Administration, Addis Ababa City Administration have established TV stations owned and operated by the regional states.

### **5.8 Tigray Mass Media Agency (TMMA)**

In Tigray region the institutions developing and disseminating context in the local language are the regional government communication affairs office, Radio Dimtse Woyane and the educational mass media agency. The regional government communication affairs office publishes "*Mekhaleh*" Newspaper and a magazine by the same name. The Newspaper, in Tigray Language, is printed every two week. Its content focuses among other things in government policy news in general and from rural there off the region social and economic issues agriculture and health. The magazine's focus is more or less the same but with more long-term treatment of the issues. The magazine is printed every three months. Both the newspaper and the magazine are made available to students through the school libraries. This is also the strategy used to reach rural areas.

### **5.9 Harrari Mass Media Agency (HMMA)**

The Harrari mass media agency owns Harrari FM 101.4 and Harrari TV. The regional government communication affairs office publishes "*Harar*" Newspaper and Magazine. Both publications are tri-language using Harrari, Oromiffa and Amharic languages. "*Harar*" Newspaper is printed every two weeks. The magazine is printed every quarter. The regional

government communication affairs office sends radio and TV news and programs about the region to EBC.

#### **5.10 Somali Mass Media Agency (SMMA)**

Somali mass media agency owns Somali FM and Somali TV. The Harari and Somali mass media agencies are setting up two further television stations in their respective regions. These stations generally have a reception range of anything up to 150km but as little as 10km in some areas.

#### **5.11 Benshangul Gumuz Regional Government Mass Media Organization (BGRMMO)**

In Benshangul region, the official language is Amharic. Most of the populations living in the three larger towns (Assosa, Kamashi and Gilgel Beles) are Amharas, Oromos and other non-natives. Berta is the largest native tribe of Benshangul with 26.7% of the population. However, Amharas and oromos account for 35.3% of the total population of the region. It seems that this situation is one of the factors inhibiting the drive to develop local content until recently.

The regional government communication affairs office publishes a newspaper titled *Wogegita* and a magazine titled *Addis Mieraf*. The office started regional television transmission on ERTA in 2011 and radio in 2012. And very recently the region has established its own mass media organization in 2013. The Benshangul Gumuz Regional Government Mass Media Organization has now taken over the activities of media from the regional government communication affairs office. The organization has established its own newspaper titled *Awude BeGu* in 2014. The organization has 40 full time workers.

#### **5.12 Gambela Region**

The Gambela regional government communication affairs office was publishing a newspaper titled "*Maded*" (It's Peace) later renamed "*AGNUMAKAO*" which representing the five nationalities forming the region namely, Agnwak, Noer, Mez`inger, Kamo and Opo. Two more magazines *Addis Zena* and *Ewuket* are also published by the office. The region is also broadcasting Amharic news and other programs in Agnwak & Noer local languages two days a week by EBC.

### **5.13 Afar Region**

Media related activities in the Afar region are limited. The region does not have newspapers, magazines, radio or TV programs. However, it pays some amount of money to Dimitse Woyane and Radio Fana to prepare and broadcast programs in the Afar language. Both radio stations have Afar speaking staff to prepare and broadcast the content of their respective programs. ETV is not accepting video clips from the region due to the poor quality of the camera they use to record events. The regional government communication affairs office publishes "*Dembal*" newspaper every Quarter. Regional news and programs are currently transmitted by ERTA.

## **CHAPTER SIX: PROFILES OF RADIO STATIONS**

### **Introduction**

This part of the teaching module discusses the history of radio in Ethiopia generally and the history and current status of three types of broadcasters: Publicly Funded/Government Owned; Commercial/Private; and Community Radios, particularly. Furthermore, it includes the issues of Christian and International radios.

### **Main content**

#### 6.1 Overview of Radio in Ethiopia

##### 6.1.1 Ethiopian Radio (ER)

#### 6.2 Publicly Funded/Government Owned Radio Stations

#### 6.3 Commercial/Private Radios in Ethiopia

#### 6.4 Community Radios in Ethiopia

#### 6.5 Christian Radio Broadcasting in Ethiopia

#### 6.6 International Radio and TV Stations:

#### 6.7 Foreign Based

### **Introduction**

The broadcasting sector in Ethiopia has broadly three different kinds of broadcasters: 1) publicly funded television and radio services owned by national and regional mass media agencies 2) private sector radio stations; and 3) community broadcasters that were licensed in 2008 and are largely in the process of establishing themselves. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA), published the following list of authorized radio and TV stations on its website [www.eba.gov.et/web/data/Broadcast/main.htm](http://www.eba.gov.et/web/data/Broadcast/main.htm) in September 2011.

#### **6.1 Overview of Radio in Ethiopia**

For decades, radio has been regarded the most important mass medium in Ethiopia. The claim still makes sense, at least when it comes to audience figures and reach. The state-owned Ethiopian Radio (also known as Radio Ethiopia, especially in earlier years) claims to cover 67% of the geographic area of the country, mostly by means of medium wave (AM). A



nationwide survey found that 60% of the population had listened to radio ‘yesterday’, and a majority regards radio as the most reliable and important source of information. However, there are regions in Ethiopia where radio is much less listened to, such as the rural area of Gambella, where the survey found that only 8% of the respondents listened to radio on a daily basis. This is a testimony of the extraordinary dispersion of settlement in Ethiopia, where 82% of the populations live in rural areas. For at least half of the national population of 83 million, radio is by all practical means the only mass medium available.

Since the fall of state monopoly in broadcasting in 2007, five private radio stations have received licenses – four based in Addis Ababa (Sheger FM, Zami FM, Radio Fana and Afro FM) and one in Mekelle (Dimtsi Woyane Tigray). A few of the new stations are quite popular with the audience and appear to have met a demand in the media market. Figures for Addis Ababa show that Sheger FM and Radio Fana are the most popular stations with 57% of the public listing them as their favorite stations, followed by the urban state-run channel FM Addis 97.1 (51%) and Ethiopian Radio (28%). Zami Radio (14%) and Afro FM (5%) are less popular, although the latter is in a category of its own as the only radio station broadcasting in English.

The content of the radios belong to three genres, broadly speaking: news/current affairs, music/entertainment and health/education. Only Sheger FM could be said to engage in critical reporting, although the station’s news-gathering methods are less organized than those of its state-run competitor FM Addis 97.1. A private station, Sheger FM is impeded by government offices not willing to cooperate in the sharing of information, but its news presentation style is more direct and less formal than its competitors, hence making the news programs popular with young listeners. This illustrates a trend towards increased diversity in the Ethiopian radio market since 2007, although private radio stations are still far less hard-hitting in political reporting than some of the past private newspapers were.

As a supplement to national Ethiopian Radio, the government maintains a decentralized radio structure through regional media agencies. Each of the eight regional mass media agencies runs at least one local FM station, typically broadcasting from five to eleven hours daily. Lastly, community radio stations are on the rise. There are currently eight community radios in the country, depending mainly on volunteer work force.

Additionally, it is important to take into account the role of foreign shortwave broadcasts aimed at Ethiopia, especially Deutsche Welle (DW; began Amharic broadcasts in 1965) and Voice of America (VOA; began Amharic broadcasts in 1982, also producing programs in Oromo and Tigrinya). 5% of the listening public inform that they listened to each of these stations ‘yesterday’, implying that DW and VOA every day reach out to roughly 2–3 million Ethiopian citizens. The potential political impact of the programs has led the authorities to engage in habitual jamming of the broadcasts, in contrast to other foreign shortwave broadcasts in Ethiopian languages, such as Radio Cairo and Radio Vatican, which are left untouched. The profile of VOA’s Amharic service has turned into an issue at high diplomatic level between Ethiopia and the US, insofar as the American embassy in November 2005 ordered an independent investigation of the station’s reporting. Today, Amharic shortwave broadcasts by VOA and DW are irregularly blocked in Ethiopia, although their news reports are readily available for local audiences through various alternative websites.

## **6.2 Publicly Funded/Government Owned Radio Stations**

The publicly owned radio include Ethiopia Radio and FM Addis 97.1 these are a part of the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA), which has near national coverage and can be received across the country through a network of transmitters. The local radio stations owned by the regional mass media agencies include.

### **6.2.1 Ethiopian Radio (ER)**

#### **6.2.1.1 A Brief History of Radio Ethiopia**

Ethiopian Radio was one of the earliest broadcasting stations in Africa and has been on air for the last eight decades. Short wave Radio Services commenced in Ethiopia in 1936 before the Italian Invasion. A radio station was established just next to the first Hotel in Ethiopia, Tayitu Hotel. However, shortly thereafter Fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia and occupied the radio station in its infant stage. By that time the station was transferred to Nefas Silk-Akaki, which is just out of Addis Ababa.

Fascist Italy moved the station near to the existing city municipality around "Abune Peter" square (currently the undergraduate school of journalism and communication found there) and commenced wire-broadcasting transmission. After five years’ occupation, the Italians destroyed

the station and left the country. When Emperor Haileselassie returned from exile in 1941, he reconstructed the radio station and started both short and medium wave transmission. However, up until 1963, the transmission was limited only to the Addis Ababa area. It was only in 1963 that Ethiopian Radio was able to reach the entire parts of the country. Ethiopian Radio has been transmitting its news and programs in Amharic and English until 1963.

In 1963 with the installation of antennas with four directions for the first time, it could broadcast news to Western, Middle East and Europe countries. Ethiopian Radio started its work with five employees. Honorable Doctor Kebede Micheal was the first news anchor. Besides the national service, on February 26, 1963, Radio Voice of the Gospel commenced its transmission, but was shut down by the military regime in 1974. Around 1965 the Ministry of Education has commenced medium-wave radio stations. This station was transmitting largely programs for adult education and support for classroom.

In 1994 the station was reestablished under the name of Ethiopian Radio; however, in 1995 it was subsumed under the Ethiopian Television and become the radio section of the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency. Although Ethiopian Radio collects fees from advertisement and from sponsorship, the substantial budget of the station comes from the government treasury. In Ethiopia the numbers of radio receivers were 194 per 1000 people in 2000. In 2009 Ethiopian Radio and Ethiopian Television merged together and restructured their institutional base.

#### **6.2.1.2 How Listening Habit was formed**

In the 50's, when people were eager to listen to the radio but did not own such a device, a curious thing occurred. Large crowds of Ethiopians congregate at various squares and around monuments and listened to horn speakers (public address systems) which broadcast the daily radio programs. These speakers were installed beginning from 1955 in central squares in Asmara, Gondar, Dessie, Debre Markos, Dire Dawa, Harar, Jimma, Nekemte, Assela, Yirgalem and Makalle. In 1957, Gore and Jijiga were added. The purpose of these was to re-broadcast programs.

In Addis Ababa, similar equipment was placed in various squares, and one of these was the Abune Petros Square near the studios and offices of The Voice of Ethiopia. In these spots, sitting

or standing people heard the news, informative talks, music and entertainment. In 1963, two 100 KW short wave transmitters were installed enabling people in the different regions to listen to The Voice of Ethiopia (Radio Ethiopia today). At the same time, microwave systems to relay programs from the main studio in Addis Ababa to Asmara and Harar were put in place.

Gradually, The Voice of Ethiopia developed and with its short wave transmitters started international broadcasts to West and North-West Africa and Europe (in French and English), North Africa and the Middle East (in Arabic) and East and Central Africa (in Swahili). However, the International Service of The Voice of Ethiopia was short lived because it was discontinued. Today, Radio Ethiopia has two services: The National Service and the External or International Service.

#### **6.2.1.3 The National Service of Radio Ethiopia**

Currently, Ethiopia Radio is the national radio station of the state-run Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA). The station claims to reach a potential audience of 45 million people – just over half the population – through its network of Medium Wave transmitters across the country. Its total coverage is about 70 percent of the national territory. The station broadcasts on Medium Wave from the following locations:

- Addis Ababa 873 Khz
- Mettu (also commonly spelt Mattu or Metu) (Oromia) 684Khz
- Bahir Dar (Amhara) 594 Khz
- Arba Minch (SNNPR) 828 Khz
- Robi (also commonly spelled Robe) (Oromia) 972 Khz
- Mekele (Tigray) 1044 Khz
- Dessie (Amhara) 891Khz
- Harar (Harari) 855 Khz

Programs are broadcast daily (for 172 hours a week) by the National Service in nine languages: Amharic, Afaan Oromo, Tigrigna, Somali, Afari, Harari, Agnuak, Nuer and English. Excluding Amharic, each language segment has a daily one-hour slot, the exception being Afaan Oromo, which broadcast for two-and-a-half hours. Harari programs are transmitted from the studios in

Harar; and Agnuak and Nuer language broadcasts are prepared and transmitted from the Metu studios of Radio Ethiopia. Radio Ethiopia also broadcasts 30-minute long English programs from Monday to Friday on the National Service frequencies from 1:30– 2:00 pm. local time.

Most of the language desks of the National Service have, other than news and current affairs, interviews related to civic societies and democratization, regular weekly programs focusing on women, children, youth, arts and culture, sports, music, plays, agriculture, quizzes and game shows and health and education programs. There are also some phone-ins. The single most popular national radio program identified by the ERIS survey was Radio Ethiopia's "Ehud Meznagna" (Sunday Entertainment) program. This light entertainment program goes out on Sunday afternoons when many people are at home. The ERIS survey showed it was particularly popular in the outlying Benishangul-Gumuz, Tigray and Somali regions.

The peak time hours for the Ethiopian Radio are: 7:00am-8:00am; 10:00am-11:00am; 1:00pm-2:00pm; 8:00pm-10:00pm. The station has allotted 12 minutes of news broadcast every hour. Main source of news information for the station are ENA, ERTA, Walta, BBC, CNN, AFP, Reuters and Xinhua and regional information offices. It also collects its own news. The station employed more than 346 full and part time journalists with Ethiopian television in 2011.

Training schemes: Telling untold stories, newsgathering and reporting, Adobe Audition, election reporting, supervisor management, constitution and color revolution, fighting corruption. Trainings organized by: ERTA, Radio Netherlands, BBC, Internews, Electoral Board of Ethiopia, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission.

#### **6.2.1.4 The External Service of Radio Ethiopia**

On March 12th 1977, the Derg nationalized the former Radio Voice of the Gospel, which was owned and operated by the Lutheran World Federation since 1963. This station was re-named The External Service of Radio Ethiopia and programs have been transmitted daily to East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and Western Europe in English, French, and Arabic.

Afar and Somali language programs of the National Service are also re-broadcast in the frequencies of this external service. The contents of these programs include current affairs and news, educational and informational programs and programs that introduce Ethiopia's culture

and history. Only the English language has a weekly Women's Forum program. The French Desk often suffers from lack of French speaking journalists.

### **6.2.2 FM ADDIS 97.1**

FM Addis 97.1 radio is the first state-owned FM radio in the country. It was established by ERTA in June 2000. Now it has 14 years of operating service with more 28 full time journalists. Many of them are journalism, language and literature graduates. Its transmission covers areas of 100 km radius around Addis Ababa with 24 hours of broadcasting. Its estimated audience is about 6 million people. The station broadcasts its programs in Amharic language. Basically it was designed to be different from the format employed by the national service, although both shared the same administration and all the staff of the new FM Addis 97.1 station came from the national service. In other words, FM Addis 97.1 was a part of Ethiopian Radio. There was no fundamental difference in their editorial policies.

The most common programs in FM Addis 97.1 are light entertainment and popular music. The station broadcasts program genres such as Children, Current affairs, Drama, Entertainment (quizzes, games and shows), Health, News, Phone-ins, Sports and Other. The station's popular Yibekal (Enough) phone-in program deals with issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and is well known for airing ground-breaking stories. The program's original presenter was widely believed to be HIV positive. It collects its own news from various news sources. The main sources are ENA, ERTA, Walta, BBC, CNN, AFP, Reuters and Xinhua. The station has allotted 10 minutes of news broadcast every hour.

The state-owned radio station FM Addis 97.1, which at its establishment in June 2000 became the first FM station in the country, opened its program schedules for civil society organizations. Numerous human rights groups seized the opportunity and rented airtime. There are also many organizations transmitting their own programs using the station. They pay to ERTA, and get income from advertisements.

The recent audience survey done by Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS), an international institute for democracy and governance shows that FM Addis is now in the second rank of most favorite stations and third in the category of frequently listened radio stations.

Training schemes: election reporting; reproductive health and gender; how to report children and women issues; Ethiopian Constitution; how to report and conduct phone in discussions on HIV issues. Trainings organized by: ERTA, Ministry of Health, Internews, National Electoral Board of Ethiopia.

### **6.2.3 FM 96.3 Addis**

FM Addis 96.3 was established in February 2006, under Addis Ababa City Administration Mass Media Agency which also runs the local TV station Addis Television, also known as ETV2. It broadcasts in Amharic to a population of 2.7 million within 30 km radius of the city centre. FM 96.3 is on air for 18 hours per day from 6:00am until midnight. There are news bulletins every hour. Outer areas the station can be received are: Dukem, Debre Zeit, Mojo, Adama, Asella, Alemgena and Sebeta. It has 61 full and 6 part time journalists in 2011.

Documentary and current affairs and light entertainment and popular music are major programs covered by the station. The main sources of news information for the station are government and non government organizations, politicians and others. It also collects its own news. Training schemes: journalism ethics, developmental journalism, media laws and regulations, program standards. Trainings organized by: EBA.

### **6.2.4 Oromia Radio**

Owned by the Oromia Mass Media Organization, the Oromia Radio Station was established in March 2008. The Agency also runs Finfine FM in Adama and a regional TV service for Oromia. Having a regional coverage, the radio station broadcasts from Monday-Friday for 7:30 hours and for 9 hours in Saturday and Sunday and has a weekly load of 67hrs and 10 minutes. Climate change and environmental matters are raised as a topic in news articles.

Oromia Radio is a government-run regional station broadcasting to the Oromia region of southern Ethiopia on Short and Medium Wave. It is based in the regional capital Adama (also known as Nazret). The station targets 15 million potential listeners living within a 100-150 km radius of the city. The station broadcasts mainly in Oromo, but also has some programs in Amharic and English. It puts out news, current affairs and entertainment programming for 10.5 hours per day from Monday to Friday and slightly longer at weekends. The main sources news

information are staff reporters, government offices, information bureaus, news agencies, WALTA, ENA and public relations offices. It also collects its own news.

Oromia Radio has Medium Wave transmitters in Adama, Bale, Robe and Nekemte and a Short Wave transmitter in Addis Ababa. Outer areas the station can be received are Nekemt station, Wellega (4 Zones), Jimma, Illubabour and West Shewa; Robe station, Bale, West Arsi, Guji and Borena; Adama Station, Shewa (4 Zones) and Arsi. It has 184 full and 17 part time journalists in 2011. Oromia Mass Media Agency operates Oromia Radio, Finfine FM 92.3 and Oromia TV. These stations share journalists and support staffs who work across these media. Training schemes: radio newsgathering and writing; producing discussion programs; entertainment program production and balanced scorecard. Trainings organized by: Oromia Mass Media Agency.

#### **6.2.5 Finfine 92.3 FM**

Finfine 92.3 FM is a government-run regional station for the Oromia region. It broadcasts from the regional town Adama (also known as Nazret). It claims to reach five million potential listeners within a 150 km radius of the city. Finfine FM broadcasts for 7.5 hours per day exclusively in Oromo. It is on air from 9:00 to 12:00 in the morning and again from 14:00 to 18:30 in the afternoon.

The station, which began broadcasting in 2010, carries a lot of news, sports and phone-in programs. It forms part of the Oromia Mass Media Agency. Main source of news information: news department, Internet; BBC, staff reporters, government offices and public relations offices. It also collects its own news. Outer areas the station can be received: Finfine, North Shoa, East Shewa, West Shewa, South West Shewa, Arsi and West Arsi. Its sources of revenue are two: advertising 40% and public financing 60%.

#### **6.2.6 Amhara Radio**

On air as of May 2005, the Amhara State Radio is owned by Amhara Regional Mass Media Agency. The station based in Bahir Dar, capital of Ethiopia's northern Amhara Region. It broadcasts on MW 801, 6090. It claims to reach seven million people living within an 80 km radius of the city.



Amhara Radio focuses on music and light entertainment, news and phone-in programs. Main source of news information: staff reporters and regional communication affair bureaus. It also collects its own news. It broadcasts for nine hours per day mostly in Amharic. The station also airs programs for two hours per week in each of the following local languages; Oromo, Awigna and Himtinya.

The station is on air from 6:00 to 10:00 in the morning and again from 17:00 to 22:00 in the evening. Amhara Radio forms part of the government-owned Amhara Mass Media Agency. This also operates a local FM radio station in Bahir Dar called Bahir Dar 96.9 FM. Outer areas the station can be received are: East and West Gojam, Awi, South and North Gondar, Wag Himra. The station has 138 full and 2 part time journalists. Training schemes: news reporting; news editing; development reporting; TV and radio production; development media; concept of a free press. Trainings organised by: the organisation in collaboration with EBA. Sources of revenue: public financing 85%, advertising 5%, and donations/ private money 10%.

#### **6.2.7 Bahir Dar FM 96.9**

Bahir Dar FM is a government-run local radio station serving the city of Bahir Dar. It is established in March 2002 by Amhara Regional Mass Media Agency. It reaches a potential audience of 180,000 people living within a 10 km radius of its transmitter mast. The station broadcasts in Amharic for six hours per day from 10:00 to 16:00. Its output includes phone-in programs, light entertainment and popular music. Main source of news information: staff reporters and regional communication affair bureaus. It also collects its own news.

It broadcast programs in Amharic language and it has a daily load of 6 hours and weekly load of 42 hours and its transmission has a regional coverage. Training schemes: news reporting; news editing; development reporting; TV and radio production; development media; concept of a free press. Trainings organized by: the organization in collaboration with EBA. The station has 12 full and 2 part time journalists.

#### **6.2.8 South FM 100.9 (Debub FM)**

Debub FM 100.9 was established in March 2005 by The SNNPR Government Radio and Television Agency. Debub FM is the government radio network covering Ethiopia's Southern

Nations, Nationalities and People Region (SNNPR). The network of eight linked stations (Hawassa FM 100.9, Wolkite FM 89.2, Bonga FM 97.4, Mizan FM 104.5, Arbaminch FM 90.9, Jinka FM 87.8, Bensa FM 92.3, Waka FM 94.1.), based in the Rift Valley town of Hawassa (also commonly spelt Awassa), claims to reach most parts of the SNNPR. It reaches a potential audience of 15 million people in the ethnically diverse SNNPR. Debub FM's core output is in Amharic, but the network's member stations also broadcast in 46 other languages used in the SNNPR. The network is generally on air for 16 hours per day from 06.00 in the morning until 22.00 at night.

Also known as South radio, Debub FM 100.9 entertains locally produced programs aimed at informing, educating and entertaining. News and current affairs programs and entertainment shows such as game shows and quizzes account for around half of South FM's broadcast output. There are also light entertainment and popular music, documentary and current affairs. And news bulletins every hour. Main source of news information: staff reporters, regional and Zonal communication sectors, ENA, international broadcast media and the Internet. It also collects its own news. There are 60 full time journalists in main station and 248 full time journalists in network stations. Training schemes: basic principles of journalism, government policies and technical capacity building specially technicians. Trainings organized by: South Mass Media Agency.

#### **6.2.9 Dire Dawa FM 106.1**

Dire Dawa FM, which was established by Regional Council, commenced officially in April 2005. It is owned by Dire Dawa Mass Media Agency which also operates a local television station. The Agency produces informational, educational and entertaining programs. The programs are prepared in the three languages of the local population. Outer areas the station can be received: Dire dawa, East Oromia, West Somali, Chinnili Zone, and South. The station has a daily load of 11 hours in Amharic, Oromo and Somali and weekly load of 77 hours. The station is on air from 08.00 to 12.00 in the morning and 14.00 to 21.00 in the afternoon and evening. Documentary and current affairs are the major programs. It also collects its own news.

There are 28 full and 11 part time journalists and 16 volunteers. Training schemes: journalism ethics, developmental journalism, media laws and regulations, program standards. Trainings

organized by: South Mass Media Agency. Trainings organized by: EBA, capacity building bureau and training institutes in collaboration with the agency. Main source of news information: WALTA, BBC and ENA.

#### **6.2.10 Mekele FM 104.4**

Run by Tigray Mass Media Agency, FM Mekele 104.4 runs for 15 hours in a day and 105 hour per week. The station was established in April 2009 and covers regional issues. Mekele 104.4 FM is a government radio station that broadcasts from Mekele, the capital of Tigray region in northern Ethiopia. The station claims to reach 2.5 million people who live within 100 km radius of its two FM transmitters in Mekele city. Mekele FM broadcasts current affairs and entertainment programming in Tigrinya for 16 hours per day. A substantial part of its output consists of phone-in programs. Outer areas the station can be received: Axum, Adigrat, Hawzen, Doga Temben, Yechila, Anferom wereda, Naeder Adet, Adagahamus, Enderta Wereda, Woknokilte, Awaelo, Samre, Sinkata (Firiwine). The station has 13 full time, 3 part time employees and 6 volunteers. Training schemes: on various topics. Trainings organized by: FM Mekelle and Mekelle University. Documentary and current affairs are the major programs. It also collects its own news. Main source of news information are: Woreda, staff reporters and Internet.

#### **6.2.11 Harari FM 101.4**

This government-run radio station serves the city of Harar in northeastern Ethiopia and the small administrative region which surrounds it. Outer areas the station can be received: Gursum and Bedeno. Harari FM claims to reach 500,000 people living within a 25 km radius of the city. It broadcasts light entertainment programming for six hours per day in Harari, Amharic and Oromo. Established in 2008, the station is operated by the Harari Mass Media Agency.

Trainings organized by: government and non-government organizations. The station has 29 full time journalists. Kind of programming: documentary and current affairs and light entertainment and popular music. Main source of news information: staff reporters, Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency, websites and the BBC. It also collects its own news.

#### **6.2.12 Somali 99.1 FM**

The radio station based in Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region in southeastern Ethiopia, is run by the Somali Mass Media Agency. It broadcasts mainly in the Somali language. Its parent organization also launched a local TV service in Jijiga in late 2010.

## **6.3 Commercial/Private Radios in Ethiopia**

### **6.3.1 The Broadcasters**

The government maintains a complete monopoly on television broadcasting, but it has licensed a handful of private radio stations. The largest of these are Fana Radio, based in Addis Ababa and Dimtsi Weyane Tigray (DWET), based in Mekele, the capital of the northern Tigray region. However, both these stations are controlled by interests close to the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party. Four genuinely private FM radio stations exist in Addis Ababa, but they all steer well away from critical news reporting that might upset the government.

There are a total of six private radio broadcasters: Afro FM, Dimitsi Woyane Tigray (DWET), Fana Broadcasting Corporation, Sheger FM, Zami FM and Bisrat FM. Four of these: Afro FM, Fana Broadcasting Corporation, Sheger Radio, Zami FM and Bisrat FM are located in Addis Ababa. Both DWET and Fana Broadcasting Corporation have historical associations with the TPLF and EPRDF respectively, but are today legally registered as companies. The Fana Broadcasting Corporation operates two radio stations: Fana FM and Fana Radio.

Their transmission range varies: Fana Radio is the only broadcaster apart from ERTA that has near national coverage, Afro FM estimates a footprint of 100km radius and Sheger and Zami have a transmission radius of 40km in and around Addis Ababa. The final private radio broadcaster, Dimitsi Woyane Tigray (DWET), operates in Mekelle and has an estimated transmission range of 1,500km.

### **6.3.2 Dimtsi Woyane Tigray (DWET)**

#### **A. A Brief History of Dimtsi Woyane Tigray (DWET)**

The radio station was first established to vehicle the Tigrian Liberation Front's Movement and secondly it was intended to address the political, economic and cultural development of the

Tigrian people. VORT birth was, in larger part, the result of efforts by the Tigrian community in “Sahel Arag” in September 1979 independently with radio EPLF’s (Eritrean People's Liberation Front) daily with an hour program. Later, during 1981-83 established in “Aberebe” in between 1983-85 shifted “Shaabit” in the domain of the EPLF in Eritrea. However, due to the dispute arises between TPLF and EPLF the new radio station was installed around “Welqait” (May-Mussie) and broadcasts its “Dimtsi Woyane Tigray kabhara merit Tigray” since July 8, 1985.

Because of many reasons, the newly installed radio station was not installed permanently at one place, as a result, from 1988-89 the station was transferred to “Tsegedie”, from 1989-90 in semen mountains around “Rasdegen” ; 1990-91 in Hagereselam and that after the downfall of the Derge Regime it installed in Addis Ababa Until 1992, lastly permanently it settled in Mekelle town. Until 1991, VORT’s transmitter was located on Lookout Mountain in the rural area of Tigray. Judging from audience calls, the DWT signal reached as Arabian countries. However, as VORT’s transmission equipment is aged, there were increasing complaints of weak signaling, static and erratic program transmission in some areas of Ethiopia.

### **B. Dimtsi Woyane Tigray (DWET) Today**

The radio broadcasts programs in Tigrigna language for maximum coverage of 995 minutes per a week, Afarigna 260 minutes per a week, Kunamgna 60 minutes per a week, and keyhebahre (for Eritrean Tigrigna speakers) 60 minutes per a week with collaboration of the different parties and VORT on Short and Medium Wave to much of northern Ethiopia. The radio station was relied solely on the hand of TPLF, rather than commercial sales to cover its operating cost until the fall down of the Derge regime. Later, the TPLF funding for VORT broadcasting was terminated. Consequently this leads to the station were increasingly forced to the self- sustaining. In any case, the ultimate challenge was marketing; despite the obvious lack of money to support the fund raising efforts.

It is now owned by Effort and Messebo Cement Factory and is officially classified as a private radio station. DWET says that its broadcasts cover five million people. The station is on air for 10 hours per day during the week, with separate broadcasts in the morning, at lunchtime and in the evening. It broadcasts for 14 hours per day at weekends. Outer areas the station can be received: whole of Ethiopia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, and South Sudan. It

broadcasts programs in Tigrigna and Afar languages. Main source of news information are: ENA and Internet, staff reporters. It also collects its own news. There are 55 full time journalists working for the station. Training schemes: different training by internal as well as external organizations. Trainings organized by: the company. Its sources of revenue is supposed to be 100% advertising.

### **6.3.3 DWET 102.2 FM**

DWET FM broadcasts music and entertainment programs in Tigrinya from Mekele. It is on air for 18 hours per day from 6:00 to midnight and claims to reach about one million people. DWET FM began broadcasting in February 2010. The station is an offshoot from Dimtsi Woyane Tigray (DWET), the private broadcasting company that grew out of the former clandestine radio station of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the forerunner of Ethiopia's ruling EPRDF party. It is owned by Effort and Messebo Cement Factory. It claims that its broadcasts cover one million people. It broadcasts for 16 hours per day. It broadcasts light entertainment and popular music in Tigrigna. There are 14 full time journalists working for the station. Its sources of revenue is supposed to be 100% advertising. Main source of news information are: ENA and Internet, staff reporters. It also collects its own news.

### **6.3.4 Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC)**

#### **a) Background**

Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.Co., the Nation's first commercial National Broadcaster and multi-lingual Radio Station, used to be a clandestine anti-Derg voice of Liberation (Voice of EPRDF) before its establishment as "Radio Fana S.Co." in 1994. With the defeat of the notorious military regime by the EPRDF led popular struggle, Radio Fana has been re-organized under the ownership of the four Regional Endowments. The major shareholders of the company are: EFFORT, TIRET, TUMSA and Wondo. As of January 2011, Radio Fana Sh.Co., grew to Fana Broadcasting Corporate S.Co. so as to enter into the TV business. FBC's current capital is ETB 100 million and operates three SW, one MW and 7 FM transmitters Nation-wide. FBC has incorporated commercial and public service values and advocates developmental journalism to

foster nation building and fight against poverty. Currently FBC has around 360 employees in the main branch and 304 employees in the regional stations, a total of 664 very strong employees.

1. Addis Ababa FM 98.1
2. Jimma Fana FM 98.1
3. Gonder Fana FM 98.1
4. Dessie Fana FM 96.0
5. Mekele Fana FM 94.8
6. Haromaya Fana FM 94.8
7. Shashemene Fana FM 103.4
8. Wolayita Fana FM 99.9
9. Nekemitie Fana FM 96.1
10. Debre Berihan Fana FM 94.0
11. Asela Fana FM 90.0
12. Mizan Aman Fana FM 92.5

Radio Fana, a private Addis Ababa radio station with close links to the EPDRF, also reaches a wide audience across Ethiopia. Radio Fana says that its Medium and Short Wave broadcasts reach 30 million people. Its Fana FM subsidiary broadcasts on FM in eight cities across Ethiopia. It claims a potential audience of eight million.

## **b) Radio Fana**

### **a. A Brief History of Radio Fana**

Radio Fana, established November 1994, was known as Voice of the Tigray Revolution during the Derg period and used to broadcast from an anti-aircraft protected cave in the Semien Mountains, more than 3500 meters above sea level. It could now come out of hiding and was established as an open media agency in the capital together with an affiliated news agency, Walta Information Center, which opened the month after. Both Radio Fana and Walta remain property of the MegaNet Corporation, which in turn is indirectly linked to EPRDF economy.

Its historical context goes back to the civil war of Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) with the Derg regime that has also shown its history attached with the movement of TPLF. TPLF

established this radio in October 10, 1979 by the name called “This is the Voice of Tigray Revolution” at the hill of ‘Sahil’ the place where it is found in Tigray. The objectives were to announce and to give information for the people of Tigray and the people out of Tigray region about the causes, inceptions and objectives of TPLF struggle and movement, the oppressive and brutal behavior of the Derg regime and its achievements and its futurity and directions of the TPLF’s struggle.

The programs were primarily broadcast in Tigrigna. After a year, it started transmitting in Amharic. It ceased its broadcasting in 1981 because of the parties’ conflict that arose between TPLF and Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF). However, it restarted its broadcasting after five years in July 16, 1986 at ‘Maymessie’ the place which is also found in Tigray, and it transmitted its programs for an hour in both languages (30 minutes in Tigrigna and 30 minutes in Amharic). It also expanded its programs by including Afan Oromo as transmission language in 1990. It often changed the place where the station located for military purpose; for instance, it was at ‘Tsegede’, ‘Hay’ (Tip of Ras Dashen hill), ‘Tenbien’, and ‘Mekele, in 1989, 1989, 1990 and 1991-93 respectively.

In 1993, after the Derg collapsed and the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came into power, transitional government of Ethiopia has passed in its proclamation of press freedom ‘all media which have already being aired shall continue their broadcasting’. Following this proclamation, on October 22, 1994, the radio was reestablished in a new form of private commercial medium by name ‘Radio Fana’ and started its broadcasting in Amharic and Afan Oromo at Addis Ababa (N.B. its Tigrigna broadcasting had covered areas around Tigray since 1992). When Radio Fana reestablished as commercial medium, it faced two major challenges; these were: management and economic problem, and disabilities of maximizing and attracting audiences. These were the turning points that initiated the medium to conduct and process audience research.

### **b. Radio Fana Today**

The history of Radio Fana pertinently illustrates the politically-inclined pragmatism of Ethiopian media governance. The radio station has been allowed to operate freely, while no other private radio station was granted a license until 2007. Different reasons have been given for this from



the official side, including a loophole in the 1992 press law which granted existing media outlets at the time a right to continue operation, but the explanations boil down to a testimony of discriminatory treatment of pro-government media houses vis-à-vis others. In reality, Radio Fana existed «out- side of a publicly known and consistent regulatory framework». When the radio market was eventually opened for private broadcasters in 2007, Radio Fana became the first station to receive a commercial license. However, that Radio Fana is owned by an EPRDF-affiliated corporation was not problematical in the licensing process, even though the 2007 broadcasting proclamation prohibits politically-affiliated organizations to possess a broadcasting license (clause 23(3)). Thus, the policy line towards Radio Fana and Walta has been favorable ever since their inception in 1994, owing to their pro-government stance. A the affluent medium group Radio Fana, having changed its company name to Fana Broadcasting Corporate in 2011, have ambitions to become the first private television broadcaster in the country by 2013 and has already submitted an application for license.

Radio Fana's Ethiopika Link entertainment program is meanwhile popular amongst youth. It deals with music, films, celebrity gossip and matters of the heart. Radio Fana broadcasts general programming to much of Ethiopia from Addis Ababa on Short and Medium Wave. It claims to reach a potential audience of 30 million people within 1,000 km radius of the capital. Fana FM, broadcasts to mainly urban audiences in Addis Ababa and seven other cities across Ethiopia. Radio Fana broadcasts 18 hours per day in Amharic, Oromo, Somali and Afar in rotating time slots. The station has a strong focus on news and current affairs. Phone-in programs account for around 10% of Radio Fana's output. Since its establishment in 1994, the station is broadcasting its programs in four local languages namely Amharic, Afan Oromo, Afar and Somalia Languages. The station launched it FM transmission in March 2007.

### **c. Fana FM**

Fana FM is Radio Fana Share Company's urban music and entertainment station based in Addis Ababa. It claims to reach 10 million people in eight cities across Ethiopia. Fana FM broadcasts mainly in Amharic, but the station has programming variants in other languages for its regional services. Established in 2007, the station broadcasts for 18 hours per day from 06.00 to midnight. It shares common programming with Radio Fana, its Short and Medium Wave stable mate, from 17.00 to 20.00. Fana FM broadcasts in the following cities: Addis Ababa 98.1 FM Gondar

(Amhara) 98.1 FM Jimma (SNNPR) 98.1 FM Mekele (Tigray) 94.8 FM Dessie (Amhara) 96.0 FM Shashemene (Oromia) 103.4 FM Haramaya (Oromia) 94.8 FM Kersa Dek (Oromia) 94.8 FM

### **6.3.5 Sheger FM 102.1**

Sheger FM 102.1 is the first private owned FM radio in Ethiopia. It was established in April 2006. But it went on air in 2005. Sheger has 13 full time journalists and additional 19 workers. Sheger is owned by Adey Tinsae Media and Entertainment Plc and its transmission covers about 40km radius around Addis Ababa. Outer areas the station can be received: Addis Ababa, Bishoftu, Adama, Shashemene, Asella. Its estimated audience reached 3 million people. It transmits English program two hours a day by rebroadcasting music from VOA. The total transmission hours in a day are 18 hours. Its revenue is totally from advertising. Currently it is profitable.

With regard to its content the station main programs are light entertainment and popular music. The most common program types of the station are Music, Sport news, News, Health Program, Dramatic narration of a book, Solid waste Management, Science and Technology, Personality profile, Discussion, Review & Preview and others. Sheger also collects its own news by staff reporters as well as from regional communication affair bureaus. It broadcasts its news for 30 minutes, 3 times a day. Popular programs include the phone-in show Erso Bihonu Min Yadergalu (What would you do if it were you?). Each edition of this program examines a complicated social situation. Listeners are then invited to phone in with their views on how they would handle it.

Despite this, Sheger is known by its originality in news presentation and catering to listeners across all age groups and strands of life, and its creative productions and format as unique and worthy of setting a precedent for all others (MSI, 2009; Ward, 2011). The ERIS's study shows that the station is becoming one of the leading stations in Addis Ababa.

### **6.3.6 Zami FM 90.7 Radio**

Zami Radio was established in 2006 and runs for 18 hours per day and 126 per week. It is owned by Zami Public Connection Plc. Outer areas the station can be received: Debreberhan, Menz,

Metehara, Nazreth, Asella, Ziway, Arusi Negele, Shashemene, Welisso, Wolayita, Menagesha, Ambo, Melketure, Fitcha, Merhabete and Sheno. It has 29 full time journalists and additional 3 volunteers. The radio station broadcasts a broad mixture of current affairs, music and light entertainment to Addis Ababa and the surrounding area. It mainly focuses on social problems of the Addis and its surrounding. The station can be heard within 40 km radius of the capital. It claims to reach a potential audience of three million.

Zami FM broadcasts in Amharic. Main source of news information: staff reporters, government and non-government institutions, individual citizens, regional states sub-city offices, civic and professional societies. It also collects its own news. Training schemes: regular in house training; and various trainings organized by government and non-government organizations. Trainings organized by: Internews, Panos, EBA, NEB, ERIS, USAID, EWLA, NEWA. Its revenue is totally from advertising. Currently it is not profitable.

#### **6.3.7 Afro FM 105.1**

Owned by Paconet Media PLC, Afro FM 105.1 is an infotainment station that operates for 18 hours a day. Afro FM 105.1 was established in 2009 and it is the first independent, privately owned FM radio in Ethiopia that operates exclusively in foreign languages. The radio station has been striving to update the diplomatic corps, the wider expatriate community and the Ethiopian Diaspora as well as the middle and upper middle income local residence about major issues happening in the country and around the world. Afro FM station broadcasts current affairs, music and light entertainment programs to Addis Ababa and the surrounding area in English. Outer areas the station can be received: Addis Ababa, DebreZeith, Modjo, Alemaya and Shashemene.

This private commercial radio station was set up in 2008 by shareholder and Managing Director Addis Alemayehou and his wife to cater for the large expatriate community in Addis Ababa and Ethiopia's English speaking elite. Addis himself comes from an international background, having grown up in Kenya and worked in Canada before returning to Ethiopia. Afro FM claims to reach a potential audience of three million people within 100 km radius of the capital. There are news bulletins on the hour. Although Afro FM broadcasts mainly in English, it also has some programs in French and Arabic too. The station is on air for 18 hours per day from 6:00 to midnight. Its programming includes documentary, current affairs, light entertainment, popular

music and phone-ins. The station has 20 full time, 9 part time journalists and 3 volunteers. Training schemes: professional training for journalists; awareness on pertinent policies of the land; training for radio technicians. Trainings organized by: the station and AAU School of Journalism. Its revenue is totally from advertising. Currently it is not profitable. Main source of news information: reporters of the station, news agencies (local and international) press releases and other outlets. It also collects its own news.

#### **6.3.8 Bisrat FM 101.1**

Bisrat FM 101.1 is a radio station established by Oyaya Multimedia in 2014. Journalist Messele Mengistu, is the owner of Oyaya Multimedia. The core objective of Bisrat FM 101.1 is to fill the information gap in Ethiopia in the sphere of education, health, sport, entertainment, science and other social affairs. It is now in the process of broadcasting its transmission within Addis Ababa and its surrounding towns and to the entire world through live streaming.

#### **6.3.9 Abay**

Abay FM 102.9 is a radio station established by HH & YT Media and Communication in 2014.

#### **Other Commercial Radios**

In Ethiopia there are also two commercial radio stations giving service with subscription to rebroadcast foreign programs namely, Multi Choice Ethiopia and Bridge Tec Broadcasting & Media Plc. Let's look their brief profile.

#### **6.3.10 Multi Choice Ethiopia**

Multi Choice Ethiopia was established in 2007. It is owned by Multi Choice Ethiopia. The station is currently on air. It broadcasts in foreign language. The station aims to reach audience nationwide.

#### **6.3.11 BridgeTec Broadcasting & Media**

BridgeTec Broadcasting & Media was established in 2011. It is owned by BridgeTec Broadcasting & Media Plc. It didn't start broadcasting yet. The station broadcasts in foreign language. The station aims to reach audience in Addis Ababa city.

## **6.4 Community Radios in Ethiopia**

### **A. A Brief History of Community Radio in Ethiopia**

The history of community radio in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. Its development is associated with the Broadcasting Law of the 2007. It comes about due to the FDRE Constitution, Article 29, which stipulates the rights of thought, opinion, and expression. Citizens' rights to freedom of expression, freedom of the press and other mass media, and free flow of information, ideas and opinions has been given constitutional protection. In addition to this, Art. 39 assured that rights of nations, nationalities and peoples with respect to the right to speak, to write and to develop their own language; to develop and promote its culture; and to preserve their history. Art. 38 also provided for the right to vote and to be elected. This means that every citizen has the right to actively participate in the affairs of the society. Article 40 ensures the right to property. These constitutional provisions have paved the way for the emergence of community radio in Ethiopia.

The attempt to establish community radio in Ethiopia was made by the Horn of Africa Capacity Building Program (HOACBO). The 'Capacity Building in East Africa Program', by Oxfam Canada was the catalyst for the emergence of Ethiopian National Community Radio Advocacy Group. Its aim was 'information for development' and advocate for the importance of Information Communication Technology. The first symposium was launched in Addis Ababa to promote community radio in East Africa in January 2002. At the end of the workshop, the participants proposed that the government of Ethiopia should prepare legal framework for the community radio. That was the starting point for community radio in Ethiopia. Oxfam Canada prepared the second workshop on the community radio at the National Hotel in Ethiopia. The workshop raised issues related to assessing situations and brainstorming how to develop community radio in Ethiopia. After this, one volunteer group comprising of five members has been set up and started its job under Oxfam Canada. The group was named "National Community Radio Advocacy Group". This group played a pivotal role in the emergence and development of community radio in Ethiopia.

The institution was empowered to fund and establish three community radio stations in the horn of Africa. These were radio Kigali for Punt Land and Somalia, and Radio Sidama and Radio Harar (currently closed) for Ethiopia. However, designating the first community radio in Ethiopia is still controversial. Even though, the three radio stations viz. the two aforementioned community radios and Gullele community radio (which was at the pilot project level in Addis Ababa and it was later closed down) were considered as the earlier community radios by some researchers; Kore community radio is the first licensed by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA). Hence, the closure of Harar Community Radio and Gulele Community Radio pilot project demonstrated that Sidama radio was probably the first operational station and Kore Radio as the first to be award license. The EBA provided a detailed and revised “Community Broadcast Service License Issuance and Work Procedure” in 2008.

Since 2008, the government has also set up 14 community FM radio stations in various small towns across the country. Fourteen community radio broadcasters are registered in Ethiopia. The community radio stations cover a radius ranging from 16km-75km and their population coverage varies significantly. In some cases they have a limited reach of 16,000 and in other cases this raises up to 1.5 million potential listeners. These stations include: Argoba Radio, Kombolcha Radio, Kefa Radio, Waghimra Radio, Sudie Radio, Jimma Radio, Korrie Radio, Kembata Radio, The Ethiopian Civil Service University radio, Setit Humerra Radio, Haremaya University Radio, Hawassa University Radio, Kebri Dahar Radio and Wollega University Radio. Many universities including Dilla University are on process to open community radios. These stations largely rely on a volunteer workforce.

Even though the government began licensed eight community radio stations in 2008, most of them only began broadcasting in 2010 and 2011. The community stations are partly financed by the government, but they also raise revenue from advertising and donations. Many of their staffs are volunteers. Most of them serve small ethnic groups which have a strong sense of local identity. Regional and community radio stations mainly broadcast in the local languages spoken within their coverage area.

## **B. Legal Framework for Community Radio: The Community Broadcasting Service Licensing and Working Guide**

In its preamble, the guide makes it clear that it has been formulated based on the Proclamation No. 178/1999. Thus, this proclamation is the foundation for the establishment of community radio. Article 2.1 of the Guide defines ‘community’ as “an entity consisting of social groups that share similar interests and needs or that has settled in a given territory”. Community broadcasting service means a non-profit making broadcast service, which can be established on the will of a community that has settled in a given territory or that shares common interest. Although it is a very short definition, it has a room to accommodate community radio.

According to the guide the main objective of a community broadcasting service is to provide informational, educational, and entertaining programs for those who are found beyond the reach of the main media center. In addition, the following requirements are included. A community broadcasting service:

- works based on the community’s interest in development, education and good governance,
- introduces and develops the language, culture and art of the community,
- participates the community in program production,
- deals with the local issues that are not covered by other broadcasting services.
- accepts information and comments from the community and by investigating the truth informs them back,
- develops the information culture and knowledge within the society by providing programs that deal with specific community issues,
- focuses on programs that appreciate human and democratic rights so as to build up the understanding of the community, and
- accepts equivalent advertisement-payments and use it to promote the station.

These guiding principles of community broadcasting service have a strong resemblance to the South African community broadcasting service policy. At a glance, it looks like a good guide that gives due consideration to other countries’ experiences.

## **6.5 The Community Radio Stations**

### **6.5.1 Korie Community Radio 92.3FM**

#### **A. A Brief History of the Establishment of Korie Community Radio**

The idea of developing Kore community radio was initiated by an NGO called Agri Service Ethiopia which works in four regions of the country. The organization had accepted the responsibility to run community radio to facilitate the grass root level developmental activities. Getting the legal entity of the Kore community board from the regional justice office was very difficult. No one knew about community radio at that time. And the organization had to introduce the idea in every office. After three years of endeavors the proclamation of community radio was adopted by Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (EBA) and the Kore community became the first to apply. However, the process was not smooth.

Even though the Kore community applied for license on time, the license has been awarded after eleven months in January 2007. The major activity that had been done after the awarding was trying to acquire fund. The organization has submitted the project proposal for several international organizations. Currently Information and Communication Assisted Development (ICTAD) which is a joint institution of World Bank and Ethiopia government has accepted the proposal and promised to fund. Following the acceptance of the proposal, the trilateral agreement was signed among the Kore community board, Agri Service and ICTAD.

## **B. Korie Community Radio Today**

Korie Community Radio, based in Kelle town in SNNPR was still undergoing pilot testing in mid-2011. The station plans to broadcast for three hours per day in Koreti and Amharic. It aims to establish regular broadcasts from 06:00 to 07:30 in the morning and from 18.00 to 19.30 in the evening. Korie Community Radio reaches a population of about 100,000 people living within a 70 km radius of Kelle town. Outer areas the station can be received: Hagere Mariam, Yirgachefe, Fisseha Genet, Korie and partially Burji Woreda. Number of employees: 4 full time and 15 volunteers.

### **6.5.2 Argoba Nation Community Radio 98.6 FM**

Argoba Nation Community Radio was formally established in 2010 in the town of Gachenie/Argoba Special Woreda (in Ethiopia's northern Afar Region near the Eritrean border. However, by mid-2011 it was not yet operational. The station was due to broadcast for four hours per day, mainly in the local language Argobinya. The Argoba district is distinctive not



only because of its language and culture, but because its population relies mainly on agriculture. Most of the population of Afar region is nomadic pastoralists. Outer areas the station can be received: expected, Afar; North Shoa (Ankober Woreda and its surroundings). Sources of revenue: public financing 65%, advertising 10% and donations/ private money 25%. The station broadcasts in Argobigna, Amharic and Afar languages.

### **6.5.3 Jimma Community Radio 102.0 FM**

Jimma Community Radio was established in the town of Jimma in south-central Oromia Region in 2008 and began operating in early 2011. It claims to reach a potential audience of one million people living within 75 km radius of Jimma town. The station broadcasts in Afan Oromo and Amharic and is on air for up to 15 hours per day. Outer areas the station can be received: Jimma Town, Ilubabor Zone (Dembi Woreda) Hassaena, Wollega (Jimma Arjo). Number of employees: 3 full time and 60 volunteers (63 volunteers). Sources of revenue: advertising 15% and donations/ private money 85%.

The station was established by Jimma University and in collaboration with Jimma community. Jimma University is following community based educational philosophy. In order to run this community based educational philosophy successfully and put the research findings into practice to benefiting the whole community with the view the media have an enormous role.

The Radio is administered by a board selected from the community. There are 300 general assembly members selected from all members of the community. The general assembly is composed of different social groups like handicaps, merchants, women, youth, civil servants, government delegates and other socially relevant groups. The assembly conducts its meeting once a year. From 300 assembly members, there are ten executive committee members who follow-up the overall activities of the radio. This committee conducts its meeting once a month and listen to the monthly reports on the progress of the activities of the radio. Among the ten executive committee members, three have been given special mandates. These members are the board chairperson, the vice chairperson of the board and the secretary. These three individuals have a weekly contact with the manager of the Jimma Community Radio in order to monitor all the activities of the radio and evaluate its current status.

#### **6.5.4 Keffa Community Radio 102.5 FM**

This radio station, based in Bonga town in SNNPR, serves the Keffa (often spelt Kaffa) ethnic community in the local area. Established in 2008 and until mid-2011 it was running test broadcasts. The station broadcasts in the local language Kaffinya and aims to reach 50,000 people living within 40 km radius of its transmitter. It is due to broadcast for two hours per day; one hour in the morning from 7:00 to 8:00 and one hour in the evening from 18:00 to 19:00. Outer areas the station can be received: Bonga Town, Bench Maji Zone (Aman Town, Telo Woreda (Osa Town). Number of employees: 5 full time journalists and 8 volunteers. Kaffa was an independent kingdom until the end of the 19th century and has a strong sense of local identity.

#### **6.5.5 Kembata Community Radio 105.8 FM**

Kembata Community Radio was formally established in the town of Durame in SNNPR in 2008, but it only began broadcasting in 2011. The station estimates that it can reach 700,000 potential listeners within a 35-40 km radius of its transmitter. The station broadcasts in the Kembatinya language for seven hours daily. It is on air from 09:00 to 12:00 in the morning and again from 16:00p.m. to 20:00 in the evening. Outer areas the station can be received: Kenbata, Alaba, Shonie. Number of Employees: 6 full time journalists, 10 part time and 8 volunteers. Sources of revenue: public financing 50%, advertising 5%, donations/ private money 45%.

#### **6.5.6 Kombolcha Town Community Radio 104.8 FM**

Kombolcha Community Radio is one of the community radios in Ethiopia. It was established in March 2008. It transmits some regular programs in Amharic language. The station began operating in 2011. It broadcasts for 14 hours daily, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The station estimates that 1.5 million people live within its 75 km radius broadcast coverage area. The program genres that are broadcast in the station include children's programs (4%), debate and discussion (20%), drama (7%), entertainment (21%), health (6%), phone-ins (32%) and sport (10%). Outer areas the station can be received: Dessie, Kemmissie, logiya (Afar Region), Hayq, Albco, Bati. Number of employees: 7 full time journalists and 30 volunteers.

#### **6.5.7 Sudie (or Sude) Community Radio 103.5 FM**

Sudie (or Sude) Community Radio was established in Kulla town in Oromia in 2008. It began test broadcasts in 2011 in Afan Oromo. The station aims to reach 15,000 potential listeners within a 16 km radius of its transmitter. It broadcasts for four hours per day in Oromo from 08:00 to 10:00 in the morning and from 14.00 to 16.00 in the afternoon. Outer areas the station can be received: Robie Town, Bulbula Town, Dirgig Town and the neighbouring Woredas. Number of employees: 40 volunteers.

#### **6.5.8 Waghimra Community Radio 92.7FM**

Waghimra Community Radio broadcasts to about 500,000 people living within a 55 km radius of Sekota town in the Amhara region in northwestern Ethiopia. The radio station was established in 2009 and began test broadcasts in early 2011 in Agewgna and Amharic. It broadcasts in Amharic for four hours in the morning from 08.00 to 12.00 and in Agew, the predominant local language, for four hours in the afternoon from 14.00 to 18.00. Network stations in other areas: Abergele Woreda, Tigray, Zikwala Woreda, Debark Woreda and Gozgiba Woreda. Number of employees: 2 full time and 6 part time journalists and 20 volunteers..

#### **6.5.9 The Ethiopian Civil Service University Community Radio FM 100.5**

The Ethiopian Civil Service University Community Radio FM 100.5 was established in Addis Ababa city in 2011. The station was ready to start full broadcasting in the same year. It broadcasts in Afan Oromo and Amharic. The station aims to reach potential listeners in Addis Ababa and its surroundings. It broadcasts for six hours per day and 42 hours per week.

#### **6.5.10 The Setit Humerra Community Radio FM 106.9**

The Setit Humerra Community Radio FM 106.9 was established in Setit Humerra town in 2011. The station was ready to start full broadcasting in the same year. It broadcasts in Tigre. The station aims to reach potential listeners in Setit Humerra town and its surroundings. It broadcasts for 14 hours per day and 98 hours per week.

#### **6.5.11 Haremaya University Community Radio FM 91.5**

Haremaya University Community Radio FM 91.5 was established in Haremaya town in 2012. The station started broadcasting in April 2012. It broadcasts in Afan Oromo, Amharic and English. The station aims to reach potential listeners in Haremaya University and its surroundings. It broadcasts for seven hours per day and 49 hours per week.

#### **6.5.12 Hawassa University Community Radio FM 90.9**

Hawassa University Community Radio FM 90.9 was established in Hawassa town in 2012. The station started broadcasting in May 2012. It broadcasts in Amharic and English. The station aims to reach potential listeners in Hawassa University and its surroundings. It broadcasts for eight hours per day and 56 hours per week.

#### **6.5.13 The Kebridahar Community Radio FM 90.8**

The Kebridahar Community Radio FM 90.8 was established in Kebridahar town in 2012. The station was ready to start full broadcasting in the same year. It broadcasts mainly in Somali and occasionally in Amharic. The station aims to reach potential listeners in Kebridahar and its surroundings. It broadcasts for eight hours per day and 56 hours per week.

#### **6.5.14 The Wollega University Community Radio FM 89.0**

The Wollega University Community Radio FM 89.0 was established in Nekemtie town in 2014. The station was ready to start full broadcasting in the same year. It broadcasts in Amharic, Afan Oromo and English. The station aims to reach potential listeners in Wollega University and its surroundings. It broadcasts for seven hours per day from Monday-Saturday and 10 hours on Sunday and 52 hours per week.

#### **6.5.15 The Three Forerunner Community Radios**

##### **6.5.15.1 Sidama Educational Radio Station**

As the name denotes this radio station is an educational radio that gives services to the southern parts of Ethiopia. It's known as the first community radio in the country. It is one of the components of the Irish Aid-funded Sidama Development Program. It started out as an autonomous project in 2007 by Sidam Development Corporation with the financial support of

the Irish government at Yirgalem town. Currently, Sidama Radio is under the control of the Educational Bureau of Southern Peoples Nation and Nationalities state. It aims to improve the quality of education for the Sidama people through radio programs, which are transmitted in Sidama language six hours daily, divided into half-hour slots and cover a range of issues relevant to the people in the area. It is estimated that the station gives service to almost 3.5 million people.

The Sidama Development Program and Irish Aid partnership intention was to establish community radio with the purpose of promoting community participatory development. But due to legal limitation, they were forced to work jointly with the zonal department of education and to use the media for both education and community development. Thus the Sidama radio broadcast two major types of programs, formal educational programs and general audience programs. The station transmission covers 188 km radios. The transmission of the station covers the whole area of Sidama and some adjacent zones southern region such as Wolayita and Gedeo as well as some parts of Oromiya region.

The major types of the program broadcast by Sidama educational radio station are formal educational program for elementary schools and general audience program. The educational programs are intended to support the formal education of the zone (Sidama) and are transmitted during the academic weeks. The general audience program, on the other hand, is broadcast for listeners in the zone in the Sidama language over the weekend. News, health, agriculture and music are the main components of the program. All the items of the program are community-oriented to reflect the day-to-day activities of citizens; the program set-up is similar to that of a community radio station. Besides, the audience is actively participating in selecting music, interviews, discussions and debates through letters, telephone calls and in person. Therefore, it may not be a mistake to say that this radio station has developed a good experience that could help it convert into community radio.

#### **6.5.15.2 Harar Community Radio**

Harar Community Radio was the first and the only radio station in Ethiopia to broadcast its programs under the label of community radio. It was established in Harar, Harari People National Regional State. Harar Community Radio was established with in the region's

Information and Public Relation Bureau's building with the mandate of the bureau in 2003. As indicated in the document of HCR project proposal, prepared in August 1999, the first initiative to establish the station was taken by the then Information and Public Service Office of the Harari Region. For its implementation, the office made contacts with the British Embassy in Ethiopia and Oxfam Canada and succeeded in acquiring the necessary broadcast equipment. To be specific, "Oxfam-Canada purchased equipment, and...a South African, GlobeCom, was invited to set it up in partnership with a local businessman". After the installation of the equipment was completed, a workshop that called for the participation of the rural and urban residents (farmers, women, youth, students, elders, social co-operatives, and NGOs) was conducted in September 2004, and a board was set-up to run Harar Community Radio. However, with unknown reasons, the board could not become functional and the radio station had to remain under the mandate of the bureau.

For the purpose of program broadcasting and production, the radio station had two new digital studios installed by the financial support of the British Embassy in Ethiopia and Oxfam Canada (Alemeshet Teshome, personal interview 2006). In fact, these studios are now used to prepare local news subordinate to the national radio. The documents of HCR (2004) indicate that, prior to starting broadcasting; the station had conducted a sort of pre-hand need assessment by sending letters to nine bureaus of the region. And the responses of the bureaus helped HCR to decide on the types of programs, time of transmission and languages of broadcasting. Then after, its broadcasting took place, despite the absence of broadcasting license, for 17 months from February 2004 through June 2005 on FM 101.4 frequency that covered about 20kms Radius.

Since the station was under the control of the Regional government of Harari the question of license did not bother any of the Federal governmental bodies. During this period the station broadcast music and different locally related programs (health, current affairs, phone-in discussion etc.) to Harar community in three languages i.e. Amharic, Hareri and Afan Oromo. For the first six months it was on air for almost 6 hours, 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., every day. As time went on, however, the time of transmission was reduced to three and half hours that is 4:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Its broadcasting has been interrupted since June 25, 2005 due to a technical breakdown in the transmission. Although this was the official excuse, lack of proper management, financial

problem and the incapability of the producers to meet the increasing demands of the audience might be the factors that result the closure.

#### **6.5.15.3 Gulele Community Radio Pilot Project**

Gulele Community Radio pilot project was aimed at establishing community radio for Gulele sub-city, located in the north of Addis Ababa. The sub city has been selected because the majority of the dwellers were engaged in producing hand-made garments and house hold utensils in a very traditional way. Thus, there was a belief that if they got access to information and educational awareness, in a participatory manner, their cottage industries would have a chance to develop; this would result in making them lead a better livelihood.

To implement the pilot project, a workshop was conducted at the Semen Hotel- Addis Ababa on July 30, 2004. The main objective of the workshop was to discuss and establish nucleus for ' Gulele Sub-municipality Community Radio'. To this effect, they formed a committee. However, the committee could not come up with any tangible result immediately. The delay in endorsing the legitimacy of a license for broadcast media by the government has been the deterring factor for the project to become operational to date.

## List of Broadcaster

No.	Owner	Name of Station	Sector	Coverage	Languages	Location
1	Ethiopian Radio & Television Agency	Ethiopian Television	Government/ Public	National	Amharic Oromifa English, Tigrigna, Somaligna, Afar, Harari	Addis Ababa
		Ethiopia Radio	Government/ Public	National	Amharic Oromifa English, Tigrigna, Somaligna, Afar, Arabic, French	Addis Ababa
		FM Addis 97.1	Government/ Public	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	Amharic	Addis Ababa
2	Oromia Radio and Television Organization	Oromia Television	Government/ Public	Regional	Oromifa, Amharic	Adama
		Oromia Radio Station	Government/ Public	Regional	Oromifa, Amharic	Adama
		Oromia FM 92.3	Government/ Public	Adama & Surrounding	Oromifa	Adama
3	Dire Dawa Mass Media Agency	Dire TV	Government/ Public	Dire Dawa & Surrounding	Amharic, Oromifa, Somaligna	Dire Dawa
4	Amhara Regional Government Mass Media Agency	FM Dire 106.1	Government/ Public	Dire Dawa & Surrounding	Amharic, Oromifa, Somaligna	Dire Dawa
		Amhara Region Radio	Government/ Public	Regional	Amharic, Agewigna, Humtigna	Bahir Dar
		FM Bahir Dar 96.9	Government/Public	Regional	Amharic	Bahir Dar
6	Addis Ababa Mass Media Agency	FM Radio Addis 96.3	Government/ Public	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	Amharic	Addis Ababa
		Addis Television	Government/ Public	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	Amharic, English French, Arabic	Addis Ababa
7	SNNP Television and Radio Agency	South FM 100.9	Government/ Public	Regional	Amharic	Hawasa



8	Tigray Mass Media agency	Mekele FM 104.4	Government/ Public	East South & South East Tigray & Mekele Surrounding	Tigrinya	Mekele
9	Somali Mass Media Agency	Somali FM Radio	Government/ Public	Jijiga & Nearby Somali Region	Somaligna	Jijiga
		Somali Region TV	Government/ Public	Jijiga & Nearby Somali Region	Somali	Jijiga
10	Harari Mass Media agency	Harar FM 101.4	Government/ Public	Regional	Amharic, Oromo, Harari	Harar
11	Adey Tensaye Media & Entertainment	Sheger FM 102.1	Commercial	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	Amharic	Addis Ababa
12	Zami Public Connection	Zami FM 90.7	Commercial	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	Amharic	Addis Ababa
13	Radio Fana Share Company	Radio Fana	Commercial	National	Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Afar	Addis Ababa
		Fana FM 98.1	Commercial	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	Amharic	Addis Ababa
14	Dimtsi Weyane Tigray Plc.	Dimtsi Weyane Tigray	Commercial	National	Tigrinya, Afar, Kunaminya	Mekele
15	Paconet Media Plc.	Afro FM 105.3	Commercial	Addis Ababa & Surrounding	English, French Arabic	Addis Ababa
16	Kembata Community Radio	Kenbata Community Radio	Community	Kenbata Zone	Kembatinya	Durame
17	Kore Community Radio	Kore Community Radio	Community	Amaro Liyu Wereda, Kore Community	Korete, Amharic	Amaro Liyu Wreda
18	Sude Wereda Community Radio	Sude Wereda Community Radio	Community	Surrounding	Oromo	Kore Kulu Kebele
19	Jimma Community Radio	Jimma Community Radio	Community	Surrounding	Amharic, Oromo	Jimma
20	Kafa Community Radio	Kafa Community Radio	Community	Surrounding	Kefinya	Bonga
21	Kombelcha Community	Kombelcha Community Radio	Community	Surrounding	Amharic	Kombelcha
22	Waghimra Community	Wag Himra Community	Community	Surrounding	Amharic,	Sekota

		Radio			Kefinya, Agewinya, Tigrinya	
23	Argoba Community Radio Broadcast Service Association	Kenbata Community Radio	Community	Argoba Wereda & Surrounding	Argobinya	Gachene
24	The Ethiopian Civil Service University	The Ethiopian Civil Service University Radio	Community	The Ethiopian Civil Service University and Surrounding	Amharic, Oromo	
25	Setit Humerra Community	Setit Humerra Radio	Community	Setit Humerra and Surrounding	Tigrigna	
26	Haremaya University	Haremaya University Radio	Community	Haremaya University and Surrounding	Amharic, Oromo, English	
27	Hawassa University Community	Hawassa University Radio	Community	Hawassa University and Surrounding	Amharic, Oromo, English	
28	Kebridahar Community	Kebridahar Radio	Community	Kebridahar and Surrounding	Somali, Amharic	
29	Wollega University Radio	Wollega University Radio	Community	Wollega University and Surrounding	Amharic, Oromo, English	

#### Foreign broadcasting

30	Multi Choice Ethiopia		Commercial	Nationwide	Foreign Language	Addis Ababa
31	Bridge Tec Broadcasting & Media Plc.	Bridge Tec Broadcasting & Media	Commercial	Addis Ababa	Foreign Language	Addis Ababa

**Source:** Ethiopian Broadcast Authority (2011b).

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: PROFILES OF TELEVISION STATIONS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides overview of television in Ethiopia. It discusses the major characteristics of television publicly funded/government owned and foreign based television stations.

### **Main content**

#### **7.1 Overview of television in Ethiopia**

#### **7.2 Publicly Funded/Government Owned Television Stations**

##### **7.2.1 Ethiopian Television (ETV)**

#### **7.3 Foreign Based**

### **7.1 Overview of television in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia, which owned a single TV station (ETV) for more than six decades is now becoming the owner of modern TV facilities even though all the stations are directly controlled by the government. The Ethiopian government has the plan to make sure that all regional states have their own TV organization.

Recently, Ethiopia is trying to expand media facilities to its entire region, but the media organizations are structured to serve the government on power thereby strengthening its position by presenting mere propaganda instead of information based on objectivity and verification. Because the media institutions in the country are not independent, they are not ready to serve the interest of the general public.

Moreover, the regional TV stations are not different from each other neither in format or content. Oromia TV is different from others only because it mainly broadcasts in Afan Oromo. The TV stations in Ethiopia are mostly the replica of ETV, the national TV and their programs are largely copied from the oldest broadcaster in the country with no or little modification. Undoubtedly, they can be referred to as the branches of ETV as no one sees any difference between ETV and the regional TV stations.

### **7.2 Publicly Funded/Government Owned Television Stations**

## **7.2.1 Ethiopian Television (ETV)**

### **7.2.1.1 A Brief History of Ethiopian Television (ETV)**

The concept of television was introduced in Ethiopia during the celebrations of the Emperor Haile Selassie's Silver Jubilee in 1956 via Telecommunication Pavilion near the old airport. The Emperor commissioned the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to transmit the event in celebration at the old airport exhibition. Transmission ceased to operate right after the celebration because there were no enough infrastructures to support the transmission system.

The experience of the first show of the television left a lasting impression on the Royal families and landlords. Dejazemach Daniel Abebe, one of the sons' of Feudal lords, was among those fascinated by the "magic window." His excitement about television led to Dejazemach Daniel to requesting the Emperor to establish his own television station in 1960. Nevertheless, the Emperor and his council of ministers denied him permission on the pretext that it was not permissible for individuals. Following that request, there were six attempts to launch television stations, but the emperor unequivocally rejected landlords and religious organizations' request to establish private television stations.

At last, television services were started on the occasion of the founding meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Transmission was still in its infant stage, thus a makeshift closed-circuit television system was installed and television sets were fixed in and around the African Hall. Following this events, Ethiopian Television initiated its broadcasting in 1964 in the city hall. A British company called Thomson Television International was responsible for the installation of the television infrastructure.

In 1965, the Ethiopian Television began making its facilities available in the interests of formal education. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, courses for in-school viewing started with some 20 receivers from the outset. In the beginning from 3,000 to 5,000 secondary school students around Addis received the course. However, success of the first course led to increased demand and in its service was extended to elementary schools (in Amharic). In 1966, The Ethiopian Television made studio facilities and operational personnel available as required for the production of the educational programs. During the Military regime, the educational

programs were established separately under the name of Educational Media Agency (EMA) and organized its own studios and began transmitting in 16 local languages with 13 stations. EMA is still using ETV transmitters and other facilities. From its establishment until 1991, ETV has been transmitting its news and programs in English and Amharic. However, after the EPRDF government two vernacular languages: Oromiffa and Tigrina- were added.

According to the 2000 World Development Report, in Ethiopia the numbers of television receivers were 5 per 1000 people 1999. ETV covers 47% of the country. The Ethiopian Television License fee never exceeds 9% of the general budget of ETV. The highest income from advertisements was in 1988, which made up 32.6% of the entire budget. Hence, more than 60% of the ETV budget comes from the government treasury. Although television set owners are required to pay a fee of 50 Ethiopian Birr (about US\$8) to ETV during the purchase of a new set, ETV fails to collect the fee because of logistic and cross border trade.

#### **7.2.1.2 Ethiopian Television (ETV) Today**

Ethiopia Television is Ethiopia's only national TV channel. It is operated by the state-run Ethiopia Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) and claims to reach a potential audience of 25 million people – less than a third of the total population. Ethiopia Television broadcasts round the clock. The penetration of ETV is uncertain. Officially, the station covers 42% of the geographical area of the country, although external reports claim up to 60% coverage. The station aims to reach 86% coverage when the digital terrestrial network is established within a few years' time. The most watched channel is naturally the easily available ETV, although an increasing number of viewers also have access to satellite channels, particularly within the urban population. Ethiopia Television broadcasts free-to-air from terrestrial transmitters in the following locations:

1. Addis Ababa
2. Adama (also called Nazret)
3. Arba Minch (SNNPR)
4. Asayita (Afar)
5. Asosa (Benishangul-Gumuz)

6. Axum (Tigray)
7. Bahir Dar (Amhara)
8. Debre Berhan (Amhara)
9. Debre Markos (Amhara)
10. Dire Dawa (Dire Dawa)
11. Degahbur (Somali)
12. Dessie (Amhara)
13. Dilla (SNNPR)
14. Furi (Oromia)
15. Gambella (Gambella)
16. Goba (Oromia)
17. Gode (Somali)
18. Gondar (Amhara)
19. Harar (Harari)
20. Jijiga (Somali)
21. Jimma (Oromia)
22. Mekele (Tigray)
23. Nekemte (Oromia)
24. Metu (Oromia)
25. Shashemene (Oromia)
26. Yirga Alem (SNNPR)

Most of its output is in Amharic, but there are also regular programs in Somali, Tigrinya, Oromo, Afar, English, Arabic and French. The English programs include weekly local interview productions such as ‘Close-up’, ‘Meet ETV’ and sometimes a special program. These locally produced English programs take up 7% of the total air- time.

Audience satisfaction with ETV is nevertheless mixed. On national surveys, ETV scores better than any other television channel, foreign stations included, when respondents are queried about their favorite channel. This must however be seen in light of the wide national reach of state television as well as the advantage of broadcasting in local languages. A few years ago, there were concerns among media professionals that the program quality of ETV was in general decay

and that it pushed people to subscribe to satellite television. A popular joke in this regard is the one about an ETV host who introduces the evening program by saying: ‘Welcome to ETV to all those of you who can’t afford a satellite dish’ (ዲሽዮሌላችሁ እንደምን አመሻችሁ). Recently, however, reports point to improvements in technical quality and content variation on ETV. African Media Barometer notes «remarkable improvements on ERTA stations since the middle of 2010 in regard to presentation and packaging as well as coverage of a wider variety of issues». This is partly attributed to the recent move by ETV to outsource part of its production to the growing sector of private production companies in Addis Ababa.

Programs on ETV consist of a mixture of genres. According to a survey of content of ETV’s main channel, the programming comprises 29% news, debate and documentary; 41% education; 22% drama and entertainment; and 8% other genres. The channel is on air 24 hours a day, and reruns are common. A vast amount of the content is locally produced, in contrast to various other African television stations where imported programs make up much of the schedule. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that a study of cultural influence in 19 Sub-Saharan African countries indicated that Ethiopians are more skeptical to Western culture than any of the other researched Sub-Saharan publics. For example, only 33% of the Ethiopian respondents said that they ‘like Western movies, music and television’. ETV programming confirms – and possibly reinforces – this tendency by carrying much local content.

The Amharic programs, other than current affairs and news, include women’s, youth and children’s programs. Agriculture and development issues, including reports from the regions, police program (usually reports of crimes that have taken place in the country), historical sites of Ethiopia and sport and magazine programs are regular productions. There are also drama and entertainment programs. The drama programs have become popular and usually focus on social and bureaucratic problems. Sometimes, legal issues are presented. On Sunday mornings, there is a program from Parliament, which is a broadcast of earlier recorded meetings and discussion in progress.

Typical entertainment shows are the Ethiopian Idol and Debo that are entirely music-and- dance related productions each running for nearly an hour per week. The former involves significant commercial breaks. Sport news and talk shows cover 50 and 55 minutes respectively. In between

some programs and as a separate programming, some musical transitions including Hibre Trit are run. These often include local musical pieces and short comic scenes, African music, works of amateur musicians and the like.

While national and regional productions are unrated, hence no restriction of viewing for any particular age group, there are a few programs specially meant for children and the youth. Apart from foreign cartoon films and motion pictures, some two hours are allotted to children's programs, of which an hour of programming is made in Amharic while Oromiffa and Tigrinya cover 30 minutes per week each. Overall, ETV as an outlet for both national and regional affairs, television productions appear predominantly to be a serious medium of socio-politico-economic discussions with scant elements of entertainment and international news and information. Main source of news information: ERTA, ENA, WALTA IC, Reuters, BBC, CNN, Xinhua, AFP and regional information communication offices. It collects its own news.

Most of ETV's management being former journalists who have been upgraded, they may not be capable for proper technical and TV station management. The other problem faced by ETV is that out of many program producers who have been sent abroad for further training, only one returned. Apparently, the brain drain has also attacked the broadcasting media. Therefore, in future, the plan is to bring trainers here rather than send trainees out of the country. Not only do state-owned media have to abide by the policies of the government, but also more importantly, the program producers do not have the confidence to make critical programs. In this regard, an exception has been made for one program called Aynatchen, (a program that investigates government institutions and reports its findings). According to the Deputy Manager of ETV, the producers of this program are guaranteed that government officials will not harass them, nor will they lose their jobs. However, it was short lived.

ETV also gets assistance in capacity building. The Royal Netherlands Embassy offers regular three-month courses to professional staff. Israel has been assisting in the training of professionals by giving short courses locally. This includes training of technical staff in areas such as lighting, editing and camera use. France and England have also assisted in capacity building. However, there is a dire need for training in maintenance of equipment. There is no support given to ETV, financial or otherwise, from international donors and NGOs. An exception to this is UNFPA,



which gave a Land Cruiser some six years ago during the preparations for a co-production. Training schemes: Telling untold stories, newsgathering and reporting, Adobe Audition, election reporting, supervisor management, constitution and colour revolution, fighting corruption. Trainings organised by: ERTA, Radio Netherlands, BBC, Internews, Electoral Board of Ethiopia, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission. ETV has 345 full time journalists and 15 part time journalists with Ethiopia Radio.

ETV retains a critical position as the nation's only television channel and houses a large journalist constituency. As a result of the merger with Ethiopian Radio in 2009, ETV is no longer a distinct organization, although the station still retains an institutional identity in the public mindset. For many journalists, ETV remains the most prestigious media institution to work for in terms of public exposure – despite many shortcomings. In ETV, one finds many of the most experienced journalists in the country.

Currently, Ethiopian television is using Arab Sat, Eutelsat, Galaxy, and Telestar to broadcast its programming all over the world. The station broadcasts programs for children, current affairs, debate and discussion, documentary, drama, entertainment (quizzes, games and show), health, news, phone in, sports and others.

#### **7.2.1.3 Addis Television/ETV2**

Addis Television, which is also known as ETV2, can be seen by about three million potential viewers within 30 km radius of Addis Ababa. The channel is operated by the Addis Ababa Mass Media Agency. ETV2 broadcasts mainly in Amharic. It also carries programs in Tigrinya, Somali, Afar, English, French and Arabic. It has 46 full time journalists. Its sources of revenue are 95% from the public and 5% from advertising. Main kinds of programs are light entertainment and popular music. Main source of news information: government and nongovernmental organizations, public representatives, politicians and other professionals. It also collects its own news.

#### **7.2.1.4 Oromia Television**

Oromia Television broadcasts from Adama (also known as Nazret) and claims to reach a potential audience of 15 million people in Oromia and neighboring regions. Outer areas the station can be received: regional: East Hararghe, West Hararghe, Bale, East Shewa, North Shewa, Finfinne, Guji, Borena, West Arsi, Arsi, Jimma, Illubabor, Kelem Wollega, West Wellega, East Wellega, Horo Guduru Wellega, West Shewa, International: Middle east, Europe and North America. The station broadcasts for seven hours per day, mostly in Oromo. There are also selected programs in Amharic and English. Programming consists mainly of news, music and light entertainment and educational programs. The station began broadcasting in 2009. Oromia Television's signal is distributed throughout the Oromia region and beyond by a series of 2 KW transmitters in the following locations:

1. Adama (Nazret)
2. Adola
3. Chiro
4. Dembi Dollo
5. Furi
6. Ghimbi
7. Goba
8. Gorie
9. Harar
10. Kofale
11. Jimma
12. Nekemte
13. Shambu,
14. Shashemene
15. Wonchi
16. Yabello

Oromia Television forms part of the Oromia Mass Media Agency. Oromia Mass Media Agency is the largest regional broadcaster in Ethiopia. According to the 2011 ERIS Media Mapping survey, it employs nearly 200 full-time journalists and nearly 100 part-timers. Training schemes: newsgathering and writing, entertainment programs production, interview techniques and

television program process, production processes, editing in the time line, professionalism and serving the public, BBC transmission. Trainings organized by: the organization. Sources of revenue: advertising 40% and government support 60%. Its main sources of news information are: staff reporters, information bureaus, news agencies, public relations offices, government officials. It collects its own news.

#### **7.2.1.5 Dire Dawa Television**

This regional TV station broadcasts from the eastern city of Dire Dawa to a potential audience of 400,000 people who live within a 75km radius of the city. It broadcasts for three hours per day every evening between 18:00 and 21:00 in Amharic, Oromo and Somali. Main programs covered by the station are: documentary and current affairs and light entertainment and popular music. Main source of news information: Walta, BBC, ENA. It collects its own news. The station is run by the Dire Dawa Mass Media Agency. The station established in June 2009. Outer areas the station can be received: Eastern Hararghe, (Kerisa) Langey, Kullubi, Chellenko, Shinille Zone, and Somali People Regional States. The station has 11 full time journalists and 3 part time journalists. Training schemes: introduction to radio programming, digital editing, HIV/AIDS reporting, ethics, radio newsgathering and writing, development communication, harmful traditional practices. Trainings organized by: Addis Ababa University, Population Media Centre, Internews, HAPCO.

#### **7.2.1.6 Harari Television**

This local TV station began broadcasting in the eastern city of Harar in July 2011. According to Ethiopian news reports, its signal covers a 45 km radius of the city. Harari Television is run by the Harar Mass Media Agency.

#### **7.2.1.7 Somali TV**

This regional TV station based in Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region of south- eastern Ethiopia, began trial broadcasts in December 2010. It broadcasts in Somali to the city of Jijiga and the surrounding area. Ethiopian news reports in late 2010 said Somali TV was broadcasting

on a trial basis for five hours per day from 19:00 to midnight. The station is run by the Somali Mass Media Agency.

#### **7.2.1.8 Amhara TV**

The Amhara television program was established in April 1999 which was worked under cultural and tourism bureau of information department. The agency started its transmission by buying air time from Ethiopian television program which was half an hour per a week.

Through time, the program had massive audience and designed to buy extra air time to cover more programs and news. As a result, on January 2004 its transmission was exceeding in to an hour per a week. Starting from on August 9, 2007, it was becoming three hours per a week. In the process, after two years its transmission has been increasing to six hours per a week. Currently the Amhara Region Mass Media Agency has its own station.

#### **7.2.1.9 SNNPR TV**

South TV is the regional broadcaster for the South Nations, Nationalities & People's Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia, and delivering local TV services to a population of 16 million people. Established in 2014 to support and develop a strong regional identity, South TV provides news and entertainment with a focus on local cultures from its base in the region's capital Hawassa.

### **7.3 Foreign Based**

#### **7.3.1 Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT)**

Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) is an independent channel that broadcasts 24 hours per day in Amharic from studios in Amsterdam, London and Washington. The station went on air for the first time in 2010. Since then, it has frequently complained of attempts by the Ethiopian government to jam its signal. The channel carries a broad range of news, current affairs, sport, documentaries and entertainment programming. It is very critical of the Ethiopian government ESAT launched a companion satellite radio service in October 2011. Although ESAT says its main studios are in the Netherlands, its principal telephone contact number and postal address are in Washington DC.

### **7.3.2 EBS**

EBS is a privately held media company established in 2008 in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA to provide a niche transmission programming that targets the booming Ethiopian market globally.

### **7.3.3 Digital Satellite Television (DStv)**

Digital Satellite Television (DStv), a subscription service owned and controlled by MultiChoice Africa, is a South African based transnational television service. DStv is the only legitimate subscription-based transnational television received in Ethiopia. MultiChoice Ethiopia operates as the official agent for MultiChoice Africa Ltd. The Agent, in its 11-year operation in Ethiopia, claims to have had more than 6000 subscribers (in 2007), a large number of whom are from Addis Ababa while subscription by residents of big towns is on a significant rise at the same time. MultiChoice Africa provides fully imported programming from United States, Europe or Asia (e.g. BBC prime, BBC World, Discovery Channel, Hallmark, Al Jazeera, CCTV4, CCTV9) together with locally commissioned programming like O-channel, SABC Africa and Africa Magic. Apart from some forty television channels, DStv brings a Digital Audio Music Channel and five radio services for its full bouquet subscribers. The channels provide a range of options for entertainment and global news media like BBC, CNN, Sky News, Al Jazeera, etc.

### **7.3.4 ArabSat**

ArabSat is a free-to-air television system, thus making it difficult to find demographic information for the service. However, a mere observation shows the number of its users appears to be far greater than DStv subscribers. The market price for ArabSat accessories and installation (at the time of writing) ranges between 1450 birr (about \$ 160) to 1750 birr (about \$ 200 birr). In fact \$ 200 (in 2007) enables the purchasing of both free-to-air accessories and a decoder which allows to illegally access to some, if not all, DStv provisions as far as users manage to buy only the smart card from DStv.

Estimated to have plus or minus 180 channels, as some new channels emerge while others close, ArabSat carries tremendous options of entertainment and global media. However, it does not bring the big European soccer leagues for which the Ethiopian youth as well as adults crowd city

houses and cafés of DStv subscribers who provide pay services. Moreover, ArabSat provides a number of regional and national programming in Arabic for the Middle East and African nations like Egypt, Tunisia, Eritrea and Sudan. Many viewers hardly understand the Arabic language.

## **PART III: PROFILES OF NEWS AGENCIES AND REGULATORY BODIES IN ETHIOPIA**

### **CHAPTER NINE: NEWS AGENCIES AND REGULATORY BODIES**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter covers the brief history of Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), Walta Information Centre, International News Agencies and Correspondents, Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) and Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) and their major functions.

#### **Main content**

- 9.1 Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)
- 9.2 Walta Information Centre
- 9.3 International News Agencies and Correspondents
- 9.4 Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA)
- 9.5 Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO)
- 9.6 Activities/Assessment Questions

#### **9.1 Overview of newsagencies in Ethiopia**

There are two locally-run news agencies in Ethiopia, one official and one private. An attempt to erect a third news agency in the mid-1990s failed because of lack of market appeal. Tam Asmar, a small-scale private agency, was operational from 1994 to 1997. Both agencies, however, ought to be regarded as government-affiliated. Opened in 1942 under the Ministry of the Pen, the official Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) boasts being one of African's oldest news agencies. In 2007, ENA again came under direct command of the Ministry of Information (later Office for

Government Communication Affairs) after a few years under a semi-independent board. The other news agency, Walta Information Center, was established in 1994 by the EPRDF-affiliated MegaNet Corporation. It has since become a serious competitor to ENA. Already by 2000, it was claimed that Walta had surpassed ENA as a provider of news and information to the official media, although in terms of number of news dispatches, ENA must have been larger. Today, Walta is reputed as a fresh and competitive wire service while ENA is struggling to divest itself of an image as old-fashioned and dull. ENA is superior, however, in terms of its nation-wide ‘correspondent’ network with no less than 39 branch offices across the country. That said, the competition between the two news agencies does not reach further than the fact that they communicate on a daily basis to discuss assignments so they do not waste resources by covering the same event. This is possible because the two agencies share a common news ideology besides serving largely the same subscribers.

ENA and Walta play a pivotal role in deciding the domestic news agenda in Ethiopia, especially with regard to the state media. An earlier report estimated that 90% of Ethiopian Radio’s news items came from ENA and Walta (before 2003). Although the recent restructuring of the state media implies that more stories are now self-produced by ERTA and individual media outlets, a considerable portion of the news is still derived directly from the news wire services. As for the private media outlets, very few have formal agreements with ENA and Walta despite low subscription costs. However, it is commonplace for the local media to pull stories from local and international news agencies without permission, and Walta has given a blanket blessing for all media outlets to use its online material. The private media are nevertheless skeptical when it comes to using the local news agencies, in contrast to international services. A study of the only private daily in the country, Daily Monitor, found that 87% of its news was derived from international news channels, mainly BBC and Reuters, while only 3% came from ENA and Walta. Both ENA and Walta sustain expanding audio-visual production units besides their print journalism departments. They also cater for the two most active news websites locally, with continuous news updates.

## **9.2 Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)**

The government-run Ethiopian News Agency (ENA) gathers edits and distributes news and pictures from all over Ethiopia. The agency has 38 regional bureaus across the country. It publishes news online in both Amharic and English. ENA distributes video and audio clips and still pictures to the Ethiopian media. It also distributes international news from foreign news agencies to domestic media outlets. ENA mainly reports on government announcements and official activities. It was founded in 1942 and claims to be the oldest established African news agency. South Africa's independent news agency SAPA, however, came to birth a few years earlier, in 1938. Nevertheless, ENA (until 1963 known as 'Agence Direcsione') was practically inoperative between 1947 and 1954, thus this year's 70th anniversary (in 2012) marks 70 years of existence rather than 70 years of operation. What has remained steady during ENA's entire period of existence, however, is a profound intimacy with the ruling power. Initially under guidance of the Ministry of the Pen, ENA has had different arrangements vis-à-vis the higher authorities, but its loyalty to ruling interests remains indisputable.

ENA has nevertheless been drawn closer to the government in later years. Between 1997 and 2007, the news agency enjoyed somewhat greater autonomy as it was governed by a semi-independent board accountable to the House of Representatives, though still closely aligned with government interests. In August 2007, the situation changed when the agency came under direct control by the Ministry of Information. Journalists complained about growing political interference. The work environment suffered. Some of the reporters decided to quit, and the defection continued in subsequent years. As a result, the various divisions of ENA are currently characterized by many new and inexperienced reporters. Senior journalists complain about ailing work satisfaction. The closeness to the government became even more evident when the Ministry of Information was dissolved in October 2008 and later replaced by the Office for Government Communication Affairs (OGCA). A key duty of OGCA is to operate ENA, and journalists in the news agency today sometimes describe themselves as government communication officers, although they simultaneously express adherence to a journalistic community.

Traditionally, ENA has had a defining role as a home for official journalism philosophy in Ethiopia. Illustratively, one of the few journalism books in Amharic is written by two ENA



veterans, Haddush Kassu and the late Simeneh Mekonnen, and published by the agency. In relation to its 60th anniversary in 2002, ENA launched the scholarly journal *Ethiopian Journalism Review* in Amharic. Initially announced as a quarterly publication, the publishing of *Ethiopian Journalism Review* has been irregular, although it remains the only periodical devoted to professional journalism issues in the country.

ENA's wire service subscribers consist mainly of state media outlets. State radio and television are major users of ENA material, as are the official print publication outlets under the umbrella of Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA). Government-loyal private media outlets, such as Radio Fana, also draw on ENA dispatches. Most private publications, however, do not subscribe to ENA and only occasionally publish stories from the official news agency, in which case they will copy material from the agency's website without paying for it.

The competition with the private news agency Walta Information Center is highly perceptible in ENA. Walta appears to have gained an upper hand lately as regards professional reputation. Several journalists in ENA express that they would prefer to work at Walta if they had the chance because it pays better than ENA and has newer production equipment and facilities than the state agency. In terms of political inclination, however, the journalists regard ENA and EPRDF-associated Walta as much the same, although a few claim to see some more journalistic independence at Walta.

ENA has exchange agreements with two of the three major international agencies: Reuters and AFP (the third one being AP). It also cooperates with various national news agencies, whose geographical location attests to the Asian and Middle Eastern rather than African orientation of Ethiopian news communication. The agencies include Xinhua (China), Antara (Indonesia), IRNA (Iran), Anadolu (Turkey), Saba (Yemen), as well as DPA (Germany) and PANA (Pan-African News Agency). The vast majority of international news stories forwarded by ENA to the local media, however, originate from the large international news agencies.

ENA also accommodates an audio-visual production unit which produces news programs and documentaries for radio and television. In actuality, in the current situation, the audio-visual production is mainly meant for promotion of government activities on ETV and Ethiopian Radio,

although some programs are channeled into ENA's website as well. ENA has, nevertheless, ambitious plans to open a television news channel for the entire region with programs in four languages: Amharic, Arabic, English and French. ENA's website is the most frequently updated local news site besides Walta's equivalent.

In addition to its headquarters in Addis Ababa, ENA sustains a network of 15 regional main branches and 24 sub-branches with at least one journalist. The headquarters receive news reports from the regions on a daily basis and distribute them further after fact-check and editing. In total, ENA employs approximately 120 full-time journalists and an equally large constituency of support staff. Some of the journalists are assigned as beat reporters who cover specific areas: one is placed at Bole International Airport; one at the Parliament; one at the Federal High Court; in addition to a beat reporter assigned to permanently follow the Prime Minister.

### **9.3 Walta Information Centre**

Walta Information and Public Relations Center S.C. is a private media outlet and Public Relations Center established in 1994. The name of registered owner is Berhane K/Mariam. It has regional offices in Gambellal, Assosa, Jijiga, Awassa, Adama and Harrar. It hires 24 full time and 1 part time journalists and 40 additional workers. Training schemes: reporting elections, participatory democracy and media coverage. Trainings organized by: National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and BBC World Service Trust. Its main source of revenue is private money. The major languages the center uses to provide news are English, Amharic and Arabic.

### **9.4 International News Agencies and Correspondents**

Some international news agencies like the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters (including TV), Xinhua (a Chinese agency), Qatar News Agency, Spanish News Agency, Al Hayat and Agence France Press (AFP) and a few others are active in Ethiopia. Resident correspondents and Ethiopian stringers and correspondents also file news and stories from Ethiopia. The stations include the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), Voice of Germany (DW), Radio France International (RFI both English and French) and others.

## **9.5 Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA)**

The independent licensing body in Ethiopia is the EBA which established according to Article 4 of Broadcasting Proclamation No.178/1999 as an “autonomous Federal Administrative Agency” (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1999). In its yearly magazine EBA states that more responsibilities and mandate have been given to the Authority based on the revised Broadcasting Service Proclamation No.533/2007. The Authority has a mandate to regulate the broadcasting industry in general with the aim to ensure the growth of high standards and prompt and reliable broadcasting services which contribute to the political, social and economic development of the country. It also acts as a regulatory agency with respect to the press industry, albeit with a more limited role.

There are three major activities that have to be done by the Authority in order to inspect media in general and the radio stations in particular: first the Authority has by do inspection to make sure that whether the media are doing their jobs in accordance with the country’s laws; second, based on the problems that have been identified during the inspection process, the Authority would arrange some trainings to support the media; and lastly, the Authority makes decisions on complaints by the society following the programs of the radio stations.

For the purpose of radio inspection the authority has imported and installed modern monitoring receiver which is found only in very few African countries. Its inspection procedure includes some criteria that are whether the radio stations have established complaints handling procedures; whether the program producers are real; technical issues; and ethical issues in advertising. Every broadcasting transmission in the country is listened and recorded for six months by the Authority if in case complaints arise.

## **9.6 Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO)**

Realizing the importance of propaganda, Emperor Haile Selassie established the Ministry of Information after crushing the coup attempt against his government by the Imperial Bodyguard in 1960. Prior to its organization as a Ministry of Information, it was known as “Yegazetana Mastawekia Mesria Bet” (“Newspaper and Information Office”) and it was organized in a department level under the Ministry of Pen. It was the Italians (1935-1941) who, for the first

time, established “Ufficio Stampa e Propaganda”, the forerunner of the “Newspaper and Information Office” and put it under the control of the Italians political office “Ufficio Politico”. The Italians established this office to propagate their propaganda in Ethiopia. The Italian colonialist conducted their fascist propaganda through radio and through their monthly magazine known as the “The Light of Rome”. On May 5th, 1941 Addis Zemen (New Era), appeared in Amharic. In 1942, The Press and Information Department was established under the then Ministry of Pen, and Sendek Alamachin (Our Flag) appeared in Amharic and Arabic, and the Negarit Gazeta appeared in Amharic and English.

The press and information department under the Ministry of Pen was established following the expulsion of the invaders in 1941. As of that period print and electronic media were covering larger area. However, the suppression of human and democratic rights and the introduction of strict censorship seriously affected its development throughout the reign of the monarchy especially the reign of Emperor Hailesilassie I. The Ministry of Information was established in 1964, which was restructured after two years with powers and duties to include tourism in addition to its mandate over the mass media. The few theatres in the capital were also put under the Ministry of Information and Tourism. This structure was intact until the overthrow of the Imperial rule by the Derg in 1974.

The provisional military government reorganized the institution as the Ministry of Information and National Guidance in 1975. The Ministry was entrusted with powers and duties to head the following institutions: The Ethiopian News Agency; The Voice of Revolutionary Ethiopia; The Press Department; The Public Relations Department; The Agency for Distribution of Journals and Magazines; and The Censorship Service.

This structure was effective until the military government was ousted by the armed struggle led by the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in May 1991. The Military (Derg) rule was characterized by brutal suppression of human and democratic rights of the people, which muzzled the development of mass media in the country. The Transitional government, which was founded immediately after the overthrow of the brutal military regime, took various measures, which were indispensable to promotion of the democratic system being implemented in the country. The right to freedom of expression was proclaimed with the total

abolition of censorship in 1992. This proclamation laid a fertile ground for the massive publication of private newspapers and magazines to an unprecedented level in the long history of the nation. The Ministry of Information of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was reorganized as the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1995. The right of thought, opinion and expression was guaranteed by the constitution, which entered into force in 1995.

The institutions of mass media were given organizational and operational autonomy and were made to be accountable to the House of Peoples' Representative. The Ministry of Information was finally reorganized by proclamation No. 256/2001, which separated it from the Ministry of Information and Culture that became Ministry of Youth, sports and Culture.

After applying BPR (Business Process Reengineering) the organization changed its structure renamed as the Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) since 2009. The House of Peoples Representative Office appointed a new minister with the objective of playing a leading role in the government information and Communication system; ensuring smooth flow of information between the Government and the public; facilitating the process of building a society enriched with information and active in participating in the country's affairs; facilitating the creation of equal opportunities for historically disadvantaged and marginalized people and sections of the community that need special support in accessing government information.

## **PART IV: PROFILES OF JOURNALISTS IN ETHIOPIA**

### **CHAPTER TEN: JOURNALISTS IN ETHIOPIA**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, issues related with Ethiopian journalists are discussed. The chapter focuses on the relationship between journalists and the government, the journalists' demography, education and their associations.

#### **Main content**

10.1Polarization

10.2Journalists: Demographics; Gender; Salary

10.3Education/Training and Workshops

10.4Professional Associations

10.5Key Figures and Scholars

10.6Activities/Assessment Questions

## **10.1 Polarization**

The tradition in the dictatorial regimes regarding journalists and their works has been very rigid. The systems have commonly had red line that directs journalists either to be with the government side or not. Otherwise they have been considered as enemy. The only expected works of the journalists were propagating the governments' agenda whether it had public interest or not. Impartiality and free expression of ideas have not been imagined by the journalists. Top journalists in the country have been harassed and disappeared during Emperor Haile Selassie and Dergue regimes. Beaalu Girma can be mentioned as example.

According to Press Reference, the problem has been emerging from the political tradition of the country. Whenever people disagree on some issues they began to polarize each other (Press APA, n.d). Such trend is now widespread in the current relationship between the government and private media journalists. The former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has told CPJ that “relations between the government and private press [journalists] have long been confrontational, but he said the treason allegations were different. They went beyond their normal bias and went for the jugular. They became part and parcel of the day-to-day preparation for the insurrection after the elections”. He has concluded that many of them were organ of opposition parties (CPJ, 2006, p. 4). However, this is not the most case for the government journalists. Amare Aregawi, founder of The Reporter newspaper, in his part says that:

Breakdown [after the 2005 election] is symptomatic of the deeper political divide. The press is a reflection of politics ‘There's no tolerance. It's 'you are either with us or against us,' and that is reflected in the media.’ Zenawi, who acknowledged a "poison" in his government's relationship with the press, said much the same. ‘We are aware that the poison is not merely between the

press and the ruling party,' the prime minister said. 'It's a reflection of the overall tension between some in the opposition and the ruling party'.

## **10.2 Journalists: Demographics; Gender; Salary**

Most of the journalists in Ethiopia are employed by the government-owned media. The biggest government media organization in Ethiopia, Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) (EBC) employs about 2000 personnel in 2013. This figure includes administration staff and those working at a technical level in all the relay stations of the organization situated in different parts of the country. The two national dailies that are published by the government-owned Ethiopian Press Agency, Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald together employ 105 to 115 journalists. The government-owned Ethiopian News Agency employs 268 staff.

## **10.3 Education/Training and Workshops**

Ethiopia got the private press only in 1991, under the present government (the EPRDF regime). The military government, the Derg, monopolized the media so as to propagate its Marxist-Leninist ideology and the private press came into existence in 1991 following its downfall. The short-lived experience of the private print media, however, is full of adversarial relations with the government, where one accuses the other regarding the situation.

Like the private press, journalism education is also a recent development in Ethiopia. "Ethiopia got the first permanent journalism school in 1996 when ... EMMTI [Ethiopian Mass Media Training Institute] (Formerly known as MMTI and MMTC) established its Diploma Program"— though there were short-term training undertakings in journalism by different organizations during the Haileselesie and the military regimes. EMMTI has now become part of the undergraduate School of Journalism & Communication of Addis Ababa University.

Currently, many of the well-established government universities, even the new ones like Madawalabu University and a couple of the private higher institutions, offer Journalism at an undergraduate degree level. The graduate program in Journalism was launched at Addis Ababa University in 2004. "... until very recently, journalist's professional competence has been identified as limited or unsatisfactory". Hence, earlier those who practice journalism in Ethiopia both in private and government-owned media were not exposed to proper professional training.

Of the 92 journalists working for the media in Ethiopia (both government and private), who were surveyed by one study, only 32.6% studied journalism of which only 6.5% graduated in print journalism. While 47.8 % of them were from Languages & Literature, the rest 13.1 % were from Agriculture, Business, Natural and Social Sciences related disciplines.

In terms of capacity and professionalism, the private press in Ethiopia is at its embryonic stage. Its capacity to recruit journalism graduates is limited. Professionals who graduate from journalism programs recently are mostly employed by the government media.

The Government has organized numerous training programs for journalists to build their capacity and professional ethics. It has provided support for the establishment and strengthening of journalist associations. In this regard, notable assistance has been given to the Women Journalist Association. The Government usually invites the private press to its press conferences. For instance, in 2007/08 the private press has attended 69 press conferences of the Government equally with Government press outlets.

#### **10.4 Professional Associations**

At present, there are four professional associations for people working in the media. These are: The Ethiopian Journalists Association (EJA), The Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association (EFJA) and The Ethiopian Women Media Association (EWMA), and the Foreign Correspondents Association (FCA).

##### **10.4.1 The Ethiopian Journalists Association/EJA/**

Members of EJA are employees of the Federal and Regional state media establishments and include both male and female journalists. EJA was founded thirty five years ago but does not seem to be active at present.

##### **10.4.2 The Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association/EFJA/**

Both male and female journalists in the private media established EFJA. Four years later, the association published, in the form of a small booklet, the Professional Code of Ethics, which was endorsed by the General Congress of EFJA in December 1998. This includes also the



International Declaration of Principles on Conduct of Journalists, which was amended by the 18th International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) World Congress in Helsinki in June 1986. Some quotes from the booklet include:

- Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist
- In pursuance of this duty, the journalists shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection of news, and of the right of fair comment and critics.
- The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or falsify documents.
- The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain news, photographs, and documents.
- The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origin.

EFJA is a member of the International Freedom of Expressions and Exchange and the International Press Institute, and is recognized internationally and has even won some awards, it was given legal status by the Ministry of Justice seven years after it had become operational in March 2000.

According to the president of the Association, the private press has not had the opportunity to develop due to numerous constraints. The main one is said to be the government, which continues to arrest journalists from the private press unconstitutionally, and illegally detaining them in prison for 3–7 months under the pretence that they are being examined. The president asserts that due to this type of harsh treatment, there are today 38 journalists living in exile; three journalists are in prison; 47 have pending cases in the Federal High Court; and a few have died while in detention due to lack of medication and treatment. Most journalists are jailed because they cannot afford to pay the huge amount of money fixed for bail (usually Birr 10,000). The private press is seen as an adversary of the government and the ruling party, to the extent that even vendors of these papers are sometimes harassed. This is mainly due to the charges directed against the private print media as being ‘opposition press’ or as disseminating only the opinions of the private publishers or individuals of various political parties.

There are many printing presses in Addis Ababa, but only two have the equipment (wave machine) to print newspapers, and the government owns both. It is when seen against this background that the 100% increase in the cost of printing has been perceived as an indirect pressure against the private press. According to the president of the EFJA, when this was announced, the private tabloids did not appear for one week as a protest to the rising cost of printing. Donors and the international community may have also been made aware of this when the private tabloids went on strike and not a single paper came out for a whole week.

The Association also appealed to the Parliament and to the Prime Minister concerning the soaring printing cost and high increase in the price of paper. We were told by EFJA's president that presently, the clash between government and the private (print) media has become extremely dangerous, because the private press journalists have now been accused of having aligned themselves not only with the opposition parties as in the past, but also with Shaabia, the ruling party in Eritrea.

According to the Minister of Information however, a better partnership is planned for the future and the Press Law will be revised and improved in partnership with the private press journalists sometimes in July 2002. The aim is to forge a better relationship between members of the state and private press journalists.

#### **10.4.3 The Ethiopian Media Women Association /EMWA/**

The Ethiopian Media Women Association (EMWA): Ten journalists formed the Ethiopian Media Women Forum on November 16, 1997. With the aim of serving and enhancing the needs of media women, this forum became the nucleus that gave birth to the association. EMWA is the only professional association in the country, that is trying to narrow the gap between private and state media in that, membership includes government and private media employees and professionals as well as public relations officers. The association was registered with the Ministry of Justice in May 1999 as the Ethiopian Media Women Association with the following objectives:

- To raise the professional skill of EMWA members;
- To advocate for women’s rights;
- To improve the image of women in the media;
- To network with media and other professional associations and organizations locally, regionally, and internationally.

Training being one of EMWA’s main objectives, with the assistance of Fredrech Hurbert Foundation, it has sent five professionals to various African countries for training and/or attendance of workshop at different times, and all have returned to their country. The Royal Netherlands Embassy has put in a tremendous effort to make EMWA a reality and help establish the Forum of Ethiopian Media Women.

When EMWA was officially recognized as an Association, it was the Netherlands Embassy that assisted in sponsoring a workshop to establish the association, elect the Board members and register new members.

Panos Ethiopia is the strongest supporter of EMWA. Ever since the project “End Violence Against Women” started in November 2001, it is still going on in collaboration with Panos Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA). At present, Panos has provided EMWA with a fully furnished office for use within its premises. A few months ago, EMWA has moved office to another area and the rent is being covered by Panos Ethiopia. Today, the membership of EMWA is 149 and a member has recently been nominated as an Advisory Committee Member of the African Women Media Committee.

#### **10.4.4 Foreign Correspondents' Association of Ethiopia**

The FCA consists of resident correspondents for the BBC, VOA, DW and others. Membership includes not only journalists and Ethiopian correspondents for international broadcasts but also information attaches of Embassies and the Information Officer of the ECA. Today membership stands at twenty-two.

### **10.5 Key Figures and Scholars**

#### **10.5.1 Blatta Gebre Egziabher Gila Maryam**

He was one of the most outstanding passionate advocate Eritreans for the restoration of Eritrea to Ethiopia and pioneer of Amharic press. He wrote satirical poems on sheets that were duplicated around 50 times and circulated in the Emperor's courtyard every Sunday in a format that resembled a newspaper, although its title remains unknown.

#### **10.5.2 Wolde Giyorgis Wolde-Yohannes 'Father of Ethiopian Journalism'**

Of particular significance in the post-war expansion of the Ethiopian press, especially in its early phase, was Blatta Wolde Giyorgis Wolde-Yohannes (not to be confused with Tsehafe Ti'zaz Wolde Giyorgis Wolde-Yohannes, the Emperor's Secretary at the time), a man who was given the epithet "Father of Ethiopian Journalism." His name was linked, originally, with Berhanena Selam as main editor, and later on and more closely, with Addis Zemen.

Still, a lasting tradition of Ethiopian journalism was formed during this period. Blatta Welde Giyorgis Wolde Yohannes was assigned as main editor of Berhanena Selam in the 1930s and subsequently became known as 'the father of Ethiopian journalism' (Molvær, 1997, p. 29; Shimelis, 2000, p. 9). Illustrative of the close bonds between the government and the media, the Emperor later entrusted Welde Giyorgis to become the long-serving chief for the Ministry of the Pen 1941–58. It was an era when loyalty to the Emperor paid off.