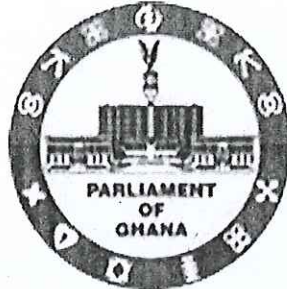


IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE FOURTH
REPUBLIC OF GHANA



REPORT OF THE SPECIAL BUDGET COMMITTEE ON THE
2024 ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF THE NATIONAL
MEDIA COMMISSION (NMC)

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Financial Year Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana was presented to Parliament by the Hon. Minister for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta on 15th November, 2023 in accordance with Article 179 of the 1992 Constitution and Section 21(3) of the Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921).

Pursuant to Order 140(4) of the Standing Orders of the House, the Rt. Hon. Speaker referred the Estimates of the National Media Commission (NMC) to the Special Budget Committee for consideration and report to the House.

2.0. DELIBERATIONS

The Committee met and deliberated on the Estimates of the National Media Commission with the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Mr. George Sarpong and a team of technical officials of the Commission and the Ministry of Finance. The Committee is grateful to the team for the insightful assistance.

2.1. REFERENCE

The Committee referred to the following documents during its deliberations:

- a. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.
- b. The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana.
- c. National Media Commission Act 1993, Act 449
- d. Public Financial Management Act, 2016 (Act 921)
- e. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2023 Financial Year;
- f. National Medium Term Development Policy Framework (NMTDPF) in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2024 - 2027;
- g. Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for 2024 - 2027; and
- h. Report of the Special Budget Committee on the 2023 Annual Budget Estimates of the National Media Commission.

3.0. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL MEDIA COMMISSION (NMC)

The National Media Commission was established in July, 1993 by the National Media Commission Act, 1993, (Act 449), among other things, to take action to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in mass media, including investigating, mediating, and resolving complaints made by or against the press or other mass media. The Commission has first and foremost of responsibilities, the promotion and protection of the freedom and independence of the mass media for communication and information.

3.1. CORE FUNCTIONS

The core functions of the National Media Commission are to:

- Promote and ensure the freedom and independence of the media for mass communication or information;
- Take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media,

including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media;

- Insulate the state - owned media from governmental control; and
- Make regulations by constitutional instruments for the registration of newspapers and other publications, except that the regulations shall not provide for the exercise of any direction or control over the professional function of a person engaged in the production of newspapers or other means of mass communication.

4.0. A REVIEW OF THE 2023 BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

The National Media Commission was allocated a total budget amount of GH¢9,200,970.00 and was distributed among the three (3) cost centres as follows:

<u>Cost Centre</u>		<u>Allocation (GH¢)</u>
a. Employee Compensation	-	6,722,520.00
b. Goods and Services	-	1,181,850.00
c. Capital Expenditure	-	1,296,600.00
d. Total	-	<u>9,200,970.00</u>

The Allocation was revised upwards to GH¢12,523,740.00 in the Mid-Year Review. The revised amount was disbursed among the three main cost centers of the Commission as follows:

<u>Cost Centre</u>		<u>Allocation (GH¢)</u>
a. Employee Compensation	-	10,045,290.00
b. Goods and Services	-	1,181,850.00
c. Capital Expenditure	-	1,296,600.00
d. Total	-	<u>12,523,740.00</u>

As at November, 2023 an amount of GH¢6,274,788.72 representing 50.10% of the allocation has actually been released to the Commission to finance its operations.

The total expenditure however stands at GH¢6,233,038.72 representing 49.77% of the Commissions' budget. The breakdown of the budget performance of the Commission is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: NMC Budget Performance as at September, 2023

No.	ITEM	Revised Appropriation (GH¢) (A)	Releases (GH¢) (B)	Actual Expenditure (C)	Variance (GH¢) D = A-B (D)	% Released
1.	Compensation	10,045,290.00	4,191,170.26	4,149,420.26	5,854,119.74	41.73
2.	Goods & Services	1,181,850.00	787,018.46	787,018.46	394,831.54	66.59
3.	Capital Expenditure	1,296,600.00	1,296,600.00	1,296,600.00	-	100.00
4.	Total	12,523,740.00	6,274,788.72	6,233,038.72	6,248,951.28	50.10

5.0. SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

In the year under - review, the Commission in accordance with Article 168 of the 1992 Constitution and section 2(1)(e) of the National Media Commission Act, 1993 (Act 449), carried out the following activities:

- i. The National Media Commission(NMC) visited Bawku to sensitise owners and journalists of two radio stations operating in the area to support the peace process;
- ii. The Commission resolved 12 cases between complainants and offending media houses;
- iii. The Commission also visited Adidome to assess the impact of a community based radio on the community;
- iv. The Commission mediated between a community radio station and the traditional authorities of Lower Axim to defuse tensions, and
- v. The Commission engaged with stakeholders to develop cooperative framework to fight the menace of voodoo and money doubling on television.

6.0. OUTLOOK FOR 2024

For the 2024 financial year, the National Media Commission intends to undertake the following activities amongst others:

a) **Media Regulation and Management**

The Commission will review with a view to amending the National Media Commission Act, 1993, (Act 449) to empower the Commission to enforce its mandate. The Commission will also accelerate the enactment of laws affecting content delivery across platforms including broadcasting laws, enact new law on complaints settlement, develop guidelines on investigative journalism and hate speech as well as establish appropriate framework for collaborative engagement with the media.

b) **Preparations towards the 2024 General Elections**

The Commission will operationalise a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the National Communications Authority (NCA), the Ghana Police Service, Ghana Armed Forces, Private Newspaper Publishers and the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association, as it works to restore integrity in the information eco-system, by deepening efforts to combat hate speech, incitement, fake news and disinformation. In addition, regulatory enforcement will be scaled up to ensure media compliance with standards.

7.0. 2024 BUDGET ALLOCATION

To implement the above programmes, an amount of Twenty-Three Million Five Hundred and Forty-Two Thousand Five Hundred and Twenty Ghana Cedis (GH¢23,542,520.00) has been allocated to the National Media Commission for the 2024 financial year would be disbursed among the three (3) major cost centres as follows:

<u>Cost Centre</u>	<u>Allocation (GH¢)</u>
a. Employee Compensation	- 9,522,520.00
b. Goods and Services	- 10,000,000.00
c. Capital Expenditure	- 4,020,000.00
d. Total	- <u>23,542,520.00</u>

The 2024 Allocation to NMC increased by GH¢11,018,780 or 87.98% from GH¢12,523,740.00 in 2023 to GH¢23,542,520.00 in 2024. A summary of the 2024 Allocation compared to 2023 is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: 2023 and 2024 Allocations

No.	Cost Centre	2023 Revised Allocation (GH¢)	2024 Allocation (GH¢)	Variance (GH¢)
1.	Compensation of Employee	10,045,290.00	9,522,520.00	(522,770.00)
2.	Goods and Services	1,181,850.00	10,000,000.00	8,818,150.00
3.	Capital Expenditure	1,296,600.00	4,020,000.00	2,723,400.00
4.	TOTAL	12,523,740.00	23,542,520.00	11,018,780.00

The 2024 Allocation to the NMC would be disbursed amongst the two main programs and sub-programs as specified in the Table 3 as follows:

Table 3: 2024 Budget Allocation to the NMC by Program

No.	Budget Program	Budget Sub-Program	2024 Allocation (GH¢)
1.	Management and Administration	General Administration and Finance	11,157,520
		Policy Planning Monitoring and Evaluation	1,080,000
2.	Media Regulation and Management	Media Affairs	8,655,000
		Media Complaints Settlement	2,650,000
3.	Total		23,542,520

8.0. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee after a careful examination of the 2024 estimates of the NMC made the following observations:

8.1. **Review/Development of Guidelines**

The Committee noted that the Commission intends to review and improve existing guidelines for media regulation to strengthen and improve its oversight responsibility in the media landscape. The Committee was informed that the review will focus on:

- i. Local Language Broadcasting;
- ii. Political Reporting;
- iii. Political Advertising;
- iv. Coverage of Political Parties by State-Owned Media;
- v. Development of guidelines on hate speech; and
- vi. Legislative review in the areas of Complaints Settlement Instrument.

The Committee was informed that the review will require a legislative overhaul of the National Media Commission Act, 1993 (Act 449) to improve and empower the Commission to enforce its mandate as enshrined in Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

The Committee therefore, recommends to the Commission to expedite the review processes of the National Media Commission Act, 1993 (Act 449) to empower the Commission to effectively regulate the media landscape and improve the standard of journalism in Ghana.

8.2. Increase in Budgetary Allocation

The Committee noted that the budgetary allocation of the Commission for the 2024 financial year recorded an increment from **GHC12,523,740.00** allocated in 2023 to **GHC23,542,520**, representing 87.98% increase. The increase affected the allocation for Goods and Service and CAPEX while the allocation to Compensation declined by GHC522,770.00 from GHC10,045,290.00 in 2023 to GHC9,522,520.00 in 2024.

8.3. Capacity of NMC to Monitor Media

The Committee noted that in an effort to improve its technical capacity to monitor the increasing media landscape, the NMC procured a mobile media monitoring van in 2023. The van however, could not be put to use due to the inability of the Commission to procure the necessary equipment required to make it functional.

The Committee noted that the 2024 Budget has allocated an amount of GH¢4,020,000 to support the capital expenditure of the Commission.

The Committee further noted that the Commission has a total staff strength of 11 with only four (4) technical staff involved in the monitoring of over 600 radio stations, 100 television channels, 70 newspapers and numerous online news portals. To effectively monitor the media landscape, the Commission has allocated funds for the remunerations of the proposed recruitments of some 149 technical staff to augment its staff strength.

The Committee urges the Ministry of Finance to grant clearance for recruitment by the Commission. The Committee further urges the Ministry of Finance to release the capital budget allocation to enable the Commission acquire the monitoring equipment to ensure responsible media content ahead of the 2024 general elections.

8.4. Menace of Fake News and Disinformation

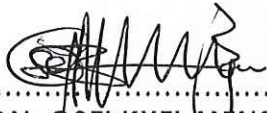
The Committee further observed that in an attempt to control the increasing incidence of the spread of fake news and disinformation as a result of the proliferation of media houses and social media publications, the Commission collaborated actively with other regulators in Africa to begin discussions towards developing standardized response to fake news and disinformation on the continent. A key outcome of this process is the commitment from Facebook, Google and Instagram to cooperate with governments and regulators in Africa to prevent the weaponisation of their platforms.

The Committee urges the Commission to take steps to combat fake news, disinformation and hate speech in the media especially as the country prepares for the 2024 General elections.

9.0. **CONCLUSION**

The Committee, after careful examination of the 2024 Estimates of the National Media Commission recommends to the House to adopt this Report and approve the sum of **Twenty-Three Million Five Hundred and Forty-Two Thousand Five Hundred and Twenty Ghana Cedis (GH¢23,542,520)** to enable the National Media Commission implement its planned programmes for the 2024 Financial Year.

Respectfully submitted



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HON. OSEI KYEI-MENSAH-BONSU
(MAJORITY LEADER & CHAIRMAN,
SPECIAL BUDGET COMMITTEE)



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JOANA ABENA SAKYI ADJEI (MRS)
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ECONOMIC CLUSTER OF
COMMITTEES)

11TH DECEMBER, 2023