



CHAPTER 3

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# WHY SOUTH AFRICA NEEDS GOVERNMENT OWNED MEDIA

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BY VUSI MONA

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## Vusi Mona

Vusi Mona was born in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga, where he did both his primary and secondary school education. After completing a Bachelor of Arts (English and Economics) and a postgraduate degree in Education (B Ed), he started working as a teacher and lectured at two teacher technical training colleges before giving this all up for his passion – journalism and the written word. He became launch editor of The Teacher newspaper, a subsidiary of the Mail & Guardian and since then has held editorial positions on Tribute magazine as well as the City Press.

In 2007, he was appointed head of media and communication for Rhema Church and had a stint as its deputy CEO before he was appointed head of communication at The Presidency in July 2009. He joined GCIS in August 2010 as deputy CEO, responsible for communication and content management. In 2013 he was appointed as general manager: communications for the South African National Roads Agency Limited (Sanral).

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Governments, by their nature, generate a lot of information through and in the process of policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. For example, when a government develops policy and implements programmes arising from it, it is also – apart from being engaged in the process of policy formulation – generating information. The same applies when a policy that is implemented is monitored and evaluated.

All government information is generated with the citizen in mind. Moving from the premise that governments are put in power by the people and for the people, policies and their implementation are meant to benefit ‘the people’. Citizens – or the governed – are therefore central to all government-generated information. If information does not reach citizens, then the notion of democracy and a people-centred government becomes hollow.

Private sector entities operate in more or less the same way. When a company formulates a strategy, executes it and presents its annual report, it generates information through this process. The information is then presented to shareholders, employees, trade unions, government regulatory bodies, the media, customers, creditors and the community. To disseminate the information, companies have invested in external media and in internal media such as annual reports, social responsibility reports and company websites. Those that understand the importance of communication have become even more effective at this, investing in and developing their own publications (internal and external), and radio and television channels that are specifically targeted at their consumer audiences.


To the extent that corporate entities are content owners, they are constantly looking for outlets and platforms through which to express such content. And if this means having to create their own media, they are not modest about it. The point is that the corporate sector has fully embraced the concept of own media to deliver content. There could be lessons here for government as content owners and information generators.

The starting point in determining whether government should create its own media is to question whether citizens have access to the information/content currently generated by government. The answer is ‘yes and no’. Citizens only have access to information to the extent that the commercial media are willing to act as purveyor of government information, or willing to reach every nook and cranny of the country and all segments of the population. But this is not always the case as there are a number of limiting factors, both structural and editorial, faced by the commercial media.

## **LIMITATIONS OF COMMERCIAL MEDIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

### **THE PROCESS OF GATEKEEPING (NEWS SELECTION)**

One of the major social functions of mass media is to provide information, through surveying the environment to herald the truth and convey a set of values to people.



The information that the mass media gathers comes from differing sources – government, opposition parties, civil society, business, sports bodies, personalities, experts and many others. The media is spoilt for choice about where it can get its information from, and government has to compete for recognition as a newsworthy source. Just as you can't let everyone into your house, media editors and producers do not simply let anyone (including government) into their space; they act as gatekeepers. Some issues, people and events will be given 'red carpet' treatment, while others will be relegated to insignificant news columns or simply ignored. Consequently, what government may consider newsworthy may not receive the same treatment from the commercial media.

Those who are snubbed by the press will complain bitterly (as we often do in government), claiming everything from media bias to vast diabolical conspiracies and media agendas. Bias and agendas may very well be why some government stories are shut out, but once the decision has been made, there is very little government can do other than complain. As they say in the media world: the editor's decision is final.

Once a government story has made it past the first hurdle though, the battle is not yet over. It is then up to the news editor or producer to decide how to present the story. The angle of the story will not be determined by the government but by the gatekeepers. Government can be the media's source of information but what comes out of the news reports is filtered through the lens of the gatekeepers with their particular set of values. The media's power to select what information gets past the gatekeepers and how this is presented has an effect on the flow and presentation of government information. The


question is: should government take this power as a given or should it contest it by having its own news products? Is the framing of matters for public consumption an exclusive preserve of the commercial media?

Gatekeepers are able to control the public's knowledge of actual events and facts by letting some stories pass through the system, keeping others out or presenting them differently from the way the source intended (this does not only happen to government stories). It is this power – to determine what goes through and how it is presented – that enables the media to set the agenda. The audience also learns how much importance to attach to a news item from the emphasis that has been placed on it within the media.

Government must make an unambiguous decision on whether it wants to contest this power or give it up to the commercial media. At the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), we favour an approach where government pushes past the traditional media gatekeepers and communicates directly to and with the people, while using the commercial media where it can. This approach is already being used through our limited portfolio of products (Vuk'uzenzele, Public Sector Manager magazine and SA News Agency).

## **THE PROFIT MOTIVE**

The commercial news media is not a public service – it is a business, and its survival depends on consumers buying and using its services and on its ability to generate profit. That profit comes from two sources: advertising and cover sales (or license fees in the case of radio and television).



These commercial imperatives limit what can or cannot be produced by the media. News outlets must make do with the resources they have. If the resources are limited this might restrict them from operating in certain areas (for example, rural areas). Citizens living in these areas will therefore be left out as newsmakers and news consumers. The commercial media is seldom interested in the rural market.

The coverage of South Africa's international activities by local media bears testimony to how limited resources and the profit motive can influence the flow of government information. Most South African media, with the exception of the public broadcaster, do not travel with the president or deputy president when they undertake international visits. The commercial media has indicated that this is due to resource constraints. Media owners want to maximize profits and this pressure results in editors and producers not deploying journalists for these 'expensive' international trips. The result? A lack of appreciation by the local media, and subsequently the public, of South Africa's international activities.

Lack of coverage of and reach into rural areas by the commercial media also exposes a number of myths. The first is that the market approach is the best and only media policy option. The second is that the commercial media unquestionably provides the highest quality journalism – the calibre of journalism a democracy needs for informed self-government. On the rural and international beats in particular, this 'high quality of journalism' has not been seen.

The very notion of journalism as an enterprise being subjected to commercial principles is problematic in light of the democratic principle of the 'people's right to know'. The 'right to


know' should not be determined by the size of a citizen's pocket. Can the news media, within the commercial media system, truly be a public service? What sort of integrity can the news have if it can be bought and sold? And what happens to those who cannot buy the news?

The inherent problem of a commercialised news media where profit maximisation is the goal, can only be balanced out by a (parallel) system that does not turn news, particularly government information, into a commodity to be bought and sold. In the electronic (television and radio) environment, this principle is accepted and this is why we have public broadcasting (the South African Broadcasting Corporation) existing side by side with commercial broadcasting (for example, Multichoice, M-Net and the newly-licensed commercial broadcasters).

## **CIRCULATION FIGURES, RATINGS AND ADVERTISING**

Maintaining circulation figures and ratings are important for the commercial media and are closely linked to maintaining profits. A media outlet's survival is dependent on how many (and even what type of) people consume its product. Any decline in circulation or ratings means that the media outlet will have to lower what it charges advertisers to place adverts. Thus, the choice of stories and their placement is determined by what is likely to attract the largest audience, however frivolous it may be.

Then there is the issue of media buying and how the adspend is allocated to different media. If, for example, younger audiences are not using a particular media product, advertisers and media buyers will seldom patronise it. Advertisers tend not to like audiences born in or before the 1950s.



This is blatant age discrimination, but advertisers insist on their right to spend their money any way they choose – even if a sizable percentage of their customers happen to have grey hair. This can have unintended consequences on the elderly's access to information.

The same can be said about the poor. Advertisers are not keen to spend their money on audiences perceived to be poor. An editor once told me that the owners had given her a mandate to lose the poorer segment of her readers because they (the owners) wanted to pitch the publication at a higher level to advertisers. The media's elitist contempt for the poor is not difficult to prove. To the poor, the media's attitude is: this is not our audience – we want people who can afford cars, houses, computers and other gadgets because they attract advertisers.

What story will make it on the front page: the one that is complex but important, or the one that is trivial but will attract the most readers? Sadly, you will find out which tycoon was eating sushi from half-naked women serving as dining tables before you will find out about South Africa halving its cost, by billions of rands, of treating its HIV-positive citizens while bringing on board an additional 200 000 people for treatment. You will hear about President Jacob Zuma allegedly 'doing shopping in China while South Africa burns' before you will find out about the substance of his visit to that country and what this could mean for South Africa. Better still, you could hear about how much his state visit to the UK cost before you will hear about the deals and agreements the business delegation accompanying him signed and what the implications are for foreign direct investment and job creation.


The point is that with the increased pressure on media outlets to improve circulation and ratings, they are compelled to 'give the people what they want' – the kind of trivia that passes for news today. While advertisers may force media outlets to give the people what they want, it is equally true that at times they compel them to give us what we don't want or need to be effective citizens in a democracy.

Also, for news outlets, the problem of steady funding and the threat of advertising pulling their funding if certain news stories offend them always looms. The commercial media can be beholden to corporate interests and this influences what it can or cannot do.

Government-owned media, which is not dependent on corporate advertising, will not be beholden to corporate interests and will have the potential to carry more balanced reporting which may even challenge the media's corporate agenda.

## **MEDIA CONCENTRATION**

South Africa has four media conglomerates – Media24, Times Media Group (previously Avusa), Caxton and Independent Newspapers. Between them, these companies, operating nationally, regionally and locally, own 95 per cent or so of the print media market. Although cross-ownership rules have prevented these media giants from owning radio platforms (42 per cent of radio is owned by the SABC), there is still a very high level of media concentration. The danger is that when one company owns a slew of properties, they tend to 'streamline,' 'integrate,' or 'centralise' operations, which means that individual media outlets will have fewer reporters keeping watch on unfolding events and resources



will be shared across different newspapers. Even now, national newspapers belonging to different media stables disseminate identical stories (the same stories which are produced by the same wire services are used by rival media outlets). Having fewer media players means that fewer stories are produced. For example, one group political correspondent can write a story for all the newspapers within the group. What impact does that have on content diversity and the potential for a range of stories and angles to be covered?

A final by-product of media concentration is the homogenisation of a company's products. Just as all Steers outlets look alike, newspapers owned by the same parent company will have a similar 'feel'. To achieve that consistency, quirks and peculiarities will be taken out and the product will be blander.

What this all means is that news outlets end up having fewer voices, fewer types of voices, less creativity and less autonomy to produce the news. Outlets within the same stable also have to rely on shared news copy and direction from the head office. Controls and checks fall into fewer hands.

But news is too important an element of our democracy to be the preserve of a few individuals. All of this does affect the flow of government information and content diversity. Fewer journalists mean insufficient writers to cover government in its entirety – that is why we end up with 'prominent' ministries and departments in the media. Those that are not regarded as 'sexy' are relegated to the margins as fewer reporters try to cover as much of government as they can.

Fewer journalists also mean limited possibilities for writers to specialise in and concentrate on

particular departments and/or subjects and to have an expert knowledge of them. Except for the obvious beats like education, health, crime, sports and business, few reporters today can be said to report authoritatively on issues such as development and land reform, labour, defence, science and technology, water and environmental affairs, and international relations. Media concentration is indeed a threat to creativity, diversity and pluralism.


Content and national programme managers on all the above subject areas sit within government. Herein lies an opportunity – to use government-owned media to educate and to inform citizens about those subject areas in which the commercial media may otherwise have no interest or capacity to cover with authority.

## **STORY STRUCTURE**

Whether the story is on radio or in a newspaper, writing styles and story types need to fit with the media outlet's mandate and vision for news coverage. If the story does not suit the outlet's style and approach to news, it will probably be dropped.

There are also certain rules journalists have to follow when writing or producing a story and these could be limiting. For example, the most popular structure for news stories is the inverted pyramid in which the information is arranged in descending order of importance. The most important facts are placed at the beginning of the story, and less important material follows. Succeeding paragraphs explain and support the lead.

This story structure is popular in the media because it tells readers quickly what they want to know. It forces reporters to sharpen their judgment of what the news is and to identify and rank



the most important elements of the story. But the inverted pyramid does have its disadvantages and may not be suitable for the delivery of government information. Although it delivers the most important news first, this approach often results in stories being reported out of context or without due regard for the big picture. For example, the flaws of this approach were clearly demonstrated in many of the news reports on the performance and delivery agreements signed between the ministers and the president. Here emphasis was placed on the punitive (largely imagined by the media) dimension of the agreements rather than the performance monitoring and evaluation policy thrust which is key for government and is the direction the country is taking.

The inverted pyramid approach also results in stories not having an ending crafted by the writer but simply ending where the sub-editor decides. Reporters writing these stories also tend to lose interest, time and energy once they have answered the immediate questions that readers might have. The second half of the story is often casual at best and poor at worst. Should that be the due of the reading public?

The cumulative effect is that certain facts are excluded and story angles changed. Should government information be subjected to such treatment without any recourse? What happens to people's right to know if the story angle government is aiming for gets changed and facts excluded?

The optimistic among us say government communicators must engage and persuade reporters and editors to change their way of doing things. They may have a valid point, but until reporters and editors are persuaded government must in the meantime strive to

communicate with their target audiences directly.

## **TIME/SPACE CONSTRAINTS**

There are many important stories that get little or no exposure in the commercial media – not because of malice on the part of the media but because there are only so many stories that can fit into a single newscast or newspaper.


Even when a story does make the cut, some important details might have to be sacrificed for brevity's sake. Journalists and editors have to decide which elements can be included and which should be left out, sometimes much to the chagrin of politicians and government communicators. This does not only happen with news stories. Opinion pieces by government communicators and policy advisers are sometimes cut beyond recognition, and they can be hesitant to submit any further articles.

Limited media space is inherently incompatible with media freedom. Modern democracies need a choice of politics and ideas, and that choice requires access to truly diverse and competing sources of news, literature, entertainment, and popular culture. If space is an issue, then let us open up the media for more entrants, including government.

## **THE CASE FOR A GOVERNMENT-OWNED NEWSPAPER**

The section above sought to highlight the limitations of the commercial media and to lay the basis for an argument to support government's initiative to address some of society's information needs by publishing its own media. This section is based on an article I wrote for City Press in July 2012 where I used Vuk'uzenzele as an example of one of gov-





ernment's initial forays into newspaper publishing. It was inspired by a panel discussion in which I participated – together with Wits Journalism Professor Anton Harber, Unisa's Dr Phil Mtimkulu and City Press editor Ferial Haffajee – at a public relations conference in the same year.

At that conference, it was a breath of fresh air to hear Harber's views on government publishing its own newspaper. He said that there was no reason for the media to object to government publishing its own newspaper, as long as it did not carry advertising. The qualification was interesting but something one could live with. It was Harber's ripping the veil off the exclusivist power by the commercial media to publish and his stance on making access to information as egalitarian as possible that caught my attention.


When government announced in 2011 that it was going to convert its bimonthly magazine, Vuk'uzenzele, into a monthly newspaper, Harber's protégés and colleagues in the media and academia protested – perhaps rather too much. To them, the freedom to publish a newspaper is their exclusive right – a privilege that is natural and immutable. Ironically, it was lost to them that they do not publish in all South Africa's official languages – including Braille – which Vuk'uzenzele does. They do not meet the information needs of the blind and speakers of African indigenous languages. When they objected, they probably had forgotten that their products are only for the fully sighted, the relatively well off (and there aren't many in our country) and those who can read English and Afrikaans. Their opposition challenged the frequently received historic wisdom of permitting market forces to shape the contours of newspaper publishing in South Africa.

Ours is a country with a tragically low number of media and communication academics who would dare question the legitimacy and desirability of our corporate media system or acknowledge the contradictions between the highly concentrated corporate media system and the communication requirements of a democratic society. Criticism is in terribly short supply unless, of course, it is directed against state-sponsored legislation.

The silence by scholars of communication studies on the impact of the commercial media juggernaut on our democracy and the dearth of research on alternative media models is deafening, particularly in a country that believes in freedom of expression and upholds academic freedom. Perhaps this has something to do with university-industry relations, as some of the big four media groups sponsor journalism and media studies faculty chairs. This could be an area of academic inquiry in its own right.

What we should lament is that our communication and journalism scholars have tended to accept the absence of the public service from newspaper publishing. On occasions they consent to it, but with considerable misgivings. Some might welcome government publishing this or that journal but this is often qualified with 'as long as they don't publish propaganda'. They need not worry. We live in a post-Soviet period and Pravda would not exactly fit into South Africa's constitutional democracy.

Interestingly, a different situation pertains in broadcasting. Public broadcasting exists side by side with commercial broadcasting. Public broadcasting's potential to promote a democratic political culture, and the value of the SABC as part of the nation's broader educational network, is recognised by all, media and communication commentators alike. On newspaper publishing,



however, some commentators are either sanguine about the power of our corporate media system or have resigned themselves to its immutability for the foreseeable future. For them, the profit-driven and advertising-supported newspaper publishing system has become almost sacrosanct.

The media, especially the print media, is traditionally opposed to government as a media player. There is a view by some in the media that 'if government does it, it's propaganda, if we do it, it's information and media freedom'.

It is very easy for government to internalise this view and therefore want to stay away from owning media properties for fear of causing controversy. However, it cannot be that when government wants to honestly and directly communicate to and with the citizens using its own media as a vehicle it should be browbeaten into withdrawal and silence because of the print media's self-interest. The reality is that the print media is not a public service but a business. It will protect its turf, just like any other business, but it stands on morally shaky ground if it wants to sell government information (packaged into news) when this can be made freely available by government to the citizens.

The idea of a newspaper as a 'no-go area' for government is today being undermined by technology. As long as people have the right device on their laptops and palmtops, they can always check out 'their-fav-newspaper.gov.za' website.

## **GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES IN THE PRINT MEDIA SPACE**


At a national level, government's presence in the print media news space happens through

Vuk'uzenzele. The publication was launched as a magazine in September 2005, with the purpose of enhancing government's unmediated communication with all South Africans and as a sequel to research conducted to establish the extent to which the population would like to receive information on government programmes. The magazine was also in response to Cabinet's request in 2004 to produce a regular government publication. After almost five years of publishing the magazine on a bimonthly basis, it was converted into a monthly tabloid size newspaper with a print run of 1.7 million.

Vuk'uzenzele is one of many communication platforms through which direct communication with the public is enhanced. This is in line with Government Communications' strategic objective of developing and effectively using government communication products to better meet the public's information needs. The newspaper promotes access to information about government programmes and explains how to access government services. It has also brought about an important addition to government's communication platforms, especially for people with the least access to media.

The newspaper is distributed free of charge in all nine provinces, mainly in rural areas, with a particular focus on the poorer sections of society. The main method of distribution is through knock-and-drop (home direct) and at bulk distribution points in government offices, clinics, hospitals, municipalities, rural police stations, post offices and Thusong service centres.





Vuk'uzenzele is also available in Braille for the visually impaired and in an electronic version for readers with access to the Internet, mostly in the upper LSMs. The newspaper is published in English with selected articles (four pages, including the entire front page) translated into all other official languages.

The newspaper also carries a regular supplement, 'Employment News', which provides information on public sector job vacancies and job oriented training programmes.

Another major print media initiative at a national government level is the monthly magazine Public Sector Manager. Public sector managers are part of government's audience and, like any other audience, have specific information needs. The magazine was launched with those needs in mind. In January 2011, following two mock-up editions – Public Sector Manager and Government Executive – research was conducted to find out how the magazine was being received and what would be the preferred title. Public Sector Manager emerged as preferred. The magazine targets middle and senior managers in the public sector and is currently circulated to 10 000 senior managers. It has a print run of 15 000 with the extra 5 000 made available through subscription and a retail network.

The magazine features best practices in the public sector and profiles managers and executives who represent and execute the public service vision well. It also provides a platform through which public sector managers are informed about public service principles, management and innovations, and regularly features interviews and discussions with political principals to share their perspectives on policy and a range of issues that affect the public service.

Through the copies made available in airport lounges and sold at retail outlets, the magazine also attempts to improve the image of the public sector and to inform non- public sector employees about the function of government and the public sector in general.

Public Sector Manager is a high quality, glossy magazine that relies on revenue raised through advertising. It has no budget allocation from National Treasury. The magazine is a radical departure – in content, design and the financial model – from the usual government journals.

UBUNTU, a magazine produced by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, was inspired by Public Sector Manager. Published quarterly, this high quality magazine is the department's first externally focused publication and guides readers to understand the country's foreign policy. The magazine targets embassies, government officials, business, labour, civil society, policy think tanks, academia, students and practitioners of international relations. The magazine is funded wholly by the Department but carries corporate adverts from sponsors who have partnered with the Department in diplomacy activities such as events or marketing and advertising campaigns.


## **GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES IN PRINT MEDIA: A PROVINCIAL SNAPSHOT**

All provinces, with the exception of the Western Cape and the Northern Cape, have externally focused publications (largely newspapers) that report on government's work in a consolidated manner. Most of these publications focus on profiling the political principals (especially the premiers and mayors) and are events-oriented.

On the next page is a table that shows provincial publications:



PROVINCE	PROVINCIAL MAGAZINE/ NEWSPAPER	AIM OF PUBLICATION	METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION	FREQUENCY	PRINT RUN	TARGET MARKET
<b>Mpumalanga</b>						
Office of the Premier	Inhlaba Mkhosi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To disseminate information it covers stories from different departments</li> </ul>	Through regional and municipal offices and outreach programmes	Three times a year (second, third and fourth quarter).	3 000	LSM 1 - 5
<b>North West</b>						
Office of the Premier	North West Mirror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To communicate and educate the public</li> </ul>	Through regional offices public places	Monthly	120 000	LSM 1 - 10
Private office of the Premier	Newspeak	The magazine is more focused on the premier's speeches, events and her profile	Through regional offices, municipalities, government Offices and public participation events	Twice a year	2 000	None in particular
<b>Northern Cape</b>						
<b>Limpopo</b>						
Office of the Premier	Limpopo News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To inform communities and stakeholders on developmental news arising from the provincial government</li> </ul>	The paper is distributed to all government offices in the province. GCS provincial offices play an active role in the distribution.	Monthly	100 000	LSM 1 - 5
Western Cape	None. Only individual department newsletters with a small print run. The only department that does mass production is the police; the focus of the newspaper is on crime related issues.					



## **GOVERNMENT-OWNED PRINT MEDIA PROPERTIES IN THE BRICS COUNTRIES**

The idea of a government-owned newspaper may be unnerving for some, especially those who believe government has no business dabbling in newspaper publishing. With South Africa having joined the BRICS, it would be beneficial to look at what the practice is in these countries.

### **INDIA**

In India, the world's largest democracy, out of 8 512 newspapers, as many as 6 686 are owned by individuals, 1 122 by joint stock companies, 260 by societies and associations, 222 by trusts and 150 by firms and partnerships. Forty one (41) newspapers are brought out by the central and state governments. Cooperative societies, educational institutions and the like own the remaining 31. Of the 41 government newspapers, 37 are brought out by the central and 4 by the state governments.

India has operated as a multiparty system for most of its history and is an excellent example of a country where the idea of a government newspaper is not seen as inimical to democracy.

Interestingly, India has a publications division within its Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, responsible for bringing out some of the country's flagship publications, including the popular Employment News, a weekly that is published in English, Hindi and Urdu. The newspaper provides information about employment opportunities for the unemployed and under-employed youth of the country which helps them to make informed choices about their careers.

The publications division is also one of the leading publishing houses in India and the largest in the public sector. It has a repository of books and journals that highlight matters of national importance. It has published more than 7 600 titles, out of which 1 500 are live on date. Besides books, the division brings out 21 monthly journals and magazines that cover issues of national importance and social purpose.

### **RUSSIA**

Although the government in Russia has begun disposing of some of its media shareholdings, around 80 per cent of the regional press in Russia is still owned by corresponding local authorities. This, of course, reflects where (politically and economically) the country has come from. A system of central planning, excessive state ownership and control of the levers of economic power and influence were the norm, and the regional press reflects this.

Although Russian government has reduced its role in media ownership, it has not let go of some media assets that it considers strategic. Rossiyskaya Gazeta is Russia's main government-owned newspaper, set up by the Russian government in 1990, before the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has a daily circulation of 638 000.

### **CHINA**

The principle and the practice of government-owned newspapers is well-established in China. For example, the Legal Daily is a People's Republic of China (PRC) state-owned newspaper under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, published in the PRC and primarily covering legal developments.

China Youth Daily is a state-run paper associated with the Communist Youth League of China. The paper is able to attract a primary readership among professionals between the ages of 21 and 48. To maintain such readership, the paper has established an online version.

The People’s Daily is a newspaper which is an organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). It is published worldwide and has a circulation of between three and four million. In addition to its main Chinese-language edition, it has editions in English, Japanese, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.

According to Unesco, People’s Daily takes its place among the world top ten newspapers. It publishes the latest policy information dispatches and resolutions of the Chinese government as well as major domestic and international news from China. What is even more fascinating about People’s Daily is its online version: People’s Daily Online, launched in 1997. People’s Daily Online’s primary role is to disseminate information from China and to make sure that the news covered in the print version is reinforced. People’s Daily Online

is reportedly one of the most authoritative, comprehensive and influential websites and generates the largest number of daily new releases in China.

Published under the People’s Daily are also ten newspapers including People’s Daily Overseas Edition, East China News, South China News, Market Daily, International Financial Daily, Jiangnan Times, Global Times, Securities Times, Health Times, Satire & Humour and six monthly magazines including The Earth, News Front, Listed Companies, Times Trend and People Forum.

## BRAZIL

Most of the mass media in Brazil is privately owned and there are no government subsidies for media companies, except for educational radio and TV – usually one public broadcasting company in each state owns and operates educational television and radio stations.

In Brazil, government ownership of newspapers is limited to the publications that specific departments bring out. Their government media landscape is as follows:

GOVERNMENT ENTITY	ORGANISATION	NEWSPAPER
President	Sulejmani	<i>METROFIRE</i>
Ministry of Defene	Ministerio da Defesa	<i>Forças Armadas do Brasil</i>
Ministry of Finance	Ministerio da Fazenda	<i>Ministerio da Fazenda</i>
	Controle Nacional	<i>Tesouro Nacional</i>
Ministry of Communications	Ministerio das Comunicacoes	<i>Diario Oficial do Brasil</i>
Ministry of Education	Ministerio da Educacao	<i>MdE - Diario Educativo</i>
Social Care	Assistencia Social	<i>Ajuda aos Iniciantes</i>
National Congress	Congresso Brasileiro	<i>Plenario Nacional</i>

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, in determining the desirability of government-owned print media properties, regard should be had of a crucial international standard in relation to freedom of expression – and that is the pluralism and diversity of the media. Freedom of expression requires that ‘the communication media are potentially open to all without discrimination or, more precisely, that there be no individuals or groups that are excluded from access to such media,’ according to the Inter-American Court.

These principles have been recognised by international courts, which have also elaborated on the several components of pluralism and diversity such as source pluralism and the existence of a three-pronged media system: public, private and community (the last-named has been implemented in radio broadcasting locally, albeit with limited success).

Unfortunately, the current situation in South Africa’s print media environment is far from satisfying international standards. The print media

landscape is concentrated in the hands of a few, thus violating the public’s right to receive information on matters of public interest from a variety of sources. This lack of pluralism is mainly due to two factors that shape the South African media landscape:

- the failure of government policies to support the development of independent newspaper publishers (India has more individuals, 6 686 to be exact, who own more newspapers than the 1 122 Joint Stock Companies);
- the uncritical acceptance in South Africa, by both government and citizens, that the print media ought to be the commercial media’s exclusive domain.

Government-owned print media properties can add plurality and diversity in terms of news sources and content. They can address the information needs of those audiences in whom the commercial media is not interested. Let a thousand flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend (and that includes government’s).