

MEDIA SUPPORT

What role for the media?

Traditionally speaking, the media serves to provide information, entertainment and education. However, media also plays a fundamental role in democracy, human rights and development.

- **Media for human rights:** Freedom of opinion and expression are fundamental rights of every human being. To this end, independent media are necessary for promoting and protecting freedom of expression as well as other fundamental human rights. Democracy cannot exist when these fundamental freedoms are not respected.
- **Media for development:** Free media is also a catalyst for social and economic development. Amartya Sen's (1999) argument that famines can be prevented by freedom of press is exemplary of this function. Media can also curb corruption, facilitate trade, spread innovations, and bring expertise on health and education to remote areas as they are flexible tools to raise awareness.
- **Media for democracy:** Free and independent media, otherwise known as the 'fourth estate', facilitates the exchange of information and opinions. It is necessary for a pluralism of views, informing citizens and building consensus based on a fair representation of public opinion. This ensures transparency and empowers citizens to hold their elected representatives accountable. Likewise, media also plays a watchdog function by scrutinising government action and inaction as well as channeling citizens' voices of discontent.

While recent **technological innovations** have certainly improved media pluralism, amongst others through citizen journalism and social media, they also provide authoritarian regimes and private interests with new ways to shape and manipulate political processes. Algorithms that reinforce confirmation bias and deepen polarisation come hand in hand with an erosion of trust in traditional media.

Why support media development?

Press freedom has declined to its lowest level in over a decade and the five biggest drops have occurred in Europe. Only 13% of people live in countries where the media is free. Media is instrumental in shaping the developing political discourse and is often critically important during election periods.

Community media also provides avenues for participation in socio-political life for the otherwise marginalised. Where infrastructures of the state lack the political will or knowledge required to regulate and safeguard the media, or provide incentives for its citizens to enter professions which may improve the quality of its output, the international community can play a key role in promoting reform ensuring open debate among citizens. Development actors can prevent monopolistic ownership conventions, a censorship culture, and promote independent journalism in transitioning states.

The EU guidelines for freedom of expression emphasise the right to seek and receive information, and the right to impart information and ideas of all kinds through any media, regardless of frontiers. Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen which falls within the 2015 United Nations framework strategy for the years up until 2030, calls for the consolidation of peace, justice and strong institutions globally. Point 16.10 of the SDG makes specific mention of the need to support public access to information and to protect fundamental freedoms.

FACTS & FIGURES

OECD 2016, Committee to Protect Journalists, 2016

OECD statistics show that ODA for media support made up only 0.4% of total ODA for the year 2016.

0,4%



Since 2012, 368 journalists have been killed while pursuing stories- 96% of which were corruption-related.

ODA to Media support in 2016 :

- Germany: \$225 million
- United States: \$56 million
- Japan: \$39 million
- European Union: \$25 million

Media Support in Practice

There are a variety of ways donors can support media. We detail some ways to support media development below, along with donor priorities.

Improving Access to Information

To improve access to information, donors can support legislative changes that allow for transparency and accountability. This can also reduce corruption. It is vital for governments to not only provide the legal framework, but also implement it by :

- Providing legal expertise to update the legal framework of information and communication;
- Democratising **access to communication** mediums through investment in media infrastructure (support building TV and radio stations and broadcasting infrastructure);
- Providing education programs which improve **media literacy** and explain where and how to access information, also tackling fake news.

Internet Freedom

When it comes to obtaining information and global news, the internet is *the* platform, Internet freedom is protected through :

- Working directly with **investors and shareholders** of communications to help protect internet freedom;
- Creating robust **legislation** at state-level to effectively regulate the media as an industry so as to combat the spread of hate-speech and enhance accountability;
- Forming an International **coalition against censorship** and a **proper legal framework** to govern content moderation.

Promoting Investigative Journalism

Donors and the development implementers must ensure investigative journalists are supported in the correct way by :

- Creating **training programs** for journalists using local and veteran journalists;
- A universal **acknowledgment** and **consensus** of sound reporting;
- Reinforcing the rule of law and **combat political corruption** so that journalists are not the targets of

Ensuring Pluralism

SME's and traditional media face major competition from larger enterprises that can overcome economic hurdles and invest in better technology. They can be strengthened by:

- Ensuring that digital and print media can benefit from the **same tax advantages**;
- Installation of **media pluralism observatories**;
- **Direct assistance** to SMEs and traditional media platforms;
- Training in the use of **modern technology and social media** engagement, including sensitization on ethics and professional code of conduct;
- Support to **production content** ensuring diversity and creative process.

Supporting Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information Acts (FOIAs) can offer countries a position to ensure transparency, deepen democracy and fight corruption.

- Appointing of a trained, independent and active **information commissioner** (like the Media Pluralism Monitor);
- Increasing commitment to ensuring the **accountability and transparency** of political and corporate processes;
- Supporting to **Freedom of Information defenders** (Journalists organizations and unions and international networks of those defenders and their activities of lobbying and advocacy).

Donor priorities: share of ODA for media support spent on each subsector:

- 45% media development projects
- 19% media infrastructure
- 23% public diplomacy
- 8% communication for development

Further Reading

- CIMA, *Defending Independent Media: A Comprehensive Analysis of Aid Flows*, 2018
- CIMA, *Understanding Donor Priorities in Media Development*, 2017
- IMEDIA Associates, *Media Assistance: Review of the Recent Literature and Other Donor's Approaches*, 2017
- IMS, *Defending Journalism*, 2017
- Brookings Institute, *The Media Democracy Needs*, 2016
- Index on Censorship, *Mapping Media Freedom*, 2017
- NATO, *The Role of the Media in a Democratic Society*, 1998