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Midterm Performance Evaluation of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN)

April 2015

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Cover Photo: Child peering into sealed door at the Mezhyhirya estate of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich
Outside of Kiev, Ukraine

DISCLAIMER

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ACRONYMS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIN	The Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia and Herzegovina
CINS	Center for Investigative Reporting Serbia
CoP	Chief of Party
GIPA	Georgian Institute for Public Affairs
ICFJ	International Center for Journalists
OCCRP	Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project
PRA	Philliber Research Associates
RIJN	Regional Investigative Journalism Network
SAR	Semi-Annual Performance Monitoring Report
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess the feasibility of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN) activity, which is part of the broader Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) replication in other parts of the world, and to fine-tune the current project for the next cycle of operation. As a mid-term evaluation, the evaluation report addresses the following questions:

Question 1. What have been the main obstacles to implementing RIJN/OCCRP and how has the project addressed them?

Sub-question: In particular, what were the obstacles in expanding the network from the Balkans to other regions, and what lessons learned should be applied to future efforts to replicate investigative journalist networks?

Question 2. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to institutionalizing professional practices and improved skills of journalists associated with the project?

Question 3. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to building and strengthening sustainable linkages between journalists?

Sub-question: Which collaborative activities have been particularly helpful to journalists participating in the project?

Question 4. Is there a correlation or relationship between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and public policy actions?

Question 5. How can the effects of investigative journalism best be measured and tracked?

The report concludes with a reflection on RIJN/OCCRP progress to date, and considerations for the replication of a similar investigative journalism network activity.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The stated goal of the RIJN/OCCRP is to “build citizen demand to reduce corruption, fraud, and other criminal activities through increased exposure to professionally produced investigative journalism” in the Balkans, Western Eurasia, and Caucasus regions.¹ The project

¹ Statement of Work. Performance Evaluation of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN), also known as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. USAID: January 14, 2014.

recognizes that the vast majority of journalism in these regions does not meaningfully report on corruption, fraud or organized crime and that the existing “scandal journalism” or journalism promoting specific political or economic interests lacks the credibility to raise citizens’ expectations. The project’s theory of change hypothesizes that creating demand for good governance requires high quality public interest investigative journalism, compelling stories told credibly through fact-based reporting, by offering in depth, consistent and even-handed investigations which expose significant corruption damaging public life.²

EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The team used a mixed methods methodology to assess the effects of RIJN/OCCRP efforts to date and how best to refine programming for this and other similar programming. These methods included document review of RIJN/OCCRP reports, online surveys of key OCCRP staff and network journalists, field visits to three of the OCCRP countries and key informant interviews with 58 project stakeholders, management and external experts. In addition, the evaluation team conducted a case study analysis of six OCCRP produced stories to examine the linkages between OCCRP stories’ potential impacts.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Q1: Major lessons learned for RIJN/OCCRP implementation and expansion

The current project design includes the core and complementary results of improving the professional skills and standards of individual investigative journalists and investigative journalism story development; however, OCCRP involvement in story development varies across regions, which can create a tension between these project components. The OCCRP expansion from one regional hub to four has faced managerial, operational and strategic challenges. The management approach embodies flexibility, which allows for context-relevant and responsive work. While there have been some changes to management structures and operations to support OCCRP growth, related decision-making processes continue to be channeled through the Sarajevo Regional Center. These management issues also generate backlogs in the editing process, which is centralized with staff who also play other programmatic or reporter roles and over-burdens the insufficient number of qualified regional editors. The linguistic diversity of network journalists has also proven challenging both for the editing process itself as well as expansion of OCCRP assistance tools to multilingual formats.

In addition to these programmatic and operational challenges, the OCCRP expansion has also underscored strategic considerations. Country-specific approaches to recruiting and training new talent are required, and OCCRP has experimented with both regional and linguistic models. Challenges with recruiting strong local talent in some expansion regions, among other factors, presents a struggle to allocate limited strategic and technical resources among existing

² International Center for Journalists: Modification of Assistance. USAID: March 15, 2011.

and new projects. Work with more regional partners has revealed a divergence between the OCCRP's transborder focus and national groups' domestic focus on story development. OCCRP has supported single-country projects, but the project does not have an explicit strategy to prioritize resources between domestic and transborder initiatives. Finally, the OCCRP's approach to encouraging financial sustainability for its partners is admirable, particularly its support of partners' short-term needs. Identifying financial sustainability solutions for partner media organizations is beyond the scope of OCCRP, but efforts to address this issue draw on limited project and staff resources and lack a clear strategy for partners or OCCRP. OCCRP leadership is considering its future, and efforts to establish itself as an organization may not be compatible with continued efforts to ensure partner sustainability. Furthermore, these efforts beg the question of whether OCCRP intends to produce original story content, serve as a platform for existing content, or both. The project continues to adapt and learn, but both operational and strategic clarity will be required for additional growth.

Recommendations:

- Revisit the OCCRP design and its core activities to define priorities
- Consider increasing the decision-making role of key operations staff and decreasing the top-heavy nature of decision-making
- Design and implement a strategy for developing additional local editing capacity
- Consider a more formal training program for local editors
- Strategize editorial roles more precisely and explicitly in order to maximize limited resources
- Consider decentralizing some final editing approvals, as feasible with libel insurance policy requirements
- Start now on OCCRP strategic planning beyond 2017

Q2. Enhancement of professional skills and their institutionalization

OCCRP covers relevant topics in the training and technical support provided to member journalists. Overall professional practices and skills of partner journalists can be linked to self-described improvement, but it is unclear whether these improvements have been institutionalized in the work habits of OCCRP partner journalists and media organizations. Some skills and standards, such as fact checking and public records research, are present but require reinforcement through use, even in media environments where higher standards are becoming recognized and expected. Other higher-level soft skills such as critical thinking are more difficult to institutionalize; compelling story telling has not been emphasized in the OCCRP training materials to date.

The experience level of journalists and the country media context also affect journalist learning and application of skills introduced through OCCRP. Editing modes and frequency of contact between editor and journalist matter (to some extent) for learning and adoption of professional practices and skills by individual journalists and partner organizations. Less experienced individuals and entities benefit from a closer, more intensive engagement with editors; whereas more experienced individuals and entities respond to more advanced technical skills and

standards through a less intensive approach. The country media context varies across the program regions, and different levels of openness and demand for critical thinking and investigative journalism certainly affect the ability and incentives to apply professional skills and practices.

Recommendations:

- Design editing interactions to match anticipated skill level of journalists
- Emphasize project-based learning of professional skills and practices
- Consider how to further solidify investigative media clusters in OCCRP countries to institutionalize practices

Q3. Building and strengthening sustainable linkages among journalists

The project has broadened journalists' views of their work and their regions. It has also clearly strengthened linkages between journalists, particularly in some sub-region areas, and even within some countries where they previously were not well linked; professional collaboration appears to be following on from project efforts to link people together. This collaboration is work related, but most journalists could not replicate significant story collaboration without continued financial and organizational assistance from OCCRP. This is not to suggest that journalists do not have the interest, but they face constraints due to capacities to take this on as well as the unclear use of regional stories. The evaluation suggests that many of the linkages that were encouraged in Southeast Europe have the potential to be continued without the OCCRP facilitation, assuming interest. This is less the case in other regions. Overall, the role of such an organizing actor like OCCRP, accordingly, has a purpose, but whether it is for initial linkage or more sustained engagements needs to be further articulated.

Recommendations:

- Consider where OCCRP linkage facilitation services are most needed
- Consider an OCCRP regional pot of flexible funding
- Emphasize internal linkages in big countries

Q4. Linkage between OCCRP stories and public policy impacts

Case studies illustrate the difficulties of ascribing impact to article production and taking credit for this impact. Causal claims even in high profile cases are difficult and further problematized due to the various levels of actual OCCRP inputs into a story. Case studies also illustrate the unclear role that the OCCRP website has or should play in distributing stories and “creating the (international/domestic) pressure” for impact that OCCRP anticipates. Overall, the apparent influence that political environment has on impact appears considerable.

Recommendations:

- Clarify OCCRP levels of story involvement in relation to impact
- More clearly articulate website purpose(s) and audience(s)
- Document more clearly how OCCRP story production relates to domestic/international media context and how the OCCRP story fits into existing media coverage production of the same story
- Document more clearly how international and domestic report impacts are linked, and consider how to fund such efforts

Q5. Tracking the effects of investigative journalism

The project lacks a clear definition of impact, and this affects its ability to meaningfully measure impact of its stories. A first step for developing a more meaningful monitoring system is decoupling the types of impact desired, whether finite project impacts related to more traditional media impact or more aspirational objectives geared towards political action. The team recommends focusing more on traditional media project impacts given the complexities and resources involved with accurately tracking the more aspirational impacts. Regardless of approach, there needs to be a clear articulation of what is possible to capture by attribution and what is possible through contribution and a system put in place to capture these project efforts.

Recommendations:

- Articulate and operationalize the journalism outcomes desired from the project
- Design a system for tracking and review progress towards the specified impact
- Include a component for better understanding potential linkages between domestic and international impacts

EVALUATION PURPOSE & EVALUATION QUESTIONS

USAID's Center of Excellence for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance and the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia Democracy, Governance and Social Transition Team commissioned Social Impact to conduct a mid-term performance evaluation of RIJN/OCCRP. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to assess the feasibility of project replication in other parts of the world, and to fine-tune the current project for the next cycle of operation.

Towards this end, the evaluation addresses the following questions:

Question 1. What have been the main obstacles to implementing RIJN/OCCRP and how has the project addressed them?

Sub-question: In particular, what were the obstacles in expanding the network from the Balkans to other regions and what lessons learned should be applied to future efforts to replicate investigative journalist networks?

Question 2. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to institutionalizing professional practices and improved skills of journalists associated with the project?

Question 3. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to building and strengthening sustainable linkages between journalists?

Sub-question: Which collaborative activities have been particularly helpful to journalists participating in the project?

Question 4. Is there a correlation or relationship between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and public policy actions?

Question 5. How can the effects of investigative journalism best be measured and tracked?

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The OCCRP began as the title of a 2007 grant proposal to the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) to fund a regional hub for a network of investigative journalists. At the time, collaborators Drew Sullivan and Paul Radu had recently set up, respectively, the Center for Investigative Reporting in Sarajevo and the Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism in Bucharest. After receiving the grant, the organization grew and Radu and Sullivan founded the Journalism Development Network (JDN), a Maryland-based 501(c)3 non-profit organization, and registered OCCRP as a trade name. Radu became executive director of OCCRP and Sullivan was named executive director of JDN. OCCRP currently has media outlet members from non-profit investigative centers and for profit independent media in 15 countries of Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus regions.

In 2011, the USAID/Europe and Eurasia Bureau competitively awarded a cooperative agreement to the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) with JDN as the sub-grantee responsible for project implementation. These implementing partners also collaborate with the Jefferson Institute, a Serbia-based technology firm.

The stated goal of the RIJN/OCCRP is to “build citizen demand to reduce corruption, fraud, and other criminal activities through increased exposure to professionally produced investigative journalism” in the Balkans, Western Eurasia, and Caucasus regions.³ The project recognizes that the vast majority of journalism in these regions does not meaningfully report on corruption, fraud and organized crime and that the existing “scandal journalism” or journalism promoting specific political or economic interests lacks the credibility to raise citizens’ expectations. The project’s theory of change hypothesizes that creating demand for good governance requires high quality public interest investigative journalism, compelling stories told credibly through fact-based reporting, by offering in depth, consistent and even-handed investigations which expose significant corruption damaging public life.⁴

To attain this overarching goal, the RIJN/OCCRP seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Investigative journalists and/or centers in three sub-regional geographic areas are virtually and actually linked to create collaborative, regionally significant content (Build teams).
- Objective 2: Use of secure, shared communications systems and digital technology applications is increased (Build tools).
- Objective 3: Investigative journalism is conducted according to high professional standards (Build standards).

³ Statement of Work. Performance Evaluation of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN), also known as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. USAID: January 14, 2014.

⁴ International Center for Journalists: Modification of Assistance. USAID: March 15, 2011.

- Objective 4: Collaboratively produced content is web-published for broad distribution and/or replication, and usage is tracked (Widely distribute results).

RIJN/OCCRP is now in its third year of implementation, and the activity was extended for another three-year period until 2017. The approximately \$6 million six-year project is currently operating in 13 countries organized around 13 local centers and four regional hubs established first in Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina, and subsequently in Kiev, Ukraine, Tbilisi, Georgia, and Bucharest, Romania.

Sarajevo is the center of RIJN/OCCRP where the program director and the managerial and editing staff are based and provide support for the investigative journalism projects. Regional hubs in Kiev and Tbilisi primarily serve as editing and regional coordination hubs. Much of the interaction among managers, editors and journalists is conducted online, via email and Skype. Investigative stories are produced in a variety of media from print to online to video and for national and international level audiences. USAID is the core funder of OCCRP's activities, but other international funding sources support non-RIJN activities, such as the Investigative Dashboard, an online resource for investigative journalists around the world.⁵ For the purposes of this evaluation report, RIJN/OCCRP and OCCRP will be used interchangeably to refer to the USAID-supported activity, unless otherwise noted.

As of June 2014, there were 114 investigative journalists participating in the network, along with local and regional center staff, fact-checkers, and editors.⁶ Through collaboration across the network, these journalists had produced, published, and disseminated 140 investigative journalistic pieces by June 2014.⁷ Program activities have varied throughout the three years of implementation and involved amended and additional activities. A sample of activities for year four include:⁸

- Recruiting local journalists into the network while ensuring gender equity
- Training members in standards, laws and safety, using documents and investigative research tools (e.g., LexisNexis), fact checking, previewing for slander/libel, and using freedom of information legislation
- Fostering sub-regional collaborative projects and producing investigative stories across the network
- Producing documentaries in addition to traditional journalism
- Developing briefs, features, and blogs
- Disseminating regional stories to a broader audience through international media and international networks

⁵ In interviews conducted by the evaluation team, OCCRP management noted at least nine other grants beyond USAID-supported RIJN activities.

⁶ Regional Investigative Journalism Network. 2014. Semi-Annual Performance Reports: SAR No. 6: Jan. 1-June 30, 2014.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

- Hiring and building the capacity of local coordinators, lead reporters, editors, and fact checkers
- Holding regular meetings with coordinators and editors
- Providing grants to local centers
- Training local coordinators and journalists to be editors
- Sending editors to the US for one month experiential learning
- Using social media tools to reach untapped social markets
- Conducting annual conferences of reporters and of local coordinators

External performance monitoring and evaluation is provided by Philliber Research Associates (PRA), which tracks nine performance indicators using surveys with project participants, reviews of journalistic standards by editors, and web searches to determine dissemination, reproduction, and use of articles published as part of the RIJN/OCCRP, among other methods.

EVALUATION METHODS & LIMITATIONS

EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation team employed a multi-methods approach to answering the above questions through the following data collection activities:

- Attendance and observation at the network's annual conference in Istanbul
- A desk review entailing both a document review and analysis of existing data collected by PRA
- Two online mini-surveys of member center managers and network journalists
- Site visits to three regional hubs, including Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Sarajevo
- A case study analysis of the results of investigative journalistic output

Annual conference

In November 2014, RIJN/OCCRP held its annual conference in Istanbul. This conference provided an opportunity for the evaluation team to learn more about the project and inform the development of the evaluation instruments, to observe network collaboration in action, and to meet with member and non-member journalists from countries other than those visited by the team. The team also used the conference as an opportunity to meet with key actors related to the project including RIJN/OCCRP management, a USAID official, and a representative of PRA, the external performance monitoring and evaluation agency. A list of all interviewees is provided in Annex IV.

Desk review

The evaluation team undertook a desk review of all relevant project documents, including but not limited to bi-annual RIJN/OCCRP reports, the PRA-prepared Semi-Annual Performance Monitoring Reports (SAR), PRA survey instruments, project work plans, and samples of project training and curriculum. The document review informed the finalization of the evaluation approach and tools, including the design of the mini surveys, key informant interview guides, and case selection.

Mini-surveys of OCCRP staff, managers and network participants

The team developed and conducted three online surveys for regional center managers, RIJN staff, and network participants to better understand networking processes, collaboration and skills transfers. In cooperation with USAID and PRA, the evaluation team added questions to PRA's year-end survey of center managers and staff. The evaluation team designed and distributed an additional survey that was administered to network journalists. The surveys focused on capturing levels of network collaboration and skills development levels. The PRA-administered surveys were distributed to a smaller group of respondents than the journalist survey, and nearly all OCCRP managers and most staff responded (approximately a 73%

response rate). The SI-administered survey sent to network journalists resulted in a lower than anticipated number of respondents. Thirty of the sixty-two journalists for whom contact information was available completed the survey – a response rate of about 48%.⁹ Survey findings informed some of the key informant interviews and provided additional triangulation of data for the evaluation questions focused on skill building and network collaboration.

Site visits

Based on initial survey data, desk research and the Istanbul conference, the team developed a set of key informant guides designed for four different informant groups including (i and ii) OCCRP editors and management staff, (iii) network journalists, and (iv) external donors and experts. (See Annex III) The team leader and investigative journalist specialist traveled to the three regional hubs of Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Sarajevo during February and March 2015. During these visits the team conducted in-depth interviews with key RIJN/OCCRP leadership and staff, regional coordinators, editors, fact checkers, and investigative journalists who collaborate with the network that are based in these three cities or who were visiting these cities at the time of the site visit. The evaluation team also met with USAID Mission officials, other donors involved in media development, and additional domestic and international media professionals. Most of these interviews were conducted in English, but where required, the team worked with a translator.¹⁰

In addition to these site visits, the team also conducted other in-person and remote interviews with individuals in the Southeast Europe region, for a total of 50 different meetings (see Annex IV for list of key informants).

Case studies

The evaluation team used a case study approach to better understand how RIJN/OCCRP-supported journalistic pieces are contributing to higher-level outcomes or impact. Selecting case studies is always a challenge. With few cases, there is a risk that chosen cases will not offer a good representation of OCCRP's work. We examined six cases in depth, which were selected to ensure variation in three key factors:

- Region: Balkans, Western Eurasia, and the Caucasus
- Impact: High impact, moderate impact, and no impact
- Type of impact: Divided into seven categories of impact

The team carried out several steps in an iterative process to identify cases and to design the case study approach. First the team reviewed all PRA SARs to identify OCCRP-reported impact categories and to generate a list of each instance of reported impact. A total of 33 impact cases

⁹ The survey response rate was very low after SI's initial outreach email to respondents; however subsequent requests from RIJN/OCCRP stakeholders – individuals known to the respondents – contributed to achieving a 48% response rate.

¹⁰ This included one translated interview in BiH and two interviews in Ukraine.

were identified, and the team inductively identified eight unique types of impact. (See Annex VII for a full listing). These include the following:

1. Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrest, asset freeze, investigation, loss of government license, firing of a public official, etc.
2. Resonance in civil society: recognition, public information campaign, reform movement, public shaming
3. Business impact: resignation at a company, loss of business, cancelling of a contract, etc.
4. Reform with legislative change
5. Response from an official institution in a public statement
6. Negative impact – tighter state control
7. Republication or citation by other media (domestic or international)
8. Effect on relations between a government and an international institution

The team selected two cases from each region with varying degrees of impact: including high and moderate impact cases in Western Eurasia, moderate and no impact cases in the Caucasus, and moderate and no impact cases in the Balkans (see Table I). To facilitate the research process of verifying impacts, the team focused on cross-border stories that primarily were described as having a ‘national level’, rather than international level impact, and cases with one or two types of impact rather than multiple types. Final story selection was made in consultation with OCCRP editors in the regions.

Table I Six Case Studies by Region and Impact Level

	Balkans	Caucasus	Western Eurasia
High impact			Ukraine: Yanukovichleaks Project
Moderate impact	BiH: Balkan Share Traders Endangered German Stock Exchange	Armenia: Church and State Deny Money Laundering	Ukraine: Ukraine’s TV channel keeps on changing hands
No impact	Serbia: Nobody’s Policing the Security Guards	Georgia: Garbage Land Deal Stinks	

For each case study, the evaluation team conducted internet research and key informant interviews with journalists involved in the stories, other journalists familiar but uninvolved with the story, and other related actors or experts. Data was collected across seven different considerations:

1. Characteristics of the article
2. Profiles of contributors
3. Level of OCCRP intervention effort
4. Country level media climate
5. Other media coverage of the same story

6. Verification of stated impact
7. Origin and originality of the story

Limitations

The evaluation confronted several methodological limitations, including:

- The informal nature of the RIJN/OCCRP network and the constantly evolving set of project activities and actors meant journalists' engagement in the network has not been consistent across countries or over time. This non-systematic variation prevented the evaluation team from conducting an analysis of results at the activity level (across RIJN sub-regions), and made it difficult for the evaluation team to assess changes at the individual level (individual journalists' skills and abilities).
- The evaluation team proposed to conduct a systematic content analysis of OCCRP stories to track individuals' skill level development over time. This approach was not possible to undertake given the lack of systematic data on first draft articles, prior to the editing process. Given the iterative nature of the editing process, final stories were not meaningful for assessing individuals' contributions to specific articles. As a result the evaluation relied more on key informant interviews than initially planned as well as journalists' perceptions reported through the survey.
- While the evaluation team endeavored to select both more and less active network journalists during its field visits and to supplement this with additional external experts and actors in the countries, the data available is less varied than anticipated.
- Low survey response rates from journalists¹¹ on skill building and network collaboration provided only limited analysis of change in the overall network over time as well as individuals' perceived change over time. Of the 143 network actors who were identified (either as a survey respondent or as an actor listed by a survey respondent), 43 did not have a country listed or associated with their name. While the majority of these actors did not have high levels of centrality measures, findings surrounding within-region collaboration may not accurately capture these interactions.

¹¹ Security considerations of individual journalists may have contributed to the lower than expected response rates.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Question 1. What have been the main obstacles to implementing RIJN/OCCRP and how has the project addressed them?

Sub-question: In particular, what were the obstacles in expanding the network from the Balkans to other regions and what lessons learned should be applied to future efforts to replicate investigative journalist networks?

RIJN/OCCRP has confronted a number of obstacles both in implementation and in expansion to other regions. Many of these obstacles are perhaps best understood as tensions between competing goals. In the discussion that follows, we explore the following obstacles, challenges, and tensions: (1) the tension between developing professional skills and producing stories, (2) management challenges, (3) bottlenecks in editing, (4) language challenges, (5) expansion challenges (6) the tension between domestic and transborder stories, and (7) financial sustainability.

Tension between developing professional skills and producing stories

The RIJN/OCCRP is a hybrid project that combines two core results: improving the professional skills and standards of investigative journalists and producing investigative journalism stories. On the one hand, these two components are compatible: a key approach to professional development is through actual story production. However, OCCRP's "story production" approach is not confined to the traditional media practice of staff editors working directly and continually with collaborators on their stories. Rather, OCCRP story production support varies widely, from financial assistance for discrete aspects of story development, such as conducting a records search, to more intensive one-on-one editing (as described in more detail in Question 2 and Question 4). This means that opportunities for learning highly depend on what role OCCRP plays in the development of any given OCCRP story.

The project's theory of change does not clarify these fluid linkages between story production and individual journalists' skills and standards beyond its stated objective of training journalists and doing good journalism. Indeed, OCCRP staff interviewed pride the project's unique structures and its flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities and work with journalists in different ways. While OCCRP leadership reports that they work hard to balance these two goals, the project has few clear guidelines for articulating how the linkages between skill and story development should evolve. An examination of individual stories and editorial decisions in the context of the project's overall approach reveals no apparent strategy to maximize objectives. As will be discussed further below (Question 2), editors vary in their prioritization of story production versus skill development.

Management challenges

The regional center model management practices have been slow to be systematized as the program has evolved and expanded. This is partly due to the fact that implementation at the beginning included a smaller group of people and many different activities. Within this early context, a flexible, highly personalized management approach worked well; however, as the project has expanded to include more media partner organizations, journalist contributors, countries and overall sets of activities, projects, and stories, this management approach needs updating. Informant interviews suggest that the modest annual funding – approximately \$1 million per year for the entire project – also has constrained personnel expansion, thus contributing to management challenges.

To be sure, OCCRP has made some managerial adjustments as it has grown. In addition to editing, the four regional editors take on some managerial tasks; a new set of Sarajevo-based staff (or at least staff with new job descriptions) is now handling the grant management and reporting process for the different grants that OCCRP receives; and other positions within the project have also become more specialized to project operations, including accounting and other operational functions. Yet, the decision-making has not changed significantly since the project started with a handful of staff and partner journalists.

This has both pros and cons. On the pro side, the management style allows regional editors/coordinators a degree of freedom to craft their version of the programming in the way they see best suited to the situation. For example, in the Caucasus, this has meant that the Georgia-based editors have been able to design their work with local journalists in a manner that appears to be specifically targeted to their needs and interests, and not constrained by any standard working methods shared by other regional coordinators/editors.

In general, the flexibility also has been a positive factor for project expansion, as it has meant that a core team of people has been able to work quickly, informally, and with discretion with partners in challenging and diverse media environments, including expanding activities into Russia and Azerbaijan. Related to this, the inherent flexibility of OCCRP has positioned the project to provide assistance or facilitate related media programming inputs from donors in these tough media environments.

The flexibility has also meant that management is able to shift attention and funds to specific issues and projects as opportunities present themselves. This is perhaps best illustrated by OCCRP's work producing the Yanukovychleaks project (see further discussion of this project under Question 4). In this situation, the project was able to pull together people and resources to react and assist journalists on the ground in the space of a few hours, even establishing a preliminary website portal in just over 24 hours to upload scans of rescued documents from former president Viktor Yanukovych's villa. Interviews make clear that OCCRP was not the only project helping out in this situation (Internews and other donors certainly played a part), but key informants credit OCCRP with establishing itself in a leadership role providing key inputs early on and in a way that was useful for journalists on the ground. This 'newsroom sensibility' – as described by external media experts interviewed – is a key way that OCCRP stands out from other media assistance programming.

But there are also cons with OCCRP’s approach to management. The flipside of this flexibility is that roles and decision-making authorities of individual staff members more limited. Often, when there is no extraordinary situation, the management structure appears to create bottlenecks.

The project conducts many activities and produces a variety of journalism products, but most decisions about these activities bottleneck at the leadership level. All major decisions regarding the website, member applications for document search financial assistance, and applications for new projects and donors all pass through one person (or two people, in the case of transborder projects), which has resulted in a management system that is described by informants that have worked with OCCRP as both slow and bureaucratic.

This ‘bottleneck’ affects minor and major parts of the project implementation from website design to support for journalists. With the same high-level editor or editors responsible for organizational as well as editorial decisions, collaborators feel the bottleneck most acutely when trying to get their stories produced, edited and published. A number of journalists who cooperate with the project described situations where they needed quick research or financial assistance (to report a story); however the project was not able to respond in a timely manner. Such delays seem more typical of a large media organization with multiple layers of editors and managers. This seemed to be particularly true for non-print media contributors who looked to OCCRP for quick assistance. As one contributing journalist described, “TV production time is not the same as OCCRP production time.” While OCCRP leadership feels that any delays are an unavoidable part of the laborious process of investigative journalism, this opinion is not shared by many of the informants.

Management Bottleneck

Currently, all major OCCRP decisions are approved by the Chief of Party in the Sarajevo Regional Center, including:

- Website design
- Decisions about member applications for document search financial assistance
- Applications for new projects and donors
- Final edit on all OCCRP publications

The editing bottleneck

Among the decisions tied up in the management bottleneck, the slow editing process is of particular concern for OCCRP efficiency in story development. Once written, stories might take many months before they are finalized.¹² Part of the slow pace is attributable to the nature of editing investigative stories. In part this is due to the need for rigorous in-house fact checking which relies on one, or at times two, individuals. A portion of this is also dependent on the necessary back and forth and potentially slow response time of contributors. The top-heavy editing structure is also a contributing factor: the editor in chief, who is also the Chief of Party

¹² Similar to investigative stories, OCCRP-led projects have experienced these challenges. In the case of the mapping media ownership project, delays in finalizing all countries and in project management oversight have meant that the project has been ‘waiting’ for six months.

(CoP), has to approve every piece before publication, often sending them back for more edits.¹³ However, one of the main obstacles in the production process is the ratio of first-level regional editors to stories and potential contributors.¹⁴ There simply are not enough strong editors in the network, resulting in backlogs that were frustrating to some interviewees.¹⁵

Currently, editors tend to have a wide region of coverage, forced to absorb the backload of editing from other regions while balancing their editing with other project responsibilities. OCCRP editors are the first to point out the need for more regional-level editors. This has been a clear challenge since the beginning, and both project reports and interviews with staff highlighted this need.

To illustrate, the two-person team in Georgia allows one editor to focus more specifically on reporters in the region and the other on text-editing obligations for the region and for taking on 'excess' stories from other regions in addition to their own region. Editors in other regions where there is just one person have few options for balancing competing obligations.

Some editors balance multiple obligations or roles. For example, the editor from Kiev and the one from Sarajevo also are involved with training and outreach in Russia and regions outside their own. They both have a keen interest in doing this outreach work, and they are a good fit for working with new journalists in these regions. However, this limits their availability for editing responsibilities in their respective regions. Similarly, the editor from Serbia also works as a reporter and balances multiple roles, depending on the story. While each editor has his or her own view and style of how to cultivate stories, an insufficient number of editors limits their ability to identify new talent or potential stories. Instead, editors are primarily focused on how to keep up with the current workload.

During interviews with editors and journalists, editing capacity is identified as the most important overall factor for meaningful learning and skill transfer opportunities. Specifically, informants identified the relative level of one-on-one editing time and this feedback process as the key factor for improving their skill level. This individual-focused work takes time and repeated encounters (as will be covered subsequently under Question 2). This suggests that editing obligations are therefore crucial both for quality story development as well as skill development. Many factors determine the appropriate stories per editor ratio, including story complexity, quality of input contributions, and experience level of the journalist. This evaluation suggests that more editorial time is required when working with less experienced journalists, which may result in less stories produced per editor. Human resources structure and quantity is a critical need of the program as the stories can be quite complex and many of the contributing journalists in some regions are relatively new to the field of investigative journalism.

¹³ This is due to the current libel insurance policy, which requires the editor in chief to approve every story.

¹⁴ There currently are four first-level regional editors with some additional editing assistance provided by occasional editors from outside the region cooperating with OCCRP.

¹⁵ Stories vary too much to quantify editing backlogs in any meaningful way.

The language challenge

Project expansion to other regions has outpaced the development of OCCRP editing capacity.¹⁶ This overlaps with the problem of language, as OCCRP operates and works with journalists in most of the countries of East Europe and Eurasia, but it has editing language capacity in only some of those languages.¹⁷ While recent efforts to bring on an additional editor proficient in Russian has addressed part of this gap for a number of countries, the deficiency of editors proficient in local languages lengthens the editing time needed to translate a story back and forth during the editing process. Moreover, both editors and journalist informants suggested that editors not proficient in the original story language are less likely to anticipate or understand the local nuances and contexts of the story in translation, undermining story production.

Expansion challenges

In addition to the above-described project management and operational challenges, expansion to new regions also brings challenges for strategic and sustained growth. In more repressive media climates, identifying partners and contributors is a delicate process that must be tailored to the local context. Identification of interested journalists historically has been difficult for OCCRP, particularly in Russia.¹⁸ Management perceives a gap in supply of contributors relative to story potential and need. This is due to the fact that strong professional contributors already have many professional obligations (as was described of more experienced network journalists in Russia). It is also due to the fact that extra precautions and efforts need to be taken in working with those that might still be in country or in the region (as in the Caucasus region with journalists still based in Azerbaijan).

Overall the expansion into new areas has forced the project to consider a more country-specific way to seek and train new talent. This is particularly true for Russia and recent training efforts there, as well as anticipated training efforts for ‘next generation’ journalists in other places, but most notably mentioned during interviews in Ukraine (and in eastern Ukraine).

The expansion has also challenged the project to consider alternative ways of structuring country expansion models. The utility of having a center or partner in each country versus a language cluster model is one area that has been under scrutiny by OCCRP leadership. During the last year, the project experimented with such a cluster with its Rise Project Romania and Rise Project Moldova. And it could consider a similar model in other countries.¹⁹

¹⁶ It should be noted that story development efforts have been facilitated by the multi-lingual Dashboard that is now available in 18 languages (as per the RIJN Semi-Annual Performance Reports – SAR No. 6: January – June 2014).

¹⁷ While some regional editors have editing capacity in one or more local languages, others have limited abilities in the myriad of languages spoken by the journalists with whom they work, editors primarily working with including , Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri speakers.

¹⁸ During the course of the evaluation, additional Russia-based journalist partners were being secured.

¹⁹ OCCRP leadership views this model as positive due to the efficiency it brings; however this is still a relatively new initiative, and the evaluation team does not have further information to assess this model relative to the regional center model.

As OCCRP has grown, a tension has resulted in the distribution of OCCRP strategic and technical resources between new and existing project sites. For the strategic resources, it is a question of how much senior staff and/or editing time to focus on these regions while covering current regions. For example, partly due to difficulties in acquiring local editors, much of the expansion work has fallen to current OCCRP editors and staff (further exacerbating the managerial and operational bottlenecks described above). It is also a question of how much coverage these regions might or should require in the near future in relation to current regions, and how to reflect this both in fundraising for these regions as well as considering how coverage in these regions might affect the project's profile overall. For example what are the pros and cons for OCCRP to carry out bigger projects in Central Asia (through securing additional funding) or Azerbaijan in relation to specific investigative stories in these countries or in relation to focusing attention and resources on projects or stories in its other designated countries of Southeast and Eastern Europe?

Finally, the strategy behind expansion also touches on the above-raised question of balancing professional development for individual journalists with story production priorities. The project is dedicated to improving investigative journalism skills and standards, yet OCCRP is also dependent on finding local editors and journalists with sufficient skills to facilitate expansion while maintaining OCCRP standards.²⁰ Unfortunately, the skill level among potential in-country partners is often deficient given the difficult, if not closing, space for independent media in some countries. This begs the strategic questions of whether the emphasis should be primarily on the stories themselves or on the professionalization and skill development of journalists? Does the allocation of funding towards big story projects like the Central Asia project, "Corruptistan," which often involve a number of experienced Western (and expensive) contributors, risk inadvertently deemphasizing journalistic development?²¹

Domestic vs. transnational

As the project has expanded, other inherent tensions in the OCCRP design have become more visible when striking a balance between OCCRP's focus on domestic versus transborder stories. To date, the project has tended to prioritize its efforts around multi-country stories. At the same time, the goal of the project is to report on major organized crime and corruption, which might not necessarily have a transborder nature.

²⁰ According to OCCRP leadership, OCCRP's formula when expanding is generally to: 1) Find someone who can be developed into a local editor 2) Identify local partners and centers that can sustain an investigative reporter team. If no center is available, locate a team that can work together virtually. 3) Integrate them into regional networks of journalists 4) For some specific stories, bring in additional super-reporters, editors or partners who can work on the stories, and 5) Integrate the best reporters into special projects and steadily give them more authority.

²¹ See for example:

https://occrp.org/corruptistan/uzbekistan/gulnara_karimova/the-prodigal-daughter/how-the-presidents-daughter-controlled-the-telecom-industry.php

Until now, journalists and expert informants describe a situation where there has been sufficient transborder subject matter for the project to pursue. However, as many of the big stories of ‘low-hanging transborder corruption fruit’ in one region (namely the Balkans) have been reported, the journalists there have become more focused domestically on corruption issues. For example, the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia and Herzegovina (CIN), is increasingly focused on domestic corruption investigations rather than transborder stories. They see the domestic pool of corruption issues as providing sufficient story potential for the foreseeable future, and they reported feeling less urgency to cover a transborder story over a domestic one more relevant to its readers.. On one hand this is a sign of success in that a partner center is focused on its own priorities and doing so in a professional manner. Yet collaboration with OCCRP is less frequent than in previous years. It still happens and will continue in the future, presumably on key stories, but it illustrates the fact that some of the most experienced partners may become less involved with OCCRP as they develop if the story focus is primarily transborder.

Similarly, other journalists’ views of priorities might differ from that of OCCRP. Most interviews in other countries also suggest that the project will be increasingly faced with the conceptual issues surrounding the decision to have a deeper domestic or transborder focus. Cross-border investigations are valued and seen as prestigious, but even if published with a local angle, many contend that domestic level corruption stories would be of more interest to their audiences.

As such, OCCRP faces a situation of perceived diminishing transborder material and potentially diverging priorities of affiliated reporters. OCCRP has recognized that developing domestically focused stories is merited and has developed a flexible approach that allows for the support of domestic stories. OCCRP staff perceive the need to generate stories for distribution through domestic media as a means toward increasing the supply of investigative news available to media consumers in those countries. This is most clearly illustrated in the Caucasus. In general, editors of partner media in the Caucasus region tend to prioritize domestically focused stories. If there is a transborder angle to a given story, they might then consider how to make it an OCCRP story. A majority of their efforts, however, are spent on generating domestic stories.

Yet OCCRP has been less explicit in considering how to prioritize story development resources between domestic and transborder initiatives. Providing space to the editors in the Caucasus to develop domestic stories signals an ability and interest in allocating resources towards such stories at an operational level. The leadership also articulates the need and professional interest in focusing primarily on transborder stories. This could create situations where the project has dueling priorities in seeking out stories without a clear rationale for why choices are made.

Another angle on this issue is the balance between larger multi-country and special projects versus one-time investigative stories. The transborder projects and are high-profile issues with a track record of generating their own interest and (often) their own resources. Many of the same people contribute to projects and stories alike; however, the difference rests in the time inputs as well as the anticipated results that stories have – either as high quality investigative pieces or as learning tools for the journalists that work on them. Both outcomes seem to be

possible for OCCRP stories; what is less clear, however, is whether emphasizing these larger projects over individual stories would change the dynamics of the network and the relationship of the network to domestic investigative reporting efforts.

Financial sustainability

Another key challenge of the program has been how and to what degree OCCRP chooses to focus on programming that will assist member organizations in their financial development and sustainability. The project has supported the short-term financial stability of partners. In the Caucasus, OCCRP has provided modest financial assistance to cash-strapped partners to cover basic costs of transportation or per diem for travel to a particular region or other basic technical costs to investigate a story. The OCCRP also covers the costs of document searches; if each document costs approximately ten Euros to obtain, OCCRP support often means the difference between having access or not to such documents, given the very modest budgets of most network partners. According to OCCRP network journalists interviewed, without this assistance, they would not be able to produce many of the stories that they have done.

OCCRP has also put forward a number of initiatives to assist partners with longer-term financing concerns, including specific practical grants for material inputs – such as camera related equipment – that would strengthen their ability to carry out quality reporting. OCCRP has provided examples and guidance to strengthen partners’ fundraising and financial planning. One of these ongoing efforts is focused on how to develop and sell stories through online mechanisms with the help of a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow²² tasked with working to develop both technical and operational ways to implement this.

Center managers who responded to the survey reported mixed results with respect to organizational improvement and sustainability, with seven individuals responding that they had received assistance from OCCRP in organizational improvement or sustainability, and none reporting having received such a grant within the preceding 6-month period. Those who reported having received assistance besides grant funding had wide variation with respect to the level of helpfulness of that assistance, ranging from 2.5 to 5 on a 5-point scale (with 1 being “not at all helpful,” and 5 being “very helpful”).

Despite these efforts, there are larger questions beyond the OCCRP initiative regarding the financing of investigative media and its sustainability in the region. While OCCRP stresses that sustainability is related to how credible the product is – i.e. if you continue to deliver quality products then you can convince others to support you²³ – the financial environment is tough everywhere for even the highest quality investigative journalism.. Most journalists and related informants interviewed imagine that donor commitment would be required for at least ten years, and even then many OCCRP members will likely struggle to find ways for viable

²² The Knight Fellowship is managed by ICFJ and supports fellows and other partners to explore and develop new models, tools and approaches in journalism. WWW.ICFJ.ORG

²³ According to the leadership, roughly half of member organizations currently working with OCCRP can produce journalism of a sufficiently high quality to be considered as ‘saveable’ or ‘sustainable.’

commercial support given their domestic media contexts (see Question 4 for further discussion of local media environment).

OCCRP was not meant to address this question, and it would be unfair to suggest that its current design could address these systemic financing challenges faced by investigative journalism globally. Yet, OCCRP's partial efforts to address this issue means that staff spends time and resources on this issue while not having the actual means or strategy to comprehensively address it.

The challenge in promoting partner sustainability is also related to the role that OCCRP sees for itself moving forward. In addition to developing the capacity of network members and stories, OCCRP is developing itself as an entity. Attention to OCCRP development as an organization requires consideration of its role beyond the current USAID funding available through 2017 and how it envisions its roles as a producer of content, as a platform for content produced by others, or both functions, and how to manage such growth strategically and effectively.

The purpose and target audiences of content producer and platform provider are so different that it is very difficult to imagine one online media meeting the needs of both. Creating high quality content is an enormous challenge in any media environment, much more so in the new democracies of Eastern Europe. Once the quality journalism is produced, presumably the results chain includes distribution, marketing and consumption by as many interested readers as possible. In the case of OCCRP, the results chain reaches beyond these points to include building citizen demand for a decrease in criminal activities (through investigative journalism), and aspirations to generate public policy action, as explored by this evaluation (Question 4). To achieve these results, media need a strategy to build a brand so that the "impact" of the reporting will grow and develop, which includes establishing its own voice and vision.

If the same organization decides to be a platform for member organizations' stories, the presentation and distribution of the stories would be more akin to a news aggregator, which does not have an editorial voice or unique journalism style or approach of its own. Each attracts different audiences and serves different purposes, so content producers and platform providers would use unique strategies to reach relevant readers and grow their respective brands. Achieving excellence at either objective requires thoughtful precision to carve out a specific niche in an online media sector in which readers are already overwhelmed with choices. Trying to do both will diminish the results realized under both objectives.

To date OCCRP has been a hybrid of the two, but moving forward OCCRP leadership realizes that it needs to more clearly define its value added and find a model for financing this. This has led OCCRP to experiment in the past several years as it attempts to see the life of OCCRP beyond the current core funding. OCCRP is putting in place a set of advisors and governance mechanisms to develop a more complex organization. Strategic decisions await regarding how the organization will prioritize its current efforts of skill and story development with network members and contributing journalists.

CONCLUSION

The current project design includes the core and complementary activities of improving the professional skills and standards of investigative journalists and producing stories; however, the variation in OCCRP involvement in story creation has only grown with the project's expansion into other regions, creating a tension between these project components. The OCCRP expansion from one regional hub to four has faced managerial, operational and strategic challenges. The management approach embodies flexibility, which allows for context-relevant and responsive work. But management structures and operations have not kept pace with OCCRP growth, resulting in slow decision-making processes that continue to be channeled through the Sarajevo Regional Center. These management issues also generate bottlenecks in the editing process, which is also centralized and over-burdens the insufficient staff of qualified editors. The linguistic diversity of network journalists has also proven challenging both for the editing process itself as well as expansion of OCCRP assistance tools to multilingual formats.

In addition to these programmatic and operational challenges, the OCCRP expansion has also underscored strategic considerations. Country-specific approaches to recruiting and training new talent are required, and OCCRP has experimented with both regional and linguistic models and has struggled to allocate strategic and technical resources among existing and new projects. Work with more regional partners has revealed a divergence between the OCCRP's transborder focus and national organizations' focus on domestic stories, for which OCCRP does not have a strategy to prioritize resources. Finally, the OCCRP's approach to encouraging financial sustainability for its partners is admirable, particularly its support of partner short-term needs. But OCCRP cannot address the larger economic pressures of the media industry that face partners even as it considers how to allocate project resources and attention. At the same time, OCCRP leadership is considering its own future and role as a unique regional media. Part of this process involves how best to define its value added whether OCCRP is better positioned to create story content or serve as a platform for it. The project continues to adapt and learn, but both operational and strategic clarity will be required for additional growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Revisit the OCCRP design and its core activities to define priorities: In the context of expansion and varying levels of capacity across network countries, OCCRP should consider how to allocate resources between professional development and story production, and how to advance either core activity. Some of the issues to consider include when and how OCCRP prioritizes expansion to new regions and/or working with less experienced journalists, and when and how it prioritizes larger multi-country or special projects versus one-time investigative stories.

Consider increasing the decision-making role of key operations staff and decreasing the top-heavy nature of decision making: The project needs senior staff oversight on the operations side that has the decision-making power to keep the project moving forward and the many activities synchronized. The project is moving in this direction, but it would be useful to consider either promoting internally or bringing on a senior-level operations staff person who can provide a counterpoint to the current leadership. Effectively, the project needs to

consider how to decouple and shape a management structure that will distinguish decision-making responsibilities between senior editing and senior operational staff.

Design and implement a strategy for developing additional local editing capacity:

This requires not just managerial will but time and money to hire, train and finance new editors. Additional editing capacity is not only a major financial investment but also time- and labor-intensive since a local investigative journalist needs considerable grooming before becoming an editor. Journalists learn best from an editor who speaks their language and shares a cultural understanding. Local journalists are also cheaper and more likely to stay in the region than an imported foreign editor, which should be only a short-term solution. Foreign-trained editors could also be considered where there are no other options and a very low local level of journalistic development:

Consider a more formal training program for local editors: OCCRP does not have a formal recruiting or training approach, rather it has tended to informally identify and then mentor promising candidates. This approach can be continued, but it needs to be intensified to proactively draw in potential local editors. An investigative television editor would also be a smart investment in countries where OCCRP works mainly with TV media.

Strategize editorial roles more precisely and explicitly in order to maximize limited resources: More editors would clearly help, particularly with other local language capabilities, but this needs to be considered in terms of the trade off in terms of resources of staffing in other regions that may see greater needs in the future. It could be that one region requires more editors, particularly if the news value is expected to grow and or partner journalists are inexperienced and in need of more skill-building. It could also be that this means more editors are based in the regions to work closely with journalists.

Consider decentralizing some final editing approvals: Currently, all editorial approval of stories goes through one person; while this is due to insurance liability considerations, designating an additional ‘final’ editor for example could assist story production processing times.

Start now on OCCRP strategic planning beyond 2017: The evaluation highlights a number of strategic issues in relation to story-selection, use of resources, and overall emphasis of the project moving forward. Much of the past years have been an experiment by doing; now is the time to more clearly calibrate the balance between media development and media production in relation to regional emphasis.²⁴ It is also the time to be clearer in planning for OCCRP and its anticipated role with partners and/or its transformation beyond 2017.

²⁴ For example, producing investigative stories appears to have been the emphasis for Ukraine until now, but a new generation of journalists there suggests that this emphasis will turn towards developing professional skills. In contrast, work in Central Asia is less about developing skills (given the tough environment) than about media production.

The planning should also include a more explicit strategy for OCCRP financial planning and its efforts to assist member centers in these efforts. A number of members could certainly learn about financial planning CIN and other members that have succeeded in developing some financial sustainability.

Question 2. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to institutionalizing professional practices and improved skills of journalists associated with the project?

The project has introduced and to some extent been able to institutionalize some professional standards of investigative journalism to journalists within its network. Certain skills are easier to transfer than others, with technical research skills being much more likely to be utilized beyond OCCRP work than OCCRP standard fact checking. Factors that affect skill retention appear to be related to the editorial interaction mode, the profiles of journalists, and the ‘home’ environment journalists face for application of standards and skills.

Key practices and skills transferred

Fact checking is one of the key skills OCCRP has transferred to journalists in the region. OCCRP is known for its thorough fact checking, and most journalists interviewed recalled painfully the often-grueling process (at least the first time) of going through every line to confirm accuracy. As one journalist described, “[It is] like doing one’s military service.” Asked to describe the experience, another informant made a hand gesture like a pistol to his head. “It was so unusual for me, being asked to provide every single piece of paper,” he said. “Now I keep all the screen shots for when they ask for documents.” Several journalists reported that in follow-on OCCRP stories they have learned not to include facts they cannot back up with sources they know the fact-checker will accept, demonstrating a positive learning curve.

Most journalists interviewed attribute this process to improving their own skill level. According to the SI survey, journalists named fact checking and collaborating with colleagues in other countries as the two highest-ranking skill areas imparted by OCCRP. The survey asked respondents to rate OCCRP efforts on a scale from one to five with respect to ten different skill areas, and then to rank the extent to which their skills improved in each of these areas on the same scale. For both questions, the mean scores for all skill areas exceeded a 3.6, with higher scores for the first question, demonstrating that journalists believed they had improved their capacity in many of OCCRP’s target areas and were generally satisfied with OCCRP efforts. Fact checking was one of the highest ranking skill areas for both series of questions. As one journalist noted, teaching fact checking is like teaching a man how to fish rather than giving a man a fish. It is a skill that stays with you. A summary chart depicting participants’ responses to questions on the ten skill areas is below.

Table 2 Summary of Journalist Survey Results Regarding Skill Areas

Skill Area	How would you evaluate OCCRP efforts to strengthen journalist skills in each of the following areas?	Do you feel that your participation in the OCCRP has helped improve your skills as a journalist?
Citing sources	4.2	3.6

Computer-assisted reporting	4.1	3.8
Conducting traditional paper-based public records research	4.2	3.6
Cooperating with colleagues in other countries	4.7	4.6
Developing human sources	4.2	3.8
Fact-checking	4.6	4.4
News judgment	4.1	3.8
Protecting sources	4.4	3.8
Telling a story in a compelling way	4.2	3.7
Writing clearly	4.0	3.8

Participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not improved as a result of OCCRP participation and 5 is improved greatly (n=30 for both questions).

It is not entirely clear, however, whether OCCRP has managed to internalize these skills in member journalists. On one hand, OCCRP partner organizations report that they have made fact checking a standard part of their editorial process. One reason might be pre-emptive: they know that every story later submitted for publication by OCCRP will be subject to the same process. Another might be simply that the journalists working with OCCRP are a self-selected crowd with high standards or standards potential and the type that naturally internalize the process.

Still, there appear to be limits to this internalization of fact checking. When journalists (both with OCCRP partner organizations and freelancers or those affiliated with other media organizations) were asked whether they apply the same fact checking standards to other non-OCCRP stories, the answers were slightly hedged. Informants say they employ fact checking on non-OCCRP stories but perhaps not as rigorously as OCCRP due to time and staffing constraints. One informant observed that if domestic media could be shown that professional integrity would lead to greater income, all media would fact-check.

A second skill transferred is learning how to write logically structured stories. Editors work with journalists to teach them how to write a story within the confines of logically presented evidence and a logically constructed story structure. Constructing a logical sequence of events that lays out the facts of the story is often a major challenge for early career journalists. Editors report that young journalists have poor or non-existent critical thinking abilities. Working with OCCRP has often been the first time a new journalist has been expected to produce a logical and rigorous case for their story. OCCRP editors find that they themselves must compensate for the inadequacies of their reporters' lack of training, but once going through this process a number of times, editors do notice better abilities to construct logical arguments.

However, OCCRP has put less emphasis less successful on transferring good writing skills. Among the skills required to produce strong investigative journalism is the ability to write stories in a clear and compelling way. While reporting and writing skills are not the same, having the ability to report accurately and clearly complement each other. Journalists rate OCCRP as being successful in its efforts to promote 'writing clearly' as a technical skill, but at a slightly lower level than other skills, with a score of 4.0.

OCCRP has not put explicit attention on clear writing, and the ‘readability’ of its product, and a review of the sample of articles selected for the six cases studies reflects this. Currently, OCCRP has no capacity for developing the writing skills of its collaborators nor does it have any strategy or plan to do so. Editorial resources are maxed out on producing stories for the website, which still suffers editorial bottlenecks (discussed under Question 1). There are no designated story-editors whose job is specifically to improve writing quality. Editors seem to be fully stretched by the requirements of the heavy edits needed to get stories into good enough shape for publication, meaning that they make sense and are thoroughly accurate. Few OCCRP stories are written in a language that is compelling and draws the reader in. Both journalists and external media experts report that OCCRP neglects writing quality and hence the ‘readability’ of its stories.

Since this skill is not emphasized in the program’s training materials, only a couple of journalists emphasized the need to know and write for an audience or be attuned to how ‘to sell a product’ to a wider audience. Others mostly assumed that quality reporting should be ‘enough’ and that financing of such reporting was either dependent on donors or without a lot of domestic potential, both of which were not related in their views to readability.

The skill in which OCCRP invests most heavily is public records research. While survey data lists this as one of the lower skill areas developed, journalists interviewed often mentioned this skill as one that offered the clearest benefit to them. It does this through trainings and one-on-one sessions, and this is often one of the first points of contact with OCCRP. For example an early 2015 training course for journalists in Siberia included a focus on how to search and access different public records. By offering research help to collaborator journalists, OCCRP helps teach research skills while also raising the standards of the stories. OCCRP also receives credit for the stories they help with on records searches, either by reprinting the stories on occrp.org as “OCCRP stories” or getting an OCCRP reporting credit in the publication on the partner media. The searches can include offshore company registers, commercial registers around the world, and property records.

Media expert informants suggest that many young journalists simply have no idea where to look for publically available information in their own countries, much less in other countries. Such skills and information are important for raising the quality of investigative stories. After several searches, journalist and editor informants described how journalists learn to identify and approach the appropriate public institution or commercial database service to request the material they need. The RIJN/OCCRP investigative dashboard <https://investigativedashboard.org/> is another tool which enables journalists anywhere, members or non-members, to ask OCCRP for investigation help, requests which are sometimes farmed out to OCCRP members on an informal basis and help broaden journalists’ thinking and network of contacts.

Factors affecting skill development and application

Skill transfer through the editing process. One of the factors that appear to affect the learning process, retention, and application of skills is the mode of skill transfer. Central to OCCRP efforts to raise professional skills and standards is the editing process. Overall, the

editing process gets generally high marks from journalists for its learning opportunities. According to SI survey analysis, more than 84% of OCCRP respondents (22 of 26 respondents) were “satisfied or very satisfied” with inputs received from regional editors with another 11.5% viewing the inputs as “neutral.”

Field interviews and observations sought to better understand what this editing process looks like in practice. Two main types of editing styles with journalists were noted in the field visits and document review.

The first approach can be considered one that focuses equally on skill and story development. The Caucasus regional coordinator/editor²⁵ employs a micro approach, focusing on working with individual journalists and helping to develop their stories and professional skills. He tends to find new investigative reporting talent among the students at the Georgian Institute for Public Affairs (GIPA), where he lectures at the journalism school. Compared to other editors, his style is unusually focused on developing journalists on an individual basis; although his focused work with OCCRP partner, TV program Studio Monitori, online media Netgazetti, and newsmagazine Liberali in Georgia also demonstrate efforts to support their organizational development. Assistance might include advice for a funding application, discussing story ideas and strategizing on approaches, or helping to convince an assignment editor to take the story the journalist is working on. When applicable, advice is also given to journalists or editors connected with new organizations.

This editor works in a similar way with journalists in Armenia and Azerbaijan. In Armenia, this is primarily through OCCRP’s partner media hetq.am. The journalists pitch stories to OCCRP, and the editor offers them story ideas and financial help for stories. In Azerbaijan, this personal approach appears to be particularly helpful given the security concerns for journalists working in and on reporting issues for the country. Overall working directly with individual journalists is an approach which offers a flexible learning process to help journalists develop through sharing expertise, editorial mentorship and resources to move stories forward.

The editing interaction style is somewhat different in Ukraine in that most interaction until now has been about the story more than the skills. This is partly due to the fact that most OCCRP contributing journalists are quite experienced; for example, of the nine partner journalists interviewed in Kiev, five headed their own investigative media program or team. The regional coordinator/editor focuses on producing the strongest investigative stories possible using the available resources and people. Developing the skills of partner journalists appears to be only a means toward this end. In this case, the coordinator generally has a close group of experienced partner journalists that he works with who have their own track record of investigative reporting. They primarily need financial and institutional support rather than help developing

²⁵ In Georgia, there is a two person editing team; one of who spends most of her time doing the editorial “heavy-lifting” on the first or second drafts for the region (and beyond). Her expertise is shared with journalists as they go back and forth editing stories. There is no sign that she has the time or mandate to help reporters develop their writing skills beyond fixing up the stories at hand.

their skills. This coordinator works in a similar way with two experienced partner journalists in Russia.

Other editors work with journalists of mixed skill levels and apply different manners of engagement. Editors in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Bucharest all describe numerous Skype conversations and hands on work with journalists, primarily focusing on story production with the intention that this will further build skills. Informants on all sides stress that more time with editors increases chances of higher skill retention, but the extent to which these different editing modes or styles impart different skill transfer and retention is partly dependent on the journalist's relative skill levels. Given that the model used in the Caucasus is the most hands on and intensive, the evaluation team considers that this model is better suited for basic skills development among a larger pool of journalists. By contrast, the approach employed in Ukraine is more likely to lead to the refinement of skills among a smaller group of more qualified journalists with greater experience.

Skill transfer through training. Many journalists interviewed could identify a training that they participated in (whether in person or through online exchanges) and some learning point that came from the training – with a number of interviewees particularly noting training for public records database searches.²⁶ However, what most journalists and editors stressed during field interviews is that training needs application for real learning to occur. One OCCRP staff member who conducts skills-based trainings about computer-assisted reporting said that he receives phone calls from participants asking to repeat lessons that were not learned because they were never put to use. From his experience, only participants who utilized the new skills were able to retain and build on them. One journalist provided her own example of how such repetition improved her skills. Her need to search the same databases multiple times for a cross-border project on media ownership made her an 'expert' on using the system. After she finished the project she felt that she had mastered the ability to do such searches for her other reporting. Another informant, now a senior editor in an OCCRP partner organization, recalled the best training ever received which was not in a formal setting: "An editor who kept sending me back to the same source to ask for more information until I got it right." As noted above, a journalist's ability to apply skills introduced through training events depends on other factors, including the quantity and content of stories they work on and the requirements of media outlets for which they work.

Journalists' profiles

Another factor that affects skill development and application is the profile of the journalist. All OCCRP journalists share a certain self-selectivity in that they specifically put themselves into

²⁶ No survey respondents commented negatively on the content or timing of the trainings themselves, but had little additional to say about them except that it would be useful to have additional and more specialized trainings as a means to build upon skill sets and further improve OCCRP efforts.

situations where they are challenged by demanding editors in ways likely unfamiliar to them.²⁷ Editors suggest that reporters who don't meet OCCRP investigative journalism standards tend to fall away because they find the project's high standards too onerous or else OCCRP staff loses interest in working with them.²⁸

Skill transfer and retention are also somewhat dependent on journalists' relative frequency of engagement with OCCRP, however it is impossible to isolate the relative skill improvements based solely on this frequency. When meeting with early career OCCRP trained staff journalists, they were able to clearly describe their skill development and its links to OCCRP. However only a handful of partner journalists have this close and frequent contact with OCCRP. Few contributors are freelance journalists who depend solely on OCCRP story fees to make a living. Eighty-three percent of the journalists responding to the survey reported working for an organization. As such, many in the network have full-time positions for other media and might have editors (like those from Netgazeti in Georgia or others) that provide quality guidance. Few have time to contribute and work on more than a handful of stories a year, or if they do, the level of actual story engagement greatly varies from a few edits or additions to central involvement in a large multi-country project. All respondents who had joined the network within the past twelve months had worked on three or fewer stories in each of the categories: regional, cross-border collaboration; domestic stories with OCCRP; and non-OCCRP stories. That stated, there was not a correlation between those who had been in the network longer and more active levels of collaboration.

Country media context

The environment of the media organization and the home country context provide a third key factor for understanding how to raise professional skills and standards. Each of the three countries visited by the evaluation team have different levels of openness and demand for investigative journalism (from the public as well as within the commercial media sector). Ukraine at the moment has the highest level of both.²⁹ While the context in BiH and Georgia does not necessarily hinder such investigations, neither public nor institutional responsiveness to such reporting provide many incentives to take on such investigations.³⁰ Connected with this is also the relative level of donor funds available for such reporting as none of the countries have commercially viable options for taking on such reporting (nor have most countries in the world). Ukraine has the highest level of current interest and funding; Georgia and BiH have less

²⁷ They also tend to have a wider exposure beyond their countries. For example: Sixty percent of survey respondents have worked or studied outside of their country of origin for at least 6 months, and forty percent reported having either advanced professional or functional native English proficiency.

²⁸ For example, of the journalist survey respondents, 20% (six out of 30 respondents) joined less than a year ago, and 23% (seven out of 30 respondents) joined three or more years ago.

²⁹ Journalists affiliated with OCCRP have developed a particular cluster of influence in Ukraine for promoting high standards, and here it is possible to speak of the 'institutionalization' of investigative journalism standards in the country (at least amongst top programs like Hromadske TV Nashi Groshi; Slidsko, etc); however, this is not necessarily connected solely to OCCRP efforts, rather the fact that OCCRP worked with journalists and provides additional skills to then to raises their standards even higher.

³⁰ See Annex VI for an overview of the media environment in three countries visited for evaluation fieldwork.

foreign funding or donors are planning to soon considerably lessen their support. In short, journalists in Ukraine have both a greater opportunity and incentive to learn the skills of investigative journalism.

Closely connected to this external environment is the media organization culture in which journalists work. Informants suggest that having a peer cohort with high standards helps encourage shared adherence to these standards. Many of the journalists at OCCRP partner organizations exhibit high levels of professional standards, including the Kyiv Post, CIN, and Studio Monitori. Similarly many of the journalists cooperating with the network but affiliated with other non-OCCRP members appeared to have high standards.³¹ Yet the evaluation team found that journalists who work for other media outlets and organizations do not have the time or resources to either take on investigative stories of similar substance or apply the same skills and standards put forward by OCCRP.

CONCLUSIONS

OCCRP has introduced new skills and standards to many journalists. Overall professional practices and skills of partner journalists can be linked to self-described improvement, but it is unclear the extent to which these improvements have been institutionalized in the work habits of OCCRP partner journalists and media organizations. Some skills and standards, such as fact checking and public records research are present but require reinforcement through use, even in media environments where high(er)³² standards are becoming recognized and expected. Other higher-level soft skills such as critical thinking are more difficult to institutionalize; compelling story telling has not been incorporated into the OCCRP training materials to date.

The experience level of journalists and the country media context also affect journalist learning and application of skills introduced through OCCRP. Editing modes and frequency of contact between editor and journalist matter (to some extent) for adoption and institutionalization of professional practices and skills employed by individual journalists and partner organizations. Particularly for less experienced journalists, closer interaction suggests more opportunities for interactive learning. More experienced journalists require less intensive editor engagement, and appear to have benefitted from exposure to higher standards (e.g., fact checking) and technical skills (e.g., computer-assisted reporting and public records searches).

The country media context varies across the program regions, and different levels of openness and demand for critical thinking and investigative journalism certainly affect the ability and incentives to apply professional skills and practices.

³¹ External media professionals and experts confirmed the quality of these and other domestic media organizations affiliated with OCCRP.

³² Higher standards described in several countries still might not be at the level of OCCRP standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Design editing interactions to match anticipated skill level of journalists:

Assuming that the project continues to expand and work with less experienced journalists (in Russia, eastern Ukraine, etc.), the program will need to anticipate more intensive editorial engagement and structure the programming around this.

Specifically, this means that more editors for less output is a likely scenario. It also means as much ground-based engagement or interaction as is possible with journalists. This could also be based on the Georgia model where one editor focuses on skills development and another on story development.

Further emphasize project-based learning of professional skills and practices:

Feedback suggests that trainings can provide an introduction, but application of the skills is the best way to internalize learning. This suggests that there should be further incorporation of specific skill building curriculum into applied use in RIJN/OCCRP multi-country projects and story development. This could happen in a number of ways, including further linking specific trainings to multi-country projects.

Consider how to further solidify investigative media clusters in OCCRP countries to institutionalize practices:

The example in Ukraine illustrates the way that many years of donor support and efforts can create a cohort of investigative journalists with high standards and influence. The extent to which this is possible to simulate in other countries is highly dependent on many external factors, but it is worth considering whether this is actually a strategic objective of the project and in which countries this might be possible (assuming it is). For example, CIN in BiH and parts of CINS in Serbia have such clusters, but most of the rest of Southeast Europe is lacking such cohorts.

Question 3. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to building and strengthening sustainable linkages between journalists?

Sub-question: Which collaborative activities have been particularly helpful to journalists participating in the project?

The evaluation examines collaboration levels first by identifying the main mechanisms OCCRP uses for collaboration. It then focuses on the relative levels of collaboration between journalists that the program has achieved. This is followed by a look at the relative sustainability of such linkages.

OCCRP methods of fostering collaboration

The project has focused on a number of ways to encourage cross-border interactions. Sponsoring and developing multi-country stories is the most frequent way that journalists establish working relations and get to know an issue from a transborder perspective. Story collaboration was the most effective mechanism cited by survey respondents to foster collaboration, with personal contact, cross-border stories, and online interaction on stories mentioned 13 times in the open-ended question (of 28 total responses). Similarly, 17% of

survey respondents listed more cross-border story collaboration as a way to improve OCCRP collaboration in another open-ended question. Often this requires journalists to have close contact during story development. For example, a Bosnian journalist traveled to Kosovo and worked with colleagues in Kosovo to investigate a story that included both Bosnian and Kosovar subjects. Such interaction can be specific to one story or can carry over to a series of stories. Working with regional editors and having close lines of personal communication were noted as the key facilitators of collaboration.

OCCRP-sponsored story development also strengthens domestic collaboration amongst journalists who might not otherwise know of each other or work together. Even when working on transnational stories, country teams have to collaborate closely to tell the part of the story on their side of the border. For example, many projects require journalists in each country to do a similar set of research and investigations around an issue – for example media ownership. A coordinating editor will give out assignments and work closely with the different country teams to come up with the final transnational product. Another example of this is a set of projects initiated by OCCRP, such as their prison documentary series, which asks journalists in several countries to examine prisons within their country and combine their work to explore larger trends in the region.

Some OCCRP editors, such as those in Georgia and the Caucasus region, actively build linkages amongst journalists from different news organizations and freelancers. As will be discussed further below, many survey respondents from Georgia, including both reporters and center managers, demonstrate a high level of ‘closeness centrality’ in the OCCRP network, meaning that they connect to many different actors in the network.³³ Informant interviews with journalists from the Caucasus region suggest that the degree of linkages and sense of ‘community’ that the editors have created is quite unique and very much to do with the manner in which the editors seek out new talent, cultivate and develop the talent, and continue to work with them within and between the countries of the region.

Outside of story production interaction, the RIJN/OCCRP annual conference is frequently mentioned and considered as a way to connect people. Many journalists interviewed see the conferences as a way to meet new people, discuss story ideas, and potentially plan new stories together. Three of the survey respondents reported that the annual conference was the biggest facilitator of collaboration on an open-ended question, though there were no discernible trends among respondents by region, work association, or years of experience. A few survey respondents also mentioned trainings as an effective mechanism of fostering collaboration and noted their desire for further work in this area.

Finally, the website securereporter.org was designed and produced specifically for OCCRP to be its main collaboration venue and online platform. OCCRP intended securereporter.org to

³³ Closeness centrality measures how fast an actor can spread information or access other nodes. It measures how many ties it requires for an actor to connect to all actors in the network.

be the network's central online platform for collaborators. It was to be a secure environment for exchanging communications protected from the surveillance of governments and criminals, a safe place to store data, and a virtual newsroom for editors and reporters across a wide region. Considerable USAID/OCCRP resources were invested in creating the site, which includes story production schedules, online discussion venues, file storage and tutorials. But the site remains practically unused by OCCRP collaborators or staff. Recent PRA reporting noted that, "All of the OCCRP staff and editors that responded [to the survey] said that to their knowledge no stories have been produced using the [Secure Reporter] platform."³⁴

OCCRP informants interviewed for the evaluation reported that collaborators prefer the convenience and familiarity of email and traditional forms of communication and tend to use social media and other online venues rather than the specifically designed OCCRP platform. Furthermore, users were not consulted in the design of the platform, and OCCRP has not pushed its members to use it. The platform nonetheless has potential if it could be modified to meet the needs of its users, as it is being used regularly by other ICFJ members, particularly in South America.³⁵

What type of collaboration has been achieved?

Through the above mentioned mechanisms, the project has broadened journalists' perspectives beyond their own borders. This is evident through an analysis of OCCRP networks identified through a survey of OCCRP staff, center managers, and reporters. Survey respondents were asked to identify OCCRP projects that they had worked on in 2014, who they had worked on those projects with, the nature of the collaboration, and whether they had worked with these individuals previously.³⁶ Importantly, journalists reported that they had not worked with approximately half of those counterparts listed in their OCCRP networks prior to the project. This suggests that OCCRP has helped create linkages that did not previously exist.

In the analysis that follows we offer graphical representations of the networks that were identified through the surveys. As discussed in the methodology section above, 73% of Center Managers/OCCRP staff and 48% of journalists responded to the survey and, as such, we do not have complete information regarding the network. As can be seen in the figures below, many reporters identified as members of OCCRP are not connected into the network. This could be because of one of three primary reasons: (1) they did not participate in any projects in 2014; (2) they participated in projects that were not identified in the survey because of non-response; or (3) they participated in projects that were identified, but they were not listed by their colleagues as involved in the project. Qualitative evidence suggests that most of the non-

³⁴ Organized Crime and Corruption Network's Regional Investigative Journalism Network, Semi-annual Performance Monitoring Report No. 7, July-December 2014. Philliber Research Associates, February 2015.

³⁵ While potential users were not asked about their needs prior to the development of Secure Reporter, PRA reporting includes survey respondent feedback on factors contributing to their non-use of the site, which could inform future modifications of the site.

³⁶ Please see Annex III for the full survey question and layout.

connected individuals did not participate in a project in 2014; however, we do not know the exact distribution of causes.

Names have been removed from the images to protect the anonymity of the survey respondents. Figure 1 presents a depiction of the network by individuals labeled with the country that they work in to protect the anonymity of survey respondents. This network demonstrates the transnational nature of the network, as each connected bubble or individual shows ties to individuals from other countries. Lines between network nodes indicate that the individuals represented by the nodes have collaborated on at least one project together in 2014. Larger circles represent those actors with the highest level of “degree centrality,” or those with the highest number of connections with other network actors. The darker the circle, the higher the level of Eigenvector centrality – meaning they are connected to influential network actors. Individuals from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are well represented in this depiction, demonstrating high levels of degree and Eigenvector centrality and therefore strong networks in these two countries.

Figure 1 Network by Individuals and their Country of Work

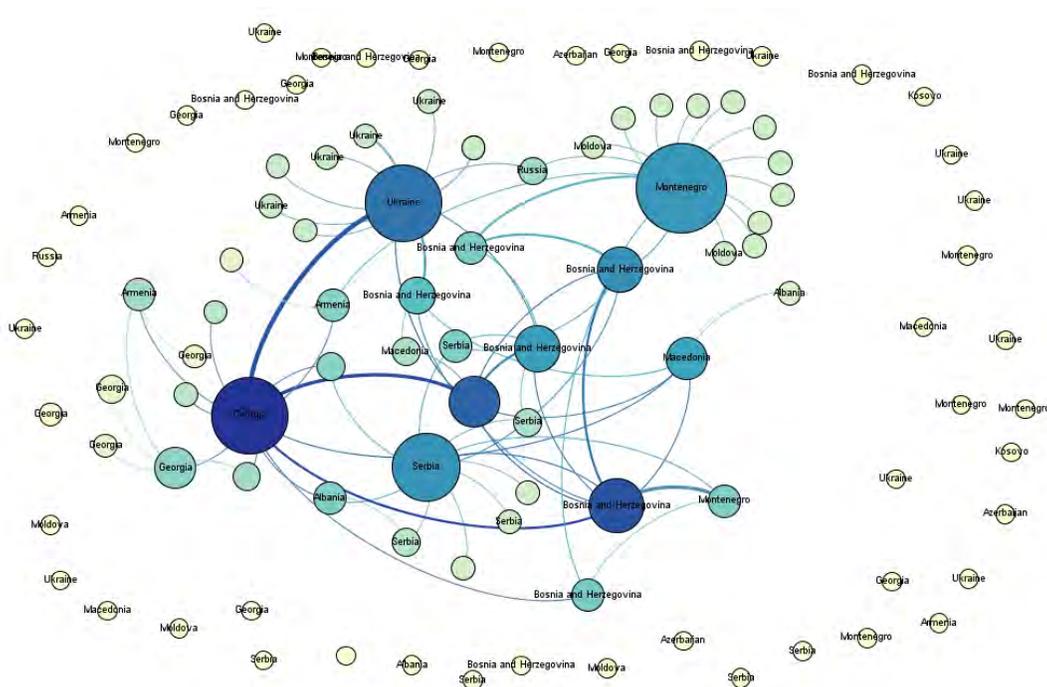


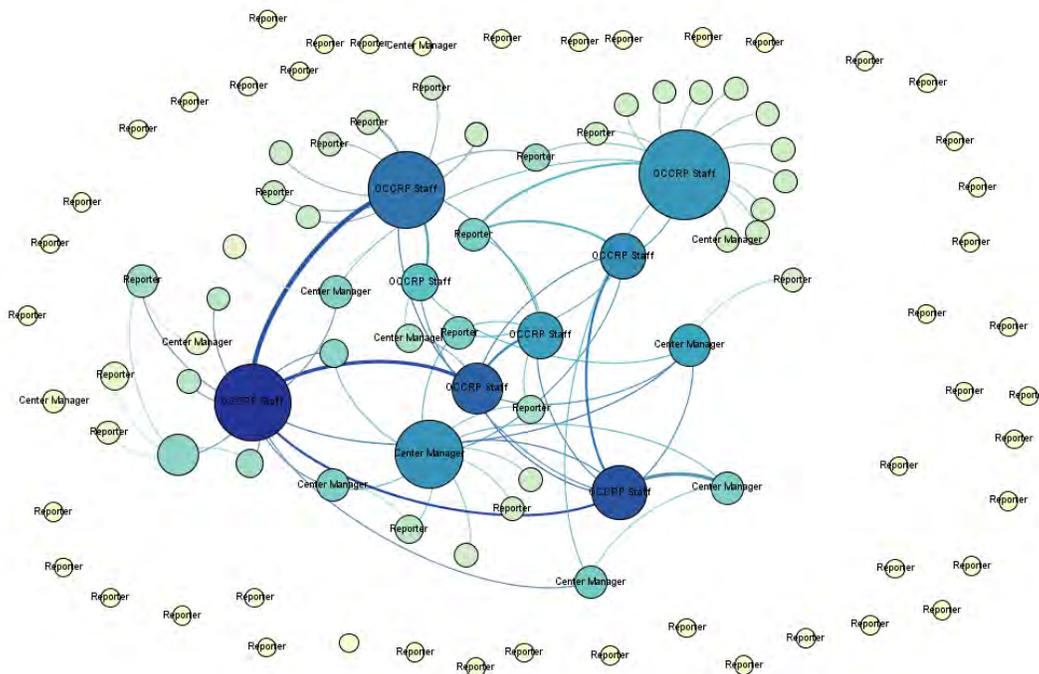
Figure 2 shows the same image and distinguishes between OCCRP staff, center managers, and reporters.³⁷ While OCCRP staff were, unsurprisingly, the most well-connected actors, a few

³⁷ The Editor in Chief was invited to respond to the survey, but the evaluation team did not receive a response. As such, the Editor in Chief is represented only where others reported connections with him. Because of his category (OCCRP staff) and likely connections to most in the network, the analysis and overall conclusions drawn from that figure are not substantively affected.

center managers and reporters were also well-connected. The figures suggest that an OCCRP staff person has the highest level of degree centrality and a staff person in Georgia had the highest level of Eigenvector centrality. This is consistent with the finding above that there is a particularly dense network in Georgia.

Survey data further shows that two thirds of respondents felt their ability to collaborate with colleagues had improved at a level five on a scale of one to five as a result of OCCRP participation. In fact, more than 95% of all respondents answered with either a four or a five. Responses regarding the extent to which OCCRP efforts were successful in promoting collaboration were similarly positive.

Figure 2 Network by Type



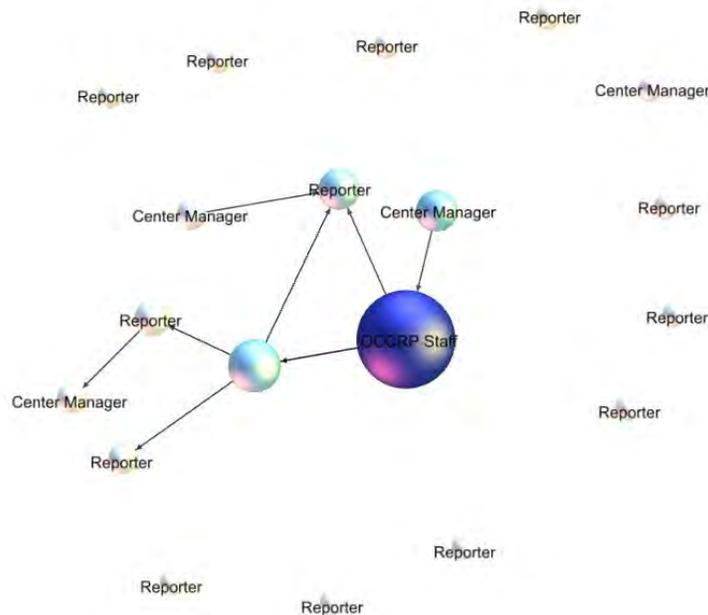
Qualitative evidence suggests that for many journalists, their interaction with the project was the first time that they had either considered or had been part of an investigative story that included other countries. On the professional level, it became the ‘ah ha’ moment for a number of OCCRP participants, as they learned to see a story from a transborder perspective, which they found radically changed the dynamics of the story and their ability to do an investigation. This was particularly true in countries where the most common formula for organized crime and corruption fund allocation included offshore companies. For example, when Armenian journalists began working with OCCRP to trace Armenian-related offshore companies in Cyprus, they gained an increased ability to both trace and tell the story from this widened perspective.

Others gained an enhanced ability to analyze and compare their own country’s organized crime and corruption issues with the international context. Journalists contended that learning about

how organized crime works in a neighboring country provided them with the ability to look at the same patterns in their own countries. Some journalists appear to have gained some level of psychological support from seeing that other journalists face similar challenges when engaged in such investigations. Related to this, for some respondents, there was a sense of belonging to an elite group of journalists doing good work. This appears to be a source of pride and indirect support. As one journalist described, “I have been working with OCCRP about three years, and I am literally proud to be part of this network.”

According to the network analysis, collaboration between other actors within and between regions varied significantly. In Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine (the Western Eurasia region), for example, all regional collaboration reportedly went through OCCRP staff, and no connections were noted between journalists themselves outside of those connections. In the Caucasus region, within-region collaboration typically went through a Center Manager or OCCRP staff member, with little collaboration noted between reporters outside of those connections (see Figure 3). In both the Western Eurasia and Caucasus regions, however, a number of these same respondents reported collaboration with journalists in other regions (as seen in the Caucasus in Figure 3).³⁸

Figure 3 Caucasus Within-Region Collaboration



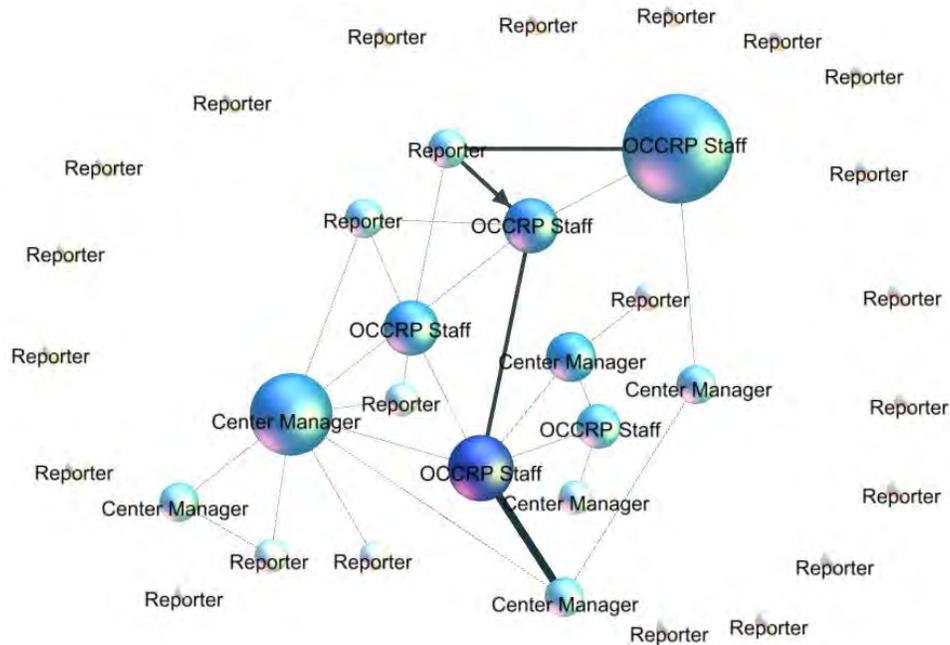
³⁸ There were no survey responses from Romania, but interviews suggest that there are connections between Romania and Moldova.

Regional and inter-regional collaboration exceeded domestic collaboration in many cases.³⁹ This was potentially due to the nature of stories being developed under OCCRP and the organizational structure of the network and center managers. Clustering coefficients and triangles, which mark the extent to which actors operate within clusters or cliques, do not correlate with country of origin or region, though they were higher for OCCRP staff and center managers than for reporters. This suggests that the networks captured through the survey cross country and regional borders and are able to spread information throughout the network regardless of national boundaries.

The Balkans region varied most significantly in terms of network representation, with some countries very active in the network and others lacking a presence; though the region had the highest levels of within-region collaboration. Some individuals were extremely well represented in the network and were identified by several survey respondents. This includes journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as from Serbia. Others, including some center managers, had relatively limited representation. Measurements of “network density” and “diameter” were higher for this region than the others, though this is in part due to the larger number of actors in this region than in other regions. The region has a large number of well-connected actors, but more than half of all actors in the region did not respond or were not listed as connected to anyone else within this region. Nearly all reporters not hired by OCCRP directly in this network were from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, leaving Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, underrepresented.

³⁹ This network analysis captures only self-reported collaboration over the past year, and as such does not capture trends or changes over time. The project has also explicitly focused on transborder stories and respondents may have therefore focused their survey responses on such stories. Key informant interviews suggested a preliminary movement (and possible future trend) towards more domestic stories rather than transborder stories (see Question 1), which would not be captured through this network analysis.

Figure 4 Balkans Within-Region Collaboration

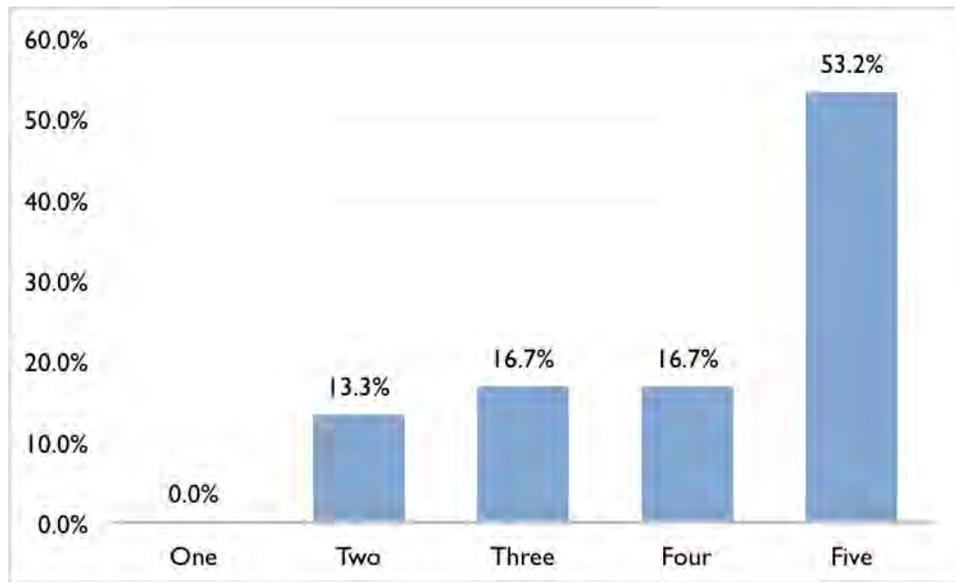


What affects sustainability?

The extent to which sponsored interactions have resulted in sustained collaboration is mixed. On the one hand, journalist survey data suggests that there is little correlation between length of time in the network and level of collaboration with others. On the other hand, as stated above, more than 95% of respondents reported having increased skills in collaboration due to OCCRP.

Interviews and survey responses provide some insights into these seemingly opposite trends. On one side, interest and confidence to collaborate appears to have increased. Seventy percent of survey respondents believed they were likely or very likely to continue their involvement with OCCRP over the coming three years. Figure 5 depicts the distribution of responses, with a response of 1 signifying 'very unlikely' and a response of 5 meaning 'very likely'.

Figure 5 Most Journalists Anticipate Ongoing Collaboration with Other OCCRP Members



Survey Question: On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you believe your collaboration will continue with OCCRP members over the coming three years?

A number of journalists interviewed described the fact that now knowing a journalist in the neighboring country meant that they could and did call them when they needed something. Usually this was to check a fact or to ask a favor for getting access to documents or information. For example, a Ukrainian journalist working on a banking story described how she asked Latvian colleagues that she had met within the network to assist in getting a document she needed. At the same time, this spontaneous collaboration is need specific and sporadic. Overall when looking at collegial interaction before and after the different project interventions, most follow-on collaboration appears to be casual rather than formal unless initiated by OCCRP. This is partly due to the fact that identifying strong stories which are mutually beneficial is often more random than scientific. Other key obstacles to collaboration listed by journalists and center managers included a lack of available time, differences in language, and distance.

Low follow-on professional collaboration is also due to simple economics. Most news organizations where journalists work or have an affiliation have tight budgets and have little to spend to co-finance larger stories that might only have an uncertain production value. This is especially true if the final product is also to be produced in English. In these cases, the financing, the organizing efforts, and English editing requirements, call for OCCRP or a convener like OCCRP to produce stories written by several journalists in several countries.⁴⁰ Journalists working in the network appear to have gained broader regional perspective, but given the fact that most stories and projects to date were initiated by OCCRP, the extent to which journalists even have time or incentive to develop such stories and projects is unclear.

⁴⁰ Several of the partner organizations arguably could produce a high standard in the local language version.

The one clear exception is among local partners with enough capacity, funding, and interest to take on such work directly. For example, some journalists in Southeast Europe noted that they have and would contact another colleague about a story directly. The respondents had a shared language with presumed colleagues, had a strong domestic media (CIN and or CINS); they did not necessarily need OCCRP as the unifying force for production or for distribution since they would also presumably have local distribution networks in their local language.

These factors are not yet in place in other regions to the degree that such ‘independent’ collaboration amongst journalists is likely. Certainly journalists share a degree of professional trust with others in the network, and they do call and would call on them for assistance. However, they would be unlikely to have the other resources needed to carry out many or major joint investigations even if they had the idea and initiative.

The evaluation also looked at opportunities where collegial information sharing and linking might be useful in building a regional investigative journalism community. One common area that appears to have potential is the sharing of planning, tricks and techniques about developing financing and sustainability models. A handful of OCCRP partners such as atlatszo.hu in Hungary, Hromdaske TV in Ukraine and CIN in Bosnia are doing innovative things to develop financial planning for their organizations and experimenting with different ways to diversify funding sources. The project highlights some of these efforts at conference venues. Specific partners also are available and willing to provide advice to others – as in the case of CIN, but in general journalists did not know a lot about what others were doing in these area and which ‘tricks and tips’ might be useful to share across the wider network. During the interviews, journalists who also are managers or editors of their programs/organizations showed an interest to have more of such information and examples from across the network since they sense that such colleagues have similar experiences, expectations, and financial challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

The project has broadened journalists’ views of their work and their regions. It has also clearly strengthened linkages between journalists, particularly in some sub-region areas and even within some countries where they previously were not well linked; professional collaboration appears to be following on from project efforts to link people together. This collaboration is work related and it is providing journalists with needed collegial assistance on stories and even some joint stories, but most could not replicate significant story collaboration without continued financial and organizing assistance from OCCRP.

This is not to suggest that they might not have the interest, but rather due to capacities to take this on as well as the unclear use of regional stories. The evaluation suggests that many of the linkages that were encouraged in the Balkans have the potential to be continued without the OCCRP facilitation given the factors of common language and level of developed investigative journalism cohorts as described before, assuming interest. This is less the case in other regions. Overall, the role of such an organizing actor like OCCRP, accordingly, has a purpose, but whether it is for initial linkage or more sustained engagements needs to be further articulated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider where OCCRP linkage facilitation services are most needed: The project should consider the extent to which specific stories and or multi-country projects explicitly further the role of linkage and which are simply for the purpose of a good story, at least articulating more clearly the expected byproducts of such efforts.

Consider an OCCRP regional pot of flexible funding: OCCRP's process of articulating its role in linkage efforts could include ways for it to play a supportive as well as central role. In relation to those regions or sets of journalists that appear to be well linked, but potentially missing funding for a particular project, consider whether OCCRP can provide a flexible funding mechanism for journalists to use for funding stories that they decide to publish in their own media and countries and local languages.

Emphasize internal linkages in big countries: The project's ability to link journalists through joint stories in countries like Georgia suggests that the project could consider how to use this technique in other places. The need for increasing the ability of like-minded journalists to work together in either big countries (e.g., Russia and Ukraine) or those of repressive environments will likely continue to grow, and the project needs to be able to put emphasis and resource towards this.

Question 4. Is there a correlation or relationship between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and public policy actions?

The overall goal of RIJN/OCCRP is to “build citizen demand to reduce corruption, fraud, and other criminal activities through increased exposure to professionally produced investigative journalism” in the Balkans, Western Eurasia, and Caucasus regions.⁴¹ The program does attempt to monitor and report on its impact, both for its funding agency and public audiences.

OCCRP characterizes a wide variety of events connected to the subject of its investigative journalism as “impact” in its semi-annual reports. The most recent SAR 7 which covers the second half of 2014, the number of stories with described impact was 82 of 169 or 42%. While this is clearly above the target objectives of 20% of story production, it does not provide a detailed understanding of actual impacts. OCCRP's website lists illustrative examples of these impacts, suggesting that – amongst other things – its stories can be linked to numerous arrests and indictments, the closure of many companies, and the banning of a political party.⁴² Some additional clarity is provided by a recent OCCRP report that describes impact in six descriptive categories.⁴³

⁴¹ Statement of Work, Performance Evaluation of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN), also known as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. USAID: January 14, 2014.

⁴² Please see: <https://www.occrp.org/occrp/about-us-2>

⁴³ As described in the February 2015 OCCRP report: “OCCRP EFFECTS: 2009 – Present, *What is the noticeable impact of OCCRP's work?*”

The evaluation team sought to understand OCCRP claims about media impact by examining the relationship between a set of articles and claimed impacts. In order to examine this linkage, the evaluation team chose six case studies: two in each of three geographic regions, including four stories “with impact” and two stories “without impact.”⁴⁴ The examples were also selected in order to describe a different “set” or “types” of impacts, including stories with single as well as multiple impacts. The examples chosen were reported to have impact in only one country (other stories are reported to have impact in multiple countries) in order to examine the impact more specifically and concretely. Table 3 below lists the cases reviewed and descriptive characteristics of the stories, impacts and OCCRP involvement.

Four overarching illustrative points emerge from the case studies. These include (1) the difficulty of claiming clear impact, (2) the various levels of OCCRP involvement and input in impact reported stories, (3) the role of the OCCRP website in generating impact, and (4) the effect that political environment has on impact.

⁴⁴ As described in the methodology section, the team discerned eight different categories of impact from the OCCRP described impacts, and case study impact types are according to these eight categories.

Table 3 Case Study Stories

Title	Country	Description	Type of impact (1-8)	Attribution of impact to the story	Role of OCCRP and attribution to occur
Nobody's Policing the Security Guards	Serbia	The unseen consequences of Serbia having no law to regulate powerful private security companies.	None		Large investment in 6-month investigation commissioned by OCCRP.
Garbage Land Deal Stinks	Georgia	Public institutions refuse to accept responsibility for the poorly managed and possibly illegal construction of a Tbilisi dump near a populated village.	None		Small investment in helping a staff reporter complete and publish an investigation she had been working on prior to joining OCCRP.
Yanukovychleaks Project	Ukraine	Large project including the rescue, recovery and publication of documents from the compound of President Yanukovich after he fled the country, and 15 investigative pieces based on their contents.	Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrests, asset freeze, investigations, loss of government license, officials fired, etc. (1) Business impact: resignation at a company, loss of business, cancelling contracts., etc. (3) Picked up by other media (domestic/international) (7)	UK's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) opened a major money laundering investigation; froze \$23 million in assets in Ukraine; Ukraine enacted an EU-wide assets freeze against 22 individuals. Interpol Warrant for former Ukraine officials: Viktor Yanukovich, together with two of his government members have been named by Interpol ⁴⁵ — the financial crimes revealed by the Yanukovichleaks effort of OCCRP and its Ukrainian partners are specifically mentioned by the Interpol warrant. ⁴⁶ Yanukovichleaks team on council: the members of the Yanukovichleaks team	Massive involvement in a major international story, funding technical services, salaries, editing and story fees.

⁴⁵ <http://www.interpol.int/notice/search/wanted/2014-13031>

⁴⁶ <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/daily/3564-yanukovich-placed-on-interpol-s-most-wanted-list>; <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/daily/3593-ukraine-warrants-issued-for-two-former-top-officials>

				have been formally requested to become part of an independent council within the Ministry of Justice which will monitor the implementation of this law.	
Ukraine's TVi channel keeps on changing hands	Ukraine	A detailed examination of the hostile takeover of Ukraine's last independent television station in 2013, revealing the political and economic forces behind the opaque deal.	Picked up by other media (domestic/international) (7)	The full version of the TVi story that OCCRP published in September 2013 (<i>Ukraine's TVi Channel Keeps on Changing Hands</i>) was republished by <i>Ukrainska Pravda</i> , the country's main independent news website, and it also ran on <i>Telekritika</i> , Ukraine's top media news and watchdog outlet. OCCRP reported that one of the proxies among the owners of the Ukraine station TVi it exposed in the story <i>Ukraine's TVi Channel Keeps on Changing Hands</i> is a suspect in the brutal beating of a journalist which has resulted in a wave of media attention.	OCCRP commissioned a former TVi journalist to examine the complex company structure of the group, which took over the channel while trying to obscure its origins.
Church and State Deny Money Laundering	Armenia	OCCRP partner organization examines the substance behind a businessman's explosive allegations that the Prime Minister and Archbishop were involved in money laundering.	Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrests, asset freeze, investigations, loss of government license, officials fired, etc. (1)	Figure with possible ties to the case was arrested at the Tbilisi airport.	OCCRP helped with international company records requests and edited and fact-checked the Armenian piece before publishing it on occrp.org
Balkan Share Traders Endangered German Stock Exchange	Bosnia	A Bosnian financial fraud group targets small German stock market traders.	Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrests, asset freeze, investigations, loss of government license, officials fired, etc. (1) Picked up by other media (domestic/international) (7)	Investigations opened in Bosnia and Germany.	OCCRP helped with foreign records requests and republished verbatim piece from partner org CIN

OCCRP contribution to impact

One of the most reported impacts of OCCRP efforts has been focused on its role in the Yanukovychleaks project. (see Annex VII) “Yanukovychleaks” was a special project consisting of 15 stories on its own OCCRP-produced [website](#) in English, Russian and Ukrainian, the result of extraordinary circumstances when the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled the country and 200 folders of his documents were thrown into the river at his residence in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the evidence of his illicit financial affairs. A team of investigative journalists, assisted by dozens of volunteers, found, dried and scanned the documents, and posted them all online to share the findings with a global public. A specially formed group of journalists then reported 15 separate investigations based on their contents.

OCCRP took the lead on the project to rescue, recover and publish the documents as the situation developed. OCCRP affiliated journalists were some of the core group of journalists salvaging the semi-destroyed documents at the Yanukovich villa, and OCCRP responded by providing everything from scanners and money for pen drives to designing a website for uploading the documents to assigning key OCCRP editorial staff and in-country affiliates to sift through documents, and write and edit stories based on the salvaged documents.

The Yanukovychleaks project shows clear impact resulting from a large collaboration between members of the network directly working together in the field. Yet even in such a dramatic success story, it is difficult to ascribe clear causal impact to OCCRP given the number of other actors involved in the project and other media covering the story. The project was also supported by Internews, the Danish [SCOOP](#) and the DC-based [International Center for Journalists](#). As well while OCCRP reports state that Interpol arrest warrants use information revealed by OCCRP efforts, and many journalists and media experts credit OCCRP for its role, none of these articles/notices specifically mentions that Yanukovychleaks/OCCRP was the source of information about the charges of abuse of office, embezzlement, and misappropriation that were later a result. Having such clear media attribution is likely rare, but it highlights the challenges of attempting to prove such causal linkages from OCCRP direct inputs.

Varied level of OCCRP story involvement

Another story that claims impact illustrates a different problem with the impact descriptions, namely the level of OCCRP involvement and ‘claim to credit’ for impact. In the case of the Armenian story (see Annex VII), there was a clear impact from the story, but OCCRP could not claim credit for the impact because of its minor role in producing the story.

OCCRP’s Armenian partner organization HETQ had conducted a lengthy and detailed investigation into a money laundering operation that appeared to involve Armenia’s Prime Minister and the country’s Archbishop. Subsequently a first suspect – the archbishop’s godson – was arrested at Georgia’s Tbilisi airport.⁴⁷ He was extradited to Armenia soon afterwards.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ <https://reportingproject.net/occrp/index.php/en/ccwatch/cc-watch-indepth/2304-armenia-church-and-state-deny-money-laundering>; <http://hetq.am/eng/news/32291/cyprus-troikas-ashot-sukiasyan-arrested-in-tbilisi-airport.html>

⁴⁸ <http://hetq.am/eng/news/55296/businessman-implicated-in-cyprus-offshore-scandal-extradited-to-armenia.html>

The Armenian investigative/news site and OCCRP partner <http://hetq.am/eng/> published several pieces based on their investigation of the explosive claims by a businessman that he had been cheated in a business deal which included money-laundering by the sitting Armenian Prime Minister and an Archbishop of the Armenian Orthodox Church. OCCRP combined them into one article and translated the pieces into English, edited and fact-checked the text and rewrote the material into one long piece, which appeared on occrp.org on January 31, 2014.

OCCRP's level of involvement in the Armenia story is illustrative of the multiple roles that OCCRP plays in producing OCCRP stories. OCCRP's involvement in the creation of any given story varies widely: very few stories are written solely by OCCRP staff journalists or would be considered "OCCRP stories" in traditional media. Most of the articles on occrp.org are written by OCCRP partner organizations, with various levels of OCCRP involvement.

The most OCCRP labor-intensive level of effort is made in cross-border regional "projects" which often include paying story fees to reporters in several countries and large investments of editorial resources, coordinating a group of journalists and editing their original texts.⁴⁹ Next in terms of OCCRP inputs and effort is the set of stories that require significant OCCRP editorial and fact checking efforts either as developed from scratch or as an OCCRP version of a local story; the majority of stories fall into this category. Still other OCCRP stories have relatively minor editorial involvement, particularly if they were developed by partner organizations like CIN. At times an "OCCRP story" can mean that OCCRP provided only advice or financial assistance with public records research in another country for OCCRP partner organizations. It should also be mentioned that in some cases OCCRP invests in stories and journalists for whom "credit" is never explicitly given to OCCRP, particularly if OCCRP provided support for a story that is only pushed in local media and not on the OCCRP website.

Any or all of these levels of engagement may result in multiple stories (or a story series) in multiple media outlets – from print to TV – making the tracking and claiming of impact difficult.

The levels of RIJN/OCCRP investment in each story fluctuates, and there is no guarantee that OCCRP investment in terms of time and resources will ensure an impact. For example, a story about Balkan share traders defrauding investors on the German stock market (see Annex VII), reprinted in its entirety from CIN Bosnia, was reported to have two types of impact. However, the OCCRP version of the CIN piece about the share traders was the same without being fact-checked or rewritten. The author worked interchangeably with CIN and OCCRP editors, and OCCRP's substantive involvement included helping the CIN reporter with his international public records research requests. This can be juxtaposed with OCCRP investment into a six-month long project to investigate the lack of regulation for Serbian security companies. This "investment" included an estimated six months of the reporter's time (at 80%) as well as the

⁴⁹ OCCRP does not necessarily 'price' the actual cost of staff and other resources that go into their stories or projects, but generally speaking, projects require a larger set of direct OCCRP inputs and resources.

time of another journalist and two interns to look at, sort through, and investigate over 300 security companies (see Annex VII). Despite this effort, there was no reported impact.

In summary, the three different levels of OCCRP inputs or involvement include (1) acquiring and editing previously published stories; (2) supporting partner organization by paying some story expenses; (3) commissioning single stories and series and cross-border projects.⁵⁰ OCCRP should take full credit for impacts of the third category; however, the project can only claim partial credit in the other two cases. Even in cases where OCCRP invests considerably, there is no guarantee that this will result in impacts.

Role of OCCRP Website

Another issue illustrated by the case studies is the role that the OCCRP website is anticipated to or does play in generating impact. All OCCRP stories are published on the OCCRP website, but it is unclear whether the website is actually, or intended to be the place that stories are read or picked up.

There are two issues to note here. In the opinion of the investigative journalist specialist on the evaluation team as well as several media expert informants, the actual design of the site is not very readable. It is difficult to search, and it feels more like a catalog than it does a news provider that engages and generates excitement about important and meaningful public interest investigative journalism. It is somewhat telling for example, that the highly successful Yanukovychleaks project had its own dedicated website <http://yanukovychleaks.org/> for showcasing the rescued documents and did not appear on occrp.org.⁵¹ This allowed it to have increased attention and to stand out from the OCCRP site.

Efforts to update the site daily with relevant corruption related reporting help to enliven the site. The project also is in the process of enhancing the site, but most efforts seem to be on better presentation rather than addressing how to design the site for target audience(s) to enhance/generate more impact.⁵²

The second issue related to the website is how the website is linked to the ‘international and domestic impacts’ caused by the story. As OCCRP informants explained during interviews, part of the assumption behind the website is that publishing in English will engage more international readers and thereby assist to increase (international) pressure for addressing the issues in an article.

⁵⁰ The total count of 140 stories includes examples of all three types of involvement. Based on the evaluators’ rough estimate of OCCRP stories (there was no comprehensive study of all 140 pieces) most stories tend to be of type 1 and 2 – as the third type requires a much larger investment of time, resources and editing.

⁵¹ Although OCCRP produced stories from the files did appear on the website.

⁵² OCCRP.org had between 25,000-31,000 unique visitors per month in the second half of 2014, according to PRA’s Performance Monitoring SAR No. 7, and around 47,000 – 60,000 monthly visits. One senior OCCRP manager reported that most hits come from keyword searches on Google – not from regular readers; around 30% of site visitors are the “core” readership who read it regularly. The organization has 11,000 “likes” on Facebook.

However, the website is often one of multiple levels of media running a story. Many OCCRP stories appear in several different formats, languages and media, and it is unclear which if any could be linked to impact. For example, the arrest of the Armenian businessman was claimed by OCCRP as impact of “its” story, whereas the impact according to evaluation key informants was far more likely to have resulted from the Armenian publication and not from the English-language web piece. While most journalists report that foreign media pressure is often more effective than domestic media at eliciting “impact,” it’s unclear how much pressure comes precisely from occrp.org published stories. The website’s impact may be indirect, resulting from foreign journalists who read it and republish stories elsewhere based on OCCRP investigations. While the Armenian diaspora tends to follow events in the country closely and read hetq.am, which is also published in English, external pressure for change or democratic reforms is not great.⁵³ In any case, it’s unlikely that many Armenian politicians read occrp.org in English.

Political environment

A fourth issue illustrated in the case studies is the extent to which the political environment matters. The Georgia garbage dump article, ‘Garbage Land Deal Stinks’ (See Annex VII) registered little impact, not due to the quality of the article or other apparent factors, but – as expert informants in Georgia suggest – due to the fact that the political system was unresponsive. The story focused on what had become a well-covered story in local media and hotly contested political issue about public institutions’ refusal to accept responsibility for the poorly managed and possibly illegal construction of a city dump near a populated village and the Tbilisi airport.

This story was a case of the reporter taking a big news story, covered and followed for years by mainstream media mainly as a political conflict, and trying to correct the absence of serious public interest reporting on the subject. She wanted to find out which officials or institutions were responsible for pushing through the dump project in a socially irresponsible and possibly illegal way. The main achievement of the piece was cataloging and illustrating the details of how various public institutions assigned blame to others, an effective portrayal of systemic dysfunction

The level of systemic responsiveness to apparent corruption appears highly dependent on relative political environment in the country. Interviews with both journalists and external media and donor experts in the three countries highlight the fact that strong reporting backed up by solid facts is not enough to correct serious abuses of power. In order for such journalism and articles to have impact, there must be political will present to address revealed abuses of power and corruption. Even stories that reveal clear examples of corruption will have no impact if the political leadership and public institutions feel they can safely ignore them.

⁵³ As its theory of change, the project links production of investigative pieces to building public demand for addressing corrupt practices and organized crime.

Most countries where OCCRP operates have mixed to difficult political environments. Of the three countries visited, Ukraine stands out as the place (at least at the moment)⁵⁴ where the combination of public expectation/pressure and some level of government will provide a more conducive environment for investigative journalism to have an impact. Informants in all three countries visited suggest that investigative pieces that cover certain ‘social issues’ and examples of ‘institutional incompetence’ have better chances of having impact than stories which confront power and expose cases of corruption by high level officials.

CONCLUSION

Case studies illustrate the difficulties of ascribing impact to specific articles produced by OCCRP and taking credit for this impact.

Causal claims even in high profile cases are difficult and further problematized due to the various levels of actual OCCRP inputs into a story. Case studies also illustrate the unclear role that the OCCRP website has or should play in distributing stories and ‘creating the (international/domestic) pressure’ for impact that OCCRP anticipates. Overall the apparent influence that political environment has on affecting impact appears considerable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarify OCCRP levels of story involvement in relation to impact: OCCRP has various ways that it assists on the production of stories and these should be clearly articulated in order to understand OCCRP’s relation to a story and its potential contribution to impact. It could be that the project decides to primarily focus on OCCRP-generated stories or multi-country projects as a way to focus outcome and impact tracing resources and efforts.

More clearly articulate website purpose(s) and audience(s): OCCRP needs to take a fresh eye to the uses and intended uses of the website with a view on how presentation of information might or might not be generating the audience it anticipates.

Document more clearly how OCCRP story production relates to domestic/international media context and how the OCCRP story fits into existing media coverage production of the same story: Part of the difficulties in understanding stated impact linkages were unpacking exactly when and where stories appeared. As much as possible, the project could more systematically track how the OCCRP version of the story does/does not relate to the reported impact. While the efficient use of project resources for increasing quality content on occrp.org and increasing international exposure for partner media should be encouraged, there is no foundation for OCCRP claiming “credit” for the impact for such stories.

⁵⁴ See Annex VI for a summary of the three country’s media environments.

Document more clearly how international and domestic report impacts are linked: OCCRP impact reports describe multi-country stories and impacts, but in ways that often provide unclear sequencing of events and effects. If the project is interested to better understand particularly how international pressure might impact national level responses, it would be useful (while likely requiring additional resources) to have a clearer way to track these happenings for a specific set of countries OCCRP prioritizes or anticipates most clearly feels such external pressure.

Question 5. How can the effects of investigative journalism best be measured and tracked?

The review of the correlation between stories and impact in the previous section highlights a number of considerations for tracking and potentially measuring impact in such types of projects. In this section, we first describe the current impact monitoring process and recognize that there is some confusion among respondents regarding the intended impact of the project and note the need for greater clarity. While we recognize the desirability of attempting to track impact, we identify and explore three problems with a focus on impact. We conclude by recommending a focus on “low level” impacts such as informing public debate via eliciting further media coverage and only claiming *contribution* to higher level national and international outcomes.

PRA, responsible for monitoring and evaluating OCCRP performance, bases its assessment of the project’s impact by using quantitative survey results: asking Regional Coordinators, Center Managers and Lead Editors whether their stories have had impact. In quarterly or semi-annual surveys, respondents are asked whether their stories have led to “Policy changes and/or government, civic, and/or civil society action related to topics covered in investigative reports.” The percentage of impact “performance” is reported in each SAR out of a cumulative total of all stories since 2011. The target percentage of all stories having impact is set at 20%. The most recent SAR #7 found that 49% of OCCRP stories had impact (82 of 169 stories). The conclusion was “Over time, a slightly lower percentage of stories has had an impact. Exceeded objective.”

Data limitations in this approach are noted in a recent SAR: “It is challenging to capture every impact a story might have.” The actions taken to address this limitation are “OCCRP interns track story impact.” PRA also uses monthly OCCRP self-reporting to collect cases of impact. SAR #7 states that “PRA will seek verification of actions and policy change as possible” although there is no indication whether verification has been possible.

Beyond these data limitations, the first issue that emerges is the lack of a clear definition of what the desired impact should be when monitoring a specific story and overall program effects. OCCRP has an articulated overall intended impact – which is geared towards informing and empowering citizens in the countries to demand better governance – but this provides an aspirational direction in which to work, rather than concrete, measureable objectives. The project’s results framework focuses on publishing, building standards, building tools, and building collaboration, rather than higher level outcomes, leaving the project’s desired impact less clearly defined.

The aspirational conceptualization of impact has resulted in divergent understandings among staff and journalists of the project’s desired impact and how it should be measured. This lack of clarity came out in interviews as well as the many categories of impact reported to USAID. This inhibits a systematic capturing of impact by story or project and impedes manners of developing project plans in a coherent and strategic way.

Even if desired impact is clearly defined, there are several problems with a focus on impact. First, some of the interviews suggest that impact itself is not necessarily a strategic consideration when planning a story. Editors might feel that it is inappropriate to be considering impact, as it could cross the line into activism. It is also important to recognize the considerable administrative burden that would be required to accurately track the impacts of stories. This could distract from OCCRP stories and capacity development focus.

The current impact monitoring approach is descriptive self-reporting.

PRA asks Regional Coordinators, Center Managers, Lead Editors, and Journalists to self-report impact, and instances where their stories have led to “Policy changes and/or government, civic, and/or civil society action related to topics covered in investigative reports.”

OCCRP has begun to more systematically group ‘effects’ of OCCRP by different categories, but it these are still primarily descriptive groupings of causal impact without a clear methodology.

Nonetheless, journalism can and often does have a national or international impact. Interviews also suggested that regardless of editors’ lack of explicit story impact expectations, they often tend to have a hunch or implicit sense that something could make a splash (in terms of social or political change). Editors develop a keen sense of timing and opportunity, and they do this based on a number of factors that they might not specifically articulate or identify.

As such, there might be good reason to track these higher-level domestic and international outcomes. Organized crime and corruption happen on both domestic and transborder levels and given the globalized nature of organized crime and corruption, being able to capture multiple levels of impact certainly has merit. This is particularly the case given that this is often considered to be the only way to encourage some action in tough political environments of the region. However, a focus on impact confronts major problems of attribution. Even if a story is developed by OCCRP, the case studies illustrate that there are many factors that might go into creating or not creating a hoped-for impact or splash, and there are difficulties in assigning causality to the actual story production. Rather than claim attribution, we argue that OCCRP should focus on the *contribution* of its stories to higher-level outcomes. In a related vein, as discussed above in Question 4, OCCRP takes credit for impact in a number of stories where it has different levels of inputs. As suggested above, OCCRP should distinguish between OCCRP-developed stories and stories developed by partner organizations.

Furthermore, as discussed in Question 4, the likelihood that a story will have an impact often depends heavily on the political environment. Political climate matters both in the ability to get the information to do a story and in the ability of officials or civil society to react in a manner that could improve the situation. If there is not a conducive environment and or no political will, there is unlikely to be a clear impact regardless of the story quality. The summary of media and political environments from the key countries visited during the evaluation provides a basis

for considering how to describe basic structural considerations of the environment. A strong focus on impact might discourage important and needed journalism in locations where impact is less likely (e.g., Uzbekistan)

In light of these challenges, we recommend a two-pronged approach. First, we recommend that there be a strong focus on what might be considered low level impacts: recognition in the form of further media exposure, public comments by officials and reporting which contributes fresh elements or previously unreported news or facts or revelations, i.e. new aspects of big stories already covered widely in the media. These indicators are not subject to a tendency towards activism, attribution is clear, and these indicators are somewhat less dependent on the political environment. Second, we recommend continuing to monitor any potential connections between OCCRP stories and domestic and international outcomes; however, OCCRP should claim contribution to an outcome rather than take credit for the outcome. Furthermore, assertions of contribution or attribution should be verified.

CONCLUSION

The project lacks a clear definition of impact, and this affects its ability to meaningfully measure impact of its stories. A first step for developing a more meaningful monitoring system is decoupling the types of impact desired whether finite project impacts related to more traditional media impact or more aspirational objectives geared towards political action. The team recommends focusing more on traditional media project impacts given the complexities and resources involved with accurately tracking the more aspirational impacts. Regardless of approach, there needs to be a clear articulation of what is possible to capture by attribution and what is possible through contribution and a system put in place to capture these project efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Articulate and operationalize the journalism outcomes desired from the project:

The evaluation team identified eight broad categories of impact reported by PRA and OCCRP. It is possible to further break these down into three broad areas: (i) domestic actions (positive and negative); (ii) international actions (positive and negative); and (iii) recognition in the form of further media exposure or other contributions to public debate. The project can be focused on more traditional media outcomes around developing OCCRP as a traditional media organization or those focused for encouraging political and social change closer to “creating public demand for democratic governance.” Whichever combination that is considered appropriate, the project needs to specify what impacts it intends to aim for with the project.

Design a system for tracking and review progress towards the specified impact:

Depending on the impact objectives, the project should put in place a system that will more comprehensively track progress towards the impact goals. This should include a clearer guidance for journalists to be able to (without a lot of additional administrative burden) provide the necessary information to the project.

Include a component for better understanding potential linkages between domestic and international impacts: The project should consider how to more systematically trace the publication of stories in domestic and international media and how they link to subsequent impacts at both levels.

RIJN/OCCRP REPLICATION

The RIJN/OCCRP project is a complex, multi-region media development project. Replication of the RIJN/OCCRP project in different regions of the world is dependent on various factors that are outside of the scope of this evaluation, including the political history and nature of corruption in a given country or region, among others. Yet the evaluation does provide some lessons learned for consideration if designing a similar program in other countries or regions. Drawn from the mid-term performance evaluation of RIJN/OCCRP, considerations for replication are presented for (1) project design and management, (2) journalist skill enhancement, (3) professional linkages among journalists, and finally, (4) potential impact of investigative journalism stories.

Design and management

Conduct an initial political/media environment assessment. This assessment will provide a clearer sense of the media context and environmental factors that might affect how a story is taken up by government officials and / or the public or the general state of media freedom, freedom of information and how journalists are treated in general.

Identify local needs and interests as a foundation for building skills and a purposeful network. This will provide project designers with a clear idea of which levels and kinds of skill development are both needed and possible (for individuals and/or organizations). The starting skill levels will also help to calibrate the project's focus on producing investigative stories either by commissioning original investigations or by providing a platform for stories published by partner journalists and media. The needs assessment will also provide guidance for designers to consider the purpose of, and how to best foster network communities.

Define the project theory of change and connection between developing professional skills and producing stories at the project design phase. The project design should be clear about the theory of change and the objectives of the program. Based on the political/media environment and needs assessments noted above, consideration should be given to how to prioritize the development of skills versus the production of stories – e.g., will the project prioritize working with young journalists to improve skills, or will it target a more experienced set of journalists to focus more on story production? As the project progresses, the theory of change and project objectives can be revisited (with beneficiaries and member organization) to confirm whether or not the original purpose and expectations are still valid and relevant to the context.

Consider media design at the project design phase. The concept of any media to be created as part of the project, such as a website, should be fully thought out before starting the web design. The audience should be identified, its needs, preferences and tastes; the tone of the writing,

both editorial and literary; and the design of the media, interface and choice of stories should all be part of the same focused concept to maximize effect.

Clarify roles and responsibilities for both senior editorial and programming staff. For multi-country projects, a management structure should be designed to support the intended scale of operations. The management structure should ideally allow for a separation between editorial and programming/operational management to ensure that both sides can be fully attended to, and mutually reinforcing.

Prioritize local editing capacities from project start. Depending on the baseline capacity of media and the experience of participating journalists, it might be useful to consider a targeted minimum and maximum ratio of journalists to editors for each country/region/language group that the project engages. This could result in a phased project implementation approach that allows formal training time for identified local editors at the beginning of the project. Prioritizing local editing capacity could also have implications for the project delivery model, e.g., prioritizing in-country editing presence over a regional editing hub or virtual presence.

Skill enhancement

Tailor the editing interaction model to journalist and/or partner media skill levels and needs. Drawing on the needs assessment noted above, the nature of journalist-editor interaction and resources required can be tailored to the country and/or regional context and participants' needs. Two basic levels of editing interaction can be considered. The first, if the journalists to be involved with the project are relatively inexperienced, should be designed to provide a more frequent and intensive interaction, preferably with a local editor (with local language abilities) working amongst the journalists rather than remotely. The second level of interaction for more experienced journalists can be either remote or onsite.

Explicitly integrate skill-building components into story or multi-country projects. Rather than stand-alone trainings given in parallel to story production, or depending on ad hoc learning interactions, skill-building components should be built into story production and or multi-country projects. Best practices indicate that learning by doing is an effective approach to adult learning. The evaluation found, for example, that journalists who conducted company ownership searches for a specific multi-country project had relative ease in applying this skill through repetitive practical application.

Consider how skill development and professional standards can be reinforced among participating journalists and media. To the extent that the project works with a cohort(s) of journalists over time, peer-to-peer learning and norming of standards could be anticipated results. See discussion below on the creation and support of professional linkages.

Creating and supporting professional linkages

Consult with local journalists and/or partner media to examine current linkages, gaps, and interests. This would provide a roadmap for designing programming that further encourages professional linkages, either through story collaboration or other tools. This effort could be integrated into the needs assessment noted above. Consultations could range from less rigorous qualitative approaches to more rigorous network analysis. Based on this consultation process:

Clearly define the role of the project in promoting professional linkages. As defined in the theory of change and project objectives, the network should have an explicit purpose. Based on this purpose, the project can define the optimal role(s) it can play in developing and facilitating these linkages (e.g., as the connector, as the funder, etc.).

Consider how the differences in country and region may affect professional linkages. Depending on the context, it is likely that linkages need to be strengthened within as well as across borders.

Investigative reporting and impacts

Develop and utilize a monitoring and evaluation plan. Performance monitoring data can track the project's various types and levels of production contribution (if there are multiple levels), and use of any websites or other methods of distribution. This should include articulating and tracking engagement of target audiences.

Define journalism impacts (higher level outcomes) either in relation to standard media benchmarks or democratic demand-driven results. The standard benchmarks could include circulation and reprinting targets, or other professional recognition, and methods for tracking these results. The second could include a method for capturing contribution towards some type of public action, potentially borrowing from approaches for tracking policy research contributions to policy change. The methods used to assess impacts should be appropriate to the rigor of findings desired (i.e., use relevant methods to measure change attributed to, or caused by, the project or to identify the project's contribution to change).

ANNEXES

Annex I: Statement of Work

Performance Evaluation Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN), also known as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)

Introduction

USAID's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia Democracy, Governance and Social Transition Team is requesting services to conduct a mid-term performance evaluation of the Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN) activity. RIJN is more widely known as the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) in order to capitalize on its widespread name recognition, and to acknowledge additional member organizations funded by other donors in USAID non-presence countries. The program is identified within USAID as the RIJN/OCCRP program. As the program has been extended for an additional three years, this is an opportune time to conduct a performance evaluation to ensure the program is meeting its intended objectives, and to suggest actions which might improve outcomes.

Technical direction during the performance of this task order will be provided by the COR, in conjunction with the Senior Media Advisor. All modifications to the scope of work, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology or timeline need to be agreed upon in writing by the COR.

Purpose and Target Audience

The primary purpose is to assess the feasibility of program replication in other parts of the world, and to fine tune the current program for the next cycle of operation. The evaluation should assess the advantages and disadvantages of a regionally-based, on-the-job/peer-to-peer training program which concurrently employs significant Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to produce collaborative high-quality, cross-border investigative journalism. The evaluation report is expected to be used for future programmatic decision making, design and sustainability development.

The findings of this evaluation are intended to inform multiple audiences. The primary target audience is USAID/Missions and USAID/Washington staff. The secondary audience includes other donors, the program implementer, relevant stakeholders and media development practitioners.

Background

The purpose of the RIJN/OCCRP program is to “Build citizen demand to reduce corruption, fraud, and other criminal activities through increased exposure to professionally produced

investigative journalism.” By inference, the overall goal of the program is to institutionalize professional investigative journalism standards and practices among a select group of investigative journalists across the Europe and Eurasia region and network those journalists to collaboratively produce content. The four program objectives are:

- Objective 1: Investigative journalists and/or centers in three sub-regional geographic areas are virtually and actually linked to create collaborative, regionally significant content (Build teams);
- Objective 2: Use of secure, shared communications systems and digital technology applications is increased (Build tools);
- Objective 3: Investigative journalism is conducted according to high professional standards (Build standards); and
- Objective 4: Collaboratively produced content is web-published for broad distribution and/or replication, and usage is tracked (Widely distribute results).

The RIJN/OCCRP program was designed to address the lack of professionally-produced investigative journalism across the Europe and Eurasia region. What commonly passed for investigative journalism was poorly researched, fact-checked or documented, and largely served as biased “scandal journalism.” The result was citizens largely ignored it. At the same time, corruption and organized crime networks were growing across the region. Average citizens were not aware of either the influence or costs of illicit activities in their communities and countries. The theory of change reasoned the production of high-quality investigative journalism would better inform more citizens, who would subsequently demand more accountability and action by their governments, law enforcement and courts. Moreover, as corruption and crime do not recognize borders, the programmatic approach was to improve investigative skills and link practicing investigative journalists from different countries in the production of collaborative reporting. While the role of journalists is not to bring those engaged in criminal activities to justice, citizen exposure to the high social and economic costs of corruption and crime can build demand for change. The program cannot claim a direct causal relationship, but there are sufficient results that demonstrate clear linkages between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and action by governing structures. For example: corrupt officials were forced to resign, organized crime figures were indicted and a widely used system of money laundering via opaque offshore company ownership was exposed.

The USAID/Europe and Eurasia Bureau competitively awarded Cooperative Agreement AID-OAA-A-11-00005 to International Center For Journalists (ICFJ) and its sub-grantee Journalism Development Network to develop high quality, cross-border, collaborative investigative journalism across the three Europe and Eurasia sub-geographic regions of the Balkans, Western Eurasia and the Caucasus. The USAID-funded activity is largely implemented through ICFJ’s sub-grantee partner, the Journalism Development Network (JDN). JDN uses the OCCRP name as a registered trademark, or brand, for all of its investigative journalism capacity development work. The RIJN/OCCRP program was based on a successful JDN pilot in the Balkans and expanded under the current award to cover all USAID Mission presence countries in Europe and Eurasia.

ICFJ is headquartered in Washington DC and is responsible for the program’s home office support, which includes compliance with USAID rules and regulations, and financial and program reporting. Sub-grantee JDN is headquartered in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and is

responsible for program implementation in the three sub-geographic regions and general program management.

In September 2013, the program's period of performance was extended for an additional three years. RIJN/OCCRP will be implemented from March 15, 2011 to March 14, 2017, with a total Life of Project (LOP) funding level of \$5,999,640. The program's mid-point is a logical time for a performance evaluation. Prior to program inception, Philliber Research Associates (PRA), an external Performance Monitoring and Evaluation firm, was contracted to design, collect and analyze performance measurement data. USAID accepted the Philliber-developed Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) and Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) in October 2011. PRA reports are currently delivered on a bi-annual basis, coinciding with the bi-annual ICFJ program reports. Ten Performance Indicators were developed, and all but one have been tracked. Indicator #5, "Operating cost as a percent of overall budgets, increased operational efficiency, and/or increased or diversified revenue streams" had no reportable data and was revised in mid-2013. PRA maintains all of the original data records and can provide access to the information upon request. Based on the PIRS data, PRA analysis and ICFJ program reports, RIJN/OCCRP appears to be achieving its stated objectives. The next three years of program operation should build upon what has been accomplished, in accordance with the original purpose and objectives.

USAID funding supports the RIJN/OCCRP program in 13 countries, in the three sub-geographic regions of Europe and Eurasia: Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia), Western Eurasia (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Russia) and the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). Cross-border collaboration has extended beyond these regions through collaboration with investigative journalists and centers in the new European Union member countries. Those centers and journalists are funded by other JDN donors, or their own donor resources. JDN and its partners have established relationships with Open Society Foundation, Google Ideas, U.S. State Department's office for International Narcotics and Law (INL) enforcement, various embassies and other donors. RIJN/OCCRP has also established collaborative working relationships with top tier western media in uncovering cross-border corruption. OCCRP or specific journalists are often cited in these reports.

Evaluation Questions:

Question 1. What have been the main obstacles to implementing RIJN/OCCRP and how did the program address them?

Question 2. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to institutionalizing professional practices and improved skills of journalists associated with the program?

Question 3. What aspects of the "network" or collaboration effect have been most helpful to journalists participating in the program?

Question 4. Is there a correlation or relationship between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and public policy actions?

Suggested Methodology:

The performance evaluation will rely on a mix of methods, including a desk review of program reports, accompanying PRA external performance monitoring reports and structured group interviews with program participants during site visits to central cities in each of the sub-geographic regions (anticipated to be Kyiv, Ukraine, Tbilisi, Georgia and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina). The evaluation should be considered a “descriptive” evaluation that can also be used to fine-tune the program to ensure intended results are achieved. Consultations should be conducted with ICFJ, JDN, participating journalists/centers and other pertinent stakeholders, including USAID EE Bureau, Washington DC. The evaluation should include some external information gathering as the opinions of local media representatives or journalists who are not participating in the program in each sub-geographic region will inform perceptions of RIJN/OCCRP’s work. USAID EE Bureau and Missions in each target city can assist in providing names of individuals and contact information for this purpose. The IREX Media Sustainability Index also includes a list of names of individuals who participate in annual country media environment assessment panel discussions. Following a desk review, the consultants will develop an evaluation framework that is appropriate and financially feasible.

This evaluation presents challenges due to the extensive geographic reach and differing levels of competency of journalists involved in the program.

The evaluators’ proposal should suggest a methodology for case study site selection and identify key interviewees, including JDN management, the key regional editor or advisor located in each sub-geographic region, and a sample of participating investigative journalists or partner centers from each region benefiting from USAID assistance. The evaluators should also seek input from media organizations, journalists or other stakeholders not directly participating in the program in each sub-geographic region to assess local perceptions of RIJN/OCCRP participant output.

The evaluation team should develop interview protocols prior to departure for the countries/regions that align to the priority areas of focus. The evaluators may wish to conduct a survey of key stakeholders.

The document review shall include but not be limited to:

- The original award agreement and amendments
- Bi-annual program reports
- Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) and PRA bi-annual analysis.
- OCCRP (RIJN) and partner websites
- A review of secondary literature as determined relevant by the evaluation team and additional literature supplied by USAID EE Bureau.

The key evaluation questions and illustrative sub-questions are:

Question 1. What have been the main obstacles to implementing RIJN/OCCRP and how did the program address them?

- Were there significant hurdles in expanding the RIJN/OCCRP from the Balkans to the two additional sub-geographic regions? What were they?

- Is the presence of a western-trained investigative journalist or editor and a common language crucial to each sub-geographic region? Why or why not?
- Is personal safety a significant issue in some regions but not others? If so, what steps have been taken? If not an issue, why not?
- Are planning, organizing, operating, etc., management practices in place in each sub-geographic region? What needs to change? What could be done?

Question 2. To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to institutionalizing professional practices and improved skills of journalists associated with the program?

- To what extent is the work of RIJN/OCCRP journalists respected locally, regionally and internationally, and how can this be measured?
- To what extent has the status of women journalists been elevated to more decision-making roles within the program?
- To what extent are partner centers aligning with best practices in sustainable non-profit journalism?

Question 3. What aspects of the “network” or collaboration effect have been most helpful to journalists participating in the program?

- How successfully have safe/secure ICT practices been integrated within the overall program, individual centers and general communication systems?
- To what extent has the limited amount of face-to-face time affected relationship building and collaboration?
- To what extent have trusted relationships between journalists been established and maintained through the program?
- To what extent do OCCRP members from non-USAID Europe and Eurasia presence countries contribute to the value of the program?

Question 4. Is there a correlation or relationship between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and public policy actions?

- Can re-publication or citations of RIJN/OCCRP content by other media outlets be used as a means of triangulation to demonstrate the effect of improved investigative journalism? (an inferred causal relationship)?
- To what extent do citations in higher-level international media demonstrate success?
- Do web analytics sufficiently demonstrate usage of RIJN/OCCRP content, archival information and data sets?
- What are the best methods to track the effects and outcomes of high quality investigative journalism?

Deliverables:

I. Proposal:

The proposal should be completed within three weeks of receipt of the tasking. The proposal should delineate the roles and responsibilities of each member of the evaluation team, which is expected to include an evaluation specialist, and subject matter experts in investigative journalism, and network analysis. RIJN/OCCRP works primarily in three sub-geographic regions, with joint program management responsibilities in Sarajevo (JDN) and Washington DC (ICFJ). The Contractor will propose a strategy to coordinate the overall evaluation effort in the most programmatically and financially efficient manner. Site visits to the three sub-geographic

regions should be considered a priority and if at all possible the evaluators should plan to attend the RIJN regional conference in Istanbul, Turkey November 7th-9th. Participants in the RIJN/OCCRP network are generally English speakers, so interpretation costs should be kept to a minimum.

The proposal should also include a detailed evaluation matrix reflecting suggested methods used to answer the key questions, sources of information, a data analysis plan and draft key informant questionnaires. The design should also include known limitations of the evaluation design. The evaluation team must be prepared to revise the design should there be substantial questions from USAID.

3. Draft Evaluation Report:

The draft evaluation report should include all of the elements of the final report as described below, in draft form.

4. Final Evaluation Report:

The final report should include an executive summary, introduction, background of the regional context, a short description of the program being evaluated, the key evaluation questions, methodologies used, limitations of the evaluation, findings, conclusions and recommendations (if applicable). The final evaluation report in Microsoft Word 2010 format will be submitted by the contractor to COR.

The report should not exceed 40 pages, although additional pages may be used for the required Executive Summary and pertinent annexes (the evaluation plan, copies of any informant questionnaires, references to externally collected data, or other resource materials). The format of the final report should conform to the following guidelines:

- a) Cover page
- b) Executive Summary should summarize the purpose, background of the program evaluated, main evaluation questions, a synopsis of data collection methods, key findings, conclusions and recommendations (3-5 pages).
- c) The main text should have an Introduction and then be structured by the four Evaluation Questions (maximum 36 pages, single spaced).
- d) Recommendations (3-4 pages).

The evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail in the body of the report. Limitations of the evaluation methodology should be defined. The report should strive to be readable by a general audience. Technical terms may be used, but a glossary should be included. The report will be structured so that interpretations, conclusions and recommendations are clearly backed by the underlying factual, descriptive information to support them. USAID policy is to publicly post the results of evaluations, **therefore care should be taken not to identify individuals who do not wish to be publicly identified.**

Required annexes to the final report shall include: (for internal USAID use; some of these components will not be included in the publically available document.)

- The Evaluation Scope of Work

- Detailed description of the evaluation methodology used
- Bibliography of documents consulted
- All tools used in conducting the evaluation, such as questionnaires, checklists, and discussion guides
- List of persons contacted/consulted and schedules for in-country visits.
- Any other sources of information, properly identified and listed
- Any “statements of differences” regarding significant unresolved difference of opinion by funders, implementers, and/or members of the evaluation team (following submission of draft evaluation report).
- Disclosure of conflicts of interest forms for of all evaluation team members, either attesting to a lack of conflict of interest or describing an existing conflict of interest
- Other documents as appropriate

Following approval of the final report content by USAID, the Contractor will be responsible for editing and formatting the final report within approximately 30 days. At least two weeks should be provided within that time frame to ICFJ and JDN to compose a statement of differences, if applicable. The Contractor will make the final evaluation report and any statement of differences (if applicable) publicly available through the Development Experience Clearinghouse within 30 days of the final approval of the formatted report. The final report will be submitted in electronic format to the USAID COR.

Mandatory Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report:

Per the USAID Evaluation Policy, draft and final evaluation reports will be evaluated against the following criteria to ensure the quality of the evaluation report.⁵⁵

- The evaluation report should represent a thoughtful, well-researched and well organized effort to objectively evaluate what worked in the project, what did not and why.
- Evaluation reports shall address all evaluation questions included in the scope of work.
- The evaluation report should include the scope of work as an annex. All modifications to the scope of work, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology or timeline need to be agreed upon in writing by the technical officer in conjunction with the COR.
- Evaluation methodology shall be explained in detail and all tools used in conducting the evaluation such as questionnaires, checklists and discussion guides will be included in an Annex in the final report.
- Evaluation findings will assess outcomes and impact on males and females.
- Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.). Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay or the compilation of people’s opinions. Findings should be specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- Sources of information need to be properly identified and listed in an annex.
- Recommendations need to be supported by a specific set of findings. Recommendations should be action-oriented, practical and specific, with defined responsibility for the action.

Team Composition/Qualifications of Consultants

⁵⁵ <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>

USAID recommends a three person team to be provided by the Contractor under this tasking. The team should include an Evaluation Expert/Team Leader as well as Investigative Journalism and Network Analysis experts working under the direction of the Team Leader. Each Team member should possess experience an advanced degree, or comparable relevant professional work experience. The Team Leader should possess sufficient expertise in leading teams in the design and implementation of qualitative evaluation of foreign assistance programs. Strong writing and word processing skills are required. Previous overseas experience in the identified countries of Europe and Eurasia region is highly desirable. Individual evaluation team member responsibilities and qualifications are listed below. All Team members will be required to provide a signed statement attesting to a lack of conflict of interest, or describing an existing conflict of interest.

Evaluation Specialist/Team Leader

The specialist is responsible for coordinating and directing the overall evaluation effort, including preparation and submission of the draft and final evaluation reports to USAID.. He/she should have extensive program evaluation experience (including USAID-related) and be thoroughly familiar with techniques of program performance appraisals. As evaluation team leader, the incumbent should possess good organization and teambuilding skills.

Investigative Journalist Specialist

The incumbent should possess deep knowledge of investigative journalism fundamentals, which are distinctly different from general journalism practices. He/she should be familiar with developing media environments in Europe and Eurasia, including threats to professional journalists working in the three sub-geographic regions, data journalism expertise and a working knowledge of sustainability models for local investigative journalism or advocacy organizations.

Network/Systems Specialist

The incumbent should have broad experience with virtual network development, including familiarity with a variety of Information Communications Technology (ICT) applications. He/she should have broad experience in network analysis and propagation, as well as working knowledge of communications infrastructure in the region, and familiarity with former Soviet and Eastern European environments.

The Evaluation team shall demonstrate familiarity with USAID's Evaluation Policy

(<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>)

(<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>)

A public site maintained by USAID's Program, Policy and Learning Bureau provides additional information on evaluation implementation (<http://usaidlearninglab.org>).

Schedule of Work:

Home Country

Evaluation team reviews background information and conducts additional desk top research to understand the country environments and identify appropriate partners. In-person or telephone interviews will be held with USAID, ICFJ and JDN headquarters staff. Evaluation team prepares

a schedule for in-country site visits and organizes a meeting schedule in agreement with USAID and with input from JDN.

Field Visits: Suggested sites include Bosnia, Ukraine and Georgia

The team will conduct interviews with RIJN/OCCRP field staff, partner organizations and associated journalists in central cities in each of the three sub-geographic regions. The teams should interview other media and/or stakeholders as appropriate in each of the site visit countries to assess the external view of RIJN/OCCRP's work. The team will assess methodology/results and draft report findings to date.

Home Country/Washington

The evaluation team prepares a first draft report of findings, conclusions and recommendations and submits this to USAID within one month of return from the field. Comments will be returned to the evaluation team within 5 days. The draft will also be provided to ICFJ and sub-grantee JDN for their review and comment within the same 5 day time frame. Contractor finalizes report and includes any statements of difference, if applicable. Report is prepared for final publication.

Washington

Final evaluation report submitted to USAID. A briefing is scheduled for EE USAID, ICFJ management and other interested stakeholders. The Contractor will make the final evaluation report publicly available through the Development Experience Clearinghouse within 30 calendar days of final approval of the formatted report.

All records from the evaluation (e.g., interview transcripts or summaries) must be provided to the COR. Any quantitative data collected by the evaluation team must be provided in an electronic file in easily readable format agreed upon with the COR. The data should be organized and fully documented for use by those not fully familiar with the project or the evaluation.

Summary of Deliverables

- a) Proposal: include evaluation activities, schedule and defined roles and responsibilities for team members, detailed evaluation design matrix, including the evaluation questions, and for each question the methods used to address it, sources of information, data analysis plan
- b) Draft questionnaires, protocols and other data collection instruments
- c) Updated SOW, if applicable
- d) Draft Report in electronic version that is structured as outlined above and includes appendices
- e) Final Report in electronic version that incorporates USAID, ICFJ and JDN comments, statements of difference (if applicable) and appendices
- f) Evaluation Record: including interview transcripts or summaries, all quantitative data collected by the evaluation team must be provided in an electronic file in easily readable format agreed upon with the COR.

Appendix A

Program literature

ICFJ Cooperative Agreement & Extension Modification
RIJN/OCCRP Annual Work Plans

RIJN/OCCRP SARS Program Reports #1 to #4, plus #5 when available
RIJN Results Framework
Philliber Research Associates (PRA) Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) and analysis reports
Suggested Evaluation Matrix for use of PIRS data
OCCRP and partner websites www.occrp.org

External literature

Knight Foundation Report on non-profit journalism (2013)
<http://www.knightfoundation.org/features/nonprofitnews/>

Pew Research Center report on U.S non-profit journalism (2013)
<http://www.journalism.org/files/legacy/Nonprofit%20News%20Study.pdf>

ICT secure practices guide (continuous updates)
<https://securityinabox.org/en>
<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/digital-security>

CIMA – Kaplan report on investigative journalism (2013)
<http://cima.ned.org/sites/default/files/CIMA-Investigative%20Journalism%20-%20Dave%20Kaplan.pdf>

Annex II: Evaluation Design Matrix

Evaluation Question	Criteria of Success/Indicator ⁵⁶	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods ⁵⁷						Data Analysis Plan	Assumptions/Risks/Considerations
			DR	MS	CA	CS	KI	SO		
Q1 What have been the main obstacles to implementing RIJN/OCCRP and how has the project addressed them?		1) PRA/RIJN documentation 2) Interview data	X				X	X	Review program documents and identify key trends; these will be further explored in interviews with center managers, editors, journalists, and relevant external actors	Program documents provide accurate basis for further interview development; key informants will be available
Q1.1 In particular, what were the obstacles in expanding the network from the Balkans to other regions and what lessons learned should be applied to future efforts to replicate investigative journalist networks?		1)PRA/RIJN documentation 2)Interview data	X				X	X	Review program documents and identify key trends; these will be further explored in interviews with center managers, editors, journalists, and relevant external actors	Program documents provide accurate basis for further interview development; key informants will be available
Q2 To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to institutionalizing		1). Raw data content analysis 2)PRA/RIJN semi-annual	X		X		X	X	Use replicable PRA quality plus SI criteria for OCCRP published story content analysis;	Replicable PRA criteria for quality assessment in

⁵⁶ Will be defined through consultation with DRG during work planning, but some examples are provided.

⁵⁷ **DR = Desk Review; Content Analysis = CA; Case Study = CS; MS=Mini Survey KI= Key Informant Interview; SO= Site Observation;**

Evaluation Question	Criteria of Success/Indicator ⁵⁶	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods ⁵⁷						Data Analysis Plan	Assumptions/Risks/Considerations	
			D R	M S	C A	CS	KI	SO			
professional practices and improved skills of journalists associated with the project?		reporting: Quality Rubric/Fact Checking Log 3) Interview data							compare with PRA/RIJN semi-annual; use findings to further investigate through informant interviews	combination with SI developed criteria can capture most dimensions of improved skills/professional ization practices	
Q3 To what extent has RIJN/OCCRP contributed to building and strengthening sustainable linkages between journalists?		1) Modified SI-PRA survey data 2. Semi-annual PRA/RIJN documentation 3)Interview data	X	X				X	X	Design questions for incorporation into PRA modified survey tools; compare these findings with PRA/RIJN semi-annual data; use initial findings to inform inclusion of questions into informant interviews	Survey response rates will provide necessary data for this network analysis;
Q4 Is there a correlation or relationship between RIJN/OCCRP reporting and public policy actions?		1) PRA/RIJN documentation 2) Interview data 3) Secondary desk review	X				X	X	X	Classify 'impact cases' according to 5 criteria for descriptive levels of impact; based on these select X cases studies to investigate further through document and field interview research	

Annex III: Data Collection Instruments

Organized Crime and Reporting Project (OCCRP)

Year 3 - Annual Survey of Journalists

Name:

Organization: or Freelance journalist

Location:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Albania | <input type="checkbox"/> Macedonia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Moldova |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Azerbaijan | <input type="checkbox"/> Montenegro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belarus | <input type="checkbox"/> Russia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bosnia - Herzegovina | <input type="checkbox"/> Serbia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Ukraine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kosovo | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

OCCRP Member Involvement

(To be answered only by new members who joined the network since May 2013)

1. For approximately how many years have you been a reporter/journalist?

2a. When did you personally join the OCCRP network?

- Between six months to a year ago
 Less than six months ago

2b. How did you hear about the OCCRP network?

3a. Were you involved in any regional, cross-border investigative projects prior to OCCRP?

- No Yes

If yes,

3b. Describe how OCCRP projects differ, if at all, from this previous work:

(To be answered by all OCCRP network members)

4. Approximately how many regional, cross-border investigative projects have you been involved with as a member of the OCCRP network in the past year (May 2013 to present)? (Select one):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not been involved in any of these projects | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 - 9 projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 3 projects | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 or more projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 - 6 projects | |

Strength of Collaboration between Network Members

In better understanding collaboration between network members, please refer to the below chart regarding types of collaboration.

Stage

Descriptor

Stage	Descriptor
Cross Promotion	Promote each other's work but do not work together to produce content in common.
Cloning	Share partners' content after a story has been completed (e.g., post on website) but no joint work.
Information Provider	Partner shares information, contacts, or support with my project
Information Giver	I provide information, contacts, or support to the partner
Content Sharing	Partners exchange ideas and jointly develop special projects. News organizations each produce their own stories.
Convergence	Partners cooperate fully in gathering, producing and disseminating stories.

5. Please list each of the titles or topics you have collaborated with other OCCRP members on over the past twelve months, if any. 5a - Titles or topic of the collaborations	5b - Who did you collaborate with on this project?	5c - What type of collaboration existed? (Please reference the chart above)	5d - On a scale of 1-5, to what extent did group members complete assignments on time and meet deadlines?	5e - On a scale of 1-5, to what extent did group members help one another and solve problems and conflict effectively?	5f - On a scale of 1-5, to what extent did the group continuously check the content and focus of the story with the editor?
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

6. Were there any activities which prompted or helped facilitate your collaboration?

Yes 6a: Please Describe:

No

7. Were there any factors which inhibited or prevented collaboration?

Yes 7a: Please Describe:

No

8. Please mark up to three activities which are particularly helpful in promoting collaboration.

- General conferences
- Joint trainings
- Join trainings
- Smaller, cross-border meetings
- Sub-regional projects
- Mentoring for centers on sustainability plans
- Dissemination with OCCRP

9. Approximately how many other journalists have you collaborated with through OCCRP to research and produce regional, cross-border stories in this past year?

10. How often have you collaborated with non-OCCRP members on projects in this past year?

- I have not collaborated with non-OCCRP members
- 4-6 times
- Once
- 7 or more times
- 2-3 times

11. How, if at all, might collaboration between OCCRP network members be strengthened or improved?

12. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you believe your collaboration will continue with OCCRP members over the coming 3 years?

1 – Collaboration is not likely at all	2	3- Collaboration is somewhat likely	4	5 – Collaboration is very likely
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11a. Please comment on your answer:

OCCRP Collaborative Platform *Secure Reporter*

10a. Have you received training on the OCCRP Collaborative Platform *Secure Reporter*?

- No Yes

10b. If yes, give an overall rating of the helpfulness of the training using the following 5-point scale:

1 – Not helpful at all	2	3- Somewhat helpful	4	5 – Very Helpful
<input type="checkbox"/>				

11a. Have you used *Secure Reporter*?

- No Yes

10b. If yes, approximately how many stories are you working on for which you have used it?

10c. Please rate the usefulness of *Secure Reporter* for sharing information and developing stories using the following 5-point scale:

1 – Not useful at all	2	3- Somewhat useful	4	5 – Very useful
<input type="checkbox"/>				

10d. What improvements, if any, should be made to *Secure Reporter* to make it more useful?

Cybersecurity Practices

For the following items, please rate your cybersecurity practices BEFORE joining the OCCRP Network and then also rate your skills and practices NOW, by choosing a number 0 “never” to 6 “always”.

11. Please rate your cybersecurity practices in the following areas	Never		Sometimes				
	Always						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	BEFORE joining OCCRP Network			NOW as a member of OCCRP Network			
a. Use of PGP/GPG for secure email							
b. Instant messaging done over OTR encrypted channels or Cryptocat							
c. TrueCrypt or other encryption of documents on hard drive							
d. TrueCrypt unmounting at the end of each day							
e. Creation and use of strong passwords (>60 bit)							
f. No reuse of passwords when creating new ones							
Now, please tell us about whether or not you have implemented these additional cybersecurity practices with 0=No and 1=Yes. . . .	No			Yes			
	0			1			
	BEFORE joining OCCRP Network			NOW as a member of OCCRP Network			
g. Password rotation on an annual basis							
h. Automatic updates enabled and used							
i. Using updated antivirus software (if using Windows)							
j. Environment automatically locked within 10 minutes of idleness							
k. Hardware stored in lock office/hom							

International Standards of Journalism

For the following items, please rate your journalistic practices **BEFORE** joining the OCCRP Network and then also rate your skills and practices **NOW**, by choosing a number 0 “never” to 6 “always”.

12. Please rate your journalistic practices in the following areas	Never		Sometimes				Always	
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	BEFORE joining OCCRP Network				NOW as a member of OCCRP Network			
a. Gather and cite multiple sources for all information you are using								
b. File freedom of information requests (FOI) to access governmental records								
c. Test and double check the accuracy of all information you are using in your story								
d. Identify by name all sources of information (when feasible)								
e. Provide enough background for the reader to understand why the story is relevant								
f. Provide context and analysis to data you are using in your story								
g. Alter or omit facts to support your story’s hypothesis								
h. Provide opportunity for all subjects to respond prior to publication								
j. Make sure your work is fair and balanced								
k. Seek out and use available public records in your story								
l. Conduct on-line research and use on-line data sources in your story								
m. Republish content without citing and/or checking for accuracy								
n. Respect the presumption of innocence when naming criminal suspects								
o. Rectify any information published by you which is found to be harmfully inaccurate								
p. Succumb to pressure from inside or outside sources for favored treatment								
q. Remain free of association and activities that might compromise your integrity								

Training and Support/Professional Development

13a. In the past year, have you received any training(s) from OCCRP, including at the Annual Conference?

No Yes

13b. Check the box in the first column to indicate which type of training(s) you have received (check all that apply) and then rate the usefulness in the last column on the following scale:

1 – Not useful at all	2	3- Somewhat useful	4	5 – Very Useful
Training Topic				Usefulness Rating <i>(See scale above)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>				
OCCRP standards, operations and procedures				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Freedom of Information (FOI)				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Using documents and investigative journalism tools like Lexis/Nexis				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cybersecurity – protecting communication systems				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Computer assisted reporting				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Legal and safety training				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Self training using the OCCRP manual				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
How to edit stories				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Story specific training (please name story: _____)				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other (please describe: _____)				

13c. How, if at all, might training offered by OCCRP be improved?

14. What additional training or personal development opportunities would you find helpful to support your work in the OCCRP Network?

Overall Assessment of OCCRP

15. To date, what would you say have been the biggest accomplishments of OCCRP?

16. Currently, what challenges must be overcome that impede the success of OCCRP?

17. Is there anything additional that you would like to share regarding OCCRP?

Stage	Descriptor
Cloning	Share partners' content only after a story has been completed (e.g., post on website) but no joint work.
Coopetition	Partners cooperate by sharing information during the development of selected stories, but still compete and produce original content.
Content Sharing	Partners regularly (but not always) exchange ideas and jointly develop special projects. However, the news organizations each produce their own stories without helping each other.
Convergence	Partners cooperate fully in gathering, producing and disseminating stories.

b. Comments about the rating:

5. Approximately, how many new regional, cross-border investigative projects have you or journalists at your center been involved with from July - December 2014 (even if not yet published)?

6. Please list each of the titles or topics you have collaborated on with other OCCRP members during the 2014 calendar year, if any, and tell us a little bit about each collaboration. Please note that these can be domestic or transnational initiatives.

6a. What was the title of the collaboration	6b. What was your role in this collaboration?	6c. Who did you directly collaborate with?	6d. What was their role in this collaboration?	6e. Had you worked with this individual prior to the OCCRP?	6f. Which of these three options best describes the collaboration?
<i>Please list up to eight projects.</i>	-Lead editor -Editor -Lead reporter -Reporter -Researcher -Other	<i>(Please write the full name of the individual. If there are more than five, please list the primary five collaborators)</i>	-Lead editor -Editor -Lead reporter -Reporter -Researcher -Other	-Yes -No	<i>(Please write a, b, or c) a. I provided information/ contacts/ inputs to them b. They provided information/ contacts/ inputs to me c. Information/ contacts/ inputs were shared in both directions</i>
Example article: "Trans-national crime affects Wonderland"	Lead editor	1. Andriy Romanenko	Lead reporter	No	C
		2. Miroslava Petrovic	Editor	Yes	B
		3. Iosava Beridze	Reporter	No	C
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		5.			
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		2.			
		3.			
		4.			

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		3.			
		4.			
		5.			
8.		1.			
		2.			
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		5.			

6a. Title or topic of the collaboration	6g. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your satisfaction with the final product (or output to-date)?	6h. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your satisfaction with the collaborative process?
<i>Numbers should correspond with the projects above. It is not necessary to re-write the project name.</i>	1 = Very dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very satisfied	1 = Very dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very satisfied
1.		
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7. What were the factors, if any, that have prompted or have helped facilitate collaboration with OCCRP members? (Factors may include OCCRP activities and/or external factors)
8. What were the factors, if any, that have inhibited or prevented collaboration with OCCRP members? (Factors may include OCCRP-related items as well as external factors)
9. What kinds of OCCRP support or activities do you think have been the most effective for strengthening the level of collaboration between OCCRP members?
10. In thinking about the last six months (July – Dec, 2014), in addition to contributing to the “big” stories, did you or journalists from your center develop and publish more locally relevant stories based on the same investigations? No Yes
11. Has there been any measurable impact of any of the big or locally developed stories on policy changes, governmental action and/or any other action by official authorities that occurred between July - December 2014? No Yes, describe:
12. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you believe your collaboration will continue with OCCRP members over the coming 3 years?

1 – Collaboration is not likely at all	2	3- Collaboration is somewhat likely	4	5 – Collaboration is very likely
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10a. Please describe the reason for your score:

13. What do you see as the key additional suggestions do you have on how collaboration might be improved?

Use of Secure Reporter

12a. To your knowledge, for how many stories have you or the journalists from your center used *Secure Reporter*?

b. What feedback have you received about its usefulness to developing the stories?

c. We have heard that some journalists are not using it because they are concerned about a lack of security. Is this an issue for the journalists at your center? No Yes

d. If your journalists are not using, but security is not the issue, what do you believe is the issue(s) that prevents its use?

Use of the Investigative Dashboard (ID)

13a. To your knowledge, for how many stories have you or the journalists from your center used the *Investigative Dashboard*?

b. What feedback have you received about its usefulness to developing the stories?

c. What might be done, if anything, to make this service more useful for your journalists?

Video Skills

14a. Have you or the journalists from your center been involved in Jail Crunch (the Prison Interview Project)? No Yes

b. In your opinion, how effective has Jail Crunch (the Prison Interview project) been at improving the network reporters' skills in video interviewing?

1- Not at all effective	2	3- Somewhat effective	4	5- Very effective
<input type="checkbox"/>				

c. How, if at all, could this project be improved?

d. Has your center benefited from this work in terms of building your capacity to produce video stories? No Yes, explain:

Quality of Work

15a. From the period of July – December 2014, have you reviewed and/or edited any stories produced by OCCRP participating reporters?

No (skip to Q10) Yes, how many? (continue below)

b. Please give an assessment of how well these stories *met the international standards of journalism*:

- All or most stories met high standards
- About an equal number of stories met international standards as did not
- Most stories did not meet international standards

c. Additional comments about how well the stories met the standards:

d. Please give an assessment of how many of these new stories had *factual errors* at the *time of first review*?

- Most stories did not have factual errors
- About an equal number of stories had factual errors as did not
- Most stories had factual errors

e. Additional comments about the errors:

f. Please give an assessment of the quality of the writing.

- Most stories were written with high quality
- About an equal number of stories were written with high quality as were not
- Most stories were not written with high quality

g. Additional comments about the quality of writing:

h. What kinds of supports or activities do you think have been the most effective for strengthening the quality of the stories?

i. What additional suggestions do you have on how the quality of stories might be improved?

Organizational Improvement and Sustainability

16a. Have you received a grant from OCCRP for organizational improvement and/or sustainability efforts? No Yes,

b. If yes, how many grants and when?

c. Briefly, what was the purpose of the grant(s) (state the objectives)?

d. What improvements have you made to your center as a result of this grant(s)?

e. What percent of your grant(s) objective(s) have you accomplished to date:

Less than 20%	20% - 39%	40% - 59%	60 - 79%	80 - 100%
<input type="checkbox"/>				

f. Do you believe that this funding has contributed to your center's sustainability?

- No
- Yes, please explain?

17a. Since July 2014, have you applied for and/or received any grants from sources other than OCCRP?

- No
- Yes, applied, how many and where?
- Yes, funded, how many and where?

b. If you received an outside grant during this past six months please provide more details (e.g., from whom, what are the objectives, and how much was the grant)?

18a. What would you describe as your biggest challenge(s) to sustaining your center?

b. What type of support could you use to overcome these challenges?

19a. Have you received any other assistance (besides grant funding) from OCCRP for improving your organization or increasing your sustainability? No Yes, briefly explain?

b. If yes, rate the helpfulness of that assistance on the following 5-point scale:

1- Not at all helpful	2	3- Somewhat helpful	4	5- Very helpful
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Overall Assessment of OCCRP

20a. What would you say have been the biggest accomplishments of OCCRP made in the last six months (July – December 2014)?

b. In the past six months (July – December 2014), what have been the biggest challenges that impede the success of the OCCRP network?

c. Is there anything additional that you would like to share regarding OCCRP?

**Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)
Year 4 – SARS 7 Interview
for OCCRP Staff**

Name:

Organization:

Location:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Albania | <input type="checkbox"/> Macedonia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Moldova |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Azerbaijan | <input type="checkbox"/> Montenegro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belarus | <input type="checkbox"/> Russia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bosnia - Herzegovina | <input type="checkbox"/> Serbia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Georgia | <input type="checkbox"/> Ukraine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kosovo | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

OCCRP Role and Involvement

1. What is your role with OCCRP? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> OCCRP Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> ID Researcher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Editor | <input type="checkbox"/> Fact Checker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

2. How many new regional, cross-border investigative projects have you been involved with from July - December 2014?

b. If so, which projects?

Quality of Work

3a. From the period of from July - December 2014, have you reviewed and/or edited any stories produced by OCCRP participating reporters?

- No Yes, **how many?** (continue below)

b. Please give an assessment of how well these stories met the international standards of journalism:

- All or most stories met high standards
 About an equal number of stories met international standards as did not
 Most stories did not meet international standards

c. Additional comments about how well the stories met the standards:

d. Please give an assessment of how many of these new stories had *factual errors* at the time of first review?

- Most stories did not have factual errors
 About an equal number of stories had factual errors as did not

Most stories had factual errors

f. Additional comments about the errors:

f. Please give an assessment of the quality of the writing.

Most stories were written with high quality

About an equal number of stories were written with high quality as were not

Most stories were not written with high quality

j. Additional comments about the quality of writing:

k. Do you believe that the quality of writing is improving for those journalists who have been part of the network the longest? Yes No

l. What kinds of supports or activities do you think have been the most effective for strengthening the quality of the stories?

m. What additional suggestions do you have on how the quality of stories might be improved?

Editing and Fact Checking Process

4a. Currently, how *effective* is the OCCRP editing and fact checking process?

1- Not at all effective	2	3- Somewhat effective	4	5- Very effective
<input type="checkbox"/>				

b. Currently, how *efficient* is the OCCRP editing and fact checking process?

1- Not at all efficient	2	3- Somewhat efficient	4	5- Very efficient
<input type="checkbox"/>				

c. What improvements, if any, could be made to the process to make it more effective and/or efficient?

Building the Network

5a. Do you play a role in identifying and recruiting new Investigative Journalism Centers or journalists into the OCCRP network? No Yes, please describe:

b. What challenges have you experienced with recruiting appropriate Centers/journalists and have these challenges been overcome?

c. As the OCCRP network expands, what challenges, if any, are being experienced (e.g. "growing pains") and what, if anything, is being done to overcome those challenges?

Strength of Collaboration between Network Members

6a. Using the scale below, how would you rate the current stage of the OCCRP collaborations in which you have been involved? First rate each of the individual stories (on attached form) and then give one overall rating (check one of the boxes below):

<input type="checkbox"/> 0	Cross Promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Cloning	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Coopetition	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	Content Sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	Convergence	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
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Stage	Descriptor
Cross Promotion	Promote each others' work but do not work together to produce content in common.
Cloning	Share partners' content only after a story has been completed (e.g., post on website) but no joint work.
Coopetition	Partners cooperate by sharing information during the development of selected stories, but still compete and produce original content.
Content Sharing	Partners regularly (but not always) exchange ideas and jointly develop special projects. However, the news organizations each produce their own stories without helping each other.
Convergence	Partners cooperate fully in gathering, producing and disseminating stories.

b. Comments about the rating:

7. Please list each of the titles or topics you have collaborated on with other OCCRP members during the 2014 calendar year, if any, and tell us a little bit about each collaboration. Please note that these can be domestic or transnational initiatives.

7a. What was the title of the collaboration	7b. What was your role in this collaboration?	7c. Who did you directly collaborate with?	7d. What was their role in this collaboration?	7e. Had you worked with this individual prior to the OCCRP?	7f. Which of these three options best describes the collaboration?
<i>Please list up to eight projects.</i>	-Lead editor -Editor -Lead reporter -Reporter -Researcher -Other	<i>(Please write the full name of the individual. If there are more than five, please list the primary five collaborators)</i>	-Lead editor -Editor -Lead reporter -Reporter -Researcher -Other	-Yes -No	<i>(Please write a, b, or c) d. I provided information/ contacts/ inputs to them e. They provided information/ contacts/ inputs to me f. Information/ contacts/ inputs were shared in both directions</i>
Example article: "Trans-national crime affects Wonderland"	Lead editor	1. Andriy Romanenko	Lead reporter	No	C
		2. Miroslava Petrovic	Editor	Yes	B
		3. Iosava Beridze	Reporter	No	C
		4.			
		5.			
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		5.			
8.		1.			
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		5.			

7a. Title or topic of the collaboration	7g. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your satisfaction with the final product (or output to-date)?	7h. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your satisfaction with the collaborative process?
<i>Numbers should correspond with the</i>	<i>1 = Very dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied</i>	<i>1 = Very dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied</i>

<i>projects above. It is not necessary to re-write the project name.</i>	<i>3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very satisfied</i>	<i>3 = Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very satisfied</i>
1.		
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8. What factors, if any, do you think prompted or helped facilitate collaboration between OCCRP members? (Factors may include OCCRP activities and/or external factors)

9. What factors, if any, do you think inhibited or prevented collaboration with OCCRP members? (Factors may include OCCRP-related items as well as external factors)

10. What additional suggestions do you have on how collaboration might be improved?

11. To what extent do you think the collaboration and network linkages are likely to continue over the next 3 years?

1 – Not likely at all	2	3- Somewhat likely	4	5 – Very likely
<input type="checkbox"/>				

a. Please comment on your answer:

Cross Region Collaboration

12a. In the previous six months (January – June, 2014) it seemed like the amount of cross region collaboration went down. To what do you attribute this?

12b. In what ways do you think that the Internet Ownership project might improve the level of cross region collaboration?

12c. What other strategies are being planned, if any, to reinvigorate the cross region collaboration?

Use of Secure Reporter

13a. To your knowledge, for how many stories have the journalists with whom you work used *Secure Reporter*?

13b. What feedback have you received about its usefulness to developing the stories?

13c. We have heard that some journalists are not using it because they are concerned about a lack of security. Is this an issue for the journalists with whom you have worked? No Yes

13d. If your journalists are not using, but security is not the issue, what do you believe is the issue(s) that prevents its use?

Use of the Investigative Dashboard (ID)

14a. To your knowledge, for how many stories have the journalists with whom you work used the *Investigative Dashboard*?

14b. What feedback have you received about its usefulness to developing the stories?

Video Skills

15a. In your opinion, how effective was the Jail Crunch (the Prison Interview project) at improving the network reporters' skills in video interviewing?

1- Not at all effective	2	3- Somewhat effective	4	5- Very effective
<input type="checkbox"/>				

b. To your knowledge, how many centers received technical assistance with Kenan?

c. How, if at all, could this project have been improved?

Organizational Improvement and Sustainability of Centers

16a. During the past six months (July – December, 2014), what were OCCRP's strategies (e.g., providing grants) to support organizational improvement and the sustainability of the centers?

b. How successful do you feel that these strategies have been?

c. What are the biggest challenges being faced by the centers regarding organizational improvement and sustainability?

d. How do you envision the ways that Chris Guess (the new Knight Fellow) might work with centers regarding organizational improvement and sustainability?

e. What more, if anything, should or could be done to support organizational improvement and the sustainability of the centers?

OCCRP Organizational Growth

12a. What staffing changes (e.g., Drew's sabbatical, role changes, new hires, role elimination) have occurred in the past six months (July - December 2014)?

b. How did these changes affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization?

c. What challenges have come with these staffing changes and have these challenge been overcome?

d. How should OCCRP change staff positions in the future to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization?

Overall Assessment of OCCRP

13a. What would you say have been the biggest accomplishments of OCCRP made in the last six months (July - December 2014)?

d. In the past six months (July - December 2014), what have been the biggest challenges that impede the success of the OCCRP network?

e. Is there anything additional that you would like to share regarding OCCRP?

Key Informant Interview Guides

OCCRP Management/Staff

Purpose of interviews:

- ❖ Key trends/lessons in implementation and management processes
- ❖ Key trends/lessons on network expansion
- ❖ Considerations on governance and sustainability
- ❖ Lessons for raising professional standards of journalists and journalism/lessons learned about how to institutionalize them

Background

Person

Position

Country/Region

Years with project

Previous experience (journalism/editing/management/regions/languages)

OCCRP systems/framework (both of these questions are also applicable for editors)

1. OCCRP has put a lot of attention on increasing local editing capacities and in managing this process between international and local editors. Describe some of the key challenges in developing local editing capacity. And key lessons learned? (looking for both operational and substance)
2. Similarly you have gone through a process of learning how to develop and seek collaboration from the various journalists/partners; how would you describe the current situation in relation to your objectives of decentralizing this process and what can be learned from this experience? It is still primarily center initiated? Any differences in relation to SEE, other regions for initiation of stories, why? (looking for both operational and substance)
3. What has worked and not with web-based systems? The web-based platform and virtual types of communication and collaboration?

Story development and management

4. Walk us through an 'average story' development in terms of time duration, number of people involved, etc.
5. How do you determine a story's price tag as part of these calculations – or is it a part? (How in general does the 'cost' of a story fit into the management process? (editing hours/fact checker, journalist remuneration, etc). Or if this is not decided on a single story basis, how are decisions made about allocating resources?

Network expansion

6. Which ways of identifying journalists/partners and managing the project have worked well as you have expanded to other regions? Which ways needed to be reviewed and what have you learned in this process?
7. How would you describe the functioning of the network in one region as to another? And inter-regionally – is it story specific or are there other regular ways that this takes place?
8. How has having a network helped investigative journalism in the OCCRP countries? Improve professional standards? How has having a network distracted focus away from journalism?

Improving professional practices and institutionalizing good practices

9. Which element of OCCRP been most successful at improving journalistic standards and practices? Which have been most disappointing?
10. What approaches have been most successful at institutionalizing good practices, i.e. making the sustainable?
11. What have you learned about the process of improving professional standards? Any surprises since you first started? If you were starting over, what would you do it differently?

Governance/management/sustainability

12. Describe how you divide your time in relation to editing and management of the project? Is this different than several years ago? Why?
13. How in general would you describe the management structure? (or draw it...) (What kind of grade would you give yourself?) How close is this to your ideal management structure for managing this complex project?
14. OCCRP has also experimented with different governance structures – including an Executive Committee – how do you see the role of such a structure now?
15. How do you see the balance between production of stories and development of capacity and sustainability for the project and for the centers?
16. Specifically in relation to sustainability, how (if at all) have your thoughts on sustainability of the project changed? Please describe your current vision.
17. And for partners in their continuation of their respective media centers? Where do you see the need for most emphasis as OCCRP or as other donors?
18. Where do you see the OCCRP journalists in 2017, if USAID funding is not repeated? And the other funding? Where do you think the network will be?

(We will also speak with key staff in the center (factcheckers/operations etc.) to better understand day-to-day functioning of the project and adapt above questions accordingly as relevant)

Editor Informant Guide

Purpose of interviews:

- ❖ Capture implementation processes and challenges on story development level (and organizationally where appropriate);
 - ❖ Capture information on the editing and journalist capacity development processes;
 - ❖ Gain information/insights on the impact case study examination
-

Background

Editor:

Country/Region

Years with project

Previous experience (journalism/editing/management/regions/languages)

(Individual) Journalistic Capacity Development

1. As you have worked with different journalists, where do you see that your inputs have resulted in improved writing and quality and journalism skills? What have you been less able to help or not been able to help?
2. How has working with OCCRP shaped your reporters' work habits? Their professional standards? Has anything surprised you about the changes? What should be done more or less to encourage the positive changes?
3. How would you describe the general pool of journalists you work with now? And a year ago? How many are regular contributors and at which level of experience do these tend to be? Which types of journalists do you think gain the most professional improvement from working with OCCRP?
4. What attracts journalists to work with OCCRP? Describe for us the incentive structures and how these have changed (or not) during the project. What could be done in terms of incentives to improve OCCRP content? To improve the professional development of journalists?
5. How do you see this in relation to the specific media contexts in the various countries? i.e. how do improving or declining better media environments affect interest to collaborate?
6. Walk us through how an idea becomes a story – how this process changed as the project has developed? How are stories 'assigned or strategized'?
7. What is media impact? – (place to start to get at the abstract impact conversation)
8. How do you understand the impact objective of this project? (To better understand if editors/managers have a similar understanding as well as how they define impact)
9. Describe the process by which you consider the value of a story and its potential impact (i.e. is multi-country more interesting; new story coverage; continued story coverage).

10. The story on _____ has a described impact of _____. Is this how you would also describe the impact? Have there been any updates to this? What other factors do you think affected the impact actions described?
11. Can you provide an example of a story that you thought would make an impact but didn't? Why do you think this was the case? (which factors may have played a role)
12. Should editors consider impact when they assign stories? How much weight should be given to impact? Should OCCRP editors consider impact more or less than they do currently?
13. What is the best way to measure impact?"

Journalist (Media Center) Informant Guide

Purpose of interviews:

- ❖ Capture implementation processes and challenges on story development level (and organizationally where appropriate);
 - ❖ Capture information on the editing and capacity skills/standards development processes;
 - ❖ Gain information/insights on the impact case study examination
-

Background information:

Name

Country/region

Years experience

Languages

Which media, type of media

Gender

Work status: freelancer/affiliated

1. Describe how you have cooperated with OCCRP? Did they find you or did you find them (or pitch a story)? (frequency of cooperation; interest)
2. What attracted you to work with OCCRP? To what extent did this cooperation meet your expectations? Why or why not?
3. Were there particular skills you thought OCCRP could offer which local media could not? Or stories which OCCRP would publish which local media would not for political or economic reasons?
4. Describe how you have worked with different editors and managers?
5. What has been the most challenging/rewarding part of this process?
6. And your work/introduction to/with different platforms/technologies/data bases?
7. To what extent have you (or your center) adapted practices used with OCCRP in your other work? Why or why not?
8. How do you see the OCCRP in relation to your regular work? (is it for the you a network of colleagues you work with, a place for pitching a story, training opportunities, etc) How do you compare working with OCCRP editors and editors at your local media?
9. To what extent has OCCRP affected your ability (skills and opportunity) to do investigative pieces as an individual, agency/center?

If worked on an case study story:

10. How would you describe media impact?
11. Tell us about your work on the story ____.
12. Tell us how you would describe the impact of your story on_____.
13. Have there been any updates to this? What other factors do you think affected the impact actions described?
14. What is the role of impact in story planning process at OCCRP? Have you learned anything from planning stories to have impact? Should it be emphasized more or less in the planning process? How do you know if a story had impact?
15. Have you worked on follow up stories? How in general has this affected your work after this?
16. Can you provide an example of a story that you worked on with OCCRP thought would make an impact but didn't? Why do you think this was the case? (which factors may have played a role)

Specifically for journalists affiliated/heading media centers:

Sustainability issues (media centers):

17. How has your center worked with OCCRP on sustainability? (which inputs/connections/training most useful/not)
18. How would you describe your key challenges in developing further the center?
19. Where do you see your center in 2017?

External Informant Guide

Other journalists/donors/etc

Purpose of interviews:

- ❖ General impressions of OCCRP journalism and quality
- ❖ General impressions of how the network affects domestic media scene
- ❖ Gain information/insights on the impact case study examination
- ❖ General assessment of local needs for raising professional media standards, producing more investigative reporting and making them sustainable/ institutionalized; compare them to OCCRP's approach

Background

Name

Country/region

Organization/Affiliation

Gender

Journalism experience

1. How have you come in contact with OCCRP?
2. What is your impression of the OCCRP as an organization? The quality of their journalism? And their skill development efforts? (Do you think working with OCCRP helps individual journalists increase their professional standards)
3. What is in your impression of the journalists that they work with locally? (and the media centers)?
4. How do you see their work affecting the domestic media scene? To what extent are its products visible in your country?
5. What kinds of stories are OCCRP known for doing? And how do their stories compare to those done by local media?
6. What does the media in your country need to produce more high-quality investigative reporting?
7. What role does a network for investigative journalists play in this?
8. Which factors of such a network might help? (Does having foreign editors help? /Does having funding from abroad help?) (some might say it hurts... skewing the market, taking the most talented reporters away from local cash-strapped media, creating an artificial media economy which will evaporate when the money dries up)
9. What are the most sustainable models for encouraging high professional standards in your country? And for producing more investigative journalism in your country?

Case study story

10. (Let's talk a bit about impact). How in general do you see media impact in your country/context?
11. Are you familiar with the story on ____? How would you describe the impact of this story? What other factors do you think affected the impact actions described?
12. In general how would you describe the media situation in your country for investigative journalism? Where are the largest possibilities for work and making an impact?

Annex IV: Sources of Information

Documents

ICFJ Cooperative Agreement (April 7, 2011) & Extension Modification (September 13, 2013)

ICFJ Semi-Annual Program Reports (SAR)

1. March-December 2011 (02/2012)
2. January-June 2012 (08/2012)
3. July-December 2012 (02/2013)
4. January-June 2013 (08/2013)
5. July-December 2013 (01/2014)
6. January-June 2014 (06/2014)

ICFJ Information Security Training Slides (no date).

IREX Media Sustainability Index 2014. *USAID Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia Project*. Morse, Leon (ed.) (10/8/2014)

Philliber Research Associates, Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) and analysis reports (no date).

Philliber Research Associates, Semi-Annual External Performance Monitoring Reports (SAR)

1. March-December 2011 (02/2012)
2. January-June 2012 (08/2012)
3. July-December 2012 (02/2013)
4. January-June 2013 (08/2013)
5. July-December 2013 (01/2014)
6. January-June 2014 (08/2014)
7. July-December 2014 (02/2015)

RIJN/OCCRP Annual Work Plans

1. Year 1 (09/07/2011)
2. Year 2 (06/2012)
3. Year 3 (06/2013)
4. Year 4 (06/2014)

RIJN Results Framework (no date)

RIJN Training Slides

1. Fact Checking (11/08/2014)
2. Accuracy (12/05/2014)
3. Basic Security (no date)
4. Story Flow (no date)
5. Information Security (no date)
6. Investigation (no date)
7. Editing Numbers (no date)
8. Footnoting (no date)
9. Investigative Process (no date)
10. Safety and Security (no date)
11. Unnamed Sources (no date)
12. Standards (no date)
13. Operational Safety (no date)
14. Photography (no date)
15. Writing (no date)

USAID RIJN Request for Applications SOL-OAA-11-00004 (10/26/2010)

Key informants

Istanbul Interviews

Position	Organization/Affiliation	Respondent Type
This information has been redacted from the public report.	USAID	USAID
	Philliber Research Associates	Implementing Organization (M&E)
	International Center for Journalism	Implementing Organization

Sarajevo Interviews

Position	Organization/Affiliation	Respondent Type
This information has been redacted from the public report.	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
	JDN	Direct Beneficiary
	CIN Bosnia	Direct Beneficiary
	Knight Foundation	Direct Beneficiary
	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
	CIN Bosnia	Direct Beneficiary
	Internews	External
	Internews	External
	Internews	External
	CIN Bosnia	Direct Beneficiary
	Dnevni Avaz	External
	ex-CIN / now freelance	Direct Beneficiary
	USAID Democracy Office	USAID
	USAID	USAID
	CIN Bosnia	Direct Beneficiary
	CIN Bosnia / BIRN	Direct Beneficiary
Democratization Policy Council	External	

Kiev Interviews

Position	Organization/Affiliation	Respondent Type
This information has been redacted from the public report.	OCCRP / Kiev Post	Direct Beneficiary
	KP / Yanukovichleaks	Direct Beneficiary
	Media Development Foundation	Direct Beneficiary
	Media Programming	USAID
	Media Programming	USAID
	Internews Media Program	External
	Internews	External
	Schemes TV show	Direct Beneficiary
	Schemes TV show	Direct Beneficiary
	Slidstvo.info	Direct Beneficiary

	Nashi Groshi TV show "Our Money"	Direct Beneficiary
	Svidomo.org	Direct Beneficiary
	Democratization Policy Council	External
	Hromadske TV	External
	Crimean Information and Press Center	External
	PACT	External
	Anticorruption Action Centre	External

Tbilisi Interviews

Position	Organization/Affiliation	Respondent Type
This information has been redacted from the public report.	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
	Studio Monitor	Direct Beneficiary
	Studio Monitor	Direct Beneficiary
	Studio Monitor	Direct Beneficiary
	Post-scriptum	Direct Beneficiary
	GIPA Journalism School	Direct Beneficiary
	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
	Netgazeti	Direct Beneficiary
	Netgazeti	Direct Beneficiary
	Euroasianet	External
	Multimedia Education Center	Direct Beneficiary
	Transparency International	External
	Transparency International	External
	Eurasianet /BBC media monitoring	External
	BBC media monitoring	External
	Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics	Direct Beneficiary
	hetq.am / OCCRP (Armenia)	Direct Beneficiary
	Journalist (Azeri)	Direct Beneficiary
Transparify	External	

Other Interviews

Location	Position	Organization/Affiliation	Respondent Type
Skype (Romania)	This information has been redacted from the public report.	OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary
Serbia		OCCRP	Direct Beneficiary

Annex V: Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Kristie Evenson
Title	Team Leader / Evaluation Specialist
Organization	Social Impact, Inc.
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> xTeam Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	Evaluation of DRGLER Regional Investigative Journalism Network, G003, HY0103-005
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No x
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

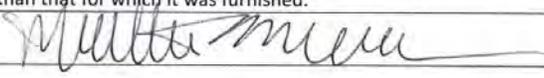
I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	3/27/2015

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Matthew Brunwasser
Title	Investigative Journalist Specialist
Organization	Social Impact, Inc.
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Regional Investigative Journalism Network G003, HY0103-005
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	<p>4. In 2012, I applied, unsuccessfully, for an editorial position at OCCRP, the USAID implementing organization whose project is being evaluated.</p>

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	Matthew Brunwasser 
Date	4.14.15

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Danielle de Garcia
Title	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
Organization	Social Impact, Inc.
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRG-LER Evaluation of Regional Investigative Journalism Project
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	April 20, 2015

Annex VI: Media Environment in Field Work Countries

The evaluation team conducted field work in the three countries where OCCRP has Regional Centers: Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia. Drawing on key informant interviews and personal observation, the following sections briefly describe the media environment in which OCCRP staff and partners are currently operating.

UKRAINE

The public pressure for better democratic governance that exploded in the streets in the winter of 2013-14 has deflated. While revolutionary momentum is lagging, key informants interviewed perceive that investigative journalism has more impact now than two years ago, when little would result from public exposure of major government corruption. Informants perceive the parliament today as more interested in changing the appearance of the laws than the substance. Indicative of the change of the political scenery, there are even several investigative journalists now serving as MPs, but little confidence about what they can achieve despite enjoying public respect.

NGO civil society activists have joined closely with investigative journalists, OCCRP partners and others, to press law enforcement authorities to act on evidence uncovered by investigative journalists solid enough for judicial proceedings. There have been some institutional changes: state institutions now monitor the lifestyles of public officials; and public documents, property records, tender documents and assets declarations of public officials are being made more easily accessible. A legal informant reports that anti-corruption prosecutions of senior officials are very difficult because of lack of political will but also a lack of expertise and poor management of prosecution services. The national public television has opened itself to respected high-quality investigative journalistic programs, broadcasting three programs of OCCRP members. Informants say their investigative stories have resulted in the firings of senior officials: the health minister, the head of procurement at the defense ministry, the general director of the state railways and others. Informants also report whistleblowers making much more frequent contact with investigative journalists than they did two years ago. One journalist interviewed reported that the state anti-corruption committee has asked for documents from his investigative reports to start an investigation.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The combination of economic misery and public frustration with dysfunctional and non-responsive state institutions in BiH has led to deep hopelessness and pessimism. International media attention is seen by some as having more “impact” than local media. As the country’s political priority is EU membership, the political elite feels pressure to show a certain amount of discipline and positive public relations in order to avoid international embarrassment. Unfortunately for the Bosnian citizenry, the opinion of Brussels is felt to be more important to Bosnian politicians than the opinion of Bosnians. There is little active state pressure on the Bosnian media, it seems, because the government feels no pressure to respond to criticism. Media industry informants say that commercial media are shaped mainly by the economic interests of their owners.

One bright spot in the Bosnian media landscape is OCCRP partner CIN in Sarajevo that continues producing investigative stories that reveal serious abuses of power that are widely republished across the Bosnian media. But informants both in the donor and media sectors suggest that public expectations are still so low that officials continue to largely ignore the abuses revealed. Media literacy is low as well as the understanding that the demand for democratic reforms and more responsive public institutions must come from the citizenry and not the political leadership. Critical thinking is lacking, and the political culture is more familiar with one-way talking rather than dialog and debate. Investigative journalism can always identify strong cases of corruption, but stopping corruption requires political will. CIN journalists argue that a strong prosecutor can bring cases based on the accuracy of CIN reports if they so choose, however this still rarely happens.

GEORGIA

Journalists and media experts in Georgia see the media environment as more open and free today than during the time of the Saakashvili government. But the combination of aloof governance, stalled democratic reforms and economic stagnation means that Georgia is about to tip over into the start of a downward post-Soviet spiral, observers say. While the previous government might have aggressively pressured media, which reported abuses of power by specific officials, the current government largely ignores them. As the campaign platform of the Georgia Dream political party was based on promises to clean up the corruption and heavy-handedness of the National Movement, the government has felt some obligation to respond to evidence of corruption, using journalistic reports to start investigations for the first time, albeit mostly against members of the former government.

While few obstacles prevent OCCRP investigations – and those of partner media Studio Monitori and Netgazeti – journalists, OCCRP regional editors, and external media experts and journalists suggest there are too few skilled journalists in Georgia with the will or resources to report many investigative stories. The media literacy and civil society consciousness of the Georgian public is still immature. Institutions are still largely unresponsive to public dissatisfaction with poor governance. An NGO, Transparency International Georgia, has helped fill the vacuum as an active voice in the media, working with investigative journalists to educate the public about corruption and good governance. Journalists find that the stories, which find the most impact among the Georgia public are short, simple and digestible, as long, dense and detailed reports tend to pass over the public consciousness.

Annex VII: Case Studies

Region: Caucasus

Impact: Moderate

Type of Impact:

(I) Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrest, asset freeze, investigation, loss of government license, firing of a public official, etc.

Story: Armenia: Church and State Deny Money Laundering⁵⁸
by Edik Baghdasaryan and Kristine Aghalaryan

As reported by OCCRP:

OCCRP's Armenian partner organization HETQ had conducted a lengthy and detailed investigation into a money laundering operation that appeared to involve Armenia's Prime Minister and the country's Archbishop. Subsequently a first suspect – the archbishop's godson – was arrested at Georgia's Tbilisi airport.^{59,60} He was extradited to Armenia soon afterwards.⁶¹

The Armenian investigative/news site <http://hetq.am/eng/> published several pieces based on their investigation of the explosive claims by a businessman that he had been cheated in a business deal, which included money-laundering by the sitting Armenian Prime Minister and an Archbishop of the Armenian Orthodox Church. The pieces were translated into English and sent to OCCRP editors who edited and fact-checked the text and rewrote the material into one long piece which appeared on occrp.org on January 31, 2014.

Kristine Aghalaryan is a mid-career journalist who started reporting at the site in 2008. She is a former student of Edik Baghdasaryan at the Yerevan state university journalism school. Baghdasaryan is the editor-in-chief who founded Hetq.am in 2001. Aghalaryan was responsible for reporting story elements outside Armenia, including public records requests and database searches, while Baghdasaryan, who doesn't speak English, did the domestic reporting inside Armenia.

To OCCRP, the cost of this piece was minimal. When Hetq.am was reporting the piece, OCCRP helped with advice on public records requests from abroad and paying for searches. After the reporters wrote the piece, OCCRP editors had to fact-check and edit, but they were not directly involved in guiding the reporting or paying additional expenses, such as travel. Aghalaryan estimates she spent 1/3 of her time on the investigation for two months; assuming Baghdasaryan did the same, the total effort by the reporters was about five full-time reporter

⁵⁸ <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/investigations/2304-armenia-church-and-state-deny-money-laundering>

⁵⁹ <https://reportingproject.net/occrp/index.php/en/ccwatch/cc-watch-indepth/2304-armenia-church-and-state-deny-money-laundering>

⁶⁰ <http://hetq.am/eng/news/32291/cyprus-troikas-ashot-sukiasyan-arrested-in-tbilisi-airport.html>

⁶¹ <http://hetq.am/eng/news/55296/businessman-implicated-in-cyprus-offshore-scandal-extradited-to-armenia.html>

weeks or 200 reporter hours. OCCRP effort would be more or less standard for editing a story.

Key informants report that Armenian businesses and individuals routinely use offshore bank accounts and register offshore companies to hide money and obscure their participation in illicit enterprises. But when a businessman publically accused the Prime Minister and Archbishop of laundering money and provided details about the companies, business deals and documents involved, the political and media reaction was explosive.

The government did not respond to the reporters' requests for information while reporting the story, a clear sign of institutional arrogance, incompetence and indifference at best, and at worst an effort to cover up high-level corruption. Government representatives responded publically to the charges only after the story was published and in response to a media storm provoked by the Hetq story. While government officials in Armenia attack Hetq journalists with words, the informant says that pressure is never physical. The main obstacle to overcome is that public institutions feel no need to respond to journalists' questions about issues with serious public interest implications. And the political leadership only responds to revelations of corruption and misgovernance when the press coverage is massive and inescapable.

When the allegations were first made by the businessman in a press conference, Armenian media gave heavy coverage to the accusations, without verifying the claims, and quickly forgot the story. The story would have disappeared had not Hetq decided to examine the evidence and see whether there was substance behind the charges.

This story is a case of investigative journalists taking a second, deeper look at a publically known story and investing the time and resources to sort it out and establish the facts. The informant reports that the other news stories were only political in nature, covered because of the scandalous nature of the accusations but with little or no attention paid to whether the allegations were true. The Hetq journalists found that the allegations were substantial if the Prime Minister's signature on the document could be accepted as valid. The prosecutor's office said it was investigating the validity of the signature but had still not announced any results more than a year later.

Looking at the stated impact of the story (the arrest of the Archbishop's godson) it appears that the Hetq story is responsible, although it is still possible that the authorities were independently investigating the claims without anyone knowing. When looking specifically at the impact claimed by OCCRP, in this case the only contribution by OCCRP came from having provided financial help and public records search fees to Hetq. The Armenian prosecutors who ordered the arrest were much more likely to have read the Hetq piece than the English-language piece on occrp.org.

The story became news when a businessman held a press conference to announce that he was cheated in a deal with the archbishop's godson which he thought was sanctioned by the Armenian government.

Region: Balkans

Impact: Moderate

Types of Impact:

(1) Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrest, asset freeze, investigation, loss of government license, firing of a public official, etc.

(7) Republication or citation by other media (domestic or international)

Story: Balkan Share Traders Endangered German Stock Exchange⁶²
by Mahir Sahinovic

Awards: Sahinovic and OCCRP received recognition from the Thomson Reuters Foundation; Sahinovic also received CEI SEEMO award for outstanding merits in investigative journalism in the professional journalists section from the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the South East Europe Media Organization (SEEMO).

CIN published three related stories, available in Bosnian and English:

- Bosnian Owner of a Firm Accused of the Share Fraud⁶³
- Balkan Share Traders Endangered German Stock Exchange⁶⁴
- Allegations against the Samardžija Brothers are Dropped⁶⁵

Bosnian police investigated and broke up a Bosnian criminal organization that perpetrated stock fraud by convincing investors in Western Europe to buy worthless stocks on the German exchange. The Bosnian Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN is the Bosnian-language abbreviation) broke the story and reported three features on the subject over a period of two years. CIN is based in Sarajevo and was founded by an OCCRP founder and is the oldest and most established of OCCRP's largely non-profit investigative reporting media partners. The OCCRP piece was a 2200 word verbatim reprint of the second CIN report. Because of the nationalities of the victims and the location of the fraud, German-language media and other foreign media later picked up the story.

Mahir Sahinovic was a staff CIN reporter with about ten years of journalism experience when he did the story in 2012. A dedicated "believer" in investigative journalism, Sahinovic is personally attracted to organized crime and corruption stories and has done four-five stories with OCCRP. The CIN story became an OCCRP story because OCCRP helped Sahinovic file public business records requests from Germany and Switzerland. Sahinovic says that all foreign press interest followed and resulted from his story.

Sahinovic estimated that he spent 80% of his time on the story for ten weeks: approximately two full-time months or 320 reporter hours. CIN paid his salary. OCCRP's investment was

⁶² Published Friday, 28 September 2012 15:44 <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/investigations/1648-balkan-share-traders-endangered-german-stock-exchange>

⁶³ Published: July 17, 2012, <http://www.cin.ba/en/bosanac-vlasnik-firme-osumnjicene-za-prevare-dionicama/>

⁶⁴ Published: September 5, 2012, <http://www.cin.ba/en/balkanski-trgovci-dionicama-ugrozili-njemacku-berzu/>

⁶⁵ Published: March 24, 2014, <http://www.cin.ba/en/obustavljenja-istraga-protiv-brace-samardzija/>

minimal: only the time and experience of the editor who helped Sahinovic make requests for documents from Germany and Switzerland.

Bosnia has weak public institutions, little public demand for or expectation of transparency, weak rule of law and few independent voices in the media. That being said, CIN did not encounter official opposition to the story; rather, threats and pressure came from the private parties found to be engaging in organized criminal activity.

Practically-speaking, OCCRP provided minimal inputs to the CIN story beyond helping Sahinovic file records requests. OCCRP did, however, put the same piece on its website as an OCCRP story, without changing a word. This raises the question of whether OCCRP has its own style, approach, tone and voice. Or whether OCCRP is a platform or aggregator of investigative reporting stories. OCCRP does not impose its own voice or brand on the stories it puts its name on.

CIN would probably have been able to report more or less the same story without this help from OCCRP and possibly achieve the same impact. In the case of minimal OCCRP inputs or contribution, it is not clear whether impact can be reasonably claimed by OCCRP in addition to the results of the CIN story. In this case, the contribution to impact OCCRP could claim would be from the traffic to its website.

Regarding the Type 1 impact, reaction by law enforcement, it's possible to draw only a possible link, since the Bosnian police had started the investigation before the reporter found out about it and may have continued with or without the CIN article.

The police in Germany, Netherlands and Austria did their own investigations in Bosnia while Dutch police questioned Sahinovic. Would the police from other European countries have done their own investigation were it not for the work of CIN? Also difficult to say, since the Bosnian police had probably made some efforts to share information with foreign police services, even though the Bosnian courts are considered corrupt and incompetent.

Regarding the Type 7 impact, foreign and domestic media coverage, this link appears direct, since no commercial media in Bosnia reported the story. And much, if not all, of the foreign media that covered the story cited CIN (not OCCRP) as the source.

The story was picked up by the Swiss Handelszeitung and fully credited to CIN, and it was cross-referenced in a number of other German-language outlets. The story was also referenced by SCOOP in their profile of Miranda Patrucic (as was the earlier OCCRP 'First Bank, First Family' story).

After the indictments were issued, the CIN story hints that the prosecutor fumbled by dropping the indictments. In private, journalists say the defendants paid bribes to drop the charges but cannot prove this. This is also strong evidence that the impact is not a reflection of the reporting. The reporter was threatened on the phone after the story was released, by a man with a Belgrade accent. The threats did not discourage him from doing a follow-up piece.

The suspects' lawyers called CIN and other Bosnian media and demanded the retraction of the stories because the court had ruled in their favor. The lawyer threatened to sue. CIN editors said that the work was based on their own reporting – not the prosecutors' work. CIN was never sued.

Another call center fraud insider got in touch with CIN, providing evidence that the fraud still continues. CIN may do a follow-up story.

Another anonymous tipster gave the reporter good information: he predicted that the suspects would be released. The informant said that they had paid 50,000 KM each. They were later released from custody. And the source said that the same amount of money would be paid to the prosecutor to make a weak indictment. The charges were later dropped. The journalist checked the unpublished prosecutor's indictment and found that specific police information was not used and that the prosecutor's case was by no means the strongest one possible.

Sahinovic pursued the story based on the sense that the police were withholding information, i.e. simple curiosity or reporter's instinct, not because of suspicion about any specific abuse of power. The police announced the arrest of some 100 suspects across Bosnia by saying only that the action was related to "an investigation of a foreign company" and nothing more. Sahinovic suspected more was yet to come, since the police generally brag about large scale arrests. Through unofficial channels, he found that the company was German and he was able to find documents and sources abroad. He was not driven by expectations of future foreign media interest – he simply wanted to understand how the criminal enterprise worked, a healthy journalistic obsessiveness. He was surprised that no other reporters knew about the criminal enterprise.

Sahinovic was assigned the story in part because he spoke the best German of the CIN reporters, and says he was the most enthusiastic in the newsroom. Indeed, the "news value" of the story to CIN's audience is minor since the abuse harmed people in Western Europe and not Bosnians. The question of the news value to OCCRP's audience is complicated by the fact that occrp.org has no clearly defined audience to which to appeal, with stories ranging from local language pieces designed to create public demand for democratic governance, to transnational cases that may be of interest to foreign journalists or international donor agencies.

Region: Caucasus

Impact: No impact

Story: Garbage Land Deal Stinks⁶⁶
by Nino Bakradze

The piece is an unusual example of a domestic news story which was published first in English on occrp.org and then edited and translated into Georgian and published two weeks later on a local news site <http://www.netgazeti.ge/>

The piece is the first story reporter Bakradze ever worked on. She started the investigation while a student, where the OCCRP editor/coordinator was her instructor. She spent another year working on it after graduation. She is now the only full-time staff OCCRP reporter in Georgia and its publication is most likely a product of her relationship with the organization, perhaps a result of the effort to help her personal professional development.

While Bakradze's investment was enormous, OCCRP's investment was far smaller. Bakradze spent several years on the piece, much of it waiting to hear back from public institutions, which altogether makes up several months of fulltime effort: more than 400 reporter hours total. She began the piece as a student, so much of her work was not remunerated by OCCRP. Her later work on the piece was partly supported through her OCCRP salary, and OCCRP editors provided editing support and encouragement.

Georgian public institutions routinely refuse to accept responsibility for their actions. This means that journalists' attempts to find answers to questions of significant public interest commonly go ignored. This is both a cause and an effect of the low expectations the citizenry has from their state institutions. In a downward spiral of low expectations, politicians feel that they can evade responsibility and often get away with it.

This lack of accountability in Georgia is not news. In this case, the story was motivated by the journalist trying to shake up the status quo and force the municipality of Tbilisi to take responsibility for their actions: the poorly managed and apparently illegal seizure of private land and construction of a city garbage dump close to an inhabited village. This admirable and all too rare attempt at making public institutions accountable might be viewed by most Georgians as slightly quixotic.

Despite years of focused and determined efforts, the journalist was unable to find exactly whose decisions were responsible. However, she was able to reveal, in details, the runaround she encountered and how the responsible institutions directed her enquiries toward others. The lack of satisfactory answers she received is perhaps the most telling explanation of why the story had no impact. Georgian institutions are so weak that it is also highly possible that even if

⁶⁶ Published on OCCRP March 14, 2014, <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/investigations/2372-garbage-land-deal-stinks>

the responsible decision makers had been determined, there may still have been no reaction, or, “impact”.

According to Bakradze, there was heavy local press converge of the general garbage dump question for years as a major Tbilisi political issue. The stories mainly focused on the exchange of accusations, protests by residents near the dump and attempts by city officials to blame their political opponents for the mess. According to Bakradze, the OCCRP piece was the only one to attempt to clarify the murky mechanics of municipal decision-making, political responsibility and officials’ machinations to evade responsibility. Neither commercial nor public media in Georgia have the interest or time to pursue such labor-intensive and unglamorous reports.

This story was a case of the reporter taking a big news story, covered and followed for years by mainstream media mainly as a political conflict, and trying to correct the absence of serious public interest reporting on the subject. She wanted to find out which officials or institutions were responsible for pushing through the dump project in a socially irresponsible and possibly illegal way. As is often the case in investigative reporting, important stories can be reported by strong reporters, for months, absorbing huge resources, without leading to satisfying conclusions. The main achievement of the piece was cataloging and illustrating the details of how various public institutions assigned blame to others, an effective portrayal of systemic dysfunction.

Region: Balkans

Impact: No impact

Story: Nobody's Policing the Security Guards⁶⁷
by Stevan Dojcinovic

One of the first of OCCRP's cross-border projects, this story was first published as a print article in the Serbian magazine Vreme and it appeared shortly after in English on the OCCRP website in 2009. The piece represented about six months of investigative work by two journalists, based on an investigation of 300 Serbian companies – with a focus on 20. The project included investigations about private security companies in five other countries.⁶⁸

The team of CINS (Serbia) reporters was led by Stevan Dojcinovic, the talented, then 24 year-old editor/coordinator/reporter for OCCRP in Serbia. Because of the work involved in investigating 300 companies he needed as many hands as possible to do the reportorial heavy lifting and get the investigation off the ground. This included another fulltime journalist and two interns.

Dojcinovic estimates that he spent around 80% of his time on the project for 6 months – along with a full-time journalist and two interns. He is the only staff OCCRP reporter in Serbia, but the other journalist was paid for his work on the piece as a freelancer, as were reporters in other OCCRP countries who wrote pieces.

The Serbian media environment in 2009 was lighter and more open than it is now. As the biggest advertiser in Serbia, the government has always exercised influence over the advertising firms on whom Serbian media depend for survival. Oligarch control over the media was also lighter at the time than it is now.

While the lack of state regulation was the most important part of the story, the reporting itself focused on the private security companies and their activities. The reporting depended on their voluntary cooperation. Some were open to talking, others were not. While organized crime groups have long operated through these legal security firms, the journalists felt no pressure. And no government cooperation was needed to report the story.

According to a key informant interviewed, Serbian media had often reported on assaults and murders committed by private security guards and other episodic and generally violent news events. Little or no media attention was paid to the patterns of these episodes or the possible legislative weaknesses which may have been responsible for their persistence. The key informant says that some new unreported cases were also revealed in the process of trying to speak with 300 security companies.

⁶⁷ Published in 2009. <https://reportingproject.net/security/index.php/serbia/serbia-nobodys-policing-the-security-guards>

⁶⁸ <https://reportingproject.net/security/>

At the same time, the key informant reports that a security law regulating these companies was introduced several years later and passed by the Serbian parliament. While impossible to confirm whether and how the investigation in particular influenced the legislation, it does reveal the limits of OCCRP's impact reporting mechanisms – since the new legislation, several years later, went unreported.

The Serbian media reported many sporadic stories about private security guards involved with violence such as seriously beating patrons in night clubs. In a sensational tabloid-like way, many media reported on the security guards' connections to mafia bosses as if the criminals were celebrities. The key informant says that none of the stories reported on the lack of legislation or regulation as a problem. Dojcinovic saw the big picture that no one was policing the security guards, and found it worthy of a regional investigation. It turned out that Serbia was the only country in the region without legislation regulating private security companies, treating them in law as any other private company.

Region: Western Eurasia

Impact: Moderate

Type of Impact:

(7) Republication or citation by other media (domestic or international)

Story: Ukraine's TVi channel keeps on changing hands⁶⁹
by Denys Bigus

As reported by OCCRP:

The full version of the TVi story that OCCRP published in September 2013 (*Ukraine's TVi Channel Keeps on Changing Hands*) was republished by *Ukrainska Pravda*, the country's main independent news website, and it also ran on *Telekritika*, Ukraine's top media news and watchdog outlet.

OCCRP reported that one of the proxies among the owners of the Ukraine station TVi it exposed in the story *Ukraine's TVi Channel Keeps on Changing Hands* is a suspect in the brutal beating of a journalist which has resulted in a wave of media attention.

Before the Maidan protests, TVi was the only Ukrainian television channel to produce news stories critical of the government of former President Viktor Yanukovich. Then in February, 2013 it was seized in a hostile takeover by a pro-Yanukovich oligarch. All 31 journalists quit in protest of what they saw as a blatantly political and illegal takeover.

Investigative journalist Denys Bigus was one of those who quit and wrote three stories about the takeover for OCCRP. The chosen case study is the second and journalistically most significant of the three. His first piece aired on TVi the last week before the journalists left under the old ownership. He then rewrote the story for OCCRP and its print partner the Kiev Post.⁷⁰

Unemployed, Bigus was able to spend significantly more time on the second piece, commissioned by OCCRP, in which he analyzed in detail the complex structure of the 100 or so companies involved in the group which purchased the channel. OCCRP collaborators are usually unable to report stand-alone pieces for OCCRP because of the needs of their fulltime media employers. Most OCCRP stories are edited and fact-checked versions of stories which have already appeared in local languages in domestic media. The third piece appeared on OCCRP about a year ago.

⁶⁹ Published September 20, 2013, <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/investigations/2150-ukraines-tvi-channel-keeps-on-changing-hands>

⁷⁰ <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/investigations/1960-owners-battle-for-tv-station>

Bigus is a well-known and well-respected investigative journalist with more than ten years of experience on television and news agencies. He worked with other OCCRP collaborators on the first and third versions of the story.

Bigus spent about five weeks, more or less full-time, reporting and writing, the second piece. By comparison, the time spent reworking the first TV piece for print was about eight work days. OCCRP helped prepare and pay for the heavy foreign records requests, needed to establish the chain of international companies involved. OCCRP editors also fact-checked and edited the piece for publication on occrp.org and the Kiev Post.

The takeover was seen by TVi and its supporters as the final step in Yanukovich establishing total media control. While the channel itself broadcast a piece about the takeover in the last week before the journalists quit and new owners took control, the OCCRP piece did not depend on the government to report the piece. Rather, the lack of transparency was itself the subject of the story which aimed to show how the new owners were able to take control of the TV channel against the wishes of the previous owner. Civil society informants saw the takeover as illustrating the weakness of rule of law in Ukraine.

Bigus' piece was the first significant piece on the subject, as an internet search of the Ukrainian media yielded no stories about the details of the takeover dating before September. And as a journalist who worked at the TV, he was among the most knowledgeable and motivated of Ukrainian journalists to dig into the details. The article was reprinted in *Ukrainska Pravda* and *Telekritika*, a leading independent non-profit media and media analysis NGO.

OCCRP reported that, "the owner of one of the proxies involved in the takeover was a suspect in the brutal beating of an activist, which increased media attention around the group which took over TVi." OCCRP claims that the beating increased media attention around the group which is demonstrable since media covered the beating. OCCRP does not claim its report about TVi was responsible for the beating, which could be considered an unintended negative impact. And the claim that the story was in *Ukrainska Pravda* and *Telekritika* is easily verifiable. The reporter was reporting on the takeover of the TV channel where he worked. So his perspective was personal as a participant in the events which he later investigated.

Region: Western Eurasia

Impact: High

Types of Impact:

(1) Concrete action by law enforcement / state institutions: arrest, asset freeze, investigation, loss of government license, firing of a public official, etc.

(3) Business impact: resignation at a company, loss of business, cancelling of a contract, etc.

(7) Republication or citation by other media (domestic or international)

Story: Yanukovychleaks Project⁷¹

by a team from Ukraine

“Yanukovychleaks” was a special project consisting of 15 stories on its own OCCRP-produced [website](#) in English, Russian and Ukrainian, the result of extraordinary circumstances when then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled the country, and 200 folders of his documents were thrown into the river on his residence in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the evidence of his illicit financial affairs. A team of investigative journalists, assisted by dozens of volunteers, found, dried and scanned the documents, and posted them all online to share the findings with a global public. A specially formed group of journalists then reported 15 separate investigations based on the contents of these documents.

OCCRP took the lead on the project to rescue, recover and publish the documents as the situation developed. The project was also supported by Internews, the Danish [SCOOP](#) and the DC-based [International Center for Journalists](#).

As one of the biggest investigative stories in Ukraine in a generation, the freshly abandoned Presidential residence at Mezhyhirya immediately attracted the top Ukrainian journalists, investigative and otherwise, seeking stories about the recently fallen regime. OCCRP acted quickly and established itself in a leadership role, providing both money to support the work of the Yanukovychleaks team publishing the documents online and editorial guidance for the stories it produced. Sensing the opportunity to show the public how the country had been governed, as well as shape a top international news story while generating international exposure, OCCRP moved extraordinarily quickly to establish the new website. The site began posting the newly rescued documents two days after the journalists’ arrival and received two million visitors in the first few days. The 15 investigative stories produced were posted on the project’s website, and work continues on two more stories.

The level of OCCRP intervention was both enormous and extraordinary, including not only editing manpower and fees for journalists to report stories, but also cash for electronic equipment such as scanners and driers, web design and other services involved in preserving and publicizing the documents and producing the resulting investigations. Without OCCRP taking a leadership role, the journalism produced at the residence might well have been fragmented and disorganized. The soggy paper documents might also have disintegrated had the

⁷¹ <http://yanukovychleaks.org/en/>

rescue come later. The fast pace at which the website came online was also key to keeping up the momentum of the news value of the story internationally. Without OCCRP, another funder most likely would have appeared, but with uncertain results.

The project was produced at a highly opportune moment: immediately after President Yanukovich had fled the country on February 22, 2014, following the deaths of 100 protestors in the Maidan, and before the new power had been consolidated. Until February 22, independent media in Ukraine existed almost entirely on funding from foreign donors. All commercial television channels were owned by oligarchs who supported the President. State institutions were largely untransparent and non-responsive to requests for information from media and civil society NGOs. The project did not require any participation from state institutions and therefore did not have to overcome any political or administrative obstacles.

The corruption of the Yanukovich regime stayed at the top of international news for several weeks in February 2014, thanks to both the revelations from the Yanukovichleaks documents and larger political events, namely the major rupture in Ukraine-Russia relations. On the whole, the project's greatest impact was to show the corruption of the Yanukovich regime with facts and documents. Avoiding politically-motivated speculation, the project was able to illustrate and catalog the government's corrupt financial dealings beyond a reasonable doubt. The project itself had a compelling narrative of its own: the team of young and earnest investigative reporters, sleeping and working around the clock for ten days in Yanukovich's former residence to rescue the documents. The team was later invited to journalistic gatherings around the world, further building the brand name and prestige of OCCRP.

One of the impacts of the project, as stated by OCCRP, was that it was "picked up by other media." The events were the top international news story for several weeks heavily covered in both Ukrainian and international media. And the findings of Yanukovichleaks certainly played a significant role, one important story of many in a quickly developing major international news story. This key role of the project is impossible to dispute.

But the claim by OCCRP that reactions by Ukrainian and international institutions were an "impact" of the project are far more problematic.

As reported by OCCRP:

Interpol Warrant for former Ukraine officials - Viktor Yanukovich, together with two of his government members have been named by Interpol⁷² – the financial crimes revealed by the Yanukovichleaks effort of OCCRP and its Ukrainian partners are specifically mentioned by the Interpol warrant.^{73,74}

⁷² <http://www.interpol.int/notice/search/wanted/2014-13031>

⁷³ <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/daily/3564-yanukovich-placed-on-interpol-s-most-wanted-list>

⁷⁴ <https://occrp.org/occrp/en/daily/3593-ukraine-warrants-issued-for-two-former-top-officials>

OCCRP reported that the UK's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) opened a major money laundering investigation after the Yanukovychleaks documents. They froze \$23 million of assets in Ukraine in connection with the case and an EU-wide asset freeze against 22 individuals suspected of misappropriating Ukrainian state assets.

The Interpol warrant for Yanukovych's arrest may well have been requested based on the revelations of the Yanukovychleaks documents but no evidence was provided showing that the request was not based on other sources. The same lack of linkage exists between the project and OCCRP claims that the asset freeze by the UK Special Crimes Office and Ukrainian officials' freeze on the assets of Yanukovych allies were based on the documents found at Mezhihirya.

The project was the product of a journalism organization reacting to extraordinary circumstances and a huge international news story. Importantly for OCCRP's unusual hybrid structure and mission, the actions it took were not those of a development organization. Yanukovychleaks is arguably the most successful endeavor undertaken by OCCRP in terms of both the significance of the information revealed and the size of the public reached.

Annex VIII: Impact Categorization

Summarized from OCCRP Semi-Annual Reports

Story	Summary of Impact	Region (1 of 3)	Categories (1 of 8)
Offshore Project	One agent profiled in piece banned from doing business in Anguilla; arrest of Romanian registry agent; closure of offshore New Zealand registry agent and deregistration of thousands of their companies; licenses revoked; loss of business for involved parties; hundreds of companies shut down by New Zealand gov; core group of proxy owners arrested; court proceedings begun, with uncertain results.	Western Eurasia	1, 3
Big Tobacco	OLAF sent investigators to review allegations with Japan Tobacco International; JTI cited OCCRP publically in media statement; report may have shaped timing of Japan gov divestment in JTI; interviewee said report revealed borders are unprotected.	Balkans	1,2,3
Zoran Copic (5 stories)	Copic arrested and brought back from BiH to Serbia; gov later opened investigation; later sentenced to 5 years.	Balkans	1
Drug dealer	Gov took away right for security officers of company to carry weapons.	Balkans	1
Energoinvest	Legal changes banned vulture capitalists from using court systems of Jersey and Isle of Man to collect judgments; pressure exerted by news stories and civil society groups; the vulture capitalists moved out of UK into rural Australian courts.	Balkans	1,2,3

Proxy Platform (16 stories)	Companies shut down; companies stricken from EU corporate "White List."	Western Eurasia	1,3
The Hunt for Egypt's Money: Mubarak's Man Moves Money	Salem sentenced to 15 years in prison; Evsen on Interpol's most wanted list for fraud; Evsen arrested and extradition expected.	Balkans / Caucasus	1
First Bank – First Family (10 stories)	EU backed off stance that high-level corruption in Montenegro was a thing of the past; Montenegro must now pass organized crime and corruption review by Europol; US Treasury investigating Djukanovic.	Balkans	1, 8
Azerbaijan's President Awarded Family Stake in Gold Fields	Report exposed problems with press freedom in Azerbaijan; OCCRP cited in international media; raised public awareness; mobilized human rights activists.	Caucasus	2, 7
President's Family Benefits from Eurovision Hall	Azeri gov passed laws to protect ruling family; gov restricted public access to business information.	Caucasus	6
Mystery Businessman Linked to Saric Gang Leadership	Tabloid in Serbia asked OCCRP for training.	Balkans	2
People of Interest profile on Naser Kelmendi	US gov listed Kelmendi as foreign drug lord; will try to seize his assets.	Balkans	1
Taylor Network Back in Business	Change in ownership of Moldova Publika TV.	Western Eurasia	3
Balkan Share Traders Endangered German Stock Exchange	Investigations opened in BiH and Germany.	Balkans	1
Teliasonera	Swiss authorities opened criminal investigation; two execs as suspects; Sweden, Switzerland bank accounts frozen; director resigned; CEO to leave; later more executives forced to leave; raid on property in France.	Western Eurasia	1, 3

Following the Magnitsky Money	Bank accounts frozen; company accounts in NZ frozen; two investigations started in Latvia; prosecutions in 5 countries and in the EU; private lawsuits filed to seize assets; Russia convicts Magnitsky post-humously; an official on Magnitsky list indicted for embezzlement; Magnitsky case debated in PACE due to a memo which included reference to OCCRP.	Western Eurasia	1, 3, 6, 8
Azerbaijan's Czech Enclave	Azeri MP sold his property; thanked OCCRP for reminding him of law.	Caucasus	3, 5
Advisor to Serbian Prime Minister Worked for Montenegrin Criminal	Anti-corruption organization asked for an investigation.	Balkans	1
Businessman Rodic Linked to Saric's Lawyer and Radulovic	Indictment; withdrawal of gambling permit; seizure of property; official description as gang head, Rodic arrested.	Balkans	1
A Businessman on the Run	Indictment; withdrawal of gambling permit; seizure of property; official description as gang head, Rodic arrested.	Balkans	1
Executive Alleges Bribery at Ericsson	USSEC started investigation	Cross-border	1
The Murderer's Trail	Member of Moldovan assassination group arrested after being filmed for documentary on the same subject.	Western Eurasia	1
Serbian PM Was Warned of Toncev's Mafia Ties	Gov'crackdown on organized crime; investigations opened; picked up by local and international media.	Balkans	1
Leak Shows Telecom Negotiated Bribes with Dictator's Daughter	Police raided Karimova property; four senior managers fired.	Western Eurasia	1,3
Businessman Exports Controversial Show	General forced to resign.	Western Eurasia	1

Ukraine's TV Channel Keeps on Changing Hands	Wave of media attention.	Western Eurasia	7
Customs Cash Cow	Revelations of abuse mobilize protestors in Ukraine.	Western Eurasia	2
Azerbaijan: Insider Deals Thrive in Ministry	Mammadov reportedly in serious financial trouble.	Caucasus	3
Georgia: Villagers Say Politicians Damaged Lake	Fishing company's problems solved; Revenue service removed sequestration of company's assets; debt repayment extended to 3 years; company functioned normally; hundreds of jobs created.	Caucasus	1, 3
Yanukovichleaks	UK SCO opened major investigation; officials' assets frozen.	Western Eurasia	1,3
Armenia: Church and State Deny Money Laundering	Suspect arrested.	Caucasus	1
Serbia: Crime Figure Linked to Trade Group	Major investigation promised.	Balkans	5
Unholy Alliance	Investigation announced; congratulations for OCCRP from EU and US officials; NATO rejected Montenegro membership bid.	Balkans	1,5,8

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