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*“A Country Failed by its Media: a Case Study From
Papua New Guinea”*

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of media in PNG and the reasons why they have failed to serve their audiences. It provides a background on media development in PNG; explores media ownership in PNG and offers a content analysis of what the two main newspapers and the country's only television station consider to be the main news agenda. It also explores the potential radio has in filling in the existing informational gap.

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Communication and Development

Modern media in developing nations are mostly concentrated in urban areas and controlled by elite sources. The quality and content of messages do not reflect the needs of the majority of the population while inadequate time and space are devoted to development information. When this information is available, often questions of access, suitability of content and participation in terms of reflecting the voice of people arise.

Papua New Guinean media is not an exception to this rule. The old argument that the poor, disadvantaged sections of the population in developing countries live in a state of ‘*undercommunication*’ is still valid today in Papua New Guinea, despite the technological advancements in the communications sector and several decades after political decolonization (Melkote, 1991, p. 145). The media can facilitate greater access to people lacking a voice, but media output needs to be of high quality, relevant and useful to them. It needs to allow the expression of a full range of opinions and matters of public concern. Access to information is the first requirement of engaged, participative democracy.

Much of what has been promised by the information society - access to vital knowledge for health and education, better information from governments and greater democratic participation, has yet to reach ordinary Papua New Guineans. Because they lack the resources to make their voices heard in the country’s shifting social, economic and cultural landscape, the rural and disadvantaged communities face the twin dangers of being left out of the decision making that shapes the future of their country and becoming the recipient of Western or Westernised media products with little alternatives to look for (see WACC, 2001). In a country like Papua New Guinea, independent since 1975 and home to hundreds of distinctively different cultural groups, where the construction of nation is still in progress and far from completion, the lack of participation and exposure to Western values could lead to fragmentation and cultural diversity loss.

The lack of resources also reflects a lack of political will and also policies that have failed to recognize the importance of communication as a social process that can help to bring change and development (see Fraser & Estrada, 2003). Instead this task has been left to the countries few, predominantly foreign owned, media which as this paper will argue does not serve all sections of society; instead they concentrate on elite groups such as politicians and businessmen to the exclusion of ordinary people.

The latest approach to development communication, aiming to inform instead of persuading people to change what they do or educating them in order to change social values, believes in empowering people to change by increasing knowledge. The emphasis now has shifted from attempting to modernize people to attempting to reduce inequality by targeting the poorest segments of society, involving people in their own development, giving them independence from central authority, and employing appropriate technologies (see Rao 1992, Melkote, 1991, Everett, 1989, Quebral, 1988, Jayaweera & Amunugama, 1987, McBride, 1980, Lerner, 1958). With the mainstream media having failed as agencies of

information for empowerment, what are the alternatives in reaching the ordinary people of Papua New Guinea?

In exploring the role of media in Papua New Guinea and the reasons why they have failed to serve their audiences, this paper paints the portrait of contemporary PNG media. *Part one* provides a background on media development in PNG and discusses its strengths and weaknesses. Issues of voice, access and content are discussed within the PNG context. As this paper will argue, the vast majority of the population – the poor, the uneducated and the geographically isolated – have little or no access to the media. In this regard the media are failing to provide support to the democratic structures of the nation.

Part two explores issues of content in depth. It offers a content analysis of what the two main newspapers and the country's only television station consider to be the main news agenda. Following the strategic approach developed by the Center for Democracy and Governance, the research compares media on the basis of balance, surveys types of stories and the level of journalistic endeavour used. This is a preliminary report on a pilot survey that examined journalists and their sources of information.

Part three focuses on radio in PNG. It explores the potential it has in filling in the existing informational gap and the role of new information technologies in overcoming the geographical/social and cultural barriers. It is argued that radio is the most suitable medium of mass communication in PNG because it corresponds better to the oral traditions of the country. It can also be more effectively used in the dissemination of development relevant information, such as health, education and good governance. Transmitting in local languages it can contribute to the preservation of local traditions.

It examines the reasons NBC's (national radio service) failed to play this role despite its extensive network of local stations that enables it to transmit in different languages. Community radio is offered as an alternative. Its role in the development and strengthening of civil society and local communities' development is examined within the PNG context.

The paper also briefly discusses the potential ICTs might have in improving access to information and concludes with some suggestions on how this situation of 'undercommunication' might be improved.

1. Media Developments in PNG

1.1 The PNG context

Papua New Guinea, an Australian protectorate until 1975, has an extremely diverse society with a staggering number of spoken languages known as tok ples (867) and a diversity of tribes and cultures revolving around them. About 85 per cent of PNG's population, estimated at 5 million, live in rural areas, largely dependent on subsistence agriculture for their survival and organised around groups of extended families living in their own little villages. (Rooney 2002). Half of the adult population is non-literate and the many disadvantaged populations speak tok ples, not English, Tok Pisin or Motu (the three official lingua franca). The geographical terrain and weak transportation services isolate whole regions, which have little access to information on health, education, electricity and almost no access to telecommunications (The Joint Country Strategy, 2003).

Although people do move between different places, each community has maintained to a large extent its own specific hierarchies, myths, rituals and languages. Because these lives unfolded within limited geographical areas, people directly communicated with one another through words. Historically PNG cultures were predominantly oral and so a mass media was unnecessary. In these oral cultures, the recording of events was hardly known. The experience of past generations was passed on directly to young people through working alongside or listening to their elders. Within these enclosed little worlds, politics was carried out at the level of the tribe, village or town with societies controlled by hierarchies derived from the extended family (Rooney 2004).

This situation has been changing since the arrival and settlements of Europeans and Christian missionaries over a century ago. It is worth noting that some areas, especially the Highlands region of the mainland saw the first foreigners as recently as in the 1950s. This relatively recent and sudden exposure has had a multiple impact on these communities, which had to open up their natural resources for extracting operations, receive an education alien to their traditional ways and convert to Christianity under the influence of various missionaries who brought their Western/Christian values.

Given the low literacy level, a struggling post-independence economy, along with geographical and cultural diversity, it is not a surprise that media in Papua New Guinea, as elsewhere in the South Pacific, have been slow in becoming established and hard to become consolidated. And as Nash argues, when discussing mass communication in PNG, its colonial background and its point of entry into the modernization process should also be considered (Nash, 1995, p. 35).

Despite the low penetration, Papua New Guinea has the largest journalism industry in the Pacific region. The media industry consists mainly of two daily and one weekly national newspapers (two in English and one in Tok Pisin), a TV station, a national radio system and several smaller commercial and religious radio stations (see Table 1).

Foreign ownership dominates the media in PNG. Conglomerates own both the two daily newspapers and the country's only television station. The *Post-Courier* is the oldest daily newspaper in PNG, established in 1969. Allied Press, a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, holds the majority shareholding. The *National*, launched in 1993, is owned by the Malaysian-based Rimbunan Hijau Group, a multinational conglomerate built on timber, plantations, media and IT operations (Robie, 1994a). The *National* was launched by the then Prime Minister Pias Wingti and attracted controversy for its foreign ownership and the paper's association with the major commercial player in PNG's timber industry (Robie, 1995, p.28).

The two daily newspapers are based in the PNG capital, Port Moresby, and share a metropolitan bias. Combined they have a circulation of less than 60,000, serving a population of more than 5 million. These newspapers rarely circulate outside of urban areas so the vast majority of Papua New Guineans are excluded from information. The newspapers charge a fifty per cent and thirty per cent surcharge respectively on their cover prices to purchasers outside of the capital to cover the cost of distribution, thereby making the newspapers unattractive to people with low incomes. PNG media generally privileges urban dwellers and those with the ability to consume, as generally speaking rural populations are unprofitable markets.

Table 1. Papua New Guinea Media Stakeholders

Media	Government	Civil Society
PNG Media Council EMTV (private foreign owned) NBC (National Broadcasting Corporation) Paradise FM (NBC owned, commercial)	Office of Information and Communication Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet	Ombudsman's Office
(Private commercial) PNG FM (NauFM/Yumi FM) Kalang FM (FM100) FM Morobe – Lae Capital FM – Lae Paim FM – Porgera	Health Department Agriculture Department Educational Department Provincial Departments Local Governments	Chambers of Commerce
(Religious) Catholic Radio Network Christian Broadcasting–Lae Baibel FM – Mt Hagen Light FM – Pt Moresby FM Maprik Radio UPNG	TELIKOM PANGTEL	Universities and Research Centres
(NGOs) CDI FM – Gobe Red FM – Gobe	National Council of Women	NGOs
(Press) <i>Post-Courier</i> (Daily/English) <i>The National</i> (Daily/English) <i>Wantok</i> (Weekly/ Tok Pisin)	National Electorate Office	Church Groups
(Other) Radio Australia Australian Associate Press BBC World Services		

Source: Author adapting AusAID, 2004.

There is one weekly newspaper, the *Wantok*, published in the Tok Pisin language and owned by Word Publishing through Media Holdings Ltd. Its shareholders are the mainstream churches in PNG: Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican, and Uniting Church. It has an approximate circulation of 10,000.

EM-TV, owned by the Nine Network of Australia and the one television station in PNG, generates only a small proportion of its coverage locally. Broadcasting started in 1987 (Foster, 1998, p.54) and is available in almost every urban centre in the country with rural and remote areas serviced by more than 500 privately-owned satellite dishes, but in 2004, 17 years after launch, the channel is still not available across the whole country.

Publicly funded radio in PNG is in the hands of a bureaucracy, the National Broadcasting Commission, which as the only radio broadcasting authority in the country is the nation's public service provider (Nash, 1995, pp. 42-43).

Privately owned commercial radio has grown since the first station, Nau FM, was launched in 1994, by Fiji-based Communications Fiji Ltd. Yumi FM joined it in 1997. PNG FM, a 100 per cent owned subsidiary of Communications Fiji, now owns both stations and there are now a growing number of commercial stations, playing mostly music, based in and around PNG's urban centres.

Although the industry has been in existence since 1969 we do not yet have a full understanding of how news agendas are created, how people use media content and the influence that the media might have in forming public opinion. We do not yet engage in

questions of justice, equity, the concentration and exercise of power, access to information and accountability.

Lack of proper research in this field has further contributed to the general perception that communication is not a priority for the country's development. A number of articles have been written, both in mainstream media (Pamba, 2003, a, b) and academic journals (Robie, 1994a; Robie, 1995; Foster, 1999) over the years sketching the PNG media profile, but little has been done to offer an in depth analysis of PNG media that would contribute to a better understanding of the above mentioned issues. Equally no audience research has been carried out so far in order to identify the information needs of the majority of the population and ways to meet them. Amongst the most recent efforts towards this direction has been the work of Dick Rooney (Rooney, 2002; Rooney, 2003; Rooney, 2004) and the latest AusAID feasibility study for a Media for Development Initiative in PNG (2004).

1.2 ***PNG Media Focus***

PNG has often been praised for having free and vibrant media, something that many of their counterparts in other Asian and Pacific countries do not enjoy (Mellam and Aloj, 2003). The media in PNG has developed and maintained a tradition of uncovering and highlighting misdeeds in society, particularly crime and corruption among high office holders. As a result the PNG media has had confrontations with politicians and bureaucrats over the years, although none of these has been to the extremes of journalists being killed or media organisations attacked although editors have at times been summoned to the Parliamentary Privileges Committee and there have been threats to control the media through legislation.

The attempts of legislative control of the media have failed due to vehement public opposition led by the media. Should the media come under any form of government control, the public would be 'alarmed' (Czuba, 1999, p. 22). An influential industrial body, the PNG Media Council, also supports the industry. The Media Council mainly consists of media managers and has been supporting the industry through trainings and protection from government's occasional claims to restrict the freedom of media.

The tradition to keep leaders in check and highlighting of wrongs in the society is inherited from the West through PNG's colonial association with Australia, who set up the media apparatus and left behind its journalism culture. Since independence in 1975, the public has unquestionably accepted the 'watchdog' approach to journalism, where the negative aspects of society are relentlessly pursued and given prominence by the media.

In recent years leaders and members of the public have complained against the media, accusing it of reporting more on negative events and issues. The government, in particular, has complained that there is little positive coverage of the country's development achievements (Skate, 1999, Narakobi, 1999). The media has been challenged to consider the fragility of the country as a young nation put together as collection of fragmented tribal communities at independence. This indicates a clash between Western news values and news values that are considered to be more appropriate for a developing nation. This last approach to news sees nation building and national integration as a priority where emphasis on development, education, and health should be high in the agenda (Robie, 1994b).

The blind adherence to and acceptance of Western style of reporting reflects the Western-influenced journalism training that journalists and editors receive in PNG. Pamba argues that this style of reporting cannot be transplanted into a fragile developing country like PNG

and assume that it would serve the same purpose, meet the same objectives and be absorbed by the public in the same way. He considers the 'blind imitation' of the Western style of reporting in PNG by an urban-based media as a 'tragedy' that does not help the national development cause of the country (Pamba, 2003, p. 15).

Pamba further argues that the media should balance its negative and positive reporting by considering the development aspirations of the country. He argues that PNG is a developing country and the media should give more focus to the ordinary people and how their lives are being affected by various factors including decisions and actions of governments.

1.3 PNG media and information for empowerment: issues of voice, content and access

The argument of '*undercommunication*' evolves around issues of access, voice and content. Bringing therefore this argument within the PNG context, one needs to see how these issues have been addressed by the media industry, civil society and government.

Participants at the AusAID Stakeholder Roundtable held in November 2003 (which included Evangelia Papoutsaki, one of this paper's authors) identified a number of challenges in regards to access, voice and content and it was argued that the potential of the media to contribute to the country's development is far from being fully realised. Papoutsaki's perception from the discussions was that there was a lack of involvement and understanding not only from the government's side but also from the civil society's which has not yet found a way to use information for empowerment and participation. This might be because of the relatively small and still growing civil society in PNG, mainly dominated by the Church groups, which have their own agendas.

The challenge to access arises because of the lack of affordable and equitable access to media by the rural population. Poor nation-wide network coverage of radio, TV and newspapers; fractured network of public broadcasting stations; government health, education and agriculture information not reaching the people, whether provided directly by government or indirectly through the media; many people not receiving media in a language that they understand, those are some of the main access issues.

Using the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) four main indicators for the level of use of communication modes in PNG - radio ownership per household, TV ownership, newspapers circulation and postal and telecommunications coverage – it is evident that the information and communication flow is weak (UNDP, 1998, p. 128). The penetration per 1,000 people of radios is 86 sets, TV 17 sets and newspapers 14. In urban areas radio and TV are more widespread with 63 per cent of urban teenagers and 38 per cent of urban adults watching TV every day. Equally, newspaper readership in urban areas is far higher than in rural areas. However, just 22 per cent of urban teenagers and 43 per cent of adults read newspapers everyday.

The distribution of newspapers is extremely limited outside urban centres. High rates of illiteracy make newspapers inaccessible to many people, not to mention that the cost of a daily newspaper is not affordable for poor people. 'Paper is expensive, heavy and costly to transport by air'. PNG is a country that has little road infrastructure and a costly air transportation system (Morgan quoted in Nash, 1995, p. 36). In rural areas 80 per cent of teenagers and 43 per cent of adults listen to radio every day. None of them reads newspapers everyday and only 5 per cent of rural teens and no rural adults watch TV

everyday. Television ownership is limited by the extent of electricity coverage throughout the country. The cost of television sets is beyond the reach of most Papua New Guineans. Statistics indicate that radio is the most common form of modern communication in PNG. Five times as many people own a radio set as a television or purchase a daily newspaper. Regarding information and communication technologies, PNG has some of the lowest levels in the developing world. Telecommunication infrastructure is also very low, especially in rural areas with an average of 2.9 telephone sets per 100 households (UNDP, 1998, AusAID, 2004, Curtain quoted in AusAID, 2004, p. 16).

However, it is not only access to information that is problematic, but the content as well. Foreign ownership, colonial legacies in journalism attitudes and training, lack of interest from government and civil society in public information, poor communication amongst civil society and media organizations and dominance of Western news values have all contributed to the production of news content that is not reflecting the needs of the people. The absence of rural journalism and networks providing the media with rural and regional content and urban focus of commercial radio is an example. In addition, much of the content and program format of broadcast media does not reflect PNG society and culture. Nau FM for instance, part of the PNG FM, has a Westernised format, based on the latest pop and mainstream music hits, targeting expatriates and 'Western' professionals in urban centres (PNG FM, 2004). Development news content, when it appears, is either inaccessible because it's mainly in English, a language little spoken by the rural populations or dated using didactic program formats reflecting the old development news paradigm that aimed to educate in order to change social values.

Further, lack of audience-driven media content raises the issue of voice and participation. People's views and concerns are rarely reflected in the current media content, which use predominately official sources of information reflecting the views of the urban, educated elites, as part of this paper explains in more detail. There is limited audience participation and feedback. Talk back radio tends to rely on telephone calls, which excludes the overwhelming majority of the population from participation. Few forums are held where the voice of people can be pre-recorded, commenting on issues of public interest. Lack of resources and basic equipment further aggravates the situation (AusAID, 2004). The latest effort from the government to reach the people and cover the gap on development news is to introduce its own information publication. It still remains to be seen how effective it will be. There is doubt though of its efficiency in terms of reaching the rural population as it comes in a supplement format, in English, and distributed by the national newspapers.

1.4 Policy and Regulatory frameworks

Governments in Papua New Guinea have not given priority to the information and communication sector. This neglect is principally reflected in the somewhat late - by many developing country standards - formulation and introduction of a 'National Information and Communication Policy' in 1993, 18 year after independence. Thus the information and communication sector in PNG remained in a policy vacuum since independence in 1975.

When launching the Policy in 1993, the then Minister for Information and Communication Services, Martin Thompson, noted the importance of information and communication policy as a guide to achieving national development, while acknowledging the attempts that were made at formulating a policy way back in 1978. Thompson saw the new policy this way: 'In national development, communication policies and communication planning go hand in hand. Policies provide the principles, rules, and guidelines on which a country's

communication system is built, whilst implementation of policies is left to planners and programmers' (Information and Communication Policy of Papua New Guinea, 1994, p. v).

This is an ideal expectation but the reality has been far from it. Since the policy was launched, governments have done little to implement it. The main reason for the neglect is the frequent changes of governments and the resultant inability to have full-time Ministry and Department of Information and Communication. Over the years, depending on the interests of the various governments, 'Information and Communication' has often been marginalized and has not been run by a fully-fledged government department but an 'office', often attached to the Prime Minister's Department. The present government has acknowledged the information and communication sector but has not given full ministry and department recognition.

Without a fully-fledged ministry and department, there are shortcomings and among them is the inability to implement the policy well and monitor its expectations. One example of this shortcoming is in the monitoring of content and amount of Christian religious programs aired on the only national television station, EM-TV. One Christian religious group, the Catholic Church, has a large proportion of airtime of its programs on EM-TV, compared to other Christian groups or religions.

The dominance of Catholic religious programs is at odds with Chapter 7 of the National Information and Communication Policy:

'Television should give equal opportunity to churches for televising their programmes. For the sake of building an ecumenical spirit, co-operation, respect and understanding among Churches, programmes should be devised to encourage such environment in the community. Churches should not be given privileged treatment on the basis of payment of their programmes' (ibid, p. 75).

This expectation of the policy has not been monitored and implemented.

There are other notable features of the National Information and Communication Policy that are not given consideration or neglected. Among them is community radio broadcasting. In the one sentence of the section on radio and television broadcasting the policy says the government should be 'encouraging PNG citizens to own and operate community broadcasting stations.'

In broadcasting and other media forms and areas of the information and communication sector, the policy is short on giving teeth to institutions to implement them. There is also little recognition of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The current government, according to the May 2004 issue of *Gavamani Sivarai*, the government monthly newspaper, has announced that it is working to reform Information and Communication Policy to incorporate and include areas covering ICTs. It is hoped that this review is more comprehensive, looking at areas such as community radio and policing than just incorporating elements looking at developments and expectations of ICTs. There is also the need to update the Radio Spectrum Act by bringing it into line with modern radio and television licensing requirements. Under the current provisions, anyone can obtain a radio licence if they pay the annual licence fees.

2. News Content and Access

The purpose of the research in this section is to examine the content of news stories in PNG newspapers and television and in particular the sources of information they use and determine what this tells us about the relationship between journalism, the audience, and democracy in the context of whether everyone has equal access to the news media.

Stuart Hall et al (1978) in their thesis on 'primary definers' argue that people in powerful and privileged positions are able to over-access the media, because journalists nervous of accusations of bias attempt to find ways of injecting impartiality, balance and objectivity into their reports.

They do this by a heavy reliance on accredited representatives of the people and organised interest groups and 'experts' who are considered to be disinterested pursuers of knowledge and therefore impartial in the debate in question (Hall et al, 1978, pp. 58-59).

In this thesis, the media become primary definers of the news because the media tend to reproduce faithfully what they say and thus reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order. It is likely that those in powerful positions in society who offer opinions about controversial topics will have their definitions accepted. Such spokesmen are understood to have access to more accurate or more specialised information on particular topics than the majority of the population.

This, Hall et al argue, permits the primary definers to set the agenda and those with arguments against a primary interpretation have to insert themselves into its definition of what is at issue. Once established this definition is difficult to alter fundamentally.

Hall's analysis is not without its critics. Philip Schlesinger and Howard Tumbler accept that there are powerful sources that can sometimes organise news agendas to their own advantage, but the emphasis is on the word 'sometimes' (Schlesinger and Tumbler, 1994, pp. 17-21). Journalists can choose to accept the sources, but they can also decide to find alternative sources. But, as Herbert J. Gans has observed, journalists are restrained by deadlines and often feel obliged to rely on sources that are able to fit in with the logistical requirements of busy news organizations (Gans, 1979, p. 121).

Although it is true that official sources do not have to be believed or taken seriously by journalists, the research intended to discover whether PNG journalists were doing just that. The journalists may not necessarily be biased towards the government or other elites, but one suspects their bureaucratic organisation and cultural assumptions make them conduits of that presentation. As Brian McNair points out, journalists tend to reproduce preferred accounts and interpretations of social reality by internalizing the dominant value structure of their society (McNair, 1996, p. 48).

2.1 Content Analysis: EM-TV

The research investigates PNG's only television station EM-TV which broadcasts one news programme per day called EM-TV National News which runs for 30 minutes (less time taken for commercials) each night. It is originally broadcast at 6pm seven days per week with a repeat each night, usually at 10.30pm or 11pm. The programme is typically subdivided into three segments: news from PNG, overseas' news and sports. The broadcasts also include stock market and currency prices from Australia, the US, Europe and Japan. Although the

news is read in English, many of the speakers who appeared on news items speak in Tok Pisin or other tok ples languages.

The research investigated 15 editions of EM-TV National News from 15 – 29 February 2004 inclusive. The main news sources for each of the first six stories broadcast per edition were counted.

Table 2

Main source of news item	Frequency (n = 90)	Percentage of total
Parliament or Government	43	47.7
Media Conferences	10	11.1
Emergency Services	10	11.1
Law Courts	2	2.2
Public Event	2	2.2
Foreign Stories	11	12.2
Others	12	13.3

Source: Author

Table 2 shows that newsgathering relies on official sources such as the government, police and emergency services for their stories as well as organised events, press statements, public conferences and conventions and events put on especially for the media.

By far the biggest single source of stories was Parliament and Government (47.7 per cent), even though Parliament itself did not sit at any time during the research period. The next largest source was media conferences accounting for 11.1 per cent of the total.

Government dominates the news agenda and there is little opportunity for anyone else within PNG to communicate through the news media. In the case of EM-TV and the newspapers, the value of the news depends mainly on the importance of the speaker, not on what they have to say, and in that respect it is not unlike the media in many developing countries (Williams, 1994, p.9).

For a more detailed understanding of the news bulletins two bulletins were picked at random and the first six items of each scrutinized to identify more precisely the sources used. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Detailed examination of two bulletins: Tuesday 16 February 2004 and Wednesday 25 February 2004.

Tuesday 16 February 2004			
Running Order	Description of item	Sources used	Comments
1	The Acting PNG Governor General, Speaker of the House of Parliament and local MP (all one person), Bill Skate, calls on the government to look into the circumstances of a road accident that killed 19 people.	Bill Skate was the only source	The item was based on Skate's visit to the crash site. The visit was on Skate's own initiative and appears to have been made for publicity purposes.

2	Up to 700 retrenched PNG Defence Force personnel will get financial pay offs paid for by the Australian Government.	PNG Defence Minister announcement at a media conference. He was the only source.	Em-TV has been taking a positive stance to regular stories about Australia's involvement in PNG's governmental affairs.
3	National Capital District Commission (NCDC) has a new head that will act as City Manager. The appointment comes amid controversy over the alleged misuse of funds at City Hall.	Story based on an announcement from Chair of NCDC at a press conference. Bill Skate, the local MP, is also interviewed at the same conference.	This is the second appearance of Bill Skate in this bulletin. He regularly supplies news to Em-TV.
4	Riots in Sydney, Australia.	NA	This is a supplied news package from Channel Nine, Australia. All Em-TV's foreign news during the whole research period was supplied from this source.
5	Dame Elisabeth Murdoch opens the garden of her house in Langwarrm, Victoria, Australia to raise funds for a local (to her home) art gallery.	NA	Channel Nine report. Ms Murdoch is described in the report as the matriarch of a media family. It is not said that she is the mother of Rupert.
6	Central Province Government (PNG) wants the national government to pay for the cost of having a local river diverted to avoid repeat of recent floods.	Story based on an interview with the Central Province Governor Alphonse Mori who is the only source.	The first PNG story in today's bulletin to originate outside of the capital, Port Moresby.

Wednesday 25 February 2004.

Running Order	Description of item	Sources used	Comments
1	Australian Opposition leader Mark Latham visits PNG to meet government leaders	Story is based on official government announcement and footage of people getting on and off planes.	This report does not include interviews with any of the story's participants. On previous days Em-TV had reported that Mr Latham was going to visit. Today's report added very little to news previously given.
2	Two policemen in Port Moresby (PNG capital) charged with armed robbery of beer from a shop. The report also gave a round up of seven other robberies that took place in the capital at the weekend.	Story is based on a police statement.	The entire story was read by the newsreader. No interviews or visual material was used in the report.
3	Members of Fiji's legal fraternity are in Port Moresby to learn about PNG's Leadership Code, which is an anti-corruption initiative.	Story is based on a statement from PNG's Chief Ombudsman, Ila Geno.	In the report the newsreader makes the point that PNG has many problems with

			leadership corruption, nonetheless other countries (as well as Fiji) look to us to find solutions.
4	The Judicial and Legal Services Commission (JLSC) has shortlisted four senior lawyers to become judges. Also four judges will be appointed from Australia.	Statement from JLSC is only source of information.	The entire story was read by the newsreader. No interviews or visual material was used in the report.
5	A group of experts from Australian National University (ANU) are studying a rare PNG Highlands tradition known as 'chanting its legends'.	Source is a two-day workshop run by ANU.	This is the first story in today's bulletin that has not originated from the PNG capital, Port Moresby. This ratio of capital to non-capital is typical.
6	Earthquake in Morocco.	NA	A report from Channel Nine, Australia.

Source: Author

The bulletins demonstrate that EM-TV excludes the vast majority of people in the country from its bulletins and it rarely includes stories about ordinary people. The closest the bulletins came was in the story about the aftermath of the road accident and even in this case the story centred on an elite person's involvement (Item one, 16 February). Generally, PNG media do not feature ordinary people unless they have been victims of misfortune or have appeared in court.

The stories that were broadcast centred on the nation's capital, Port Moresby. In the two bulletins featured there were only two PNG stories that originated from outside the capital. During the research period 73 per cent of the stories originating within PNG came from Port Moresby and only 27 per cent from elsewhere in the nation. About 85 per cent of PNG people live in rural area and they are not being represented by the news media. In these circumstances it is impossible to know what kinds of stories originating from outside Port Moresby are being missed and exactly how much rural people are at a disadvantage in terms of having their voices heard. There are no official viewing figures available, but it is a reasonable assumption to make that the viewers are generally urban and educated elites.

Tetty, using the example of Africa, has argued that the reason why most television programmes and publications use the colonial language (in PNG's case, English), even where local languages exist, is that they have to do so to survive economically (Tetty, 2003, p.25). Private media rely on advertising for economic prosperity and elite groups who tend to use the colonial language are the most attractive to advertisers.

2.2 Content analysis: The National and Post-Courier

This survey examined journalists and their sources of information (Rooney, 2003). A survey of ten issues of the *National* and *Post-Courier* was undertaken over two separate weeks in August 2002 (Monday-Friday 12-16 August 2002 and Monday-Friday 26-30 August 2002). Both papers only published Mondays to Fridays and two full weeks' worth of publications

was examined. The survey was made of the lead news stories on each of the main news pages (front, three and five).

During the research period, the pagination of the *National* was between 32 and 64 pages. Two editions reached 64 pages but both of these were on Fridays when the newspaper included its Weekend magazine supplement. The *National*'s 32 page editions included 12-page supplements carrying EM-TV and satellite television listings.

Pagination for the *Post-Courier* varied between 24 pages and 52 pages. The 52-page editions were also on Fridays when the *Post-Courier* published its magazine supplement, Weekend Extra. During the 10-day period, the *National* published a total of 432 pages and the *Post-Courier*, 376.

Both newspapers placed their editorial in clearly defined compartments. Running from the front of the newspaper, these typically were home (or national) news, regional (Pacific) news, world news, business news and sport. There was other material interspersed among these compartments on some days, for example news from specific regions within PNG and supplements sponsored by advertisers or organizations.

Home or national news accounted for six to eight pages per day in the *National* and between five and nine pages in the *Post-Courier*. The home news agenda will be discussed in more detail below.

Sports and business were important to both newspapers' editorial mix. Sports news in the *National* ran from four to ten pages per day. The *Post-Courier* ran sport on three to nine pages per day. The business section, which in the *National* ran from four to eight pages per day, was bigger by far than the *Post-Courier*, which typically ran three pages per day. Both newspapers ran a full page of Australian stock market prices each day. Overseas' news (defined as news from outside PNG) was sub-divided by the newspapers into region (or Pacific) and world. The world section was always larger than the regional by a ratio of two or three to one.

Out of the 30 stories counted, 25 in the *National* and 22 in the *Post-Courier* came straight from 'primary definers.' Stories in this category included statements from Government ministers on why there was a need to cut public spending and reduce salaries of government employees, a financial crisis in the copra growing industry and the board meeting of a large petroleum company.

Both newspapers shared the same agenda, but the *Post-Courier* was a little more likely to give prominence to dramatic human-interest stories. For example, it led one edition on a story of a woman being hacked to death inside a bus in the capital, Port Moresby, while the *National* chose to lead that day on the Australian Prime Minister's call for PNG to continue with its financial reforms (Gerawa, 2002, p.1, Senge-Kolma, 2002, p.1).

The study examined the sources of news stories. This task was simple as most stories surveyed had only one or two sources of information and were from public events such as sittings of Parliament, conferences and conventions, and events constructed specifically for the media. As Table 4 shows, by far the biggest single source of stories for both newspapers was Parliament, accounting for 63 per cent of stories in the *National* and 50 per cent in the *Post-Courier*. These stories were reports of proceedings on the floor of Parliament, with the overwhelming amount of coverage dominated by government

members. The next largest source was press conferences and statements accounting for 10 per cent of the *National* coverage and 20 per cent of the *Post-Courier*. In the survey period these conferences and statements came from the Prime Minister's Office or other government officials.

Table 4
Sources of stories on prominent news pages of The *National* and *Post-Courier* newspapers, August 12-16 2002 and August 26-30 2002

	<i>National</i> n =30	<i>Post-Courier</i> n = 30
Parliament / Government	19	15
Press Conference/ statement	3	6
Court case	3	1
Speech	3	1
Crime	0	4
Others	2	3

(Rooney, 2003, p.125)

A survey was also undertaken to identify the number of sources that journalists use in their stories. Table 5 shows that the majority of stories in both the *National* and the *Post-Courier* came from a single source: 57 per cent in the *National* and 73 per cent in the *Post-Courier*. The percentage of stories relying on two or fewer sources was 93 per cent in both newspapers.

Table 5
Number of sources quoted in stories on prominent news pages, August 12-16 2002 and August 26-30 2002

	<i>National</i> n =30	<i>Post-Courier</i> n = 30
One source	17	22
Two sources	11	6
Three sources	2	2

(Rooney, 2003, p.125)

The table needs some explanation. Although in some cases more than one source is quoted this does not necessarily mean that high levels of journalistic endeavour are used. Journalists tend only to quote more than one source when these sources are readily provided for them. The stories in which three sources were quotes were court cases and news conferences.

In the cases where two sources were quoted the journalist has not sought to collect an alternative view to the main speaker, instead two sources supporting the same argument are used, for example from stories originating from sittings of Parliament.

The reluctance to find alternative voices, even within the mainstream political parties means that readers are given a one sided view on matters of controversy. During the survey period the recently elected PNG government handed down its first budget. Both the *National* and *Post-Courier* had prominent stories the day of the budget, previewing what was likely to be said and the day after giving details of the main speech in Parliament. The reporting was uncritical of the government. The day of the budget, the *National* and the *Post-Courier* produced similar stories supportive of the government. They were based on a press preview of the contents of the budget. The *National* lead its paper with this paragraph:

'The Government will change the course of Papua New Guinea through an export-driven economic recovery strategy, according to the Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare' (Taimbari, C. 2002a, p.1).

The *National* quoted the prime minister as promising to stabilize and unite the country to improve living standards. The prime minister was the only person quoted in the story.

The *Post-Courier* had a similar story highlighting an export-driven 'recovery and development plan' based on the same press conference given by the prime minister (Niesi, 2002a, p.1). On the day after the budget was handed down the *Post-Courier* led its front page with this opening paragraph:

'The Government yesterday moved to clean up the financial mess of the 2002 Budget by cutting MPs allowances, Government departments and agency allocations' (Niesi, 2002b, p.1). The report used only one source, the finance minister Bart Philemon.

The *National* also uncritically reproduced the finance minister's assertion that the country's economic ills were due entirely to the previous government's mismanagement of the economy. It quoted Philemon to the effect that the previous government's last budget was

'a political budget and as such sound economic management was crushed under the weight of political expediency at the expense of the future well-being of Papua New Guinea' (Taimbari, 2002b, p.1).

Nowhere in either story was the past prime minister, now leader of the Opposition, given the chance to react to the assertions

A further issue involves the simplicity of the political analysis offered by the government. The finance minister and the newspapers make no effort to explain the complex nature of the PNG economy which has a public debt to GDP ratio over 70% with interest costs absorbing more than half the development budget. There have been persistent budget deficits (Windybank and Manning, 2003, pp.4-5).

2.3 Discussion

The PNG constitution provides for free speech, including freedom of the media, and the government generally respects these freedoms in practice. Press laws in PNG tend to be based on the English model and although there is a guarantee of 'freedom of speech' there are laws suppressing defamation and indecency and maintaining secrecy (Narokobi, 1999, p.154).

A cynic might say that the government could afford to have a free press since journalists show no inclination to call politicians to account. Newsgathering in PNG tends to be passive and the media rely on official sources such as the government, police and emergency services for their stories. The value of the news depends mainly on the importance of the speaker, not on what they have to say, and in that respect, it is not unlike the media in many developing countries (Williams, 1994, p.9).

The research supports the view that journalists over rely on powerful elites as sources and that journalists do not pro-actively find alternative sources to provide balance to stories. Reporters receive information from a single source and re-present it unquestioningly in reports. It may be an over simplification to say that journalists have to do this in order to fit in

with the logistical requirements of a busy news organization. Surely, one feels, within the confines of the political establishment in PNG which is based within a single district of the nation's capital, journalists are able to get opposing views, especially in matters that are controversial.

The media is weak in covering the whole country because nearly all the media organisations are based in the national capital Port Moresby, a centre that is only connected to the rest of the country by air. Media organisations tend to be unwilling or unable to cover the high cost of airfares to get stories. Journalists therefore rely on filing their reports by telephone contact. The necessity of this has the effect of excluding the majority of the population who live in the rural areas and have no access to telephones.

In the few urban centres outside of Port Moresby where reporters are based, they tend to lack resources such as vehicles to move around. James Apa Gumuno, a journalist from *The National* newspaper based in Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands Province, said in a conversation with Kevin Pamba (June 2004) that he does not have a vehicle to cover a by-election in one of the electorates in that province. Gumuno spoke of his hardships travelling by unreliable public transport taking a two-hour trip down to the electoral centre of the Anglimp-South Waghi, where the election was taking place and travelling back another two hours to Mount Hagen to file his reports for the Port Moresby newsroom office. Gumuno often laments of the hardships he faces with transport to cover the vast Highlands region comprising five provinces with nearly 2.5 million people, half of the country's population.

One of the few times that journalists have their travel costs covered is when they are asked to follow government officials or other important personalities when they are on tour. Often the travelling expenses are sponsored by members of elite groups to ensure media coverage of events involving themselves. Journalists who make trips sponsored in this way are 'captives' of the sponsor and have little chance to cover other aspects of the story beyond that required by the sponsor. Pamba suggests that the media should put disclaimers at the end of each story or feature produced by journalists who have been on a sponsored trip. This, he says, will give the public an opportunity to judge the objectivity of the reporting and if certain information is left out, they can know that the report was produced after a trip sponsored by someone else with a vested interest (Pamba, 2003, p. 17).

Journalists in PNG tend not to give background information to the stories, even those running from day to day. One of the traits of PNG journalism is its unwillingness to produce stories that contain a balance of views within them. Instead, journalists opt for revisiting stories over a period of time, introducing new elements and different views in each new episode. In this way, committed viewers might be able to piece together the disparate elements of the story into a comprehensible whole. However, each new episode tends to include only one source, thus there is no balance of views or attempt at interrogation of the powerful. This demonstrates a lack of capacity among PNG journalists to perform one of their vital roles within a democracy which is to examine what government is and is not doing and to provide the public with information, comment, analysis, criticism and alternative views (Roth, 2001, p.10).

In this respect journalists have trouble overcoming the traditional norms of their societies: PNG people tend to have uncritical acceptance of traditional knowledge and procedures, with deference given to elders and those in positions of authority, which is often at odds with the values of modern societies. Critical thinking and problem solving are not generally taught

in schools and the indigenous languages, including Tok Pisin, do not include vocabulary that facilitates questioning and critical thinking (McLaughlin, 1996, McLaughlin, 1997).

3. Radio in PNG and its role in national development

Although radio appears to be the preferred mode of communication in PNG with greater access than any other medium, it is still far from reaching all people and its full potential as agent of information for participation and empowerment.

From the three existing types of radio in PNG, public, commercial and civil society based (NGO/churches run), only the first one appears to have the potential to make a major contribution to Papua New Guinea's development goals. It is a public broadcaster with a national radio network, although it does not currently operate as one. It serves rural people by broadcasting programs with relevant development content in local languages in the provinces. NBC's mission statement fits within the development communication goals: contribute to integral human development via the advancement of knowledge, taking into account, without bias, Papua New Guinea's over 850 different languages, cultural diversity, religion and politics, through the provision of an independent, comprehensive and innovative broadcasting service that must be accessed by all Papua New Guineans (NBC, 2003-2007).

At its peak, it was able to reach about four million people in about 60 different languages as well as English, through its three networks, Karai, Kundu and Kalang. Each of these networks had a well-defined identity and role. Karai, the national service, has been broadcasting from Port Moresby on short wave in English with selected programs in Pidgin and Motu. It primarily broadcasts news and current affairs, sports and music and national development programs. Kundu, the provincial services, has been broadcasting in each of the 19 provincial capitals on short wave. The provincial radio stations have had high level of autonomy over their programming but they have been required to transmit programs of national importance from the national service. They broadcast mainly in selected major indigenous languages, in English and Pidgin. The Kalang service, which was the commercial radio station, was lost to Telkom to offset debts and is now operating as FM 100, an independent commercial radio station. Recently NBC tried to re-enact its commercial operations with Paradize FM.

As most public broadcasters in many developing countries, the NBC's role was and continues, albeit in a defunct way, to be to 'promote national unity' and emphasize 'social, economic, educational and technical development' (Katz, et al, 1978, p 35). This traditional public broadcasting role has included in its application broadcasts to schools, rural programs, religious (Christian) broadcasting and government extension programs (McKay, 1976). NBC was in its heyday... 'a true voice of the nation' and one of the strongest voices of uniting PNG. However, bad management and budgetary cuts, indicating the government's inability to fully appreciate the importance of information in the country's development, have impaired the function of NBC.

Poor legislation has exacerbated even further the challenging situation that NBC has been facing. The organic Law of 1995 transferred to provincial government responsibility for meeting provincial radio station operating costs. This has resulted in political interference by some provincial governments that affected the content and forced several stations off-air because of lack of resources or willingness to fund provincial radio seeing it not as one of their priorities. When one of the authors (Papoutsaki) visited the Goroka provincial station, in March 2004, the manager explained that the station was not able to transmit because of

lack of funds for operating costs. Although the staff is still receiving salary from the central government as civil servants, they are not able to report. A representative from the provincial government commented when asked why there is no support for the local station commented that it was not seen as a priority due to general lack of funds.

The fragmentation of the NBC provincial radio network caused by the organic law as well as funding, management and other difficulties have resulted in many of them to close down. NBC provincial radio journalists used to accompany government patrols to villages; however, often they lack the resources to do so now. NBC provincial radio stations, which provide a forum for local people, do not generally share content with NBC nationally because the network is defunct. This does not allow NBC to fulfil one of its main goals which is the promotion on national unity and identity. NBC archives that recorded the songs and dances of village people are not in a useable format and are slowly perishing. In addition, Government information officers in health and education departments said they lacked resources to visit rural areas (Ninkama, 2004, AusAID, 2004). And with many provincial stations unable to pick that role, whole sections of the population are cut off from valuable information.

The only therefore medium of reaching the rural populations in local languages has lost its capacity to make quality programs, leaving a vacuum which cannot be met by the recently established Christian community stations which import directly their program format and content from overseas. An example of this Christian stations is the Catholic Radio Network (CRN PNG) which re-broadcasts around the country the Vatican Radio World News in English, with a heavy religious program and a tiny fraction of its scheduling offered in Pidgin (Catholic Radio Network of Papua New Guinea).

Neither the commercial stations can fill in this vacuum. They have strong commercial incentives to target their program content towards relatively affluent, urban audiences offering mainly inexpensive, easy to generate music-based program format (AusAID, 2004). FM 100 mission statement is an example of this: "we target...the more mature audience with the highest disposable income... . We have a share market of the expatriate audience who hold close to their hearts the classic music of one hit wonders from before" (Who is FM100, 2004). Nau FM, the country's first commercial radio station, follows along those lines by stating that they also have a share of "an older audience, mainly the expat market plus the 'western' professionals living and working in urban centres" (PNG FM, 2004). Their programming is mainstream music; mainly western pop. Commercial radio stations also tend to lack opportunities within their program format for the voice of ordinary people to be heard. Yumi FM's primary content is also music, albeit predominately local and with a stronger grass roots face, according to the managing director (ibid).

With the mainstream media having failed then as agencies of information for empowerment, what are the alternatives in reaching the ordinary people of Papua New Guinea? Lack of a strong civil society that is still nascent and dominated by the Christian missions leaves little hope for information becoming the tool of small and less privileged communities. There is a need in building a stronger civil society that can take a leading role in rural communication.

Radio is unarguably the best medium of communication in a country like PNG with a strong and diverse oral culture. The alternative to the NBC's bureaucratic structure, the commercial westernised content of private radios and the moralistic/religious content of Christian radios could be community radio.

Community radio is a new concept to this country despite its wide use in the developing world for several decades already. Community radio stations could fill the gap that the mainstream broadcasters and other media forms cannot meet. They give voice to groups and individuals that are left out of the radar of the mainstream broadcasters (CBAA). By having people in the community volunteering or working for a nominal payment, community stations can strengthen the community by empowering people to take ownership and responsibility of their communication needs.

“... community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself, i.e. owning and controlling its own means of communication” AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa 1998).

Papua New Guineans by their traditional communal culture, which is still strong, are people who willingly help each other in times of need. As such, if an educational institution, a church, a women’s group or other non-governmental organization was to organize and operate a community radio station that reflected the shared interests of the people, they would indeed generate sufficient interest for volunteers and funds to help running it. Projects such as the rural multimedia production centre in the Highlands, part of the media production unit of the Foundation for Rural Development which produce audiovisual material on rural and development issues can assist by providing content to community radios. At the moment their activities in making more information available to rural communities is hindered by the cost of access to airwaves.

Community radios can overcome the linguistic divide, which hinders information dissemination from national broadcasters, and strengthen cultural diversity that has been weakened with the spread of English and pidgin through education and migration to urban centres. It can overcome the literacy problem, as its medium of communication is oral. It can also solve the transmitting problem, as it will be broadcasting locally.

However, people need to be aware of this option. Policy makers and opinion leaders need to promote the community radio concept to create interest among the people and also donors. Providing cheaper access to airwaves will assist further the operation of these stations. There is also a need for a network that link government agencies, civil society and media, as information sharing is vital for maintaining social and national cohesion in a country that cultural diversity can become a hindrance to development if not properly utilised. Transmitting for instance national news or information from the ministry of health and education in local languages can help foster national unity but maintain the use of local languages and cultural diversity.

New technologies have yet to make an impact in Papua New Guinea, although it has been argued that ICT can help overcoming the country’s difficult geographical terrain that hinders transition of signals and transportation. ADB’s ICT projects in the Pacific as tools for development and poverty reduction aim to overcome such constrains associated with smallness and isolation (ADB, 2000, p 39). However, ICT is a tool that can improve access but its effectiveness still depends on the content it carries. ICT, as ADB argues, does not create information (2003, p 5). There is also the issue of sustainability, people should be trained to operate and maintain the ICT systems, otherwise they will fail and prove costly to restore. At the moment the country does not have the capacity to sustain such highly trained individuals and systems.

There have been some first initiatives of ICT use, such as the multipurpose community telecenter in the east Sepik region, an initiative of HELP Resources Inc (a community development organization). It offers public access to the Internet visited by local villagers who want to check the price of vanilla in the international markets and aims to create a communication hub with development material and access to the net. However this is an isolated case and one has to see to what extent such activities can make improve substantially the information needs of the rural population. Not to mention the need to overcome the lack of general literacy before they tackle electronic literacy, needed to be able to use computers.

Conclusions

The media in Papua New Guinea have failed to serve their audiences. If the media is to realise its potential in contributing to Papua New Guinea's development priorities, it has to broadcast radio and television programs and publish newspaper articles that address these priorities. At present, the journalism being delivered by media organisations in PNG does not include much high quality development-related material.

In addressing the reasons for this state of affairs and with the intention to provoke discussion we believe that development impact, not technology, must be the main driver.

The regulatory regime is an important factor in the effectiveness of the media sector; however, in PNG there is limited capacity for implementation of regulations. Radio stations in PNG have at times become embroiled in provincial and national political struggles, affecting levels of government funding and commitment.

We do not see the availability of equipment and technology as central to the issue; financial and personnel issues are generally far more significant causes of poor performance in the sector. Short-term training courses and workshops for journalists designed to overcome such deficiencies have had limited impact in transferring skills. There is a sense that the learning achieved during workshops is not transferred to the workplace.

Too often media for development initiatives are captured by the professionals within the industry and the intended beneficiaries – the poor, youth, indigenous – are marginalized.

We suspect that encouraging access to existing media networks may be a more effective way of providing a forum for poor people to be heard and increasing the diversity of development programming than establishing new, under funded, media facilities.

Community radio stations will have limited prospects for sustainability unless linked on an ongoing basis with larger institutions (church, university, business or government) or international funding sources.

We concur with the guiding principles identified by AusAID (2004). That media, with government and civil society, should support PNG's democracy and development goals. It should promote a professional, independent, responsible and diverse media that upholds the universal right to freedom of expression.

Priority should be given to overcoming the information divide determining ways to provide access to information that addresses the needs of people living in rural areas, including women and youth.

And above all celebrate PNG's many cultures and languages, its rich cultural heritage and its unique ways of self-expression.

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