

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

CREATE A CONDUCTIVE MEDIA POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The general principles contained in a media policy are directly required to guide the decisions of authorities, especially the government of Lesotho, about the functioning of the media. At the same time, a conducive legislative framework would allow the media to operate more freely and effectively.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO GUARANTEE MEDIA FREEDOM

Press freedom is only implicitly protected under Article 14 (1) of Lesotho's Constitution (1993), which guarantees freedom of expression. In line with international best practice, Lesotho should introduce a constitutional provision explicitly guaranteeing media freedom to ensure robust protection of the press.

MEDIA VIABILITY

EQUALLY DISTRIBUTE GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING AMONG MEDIA HOUSES

Government should not directly advertise with media houses. Rather, it should channel advertising through private and independent advertising agencies, which in turn, distribute ads based on a clear criteria such as coverage (reach) and listenership (readership).

MEDIA PROFESSIONALISATION

INCORPORATE MEDIA TRAINING AT REGISTRATION

Media houses should be bound by law to present training plans at registration indicating how they will build the capacity of their employees. In-house trainings are key to developing professional and ethical journalists.

MEDIA REGULATION

Background information:

Lesotho lacks an industry-wide framework that regulates both print and electronic media: currently, only TV and radio are covered by the Broadcasting Disputes Resolution Panel. Print media consumers have no means of lodging a complaint except through the courts. At the same time, Lesotho's media has a reputation for being unethical and lacking editorial independence.

MEDIA REGULATION

CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE MEDIA REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The establishment of governing principles and code of ethics for media practitioners, editors and proprietors could help improve media quality and professionalism.

MEDIA REGULATION

ESTABLISH A PRESS COUNCIL AND OMBUDSMAN

A National Media Council and National Press Ombudsman regulating both print and electronic media would provide a credible complaint mechanism for media content consumers outside of the courts. Suing in court for exorbitant damages has a chilling effect on Lesotho's surviving newspapers and magazines.

MEDIA REGULATION

DEVELOP A CO-REGULATORY MEDIA SYSTEM

Government and the media industry should cooperate to develop a co-regulatory media system that brings together both voluntary and statutory regulatory systems. A co-regulatory system would allow for state's intervention in case of failure of self-regulation.