
**The Department of Journalism
New York University**

**Center for Investigative Journalism
Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Grant No. 168-G-00-04-00102-00

FINAL PROGRAM REPORT

**Submitted to
The United States Agency for International Development**

October 10, 2007

Department of Journalism
New York University
Cooper Square, 6th FL
New York, NY 10003
Tel: +1 212-998-7977
Fax: +1 212-995-4148
E-mail: hawley.johnson@nyu.edu



7 East 8th St, Suite 187
New York, NY 10003

October 11, 2007

Mitchell Stevens
New York University Department of Journalism
285 Mercer St. 9th Floor
New York, NY 10003

Subject: Quarterly Report for Grant No. 168-G-00-04-00102-00, "Center for Investigative Journalism"

Dear Dr. Stevens:

Enclosed please find the final report for the joint project for the Center for Investigative Reporting. This report is the final contractual obligation and satisfies all final terms of the subcontract between the Journalism Development Group and New York University.

We are pleased to have worked with New York University and believe we have together accomplished an historic task. When we embarked on this innovative program, we understood that, unlike many development projects, there was a high probability of failure. Some of the questions we asked were:

- Would local journalists agree to work with us?
- Would journalists accept working under a very different system?
- Could we do real investigative reporting in BiH given the difficult environment of BiH?
- Could we survive the problems of doing investigative reporting in a highly charged political environment using government funding?
- Would local media accept us and run our stories?
- Would readers read our stories and care?
- Could we properly protect our journalists from lawsuits and physical danger?
- Could we make the project sustainable given that we did not have the full funding level we felt was necessary?

Now, more than three years after we posed these questions, we believe the answer to all of them is an overwhelmingly yes. CIN is an internationally respected, award-winning news organization with growing commercial revenues. It continues to do important work that is improving the society of BiH.

We believe this program represents a significant achievement.

Sincerely,

Drew Sullivan
Advising Editor
The Journalism Development Group LLC

Marsala Tita 31/III
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia-Herzegovina

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Initial Goals	4
Management Plan.....	6
Staffing.....	6
Cooperation.....	7
Distribution	7
Other Products	7
Public Outreach.....	8
Fundraising	8
Security Issues	8
Legal Issues.....	8
Objectives and Results	9
Other issues	10
Standards.....	10
Reader Response.....	10
Website Development and Access.....	10
Assessment.....	11
Appendix A – News Organizations Publishing CIN Stories	12
Appendix B ARD Assessment Response	15

Abstract

CIN has achieved or exceeded almost all of the goals outlined in our project proposal.

CIN has reached the people of BiH. During the past three years, CIN has published 135 investigative stories and 38 news items in 41 print and broadcast news organizations. CIN stories have appeared in print form 350 times. Our work has been copied, referred to or cited hundreds of more times; it has appeared hundreds of times on more than 50 internet sites. CIN stories are now regularly published in *Oslobodjenje*, *Blic*, *Vecernji List*, *Start Magazin*, *Novi Reporter* and many other leading publications. Our stories are regularly featured in the top-visited web portals in BiH. CIN completed and aired two investigative documentaries at two state television channels. It publishes a popular web site that draws more than 6,000 unique readers per month to its projects, almost 90 percent of whom are Bosnian residents. It has led to clear and significant change, such as the replacement of ministers and judges, improvements in laws and procedures. It has prompted government action where there had been no action, and educated the people of BiH on how their government works.

International donors have recognized CIN as an important program for informing the public about corruption and accountability. It has received grants from The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Swedish Development Agency (SDA), SCOOP and the Open Society Institute (OSI) to continue its work for three more years.

CIN has also started earning money from work for international organizations. It has agreements for joint efforts with regional and international media in both television and print. It has completed paid assignments for organizations such as *New York Newsday*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the Global Integrity Project.

An international editor continues to work at CIN part-time, but the majority of work is completed by the trained staff of CIN, who embodies the highest international standards. Their achievements have been recognized in awards by the Online Journalism Association and the Global Network of Journalists.

The work has not been easy. Companies being investigated have threatened lawsuits and five firms did sue. All lawsuits to date have been dropped. CIN staffers have received threats of physical violence as well. But no reporter during the past three years has been hurt, thanks in part to CIN's stringent safety procedures.

CIN also contended with unfair criticism from *Dani* and *Slobodne Bosna* magazines and from a USAID assessment team. The criticism reflected perceptual differences rooted in outmoded views of the role of journalism in Bosnian society – a view CIN refutes. We believe we have substantially disproved these criticisms. Clearly CIN's approach has been recognized as great Bosnian journalism by international peers.

Introduction

The task that New York University and the Journalism Development Group undertook was difficult in many ways. Building a sustainable organization is difficult for development programs even under ideal conditions. To do this in the moribund economy of Bosnia was even more daunting. To do this in the divisive world of Bosnian media and politics was worse.

As an additional obstacle, some Bosnian media editors and owners were not supportive of CIN's goals, seeing it as an international organization and not local media. They made sure CIN paid the price. Meanwhile, CIN ignored local media reaction and focused on its most fundamental goal – writing for the people and not the political elite. We believe the people have noticed.

I have recently discovered that the Center for Investigative Reporting is behind the article on Branković. It is amazing how much I liked it. They accuse but with arguments. Not like Slobodna Bosna who will write anything and does not care if it is true or not. I was personally a witness to dozens and dozens of articles that were done without even one percent of truth, and were used as a tool to present accusations. Now we have the Center for investigative reporting and it discovered an affair involving the government and high level officials in a good way. –
Quote from Bosnian Blog

Initial Goals

Our initial proposal submitted Oct. 3, 2003 outlined the following critical goals.

Goal 1: Produce high quality investigative reports that encourage changes in government and society

Result: CIN produced a total of 135 investigative stories that had a noticeable effect on government, business and the public. While a direct causal relationship is impossible to prove, CIN work is linked with the following:

- Firings: CIN stories have led to the replacement of two judges -- one local and one international -- on the Court of BiH. One judge was replaced after CIN broke a story that outlined charges of sexual harassment against him. The international judge resigned under pressure after CIN explored his background and qualifications and demonstrated that the court and the Office of the High Representative had failed to check any of this.
- Firings: The Minister of Health resigned one month after a series that was critical of the health care system.
- Firings: The Registrar of the Court resigned and failed to fulfill his mandate a few months after CIN ran a story that pointed out problems with the court.
- Charges: CIN looked at the case of a high ranking law enforcement officer in SIPA. According to witnesses, the inspector had been responsible for the death of a young girl and the disablement of three more people in a car accident with his official car. He allegedly fled the scene. The statute of limitation was expiring and prosecutors had not filed charges despite witness statements and damage to his car. Within weeks of a

CIN story, prosecutors changed their minds about there being insufficient evidence to file charges and he is now being tried in court.

- Law/Rule/Regulation changes: After CIN published a story on the background of an international judge, the Office of the High Representative changed the manner in which international judges were selected and required that future international appointments be vetted by the local High Judicial Prosecutorial Council.
- Law/Rule/Regulation changes: After a series on the courts, an independent oversight body for the Court of BiH was formed to oversee the court's operations.
- Action: After a series on police corruption, Republika Srpska prosecutors more than doubled their investigations of police corruption and started an education program for police officers.
- Action: After CIN's story on food safety, FBiH and RS food inspectors implemented more aggressive inspections and closed numerous restaurants as unsafe. In addition, an email was circulated listing the restaurants that had failed CIN's independent testing of food quality. A couple of restaurants have since closed due to lack of business.
- Action: After a story on black market labor and employers not paying required pension and health care benefits, a major operation of inspections led to the collection of millions of konvertible marks in taxes and the registration of more than 30,000 black market employees. The registration by employers allowed these 30,000 plus people to have health care and pensions. The ministry credited CIN's story for expediting the action.
- Action: CIN wrote the first story on the private university business and how they were unregulated, of poor quality and popping up everywhere. The government of the RS has cracked down since the series, shutting down a number of the most suspect universities.
- Action: CIN wrote about corruption among a group of politicians in Middle Bosnia Canton who allegedly siphoned 1.2 million KM of taxpayer money through abuse of office. The cases had never been prosecuted when CIN first looked at the issue. While prosecutions still have not occurred, four of the nine politicians were defeated in subsequent elections. The accused attributed their losses to CIN coverage of the issue.
- Change in Ownership: After CIN detailed how the Elektrobosna ferrosilicium plant was falsely privatized and management was engaged in fraudulent activity, the courts finally forced the plant into bankruptcy and auctioned off its assets. The former operators did not win the tender for the firm, but rather a German citizen of Bosnian descent who is now trying to get the plant working again.
- Public Education: CIN has initiated robust public debate on privatization, domestic violence, food safety, the court system and other issues that were not regularly covered as public issues. CIN reporters have regularly appeared on local television and radio talk shows, raising awareness of these issues. Numerous news organizations have borrowed, cited or used CIN's work to increase the public's understanding of what has happened.

Goal 2: To produce a generation of highly trained and skilled reporters and editors

Result: So far, more than 20 journalists have worked for CIN and have been trained by both the local staff and our international advisors. As expected, a key group of four journalists has stayed with CIN since the beginning. They form CIN's current leadership. CIN reporters and editors are among the most skilled journalists in BiH. Their names are not known, but their work has been recognized by international awards.

The reporters regularly produce work that exceeds local standards. They are capable of training other local staff to meet their standards. Their work is improving without outside intervention.

When the program started, JDG warned USAID that international editors were needed for three years and then as advisors for three additional years. USAID decided that only 18 months of international support were needed followed by six months of advising. We believed then and believe now that to train a group of people in professional standards so radically different in scope and philosophy as Bosnian journalism is from American journalism requires time. To train a reporter to be a manager and leader of an investigative center takes more time than USAID allowed. JDG stretched finances and invested its own resources in order to keep internationals around for a longer period. Both JDG and the CIN reporters believe that this was necessary for the success of CIN.

JDG understands and supports USAID's desire to create a truly local organization. But an organization without fully trained leaders, incapable of maintaining the highest standards and merely copying the existing Bosnian media is not worth creating or maintaining. Leaders also must be able to sustain the organization financially and push for continual improvement. CIN is close to achieving this, and with some additional months of advising, it will.

Goal 3: To establish a permanently funded organization dedicated to building a Fourth Estate.

Result: CIN has three additional years of funding and a wider base of donor support than ever. It has built credibility with the local media and is accepted as an important news organization in BiH. News organizations fight for exclusivity for CIN projects. It has started earning commercial revenues, increased its presence with regional and European media and started an aggressive regional program. It has been recognized as among the top international investigative news organizations by its peers through awards and other recognition. These are all the ingredients needed to earn regional and international commercial revenues in the news business.

Management Plan

JDG generally followed the management plan as designed, making minor changes in order to improve effectiveness.

Staffing

CIN eliminated the "intern" position after one year, largely because of the stigma of that title for reporters asked to shoulder the same duties and responsibilities as their colleagues. CIN promoted the interns who had performed well as journalists. Throughout the three years of the grant, CIN maintained a mix of beginning and experienced journalists at roughly an even split. The original plan envisioned just two positions – intern and fellow. CIN local staff created a graduated system of titles simply called Journalist I, II and III. The differentiation reflected different levels of experience and different pay grades. This allowed us to reduce the average pay to save costs in anticipation of long-term sustainability.

The original plan called for keeping a core group and slowly cycling out reporters so that they could return to the news industry. Early on, USAID recommended CIN not do this in order to maintain standards, and because the training was proving harder than anticipated. JDG agreed, although for all practical purposes CIN has had enough regular turnover to meet the original intent.

A local management team was put in place in August of 2006. Unfortunately, CIN lost a talented editor in December, when she became pregnant and shifted to a public relations career to have more time with her family. CIN is aggressively working on strengthening the management team and seeking to fill the open position.

CIN is at full staff and four recent hires included three experienced journalists. The combined staff may offer the proper mix from which to complete the management team.

Cooperation

The original plan envisioned cooperative ventures with local media. CIN did cooperate on a large number of stories over the year. For example, CIN provided documents and assistance for a story investigating the Slavosky Brod oil refinery. CIN regularly talked with local journalists and editors to update stories. CIN has been unable to date to do a complete project with local reporters largely because local daily media outlets cannot provide reporters on a regular enough basis to make this feasible.

On the regional level, however, CIN has worked extensively with international media outlets. CIN's partners included investigative centers in Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia and journalists in Russia, Moldova, Albania, Montenegro and the Ukraine. CIN completed a three-month project on energy traders and has other projects in the works. CIN also worked with international media, on occasion providing assistance and paid services.

CIN cooperated with local television as envisioned, creating documentaries for Federal Television (FTV) and Radio Television Republika Srpska (RTRS).

Distribution

The original plan called for wide distribution of CIN stories in newspapers, magazines and wire services. After the program started, CIN added distribution to increasingly important web portals.

In all, CIN stories appeared in 41 outlets throughout BiH and the region. On a regular basis, CIN now distributes all stories to Oslobodjenje, Vecernji List and Blic, effectively covering the whole country with the most reputable newspapers. This list has tended to change over time as new opportunities presented themselves. Early on, CIN distributed regularly to SAN Dnevni Novine, Nezavisne Novine and Dnevni List. CIN also has distributed through ONASA and FINA. Occasionally, news outlets requested money or required subscriptions for CIN stories to run. In those cases, CIN generally refused.

During these three years, CIN has recognized the increasing potential of web portals. CIN stories now regularly appear on Sarajevo X, Pincom and Bljesak, three of the most popular web sites in the Bosnian internet space according to Alexa.com and other website ranking sites.

Other Products

CIN originally produced a quarterly newsletter and issued three copies in its first year. The newsletter was aimed at keeping the local media abreast of developments at CIN. Management

decided that the audience was too small for the cost and the amount of work it took to generate the newsletter. The website could more efficiently provide such information.

The original proposal saw the possibility of creating other products, such as books, magazines, documentaries and reprint packages that could be sold. This remains a long-term interest of CIN. While CIN has put together reprints, the potential for sale is limited and until CIN has a broader reach it will be impossible to do this cost-effectively.

Public Outreach

CIN has fulfilled its goals of actively seeking a broad public through outreach. CIN reporters have appeared on numerous television and radio shows on every major television channel and network. CIN reporters and editors have spoken at conferences, trained reporters for other news organizations and hosted discussions or roundtables both in BiH and in neighboring countries. While CIN is still not a household name in Bosnia, its work is well known.

Fundraising

A local staff person responsible for fundraiser has succeeded in meeting all funding goals. An additional three years of almost full funding has been secured from donors including the Open Society Institute and the Swedish and UK governments. Interest in the center's work remains high due to its journalistic successes and the deteriorating political situation in BiH. CIN is implementing a plan to earn an increasing share of its income (up to 50 percent) through commercial revenues. So far, it has earned a little less than 50 percent, but projects are in the works that will improve that figure.

Income should start being generated by the regional program, which has so far been successful journalistically. The program funds a series of high-profile regional projects in cooperation with other centers. It is funded through a grant CIN received from the United Nations,

Other fundraising opportunities not envisaged in the original proposal as associated with the regional program will be initiated soon. In all, CIN's current situation is stable and the program appears sustainable for the coming years.

Security Issues

JDG predicted security would be an issue, yet so far CIN has managed to avoid serious problems despite aggressive reporting in sensitive areas. Reporters have become accustomed to threats and over the past three years there have been five cases of what editors considered substantial and credible threats. In all cases actions were taken and no problems resulted.

CIN has a detailed security plan and reporters are trained about security issues. CIN has tweaked these plans over the years, adding new components. However, it is impossible to fully secure the safety of any reporter. CIN has the resources and contacts such that any threat or attack would be addressed aggressively.

Legal Issues

CIN faced three substantial legal threats over the past three years, including a case filed by five restaurants which tested poorly in our food safety series. In all cases, CIN fended off threats and actual suits. All hard-hitting stories are reviewed by lawyers in advance, leaving little basis for complainants to file suit. The one case that was brought was dismissed.

CIN has grown concerned about access to government records. Over the past three years, more and more records have been closed off. Just after the USAID funding ended, CIN acted by suing the entity government of the Federation for access to documents held by the FBiH Railways. Lawsuits of this nature were only possible once CIN established itself as a legitimate and respected news outlet.

Objectives and Results

In its original plan, JDG set a series of objectives that could be achieved through its plan. These are:

- To create an independent newsroom, with international standards and without local political, sectarian or economic pressures, where stories concentrate on answering the questions of Bosnia's 3.5 million readers and viewers.
- To promote democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina by reporting on critical issues that will help the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their leaders make informed decisions
- To report on potential solutions for the problems facing Bosnia-Herzegovina and to provide NGO's, think-tanks and policy research organizations with the well researched background and context they need to create policy
- To do stories that promotes transparency in government and hold government accountable.
- To report on the underreported issues that the Bosnian news media cannot or will not address
- To support a new generation of reporters and editors in investigative reporting to the depth and extent needed to affect lasting change
- To create a permanent organization to serve as a resource for other media organizations on investigative reporting and reporting training.

JDG believes CIN has achieved or is approaching all of these. Some, like promoting transparency, are fights likely to go on for a decade or more. Others, like reporting on issues other media cannot or will not report on are just beginning to happen. CIN's work in exposing the corrupt practices that led to the Prime Minister receiving a free apartment has created significant discussion. The state prosecutor's office has contacted CIN and now other media have begun reporting on his financial dealings. With time and reporting, CIN will be coming out with more of these kinds of stories.

Other issues

Standards

CIN won recognition by two global investigative reporting prizes. We believe this is the only such recognition ever in BiH for investigative reporting.

CIN won the first Global Shining Light Award presented by the Global Network of Investigative Reporters, which includes most of the world's investigative reporting organizations. CIN won for work on energy traders in cooperation with regional reporters and organizations.

CIN is also a finalist for the 2007 Online Journalism Association's Investigative Reporting Award for a small market website. The prestigious award based at the Annenberg School of Journalism at the University of Southern California recognized CIN for its food safety series.

The awards demonstrate that CIN exceeds international standards for investigative reporting, a core goal of this project.

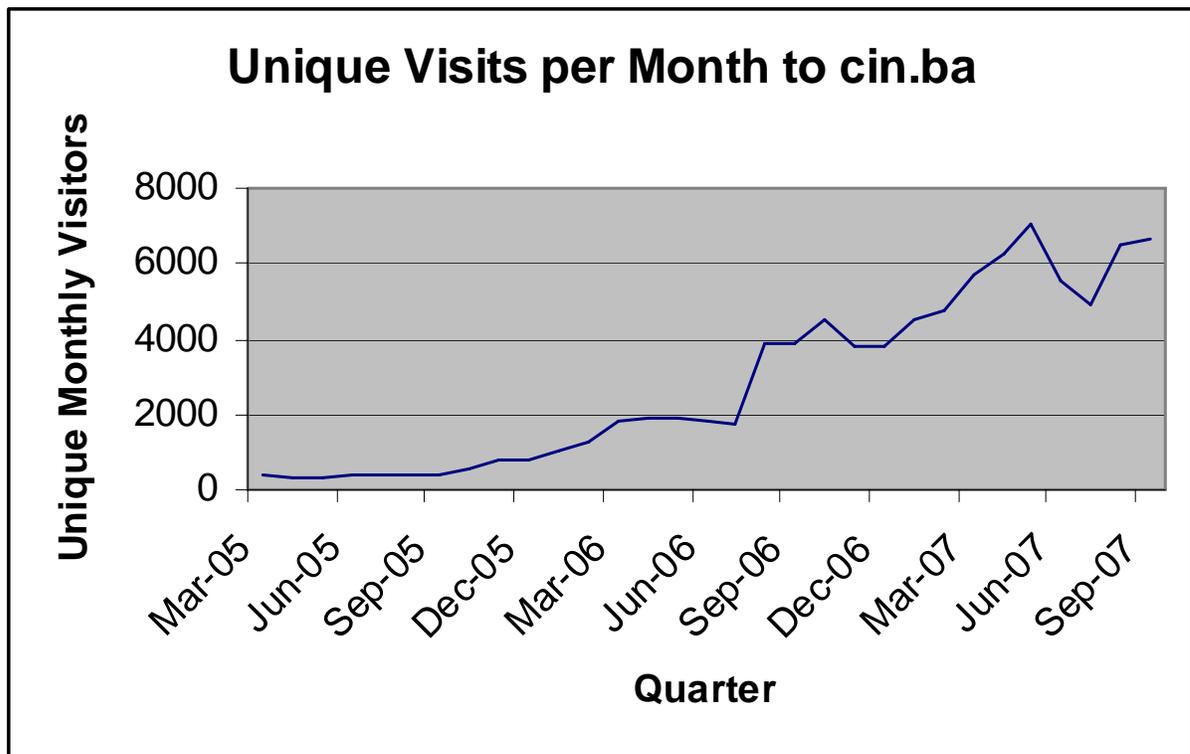
Anecdotally we know that CIN has become a model for local journalists. At least three editors have indicated that they would like their staff to emulate CIN's work. One Sarajevo editor, for example, told his staff during a meeting he wanted them to do "CIN-like stories." These cases indicate that CIN has leveraged its style and standards into local media. These organizations still lack the resources to do what CIN does, but the aim of following CIN's standards is an important first step.

Reader Response

CIN regularly gets feedback from readers who email and call. Often they have ideas for further investigations. This is remarkable, since CIN's name does not always appear prominently in our stories. The feedback demonstrates the public's interest and sense of empowerment – that they believe there is an organization that can help.

Website Development and Access

CIN has an effective website that brings many new readers to CIN. This story outlet is important to CIN because it represents the only guaranteed way in which CIN can publish all its stories. Over the past three years, it was often the case that even our regular clients would decide not to publish certain sensitive stories. The cin.ba website currently reaches about 6,500 different people per month, the majority of whom are residents of BiH. This is the same circulation as a small magazine, meaning CIN will also have some access to the people – an important achievement. A new website will be implemented early next year which should improve traffic.



Assessment

In the spring of 2006, USAID in BiH commissioned an assessment by the contractor ARD. It looked at USAID media programs, including CIN. The final report, titled “Assessment of USAID/Bosnia and Herzegovina Media Interventions,” was issued in July.

Shortly after the report, JDG and NYU issued a response in which we stated that “We feel strongly that the assessment does not significantly contribute to the understanding of media in BiH in general or to our program in particular.” The 22-page response included a point-by-point rebuttal of the findings and is included in Appendix B.

Eighteen months later, the ARD assessment has been demonstrably proven false and inaccurate.

ARD’s work demonstrates one of the most serious problems facing media development programs: the use of assessors who lack the media experience, intellectual rigor or local understanding needed to assess programs. ARD’s contractors failed to understand basic principles of media, media development and local conditions. They relied on advisors with personal agendas and spoke almost exclusively with the same media elite responsible for the mediocre publications CIN was trying to best. They judged CIN using the very people who were least supportive of CIN’s approach.

Most of all, they failed to understand a basic perceptual differences between Bosnian media and international media that dictates the very form of Bosnian media. The Bosnian media elite feel that they are part of the political system and participate by favoring or disfavoring local political groups or issues. Local media see the people as largely irrelevant because they play almost no role in the political process and thus they play no role in the local media. Consequently, too many stories are aimed at politicians, have little context, are not reader friendly, seldom have credibility and are largely irrelevant to the people of BiH.

CIN's goal was to write for the people, to give them the information they needed to participate in a democracy. It was always obvious to JDG that local media leaders would see no purpose in this approach. We were not surprised when they said CIN stories lacked newsworthiness, had background information that everybody new (at least the media elite knew) and were too detailed because these were elements CIN added for the people. We were not surprised the media elite saw better uses for the funds being spent on CIN. That the assessment team echoed these criticisms for many of the same reasons was wrongheaded. These types of assessments in the long run actually hurt the development of participatory democracy by undermining the core work needed to change attitudes.

CIN is the only program in years of media development in BiH that has consistently resulted in local reporters producing news items in a sustained manner that meet and exceed international journalism standards.

Some of the other criticisms in the assessment include:

- The assessment said CIN and JDG management failed to aggressively raise funds. Before the assessment report was even finished, CIN had been notified it would receive a grant from a donor. CIN was able to replace all USAID money well before funds ran out as we repeatedly assured the consultants.
- The assessment repeatedly said CIN had a bad relationship with local media owing to long stories, high salaries and lack of newsworthiness. Yet after three years, forward thinking editors pressed by the need to increase circulation are now seeing the true benefits of CIN. CIN today has regular space in the best newspapers in BiH and the region. It is not surprising that media in Croatia and Serbia, where standards are much higher and business is more competitive, have embraced CIN's work. Clients clamor for exclusive rights to long stories about topics rarely covered anywhere else.
- The assessment said CIN was not Bosnian enough and actually urged that CIN lower its standards (remove background and context) to make stories more appealing to Bosnian news institutions. This amazing comment exemplifies the problematic perspective that permeates the assessment. Instead, CIN's success with readers has led to frequent feedback to media outlets and more demand for our stories.

Appendix A – News Organizations Publishing CIN Stories

The 41 news organizations and 49 news or portal websites that ran CIN stories or photos, wrote about CIN or substantially used CIN's work:

BH Radio 1
BHT1
Bosnia Daily
Danas
Dani
Deutsche Welle
Dnevni avaz
Dnevni list
eFM
EUPM
Euro Blic
FENA
FTV
Jutarnje novine

Monitor
Nezavisne novine
NOVA TV
NTV Hayat
ONASA
Oslobođenje
Poslovni dnevnik
Radio 202
Radio Busovača
Radio FBH
Radio Free Europe
Radio Kalman
Radio Mir Sarajevo
Radio Mir, Međugorje
Radio Zos
Reporter
RTRS
San
Senzor
Slobodna Dalmacija
Slobosna Bosna
SRNA
Start
Strogo pov.
TV Alfa
TV Pink BH
TV Sarajevo
Večernji list
www.24sata.hr
www.24sata.info
www.bhstring.net
www.bhtraders.biz
www.BIHinfo.com
www.biznis.ba
www.biznis.co.ba
www.bljesak.info
www.blogger.hr
www.bosanskibrod.com
www.crimecircle.blog.ba
www.crimecircle.blog.ba
www.dnevnik.hr
www.english.hotnews.ro
www.eni-news.com
www.glas-slavonije.hr
www.gucagora.com
www.hej.hr
www.hic.hr
www.index.hr
www.investors.com
www.kakanjci.com
www.kliker.info
www.kozarac.ba
www.kozarac.com
www.lipovac-brcko.com

www.livno-online.com
www.mladi.info
www.netnovinar.org
www.omk.org.ba
www.otac.ba
www.pincom.info
www.plbih.org
www.pogodak.hr
www.poskok.info
www.prijedorcity.com
www.prijedorstampa.com
www.radio-busovaca.com
www.rtvfbih.ba
www.sarajevo-x.com
www.see.oveworl.net
www.SEEbiz.net
www.srebrenik.net
www.superbosna.com
www.sutjeska.com
www.tomislavcity.com
www.tportal.hr
www.verdi.be
Zamirzine

Appendix B ARD Assessment Response



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

A private university in the public service

August 15, 2006

Michael Henning
Democracy Officer
USAID Bosnia-Herzegovina

Dear Michael,

We have received the report titled “Assessment of USAID/Bosnia and Herzegovina Media Interventions” and we thank you for the opportunity to respond. This response has been prepared in cooperation with our subcontractor Journalism Development Group and therefore reflects the opinions of JDG as well as the center’s staff.

We understand the importance of periodic assessments and we welcome the opportunity to have an independent review of our program to date. In that spirit, NYU staff and our contractors cooperated with the assessment team and provided them detailed information. We also understand the assessment is the opinion of the assessors and not necessarily indicative of all viewpoints. Finally, we also understand that all assessments are inherently limited by issues of time, resources and access.

We have read the document in depth and seriously considered the points raised by the two assessors from the contractor ARD. All of these issues are intimately familiar to us as both NYU and its contractors have been active in BiH in the region since 2000.

In the end, we feel strongly that the assessment does not significantly contribute to the understanding of media in BiH in general or in our program in particular. The issues raised are well known to USAID, NYU and JDG. We feel they have been well documented by our team, planned for and are being addressed. The remaining disagreements with the assessment are matters of priorities.

We felt further that the assessment had other shortcomings. Ultimately, it lacked intellectual rigor and structurally it failed to justify why the recommendations would improve the program. There was a failure to consider the basic conceptual differences between Western media and Balkan media, it reiterated opinions about the media that have long been discredited, it relied almost exclusively on the opinions of a small number of self-proclaimed media leaders and intellectuals and it neglected to seek input from alternative voices like government officials, NGOs or international observers. The text includes a number of opinions that are stated or conclusions drawn without any evidence proffered, sources cited or justification provided.

The assessors also failed to comprehend the need to strike a balance between administrative needs and journalistic goals at the center. For example, the assessors arbitrarily applied a strict and unrealistic standard to the issue of sustainability while ignoring the more difficult issues of creating standards. When the assessment was made, CIN had only been publishing for 18 months. It was unrealistic to expect not only sustainability at the center but acceptance in the notoriously intolerant media industry, public awareness of CIN and success in fundraising. These are standards that neither USAID nor NYU/JDG ever agreed to meet at this stage of the ongoing project.

The shortcomings may reflect the short period of time the assessors had to understand a complex topic or the lack of variety of their sources. They never followed up with NYU or JDG on any of these issues even though they were raised while they were in Sarajevo. In fact, the assessment team even declined an offer to discuss the program with me, the NYU program officer, citing lack of time.

While the assessors credit NYU and JDG with achieving the most important goal of reaching international standards for investigative reporting, they seemed completely unconcerned about how those standards would be maintained under local management – a critical issue going forward. Instead, they concentrated on a perceived lack of acceptance by local media, an issue that we have maintained from the start would naturally resolve itself¹ and a perceived failure to turn over management of the center to Bosnian management fast enough².

The assessment was also complimentary, calling CIN an innovative program, noting it had met the majority of its goals and crediting it with reaching international standards for investigative reporting, something that has never been done in BiH or the region, and which was the prerequisite for the next stage, the handover to local editors. The assessment also recommended further funding contingent on CIN meeting fundraising goals.

We believe it is necessary to do a point by point refutation to correct for the record any misstatements, misinterpretations and disagreements we have with the assessment. Except for a few cases, we will consider only those issues related to CIN and not the other programs assessed. Much of the point-by-point analysis was prepared by JDG.

As a general comment, a number of the points discussed below were never raised with CIN editors or reporters by the assessment team. This is the first time many of these issues have been seen by us and we feel that it would have been more efficient to have been able to address these issues when the assessors were in CIN offices. We may have been able to clear up much of the factual inaccuracies contained within. Furthermore, we offered the assessors ample opportunity to call us during the completion of the report to clarify issues –an offer they failed to take advantage of.

Again, we thank you for this opportunity to respond and are happy to discuss any aspects of our analysis more in depth. The new CIN management team hopes it will have a chance to present its strategies to USAID in the near future and comment on any outstanding concerns, as was recommended by the assessment team. We greatly appreciate USAID's support for this project over the last two years.

Sincerely,



Hawley Johnson
Co-Principle Investigator

¹ In fact, the assessment criticizes CIN for not appearing in Oslobodenje. Oslobodenje is often given respect by local media sometimes beyond its circulation. However, CIN stories appeared this week in a double truck spread. In an editorial meeting, editors praised the CIN articles and requested they be given additional stories.

² CIN local management were named August 10, only six weeks after an the originally proposed date and three weeks ahead of an updated schedule given to USAID in May.

NYU/JDG/CIN Assessment Comments³

Background section

- *In contrast to the advances in the electronic sector, print media may have made the least progress over the past few years.*

This unsourced and unsupported comment ignores important context. In daily news reporting, television appears competent and professional. However, TV stories lack depth and tend to be event driven or have their agenda set by the print media. Television journalism successfully avoids the opinionated, politically motivated attack journalism sometimes found in print media but that is due to RAK and its predecessors that have regulated this type of journalism out of the media. When considering investigative reporting, television has been as equally inept as print media, often broadcasting single source stories based on unsubstantiated hearsay.

- *From nearly all of those interviewed for this assessment, the opinion remains that the overall quality of journalism in BiH is still poor.*

This is unfortunately true. However, we do question whether the assessors read local media based on their attribution of this comment to their sources which were dominated by local media editors. An understanding of the dominant standards in local media was critical to this assessment and to evaluating the input from the sources, especially in the media. The assessment seems to accept uncritically the analysis of a group of people who the assessors conclude produce poor journalism. While the local media editors are smart, intelligent people, they have a distinct frame of reference for media, standards and investigative reporting. From the comments in this assessment, that frame of reference was not adequately accounted for.

- *The low quality of journalism is also a direct result of a corresponding lack of quality university-level journalism programs. – Page vii*

This unsupported and unsourced comment conveniently shifts all blame to universities and not to the media outlets themselves. University level media education plays a small role in educating journalists who generally learn 90 percent of their trade on the job even in the US. The blame for low standards in local media rests squarely with the gatekeepers of standards: the editors of local media.

This is an example of “media myths” that continue to be repeated even though they have long since been discredited. They are perpetuated by local editors for the benefit of donors and visiting internationals to explain the poor quality of media. Other myths are:

- We’d be great if we only had more money⁴
- We don’t have more money because readers here are poor and can’t afford to buy newspapers⁵

³ A note on nomenclature: the terms JDG, CIN management and CIN editors are used interchangeably in this document. They all refer to the subcontractor JDG.

⁴ Media organizations have received a large percentage of the more than \$100 million in media assistance in the last decade. It is not uncommon for outlets popular with donors to receive more than \$100,000 in direct assistance per year even today.

⁵ There are more than 800,000 mobile phones in BiH and the standard of living has risen every year since the war yet print outlets are mired by low circulations. The cost of a newspaper is the same as the cost of a loaf of bread. CIN believes when a newspaper offers readers more value than a loaf of bread they will buy them. Also, magazines have regularly increased prices from one to three marks. If the editors really believed that price was a barrier, why do they consistently increase prices rather than seek greater circulation?

CIN leadership talks regularly to university classes and have a number of young staff members and interns. We have found university students intelligent, motivated and perfectly capable of good journalism with proper editorial guidance and standards.

We have also found that most of the bad habits of local journalists are ingrained during their tenure at local media outlets and NOT universities. While universities need to improve drastically, to blame them “directly” for the poor quality of local journalism is simply wrong.

Section on CIN

- *However, it is not clear at this time if CIN has had success in achieving its central goal of changing the news agenda in Bosnia or altering the way other news media approach investigative reporting. CIN management claims anecdotal evidence of impact of its past reports; while editors at the media outlets that CIN relies upon to publish reports doubt that CIN has had impact on operations at their outlets, or on their readers.*

We disagree that CIN’s central goal is to change the news agenda. The second half of the sentence more closely approximates its central goal of leveraging standards into the marketplace by creating demand for high quality stories that address the needs of readers.

We are unclear about the comments on “impact.” What did the editors mean by stating that CIN has no “impact” on them? We believe this is not a question where self reporting is reliable. In fact, editors have frequently adopted elements of CIN standards, especially when running CIN stories.⁶ Whether these editors are acting consciously or unconsciously when doing so, they are still adopting CIN values⁷. Other examples are a more common tendency among our partners to write issue packages, more humanization of stories and an increase in sourcing. Whether these editors credit CIN is irrelevant. CIN is still an influence.

As far as whether CIN is impacting readers, some local editors are not the best judges of this issue. They oversee publications with very low readership⁸ so they themselves are failing to have much impact with readers. CIN is trying a different way to reach readers and it is not surprising that the people most connected to the status quo will not see CIN’s approach as worthwhile or effective. Forward looking publications like Oslobodenje, Blic and Vecernji list have told CIN they like the CIN style and approach to investigative reporting. These are amongst the highest circulation newspapers in the market.

- *CIN’s international management has been slow to identify and install Bosnian leadership at the Center, citing greater than expected challenges in identifying and training appropriate personnel to an acceptable level of competency before transferring editorial and management responsibilities. As a result, after two years there is still no Bosnian editor-in-chief or Bosnian director, exacerbating the center’s image as a non-local media organization.*

JDG, CIN’s international management, has considered the future leadership from the very beginning, so it’s inaccurate to say it has been “slow”. In fact, every reporter hired was considered based on his management potential. However, JDG delayed the appointment of

⁶ An example is the Aug 13 issue of Nezavisne Novine, in which the editor assigned a reporter to look at a local case of food poisoning. This effectively localized a CIN story. CIN would argue this is “impacting” news coverage because the editor adopted CIN values of packaging stories (main stories with sidebars), writing for and connecting with the reader, placing a human face on an issue and writing issue rather than event driven stories. Another of many examples is the epidemic story in health care in which we wrote about the government’s failure to deal with diseases and Nezavisne Novine followed with a large story on bird flu to complement the CIN story. This style of journalism would not have happened without CIN.

⁷ At one of CIN’s partners, a reporter was given a CIN package and told to “do that” to a story he had been assigned.

⁸ Penetration is the term for the percentage of readership in a country. Bosnia has an estimated circulation of 100,000 for 4 million people or 2.5%. This is about one quarter to one tenth of what it is seen in other EU countries. It is also not a matter of poverty. Algeria has a similar standard of living and has penetration rates of about 8%.

managers by approximately 6 weeks.⁹ This was due to a change in strategy in January when JDG decided to train ALL reporters in management and editor skills. We felt this approach would help us better evaluate and identify those people best suited for leadership and management by having them actually manage and edit. This process strongly influenced JDG in the final selection of leaders. Simultaneously, CIN also interviewed a number of veteran journalists for this position, even trying some out, but ultimately they felt the current staff was the most adamant about meeting standards. JDG felt that this was not an unreasonable time delay for such an important process and decision.

- *The assessment team believes that the transfer to Bosnian management should have been prioritized earlier within the original CIN timeline (this should be noted as a flaw within the initial CIN proposal. In addition, the international managers—with their many years of experience working in the Bosnian media development environment—could have foreseen potential staffing difficulties and recognized the risks involved with waiting nearly two years to promote local management.*

This is an interesting opinion and it is not supported with any rationale of why the assessors feel this way, as is often the case in this assessment.

The reason JDG proposed the original two year time schedule (which was cut down from three years by USAID) was to insure CIN management successfully embodied the standards, learned editing skills and learned management skills – a process that takes years. It was important to the success of the program that the internationals could leave and there would be little dropoff in quality. The assessment team quickly credited CIN with achieving this goal, an opinion that while complementary was arrived at very quickly and without citing any evidence. They never consider the issue of the maintenance of these standards.

JDG believes the assessment team’s aggressive promotion of local management, while understandable for political and development reasons, is a common fatal mistake in media development as an industry. JDG believes that local management must be able to meet a threshold of quality and maintenance of standards before they should be supported. That threshold is the point where readers perceive a news product as fair, accurate, clear and appealing. When this is reached, credibility rises and other readers take notice and start to regularly buy a publication. Too often media development specialists declare victory before that threshold is reached or maintained. Being the best media outlet in a country is not enough to grow circulation¹⁰. This only leads to a lot of publications with anemic sales – much like what is happening in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Too often, media donors gave money to organizations that don’t meet this standard. The money is wasted because even with all the money in the world, their product will never appeal to readers.

For example, in 2003, the current principals of JDG started working with Nezavisne Novine under the old IREX program. At the time, USAID and IREX managers repeatedly said the Banja Luka publication was great and needed no journalism work although circulation was stagnant and even dropping. They attributed the problem to ineffective marketing.

However, a careful analysis of the paper indicated serious problems that negatively affected reader satisfaction. After 18 months of work, the problems were mostly addressed and the paper was significantly better under a new management team and an editorial process that stressed these

⁹ Editor positions were appointed August 10. The original schedule called for the appointments to take place after two years. Given that the hiring of the original reporters was about three weeks late, this slippage is small in a three year project and not indicative of failure.

¹⁰ Dani is often cited as the best media outlet in BiH but its sales have fallen by a factor of 6 times since 1995. Now Nezavisne Novine is recognized as the best and also the most credible.

standards. Without any marketing, the newspaper began to see a steady growth in circulation¹¹ that has continued today and made the paper the second most read in BiH.

However, the media landscape is littered in BiH and elsewhere with organizations that were declared successes and left to fend for themselves -- OBN, Večernji Novine, FOI center and others.

And it is also littered with wasted money for unmet standards. For instance, a number of donors gave Dani Magazine money for a promotional campaign that included the selling of low cost books with Dani. This campaign came at a time when Dani was experiencing eroding sales due to reader discontent. While the campaign was very successful in terms of boosting sales, it also advertised the continued weakness of Dani's product. When the campaign ended, sales eroded even further because people who bought during the campaign were only reminded of why they stopped buying Dani.

We disagree completely with the assessors that two years of international direction was too much. We fear it may not be enough. JDG is not only training reporters to reach standards, it is training managers to manage correctly and editors to edit correctly. Unlike the assessors who are specialists in development issues, the principles of JDG have over 40 years of newsroom management experience in daily newspapers. We know it can take more than two years to turn around an American newsroom. We had less certainty than the assessors for precisely the reasons they cite – having worked in BiH.

However, we do believe that CIN local staffers are ready to start their own management of the center. Because JDG has a subcontract with NYU, it has fiduciary responsibility for the center and will maintain a veto option over all management decisions, especially those regarding legal issues. However, NYU and JDG are committed to allowing the CIN staff to manage the center and to complete the stories on their own as a means of improving their skills. JDG staff will aggressively police good standards, management practices and editing practices during this time.

- *Acceptance of CIN content, by both readers and media managers, also seems to be affected by the current international management approach to journalism. Representatives of Bosnian news outlets that have carried CIN products, as well as editors of those outlets that have not, criticized CIN articles for being too long while at the same time not offering readers particularly new or useful information. This may be due to the extensive background material provided in CIN stories which, though internationally recognized as good investigative journalism practice, is something of a new concept for Bosnian readers who may construe it as redundant.*

This is a well known criticism of CIN and one we believe to be totally irrelevant. The “*current international management approach to journalism*” is simply investigative reporting that meets international standards and currently accepted best practices for newsroom management and editing. This approach is practiced worldwide to great success.

The criticism of CIN articles being too long and not having new information is also a well known criticism and gets to the heart of the differences of CIN's approach. The length issue is related to the style of journalism. Bosnian newspapers often print serial, event driven news that offers little or no context for the reader. A quick look at the story lengths in Avaz and Oslobođenje should convince any reader of this truth – they are far below average lengths worldwide.

However, issue oriented investigative journalism like that practiced by CIN provides the context readers need to understand the whole issue and to make decisions. Within that context is provided all the “new” information. CIN editors had to initially fight their own reporters on this issue. The reporters wanted to stick all the new information up front so it was clear how the story

¹¹ Nezavisne Novine circulation has almost tripled from when the work with IREX started – a phenomenal record for a market where circulation has regularly dropped. Owner Zeljko Kopanja credits the IREX work with achieving this.

broke new ground. However, this only muddies the information for the reader who may not know what is new and what is old and frankly may not care.

This relates to a basic conceptual issue we believe the assessors did not account for. Bosnian and Western reporters have fundamentally different ideas of who they serve. Simply stated, Bosnian editors seek to influence the politicians and the intelligentsia (including other journalists) who control the politics and finances of their country. Western editors seek to influence the public by giving them the information they need to make informed decisions so that they can exercise their democratic rights. As Bosnia is caught between a semi-socialist state and a democracy, neither approach is unreasonable.

Newspapers historically have served as a place for intellectual give-and-take among the ruling elite and the intelligentsia and never aimed to serve the people. The common people read the publications to understand what the elite were thinking and not necessarily to get useful information. The news tends to be event driven and cover arcane elements of the political process of interest to this audience. Local editors who continue this tradition write in a style of journalism that achieves this goal. They write in a clipped, insider style because the elite politicians and journalists already know the context and only need to know what information is new. It is important to include the opinions of the journalist because he or she is a participant in the process. There is no need for narrative style or to appeal to common people who are irrelevant to the process. Issues important to the common reader like jobs, education, health care and personal finances are largely ignored. This is a sane and rational approach for serving this particular audience. However, without a general appeal, circulations will be low, and this is what is happening.

CIN, however, writes for common readers to give them the information they need to make informed choices in a democracy. This means the context and background, both new and old, is important and should be included for the complete understanding of the issue. A reader friendly approach of writing clear, narrative stories is also used. This naturally leads to stories that are longer. While this approach may not be suitable for all media, it is suitable for any media seeking to appeal to readers or to sell more than 1000 copies. It is natural for editors who see their mission as serving political elites to have the criticisms they do.

Support for this thesis can be found in IREX focus groups, which showed that the common complaints readers had was that the stories didn't explain enough, were too hard to understand and not relevant to their lives. It is also supported by the low circulation figures.

The assessment team seems to acknowledge this but then disappointingly repeats these long discredited arguments as a criticism.

- *Therefore, while adhering to the "highest western investigating standards," CIN might also seek a more realistic balance between its high standards and producing content that editors want to publish, and Bosnians want to read. Changing readers' habits and expectations will understandably take time.*

JDG objects to this comment more than any other in the assessment. Again, the assessment team fails to understand the key conceptual issues. JDG has required CIN to adopt high standards not to achieve some desired level of excellence to satisfy egos but as a prerequisite to building credibility with a public that does not believe BiH media. That threshold must be met or CIN will simply be another media outlet the people don't believe.

The assessors are asking CIN to produce material that more closely meets current local standards that better serve the elite than readers so the editors will like and run CIN stories. We are not sure that the assessors really understood the implications of this recommendation. This recommendation serves no useful purpose and fundamentally undermines the approach agreed to by USAID and NYU since the beginning of this project.

While CIN has decreased average story length since the third project to meet requests by editors, it has done so by tightening its writing and by breaking up stories into more sections, not by compromising standards.

Furthermore, based on circulation, the local editor's approach is frankly not working. People are not reading local publications enough to sustain the publications.

However, there is evidence that some editors are trying the CIN approach,¹² that the barriers are coming down and that CIN's style is growing in acceptance.

- *There are also significant shortcomings in areas essential to a sustainable future at CIN, namely CIN name recognition and fundraising. To date there have been few public awareness or marketing efforts to promote CIN, the CIN brand, CIN journalists, or CIN product. Interviews during assessment field work with Bosnian media managers sympathetic to CIN, editors that considered CIN more as competition, and with other observers of the Bosnian media scene indicated that CIN is relatively unknown to the Bosnian public. CIN's international management claims otherwise. At this time, no independent research data exists to support assertions on either side.*

The name recognition is a function of priorities. We disagree with the priorities of the assessment team in that we should be "marketing" the CIN name as a brand.

To begin with, CIN has no funds for marketing. Marketing or promoting the name of a publication is good for sales but CIN has no sales per se. We would be promoting a name and not a product. This could likely cause even more competitive feelings from our partners.

Also it is uncommon to engage in marketing of investigative reporting because that often raises the issue of credibility -- it is assumed that the importance of the work will draw reader attention and anything that must be "sold" is suspect. CIN successfully "sells" itself when it achieves credibility with the public and with local media. That is clearly already happening although reputations take years to build.

It may be true that CIN is largely unknown with the public but we feel this is fast becoming a non-issue as we expected¹³. In the past, CIN's name recognition was hurt by the competitive spirit of the organizations that run our work. For a long time, publications stripped references to CIN from the articles while at the same time promising not to do so. CIN could have denied these outlets stories but opted to continue so that the stories would run widely. CIN continued pressuring outlets to stop this practice. The stories did get good play but at the expense of increased name recognition. That led to a situation where CIN's stories were well known but CIN was not. This is not unusual for investigative reporting organizations and even investigative reporters. Recently however, organizations like SAN have capitulated and have started using the CIN name.

More important than CIN's name recognition with the public is its recognition among donors, politicians and the media. We know we are well established in that circle. While name recognition with the public is desirable and growing steadily, it is not the most important factor in sustainability. Sustainability will not immediately come from local story sales but from international story sales and donor support.

¹² The recent success of the food series is evidence provides ample examples of recalcitrant media accepting very long CIN stories and running them in inside pages. Reader response was so high at Vecernji list that they published a story the following day on the front page about it.

¹³ The series "Danger on your Plate" published in August disproved many of the issues in the assessment. The series was covered by all major television stations including a CIN-produced documentary, led to interviews of CIN reporters on BH Radio 1 and TV Hayat, played on other radio stations and appeared on other radio stations. SAN and Večernji list wrote stories on the story itself. All of these featured CIN's name.

CIN has always recognized the importance of name recognition. To address the issue, CIN decided in late 2005 to produce TV versions of its work.¹⁴ We believe this will have an impact. Given that CIN has produced work largely under someone else's name and only for 18 months, we believe ultimately that it is premature to judge this issue now.

- *Equally concerning is CIN's lack of tangible progress in securing any financing other than USAID's initial three-year investment. CIN's fundraising strategy for continuing operations past 2007 seems primarily dependent on receiving future USAID financing. Documents supplied by CIN management to the assessment team indicated that without substantial USAID support beyond the current three-year grant, CIN will close.*

The assessment team asked very little about CIN's specific fundraising plans. Had they inquired, they would learn that CIN had made great strides.

CIN started preparing fundraising materials in January of 2006, which was just over one year after its first series ran. This was a logical time to start because CIN needed to have a body of work to advertise its abilities. Since that point, JDG has put together fundraising materials (reprints of stories in a magazine format, folders, brochures, fact sheets and other materials), developed a fundraising strategy and trained local staff. All of this was implemented before the assessment team visited CIN. The assessment team was given these materials.

Simultaneously, JDG has four major proposals submitted involving CIN or in CIN's name. Preparation of many more are in the works. CIN trained staff has visited more than a dozen donors, many of whom have expressed interest in our work.

We do not know what the assessment team means by a lack of tangible progress.

It is true that JDG officials, who are competitors of ARD and the consultants who comprised the assessment team, did not share all of the details of the plan as it related to JDG and regional work.

As far as USAID support, the original proposal and the original verbal agreements with USAID made it clear that additional USAID funding was needed for long term sustainability after the center became fully local. NYU and JDG proposed three additional years at full funding (about \$360K/year) and while USAID did not commit to any funding, it made clear that if CIN met its journalistic goals, funding would likely occur.

The assessment recommends \$175,000 per year, which would be an important commitment by USAID and could go a long way to insuring the center's sustainability.

Conclusions section

- *Also, there is concern regarding CIN's managerial approach when investing USAID funds in human capital to improve investigative journalism products disseminated through Bosnian media.*

We are not sure what this means. Investment in people and human systems can be the most productive form of international development work. CIN doesn't need equipment, it needs expertise and time.

Recommendations Section

¹⁴ The first CIN produced package, a documentary on food safety and branded with the CIN name, will appear on FTV and RTRS this month. CIN staff also appeared on BH Radio 1 and TV Hayat lately.

- *Therefore, the most important role that USAID can play after more than 10 years of media development assistance is to continue to **empower Bosnian organizations** so that local media development experts can determine needs for training, technical assistance, and potential grant-giving.*

JDG and NYU would like to point out that while this is a worthy goal, no media development is worthwhile unless the standards of the trainers exceed those of the industry and the training program can successfully alter those standards. We believe CIN can play an important role in that training process.

- *In response to the significant concerns with the present direction of CIN, USAID should make any future funding contingent upon meeting a number of conditions regarding project and fundraising activities. First and foremost, the transition to Bosnian leadership at the center must take place as soon as possible.*

Bosnian leadership took over on Aug 10. This is no longer relevant.

- *CIN managers should develop a detailed marketing plan, and begin implementation of marketing activities. This strategic marketing effort should include quantitative and qualitative research to determine audience awareness of, and opinions regarding, CIN and its investigative journalism products. Such research, conducted independently, would also help to competently counter statements made by many actors on the local media scene that the Bosnian audience is for the most part unaware of CIN or its products.*

JDG and CIN would be happy to conduct such research. Such research is expensive and not currently in our agreement but if additional funds are provided CIN will arrange for the work to be done.

- *A closer collaborative relationship with editors at Bosnian news outlets should be cultivated as part of the CIN story development process, to ensure buy-in at local publications.*

This is very difficult to do in practice. Outlets fight for exclusivity of CIN's stories. If CIN tells everyone what the story is, then it won't be exclusive and the interest will wane. Furthermore, we do not believe buy in is a serious problem. We have appeared in almost every major outlet in BiH except Dani and Slobodna Bosna.

- *Finally, CIN should prepare for, and encourage, the transition of some of its reporters and editors back into Bosnian newsrooms—so that CIN's expertly-trained journalists can directly change the day-to-day product of Bosnian media outlets.*

Should the need arise to place reporters back in local media; it would be presumptuous of JDG management to offer them any advice. Most of our reporters have around a decade of experience in local media and they know it well. There is nothing we can say or do to help them other than to encourage editors to hire them, which we would do. CIN management would do everything in its power to help reporters take advantage of their skills.

Print Media section

- *Quality of print content is also largely a reflection of the quality of journalism education. Journalists at newspapers and magazines are typically young (the average age of reporters at many of the outlets interviewed was about 27) and, though often recruited from the university, learn most practical skills on the job as the university programs are theoretical and outdated. As a result of the low quality and questionable veracity of news publications, readership is low.*

This is a fascinating paragraph that conveniently shifts blame for the low quality and low readership of newspapers to universities and away from the media itself and from the multitude of local organizations that have been training reporters for more than a decade, including Media Plan Institute, Media Centar and USAID Media. It is unrealistic to expect universities to produce ready-to-report journalists and no where on earth is this done.

The assessment looks at the effectiveness of USAID Media and Media Centar on the USAID projects but never looks at the body of work of these local organizations. This is relevant because the assessment strongly recommends to “*empower Bosnian organizations.*” The Media Centar, which has been the recipient of millions of dollars, has been around for many years and has had ample opportunity to improve local media. What effect has it had on improving journalism? If the assessors are right that media is bad, why don't they blame the Media Centar, which is the premier training organization in the country and whose job it is to do mid-career training? What about Media Plan Institute? Why only government run universities?

We do not blame any of these organizations but believe the responsibility is with the media editors themselves who control the standards. However, the assessment recommends this empowerment without any proof that these organizations will actually do something to improve media.

Arguably, the Media Centar, which has good relations with local editors and regularly invites them to their roundtables, is in the best situation to change these editors and in more than a decade of work has not done so.

CIN is affecting change through the competitive process of leveraging standards. Editors will be forced to adopt changes to confront the loss of influence and readers. This mechanism is well understood. When donors gave money to Dani to move to color, glossy paper, its competition Start and Slobodna Bosna were forced to follow suit although at great expense to meet the new standard. When certain stories resonate with the public like the food story, newspapers will be forced to imitate it, thus raising the standards for all.

- *With the exception of Avaz, the greatest challenge facing newspapers in BiH is financial viability.*

This is another acceptance by the assessors of Bosnian media mythology. Nezavisne Novine, Večernji List, Blic and other publications are very successful and profitable. The lack of success of some publications is due to producing a poor quality product that the public doesn't trust or finds irrelevant. More Bosnian publications could be successful if they adopted higher standards of quality and reader appeal. They force themselves into ethically untenable positions by having to rely too often on a small number of advertisers and political parties.

CIN Section

- *Most importantly, CIN has put together a diverse and dedicated staff of reporters and potential editors who are now well trained in the methods of western investigative journalism and have fully internalized the skills (i.e., interviewing, research, story organization, and accuracy) needed to practice their craft*

We believe this is significant. In 12 years, no organization has been able to get a media outlet to consistently meet international standards for investigative reporting, the starting point for change, building credibility and attracting readers.

- *CIN documentation shows that the center has produced 62 stories which have been published, appeared in, or cited within at least 12 different news outlets, including*

newspapers, magazines, websites, and television news programs. Actual number of readers of CIN stories is difficult to measure as CIN reports appear in news outlets at the discretion of each outlet's respective editor-in-chief. Given the outlets most-inclined to run CIN stories, and the low readership of all Bosnian print outlets, it is unlikely that the center's articles reach a significant portion of the population.

This is inaccurate. Stories written and produced by have appeared in 26 news organizations¹⁵ and not 12 as noted by the assessors. About eight of these organizations can be considered regular CIN partners who run almost every story given to them by CIN. About 20 more have covered CIN stories, copied CIN stories or covered CIN itself. This includes every news organization in BiH. This is a remarkable achievement considering we speculated that few organizations would run CIN stories.

CIN stories are also probably the most distributed investigative stories in the print media. By publishing in multiple outlets, CIN stories reach wider numbers of readers than the stories of Slobodna Bosna, Dani and Nezavisne Novine which often usually only run in their own publications. Only Dnevni Avaz reaches more, but Avaz never runs investigative stories. Still, given the general low readership levels, CIN managers sought to reach an even larger audience by working in the television media as well.

- *Though the center's reach is clearly not as broad as initially expected, CIN's director believes the center's stories have positively influenced events in Bosnia.*

The first part of this statement is simply wrong. JDG and NYU originally contemplated the possibility that CIN would not be published in a single newspaper. We determined that if CIN stories only appeared in one publication, we still had a chance of success because a good and important story would have to be told even if the story was adopted by other publications. For reader affect, we also believed that change could occur from a story being well known rather than the outlet being well known.

However, this did not turn out to be a problem. CIN's story play has far exceeded our most optimistic projections.

Concerns

- *It cannot be said, however, that CIN has had a discernable impact upon project goals such as setting the news agenda for Bosnian media,*

This is not true. JDG and CIN staff has documented more than 600 cases of media reporting about the issues generated by the 62 stories they ran at the time of the assessment. The assessor's source for this is not stated but may be the local editors who have been competitive and dismissive of CIN. There are clear cases of CIN dominating the media agenda on an issue¹⁶. The assessors offer no data or basis to refute CIN's results.

- *or that CIN has altered the way other news media approach investigative reporting.*

We dealt with this earlier but again self-reported answers on this issue may not be reliable.

- *Especially worrying is that CIN journalists, though highly trained, seem very disinclined to return to local news outlets, putting into question their ability to become "the next generation*

¹⁵ This does not include news related websites or web only news sites. This would add up to two dozen more outlets to the list of CIN publishers.

¹⁶ Two notable examples are the series on the War Crimes Chamber of the State Court of BiH, which changed the tenor of coverage from event driven notices of indictments to an issue oriented story on whether the WCC will work and ultimately was it doing a good job. Also, the food safety series drive many media organizations to begin examining food safety including SAN, BH Radio 1 and Nezavisne Novine. These are clear examples of setting an agenda.

of investigative reporters and editors” who will go back into Bosnian newsrooms to create culture-change from within.

CIN reporters have stated a desire not to have to work in the local media again but this is a logical response to conditions in BiH media. Local reporters are sometimes subject to poor working conditions, poor and inconsistent pay, politicized newsrooms where the story findings are shaped by editor politics, unprofessional editors who alter copy for the worse, abusive management and low self esteem.

The reporters will go back to local media for a job if they must. They have families to support. But to criticize them for what is a sane response shows that the assessors are not familiar with the reality on Bosnian newsrooms. If, however, publishers agree to recreate some of the professional environment found at CIN, our reporters would eagerly return.

- *Furthermore, CIN is currently not financially self-sustainable, a reality which CIN will need to address if the investment in the center is to lead to sustainable results.*

This is an interesting statement given that the assessors state that media itself is unsustainable in BiH. In fact, the Media Centar is not strictly self financing because it still relies almost exclusively on grants; nor are many media organizations, and only a few newspapers. Yet we believe we have a means of providing the type of sustainability achieved by other investigative organizations around the region and world. We have been consistent about what that recipe is and it requires some level of USAID support for three more years until the commercial side of CIN can begin earning revenues and until CIN can develop international ties to other organizations and media outlets. Then with a mix of donations and commercial revenues like the other investigative centers around the world, CIN can survive.

- *Significant as these issues are, we believe these problems are more a result of the implementation strategy adopted over the first two years of the project by the international management at CIN, as opposed to a fundamental flaw with the concept of creating an investigative reporting center in Bosnia.*

The JDG management has scrupulously followed the original approved proposal except where we saw ways to improve it. We do not see where we have deviated nor does the assessment make this clear.

CIN management always looked toward a six year window to achieve sustainability as we said in the original proposal. The assessment meanwhile has added a requirement of sustainability at the two year point, an odd and new program requirement that is not supported by any documentation. CIN is on track toward its goals and may even be ahead.

- *However, CIN has not put into practice three of the most important attributes noted as key to the success of other investigative centers around the world—components upon which the CIN model is based. These three elements most affect the ability of CIN to function as a trusted and integral part of the Bosnian media environment, namely: 1) “localness,” i.e., installation of Bosnian leadership at the center to ensure local acceptance;*

To the average reader, CIN is completely local. All stories now read as local stories but with clarity, context and accuracy stressed. We worked hard to achieve this change.

From an institutional standpoint CIN has an international reputation and feeling but only with the news media “leaders” that the assessment team talked to. CIN’s internationalness was a necessary step to achieving the standards. The international feeling will fade quickly as it has with the Media Centar, Helsinki Committee, CRA/RAK, Press Council and other local organizations started as international organizations.

Having an international scope and feel is not even necessarily a bad thing for CIN. CIN has made greater inroads to the international community here than other news organizations and our

reporters frequently are told they work for the only local news organization some internationals will trust – a credibility hard won from fair and accurate stories. Also, many organizations in BiH seem and look very provincial and non-professional when viewed by outside eyes, so that CIN's international sheen may actually help it attract international cooperative ventures that will eventually bring money.

- *2) public outreach and marketing, to gain and maintain public support; and,*

CIN has actually engaged regularly in marketing with the time and resources available to it. Its editors have talked each semester to students at various universities, its reporters have represented the organization in countless roundtables and journalism events, a local staff member recently represented CIN in London at an international meeting of investigative reporters, more than a half dozen articles have been written about CIN in local and international media and reporters regularly chat and post stories online in discussion groups. CIN has also sponsored two well attended events at the Media Centar for local media. CIN regularly publishes press releases for every story. To say that public outreach is a low priority is not correct.

CIN must, however, pick carefully where it spends its resources. Time is at a premium at CIN, which is something the assessment team seems to have failed to understand.

To understand how the center works, reporters spend eight to ten hours every day chasing news stories and seeking to uncover hidden information. CIN regularly has three to six stories in the works at any one time and a cascading series of daily deadlines. Many of these stories are time sensitive and require long hours to meet tight deadlines. The stories require coordinating multiple reporters, photographers, graphic artists, translators, editors and videographers. CIN gets little cooperation from the government and has to earn each level of cooperation it gets through a painful process of developing sources, building trust and scouring public records for critical bits of information.

The work is sometimes dangerous, it is often politically sensitive and it continuously challenges every skill the reporters and editors have. In the end, it is hard to spend lots of time in self promotion.

CIN naturally has a strong public connection and is by definition a public outreach organization. Our reporters speak with dozens of people each day and send out dozens of faxed requests for information each week to places all over the world. In the end, however, our stories are our most efficient and effective way of reaching the public and they have a bigger impact on public perception than any poster or marketing plan ever will.

CIN management does not reject marketing. It just feels the priorities must continue to be doing important stories, and that marketing will eventually take care of itself. This is another example of where the assessment team might have been premature in the assessment of this issue.

- *3) permanent funding to maintain independence of the center. Current CIN management have made these three issues relatively low priorities; however, we would argue, progress on these three fronts from the first day was critically important.*

As we have pointed out, CIN has had an active and successful fundraising effort. We are not sure where the assessment team learned these issues are low priorities but all evidence points to them not being a low priority.

- *If the center is not welcomed by the local Bosnian media, if CIN products are not demanded by the Bosnian public, and if funds to sustain CIN are not in place, then the value of CIN's news product is negligible, and the talent of the center's reporters goes un-utilized. Simply put, CIN may fail. Below we elaborate further on flaws in the current approach that we believe should be changed.*

This is an issue of priorities. As was explained to the assessment team, first and foremost was establishing standards. The presence of these threshold standards are what make CIN different from other media, makes them credible and will ultimately make CIN successful. If these standards cannot be repeated in the absence of the international staff, CIN will fail later.

Everyone in BiH including the assessment team is willing to concede that CIN has high standards as has met this threshold. Even the news leaders most critical of CIN and who have written negatively about CIN have not questioned CIN's quality and adherence to standards. However, the CIN management team is interested in the CIN local staff being able to perpetuate these standards by themselves.

We have worked hard to achieve these. Once achieved, CIN stories will gain acceptance and donors will appreciate the value CIN brings not only to journalism development issues, but also to democracy and anti-corruption issues. This will help drive funds toward CIN rather than having to compete for small chunks of money against Media Centar and other media programs.

- *Bosnian media outlets currently publish CIN stories on an ad hoc basis, totally at the discretion of news editors. In order for CIN to have significant influence on the Bosnian news agenda, CIN reports should be widely carried in a majority of popular news outlets. Altogether, print circulation hovers below 100,000 paid copies; understanding this, CIN must reach as many readers as possible to have any impact on its proclaimed audience. The print media that typically run CIN stories have an approximate combined paid circulation of 30,000 (though pass along readership may be as much as four times higher). To be accepted by media outlets and achieve wider publication of its stories, CIN must be perceived as a Bosnian institution by actors in the media sector. This is hindered by two interconnected issues:*

This series of statements make some assumptions that we disagree with. The assessor's argument simply stated appears to be:

1. CIN is not being run in local papers
2. They are not being run because they are too "international" and Bosnian editors won't run the work that is too "international"
3. Replacing CIN international editors will lead to stories being run.

We disagree with all three of these conclusions, none of which are backed up by any evidence.

1. CIN stories have appeared in almost every major Bosnian newspaper and all imported foreign papers (see appendix A). There appears to be no problem. At the time of the assessment, Oslobođenje had not run our recent stories but the Sarajevo paper extensively ran the food series. Avaz, Dani and Slobodna Bosna are the only major papers where CIN stories have never run. Given their politics it is not likely they ever will. In the less political regional papers, CIN has appeared in all, including some of the largest papers in the region.
2. There is simply no evidence of this and none is presented by the assessors. CIN has run in more than two dozen outlets while its international team has directed the center. While the editors may have told the assessors that CIN stories are "too international," they appear to be regularly running them.
3. When local editors are appointed at CIN, it will present as much of a minefield as the long-time international editors who have detractors but also close relationships with some organizations. The only group Bosnian editors seem to hate more than internationals is themselves. Feuds between editors are common and it could at some point erode CIN if editors were to get into personal disagreements.

To put CIN's success in context, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network also regularly publishes stories made available free to local media. BIRN is a completely local organization known to all as being local although it has its roots in the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, a London-based NGO.

BIRN stories appeared only eleven times since late 2004, which is the same time frame that CIN has been publishing. Most of these appear in just one outlet. Almost all of these are breaking news stories or analysis stories rather than investigative work.¹⁷

CIN meanwhile was published hundreds of times in local media during this same time period. If the assessors were right, BIRN stories, which more closely resemble local stories, should be more prevalent, and yet they are actually less prevalent..

- *Delay in transfer to Bosnian leadership: CIN fellows were scheduled to be placed in leadership positions by the end of the project's second year. As CIN enters its third year (July 2006), a local management team (editorial and administrative) has yet to be installed. The expatriate managers seem to have identified individuals that will later comprise the Bosnian management team, but are not yet fully confident in the ability of their selections to perform tasks to an "international standard". Therefore, the expatriate director will request more time (as much as three months) to train the new management team.*

The delay again was weeks. USAID was fully aware at all times of the JDG schedule. In a meeting in May, JDG provided a schedule to USAID indicating Bosnian leaders would not be selected until September 2006. The schedule was discussed and no issues were raised.

- *CIN is largely viewed as a competitor by editors at media outlets interviewed, rather than a complementary asset to their outlets' newsgathering ability.*

Competition is neither bad nor undesirable. It pushes local outlets to exceed our standards and beat us. This also demonstrates local outlets see CIN as a peer. This disputes the earlier assertion by the assessment that CIN has had no effect.

- *Viewed as an international organization with vast resources, CIN is the source of resentment among many of its potential partners. CIN appears to have a positive working relationship with two or three local media outlets (particularly Start, Nezavisne Novine, and SAN) but even editors from these publications emphasize CIN's need to be further integrated into the Bosnian media community and collaborate directly with media outlets and their editorial staffs.*

CIN has standing offers to all news organizations to collaborate. They have inquired and discussed stories. They have collaborated with Nezavisne on breaking news on a few occasions¹⁸. They collaborate regularly with international outlets like the Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism, the Guardian and the Chicago Tribune. However, most local outlets' ideas of collaboration and "integration with the Bosnian media community" involve CIN giving them money to do questionable stories that only meet the outlet's standards. They, with our support, have not agreed to those terms.

- *In short, CIN is still seen as an outsider, and will continue to be considered an external player until Bosnian leadership can build necessary bridges to managers at media outlets.*

The assessment oddly took a very personality driven look at the media issue and regularly delved into internal BiH media politics. This is precisely the mistake made by local editors who turn

¹⁷ Analysis was done using Media Centar's iDoc database which includes most of the major newspapers and magazines in BiH although not all. Results are not exhaustive but representative.

¹⁸ A notable case was a breaking scoop by Nezavisne Novine on the Bosanski Brod Refinery. CIN had documents and knowledge Nezavisne needed and CIN provided the documents and information, including secret contracts it had obtained.

professional issues into personal issues. By overly focusing on the personalities, they missed the reality of what was happening, which was that CIN is actually doing quite well in the local media.

CIN's management does have a long history in BiH which is both a benefit and potential distraction. CIN's director was responsible in a former assignment for the stopping of international funds from one outlet and the denial of funds to a couple more. He also was responsible for many positive changes that many outlets respect and have benefited from. These politics are unavoidable but they are also irrelevant.

Outlets are regularly running CIN materials. Readers are familiar with CIN stories and increasingly familiar with CIN itself after only 18 months of publishing. In addition, the trajectory is very noticeably upwards, meaning that CIN continues to gain with each story. This is a very positive achievement and there is no indication that there is a problem with CIN's plan or management's implementation.

- *CIN's international leadership also affects presentation of content within articles. The original CIN proposal states that stories will explore solutions to the issues they raise—that they should stress how the public or policy makers can get involved to solve problems. This has not been a hallmark of stories to date; anecdotal comments from readers say that the “problem solving” element is missing from CIN articles.*

This is flagrantly wrong as a review of CIN projects immediately will show. Almost every project has specific stories that address both what readers can do and what government can do and every story includes some information on what could or should be done. The assessors had these stories and needn't have relied on local editors or “readers” to make this judgment.¹⁹.

- *The stories are reportedly well-written; CIN reports are certainly longer and more in-depth than most investigative pieces currently familiar to audiences. However, CIN articles do not seem to offer readers particularly new information—or give the audience a ready sense of what to do with the extensively-compiled information. CIN should strike a balance between insisting on the “highest western investigating standards” and working within a Bosnian reality. CIN must accomplish the task of ensuring that excellent journalism skills are internalized by reporters and editors within the goal of producing stories that Bosnian editors-in-chief want to run, and that Bosnian citizens demand to read. Until this happens, CIN's ability to “change and set the news agenda for Bosnian media” will remain limited.*

These comments are uninformed and frankly troublesome. We doubt the assessors read CIN material or local media and it would be pointless to point out the dozens of stories CIN has broken. We have explained in detail above why some local journalists continue to repeat this claim.

More troubling is that the assessors seem to suggest compromising standards which is counterproductive. If CIN produced stories editors want to run, then nothing will change. Bosnian editors have few readers. CIN believes its time to do something different. This generation of editors has failed to harness the power of print media. Given its normal power, they have had little effect on Bosnian society. It is time to try something new. The assessors would have CIN be a wire service writing short, event driven stories for unread publications.

Public Outreach

¹⁹ Stories are “Doctors Doing it Right,” “Patients Fight Back” and “A Chance for State Level Health care,” from the Health care series. “Ways to Change Faculties for the Better” from the education series. “What to do to Help a Victim” and “What to do if You are a Victim” graphics from Domestic Violence series and “The Ten Commandments of Safe Food” graphic from the food safety series. However, each story also has some element of providing solvency.

- *The Center for Investigative Reporting seems to be virtually unknown to the general public in Bosnia. This is surprising after public outreach was recognized as critical to the success of other investigative journalism centers referred to in NYU's proposal. The CIN proposal states that "to maintain credibility with the community, the center must aggressively educate the public, other media, business, and the government on how it operates, how decisions are made, how it selects stories, and its mission to create a Fourth Estate." Nonetheless, two years into the grant period, most Bosnians have not heard of CIN or its journalists nor do Bosnians have any awareness of the center's mission. Media outlets that run CIN stories often strip out the CIN byline and any references the center's investigative reporting team in the text.*

The extent of CIN's public recognition is not known either by CIN or the assessors, although they have chosen to believe CIN is unknown based on interviews with sources who are antagonistic towards CIN's goals. However, these same media leaders are the people with little or no circulation themselves.

While CIN's name was stripped out originally, that has been slowly changing. SAN and Oslobodenje have run stories with CIN's name, which is a change of policy in the last few months. The growth in usage to other outlets is giving CIN the right to demand bylines and this will be commonplace this year.

- *Occasionally, CIN has been negatively profiled by news outlets hostile to the center, but it is CIN policy not to respond or offer corrections to inaccurate allegations. While there may be value in taking the "high ground" in such cases, when considering CIN's minimal name recognition, this policy seems unwise as CIN risks being publicly defined by its detractors.*

CIN does not want to contribute to the hostile, attack atmosphere in local media. It ruins everyone's credibility. USAID has supported this approach in the past.

- *CIN management acknowledges this lack of name recognition—or branding—of the CIN product but maintains that branding is neither a priority nor particularly necessary. The expatriate managers believe that the CIN name will become better known as they expand into television (reporting that NTV Hayat has agreed to broadcast a CIN investigation as a documentary production this summer), and as more electronic media outlets refer to CIN stories in their own news reports.*

The CIN management admits that this has been an issue in the past and believes it will not be an issue in the future. Already, since the assessment, the CIN name has appeared regularly in TV, radio and print media. CIN believes an expensive and time consuming marketing campaign is not the best use of USAID money and may not work. The best advertisement for CIN is quality journalism.

CIN's documentary has already shown on FTV and will appear twice on RTRS in the next week, not TV Hayat.

Funding and Self-Sustainability

- *The original NYU proposal outlines a four-pronged fundraising strategy for securing permanent funding for CIN which involves:*
 - *Building an endowment—an endowment campaign was to be launched by week 56,*
 - *Hiring a commission-based fundraiser by week 53,*
 - *Soliciting individual contributions (ongoing), and*

- *Soliciting outside grants (ongoing).*
- *At the end of Year Two of the grant period, however, CIN has made no tangible progress toward securing financial support beyond the current USAID contribution. The endowment campaign has not resulted in any contributions, nor has a fundraiser been hired (a Bosnian staff member is charged with fundraising efforts, but the original proposal to hire a dedicated commission-based fundraiser might result in a greater chance of success). CIN management indicated that for short-term financing they are counting on advisory board members acquiring individual \$10,000-\$20,000 contributions from “rainmakers.”*

As mentioned above, CIN has four proposals pending and more than a half-dozen in the works, all of which were in the works at the time of the assessment.

The endowment was always considered a long term goal and would not be possible until CIN had a body of work worth supporting. The endowment fund is in the works and the new version of the CIN website will have an endowment contribution page and an individual contributions page.

JDG scrapped plans for a commission-based fundraiser for the time being. While some were approached, it became clear that Bosnia-Herzegovina was too tough of a sell for a fundraiser. Nobody accepted JDG’s request. This was an unrealistic goal in the original proposal.

JDG never said it was counting on short term financing from “rainmakers”. These people are planned for jump starting an endowment. Instead, JDG, through its advisory board, is seeking individual wealthy contributors to either fund the endowment or to make a significant contribution. This, too, is a long term goal.

CIN is looking at local and regional grant contributions, which are the main focus of its short term and medium term fundraising strategy. CIN has identified about a dozen grants and proposals and has applied or will apply to them shortly.

- *Funding shortfalls are not uncommon. However, the lack of urgency displayed by CIN management on this point is disconcerting. Realistically, NYU and JDG did not expect the center to be fully self-supporting within the first three-year grant period. In fact, the original proposal noted that securing an endowment during this time was probably unrealistic and suggested that USAID consider modest funding post-2007 at around \$200,000 per year to supplement financial support from other sources until an endowment is in place. This strategy, however, assumes that some successful (non-USAID) fundraising would have taken place during the initial three-year grant period. So far, this is not the case.*

That CIN management is displaying a “lack of urgency” is an opinion that seems to be largely irrelevant. As a deadline based organization, there are many things at CIN that require urgent action. CIN management has been tackling them according to a well established plan. As part of that plan, CIN initiated its fundraising strategy in January of 2006 and grant proposals were already in the hands of donors by the time the assessors visited. This might account for the calmness of management.

JDG did not share all of its regional plans with the assessors who represent a competitor. This led the assessors to believe there was less happening than there was.

- *Moreover, as part of the information CIN provided to the assessment team, CIN managers cited that they plan “...to ask USAID for local funding for three additional years. In that time, it is possible to get the center self supporting. Failure to get this funding will probably result in closure of the center as a functioning organization.” This statement places sole responsibility for keeping CIN operational directly on USAID, rather than on the center’s current leadership and their efforts to raise funds during the*

first three years of the project. The tone of this document seems to contradict the spirit of the original proposal that describes a strategy to secure non-USAID funding and ensure the financial independence of the center.

Without the long term support of USAID as originally envisioned, the center does face a difficult future. That was clearly stated in the original proposal and acknowledged by USAID. USAID also did not respond to requests by JDG to add additional funds to keep JDG staff on for the final year and to pay media insurance. These funds were promised at various points in the process. This diminishes the amount of time JDG can spend on this issue and again makes it less effective.

However, regardless of USAID's actions, JDG and the new CIN management understand what is needed to keep the center doors open and has been working on that issue for months. However, the comments above are not in conflict with the original proposal. Raising the \$350,000 needed to keep the center open is challenging in BiH, a place that suffers from donor fatigue more than any other, even with USAID's support. We believe it is possible. Without USAID support, that challenge doubles.

Other Concerns

- *The original staffing plan called for recruitment of the best journalists in Bosnia who would be paid an above average salary in order to get and retain them by the center. Predictably, this approach to hiring has created a certain amount of resentment among Bosnian media outlets that cannot compete with CIN's international budget and resources. Nearly every print outlet interviewed (both those friendly to CIN and those that were not) mentioned this disparity between reporter salaries at the center and Bosnian media market standards as a major point of contention. Even if salaries at the center are not at the exaggerated level cited by other print outlets, this perception adds to the local animosity toward the center and presents an additional obstacle at those very media outlets CIN relies on to publish CIN articles.*

This paragraph is confusing. First it says there is a wide disparity between reporters' salaries in CIN and other local media, and then it says there is only a perception of a disparity and this is hurting CIN. In truth, the average CIN salary is about 1600 KM per month. This is probably slightly higher than most newsrooms. Senior CIN reporters make 2200 KM per month. There are no surveys of Bosnian newsrooms but average salaries are probably around 1000 KM per month give or take a few hundred KM.

CIN is not responsible for the wrong perception of CIN salaries. In fact, some of the very editors with whom the assessors talked with and who complained about CIN salaries wildly exaggerated CIN salaries in negative stories they wrote about the Center. These same editors have taken hundreds of thousands of dollars in international funding themselves and still do.

Secondly, we are not certain CIN salaries are out of line. Three senior reporters rejected job offers from CIN saying they were making more money at local magazines. Thirdly, CIN wasn't paying taxes on their reporters for most of the time of the grant which is allowed by Bosnian law for international organizations. CIN reporters made their own pension and health contributions which lowered their salaries considerably. These pensions were then lost when staff of the journalism union, where some of these complaining editors served as officers with fiduciary responsibility, absconded with the money.

In truth, there is a general impression that salaries are high at any organization with any international affiliation. CIN cannot change that perception.

Finally, as CIN pay is not wildly out of line with standards, since it requires considerably more from its reporters including long hours and weekend work, since it demands the highest standards

and since it has more stress than the typical newsroom, this is not an injustice. It makes more reporters want to work with CIN and it makes editors work to be more like CIN.

- *Furthermore, CIN has not hired “the best Bosnian journalists,” those that might warrant higher salaries based on their skill and stature within the local media community. Apart from a few reporters, the center has hired talented, but primarily young, inexperienced, and unknown journalists that the international editors have trained from the ground up. The expatriate editors found that seasoned journalists either did not want to leave their secure jobs or were unwilling to learn a new way of reporting. This situation should have been foreseeable from the outset of the project, given the extensive experience of CIN’s international management in Bosnia prior to establishing the center.*

This opinion is without merit and represents again the opinion of a few media leaders. In fact, CIN received more than 150 applications from most of Bosnia’s most famous journalists and interviewed about 80 reporters for its positions. CIN had a good selection and picked the reporters it liked most and was turned down by only four reporters.

CIN interviewed some but generally stayed away from “the best Bosnian journalists.” That is because what makes a good or famous Bosnian journalist in the local media is not what CIN was looking for. Fame in Bosnian media comes from clever, cultured writing, a keen, biting wit, a long list of famous people who will take your call and a clear, strong opinion. In America this makes you a famous columnist. In Bosnia it makes you a famous investigative reporter.

In America, a famous investigative reporter is unknown to most people, can’t necessarily write a clever phrase to save their lives, loves dark basements with musty records, won’t take no for an answer, won’t give up until they’ve solved the puzzle, doesn’t care about getting invited to parties of important people and most of all, does not want to be famous or clever. These were the people we were looking for. It is a well known criticism of our center that our reporters are not famous. They don’t want to be and that’s why we hired them. The famous ones would never be satisfied with the work CIN had to offer.

Secondly, our reporters are not all young. Our fellows have between 8 and 20 years experience. Also, like many of the points in this assessment, the assessors never raised this issue with CIN or its staff.

- *Resentment of CIN’s approach to hiring created an obstacle between the center and professionals at Bosnian media outlets that must be overcome. CIN’s choice of salary levels also created an additional burden on the operating budget of the center.*

It is very hard to avoid resentment in Sarajevo and Bosnia in general. It is often neither possible nor desirable to deal with it. However, again, CIN has overcome these “resentments” and is publishing in most major newspapers, a fact that seems to have been misunderstood by the assessment team and at the same time the nail on which they hang most of their criticisms. It’s just not valid.

CIN salaries will be dealt with in the fundraising efforts. To a member, CIN staff has agreed to take pay cuts if it is necessary to keep the center operating.

- *Finally, there is concern about the future of CIN journalists and how they are expected to become, as described in the original proposal, “a new generation of ‘watchdogs’: investigative reporters and editors who will return to local media and continue to spread a new set of standards for fair and balanced journalism.” Over time, CIN shifted its strategy from cycling fellows through the center and back into Bosnian news outlets, to having a permanent roster of reporters and editors who will operate CIN once the international management departs. While this permanent structure may be good for CIN as an individual organization, it does little to accomplish the goal of creating a cultural*

and professional shift in newsrooms across Bosnia by placing the “new generation of ‘watchdogs’” back into local media outlets

This change in strategy was actually suggested by USAID and accepted by CIN. It was believed that there would be some regular turnover and this could account for some of the departures. Had CIN replaced all reporters, it would have been impossible to keep the organization operating. In fact, five people have worked at CIN and departed. All went to equal or better jobs. One went from an intern position at CIN to a lead producer on an evening news and entertainment show. She used skills she learned at CIN to manage her reporters. Since that point departures have slowed.

Given the deteriorating conditions at most newspapers, CIN reporters are still more likely to do more at CIN than at a paper that refuses to provide the resources and independence to do their work. If CIN continues operations, additional reporters will leave or smart editors will lure staff away to recreate CIN-like investigative teams. This is a more natural way to propagate the standards.

- *It is extremely worrying that none of the CIN journalists interviewed seem to want to work in a Bosnian outlet newsroom, claiming that such an adjustment would be impossible after working under the conditions provided by CIN. While the assessment team admires the commitment of CIN journalists to their organization, it is concerned by the reporters’ lack of commitment to the field of Bosnian journalism as a whole.*
- *We consider this a failing of current CIN international management. Even if CIN retains certain staff members to maintain the center, some journalists will inevitably leave. There appears to be no “re-entry” preparation—or motivation—for CIN reporters to go back into the local Bosnian media market. Reporters will not have the same resources or freedoms they enjoy at CIN. To be effective in the overall market, and to affect the kind of change foreseen by NYU and JDG, CIN journalists need strategies to help them survive and thrive in Bosnian newsrooms. CIN reporters need the wherewithal to take the skills and tenacity developed at CIN and apply these attributes in other, less optimal environments.*

If CIN closes, the journalists will seek jobs in the news industry although they will face a difficult time adjusting to the demoralizing conditions at most outlets. However, they will more likely start their own media, work as freelancers or work for international media. In all three, they will still propagate the standards.

As far as the international management failure on this issue, it sounds more like a failure of local editors who have created the Bosnian media landscape. It is arrogant to think we could prepare the reporters for working in a place where they already have more than 60 years combined experience working. They know what the Bosnian media is. They know who the editors and owners are of local publications. They know how to survive – they all have for many years. They now have the investigative reporting skills that they may be allowed to use or not. Some may take a job where they have to lie, harass, bully and slander people at the direction of their editor. That is their choice. We can not help them. However, there are always opportunities for good investigative journalists and the best will find those opportunities as they found CIN.

No matter what the assessors think, the managers of JDG who have more than a decade of Bosnian experience and the CIN staff intimately know the price of failure. We have spent two years struggling here doing the most difficult work a journalist can do. Our eyes are open.

Conclusions and recommendations

- *The CIN expatriate staff must take immediate, concrete steps toward transferring editorial and administrative responsibilities to local Bosnian leadership. This transfer was supposed to have been completed by the end of the second year, but by the beginning of year three the*

new Bosnian editor and director have yet to be named. This delay has negative implications across the board—from budget shortfalls to broader acceptance by the local media—and needs to be resolved now.

As planned, local leadership was named August 10th.

- *CIN is at least one year behind in fundraising. The current international director should take immediate and aggressive steps to get this effort on track. Delays in both fundraising and progressing with an active endowment campaign need to be addressed. CIN needs to show that non-USAID income streams have been identified and are being effectively pursued.*

CIN is not one year behind in fundraising. Fundraising was commenced soon after the starting of the center with the appointment of the advisory board. After a reasonable period of time to generate stories passed, CIN started preparing materials and a plan that was well in place when the assessment was done. However, no questions were asked about the specifics. Non-USAID income streams were already identified and applied for at the time of the assessment. The endowment campaign is underway although it will not likely contribute significantly to the income stream before the grant is completed as anticipated unless the advisory board successfully secures a large donor.

- *A written marketing plan should be developed which includes the launch of a public outreach campaign to raise recognition of CIN as a brand and promote CIN's product. The center recently published its first newsletter and has developed a packet of materials that describes the center. While these promotional materials are useful, CIN needs a comprehensive marketing plan to strategically and effectively elevate the name and image of the center. Cross-marketing techniques such as airing public service announcements on popular radio stations and targeted poster campaigns to promote upcoming reports should be considered.*

CIN strongly believes that the regular publication of its materials and the addition of television is the most effective use of its time and resources, which are very limited. Investigative projects are very time consuming and CIN still has a ways to go before it can start tackling more difficult corruption and organized crime stories. While CIN recognized the importance of public outreach and has availed itself of every opportunity, it does not have the marketing expertise or the resources to be planning and running marketing campaigns. CIN is a very lean organization with no extra staff and most staff members have more responsibilities than time. CIN is also not clear how a poster, the means used by political parties, will raise its credibility with the public.

However, the presence of a new local management team will help CIN get more interviews and appearances on radio and television as “experts” which will help the center much more. CIN should also work to get more stories done about itself in the local media.

- *As part of a comprehensive marketing strategy, CIN should commission independent (outsourced) quantitative research to measure current awareness of the center, the CIN brand, and CIN reports. This research could also include qualitative opinions regarding reader understanding and use of information available in CIN articles. An initial research project would act as a baseline that CIN can use to compare with future research to measure change in audience recognition of CIN, as well as change in audience attitudes towards CIN and its products. If outsourced to an independent research institute or firm, analysis could be used by CIN management to both help craft a CIN marketing strategy, and more competently counter claims that CIN and its products are relatively unknown to Bosnian audiences (based on research results, of course). CIN should also begin using other research tools such as focus group studies and informal telephone surveys to further help gauge public awareness of the center, opinions on CIN stories, and reader preferences. Acquiring real data (instead of relying on anecdotal evidence) will allow the center to make more informed marketing, business, and journalism decisions and ensure the center's news products are meeting the needs and expectations of readers.*

CIN would welcome quantitative research on the center's work, name recognition and attitudes. CIN is the only Bosnian media organization that regularly uses this tool in its reporting, including a CIN focus group on attitudes of employers toward university graduates for the education series and a survey of attitudes toward the war crimes chamber for the justice series.

However, CIN is not allowed under its current grant agreement to spend money on such a study, nor does it have the funds in its very lean budget. Additional USAID funds would need to be provided to complete such a study.

- *CIN should take concrete steps toward improving and/or broadening its relationships with management at local media outlets. As noted earlier, many outlets view CIN as a competitor. A more collaborative approach to dealing with these editors-in-chief as partners will be crucial to reaching more readers with CIN stories. This collaboration should begin with the selection of investigation topics to generate buy-in from editors early in the process of developing potential stories. Given its circulation and audience reach, CIN should consider approaching Dnevni Avaz, in particular, to explore possible collaboration*

CIN feels it has amply demonstrated in this response that the results do not support the assessment team's opinion that CIN is not accepted. The data in fact shows that CIN is a resounding success despite the alleged attitudes of media leaders. CIN has open collaboration and always seeks additional collaboration as long as the standards that are accepted are CIN's. CIN will not lower its standards to appease local editors or it will cease to be a necessary feature in Bosnian media. CIN believes it is receiving excellent buy-in from local media.

One of the first tasks of the new local management will be to visit all BiH media outlets including Dnevni Avaz. While CIN would like to appear in Avaz, it would be important that they run most of a full story. This would be a problem for the Avaz format which focuses on very short stories. However, CIN is always open to creative solutions.

From a media development standpoint, it may not be in the best interest long term for CIN to spend significant time and resources helping Avaz, which already controls 70% of the print media market. For the sake of diversity, it may be better for CIN to work with Nezavisne Novine, Oslobođenje and other more independent media.

- *Central to CIN's mission is changing the news agenda and reporting culture in Bosnia. For that to happen, CIN journalists and editors need to return to Bosnian newsrooms after their tenure at CIN ends. Job opportunities at local media outlets, particularly at the editorial level, should be explored and cultivated by CIN managers. A "re-entry handbook" should be developed that provides guidance and strategies for handling difficult situations returning CIN journalists and editors may encounter in Bosnian newsrooms.*

It is more likely that CIN reporters could write such a handbook for CIN editors.

- *A comprehensive written business plan should also be developed to guide the center's journalism goals and fundraising strategies. Such a document will help the center frame its activities and track its progress against benchmarks established in the business plan. The document will also provide invaluable guidance to the Bosnian managers who will be tasked with future management of CIN.*

CIN editors agree and have already assigned the new managing director a task to develop a CIN business plan for donors and to guide the organization past the current grant.

- *First, we strongly suggest that USAID seek a funding mechanism that will allow for greater oversight regarding CIN activities and management. USAID has extensive expertise and insight that will be beneficial to the center, particularly after management has been transferred from international staff to local leadership that may be less familiar with USAID expectations.*

USAID has been a very good partner to CIN since the beginning. CIN especially has benefited from USAID's enlightened policy of separating its role of donor from the journalism obligations of the center. CIN has a policy of providing USAID complete and unfettered access to the center's operations with the exception of its journalism process. CIN believes this relationship has helped CIN avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest and so far no media outlet has accused either party of such improprieties. Any adjustment of this agreement needs to be justified and carefully considered. If CIN ever appears to be beholden to USAID, CIN will suffer dire consequences to its credibility.

- *Third, and finally, we recommend that USAID consider post-July 2007 funding for CIN contingent upon written confirmation of a minimum of matching funds prior to disbursement of any new USAID monies. For example, CIN has indicated that, as a local organization, its budget will be approximately \$350,000 per year. In this case, CIN would be required to raise \$175,000, or half its total yearly budget from non-USAID sources. USAID could then consider making a matching grant to the center for the other half of its operating budget.*

JDG recommends a slight modification to this proposal. It proposes that USAID provide an initial \$175,000 to \$200,000 upfront in July 2007. A disbursement in July 2008 would then be contingent upon CIN meeting a matching fund goal. This gives CIN more time to meet its goal, which is sometimes necessary for an organization that can not officially show the receipt of a grant (NYU is the grant recipient and CIN's books remain empty). The USAID funding is also necessary to demonstrate acceptability by certain donors and thus leverage matching funds. Finally, many European donors are notoriously slow with disbursing funds and can be late up to one year in payments.