

## Media survey

Snowball sampling was used to identify 24 journalists for interview. The journalists were from a variety of media outlets include radio (9), wire services (2), television (5), print (6), and web-based publications (2). Eighteen of those interviewed were Haitian, five were foreigners, and one was Haitian American. Nearly all of the journalists interviewed were men (22), which is generally representative of members of the press in Haiti. With the exception of one freelancer, the rest were full or part time employees.

As an organization, Viva Rio is well-known by members of the press. All journalists interviewed had heard about Viva Rio and more than half (54.2%) had covered a story that involved Viva Rio in some way. When asked if someone from their news outlet had ever interviewed a Viva Rio staff person, 66.7 percent (16 individuals) indicated that they had (four respondents did not know one way or the other). More than half indicated that in 2008 their news agency ran stories about Viva Rio at least “once or twice every few months” (see table 1). Not surprisingly considering the short tenure of Viva Rio’s work in Haiti, journalists reported that there were more articles about Viva Rio in 2008 than in previous years (see table 2). Viva Rio was covered in the context of a range of topics including stories about specific Viva Rio projects, coverage of recent events in Bel Air, the gang situation, access to basic needs such as clean water, MINUSTAH and Brazilian troops in Haiti, government projects (water pipes), and the general security situation.

**Table 1: In 2008, how often did your media outlet run stories about Viva Rio?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Several times a month	2	8.3	10.5	10.5
Once or twice every few months	12	50.0	63.2	73.7
Once or twice a year	5	20.8	26.3	100.0
Total	19	79.2	100.0	
Did not respond (“Don’t know”)	5	20.8		
Total	24	100.0		

**Table 2: Compared to 2007, what trends have you noticed regarding Viva Rio in the press?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
There are more stories about Viva Rio now than before.	16	66.7	72.7	72.7
There is really no difference in the number of stories.	6	25.0	27.3	100.0
Total	22	91.7	100.0	
Did not respond (“Don’t know”)	2	8.3		
Total	24	100.0		

Several respondents commented that coverage of Viva Rio had focused so much on specific areas of work being done by the organization that the staff members were not viewed as experts in other areas where the organization also works.

One print reporter pointed out that he frequently relies on the staff of community organizations such as Viva Rio for quotes when writing about other news stories. “Let’s say I have a story about crime. A person was kidnapped. Okay, I can just interview the victim, the family members, the police. But to make it more interesting I can also talk about the violence in that area and what’s being done about it. I can interview a pastor, someone from the political groups in the area, someone from the United Nations. To have a quote from a Viva Rio staff about the general subject, that would add a lot to my story. And it would be good for Viva Rio because it would get their name out there.”

Similarly, a radio journalist stated that he would have wanted Viva Rio to participate in a recent show but never asked because “that’s not what they do. Viva Rio is seen as maybe more of a foreign organization. I didn’t even know if their staff spoke Creole. But if their director or the directors of their programs were available we would very much like to have them on the air, to talk and debate, to discuss the current situation. We do this all the time but our listeners get tired of hearing the same people. It would give an interesting perspective to have Viva Rio participate because unlike MINUSTAH, their staff are actually doing work on the ground and would know what’s happening in the popular zones.”

Viva Rio was seen by respondents as important organization that journalists should be aware of and which is involved in newsworthy issues and events. All of those interviewed answered “yes” when asked if they thought it was important for Viva Rio’s work to be covered by the media. As one respondent explained, “Our responsibility in the press is to inform the community about what we think is important. By that I mean we have a responsibility to more than just our industry, we also have a communal responsibility to bring information to the public. So Viva Rio is very important for us to cover. For instance, people should know what is happening in their own community. Maybe a person will have a problem with water and they have an issue with CAMEP. And CAMEP is not responding to their complaints. Well if we have lived up to our responsibility and let them know about Viva Rio then the person would know that Viva Rio was an organization they could call on for help with their problem. So yes, I agree that it is very important for us to cover Viva Rio’s projects.”

Another journalist pointed out that coverage of Viva Rio’s projects enables them publish positive news coverage of Haiti: “So much of what we write is negative: the gangs, the political situation, the hurricanes. We have to remember to do stories like this [about Viva Rio] that show how there is some hope for Haiti.”

**Table 3: Compared to 2007, what trends have you noticed about Viva Rio image in the press?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Stories about Viva Rio are more positive than in the past.	15	62.5	68.2	68.2
The way Viva Rio is portrayed in the press is pretty much unchanged.	7	29.2	31.8	100.0
Total	22	91.7	100.0	
Did not respond (“Don’t know”)	2	8.3		
Total	24	100.0		

**Table 4: In general, what has been the tone of your media outlet's coverage of Viva Rio?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Positive	15	62.5	71.4	71.4
Neutral	3	12.5	14.3	85.7
Mixed	3	12.5	14.3	100.0
Total	21	87.5	100.0	
Did not respond ("Don't know")	3	12.5		
Total	24	100.0		

Press coverage of Viva Rio was generally positive or neutral. The organization was described by reporters as “doing good work,” “making a difference,” “having an impact,” “community-driven,” “non-political despite all the sh\*t they wade in every day,” and “one of the few groups that actually doing something with the grants they get.” Negative comments about Viva Rio were rare and did not appear to be reflected in print. These comments were related almost exclusively to difficulties that reporters had had in the logistical process of reporting on Viva Rio and not on the organization’s work. For instance, reporters complained that it was hard to reach staff members for quotes or information, that staff did not want to talk with the press without permission from higher ups and then never got back to the reporter, or that phone calls to the office were not returned.

Overall, positive mentions of Viva Rio’s work in the press appear to be on the increase (see table 3). None of those interviewed stated that their media outlet’s coverage of Viva Rio was generally negative. Rather, 62.5% of respondents (15) said that their coverage was positive, while 12.5% (3 individuals) said that coverage was neutral and another 12.5% stated that there was a mix of positive and negative coverage of Viva Rio by their media outlet.

One theme presented by seven of the journalists was the idea that Viva Rio is trustworthy and is truly involved in the community while other similar organizations with mandates to reduce violence or address social problems are not actually doing what they say they are or are not in touch with the population.

“They aren’t the UN. These guys aren’t clueless. They know what’s happening in Bel Air. And the people in Bel Air know them.” (radio journalist)

“I could trust what [Viva Rio staff] says about the situation. I can listen and know that he knows what he’s talking about because he’s really there doing the work. I can’t trust information like that when it comes from some of these groups because everything is so political. The situation is so charged. So, I guess they are just more trustworthy.” (news wire service reporter)

“Not all the controversy we hear about gets reported but you know, we still hear stuff. We hear the good and the bad. We know what groups are really doing the stuff they are getting funding to do. Viva Rio is one of those groups that I can say ‘okay, they are getting this money and I can see what they are doing with it.’ That makes it easier to trust them when other facts as well, and with their assessment of the issues in general.” (print journalist)

Other positive assessments of Viva Rio mentioned by journalists were: “Viva Rio is doing good things for the community” (mentioned by 16 people), “Viva Rio’s work is improving the conditions for people in their daily lives” (12), “Viva Rio’s projects improve the neighborhood environment” (12), and “Viva Rio’s work is reducing violence/improving the security situation” (10).

The findings suggest that Viva Rio may benefit by:

- 1) Members of the press should know who to contact about specific stories, how to get a hold of that person, and what languages the person speaks.
- 2) Viva Rio could identify several staff members experts in particular areas (eg, security or public health) and make these staff available to the press to comment on related stories or participate in radio shows.
- 3) Contact with the press can and should be actively cultivated. As one reporter put it, “Viva Rio is one of those organizations that don’t use us effectively. They if wait for us to come to them, but if they were smart they’d be on the phone with us every week pitching a story. It’s not like we don’t want to cover them, we just don’t know what they are doing that should be covered.”