

Media Programming Under Fragile Conditions: A Democracy and Governance Field Guide

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1 Introduction: Why Focus on Media in Fragile Conditions?

The media play a vital role in many developing countries. Media outlets enable citizens to communicate with each other, serve as platforms for debate, anchor democratic processes, and facilitate poverty reduction and development through provision of needed information.

In states experiencing conflict, violent political upheaval, or complete collapse, the media sector is even more critical. Local and international media provide crucial humanitarian and political information in the midst of chaos. Reliable, timely news reports help people navigate their tumultuous surroundings. Media programming can also support conflict mitigation, contribute to stabilization and strengthen the accountability mechanisms that lead to democratic governance.

At the same time, the media can spread misinformation, inflame tensions and/or violence, and contribute to instability. Although the most well-known recent example is the 1994 Rwanda genocide, in which radio is widely acknowledged to have played a role in inciting the slaughter of nearly a million people, there have been other cases in which the media have been used to hasten destructive destabilization.

Because of these complexities, development professionals working under conditions of fragility need to stay closely informed about media sector developments, opportunities, and warning signs. Indeed, analyzing and potentially working with the media sector should be a high priority in any strategy dealing with states in conditions of fragility or undergoing post-conflict reconstruction. Although media programming is no panacea to the multiple challenges of working in fragile conditions, well-designed activities can make a positive contribution to both short-term stabilization and long-term peaceful development. This guide will lay out several strategic recommendations and provide resources for further information.

1.1 *Media Sector Activities: Important Distinctions*

In the donor world, the phrase “media program” may mean different things to different people. Generally, when dealing with fragile conditions, donors view the media sector as **a tool to achieve outcomes** (i.e., using media products such as PSAs, advertising spots, or dramas to accomplish immediate humanitarian or stabilization objectives), as well as **an outcome itself** (i.e., strengthening and developing the media sector as a cornerstone of long-term democratic development).

In fragile situations, particularly immediately following a conflict, donors frequently gravitate in the short term toward the former view, using the media as a means through which they can encourage such outcomes as humanitarian relief and service delivery, conflict mitigation, peaceful administration of elections, or national reconciliation. To

achieve these aims, donors deliver specific messages targeting specific populations, aiming to affect or change certain behaviors. This type of media messaging is typically known as “behavior change communication” (BCC) or “communication for development,” and tends to focus less on capacity building within the media sector than on messaging to achieve a particular outcome.

Yet the latter type of activity – working toward a strong, independent media sector as an end in itself – is equally, if not more, important to the long-term goal of stabilization and consolidated democratic reform. As one guide notes, “The news media, or journalism, remains in the forefront of peace-building initiatives because at its best, it is the safeguard of democratic governance.” (Howard, 2002) For this reason, and because there is already a robust literature on development communication in post-conflict and other unstable situations, this guide will focus primarily on this latter objective of strengthening the independent media sector under fragile conditions.

That said, it is possible and even desirable to simultaneously make use of and strengthen the media sector in states experiencing conflict or fragility. In fact, both objectives may have long-term and short-term outcomes. Ideally, use of the media to achieve other aims should help strengthen the media sector itself, through providing enhanced professional or technical skills, sustainability, or infrastructure. Likewise, use of media for specific goals can have long-term positive effects on the sector. Support for building accurate and fair reporting on internally displaced persons (IDPs), for example, also strengthens the overall professional capacity of journalists and reduces stigmatizing and inaccurate practices in the media.

Particularly when working in post-conflict and other unstable, crisis-type situations, donors frequently postpone the long-term goal of strengthening independent media in favor of message campaigns to promote stabilization and/or reconstruction. However, these objectives are not inherently opposed (although care should always be taken to distinguish between news-oriented programs and messaging-type activities). Displacing the long-term goal for the short-term goal can be detrimental to sustained peace and democratic development, as this may establish norms in the media sector that will be difficult to reverse when the country moves out of fragility. Program planners should understand that even though reducing fragility may necessitate short-term, top-down media interventions, the media sector simultaneously deserves long-term attention and locally owned capacity-building measures in order for programs to be effective and achieve lasting positive impact.

2 The Media and State Fragility: Key Issues

In previous strategy papers, USAID has distinguished between states that are vulnerable and states in crisis. *Vulnerable* states refer to those states unable or unwilling to assure provision of security and basic services to significant parts of the population, and where government legitimacy is in question. (This category includes both pre- and post-conflict states.) *States in crisis* are those in which the central government does not or cannot exert

control over its own territory, where the state is unable or unwilling to provide vital services to citizens, where government legitimacy is weak or absent, and where violent conflict is present or imminent. (USAID Fragile States Strategy, 2004) Where appropriate, this guide will distinguish between vulnerable states and states in crisis, although it acknowledges that programmatic recommendations for each may overlap significantly.

USAID's goal in these states is to reverse decline and help countries recover to a stage where transformational development is once again possible. Since research shows that fragility is correlated with ineffective or illegitimate governance, reversing decline hinges on boosting the effectiveness and legitimacy of governance in states experiencing conditions of fragility. In the political sphere, this means ensuring that political institutions and processes are acceptable to citizenry and respond adequately to citizen needs. Independent media have a strong role to play in this aspect of reversing fragility, the strategy notes. (USAID Fragile States Strategy 2004). In addition, media programs can be targeted narrowly to support individual objectives that comprise an overall fragility-reduction strategy, such as peacebuilding, elections, and so on.

2.1 The Media's Link to Fragility: Warning Signs

The media can contribute to fragility in a number of ways. Biased or inaccurate reporting can inflame ethnic or communal tensions, as can the overt manipulation of the media by ethnic, clan, or government interests. Inaccurate reporting of important development-related information can also contribute to instability: in a post-conflict situation, where reliable sources of information are few and government ability to deliver public services is weak, misleading health or sanitation information, for instance, could spark a public health crisis.

In Serbia under Milosevic (as well as elsewhere in the Balkans), for example, the media was used to fan nationalism. During the Bosnian war, the Serbian media – which was largely controlled by either the government or Milosevic cronies – attacked Bosnians and denied the existence of Serb violence against Bosnians. The media was considered a key element in Milosevic's nationalistic campaign, and is thought to have played a role in mobilizing Serbian aggression. (McClear, McClear and Graves, 2003)

Analysts have identified certain clues that indicate when a country's media sector may be vulnerable to being manipulated in a way that could increase overall instability and/or conflict. One study notes that these clues can be divided broadly into two categories: those dealing with the structure of media institutions, and those dealing with media content. Structural signs include: broad media reach and accessibility, limited plurality, little diversity of ownership (including but not limited to political party control of media outlets), low journalistic professionalism, limited political/ethnic/communal diversity in the journalism corps, and limited professional connection between domestic journalists and the international professional community. An undeveloped enabling environment for media – weak media laws and ineffective legislative and judiciary institutions – are also structural indications that media may be vulnerable. (Frohardt, 2003)

On the content side, indicators include a focus on past conflicts and ethnic animosity, manipulation of myths and stereotypes, overemphasis on certain grievances or inequities, the portrayal of conflict as inevitable or eternal, and consistently discredited alternatives to conflict. In general, media content that creates a climate of fear tends to engender widespread feelings that pre-emptive action and other justifications for violence are justified. (Frohardt, 2003)

These structural and content indicators may be present in both vulnerable and crisis states. The fluidity with which states move between these categories means that even in post-conflict states, the media may still contribute to fragility in some fashion. However, the presence of some of these media indicators in a country does not automatically mean that media are contributing to fragility, or, more narrowly, conflict. (Broad media reach and accessibility, for instance, can be a positive thing – and is often considered an objective – under normal, non-fragile circumstances.) A positive showing on some indicators should be factored into the overall country context, taking into account existing conflict drivers and other sources of fragility.

2.2 How Media Activities Can Help Reduce Fragility

Indicators such as the ones mentioned above provide a road map of sorts to identifying appropriate programs that both support and use the media to bolster state resilience and contribute to stabilization and recovery. The following categories cover the major areas of media programming in fragile conditions, but are not exhaustive.

2.2.1 Independent Media Development

As one study notes, “the heart and soul of good conflict reporting is solid journalism – fact-based, moderate in tone and balanced in sources and subjects.” Establishing a solid foundation for the development of independent media is always a crucial task in any fragile environment, although the sequencing of activities may vary depending on the situation.

By addressing a number of the cautionary signposts mentioned in the above section, programs to strengthen independent media development ensure the overall health of the media sector and help inoculate it against overt manipulation. In the Serbia case mentioned above, for instance, it was support to independent media – in particular, the radio sector, which Milosevic had overlooked – that proved crucial in breaking the government’s nationalistic grip on Serbian media. USAID programs supported the development of sustainable, independent and professional media that provided Serbians with the tools they needed to both topple the Milosevic regime and consolidate their developing democracy. (McClear, McClear and Graves, 2003)

While USAID has been broadly engaged in supporting independent media since the late 1980s, it began focusing on the sub-sector of media and fragility primarily in the 1990s.

As previous USAID publications have noted, activities have generally been situation-driven and relatively small, and have concentrated on individual countries in Africa and Europe. The bulk of this type of media assistance has been channeled toward situations of post-conflict reconstruction, where several unique opportunities exist. In particular, programs in these situations have focused on establishing legal frameworks, assisting new governments in establishing regulatory bodies, training a professional cadre of journalists and other media professionals, and ensuring economic viability and survival of the sector. (Kumar, 2004)

Support for independent media does not mean sticking to a single template in all situations, however. As noted throughout this paper, context should drive programming, and there are no hard-and-fast rules for media development in these situations.
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In both fragile and transformational development states, support for independent media can be broken down roughly into five general categories. While the focus in traditionally developing states may be refining or consolidating key areas, the emphasis in states experiencing fragility should be on building the basics and paying particular attention to windows of opportunity, as well as those areas that are sensitive to the dynamics of conflict.

Infrastructure/Equipment/Access: Restoring – or installing – basic media infrastructure (from transmission towers to production equipment) is often a key first step when implementing media sector programs in post-conflict environments. An initial media assessment, taking into account population needs as well as structural and cultural issues, should indicate the type of media most appropriate for the country. Radio is frequently the first sector that donors turn to in a fragile or post-conflict state, given its low cost and ability to penetrate widely. Donors should also consider creatively incorporating the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), such as Internet-enabled computers and cell phones, which are enabling new forms of journalism and accountability mechanisms. At the same time, while much attention has focused on ICT in recent years, these technologies are often most effective when strategically deployed, or when used in combination with older forms of media, to ensure that information is accessible by wide portions of the population.

In states where there is existing infrastructure, program planners should consider how that media is being used. If the media is being used to inflame tensions – as was the case with television in Serbia – then donors may wish to consider the use of alternative media (such as the Internet) to counter incitement. This may include building out additional infrastructure, or may incorporate the use of international broadcast outlets if the situation is extremely bad.

Media Skills, Professionalism, and Content: In the most extreme cases, there may be very few media professionals in the country. Those that exist may operate within a divided and/or propaganda-oriented media sector. Such situation may necessitate a short-term

focus on specific content production, transitioning to a broader focus on professionalism. In conflict situations, the media sector may suffer from problems of professionalism linked to the proliferation of highly partisan media outlets, where the entire media sector may be ‘captured’ by one or two political entities. In addition, there may be specialized training needs in fragile conditions, such as those related to covering elections, peace processes or overall reconstruction. None of these challenges can be met by short-term fixes; building media skills and professionalism necessitates strategic thinking about strengthening the long-term capacity of the sector, from university education to mid-career training and certification to working with whole newsrooms or media outlets to ensure that all levels of staff understand the core tenets of professional journalism practice. In the short term, content dissemination may take precedence over long-term capacity-building, but even production activities should incorporate an element of training.

Business Environment and Sustainability: In an environment of high intensity and extreme urgency, sustainability issues are often considered last. Early funding decisions, however, can have a long-term impact on the development of a financially sustainable private media sector. Pouring resources into transforming the state media sector may deprive private outlets of the level playing field they hope to compete on; at the same time, concentrating on a handful of high-profile private media outlets may overlook opportunities with community media or the public service broadcaster. Long-term development of a financially sustainable, independent media sector requires development of the corresponding financial infrastructure: functioning, transparent media markets; a sophisticated and regulated advertising sector; technical skills and executive expertise in media management; separation of business and editorial departments; and so on. Non-profit forms of media – community radios and newspapers – must also learn how to sustain operations and raise funds when the initial level of donor interest drops off. Finally, transforming state broadcasters into true public service broadcasters requires understanding of comparative regulatory and financing models.

Media Enabling Environment: Developing a functioning regulatory system for media is often overlooked until too late. The enabling environment is crucial to ensure fairly distributed frequencies and open licensing processes. The legal framework forms a significant part of this enabling environment, as it enables policymakers and media outlets to deal effectively with thorny issues such as regulation of hate speech. Regulators may wish to set up an independent commission to deal with media incitement to violence, particularly in a country that has previously experienced incitement. Media-related legislation and regulation, such as freedom of information, libel and licensing laws, should be addressed early and often when engaging the media sector in fragile conditions. In addition, attention should be paid to the institutions that shape the enabling environment: the legislature, judiciary, and occasionally executive. In post-conflict situations in particular, these institutions are frequently unable – due to lack of capacity – or unwilling to take the steps necessary to ensure a completely free and independent media sector.

Media Association Building: Media-related civil society organizations (CSO), whether journalists' unions, professional associations, freedom of the press watchdogs or media monitoring groups, complement the regulatory system in enhancing the enabling environment. These media CSOs can advocate broadly on issues, push for change in the legal environment, and set the climate for media business development success. In many fragile environments, media CSOs either do not exist or have been tightly controlled by government.

Text Box: Supporting Independent Media in Post-Transition Indonesia

After Indonesia's political transition in 1998, the country faced several pressing challenges relating to governance, conflict, and territorial integrity. In this fragile environment, the media was seen to play a crucial role in the country's transition to a more stable, consolidated democracy. USAID, through its partner Internews, supported the transformation of the formerly state-dominated media system into a pluralistic, vibrant independent media sector.

USAID's media assistance programs worked on a number of fronts to ensure that the transition went smoothly. Media law reform was tackled early and made a priority. Radio stations received not just journalism training, but management training as well. Ultimately, stations began producing their own news programs, an unprecedented development. More media outlets focused on incorporating public views, either through active solicitation of non-expert commentary in news reports, or through establishment of new, interactive programming. Several years after the transition, the independent media sector underpins civil society and contributes to the ongoing push for transparent and accountable governance.

Although these five categories represent the primary programmatic areas for media activities in fragile conditions, this does not imply that the role of the media is the same in every case. In each country, development practitioners should carefully consider a) what role, if any, the media already plays in contributing to fragility; and b) how the media might contribute to more representative and resilient governance. If the media is already a significant driver of conflict, this would considerably affect whether and how donors might engage with the sector.

2.2.2 Media and Conflict Resolution

In addition to broad support for the development of an independent, pluralistic media sector, USAID has also supported more narrowly targeted programs that use the media to contribute to specific peace-building objectives. To accomplish these ends, the programs tend to use many different forms of media, branching out beyond the sphere of journalism: PSAs, jingles, complex message campaigns, songs, and so-called 'intended outcome' dramas, in which the storyline is carefully developed to achieve a peace building aim. In Burundi in the mid 1990s, for instance, radio production program Studio Ijambo was set up as a direct response to the hate radio and divided press that had spread

through the region. Studio Ijambo produced several products such as a soap opera called “Our Neighbors, Our Selves,” and a magazine show called “Pillars of Humanity” (known as “Heroes”). (Hagos 2001)

TEXT BOX: Countering A Divided Press in Macedonia

In the early 1990s, the Macedonian press and its audience were sharply divided along Macedonian-Albanian-Turkish ethnic lines. One NGO, Search for Common Ground, set up multi-ethnic journalist teams that initially set out to report together on non-political issues such as health care and education. SCFG sought to get all existing newspapers on board and ensured that each jointly written article was published identically in different papers. SCFG estimates that over the life of the program, most Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Roma journalists passed through this program. (Melone et al, 2002)

It should be noted that many of these programs go beyond support for straight news journalism to incorporate a number of other types of media: radio dramas, television soap operas, and so on. These programs typically use a conflict-resolution approach whose specific objective is to use the media to build peace and reduce conflict. This inherently normative approach is at times at odds with conventional approaches to supporting the development of independent media, which emphasizes strict neutrality and objectivity on the part of journalists. Recently, many media assistance practitioners have sought to identify ways to support internationally recognized norms of professional journalism while incorporating a conflict-sensitive approach. (See text box.)

TEXT BOX: News Media as Advocate or Neutral Observer?

“Professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced.” – Conflict Sensitive Journalism, IMPACS.

Both conventional support for independent media and use of media for peace-building purposes are becoming increasingly common in post-conflict and other fragile conditions. Their approaches, however, sometimes diverge. Conventional support for independent media traditionally stresses internationally recognized tenets of professional journalism such as fairness, objectivity, neutrality and balance. Newer media-related peace-building approaches tend to stress the use of different types of media to resolve conflict, underpinned by the normative assumption that journalists should actively work to resolve conflict and seek peace.

The idea that the news media should take on an advocacy role is controversial among media professionals around the world. Those who argue that the news media should actively seek to resolve conflict say that it is impossible for journalists to truly remain neutral or objective in a conflict; that all journalists bring to their profession innate

personal and cultural values; and that the very act of observing and reporting on a conflict makes journalists and media professionals part of the dynamics of the conflict. Moreover, they argue, even professional reporting on certain news events – such as hate crimes or ethnically charged violence – may lead to an increase in fragility or conflict in certain situations. Recognizing these facts, they argue, journalists and other media professionals should at the very least be sensitized to conflict dynamics, and preferably make an active effort to facilitate peace-building dialogues in their communities. (Howard, 2002)

Supporters of conventional independent media development programs argue that encouraging journalists to take on an advocacy role of any kind – even one that supports constructive goals such as peace-building – instrumentalizes the media and changes journalists from neutral observers into direct actors. They note that training journalists to think of themselves as actors in a conflict first and reporters second has the potential to have long-lasting negative effects on the professional development of the journalism sector, and contravenes internationally accepted professional norms. As some put it, “Propaganda for peace is still propaganda.” (Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), 2004). Moreover, journalists who are perceived to be ‘non-neutral’, or collaborating in some way with parties to a conflict, may be at heightened risk.

An evolving approach seeks middle ground between the two. It recognizes the need for journalists to adhere to core professional values, but incorporates the position that such values can accommodate a more sophisticated understanding of what drives conflict as well as the role of journalists in covering conflict. It also advocates a balanced approach to conflict coverage that highlights areas of agreement as well as discord. (IWPR, 2004) Sample activities in this middle ground include: multi-ethnic teams of reporters; ethnically integrated newsrooms and joint publications; specialized training in using a conflict-sensitive lens in reporting and digging beneath the surface of entrenched positions; and establishing neutral or cross-cutting journalist unions and self-generated codes of conduct.

2.2.3 Synergies with Other Priorities In Fragile and Post-Conflict Situations

Media activities may also present distinct synergies with other activities in fragile and post-conflict situations. Donors should consider the ways media activities can enhance these as well as other processes and objectives.

2.2.3.1 Elections

The media can be an important component in the administration of peaceful elections in fragile environments. Elections are frequently complicated, and doubly so in a fragile or post-conflict environment where such processes may be unfamiliar. The media can play a key role in informing the citizenry about what to expect during an election, and can ensure that citizens know their rights and responsibilities as well as the rights and responsibilities of candidates, political parties, government bodies, and other

organizations. Civic journalism-based elections programs can help bring citizens into the process of setting the election agenda through public forums and publication of voters' guides in which candidates are asked to address citizens' concerns.

In addition, the media can play an important watchdog role during elections. Media can help publicize the results of a quick count, ensuring that official tabulation is fair and transparent. A professional and well-functioning media can also point out irregularities in the process and maintain basic levels of transparency. Political parties, civil society organizations and actors such as the election administration body can all be trained in using outreach to the media to make sure that basic information about their positions, platforms and processes are being conveyed to the public. An electoral media commission may be established to adjudicate violations of the electoral law involving the media or candidates' use of the media.

Media outlets themselves have a role to play in covering the election, and media monitoring groups can ensure that coverage conforms to equal-time regulations and allows for fair treatment of all candidates. Because elections can be tense, particularly in fragile environments, media monitoring groups can ensure that media outlets are not exacerbating divisions or inciting irresponsible behavior.

TEXT BOX: Media Supporting Elections in Iraq

In Iraq, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) supported a 32-episode program on the constitutional process, airing on state broadcaster Al Iraqiya. The initiative brought together multi-ethnic, multi-faith audiences to discuss – in a neutral, calm setting – the various topics surrounding the constitutional process, including treatment of minorities, federalism, and women's rights. IREX also supported another elections program which allowed audiences to participate in discussions on key issues with candidates and parties.

2.2.3.2 Peace Process

The media is a critical actor in any peace process, since citizens rely on the media not only for basic information, but also to explain complex negotiations and frame overall issues. Actors within the peace process also rely on the media to provide feedback and disseminate their own positions. A responsible, informed media can play a crucial role in ensuring a democratic process and informed citizenry. An unprofessional, sensationalistic media can skew perceptions of the peace process and fuel expectations that concessions are dangerous, compromise is unacceptable, and negotiations are constantly on the verge of collapse. (Wolfsfeld, 2001)

To the extent that there is an existing media sector during conduct of a peace process, potential programs might encourage media outlets to report on the process objectively and responsibly. Possible activities include training journalists on how to cover peace processes without sensationalizing or highlighting only conflict; information

dissemination on the nuts and bolts of the peace process; and media packages tied to town hall discussions that encourage citizens to gain a deeper understanding of the process.

In the long term, the media can contribute to peace-building through professional coverage of war crime trials and truth-and-reconciliation commissions. In relevant situations, it may be useful to consider programs that train journalists on procedural aspects of such events, as well as sensitivity in covering these issues. Since trials or other related activity may take place far away from the country, it may be worthwhile training and sending local journalists to cover such events to ensure that the citizenry feels a sense of connection to the process.

When dealing with journalists, donors should keep in mind that peace process-related activities should not dictate to the media how issues should be covered. Rather, journalists should be equipped with a range of skills to ensure their coverage is as balanced and professional as possible.

2.2.3.3 Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration

Media activities can also support the process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR). Targeted media civic education campaigns can ensure ex-combatants are aware of DDR programs such as transitional assistance and training, skill development programs, and their role in their communities. Additionally, the media can serve an important function by helping informants understand the various economic and social opportunities available to them during the reintegration process, such as incentives for the private industry to hire ex-combatants.

In this case, a broad-based media program that also focuses on creating a viable private media sector may help generate the kinds of economic opportunities that complement DDR programs.

2.2.3.4 Service Provision

Effective service delivery is always a priority in post-conflict or unstable situations. The media can help facilitate effective service delivery in a number of ways. In the health sector, for instance, media programs can ensure that wide swaths of the population obtain vital information about key health programs, such as inoculations or prenatal care. In the education sector, distance-learning programs conveyed through radio may reach otherwise isolated populations in disaster-affected or war-torn areas. Radio programs may also be useful for civic education programs that address key reconstruction or reconciliation issues.

Community radio can also play a role in ensuring that local communities circulate vital information, shaped by local needs. If appropriate (and if the infrastructure situation allows), community radio stations can also be paired with an Internet connection and

terminal, which local communities can use as an information kiosk to retrieve necessary information from the government or international sources.

3 Choosing Media Activities for Different Situations

There are some media programmatic activities that are more suited to vulnerable rather than crisis environments, and vice versa. In all cases, specific country context should determine the appropriateness of each activity.

3.1.1.1 States Vulnerable to Fragility

For states that are vulnerable (including pre- or post-conflict) as opposed to actively in crisis, there are a number of options for working with the media to consolidate peace, stability and more effective and legitimate governance. Illustrative activities might include:

- *Training in basic journalism:* Particularly in situations where there are few or no guidelines and journalists/editors may be isolated from their international professional counterparts, holistic training (emphasizing all aspects of the newsroom) in the basic principles of professional journalism may be an important first step. There may be little or no existing capacity in the country.
- *Peace journalism training:* Sensitizing journalists to key concepts in conflict resolution may make them better able to portray the complexities of conflict, as well as cover key aspects of conflict more thoroughly, such as peace-building, dialogue, and so on.
- *Targeted training:* In states vulnerable to conflict and instability, issues such as service delivery, post-conflict elections, anti-corruption/transparency, and DDR (demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of combatants) may be paramount. Media can play a constructive role in covering these issues.
- *Production projects:* Productions generally consist of TV or radio programs targeted at a specific issue or audience, and may form a flagship element of a comprehensive media program. They can be produced by local staff hired for the purpose, or subcontracted out to local production teams when possible. Production activities can play a major training role, as trainees must deal with real-life scenarios and audiences.
- *Community radio:* In situations where there is little or no media infrastructure, a community radio initiative may be appropriate in order to ensure that communities have a voice and can inform themselves. Community radio stations are low-cost, and can serve as a springboard for local community mobilization.
- *Media business strengthening:* Although grants and direct equipment transfers may be necessary in the beginning, donors should work to ensure that media outlets develop the skills to function on their own, after external funding disappears. For private sector media outlets, this means strengthening their capacity to draw advertising revenue and function as businesses while maintaining editorial independence and integrity.

- *Media regulation/legislation*: Particularly in post-conflict situations, where the state is trying to re-establish norms and draw up guidelines, guidance on media legislation is crucial. Donors may consider bringing in international experts who can advise on how to craft an internationally acceptable, locally appropriate set of media laws that create an enabling environment for free and independent media. In cases where hate speech has been prevalent in the media, it may be necessary to devise a temporary media regulatory body to act as an independent arbitration body in resolving media-related disputes.
- *Media legal cadre*: Developing an indigenous legal cadre proficient in international and local media law and precedents is crucial to ensuring that there is domestic capacity to create and protect the enabling environment for media once international support pulls out. It may also be necessary in cases where the government is inclined to harass or threaten journalists with legal action; creation of a legal defense fund may also be warranted.
- *Public service broadcasting*: In some cases, it may be crucial to lay the groundwork for reform of the state broadcaster as soon as possible, particularly if there is room to transform it into a genuine public service broadcaster. The PBS can play an important role in addressing minority viewpoints and concerns, as well as other issues not likely to be taken up by profit-oriented private sector media. Care should be taken, however, not to develop the PBS at the expense of all other types of media.
- *Association building*: Media professionals and organizations that exist in fragile conditions may come under threat from both state and non-state actors. Professional associations that link into a wider global network are one way to ensure that any abuses are brought to international attention. Moreover, conferences and associations may also be used as a venue to bring together journalists who are divided along ethnic lines.

TEXT BOX: The Kosovo Temporary Media Commissioner

Setting up a temporary media commission is one model for dealing with the regulatory aspects of establishing an independent media sector in a post-conflict environment. The Office of the Kosovo Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) was established in June 2000 by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). As the temporary broadcast regulatory agency charged with promoting independent, professional media in Kosovo, the TMC dealt with allocation of broadcast licenses, formulated media codes of conduct, and drafted election coverage rules. The TMC has also been responsible for setting media policy and monitoring media activity. It has ventured into controversy by shutting down broadcast outlets operating without licenses, and by reprimanding or halting publications that it claims have incited violence. Some press freedom NGOs see this type of action as inhibiting media freedom and independence, while others say it is necessary in a post-conflict environment where ethnic and other tensions remain intense. The TMC is in the process of being replaced by a permanent Independent Media Commission.

3.1.1.2 States In Crisis

When government is either nonexistent or unable to control territory, and where conflict may be violent and intense, the options for working with the media are more limited. For one thing, the media itself is more vulnerable – both journalists and large pieces of equipment, such as transmission towers, may come under attack. Equipment disbursed by donors may end up in the wrong hands, so tracking key pieces of infrastructure is important. In addition, individual media outlets can be at risk of being co-opted by actors in the conflict, and programs must be careful not to compromise or endanger individual staff and participants. Finally, the political space and dynamics of conflict may limit what can be productively done in terms of building professional skills in the sector.

At the same time, the very urgency of the situation may mean that working with media is even more necessary than usual. Despite the increased constraints, there are still several options for working with the media in such situations.

- *Measures to counter hate media:* In situations where the mass media incites violence, international actors may need to step in to provide alternatives, or, in the most extreme scenario, effectively shut down hate media. For media donors and implementers, the latter step is generally outside their scope; however, the former is one that can be accomplished through identifying alternate means of content transmission, reconciliation programming, and content that specifically works to achieve conflict resolution – as the situation permits.
- *Humanitarian broadcasting:* In situations where a collapsed state has left behind an information and service-provision vacuum, basic humanitarian information can fulfill a much-needed demand.
- *International broadcasting and alternative media:* When the existing political or infrastructure situation makes it impossible to work with local media, it may be necessary to use international broadcasting to reach local populations. In these cases, care should be taken not to turn international broadcasting into a long-term remedy that supplants or crowds out fledgling local independent media. (See text box.) One way to deal with this is by providing local media professionals the opportunity to broadcast externally. Alternative media, such as the Internet and satellite broadcasts, may also be useful in reaching certain audiences.
- *Training for journalists in reporting from war zones:* Assuming the country already has a professional media cadre, training and equipping reporters for reporting on and from war zones is an option. This might include provision of necessary gear and protective equipment, as well as training in what to expect upon encountering belligerents.

TEXT BOX: The Role of International Broadcasting

At times, it may be impossible to work with media in a crisis state. There may be no domestic infrastructure, or the infrastructure and outlets may be wholly controlled by an illegitimate government bent on fomenting conflict. In this case, international broadcasting – television, Internet and (usually) radio signals broadcast from outside the

country's borders – assumes an elevated role. In places such as Sudan, for instance, international broadcasting has played an important role in keeping the country's population informed.

As always, however, care must be taken to ensure that international broadcasting is both appropriate and does not crowd out relevant local efforts. As one commentator pointed out in the case of an international broadcasting effort in Somalia: “The first problem arose when the programme was broadcast out of Addis Ababa by people speaking Somali with Ethiopian accents . . . the Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia was still foremost in the minds of the local radio audience. The project was for all these reasons wholly impractical, and may well have been counterproductive.” (Hieber, 2002)

Once a fragile situation stabilizes and the environment for working with media becomes more favorable, there may still be a role for international broadcasting. Privately owned satellite channels and advertisers are increasingly partnering with donors, particularly in media messaging campaigns. International advertising agencies have become partners with USAID in finding media placement for PSAs on avian influenza in Asia, for example. However, donors should be aware of the sustainability issues involved for local media, and ensure that the presence of international broadcasting or advertising agencies does not hamper the development of an independent local media or advertising sector.

4 Program Design

When designing media programs for fragile conditions, parameters should always be informed by an in-depth analysis of several factors, including: a) the overall political climate and conflict environment; b) the overall media environment; c) the media's existing role, if any, in driving or combating fragility; c) the likelihood that donor programs can achieve a positive impact through work in the media sector. As in all fragile environments, the first rule of work in the media sector should be: do no harm.

4.1 Quick Assessment

Ideally, a quick media assessment should be carried out prior to undertaking any media activities. An assessment assures that local needs are driving any proposed media activities, provides essential ground-truthing, and serves as a useful guide in any future programming. The media assessment should also include, if possible, an information-needs and preferences assessment of the local population. While sometimes costly, performing the necessary audience research upfront can avoid wasted effort over the lifetime of a project. Finally, the media assessment should be informed by an existing conflict, fragility and/or democracy and governance assessment of the country.

Understandably, in some fragile contexts, donors do not have the time and luxury of carrying out a full media assessment before embarking on activities. In this case, it is useful to maintain close contacts with local partners and other donors, and if possible

conduct regular “mini-assessments” along with scheduled program monitoring and evaluation to ensure that activities are achieving their intended targets and are suitable to local conditions. Information-sharing among donors can also lead to reduced activity duplication and complementarity.

4.2 Illustrative Program Framework

The following sample framework is intended to be illustrative only, rather than a blueprint for sequencing media initiatives. It lays out some of the broad issues that donors and media implementers should be considering, according to phase and type of activity. Not all the activities suggested will be relevant in every case. Country context should always determine the exact sequencing and scope of activity.

	Initial Response	Reconstruction	Transformation	Consolidation
Analysis	Conduct quick media assessment, informed by overall conflict assessment, population information needs, and audience research. As programs are designed, develop monitoring and evaluation plan	Conduct monitoring and evaluation of initial response efforts to ensure local feedback, fine-tune information delivery, and set stage for long-term program design As appropriate, conduct audience research to gauge effect of content-related programs	Continue monitoring, evaluation and research efforts, making adjustments to programs as needed If situation has changed significantly, a more thorough media assessment and program redesign may be appropriate.	Continue monitoring , evaluation and research efforts, making adjustments to programs as needed
Infrastructure	If needed, put in place or distribute enabling infrastructure (i.e., transmission towers, hand-crank radios, printing presses etc.) to ensure population can access information	If needed, re-visit infrastructure issue to ensure needs are being met; conduct maintenance and begin to train local personnel in maintenance.	Ensure sustainability in infrastructure provision and maintenance	Ensure sustainability in infrastructure provision and maintenance
Media as a tool	As needed, provide national/regional/local humanitarian or security-related news and information, through appropriate mix of media: radio/tv talk shows, radio/tv drama, PSA/jingles, billboards, posters, handbills, theater, video-on-wheels, newspapers/magazines, satellite, the Internet, cell phones. As appropriate, utilize international broadcasting in a way that does not undermine future local efforts.	Engage in tactical information campaigns on specific issues as appropriate: voter registration, human rights, development information. Engage in spot media campaigns to reduce tensions in hot areas. Involve local communities (including but not limited to civil society organizations) in production of local information, to demonstrate tangible results in early phase. If appropriate, implement media-related conflict transformation activities, such as “intended outcome	As appropriate, continue to engage in tactical development communication and other activities. Ensure that media messaging activities contain progressively more capacity-building components, complementing programs undertaken to strengthen the media sector.	As appropriate, continue to engage in tactical development communication and other activities. Ensure that media messaging activities contain progressively more capacity-building components, complementing programs undertaken to strengthen the media sector.

		programming.”		
Media as an outcome	<p>Provide direct grants and equipment transfers to individual media outlets, keeping in mind absorptive capacity and long-term sustainability. Provide basic training to media professionals, focusing on mainstreaming relevant issues in news coverage.</p> <p>Assess condition of state-broadcaster (if relevant) and, as appropriate, consider next steps for possible transformation into public service broadcaster.</p> <p>Facilitate communication between media, civil society, and government groups, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Provide basic training to media professionals. Work with journalists on conflict issues – “peace journalism” approach to encourage conflict-sensitive but professional reporting. If relevant, plan for transformation of state broadcaster into public service broadcaster; lay groundwork for developing private media.</p> <p>Support indigenous media-sector associations to enhance enabling environment.</p> <p>Ensure developing legal framework enables development of independent media; synergies with constitution-drafting and other rule of law activities.</p> <p>Consider, if appropriate, models to deal with incendiary speech, such as monitoring boards (caveat: proper board composition, implementation and monitoring are key to ensure board functions independently and responsibly)</p>	<p>Develop institutional capacity to train journalists domestically. Foster university-level (if appropriate) and other institute-based journalism and media programs.</p> <p>Support other ways to ensure long-term development of sector – foundations, trusts, professional associations, etc.</p> <p>Support the emergence of media-sector CSOs to act as media and freedom-of-expression watchdogs.</p> <p>Train media law experts; engage in continual work on media legal issues.</p> <p>Promote the development of a pluralistic media: public service, community, and private outlets; ensure regulation encourages the emergence of diverse voices.</p>	<p>Support the continuing education and skill development of the media professional cadre.</p> <p>Assist development of advertising markets, ratings systems, and media financing. May include working with the advertising sector, publishers, banks and other lenders, independent audit boards, etc.</p> <p>Assist with legal, regulatory, and – if necessary – constitutional reform to enable a free media environment; further expand cadre of media legal experts.</p> <p>As appropriate, complete process of transforming state broadcaster into public service broadcaster. Raise general public awareness of the role and importance of independent media; introduce idea of media ombudsman at individual outlets.</p>

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation in the media sector has developed considerably over the last several years, but is still far from an exact science. Different groups – implementers, donors, and academics – have come up with various ways of monitoring a program’s progress, as well as attempting to evaluate its impact. The larger media assistance community is still engaged in an ongoing discussion about monitoring and evaluation, as well as about the types of indicators that should be used at both the country level and the program level.

USAID has funded the Media Sustainability Index (MSI) in Eastern Europe, and is now expanding MSI coverage to the Middle East. The MSI scores countries on five broad-based indicators, which should capture the objectives of most conventional media assistance programs. They are: free speech, professional journalism, plurality of news sources, business management, and supporting institutions. These are then broken down into sub-indicators that delve into more detail in each of the categories.

Broad-based indicators such as the MSI and the Freedom House Freedom of the Press study may provide an overall look at the state of a country's media sector, but generally are not specific enough to determine the impact of a particular media program. Country indicators can, however, be combined with extremely localized indicators and feedback to produce a balanced evaluation report. For instance, in a situation where the objective is to develop professional journalism, progress on broad country indicators can be measured against analysis of media content from outlets that have received training. These can also be compared against content from outlets that have not received training; and all of this data can be combined again with participant feedback, independent media monitoring reports, and firsthand observation by implementers.

If possible, easy metrics should be avoided. A project aiming to bolster independent media in a post-transition state might, for instance, identify how many journalists have been trained over the life of the program. But measuring how many journalists pass through a specific program is one thing; determining the overall effect of this program on the media sector is another, and determining the impact of the sector on the country's overall political situation is another yet again. Ideally, basic metrics and benchmarks would be combined with participant feedback on training effectiveness, as well as follow-up content analysis and audience/readership research to determine if journalists who enrolled in the training program subsequently produced articles that demonstrated a sustained increase in professionalism. Incorporating a variety of evaluation measures can help ensure that the M&E component reflects not merely program effectiveness but overall program effect at both the sectoral and broader country level. Contracting an overall assessment out to an independent analytical firm may be one option for donors who do not have the in-house capacity or funding to do it on their own.

6 Lessons Learned

6.1 Think Long Term, Act Short Term

Timelines in post-conflict and other unstable situations are shortened, and the pressure to get programs up and running immediately is intense. In such situations, donors may need to act quickly, without ample time for assessment and planning. Nonetheless, they need to consider carefully how to ensure that immediate interventions incorporate local ownership and set the stage for long-lasting positive impact. Donors should also weigh the possibility that their short-term actions may leave a negative impact on the media sector, such as putting journalists and others at risk.

Some media programs in fragile environments have focused exclusively on training journalists how to be conflict sensitive, or how to report on pressing issues such as elections or security issues, while neglecting the fact that basic professional skills have been left unaddressed. Meanwhile, a preponderance of development communication messages may contribute to the creation of a culture of "pay for play," where the media becomes accustomed to solely producing information on demand for donors, political

parties, or other entities. Ultimately, unprofessional reporting – even when well-intentioned – can be counterproductive.

Short-term media interventions – such as messaging campaigns or intended-outcome programming – should be designed, whenever possible, to advance the growth of an independent media sector in the long term. For instance, a development communication project might include a capacity building component to train staff how to cover or produce such programming on their own in the future. If journalists are involved, donors should ensure that, if necessary, basic skills are passed along.

Media regulation and legislation should be incorporated into media planning from the beginning. Collective wisdom gleaned from media programs globally shows that it is crucial to a) develop the legal framework early, incorporating input from the local media community; b) seed a cadre of media law experts that can provide continued advice to parliament, local councils, NGOs, etc. If there are none existing, think about developing media law curricula as part of legal education reform efforts, and whether there may be existing pockets of relevant expertise (returning expatriates, for instance) who can be tapped in the short term. On the regulatory side, it is important to encourage the emergence of a credible, professional independent broadcast regulator to handle process-intensive (and content-sensitive) issues such as frequency allocation, broadcasting license requirements and applications, and dealing with incendiary broadcasting.

In general, although there will be early pressure to focus on equipment distribution (radios, transmission towers, printing presses) and direct grants to media outlets, donors should take care to maintain a long-term emphasis on building local capacity. Moreover, donors should avoid focusing on “hot spots” in the news, then moving on before fledgling programs are able to stand on their own.

6.2 Ensure Locally Appropriate and Locally Owned Activities

When it comes to content, the lesson is a very simple one: Know your audience. Media sector activities cannot be cut and pasted from one cultural environment to another (or even, sometimes, within the same country). As much as possible, allowing local consultation and input into design and implementation of media programs – i.e., radio shows or intended outcome dramas – enhances the legitimacy of the activity as well as the credibility of any programming or message generated.

When the goal is to support the independent media sector broadly, through training and other activities, it is still vital to incorporate local expertise into the design of activities. Donors should make every effort to seek local partners who possess detailed local experience as well as legitimacy. The best training efforts can fail if they are perceived to be dictated from abroad, or from a local source that lacks the trust and respect of the grassroots community it serves.

6.3 Work with Credible, Experienced Implementing Partners

Once credibility in media activities is lost, it is extremely difficult – if not impossible – to reclaim. For that reason, selecting media implementing partners – whether international or domestic – with relevant expertise in media activities is paramount. Contractors and implementers with specific expertise in military-focused strategic communication or psychological operations do not have the appropriate skill sets for transforming state media and fostering the development of an independent media sector, and vice versa. Because the media sector is so high-profile, missteps or inexperience on the part of contractors will not only be visible but likely highly publicized and detrimental to donor efforts.

In many post-conflict contexts in particular, there may be multiple bilateral and multilateral actors engaging in a variety of activities in the media sphere: public diplomacy, psychological operations, development communication, etc. While recognizing that these activities often take place simultaneously during complex emergencies, donors focusing on independent media development should take care to ensure that programs in this sphere remain firewalled from psychological operations and other persuasion campaigns. This is crucial for maintaining the integrity and credibility of the programs, their participants, and the donor.

6.4 Carefully Consider Contextual Factors

Contextual factors are always important, but even more so under conditions of fragility. Any media activity – whether training journalists, broadcasting intended outcome programming, or donating equipment to media outlets or individuals – should be sensitive to not merely the local conditions, but the timing (and timeline) of the proposed activity. Being sensitive to historical and current perceptions of conflict are also important in ensuring that any initiative is grounded and credible.

Another issue that requires nuanced understanding of context is branding. New requirements for USAID require clear labeling of USAID-funded products and activities. Although funding sources should never be concealed, highlighted U.S. government funding for media projects can give the appearance that the independence of media outlets receiving assistance may be compromised. Any perception that a media outlet or media activity is merely a public relations exercise will immediately undermine the credibility of the endeavor. A low-key approach can provide a good balance between transparency about the source of funding and sensitivity to these issues. If needed, waivers can be sought for some media programs.

6.5 Focus on Sustainability

While direct funding for media outlets may be the only means necessary to jump-start a media sector in the beginning, this may lead to practices that do not support financial

sustainability of the sector. Donors need to be sensitive about transferring large amounts of funding to a small handful of media outlets that may not be able to absorb that amount of inflow. Moreover, donor patterns set at the beginning of the media funding process can set expectations for the future in the media sector – including expectations about equipment provision, inflated staff salaries, etc.

A key lesson, then, is that donors try not to set precedents for donor dependency in the beginning, even though there will be immense pressure to immediately disburse large amounts of funding. At the very least, communication with other donors will ensure that USAID planners understand how to act in complementarity with other funders in the sector.

While international broadcasting may be a necessary feature of media activity in the early stages (or even the latter stages) of post-conflict reconstruction, it does not necessarily inculcate local capacity in the media sector. Donors should try to ensure that international broadcasting initiatives also have an element of long-term capacity building.

That said, not all media activities must be geared towards being indefinitely maintained over the long-term. Radio programming that is intended to reach a certain population within a certain time frame to communicate specific information – for instance, on voter civic education, or specific peace-building initiatives – need not necessarily be stretched out into a long-term activity if the activity itself does not warrant it. Only those activities that show promise of building long-term capacity in the sector should feature a built-in sustainability component.

6.6 Avoid Donor-Driven Projects and Overlap

In fragile environments, where the local government is likely to be both weak and unresponsive, donors need to be careful not to assume they've been given a blank canvas upon which to program various activities. While some degree of donor direction is likely and probably necessary in fragile conditions, it is still important to ensure a participatory process of consultation and program design when considering media activities. Overly donor-driven projects may suffer from conceptual weakness, problems in implementation, and low levels of effectiveness and sustainability.

In the wake of a conflict or natural disaster, multiple donors tend to rush in, all brandishing the same great idea. Whenever possible, it is best to share information on activities and if possible ensure that programs do not overlap. Too much concentration of funding in one area may lead to sustainability problems in the sector, as noted above. It may be particularly useful for donors to pool and share resources on various assessment needs, so that at the very least all donors share some baseline knowledge about the media environment.

7 Other Resources

This guide is not intended to be an exhaustive resource on working with media under post-conflict and other fragile conditions. The literature on communications for development and social change is extensive, for example, and cannot be usefully summarized here. The following links provide directions to further resources on many of the issues noted in this guide. The references section at the end of this guide is another useful tool for further information.

The Communications Initiative: A multi-donor effort to share experiences, research, training, evaluations and strategic planning in communication for development and social change. <http://www.comminit.com/>

International Center for Journalists (ICFJ): ICFJ, a journalist-oriented media assistance NGO, runs media development programs worldwide. It operates the International Journalists' Network (IJNet), an online resource for the media assistance community, connecting journalists with opportunities and information while helping donors and organizers avoid duplication and learn about innovative programs around the world. <http://www.ijnet.org/>

Search for Common Ground: SCFG, a U.S.-based NGO that works specifically on conflict transformation, has implemented a number of media-related projects in fragile and conflict situations. Its resource page provides several tools for donors and practitioners working in conditions of fragility. http://www.sfcg.org/resources/resources_home.html

Internews: An organization that works to improve access to information around the world, Internews has worked on independent media strengthening projects under traditional developmental as well as fragile conditions. In addition to other resources on the Internews site, the Open Media Watch: Media, War and Peace section provides links to outside analysis, reports and commentary on issues relating to state fragility. http://www.internews.org/openmedia/sept_11_media.htm

IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board): IREX is an international nonprofit NGO that works on education, independent media, and civil society development. USAID has funded the IREX Media Sustainability Index (MSI) as well as numerous media development programs in fragile conditions, including Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa. The MSI and other resources can be found at <http://www.irex.org/media/index.asp>

Institute for War and Peace Reporting: IWPR is an international NGO based in London that generally focuses on media assistance programs and reporting in conflict and post-conflict situations. Its website contains links to several resources, including a handbook for local journalists in crisis areas. <http://www.iwpr.net/>

8 Sample USAID Program Mechanisms

For USAID field staff, there are a number of agency mechanisms that can address potential media activities in fragile conditions.

1. DCHA/DG Civil Society Strengthening Cooperative Agreements. These are two five-year Leader With Associates cooperative agreements awarded respectively to the Academy for Educational Development and Pact, each representing a consortium of civil society partners. The Cooperative Agreements can be used for broad independent media support as well as targeted civic education campaigns that use the media. Search for Common Ground and IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) are two media sector NGOs affiliated with the AED Cooperative Agreement. Internews is the media sector NGO affiliated with the Pact Cooperative Agreement.

2. DCHA/CMM Indefinite Quantity Contracts (IQC) for Instability, Crisis and Recovery Programs. These are five new IQCs for the provision of services to support USAID's ability to assess and respond to conflict, extremism, political instability and fragility. The five IQC holders are Management Systems International, Development Alternatives, ARD, AMEX International, and the Academy for Educational Development. For a full list of subs under the IQC holders, visit USAID/DCHA/CMM website.

3. Office of Transition Initiatives SWIFT II. SWIFT II (Support Which Implements Fast Transitions) is an OTI IQC which is designed to allow fast, efficient startup of programs in a transition environment. Six companies and/or consortia are prequalified to compete in the IQC: ARD Inc., Casals & Associates, Chemonics, Creative Associates International, Development Alternatives, and PADCO.

4. Bilateral programs. USAID Missions may always issue their own RFA or RFP, although the time-frame for accomplishing this in crisis situations may be too long to accommodate short-term needs.

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