NEWS COVERAGE OF NGOs AND ETHICAL CONCERNS: THE CASE OF ETV AMHARIC BROADCAST

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the problem ................................................................. 1
1.2 Statement of the Problem ................................................................. 2
1.3 ETV and NGOs .............................................................................. 4
   1.3.1 Overview of ETV ................................................................. 4
   1.3.2 Overview of NGOs in Ethiopia .............................................. 4
1.4 Rationale of the study .............................................................. 5
1.5 Research Questions and hypothesis .................................................. 6
1.6 Objectives of the Study ............................................................... 6
1.7 Significance of the Study ............................................................. 7
1.8 Delimitation of the Study .............................................................. 7
1.9 Limitation of the Study ................................................................. 8
1.10 Organization of the paper ............................................................ 8
1.11 Definition of Terms .................................................................... 8

Chapter two: Literature Review

2.1 News selection process ................................................................. 10
2.2 The Role of Journalist as an Agenda Setter .................................. 12
2.3 The Role of Journalist as Gatekeeper ........................................... 14
2.4 News sources and Media Access .................................................. 15
   2.4.1 Building Positive Image ..................................................... 15
   2.4.2 Getting Publicity ............................................................... 16
2.5 Ethical considerations in the News Selection process ...................... 17
   2.5.1 Journalist and ethical concern in news selection process ............ 18
2.5.2 Pressure of News Sources

Chapter three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the method
3.2 Data sources
3.3 Sampling
3.4 Defining Categories
3.5 Data Processing and presentation

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction
4.2 ETV’s Editorial Policy and News selection criteria
4.3 Data obtained by Content Analysis
4.4 Over View of duties and responsibilities of News Editors and Reporters
4.5 Responses Obtained from NGO’s PR Officers, News Reporters and Editors
   4.5.1 Editors reflection on the extent of NGOs news coverage
   4.5.2 Editors’ reflection on Ethical issues: in the case of reporters and NGOs
   4.5.3 Reporters’ reflection on ethical matters they encounter while working with NGOs
   4.5.4 Reflection of NGO’s PR officers on ETV

Chapter Five: Summary and conclusion

5.1 Summary and conclusion

Bibliography
Appendices
Questionnaires

The Ethiopian herald newspaper- News about the 2008/09 Ethiopian budget
**List of Tables**

**Table one**- Total number of news stories referring to NGOs and total number of news stories broadcast during the sample time

**Table Two**- The amount of news Vs Characters cited in news stories

**Table Three**- The first two news stories in 8p.m. newscast recorded in a sample time Vs characters cited in the news
Abstract

The aim of the research is to assess the role of ETV’s newsroom journalist, reporters’ and editors’, as gatekeepers and agenda setter in news selection and presentation. The research further assess the extent of NGOs air coverage in ETV in 8P.m. news cast and the general overview of the relationship between NGOs and individual ETV journalists.

The research has brought important theoretical framework in chapter two, so as to strengthen the analysis part in chapter four and five. In chapter three, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to indicate how data’s were analyzed in chapter four and five. Video-recorded news stories were analyzed using content analysis; while in-depth interviews were conducted with PR officers and ETV newsroom editors and reporter.

As indicated in the content analysis, some 472 news stories were recorded with the total air time of 37,760 second; 3.2 percent of which entertain NGOs. On the other hand, it was indicated that NGOs were the most important channel to deliver foreign aid that is estimated to be one third of the national budget, to the country.

The response forwarded by reporters and editors uncovered reason why NGOs used to get less coverage in the 8 p.m. news coverage and how and why NGOs try to negotiate with journalist informally to get air time.

The response came from interviews of newsroom editors, reporters showed that the gate keeping as well as agenda setting role ETV’s newsroom editors are significant. The research showed how editors’ personal biases adversely affect news coverage of NGOs’.
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the problem

The Ethiopian Television (ETV), the sole TV broadcasting station in Ethiopia, was established in early 1960’s. At its early stages, almost all programs were presented in Amharic, a widely spoken local language in the country.

During the station’s first few years, the coverage area of ETV transmission was not greater than one percent of the country’s geographical area. Four decades later, in 2003, transmission, reached nearly 47 percent. Leykun (1997:23).

After making numerous adjustments on programs and airtime, ETV recently launched a new program schedule, nearly 12 hours a day. In the new arrangement, the station presents seven news bulletins announcements in Amharic during weekdays and a bit fewer in week ends. The 8 pm Amharic newscast in the primetime is expected to reach the largest number of viewers.

Media scholars agreed that TV is the most powerful media to present news events in memorable ways. Andsager (2000:176) underscores that television is the most important medium, as it mainly influence our day-to-day life and molds our perception of issues and events that are important in the society. Understanding this therefore, politicians, governmental as well as non-governmental organizations, individuals and other interest groups often use any possible means to access the media to popularize their agenda among the public. “A wide range of people and organization often seek news coverage or more accurately positive news coverage” Campbell (2004: 80).

Such mammoth interests of groups keenly interested to access the media. Despite this fact however, media organizations often set criteria to select news stories. Besides external pressures that often come from government ETV has its own editorial policy to control the content and types of the programs that should be transmitted.
After the researcher made short preliminary interviews with ETV Newsroom editors, he understood that the station gave special emphasis to news stories that focused on successful development stories. Furthermore, as a news viewer, the researcher also recognized that most news stories dealt with the government’s successful development efforts. In fact, protocol news items, which mainly refer senior officials, seemed to be given priority.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Boyd (2001) cited the former BBC director of programs, Brian Wenham, to explain the immense power of the audiovisual media.

*Television is credited ...with almost superhuman powers. It can, they say, start wars and it can sap the will to continue those wars. It can polarize society, and it can prevent society talking sensibly to itself. It can cause trouble on the streets.* (192)

The former BBC director tried to highlight the massive agenda setting power of TV media. Putting Wenham’s description of TV media into perspective, acknowledges the immense agenda setting power possessed by ETV, as the only TV station in the country.

Green and Clark (1991:116) advance the argument by acknowledging TV media as more efficient media system in disseminating messages that could be translated into relatively stronger agenda setting effect on national issues.

As mentioned earlier, ETV is geared to set development agenda on the 8p.m. newscast. Despite great efforts to cover development news, The ETV seems to give less attention to NGOs in that newscast. In short coverage of NGOs did not seem proportional to their participation in the country’s development.

Deacon (2004:99) explains that although NGOs are considered ‘resource-poor’ organizations, some charity organizations have multi-million pound concern.
Currently, according to exclusive information of records of the Ministry of Justice in 2007/08 some 2203 international as well as local NGOs engaged in development works in Ethiopia. They pour a significant amount of money to the country’s GDP and mobilize more that 123 thousands of workers.

A few news stories focus on the successful achievements of NGOs, but it may not compensate the extent coverage that NGOs would likely deserve from ETV news coverage, considering that high percentage of economic involvement.

The problems arise from biased news selection and the presentation role of newsroom journalists. As stated earlier, newsroom journalists mainly give priority to government agendas when they serve as a “gate keepers”. News room Editors rejects other news stories in order to give much airtime to government.

This however contradicts ETV Editorial Policy. In chapter one and three section of the policy, it was decreed that all segment of the community shall be served equally. Two reasons may explain this unfair treatment of NGOs:

I/ loose implementation of the editorial policy, among journalists and the and ETV management, and

II/biased attitudes of newsroom journalists, who have strong agenda setting and gate keeping roles in day-to-day operation.

Due to this fact therefore, NGOs often design strategies to access the media. These may include making informal payments to individual journalists to produce news or any other programs to compensate for what they could not get in a formal relationship with the station. Doing this is vital to maintain positive images before the public and perhaps among donors.
Kruger (2004:102) explains ethically acceptable responses that journalists should follow in case when they get such invitations from news sources. “People sit around working out strategies of getting onto our screen and our responsibility is to try to keep them at bay”. He indirectly shows the authority that journalists have in selecting and gathering news, and how they should ethically use such authority in their day-to-day challenges they could face in their work.

1.3 ETV and NGOs

1.3.1 Short Overview of ETV

On its infant stage, the coverage capacity of ETV, as compared to the country’s total area, was less than one percent. This equaled a six-mile radius of the Capital. By 2004, the coverage capacity grew to 47 percent of the country’s total area Leykun (1997:28). In 2007, the station launched new satellite transmission over North America, Asia and Europe.

Over 43 years skilled manpower has also expanded. Thirty one in 1964 grew to 600 in 2007. Although there is still a gap between viewer demands and the program quality and coverage capacity, the station has tried to strengthen program production through a new organizational structure.

The capacity and number of TV viewers has also increased. The number of TV increased from 500 in 1964 to 240,000 in 1996, while the number of TV viewers only 5000 in 1964 grew to 4 million in 1996 (Ibid:34). The statistics represents only the TV sets registered per household to pay the station’s annual service. The numbers of TV sets and TV viewers might actually be more.

No researches have been made on ETV so far, only an unpublished book, tells the history and progress of ETV. No research material or written documents focus on the relationship between NGOs and ETV. Only guidelines set on the station’s Editorial Policy to indicate how NGOs need to be treated in news coverage.
1.3.2 Overview of NGOs in Ethiopia

Deacon (2001:99) defines NGOs as “non-statutory” and non-profit organizations. His definition includes charities, trade unions and other cause-based organizations, as well as mainstream political parties and any professional and corporate interest groups. The World Bank defines NGOs as “private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development”.

The World Bank divides NGOs into two broad categories:
I/ Operational NGOs, whose primary purpose is to design and implement development related project
II/ Advocacy NGOs, whose primary purpose is to find or promote a specific cause and seek to influence the policies and practices of the bank.

If traditional self-help institutions were recognized as NGOs, they have long history in Ethiopia. According to CRDA report “The History of NGOs in Ethiopia”, it was early 1960s when both foreign and local NGOs came to existence.

The famines occurred in 1973 and 1984 were also historical benchmarks. NGOs involved with charities and community development programs began to flourish. Currently there are 3,582 international as well as local NGOs, civic and professional associations and religious organizations in Ethiopia. 2,203 of them have engaged with various development works investing hundreds of millions of birr.

1.4 Rationale of the study

The decision to focus on NGOs on the topic has been reached for two reasons. First the researcher is a journalist working for a government newspaper and has observed that government media, including ETV, are reluctant to cover NGOs although the government calls NGOs development partners in speeches of senior officials. For example FDRE president Girma W/Giorgis has appreciated the efforts of NGOs while speaking at the launching of NGO’s exhibition in December 2008.
NGOs often use various ways to persuade a media to cover them. For instance, they are suspected making extra payments to journalists privately to get their name and activities in the news. This is tempting because government journalists’ salary is very low and often they do not reject offerings of news sources. ETV editor, for example may get a monthly salary of 200 USD.

Second, the researcher tries to assess the role of newsroom journalists as agenda setters and gatekeepers in the day-to-day newsgathering and selecting process. The research intends to compare and contrast the actual news selection procedures with ETV editorial policy issued in 2005. The policy has 15 chapters that mainly discuss duties and responsibilities. Chapter four discusses how and when NGOs, civic as well as professional association, will get news coverage.

1.5 Research Questions and Hypothesis

The study intends to show the role of the ETV newsroom journalist in the news process based on the research hypothesis that coverage of NGOs is presumed to be unfair in ETV news cast. The hypothesis also includes unethical relationship between NGOs and individual ETV journalists, because NGOs try to access the media outlet by offering benefits to individual journalists. The study was guided by the following basic questions:

1/ how often does ETV cover news of NGOs?
2/ what are the roles of news room journalists in news selection and presentation?
3/ what strategies do NGOs use to get news coverage?

1.6 Objectives of the Study

General Objective
1/ to show the agenda setting and gate keeping role of newsroom journalists in the news gathering and selecting process
2/ to find out the extent of news coverage of NGOs in ETV Amharic news cast.
3/ to find out NGO strategies, to access ETV newscasts.
Specific Objectives
I/ to assess the criteria for selecting news for ETV Amharic program.
II/ to show how newsroom journalists deal with news items related to NGOs.
III/ to assess ethical issues that arise when NGOs offer journalists money to get on air.

1.7 Significance of the Study
The study is significant because it tries to show how ETV treats stories of NGOs. The research may also lead to a proper air time in the news casts for NGOs and other stakeholders that significantly share the country’s development endeavor. ETV as the country’s only television station is supposed to fairly serve all community segments in its daily news broadcast. The study may also encourage ETV to weight news coverage of NGOs on its Amharic newscast. In a broader context, the study will also enable the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency to consider news coverage of NGOs in newscast.

More specifically, ETV reporters and editors of ETV, may look for ways in which NGOs can get proportional news coverage. Berkowitz (1997:57) clearly states that one day’s news represents the effect of many gatekeepers at many gates.

The study may also create opportunities for those, who are concerned about NGOs activities in the country. As a result, the achievement, of NGOs will be promoted while weak sides will be identified and improved. Finally, there was no research examines the relationship between NGO’s and ETV. This study may fill the gap by analyzing news selection and presentation of NGOs news stories and examining benefits offered by NGOs to attract journalists.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study
The study focused on describing the overall relationship between ETV and NGOs. Hence, 8 pm news stories were recorded in video for one month in a sample time in 15, March to 13 April 2008. Further more in-depth interviews have been conducted with purposely selected news room editors, reporters and NGOs’ PR officers.
Study has a nationwide context. It could have been better if the study encompasses the two news agencies, Walta and ENA, as they have great contribution in ETV’s daily news coverage. It could also have been better if the study included regional information bureaus; as they serve as a news sources to ETV. However, due to shortage of time and resources the in-depth interviews have been conducted to purposely-selected news reporter, editors and NGO’s PR officers only. The study was intended to show agenda setting and gate keeping role of journalist in news selection and presentation of ETV news room.

1.9 Limitation of the Study
It was very hard to get information about NGOs especially from governmental institutions. Hence, the research is confined on the limited information that the researcher managed to get.

Shortage of related material was also the other problem to the study, as it was too difficult to find books and researches written on the relationship between NGOs and government media; specifically, with ETV.

1.10 Organization of the study
Chapter one addressed topics such as background of the study, statement of the problem, rationale of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, organization of the paper and definition of terms.

Chapter Two reviews related literature, which includes various issues. Methodology and data analysis are discussed in Chapters Three and Four respectively. Summary, conclusion and recommendation are treated in Chapter Five. References and appendix appear as the last section.

1.11 Definition of Terms
For the purpose of clarity and consistency, the following definitions of terms are used.
1/ News coverage refers to the reporting of news stories about NGOs.
2/ NGOs are non-profit organizations engaged in designing and implementing development-related projects.
3/ Project news refers a kind of news that reporters produce with personal motivation.
4/ owner of the story refer to news sources that are frequently cited in news.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, various topics and issues, believed to support the study, were discussed and analyzed. The overall review provides the study’s theoretical framework and explains the methodologies and procedures selected.

2.1 News Selection Process

Schramm (1964:38) indicates how exchange of information began among primitive tribes huddling in caves against the cold and ever-present danger. Even primitive societies had needs to certain essential information in addition to the sort of everyday information exchange in courtship, family life, children’s play, or casual conversation.

Schramm tries to highlight the vitality of information flow even in earliest stage of human civilization. After thousands of years, human civilization has reached at the information age, when information communication has become intensive, instant and complex. The flow of fresh information through various mass media’s called “news”.

Stretz (1989:33) suggests that experienced reporters may offer working definitions, such as “News is what I say it is” or “News is what is reported in the paper” or “News is something that you know today that you didn’t yesterday”. Stephens (1980:63) partly agrees that news is the result of personal judgment, which is exclusively a product of experience. But the ability to identify important news stories needs a commonsense, knowledge of current events and basic journalism principles. In short, the above scholars agree that the definition of news may vary among journalists depending on their experience.

Boyd (2002:18) partly supports these scholars as he defines newsgathering as an art that can be gained and refined. There is no universally acknowledged definition of news. This is mainly because the concept of news by itself is subtle to understand. The dynamic character of news selection also distinguishes content and forms of news from place to place and from time to time.
Strentz (1989:61) underscores the dynamic character of news when he observes “….Definitions do change. Today’s news definition of prominence differs from now to thirty years ago; conflicts as news value differ from the definition of ten or fifteen years ago”.

Manning (2001:61) offers a different view from Strentz, despite cultural and social disparities in different parts of the world; newsrooms share common news favorites that mainly focus on sex, crime, and law. Gans (2004:78) on his part broadly categorizes the news selection into four theories. The first is, journalist-centered showing that a journalist has a prominent role in the newsgathering and selection process. The responsibility of selecting and gathering news stories rests with journalists.

On this regard Sigal, (cited in Schudson 2004:134) further explains that the content and presentation of news depend on the will and interest of the stakeholders: news sources, reporters, editors and others, who in one way or another, influence news content. “News is not what happens, but what someone says has happened or will happen”. (Ibid: 134)

Gans’s second theory (2004:78) focuses on the role of news organization in the news selection process. The organization-centered theory highlights the power of news organizations in selecting and shaping news stories. Manning (2001:214) advances this theory saying that journalists in one way or another should conform to the rules and values of the news organizations that employ them. Thus, he says, these regulations of the media institution have a greater importance in setting the media agenda. Manning’s idea contradicts the previous approaches, which say that journalists are the most important group in setting news agendas.

The third theory that Gans discusses (2004:79) is event-centered or the so-called “Mirror theory”. The theory takes events as an important factor on the news selection and gathering. The theory however, has been weakening weaken since early 1960’s.
To challenge this theory, Schudson (2004:330) says news is not a mirror of reality. Instead he says, news only represents of the world and all representations are selective. According to him, some human beings must do the selecting while other people make decision about what to present as news and how to present it.

Gans’s fourth theory emphasizes other factors which are outside of the news media. Economical, political, technological, and other factors could have a great importance in affecting the news selecting and gathering processes. To support this, Ramaparasad and Kelly (2003:78) cite Rampal and Aggarawala who show how political factors affect news selection process, as most news items praise the positive features of leaders. It is apparent that under such circumstances, television stations in developing countries may give a lot of news coverage to issues that enable the leaders to stay in power.

2.2 The Role of Journalist as Agenda Setter

Cohen cited by Manning (2001:212) says that the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it stunningly successful much of the time in telling people what to think about.

He highlighted the power of media as effective in creating public agenda but mostly ineffective in directing the public what to decide. Manning (2001:214) emphasizes the power of media on bringing a particular theme of issue up hierarchy of public concern.

River (1991:154) Schudson (2004:134) concentrate on the power of media in shaping public understanding of government. They say the public knowledge of government does not depends on observations and experience rather on the media agenda. Manning (2001:213) agrees that media have no power to override experience but news media plays an active, rather than reflective role in ordering issues of public concern.

Galtung and Ruge cited by Manning (2001) gives additional insight to the media agenda setting process as they metaphorically pinpoint the existence of deliberate agenda-setting, among media.
If all potential news events that occur in the world are understood as radio signal then news organization can be regarded as radio receivers that are turned to particular frequencies. (161)

Like other scholars, Galtung and Ruge, underscore the power of media to set public agendas. However they also want to pinpoint that agenda depends on the concern and interest of media institutions. In the other word the content of media agendas are designed and delivered to the public depending on the interest of stakeholders who have directly or indirectly have a power in the media.

Other media scholars give much of the authority to set media agenda to external factors mainly for the news sources. Gandy, Jr. cited by Protess and McCombs (1991:261) highlights the importance of stakeholders in shaping agenda while he disregards the overemphasizing of researches on media impact on the public’s agenda. He challenges researchers to go “beyond agenda-setting” by examining how media content is shaped by powerful societal forces. Gandy focuses on the use of “information subsidies” by interest groups and bureaucracies to influence journalistic priorities and work routines.

Berkowitz (1997:53) however, considers news as a representation of reporter’s expert judgment and personal motivation seemingly supports Gans’s first theory (2004) - journalist centered approach. Protess and McCombs (1991:211) also say that individuals decide the important news agenda presented to public. The individuals, according to them, are stakeholders, who actively participate in news gathering and reporting, specifically reporters and editors.

In contrary with this however they put exception in the case of war famine and events occurred abroad. They give instance about issues viable to controversies unless technical or “expert” opinion is given: we are less able to step out side the interpretive frame work offered by the news media (Ibid: 212)
Schrumm (1964:85) in his part however, asserts that reporters are one of the gatekeepers and agenda setter as they have a power to decide on facts should be passed along what to write, what to shape and color and importance to give the event.

2.3 The Role of Journalist as gate keeper

White D.M cited by Campbell (2004:109) is the first media scholar to test Lewin’s theory “gate keeping” in the news selection process. White’s research emphasizes an editor named Mr. ‘gate’. The research proved that news selection could be highly influenced by journalists’ subjective value judgment shaped by personal experience.

White explains (cited in Campbell 2004:109) “Mr. Gate” is a fair representation of his class that in his position as "gatekeepers” the newspaper editor sees to it consciously or unconsciously that the community shall receive the facts that the journalist representative of his culture believe to be true. Jay,(1981) however, says that, not only the interest and subjective feeling of the journalist is the driving force to select the news but also organizational policy plays a significant role to shape the news selection process. “The crucial decision as the definition of news What will and what will not be covered are made not by the journalist on the spot but by executives of the news organization”(119).

Jay compares media with a roulette wheel mounted on a tilted table favoring some number over other number no matter how fair the croupier might be. A news organization tilted in a certain direction because of its structure will also tend to favor certain types of stories over others (1981:125).

The two scholars opposed at one point: White argues that media information mainly shaped by journalists’ subjective value judgments to set the news agenda while Jay reject white’s opinion and give authority of news selection and presentation to the executives of the media.

Manning (2001:52) supports Jay(1981) by defining news organizations as “functioning bureaucracies of factories with a given ‘input’ and ‘output’ with organizational rhythm
and insatiable for fresh raw material of information, and staffed by personnel trained or
socialized to work to standardized rules and practices”.

Jay also accepts a role for journalist to exercise their autonomy, though, according to
Manning, rules and requirements of the media organization are still far more important in
news selection and presentation.

Against the perspective of Manning and Jay, Garrison (1992:38) fully hands over the
Authority for news selection to “gatekeepers” or journalists saying that a story should
have the gatekeepers’ approval to pass through the gate before it is screened or published.
Whenever questioned who Journalists or media executives, are more important in news
selection and presentation. However, as it was indicated above, areas exist where one
have power over the other.

2.4 News sources and Media Access

2.4.1 Building Positive Image

Schudson (2004:134) defines sources as the dark secret of the power of the press, with
sources exercising much of media’s power by the information they provide. Sources he
says are influential bodies that stand arms length from the media but often stretch their
hands to gain hold of a given agenda. To Gans (2004:117) Journalists see people mainly
as potential sources, but sources see themselves as people with a chance to provide
information that promotes their interest, to publicize their idea, or in some cases, just to
get their name and faces into the news. For him sources often try to gain advantage
through the information they posses, by trying to maintain the upper hand over journalist
and manipulate the media to uphold their interest. Cited in Campbell (2004:80) Gans
(1979) says that journalist and sources are “in a tug of war” as sources always attempt to
manipulate the news, putting the best light on them selves, while journalists search out
information they want.

Although Gans (2004) did not try to show who would be the winner of the “war”
Manning (2001:51) says sources often conclude that they can win the war by taking the
upper hand easily cultivates good relations with reporters. This, according to Manning, is because public relation units, in government, large corporations and major non-profit organizations, are staffed by people who have experience in journalism profession.

According to Manning (2001:137) sources are eager to access the media to deliver their agenda to the government, expecting that the government will react by taking their agenda seriously. Business organizations may also use media to undermine or weaken internal or external business rivals. The same is true to non-profit institutions such as NGOs. All follow similar patterns not to undermine business rivals but to show the extent of their achievements to the general public and to target audiences such as donors or government officials.

2.4.2 Getting Publicity

Political institutions, profit making and nonprofit making organizations and other segments of society demand access to media, the extent depending on what they want to achieve.

For Gans (2004:117) the news media is one of the most preferred outlets. Sources benefit from widespread and legitimate publicity that the news media supply and they need the news media to carry out their duties. According to Gans getting news coverage is more useful than getting media advertising because news is more credible to the public. But there are reasons why public agencies, non-profit organizations and individuals depend on news media to publicize their agenda. According Gans (2004:118) many of these organizations are not allowed to advertise or cannot afford the cost of advertising.

According to Gans (2004) newscasts are preferable outlet to sources to reach the public because of strong credibility that news have among the public. Furthermore no payment required to get news coverage. Some institutions such as NGOs may not be allowed to advertise because they are engaged in non-profit activities. Hence news may consider the safest and most effective gateway to the public.
2.5 Ethical considerations in the News Selection process

2.5.1 Journalists and ethical concern

Kruger (2004) explains that journalism like any other profession is exposed to ethical challenges.

> There are all instances in which we have no difficulty identifying the conflict of interest that undermines the independence and integrity of the person involved. Concern about these issues has grown in all areas of public life. Wherever public interest is at stake, the standards of expected behavior are becoming higher. Journalism is no exception. (94)

In day-to-day operations journalists directly or indirectly encounter ethical challenges that may affect their independence. In this regard media institutions often set ethical principles and codes of conduct to protect journalists’ professional integrity.

“Ethics has been considered as a system of rules used to restrict what journalists do in reporting about their communities” Garrison (1992:288). But William, cited by Sisson (2006) says mere presence of ethical policies and ethical guidelines is not sufficient, unless journalists consciously make personal judgments to tackle the ethical questions.

> ....Being ethical is a bottom line of anything. Some ethical beliefs are personal and there are some that are shared. But I would be lying if I said I had a plastic card on which they all are written. But then if everyone is just following corporate rule book. Then ethics would mean nothing. You have to ask yourself if you can sleep at night, then they mean everything. (10-11)

Black and Barney cited in Garrison (1992) say journalists should be free to decide ethical matters with no interference from media organization.
Rather than acting like finger wagging scolds with pursed lips constantly chiding, “No, no, no!” whenever they encounter a journalist about to exercise news judgment ethicist and media critics - and journalist – are encouraged to look at the decision-making process as a more positive enterprise based on a moral obligation to positively contribute to an informed populace (288).

On such occasions journalists could be sandwiched between two contradictory self-interests: to take advantage of situations for professional or personal gain on one hand, and to respect and follow ethical rules but lose benefit. These are common questions often raised in journalists’ daily routine, but have to be answered cautiously. To this regard Jay (1991:296) says “As moral agents we are all accountable for our action and should not be blamed for our ethical lapses”.

2.5.2 Pressure of News Sources

In many developing nations limited financial capacity often keeps media from covering out-of-town events. This is true in most of the government as well as private media institutions in Ethiopia.

Such problems, of course are not confined Ethiopia but apply everywhere similar financial problems exist. Schudson (2004:143) refers China where reporters’ Salaries are small and where news sources routinely pay for journalist travel hotel and meals when they report out-of-town events. (This is called “three-warranty reporting).

The assumption is, of course, that such freebies adversely affect journalistic independence and affect free and fair information to the public.

As previously indicated, journalists should be willing to follow the ethical principle code of media institutions. Question arises when a journalist is sandwiched between personal greed and professional standards. As Ronning (2002:100) notes personal considerations
start for a journalist where elements within a moral system conflict and when a person is called upon to choose between alternatives.

Journalists could be unable to do their tasks properly if they begin to enjoy fringe benefits-freebies. As Maynex says

*Freebies, perk and privileges have become a serious ethical problem when you find yourself giving a second thought to calling certain sources that has been especially generous or being very careful about how a certain story is written in an effort not to offend someone you like* (1996:400).

Wilson (1996:168) cited by Keeble notes, however, that journalists should not lose their critical faculties when cash is tossed their way.

*Much of the time it is harmless. Some of the time it fails the public because editorial scrutiny is relaxed. The proper journalistic stance is that, whatever facilities are provided, they will be declared, no condition will be accepted, no editorial favor granted and the nature of the coverage decided independently* (2001:42).

Wilson considered material assistance offered by the news source as insignificant to influence the subjective judgment of journalists. Perhaps he seems to agree with the idea that it is a reporter who may or may not abide with the ethics of journalism profession. But it may not be easy to disregard the extent of pressure that source could create if they once began to provide material or financial assistance to journalists.

Wilson cited by Keeble (2001:213) emphasize the importance of balanced treatment of issues to carry program making and newspaper reporting in order to maintain audience credibility. For Keeble, a journalist will achieve this by detaching himself from the influence of any news sources and thus acting independently.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the method

As stated in chapter One, this study mainly focuses on the agenda setting and gate-keeping role of ETV’s Amharic news room and how their journalists select and present news in general and NGOs news, in particular. The study also tries to analyze ethical breaches, which often occur as NGOs pay, to news reporters for access to ETV coverage.

The researcher uses qualitative and quantitative methods to carry out the study. Concerning using different methods, Babbie (1979:110) argues that each method has weaknesses and strengths. So, he suggests, a research design should bring more than one research method.

Content analysis was used to measure the frequency, duration priority and content of news stories the 8 p.m. Amharic newscast.

Content analysis, then is particularly well suited to the study of communications and to answering the classic question of communication research: “who says what, to whom, how, and with what effect?” as well as to the more recently added “why?” as mode of observation, content analysis requires a considered handling of the what, and the analysis of data collected in this mode, as in others, addresses the why and with what effect. (Ibid: 135)

In addition to content analysis, in-depth interviews targeted purposefully selected members of NGO’s public relation (PR) departments and ETV news editors and reporters. In-depth interview questionnaires were designed to reach each category of sampled unit.

In qualitative research, one interviews people to understand their perspective on a scene, to retrieve experience from the past, to
In general, the study was more qualitative than quantitative as it mainly depended on analyzing and interpreting the responses of sample units: NGO PR officers, news reporters and ETV editors. The content analysis also included counting of news stories, measuring of airtime and categorizing of news content.

### 3.2 Data sources

The four categories of sources of data are:

I/ the 8 p.m. Amharic newscast (excluding foreign and sport news)

II/ in-depth interviews with ETV news reporters

III/ in-depth interviews with ETV news editors

IV/ in-depth interviews with NGO PR officers

A video recording Amharic newscast is believed to show the extent of news coverage of NGOs in the Amharic newscast and strengthen the in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were believed to show why the news coverage of NGOs was the way it was shown and was expected to reveal the role of newsroom journalists in news selection and presentation. In-depth interviews were also designed to analyze the view of ETV news editors and reporters regarding NGO news stories and gauge their reaction.

### 3.3 Sampling

The 8 p.m. Amharic newscast was recorded on video for one month, from March 15 to April 13, 2008, although three days were missed due to electricity problem. The sampling time was chosen simply to accomplish research in accordance with the overall schedule.

The researcher was interested in 8 p.m. Amharic newscast for two major reasons:
I/ Amharic newscast take more airtime and cover many issues than other local languages newscasts such as Tigrigna, Oromiffa, and Somali.

II/ The 8 pm news, in prime time include more stories than other Amharic news times. This is because news stories often reach the newsroom in the afternoon and some of important news items are repeated in the night. It is also the longest newscast as it lasts 15 to 20 minutes.

In-depth interviews include three categories of sample units: ETV news reporters, ETV news editors, NGO PR officers. The first in-depth interview focused on reporters and editors to show their roles in selecting and gathering news, and how they react to their organizational requirements.

To show the relationship from the third “source” perspective, the researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with NGO’s PR officers. In general, through in-depth interviews and content analysis, the researcher attempts to show a complete picture of the extent of NGOs news coverage and the relationship with ETV.

As stated in previous chapter, more than 2,203 NGOs in work in development and promotional activities in Ethiopia. The research only focused on those engaged in development. To accomplish this, the researcher generally used purposive sampling. Deacon (1999:75) emphasizes the importance of understanding of “non-randomness” as an alternative when a researcher tries but fails to achieve true randomness and implement other types of sampling referred as “judgmental” or “purposive” sampling, which stresses the conscious and deliberate intention of those who apply the procedures.

Typical-case sampling was used to decide the sample unit of NGOs.

*With typical-case sampling, the researcher seeks to identify a case that exemplifies the key features of phenomenon being investigated. The method needs to be supported by other, more*
Two umbrella-NGOs; Jerusalem Children Community Development Organization (JeCCDO) and Action Aid from local and International NGOs were selected. The two NGOs which undertake various development activities throughout the country were selected as samples with the assumption that they could partly represent significant number of NGOs that often get funds from them. PR officers of these NGOs were also willing to provide the necessary information, and this is believed to strengthen data obtained from other sources.

Theoretical sampling techniques were also used to identify four sample ETV news reporters and ETV editors who could tell experiences, relevant and appropriate to the study. Deacon cited in Glaser and Strauss (1967:57) notes that this method enables the researcher to deliberately seek out respondents who are most likely to aid theoretical development by extending and even confounding emerging hypotheses.

News editors are accountable for the day-to-day news gathering and selecting processes, and have full authority to set the daily news agenda. Four editors were interviewed in-depth. All editors are members of ETV’s editorial board. The researcher made extensive interview until no new ideas emerged.

3.4 Defining Categories

Bell (2001:103) says that content analysis yields meaningful evidence to answer the research questions only when categories of content are explicitly and unambiguously defined and consistently employed. Therefore, categories of the study, of which some were used as variables, were first defined.

Next, two coders were trained for three days, May 8 to 11, 2008, to code news stories recorded on video. The training time was decided based on coder’s availability and the entire research time.
Following that the reliability between the coders was also tested. With regard to testing codes, Bauer and Gaskell (2000:251) claims that testing the reliability of the codes is one of the crucial steps taken by researchers who use content analysis. Putting this fact in mind, the researcher implemented a holistic approach to test coders’ reliability between the data coded by two coders; the researcher discovered very little difference. This suggests that coder’s influence on the reliability of the recorded data is insignificant.

Concerning overlap of coverage, Van (2000:89) says that coverage is not always neat and tidy, and as a result, some simple rules need to be used in coding. Understanding this, any news that partly included NGOs was coded as a separate story referring an NGO mentioned in the story and other stakeholders cited in the story. However, the air time that the story took, calculated in seconds, was equally divided between the two stories.

Regarding the difficulty of coding, Deacon (1999:79), say that, some variables are easier than others to be applied to a coding frame. As for overcoming the difficulty, they also indicate that while some quantitative content analysis studies take specific words as their sampling units to explore themes of news stories, others rely on the coders to recognize certain themes or ideas in the news, and then to allocate this to predetermined categories.

In this study, however, no such difficulty occurred as the study tries to focus only on number of stories, airtime and content types, which were easily codified. The coders managed to code all the recorded news stories easily and effectively.

**Definitions of categories used in the study:**

I/ Content type refers to the story’s main; E.g. politics, economy etc.

II/ Airtime of story refers to the length of time, measured in seconds that the story takes during the newscast.

III/ Priority of story refers to how news stories are ordered depending on their importance, during the newscast, E.g., the most important one comes first.

IV/ Number of news stories refers to the number of news stories broadcast about NGOs.
3.5 Data Processing and Presentation

As indicated, information was gathered through qualitative and quantitative methods and presented in two distinct ways. Quantitative data obtained by content analysis presented with coding frames as headings. Qualitative data, obtained mainly from three groups of sources through in-depth interview were organized under different topics.

After the data were collected, statistical tools were identified and used to measure and analyze news converge of NGOs under content analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), more specifically, descriptive statistical techniques such as mean medium and mode-were used.

In general, this chapter shows the research methods designed and followed in subsequent chapters. This has been done in accordance with the hypothesis, research questions and research objective outlined in the first chapter. This chapter has also based itself on theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review chapter. Above all it has laid the foundation, presentation and analysis of data in the chapter four.
Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, data obtained using content analysis and in-depth interview are presented, analyzed and interpreted. This is largely completed in line with the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter two. Integrated with the previous three Chapters, chapter 4 provides a solid foundation for Chapter five.

As stated previously chapter, this chapter presents data two ways. The content analyses part, addressed findings observed in evening 8 p.m. newscast of Amharic news stories. In general, this part explores the news coverage of NGOs in the sample time. More specifically, under this section, news stories of NGOs are analyzed using such variables as: number of stories, airtime, content category and owner of news stories. The second part dealt with the analysis of responses obtained through in-depth interviews. These were conducted with purposely selected newsroom editors, reporters and NGO PR officers.

The analysis under this section is believed to answer partly the why and how of news coverage of NGOs in evening Amharic newscast is the way it was discovered using content analysis. In a nut shell, three tables outline the findings of content analysis. Responses obtained through the in-depth interviews presented unanswered questions rose in the content analysis.

4.2 ETV’s Editorial Policy and News Selection Criteria

In addition to subjective criteria used by ‘gate keepers’ of ETV to select the news agenda, the government mass media editorial policy is also used as a guideline to select news.

As noted in the introduction part of the Editorial Policy, government media Editorial Policy has changed four times since modern media introduced to the nation. During the rule of Emperor Haile Sellasie, the policy shape programs to reflect the kings divine
power highly influenced by Christian dogma. Despite adjustments editorial policy during the ‘Derg’ regime, guided the media as government mouthpiece.

In 1993, two years after the down fall of The ‘Derg’ the third governmental media editorial policy was put in practice. However, the policy did not fit to the landscape of various government media. So in 1997, each government media institution designed its own editorial policy.

The ETV’s newest editorial policy has 15 chapters and elaborates issues such as: how the organization works with news sources, procedures for the organization to follow for news coverage, ethical standards that journalists shall follow, and others.

Regarding with news selection, the policy, by enlarge, sets the general framework of news selection procedures; while editors, reporters and other stakeholders may exercise their power subjectively. Still, however, the organizational requirements to select news items are far more important than that of the personal decisions of individual Journalists.

Campbell (2004:112) explains the relationship this way, “…the point here is that decision-making processes are arguably institutional in nature, with individual gatekeepers making decision based on pressure to conform to institutional requirements.”

The organizational requirements of ETV, according of its editorial policy emanates from one of the policy’s four pillars of the national ideals that emphasize on building a sustainable participatory democracy, bringing multifaceted development, solidifying the people’s democratic unity and protecting the nation’s dignity and freedom.

In line with the above requirements, ETV has set various preconditions, to select stories to the newscast. For instance, the Editorial Policy under article 4.2.7, Sub Article 4.2.7.1 explains that Government Mass media shall give news coverage to NGOs, civic associations, professional associations only if they are legally recognized.
Sub-article 4.2.7.5 of the Editorial Policy imposes additional criteria that narrow NGO’s possibility getting news coverage. Foreign Development Partners/Relief Organizations it says shall get media coverage considering the project news and beneficiaries. The decision to identify news that fulfills the aforementioned criteria is left to journalists, specifically editors. Yet ETV journalist seems gate keepers that directly or indirectly impact the media to air news agenda which magnify the success of the government.

To this regard Tumber (1999:342) gives explanation that of crucial importance to the study of news sources are the relation between the media and the exercise of political and ideological power, specifically by government who attempt to define and manage the flow of information.

4.3 Data Obtained by Content Analysis

Data obtained by content analysis are presented, analyzed and interpreted here. Jensen (1998) cited by Teshome (2005:47) says that the first way for describe a newscast is to note the total number of news stories examined in the sample.

Table (1)

Total number of news stories referring to NGOs and total number of news stories broadcast during the sample time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic News</th>
<th>Stories that referred to NGOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number</td>
<td>Total air time in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>472</td>
<td>37,760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above vividly pictures NGO news coverage on ETV. Of 472 news stories recorded in the sample time, only 16 that were not more than 3.4 percent of the total, belonged to NGOs.

The total air time given to NGOs stories is 1200 seconds, which was not more than 3.2 percent of the grand total of seconds taken by the whole stories recorded in a sample time. The percentage share of NGOs stories from the total number of news, which was 3.4 percent, is greater than that of the percentage share of NGO’s stories from the grand total sum of seconds which was only 3.2 percent. This suggests that NGOs were not only given less chance to get on air but also offered shorter amount of broadcast time. For instance news stories (37,760 divided by 472) average 80 seconds. However the average duration of NGOs news, was 75 seconds or 5 seconds shorter.

**Table (2)**

**The amount of news Vs Characters cited in news stories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content type</th>
<th>Sum and % of total sum</th>
<th>News owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News owner</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Sum 103</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% total sum</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Sum 172</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% total sum</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Sum 10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% total sum</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>Sum 4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% total sum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>% total sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in table (2) Economic news stories took the biggest share, 36.4 percent while science and technology took the least in 0.85 percent. The economy news mainly includes investment, infrastructure and finance. To this regard the figure clearly indicates that the station gave much emphasis to Economic issues. Next to Economy, politics and Agriculture took the second and third place with 21.8 and 20.8 percent respectively. The figure offers a clear indication that the station aims to stimulate and even intensify development activities.

Though important economic partners, NGOs, receive minimal news coverage despite their significant contribution in the economy. One governmental daily newspaper *The Ethiopian Herald* editions 12 July 2008, reported the parliaments, the 2008/09 national budget. Of 54.2 billion birr, 69 percent would be collected from taxes while the rest 31 percent was expected to be fulfilled with foreign aid and loan which, mainly channeled
through local as well as international NGOs. Hence, it could be easy to guess how NGOs are important in the country’s economy.

The government took the lion’s share of the total news stories possessing 66.7 percent of the total number of the news stories. The same is true in Economy news as the government possessed 61.6 percent while the individuals, business associations and others took the rest 33.7 percent of the total economic news. Perhaps the result indicates that the station focused on setting the agenda of the government positively.

Table (3)
The first two news stories in 8p.m. newscast recorded in a sample time
Vs characters cited in the news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Type</th>
<th>Sum and % of total Sum</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Sum and % total sum</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most often, a few news stories are flashed at the beginning of the newscast. By doing this, the station indicates the important news agenda of the day. Putting this under consideration 54 news stories were selected, during the 27 days of the recoding period.

On such cases Griffin (396:2006) indicates that Prominence in the television news format is defined by placement as one of the first three news items or any discussion lasts over 45 seconds.

Based on the data, therefore, 98.1 percent of the first two stories collected during the sample cited the government, while NGOs were cited only in the rest of 1.9 percent. As it is indicated on the table, 72.2 percent of prior news stories, dealt with politics. The result indicates that though it gave priority to political news involved by senior officials the station gave much of its newscast time to economic issues. As Kaniss notes,

> Even more important, news coverage carries with it greater legitimacy that advertising and consequently may play a stronger role in creating positive image for an official (1991:161).

### 4.4 An Overview of duties and responsibilities of News Editors and Reporters

There are six Editors in ETV Amharic newsroom. One of them is representative head of the news department. He supervises all news departments: Tigrinya, Oromiffa, Somali, English and Amharic. He also has a mandate to suggest on the content and number of news stories that should be broadcast in each news department.

After making in-depth interviews to Editors, the writer of this research understood that News Editors have two major duties: I/ they Edit news II/ they give direction to reporter
to enable them produce news based on the organizational requirements. The responsibility could be double when they become duty editors once or twice a week. A duty editor has an authority to decide on the number and content of the news that should be delivered to editorial meeting. On such a condition, besides the aforementioned duties, the duty editor gives order to news stories depending on their importance before the newscast. The editor has also a power to reject the news stories.

Furthermore, all editors were members of the Editorial committee, which always gathers every day at 8 p.m. for not more than 30 minutes. The editorial committee decides the number and content of news stories that should be aired in the newscast. The editorial chaired by the representative head of newsroom department who was referred as E (3) in the analysis of in-depth interview. Hence, it is clear that news room editors have enormous power to decide the daily agenda of newscast.

News reporters were the other stakeholders with significant contribution in the newsgathering and selecting process. There were 33 news reporters in ETV newsroom who mainly engaged with news reporting. Sometimes, however, they are responsible to receive news stories from news agencies and to make preliminary editing before they deliver them to editors.

Editors decide where a reporter should go and makes a news stories in line with organizational requirements. However, in some occasions, a reporter has a power to make project news. A reporter should provide the project news plan to an editor. The editor may decide by himself or present it to the editorial committee.

As White’s experiment, Personal experience is one of the most important factors that affect Editors individual decision. In case of ETV, the availability of the resources; camera, transportation facility were also factors which affect decisions of editors.
4.5 Responses Obtained from NGO’s PR Officers, News Reporters and Editors

4.5.1 Editors reflection on the extent of NGOs news coverage

All the editors witnessed that political news, which often dealt with senior officials, were given priority in the news order. This was resulted from the assumption that these news stories entirely represent the whole nation. For example, editors cited the importance of the prime minister quarterly performance report to parliament.

According to E (1) indicated that there were also news stories about which editors did not have any idea where they were from, but were ordered by top management to prioritize the stories during broadcast. The response of the editors is one instance which vividly shows government interference in deciding the content and type of news. Most often, Economic issues come next to political news, which can also be referred as protocol news. However, the amount of investment and number of beneficiaries of the project matter to decide the order of the news.

E (3), on the other hand, explained that there was no clear line to decide the amount of investment that should be covered. But decision would be made depending on the actual reality on the ground. For instance, he said, it may be nothing if three star hotels were built in Addis or Oromiya region, but it could be newsworthy if it is in Benishangul, one of the most backward regions in Ethiopia. He further said, “If we received the same kinds of investment news from two or three regions and if we have to choose one of the news items, then we directly compare the amount of money invested in the project and the number of people who get benefit from it.”

Furthermore, E (1) confirmed that there were also occasions when the editors gave priority to governmental development projects which by any of the above criteria couldn’t be regarded as newsworthy when compared with those which were carried out by NGOs. “I personally believe that it was wrong to reject news stories which, in terms of investment and number of beneficiaries were far more newsworthy, considering only the reason that these news were from NGOs.”

42
The answer given by E (1) indicates that the editors might intentionally marginalize other development news stories that were thought to undermine government development news stories before the public.

E (3) on the other hand, explained that ETV used much similar criteria as any other news stories, to value the news worthiness of NGO’s news stories. He said that If NGOs clearly states the amount of money invested on the project and number of beneficiaries of the project; it could be easy for editors to decide on it. But in most case editors have doubt on the fact stated in invitation or on press release.

Responses also indicated that such decisions significantly modified by editors’ personal judgments although all of them still give priority to news stories attended by senior officials. Vivian (2003:266) supports such reality. He considers gatekeepers as invisible to the audience yet working behind the scenes and making crucial decisions in near anonymity on how the world will be portrayed in the newscast and the next morning news paper.

Due to the fact that editors have immense power to decide on the news stories, it was important to assess the general overview of newsroom journalist about NGOs and their contribution. To this regard all three respondents except E (2) expressed their belief that although NGOs spend much of their fund on managerial cost, they also contribute a lot to the countries development.

Against this E (2) considered NGOs as corrupted. “I haven’t encouraged reporters to make their project news on NGOs; there were a lot of uncovered burning issues.”

The above responses indicate that at least three of the four respondent editors believe that NGOs contribute a lot to the country’s development. However, all of them expressed their doubt that there could be corruption out there.
Putting the fact under consideration, the informants were asked if there were NGOs which used to get repeated news coverage in ETV Amharic news cast.

E (1) (2) (4) accepted that some of the NGOs repeatedly get news coverage. They referred Menschen fur Menschen, as an example. They put forward one of their reasons that the founder of the NGO, has got great recognitions from the government. This according them is proved when the premier visited one of the project sites of Menschen fur Menschen. Furthermore, the response given by the respondents gave a clue that the decision of journalists were shaped by government’s interest.

E (1) gave further explanation that there was unofficial demarcation among NGOs; those who were with government and those who were not. But he didn’t provide what criteria put under consideration to put NGOs on such categories. According to E(1) therefore those NGOs which are thought to have positive relation with government would get much better news coverage than the rest of NGOs.

E (2) indicated that it is hard for editors to keep reporter for news event which are attended by senior official, due to the fact that the management could take punitive measures. The presence of government officials was important to get news coverage. Knowing this fact therefore NGOs used to cite the name of senior officials on their invitations or press releases. Unless you managed to invite senior officials on your news event you hardly get air time.

E (2)’s explanation also lead us to understand how NGOs were vigilantly searching to win the eyes of ETV editors putting the name of senior officials on their invitations whether they attend on the event or not. Furthermore, it could be a sign of frustration on the side of NGOs, that they couldn’t get news coverage unless they attach themselves with senior officials.
4.5.2 Editors’ reflections about ethical issues in relation between reporters and NGOs

All the informant editors said that there is no favorable environment to reporters to carry out their project. The situation is worse if a reporter plans to make project news on NGOs. The informants regarded resource problems, most importantly-camera and transportation facility- as major reasons that discourage reporters not to deal with project news. However, editors also have an influence over reporters day-to-day news reporting.

E (1) (4) said that a reporter proposed to make a project news on NGOs, there is definitely a plan to get money. They believe that priorities should be given to social issues that were uncovered due to resource and time constraints. E (3), however, denied that most of reporters weren’t willing to propose project news. “Personally I encourage a reporter to plans project news on NGOs as they managed to provide convincing evidences on their news story. A reporter has to include government officials’ approval about the work done, accompany with the beneficiaries’ witness in a reporting.

E (2) on the other hand said that he has not considered as a plan of making money if a reporter would propose to make news on NGOs with personal motivation. For him some NGOs were truly working on development. He cited Life foundation as an example, which recently announces to build cancer referral hospital in Sheno town. For him this was a noble idea. “If a reporter plan to make project news on such NGOs, I didn’t think that it was bad. But it is wrong to plan on NGOs working on small community development projects”.

However, all of them believe that there could be possibilities when NGOs provide illegal offering to reporters to get positive coverage of the media.

Witness 1:

Told by E (1)

A year ago, ETV sent a reporter and two camera men to Eastern Harar to cover the developmental activities carried out by one of the local NGOs. All of them took their
field allowance from ETV. They stayed on the field for not more than a week. When they finished their work a reporter was given 700 birr and was told to share it with the two camera men. But the reporter kept all the money for himself thinking that his colleges wouldn’t know about it. However, the two camera operators told to E TV management when they return back about the money that the reporter had received. And the management took punitive measure on the reporter not for his greediness to share with his colleagues but for the reason that he received illegal money from the news source. Such issues seldom uncovered if there is a disagreement among the crewmembers.

The above witness made by E (1) indicates trends among reporters to receive additional payments from NGOs. The story could also tell us that the management has less opportunity to identify such misconduct as the agreement was made in complete secrecy.

The Editorial Policy, in chapter 6 article 8 indicates that “Government Media journalists shall not receive money or any other benefits, from news sources”. Against with its own editorial policy, however, the station has allowed to reporters to receive their payments from NGOs when there were field events. According to all informants editors except E (2), ETV often allow to reporters to receive allowance payment from NGOs.

E (4) (1) explained about such cases that reporters often couldn’t collect their allowance fee on weekends. If a reporter has to go our for fields on there is no enough time to process his field allowance from ETV due to the fact that there is long bureaucratic process.

4.5.3 Reporters’ reflection on ethical matters they encounter while working with NGOs

R (2) and R (4) regarded the discouraging responses they used to get from their editors, as an important reason, when they were asked why they were hesitant to make project news on NGOs. “Editors may think that we planned to make money” they responded.
Hence, according to half of the respondents, editors suspect reporters with receiving of money from NGOs.

R (2) regarded editors as gatekeepers who are influenced by their subjective experience. He said that some times editors may reject a project news plan, claiming that it seems promotion. But some other time, some other reporters may get acceptance to make project news, which by any criteria could be considered as promotion. “You can guess how personal decision matters in the overall newsgathering and selecting process” he said. According to R (2) subjective criteria have significant share to decide what news should come on the screen and other wise.

R (1) on the other hand didn’t accept the reason given by the previous informants. “I have made a lot of project news on NGOs” None of my editors rejected my proposal. The only thing that you have to do was to convince your editor. Based on the responses of R (1) hence we can understand that reporters have a space to set the news agenda as long as they work in line with the organizational requirements and manage to convince their editors.

R (2) negated R (4) saying that editors consider their relations with a reporter before they approved the project news plan of a reporter. R (3) On the other hand, argued that the problem emanates from the reporters themselves. “I think we were bit lazy” he said. Reporters wanted to avoid tiresome duties. “Most of us preferred news stories that are easy to access. I think that was why most of our news confined in Addis” she added. Furthermore, according to R (3) it was hard to find interesting issues that could attract reporters.

Reporters are gatekeepers whose stand at the second stage, next to the news source who has to decide which facts to pass along the chain, what to write, what to shape and color and importance to give to the event. Vivian (2003:267)
A chapter 6 article 8 of the Policy restricts journalists not to receive any kinds of benefits such as accommodation, meals even small gifts. To this regard the respondents were asked whether they received any special benefits while they made news on NGOs. All of them admitted that they got benefits when working with NGOs. They mentioned T-shirt, lunch and transportation allowances as some of the usual benefits they earn in events held in the capital-Addis.

The field allowance payment made by NGOs on the other hand, was three to four times greater than that of ETV. R (2) said that he receive his allowance payment twice- from ETV and the host NGOs who invited them. Against with R (2) however, R (1) says that it could be very dangers to receive the allowance twice. Editors may communicate with the NGO, if they are suspicious of the reporter. But all reporters said that they prefer payment of NGO’s if they were asked to choose. R (2) said that NGOs often pay for reporter. “Perhaps it is because they want positive news coverage to projects that they didn’t accomplish.”

Witness 2

Told by R (2)

I heard that sometimes NGOs and business institution used to try to give a guideline how the reporter organize and write the news stories. I myself once encounter such experience from one of private business company.

At the beginning of this Ethiopian New Year, I was ordered to make news on one of biggest flour factory, a brother biscuit which is found in Adama. Before I left to Adama, my editor gave me two major areas of the news that I should focus; the factory made salary increment to its workers and mobilize its worker to the millennium transplanting tree seedling program.

When I get there, however, the owner of the factory told me to include the types of products that the factory produces in the news. At first I tried to convince him that it is
ethically wrong and impossible to do that because of editorial policy of ETV. but he refused to accept. Meanwhile one of the members of the journalist crew who was from Walta information center, begged me to say ‘ok’ to him. So I did. We received good reward for that. But I didn’t include the list of products from the news story as I knew that my editor would reject it.

R (2) may express how reporters could be faced with contradictory personal interest and professional commitments. It also indicated how they ‘systematically’ trying to address their problem, as they want to address both interest, getting money from source and obeying to the Editorial Policy.

All the Informant reporters agreed that other reporters may possibly face similar experience. However, R (3) said, that sources did not want reporters to make them false story; but to add few positive remarks on the news story.

Almost all the reporters however confirmed that they haven’t got full-information from NGOs. R (1) indicated that it was impossible for reporters to check out the amount of investment poured in the project and number of beneficiaries, attending only a day long workshop. Even in the field visit it is impossible to find out a source who can tell something different. You can’t have any outlet except interviewees arranged by the host NGO. R (3) on the other hand, consider deadline as a major factor that prevent reporters not to make a cross check on the facts provided by NGOs. On the other hand, R (2) argued that it is impossible to a reporter to challenge the host NGOs who paid his/her allowance payment, and which is also the only available source on the occasion.

4.5.4 Reflection of NGO’s PR officers on ETV

The two PR officers of selected NGOs JeCCDO and Action aid were interviewed to identify their organizational communication strategies and their view towards ETV news coverage.
P (1), who is from Action Aid, said his organization has an international guidelines implemented across the world. He also said that his organization gives no special emphasis to government media. But P (2), said his organization gives special emphasis to government media. According to him government media are considered as credible sources among donors. His response indicated that unlike international NGOs, local NGOs are interested on getting government media coverage. For P (2) indicated media coverage and getting donations are linked.

Both respondents complained that ETV does not give timely response when they ask for coverage. “We have to wait until few days left to the news event” P (2) said. And they may not have time to find private media as an alternative. Over two years P (2) said only twice did ETV respond properly to questions.

Witness 3
Told by P (2)
Last year we sent our media invitation to ETV to send us a reporter to the field trip held in Bahir-Dar. At first I myself went to ETV and submitted the invitation letter, to ETV record office. And we hoped that they would deliver it to the concerned body immediately as I repeatedly told them it was too urgent even to the extent we submitted the invitation a week before the day that the event took place. Two days before the event, I went to ETV to take the assigned reporter with me to Bahir-Dar. And I was told that no reporter was made ready. I can’t even know whom I should talk to. It was of course too challenging to illustrate to my boss what had happened to me. And we missed the event without the media coverage.

The two PR respondents were also asked whether they previously tried to contact journalists personally, to get on air. Both of them said yes. But, they didn’t want explain more about the amount they paid or the identity of the journalists. The response of the PR officers indicated that agreement between NGOs and journalists would be made under secret. P (2) indicated that no journalist who worked with him asked for payment.
Regarding payment for a field visit, both informants claimed that they pay reporters allowance fees and transportation costs, almost all the time they asked for the news coverage to out-of-town events. P (1) insisted that they would get no coverage if they did not pay the allowance fee of reporters and facilitate transportation. P (2) shared the opinion of P (1) saying that he could not remember a time when ETV paid reporters an allowance to cover of out-of-town news events.

It is here where the editorial policy guidelines and implementation of this guideline clearly contradict. The policy restrict the reporter from accepting any kind of benefits from news sources; on but as to P (1) and P (2) the management even refused to give news coverage to news event of NGOs, unless they pay allowances. Small gifts such as: T-shirts, pen and meals are often lunch would be provided in occasions when NGOs organized workshops, meeting or any other gathering in the city. P (1) explained small gifts were offered not only to journalists but for all participants. P (2) indicated that his organization provides small gifts such as T-shirt with a logo to promote the NGO.

In conclusion, in the chapter, a great attempt has been made to test the hypothesis and respond to the research questions set in the introductory chapter. This has largely been done on the ground of the theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review chapter and chapter three which deals about the methodology of the research. Besides, the discussion, interpretation and implications made on the data obtained using content analysis and in-depth interviews that are believed to establish bedrock for the subsequent chapter.
Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

This chapter at first discusses major findings of the study, largely in relation to the theoretical frameworks raised in chapter two-literature review and chapter four analyses of the data.

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

In the study, content analysis and self-completion questionnaire were employed to gather data in chapter four. News reporters, editors, and NGO PR officers were also interviewed. The data mainly test the hypothesis set in the introductory part chapter one. As broadly viewed, the whole attempt of the study was to test the gate keeping and agenda-setting role of newsroom journalists in news selection and presentation. The research also tried to assess whether NGOs provide offerings to journalists to get positive news coverage.

In chapter four’s content analysis, the first table showed that NGOs not only get very little news coverage, but also receive a shorter span of broadcast time. Stories about NGOs are on average five seconds shorter than other news. Table Two showed that ETV gives a lot of emphasis to economic news some 36.4 percent of all news stories, involved in economy. Paradoxically enough however, political issues took 72.2 percent of the 54 prior two news stories in table three, recorded in the 27 sample days. The result indicated that though ETV gives much of its newscast time to development issues, political news that mainly involved by senior official were prioritized during the newscast.

Fourie cited by Teshome (2006:49) argues that in the case of television, the chronology of events is important as it shows the prior agenda of a station. Hence, with the perspective of the above citations the result indicated that ETV accentuated to set political news as prior agenda.

In related issue, E (1) indicated that there were news stories, which were not known by any of the editors but aired with the direct order of the top management of the station. Such cases are an implication of direct government interference. The assignment of the
general manager of the station is also an indication of government interference, as it is the prime minister who appoints a person to the position.

One editor indicated how the government directly interferes in news selection, without even consulting editors. The above case further pushed us to reconsider that government interferences could be one of the reasons that other news stories do not air.

The role of newsroom journalist as agenda setter and gatekeeper is significantly important, beside the aforementioned external factors, to point out reasons why NGOs get lesser coverage in ETV newscast. During the in-depth interviews editors, E (4) (2), said they addressed reporters to focus on other issues rather than NGO stories. Straubhaar and Larose (2006:47) indicate that gatekeepers could squelch new ideas and suppress the news of events that others might find important. They highlighted possibilities that editors may squelch stories only by deciding not to send a camera crew to the news event. However, they, again diminish the power of editors assuming that fierce competition among media institution to get audiences, limits the power of editors over news events. The second conclusion of Straubhaar and Larose might work in a condition where various independent media outlet struggle to win the audience. However, the case of ETV is much different from their assumption for the reason that ETV is the sole TV station in the country. These therefore, make it possible for newsroom editors in ETV to kill an event, as Straubhaar and Larose stated, deciding only not to send a reporter.

Why did E (4) (2) discourage reporters to write about NGOs? Based on the response they gave, the reason embedded inside their understanding about NGOs. Both of them believed that most of NGOs were spending much of their resource on managerial expenses and invest insignificant amount of their resource on development. That was why, according to them, NGOs seriously demand media coverage to prove as if they did a lot in development through getting government media coverage that was according the editors was crucial to win the eyes of their donors.
White’s Mr. ‘Gate’ is more or less similar to the characters of ETV news editors. Editors’ subjective experience and personal biases affect the total news selection and presentation process. Due to this, only issues of government, get repeated news coverage, while other news hardly sways editors.

*The consensus that forms among editors to keep certain stories in the news while excluding others may bias the public agenda and reinforce hegemony over ideas (Ibid:47).*

The rest two respondent editors also indicated that they did not interfere in decisions of individual reporters if they get convincing evidence that a reporter has no personal interest to use his position illegally to get money. However, their responses indirectly implicated that these editors could also interfere if they believe reporters received offerings from the NGO. To this regard respondent reporter R (2) confirmed that no standardized criteria helped to value news issues rather subjective experience of editors’ matter most. Nevertheless, R (1), rejected R (2)’s view, saying editors accept reporters’ proposal with tangible evidence about the success story of the NGO.

The third reporter R (3) also blamed reporters. She said that reporters unless ordered, often avoid tire some news reporting and focus on events that takes place in Addis. This indicates that reporters can be gatekeepers as they initially can avoid out-of-town events as tiresome. The other editors further stated that NGOs often misinform the station on their invitation. Some NGOs, according to editors, overstate their accomplishment to attract media coverage. That is why ETV often put in difficulty to make timely decision to cover their event.

Besides offering and payment to journalists, NGOs use other techniques to get news coverage. Knowing that editors will not dare to reject such invitation, NGOs cite the name of senior officials on their media invitation letter, as if they will attend on the event.
To this regard E (2) said that there will be punitive consequences if an editor doesn’t send a reporter to event attended by senior officials.

Regarding offerings provided by NGOs, the two NGO public relation officers agreed that they have provided small gifts, meals and huge sum of field allowance to reporter whenever there is out-of-town - news events.

However all ETV editors claimed that ETV pays reporters allowance. But they also said that sometime NGOs pay allowances if reporter had no time get their payments from the station. P (1) explained that his organization always write confirmation on the invitation letter that they would pay reporter allowances. According to P (1) ETV may not send reporters if NGOs failed to confirm reporters’ allowance ahead of time.

Some media institutions say such offerings do not affect journalists’ impartiality. Once, New York Times wrote in an editorial “accepting Junket and boondoggles does not necessarily mean that a reporter is being bought. But it inescapably creates the appearance of being bought” Shirley Biagi (1996:333).

The reverse is true for ETV as the editorial policy of the station strictly forbidden such relation between journalist and news sources under Chapter 6 article 8 “Government media journalist shall not receive any kinds of benefit or privileges from news sources.”

Ronning (2001:104) says that such offerings have an impact on journalist independence. He argues that journalists have an ethical duty to make a cross with other sources so that they can work out to establish the truth by exposing to the public the information the other source are stand on the news issue.

It seems unthinkable for ETV reporters to follow Ronning’s advice. R (2) described how reporters would not dare to challenge host NGOs that paid their allowance and provided transportation during the field visit. He also elucidated that there was no way for reporters except to write what the host NGOs want to be published or broadcasted.
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Appendix (B)

Addis Ababa University
Graduate of Studies of school of Journalism and communication

Interview questions for public relation department members of NGOs

1- What is your status in the organization?
2- Do you have any written documents used as guideline on how to contact with government media, specifically with ETV?
3- What strategies do you often use to get ETV’s news coverage?
5- What kinds of response do you often get whenever you insist to get news coverage?
6- What other ways do you consider to get the news coverage of ETV?
7- Have you ever contacted reporters, to let them makes you news about your organization? What response have you got?
8- How often have you been successful to get news coverage via making agreement with reporters?
9- Have reporter’s insisted to get payment in return to what they did?
10- Have you ever paid ETV’s reporters field allowance in case of field news event?
11- What would you think be the result if you refused to cover reporter’s expense?
12- Do you provide small gifts such as: T-shirts, pen and other small gifts when you organize press conference?
13- Do you have any exemplary experience that you want tell regarding to the relation between you organization and ETV?
14- What do you suggest to improve the extent of news coverage of NGOs?
15- Are there any other comments that you want to forward regarding to the subject mater raised in the questioner?
Appendix (C)
Addis Ababa University
Graduate of Studies of school of Journalism and communication

Interview questions for News room Editors.

1- How long has it been since you became a newsroom editor?
2- What is the most frequent news content in Amharic newscast?
3- What response does ETV often give when NGOs insist to get news coverage?
4- What criteria do you consider to select news stories?
5- How do you evaluate the contribution of NGOs in the country’s development endeavor?
6- What are prominent news sources of ETV?
7- How does ETV get news stories of NGOs?
8- What strategies do NGOs use to get news coverage?
9- Are there exceptional NGOs that are actively contact with ETV and managed to get news coverage?
10- Does the editorial board encourage reporters to make news on NGOs? If so what content of news stories of NGOs get priorities?
11- What do you respond if a reporters ask your advice about his news project on NGOs? Do you feel that he plans to get money?
12- Are there any limitations what reporters show interest to make on NGOs?
13- What criteria do you implant to accept or reject when NGOs ask news coverage?
14- How does the station deal reporter’s field allowance on news event organized by NGO?
15- Are NGOs guaranteed to get news coverage, if they are willing to pay reporters allowance in case of field trip?
16- Do you have any exemplary experience regarding ethical concerns in relation between reporters and NGOs?
Appendix (D)

Addis Ababa University
Graduate of Studies of school of Journalism and communication

Interview questions for news reporters

1- How long has it been since you started to work for ETV?
2- How often have you made in news in a week?
3- What were the most frequent issues raised in your news stories?
4- Have you ever personally decided the content of new stories or know a reporter who did that?
5- Have you got personal invitation by one of NGOs to cover the news event or know a reporter who ahs such experience?
6- Whom, ETV or NGOs often pay your field allowance in case of our-of-town newsgathering organized by NGOs?
7- Whom do you prefer ETV or NGO to pay your allowance payment in case of out0of town new gathering? Why?
8- Have you ever been offered freebies by NGOs or heard of similar experience encountered by some other reporter?
9- Did NGO’s try to lead you how to write news related to them or so you know any other stories encountered by some other reporter?
10- Do you believe that NGO’s have got adequate news coverage?
11- How often news editors give approval to air news stories related to NGOs’?
12- What do you suggest to improve NGOs access to the Amharic news coverage?
13- Do you have any exemplary experience you encountered while you were working with NGO’s?
Appendix (E)
The approved national budget for the current fiscal year will ensure the sustainability of Ethiopia’s high economic growth for the sixth time

(The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Information Friday July 11, 2008)

We are determined to engage in a complex and painstaking task of emerging from the quagmire of poverty. The popular struggle of the Ethiopian peoples, which eradicated the previous repressive regimes, is also becoming victorious against their worst enemy, poverty. As a result of the implementation of the correct and participatory policies and strategies aimed at transforming the country’s legacy of poverty into that of development, a two-digit economic growth has been registered over the past five consecutive years. This shows that the government is succeeding in its vision of bringing the country to the level of the middle income countries in the coming two to three decades.

To fully realize this positive development and ensure the all-round benefits of the peoples, our concerted and continued efforts are called for. The House of Peoples’ Representatives has recently approved a national budget for the 2008/2009 fiscal year. In this connection, it is clear that out of the proposed 54.3 billion birr of recurrent and capital budget, including subsidies to the regions, the lion’s share is allotted to the various sector development projects such as roads, agriculture and rural development, education, health and others, which are decisive for the sustainability of our country’s economic growth.

The significant increase in the amount of budget compared to that of the preceding years is an attestation to the fact that the efforts of the government to build a reliable base of resources, through enhanced revenue collection capacity, which is scoring promising results. Sixty-nin per cent of the financial sources for the budget year is actually covered locally, which demonstrates that our country will indeed become self-reliant if the revenue collections are further enhanced.

Nonetheless, the current price hike, which is a reality at the national as well as global levels, has had its own influence, despite the rapid and sustained economic growth. In recognition of the degree of this challenge and its possible impact, the government has made tackling the phenomenon a priority agenda. Subsidizing on domestic products, lifting some duties and other policy-based regulatory measures, in addition to the temporary and permanent solutions to control the price hike are proof of the special efforts applied to overcome the current challenge.

In general, the approved budget for the current fiscal year has a significant role to play in promoting the ongoing efforts to regulate the current inflation and to reduce the high cost of living. It also makes a major contribution to the enhancement of accelerated development capable of alleviating poverty and ensuring the overall benefits of the peoples. To this effect, the government and the public must intensify their ongoing efforts.

Moreover, periodic evaluations on the expenditure of the budget should be made to make sure that it is actually used as planned and that the intended targets are met. In this regard, all sections of society, the government and other stakeholders are expected to apply maximum efforts to ensure the sustainability of the economic growth for the sixth time running, through fighting corruption and financial wastage, monitoring the economic use of budgetary and other resources, timely and proper revenue collection and increasing the capacity to generate hard currencies.