Agricultural, Cultural and Professional Media Development in the Republic of Mali, West Africa

Shelly Sitton
Oklahoma State University
shelly.sitton@okstate.edu
Telephone: 405-744-3690
FAX: 405-744-5176

Dwayne Cartmell
Cindy Blackwell
Craig Edwards
Oklahoma State University
Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership
448 Agricultural Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078

Abstract

Two continents. Two democracies. Two diverse cultures. One international education program whose participants have a common goal: to use “freedom of the press” to provide agricultural news and information to readers, listeners, and viewers in a professional manner. A free press, or the Fourth Estate, provides a foundation to support and sustain a democratic society. Members of the press should function as watchdogs to ensure society receives accurate and objective information.

Developing democracies, in particular, are sensitive to the need for a professional press corps, including media professionals who monitor its institutions and investigate the critical issues confronting its people. In its second decade of democratic reform, Mali is one of the world’s 10 poorest countries and 90% percent of its population lives in rural areas. Agriculture is the primary industry in Mali and provides the opportunity for this developing society to expand its position in the global market; therefore, journalists play an important role in distributing information that will help this industry move forward.

Through a Citizens Exchange Program grant funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, faculty members created an educational opportunity for media professionals from the Republic of Mali, West Africa, to interact with American communications faculty, students and agricultural media professionals.

This poster presentation explores the culture of Mali and lessons learned through a pictorial and video presentation from travel to Mali during the project’s first phase and artifacts developed in the project’s second phase when Malians spent one month gaining media experience in the United States.

Keywords: Africa, Media, Cultural Exchange Program