

**MEDIA MONITORING  
INTERIM REPORT No. 1  
Period 13 – 28 February 2010**

**1 March 2010**



## Executive Summary

After 24 years Sudanese citizens will express their vote. Citizens need to be informed on political alternatives and voting mechanisms. The role of the media in this process is crucial, as journalists and media houses will be called to support and facilitate a process representing a historical moment for Sudan. Their responsibility and contribution is therefore essential to ensure that voters received accurate and complete information enabling them to make an informed choice on Election Day.

The Sudan Media and Elections Consortium (SMEC) has been established to implement a Media and Election project in Sudan. One main activity of the SMEC is media monitoring of election coverage. The media monitoring is being implemented in parallel with an intensive training and mentoring programme for the journalists and media outlets. The monitoring and the training component are separate but are inter-linked activities of the same project.

The purpose of the media monitoring is two-fold. Firstly, monitoring the coverage of the electoral campaign will provide valuable information on media's performance during the campaign period, thereby offering additional contribution to the overall assessment of the electoral process in Sudan. Secondly, the monitoring serves as a feed back to the media outlets themselves on their work and it may enhance their reporting skills for present and future elections.

The media monitoring takes place all over Sudan, with two main joint media monitoring units, one in Khartoum and one in Juba, and parallel media monitoring units in seven states.

This report contains an overview of the approach and methodology for media monitoring in Sudan. It also contains the list of all the media which will be monitored for 3 months around the election period. This is the first interim report on media monitoring activities. Bi-weekly reports will be made public in the course of the election period with an interim report directly after the elections and a final report in June.

Media Monitoring Units commenced their activities on 13 February at the opening of the campaign; the observation will continue till the end of May to assess post election coverage. The SMEC carries out media monitoring of four TV stations, seventeen radio channels and thirteen newspapers on a daily basis. The media included in the sample have been selected according to a number of criteria, including territorial reach, estimated audience, and circulation.

All selected media are monitored according to a methodological approach created in 1995 and based on content analysis. It was tested and adopted in a number of elections by international organisations and civic society groups all over the world, including Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia, Yemen, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Congo, Togo, Sierra Leone and Madagascar.

The monitoring of election and political coverage is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis and it aims at observing and assessing the extent to which media provide fair and balanced coverage of politicians and other stakeholders. The project also monitors hate speech or inflammatory language - either reported or originated by the media themselves - to assess whether the media acted as agents of pacification or rather contributed to increase any potential tensions

related to elections. Identified incidents of hate speech will be communicated to the relevant authorities and organisations.

The official campaign period started on 13 February. The National Election Commission (NEC), in conjunction with the state media, prepared an inclusive schedule to guarantee the equal use of the public media by all contestants. The NEC also issued the Professional Media Guidelines for Election Coverage and they conducted sensitisation workshops with the media and other stakeholders both in Khartoum and Juba.

Since the beginning of the campaign, the media have widely and regularly covered the election process and candidates. Information regarding contestants and the activities of election supervisory bodies has been provided by the main media outlets. A number of programmes and articles on election authorities and parties' campaign activities were available to the public during the first 15 days campaign. However, most of journalists reporting have been focussed so far on struggles and polemics among the main parties rather than on their specific platforms and policy proposals. The horse race for national Presidential elections dominates media reports, while legislative elections have received so far more limited attention.

Two reports with the main quantitative preliminary findings concerning election coverage and hate speech will be released before voting day.

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The Media and Elections Project, funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is implemented by the Sudan Media and Elections Consortium, a group of national and international organisations with expertise in media support. These are Sudan Development Initiative (SUDIA), International Media Support (IMS), Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), Osservatorio di Pavia, Arab Working Group for media monitoring and Fojo media institute.

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## Media Monitoring: structure and methodology

The Sudan Media and Elections Consortium (SMEC) is established to implement a Media and Election project in Sudan. One of the main activities of the SMEC is media monitoring of election coverage. The media monitoring takes place all over Sudan, with two main joint media monitoring units, one in Khartoum and one in Juba, employing a total of 36 Sudanese media monitors. Seven media monitoring units at state level have been established in North Kordufan, North Darfur, Red Sea, Lakes, Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile and Central Equatoria. All units are run by national management and monitors with the support of international experts. Within the Sudanese media and elections Consortium, the Osservatorio di Pavia and the Arab Working Group (AWG) are responsible for advising on the implementation of media monitoring operations and methodology.

Units commenced media monitoring of election coverage on 13 February at the opening of the campaign; the observation will continue till the end of May to assess post election coverage. Immediately after the elections a preliminary report containing the main findings and conclusions will be released while an exhaustive final report will be published at the end of June.

The SMEC carries out media monitoring of four TV stations, seventeen radio channels and thirteen newspapers on a daily basis<sup>1</sup>. The media included in the sample have been selected according to a number of criteria, including territorial reach, estimated audience, and circulation.

All selected media are monitored according to a methodological approach created in 1995 and based on content analysis. It was tested and adopted in a number of elections by international organisations and civic society groups all over the world, including Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia, Yemen, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Congo, Togo, Sierra Leone and Madagascar.

The methodology includes two main components: the monitoring of election and political coverage and the monitoring of hate speech.

The monitoring of election and political coverage is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis and it aims at observing and assessing the extent to which media provide fair and balanced coverage of politicians and other stakeholders within the electoral process, according to national laws, domestic regulations and professional codes of conduct as well as international best practices. Quantitative analysis implies the selection of elements of the content of media output that can be counted and focuses on the time and space allocated to different parties or candidates. Each mention of the subject is logged separately and the amount of time and space allocated is then recorded. Each mention is also classified in terms of tone toward the political actor covered. The monitors then classify the assessment according to a three value scale of positive, neutral and negative.

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<sup>1</sup> Press: Al Sahfa, Al Ray Al Aam, Al Intibaha, Al Sudani, Akhir Lahza, Ajas Al huriah, Akhbar Alyoum, Al Ayam, The Citizen, Juba Post, Khartoum Monitor, Southern Eye and Sudan Vision  
TV: Sudan TV, Blue Nile, Khartoum State TV and South Sudan TV  
Radio stations; Omdurman Radio, Khartoum State Radio , Peace Service, Al Qwat Al Mussalaha, Saheroon, North Kordufan, North Darfur, Red Sea, South Sudan Radio, Radio Miraya, Radio Bakhita, Liberty FM, Junubna FM, Rumbek FM, 97.5 FM/Voice of Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan Radio Malakal, Spirit FM

The qualitative analysis is based on the systematic observation of specific themes and issues: voter education, women and gender balance, coverage of election authorities and the election process, the context and standards of media work in Sudan.

The second component, monitoring hate speech or inflammatory language - either reported or originated by the media themselves – aims at assessing whether the media acted as agents of pacification or rather contributed to increase any potential tensions related to elections. This exercise will be able to observe: whether the media publish or broadcast hate speech through and by any political speakers, whether the media themselves promote violence, which are the main sources of hate speech and who are the target groups affected. Identified incidents of hate speech are communicated to the relevant authorities and organisations.

### **Legal framework for election coverage**

Sudan is a State Party of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by more than 160 States. The ICCPR imposes binding obligations on signatories and elaborates on several of the rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to freedom of expression. Article 25 of the ICCPR – based on Article 21 of UDHR - guarantees the right to political participation; finally, Article 2 of the ICCPR prohibits discrimination on the ground of political ideas, thus providing a legal basis for the right of political parties and candidates to have equitable access to the public media.

Sudan has also signed of African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Article 9 of this charter protects “the right to receive information (and) the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.”

In addition to its international commitments under these human rights treaties and declarations, Sudan has agreed to respect and ensure freedom of expression and access to information under the provisions of a number of thematic human rights treaties that touch on issues of freedom of expression, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination..

At national level, the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) expressly provides that violations of human rights shall be considered as violations of the CPA itself.

The 2005 Interim National Constitution of Sudan provides for a Bill of Rights. Article 39 of the Constitution protects the right to freedom of expression and of the media under Article 28. The Interim Constitution also establishes a division of competence between the central Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan, and State Governments, which includes issues of media regulation.

The regulatory framework for election coverage is established in the National Election Act. The Act states that candidates and political parties “shall be afforded access to and use of all means of communication media” and this provision applies to all media.

Rules specifying the necessary measures to guarantee the rights of all candidates and political parties to access the public media on the basis of equality and equal opportunities have been define by the National Election Commission (NEC). The NEC in conjunction with the state media

prepared an inclusive schedule to guarantee the equal use of the public media by all contestants. The time allotted for the presidential contestants in the official radio and TV channels is 20 minutes, while those contesting for the office of the President of the Government of Southern Sudan would be allowed 13 minutes. 10 minutes will be allotted for political parties. In this regard on 15 February the NEC issued an order establishing the schedule for the order of appearances of all candidates and parties. In addition the Commission released a detailed list of rules and regulations that all political parties and independents candidates must adhere to so to ensure equal campaigning opportunities to electoral nominees.

The NEC also issued the Professional Media Guidelines for Election Coverage and they conducted sensitisation workshops with the media and other stakeholders both in Khartoum and Juba. According to the instructions issued by the NEC any candidate or party that makes a claim of having been defamed or injured by a media house, print or electronic, should be granted either the opportunity to reply or be entitled to a correction or retraction by the media house who made the alleged defamatory statement. The reply or correction should be made in approximately the same time period or space as the alleged defamatory statement. The guidelines also require journalists to operate in a way that upholds their highest professional ethical standards, in the exercise of their constitutional right of free expression and in recognition of their social accountability.

### **Monitoring Sudanese Media: preliminary remarks**

The official campaign period started on 13 February and since then media have widely and regularly covered the election process and candidates. News regarding election authorities has been provided by the main media outlets that extensively reported on the activities of the NEC and Higher Elections Commissions (HEC) in the states. Nonetheless news were mainly focussed on political parties' complaints while targeted information on how to vote, eligibility criteria and other technical aspects of voting appears still limited.

Programmes and articles on candidates and parties' campaign activities were available to the public during the first 15 days campaign. However, most of the coverage has been focussed so far on struggles and polemics among the main political forces rather than on their specific platforms and policy proposals. A number of articles reported on the reciprocal accusation among the main parties and candidates regarding misuse of public resources, harassment of supporters and discussions on the possibility to postpone elections, while policy issues such as education, health and economy have received limited attention.

The horse race for executive positions – Presidencies and State Governors - dominates media reports: special features on Presidential candidates were published in the main media outlets while legislative elections have received so far more limited attention. Similarly, polls published during the first 10 days of the campaign were mostly concentrated on the election for the national Presidency and focussed on the competition between the incumbent Al Bashir and his main opponents Yasir Arman, Al Sadiq al-Mahdi and Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud. In addition, media coverage often focused on the future referendum rather than on the present electoral consultations.

Media coverage of women's issues and women role in the electoral process was limited, despite the fact that the election law foresees quota provisions for women's lists. Likewise, the presence of female candidates in the media was extremely reduced vis-à-vis their male counterparts. However, women occupying executive offices – such as Ministries and other Governmental positions - managed to receive more substantial coverage during this period.

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