



Guatemala

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Financially Viable Media in Emerging and Developing Markets

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Country Report

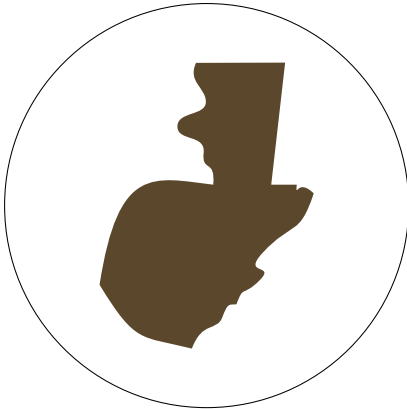


Table 9: Guatemala Country Data

Data type	2010 (e)
Population	13.8 million
Literacy rate	74%
Per capita GDP	\$5,200
Urban/rural population	40/60%
Official language	Spanish
Landline telephone connections	1.4 million
Mobile phone connections	17.5 million
Internet penetration in %	15%

Sources: World Bank Development Indicators and other World Bank statistics, UN Population Information Network, Budde Communications Inc, International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Executive Summary

With a vibrant, young population, an emerging middle class, and the largest economy in the region, Guatemala offers an attractive setting for the development of innovative models of journalism. Guatemala's culture is diverse, cosmopolitan, and multilingual. At the same time, its local media have been eager to experiment with multiple platforms and to develop new products to reach new readers. Guatemalans utilize more than 17.5 million active mobile lines, 5 million television sets, and the largest number of Internet connections in the region; 90 percent of the country has radio coverage, and be-

tween 450,000 and 500,000 newspaper copies are printed daily. All of these factors position Guatemala as an impressive potential media market over the next decade.

But in order to prosper economically, Guatemalan media must identify new financial instruments that will allow them to grow and compete and overcome the lack of angel investors, security concerns, weak institutions, and endemic corruption. The media must also help the country overcome legal impunity and disregard for the rule of law if it is to serve the advancement of Guatemalan democracy.

Country Indices: Guatemala



Political & Regulatory

Electoral democracy, multiparty system; next elections scheduled for September 2011

1996 Peace Accord ended three-decade long internal armed conflict; reconciliation process halted

Weak government and institutions under influence of powerful clandestine security organizations and organized gangs that operate with impunity

Political situation has had chilling effect on the press; journalists and human rights activists threatened and targeted

No restrictions on media ownership (including foreign ownership); media market highly concentrated; major four television stations owned by one man; print media ownership concentrated among three groups

Freedom of expression guaranteed by constitution; press freedom undermined by media-specific regulation

2010 Access to Public Information Law lifted whistleblowers' protection by criminalizing any leaks of "classified information"



Economy & Market

World Bank ranks Guatemala as a lower middle income economy

GDP per capita US\$5,200; GINI highest in Latin America; 0.003 Guatemalans own about 50% of country's total bank deposits

Global economic crisis had negative consequences on media viability

With 1.7 million Guatemalan expats, remittances are seen as part of national income

Frequency spectrum privately administered since 1996

Over 2,750 community radio stations, majority unlicensed, pending Community Media Law before Congress

Distribution system outsourced and loyal to dominant media groups; many newspapers own their own printing presses

Newspaper market: 25 websites offering local news and content, 6 major dailies, 2 (owned by the same company) with circulation of 450,000 to 500,000 copies per day



Social

13.8 million people, 43% indigenous

Over 50% of population live in poverty, over 15% in extreme poverty, majority of whom are indigenous peoples

50% work-force receive below-minimum wage; child labor widespread

Literacy rate: second highest in the Americas after Haiti, though illiteracy rates among youth are quickly dropping

More than 23 distinct indigenous languages; 2 critically endangered, major 4 spoken by more than 3 million people

Majority indigenous population learn to write and read in Spanish only

Media programming in indigenous languages rare

Religion an important part of Guatemalan society



Media & New Technologies

Radio almost universal – 90% reach

17.5 million active mobile lines

5 million analog television sets

15% of population use the Internet; Internet widely available but access limited due to high costs

Mobile text (SMS) affordable and used as a news platform

1. The Guatemala Economy and Newspaper Conditions

Guatemala is the largest country in Central America, a lower-middle income developing country with a population of 13.8 million. The economy is predominantly agricultural; more than half the country's labor force is engaged in farming. The contribution of the farming and livestock sectors to the national GDP is 23.5 percent and represents 83 percent of the total exports. Leading exports include coffee, sugar, bananas, winter vegetables, cut flowers, and textiles.

Guatemala's wealth is distributed in a highly inequitable manner. The GINI coefficient (measuring inequality) is among the highest (53.7) in Latin America (UNDP, 2009). Poverty predominantly affects indigenous communities and those living in rural areas. Of the population, 50.9 percent live below the poverty line, and 15.2 percent live in extreme poverty (National Institute for Statistics, 2006). The poorest quintile of the population receives only 1.9 percent of the total national income. On top of it, 50.1 percent of workers currently receive a salary that is below the legally established minimum wage (National Institute for Statistics, 2006), and the cost of the basic food basket is higher than the minimum salary by both local and international standards (ICTS, 2010). The monthly wage for a retail worker is less than US\$200.

The economic elite consists of some 150 families clustered into five major holding groups, which are diversified and currently richer than ever before. As the country with the highest number of private planes and helicopters per capita in Central America, Guatemala is also the country with the highest rate of women dying from unresolved complications in pregnancy due to lack of affordable transportation to a health center. More than half the population (approximately 6.5 million) earns less than US\$2 per

day, whereas 0.003 percent of Guatemalans own 50 percent of the country's total bank deposits (Menkos, Saiz & Eva, 2009: 2).

Guatemalan communications systems are connected to the Network Access Point of the Americas through three independent submarine cables and through land cables to Mexico. With three carriers and up to 19 Internet service providers, Guatemalan Internet usage is on the rise. About 15 percent of the population have access to the Internet, and the numbers are expected to increase with the introduction of smart phones (Andrade, 2010) and affordable Internet devices to rural areas (ITU, 2008). Telecommunications infrastructure is good, and mobile penetration brings connectivity to even the most remote areas of the country through wireless and satellite technology.

Guatemala's print journalism market is constrained by illiteracy. The country has the second highest rate of illiteracy in the Americas after Haiti (UNDP, 2009), though illiteracy rates among youth are quickly dropping (CONALFA, 2009). Improved literacy is leveraging the impact of increased Internet penetration. Entrepreneurship and affordable e-commerce solutions are opening doors for entry-level, low-budget small businesses. The Internet promises the long-awaited prospect of opportunity for all Guatemalans regardless of race or social standing through universal connectivity at affordable prices.

However, poor governance and corruption (OECD, 2010), lack of infrastructure maintenance, and concentration of media ownership pose serious obstacles to such progress. While the most advanced sector, telecommunications, is fully deregulated, media ownership in urban areas remains extremely concentrated, primarily in the hands of one man: Mex-

ican businessman Ángel González. González owns all four of Guatemala's private television stations (Press Reference, 2007). Due to government licensing fees and a singular spectrum regulation (explained in the Media Law and Regulations section of this chapter), it remains prohibitively expensive to operate independent radio stations in most regions.

The Guatemalan government has stated its commitment to expanding Internet connectivity, yet until recently little progress had been made. Only 4 percent of the current government budget is devoted to science and technology; less than 1 percent of the GDP is invested in overall research and development (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2007).

Approximately 1.7 million Guatemalan expatriates live in the United States (an estimated 60 percent of them lack legal status), with smaller communities in Mexico, Canada, Central Europe, and other Central American countries. Remittances sent to family on a regular basis by increasing numbers of Guatemalans who work abroad have become part of a sustained micro-macro economic process that helps satisfy the basic needs of recipient families. The Internet has facilitated bonds between Guatemalan immigrant communities in the United States with their home villages through online newspapers and social media pages.

The recent economic downturn had a major impact on emerging media, as newspapers and advertising agencies went back to more-traditional practices and clients reduced their budgets. But Guatemala's larger problem is the lack of pluralistic media to connect citizens and influence public policies. That is the real challenge: to create the conditions to make local media financially viable and diverse.

2. Political Overview

Guatemala is a constitutional democratic republic. The president is elected by popular vote every four years, as are other governmental authorities. The Peace Accords signed in 1996 ended more than three decades of conflict that had left a fragmented society and a militarized state responsible for massive human-rights abuses. Guatemala's government has long perpetuated social inequalities and systematically excluded and persecuted indigenous peoples.

The media cannot be isolated from this violent past. Only a few decades ago, during the 1980s, the government discouraged the Guatemalan news media from extensive reporting on the war. There were "invisible" words such as "guerrilla" that rarely appeared in the news media (Garrard-Burnett, 2010: 163), and violence was reported without naming the perpetrators. Following the signing of the accords, the transition to a more democratic and egalitarian society has been complex. Minimal progress has been made in fulfilling the articles of the Peace Accords regarding human rights and improving the socioeconomic situation. This situation is compounded by the internationalization of organized crime, drug trafficking, corruption, and kidnapping; organized gangs operate with complete impunity and have assumed effective control over many areas of the country. All of these factors have a direct effect on the news media, including a pervasive atmosphere of threats and violence against journalists.

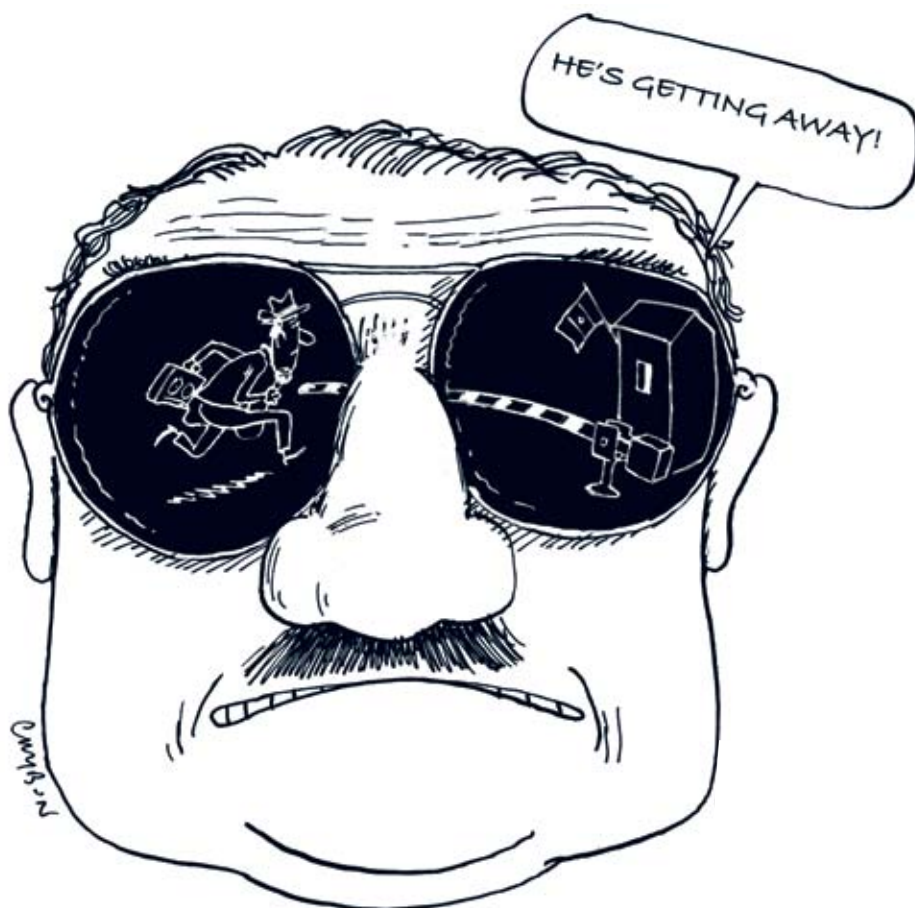
Guatemalan institutions are unable to address this rampant violence due to a lack of resources, intimidation, corruption, and infiltration by illegal and clandestine security organizations. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions famously stated, "Guatemala is a good place to commit a murder, because you will almost certainly get away with it"

(Alston, 2007: 17). President Alvaro Colom was elected in 2007, representing a coalition of political forces from the left and the right with a "social democracy" emphasis. However, the government remains weak, and little progress has been made toward promoting accountability and to bringing human rights perpetrators to justice. Human-rights defenders continue to be the targets of threats, and clandestine security organizations still operate with impunity.

Corruption remains a serious problem at many levels of government. In recent years the government has flaunted international criminal law, committed extrajudicial executions, and conducted forced evictions of impoverished citizens. Guatemala's compromised judiciary, which should serve as a check on violence and cor-

ruption, only exacerbates these problems.

National elections are scheduled to take place in September 2011 and may turn bloody. Media outlets will face challenges to cover the process. Their financial fragility makes them vulnerable to becoming electoral vehicles, or, even worse, instruments of criminal networks, as is already occurring in some regions. The government has made some progress. With international help, several high-profile officials and former leaders have been arrested, including a former president, various former high-ranking officers, and individuals of influence. Prosecutors and police are learning new counter-crime techniques that can help to break the wall of impunity (International Crisis Group, 2010).



3. Socio-demographic Overview

Much of Guatemala's poverty is concentrated among its rural and indigenous populations (World Bank, 2009). An indigenous woman is three times more likely to die during childbirth or pregnancy than a nonindigenous woman. Indigenous regions' rates of primary school completion are half those in the capital region. Child labor is common: as many as 31 percent of all children under the age of 14 work, and in rural areas, many children start working between the ages of 7 and 10.

Guatemala is a religious, conservative country with a dwindling Catholic population and a profusion of Protestant evangelical sects whose

adherents are found among all major ethnic groups (Elder, 2005) and political parties. Many indigenous Catholics and some Protestants also practice some form of indigenous spiritual ritual (U.S. State Department, 2009). Religion plays an important role in Guatemalan society. As the political parties become fragmented and disappear, the political void is being filled by religious groups, who use new media technologies in surprisingly effective ways to engage citizens, raise funds, and promote their print publications and broadcasts. There are no exact numbers, but it is understood that the Bible has been translated into more indigenous languages and formats than has the national

Constitution, and religious groups are experimenting with audiobook broadcasts via community radio.

Guatemala's indigenous population struggles to preserve its cultural heritage. According to UNESCO, there are more than 23 vulnerable languages, 2 of them critically endangered. Four other languages are spoken by a significant percentage of the population: Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', K'iché, and Mam (UNESCO, 2010). These languages are spoken by more than 3 million Guatemalans, but they constitute a population that has little or no access to newspapers, lives in rampant poverty, and has little access to basic services.

4. Media Legal and Regulatory Environment

The Guatemalan legal system both promotes and undermines press freedom. The Guatemalan Constitution guarantees freedom of opinion (Article 35) and freedom of the press (Article 9). The Law on Freedom of Opinion is the most important law regulating freedom of speech. Under this law, no one may be persecuted or harassed for his or her opinions. However, the law stipulates that publications that abuse freedom of expression or thought may be subject to a jury trial or punishment in the following cases: a) printed material that involves treason to the country, b) printed material that this law considers subversive, c) printed material that is damaging to morals, d) printed material that fails to respect private life, and e) printed material containing slander or libel. The law also prohibits the forcible closure of newspapers and the refusal to grant press and/or broadcast licenses to media organizations.

The Law of Freedom of Opinion also explicitly stipulates right of reply or "obligation of media to adhere to the right of reply." Those accused of breaking the law are judged by a jury, and those convicted have the right of appeal. The law makes an exception when the offended party is a government employee or official: if the offending content concerns "purely official acts" related to government work, a "Court of Honor" will judge the case, and the decision will be final and closed to appeal.

If a state of siege is decreed, permitted by the Law of Public Order, journalists must "refrain from publishing anything that might cause confusion or panic" (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 1983).

Media ownership

There are no legal provisions re-

stricting media ownership or requiring the disclosure of media owners. It can be impossible to ascertain who actually owns a given Guatemalan news outlet. The corporate structure for printed media in Guatemala is the stock company or corporation (Sociedad Anónima). The owners of the stocks are protected by anonymity, and it is extremely complicated to pierce the corporate veil.

Before the enactment of the 1996 General Telecommunications Law in Guatemala, the radio waves were owned and licensed by the state following the licensing of radio spectrum model of the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The 1996 radio spectrum deregulation reform privatized the Guatemalan radio spectrum. Owners of the licenses for radio spectrum are allowed to lease, sell, subdivide, or consolidate their titles. The results of the reform have been strongly

Guatemala's Media Market: Who's Reading and Listening?

There are no studies on newspaper reach or demographics. (Even the national literacy statistics rates are out of date; the last were determined in 2002.) There are few objective, serious media studies of quantitative audience measurements of printed and digital media. While there was one verified audit conducted by Verified Audit Circulation a couple of years ago that was sponsored by advertising agencies and media groups, such studies are now too expensive. There is little qualitative research on media; most of the analysis is related to politics, and more concretely to elections. These studies of media's credibility, influence, and impact on different social sectors often seek to debate the media's role in constructing democracy.

positive as can be shown by comparing the growth of the mobile sector in Guatemala with Latin America as a whole (Ibargüen, 2006).

There is no regulatory body that oversees newspapers or licenses that are required to operate newspapers, nor are there any limitations on foreign ownership or foreign content. Media is treated as any other business, and there are no tax privileges for their profits.

Community radio is a major and dynamic force in rural areas. Around 2,500 community radio stations are currently broadcasting without licenses, compared to 250 community radio stations that are properly licensed. The Community Media Law is still pending in Congress (Cultural Survival, 2010). If approved, it will grant a special status to community radios and allow them to broadcast without licenses.

There are no special laws protecting journalists. Relatively few investigative reporters and newsrooms have been specifically targeted by drug-related threats and violence – at least compared to their Mexican

counterparts. One reason for this is that few journalists dare to investigate the country's powerful drug lords. Violence against journalism is fueled by local authorities and other entrenched interests who often retaliate when journalists dare to investigate corruption, misuse of public funds, white-collar crime, and environmental abuses. The restricted media coverage of Guatemala's political violence keeps readers in the dark on the true nature of this violence and does nothing to break this silence (Franzblau, 2008). Real information and credible sources are difficult to obtain.

After more than ten years of discussion, a law was finally passed on September 23, 2009, that allowed Guatemalan citizens access to public information. It was hailed as a step forward for government transparency, but in practice procedures are slow, impractical, and burdensome for journalists. It takes up to 30 days to decide on a public information request; citizens must disclose the purpose of their requests as well as their identity, personal data, address, and telephone number – whether the government of-

fice accepts the request or not. That leaves corrupt officers with a powerful tool against the press: it gives them advance notice and plenty of time to destroy any information in their hands, replace records, and even put pressure on the journalist seeking to uncover corruption. According to the new Access to Public Information Law, the status of whistleblowers changed, criminalizing any leak of "classified information" since late April 2010, when the law came into force. Previously, government leaks were not criminalized, but now any officer disclosing "classified information" to shed light on malfeasance faces criminal and civil prosecution.

5. The Portait of National Media

Impact of new technologies

On January 2010, the Guatemala City daily Prensa Libre launched a new editorial platform. The paper's online team produces multimedia content that includes infographics, edited videos uploaded on YouTube, and breaking news distributed via Twitter. Currently, this is the only news outlet in the country updating content 24 hours a day (Prensa Libre, 2010) and is the most innovative digital platform in the region. The site is far more ambitious than most digital news platforms in middle-income countries. Now, other Guatemalan news companies are testing the waters and searching for a business model. Many of them are experimenting with mobile applications, providing breaking news via SMS-text alerts and inviting listeners to contribute news, comments, and traffic reports that are on read-on-air. It is important to note that Nuestro Diario, part of the same media group, also has an online platform, but it is not as sophisticated as that of Prensa Libre.

In May 2010, Guatemala experienced a volcanic eruption followed by an ash storm, an event that marked the first time SMS was used on a massive scale in Guatemala. Authorities used SMS to communicate with citizens, sending updates and instructions to follow. According to the Government Communications Secretary, it was possible to do so because private companies offered their services free of charge as an exceptional action of corporate social responsibility. However, the carriers' usual price was beyond the reach of the government budget.

The most popular social network in Guatemala is Facebook, followed by YouTube. Other tools, such as Twitter, still have little penetration and few users. People often communicate with SMS, a cheaper medium available to

almost every literate citizen, costing less than US\$1 to send 100 messages to local phones. There are around 25 digital websites producing local news and selling local advertising. Some of them have developed business models attached to their websites, while others are more focused on other topics such as art, culture, the environment, and literature, producing good-quality content that is often spotted by journalists and reproduced in the printed media. Alternative media and local journalists receive incentives and subsidies from the government, which has trained rural journalists and has developed a series of local magazines (See Vivéla Solidaridad Alta Verapaz, 1 (1), 2009). Guatemala has still not made the shift to digital television; when it does, rural areas and low-income families may be negatively affected.

Media industry in transition

Latin American media systems are experiencing a gradual transition from family-owned, partisan media to globalized corporations, conceived primarily as moneymaking enterprises rather than as political tribunes or avenues to power and influence for their ambitious owners (Waisbord, 2002). This trend is borne out in the Guatemalan press. Until recently, media ownership was concentrated in only a few hands and controlled or influenced by a limited circle of actors, but newspapers and news outlets are slowly moving to a more open, pro-business approach. Issues that have been silenced for years, such as news related to mass atrocities during the war, are now reported more freely. Nonetheless, during Guatemala's 2009 political crisis, media played a manipulative role (Schieber, 2010), abandoning a neutral, professional approach to coverage and favoring the dominant elite.



Photos are courtesy of Agence France-Presse (AFP)

Influence of Media Outlets and Journalists

Journalists have limited influence in Guatemalan media due in part to poor education, low standards, and sub-standard working conditions. There is no university degree in journalism, just a technical diploma focused on liberal arts such as philosophy, literature, and public relations. This curriculum fails to meet contemporary needs. Many media outlets have been implicated in scandals for breaching labor laws. Report-

ers who are under professional pressure are highly vulnerable to bribes and manipulation. The average salary of a news reporter is lower than that of a teacher or a sales representative. Working conditions are dangerous and unfavorable for any journalist but especially so for rural journalists, who are underpaid and have limited empirical training and few opportunities to thrive in a local news market.

In small markets and complex political environments such as Guatemala's, owning a newspaper is not as much a financial asset as it is a strategic asset. Press reports are the primary means of disseminating accounts of events and are of the utmost influence on decision makers. Politicians, social scientists, and the middle classes tend to rely on print media coverage of events. Newspapers affect public opinion, and journalists employed by TV or radio stations tend to base their coverage and design their programs in response to print media. Therefore, while radio is the most popular medium, the printed press is what shapes public opinion. The top dailies are Prensa Libre, Nuestro Diario, El Periódico, Siglo XXI, Al Día, and La Hora. All of them are published online, and at least two of them deliver breaking news via SMS services to their subscribers. Prensa Libre and Nuestro Diario, members of the same news group, publish around 430,000 newspapers every day.

The ownership of Guatemalan print media is concentrated among three groups: Casa Editora Prensa Libre, Aldea Global, S.A., and Corporación de Noticias. Casa Editora Prensa Libre, the oldest and dominant player in the market, owns the national newspapers Prensa Libre and Nuestro Diario, printed daily and distributed in more regions than any other media, and it also owns El Quetzalteco, a regional newspaper published three times a week in the second largest city, Quetzaltenango. Its revenues come from advertising, subscriptions, and daily

sales by street vendors. Prensa Libre has a pool of 1,000 advertisers and is the most expensive newspaper in Guatemala both for advertisers and for readers. It shares distribution channels with Nuestro Diario and claims to have one of the most successful financial models in the region, reaching all the urban areas and some of the rural areas in the country. Nuestro Diario is popular among younger and less-educated readers, with attractive visual features in social and sports sections.

Guatemala's economic and intellectual elite reads El Periódico, published by Aldea Global, S.A. It was founded in 1996 (immediately after the Peace Agreement was signed) by a group of Guatemalan journalists who had previously worked for Corporación de Noticias. The paper was created with the financial support of the Media Development Loan Fund. Forty percent of the capital was provided by 135 private individuals, who invested US\$10,000 each, and the other 60 percent was provided by the newspaper workers.

Until 2009, Costa Rica's Grupo Nación from Costa Rica owned around 50 percent of Corporación de Noticias, a group that produced the daily Siglo XXI and the daily Al Día. Its business model encountered financial difficulties and received heavy subsidies from the business sector. In 2009 it was sold to a group of Guatemalan investors. Now, Al Día is the virtual competitor of Nuestro Diario, with improved features such as five regional editions

with local content distributed in rural areas and a careful editorial policy to reduce "yellow press" content on the front page. But further improvements in coverage and distribution will depend on finances. The new managers need approximately US\$1 million to launch a multimedia newsroom but are finding it difficult to raise the capital due to the financial crisis and Guatemala's closed financial system. They have developed other products, such as a free newspaper for young adults in urban areas, but cannot launch it without an infusion of venture capital.

While Central American media markets are small, they offer some attractive prospects. Many remote areas still depend on radio and television, and illiteracy and functional illiteracy are widespread; on the other hand, the combined potential of a youthful population, the Internet, and mobile penetration might change the landscape.

Prices of printed newspapers are affordable and competitive, with prices ranging from US25¢ to 40¢. The dominant newspaper, Prensa Libre, is slightly more expensive (US60¢ on Sundays) but offers a variety of specialized magazines and special reports. At least ten weekly tabloids are independently produced and distributed in different areas, and there are up to 25 digital newspapers focused on local and hyper-local news. Dailies are sold in public spaces, such as street corners, bus stops, and marketplaces, while weekly editions rely on other channels for

their distribution, much of it outsourced to third parties. La Hora, the country's oldest newspaper, has protected its newsboys as employees, but all others have contracted them as service providers.

The most important dailies are printed on their own presses, which also print other weekly or monthly publications, providing an important source of income for most of the news groups. It is important to clarify that neither the paper supply nor the printing industry has concentrated ownership as it used to be in the past. There are more than 150 independent printing companies in Guatemala, and many of them are small, rural, local family-owned enterprises.

All daily and weekly newspapers are printed in color tabloid format. Guatemala has the installed capacities to produce high-quality books and prints and has a diverse pool of small, medium-size and large-scale providers offering such services. In the past, newsprint was imported from a single company based in Louisiana, United States, but following

Hurricane Katrina, newspapers diversified their sources.

The critical point is the distribution of newspapers. Distributors are loyal to the dominant media and are reluctant to distribute other products. Distributors are not hired but work on outsourcing schemes, except for one of the newspapers.

Editorial independence and finance

Owners often play an important role in the editorial policies of Guatemalan newspapers. There are no official or private sources of financing for media startups in Guatemala, especially for innovative models of journalism using new technologies. In fact, even the dominant publisher in the market, Casa Editora Prensa Libre, has been slow and cautious in investing in media development beyond its traditional tabloid. International aid agencies assist journalists with technical expertise and professional training and invite them to workshops and training courses on a regular basis. Rural journalists often

miss such opportunities. There are few opportunities for media entrepreneurs to find "angel investors" to invest in media development.

Affordable seed funding is not available for growing media outlets. Although Guatemala, with its solid financial reserves and the lowest external debt in the region, offers favorable opportunities for investment, investors note the numerous newspaper bankruptcies over the last two decades and prefer to invest in infrastructure or nontraditional exports. Advertising revenues from the private sector are the most important share of the total newspaper revenues, and three sectors are critical sources of advertising: telecommunications, banking, and mining.

Table 10: Guatemalan newspapers circulation, rates (July 2010)

Daily	# issues	Price per one page of advertising in printed edition, full color
Diario de Centroamérica	7,600	US\$1,000
La Hora	18,000	US\$400
Siglo 21	27,000	US\$1,200
El Periódico	30,229	US\$2,750
Al Día	60,000	US\$1,200
Prensa Libre	146,605	US\$3,750
Nuestro Diario	280,000	US\$3,750

Source: Data facilitated by the Secretariat of Social Communication, Guatemalan Government. (August 2010) Prices offered to the government in US dollars.

6. Media and Indigenous Peoples

According to the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1995), the Guatemalan government assumed the obligation to promote the broadest possible access to the communications media by the Maya communities and institutions and those of the other indigenous peoples. This included the creation of opportunities in the official media for the dissemination of expressions of indigenous culture and the promotion of a similar opening in the private media. The government is also required to regulate and support a system of informational, scientific, artistic, and educational programs on indigenous cultures in their languages and disseminate them through national radio, television, and the printed media.

Nearly two decades after the accord was signed, these commitments are merely fine words with poor implementation. While international aid agencies have assisted a few indigenous media outlets with donations, grants, and technical cooperation, the private sector and the government have failed to fulfill their promises. One indigenous newspaper, *El Regional*, was subsidized by the Norwegian government. When the funding ended, the newspaper disappeared because it failed to find a business model.

Another issue is language. While indigenous peoples want to create their own media outlets, it will not be feasible to develop printed press in indigenous languages. The largest indigenous communities learn to read and write in Spanish only. There are, however, opportunities to develop a pub-

lishing industry oriented to education resources, multimedia publications, and audiobooks in indigenous languages. This is demonstrated by the Cholsamaj Foundation, a publishing house founded in 1991 with the motto: “technology and Mayan culture are compatible,” which defines the organization and the work they do. After almost 20 years, it is one of the most interesting models of small-scale success in diversifying media and rescuing indigenous languages, and it is now moving its products from printed books to digital, interactive editions.

Media plays an important role in fighting prejudice and fostering positive attitudes and nondiscriminatory action toward marginalized groups (women, minorities, indigenous, etc.) in the society. As the UNESCO study “Racism in Media” reports, indigenous people are most often portrayed by journalists as members of a crowd or a collective identity without important individual roles. In Guatemala, wearing traditional indigenous costumes is associated with helplessness and marginalization. Media, along with the educational system, will need to play a paramount role in the protection, promotion, and respect for indigenous cultural values, knowledge, and tradition.

The number of programs focused on Mayan, Xinca, and Garifuna peoples is very limited and local. Not a single newspaper with national distribution dedicates special coverage to indigenous peoples. Radio Universidad, a radio station belonging to the public university, had some programming focused on indigenous peoples, but it was closed due to lack of funds.

Local Media Dominate Rural Areas

Printed press barely reaches rural areas, and there is not a single newspaper distributed throughout the entire national territory. Commercial radio and television stations in Guatemala broadcast solely in Spanish and represent mainstream Ladino (Spanish-descendent) culture, largely ignoring the interests of the indigenous population. Print media hardly differ, even if they include a few indigenous columnists.

Community radio stations play an important role in educating their audiences on issues including human rights, politics, and the environment. Such programming is essential in a country in which many children are unable to attend

school due to financial constraints. In addition, the high rate of illiteracy makes printed media inaccessible to most of the population, while TV sets are prohibitively expensive, and their signals rarely reach the country's more-remote regions. Even though small battery-powered radios are abundant, opportunities for the future of radio are constrained. The Guatemalan Chamber of Radio Broadcasting, an autonomous group of powerful commercial radio broadcasters, has tremendous influence in Congress and effectively determines the fate of smaller stations. In recent years, the monopoly over Guatemala's communication media has been consolidated into fewer and fewer hands.

7. International Aid to Guatemalan Media

Many aid organizations have contributed to the improvement of Guatemalan media prospects. These include the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), USAID, the Dutch agency HIVOS, the Soros Foundation, the Ford Founda-

tion, the Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), and the Spanish Cooperation Agency (AECI). UNICEF and UNESCO have supported different areas of media development, from funding of publications and specialized reports to training of investigative journalists.

