

**Addis Ababa University**  
**School of Graduate Studies**

**Challenges of Journalists in Reporting Politics: A  
Comparative Study of FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger  
FM 102.1 Radios**

**By**

**Engdawork Tadesse Feleke**

**Advisor**

**Dr. Mohammed Hassen**



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**Challenges of Journalists in Reporting Politics: *A Comparative Study***  
*of FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 Radios*

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**By**

**Engdawork Tadesse Feleke**

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By Engdawork Tadesse Feleke

Approved by the Examining Board

Dr. Gebremedhin

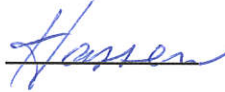
Chairman, Department Graduate Committee



Signature

Dr. Mohammed Hassen

Internal Advisor



Signature

External Examiner

Dr. Abdissa Zerai

Internal Examiner

Signature



Signature

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

**ACHPR:** African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

**ACDEG:** African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

**AFP:** Agence France Presse

**AU:** African Union

**BBC:** British Broadcasting Corporation

**CNN:** Cable News Network

**CPJ:** Committee to Protect Journalists

**CSO:** Charities and Societies

**DWET:** Dimitsi Woyane Tigray

**DPFEA:** Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa

**EBA:** Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority

**FDRE:** Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

**EFJA:** Ethiopian Free Journalists Association

**EJA:** Ethiopian Journalists Association

**EJN:** Exiled Journalists' Network

**ENA:** Ethiopian News Agency

**EPRDF:** Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

**EPLF:** Eritrean People's Liberation Front's

**ERIS:** Electoral Reform International Services

**ERTA:** Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency

**ETV:** Ethiopian Television

**FGD:** Focus Group Discussion

**FM:** Frequency Modulation

**FSS:** Forum for Social Studies

**ICCPR:** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**MOI:** Ministry of Information

**MSI:** Media Sustainability Index

**NEBE:** National Electoral Board of Ethiopia

**OGCA:** Offices of Government Communication Affairs

**RE:** Radio Ethiopia

**RSF:** Reporters sans Frontier

**SIDA:** Sweden International Development Agency

**TGE:** Transitional Government of Ethiopia

**TPLF:** Tigre People’s Liberation Front

**TV:** Television

**UDHR:** The Universal Declaration on Human Rights

**UN:** United Nations

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

**USAID:** United States Agency for International Development

**VOA:** Voice of America

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## ABSTRACT

This study is intended to identify challenges of journalists, working in government and private FM radios, in reporting political related issues. The rationale behind it is that as long as these newly coming FM radios are functioning in a country which needs more and more economic, political and social improvements; and as long as they are reporting serious political issues such as election and other; their performances and contributions to the political and social arena of the country; and the constraints faced by the journalists in reporting political issues should be studied. To this end, the study uses focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview to get data from the journalists in FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 radios and Key Informants in EBA, NEBE, EJA and EFJA. The study focuses on the views and experiences of journalists. Thematic analysis has been used to discuss and analyze the data. Verbatim transcription of verbal data, production of initial codes, identification of theme, revision of theme, naming and defining theme and producing the final report are the important steps the study follows. The findings of the study show some major constraints to the journalists in political reporting, three of which have been summarized here. One is their poor relationship with government officials and politicians. On the one hand, with some underestimation most government officials prefer 'the government journalists' than 'the private ones'. They give information to the government journalists beforehand. However, many of the opposition political party leaders and members do not like the government journalists. On the other hand, the private radio journalists are in-between; that is to say, they have moderate relation with both the government and the oppositions. Second, concerning access to government information, journalists in government media have more access than the private ones. But they themselves are facing problems of the deliberate act of delaying information by the officials and they are not eligible to report foreign relations issues directly by themselves. Whereas, the main problem for the journalists in Sheger FM 102.1 is that many of the government officials are reluctant to give them information because they are 'private radio journalists'. Distorted and biased information is also a problem for them. Third, lack of professional freedom is another constraint for the government media journalists than the private ones. The government officials intervene in the works of the journalists, especially whenever serious issues arise in the country. For which reason, they do self-censorship. But they are free in their routine reporting of issues which are not serious.

Contrary to this, the private journalists are enjoying their professional freedom. They have no any proprietor or commercial influence in their works.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In these days, in democratic countries around the world, the role of journalism is not limited to telling people what they need to know, but it is much more than that. Many scholars put its position as the fourth branch of the government, because journalism plays not only a political but a governmental role (Cook, 1998). Mass media are working with defined social and semi-official status. In Siegel's words (1996), "...they are support structures for the political and economic systems of modern states" (p. 18). Additionally, the journalists themselves in these countries "have similar legal, political, economic and cultural conditions. They enjoy formidable legal protections, have considerable access to those in power, and are supported by substantial news organizations" (Tumber, 2008, p. 106).

On the other hand, the role of media and of journalists in Africa is different. Especially in the sub-Saharan Africa the media operations are still at a fledgling stage. With threats and constraints journalists are striving to provide a platform for enhancing civil and political rights that voluntary associations do not do (Hyden, Leslie & Ogundimu, 2002).

In order to understand the various functions of journalism in these contrasting situations, we may first review what the media and political scholars have said. McNair sets out three characteristic of requirements of journalism:

**A supplier of information** requires for individuals and groups to monitor their social environs; **a resource** for, to support and often participate in public life and political debate-in liberal democratic societies particularly the discursive foundation of what Habermas (1989) famously called the **public sphere**; and a **medium** of education, enlightenment, and entertainment-what might be grouped together as its recreational or cultural functions. (as cited in Tumber, 2008:2)

McNair's requirements show us the prestigious and respected functions of journalism. He considered it as an integral part of any human interaction whether at individual or group level for the prosperity of the society. This is true in many countries of the West.

From the other point of view, Olav Stokke argued that the roles of journalism should not be necessarily all the classical ones i.e. information, education, mobilization and entertainment and combinations of such functions-rather it might depend on the situations in a given country or parts of the world.

Stokke (1971, pp. 10-11) said that in new nations, for example, media may have nation-building function. Political unity, national and social integration may be their functions. In this role the media can "provide a direct link between the government and the governed, bypassing the multitude vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal (geographical/regional) administrative structures and by organizations of various kinds in most societies". Another role of the media suggested by Stokke is development. In this function of the media he wants to indicate that the media should contribute to the development efforts of many African countries by providing information for adult education, mobilizing societies to the efforts and directing attentions to the achievements.

Although the above two optimistic views of media functions could be considered as good points of argument, it is difficult to accept the third option offered by Stokke as the stand of most governments in Africa and elsewhere. He points out that media should serve as the instruments of the governments to mould the public opinion with regard to values and policies (Ibid).

Unlike these two authors, Donsbach and Patterson (as cited in Tumber, 2008) have tried to identify all sorts of media and of journalists' functions and have grouped it into two dimensions in order to describe the cross national variations. According to Donsbach and Patterson, there are a number of roles of journalists that have been described by many authors- "neutral" and "participant"; "interpreter", "disseminator" and "adversary" for American journalists; "watchdog" and "educator" for Swedish journalists; "bloodhounds" for British and "missionaries" for German journalists; and others include "gatekeeper" and "advocate".

The two dimensions of Donsbach and Patterson are: a passive-active dimension that bases on the journalists' autonomy as a political actor; and a neutral-advocate dimension that bases on the journalists positioning as a political actor:

The passive journalist is the one who act as the instrument of actors outside the news systems, such as government officials, party leaders, interest group advocates, or others... In contrast, the active journalist is one who is more fully a participant in his or her own right, actively shaping, interpreting or investigating political subjects...The neutral journalist is one who does not take sides in political debate, except for a preference for good (clean, honest) government as opposed to bad (corrupt, incompetent) government... In contrast, the advocate journalist takes sides and does so in a consistent, substantial and aggressive way. These sides do not have to be those of the opposing political parties. [It may be other issues]. (Ibid, p. 117)

The above discussion helps us to draw the situations in which media or journalists play their roles in a given country. Whatever role, passive or active or neutral or advocate media/journalists have, there is a common understanding that they have invaluable power that should not be neglected.

Besides, even though there is an asymmetric balance of relationship between politicians and media practitioners, journalists are playing greater role in today's political arena. Hyden et al. (2002), said "communications [media or journalists] may shape democratization but the causal link also goes the other way. For example the extent to which political actors allow freedom of expression will influence the behavior of media personnel" (p. 1).

With regard to the role of media in politics debate has continued, according to McNair (2000). He said that there is a common understanding between the academic community and practitioners of political communication that "journalists and their media organizations stand not merely as reporters and analysts, but as participants in, and producers of what we all-citizens, politicians and their communication advisors and journalists- experience as political reality" ( p. X).

Because of this relationship, politics has become the staple food of journalistic reporting in which media organizations invest a lot of resources. But as it is discussed above, the conditions and constraints under which journalists are doing their jobs matters. "...journalists in a liberal democracy" said McNair (2000), "are called upon to stand between political actors and the public, mediating between the two groups in ways which are, overall, intended to be beneficial for the political process" (p. 105). In other parts of the world, like Africa, however, the journalists' work heavily depends on other external factors. Government is one of the key factors. "How does the government shape the way politics is covered by the mass media?" is pivotal in study of journalism and politics, according to John Street (2001, p. 103).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Media in Ethiopia has in fact had a long history in its presence, but it has contributed little to the improvements of the political culture of the country. When we look at its role beginning from Menelik II to the current regime, there are no basic changes. Its instrumental role to the government has continued. That is, journalists have always been the mouthpiece of the rulers. It was during the last hours of Haile Selassie's regime and the early days of the military government that the print media was a forum for the anti-government opposition movement. During which national issues such as democracy, form of government, and land tenure were subjects of open discussion between various opposing forces in the government media. The recent history also shows that even if the current regime allows the private print media to function in the country legally, there are many practical problems for the journalists (Shimels,<sup>1</sup> 2000 & Mairegu, 1995).

Until the 2005 parliamentary election, journalists in print media were relatively free. Newspapers and magazines had been publishing news stories that criticize the government; they had reflected their criticisms through cartoons and jokes and even through their editorials; and opposition parties have counter attacked the ruling government through these media. As a result the media have been usually clashing with the government, Mairegu (2003). However, after the 2005 parliamentary election, things have changed. Many newspapers and magazines have been closed.

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<sup>1</sup> Names of Ethiopian authors are conventionally cited within a text in first name

The government has begun crackdown on journalists. In his address to the First Press Freedom Forum on Ethiopia, Martin Hill, Horn of Africa Researcher, Amnesty International (AI)<sup>2</sup>, regretted that:

The situation is not getting better in Ethiopia despite the supposed protection that the constitution provides for journalists... the new press laws are not laws for press freedom, but rather against press freedom. Changes to the criminal code have also been introduced to make it more difficult for people like Kifle [Former President of the EFJA living in exile in Uganda at that time] and his association to document arrests of journalists for carrying out their legitimate functions (as cited in Ibrahim Seaga 2006, p. 11).

Like many African countries, in Ethiopia, radio and television have been controlled by government since their introduction during Haile Selassie I. Most African governments have recognized that newspapers are the media for the small educated urban elite; while radio is considered as the primary vehicle for reaching the vast majority living in rural areas; hence it is called ‘the people’s medium’. As a result, like their colonial predecessors, most African governments “treat radio as the backbone in their strategy to secure support from the people, especially those in the rural areas” (Hyden et al., 2002, p. 93). Because of this and other reasons in its longer history in Africa, radio has rarely contributed to the democratic process of the continent.

There are now some expansions in community and private FM radios in Ethiopia. Some private broadcasters and regional governments have been licensed for community and FM radios. Despite this expansion, however, the commercial or private FM radios are very few in number and are giving services only around the capital city of the country. Exceptionally, in 2009, radio Fana has expanded its FM transmission to six major towns of the country.

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<sup>2</sup> Spoke to The Open Forum on Ethiopia 2006 was the first of the Press Freedom Forum Series of events organized by the Exiled Journalists’ Network (EJN) in association with sister organizations

Oftentimes, these FM radios are focusing on entertainment. But they also cover serious issues such as election, good governance, corruption and the like. For instance, all FM radios have been actively involved in the 2010 national and regional elections. They have allocated air time for political parties and report the election process by themselves. Nevertheless, as newly coming FM radios they are being considered by many other people as having only entertainment function.

However, it has to be noticed that the role of FM radios in Africa has been radically changed; and FM radio stations are becoming basic for the democratization process of many countries in the continent since the 1990s. The 1990s is the period in which the wind of changes affected many African countries including Ethiopia. Article 19 (2003), in its discussion of broadcasting policy and practice in Africa particularly of the private FM radios, states that:

In the recent democratization processes of the 1990s privately owned FM radio stations, where they have been allowed, have been cited as an important factor in giving the opposition a platform during elections and in ensuring that elections are conducted freely and fairly. In Uganda, Mali and Ghana talk shows and discussions have been influential in providing a forum for robust political debates. Equally control of broadcasting has been cited as an impediment to democratization or pluralist politics. It has also been noted that FM radio stations have tended to be dominated by popular western music rather than local music or programs in local languages. (p. 9)

This is not the case in Ethiopia. The contribution of FM radios to the political reforms and democratization process of the country is not well studied. Little research has been done on FM radios that focus on issues related with music censorship, human trafficking and the contribution of private FM radios to social development in the country. Many other focus on the national radio and television stations and community radios.

The political conditions and constraints under which journalists in both the governmental-FM Addis 97.1 and private Sheger 102.1 FM radios are doing their reporting, especially that of

political issues, is the main concern of this study. In other words, the study tries to find out challenges of journalists, both in FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger 102.1, in reporting political issues<sup>3</sup> and makes a comparison. The justification for the need of such a study is that, as long as these newly coming FM radios are functioning in a country which needs more and more economic, political and social improvements; and as long as they are reporting serious political issues such as election and other, their performances and contributions to the political and social arena of the country and the constraints faced by the journalists in reporting politics should be properly understood.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to identify challenges of journalists in reporting politics in both government and private FM radios: FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 and make comparison.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

**Some of the specific objectives are:**

- Assessing the news making process in both FM radios
- Identifying problems of journalists in getting sources and government information
- Assessing journalists' attitude toward press and broadcasting laws
- Identifying challenges and opportunities of journalists at election time
- Examining what looks like the relationship between journalists and politicians
- Showing the development of broadcasting media-especially FM radios in Ethiopia

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<sup>3</sup> By political reporting it means all forms of reporting including political news and interviews, commentaries, political campaigns and debates and the like in broadcast media

## **1.4 Research Questions**

- How do journalists, both in government and private media, see their professional duties compared to the government media policy i.e. development journalism?
- Does the political public sphere of the country have influence on the expansion of broadcasting media?
- To what extent are journalists free from government/proprietor influence?
- Do journalists in both government and private FM radios have equal access to government information? Which one of them has better chance to get information from opposition leaders?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study is intended to show the gaps in the working conditions of journalists, both in government and private FM radios, in doing political reporting. The study also show current status of FM radios in the country, on its way. Knowing the gaps and the current status of these FM radios will help government, media owners and journalists to minimize the differences and make the practice of journalists more professional regarding political issues. The research could also be helpful for researchers who may want to further investigate on some problems of journalists in relation with political reporting.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 radios which have transmission around Addis Ababa. It does not include other FM radios either in the city or other towns of the country due to time and financial factors. As FM radios beginners in the country and their experience of radio operation, the two FM radios can fairly represent the FM radios in Addis Ababa.

## **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

Due to small number of the total population in both FM radios, the study is limited to qualitative methods; FGD, in-depth interviews and key informants other than using quantitative methods. In fact, a richer result could have been achieved, had all the government and private FM radios in the city been included in this study. But due to time and budget constraints the study is limited to the two FM radios.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

The thesis has five chapters. The first chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, the research questions and objectives of the study, scope and significance of the study and organization of the paper. The second chapter reviews the relevant literatures. It discusses the functions of the media; media and democracy in Africa and in Ethiopia; and the broadcasting service in Ethiopia with brief background information about FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 radios. The third chapter deals with the methodology of the study. It explains how the areas and participants of the study are selected; and how data are gathered and analyzed. In the fourth chapter data are presented and analyzed. The last chapter summarizes the findings of the research and draws conclusions based on the results of the study. Based on the conclusions, the researcher has finally forwarded some implications and recommendations to concerned bodies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the relevant literature of media and politics in three broad categories: the first category deals with the normative functions of media as conceptual framework; the second one is about the general picture of the practice of media and of journalists within many political and other reforms in Africa since independence from colonialism; the third category shows the domestic context of media practice in relation to main political occurrences; and in the last we see the expansion of broadcasting media, especially that of FM radios.

#### **2.2 Functions of the Media<sup>4</sup>**

##### **2.2.1 The Characteristics of the Media**

The most important feature of the mass media is that the few who own the medium are addressing the many-the mass and scattered audience. This shows us how mass media are in its crucial position in the society whether to play its basic role for the good of the society or its instrumental function for the few in power or in business. Additional characteristics of the media are: the communication flow being one way; therefore, there is no-direct feedback from the audience; the communication being mediated through technology i.e. TV, radio and newspapers etc and the information being collected and processed (Siegel, 1996). Let us see the function of mass media within this nature of communication.

##### **2.2.2 The Functions of the Media**

Sociology scholars have discussed the functions of media within the context of functionalism or structural functionalism paradigm of sociology. In this paradigm the basic notion is that:

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<sup>4</sup> Media or mass media here refers only to the main stream ones; they are newspapers, magazines, radio and TV

...A view of society as being integrated, harmonious and a cohesive whole consisting of different social systems. All parts of society, be it government, welfare institutions, educational institutions, the military, economic institutions and cultural institutions function to maintain equilibrium, consensus and social order...As powerful socialization instruments they [media] should function towards integration, harmony and cohesion, whether it is through the information, entertainment and/or education. (Fourie, 2004, p. 265)

On the other hand, communication scholars, such as Wright, describe the media functions in a simplistic model by saying the functions of media are information and entertainment, but such model is inadequate in that it does not include “other manifest and/or latent functions of the media, especially when it comes to the political functions of the media” (Fourie, 2004, p. 270).

In a broader sense Harold Lasswell has identified three media functions: surveillance, interpretation and socialization. The fourth function of media has been added in this category by Graber that is ‘deliberate manipulation of politics’ (Graber, 2002). Similar to this Denis McQuail (as cited in Siegel, 1996, p. 21) has identified the mobilization function of the media. Mobilization refers “campaigning for social objectives” in a number of key areas, including politics, war, economic development and work.

#### **2.2.2.1 The Sources of Political Power of the Media**

From the very important roles and characteristics of the media in society, media are now powerful institutions in political sphere. According to Siegel (1996, p. 22), political power of the media comes forth from five sources. *Firstly*, the political power of the media comes from their information provision function. In this regard, media prepare the public for the future development by assessing and delivering accounts of politics that include warning signals about dangers. Additionally, they expose individuals to the public.

*Secondly*, their role of political linkage between the public and the government. Media can define the democratic nature of the governmental system as well as they can help the public’s involvement in the democratization process.

*Thirdly*, their *agenda-setting* role. With their selective nature, media do not simply transmit what they have gathered; rather they select the most important political issues which have public interest and set it as agenda to the public. For the general population media are the most important source of information about politics directly or indirectly. Therefore, their role of agenda-setting is very important to analyze the political process.

*Fourthly*, the ideological or editorial view of journalists that means editorial offerings is also the source of political power of the media. Through their editorials, background stories on political issues and their merits, columns by political columnists, interpretative stories and political cartoons in the newspapers; and through commentaries and political interviews in broadcast, journalists can shape the general content of the media. As a result the media can get their persuasion power.

*Lastly*, the influence of media on political actor is the other source of political power. Politicians need media attention to gain public acceptance by releasing their planned political events and pronouncements.

#### **2.2.2.2 The Nature of Political Power of the Media**

In discussing the nature of political power of the media we have to look at the normative functions of the media. What should be the norms of media practices and the behavior of journalists? This and other normative questions of the media, especially in relation with government influence, have been discussed in the following theories. The main focuses of these theories are press freedom, legal and other restrictions and how these things impact the functions of the media in society.

The first four theories are known as “The Four Theories of the Press” which were first introduced in 1956 by three authors: Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963). These theories tried to clarify the link between mass media and the political society in a global scene. The next two theories are developmental and democratic-participant which were formulated to address conditions in developing countries and to describe a new kind of media-government-public relationship with their deficiencies, such as corruptions and abuse of power (Fourie, 2004).

In his four theories of the press Siebert et al. (1963), has used some criteria to make comparison among the four political systems of the world in which the press function. The major criteria are *role of the press, freedom of press, control of the media, application of the theories in modern world* and *the permitted and forbidden subject matters*. We discuss these issues in accordance.

### **A. Authoritarian**

This theory assumes the media as one of instrumentalists of the state in order to promote its objectives and policies. Therefore, the state has the power to test and evaluate the contribution of the media against achievements of its established goals. Questioning the goals of the state or the authorities in power by the media is not allowed, the media are being assumed as having no direct responsibility. The few in government position should be free from any interference (Siebert et al., 1963).

However, the most headache thing to the authoritarians is controlling the private media. In the authoritarian system private ownership is allowed. As result they have tried to use five mechanisms to influence the works of the private journalists; (1) the granting of special “permits” (or “patents”) to the selected individuals to engage in the “art and mystery” of printing, (2) the licensing system for individual printed work, in other words using censorship, (3) prosecution before the court-the basis for the prosecution are treason as the basic crime against society; and sedition as the attempt to overturn the state, overthrow of the established government and advocate policies which might lead to an overthrow, (4) purchasing or subsidizing privately owned media by the government, and (5) taxation has been used to limit the circulation and profit of the newspapers (Ibid).

Now “most authoritarian states have established complete state monopolies of broadcasting. The operation and programming of radio and television rest with an official government agency which is responsible for carrying out government objectives” (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 29). However, Roelofse (as cited in Fourie, 2004) says, it can also be used by less authoritarian societies during war or danger of terrorism. The most important example took place in the past century in Germany, Italy, Spain, and South Africa and in many other African and Communist countries.

## **B. Libertarian**

The basic media function in libertarian concept is informing and entertaining the public. Sales or advertising can be considered as additional function. But its main purpose is “to help discover truth, to assist in the process of solving political and social problems by presenting all manners of evidence and opinion as the basis for decisions. The essential characteristic of this process was its freedom from government controls or domination” (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 51)

Government in libertarian concept has been considered as the servant of the society. Its main function is to maintain a stable framework within which the free forces of individualism may interact. And the only way of controlling mechanism in a democratic government is the judicial system. Furthermore, laws defined by the court are the only limitations of freedom of the press. But the problem is getting the formula to define the limit of discussion in democracy, especially during the national emergency. Holmes and Brandies (as cited in Siebert et al., 1963) have created their formula which is known as “*clear and present danger test*” and rejected the “*reasonable tendency*” of the Supreme Court of US to judge the discussion [in media] as crime or not.

With these efforts, however, “the question of whether [a free press] is an end in itself, a means to an end, or an absolute right has never been settled” MaQuail (as cited in Fourie, 2004). Likewise its application in most countries of the world has getting difficulties with many factors such as nationalistic pressures, internal security and economic conditions. The USA and Britain have had this type of press for approximately 200 years (Siebert et al., 1963).

## **C. Social Responsibility**

The social responsibility theory has been formulated to reconcile “the public’s right to know” and “the public responsibility of the press”. The basic notion of the theory is “freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our [US] government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential function of mass communication in contemporary society”. In this theory, with some dissatisfaction in their interpretation, the main functions of the media are serving the political system, enlightening the

society, safeguarding the rights of individual, serving the economic system, providing entertainment and maintaining its own financial self-sufficiency (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 74).

A major contributor to this theory in America is the government because the rise of broadcasting makes its role vital in the allocations and regulations of frequencies. Technological and industrial revolution, the sharp voice of criticism, intellectual climate and the development of professional spirit are among the factors. Concerning media freedom and its relation with government, social responsibility theory emphasizes that the government should not merely allowed the free press; rather it should protect it against the private rights of others and against the vital social interests (Ibid).

MaQuail (as cited in Fourie, 2004) says the theory provides two ways in which media would accomplish the social responsibility of the society; first using independent regulatory institution for broadcasting industry; and second, the continuing development of professionalism, which should advance and nurture balanced and impartial news presentation.

#### **D. Communist**

In Soviet Communist theory the media are the instrument to propagate the doctrine and policies of the working class or the militant party. The conception of press freedom in this theory is there is no absolute freedom, and no freedom against the state can be permitted. Freedom and responsibility are inseparably linked; freedom is to speak about the truth of the Soviet system and access to the media facilities through the Soviet in order to eliminate class control. There is no private ownership in this theory, rather the Party is responsible to control all the press and broadcasting by three mechanisms. The first one is by inserting its own reliable members in all key appointments; second, by issuing a large number of directives and instructions; and lastly by constant review and criticism (Siebert et al., 1963). Few nations today follow the communist model; The People's Republic of China is the prime example (Siegel, 1996).

### **E. Development Theory**

Development theory was created in 1960s. It gives more emphasis to the ideals of economical developments. Therefore, the media should highlights development projects, provides critical coverage of development planning and programs, and informs readers of how the development process is affecting the society (Sterling, 2009). As a result the media should be subordinated to these ideals with some liberties.

MaQuail (as cited in Fourie, 2004) has identified its basic assumptions as follows. The first notion of the theory is that the media should make a positive contribution to the national development. Second, journalists have both responsibilities and liberties in obtaining and distributing information. Third, to protect development objectives, the state has the right to intervene by restricting and censoring the media, state subsidies and direct control are justifiable.

Based on this, development journalism has been used by repressive regimes to justify government control of the press. Not only governments are the supporter of this theory, but also some journalists in less developed countries have argued that “there needed to be a new kind of journalism that informed readers about the development process while simultaneously empowering them toward more democratic participation, others were pointing out that there were sharp inequalities in global news flows” (Sterling, 2009, p. 403).

### **F. Democratic-Participant**

By giving emphasis to community-controlled media, democratic-participant theory has blamed the corporate monopoly of private media ownership in libertarian model and too much government involvement and bureaucratization in public broadcasting in social responsibility model. It focuses on the local level information flow (Siegel, 1996). Hence, its major concerns are the multiplicity/diversity of media, the small scale use of media, the local nature of media, the deinstitutionalization of the media, the reciprocal role of communicator and recipient, horizontal communication and interaction and involvement (Fourie, 2004).

Additional assumptions of the democratic-participant theory regarding media ownership is that all groups, organizations and communities should have their own media; and the existence of the media must be justified in terms of the needs and interests of the recipients, and not exclusively in terms of the media organizations, professional media workers or advertisers. In relation with media control it says that there should not be any political or bureaucratic influence on the content of the message of the media and the organization itself (Ibid).

### **2.2.3 The Media, The Public and The Politicians**

The press can be considered as “positive communicators” for both the public and government. The media helps the society by defining the political issues and showing how these issues affecting them. Furthermore, they play the watchdog role in order to keep the public interest. They also serve the government as its Fourth Branch in the policy formulation process by linking the bureaucracy, the legislative and executive branches of government, and the people. In general the society as a whole “must have media that are the government’s voice as well as media voices that oppose it. If there are no media that express the government’s goals and that are willing to disseminate explanations and support of them, the government’s policy cannot possibly work and the government cannot function” (Siegel, 1996, p. 28).

The other aspect of the media is that the “adversary” view of its connection with politicians. For the safeguard of public interest the relationship between the journalists and politicians should be maintained cautiously. Because journalists and politicians have very close working relationship and this is also the survival issue for each other. Politicians and journalists cannot live without each other (Ibid).

## **2.3 Media and Democracy in African: An Overview**

Principal historical and political occurrences in Africa are bases to understand the current media landscape in many regions of the continent including Ethiopia. In relation to media development, some writers, such as Hyden et al. has identified two periods of political transitions in Africa that are basic for the explanation of media development and its role in the African democratization process.

The period from decolonization in 1945 and the early years of independence in 1968 was known as the first wave of democratization which marked by the global radicalization of politics in socialist direction, the emergence of dependency theory and the spread of a more systematic effort at autocratic rule by civilian and military. Media have had two typical roles: as mouthpiece of the nationalist cause and as creator of a discursive realm-of the emerging nationalist community (Hyden et al., 2002). The next topic discusses the second wave.

### **2.3.1 The Political Transition of the 1990s in Africa**

The 1990s political transition in Africa is known as the second wave of democratization. In fact the transition has begun in the late 1980s. The political transition that took place in the three decades following independence was not democratic; rather the emerging democratic regimes have become totally autocrat, (Hyden et al., 2002). Due to internal and external reasons, however, the actual transition in many African countries has begun in 1990s. Bahru and Pausewang (2002) explain the situation in this way:

A 'wind of change' started blowing on the African continent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the Cold War came to an end, most of the authoritarian regimes lost the external props that had sustained them. The East could no longer bail out the dictatorships with "socialist" pretensions. The West no longer saw the need to prop up corrupt and dictatorial regimes as bulwarks of anti-communism. At the same time, a movement from below (whether in the form of urban mass movements or rural guerrilla warfare) rendered dictatorial regimes into untenable propositions. Battered from inside and shunned from outside, these dictatorial regimes collapsed one after another like a row of dominoes. 'Democratization' became the rallying cry that united internal campaigners for political liberalization as well as external donors. (p. 7)

According to Seyoum (2001), the implications behind these internal and external factors are three things: democratic transition, economic improvement and freedom of information. As a result many of the countries have done political arrangements that include:

Support for political pluralism, regular elections, freedom of the press, and the right of association. It is this picture of Africa as an emerging democratic continent from decades of brutal dictatorship and the massive economic mismanagement and social misery of the 1970s and 1980s, into an era of regular elections and greater involvement in the world economy, that has led to the oft wildly stated claim that a renaissance is emerging on the continent, (Ocitti, 1999, p. 4).

The role of media in the second wave of democratization is different in that the media outlets have become more diversified and their direct and indirect contributions to shape the political transition in the continent become vital. The press in particular and the broadcasting media (in fact many of the African governments have controlled it) with some limits were reporting and expressing the public interest in main political issues. They have had influence on politics by reporting cases of corruption and providing information about civic rights and responsibilities indirectly (Hyden et al., 2002).

Additionally, the 1990s political transition in Africa has resulted for media reforms in the continent. Many countries have deregulated their media sector and opened up their door for free press. At the same time, legal framework has emerged to restore press freedom. This results again for the proliferation of independent press and for their consciousness and articulation. African journalists have begun continent-wide initiatives that ascertain the vital role of the press in democracy and guarantee its practitioners'-journalists' rights. The Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press adopted by African journalists in 1991 is the first and foremost work. This declaration endorsed by the General Conference of the UNESCO. Following this and other efforts that have been done by journalists and politicians some 42 nations entered a new era of multiparty democracy culminating with constitutional reforms that included freedom of the press and expression in the late 1990s (Ocitti, 1999).

### **2.3.2 Political Accountability, Media Freedom, and Access to Information in Africa**

#### **2.3.2.1 Political Accountability and Media Freedom in Africa**

Political accountability needs government officials who are accountable, informed public, laws and constitution, civil society and healthy media, and legal (e.g., trials) or political (non

reelection) process. These would answer the following questions: 1) Who is accountable? 2) To whom? 3) For what? 4) How (mechanisms of reporting)? and 5) For which consequences? Central to this end is that "...all of which require respect for freedom of association and expression, transparency, freedom of information, and freedom of assembly... it also requires a free and vibrant media [that] able to investigate freely and without fear, report, question, and denounce" (Callamard, 2010, p. 4; Tettey, 2008).

Freedom of speech which is inalienable rights to media freedom and access to information is treated as universal human right in democratic legal regimes and they are elaborated and enacted through principles, declarations and standards based on international co-operation, in some cases even enforced by international courts. Many African countries as members of the United Nation and African Union are legally bound to protect freedom of expression in accordance with international law and their own regional declarations. Many of the declarations including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are:

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) adopted in 1981
- The Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press adopted in 1991
- The 2000 Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), ratified by 53 African countries (except Morocco)
- Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (DPFEA),
- The 2001 African Charter on Broadcasting
- African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) adopted in January 2007 (Berger, 2007)

Despite these international and continental initiatives in the legal provisions of freedom of expression and media freedom, there are many problems on the ground in many countries of Africa. For instance, Reporters sans Frontier (RSF) reported that:

In spite of gains made over the last several years' freedom of the press in Africa was badly damaged in 2007. On at least 12 occasions during the year, men received orders to kill journalists. Police received orders on almost 150 occasions to make an arrest, not of a corrupt minister or a notorious killer but of a journalist. Even governments of countries in which Reporters without Borders had invested some hope in previous years, have brought instruments of repression to bear against the press. (as cited in Tetey, 2008, p. 11)

The other problem is that some countries in the continent are recently using restrictive laws for further control of media and to punish/harass journalists and media practitioners who publish articles that are critical to the government. Other problems associated with media freedom that have been identified by Callamard (2010) are:

- Reluctance to adopt *access to information laws* by state parties;
- Failure to the achievement of professional standards by the journalists; and
- Lack of responses from some state parties to the African Charter and other international declarations

Two writers have proposed their own assumptions regarding the reasons for such problems. Seyoum (2001) has identified the following reasons: one is the lack of will (by the governments) to transform those rights (freedom of expression of media) from words to deeds and the second one is the political culture inherited from colonial states in much of Africa tended to be centralized, authoritarian, mono-party rule devoid of room for choice and participation.

In his discussion of "*Accountability, Transparency, and Freedom of Expression in Africa*" Callamard has concluded that:

Over the last two or three years, two key factors have contributed to a worsening of the landscape for both freedom of expression and accountability in Africa. The first is the global human rights setback, resulting from the economic and banking crises in many countries across the globe, the "war on terror" and its security agenda, and the emergence of a multipolar world with human rights-unfriendly actors such as China

exercising an increasingly crucial influence. The second factor that has triggered a specific continent-wide setback has been the holding of a number of elections across Africa. The widespread manipulation of the competitive electoral processes over the last two years or so has both required and resulted in the curtailment of dissenting voices and independent media reporting. Both journalists and civil society were at the center and the forefront of the repression required to flaw elections results. (2010, pp. 25-26)

### **2.3.2.2 Access to Information in Africa**

Access to information is the other side of the same coin to freedom of expression. “It has been entrenched in the constitutions of many countries in Africa”, however, “only a handful of these countries have enacted laws that give effect to this right”. Ethiopia is one of the six countries in Africa that has been mentioned here as exemplary for enacting law that guarantees the right to access to information. The other countries with access to information legislation are South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda and Liberia (Callamard, 2010).

Callamard further discusses the importance of access to information and its use as linkage between the society and government officials as follow:

Access to information held by public authorities enables citizens to make informed choices and allows them to scrutinize the actions of their government. It is essential to creating a relationship of trust between state bodies and the general public, allowing for transparency and public participation in decision making. Without an individual right to access information, state authorities can control the flow of information, “hiding” material that is damaging to the government and selectively releasing information the government deems appropriate for public consumption only. In such a climate, corruption thrives and human rights violations can remain unchecked (Ibid, p. 23).

Whether the African countries have enacting legislation on access to information or not, still there are many problems related with this right. Many of the governments’ officials in Africa have closed their door to journalists. As a result the journalists are being dependent on the less

newsworthy and ordinary people for information. This would have negative impacts on the democratic principle of accountability and professional quality of journalism (Tettey, 2008).

### **2.3.3 Broadcasting and Political Transition in Africa**

Broadcasting in Africa, especially radio with its contradictory roles-instrumental, adversarial and informative, has been expanded through five historical and political stages or forms, according to Hyden et al (2002, pp. 81-93).

a) During the colonial period broadcasting/radio has been used to maintain European Colonizers' interest with their established order, global prestige, and to influence international development.

b) In the anti-colonial struggle broadcasting/radio has been used as a tool by both colonial powers and nationalists. Colonial powers have used it to maintaining their relations with newly independent governments and the nationalist leaders have used it to strengthen their state formation.

c) After the colonial period the independent states have begun controlling over broadcasting to protect their domestic power, to inform and educate their population, and to fight off attacks on sovereignty. Additionally, governments have realized that broadcasting is far reaching and important tool to foster their political activities.

d) In order to propagate specific political interests many African countries have used clandestine radio. For example, both Eritrean People's Liberation Front's (EPLF) *Voice of the Broad Masses in Eritrean* and Tigre People's Liberation Front's (TPLF) *Voice of the Tigre Revolution* have had clandestine radio broadcasting in their liberation struggle.

e) The last stage for broadcasting in political transition in Africa is economic pressure from Western countries to liberalization of media sector. Until the mid 1980s there were no private radio stations in sub-Saharan Africa. But because of the privatization program undertaken by many African countries the number of private broadcasters in twenty-seven countries could reach 137 in 1995. To take the advantage of this privatization program in media sectors, international broadcasters such as VOA and BBC have developing a network of affiliated FM stations across

the continent. Hyden et al. (2002, p. 98) explains the importance of such trend: “in a situation where local media remain weak and unreliable in terms of what they can broadcast with an explicit political content, these Western broadcast organizations can serve as important allies in the battle for greater media freedom.”

The last stage of these political transitions with media landscape has implied the second wave of democratization that results for many political, economic and other forms of changes in Africa as discussed above. Broadcasting has shown important development in the continent since this period of time. Article 19 (2010), in its book entitled “*Broadcasting Policy and Practice in Africa*” clearly puts the situation as follow:

The 1990s witnessed the beginnings of changes in broadcasting in Africa that have been described as ‘liberalization of the airwaves’. Liberalization of the airwaves is a reference to a process that has led to the emergence of private broadcasters and to a much lesser extent and in a very few countries, ‘community’ broadcasters...The liberalization of broadcasting is happening in a context of political change from military and one party state governments of the period after independence to multi party governments (p. 10).

Comparing with print media, however, broadcasting in Africa has slow progress toward privatization or private ownership. Rather state monopoly over broadcasting, which is not compatible with the right of freedom of expression, has been seen in many countries. Even though many private broadcasting are now functioning in many countries of Africa, their regulatory institutions are not free from government influence. This is hardly contradictor with the broadcasting principles that have been guaranteed by many declarations at continent-wide or international level.

For instance, the African Commission asserted that it is necessary to regulate broadcasting “to manage the limited available radio spectrum, but the regulation should follow strict principles. The basic idea of principles of broadcasting is that the state and broadcast regulatory system shall encourage private and community broadcasting. This in turn needs:

- Equitable allocation of frequencies between private broadcasting uses, both commercial

and community;

- An independent regulatory body which is responsible for issuing broadcasting licenses and for ensuring observance of license conditions;
- Fair and transparent licensing processes;
- Diversity in broadcasting; and
- Broaden access to community broadcasting by poor and rural communities (Callamard, 2010).

Unlike the print media, the contents of broadcasting in Africa are very limited due to ownership and control trends. Even though there are few private broadcasting that deal with more serious issues like public affairs, human rights and press freedom; they are facing with intimidation by government, self censorship and limited market resources. On the one hand, government-owned broadcasting continued its instrumental role. On the other side, the private broadcastings are not willing to challenge governments; rather they focus on their commercial interests that serve the urban economic and political elite. In some cases they are politically affiliated with governments. However, “there are signs that private-enterprise radio may be experimenting with forms of political expression that contradict prevailing orthodoxy,” (Hyden et al., 2002, p. 101).

## **2.4 Media and Democracy in Ethiopia: An Overview**

The above discussion has been done with the assumption that it has substantial applicability to the Ethiopian context. In many countries of the continent there have been significant improvements concerning media and democracy. Media institutions with other civil society organizations in Africa “are believed to foster a deepening and broadening of democratic governance through grass-roots participation as distinct from the formal institutions of governance such as parliament and the judiciary” (Bahru and Pausewang, 2002, p. 8). With this idea in mind we shall see some points about media development and political reforms in Ethiopia briefly.

### **2.4.1 Initial Assumptions by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE)**

The transitional period of Ethiopia which took place from 1991 to 1994 has presented both

opportunities and challenges for the TGE. Costantinos says:

The dismantling of the feudal system and later of the dictatorial military and Marxist government in Ethiopia heralds a historic moment, ripe with challenges and opportunities. It is a challenge because it is a test for Ethiopia's emerging democratic institutions and their ability to participate in reshaping the future of the country. It is an opportunity because it provides the means to promote democracy in the real sense of the word thus enabling the people to heighten and deepen their awareness of their fundamental rights (1994, p. 2).

With these challenges and opportunities the TGE has promised many democratic reforms. One of the initial promises is to liberalize Ethiopia's historical pattern of authoritarian rule and introduce a more tolerant and participatory political system including independent media and professional journalists. It would convert the state media monopoly to a genuine public corporation and allow the establishment of independent media channels/initiatives (Cohen, 1994).

Moreover, it "loudly advocated democracy and the freedom of expression for a people who had lived in forced absolute silence for decades. This was like real birth of democracy," says Costantinos, "The government press and media were the front runners to herald to the millions of Ethiopians and the world that freedom of expression and of the press had finally become a reality. The most hated system of censorship is no more," (Costantinos, 1994, p. 13).

The commitment of TGE has been manifested by its first Charter, which guarantees freedom of expression and individual human rights. Article 1 and sub article 10 of Article 9 of the Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia focuses on the fundamental democratic rights which include freedom of speech that is guaranteed by Universal Declaration on Human Rights and fair usage of mass media, respectively (Article 19, APA, n.d.). "This, needless to say, is a step in the right direction. In view of the democratization process the country has embarked upon, under the new leadership," (Costantinos, 1994, p. 8)

However, according to Cohen (1994), most of the initial promises of democratic and good governance issues could not be achieved by the TGE because of many reasons. Tensions have

been increased due to practical demands of the promised democratic and governance issues by the public in general and civil societies in particular. “The formality with actuality, declaration and implementation, rhetoric and reality, remains a palpable one,” (Bahru and Pausewang, 2002, p. 11).

#### **2.4.2 Media Reforms in Ethiopia**

Even though there have been no non-governmental media reforms during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie and Mengistu, there were two golden periods<sup>5</sup> of freedom of the press that ever occurred again. The first period was during Prince Zewditu. At that time Ras Tafari Makonnen (the future Emperor Haile Selassie) and his followers as progressive persons were writing about basic political and social changes and reforms freely. Unfortunately, it was short-lived. The second golden period was the early three years of the revolution starting from 1974 to 1977. In this period there was an almost uninhibited discussion of national issues, with various individuals and groups advancing their respective recipes for social transformation. These two periods of freedom of the press were unique in that both took place within the framework of a government-owned press. These are remarkable events in the twentieth century history of media in Ethiopia, (Bahru and Pausewang, 2002 & Costantinos, 1994).

However, actual media (press only) reform has occurred since 1992. Many political and economic changes in the country have influenced the reform of media landscape. But the very relevant event was the promulgation of new press law in October 1992 in the country. The free press has gained legal rights and responsibilities (Cohen, 1994). As a result a number of private newspapers and magazine have mushroomed. This period is known as the third golden period of freedom of the press (Bahru and Pausewang, 2002 & Costantinos, 1994). Despite the expansion of private press in this period of time, many problems have been witnessed regarding the press law and the relationship between government and independent journalists. Shimelis Bonsa explains that:

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<sup>5</sup> The press was also free during the short period of Endalkachew Mekonnen who was the last prime minister of Haile Selassie I regime. His period took place from February 28 to July 22, 1974. Endalkachew was trying to change the bad image of the regime by being more tolerant to the revolutionists and do some political reforms including proposal of constitutional reforms (Bahru, 2007 & Mocria, Mesfin & Alemayehu, 2003).

Not only have the owners and editors of the papers been the victims of sustained government harassment under the cover of a restrictive press law, but they themselves have also not shown the highest standards of journalism in the execution of their task. The perfect balance between government tolerance and professional responsibility—two important pre-conditions for the thriving of a free press—has thus remained elusive. The financial viability of most of the papers is also highly problematical. These circumstances have engendered a considerably high attrition rate. But, despite the obvious problems and shortcomings, the private press has contributed significantly to the emergence of a situation far removed and improved from the monolithic picture that had prevailed in the Imperial and Derg eras. (as cited in Bahru and Pausewang, 2002, p. 13).

The provision of broadcasting proclamation in 1999 has shown hopeful sign of private commercial radio and television can be licensed and the need of reconfiguring the state broadcast media as genuine public service broadcasters by the government. Until this period of time the government broadcasting were regulated by Proclamation 6/1991 which states ‘that Radio Ethiopia (RE) and Ethiopian Television (ETV), described as the "mass media", will remain state-owned and controlled by the Ministry of Information under the new political dispensation,’ (Article 19, 2000, p. 9). However, private and many community radios have come in reality lately after six years.

The recent phenomenon regarding media reform with legal frameworks is the revision of both the press and broadcasting proclamations. Broadcasting Service Proclamation, Proclamation No. 533/2007 and Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation, Proclamation No. 590/2008 have been issued in 2007 and 2008, respectively. Following this revision there are some improvements. However, media reform is still unfinished job for the government. Compared it with other African countries, our media development is still fragile. More works need to be done.

### 2.4.3 Status of Freedom of Media in Ethiopia

The slow and restrictive reforms of media landscape in the country results worsen situations to freedom of the media in Ethiopia. As discussed above, in principle the government has accepted basic democratic declarations by international organizations, however practically it considers media as adversary. As a result it limits their freedom. This is where the problem begins to surface in the Ethiopian media history since 1992 (Costantinos, 1994). Many international media organizations, writers and local journalists express their concern in many ways. Berhane say that:

In the beginning, EPRDF government has tolerated numerous critical and sometimes misinforming or abusive articles and cartoons, which were published in the private press without being threatened by the government. But some years later the authorities did take harsh measures against the private press on many occasions, particularly over articles reporting on armed conflicts that dispute the government policies. (2002, p. 2)

No better condition for freedom of expression has come until 2003 and 2004. Amnesty International in 1998, World Press Freedom Review in 2000 and Human Rights Watch in 2001 have reported that:

The EPRDF authorities have responded harshly to those who have accused their policy, particularly embezzlement of officials and the abuse of power... journalists who are critics of the government policies were arrested and later released without charge after a month. But many of these have complained of ill treatment during detention... One of the most worrying practices is the authorities willingness to play 'cat and mouse' with media workers. Over a dozen of journalists have left the country, alleging that they have been persecuted for their professional journalistic daily activities and publishing free opinions, dissemination of false information by a cynical nature of harassment and intimidation. (as cited in Berhane, 2002, p. 3)

The editors-in-chief of nine private newspapers in Ethiopia have expressed the situation in which freedoms of expression and of the media have been practiced and the worsening relationship between the government officials and the independent journalists in their report in

2003. They have expressed the gap, mistrust and partisanship between the government and the private press. They have prepared the report after they evaluate the then draft law based on the idea that giving guidance and recommendations for consideration by the government and showing mismatches between some parts of the draft laws and international standards relating to freedom of information (Article 1, APA, n.d.).

The relative freedom of expression and of the media has been seen in the pre-election period of the 2005 election. It has been vibrant period to both government and private media. European Union (2005) states in its report that:

State and private media provided generally balanced coverage. During this period, there was a notable opening of the state media to the political parties contesting the elections, and print space and airtime was afforded to the main coalitions challenging the ruling party. Live broadcast of debates between the main political actors permitted genuine democratic discussion and raised public interest in the electoral process throughout the country. (p. 2)

The truly multiple points of views have been expressed through the Ethiopian public media in 2005 election campaign (Carter Center, 2009 & European Union, 2010). On the other hand the government has accused private press as being the organ of opposition parties (CPJ, 2006). This period of time has been short-lived. Following the aftermath of the 2005 election, however, the situations have become more difficult for the journalists. Many of them have been imprisoned and accused of crime against the constitutional order of the country (MSI, 2006-2007). Many of the private newspapers and magazines have been closed. Kifle Mulate, who was the former president of EFJA, says “Ethiopia has made a sad history for itself by becoming not only the African country with the largest number of journalists in prison, but also the country with the largest number of journalists living in exile,” (as cited in Saega, 2006, p. 6). Human Rights Watch in its 2010 report entitled “*One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure*” *Violations of Freedom of Expression and Association in Ethiopia*” states:

Over the past five years the Ethiopian government has restricted political space for the opposition, stifled independent civil society, and intensified control of the media. As

this report describes, this has been a long-term policy with the relative freedom of the 2005 pre-election period standing out as an anomaly. Repression has gained greater momentum as the 2010 elections approach, with the government taking measures to avoid a replay of the events of 2005. (Human Rights Watch, 2010, p. 6).

According to Professor Alemayehu G. Mariam, many international media freedom advocacy groups ranked Ethiopia at the bottom of the list of nations with the worst records on press freedom:

In the 2009 Freedom House's 'Press Freedom Rankings', Ethiopia came in at a dismal 165/195 countries. Reporters Without Borders ranked Ethiopia at 140/175 countries in 2009. The Committee to Protect Journalists on May 2, 2007 ranked Ethiopia as number 1 among the 'top 10 backslider' countries 'worldwide where press freedom has deteriorated the most over the last five years'. (2010, para.5)

Despite these degradations of media freedom in the country since the 2005 election, the government said that there are improvements in media and government relation. The 2008 Media Sustainability Index (MSI) states that:

However, in what is seen as a big step forward in relations between the government and private media, no journalists have been convicted this year and no journalist is currently jailed. At the same time, high-profile government officials and agencies are slowly opening their doors to private newspapers and have shown signs of engaging the country's two private FM radio stations. (p. 123)

However, with the passage of the two media laws-Broadcasting Service Proclamation, Proclamation No. 533/2007 and Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation, Proclamation No. 590/2008, which had been debated for years; and other media related laws- Anti-Terrorism Proclamation, Proclamation No. 652/2009 and Charities and Societies Proclamation, Proclamation No. 621/2009; many complaints are being heard still this moment. Many international organizations such as Article 19 and Human Rights Watch have commenting the laws since their draft periods. They express that the laws are highly restrictive

and do not guarantee freedom of the media and its practitioners. Many articles in the proclamations are ambiguous and gave the government authorities more power to invade freedom of expression (Article 19, 2010). But the government on the other side says that the laws i.e. the Charities and Societies (CSO law), anti-terrorism bill, and media law would not have any adverse impact on civil society and the media. The “Ethiopian officials have claimed that the CSO and media legislation will “empower” the Ethiopian people, and that the CSO law resembles legislation in industrialized democracies,” (Human Rights, 2010, p. 58).

Nevertheless, the media situation in the country has becoming more worsened. MSI in its 2009 publication states that:

Officials display little respect for press freedom and freedom of speech, crushing demonstrators agitating for their rights, forcing many journalists into exile, and holding others in detention for years. The media labor in an atmosphere clouded by intimidation, fear, and self-censorship. The few surviving independent voices feel forced to tread cautiously, often avoiding penning any articles that criticize the government. (MSI, 2009, p. 119)

The problems are not only external i.e. from the government, but also from the journalists themselves. Journalists are not professionally and ethically qualified. MSI in its 2008 publication states that “major constraints to investigative and niche reporting include politics, lack of professionalism, and ethics. Among the private media, journalists who attempt to investigate specialized subjects are hindered by their editors’ biases and lack of buy-in. They also encounter the ethical problems arising from their own personal and vested political interests,” (MSI, 2008, p. 128)

#### **2.4.4 Ethiopian Journalists - Friends or Adversaries**

The tradition in the dictatorial regimes regarding journalists and their works has been very rigid. The systems have commonly had red line that directs journalists either to be with the government side or not. Otherwise they have been considered as enemy. The only expected works of the journalists were propagating the governments’ agenda whether it had public interest or not.

Impartiality and free expression of ideas have not been imagined by the journalists. Top journalists in the country have been harassed and disappeared during Emperor Haile Selassie and Dergue regimes. Bealu Girma can be mentioned as example (Costantinos, 1994).

According to Press Reference, the problem has been emerging from the political tradition of the country. Whenever people disagree on some issues they began to polarize each other (Press APA, n.d). Such trend is now widespread in the current relationship between the government and private media journalists. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has told CPJ that “relations between the government and private press [journalists] have long been confrontational, but he said the treason allegations were different. They went beyond their normal bias and went for the jugular. They became part and parcel of the day-to-day preparation for the insurrection after the elections”. He has concluded that many of them were organ of opposition parties (CPJ, 2006, p. 4). However, this is not the most case for the government journalists. Amare Aregawi, founder of *The Reporter* newspaper, in his part says that:

Breakdown [after the 2005 election] is symptomatic of the deeper political divide. The press is a reflection of politics ‘There's no tolerance. It's 'you are either with us or against us,' and that is reflected in the media.’ Zenawi, who acknowledged a "poison" in his government's relationship with the press, said much the same. ‘We are aware that the poison is not merely between the press and the ruling party,’ the prime minister said. ‘It's a reflection of the overall tension between some in the opposition and the ruling party’. (Ibid, p. 5)

#### **2.4.5 Election and Media in Ethiopia**

The 1995 and 2000 national and regional elections in the country have been dominated by the EPRDF. EPRDF has dominated the party registration process and the media. The major opposition political parties have not been participated (Smith, 2007).

However, the 2005 national and regional election was unique and very contesting. Moreover, government has opened “the state media to the political parties contesting the elections, and print space and airtime was afforded to the main coalitions challenging the ruling party. Live

broadcast of debates between the main political actors permitted genuine democratic discussion and raised public interest in the electoral process throughout the country,” (European Union, 2005, p. 4).

Many Ethiopians have observed that “public policy appropriately receives debate, that public media cover multiple points of view, that voters’ choices can result in opposition members of parliament...This potentially represents a historic sea change in attitudes toward political power and competition in Ethiopia,” (Carter Center, 2009, p. 38). Besides, the government and private media have been blamed by many election observers and writers for their partisan reporting to the ruling and opposition parties-respectively (Wondwosen, 2009).

The post-election period, however, has been followed by the crackdowns. The government has taken harsh measurements. Smith explains that “rather than extending negotiated access to state-controlled media for opposition political parties and civil society, the ruling party tightened its grip on the private press, creating a substantial gap in coverage (Smith, 2007, p. 7). European Union (2005, p. 4) in its final observation report states that: “media coverage also worsened. State media published statements by government/EPRDF personnel claiming victory in the elections, despite the fact that counting was still underway, but refused to publish opposition statements”. Concerning the private media, however, the consequences were very harsh. Many media outlets have been closed and journalists have been accused of “outrages against the constitution” and “incitement to genocide,” and handed heavy prison sentences. Additionally many of them have been exiled (MSI, 2006-2007).

According to the 2010 election observation final report of European Union, the 2010 national and regional election is quite different from the 2005 election in many aspects in relation with media. Generally, there was neutral coverage of the election campaign by the media. However, the government-owned media have failed to do so. More than 50% of its airtime has been given to the ruling party. Likewise, some criticism against the government reported by the private journalists, but with extreme caution and scarce. Some degree of self-censorship has been seen (European Union, 2010).

All media have been regulated by The Code of Conduct for the Mass Media and Journalists on the Manner of Reporting about Elections Regulation Number 6/2010 that has been issued by the NEBE. The Code of Conduct has been formulated with the assumption that it would give the rights and responsibilities for the media, political parties and the electoral management body in campaign reporting. Consequently,

Ethiopian media, as a whole, ensured the coverage of the main political campaign events throughout the country, providing a range of election-related programming and content. Both private and state-owned media demonstrated their commitment to promote the NEBE's voter education messages. However, the limited outreach of print and broadcast media around the country reduced their capacity to provide all voters with sufficient elements to make an informed choice on Election Day. (Ibid, p. 23)

In addition to this, despite their partisan approaches in their coverage of the campaign, both the government-owned and private media have shown neutrality in the election-related stories. EBA was the only body that has monitored the coverage of election by the media.

## **2.5 Broadcasting Service in Ethiopia**

The most controversial issue concerning broadcasting in Africa is its ownership and content-its plurality (many media owners and operators including genuine public service media) and diversity (different media owners and operators offering the widest possible range of content relevant to needs and wants of audiences as citizens in a democratic dispensation). On the one hand, governments in the continent still have considering the role of broadcasting as nation building and development. Their policy is very simple and traced back its origin to the immediate post independence period in the 1960s and in the late 1980s. However, this is no longer the case; today's political reforms and of media reforms demand a lot. Article 19 (2003) point out that:

Government can no longer define the role of broadcasting as just nation building and development. In line with political changes, broadcasting has to play democratic roles as well. Democratic roles come with the imperatives of respecting and upholding

freedom of expression and a free flow of information and ideas. State control and regulation has to give way to independent regulation. Independent regulation requires new institutional arrangements, which are inclusive and transparent. (p. 4)

On the other hand, many others equated the existence of private-owned media with media pluralism and diversity. It is true that the state dominance in the ownership results more restrictive media practice. However, simply the existence of private-owned broadcasting by itself would not be guarantee for media pluralism and diversity for many reasons. First, private ownership does not exclude editorial controls for political and commercial interests. The other one is private broadcasting are additionally economic institutions, as a result they might ignore their political and cultural roles. The third point is that the private broadcasting might be controlled by either the rich or powerful, or to those linked to powerful politicians or even to politicians who doubled up as private businesspeople (Article 19, 2003).

With the above arguments in mind, practices in the continent show that the “sub-Saharan Africa has a varied media landscape in terms of media choice, accessibility, levels of government intrusion, and the legal and economic structures in which they operate” (Sterling, 2009). Many countries are known by their state monopoly of broadcasting. Many of them have restrictive regulations of broadcasting. The state-owned media are under political control (Berger, 2007).

The current situation in Africa depicts many improvements despite the governments’ control over broadcasting. Callamard says that “broadcasting was almost always a state monopoly and private and community broadcasting were either restricted or simply not allowed. This is no longer the case. The dominance of state ownership across Africa’s broadcasting sector has been loosened and privately-owned radio and television stations as well as community owned media are emerging” (Callamard, 2010, p. 14). However, this again is not free from political influence. “Governments tend to allocate private and community radio frequencies to individuals on this same basis—aligned to their political persuasion. Often licensing of private broadcasters remains politically controlled even in the context of liberalization of broadcasting and the slow pace of change away from state monopoly of broadcasting” (Ibid, p. 18). These are the cases for Ethiopia

too. The Ethiopian government still controlled the national radio and television. The liberalization of media is very limited. Especially this is true for broadcasting (Berhane, 2002).

### **2.5.1 Status of Broadcasting Service in Ethiopia: FM Radios in Focus**

Nowadays in Ethiopia there are about 31 radio and television stations. Many of them are owned by governments and community broadcasters. Six of the radio stations in the country run by five private broadcasters namely Afro FM, Dimitsi Woyane Tigray (DWET), Fana Broadcasting Corporation, Sheger FM and Zami FM. Both DWET and Fana Broadcasting Corporation have historical associations with the TPLF and EPRDF respectively, but are today legally registered as companies. The Fana Broadcasting Corporation operates two radio stations: Fana FM and Fana Radio. Ethiopia Radio, Ethiopian Television and FM Addis 97.1 are government owned and all are under the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) (Ward, 2011; Gebremedhin, 2006).

In general there are three categories of broadcasting in Ethiopia: a) Publicly funded television and radio services owned by national and regional mass media agencies; b) Private sector radio stations; and 3) Community broadcasters (Ward, 2011).

Television is still in the hands of government. Broadcasting in Ethiopia is prohibited for political parties and religious institutions by Article 23 of the Broadcasting Service Proclamation (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1999). Major sources of revenue for the stations are public finance and private money or advertising. The number of journalists working in all broadcasting in Ethiopia is now reached to 1,200. Out of this number private sector consists 244 or 20%. 346 or 29% of the total number are working for the ERTA radio and television channels (Ibid).

Concerning the broadcasting license, journalists are complaining about its bureaucratic and discriminating procedures made by EBA. Journalists have told MSI that “Licensing of broadcast media is not transparent, panelists agreed...it only extends to private FM stations in the capital, Addis Ababa...private television stations are not allowed to operate...these restrictions to be the most irresponsible thing that the government has done since coming to power in 1991” (MSI, 2008, p. 125).

A year after the MSI (2009) has conducted a panel discussion with Ethiopian journalists on the media status. Again panelists have complained about licensing:

Near unanimously, the panelists deemed the broadcast media licensing process deeply opaque, political, and selective. Previous FM radio permit allocations demonstrated that no clear regulations guide the bidding process for the licensing of airwaves. Media professionals see the severe restrictions on radio station licensing as the government's unwillingness to entertain views different from its own. The broadcast agency's obscure process led the panelists to conclude that the agency functions with its own set of vague criteria to arrive at decisions with an air of political bias. A third private FM radio station, the all-English Afro-FM, received its license in 2009. It airs mostly English music. Several panelists consider this evidence that radio station requests are not only frequently delayed, but they are more likely to be rejected if they deviate from entertainment into more serious, controversial topics, including politics. Furthermore, the process of appointing heads of the regulatory agency is highly political, which panelists take as additional evidence of the government's intention to steer the whole licensing process toward its own political advantage. (p. 121)

### **2.5.2 Broadcasting Service Proclamation and the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority**

The independent licensing body in Ethiopia is the EBA which established according to Article 4 of Broadcasting Proclamation No.178/1999 as an "autonomous Federal Administrative Agency" (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1999). In its yearly magazine EBA states that more responsibilities and mandate have been given to the Authority based on the revised Broadcasting Service Proclamation No.533/2007.

The Authority has a mandate to regulate the broadcasting industry in general with the aim to ensure the growth of high standards and prompt and reliable broadcasting services which contribute to the political, social and economic development of the country. It also acts as a regulatory agency with respect to the press industry, albeit with a more limited role. This media mapping exercise is intended to provide the EBA recent and accurate information on the media in the country. The mapping presents a profile of

all major mass media in Ethiopia to assist in policy level decision making, assessments for training needs across all regions and as the basis for continuous and professional record keeping maintenance (EBA, 2011b, p. 1).

Article 4 of the revised proclamation has changed the accountability of the Authority to the Ministry of Information that was directly to the Prime Minister in the previous proclamation. Article 9 and 12 state that the total number of members of the governing board would be decided by the government and the director appointed by the government with the Ministry of Information recommendation (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2007). However, still its accountability is in the hands of the government. This may raise question about its autonomy.

The improvement in this proclamation is that it specifies all types of broadcasting that are internationally accepted. Article 16 of the proclamation categorizes the broadcasting service into three groups: public, commercial and community with their duties and responsibilities. All types of broadcasting including television are allowed in the proclamation; but practically it is still only FM radio has been given to private broadcasters. Television broadcasting has been suspended for unknown time period (Ibid).

### **2.4.3 A Brief Background of FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1**

#### **2.4.3.1 FM Addis 97.1**

FM Addis 97.1 radio is the first state-owned FM radio in the country. It was established by ERTA in June 2000. Now it has ten years of operating service with 28 full time journalists. Many of them are journalism, language and literature graduates. Its transmission covers areas of 100km radius around Addis Ababa with 24 hours of broadcasting. Its estimated audience is about 6 million people (Ward, 2011).

The most common programs in FM Addis 97.1 are light entertainment and popular music. The station broadcasts program genres such as Children, Current affairs, Drama, Entertainment (quizzes, games and shows), Health, News, Phone-ins, Sports and Other. It collects its own news from various news sources. The main sources are ENA, ERTA, Walta, BBC, CNN, AFP, Reuters and Xinhua (Ibid).

The recent audience survey done by Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS), an international institute for democracy and governance shows that FM Addis is now in the second rank of most favorite stations and third in the category of frequently listened radio stations (Ibid).

#### **2.4.3.2 Sheger FM 102.1**

Sheger FM 102.1 is the first private owned FM radio in Ethiopia with five years' operating service. It has been launched in April 2006. Sheger has now 13 full time journalists and additional 19 workers. The number of journalists who have journalism and communication background is very small, but similar to FM 97.1 many of them have language and linguistic background. Sheger is owned by Adey Tinsae Media and Entertainment Plc and its transmission covers about 40km radius around Addis Ababa. Its estimated audience has now reached 3 million people. It transmits English program two hours a day by rebroadcasting music from VOA. The total transmission hours in a day are 18 hours. Its revenue is totally from advertising (Ward, 2011).

With regard to its content the station main programs are light entertainment and popular music. The most common program types of the station are Music, Sport news, News, Health Program, Dramatic narration of a book, Solid waste Management, Science and Technology, Personality profile, Discussion, Review & Preview and others. Sheger also collects its own news by staff reporters as well as from regional communication affair bureaus. It broadcasts its news for 30 minutes, 3 times a day. Despite this, Sheger is known by its originality in news presentation and catering to listeners across all age groups and strands of life, and its creative productions and format as unique and worthy of setting a precedent for all others (MSI, 2009; Ward, 2011). The ERIS's study shows that the station is becoming one of the leading stations in Addis Ababa.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study deals with methodological aspects of the research. Important methods including data collection tools, sampling procedures and method of analysis have been discussed.

#### 3.2 Qualitative Research

The approach in this study is qualitative study. Qualitative study “seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves” (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005, p. 1). With the aim of getting their understanding of the social realities, the population might be individuals, groups or cultures (“Introduction to APA,” n.d.). With this assumption in mind, various qualitative methods of data collection and analysis have been employed so as to assess challenges of journalists in reporting politics in both government and private FM radios.

#### 3.3 Methods of Data Collection

In qualitative research the main goal is to get deep understanding of problems of the participants in the study. Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to find out major problems of journalists in reporting politics, particularly the problems encountered by journalists who are working in FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1. To this end, information has been collected by using Focus Group Discussion (FGD), In-depth Interview and Secondary Document.

##### 3.3.1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

FGD is one of the qualitative data collection methods. It enables researchers to “yield a large amount of information over a relatively short period of time. It is also effective for accessing a broad range of views on a specific topic, as opposed to achieving group consensus”. Participants

here are not necessarily alike; rather they might have different backgrounds that would contribute to different views (Mack et al, 2005, p. 51).

This study uses two FGDs: one is from FM Addis 97.1. The journalists are members of the newsroom with different years of experience. The other group is from Sheger FM 102.1. These journalists are also members of the newsroom with different years of experience. Due to the sensitivity of the issue informants have agreed to participate only on condition of anonymity. The necessary backgrounds of the participants have been presented in Appendix E.

### **3.3.2 In-depth Interview**

Unlike FGD, in-depth interview enables researchers to get information on highly personal or socially sensitive topics. It is very important to elicit personal feelings, opinions and experiences of the individual interviewee. The interviewee is considered as expert or very close to the issue (Mack et al, 2005).

Two in-depth interviews have been conducted with the Deputy Director of FM Addis 97.1 and Executive Producer of News and Information of Sheger FM radios. Additionally five key informants have been selected and interviewed from EBA, NEBE, EJA and EFJA. Also sources of statistical data regarding FM radios and regulatory issues have been used from EBA.

## **3.4 Selection of Research Areas and Participants**

In order to draw the area of study and selecting research subjects the researcher uses purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling method is advantageous to the researchers in that sampling selection is not determined by chance; rather the researcher selects his informants strategically so as to get in-depth information of the informants that adds optimal insights to an issue about which little is known (Abiy, Alemayehu, Daniel, Melese & Yilma, 2009).

FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 are selected because the former is the first FM radio in Ethiopia and has large audience participation and area coverage; and the latter is also the first private FM radios in Ethiopia and it also has large listeners. As FM radio beginners they have

better radio operation and reporting experience. Besides, the researcher is interested on their ownership difference (government/private) in order to show the gaps in their current status. The main subjects of the research including the Deputy Director of FM Addis 97.1 and Executive Producer of News and Information of Sheger FM radios are selected based on their reporting experience and relevance to the issue being studied.

A Director and an Inspector from EBA, Vice Chairman from NEBE, Vice President from EJA and President from EFJA are key informants in this study. These informants are selected for their general views of the country's media situation and their experiences of media practice.

### **3.5 Method of Data Analysis**

The collected data in this study has been analyzed by using thematic analysis. "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (Victoria, 2006, p. 6). The researcher in this study has used six important steps to carry out the analysis procedures.

The first step is verbatim transcription of verbal data of FGD and in-depth interview. According to Bird and Lapadat and Lindsay (cited in Victoria, 2006, p. 17), this step should be seen as "a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology and recognized as an *interpretative* act, where meanings are created, rather than simply a mechanical one of putting spoken sounds on paper".

The next step is production of initial codes from the data. Mainly the coding process is "data driven". By data driven we mean codes have emerged from the data that are transcribed. Coding has been done by writing the abbreviation of each code on the copy of transcribed scripts. Then in the third step all important themes have been identified and the coded extracts collating with them on a separate piece of paper. Additionally sub themes and miscellaneous issues have also been organized. In the next two steps the identified themes have been reviewed; and each theme has been named and defined. The final step is producing report. In relation to the research

questions the analytic narrative has been presented in addition to the description of data. Vivid examples and extracts have been used to support points selected for discussion.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the major findings and discussion of the thesis with brief introduction of the two FM radios' news making process. There are four major themes in this chapter: 'Journalists' Views of Their Profession', 'Media Laws and The Broadcasting Regulatory Body', 'Political Reporting Constraints' and 'The Gains and Losses of Working in Government or Private Media'. The themes contain sub-themes and codes which represent questions that have been forwarded to the participants.

#### **4.2 News Reporting Routines of FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1**

##### **4.2.1 FM Addis 97.1**

According to Messay Wendmeneh, Deputy Director of FM Addis 97.1, reporting process follows two ways: first, the station receives its information from the main news sources-ENA, Walta and OGCA; second, the station doing its own reports. Reporters come to the editorial meeting with their plan of news, and then it would be decided by the editors. Sometimes the reporting follows events. Additionally, the station has created four news production units with the intention of creating specialized news reporting, namely: Sport News Production Team, Political Issues and Foreign Affairs Production Team, Development and Construction News Production Team, and Social Affairs Production Team. Each unit contains three to five journalists with one editor (Personal interview, May 23, 2011).

##### **4.2.2 Sheger 102.1**

Silleshi Tesema, Executive Producer of News and Information of Sheger FM 102.1, says the station is unique in that it has four unique style of news presentation. From Monday to Thursday it has morning time news stories which are 30 minutes long. The stories have to be short because it is driving time. More elaborated news stories are presented at launch time. Friday is a special

day for Sheger FM; it has one hour news feature and documentary. The stories are hundred percent local. Saturday is business news program day with short international business stories there to be followed by interview and analysis on local issues (personal interview, May 30, 2011).

### **4.3 Journalists' Views of Their Profession**

This section discusses the ideal views of journalists towards their profession and practices and their attitudes towards the government media policy, i.e., towards development journalism.

#### **4.3.1 Role of Media and Development Journalism Discussed**

Journalists, both in FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger 102.1, show variations in their interpretation of their professional role and definition of development journalism. Most of the discussants from FM Addis 97.1 have shown similar attitudes towards development journalism with little difference in their expression. For some of the participants it is untouchable, they accept it simply. According to Messay and some other discussants, Ethiopia is “under-construction”. Therefore, there are many developmental activities that are being done by the government. These activities have to be promoted by the media (personal interview, May 23, 2011).

Discussant 1, a Senior Reporter with four and half years of experience, says “We are in the right track and it is a must to follow development journalism as our direction set by the government. The reality here in our country forces us to follow such type of journalism. It is only two decades since the country has entered the true developmental direction”. Practically, however, he says “there are some difficulties due to personal failure of the journalists’ knowledge gap, current issues like election and poor media management. These all make development journalism uninteresting, not the idea by itself,” (FGD, May 23, 2011, p. 1).

The other informant Discussant 3, a Deputy Producer with three years of experience in the station, shares the idea that “development journalism would not prohibit us to report some problems that arise with developmental activities. Even though our duty is to promote

developmental activities, we are also required to investigate problems attached to it and to present the issues to concerned bodies and the public” (Ibid).

On the other hand, informants, in Sheger FM 102.1, have reflected different views of development journalism. Sileshi says that:

We cannot give the profession [journalism] different form of expression ‘because this is Ethiopia’. It is universal practice. The role and duties of the profession has been defined by itself. We do not necessarily follow development journalism here. There are many countries whose media promote social welfare and development activities without tagging ‘development journalism’ to their practice. Doing infrastructural news only would not guarantee the society; rather programs that transmit attitudes, skills and knowledge to the society are needed. (personal interview, May 30, 2011, p. 1)

Most of the discussants have also manifested their different views of development journalism. Unlike the government journalists, informants here reflect more broad views of their role and criticize the development journalism policy of the government. Discussant 2, a Reporter with four years of experience, says that “the profession should be based on freedom of expression and basic professional and ethical principles. Based on that it can and should be used for the country’s development,” (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 1). Discussant 3, a Reporter with two years of experience, in her part says “the profession should be based on the true public-service provision. Developmental journalism is one of the social welfare activities. I do not believe that all journalists should be developmental. Further than development, there are other issues that should be reported” (Ibid:2). Other participants add that generally the media should be the voice of the people. And it has to mobilize it. “Most often this is not the case for Ethiopia. The government media activities seem to be mere fabrication and fictitious” (Ibid, p. 3).

Wondwosen Mekonnen, in EFJA, seems to have has agreed with that, when he says:

You can possibly follow development journalism, but the profession is not limited in a specific area of reporting. The most important point here is that the area is broad. It touches every aspect of our life: political, economical, social and others. Only focusing

on the economical developments would not guarantee for better life. Rather, economical developments should be achieved with human developments such as human rights, press freedom, freedom of speech and the like. (personal interview, May 24, 2011, p. 1).

### **4.3.2 Freedom of Journalists**

To what extent journalists should be free? What do we mean when we say freedom of journalists? Such questions have been forwarded to the participants in FGD. Most of the participants have underlined that such concept in journalism is difficult to have common interpretation and application across countries and regions. Not surprisingly, the government and private FM radios' journalists show differences in their expression of media and of journalists' freedom. However, there are also some common understandings among them.

Discussant 4, a Producer with fifteen years of experience in FM Addis 97.1, says that the extent to which a journalist is free is depends on the media station in which he or she is working. Any journalist should work with the editorial policy and aims of the station. However, impartiality is questionable. Discussant 2, a News Editor with three and half years of experience, has supported the idea of working for the aims of the station, but he argues that no one should interfere with the journalist's work. No one should say to the journalist add this one and omit that one. However, he ascertains that the freedom should be with some limitation on issues such as public welfare and sovereignty of the country (FGD, May 23, 2011).

In contrast, Discussant 1, in the same station, emphasizes that freedom and looseness are two conflicting things in the discussion of professional freedom. According to this participant, as long as journalists are working in the government media which follow development journalism, they have to be biased to development. In the first place they are citizens of the country (Ibid).

Mesay focuses on the relativity of media freedom. He considers that there is a relative freedom of media in this country. He also mentions that their news making process can be taken as example. In their news making process everybody is free to come up with his news idea and discuss it in their weekly editorial meeting. If it is ok professionally, the journalist would be

allowed to do it. This is a sign of journalists' freedom. Sometimes, however, there is the role of agenda setting, that is to say, some important agendas would be brought up by the top management and government officials to them to be covered and fostered (personal interview, May 23, 2011).

Discussant 5, a Reporter with one year of experience, in Sheger FM 102.1, expresses that a journalist should be free from all sorts of influence. The journalist has to be free even from his or her own attitude. Discussant 3 and 2 also concur in holding that if a journalist is free it means that he should be free from any political influence and other forms of interference. The journalists have to have maximum freedom as long as they satisfy the needs of the society (FGD, July 15, 2011).

Practical view of freedom of journalists in our context has offered by Discussant 4, a Reporter with one year of experience in the station. She says that freedom of journalists refers the right to write and speak freely. But in this country, such a freedom is found only on the paper, not in practice. The other informant Discussant 1, a Reporter with two years of experience, says that any profession has its own professional principles and ethical guidelines. Therefore when we say a journalist is free we mean that he is working freely with these professional and ethical frameworks and with the country's laws and regulations (FGD, July 15, 2011).

Sileshi says that:

In Ethiopia the limit is there in the laws of the country. What is allowed to write or not is decided by laws. For press freedom, the development of the country and professional maturity of the journalists are preconditions. Generally there are three important things which have to be considered whenever we discuss about press freedom beyond laws and regulations. First, press needs fair criticisms of the activities of government. Second, there should be government which is open and tolerant for criticism. Lastly, there should be professional excellence on the part of the journalists. Press freedom is the sum of all these things. (personal interview, May 30, 2011, p. 1).

Tsegaliul Woldekidan, in EJA, expresses that the journalists' freedom should also be seen with respect to their their access to government information. Officials should not prohibit journalists getting the public information. Additionally full responsibilities should be given to the journalists themselves (personal interview, May 19, 2011).

On the other hand, Wondwosen says that:

This [freedom of journalists] is ideal. The basic things are your journalistic report should be balanced, fair and impartial. But you cannot restrict a person from his own personal beliefs and an attitude...What you call 'freedom' is related with Westerners' attitudes. I do not accept it completely. On the other hand, still we have seeing that there are some journalists who are totally sided. Actually we can see such partisanship in abroad. But this is not good trend for our country. (personal interview, May 24, 2011, p. 2).

To sum up, all participants have forwarded their views of freedom of journalists. With some commonalities and differences they have reflected their important ideas that would help us to understand their current situation. To some extent journalists from the government radios focus on the individual journalist's responsibility; and the private ones are more interested on the external factors that intervene in the works of journalists.

#### **4.4 Media Laws and The Broadcasting Regulatory Body**

This section deals with the attitude of journalists toward the current media laws of the country i.e. Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Government Information Proclamation and their relationship with EBA.

##### **4.4.1 Media Laws**

Journalists have been asked about their attitude and awareness with regard to the current media laws, particularly concerning Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Government Information. Mesay, in FM Addis 97.1, strongly believes that:

The proclamation is workable in our context [of the country]. It rather shifts the burden to the journalists. It makes you more responsible. Unless and otherwise you fear the responsibility that imposed by this law, you can possibly do your job by following only your professional principles. As to me, the professional principles by themselves impose you more responsibility than the laws. (personal interview, May 23, 2011, p. 5)

Discussant 1, in the same station, argues that all the proclamations are workable but it should include more articles that push the government officials to open their door not only for the government journalists but also for the private ones (FGD, May 23, 2011).

Sileshi, in Sheger FM 102.1, expresses that they do not worry much about the laws; rather they focus on things that are allowed by the laws. He assures that they can do good journalism by leaving the prohibited issues undone. Their goal is rather creating engagement between the public and government. Additionally they have tried to maximize the opportunities that the society has in order to understand its environment (personal interview, May 30, 2011). According to Discussant 1, “the most difficult thing in relation with the laws is if the news room policies and the laws of the country fail to match with each other. Therefore it would be easy if we make our newsroom editorial policy match with what the laws say” (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 6).

Neither in the government radio nor the private one have participants failed here to express their ideas strongly. Even some of the participants have discussed some issues which are not related directly with legal issue. Some important points have been discussed by the two presidents of journalists’ associations, who have involved and contributed a lot in the discussion of the current laws starting from its draft level.

Thegaliul says that “we can’t say that the law is perfect. Still we are offering some comments to the government that there are some articles in the law which restricts freedom of the media. But it is workable when we look at it from the development level of media and democracy in the country” (personal interview, May 19, 2011). Wondwosen points out that:

First of all the laws should be broad. It should create enabling environment. We have discussed on the law for six years with the government. There are some improvements...But we have still reservations on some issues. The sanction for defamation is excessive...It is from 100-200 thousands birr. This would not encourage journalists...We are not saying that it is totally restrictive, it is workable. It includes some important universal articles. Furthermore it guarantees the editorial rights of journalists. (personal interview, May 24, 2011, p. 10)

#### **4.4.2 Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority**

As discussed above in chapter two, EBA is the media regulatory body of the country. According to Abiyu Mekonnen, Broadcasting Media Inspection and Support Team Coordinator, the 2007 broadcasting service proclamation has given the Authority full mandate to regulate broadcasting services in the country. Based on this, the Authority does inspection to FM radio stations once a year; but he believes it should have been done once a month if it was not for lack of budget and human power (personal interview, April 6, 2011).

There are three major activities that have to be done by the Authority in order to inspect the radio stations: first the Authority has by do inspection to make sure that whether the media are doing their jobs in accordance with the country's laws; second, based on the problems that have been identified during the inspection process, the Authority would arrange some trainings to support the media; and lastly, the Authority makes decisions on complaints by the society following the programs of the radio stations (EBA, 2011b).

Some of its specific criteria are: whether the radio stations have established complaints handling procedures; whether the program producers are real; technical issues; and ethical issues in advertising. Every broadcasting transmission in the country is listened and recorded for six months by the Authority if in case complaints arise. For this purpose the authority has imported and installed modern monitoring receiver which is found only in very few African countries (personal interview, April 6, 2011).

Regarding their relationship with FM radios, Abiyu says that “the radio stations are not cooperative. Even they have no chair for us to sit whenever we went there. But now, he says, there are improvements. We are supportive of them” (personal interview, April 6, 2011, p. 2)

In contrary, Mesay and Sileshi, both in government and private media, have forwarded their opinions. Mesay says that there is no strong relation between them. They rarely communicate, and that only when some problems occur. Sileshi points out that they are working with the Authority in a constructive way as much as they can do. They have broadcasting principles which is called ‘constructive engagement’. By ‘constructive engagement’ they mean creating good relationship with the government or the regulatory body of the media. They do not want to have confrontational stance toward them. However, sometimes because of lack of experience in all parties involved in broadcasting service, some problems have been arising. The Authority accuses Sheger in its parliamentary report in 2011. However, Sileshi says the regulatory bodies themselves “are not confident to say that they know all the broadcasting journalism genres and formats and linguistic structures”. They failed many times. Therefore he has recommended that as long as the broadcasting services, especially the private one is newly coming, there should be supportive relationship from the government (personal interview May 23, 2011 & May 30, 2011, p. 4).

#### **4.4.3 Expansion of Broadcasting Media**

Broadcasting media have showing improvements in a country since 2007 following the issuance of the 1999 broadcasting service proclamation. Licensing has been given to the radio stations through competition, according to Ayalew Getaneh, Mass Media Expansion Work Process Director. Some of the criteria to the competitors are: capital, human power, program type, language, area of coverage with transmission hour and the like (personal interview, April 26, 2011). Additionally there is a broadcasting services directive for commercial radios. This directive sets out all involved parties with their duties and responsibilities in the licensing process (MOI, 2008). However, the expansion is limited to FM radios and some regional government’s television station and community radios.

Sileshi says that, in Ethiopia there are significant structural changes in media. Diversity of ownership with private proprietors has become real. But it is still limited to FM radios. Even the FM radios itself are with limited geographical area of coverage except Fana radio. Moreover, he emphasizes that the government controlled television. The government would not allow television ownership for private individuals until the next five years because of unknown reasons (personal interview, June 20, 2011).

Wondwosen considers that the area of broadcasting service is very sensitive. It is in infant level. It needs careful attention. Always there is a competition between private media. However, the other thing which has to be considered is commercialization. He asserts that the current FM radios are usually focused on entertainment to gain profit.

## **4.5 Political Reporting Constraints**

In this section major constraints of journalists, identified by them, in doing political reporting are discussed. Political reporting here refers any form of political news and interviews, commentaries, political campaigns and debates and the like in broadcast radios as noted in chapter one.

### **4.5.1 Political Issues Identified**

Political issues refer here areas of reporting that have been categorized by the journalists as politics in their routine reporting process. Participants, in FM Addis 97.1, have listed issues that they consider as political. Mesay distinguishes some specific areas of political reporting. In fact, he admits that usually their reporting depends upon events, but they also sometimes do serious political reporting. Political party activities in general and election, political party debates, meetings of the ruling party, anniversary of EPRDF and TPLF in particular are main areas of their reporting. Good governance is also the other political issue for them; “If there is power abuse by the public officials, we would investigate it in the form of news or program whether the official is civil servant or politicians” (personal interview, May 23, 2011, p. 4).

The other informant Discussant 4, in the same station, explains that any issue from federal government whether it is from Prime Minister Office or House of Peoples' of Representative should be taken as political. International relations and foreign relation are also political reporting areas (FGD, May 23, 2011).

In contrast, the private journalists do not have such specification for political issues. Sileshi offers his idea of political issues in an obscure way. He says that anything is politics. "Which thing is not politics?" he asks. However, he has tried to be specific in that he considers election as the main political issue (personal interview, June 20, 2011). In the same way, Discussant 1 says that the selection of issues depends on events, for instance, the Prime Minister speech or the opening of the parliament. The other discussant says the basic criterion is that how it is important or urgent to the public (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 6).

We can see that the journalists, in FM Addis 97.1, are aware of categorization of political issues as discussed above. In this regard the private radio journalists including the Executive Producer have not discussed 'what political issues [for them] are?' in detail.

### **The 2010 Election**

One of the major political issues that have been identified by the informants above is election. Participants have been asked to their experience of the 2010 national and regional election. For his expertise the key informant Ermiyas Assefa, V/Chairman of NEBE, has forwarded some points regarding the election process and media participation. He says that first the board has prepared 'the Code of Conduct for the Mass Media and Journalists on the Manner of Reporting about Elections Regulation Number 6/2010'. This code of conduct has been approved with the consensus of journalists themselves. Next the board has given training about election reporting to all types of media. Then the board has given journalists permission to report the election process. By collaborating with the EBA the free air time and columns have been allocated to all political parties based on some formula. Finally they all have done balanced and fair reporting of the contest of political parties and Election Day, accordingly (personal interview, May 24, 2011).

In the 2010 election, the private radio journalists have more suffered in keeping balance between the ruling party and the opposition. Moreover, discerning actual facts among fictitious stories which have been released by unknown sources is major problem to them. Discussant 1 says “as individual there was no problem. But as a radio station which has great recognition by the public, keeping neutrality was very challenging”. As a matter of fact, the journalists generally are satisfied with their experience of election reporting. They have been involved in the discussion of the Code of Conduct for the Mass Media and Journalists on the Manner of Reporting about Elections Regulation arranged by NEBE (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 6).

Journalists, in government radio, explain that they have done their election reporting by following the directives and code of conduct of election reporting issued by NEBE. They further express that they have investigated whether there were complaints from contesting parties and whether there was unfair pressure on the public. As a constraint, Discussant 1 outlines that the perception of the people in the ground was not welcoming. Many people consider the government journalists as any civil servant, not as professional journalists. That was the most difficult thing for them. According to this discussant, however, they do not play fully in the field that has been given by the government. Apart from this, the 2010 election was peaceful and quiet for them when it is compared with the 2005 election (FGD, May 23, 2011).

As radio stations, both Sheger M 102.1 and FM Addis 97.1 radios have covered the election process and political parties neutrally. The quantitative and qualitative data of EBA shows that not only the two radios, but also other broadcasting media including Ethiopian television have covered the election process in a neutral way in their news reporting (EBA, 2011a).

## **4.5.2 Major Areas of Constraints of Journalists in Reporting Politics**

### **4.5.2.1 Journalists-Politicians Relationships**

Journalists in government and private media have different relationship with politicians-government officials and political party leaders or members. The relationship between government journalists and government officials is better than the private ones. But there is weak relationship between the government journalists and the opposition political parties. Journalists

in private radio are in between. Keeping balanced relationship with both the government officials and the oppositions is challenging for them.

Journalists, in FM Addis 97.1, are usually trying to make balance of their coverage of political parties. They try to create two ways of communication. As the matter of fact, sometimes, the political parties themselves might be involved in the discussion that has been arranged by the station. That is good opportunity for the journalists. But usually journalists follow the press conference prepared by the political parties. Occasionally the journalists purposely do report by themselves. The journalists are trying to balance their report not only between the oppositions and the ruling party; but also between what the ruling party says and the public responses.

Discussant 1 explains that he has had the chance to talk with some opposition party leaders off the record. He says that many of them told to him they knew he “would present this information by cutting and pasting”; on the other day they said “you did as we say” (FGD, May 23, 2011).

According to Discussant 5, some opposition party leaders are optimistic whether for government or private media. Explaining this, he says, they considered the activities of the media as constructive to the country’s development and democratization process. However, there are also some politicians who give journalists destructive issues. When such issues are cut by the station, they complain a lot. But the issues might disgrace individuals or put down national dignity. Some other still may want to transmit insult through media which is totally unethical (Ibid).

Regarding this, the informants in Sheger FM 102.1 radio consider that they have good relationship either with the ruling party or the oppositions. Sileshi, for example, says “nobody has complained about our coverage of the 2010 election. The NEBE itself wrote us letter that shows ‘we had done balanced reporting’. No party has complained that their saying has been omitted. Even if we missed some of their announcements, they haven’t complained about it because we give them reason. Additionally, they trust us,” (personal interview, June 20, 2011, p. 6).

Unlike the Executive Producer, Discussant 5 in the same station says that “everything is like walking on blade of knife. The parties lobby us and want us to transmit their saying only. If the

oppositions consider our news biased to the ruling party they stop communication with us. The government, on the other hand, keeps us under surveillance, if our news coverage seems inclined to the oppositions” (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 5).

Discussant 1 in his part says they are always in-between. Even the sound quality of their presentation would be considered. Otherwise it would create mess. They do report based on objectivity. However, they do not make the political public sphere sensational for the sake of objectivity. They focus on the national consensus. Their reports are neutral. As a result they have close relationship with both the ruling and opposition parties (Ibid).

#### **4.5.2.2 Access to Government Information**

Regarding access to government information in political reporting, journalists in FM Addis 97.1 have faced some common problems. The first problem is that getting the government officials in their office is difficult. Most often they have been in meetings or field works. They do not give journalists enough time because they are loaded with lot of works. However, the works of the journalists are time bounded; they usually went there with their plan, according to informants. Moreover the officials sometimes may hold information for a long period of time. Discussant 4, says “sometimes we challenge them. Based on our right in the constitution, we tell them that they have the responsibility to give us the public information. Otherwise they make you bored” (FGD, May 23, 2011).

Discussant 5 explains that the problem is not only from the officials, it is also due to the management of their station. The management should have arranged many appointments with the ranking officials, but it is not doing that. That is the failure of the media institution. On the other hand, he expresses that there is underestimation of reporters in part of the officials. This is another problem for the journalists. They do not consider them as professional. Especially on issues related with foreign relations they usually do report by receiving information from the third party. They are not allowed to attend the event by themselves. But, foreign journalists are eligible (Ibid).

Most of the informants, in Sheger FM 102.1 radio, say that many politicians and government officials do not give them information because they are ‘private media journalists’. The government officials give primary attention to the government journalists. Some officials have fear to give them information. “Even we ourselves fear to use information which is highly criticizing the government. We fear for our station”. However, the most difficult thing for them is that many of the officials give them distorted and biased information. As a result they do not trust anyone. The sources always tell them only the good image of their institution. Sorting out the actual fact is another work for them (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 7).

Tsegaliul and Wondwosen ascertain that many of the officials’ doors are closed to journalists either from the government or private media. The good thing which they acknowledge is that the issuance of “access to information act”. However, there are still problems of getting the officials directly by the journalists. Many of the government institutions release information only through public relations sections. “Why not the government officials themselves contact the journalists directly?” they ask (personal interview, May 19, 2011 & May 24, 2011).

#### **4.5.2.3 Political Intervention and Proprietor Influence**

The issue of political intervention in FM Addis 97.1 radio is controversial for the discussants. Some informants say that there is a political intervention whether it is directly or indirectly. Others say, in spite of the fact that sometimes the government officials might intervene due to issues related with national security and external relations, they consider themselves as free and independent.

Mesay assures that they commonly do their jobs based on their weekly editorial meetings. Nobody is involved in the meetings, other than the journalists. But sometimes they might discuss issues with their director and other deputy directors (personal interview, May 23, 2011, p. 4). Discussant 4 expresses that:

Before political intervention, the basic problem for us is that the image in the audience. They consider our job as reading what the government wrote to us. They have no idea about what we do. But every activity here is planned. We plan news and other programs

based on the editorial policy and program formats of the station...On the other hand any report of development activities done by the government is taken as politics...But we don't that much report politics. There are many other professional programs that we do. (FGD, May 23, 2011, p. 9)

However, with some common stands, the other informants do not agree with Mesay and Discussant 4. According to Discussant 1, "the station is one of the voices of the government. Therefore, the media are its property. Once the government has announced its yearly plan in September by the President, we would receive the plan and follow their achievements. This is must. We agree once when we joined the organization. We have no option". The other informant Discussant 5, a Deputy Producer with three years of experience in the station, says:

As to me, no one would say stop doing this or doing that. Rather the journalists themselves have fear. They fear doing investigative reporting on political issues. There is no such trend here. For example, it is possible to do investigative reporting on a corrupted official by exposing him/her to the public. But we are doing nothing, because we fear. (FGD, May 23, 2011, p. 10)

This is indirect intervention for Discussant 2. He says that "there is no intervention directly, but there is an indirect one that we do by ourselves. We knew the constitution, strategies and policies and interests of the government; what looks like our external relations and what the security issues of the country, so we do some adjustment with these assumptions in our jobs" (Ibid, p. 9).

On the other extreme the private FM radio journalists seems enjoying much freedom in their professional autonomy than the government ones. They are free from any interference as they express in the discussion. They have been asked whether commercial interest of the owners have affected their jobs. All respondents agree that they have independence and there is no any interference.

Discussant 4 says that "in any case the station is protecting us from any influence either from our customers or other sections of the station. We have newsroom freedom in that no one would contact us without our Executive Producer's permission. We don't give unfair news coverage for

any organization, unless and otherwise we agree on the issue in the editorial meetings” (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 2).

However, Tsegaliul argues that even the private radios themselves are not free from their proprietor interest. Oftentimes, they reflect the interests of their owners. There is more influence in the private radios than the government ones. As government media journalists, he says, they have relative freedom, but they do not use it properly. But he does not deny that there are some serious issues which are untouchable by them in the government media (personal interview, May 19, 2011).

#### **4.5.3 The Gains and Losses of Working in Government/Private Media**

Working for the government or private media may have its own advantages and disadvantages to the journalists. In this section the journalists have outlined what they gain and lost in their stations. According to journalists, in FM Addis 97.1, the most advantage of working in government media is that there are sufficient infrastructural supplies and a lot of human power with various professional experiences. There are chances to share experience and do different forms of programs. Mesay says that “ERTA is now more than 80 years old. It is old enough for experience sharing. It is one of the huge institutions in the country,” (personal interview, May 23, 2011, p. 6).

Serving the public is the other major benefit for journalists as mentioned by Discussant 5. There is a chance to educate and entertain the public. In another way there is agenda setting role to mobilize the society. That would help journalists to create familiarity with the society. In contrast to the ideas that they mentioned above in the discussion of access to government information; other participants point out that they have easy access to get government information and officials than the private ones. Moreover, Discussant 1 has identified that there is a great opportunity to know government’s policies and strategies either in formal or informal ways. (FGD, May 23, 2011).

Concerning the disadvantages of working in the government media, all the informants have agreed that there is no financial benefit in the government media. However, most of the

participants have not been willing to discuss more disadvantages in the station, except Discussant 1. Discussant 1 confidently says that:

There are a lot of things which I lost here, but the basic problem for me is the management...Like other governmental institutions, there are similar problems here in the government media...There is inefficiency in part of the management. Due to managerial problems, the institution has lost many professionals. It is difficult for professional journalists to work with managers who are inefficient and simply protect the power of the government without doing anything. They fear risk because they are doing nothing. Such people are the sources of problems in the government organizations. Whenever you tried to confront them, they tag you another name such as 'anti-government', because they have veto power. But you don't have it. Therefore no one would hear you. As a result you might be silent or go to another station. (FGD, May 23, 2011, p. 5)

The most common advantage for all participants in Sheger FM 102.1 radio is professional freedom. They have bad image towards government media. They have assumed that they are free from bureaucracy and government influence which would come following current issues. Additionally, Discussant 2 says "we have the opportunity to get and work with the society closely". According to Discussant 4, their rights are protected in private media. She adds that "even though you are not allowed to say anything you like here because of many situations; there is a chance 'to think'. When I imagine the government media, it is the place where everything is forbidden, even thinking" (FGD, July 15, 2011, p. 2). As a disadvantage, Discussant 3 says they are not doing news timely because the government gives the information for its own media first. They are scooped by the government media.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study is identifying challenges of journalists in reporting politics, both in FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1 radios, and making comparison. To this end, the researcher has used FGD and in-depth interview with journalists and key informants to gather the necessary data. Then the data have been discussed and analyzed by using thematic analysis. As a result the researcher has reached on the following conclusions. The approach to discuss the conclusions is based on each section of the discussion in chapter three.

#### 5.2 Conclusion

##### **Journalists' ideal views of their profession**

In discussing the ideal function of media and of journalists and the government media policy-development journalism in Ethiopia- the government journalists seem to have been of bureaucratic mindset. They are not critical of these controversial professional claims in the country for many years. Many of them accepted this policy without questioning. Even, for some participants questioning the government's media policy might be discouragement of the development of the country. They are highly engaged with the merits and demerits of development journalism. Also, freedom of journalists and of the media has been seen by the government journalists from such perspective.

On the other hand, the private journalists are not totally supportive to government media policy-development journalism; and they are trying to be more professional than the government ones in defining their roles. Rather than focusing on what the government says, concerning the professional duties, they let themselves and their roles be defined professionally. Their argument point is that no one can limit journalism in a specific area- development or other, instead let the

professional act to reflect their own professional ethics and principles which are universal. Their views of freedom of journalists and their role are based on this rationale.

### **Media laws and the broadcasting regulatory body**

Concerning the country's media laws journalists both, in government and private media have agreed that it is workable. But key informants from the journalists' associations have reservation on some articles that would restrict the journalists' freedom.

The relationship among the two FM radios and the Authority seems weak. Lack of broadcasting service experiences results in poor relationship between Sheger FM radio and the Authority. The Authority contacts the radio stations rarely whenever some problems occur, rather than engaging in some other constructive activities and discussions. In fact it arranges on occasions training in legal and ethical issues by collaborating with NGOs and some government organization. It may be said thus, the Authority has a supportive role for the media because it is arranging trainings and some support to these FM radios, even beyond its duties granted by the proclamation. In relation with the expansion of broadcasting media, however, Sheger FM 102.1 has complained about the restriction of television license for private sector. It has been prohibited for five years.

### **Political reporting constraints**

Journalists in FM Addis have had organized news making procedures and clear identification of political issues. The private journalists have failed to do so. The journalists in FM Addis have identified the following major issues as political: election, political party debate, good governance, any issue from federal government, and international and foreign relations. But journalists in Sheger FM have identified only election as main political issue and stated other issues merely as political in the broad sense of the term. They have no organized way of reporting political issues like the journalists in FM Addis due to some infrastructural problems. But they do political reporting whenever political events occurred.

In the May 2010 election both Sheger FM 102.1 and FM Addis 97.1 radios have shown good performance in their reporting. They have done their report in a neutral way. Officials from

NEBE and EBA have assured that the radios cover the election campaigns and Election Day with balanced and fair way. No complaints heard about their reporting either from the ruling or the opposition parties. However, the individual journalists in both FM radios have identified some problems related with their election reporting. The government media journalists have said that there were wrong perceptions of journalists by the society. The society has been not welcoming to them, because they are 'the government journalists'. On the contrary, keeping balanced reporting between the ruling and opposition parties was challenging for the private journalists.

The main obstacle in doing political reporting for the journalist both in FM Addis and Sheger FM radios is their weak relationship with politicians, be they the political party leaders or government officials. Most government officials prefer the government journalists. Oftentimes, they give important information beforehand to them. However, they underestimate journalists. They do not give them respect. On the contrary, many of the opposition party leaders do not like government journalists. As beginner private radio journalists, the informants, in Sheger FM 102.1 radio, have moderate relation with government officials and opposition party leaders. As they say, they are in-between.

Concerning access to government information, journalists in government media have more access than the private ones. But they themselves are facing many problems. The first problem is the deliberate act of delaying information from many government offices. This is creating greater impact on their deadline oriented reporting. The other problem identified by the journalists is that there are some ranking officials who should be contacted through the media management in order to give interview and make programs; but the management failed to do so. Likewise, most officials should have contacted journalists directly, but usually they release information through the public relations experts. The other problem is that they are not eligible to many of the issues in foreign relation activities. Rather the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives privilege to foreign journalists. The common problem to Sheger FM 102.1 radio's journalists is that many officials are reluctant to give them information. That is because they are 'private radio journalists'. The other problem is that they commonly receive distorted and biased information, so sorting out the facts is another burden to them.

Lacking professional freedom is another constraint for the government media journalists than the private ones in doing political reporting. Especially, if the issues are more serious, there might be direct intervention by the government officials. Many of the journalists do self-censorship. However, they have autonomy in their routine reporting process as institution. They do their works based on their plan and weekly editorial meetings. In this regard, journalists, in Sheger FM 102.1 radio are professionally independent. Moreover they are protected by their newsroom Producer from any interference either by the interests of their owner or customer.

### **The gains and losses of working in government/private radio**

The most important advantages of working in government media are: professional experience, public service, knowledge of government policies and strategies and easy access to ranking government officials. Managerial problems and lack of financial benefit are the two main problems of the journalists working in government media. The major advantage working in private radio station is professional freedom and the opportunity to work with the local society. Lack of government information is its disadvantage.

### **5.3 Implication**

As discussed above, the constraints of journalists in doing political reporting cause from some external and internal factors. Among the external factors government officials and politicians take the lion share. Journalists both in FM Addis and Sheger FM radio have facing different constraints in their political reporting. Apart from their capacity and ownership differences, however, they share some common problems which results from withholding of information by the government officials, government intervention directly or indirectly and mistrust of journalists by the politicians.

Lack of professional competence, self-censorship, poor management and others are the internal factors that have been manifested within the journalists themselves. Furthermore, it has been understood that the extent to which the government and private media journalists are affected by these problems vary a lot. The in-depth interviews with key informants such as the presidents of journalists' associations and officials from EBA and NEBE show that there is lesser

understanding of these gaps and little efforts has been made to reduce it. Unless and otherwise the government, politicians and journalists themselves try to minimize these gaps together, political polarization like that of the history of print media would be the trend among the private and government broadcasting journalists. The development of broadcasting journalism, especially FM radios, would be slow and unhealthy.

Therefore, this study comes to close by recommending: a) to enhance professionalism by expanding ethical and knowledge based journalism by the academia; b) to expand the political public sphere that would create enabling environment for the journalists by the government; c) to improve the relationship between journalists and politicians by developing confidence and impartiality and by being free from any form of influence on the part of the journalists while politicians on their parts should be supportive to the journalists; d) to improve the qualities of management by the media institutions; and e) to make necessary revisions of professional act and similar other laws by policy makers. Finally, any researcher interested to pursue further in this area may take up examine in detail any one aspect of the journalists' constraints that have been identified by this study.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Guide for the FGD and In-Depth Interview Participants**

#### **Journalists' Ideal Views of Their Profession**

1. What should be the role of media and of journalists in Ethiopia in relation to the government policy of development journalism?
2. To what extent journalists should be free in Ethiopia? What do we mean when we say journalists are free?

#### **Media Laws and the Broadcasting Regulatory Body**

3. What do you think about the current media laws of the country? What positive and negative impact it have on your jobs?
4. What looks like your relationship with EBA?
5. How do you explain the expansion of broadcasting media especially FM radios in Ethiopia?

#### **Political Reporting Constraints**

6. How do explain your news making process?
7. What are political issues for you? How do you select them?
8. What are the challenges and opportunities of election reporting?
9. What looks like your reporting of the 2010 election?
10. How do you describe your relationship with politicians-government officials and political party leaders and members?
11. What are the major problems for you regarding access to government information?
12. What looks like the government/the proprietor intervention on your work?

#### **The Gains and Losses of Working in Government/Private Media**

13. What are the gains and losses of working in government/private media?

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Guide for Key Informants in EBA**

#### **General questions**

1. How do you explain about the expansion of broadcasting and of FM radios in the country?
2. What looks like the current status of the FM radios?
3. What are the main functions of the FM radios?
4. How do you supervise the FM radios?

#### **Specific questions about FM Addis 97.1 and Sheger FM 102.1**

5. What looks like your relationship with the two FM radios?
6. How do you explain the 2010 election report of the two FM radios?
7. How do you explain the level of awareness and understanding of the current media laws by the journalists both in government and private radios?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Guide for Key Informant of the Vice Chairman of NEBE**

1. What looks like the contribution of media in general in the 2010 election?
2. What looks like the contribution of government and private FM radios in particular in the 2010 election?
3. How do you explain the relationship between NEBE and the media during the 2010 election?
4. Have you ever seen biased report by the FM radios?
5. What do you think about the challenges and opportunities of election report for the journalists?
6. Are there any complaints from journalists about the code of conduct for the journalists to report election?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Interview Guide for Key Informants of EJA and EFJA**

1. What should be the role of media and of journalists in Ethiopia in relation to the government policy of development journalism?
2. To what extent journalists should be free in Ethiopia? What do we mean when we say journalists are free?
3. As association how do you see the current political public sphere of the country in which media are functioning in relation to freedom of expression?
4. How do you explain the development of broadcasting media in Ethiopia?
5. What are the major complaints raised by the journalists regarding their political issues reporting?
6. How do you explain the current status of the private and government FM radios?
7. What are the strength and weak sides of the current media laws?
8. What is the contribution of the association to the development of the profession?

## APPENDIX E

### Participants of FGD in FM Addis 97.1 (a)\*

No.	Discussants	Sex	Year of Experience	Educational Background	Current Position
1	Discussant 1	M	3 years and 4 months	Economics	Senior Reporter
2	Discussant 2	M	3 years and 6 months	Economics	Editor
3	Discussant 3	M	2 years and 8 months	Geography	Deputy Producer
4	Discussant 4	M	15 years	Law	Producer
5	Discussant 5	M	2 years and 8 months	History	Deputy Producer

\* The discussants are selected out of 14 members of the newsroom. One of the 14 members is the Deputy Director who has been interviewee for in-depth interview.

### Participants of FGD in Sheger FM 102.1 (b)\*

No.	Discussants	Sex	Year of Experience	Educational Background	Current Position
1	Discussant 1	M	2 years	Journalism	Reporter
2	Discussant 2	M	4 years	Bus. Adm.	Reporter
3	Discussant 3	F	1 year	PSIR	Reporter
4	Discussant 4	F	1 year	Literature	Reporter
5	Discussant 5	M	1 year	Economics	Reporter

\* The discussants are selected out of 11 members of the newsroom. One of the 11 members is the Executive Producer who has been interviewee for in-depth interview

## APPENDIX F

### List of Interviewee for In-Depth Interview

1. **Messay Wendmeneh**: Deputy Director of FM Addis 97.1. May 23, 2011
2. **Sileshi Tesema**: Executive Producer of News and Information of Sheger FM 102.1. May 30, 2011

## APPENDIX G

### List of Key Informants

1. **Abiyu Mekonnen:** Broadcasting Media Inspection and Support Team Coordinator. April 6, 2011
2. **Ayalew Getaneh:** Mass Media Expansion Work Process Director. April 26, 2011
3. **Ermiyas Assefa:** Vice Chairman of NEBE. May 24, 2011
4. **Tsegaliul Woldekidan:** Vice President of EJA, journalist. May 19, 2011
5. **Wondwossen Mekonnen:** President of EFJA, journalist. May 24, 2011