

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE REPORTING AUDIT



A Review of Media Coverage of the Transitional Justice Process in Liberia

March – May 2008



Funded by UNESCO, OSIWA and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)

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The Liberia Media Center (LMC) recognizes the hard work and dedication of its staff and consultants for working tirelessly to ensure the publication of this report. LMC extends special thanks and gratitude to Paul James Allen for the transitional justice inputs on behalf of ICTJ, Mr. Samuel Duworko and Ms. Marquita Smith for their editorial advice and contribution to the text.

Executive Summary

It has been nearly three months since the Liberia Media Center released its first media monitoring report of coverage of the Truth and Reconciliation process and the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

The outcome of this exercise, like the previous one, is not intended to establish the “best from the rest” neither to stimulate undue competition amongst media houses. It rather seeks to assist, where necessary, by offering technical and editorial advice to improve the content of news and programs being delivered by the various media outlets under the project.

More specifically, it seeks to build a culture of professional accountability amongst media houses. Generally, it should be noted that the Liberian media has shown strong interest in the coverage of the TRC process and the Charles Taylor trial. Despite resource and editorial constraints, both the print and broadcast media sectors performed satisfactorily with very few incidents of ethical and editorial problems.

In the print sector, the *Daily Observer* and *New Democrat* were outstanding in their coverage of both processes, though overall, the broadcast media provided more coverage than the print. The *New Democrat* published fewer gruesome pictures this time and clearly distinguished news reports on the trial from their opinion pages and carried over a dozen stories.

Other newspapers making strides were *The Analyst* and *National Chronicle*. The print sector devoted 1.8% of its total content space to the TRC, while the broadcast sector dedicated 3.0% of its total airtime. *The Analyst* Newspaper should be specifically credited for keeping a number of issues on the radar, notably the appearance of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf¹ before the TRC. The paper ran one of its columns “Memo to the President” for a record twelve (12) times reminding the President Sirleaf of her commitment to the TRC and the consequences of her refusal to appear.

LMC still maintains that the President should lead by example and appear when called upon by the Commission.

¹ The President had in time past promised to appear when called upon but in February, said she would rather document her experiences in her up-coming book but LMC rejected her suggestion and insisted she appear to provide legitimacy to the process and

All media institutions combined produced far better quality stories than the previous review. However, the *National Chronicle* should be singled out for its troubling pattern of reporting and strongly admonished to clearly delineate its news from its opinion pages. The project notes that some of its reports were not sourced and suggest to have been written as the paper's opinion and not as a news article, which is how it was presented. Specific reference is made to its March 24, 30, and April 2, 18 editions.

The study found that coverage of the TRC process declined since the last report, in part due to lack of access by reporters. The farther out from Monrovia the hearings went, the more media failed to report them. However, even when the hearings were closer, the results were mixed. The print media recorded a total of 182 articles dropping from a monthly average of 95.5 in the preceding period to 60.6 articles. While the broadcast media brought 126 articles recording 1.93% reduction, down from a monthly average of 65.5 to 42.0.

The Charles Taylor trial is almost evenly divided between both print and broadcast outlets, though the broadcast sector relies heavily on Talking Drum Studio and the BBC World Service Trust syndicated reports from the trial taking place in The Hague and accounts for 64% of coverage on the proceedings. The Liberia Media Center recognizes that the project has helped place emphasis on informing the public and helping media organizations provide accurate and balanced coverage of the trial. However, there is room for all media organizations to improve their reports by trying to find creative ways to overcome resource challenges and generate some original reporting and rely less on syndicated materials.

Star Radio and *Radio Veritas* again performed very exceptionally in their coverage of the TRC hearings and the Charles Taylor trial. *Truth FM* made some strides but both *Truth* and *ELBC* still have the recurring problem of not meeting their news schedules. *ELBC* especially will require serious funding and enhanced institutional capacity to match its current infrastructure development with the quality of output.

There were very minimum follow-ups and the most interesting follow-up was *Star Radio* continued coverage of Mango Miller. Miller a former fighter allegedly beheaded a woman and held her son captive for over 18 years. *Star Radio* correspondent in Buchanan, Wilikimon Dwegbe's keen interest in the story helped secure the boy's release.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

5.0 Background

Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission presents the most viable opportunity for addressing abuses emanating from its civil conflict and setting the stage for genuine reconciliation and healing. Since the process began, the LMC has been supporting the Commission's work by conducting journalism training programs together with host of international and local stakeholders.

The Transitional Justice Reporting Audit project is a follow-up to various capacity building initiatives carried out since 2006. It aims to promote accountability within the media sector through independent monitoring of media performance during the TRC process and the ongoing trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor. This document is the second in a series of reports to be released on the process but is being presented in summary form. Interested readers could follow-up on the first report for general details related to the overall project, including background, objectives, research scope and methodology.

5.1 Objective

The general objective of the exercise is to monitor and evaluate media coverage of the TRC public hearings and assess how the coverage affects public appreciation of the process.

1.2 Scope of Monitoring

The project has been monitoring and evaluating the performance of eight (8) newspapers and four radio stations based in Monrovia. Radio stations include *Radio Veritas*, *Truth FM*, *ELBC*, and *Star Radio*. Print institutions reviewed during the period were *The Analyst*, *The News*, *Daily Observer*, *The Inquirer*, *New Democrat*, *Public Agenda*, *National Chronicle* and *Heritage*.

1.3 Methodology

Desk review of newspapers and review of recorded news and information items were the methods used for collecting data. The monitoring targeted the TRC public hearings and the ongoing trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor taking place in The Hague, The Netherlands. However, attention was also placed on TRC related stories including press statements, letters, talk shows, debates and commentaries. The papers, like radio stations were reviewed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

CHAPTER TWO: NEWSPAPER ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY REPORT

2.0 Articles Reported

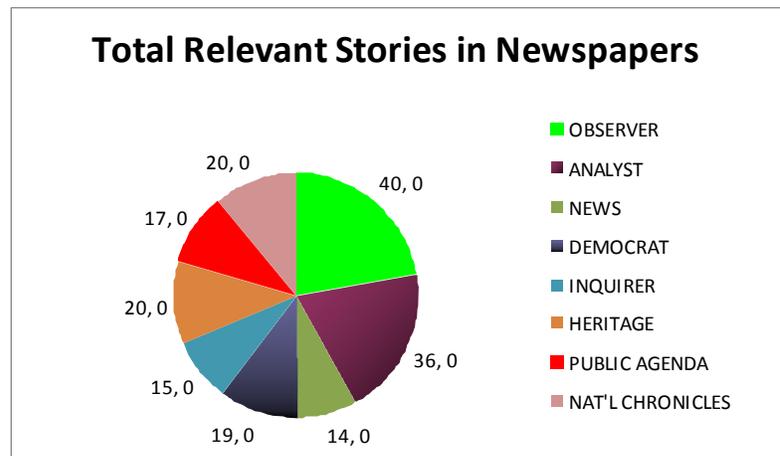
In the period covering March, April and May, a total of 182 stories, an average of 60.6 monthly, were reported on the truth and reconciliation process. This represents a decline in coverage from the preceding period, where media outlets averaged 95.5 stories a month. As shown in the below graph, the *Daily Observer* maintained its impressive coverage of the TRC by featuring forty (40) stories on the public hearings. The *Analysts* came a close second with thirty-six (36) articles. Of these, twelve (12) carried similar captioned, "Testifying is a Must" in a column titled "Memo to the President". *New Democrat*, *The News* and *The Inquirer* saw declines, while *Public Agenda*, *National Chronicle* and *Heritage* recorded uptakes in their coverage. The *Public Agenda* published seventeen (17) articles, *The Heritage* twenty (20), *New Democrat* (19), *The Inquirer* sixteen (16), *The News* and *National Chronicles* fourteen (14) and twenty (20) respectively.

The review noted the *Daily Observer's* consistent coverage of hearings in the interior of the country. Most of the stories offered readers great details and were well written.

The New Democrat failed to keep its lead in covering the TRC but in contrast

outperformed the *Daily Observer* in coverage of the Charles Taylor trial. Looking at the table below, coverage of the TRC is in sharp decline. Trends show, that distance is a major factor. The farther the TRC goes in Liberia's interior, the less access media outlets have to cover it. However, results are still mixed even when the hearings are a reasonable distance outside Monrovia.

For instance, when the hearings were ongoing in Grand Gedeh, the print media displayed nine (9) articles, compared with Grand Bassa that recorded sixteen (16). Some exceptions were Rivergee and Lofa, where the print media delivered ten (10) and twelve (12) articles respectively. The Rivergee coverage mostly concentrated on reports of an alledged fist fight between Commissioners Pearl Brown Bull and Massa Washington.



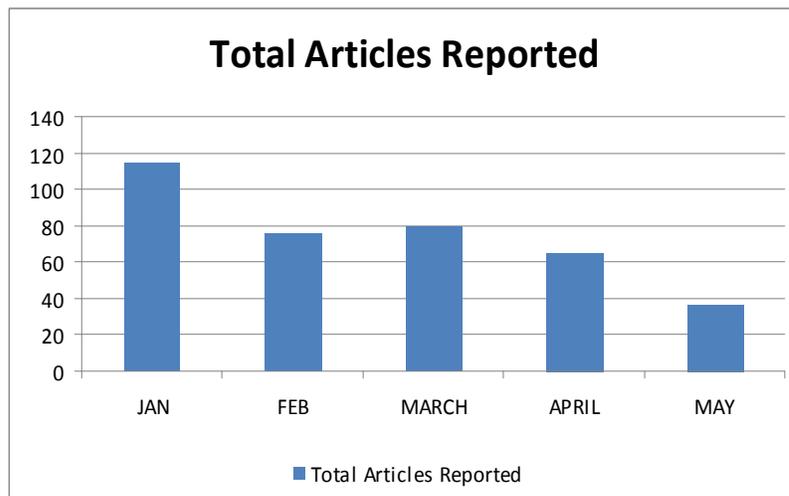
Interestingly, when the hearings came closer to Monrovia, as seen in the case of **Margibi and Bomi Counties**, the number of articles declined to four (4) and seven (7) respectively. The *Daily Observer* brought a record breaking thirty-two (32) articles on rural hearings. *The News* and *The Inquirer* offered readers fewer stories than the other newspapers, totaling five (5) and four (4) articles respectively. Trends also show that media outlets, especially the Heritage and Analyst, with limited reach and staffing resources, relied heavily on TRC Press Releases.

NEWSPAPERS County-by-County ASSESSMENT

Table 1

News Papers	Gran D Kru	River Gee	Grand Gedeh	Sinoe	River Cess	Grand Bassa	Lo Fa	Gbar Polu	Bo mi	Nim ba	Bo Ng	Mar Gibi	Mary land	TOTAL
Daily Observer	0	6	3	1	3	3	3	3	4	4	0	1	1	32
Analyst	0	1	3	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	10
News	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
New Democrat	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	2	1	0	0	2	0	12
Inquirer	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Heritage	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	9
Public Agenda	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	7
National Chronicles	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	11
TOTAL	2	10	9	3	7	16	13	11	7	4	3	4	1	90

The table above shows the number of hearings reported from the counties from March to May 2008



2.1 Space Allocation

In March TRC stories took up a total space of 6,378.61 square inches amounting to eighty (80) relevant stories against a total space of 241,891.68 square inches totaling 42.75 pages against a total of 1685 available pages. The sixty-five

(65) stories published in April took 3,510.457 square inches out of the total available space of 241,891.68 square inches. This represented thirty (30) pages

of the total of one thousand seven hundred and fourteen (1714) available pages.

Table 2

No	Newspaper	Total Relevant Stories in Newspapers	Total Relevant space in Newspapers in square inches (A)	Total available space in Newspapers in square inches (B)	Total pages in Newspapers	Percentage space allocated in Newspapers in square inches (A/B×100)
1	Daily Observer	40	2,584.58	126,495.07	936	2.043
2	Analyst	36	3,209.492	78,894.75	482	4.068
3	News	14	660.209	61,420.29	502	1.074
4	New Democrat	19	1,699.411	119,226	728	1.425
5	Inquirer	15	712.21	120,588.36	889	0.59
6	Heritage	20	916.852	66,390	450	1.38
7	Public Agenda	17	1,027.295	32,530	250	3.157
8	National Chronicles	20	1,177.623	47,610	368	2.471
TOTAL		182	11987.672	653,154.47	4,605	

N/B: 'A' represents total relevant space in Newspapers in square inches
'B' represents total available space in Newspapers in square inches

The table reflects consolidated figures for March, April and May

2.2 Analysis

Like the previous period, the *Daily Observer* devoted 2% of its total space to the TRC coverage from a total of nine hundred and thirty-six (936) published pages. All papers devoted just 1.8% of their combined published pages to the TRC for the three month period.

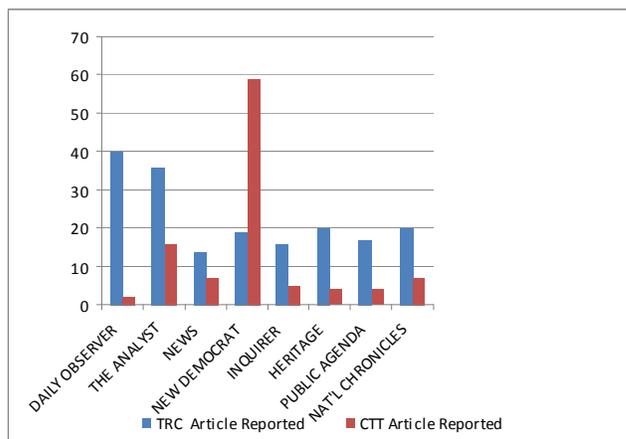
The *New Democrat*, *The News*, *The Inquirer* and *Heritage* saw decline in their space devoted to the TRC unlike the previous period in which the *New Democrat* recorded significant space allocation. The paper dropped 1.4% from 6.2 % in the preceding period. However, the *New Democrat* emphasis on the Charles Taylor trial recorded 7.5% of total pages published.

Other papers that increased their content space to TRC coverage were the *The Analyst*, *Public Agenda* and *National Chronicle*. While *The Analyst* carried fewer stories than the *Daily Observer*, it allotted more content space totaling 4.0%. However, considering the diversity of articles, space allotted to pictures, and the layout style, the *Daily Observer* had relatively more content space than the Analyst. For example, *The Analyst* newspaper in March repeated one of its columns “Memo to the President” for twelve (12) times. Though the article was considered and has been further analyzed in other sections of this report, it was not calculated in the space analysis.

Table 3

No.	Newspaper	TRC Article Reported	CTT Article Reported	Total Article Reported
1	Daily Observer	40	2	42
2	Analyst	36	16	52
3	News	14	7	21
4	New Democrat	19	59	78
5	Inquirer	16	5	21
6	Heritage	20	4	24
7	Public Agenda	17	4	21
8	National Chronicles	20	7	27
TOTAL		182	104	286

The table above shows the number of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Charles Taylor Trail (CTT) articles reported from March to May



The project began documenting media coverage of the Charles Taylor trial (CTT) in January but more emphasis was placed on the TRC media coverage then. The *New Democrat* produced a whopping fifty nine (59) articles, half the combined total of all newspapers on the Taylor trial. In total the newspapers brought one hundred and four (104)

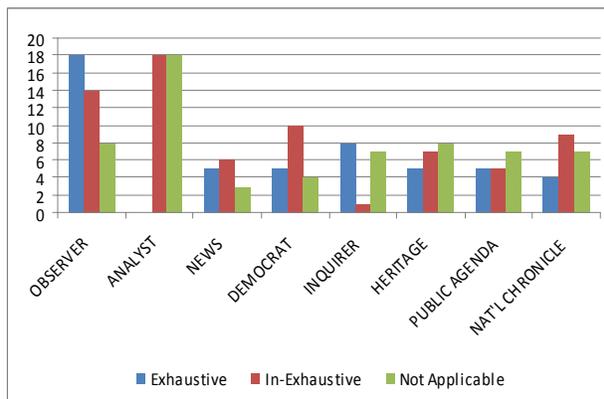
articles. Like in January and February, the *New Democrat* maintained a close lid on the trial, in some cases bringing testimonies of the key witnesses verbatim. It ranked high both in content space allocation and amount of articles reported.

In contrast the *Daily Observer* which saw huge coverage of the TRC, performed least in covering the Charles Taylor trial.

2.3 Diversity

Diversity refers to the different sources the medium contacted or referred to in ensuring balanced, thorough and accurate coverage. It also considers the extent to which the medium went in finding multiple dimensions to reports and in other cases laboring to background stories. In examining whether coverage was “Exhaustive” sources mentioned were checked against the story angles and their subjects. As shown in the graph below, *The Analyst* Newspaper though with an uptake in the number of TRC stories, dropped in its diversity rating with four “Exhaustive”² stories published in March, April and May. The paper experienced some serious difficulties in meeting its production schedule. It failed to appear on the newsstand seven times during May.

Similarly, the *News*, *New Democrat*, *Public Agenda*, *National Chronicle* and *Heritage* published fewer Exhaustive stories, while the *Inquirer* saw slight uptake in its diversity numbers from its previous rating though with relatively small number of articles.



Daily Observer again had an impressive showing with about eighteen (18) of its articles meeting the diversity threshold. Most of the stories had interesting background information, though it seemed the paper often used press releases from the TRC media unit without giving attribution. This was noticed in its March 5, 2008 Vol. 12, No. 43 edition.

Note:

A story is considered “Exhaustive” when the news medium ensures that the article is thoroughly balanced. Not all articles such as commentaries, editorials and letters need to be balanced. Thus articles falling in that category are deemed not applicable for classification. In most cases, stories based on accusations, allegations, and name calling need to reflect diversity. News on public announcement, pronouncement by the TRC and donations do not necessarily need to be balanced, however, when the news medium go a step

² In categorizing news stories from an exhaustive standpoint, the project Editor conducted a painstaking review of all news stories from the hearings to determine story categorization. This was necessary, as not all stories (34%) from the hearings were categorized.

forward to give additional background, and supplementary references, the story could be placed on the medium scorecard as “Exhaustive.”

2.4 Summary on Specific Print Media

The Inquirer

The Inquirer published nineteen (19) editions in March, twenty-one (21) in April and seventeen (17) in May. For the three months combined, it published a total of fifteen (15) stories on the TRC. The paper carried twelve (12) photos on the process and no editorial. These stories, however, did not cover the TRC public hearings in the counties. In May, it published two stories in spite of the hearings being held in nearby Kakata.

On the Charles Taylor trial, the paper featured five (5) stories; one in March and four in May.

The Inquirer has improved its layout but still needs to work on its font size uniformity. The project in its tour of media outlets before the release of this report, informed the Inquirer’s management of the problem and its shortcomings in covering the TRC hearings. The newspaper acknowledged the gap, but indicated it was understaffed and in need of more resources to effectively cover the rural hearings.

The News

For the period, *The News* published fifty-nine (59) times, publishing five (5) TRC stories in March, four (4) in April and five (5) in May, down from an impressive start of nineteen (19) in the preceding period. Seven (7) of the fourteen (14) published articles derived from in the rural areas. The paper published a total of eleven photos.

The News saw a sharp decline in its coverage of the TRC and failed to take advantage of a number of agenda setting issues. On the Charles Taylor trial, it equally failed to keep readers informed. The paper offered only seven articles with May accounting for five, the primary focus of those were the testimonies of former Liberian President Moses Blah.

In the paper’s overall coverage of the trial, 4.5 pages were allotted to the Taylor trial out of one hundred and forty (140) pages published. During the tour of media institutions and outlets, the Editor-In-Chief of *The News*, Jerome Dalieh informed the project that his paper had limited TRC coverage but was making up with renewed concentration on the Charles Taylor trial. When quizzed on

the publication of gruesome pictures, Dalieh informed the team, the paper had a policy in place against the publication of gruesome pictures.

Daily Observer

The *Daily Observer* published more articles for the period and carried more photos than all the other papers. In March it had thirteen (13) publications mostly on the hearings outside Montserrado County. All months combined, it published forty (40) stories on the TRC. The *Daily Observer* had most of its stories and articles well written and balanced.

The *Daily Observer* for the very first time since the start of the Taylor's trial published two (2) stories on the trial in May (15th and 23rd editions). *Daily Observer's* Managing Editor Ellicot Seade informed the project team that the limited coverage on the proceedings is due to a lack of access to the resources and general information.

The Heritage

The *Heritage* published twenty (20) articles on the TRC during the period. In one of its editorials the paper towed a fine line when writing about a fist fight between two of the TRC Commissioners.³ It published an editorial on March 10, with a repeat on the 11th of March titled: "TRC Commission: Execute your Mission with High Degree of Maturity and Responsibility." This was an important position and a number of papers provided similar perspective to the incident.

On the Charles Taylor trial, the *Heritage* published four (4) stories in its March and May publications. In May, the two stories published were displayed in the lead position and drew huge sales, according to the paper's editor-in-chief.

New Democrat

The *New Democrat* also recorded few stories on the TRC with nineteen (19) articles in three months. Fourteen (14) photos were displayed by the *New Democrat*, with no gruesome pictures in March and April, though the paper resumed publication of these photos in its May publication depicting the Carter Camp massacre in its May 29, volume 15 #101 and May 30, volume 15 #102. The paper reported on the alleged altercation between two commissioners in its editorial titled, "The TRC Unenviable Image" in its March 4th edition and repeated it on 6th March.

³ The media reported that Commissioner Massa Washington and Pearl Brown Bull were embroiled in a row

For the month of April, the *New Democrat* ranked second to the Daily Observer with ten (10) stories on the TRC. Seven of the ten stories were about the hearings. In May, the paper dropped in its content pages, from twenty (20) to twelve (12).

Covering the Charles Taylor's trial, *New Democrat* did an outstanding job. Like January and February, the Democrat outnumbered the rest of the papers on the coverage of the trial. During Taylor's trial, sixteen (16) pages were allotted out of the 268 pages the paper covered in March.

The Analyst Newspaper

The Analyst ran thirty-six (36) TRC related stories for the period but repeated a column captioned "Memo to the President" on the topic, "Testifying Is A Must" from the 10th of March to the 28th. The Analyst should draw praise for keeping this issue out front and reinforcing the need for national and grass-root support for the work of the TRC.

The *Analyst* published six (6) stories about the TRC out of its 15 publications in April, with four of those stories coming from hearings outside Montserrat County.

National Chronicle

The *National Chronicle* published twenty (20) articles for the period, up taking its previous standing of six (6). While the paper published more stories compared with other dailies it still has layout, font size and photo issues to address.

A rather troubling observation, the paper in its March 7, edition seemed to suggest that the TRC was "Serving as a Kangaroo Court" in citing a document it alleged emanated from the Ministry of Finance requesting the personal income returns of some members of former President Charles Taylor's inner circle.

Though the commission is yet to react to this allegation, the paper failed to contact representatives on the subject. And even more alarming is the pattern of reporting it has adopted on the TRC, which holds implication not only for the process but the paper's own credibility. Some of the stories were off the mark and void of good journalism principles and practice.

The National Chronicle featured nine (9) articles on Harry Greaves and in one of its publications it indicated that Mr. Greaves was engaged in financing the

National Patriotic Front of Liberia and alleged that he killed 250,000 innocent Liberians though the story quoted no one and referenced no documents. The LMC contacted the National Chronicle following the publication of the article and expressed concerns over the article and paper's Managing Editor, Emmanuel Akyempong promised to take steps to address the problem.

Public Agenda

The Public Agenda Newspaper reported seventeen (17) articles for the period including an editorial which appeared in its March 5, edition captioned "TRC must be policed with a TRC " in reference to allegation of misconduct between Commissioners Massa Washington and Pearl Brown Bull. The editorial was timely, well structure and nicely written.

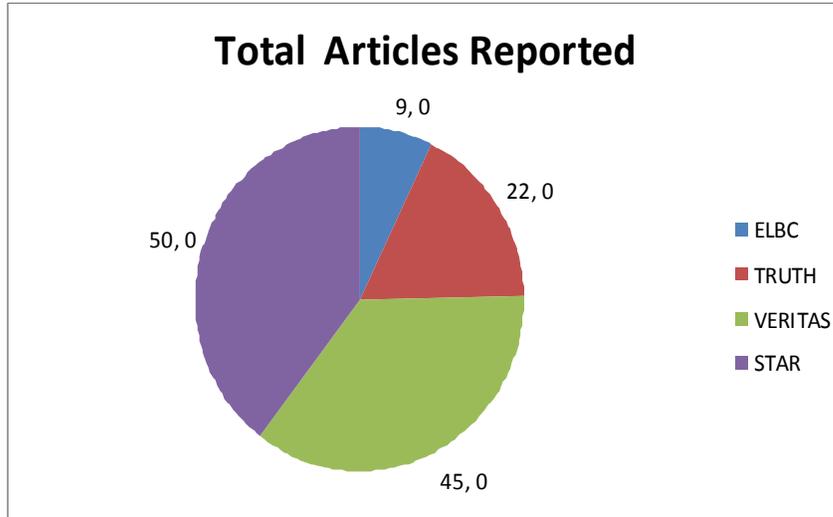
However, the project was alarmed by the Public Agenda's unbalanced lead story in its March 17, edition, "Crisis Shakes TRC – Two Officials Suspended for Fighting, Contact Group Intervenes to Restore Dignity." In that article, the paper alleged that two commissioners of the TRC were suspended by the board of inquiry set up to probe the cause of their alleged brawl but the story was rejected by the very 'commission' it claimed took the action. While it seemed to contact several sources to verify the incident, it failed to simply cross check the suspension allegation with the commission. The story offers a good example of poor or in-exhaustive reporting, as the paper made little or no effort in cross checking its facts.

Considering its staff strength and frequency of publication⁴, Public Agenda should be commended for its coverage of the Charles Taylor trial. For the period, the paper published four (4) articles.

⁴ Public Agenda is the only tri-weekly newspaper being monitored by the project, appearing on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It has gained the reputation of being very critical in its reporting especially on governance issues and recorded over 70% on coverage of politics in the topic coding for the period.

CHAPTER THREE: RADIO ASSESSMENT RADIO ASSESSMENT

3.0 Stories Monitored



During the months of March, April and May, ELBC, Radio Veritas Star Radio and Truth FM were monitored from Monday to Friday, between 9:00am and 7:00pm. The project captured a total of 126 TRC

articles from all the stations over the period. On the average, the TRC monitoring exercise witnessed a downward trend in broadcast media coverage unlike January and February as shown in Table 2. Comparatively, in the first review covering January and February, TRC articles reported totaled one hundred and thirty-one (131) against one hundred and twenty-six (126) in the second period covering (March, April and May) and recording 1.93% reduction. On monthly average, the sector dropped from an average of 65.5 to 42.0.

All radio stations monitored during the period failed to aired news bulletins at different times in their schedules. ELBC still has the recurring problem of not giving their newscasts as scheduled. However for the current period, it was Truth FM that performed very poorly. The medium failed to produce 106 newscasts for a number of reasons ranging from technical to business obligations.

ELBC failed to carry sixty-one (61) newscasts, Radio Veritas two (2), and Star Radio twenty-six (26), making a total of one hundred and ninety-five (195).

Table 4

No.	Station	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	Total Articles Reported
1	ELBC	4	4	1	9
2	TRUTH	6	12	4	22
3	VERITAS	21	24	0	45
4	STAR	11	26	13	50
TOTAL		42	66	18	126

The table above shows the number of TRC articles broadcast by each of the stations monitored from March to May

On the coverage of the Charles Taylor trial the broadcast made some strides compared to the newspapers. It carried 118 news stories verses the 106 published in newspapers. Star Radio made substantial progress from its previous standing, surpassing Radio Veritas in rankings for coverage of both the TRC and the Charles Taylor Trial. It carried one hundred and nine articles on the two processes, close to half the total number of articles carried by the broadcast media. ELBC, like in the previous period, offered low numbers of stories, and seems to be in need of resources to compete with other stations. Though the TRC is a national process and should have naturally been on the radar of the network, it recorded nine articles representing just 7.1% of the combined coverage of the four stations. Citing issues and problems with information sharing between journalists in The Hague, the station aired just three stories on the Charles Taylor trial representing 2.5%.

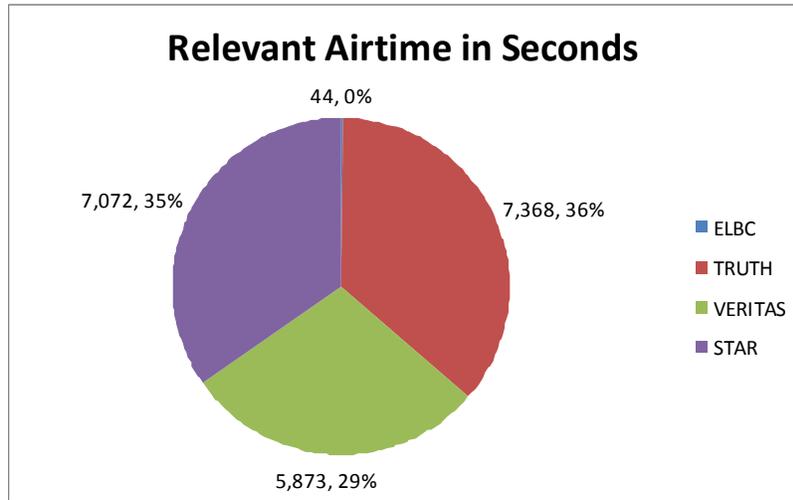
Table 5

Months	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	TOTAL
Total Articles Reported	63	68	42	66	18	257
Total Relevant Airtime in Seconds	6,469	7,124	6233	7,736	9,201	36,763
Total Airtime in Seconds	57,977	211,388	213,934	242,059	201,469	926,827
Problem Bulletins	58	84	62	77	56	337

The table above shows the reporting trend TRC articles took over the past five months

3.1 Airtime Allocation

In March, April and May, the review saw stations devoting just 3.09% of their total airtime to the TRC down from 12.1% in the preceding period. Star radio alone accounted for nearly 40% of the coverage, while *Truth FM* secured close to 35% of airtime



in spite of its news scheduling problems⁵. Out of the total 657,462 seconds or approximately 183 hours used for the broadcast of all programs monitored, a total of 20,357 seconds or approximately 6 hours were devoted to TRC stories by all the stations combined.

In April, *Star Radio* earned another first, being the first and only station to allot ten (10) minutes of their airtime to a single report on the TRC hearings.

Table 6

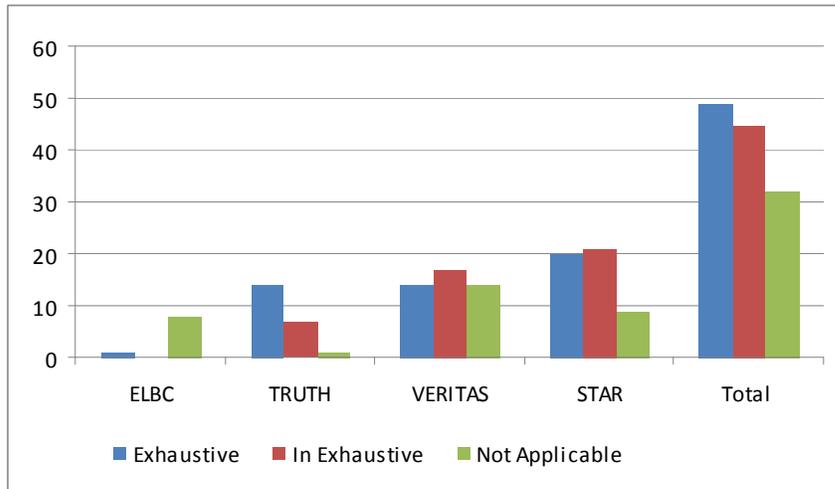
No.	Station	Total Airtime in Seconds	Total Airtime in Minutes/ Seconds	Relevant Airtime in Seconds	Relevant Airtime in Minutes /Seconds	Total items	Percentage of airtime allocated
1	ELBC	153,852	2,637mins 10secs.	44	5.73mins.	2,376	0.028
2	TRUTH	130,400	2173mins 20secs.	7,368	163mins. 51secs.	1,457	5.65
3	VERITAS	63,966	1066mins 6secs.	5,873	97mins 51secs.	1,021	9.18
4	STAR	309,244	5,154mins 4secs.	7,072	117mins 52secs.	2,407	2.28
Total		657,462	11,030mins 40secs.	20,357	384.73mins 34secs.	7,261	

The table above shows combined tabulation of March, April and May available and relevant airtime in seconds, minutes and hours, total items and the allocated durations translated into percentage

⁵ Note that some stations have several newscast on their schedule including ELBC with 11, Truth FM 7 but don't bring their bulletins regularly

3.2 Diversity

In examining whether coverage was “Exhaustive,” references, sources, and context were cross checked relative to the nature of the story. Efforts were made to ensure a thorough or balanced report. Amongst the institutions, *Star Radio* carried the highest number of “Exhaustive” stories that included



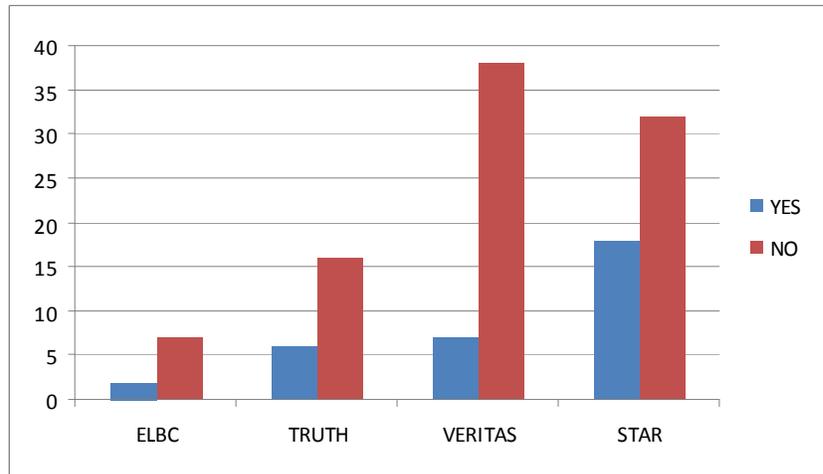
background, were researched and cross checked, and remained balanced.

Although they produced twenty (20) exhaustive articles, they failed to meet the same threshold in twenty-one (21) of their news items.

ELBC radio again showed poorly with just one (1) in their nine (9) articles meeting the threshold. Both *Radio Veritas* and *Truth FM* brought fourteen (14) “Exhaustive” stories each. However, *Radio Veritas* also recorded seventeen “In-Exhaustive” articles.

Compared with previous performances, the study saw little change with the exception of *Truth FM* which deserves commendation for producing few “In-Exhaustive” stories. It should also be noted that part of *Radio Veritas* problem was its absence from the airwaves from April 20 to mid June. Notwithstanding, April witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of “Exhaustive” and “In-Exhaustive” stories, but a reduction in stories under the “Not-Applicable” classification. There was an increase in the number of “Exhaustive” stories carried by *Truth FM*, and *Star Radio* while *Radio Veritas*, who was off air from April 20 to May 30, remained constant with its Exhaustive stories. For actualities, Star Radio averaged eighteen (18), followed by Radio Veritas seven (7), Truth FM six (6) and ELBC two (2).

The Talking Drum Studio and BBC World Service Trust (BBCWST)⁶ initiative to host reporters at the trial and feed local radio stations about developments in The Hague has seen huge uptake in the coverage of the Trial by the broadcast media. The broadcast media brought a total of one hundred and eighteen (118) articles on the Charles Taylor Trial with, *Star Radio* accounting for over half that number. TDS/BBCWST syndicated recordings of trial news, accounted 64% of the coverage on



the Charles Taylor Trial and 68.3% of coverage of *Star Radio*. *Star Radio* unmatched performance in the coverage of the Trial is worth commendation but the station should strive to increase self-generated content on the trial. Truth FM recorded 74% and Radio Veritas 42 %.

The downside of the TDS/BBCWST syndicated reporting has been that many media outlets relied on the ready-made news content produced by the project. This has fostered minimum efforts to generate original coverage of the Charles Taylor trial.

The study notes that media outlets do not have adequate resources to cover the trial from The Hague. However, the project strongly argues many local perspectives to the ongoing trial can still be explored by the various stations. Aside, coverage of the Charles Taylor Trial is carried verbatim on the website www.charlestaylortrial.com, where media personnel can download resources to inform their own perspectives from the proceedings.

Truth FM in particular seems heavily reliant on the TDS/BBCWST materials, while Radio Veritas had 58% self-generated content, a very good balance in the coverage of the Charles Taylor trial.

⁶ With funding from the Ford Foundation and the British Common Wealth Office, Search for Common Grounds and the BBC World Service Trust have been following the Trial of Charles Taylor by assigning Liberian and Sierra Leonean journalists to the Hague. See, www.talkingdrumstudio.org for details.

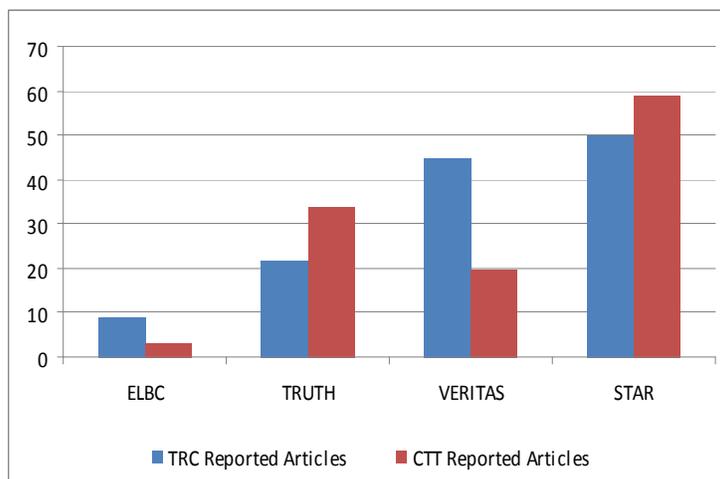
RADIO ASSESSMENT

RADIO STATIONS	TDS SYNDICATED			Total
	March	April	May	
VERITAS	8	1	0	9
TRUTH	8	6	11	25
ELBC	0	0	0	0
STAR	18	15	8	41
TOTAL	34	22	19	75

RADIO STATIONS	SAME MEDIUM			Total
	March	April	May	
VERITAS	6	6	0	12
TRUTH	2	4	3	9
ELBC	0	3	0	3
STAR	6	9	4	19
TOTAL	14	22	7	43

The table above shows the number of news stories syndicated from the Talking Drum Studio Liberia against those reported from the media instructions

Still on *Truth FM*, of the ten (10) news stories reported in March on the trial, eight were culled from Joseph Cheeseman’s reports from The Hague. In April, it reported ten (10) articles, almost evenly divided between TDS/BBCWST and the station own content. In May, it reported fourteen (14) stories but attributed eleven (11) to Alphonsus Zeon, reporting from The Hague. As seen below, *Truth FM* reported more stories on the trial than the hearings and *Radio Veritas* more articles on the hearings than the trial.



ELBC

For the entire review period, ELBC reported nine (9) articles on the TRC process and three (3) on the Charles Taylor trial. In March, they aired single story on the TRC, instead focusing on the National Population Census. In April it again produced just one story on the TRC

but ran the same story on April 16 and 17.

ELBC, the state owned radio station, is still mired with the problem of newscast regularity. It has now officially canceled their 10 am, 11 am, 10 pm and 11pm newscasts but nonetheless, failed to air on sixty-one (61) occasions. Like the TRC, coverage of the Charles Taylor trial was very low. In March and May, ELBC did not bring a single story on the trial. It ran three stories in April, of which two were on a workshop on reporting International Criminal Court proceedings organized by the London based Advocates for Development and the local media group International Centre for Media Studies and Development (INCEMSADWA).

The review noted that most of the station's broadcasts fell short of the five minute time allotment and in some cases lasted as little as three minutes. While ELBC has a severe resource problem, the internal reorganization of the station's broadcast department must be seriously considered in light of the expansion and upgrades currently taking place so as to bring the quality of the service on par with the quality of the equipment.

(ELBC is owned and operated by the State and depends largely on state subsidy to run. The government of Liberia appoints the station management team but proposed legislation [Public Service Broadcasting Act] seeks to reverse this and restore much authority to the National Legislature and the civil society.)

Truth FM

Truth FM saw decline in its coverage of the TRC in March, April and May. In March, the outlet reported six (6) TRC stories, in April twelve (12) stories and May four (4) stories. This trend shows a reduction in the number of TRC stories covered by the station. Unlike the TRC hearing, *Truth FM* recorded an increase in its coverage of the Charles Taylor trial reporting ten (10) stories in both March and April and fourteen (14) in May.

Of their total coverage from the Charles Taylor trial, 73.5% was attributed to the BBC World Service Trust and Talking Drum Studio project covering The Hague.

As in preceding period, *Truth FM* has the recurring problem of irregularity in meeting its news schedule. The station could not meet a staggering 106 newscasts up from forty-five (45) in the first review.

Truth FM needs to strike a balance in its business demands and the corporation's desire to provide public service and be seen as a professional news organization.

(Truth FM is a commercial radio station owned by a Liberian businessman and operated by Liberians. Barely four years on the scene, it has made relative impact and draws significant audience - audience determination is based on findings of an LMC Media Reach and Penetration Study.)

Star Radio

Star Radio should be applauded for an outstanding coverage of both the TRC hearings and the Charles Taylor trial. It dominated coverage of both events and brought nineteen (19) self-generated reports on the Charles Taylor trial against forty-one (41) syndicated by the TDS/BBCWST project. The station made efforts in contacting the TDS/BBCWST reporter in The Hague via telephone to provide an interactive perspective to the coverage unlike other mediums that relied solely on the TDS/BBCWST pre-made materials.

The station made a number of interesting follow ups and encountered some prominent developments. *Star Radio* followed with keen interest the suspension of Commissioner Bull by the TRC. It contacted all parties and followed the Commissioner Bull's Court case against the TRC.

In one of its talk shows, "I Beg to Differ", the station opened public debate on the Pearl Bull and TRC saga. Lasting one hour twenty minutes the show provided citizens the space to express their opinion on the subject.

(Star Radio is a project of Foundation Hironnelle based in Switzerland, designed partly as a public service station, semi-commercial and owned and operated by a Liberian Board of Directors.)

Radio Veritas

Despite being off the air for most of April and all of May, the station on average maintained its excellent coverage of the TRC and the Charles Taylor trial. It dominated the March coverage and came in a close second to *Star* in April despite going off air around the 18th.

On coverage of the Charles Taylor Trial, it came second to *Star Radio* and had more self-generated reports than *ELBC* and *Truth FM* and eventually equaled their average tally when combined for the three months period.

Radio Veritas featured two talk shows on the TRC process and should be commended for a number of follow-ups in relations to the Buchanan hearings and the Pearl Brown Bull-TRC saga.

(Radio Veritas is owned and operated by the Catholic Church in Liberia and is mainly run on grants and donations from groups and individuals and also receive subsidies from various parishes of the Archdiocese).

CHAPTER FOUR: OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 Highlights on the Charles Taylor Trial

On the whole, media coverage of the Charles Taylor trial can be termed appreciable. Most of the problems with the various reports came from coverage of the TRC public hearings. However, it is important to note that the broadcast and print media coverage of the Charles Taylor Trial were about equal. Though there are fewer radio stations than newspapers being monitored, the broadcast media organizations have closed the gap since the last review.

What also accounts for the increase in radio coverage of the trial is the syndication of materials to three (*Star Radio, Truth FM and Radio Veritas*) of the four stations by the Talking Drum Studio (TDS) and British Broadcasting Corporation World Service Trust (BBC WST) project. Newspapers, in contrast, lack the technical and material resources to find news and information sources on the internet. Few newspapers have internet access and many more desire adequate computer facilities; thus, making it difficult to keep up with the coverage.

4.1 Coverage of TRC Rural Hearings

In spite of intervention by the Liberia Media Center (LMC) to get the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Media Department⁷ focused on enhancing media access to the hearings, the coverage of the hearings in the rural areas (that is, outside Montserrado County in the hinterland counties) was not adequate.

Proximity aside, a range of factors points to this decline. Media institutions have indicated that the coordination of the rural hearings was poor but the TRC insists that in spite of its resource problems, it exerted efforts to invite media institutions and, in some instances, providing transport assistance to the hearings. Most newspapers talked to prior to the release of this report admitted that they also faced manpower and resource problems. They were particularly interested in supporting their own reporters to cover the hearings instead of the TRC providing support in order to ensure independence and credibility. This resource gap on both ends could be attributed to the decline.

The absence of internet facilities in most of the remote areas made delivery of news and information for the print media very challenging. Even the TRC,

⁷ TRC Media Unit and the LMC were involved with facilitating coverage of the hearings in Rivercess through provision of transportation, per diems and communication incentives.

which constantly feeds the print media with its press releases, had problems in getting information back to Monrovia.

4.2 Follow-ups and Investigations

As seen in the first report, lack of human, financial and technical resources impacted the media's ability to follow-up on issues arising from the process. Most of the follow-ups were centered on accusations and counter-accusations involving Commissioners.

Resources aside, there were a number of simple follow-ups that were left unattended. For example, in its March 25 edition under the headline "LPC Fighters Wiped Out Rivergee Villages", the *Daily Observer* reporter gave a graphic account of a testimony by one of the witnesses who claimed to have been through a journey of death – witnessing scores of massacre by fighters of the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) while in their custody. Although she made the testimony in Rivergee and claimed the incident took place there, no reporters present made efforts to follow-up the testimony with other sources or at least explore opportunities for further insight into the story.

Epic Investigation

Star Radio made follow-ups on prominent individuals and victims alike in April. An example of its outstanding follow-ups was displayed on April 10, during the station's 6 p.m. news bulletins. Its correspondent in Buchanan, Wilikimon Dwegbe, reported how the Justice Ministry and TRC helped a boy whose mother was beheaded by one Mango Miller during the civil war in 1990. He had been abducted by Miller, who demanded \$600 before releasing him. Fueled by the tenacity of the journalist following the story, the TRC engaged the Justice Ministry, and Miller was arrested and has cooperated, thus securing the release and subsequent turn over of the boy to his sister 18 years later.

4.3 Setting the Agenda

Very few media outlets raised debates on critical issues and sustained those debates. Of the institutions in question, the project has singled out *The Analysts* and *Public Agenda* newspapers for their tenacity and courage in raising critical debates on the TRC process even at the top level.

The Analyst should be applauded for its consistency in flagging the issue of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf appearance before the TRC. In a record twelve (12) publications, the paper deliberately ran its column "Memo to the President" challenging President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf not to back down from

her promise and face the TRC. It ran, for couple of weeks on the bottom corner of its front page, similar message. Though the President is yet to reverse her public comments, the paper decision to raise the issue was important and should send a message to the Commission that consistent with its mandate, no Liberian including the President can decide against facing the TRC when called upon. In the same column *The Analyst* again ran an article titled: “Watch out for the Dearboy stigma”, which appeared in the April 10 edition. This article called on the President to carefully look into the Dearboy saga in which some elements of the Executive Mansion were accused by the Commission.

For the *Public Agenda*, the paper should be commended for its thorough scrutiny of the Rivergee incident involving TRC Commissioners Pearl Brown Bull and Massa Washington.

4.4 Misrepresentations/Facts Telling

There were a number of misrepresentations but notable amongst them was the *Daily Observer*, March 5, 2008 Vol. 12, No. 43 edition. The project interposes no objection to the *Daily Observer* republishing the TRC press releases or flagging stories from the TRC dispatches. But the fact that stories are being written and graphically portrayed as those of the medium places all editorial responsibility on the paper. In its genuine quest to cover the TRC in all its various up-country appearances, the medium should always guide against taking on the TRC language as its own. Even the headline of the story “Prince Johnson Ordered Execution of Krahn – Survivor Relives Atrocities” (March 5 Vol 12. No 43) presents the witness testimony as facts.

Beside the *Daily Observer*, a number of papers failed to address testimonies of witnesses as allegation. *The Analyst* April 22, Vol. 9, No. 136 (“He’s Still After My Life- After Killing My Family; Frightened Widow Tells TRC”); *The News* March 18, Vol. 19, No. 221 (“My Husband Brother Killed Him”...Weeping Woman Tells TRC”) are examples of misrepresentations.

4.5 Recommendations

As mentioned earlier, the media community in Liberia has shown strong interest in coverage of the truth and reconciliation process as well as the Charles Taylor trial. However, the lack of resources has restrained the media's desire to cover the two processes adequately. Coverage of the TRC is time and resource demanding, hampering a number of outlets with limited manpower and institutional resources to focus on the process. It should be noted that some of the recommendations contained in the first report remain valid but were excluded in this latest report in order to keep the text succinct and focused. However, the project would recommend the following to the TRC and the media for improving the coverage of the hearings.

- The Liberian TRC will need to reconsider its approach to issues regarding media. The Commission's Media Unit is acutely under-resourced and will require concrete support to carry out its functions. Support for local media coverage of the process should be provided if and when necessary.
- The TRC Media Unit must exercise care in its quest to aid media outlets unable to cover the hearings have access to information by wording its press releases in ways that avoid stereotyping, conclusions and blaming. A number of examples cited in this report should be carefully studied to draw useful lessons.
- As in the case of the *National Chronicle*, media outlet covering the process, should at all times avoid being drawn into personal crisis and clearly separate their editorial responsibilities from business and political interests. The media in general should remain supportive of the process and take the lead on critical debates and issues arising from the process.
- A mechanism should be instituted to provide print media houses access to resources on the Charles Taylor trial. Institutions such as ICTJ, LMC, BBC WST and TDS should explore forging partnership as well as other creative ways to close the information gap, especially within the print media.
- Private broadcast institutions which genuinely seek to provide public service on the coverage of these processes are challenged with balancing profitability and consistent coverage. They should reduce some of their scheduled newscasts and run syndicated special features on the commission and its activities as a means of helping to balance their business goals and their public service desires.

Appendix

About the LMC

The Liberia Media Center exists as a legally registered not-for-profit media and communication firm that fosters local development through the utilization of communication and information sources. LMC exists to assist media and civil society with professional services in a wide range of areas, including research, training, outreach and mass communication.

It was officially commissioned on August 26, 2005 and currently provides journalists, media organizations, youths, students and civil society access to basic IT (Computer and Internet) and secretarial resources at its office complex in Monrovia.

LMC exists to provide a forum for the periodic assessment of media coverage of significant national and international events, facilitate capacity building programs for civil society and journalists, and render professional services to media and civil society groups.

With a nineteen member staff, LMC is currently the biggest registered specialized communication and media firm in Liberia and is partnering with the Radio Netherlands Training Center (RNTC) to support the development of community radio in eight of the fifteen outlying counties in Liberia. In the next three years, LMC will assist with the creation of infrastructure as well as the technical and professional development of twelve small scale radio stations in the broader context of enhancing freedom of expression, public participation in national decision making, good governance and economic growth and development.

LMC has most recently worked with a number of international organizations including UNESCO, UNDP, IREX USA, Open Society Institute, Freevoice (The Netherlands), International Media Support, International Center for Transitional Justice, and the University of Boston in Massachusetts.

Recently, the Center facilitated a “Media Reach and Penetration Study” targeting three counties with the objective of determining how far media was reaching, who was consuming media products and what attitudes and preferences were consumers showing toward those products.

In the natural resources sector, particularly forestry, LMC was the lead organization in a consortium competitively selected by the Forestry Reform Monitoring Committee to communicate proposed legal forestry amendments and facilitate public outreach for a set of core regulations and standard contracts under the new forestry law of 2006.

LMC has a nine member Governing Board chaired by the President of the Press Union of Liberia. The management team is headed by an Executive Director assisted by a deputy and several program officers.

Most Recent Activities

Activities	Date	Location	Source of Funding	Contact Person
LMC – Phase I (incl. recruitment of personnel and acquisition of equipment and furniture)	March 2004 - August 2005	Monrovia	IMS/OSI/ IREX	Tom Hughes, IMS/ Lawrence Randall, LMC
Working groups on Reform of Media Laws and Policies	May 2005 – Nov 2005	Monrovia	UNESCO/ IMS	Edetaen Ojo, UNESCO/Lawrence Randall, LMC
Computer Assisted Reporting/Internet Training (for media and members of the Federation of Liberia Youth	November-January 2005	Monrovia	UNESCO	Lawrence Randall, LMC
Media Review Roundtable on the 2005 elections	February	Monrovia	LMC/UNMIL	Lawrence Randall, LMC James Wolo, UNMIL
Free three months Internet Access for the media	February 2006-April 2006	Monrovia	LMC	Lawrence Randall
Coordination of International Media Partnership Delegation return to Liberia	June 4-11, 2006	Monrovia	LMC/IMS	Lawrence Randall Thomas Hughes
Media and CSOs roundtable on reporting the budget and corruption	July 15, 2006	Monrovia	LMC	Lawrence Randall
Information delivery, vetting and data collection on proposed forestry laws and regulations	July-February 2007	Liberia	Environmental Law Institute/FRMC/ LMC/FDA/PUL /CEMESP	Lawrence Randall Bruce Myers Robert Simpson

Photojournalism Training	January- February 2007	Monrovia	FREEVOICE	Lawrence Randall Jan Williem Gast
Internship Placement and Vocational Training	November 2006- January 2007	Monrovia	UNESCO	Lawrence Randall Edetean Ojo
TRC Media Training and Team Reporting/Monitoring	January-April, 2007	Liberia	IMS/ICTJ/TRC	Lawrence Randall Paul Allen Juliane Weshtphal
Future Search Conference and Needs Assessment for Community Radio Support	January- March 2007	Liberia	Radio Netherlands Training Center	Lawrence Randall Leon van Dan Boogerd
Transitional Justice Reporting	August 2007	Monrovia	BBC World Service Trust	Julia Crawford, Lawrence Randall
Setup of Training Center for at the Liberia Media Center	March-June 2007	Monrovia	Radio Netherlands Training Center	Lawrence Randall Leon van Dan Boogerd