USAID
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MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Learning, Evaluation, and Research (LER) Activity

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ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil society organization
DDoS	Distributed Denial-of-Service
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
IREX	International Research & Exchanges Board
KPI	Key performance indicators
LOE	Level of effort
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MER	Media Ecosystem Roundtable
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PSB	Public service broadcaster
RSF	Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy
VIBE	IREX's Vibrant Information Barometer
VPN	Virtual private network

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Media for Democracy Assessment Tool

The purpose of the Media for Democracy Assessment Tool (MAT) is to assist United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in producing media assessments to inform strategy on media and democracy programming, help inform potential media development programming goals, and help provide an informed understanding of where USAID investment is most feasible and needed and will have the best chances for impact.

The MAT provides a standardized methodology to answer the key question: How do media connect to democracy and how can media support democracy promotion and civic space?

Why Media and Journalism Matter for Democracy

In the context of supporting democracy, the concept of media impacts the decisions and activities of governments. Media are the lifeblood of democracy and the means through which citizens and their elected representatives communicate in their reciprocal efforts to inform and influence. Moreover, media for democracy help to compensate where there is a weak, and often non-independent, judiciary and shine a light on corruption. Media provide vital news and information that is in the public interest and play a central role in a vibrant, resilient democracy.

For more than 30 years, USAID has supported independent media as part of its democracy promotion efforts. Today, free and independent media are under threat. Research undertaken by Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Freedom House, and others has shown that democracy has declined worldwide on an annual basis, with consistent downward trends over the last 15 years. V-DEM data shows that the media sector is often the first to suffer when democracies backslide. The situation has worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with some 80 countries seeing a decline in conditions of democracy and human rights. This democratic backsliding has resulted in the spread of autocratic governments, attacks on freedom of expression, media censorship and repression of civil society, a compromised or suppressed enabling environment, and, ultimately, closing civic space.

CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY

The causes of democratic backsliding are many. Long-standing challenges like corruption, weak rule of law, lack of independence in the judiciary and media, weak funding for the "third sector," and a lack of political will to take up the reforms needed to democratize have been key obstacles for much of the past 30 years. According to the Center for International Media Assistance, democratic backslides have also occurred due to "soft censorship" by local media. Soft censorship promotes positive coverage of government officials or their actions. It influences news coverage of state bodies and officials and their policies and activities through allocation or withholding of state media spending or selective application of licensing, permits, or regulations to shape the broad media, promote or diminish the economic viability of specific media houses or outlets, and/or reward or punish content produced by individual media workers. Without a strong, independent media, it is difficult to keep the government accountable to democratic processes.

Other challenges faced by media now include technological disruption to already fragile media organizations and systems. Changes in audience consumption patterns mean that media are in a constant chase for new audiences and revenue streams. Newer challenges brought on by the collapse of traditional business models that sustained media and disruptive technologies have given rise to a host of problems like online surveillance, online harassment, and smear campaigns, and the widespread misuse of online platforms to distribute a range of disinformation. In addition, in contrast to previous generations of media development (i.e., after the fall of the Berlin Wall), there is sharp power exerted worldwide by authoritarian actors that are seeking greater influence over the information domain.[1]

Additionally, audiences have changed, which presents even more challenges to media and democracy. Today, there are shorter news deadlines and public expectations of "up to the minute" breaking news stories. This creates challenges for investigative journalism, which differs from breaking news journalism because it involves deep investigations into hidden areas (like crime or corruption), longer timelines to report on, and the frequent use of larger datasets. Audiences do not want to wait, and now turn to social media for news.

[1] See National Endowment for Democracy's Sharp Power And Democratic Resilience Series (https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-and-democratic-resilience-series/) for helpful background papers on sharp power and its relevance to current issues facing the democracy and human rights space.

As of January 2021, there were 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide—59.5 percent of the global population. Of this total, 92.6 percent (4.32 billion) accessed the internet via mobile devices.[2] Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are the most popular platforms in the world, especially in developing countries. These transformative technologies—which are liberating and democratizing—also threaten democratic values and order. When abused, exploited, and controlled for malign purposes, the same technologies that can help spur exciting and transformational change can be used to crack down on human rights activists, control the narrative, and squash free and fair elections. The creation of fake accounts, trolls, and bots diminishes the sphere for public discussions and inhibits productive social discourse. Equally as worrisome, autocratic leaders who feel threatened by civil society and independent media take drastic measures that lead to censorship, internet shutdowns, crackdowns and clampdowns on freedom of assembly, and criminalization of free speech in both online and offline formats.

Media matters because media content influences how people view their world. All types of media set agendas for public discussions, root out corruption and mismanagement, and tell the stories that create national and cultural identities. media, and sustainable media institutions, are relevant to USAID stakeholders because they are necessary partners in promoting and sustaining democratic values and processes as noted in USAID's 2013 strategy on democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG).[3]

Civil society and independent media programming also help USAID achieve its wider development goals of eradicating extreme poverty, supporting a human rights approach to development, and helping to prevent further democratic backsliding by reversing the trend of democratization around the world. Media cut across and support many USAID priority development objectives. Support for free and independent media necessitates access to information, freedom of expression, a range of digital rights, and enhancement of information and communication technologies and digital infrastructure. At its core, media development enables better communication, encourages better quality and quantity of information related to a range of development objectives and ideals, and helps to ensure transparency and accountability of governments, corporations, and society writ large.

> As has long been argued (see Amartya Sen's Development as Freedom), strong democratic environments are key to achieving USAID priority developmental objectives in all development sectors such as agriculture, economic development, environment and climate change, governance, infrastructure, gender, global health, water and sanitation, and humanitarian disaster relief and response. Democracy is not just about a free and fair political system. As Sen and others have observed, because democratic governments "have to win elections and face public criticism, and have strong incentive to undertake measures to avert famines and other catastrophes," democracy expands human freedom and improves quality of life.

[2] https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/

[3] USAID's Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Strategic Assessment Framework (2014) https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Master_SAF_FINAL%20Fully%20Edited%209-28-15.pdf

Media Support USAID's DRG Strategic Framework Goal Statement[4]

USAID support for media development will vary in each country based on a variety of factors. In some countries, a return to the former state of play for media where audiences and advertising revenue were more predictable may not be possible and new possibilities may need to be considered. A media development assessment needs to consider the ecosystem as a whole looking at media's performance in certain contexts and the characteristics of individual media within that ecosystem. The chief tenets of media development assessment should include (but are not limited to) the media's levels of inclusive pluralism, legal-regulatory safeguards, adherence to professional standards, and economic self-sustainability.

The MAT provides guidance on a holistic approach to assessing key dimensions that help support media and democracy. It is meant to be a structured guide to walk USAID staff through the formulation of an assessment and to provide assistance in assessing the various dimensions of the media sector.

Audiences are the ultimate focus of media development. Media can influence audiences and provide sources for audiences to gain useful information and answers to questions. Thus, media support diverse development sectors. USAID manages many types of public-facing programming support for which media assessment is highly relevant, including conflict, post-conflict, political transition, elections, human rights, health, gender, youth, countering violent extremism, and countering and preventing disinformation. Media are often described as the lynchpin of democracy or as its "connective tissue"—the metaphors extend beyond just normative theories about the press; media are often the medium through which conflicts play out (e.g., Rwanda, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the current crisis in Myanmar). Media are also a tool countering both violent extremism and disinformation; for example, in Somalia, various media platforms—especially radio and social media—are important to community building, sharing accurate and truthful information, and providing an alternative to the various types of misinformation and disinformation Al Shabab spreads.

The level of development and the professionalism of a nation's media sector will influence other democratic processes including governance, economic development, social relations, and political stability. Media outlets can provide the glue that holds a nation together but, without a clear understanding of their responsibilities, media can also be a force that divides society. In many countries and contexts, this means that media and journalists need to have a greater awareness of and responsibility for the consequences of their actions. They allow for the free flow of information upon which civil society rests. Yet, in some cases, it also means that unprofessional media can create more harm than good, and when this is mixed with the often chaotic and unregulated social media spaces through which we communicate, exchange information, and share news of the day, this can quickly lead to an undemocratic and toxic public sphere. Toxic media do not just happen by accident. There are some incentives for a certain kind of harmful media performance. For instance, in some countries, there is a media business model that plays on identity and polarization, which generates more attention online.

[4] The overall objective of the Strategic Framework Goal Statement is to support the establishment and consolidate inclusive and accountable democracies to advance freedom, dignity, and development. DO 1 and DO 2 signal the importance of freedom of expression and independent, open media to USAID's broader development efforts. And, as part of a broader range of conditions needed to support a vibrant and healthy democracy, universally recognized human rights standards must be protected and supported. Often, USAID programming plays a central role in supporting advocacy and policymaking that is human rights-centered and upholds international standards and norms. Similarly, media and democracy programming are vital to efforts designed to fulfill the goals outlined in DO 4, which seek to improve cross-sectoral development outcomes.

MEDIA AS WATCHDOG

Media have long been viewed as a watchdog of government and private sector companies. When media fail to perform their watchdog role, corruption flourishes and human rights erode. To be clear, media are part of a complex system of interrelated and interconnected parts. Today's media includes traditional or formal media organizations—print, radio, and television—along with the rapidly evolving area of informal media such as digital/online media. Social media platforms provide channels for citizen-led media[5] in which people and organizations participate in creating and sharing news, information, and other viral content. Digital media have changed the structure and the power in many media environments. While this has enabled greater participation in the media, it has also led to the spread of misinformation and disinformation because anyone with a phone can create "news." This has led to an explosion of news and information sources across the world with varying levels of professionalism, ethics, regulation, and oversight. Absence of independent media altogether, low levels of media literacy among both the public and media professionals and the lack of ethical reporting standards present serious challenges for democracy promotion.

The information ecosystem relies on multiple actors, formal and informal. Journalists who are trained to cover the news are the lifeblood of this ecosystem. News directors and producers provide them with editorial oversight. Media organizations also need data scientists and other researchers to identify trends from big data and conduct audience research to better tailor their programming for local tastes. Advertising and marketing team members bring in the revenue that supports salaries and other costs associated with news production.

This media support sector also includes professional associations that advocate on behalf of media members; this can include research centers, professional/labor associations, and media lawyers. Most countries have some form of a media regulator that creates laws and guidelines that govern media organizations. There are also various institutes, centers, and universities that provide training to the media sector.

Influencers and citizen journalists also perform roles in news creation and dissemination. Each component of the ecosystem plays an important role and may require a different type of USAID support.[6] Within this complex context, the MAT helps USAID produce a comprehensive assessment of the media to inform future media development programming.

[5] Citizen media are content produced by private citizens who are not professional journalists. Citizen journalism, participatory media, and democratic media are related principles. In the context of social movements, political change, and democratic reform, citizen media plays a significant role.

[6] Note: These different institutions are the ideals and it is important to keep in mind that, in many contexts, the media ecosystem will not have all of these components; that it may not be in USAID's manageable interest to develop each component that needs to be addressed.

TOOL OVERVIEW

This MAT was created by media development experts (from business and management, law and policy, and research and evaluation backgrounds) to structure the dynamic assessment process needed to inform USAID media programming. The development of the tool included more than ten consultative interviews with media development specialists and media professionals that helped to shape the assessment process and materials. It is estimated that implementation of this tool may take up to six months, which is in line with USAID timelines for announcing new, or revisions to existing, DRG programs. Each step needs to be completed before moving on to the next step. The MAT team membership is flexible and is a generic descriptor of those conducting the steps of the MAT. The media assessment team could include some combination of a Mission Assessment Team that conducts the entire tool. There could be a Desk Review

Team that manages Step 1. Alternatively, parts of the MAT could be completed by a Contractor Assessment Team. Team composition is based on USAID needs and resources.[7]

The design of the MAT is structured around four specific steps in the media assessment process:

- **Step 1:** Media Assessment Desk Review—Background analysis.
- **Step 2:** Media Ecosystem Roundtable (MER)—In-person meeting with key media stakeholders.
- **Step 3:** Media and Democracy Assessment Dimensions—Ten key dimensions[8] of research to help prioritize media development needs and opportunities.
- **Step 4:** Synthesis—Synthesizing the desk review, the MER, and the 10 dimensions to identify a realistic program for media support.

Each step builds on the completion of the previous step so they should be completed sequentially, not simultaneously. After the assessment of the local media in steps 1-4, there are two additional steps to plan media development programming.

- **Step 5:** Selecting Programming Indicators- Identifying the different outcome indicators that will be used to measure the results of the programming.
- **Step 6:** Findings, conclusions, and recommendations that can be taken into consideration by USAID- Identifying the next steps for media programming based on steps 1-5.

[7] The reference to "media assessment team" refers to those who are participating in the specific step described in the MAT. The composition of the MAT team may differ depending on the requirements of the Mission and the expertise needed for each step of the tool. Teams may be comprised of local experts, USAID Mission staff, or external international experts. It is foreseeable that the Desk Review could be completed by an internal, local or international media expert. The MER could be facilitated by a USAID employee or media expert. The examination of the 10 dimensions of the nation's media sector could draw insights from a diverse team of local, international and country experts.

[8] The ten dimensions guide the assessment of the state of a national media environment, they are: 1) Information Ecosystem Mapping; 2) Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media; 3) Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender Youth, Disabled, and LGBTQ+; 4) Newsroom Professionalization; 5) Business, Sustainability, and Market-Based Capacity; 6) Media, Community, and Social Influence; 7) Media and Information Literacy; 8) Practices Around and Access to Training on Journalism Safety/Security; 9) Education, Universities, and Professional Development Training; and 10) Donor and Peer Analysis. More detail is provided on the ten dimensions and their use in Step 3.

STEP 1: MEDIA ASSESSMENT DESK REVIEW

As a first step, USAID Missions should plan for an in-house desk review team or commission a short desk review from outside expert(s) that will bring together what is already known and inform discussions in the next step, the MER. If an outside consultant is the best option, then the Mission should budget for approximately 5-7 days of level of effort (LOE) for a consultant and/or media specialist (i.e., USAID's media advisors) to complete the desk review.

The desk review is not meant to be an exhaustive write-up; rather, it is meant to inform consultation and focus on a deeper assessment. The desk review is a lot like an abbreviated literature review that should focus

on key articles, reports, and publications of interest related to media development, media and democracy, and journalism-related topics with a priority on the local context. As a helpful tip in writing up the desk review, the team should select publications (such as books and journal articles), critically analyze them, and focus on explaining findings to a general audience.

The desk review should follow five key steps:

- Search for relevant literature.
- Evaluate sources.
- Identify themes, debates, and gaps.
- Outline the structure.
- Write up the media and democracy desk review.

The review should not just summarize sources—it should analyze, synthesize, and critically evaluate sources to gain an understanding of the state of knowledge on the subject. It should also be grounded with an eye to what USAID Missions will find most useful. Prior to the desk review, the USAID unit leading the media assessment should select key questions of interest and determine how the desk review will factor into the MER.

Before beginning the MAT, it is important to consult available literature on media and other related institutions in the focal country. The review should also include digital media and social media trends, platforms, and influencers in the country.

Traditional academic literature reviews will gather, analyze, and then synthesize peer-reviewed articles and books on a topic. A full academic literature review is not necessary; instead, a desk review should be conducted to gather recent academic and "grey literature," which includes reports (such as country reports) and recent studies to supplement an understanding of the country. Appendix A offers a compilation of resources for MAT teams to consult to help inform thinking around conducting media and democracy assessments, including Key Media and Press Freedom Indices.

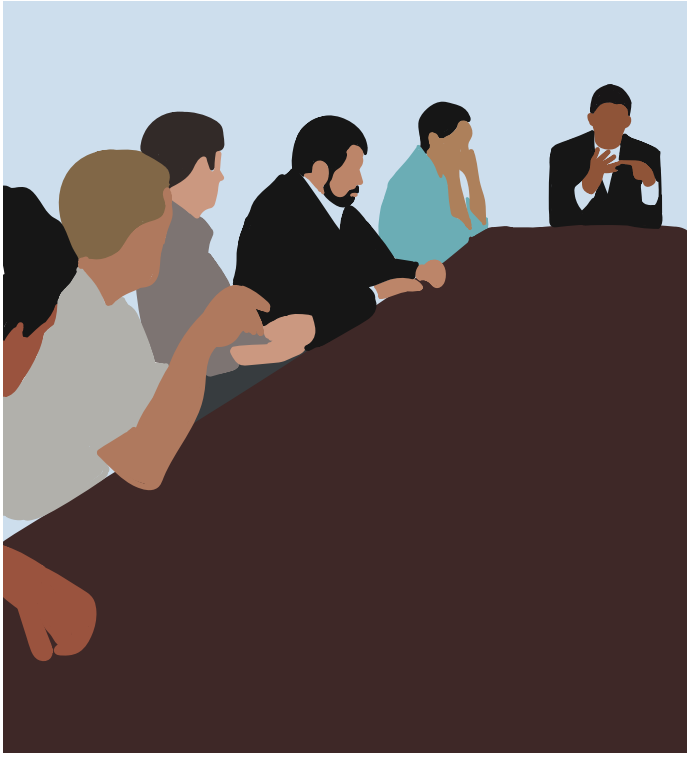
The goal of the desk review is to pull together practical insights into media. Some countries will have a lot of research materials while others may not—Google Scholar can provide peer-reviewed articles. The desk review will help to document trends and find updated information. Reports by trusted think tanks and institutes that often report on media-related topics can also support the desk review. Members of the desk review team may want to contact marketing agencies to find out what kinds of data (such as Ipsos polls) exist to draw insights into media trends and how well certain media are being received and how audiences are being engaged.

Remember that media programs need to be future-oriented. While the desk research is meant to identify past trends, it is also important to look forward for new possibilities. As part of "next-generation" media development, USAID DRG programs have an opportunity to curate and maintain a robust literature and evidence base that can be helpful to other USAID-funded programs as well as others working on democracy and media strengthening programs.

> Databases like Facebook Transparency Reports can also provide valuable information. There are many reports and evaluations of media development programs that can give some general insights into the focal country. The desk review team can consider reports from the United States Agency for Global Media and media development implementers; for example, International Research & Exchanges Board's (IREX's) Media Sustainability Index/Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE), Freedom House Freedom of the Media/Freedom of the Net, V-DEM's indicators, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and other annual metrics/ratings systems. When looking at the reports, special attention should be paid to the conclusions and recommendations sections.

At the end of the desk review report, the Mission should have a good understanding of how the national context affects media.

STEP 2: MEDIA ECOSYSTEM ROUNDTABLE (MER)



Pre-Assessment MER

The second step in the MAT is a discussion on the operating context for media development in the country of interest. This part of the MAT, reflecting USAID needs and resources, can be completed by the same people who conducted the desk review or this task can be assigned to a Mission assessment team or a contractor assessment team. This part of the tool will take approximately 3-5 days of LOE to complete.

In this step, USAID convenes an experts' panel/structured civil society and industry discussion.

The MER will help to identify overall priorities for media and its general trends and context, as well as strengthen the community around media development. The MER enables USAID to convene a small group of local experts and stakeholders on the media to help inform thinking about key aspects of a country's status regarding key facets of media development. It is not intended as a formal, high-level conference, but rather an informal gathering that will offer a participatory process to get important feedback on three broad areas for the media sector assessment: 1) political economy of the media; 2) institutions, journalistic professionalism, and managerial professionalism; and 3) audiences: access and inclusion. The consideration of the political economy of the media, journalistic and managerial professionalism, and audiences provide a solid base upon which to identify the most pressing needs in the media sector.

The MER should be completed, and the answers analyzed before starting the formal assessment in Step 3. The MER will be driven by a variety of local insights and expert opinions. Media programs need to be future-oriented. While recruiting the current leaders in the field, it is also important to invite new influencers in the sector to join.

USAID who participates at a MER will invite representatives from civil society, formal media professionals (journalists, editors, owners), online media start-ups, think tank experts and academics, advertising and marketing leaders, influencers, lawyers, relevant influencers, emerging tech leaders, and industry (including corporate media, Facebook, Google, and other major players, when relevant and available) to the panel. Invitees do not need to prepare formal remarks or any written papers in order to participate. Their participation is voluntary and for informational and research purposes only. The idea for the MER stems in part from feedback in many media development contexts that beneficiaries of media assistance feel that it is vital to tap into local expertise and opinions before the crafting of any media development funding proposals or donor interventions. The MER is one such opportunity for local expertise to be tapped into and incorporated into USAID's media assessment-related undertakings.

The information gathered through the MER will guide the questions and scope of work done in Step 3, the formal assessment. Additionally, the MER offers a means to a multi-stakeholder process that supports inclusivity and a diversity of views and opinions. Finally, the MER offers an opportunity for a sector-driven analysis that will bring key actors and new influencers together that comprise the informal sector of media to engender concordance along the lines of the key opportunities and challenges facing the media sector.

WHAT CAN YOU GET OUT OF A MER?

The insights gained from the MER will assist stakeholders already engaged in media development and provide the Mission with a foundational understanding of the local media ecosystem. The MER can be reconvened as needed for longitudinal analysis of the state of the formal, digital, and social media. The MER, or local versions of it, should be a routine/mandatory part of the assessment methodology when and where possible, with at least attendance (and perhaps facilitation) by the assessment team members. USAID should use a good facilitator and have a rapporteur available to take notes and record the proceedings of the MER.

To differing extents depending on funding, political contexts, and civil society priorities in a country, media development will already be a concern among some stakeholders. They may already have established regular meetings, workshops, or conferences. The MER could be scheduled around the same time as these events where feasible and appropriate to take advantage of stakeholders who come to the same location at that time. In contexts where this is not possible, USAID should use its discretion to determine how to best hold a MER given local political realities, sensitivities, and other concerns. It should be made clear to invited guests that the MER is an effort to be participatory and inclusive of local expertise and to facilitate a high-level discussion that will help inform future programming in the media sector. USAID should clearly state that participation is voluntary, and involvement is not a guarantee of future funding. The reason for hosting the MER is to acknowledge that it is important for USAID to tap into local knowledge and experience from the media and journalism sector writ large as part of any strategy or assessment process.

MER DESIGN AND INSTRUCTIONS

Length of Time for the MER Meeting: The MER needs to be **at least a one-day event** to support high-level discussions and observations. In contexts where few of the stakeholders know each other or have had the chance to meet previously, the meeting should be two days to enable stakeholders to get to know each other.

Scope of Participation: The MER is not intended to bring together the entire media sector. It seeks to bring together **between ten and twenty thought leaders** who represent a diverse sample of media development specialists from civil society, media organizations, and academia. The invitation list should consider representatives from civil society, media professionals (journalists, editors, owners), local experts who have participated in RightsCon and other global rights conferences, media start-ups, think tank experts and academics, advertising and marketing agency leaders, influencers, lawyers, and industry (including corporate media, Facebook, Google, and other major players). Be sure to include representatives from marginalized groups (women, youth, LGBTQ+, ethnic minorities, and disabled people) or those familiar with media development practice.

Facilitation: Good facilitation of the meeting will include a **dedicated, experienced facilitator** (with a preference for someone with media development experience) who will decide on processes that will enable group discussions, such as world café,[9] breakout groups,[10] or media mapping.[11] Special attention should be paid to existing power dynamics (for example, not having a journalist and her editor in the same discussion) and creating a safe space for participants from marginalized groups to speak. Facilitate more open participation by breaking participants into groups to discuss assigned topics around their expertise or issue area.

Approach: The MER seeks to support a participatory process that will be locally driven and engender a multi-stakeholder process that supports inclusivity and a diversity of views and opinions. It offers an opportunity for strengthening a sector-driven analysis that will bring key actors together, engender concordance, and support sectoral collaboration on key opportunities and challenges facing the media sector.

Topics: An important aspect of the MER is to achieve a high level of analysis with questions that allow for maximum participation and help to make a map of the state of media development overall. As such, the agenda should be designed to address no more than three or four guiding questions in the three primary areas of media development:

1. Political economy of the media.
2. Institutions, journalistic professionalism, and managerial professionalism.
3. Audiences: access and inclusion.

Agenda: These three areas are a useful starting point in designing the agenda. A full list of topics that can inform the MER are provided in Appendix B. Each USAID Mission, together with its facilitators, should choose the key questions and topics that will be most fruitful to stimulating conversation in the local context.

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[9] A world café is a structured conversational process for knowledge sharing in which groups of people discuss a topic at several small tables like those in a café.

[10] Breakout groups are used as a large group discussion technique designed to increase participation. During a large meeting or a workshop, a facilitator may assign the group to work on smaller teams to answer questions or tackle specific challenges.

[11] Mapping networks visualization of media in a country, where it is clustered and by what type (i.e., alternative and community media, commercial/for-profit media, non-profit media, public service media, messaging app-based media, and niche media—youth focused, women focused, and media that caters to minority groups or marginalized populations). Note, other issues of interest can also be mapped, such as mapping the dynamics sustaining and constraining the provision of local news and knowledge, which the Democracy Fund did.

Keep in mind that the MER should also be a useful conversation for the local contacts in the media sector, in addition to an organized way of getting local stakeholder feedback.

The agenda should include any materials to be shared with invited stakeholders, including the desk review from Step 1 (above). The desk review will help frame the discussion and surface any key studies or insights that can help USAID and local stakeholders focus the media assessment.

THE MER PRE-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The information gathered through the MER should be synthesized into the pre-assessment report that will address the key dimensions to be assessed and the overall context of challenges and priorities in media development learned from the MER. The pre-assessment report does not need to be very detailed but should instead provide a rationale of the media dimensions that will be assessed in the country visit. Consider using bullet points, cut-in tables, and quotes to identify the most important issues for media to play their role in promoting democracy in the country.

The outcomes of the pre-assessment report should be to facilitate a participatory approach to designing the assessment of 10 Media for Democracy dimensions that will involve a wide range of stakeholders.

STEP 3: MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS

This section provides guidance across ten dimensions for assessing the state of a national media environment. These elements and questions are drawn from the experience of media analyses done by CSOs, government agencies, and academia over the last twenty years. They are not intended to be exhaustive; in a changing environment, new challenges, obstacles, and models are normal. But the elements are intended to inform the design of a comprehensive analysis across each dimension.

In Step 3 of the MAT process, the team should comprise people who have either conducted or evaluated the desk review and the MER reports. They should be aware of issues of security in terms of interlinkages among media and with other actors in local society at the outset. Media professionals are one of the top targets for violence and harassment (Freedom House, 2019), and online harassment has also grown to be a major issue around the world. As such, the MAT team should have clear protocols to protect the security of stakeholders and the team itself throughout the assessment.

The MAT considers the media as a complex ecosystem in which media organizations overlap and are interlinked within a wide variety of social and economic actors. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the complexity of the media ecosystems, and how, within the legal enabling environment, media adapt and evolve with technological challenges that constantly make the sector seem to be in upheaval. The ten dimensions of the assessment tool are designed to help the media assessment team frame this complexity within the fluid conditions facing media and democracy programming.

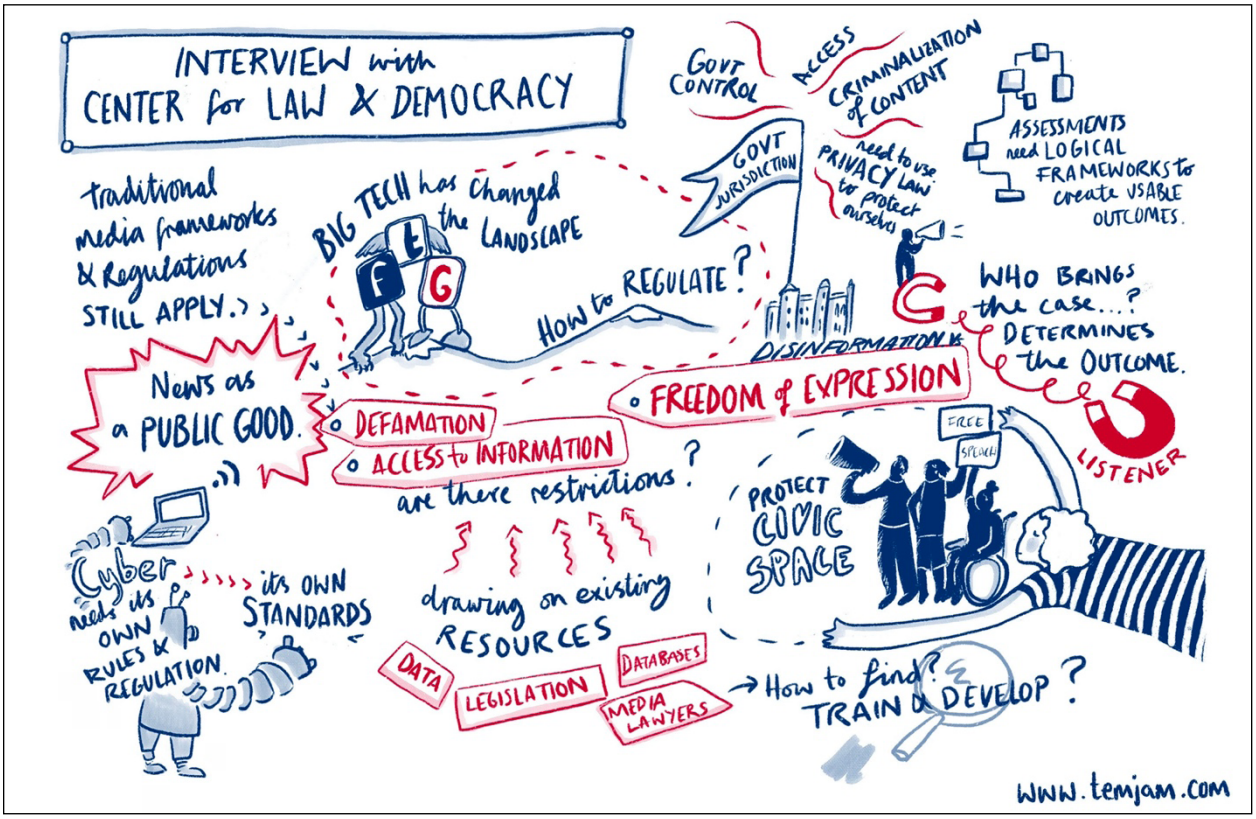


Figure 1: Key ideas on assessing the enabling environment for free and independent media from legal expert Toby Mendel, Director of the Centre for Democracy and Technology

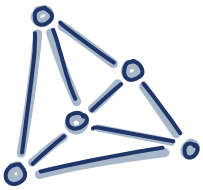
Planning the MAT

It is especially important to see the elements that will guide the assessment process and are presented under each dimension as components that can help to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Our goal is to assess how each dimension can best support democracy and where it is falling short. The toolkit is modular so that those using the MAT have the maximum flexibility to choose the appropriate dimensions and elements that are identified as priorities in the pre-assessment process. This part of the tool may take approximately 5 days LOE per person to organize the data to address the selected dimensions. The scoring meeting and the write up may take an additional 2-3 days of LOE per person.

It is important to recognize that the current media space is dynamic. Conditions are always changing, and it is important to keep the dynamism of the space in mind with the 10 dimensions. The MAT team should also consider informal media such as entertainment media, social media, and messaging apps rather than only focusing on formal media in the assessment.

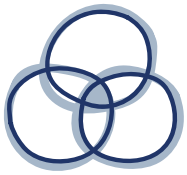
At the end of the assessment process, we envision the team will have a practical map showing needs and assets within a particular media ecosystem over the next two to five years. From this process, the team will thus be able to recommend cost-effective and strategic programming directions to USAID. In Step 4 of this toolkit, there is guidance on writing up the assessment and scoring each of the dimensions outlined below. Note—the MAT team will only score dimensions 2–9, as dimensions 1 and 10 are "bookends" and provide overall context to understanding the media itself and what type and level of donor activity and support has been offered in a country to date. Annex C of this toolkit provides a guide for synthesizing the data and for scoring the relevant dimensions.

Overview of the Ten Dimensions to Assess



Dimension 1: Information Ecosystem Mapping. Mapping the major sources of news and information from both formal media—TV, radio, print, and digital media—and citizen-led media, including social media influencers, other forms of citizen-generated content, and any noteworthy and important platforms, players, or institutions that stand out in terms of providing content, news, information, and journalism.

Dimension 2: Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media. The extent to which the legal and regulatory operating environment for journalists enables them to report the news, and how well it is protecting and facilitating the broad exercise of freedom of expression and the performance of journalist and media activities. Looks for strengths, opportunities, and challenges.



Dimension 3: Cross-Cutting Issues: Gender, Youth, Disabled, and LGBTQ+. The extent to which marginalized voices—women, youth, minorities, LGBTQ+—are included in media content and represented within the media sector. In some countries, there may be a need to examine the rural-urban divide in media content and presence. In other countries, you may need to consider the "youth bulge" that will affect media consumption patterns as they are different than other segments.

Dimension 4: Newsroom Professionalization. The extent to which journalists and other media professionals uphold national and international standards around fair and ethical reporting.

Dimension 5: Business, Sustainability, and Market-Based Capacity. The extent to which the media are financially resilient and editorially independent of influence by political and financial elites.

Dimension 6: Media, Community, and Social Influence. The extent to which media play important positive roles in the community and are respected and trusted.

Dimension 7: Media and Information Literacy. The extent to which audiences are data- and information-literate; understand the information threats to, and the watchdog role of, a free press in a healthy democracy; and possess the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication.

Dimension 8: Practices Around and Access to Training on Journalism Safety/Security. The extent to which media sector workers and citizen journalists are safe to do their jobs.

Dimension 9: Education, Universities, and Professional Development Training. The extent to which formal and informal education opportunities are present and have the capacity to support professionalism across the different sub-sections of the media.

Dimension 10: Donor & Peer Analysis. The extent to which other donors and media leaders are working together on programming and sharing information on media development.

The modular design of the toolkit is intended to enable assessment staff to quickly refer to these dimensions in their assessment process. Each dimension section is designed to provide the media assessment team with practical tools to assess the specific media dimension highlighted (see 1–10 above):

1. **Overview of the dimension**, including key areas of concern and focus to think about practically and programmatically.
2. **Myths (incorrect assumptions)** about the dimension that should be recognized and avoided. Myths can serve as a conversation starter on some of the dimensions.
3. **Elements** provide useful questions to adapt for the assessment process.
4. **Suggested lines of programming** that can be recommended for this dimension.
5. **Suggested country context and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators** that can be useful in evaluating changes in this dimension.

Dimensions 1 and 10 are assessment bookends to the specific dimensions. They are primarily intended to give an introduction (1) and summary (10) of the process. Treat them as the anchors for the rest of the dimensions.

Scoring of Dimensions

Keep in mind that at the end of the consideration of dimensions 2-9 and their respective elements, each member of the assessment team will provide a numerical score from 1–10 for three macro scoring areas—competency, need, and feasibility.

- Competency is how the country fares overall with respect to the criteria assessed for the dimension.
- Need is the overall need for donor support.
- Feasibility is the assessment team's consideration of the receptivity and feasibility for the aid to produce impacts.

The assessment team will prepare a comprehensive table with the scores of 1–10 for dimensions 2–9, along with considerations of overall strengths and weaknesses and links to other dimensions. The rating scale in the synthesis section of the tool is meant to be a discussion tool so that each member of the team explains their scores and then the team negotiates a final score representing each dimension.

Dimension 1. Media and Information Ecosystem Mapping

For the first dimension in the media and democracy assessment tool, take an inventory of the media players, actors, platforms, influencers, and networks of the broader media and information ecosystem in the country. The purpose of this exercise is to develop an overview of the media, including journalists, outlets, internet penetration, basic audience research figures, most popular mediums, and key influencers by providing starting points to understand the media space. In addition, the information ecosystem mapping will consider issues of use and reach of media, audience insights, and the purposes or use of the media. Dimension 1 compiles any available audience research as well as other pertinent research that looks at levels of trust in media, audience trends and preferences, and the overall apparatus used in the country to collect reliable audience data.

While this toolkit does not ask assessment teams to undertake a comprehensive information ecosystem mapping research undertaking, it is a useful approach[12] for USAID Missions to consider as a standalone activity or research project that an eventual media development program could include as part of formal programming—the mapping could be done on an annual or biennial basis.

THE EIGHT CRITICAL DIMENSIONS OF INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS

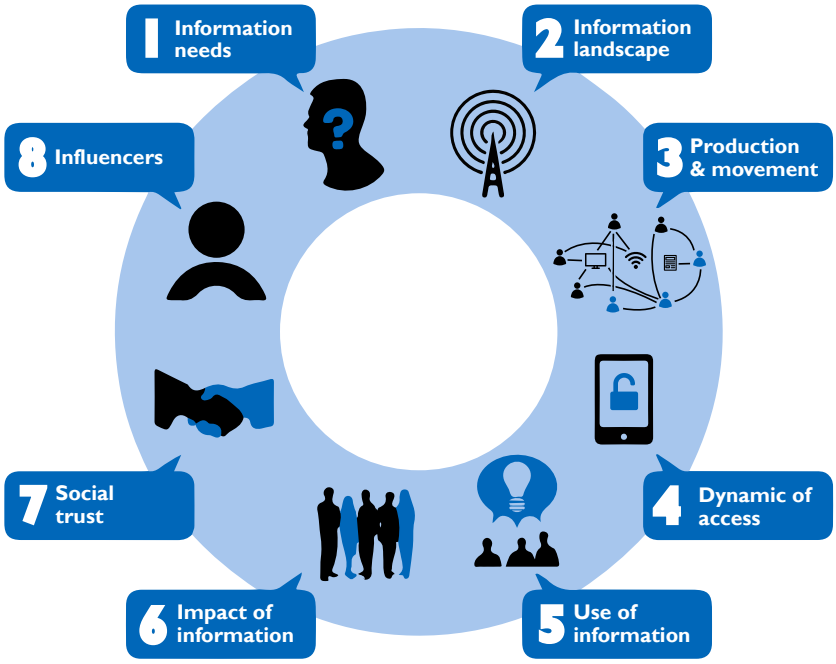


Figure 2: Information Ecosystem, adapted from Internews infographic

[12] Information ecosystem mapping is a robust, intensive research undertaking that requires a lot of planning and preparation to set up research design, sampling, the formation of a research team, and the development of mixed-methods research tools. It makes use of focus groups and audience feedback discussions and employs techniques like world café-style workshops with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the media and journalism sector.

MYTHS

In mapping information systems, there are myths that are currently prevalent. Sometimes, even seasoned media experts buy into myths that influence how they view media. The myths below can provide a kind of "check and balance" of assumptions about media development. They can also serve as a conversation starter.

Myth 1: Different components of media development programs exist in isolation from each other. It is a myth that successful media development programs should only address one dimension without considering the other dimensions. The media's information ecosystem is dynamic, complex, and fluid. All parts are interrelated and require constant effort to maintain the health of the overall system.

Myth 2: Training outcomes are easy to sustain. It seems like some media projects are in a constant cycle of training. However, training outcomes are actually quite difficult to sustain. The same qualities that make a media and information ecosystem dynamic, complex, and fluid also mean that the space is ever-changing. Journalists often transition into careers in marketing and advertising or public affairs (thus, they are replaced by new people who also need to be trained), new technologies get developed and disrupt the system, and the same market forces that have the potential to create economic opportunity are equally as likely to inhibit the growth and sustainability of the media sector. Media are unpredictable and the rules of the game and how they are played are always debatable. In such a state of flux, training, capacity-building, mentoring, and education will always be needed.

Myth 3: It is best to build up a few strong media organizations rather than build the capacity of the media ecosystem (regulatory framework, freedom of expression advocates, a robust and well-trained education sector, etc.). There is a tendency to want to focus only on the content providers and the media outlets, perhaps by helping to launch new start-up digital media or support human-rights-activists-turned-journalists in building new online media outlets. While these are worthy aims, they will not be enough on their own to sustain the health of the rest of the ecosystem. Without good laws and regulations that support a social and political culture for inclusive, pluralistic democratic media, the democratic goals of media assistance may fall short for audiences who consume their news/information on social media platforms (as opposed to buying a newspaper or receiving information from a broadcaster).

Myth 4: Audiences are making conscious choices about the news and information they consume. Actually, algorithms play an important, and often unseen, role in news selection. Some platforms like YouTube push people to view more radical content through their search results.

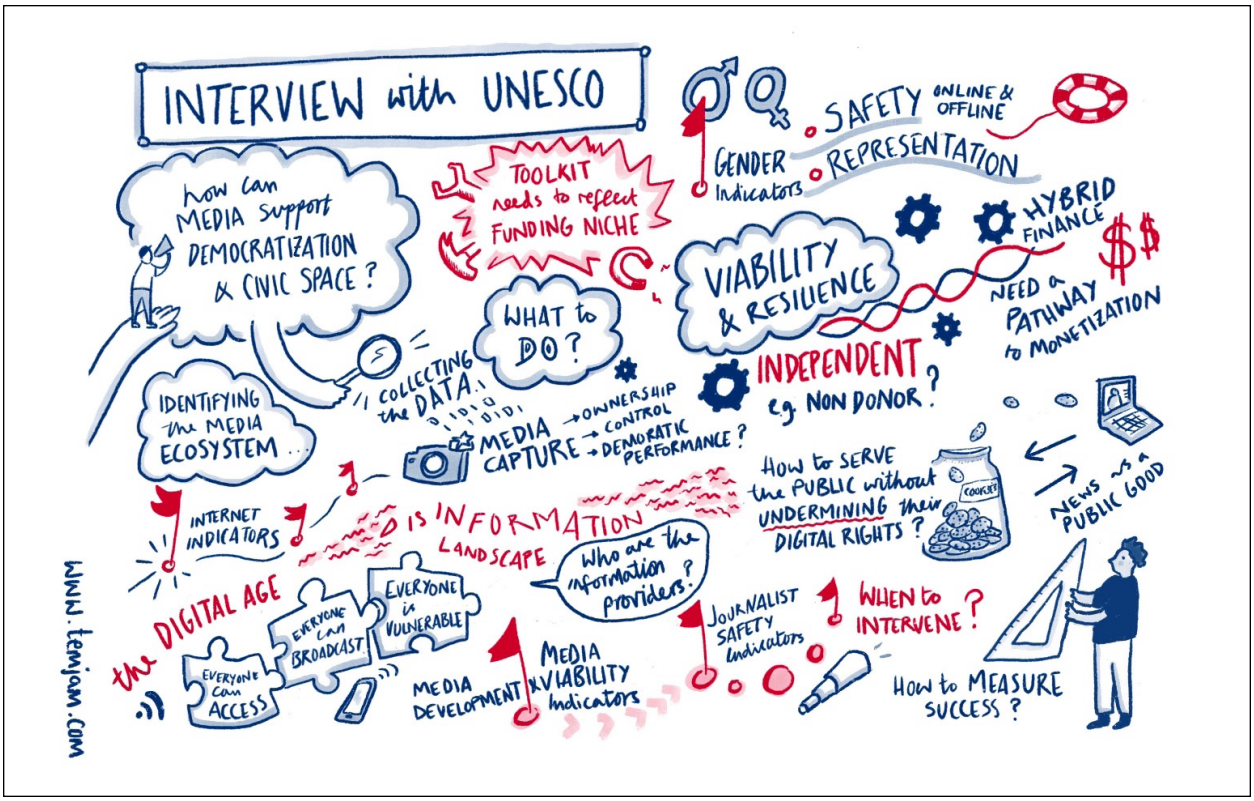


Figure 3: Graphic notes from an interview with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) freedom of expression, media literacy, and internet freedom experts. The interview highlighted the complexity of all the dynamic forces at play in the media and information ecosystems.

ELEMENTS

As illustrated in Figure 3, the media and information ecosystem are a complicated web of interlinkages and systems that each require attention and strategic points of entry in order to support the type of media programming that will lead to improved democratization and health of the overall civic space. For this first dimension, this complexity must be mapped by collecting data and information on the major sources of news and information from both the formal media sector—TV, radio, print, and digital media—and citizen-led media, including social media influencers, other forms of citizen-generated content, and any noteworthy and important platforms, players, or institutions that stand out in terms of providing content, news, information, and journalism.

The information for this dimension will come from a combination of the desk review in Step 1 and basic information-gathering about the country context. The data from the information ecosystem mapping should inform the next eight dimensions. In mapping the media and information ecosystem, it is helpful to map the sector along the following elements:[13]

[13] This section was informed by USAID's The Role Of Media In Democracy: A Strategic Approach (1999).

ELEMENT
Element 1.1 Overall Context • What dynamics of the media sector are impacted by political conditions, conflict, and divisions in society (see above note regarding using a PEA to provide background)? Is this a pre-conflict or post-conflict country? What are the ethnic and political polarizations in the country? • What has been the history of the media over the past two decades? • Has the country received media development assistance previously? • What is the state of information manipulation, hate speech, and/or harmful information in the country, and is it internally or externally generated (or both)?
Element 1.2 Inventory of Journalists and Journalists' Conditions • What are the number and types of journalists? • What levels of professional journalist training are available in the country? • What is the regional focus and types of specialization of each? • Under what overall labor conditions—including security/health and safety, salaries, bonuses, support for training—are journalists operating?
Element 1.3 Information Systems • What information channels exist? This will map key media and information providers and actors including TV, radio, newspapers, online media, alternative and community media, WhatsApp or other closed messaging app-related journalism, social media influencers, and informal networks. It will also map issues such as access to mobile, access to broadband, access to cable broadcasts/terrestrial broadcasts/satellite broadcasts, and, for print, locations of relevant distribution networks. Offer an overview of the number, types, and access levels of media. Include in this assessment, based on data available, the format (tabloid, traditional), circulation, and type of content (religious, political, entertainment, etc.). • Does the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs office have any insights to share? Which media outlets regularly receive press releases and invitations to cover events from the Embassy and USAID?
Element 1.4 Information Sources • Which sources do audiences rely on and trust? • On which subjects? To the extent that audience research data is available, offer breakdowns on levels of trust for different institutions (government and media) and by media type (outlet name) and other sources of trustworthy information.
Element 1.5 Information Consumption • What are the trends in audience consumption habits and insights on different platforms, channels, and alternatives? Offer an overview of audience segmentation by language, geography, gender, age, and other demographic factors. As digitalization has become the norm, even in the most underdeveloped of settings, audience research is key to informing media development strategies.
Element 1.6 Information Measurement • Does the country have reliable figures for broadcast ratings or audience/circulation? • What are the mechanisms for these measurements? • Is it politicized or is the research independent and considered fair?

Dimension 2: Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media

This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "To what extent does an enabling environment exist and how does it support or hinder the development of free and independent media?" This analysis should include consideration of the scope of legal and regulatory frameworks, media structure, and culture that enable free and independent media. All of these areas can be considered against the pillars of the international human rights standards that establish the right to freedom of expression and freedom of information.

The extent to which the overall environment enables media in a country—through support for the production of news and information and laws that are conducive to open inquiry—will impact how news is framed and promoted. An environment conducive to the exercise of freedom of expression and freedom of information rights is necessary to promoting strong democratic governance.

Such rights are universal human rights drawn from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[14] and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[15] These rights are affirmed within regional human rights standards drawn from the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10),[16] the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 11),[17] the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 13),[18] and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 9).[19] The text box on the right provides a list of international conventions relevant to the enabling environment for media.

All states must recognize and protect a minimum of freedom of expression for all individuals. States should not only refrain from interfering with these rights but also initiate and implement active or positive measures that promote the exercise of such rights.

State regulation may constitute a legitimate and necessary instrument to frame the exercise of freedom of expression and to avoid unjustified

International Conventions Supporting Media Freedom

- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Charter of Paris for a New Europe
- European Convention on Human Rights
- American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man
- American Convention on Human Rights
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Resolution 169 on Repealing Criminal Defamation Law in Africa by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Windhoek Declaration for the Development of a Free, Independent, and Pluralistic Press
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations Human Rights Declaration

[14] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Available online at: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

[15] Available online at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx

[16] Available online at: https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf

[17] Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights_en

[18] Available online at: https://www.cidh.oas.org/basicos/english/basic3.american%20convention.htm

[19] Available online at: https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=49

violations of the rights of others and of other principles linked to the general interest. However, legislation and regulation, as well as enforcement by the judiciary and other competent authorities, may also endanger these rights and introduce unnecessary and disproportionate restrictions on them. The mere absence of legislation or regulations safeguarding these rights can also cause detrimental effects on their actual enjoyment.

The most common areas for State legislation/regulation, include:

- Access to information.
- Safety of journalists.
- Criminal provisions affecting speech (i.e., dealing with hate speech).
- Civil liability.
- Audiovisual/broadcasting.
- Online intermediaries and privacy.
- Cybersecurity.

MYTHS

In assessing the strength of a local enabling environment, the media assessment team needs to be aware of some common myths that are currently prevalent.

Myth 1: The best way to protect freedom of expression is to avoid any regulation. In fact, ample evidence shows that, in the absence of regulation, freedom of expression cannot be effectively guaranteed and is especially abridged in marginalized populations. This approach privileges the rights of the speaker and not necessarily the rights of listeners.

Myth 2: Freedom of expression is preserved if a judge is involved in a decision based on the law. While the legal framework is very important for freedom of expression, it is also about implementation (judges are not always educated on how best to do this in a rights-respecting way, or government officials often selectively apply laws/punishments to certain outlets/content providers); media culture and structure are also key to understanding the strength of the enabling environment. It is also important to assess the context of independence of the judiciary.

Myth 3: Online speech is a separate matter which cannot be effectively regulated in countries other than European Union member states or the United States. Despite the global reach of the internet and other online platforms, this does not necessarily mean a complete loss of jurisdiction by national authorities. Jurisdiction issues are complex and require finding a balance between preserving certain principles at the national level and guaranteeing the openness of the internet. Without good laws, regulations, and norms that support a social and political culture of freedom of expression, civic debate is a risk. Every nation needs protections for online speech.

Myth 4: News media and journalism, whether from formal media or digital news outlets, are the only sources of information that have a real impact on the practice and functioning of democracy. News operations, the institutions and regulations that govern them, and the politics and economics that enable their sustainability may not be on their own sufficient to protect democracy without media development support.

ELEMENTS

The questions that follow address many of the known factors that lead to a strong enabling environment. They cover the scope of legal/regulatory issues as well as structural and cultural issues that restrict or enable free and open expression in the media. The assessment team should incorporate these questions

into assessment instruments—interview guides, focus groups, surveys, and literature reviews—to arrive at a snapshot of the enabling environment for media in a country.

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 2.1 Media governance, policy, and general legal framework • Has the country ratified international/regional human rights instruments? Has the country accepted the jurisdiction of regional human rights (and related) courts? • Are there relevant decisions/recommendations/reports regarding freedom of expression in the country adopted by regional courts and other relevant international bodies and procedures? • What are the recommendations in the area of freedom of expression derived from the successive universal periodic reviews by the United Nations Human Rights Council? • What are the constitutional provisions regarding the protection of human rights and particularly freedom of expression? Are there any specific safeguards (Constitutional Court protection, etc.)? • Are there specific laws dealing with freedom of expression and freedom of information topics (access to information, general media laws, press laws, audio-visual media laws, cybersecurity laws that invoke liability for online speech, or other media-related laws)? • Are there criminal law provisions with possible impact on speech (defamation, slander and libel, national security and public order, protection of religious feelings, protection of symbols and institutions, terrorism, and extremism)? • Are there general "horizontal" laws and regulations affecting speech activities (civil liability provisions for damages, intellectual property, privacy and data protection, public order, electronic commerce, and cybersecurity)? • Are there relevant court decisions and other resolutions regarding freedom of expression and media regulation adopted by regulatory bodies, agencies, and national human rights institutions? • What are the institutions in charge of setting the general media policy framework? • What are the most relevant media policy decisions or projects currently being executed?	Media Laws and Regulation
Element 2.2 Access to public information • Is there an access to information law? • Is there open government or open government processes? • Is there an independent commission in charge of the application of the access to information law? Is the commission properly funded? Is the commission able to operate and perform its duties on a regular and stable basis? • Are there relevant judicial decisions regarding access to information? • Is the country a member of the Open Government Partnership?[20] • What is the Right to Information rating of the country?[21]	Media Laws and Regulation

[20] https://www.opengovpartnership.org

[21] https://www.rti-rating.org

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 2.3 Self-regulation mechanisms and processes • Is self-regulation/co-regulation encouraged by any of the existing legal/regulatory instruments? • Do media outlets count on internal self-regulatory mechanisms (internal codes of practice, ombudsmen, ethical committees, etc.)? • Are there codes of ethics/professional codes applicable to journalists and other media actors? Are they properly known and applied? • Are there independent self-regulatory institutions (press councils, professional committees, social media councils, etc.) in place? Are the institutions used by citizens and other relevant stakeholders? Are decisions respected and acknowledged? Are these institutions sufficiently funded?	Media Structure
Element 2.4 Culture and level of fair play and competitiveness in the media marketplace • What are the legal barriers to the provision of media services? • Are there independent commissions/bodies in charge of the regulation of media services? • What are the roles and powers of government institutions vis-à-vis access to the market and provision of different types of media services? • What is the role of competition authorities regarding the activities of media companies? • Are there clear and consistent rules regarding direct or indirect financing of media by State bodies? Is there any monitoring of foreign investments and or other kinds of foreign participation in the media market? Are there efficient and independent monitoring institutions in this area?	Media Culture
Element 2.5 Existence of media and civil society to support the enabling environment • Are there CSOs totally or partially dedicated to the protection and promotion of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of information? • Are there any legal restrictions that may affect the work of human rights organizations and non-profit organizations? • Does the legal system contain adequate provisions to guarantee the participation by civil society and other relevant stakeholders in processes of law- and policy-making? • Do civil society and media organizations have proper access to institutions and government bodies in charge of media policy and legislation?	Media Structure

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 2.6 Legal protections or enabling environment for media pluralism, especially regarding the representation of marginalized and vulnerable groups • Are there legal/regulatory provisions regarding limits to media concentration and promotion of media pluralism? • Are there legal/regulatory provisions establishing specific measures to protect pluralism on distribution platforms (quotas of independent producers, must-carry rules to protect local or smaller stations, etc.)? • Do the different institutions and bodies in charge of media regulation and supervision actively monitor and promote media diversity and pluralism? • Are there effective policies in place to promote the production of diverse and pluralistic media content? Are there effective policies in place to promote media pluralism and diversity in areas such as ownership, human resources, gender, or geographical presence and coverage? • Are there legal provisions and/or regulations covering and framing the specific role of community media? • Are there legal provisions and/or regulations defining the role and activities and guaranteeing the independence of public service media?	Media Laws and Regulation
Element 2.7 Levels of media engagement with the private sector • Do businesses count on a sufficient level of legal certainty vis-à-vis general operation matters (establishment, taxation, registration, access to courts, etc.)? • Are there clear rules regulating advertising in different media and across platforms? • Are there incentives (tax, for example) for the private sector to sponsor or support the production of certain types of media content? • Has the provision of media services been fully liberalized?	Media Structure

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 2.8 Assessment of differences between laws and policies related to the State, public service, commercial, and alternative and community media • Is there a clear distinction (in terms of legal/regulatory regimes applicable to the establishment, authorizations, content, obligations, and other functioning aspects) between different types of media? • Is there a State media sector? Does it have a legally protected oligopolistic/monopolistic position? • Is there a properly regulated public service media organization (particularly, audiovisual media)? Are editorial independence, financial viability, and autonomous management properly guaranteed? What are the governance mechanisms of the public service corporation? How are top-level management teams appointed? • Are there clear and specific legal/regulatory criteria defining the characteristics of community media? Are there consistent and appropriate legal/regulatory provisions preserving the presence and framing the role, rights, and obligations of community media? • Are there clear, transparent, and proportionate legal/regulatory provisions regarding the rights and obligations of commercial media? • Are there specific legal/regulatory provisions applicable to distribution platforms (cable, satellite, intellectual property, etc.)?	Media Laws and Regulation
Element 2.9 Extent to which governments use laws, policies, and practices to censor and/or control the information narrative • Is there a high level of impunity for violence against journalists in the country? • Do corruption, weak institutions, or lack of political will foster a culture of impunity for crimes against media workers? • What is the consistency of existing legal/regulatory rules vis-à-vis applicable international and regional freedom of expression standards? • What has been the role of courts regarding the enforcement of applicable laws and the protection of the right to freedom of expression? • What has been the role of the Attorney General (or national equivalent) and prosecutors in cases where the exercise of the right of freedom of expression is involved? • Has the government pushed or exercised any kind of advocacy or influence regarding the prosecution of journalists or other media actors? • What has been the role of regulatory bodies regarding the enforcement of applicable laws and the protection of the right to freedom of expression? • What is the role of government bodies and public institutions in general in the facilitation and dissemination of information to the public? • Are there specific "fake news laws" criminalizing the dissemination of certain types of information or the use of sources other than the official ones? • Are judges well-trained/capacitated (for access to information laws, libel cases) to implement/rule/interpret laws/regulations related to media freedom?	Media Laws and Regulation

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 2.10 Context and overview of the extent to which disinformation and misinformation affect the free flow of information or inhibit/threaten democracy and civil society. • Is the government actively engaging in the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda? • Are there foreign actors or non-governmental domestic actors engaged in disinformation seeking to influence local populations? • Is the accusation of disinformation or "fake news" used by government, opposition, or other political proxies to discredit legitimate speech or to pollute the information environment with accusations of disinformation? Are contrived mechanisms of monitoring the media or news used to cast aspersions on legitimate media? • Are opposition parties, minority groups, CSOs, or other vulnerable actors particularly targeted by the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda? • Are there academic institutions, think tanks, CSOs that are involved in monitoring, analyzing, and exposing disinformation? • Are there violent attacks, discrimination practices, and other human rights violations in connection with the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda? • Are there effective policies in place to identify, assess, and counter the negative consequences of disinformation and propaganda?	Media Culture

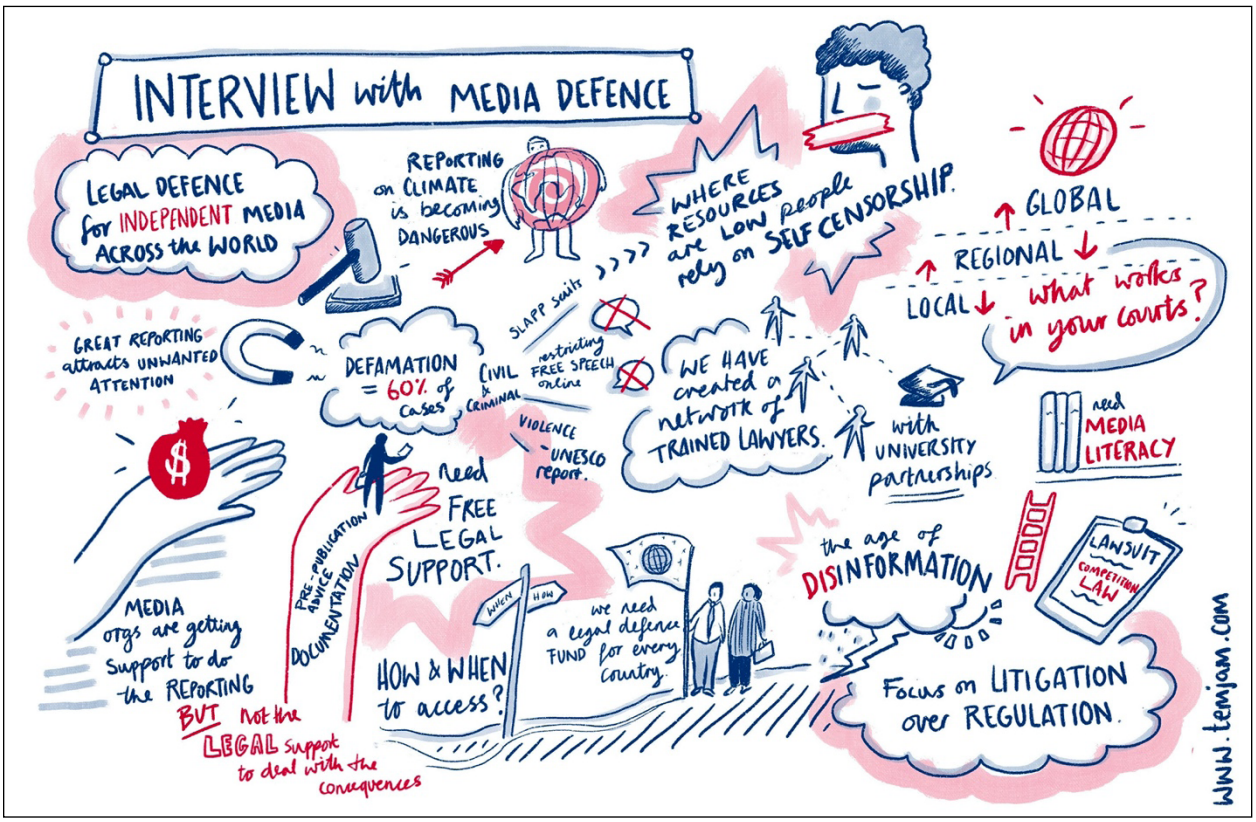


Figure 4: Visualization from an interview with Media Defence's Acting CEO Alinda Vermeer on the importance of strategic litigation, pro bono legal services for journalists, media outlets, and bloggers, and the importance of media support for legal and regulatory matters.

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

As Figure 4 (above)—drawn from an interview with Media Defence (an international non-governmental organization [NGO] offering pro bono legal services to journalists, bloggers, and media outlets facing jail time or other legal troubles)—illustrates, strategic interventions to strengthen the enabling environment can include legal support, networking media lawyers, addressing self-censorship practice, and exposing dangerous climates for reporting among other things, depending on the issues identified in the assessment. These can also be interventions that occur on the global, regional, or local levels.

Assessing the different elements above will yield a snapshot that shows the challenges and obstacles to be overcome. The elements provide insight into the implications for improving the enabling conditions for media by reforming legal and regulatory frameworks, improving the structure in which media operates, or strengthening the media culture in a region. Some specific programming lines that can be suggested are:

Government-focused programming

1. Trainings for judges and prosecutors regarding applicable freedom of expression standards.
2. Trainings and/or support to strengthen or establish regulatory bodies.
3. Support for an independent judiciary.
4. Institutional support to ensure even application of laws.
5. Training/support for legislators on drafting media laws, including consulting with local media support organizations, particularly governing the use and role of media around elections.
6. Training in international law and standards to which countries' media laws must comply.
7. Training for public agencies, ministries, etc. on responding to access to information requests and adhering to open data laws/requirements.
8. Rating/scoring tracking government responses to access to information requests.

Media- and civil society-focused programming

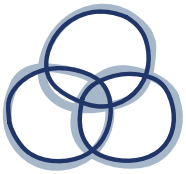
1. Legal support is holistic (in which journalists/outlets have access to pre-publication reviews to avoid violating libel/defamation laws or journalists receive training on their legal rights and responsibilities) and reactive (access to legal defense funds, counsel).
2. Activities to familiarize journalists with existing legal/regulatory frameworks and incentivize the use of available mechanisms (e.g., access to information requests).
3. Promoting and supporting advocacy for media legal reform.
4. Support to improve access to information and transparency policies and practices through testing of access to information processes. Scorecards can be created to measure how well government agencies respond to inquiries or how useful government websites are for providing information.
5. Information dissemination regarding laws and implications they have for media freedoms (e.g., registration, print licensing, criminal penalties for libel and slander).
6. Support for media law curriculum at law schools.
7. Information dissemination regarding laws and implications about the business sector (i.e., the ability to disseminate information relevant to make investment choices, track international markets, monitor government policies, etc.), and the ability to attract investors to the media sector.
8. Engagement with other private sector actors on new laws and regulations (including lobbying/advocacy/standards setting).
9. Documentation of violations of the rights of journalists to perform their professional function

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

The indicators below and in subsequent dimensions are outcome-focused, meaning they are geared toward a measurable observable change and usually geared toward an observable behavioral change. Each USAID media development program will select its own indicators. Below are illustrative types of indicators a program could use to track progress and the overall impact of a specific intervention. The indicators chosen should be part of a program's M&E plan, and indicators should be aligned to programmatic activity and a system of measurement and verification should be agreed upon in terms of the best means of verification and frequency of data collection.

Outcomes related to a conducive, open enabling environment for independent media:

1. Media competition. Measured in terms of levels of media competition; media freedom; media governance; access to media and information; and legal, digital, and physical security. (Note—scores and data for each area can be derived from other Dimension 2 indicators listed below.)
2. Number of incidents of violence targeting journalists in a year.
3. Number of crimes against journalists that are prosecuted in a year.
4. Extent to which the broadcasting code does not compromise the editorial independence of the media; for example, through imposing prior restraint.
5. Extent to which freedom of expression is guaranteed in law and respected in practice.
6. Extent to which access to information/right to information is guaranteed in law and respected in practice.
7. Number of websites blocked by the State using unclear criteria or opaque processes.
8. Extent to which effective regulations prevent undue ownership concentration and promote plurality.
9. Number of legal proposals submitted to authorities to improve the enabling environment.
10. Use of international/regional freedom of expression standards in decisions adopted by judicial and regulatory bodies.
11. Access to information requests by journalists and number of pieces written on the basis of the information obtained.
12. Official web pages that fulfill applicable transparency requirements.



Dimension 3: Cross-Cutting Issues—Gender, Youth, Disabled, and LGBTQ+ in Media Programs

This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "How are marginalized people and communities represented in and representative of the media in a country?"

The inclusion of marginalized voices—including women, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+— in news media and entertainment content and as producers of, consultants for, and leaders/managers of the news in the media industry are cross-cutting issues that impact every aspect of media development. If these voices and perspectives are absent from the news and entertainment products, democratic processes and policymaking cannot effectively benefit them. In every society, there are marginalized or minority voices that may have been excluded from the media. These groups may speak different languages or have sets of beliefs based on different ideologies or practices. Moreover, marginalized populations are frequently the targets of disinformation campaigns, particularly in populist countries. They are disproportionately subjected to harassment and trolling.

MYTHS

In assessing the media's capability to address marginalized voices, be aware that change here is often the cause of conflict as social benefits and privileges are manipulated for populist, economic, or social reasons. There are many myths that stand in the way of change. Four myths that the media assessment team should consider are:

Myth 1: Because LGBTQ+ groups are stigmatized and discriminated against, there is nothing we can do to promote more positive inclusion and integration into media development programs. Numerous examples from all continents have shown that familiarity with LGBTQ+ often begins in the media, especially entertainment media. It lays the foundations to reduce the stigmatization and discrimination this community faces.

Myth 2: Media and journalism are considered "man's work" and therefore, out of respect for cultural norms and values, it is better for us to not get involved in promoting gender equality and empowerment through media development. Journalism is still a field in which media managers cite dangerous risks as a reason to exclude women journalists. However, it should go without saying that women have shown they can manage the risk and their perspectives on news and reporting are critical for media development. While they can manage the risk, there are security issues more unique to women that will be addressed in Dimension 8.[22]

Myth 3: Women dominate the media sector in my country, so there is not a need to address gender issues in my media development program. In some countries and regions, women can dominate the journalism field; however, gender also means considering content about gender, including women as experts/quoted sources in reporting, and ensuring that they are represented as managers (i.e., editors and senior managers).

Myth 4: All online youth are internet wizards—being a "born digital" has erased the digital divide. Not true. Familiarity with the internet is important to use it effectively, but many youths lack the experience, training, and knowledge to be discriminating consumers of internet media.

ELEMENTS

Elements and questions useful for analysis cover both the culture of the media (how well its content reflects voices and perspectives of marginalized communities) and the structure (whether marginalized communities are active participants in the production of news and entertainment content), including at senior levels. Incorporate these questions into assessment instruments—interview guides, focus groups, surveys, and literature reviews—to arrive at a snapshot of how marginalized voices are represented in and representative of the media in a country.

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 3.1 Research about gender, youth, and other cross-cutting issues including, but not limited to, disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation (hate speech) • What research, if any, has been done in the assessed country regarding gender, youth, and other cross-cutting issues? • Are there think tanks, CSOs, or academic researchers that focus on cross-cutting issues? Include them in interviews, if possible.	Media Culture

[22] See IWMF's global studies on women in the newsroom https://www.iwmf.org/resources/global-report-on-the-status-of-women-in-the-news-media for more details of how gender influences media.

ELEMENT	SCOPE
Element 3.2 Cultural norms that affect women, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+ • What laws, regulations, and policies are in place related to gender, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+? Are there any legal protections? • What social norms and practices exist regarding gender, minorities, and LGBTQ+? Is there widespread social acceptance or open discrimination or is it somewhere in between? • Do marginalized groups have access to legal protections in the event that they face discrimination, harassment, or other unlawful behavior?	Media Culture
Element 3.3 Composition of the media industry with regard to women, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+ • Do media outlets and related media industry professions have inclusive hiring practices and safe work environments for all people? • What opportunities exist to help advance media and journalism careers for marginalized people?	Media Structure
Element 3.4 Representation in the media with regards to women, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+ • Are there any bloggers, alternative media, or community media that cater to marginalized communities? • Are there mainstream media—TV, radio, print, major digital media—that have special programs or devoted time/space for marginalized communities? • Do media and journalists fairly and in a non-discriminatory way refer to marginalized peoples or do they use stereotypes, bigoted terms, or slurs and slander? • Are these groups represented at senior management levels and in governance structures of the media industry? • Do journalists and media actors seek out vulnerable populations as sources/quoted experts for stories (when safe to do so)?	Media Structure

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the media and what USAID can realistically achieve in a development program. Some suggested programming responses are:

1. Commission further research on media representation and the portrayal of marginalized groups. This can include hosting roundtable discussions with key media and civil society actors related to relevant topics for greater social inclusion and advocacy support for marginalized communities. Make use of USAID's range of policy guidance and commission research that offers a local perspective of these issues (i.e., a gender analysis of the media and journalism sector).
2. Grant support for media programming, ranging from entertainment programs, specialist journalistic content, think pieces, and special topics coverage on cross-cutting issues.
3. Offer inclusivity and sensitivity training by partnering media programs with CSOs in the country or region that can help create better understandings and practices of treatment and coverage of marginalized issues. Encourage media interaction with CSOs concerned with minority and gender issues to influence the agenda-setting process in the newsroom.

4. Support the creation of local style guides for use by media houses and journalists so that they can better and more accurately cover marginalized groups—style guides for LBGTQ+ and disabled people are good starting points to improve fair representation.
5. Offer grant support and opportunities for youth programming. This could include high school or university newspapers, podcasts, and social media programming. Options for mentoring, coaching, and internships would also be useful for youth and media program streams.
6. Offer newsroom and management training to sensitize management and staff to minority and gender concerns to ensure these receive adequate coverage in the mainstream press.
7. Conduct workshops and training to learn how to locate subtle and overt discrimination and edit it out of news stories.
8. Local grants could include diversity grants/programs for media outlets/centers to be more inclusive in hiring practices, or leadership training/programs for staff who identify as part of a marginalized population.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. Percentage change in the overall amount of coverage marginalized groups and topics of interest by USAID-supported media.
2. Increased level of cooperation among CSOs that support positive social change related to marginalized issues and journalists and media outlets.
3. Percentage of change in terms of the amount of misinformation about marginalized groups in the media (adjust and specify which of the cross-cutting issues is the focus).
4. The number of women in positions of management and ownership of the media.
5. The number of youth-related media programs and youth-specific media development interventions.

Dimension 4: Newsroom Professionalization

This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "To what extent are professional standards met in news coverage of key events and issues?"

Newsroom professionalization means that journalism content attains professional standards of quality. While professional standards have long been taught and accepted for print and broadcast media, the industry is adapting these standards to new online content delivery. This trend is "converging" media operations; newspapers with multifunctional websites; community radios linked to rural audiences via cell phone applications; or multimedia houses that broadly embrace television, radio, internet, print, social media, and/or wireless services. Media interact ever more intensely with their audiences; thus, it is incumbent on journalists to translate professional standards to the emerging news environments.

Newsrooms are quite diverse in today's globalized, digitized, online world. Technology means that many journalists are not working in a formal newsroom but interact with each other through platforms for editing, sharing content, and feedback. Newsroom culture is also shifting, and the changes may impact professionalism.

As the interview with Daraj.com, a Beirut-based independent digital platform, shows (Figure 5, below), media are not just a part of the problem in the perpetuation of disinformation in society—they are an integral part of the solution. They are on the front lines of disinformation. Good professionalization leads to the capacity to see the bigger picture, verify facts, and understand the sources of news in society.

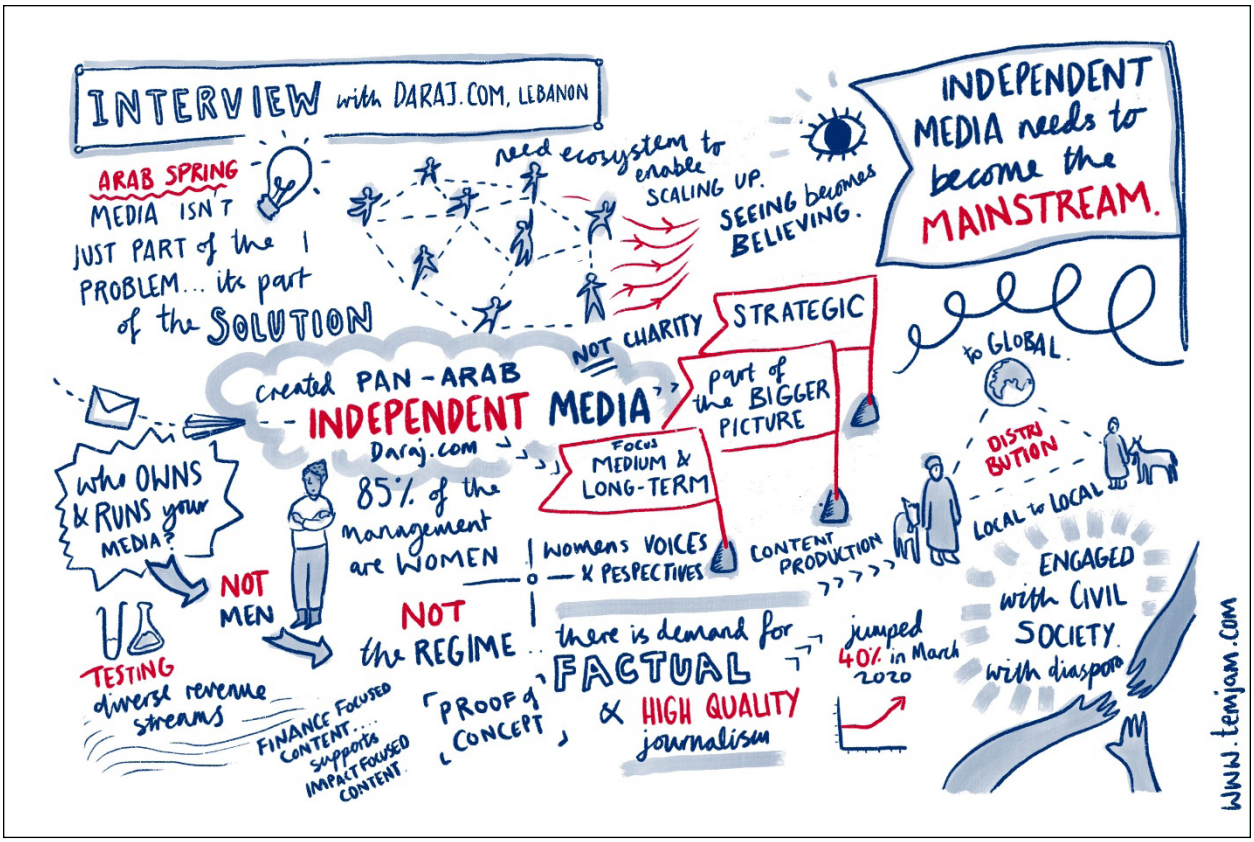


Figure 5: Visualization of an interview with Alia Ibrahim, co-founder and editor of Pan-Arab independent digital media outlet Daraj.com

There are multiple paths to the professionalization of newsrooms. Organizations can focus on developing high-quality content generated by well-trained journalists and editorial teams. Journalists and editors can be more professional when they respond to and incorporate user-generated content news coverage and programming. Organizations can also produce better and more interactive content through the digitalization of media operations. Advanced data visualization and automated fact-checking can also enhance newsroom professionalism. Finally, newsroom professionalism fundamentally requires that journalists are paid a livable wage and have the chance to learn about and integrate international standards into their work.

MYTHS

Some of the common myths about newsroom professionalization that should be avoided by the media assessment team are:

Myth 1: Bigger newsrooms are better. In fact, small newsrooms can build their capacity to cover local news and specific themes that are missed by bigger outlets.

Myth 2: Circulation numbers are an accurate measure of the professionalism of an outlet. Professionalism and the demand for news are not necessarily correlated. There is ample evidence that people will buy news that conforms to very low standards of investigation or fact-checking.

Myth 3: Training journalists is a waste of resources. All professions require periodic training updates so that members stay current in their skills and take advantage of innovations. While every study indicates a significant shrinkage in print media, it is likely to continue to be an important news source that is translated to online formats. Moreover, it is not just "training" but long-term and/or in-house/tailored mentoring,

coaching, and ongoing learning, just as all professionals need to continue to advance in their fields. Training is necessary because of journalists' important role in society and the ever-changing technological environment that shapes modern journalism.

ELEMENTS

Elements and questions useful for analysis consider both the level of journalism skills and the way in which media outlets promote and require these skills. The media assessment team should incorporate the following questions into assessment instruments—interview guides, focus groups, surveys, and literature reviews—to arrive at a snapshot of newsroom professionalization in a country.

ELEMENT
Element 4.1 Assessment of the quality of journalists' reporting skills • Which outlets drive the news cycle? • Which outlets are considered the most professional in reporting? Which outlets are considered the least professional? • Is there variance in terms of professionalism among media types? Which media type is considered the most professional: tv, radio, print, online? • Which outlets have won industry awards? • Do journalists and editors and local independent media understand how data is used for content optimization or how data journalism works (i.e., use of public data, databases, data dredging, data visualization)?
Element 4.2 Assessment of the country's investigative journalism outlets, capacities, and networks • Which outlets drive the news cycle? • Which outlets are considered the most professional in reporting? Which outlets are considered the least professional? • Is there variance in terms of professionalism among media types? Which media type is considered the most professional: tv, radio, print, online? • Which outlets have won industry awards? • Do journalists and editors and local independent media understand how data is used for content optimization or how data journalism works (i.e., use of public data, databases, data dredging, data visualization)?
Element 4.3 Adherence of the local media to recognized professional standards, ethics, and norms • Where do ethical standards come from in this nation? • Is there a professional code of ethics? • Which professional associations exist? What is the size or percentage of membership across the sector? • Do professional standards exist and are they being followed? • What is the sanction for when journalists or organizations fail to meet standards?

ELEMENT
Element 4.4 Integration of digital media and cybersecurity skills (digitalization of media operations). This would include media outlet operationalization and support for the uptake of digital literacy and digital security in the newsroom • What is the level of digitalization into other formal media types? • What are the levels of vertical integration (does the TV station have a website and a digital version of the news? Are radio stations online as well as broadcasting? What is the prevalence of print outlets integrating video, links, and other interactive formats into stories)? • Do the outlets safeguard data in email, data storage, and website security? Do they conduct regular audits? • Have outlets experienced any cybersecurity incidents/breaches? If yes, how did they respond? • What are the existing levels of digital security in the newsrooms? • What are the patterns of cybersecurity adoption among media types (TV, radio, print, and online)?
Element 4.5 Newsroom in-house audience research skills and ability to make use of analytics, metrics, and research • Do most of the outlets have in-house audience research experts to measure how well content performs? If not, can they use affordable external experts? Can staff use and analyze research? Are they using the insights for audience expansion, news development, or advertising revenue? • Do outlets have the skills and ability to make use of analytics, metrics, and research to evaluate how well content performs?
Element 4.6 Mechanisms and sustainability of support to professional networks for journalists and media professionals • Which mechanisms exist to support professional networks for journalists and media professionals? • Are these networks formal (associations) or informal? • Are these mechanisms sustainable? If not, what needs to be done to make them sustainable?
Element 4.7 Compensation for journalism; wages are competitive with similar professional jobs • What is the level of compensation for journalists? Editors? Other media staff? • Are journalist wages comparable to similar professional jobs? • Are journalists unionized? • What is the level of turnover in newsrooms (i.e., journalist and editor turnover)?

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

After assessing this dimension, consider the strengths and weaknesses in newsroom professionalism and how USAID can realistically address these weaknesses through programming. Some suggested programming lines are:

1. Capacity-building and technical training support for digital newsroom readiness and transformation to a digital and/or converged newsroom.
2. Online mentoring coupled with onsite embedded digital media newsroom professionalization training and skills building.

3. Small grants program to support local innovation hubs and innovation safe spaces within newsrooms or in a community journalism setting, and to test out new ideas for adapting new and emerging technology to support news and journalism professional development.
4. Support for building the capacity of data journalism and data analytics training.
5. Accelerator funding, digital media start-up programming, and co-creation workshop streams to jumpstart and support new models and approaches to digital journalism.
6. Develop or support a locally led training program or media institute staffed by senior and emergent media leaders to build journalism skills.
7. Support academic research into journalism standards.
8. Build up business management and innovations in newsrooms. Just as there have been innovations in how content is created and shared, the business of the newsroom needs innovations as well. Automated journalism, advanced data visualization, and automated fact-checking can enhance newsroom professionalism.
9. Support industry-led roundtables that can set international standards for ethics.
10. Small grants program to support content production and niche or specialized journalism topics, and to develop social impact-related coverage (stories about positive social change).
11. Small grants funding to help support local investigative journalism.
12. Programming support for workshops, conferences, and seminars that bring together media and civil society—including press associations, journalism associations, and academics—to focus on and raise awareness about hot topics and key trends in supporting journalistic professionalism.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. Outcomes related to improved newsroom professionalization, including training and education outcomes, show increased levels of media education, institutionalization, quality and professional standards, financial sustainability, and empowerment of journalists.
2. Number of media outlets that have clear codes of ethics and professional editorial guidelines.
3. Percent change of levels of understanding by media professionals and journalists around journalism ethics, professionalism, and standards of independent journalists and media.
4. Extent to which independent journalist associations exist and identify good practices.
5. Media and content producers demonstrate improved capacity to produce professional, locally relevant, and evidence-based news and information that is an alternative to disinformation and propaganda.
6. Local media and content producers demonstrate an increased capacity to produce social impact entertainment, which can often find itself outside of the crosshairs that target traditional news-focused media. Dramas, comedies, satire, reality shows, media magazines, and other creative platforms allow for sharing of information, fostering difficult discussions, and contributing to social norms.
7. Independent media offers quality content and information in the public interest (including investigative journalism).
8. Journalists are capable of producing a wide range of creative, engaging, and balanced content. They understand how to utilize social media and maximize distribution platforms to expand the reach of content.
9. Newsrooms and media outlets are equipped with staff, systems, and skills-based competencies to leverage digital journalism skills for journalistic and business purposes.

Dimension 5: Business, Sustainability, and Market-Based Capacity

Independent professional journalism depends on the economic self-sustainability of media outlets. This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "Are media well-managed, economically viable, and financially sustainable?"

Dimension 5 considers the extent to which the media are financially resilient and editorially independent of influence by political and financial elites. Sustainable media remain flexible and adopt technologies. They can earn revenue and funding from diverse sources and have transparent ownership and easy-to-find information on funding sources. Media business models are diverse and shaped by their overall legal, political, and economic context, as well as the internal capacity of individual news organizations.

Media outlets are not only driven by their newsrooms; operations are unified and institutionally aware of audiences, audience development, revenue development, and social responsibility. These outlets successfully market their brands and products to their audiences, customers, and stakeholders. They are managed professionally. Content decisions are made based on journalistic criteria and guided by audience data, analytics, and insights. Content is distributed on channels and platforms that are preferred by audiences and that are safe for both producers and consumers. Content is diverse and meets the needs and expectations of audiences.

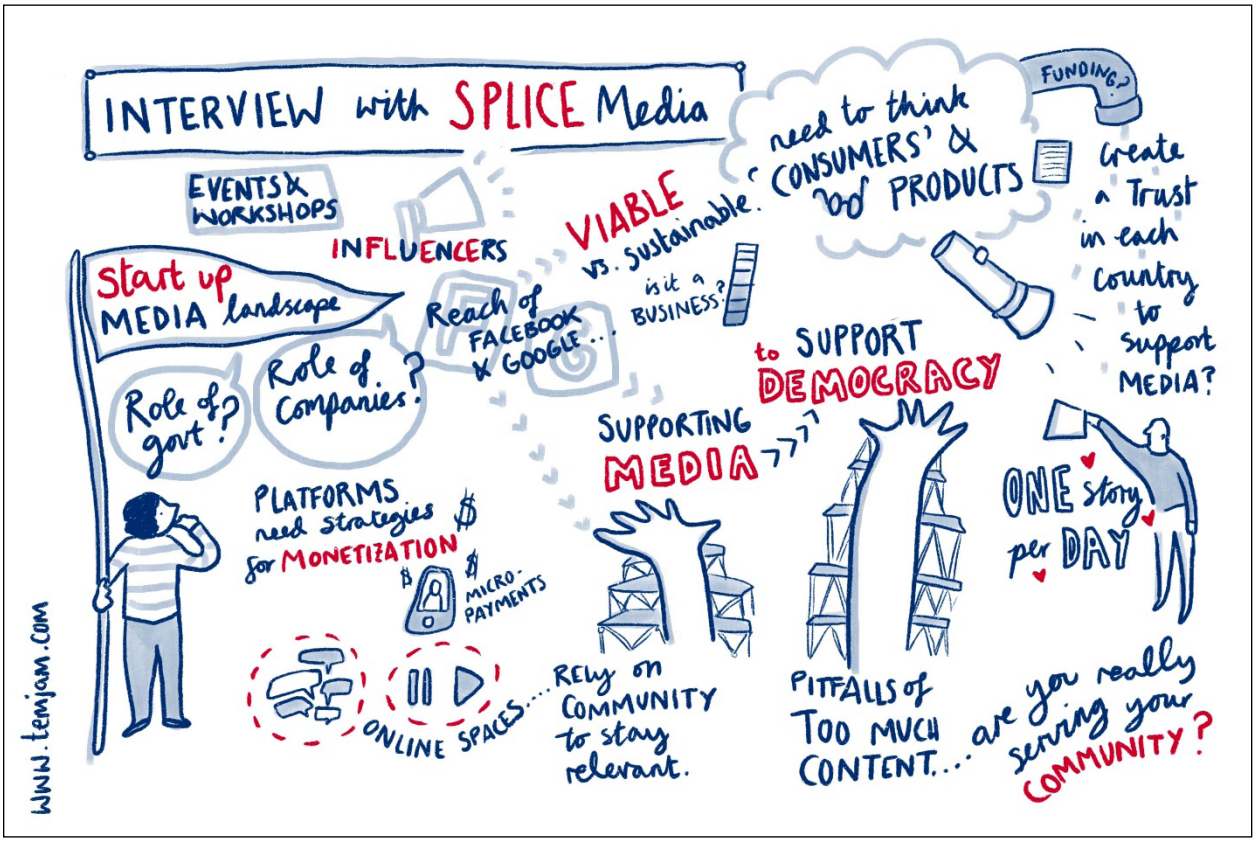


Figure 6: Interview with Splice Media—Media Sustainability

The interview with Splice Media (Figure 6, above) shows that sustainable media relies on government and companies and meets the needs of its consumers. Sustainable media organizations employ data in its many forms: for reporting, market analysis, targeting, and assessment. The community of its consumers helps to

determine how much news and what types of content are needed. Media adopt new technologies and adapt them for their purposes, whether they be audience expansion, retention, security, or overall monetization. It needs a media environment that supports collaboration, innovation, and the potential for investment, and a culture of experimentation that tolerates risk, celebrates success, and learns from failure.

MYTHS

As in any sector undergoing rapid technological change, there are many myths that should be avoided by the media assessment team.

Myth 1: All media organizations can, and should, become profitable. Not all news is profitable and the lesson of the traditional news function that was often carried at a loss suggests that the production of hard news is a social good that cannot always be provided by the private sector. Investigative journalism, in particular, is rarely profitable, including in countries with otherwise strong media ecosystems.

Myth 2: Journalists with a passion and commitment to the news mission make the best media organization managers. Managing an organization comes with its own set of skills that are essential to sustainability and not necessarily held by journalists. However, business and organizational managers with no commitment to news are also a danger to its production and provision.

Myth 3: The newsroom must maintain a "church and state" relationship with the organization's business operations and business models. While the willingness of consumers to pay for the news is not the only criteria for determining what news will be provided, it is an important criterion. If people will not buy news, they cannot gain information from it.

Myth 4: The goal must be to grow as large an audience as possible. The sustainability of a news operation requires an audience appropriate to the news provided. Engagement and interaction with an audience can be as important as audience figures. Not all potential audiences are large enough to ensure profitability or growth.

Myth 5: There is a finite number of business models that support news media. The last decades have shown that there are many appropriate models. For example, Wikipedia—a non-profit information source—has pioneered a new form of reader-generated news that has become an international standard.

ELEMENTS

There are many elements and questions useful for analysis around the sustainability of media business models largely because of the potential diversity and scope of these organizations. The media assessment team should adapt the questions that emerge as the most pertinent in the pre-assessment period. These questions will inform the assessment instruments—interview guides, focus groups, surveys, and literature reviews—to arrive at a snapshot of media sustainability in a country.

ELEMENT
Element 5.1 The business and legal operating environments for news media organizations • What kinds of media ownership exist: community, public, private, government, NGO? • Is there a broad community of citizens, organizations, and practitioners that strengthen, energize, and empower news media? • Are media businesses legally allowed to operate? • Are there provisions that make it uniquely difficult for media organizations to open or shut down as businesses? • Are media ownership and sources of funding transparent? Who owns and funds the media? Are there any classes of people who are restricted or limited in their ability to own/operate media? • Is there a politically neutral regulator that oversees spectrum allocation? • Are non-spectrum news media licensed (print, digital) and, if so, to what purpose? • Is there an official State news media system that receives government funding but also competes for advertising against independent media? • Does the government or civil society produce, contribute, and/or distribute entertainment media that contains content designed to achieve a specific policy or political goal? • Does the government interfere in distribution networks? • Do laws uniquely punish media businesses or their owners in ways that are punitive, selective, or unlike those applied to other businesses? • Are owners, shareholders, and/or investors at risk of criminal, rather than civil, liabilities for legal infractions? • How are media taxed, and are all media taxed consistently? Is that taxation perceived to be fair? • Are organizations or people that conduct business with media organizations at risk? Are they targeted for reprisals (such as tax audits, harassment, reputational harm, or indirect punishments)? • Is advertising content restricted in any ways that are designed to prevent fair-market competition? • Do media have fair access to financial tools, capital, and debt? Do they use credit cards and other short-term lines of credit to cover cash flow? • Are media employees compensated competitively with those of other businesses, especially in areas such as finance, data, technology, sales, and marketing?
Element 5.2 Media business/outlet strategic focus and administration/governance practices • Do media organizations operate in a customer-centric fashion, focused on integrated organizational results? • Do media houses have boards of directors or other oversight mechanisms? • Do they adhere to General Data Protection Regulation or similar privacy standards? • Do media businesses maintain accurate, audited financial records? • Are there consequences if records are inaccurate? • Do they establish annual budgets that can be revised in light of market changes? • Are there laws or common business practices that make it difficult/expensive to hire, fire, or restructure the workforce? • What is the level of employee churn in media companies? • Are compensation and incentives offered equally to female and male employees with similar responsibilities? • How much reliance is placed on stringers, freelancers, contractors, or volunteers? • Do media companies typically have job descriptions for their workers? Performance reviews? • Do media pay incentive compensation for performance? Is it fairly administered?

ELEMENT
Element 5.3 Media businesses' ability to strengthen and align internal infrastructure • Is there market-level audience data available in the country? • Do media organizations typically have a clear vision and mission that is well communicated and embraced among staffers? • Is that vision and mission supported in its broader community? • Are media led by diverse people (gender, ethnic backgrounds, age, religion) and representative of diverse views? • Do media houses implement strategic and business plans? If so, do they achieve the intended results? • Are organizational goals clear, measured, and shared with employees? • Are key performance indicators (KPIs) tracked and, when important milestones are met, celebrated? • Do media businesses periodically rebalance their workforces to align with achieving their strategic priorities? Or are resources aligned against earlier goals and legacy structures? • Are internal resources aligned with the organization's business models? For example, a company that uses a consumer revenue model requires resources in content production, data management, payment gateways, consumer marketing, and renewal cycle management. A business revenue model requires expertise in sales, marketing services, ad production, fulfillment, and contract management. • Do company cultures support innovation, experimentation, and professionalization? • Do media invest in training and developing staffers in critical roles across the organizations?
Element 5.4 Ability to serve and grow an audience/consumer base • What is the usage of, and access to, mobile internet, satellite, terrestrial media, print media, and other media sources? • What is known about audience preferences about news sources? • Which media are most trusted? • Which have the most loyal audiences? • Is there an urban/rural split in media use? • Is there an age or gender split in media use? • Are news media clearly differentiated, whether by content, style, geography, focus, or level of expertise? • What are accepted consumer price points for different types of media? • Are news media restricted from using specific distribution channels? Examples include restrictions on community radio, lack of access to the broadcast spectrum, control of satellite distribution channels, or restricted access to the internet. • How do media organizations define their target audiences? • Is there an audience that transcends geography (such as a pan-regional or exiled diaspora audience) or that has unique characteristics (language, gender, ideology)? • Do managers differentiate between growing overall audience levels (to support advertising models) and growing targeted readership audiences (to support consumer revenue models)? • Do newsrooms have a process for understanding what audiences want and need, and for testing what content they might embrace? • Do editors and news managers rely on audience data to refine content and align it with target audience interests? If so, are decisions made in real time, or do they lag the news cycle? • Do they use trend data and audience profiles to shape content on a longer arc? • Are content strategies developed to proactively cultivate specific audiences? • Have staffers completed analytics training courses and integrated that knowledge into operations?

ELEMENT
Element 5.5 Sources and development of consumer revenue • Do media organizations have clearly defined target audiences? Do they maintain performance metrics relative to those targets? • Are media organizations proficient in bringing audiences along a customer journey of increasing loyalty and engagement, culminating in paid subscriptions or memberships? • How do they differentiate themselves from other content and not just other local news sources? • Do media actively market their brands and content to audiences? To potential audiences? • Is there a culture of paying for content? Are consumers paying for subscriptions of any sort, such as newspaper or magazine subscriptions, or digital offerings including streaming movies or programs, podcasts, playlists, or news? • Are news media using newsletters, events, or other outreach tactics to develop databases of known users? • Have local news media successfully developed digital subscriptions or paywalls? • Are there payment gateways or other payment mechanisms that are commonly used by a wide number of people? • Do media hold events that generate ticket or merchandising sales? • Do media organizations ever use crowdfunding to raise revenue?
Element 5.6 Sources and development of business revenue • Is there a functioning consumer economy and differentiated brands that support advertising? • Does the market have unique characteristics (seasonality, tourism, conflict/war, sanctions)? • How large is the advertising market and how is market share allocated? • Is there market disruption, whether from technology, new entrants, or global platforms? What effects have those had? • Are businesses spending money directly with news media on advertising? Or have ad revenues shifted into other channels, like advertising houses, social media platforms, or with influencers? • Is there a professional advertising ecosystem that offers development opportunities, networking, and award competitions? • Are there independent audience research or verification services that help establish a transparent and competitive media marketplace? • Are government subsidies and advertising budgets allocated fairly and based on transparent criteria? Are payments made in a timely fashion? • Is the media market disrupted by close-to-government actors? Examples include the manipulation of audience rating systems or preferential spending among outlets. • Do advertising agencies capture a significant share of marketing spending? • Are media houses proficient in accepting digital advertising? • Do news media have professional sales development departments with established goals and revenue targets? • Do members of their sales teams use metrics and KPIs to assess performance? • Is audience data a core element of shaping advertising and event marketing sales strategies? • Do media organizations offer business clients diverse services beyond traditional advertising, such as custom content, event sponsorship, audience insights, and marketing services? • Have media diversified their revenue sources to include events or non-news products? Do they offer conferences, convening, or trade shows? • Are media proficient in receiving programmatic advertising and accepting Interactive Advertising Bureau standardized ad placements? • Can media receive payments for digital advertising within their country and banking system? Or do they operate offshore banking arrangements? • Are media organizations capturing first-party data in the absence of cookies?

ELEMENT
Element 5.7 Assessment of media business/digital skills for sustainability • Are data, in many forms, at the heart of business processes and decision-making? • Have media organizations invested in data analysts and the tools they need? • If they are using consumer revenue business models, have they implemented any specialized tools that support customer acquisition and retention? • Have they implemented any business intelligence tools to aggregate and analyze diverse sources of information? • Are they adept at using social media for communicating with, and promoting to, audiences?
Element 5.8 Ability to experiment/innovate within the media organization • Are there incubator or other organizations that support media innovation with expertise, mentoring, grants, technology, space, or other consulting? • Do media collaborate across platforms and brands on key topics? Issues? • Do media have social media expertise in-house? • Do they have a culture of experimentation that tolerates risks and learns from unsuccessful efforts? Do they have the financial resources to do so? • Do media houses have the tools to test and refine ideas, such as using A/B testing on content? • Are they incorporating artificial intelligence to increase productivity? • Are they experimenting with various formats, including digital audio, video, and social media?
Element 5.9 usiness models and practices as they relate to traditional/formal and digital state, public service, commercial, and alternative/community media • Are there alternative voices in the media sector? • How vital are they? • What communities do they represent? • How large are their audiences? • How are they distributed? • What are their business models? • How have they affected community discourse? • Have they or their audiences faced reprisals? Or, conversely, gained greater acceptance?

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

After assessing this dimension, the strengths and weaknesses found in media sustainability must be considered alongside how USAID can realistically address these in programming. Some suggested programming lines are:

1. Support a business accelerator for media that provides thought leadership and offers business incubation, start-up support, and opportunities for collaboration.
2. Support the development of sustainable media businesses with organizational capacity assessments, training opportunities, and expert consulting designed to improve management and encourage diverse revenue sources.
3. Support the development of diverse consumer revenue models with training, access to customer relationship management tools and data, and ongoing mentoring.

4. Support the development of diverse business revenue models with training, seed-funding, and management support.
5. Purchase subscriptions in an analytics platform (i.e., Chartbeat, Parse.ly, or similar) for partner media organizations. Train them to integrate data into decision-making. Develop dashboards to track partners' progress toward audience goals.
6. Work with media partners to clarify their brands and present them consistently. Working with professional marketers, develop brand and tactical marketing materials to position media in the market. Work with partners to use social media marketing to make their content visible to audiences, expand reach, and deepen engagement.
7. Support networks across media organizations for sharing data to attract advertising on a large scale.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. State does not discriminate through advertising policy or use advertising to favor certain outlets over others for political or other reasons.
2. Number of target media entities that make new capital investments.
3. Average percentage of media revenues derived from advertising by target private sector independent media entities.
4. Media diversify their revenue sources.
5. Media integrate data into their operations and use a wide range of KPIs, metrics, and analytics to refine their efforts, optimize results, and measure their effectiveness.
6. Media successfully market themselves to audiences; their brands are strengthened and differentiated.
7. Milestones achieved against media viability, sustainability, and profitability: Media outlets supported show demonstrated markers of progress (improved milestones and benchmarks scores) in terms of the progress made around business models. (Note—USAID guidance indicates that while media should be resilient, markets are challenging—in a closed space, a market-based model for commercial independent media may not exist, hence the need to develop off-shore methods of financing. This would require USAID buy-in and approval, but this type of support could also be factored into the media outlet's milestones and benchmarks for improvements made to business practices.)

Dimension 6: Media, Community, and Social Influence

Dimension 6 focuses on assessing the important role that media plays in their communities and within civil society. Media are critical to the creation and dissemination of fact-based news and information that is critical for civic engagement and necessary for the good functioning of civil society. Media, in this way, are critical for keeping the government accountable and helping in the development of initiatives, actions, and enterprises that will serve the community's interests. Some outlets may be solely dedicated to advocacy journalism. Advocacy journalism is different from investigative journalism because it works for some social or political purpose. Today's media sector includes both formal media (traditional media like print, radio, and TV) and social and digital media, all of which may have different objectives.

This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "To what extent are media responding to the needs for information and news to inform civic engagement and civil society?"

Figure 7: Interview with City Dog Belarus—Responding to Civic Priorities

As Figure 7's graphic representation of the interview with City Dog Belarus shows, strong media are critical for the good networks and dialogue that build the community and help citizens to unite against common enemies and threats. The media sector must build partnerships to connect with its target audiences and focus on experimentation and innovation to meet their needs. They should provide platforms for public discussions of issues and be a place where debate occurs. Media can only perform this role if they are influential with community members.

MYTHS

Myths about the social responsibility of the media often perpetuate a denial of the media's power to set agendas and serve their communities.

Myth 1: There is nothing that can be done to moderate partisan or politicized media influences. While media models seem to be trending toward separating people based on their partisanship, the media can and should provide multiple, valid perspectives on the news that aim at providing the truth.

Myth 2: There is no market for alternative/niche media outlets. The internet has many specialty media products often aimed at news deserts created as major media outlets pull out. The gap in the supply of local and specialty news is picked up by social media often inefficiently and without access to investigative skills.

Myth 3: Media need to be separate from civil society in order to be objective. Civil society is not an interest group. It is that sector of society that represents the needs, interests, and desires of all citizens. In this aspect, media and civil society can amplify each other's work in ways that both serve their communities and their missions.

Myth 4: Larger media are more influential than alternative/niche media. The authority to influence is drawn from good, consistent reporting. Many niche media have become very influential through a commitment to high-quality reporting on issues.

ELEMENTS

The media assessment team should identify important civil society stakeholders in the pre-assessment and then adapt the following questions for both the media and these stakeholders. These questions will inform the assessment instruments—interview guides, focus groups, surveys, and literature reviews—to arrive at a snapshot of the links between media and its communities in a country.

ELEMENT
Element 6.1 Overview of media participation and exchange with civil society • How well is the media integrated into civil society? Do they have an adversarial or collaborative (or mixed) relationship? • Do the media use research/analysis by civil society in their reporting? • Do civil society groups use media reports to enact or advocate for change?
Element 6.2 Overview of alternative, niche, local, and community media sources • How many alternative, niche, local, and community outlets are operating in the country? • What is the history of this sector of media?
Element 6.3 What is the condition of state or public service broadcaster (PSB) institutions—or public media institutions? • Do public service media operate under a legal framework that allows them to be editorially independent of the government and has a clearly defined remit? What is the selection and appointment procedure of the managers of the corporation? • How is public service media funded? • Are there any allegations of unfair competition coming from commercial media (e.g., if public service media are allowed to compete for advertising, thus creating an uneven playing field as they also receive funding from the government)? • What is the public perception/use of public service media? Is there a gap between perception and use and, if so, why? • What are the accountability mechanisms for public service media? • What relationships have existed, if any, among the alternative niche outlets and the public broadcaster? • Should there be relationships among the alternative niche outlets and the public broadcaster? If yes, what kinds of relationships might leverage the strength of each?
Element 6.4 Overview of key social media platforms, outlets, and influencers • How do alternative media sources and outlets distribute their news and entertainment content? • Which online platforms, including social media, are used and by whom? • Who are the leading alternative media influencers (outlets and people)? Why are they perceived to be influential? • What are some of the challenges to the distribution of alternative/niche media? • What are the connections between social and digital media and civil society? • What is the level of advocacy journalism?
Element 6.5 Level of influence and type of role social media platforms and closed-network messaging apps play in information-sharing and providing alternative media • What are the dominant social media platforms in the country for news and networking? • Which messaging apps are most used? Most trusted?

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

After assessing this dimension, the strengths and weaknesses in the links between media and its communities must be considered alongside how USAID can realistically address these in programming. Some suggested programming lines are:

1. Promote dialogue within USAID civil society programming to increase cooperation and understanding of the importance of stimulating links to media development.
2. Develop locally driven centers/organizations/systems for media and civil society to collaborate for public discussions and debates on civic/public interest issues.
3. Support public service media (broadcasters and online).
4. Support potential partnerships between CSOs, entertainment producers that create social impact, and investigative networks for more impactful journalism and entertainment content. These partnerships may fill gaps in the mainstream coverage of topics like the environment or climate change (Note: Supporting such partnerships can be challenging and should be done mindfully in a way where both CSOs and media outlets retain their independence on story selection/advocacy work through a firewall approach once a topic for a report series has been agreed upon).
5. Support a high-quality, investigative journalism center (see Dimension 4 for linkages with other aspects of media development).
6. Provide small grants funding to community media and advocacy journalism.
7. Encourage or support business sustainability training for niche/alternative media. This would include pathways to continued funding and support beyond USAID assistance.
8. Support partnerships between alternative media, community media, and other public interest-driven media and libraries and/or community centers.
9. Facilitate meet-and-greet talks between journalists, technologists, and media producers to interact with the community and to help audiences understand and keep pace with the changing state of media.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. Percentage change based on audience research of media consumption of alternative media, public media, and community media.
2. Outcomes related to improved independent media engagement in community and society demonstrate the following qualities:
    a. Levels of media consumption and literacy.
    b. Levels of CSO and popular support for media.
    c. Levels of relationships and media coalitions that promote press freedom, access to information, journalists' rights, other aspects of media, and democracy-related institution-building.
    d. Percentage change in the perceptions and social norms, attitudes, and beliefs related to independent media (media and democracy).
    e. Percentage change—inclusion of vulnerable groups. This could be measured in terms of coverage/content or inclusion of staff in outlets (or both)?
6. For media development programs aimed at supporting PSB:
    a. The public service goals and remit of the PSB is clearly defined in law.
    b. The PSB has specific guarantees on editorial independence and appropriate and secure funding arrangements to protect it from arbitrary interference.

c. The PSB is publicly accountable through its governing body. The PSB has a proven commitment to consultation and engagement with the public and CSOs, including a complaints system.
d. Public involvement in appointments to the governing body.

Dimension 7: Media and Information Literacy

This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "To what extent are audiences media literate?"

This dimension considers the extent to which audiences are data and information literate; the information threats to, and watchdog role of, a free press in a healthy democracy; and how to evaluate the media with critical thinking skills and competencies. Media must meet audience needs in order to stay in business. Media content must stand up to scrutiny, including media and information literacy.

Media literacy programming is on the rise and needed globally, as disinformation and propaganda threaten democratic gains made over the past three decades. Disinformation is a complex phenomenon driven by many local and international actors with different agendas, resource bases, and levels of sophistication. There are often many geopolitical considerations when it comes to countering disinformation (e.g., it is increasingly clear that there are different ways in which China, Russia, and Iran in particular seek to use disinformation tactics as part of their statecraft). While foreign interference is important to factor into media and information literacy program design, it is also important to consider the role of domestic and state-sponsored forms of disinformation.

The threats posed by disinformation are exacerbated by the widespread availability and consumption of digital media, including social media (especially Facebook and Twitter) and messages spread through messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook messenger. The impact of disinformation on the public's view of current affairs and everyday news has led to political polarization, heightened geopolitical insecurities, and a rampant spread of rumors around public health concerns, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

How can people become better at evaluating information and thus mitigate the ill effects of propaganda and disinformation? One answer is to teach people how to objectively evaluate information through media literacy awareness education and campaigns. In particular, utilizing applied learning and interactive approaches to help audiences evaluate information, and responsibly produce and share content. Media and information literacy programming is an emergent and rapidly growing field unto itself and has a unique set of vocabulary and key terms that are important for the assessment team to be familiar with. The text box below provides definitions of many of these terms and some of the parameters used to assess media literacy for ease of reference.

Key definitions and parameters of media literacy include:

Algorithmic Literacy: Recognizing the inherent biases in computer programming; critically evaluating the information we receive online and not assuming that the highest-ranked information is the "best" information. Understanding that engaging with digital platforms involves sacrificing a degree of privacy.

Data Literacy: The ability to read, work with, analyze, and communicate with data. It is a skill that engages all levels of workers to pose the correct inquiries of data and machines, build knowledge, make decisions, and convey significance to others.

Digital Literacy: The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Information Literacy: The set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to know when information is needed to help solve a problem or make a decision, how to articulate that information need in searchable terms and language, then search efficiently for the information, retrieve it, determine its relevance, communicate it to others, if necessary, then utilize it to accomplish bottom-line purposes.

Media Literacy: The process of understanding and using the mass media in an assertive and non-passive way. This includes an informed and critical understanding of the role of the media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques.

Bias: A lack of balance in the selection of events and stories that are reported and how they are covered. The term "media bias" describes bias in a media organization or group, rather than the perspective of an individual journalist or article.

Critical Thinking: The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action.

Disinformation: False content, imposter content, manipulated content, and fabricated content that is deliberately created or disseminated with the express purpose to cause harm. Producers of disinformation typically have political, financial, psychological, or social motivations.

Misinformation: False connection, misleading content—information that is false, but not intended to cause harm. For example, individuals who do not know a piece of information is false may spread it on social media in an attempt to be helpful.

Propaganda: Any media text whose primary purpose is to openly persuade an audience of the validity of a particular point of view.

MYTHS

Common misperceptions about media literacy relate to the fact that it does not tend to be widely known outside of the media development field and few learning institutions have effectively implemented it into their curricula. But the ability to evaluate news and news sources is a skill that can be enormously beneficial to the promotion of democracy and building stronger democratic practices.

Myth 1: Media literacy only teaches critical thinking skills. While critical thinking competencies are indeed an important part of media literacy, it also includes skills to be digitally savvy, as well as to understand the watchdog role of a free press in a healthy democracy.

Myth 2: Media literacy is mainly taught in schools as part of civic education or a stand-alone class. Media literacy is not widely taught and is an important, basic skill useful for civics but also for accessing the information we all need in our daily lives.

Myth 3: Media literacy takes too long. Media literacy topics can be incorporated into short and diverse learning fora, including games (like Harmony Square), satirical news programs, and storytelling formats.

Myth 4: There is no evidence that media literacy works. Several studies show that media literacy training has improved the ability of citizens in diverse countries around the world.

Myth 5: Media literacy is a silver bullet. There are no silver bullets, in the sense of a panacea for all that is ill in the media sector. However, media literacy is a key component of a healthy media ecosystem.

ELEMENTS

Elements and questions useful for analysis are:

ELEMENT
Element 7.1 Levels of public information literacy. • Are there media literacy education programs in primary or secondary schools or universities, or is media literacy integrated across subjects (including civic education)? • Does the local Ministry of Education or equivalent have a media literacy-focused national curriculum? • Are there media literacy programs, centers, or initiatives offered by the State, civil society, or other entities and are they widely available? • Are there civil society-led media literacy awareness campaigns and are they interlinked with media and journalistic programs and coverage? • Do people have awareness of and access to media literacy games? • Are there local fact-checking organizations? What is the public perception of them? Are they trustworthy and valued?
Element 7.2 Audience demand for independent media and, relatedly, audience demand for disinformation • Do local independent media outlets offer coverage or programming that seeks to impact public awareness about media and information literacy issues? Does this include media outlet-level fact-checking information, columns, or "in the spotlight" types of consideration? • Is the State media propagandistic? What about other media outlets and platforms? • What does national audience research indicate in terms of the popularity, reach, engagement, and influence of media? • Do surveys or other forms of knowing such as focus groups or audience studies indicate that citizens understand the watchdog role of the press?

Element 7.3 State of information integrity
• What is the level of trust from audiences in media and social media platforms?
  • TV
  • Radio
  • Newspapers
  • Social media
  • Closed messaging apps

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

After assessing this dimension, the strengths and weaknesses in the level of media literacy in the country must be considered alongside how USAID can realistically address these in programming. Some suggested programming lines are:

1. Support media watchdog and media monitoring groups as a tool for promoting media transparency and transforming civil society and the public into active participants in the media.[23]
2. Raise awareness of the role and function of the news ombudsman, which acts as a key link between citizens and news agencies and helps to hold news agencies accountable and accessible to citizens.
3. Develop media literacy skills through mobilization, public forums, and debate on relevant topics such as current affairs, media practices, and citizens' rights and obligations.
4. Incorporate media literacy as a core element of media development programs' cooperation with Ministries of Education, primary and secondary schools, universities, and other educational programs. While media literacy can be taught as a stand-alone course, in some cases it can be more effective when integrated across diverse subject areas.
5. Support educational programs such as having journalists visit a classroom, or having a classroom visit a media outlet; create internships for students and support student publications.
6. Promote research on the impact of media literacy on citizen action, citizen participation, and good governance. Empirical evidence is also needed to build support for related policy development and advocacy efforts.
7. Fund national audience research that includes key research questions that provide feedback on media literacy trends in terms of audience attitudes on trust in media, consumption habits, and ability to discern disinformation and misinformation.
8. Small grant support for the development of games (online and offline) that can make learning about media and information literacy fun and engaging.
9. Look for opportunities to connect and collaborate with other donor-funded programs that work in the areas of media and information literacy. Avoid duplication and look for areas to cooperate with and augment the effective approaches that are working in other countries.
10. Look for regional programming opportunities, including supporting conferences, teacher training, media literacy training of trainer programs, and curricula and resource development and exchanges.
11. Link up media experts or journalists, civil society, and academics in other countries seeking to become media and information literacy experts with counterparts in the global south or other areas. Establish peer networks for support, exchange, and peer-to-peer professional development.
12. Set aside funding for long-term impact assessments (longitudinal research) to see how effective media and information literacy programming is.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. Percentage of population that trusts available news sources, with the understanding that trust could potentially decrease as media literacy (and thus, awareness) increases.
2. Percentage change in the population's critical information consumption skills and behaviors (can be disaggregated by student and non-student population).
3. Percentage change of training participants reporting a change in media consumption habits.

[23] Program suggestions 1–5 come from Martinsson, J., 2009, "The Role of Media Literacy in the Governance Reform Agenda," Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP), World Bank, Washington D.C.

4. CSOs and media outlets share and disseminate media and information tips and best practices.
5. Number of individuals reached by awareness campaigns who report they share knowledge and information they learn from a media and information literacy program.
6. Media literacy training curriculum is adapted to the local/national context.
7. Percentage change in number of schools (primary and secondary) who have adopted a media literacy curriculum.
8. Percentage of training participants reporting they shared knowledge/skills that they received.
9. Audiences demonstrate an improved understanding of core skills and competencies related to media literacy efforts; part of the measurement for this is seen through public demand for high-quality, independent reporting as an important step in combatting disinformation.
10. Number of media literacy trainers or trained ambassadors working in the country to continue promoting media and information literacy.

Dimension 8: Practices Around and Access to Training on Journalism Safety/Security

Dimension 8 considers the security within the media because media sector workers and citizen journalists must be safe to do their jobs. This includes decreasing a broad spectrum of legal, physical, digital, and psychosocial security that journalists in every country today are facing as a normalized part of their functions. Today, there are many threats to journalists and media organizations. Additionally, the digitalization of the media now includes citizen reporters and individual bloggers who also need to stay safe online.

This dimension provides an answer to the overall question "To what extent are media professionals and other producers of the news safe to perform their reporting functions?"

Journalists need to be equipped to protect their electronic information records, including the identities of their sources. Threats to journalists and media organizations include having phones and computer equipment confiscated, email accounts being subjected to illegitimate surveillance and hacking, and media websites being disabled by attacks or maliciously infected with "trojan" viruses. Journalists increasingly need to know how to protect important and sensitive data. Both bloggers and professional journalists need to understand and use internationally recognized digital safety measures. Journalists need to prioritize their security needs based on individualized risk assessments and organizations need to also regularly evaluate their risk as well.

Key definitions and parameters of digital security include:

Phishing: Fraudulent emails that steal valuable information.

Malware and Viruses: Software that disrupts, damages, or gains access to a computer; types of malware include viruses, adware, spyware, worms, trojan, ransomware.

Digital Surveillance: Online or physical access to devices to track and get intelligence.

Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) Attacks: DDoS disrupts or stops traffic to a server by overwhelming its capacity.

Insecure Mobile Communications: Taps or intercepts of calls, texts, and files sent from a cellular phone.

Internet Blocking: A technical measure intended to restrict access to information or resources.

Insecure Files/Data: Files or data can be stolen through online or physical action.

Human Error/Confiscation: Revelation of sensitive material online (social media, forwarded emails) or through the confiscation of devices.

USAID media beneficiaries are in danger of all types of digital security risks as mentioned above. Digital safety programs generally address safety through three lenses: physical awareness, digital identity, and psychosocial care. The media assessment teams should be aware of the universe of rapidly evolving digital security challenges. The text box above provides some key definitions and parameters of digital security for ease of reference.

In fact, while digital security has received more and more attention, journalists continue to face severe threats from those who do not want to be exposed or held accountable for their actions. An assessment of these threats and an understanding of the trends is fundamental to understanding the duress and stress affecting the sector and the degree to which it faces reprisals for performing its news functions. Figure 8 (below) identifies the different risks to journalists and media organizations.

Figure 8: Threats Targeting Journalists, adapted from [UNESCO infographic]

MYTHS

Many of the misconceptions in this area relate to the increasing threats against journalists and a general sense of apathy that anything can be done. While it is certainly a complex issue, improving conditions have been shown to emerge from security training, change of practice, and other programming. In this way, the media assessment team should avoid the following myths:

Myth 1: It is impossible to keep journalists safe from surveillance and other threats. No one is ever completely safe. However, approaches from the increased use of encrypted communications to journalist inclusion in professional networks that can help respond to threats have proven to reduce insecurity.

Myth 2: Surveillance does not affect the quality and content of news. Studies have shown that journalists who are aware of surveillance practice greater self-censorship.

Myth 3: Only war correspondents and investigative journalists need access to psychosocial support. While they are more at risk of suffering trauma as a result of their work, daily beat reporters are also vulnerable when covering certain topics, like domestic violence, natural disasters, or crime. Moreover, reporters from marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ or women are often at risk of harassment and hate speech from audiences or political figures as a result of critical reporting. Another group that needs psychosocial support is media and civil society staff responsible for tracking and reporting on hate speech, especially online monitors.

ELEMENTS

Elements and questions useful for analysis are:

ELEMENT
Element 8.1 State of play around legal security • What is the legal environment influencing government surveillance and the confiscation of journalists' or media organizations' equipment? • How well are these laws enforced? • Do journalists and media organizations understand their rights? • Who is advocating on behalf of the media sector in the area of legal security? • What resources/access to legal support exist for journalists and outlets?
Element 8.2 Practices around and access to training on digital security • What is the general level of digital security awareness, expertise, and access to tools? • Is training at the individual level? Organizational level? • What is the prevalence of digital security training? Who is delivering training? What are the outcomes of the training? • What are some of the most dangerous digital security practices persisting in media?
Element 8.3 Practices around and access to physical security • What is the general level of physical security knowledge, expertise, and access to protective equipment? • Is training at the individual level? Organizational level? • What is the prevalence of physical security training? Who is delivering training? What are the outcomes of the training? • What are some of the most dangerous threats to physical security for journalists and media sector workers?

ELEMENT
Element 8.4 Practices around and access to psychosocial security • What are the general levels of psychosocial security knowledge, expertise, and access to support? • Is training at the individual level? Organizational level? • What is the prevalence of psychosocial security training? Who is delivering training? What are the outcomes of the training? • What are some of the most dangerous threats to psychosocial security for journalists and media sector workers?

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

After assessing this dimension, the strengths and weaknesses in the level of media literacy, security, and safety must be considered alongside how USAID can realistically address these in programming. Inevitably, there will be significant variance between legal, physical, digital, and psychosocial security conditions. Also, there is likely to be a divergence between professional media organizations with greater resources to bring to bear and freelance reporters and bloggers without an institutional infrastructure to protect them. Some suggested programming lines are:

1. Support rapid response solutions for organizations and individuals under immediate threat.
2. Support advocates for laws that protect journalists and media privacy and information.
3. Support physical security and digital safety audits for media outlets at the most risk of breaches.
4. Support digital security training for journalists, media organizations, and related NGOs.
5. Support security audits of web services and mobile apps for every grant to media organizations.
6. Encourage the use of secured hosting with DDoS mitigation of at-risk websites (for example, see Qurium Media Foundation, which offers such services).
7. Promote circumvention solutions for internet-blocked websites.
8. Conduct digital forensics investigations of digital attacks.
9. Offer journalism safety boot camps and preparedness training.
10. Hold journalist and civil society roundtables on issues and matters pertaining to practices around and access to training on journalism safety/security.
11. Look for opportunities to collaborate and coordinate with other donors and program implementers who are working in this same space.
12. Consider gender and other marginalized groups' needs and interests in program design and offer safe spaces and appropriate gender sensitivity in trainings and mentoring related to promoting journalism safety and security.
13. Develop a cadre of local journalism safety and security experts/trainers who can help promote good practices and offer local sources of support and reassurance to media partners.
14. Look for ways to build out capacity at existing CSOs and media associations to take on added services that can consistently support their members and followers in terms of providing expertise and guidance on journalism safety and security matters.
15. Set up a hotline or tips line that local journalists and media can tap into during times of crisis or need.
16. Consider pooled funds or working with other donors to provide support to media practitioners, as such training and resources (especially for legal and physical security) can be quite expensive.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. Percentage change on scores related to newsroom journalism safety and security audits—including measuring for legal, physical, psychosocial, and digital security and safety practices.
2. Media and civil society demonstrate improved understanding, skill uptake, and behavior change around legal, digital, physical, and psychosocial security.
3. Journalism safety and security skills are transferred and shared within CSOs, media outlets, and their wider stakeholder communities.
4. Legal defense mechanisms and human rights lawyers are well-placed to support and protect journalists' rights, including proactively (via pre-publication reviews) and through defense/counsel services.
5. Inclusive and diverse journalism safety and security programming; i.e., local organizations support women and other marginalized groups, programming has a gender lens and is adapted to local needs and realities.
6. Number of local CSOs and media (journalists or media outlets that have a security focus or beat) that focus on digital security, journalism safety, and related areas.

Dimension 9: Education, Universities, and Professional Development Training

The infrastructure for developing a strong journalism trade is present in every country. Journalists need access to formal and informal education opportunities. Understanding the quality and accessibility of these opportunities informs Dimension 9.

The team will want to answer the overall questions "To what extent do journalists and editors have opportunities for basic, advanced, and specialized professional training opportunities through a variety of venues? Do universities deliver high-quality practical education informed by modern media theories? Are undergraduates leaving with media skills, ethics, and business training? Are graduate students developing advanced news, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills?"

In addition to the formal and informal educational opportunities, journalists need training across media support areas such as data science, audience analysis, social media analytics, and marketing and advertising to increase revenue.

MYTHS

Myth 1: Universities are hard to work with and the amount of bureaucracy involved is more trouble than it is worth. While it is often harder to work with local universities, it is also worth the effort, especially in the long term. Local universities will (hopefully) outlast donor support that can often come and go. Educational programming is a long-term investment that has the potential of serving multiple generations. The demand for media and communication expertise will likely continue well into the future, and in order to create the workforces needed to sustain and support democratic media, well-trained people are needed.

Myth 2: Academics are too abstract and all they care about is theory. In some countries, journalism education is mainly taught as theory rather than the actual practice of journalism. In other countries, academics and practitioners may have different worldviews and approaches to their crafts. But, there is increasingly a lot of overlap and synergies between them. Universities and research centers make ideal partners for some types of programs because the capacity and professional development of the people

and institutions can be invested in, and they have a strong leave-behind that will long outlast the program being funded. Moreover, universities and research centers are important allies and conduits for American scholars and researchers to work with. To tackle many of the top challenges in media development—countering disinformation, innovation of business models for media—local researchers and academics are needed, as they understand the culture, language, and socio-economic factors.

ELEMENTS

Elements and questions useful for analysis are:

ELEMENT
Element 9.1 Academic programs that offer degrees in journalism, communication, marketing, data science, or other media industry-related careers • Which universities provide journalism, media education, communication, marketing, data science, and other media-related industry careers (advertising)? Are these for undergraduates or graduate students? • Are these universities private or public? Will any curriculum developed need to be approved by the Ministry of Education? • Where do most media professionals gain their credentials? Is it through on-the-job experience, formal education, Informal training, or other systems (family business, government, private sector)?

Element 9.2 Professional development training programs that offer skills, capacity-building, tools, and resources
• What types of informal educational opportunities exist in the country (training centers and institutes)?
• Which skill development opportunities are offered in topics such as journalism leadership?
• What is the level of uptake in the offerings?
• Are there any certifications? Accreditations?
• Which associations provide training in journalism, media education, communication, marketing, data science, and other media-related industry careers (advertising)?
• How active is the industry in training and professional development?
• How effective is this training?
• What kinds of resources, beyond training, are offered by media and trade associations for media professionals?
  • Mentoring
  • Internships
  • Job placement

SUGGESTED LINES OF PROGRAMMING

After assessing the availability of journalism education, the strengths and weaknesses of this education must be considered alongside how USAID can realistically engage in improving it through its programming. Some suggested programming lines are:

1. Develop locally driven media trainers and experts with up-to-date skills and experiences.
2. Support the development of university partnerships with practice-based centers, including law schools with media law specialties.

3. Conduct leadership programs for mid-career journalists, editors, and news directors.
4. Support short courses in communication, marketing, data science, or other media industry-related careers (this goes with media professionalism—Dimension 4, business development)
5. Support the capacity of media associations to provide leadership and opportunities for peer learning, mentoring, and exchange across the evolving media sector.
6. Research grants in support of M&E, specific studies, audience research, or other needs that are part of a media development program.
7. Support media innovation hubs.

SUGGESTED COUNTRY CONTEXT AND PROGRAM OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. Number of undergraduate and graduate training programs, certifications, and continuing education opportunities for journalism, media law, and media studies.
2. Number of university programs offering hands-on, practical (as opposed to solely academic) journalism courses.
3. In-country academic and professional researchers show increased capacity for and expertise in 21st-century journalism, media law, and communication studies and are included as part of local media development efforts.

Dimension 10: Donor and Peer Analysis

Dimension 10 identifies other donors working in this space to support media—currently and in the past five years. The key questions to look out for in this dimension are "Has there been a history of donor support for free and independent media in this country, who are the key donors and what do they support, and what other program implementers are actively working on media assistance?"

There are many different private, government, and NGOs that are providing support to media across the world. Knowing which donors and NGOs have conducted media development programs or activities is important so as not to "reinvent the wheel" or duplicate past initiatives.

Donors may include western donors such as European governments. Private donors now include big technology-based corporations. Additionally, there may be local donor capacity through local accelerators or media development investment funds. Finally, do not just think about western donor assistance; increasingly, the People's Republic of China has been actively supporting media programs and other initiatives that offer public diplomacy and media development types of activities. Scholars have documented the People's Republic of China in leveraging such support to try to co-opt local media to improve the Chinese government's image and the image of China in general.[24]

This dimension is an anchor to the mapping exercise. It is intended to scope out previous programs. Gaining a good sense of which organizations have completed media sector initiatives will help to identify existing gaps in the media sector that USAID programs can fill. The first step is to ascertain the history of media development in the country. Determine if there is access to other donors' reports, M&E, and other data collected in their efforts to support media. It should be easy at this stage of the mapping exercise. Dimension 10 is not scored as it is a summary anchor to consider the other dimensions.

[24] See report by Sarah Cook for National Endowment for Democracy in February 2021: https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Chinas-Global-Media-Footprint-Democratic-Responses-to-Expanding-Authoritarian-Influence-Cook-Feb-2021.pdf

MYTHS

Myth 1: If Facebook and Google are funding the local media environment, donor support is not needed. Big tech and social media alone will not support or sustain a healthy media ecosystem. They can make for good partners and are increasingly part of the overall donor support system. However, their products and approaches do not always align with conflict sensitivity or following a do-no-harm approach, and they may not necessarily follow the same thinking about development goals as USAID. It is important to provide for a holistic range of support and USAID's involvement and partnership plays an important role as convener, networker, and balance against private, commercial business interests.

Myth 2: When media development programs have been ongoing or off and on for the past 20 years, then independent media programming no longer requires USAID's assistance. Media and journalism worldwide are going through incredibly difficult times. New approaches to thinking about business models and new approaches for virtual newsrooms and digital newsgathering teams co-exist with the ebb and flow of political change and uncertainty. Democratic backsliding is accompanied by or made worse because of threats to press freedom and shaky foundations on which media can operate. Without donor funding, independent media will often not be able to survive.

Myth 3: Media are businesses and therefore do not deserve donor funding. This is one of the biggest myths that has long plagued the sector. Meaningful media development requires investments of donor funding, experimentation, and constant re-thinking to keep pace with all the technological and political changes that always surround media and journalism.

ELEMENTS

The below three elements offer questions to keep in mind when meeting with other donors and investors in the local media space. It is also a good idea to ask key actors from media outlets, journalism associations, and press freedom advocates about their impressions of donor involvement and recent history in working in the country regarding media assistance. Any reports, evaluations, or publications related to past donor involvement and any outcomes achieved are also useful to obtain.

ELEMENT
Element 10.1 Publicly available reports and documents about media development projects and evaluations
Element 10.2 Activities of donors of media and journalism-related work in the country over the last five years • Does the U.S. Embassy (or other embassies) or the Department of State's Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Bureau fund local media or individual journalists? If yes, how much? Which activities? • Who are the other countries, donors, or foundations that support media and journalism (i.e., China, European Union, United Kingdom, Media Development Investment Fund, Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, Luminate)? • What are the motivations of the donors? • Which government donors have been active? For how long? If not currently active, why not? • How much has been spent? Which organizations received the bulk of the government donor support? • What kind of support has been given? Training? Equipment? Core operational support? Funding for content production? • What kind of frameworks and indicators have they used to measure outcomes and impacts?

ELEMENT
Element 10.3 Status of other types of industry funding (Facebook, Google, Bloomberg) for local journalism or media development programming • Which private donors have been active? For how long? If not currently active, why not? • How much has been spent? Which organizations received the bulk of the support? • What kind of support has been given? Training? Equipment?

The 10 dimensions are considered with the desk review and the MER to provide a roadmap to inform the media assessment.

STEP 4: SYNTHESIZING STEPS 1-3

It is now time to synthesize the results of the desk review, the MER, and the ten dimensions of the MAT to identify the next steps in media programming for this country. Appendix C provides the worksheet to complete after synthesizing the two parts of the analysis.

Step 1: Analyze the Findings From the Desk Review

- What are the most significant findings from the desk review that inform your understanding of the needs for media development in this country?
- Which priorities for media development assistance emerged as most feasible to have an impact on the media ecosystem?

Step 2: Analyze the Findings From the MER

- What are the most significant findings from the MER that inform your understanding of the needs for media development in this country?
- Which priorities for media development assistance emerged as most likely to have an impact on the media ecosystem?

Step 3: Analyze the Findings of the 10 Dimensions

- What are the most significant findings from the 10 dimensions that inform your understanding of the most pressing needs for media development in this country?
- Which dimensions seem to complement each other and should be considered together in an assistance program?
- Which priorities and groups of dimensions emerged as most likely to have an impact on the media ecosystem?

Appendix C provides additional guidance and a worksheet on writing up the results and summarizing findings, in addition to a helpful scoring system. Use Appendix C to synthesize the findings in the ten dimensions. Come back to this page at the conclusion of the analysis of the ten dimensions and complete Steps 5 and 6.

Step 4: Identify the Convergence of Priorities for Media Sector Development

- Based on the desk review, MER, and analysis of the 10 dimensions of media, where is there a convergence of priority and linkages among the dimensions of the three data collection methods?

What were the top findings of the assessment and how do they relate to potential future programs or activities USAID could support? Which programmatic activities, including activities that cut across more than one dimension, can have the greatest impact on improving the media ecosystem in this country? List them:

MEDIA ASSISTANCE ACTIVITY	DIMENSIONS ADDRESSED
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Step 5: Select the Programming Indicators

Appendix D identifies the output and outcome indicators that measure media development results. After consulting the appendix, identify at least four indicators that may capture media development progress for strengthening the media ecosystem. Steps 4 and 5 may take one or two days of LOE.

INDICATOR	OUTPUT OR OUTCOME
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Step 6: Draft Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations That Can Be Taken Into Consideration by USAID

The previous five steps have identified the most important issues in the media sector, the priorities for programming, and the indicators to measure the progress of program activities. The team conducting the MAT writes key findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Appendix C offers some further guidance on taking all the information collected during the assessment and offering a guide for bringing it all together. This step of the MAT could take up to five days of LOE depending on the detail of the findings, conclusion and recommendations. This document could be used to draft the RFP for a USAID media development program.

APPENDIX A: COMPILATION OF KEY MEDIA AND PRESS FREEDOM RESOURCES

Overall Suggested Resources to Consult/Background Documents to Help with Media and Democracy Assessments

This appendix offers a compilation of resources for assessment teams to consult to help inform thinking around conducting the desk review and the 10 dimensions of Media for Democracy. Use these sources during the different Steps of the MAT.

The media development sector has amassed a number of resources, toolkits, guidebooks, and handbooks over the past 20 years. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, it is useful to take stock and draw from the guidance of the many experts and initiatives that have sought to improve understanding of how to best support media and democracy. The resources compiled below are meant to help assessment teams in a variety of ways. They can be consulted for specific expertise, guidance, and know-how, and they also offer deeper perspective and insight on the specific focus areas of each domain and the elements that are being assessed. The list is meant to be used as a consultative resource by assessment teams to get a fuller understanding and perspective on the ten dimensions.

KEY MEDIA AND PRESS FREEDOM INDICES

- Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends
- African Media Barometer
- RSF World Press Freedom Index

- RSF Media Ownership Monitor: Assessment of who owns the media and how to relates to press freedom
- Freedom House Freedom on the Net
- IREX Media Sustainability Index: Retired in 2019, but past 20 years of data online and the new VIBE that covers 13 countries in Europe and Eurasia in 2021 and 18 countries (including Central Asia) going forward
- UNESCO's Media Development Indicators

KEY DEMOCRACY INDICES WITH SOME FOCUS ON MEDIA OR PRESS FREEDOM

- Asian Barometer
- Freedom House, Freedom in the World Survey: Question Area D1 - Are there free and independent media?
- V-Dem: A new approach to conceptualizing and measuring democracy that provides a multidimensional and disaggregated dataset reflecting the complexity of the concept of democracy as a system of rule that goes beyond the simple presence of elections.
- ICNL Civic Freedom report: Provides information on legal issues affecting civil society and civic freedoms, including freedoms of association, expression, and peaceful assembly.

DIMENSION 1: INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

The major sources of news and information from both formal media—TV, radio, print, and digital media—and citizen-led media, including social media influencers, other forms of citizen-generated content, and any noteworthy and important platforms, players, or institutions that stand out in terms of providing content, news, information, and journalism.

- UNESCO Media Development Indicators framework country reports: Currently being applied in countries across all regions to carry out in-depth assessments of their media environment, available for 23 countries, with more planned.
- Media Landscapes: Created by the European Journalism Centre, in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, to provide overview of the historical evolution of its media scene and the major players, including print, broadcast, and digital outlets and all relevant associations, professional bodies, unions, and educational institutions. Each report then places this in a vital socio-political context of regulation, legislation, and press freedom.
- Internews Framework for Mapping Information Ecosystems to Support Resilience
- Communicating with Disaster-Affected Communities frameworks: A growing platform of more than 30 humanitarian, media development, social innovation, technology, and telecommunication organizations dedicated to saving lives and making aid more effective through communication, information exchange, and community engagement.

DIMENSION 2: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR FREE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

The enabling environment allows for framing, promoting, and facilitating the exercise of freedom of expression and the performance of journalist and media activities.

- United Nations, Human Rights Committee. (2011) General comment No. 34—"Article 19: Freedoms of opinion and expression." CCPR/C/GC/34. Available at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/gc34.pdf

- Bresnier, Katie. Understanding the Right to Freedom of Expression. (2015). Available at: https://jhr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Understanding-Freedom-of-Expression-Primer-ENG-web.pdf
- UNESCO. "World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: Global Report 2017/2018." Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261065?posInSet=9&queryId=d1708431-ce8d-425e-8f7c-ed9d93002b11
- United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OAS Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression. Statement on access to and free flow of information during pandemic. 2020. Available at: https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/448849
- Mendel, Toby. ARTICLE 19. Freedom of Information as an Internationally Protected Human Right. Available at: https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/foi-as-an-international-right.pdf
- United Nations. Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Available at: https://en.unesco.org/un-plan-action-safety-journalists
- OSCE. (2016). Media Freedom on the Internet: An OSCE Guidebook. Available at: http://www.osce.org/netfreedom-guidebook
- The Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media: Contribution to Transparent and Accountable Governance. Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, USAID. Available at: https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1065&context=asc_papers

DIMENSION 3: CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES: GENDER, YOUTH, DISABLED, AND LGBTQ+ AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS

The inclusion of marginalized voices including women, youth, minorities, and LGBTQ+ in media content and the industry. In terms of marginalized voices, ethnic, religious, and other minority groups (i.e., indigenous groups) should be considered.

USAID Policy Guidance:

- LGBT Vision for Action: Promoting and Supporting the Inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals
- DRG LGBTI Inclusion
- USAID Youth in Development Policy
- USAID Youth Programming Assessment Tool
- USAID Policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment
- Disability Inclusive Development 102 Mainstreaming Disability Across the Program Cycle and Beyond

Backgrounders and Explainers:

- Internews Thought Paper: From Counting Women to Making Women Count: Focusing on Women in Media Development Programs
- White, Aidan. (2009). "Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism," International Federation of Journalists, Brussels.
- GLAAD Media Reference Guide
- Ethos Report: Media reporting and reference guide on LGBT issues.
- LGBTnet Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Development Cooperation:Introduction and resources on how to work with aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity for NGOs and others engaged in international development.

- Media and Marginalized Communities: Media discourses and discrimination against members of marginalized groups (drug users, sex workers, LGBT, people living with HIV)

DIMENSION 4: NEWSROOM PROFESSIONALIZATION

Newsroom professionalization is where journalism content meets professional standards of quality, business practices, and ethics.

- Journalism Trust Initiative, with the European Committee for Standardization and RSF agreement on journalism standards: Intended to establish a framework for promoting principles of ethical journalism, encourage news providers to adapt professional norms, and help the public distinguish between credible and false news sources.
- Pavlik, John V. (2013). Innovation and the Future of Journalism, Digital Journalism, 1:2, 181-193. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2012.756666
- Posetti, Julie. (2018). "Time to step away from the bright, shiny things towards a sustainable model of journalism innovation in an era of perpetual change." Reuters Institute's Journalism Innovation Project. Available at: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/time-step-away-bright-shiny-things-towards-sustainable-model-journalism-innovation-era
- Westergaard, Per. and Jørgensen, Søren Schultz. (2018). "54 newsrooms, 9 countries, and 9 core ideas: Here's what two researchers found in a yearlong quest for journalism innovation." Available at: https://www.niemanlab.org/2018/07/54-newsrooms-9-countries-and-9-core-ideas-heres-what-two-researchers-found-in-a-yearlong-quest-for-journalism-innovation/
- Spyridou, Lia-Paschalia, Matsiola, Maria, Veglis, Andreas, Kalliris, George, and Dimoulas, Charalambos. (2013). "Journalism in a state of flux: Journalists as agents of technology innovation and emerging news practices." The International Communication Gazette, 75(1). 76-98. Available at: DOI:10.1177/1748048512461763

DIMENSION 5: BUSINESS, SUSTAINABILITY, AND MARKET-BASED CAPACITY

Some useful resources for assessing and programming efforts to improve media sustainability are:

- From start to success—New handbook to support startups striving for media viability
- Deutsche Welle Akademie's Media Viability Indicators
- Schiffrin, Anya. (2019). Fighting for Survival: Media Start-ups in the Global South. Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FightingForSurvival_March_2019.pdf
- Impact Architects' Healthy Local news & Information Ecosystems: A Diagnostic Framework: examines both the supply-side and demand-side of community information.
- Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool from FHI360, in conjunction with JSI Research and on behalf of Advancing Partners & Communities: Provides thorough and practical checklists that identify strengths and gaps in an organization's management and can be used as a self-assessment tool.
- Media Ownership Monitor from RSF: Helps to bring transparency to media markets by answering the question, "Who owns the media?" Media ownership is a central issue in any media market assessment, as it offers clues into how competitive or anti-competitive the field is.
- Media Development Indicators from UNESCO: Looks at aspects of the media environment structured around laws and regulation, plurality and diversity of media, media as a platform for democratic discourse, professional capacity-building, and infrastructure capacity sufficient to support independent media.

- Report on the entertainment and media sectors of national economies from PwC (a global accounting firm).
- Hootsuite's annual Global Overview Report provides benchmarks of digital use. annual

DIMENSION 6: MEDIA, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

The media play important roles in the community and are respected members of civil society. They have a role to play in the creation, dissemination, and civic engagement of fact-based news and information. Media keep the government accountable and reflect community interests.

- Howley, Kevin. (2009). Understanding Community Media. Sage.
- Community Media: A Good Practice Handbook, Steve Buckley, UNESCO Publication. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215097
- Internews Toolkit & Curriculum (2009). Community Media Sustainability Guide: The Business of Changing Lives. Available at: https://internews.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/InternewsCommunityMediaGuide2009.pdf
- Abbott, Susan. (2016). Rethinking Public Service Broadcasting's Place in International Media Development. Center for International Media Assistance. Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CIMA_2016_Public_Service_Broadcasting.pdf

DIMENSION 7: MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

Audiences are data- and information-literate, can understand the watchdog role of a free press in a healthy democracy, and can make informed decisions on the content that they prefer to consume.

- Media Smart's Media Literacy Fundamentals
- MediaWell: Tracks and curates research on disinformation, misinformation, and "fake news" in the wake of the digital revolution. The website has a vast collection of thought papers, guides, and resources to help practitioners and researchers stay current on topics of media and information literacy.
- UNESCO Media and Information Literacy resource pages: Features guidelines, resources, training materials, online classes, glossaries, and much more.
- Moeller, Susan D. (2009). Media Literacy: Understanding the News. Center for International Media Assistance Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-Media_Literacy_Understanding_The_News-Report.pdf

DIMENSION 8: PRACTICES AROUND AND ACCESS TO TRAINING ON JOURNALISM SAFETY/SECURITY

Media sector workers and citizen journalists are safe to do their jobs.

- IREX SAFE tool
- Internews Safetag
- Amnesty International
- Journalist's Toolbox
- Council of Europe, Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists
- DART Center for Journalism and Trauma
- RSF and UNESCO Safety Guide for Journalists

- Journalism Safety: Threats to Media Workers and Measures to Protect Them from The International News Safety Institute, through support from the International Programme for the Development of Communication
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Safety of Female Journalists Online

DIMENSION 9: EDUCATION, UNIVERSITIES, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Formal and informal education opportunities are present and have the capacity to support professionalism across the different sub-sections of the industry. Journalists and editors have opportunities for basic, advanced, and specialized professional training through a variety of venues. Universities deliver high-quality practical education informed by modern media theories. Undergraduates graduate with media skills, as well as ethics and business training. Graduate students develop advanced news, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills.

- Global Journalism Education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Innovations from the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas School of Journalism.
- University Journalism Education: A Global Challenge. (2007). Center for International Media Assistance. Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-University_Journalism_Education-Report.pdf
- Berger, Guy and Matras, Corinne. (2007). "Setting Up Criteria and Indicators for Quality Media/Journalism Training, Institutions & Identifying Potential Centres of Excellence In Journalism Training In Africa."School of Journalism & Media Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa & École Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille, France in association with UNESCO. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/ipdc51_bureau_indicators_journalism_training_centres_africa.pdf
- Frølund, Lars, Murray, Fiona, and Riedel, Max. (2017). Developing Successful Strategic Partnerships With Universities, in MIT Sloane Management Review. Available at: https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/developing-successful-strategic-partnerships-with-universities/
- USAID Education Policy, 2018

DIMENSION 10: DONOR & PEER ANALYSIS

This set of resources helps assessment teams think about how to best identify other donors working to support independent media and offers some resources on current thinking around donor trends.

- Armour-Jones, Sarah and Clark, Jessica. (2019). Global Media Philanthropy: What Funders Need to Know About Data, Trends and Pressing Issues Facing the Field, a Special Report for Media Impact Funders. Available at: https://mediaimpactfunders.org/reports/global-media-philanthropy-what-funders-need-to-know-about-data-trends-and-pressing-issues-facing-the-field/
- Center for International Media Assistance, National Endowment for Democracy, Profiles in Media Development Funding: International donors, both public and private, play an essential role in media development worldwide. In order to better understand the work donors are facilitating around the world, the Center for International Media Assistance surveyed these organizations. Each profile contains information about the organization's background, its current thematic priorities, details about funding, and in most cases a couple of examples that illustrate the types of media development projects they fund.
- Myers, Mary and Juma, Linet Angaya. (2018). Defending Independent Media: A Comprehensive Analysis of Aid Flows. CIMA Digital Report. Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/comprehensive-analysis-media-aid-flows/

- Schwartz-Henderson, Laura. (2020). Supporting Media at a Time of Crisis: Donors Explore New Strategies. CIMA Digital Report. Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/supporting-media-at-a-time-of-crisis-donors-explore-new-strategies/
- Dutta, Nabamita and Williamson, Claudia R. (2016). "Can foreign aid free the press?" Journal of Institutional Economics, 12(3):pp. 603-621.
- Cauhapé-Cazaux, Eduardo González and Kalathil, Shanthi. (2015). Official Development Assistance for Media: Figures and Findings. Center for International Media Assistance and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Available at: https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CIMA-Official-Development-Assistance.pdf

APPENDIX B: EXPANDED LIST OF MER TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

The following topics and questions below can be discussed at the MER. Not all topics will be relevant to a particular country's context. The MAT team should help craft an agenda and decide how to best structure the time in accordance with these three broad areas. Note, the below topics are for reference purposes only. Each local USAID Mission, with the help of chosen facilitator(s) and the USAID DRG Center, should craft a short and tailored agenda for the MER.

Political Economy of the Media

In advance of the MER discussion, it will be useful to consult the USAID Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Assessment Tool. This tool can be modified for each country's context and is recommended before the MER. A modified PEA can also be conducted at set intervals once a media development project has been started.

POLITICAL CONTEXT AFFECTING THE MEDIA SECTOR

The first subject area to discuss at the MER pertains to the political economy of the media sector. Note: for the purposes of the overall Media for Democracy Assessment and for the MER specifically, the aim of including questions and a facilitated discussion on topics pertaining to the political economy of the media (including the political context affecting the media sector, the market and economic challenges facing media, and regulation and legislation affecting the media sector) is to provide space for important questions that will help to guide the formal assessment that will follow the MER.

Keep in mind that the MER is not a substitute for a formal PEA (reflecting on the Thinking and Working Politically approach). The results of the discussion around the modified PEA and write-up from the MER can, however, be used as a basis for future research. The subcomponents of the PEA for the MER are outlined below—each USAID Mission and MAT team should decide which of these to focus on and feel free to add in customized questions of their own choosing. Some key questions are highlighted in this toolkit.

Representative topics:

- What is the presence of disinformation by domestic or international actors, whether connected to the government, financial elites, or other interests?
- Where do citizens get their information (formal media, digital media, social media/apps, entertainment media, word of mouth)?
- What, if any, conflict and tensions (internal and external) exist between different groups? Conflicts and tensions that exist in a specific country or context can play out within the dynamics of the media in any number of ways including media's role in contributing to the "agenda-setting effect" (i.e., how key actors use media to manipulate public perceptions of a conflict). Media can distort information environments by providing a medium through which disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation,[25] especially hate speech finds an audience and distorts public opinion. Thus, media can be a "source of antagonism and an instigator of conflict rather than a source for peace."[26] Increasingly, it is also important to monitor and assess the potential of online speech and monitor for "dangerous speech" that has the potential to turn into offline violence and conflict.
- What is the level of freedom of expression? Look at issues of intimidation, attacks on journalists (including different experiences between journalists by gender), and the closing of media houses.
- Are there legal and extra-legal restrictive tactics as well censorship and self-censorship?
- There are a variety of ways that media are co-opted by different actors. First, media can be co-opted by the process of buying up/ownership of media/advertising houses by governments, oligarchs with political agendas, factions, and other interests. The State can be heavily involved in the news media and media market, sometimes known as State capture. State-supported media may co-opt the advertising market by monopolizing revenue. Second, media can self-censor by not covering certain topics or people so that they are not targeted by the State. Third, there is a prevalence of soft-censorship that is now pervasive in many of the countries where USAID operates as well as more globally; that is, media markets are threatened by 1) advertising and influence 2) subsidies, 3) paid "news," 4) bribery/payments, and 5) unfair allocation of licenses, imports, and audits.[27]
- What are the roles of international actors and their influence on the media sector, including those actors' diaspora role(s) in the media ecosystem, ownership, political influence, or playing a role positively or negatively in media's support to democratic practices?
- Are there any upcoming elections or reforms (if relevant) and what is the potential role of the media?
- Is there effective and transparent government communication with journalists and directly through media platforms?

THE MARKET ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACING THE MEDIA

Representative topics:

- What is the overall economic, environmental, and media market structure?
- What are the sources of funding available for media outlets?
- What are the predominant funding models and do they differ by platform?
- What is the degree of news media digitalization and optimization for digital distribution?

[25] Malinformation is deliberate publication of private information for personal or private interest, as well as the deliberate manipulation of genuine content. See https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XFKF.pdf

[26] See: The Role of the Media in Conflict, USIP, June 2007.

[27] See: https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Soft-Censorship-Hard-Impact.pdf

- What is the political economy of the advertising market (whether or not that market is shut off to certain media actors and whether "soft censorship" prevents market access)?
- Are there market incentives to engage/spread/support disinformation and propaganda?
- Is there a functioning advertising ecosystem? For instance, is there an existing and broadly accepted broadcast ratings system, like Nielsen ratings?
- What are the economic factors inhibiting improved financial resilience or sustainability for media outlets? Note—the MAT team should acknowledge the local context and economic conditions in which the media operate. Questions pertaining to the financial resilience or sustainability of media outlets are meant to offer USAID a picture of the overall financial health and well-being of media outlets.
- What are the conventional and alternative opportunities available for media organizations to maximize revenue?
- What is the status of journalists' wages and employee conditions? What is the degree of staff turnover and movement from media sector jobs to non-journalism jobs (i.e., public relations and marketing or government)? What is the average salary of a journalist?
- What are the comparative costs and affordability of newspapers, cable, satellite fees, and licensing fees for citizens? How do these costs compare to other household expenses? How are State and public media financed?
- What is an approximate assessment of potential advertising, sponsorship, subscriptions, donations, membership, or other income potentially available to organizations? What is the size of the advertising market? How is the revenue distributed? Do media houses have examples of alternative revenue sources they can use as models?
- Do media organizations have the resources and structures that are supportive of improved economic sustainability? For example: do they have a sales and marketing team? Do they understand metrics and other analytics for enhancing sales and growing audiences?

REGULATION AND LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE MEDIA SECTOR

Representative topics:

- What are the legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks (and details of such frameworks) that protect and promote freedom of expression and information and fair gender portrayal? How are they interpreted and implemented?
- What are the media pluralism practices and considerations for legal and regulatory protections for marginalized groups and broader representation? Is editorial independence guaranteed in law and in practice? What barriers exist? For example: defamation and blasphemy laws, hate speech, national security, anti-"fake news" laws, and other restrictions.
- What are the regulations governing foreign and local ownership of media? What are the transparency requirements for market regulation and the ability to maintain a fair playing field?
- Is there legislation curtailing foreign re-broadcasts or enforcing local production quotas? Are there restrictions on social media platforms (prevalence of virtual private networks [VPNs])? Note—the prevalence and legality of VPNs should also factor in the culture of using VPNs (differs by geography, digital literacy, etc.).
- What are the barriers to a functioning legal and regulatory environment (such as a culture of secrecy, corruption, institutional resistance, or a lack of technical and institutional capacity in the public administration)?
- Are there local media associations and civil society organizations (CSOs) defending media freedom and gender equality in the media and influencing policy on media?

- Is there a system of media self-regulation such as establishing codes of conduct, press councils, and standard-setting bodies?
- What is the level of censorship and self-censorship (on mass media and the internet)?
- What are the potential barriers related to the regulation of telecommunication and the internet?
- Do licensing/spectrum management, regulation, and legislation that promotes pluralistic media or that leads to market failures that produce adverse outcomes for the information environment exist?

Institutions, Journalistic Professionalism, and Managerial Professionalism

Representative topics:

- What is the degree of both journalistic and managerial professionalism?
- What is the capacity of the media sector, including in niche/technical areas like business reporting, investigative journalism, advocacy journalism, and health/science reporting? What are the levels of formal education (university) and informal education opportunities for journalists, including the availability of specialty/niche reporting?
- How does training equip media professionals to understand the role of journalism and media as well as development—including first aid training, protecting sources, investigative reporting, gender sensitivity, etc.?
- Do journalists and media professionals have access to digital, physical, legal, and psychosocial security resources?[28]
- What is the level of access to professional training and development, both vocational and academic, including digital literacy? Is there gender equality in terms of access?
- Are media workers able to join independent trade unions and exercise their rights?
- Is there trust in the trade unions' independence and competence?
- What is the quality and extent of the infrastructural development of unions?
- Is social diversity reflected throughout media content (including sources) and employment (including management/leadership positions)?

Audiences: Access and Inclusion

Representative topics:

- What is the public's access to media (including among marginalized groups)? In particular, consider the level of access and use of the internet, including mobile internet consumption, social media use, and uptake of podcasts.
- What barriers exist that preclude audiences from freely accessing content? Do audiences use VPNs or other circumvention technologies to access content?
- What is the purchasing power of the audiences and is there any evidence that audiences are prepared to support subscription services/membership and/or donation models?

[28] See: DW report on connecting safety to financial viability/operations: https://www.dw.com/en/safe-strong-viable-the-symbiosis-between-media-viability-and-media-safety/a-57334604

- Do media reflect and represent the diversity of views and interests in society, including those of marginalized groups?
- Are audiences using different platforms highly segmented or are there cross-cutting factors (by language, ethnicity, rural/urban divide, sex, age, and diaspora) that influence platform choice?
- Which media type is gaining the most attention (attention economy)?
- Are women represented in non-stereotypical content and/or consulted as experts/sources?
- Is there any data/research on levels of audience perceptions and trust in the media and demand for "good journalism?" Are findings disaggregated by sex, age, location, and socio-economic status?
- What is the role of audiences as content producers? Consider the decentralization of media production, including user-generated content.
- What is the level of media literacy among audiences—perceived or based on evidence/data (if it exists)? Are there studies or publications available that consider media literacy of youth, adult, or mixed-age populations?

An approach that draws on questions associated with the PEA provides a good framework to structure the questions about the macro issues of the media ecosystem and will inform the pre-assessment report.

APPENDIX C: SYNTHESIS OF DATA AND REPORT WRITING

Synthesis of Data Collected

After answering the questions and considering all elements comprising each dimension, come back to all the data, reflect on your conclusions for each of the dimensions, and begin to synthesize the conclusions.

As part of the summary, the assessment team will score the dimensions based on the three categories: 1) how the country fares overall with respect to the criteria assessed for the dimension, 2) the assessment team's consideration of the receptivity and feasibility for the aid to produce impacts, and 3) the overall need for donor support. The assessment team will prepare a comprehensive table with the scores for each dimension, along with considerations of overall strengths and weaknesses and links to other dimensions. The fillable table for the assessment team is provided below.

The purpose of this scoring exercise is to provide a filter for the information gathered during the assessment in a structured way. The scaled comparisons will also offer a visual way of comparing each dimension and help inform decisions on where and what to fund in a media development program. The purpose of the scoring is to offer some way of evaluating the different dimensions and help prioritize potential interventions. The scores are also meant to facilitate discussion with the USAID Mission and the DRG Center on the levels of media development around a particular dimension. These scores are based on the opinions of the team and are meant only to help guide the assessment and offer an additional lens through which to understand the data collected and help focus what type of media development intervention, if any, is most useful.

Dimension Ratings and Discussion

Each member of the MAT team should select a numerical score below. The rating scale is meant to be a discussion tool so that each member of the team explains their scores and then the team negotiates a final score representing each dimension. There are three scoring areas—competency, need, and feasibility.

Synthesis of Data Collected. For each of these three areas, team members will offer a score on a scale of 0–10 reflecting a granular view of the media context. The criteria should consider the written assessment and the country's overall state regarding the questions asked for the dimensions reviewed.

1. **Competency Score for the Dimension:** Overall impressions by the assessment team on the competency of the media sector on the dimension being reviewed. Use the information gathered, interviews, and any site visits or observational meetings as a basis for the score.

COMPETENCY SCORING CRITERIA SCALE											
0 LOWEST	1	2	3	4	3	5	6	7	8	9	10 HIGHEST

2. **Need Score for the Dimension:** The criteria used for this rating should include the actual need that USAID funding would address. In thinking about "need," it may be helpful to think in terms of who would benefit from the funding or support? Why is it a need? How would any donor support be used? Is there an unmet need? If USAID does not fund this dimension, how will democracy and governance programs be affected?

NEED SCORING CRITERIA SCALE											
0 LOWEST	1	2	3	4	3	5	6	7	8	9	10 HIGHEST

3. **Feasibility of Donor Support for the Dimension:** The score should include an analysis of whether it is in the manageable interest of USAID. Is it actually possible to fund work in the dimension being scored? In this sense, think about what would happen if media development was not supported.

FEASIBILITY SCORING CRITERIA SCALE											
0 LOWEST	1	2	3	4	3	5	6	7	8	9	10 HIGHEST

To help bring all the scoring and reflection about each dimension together, use this space to help think through:

- Overall conclusion/summation of the Media for Democracy Assessment for the country (write any conclusions that can be drawn on the media situation).
- Overall opinions about the media environment in terms of top strengths and weaknesses (qualitative conclusion). Interlinkages between domains and USAID policies and guidance (Gender, Youth, LGBTQ+, Journey to Self-Reliance, PEA, Digital Strategy) that can be helpful in terms of developing or improving the dimension.
- What kind of combination of dimensions or elements should be considered together to form a coherent media development program?

TABLE OF MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY ASSESSMENT DOMAIN SCORES

DIMENSION	SCORE CATEGORY 1	SCORE CATEGORY 2	SCORE CATEGORY 3	STRENGTHS/ WEAKNESSES	LINKS TO OTHER DIMENSIONS
	Competency of the media sector on the dimension	**Need for improvement on this dimension**	**Feasibility of assistance: what difference will it make?**		
1. Information Ecosystem Mapping	No scoring				
2. Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media					
3. Cross-Cutting Issues—Gender, Youth, and LGBTQ+ in Media Programs					
4. Newsroom Professionaliz-ation					
5. Business, Sustainability, and Market-Based Capacity					
6. Media, Community, and Social Influence					
7. Media and Information Literacy					
8. Practices Around and Access to Training on Journalism Safety/Security					
9. Education, Universities, and Professional Development Training					
10. Donor & Peer Analysis	No scoring				

APPENDIX D: EXEMPLARS OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Outcome-Level Indicators for Each Dimension

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Dimension 1: Information Ecosystem Mapping	
Percentage of the population listening to the radio, watching TV, reading the news, obtaining information from computer-based internet, and obtaining information from cell phones.	Shows how much of the population is reached by different information channels.
Dimension 2: Enabling Environment for Free and Independent Media	
Outcomes related to a conducive, open, and enabling environment for independent media. Measured in terms of levels of: • Media competition • Media freedom • Media governance • Access to media and information • Legal, digital, and physical security (Note—scores and data for each area can be derived from other Dimension 2 indicators listed in this table.)	These are overall relevance outcome areas that USAID has identified as being important. Each sub-area has the potential to be scored and taken as a whole—these measurements would offer a comprehensive view of the overall health of the enabling environment for free and independent media.
Number of lawsuits in a year for slander or libel against media organizations for criticizing the government or those with close ties to the government.	Proxy for government-linked attacks on media.

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Number of incidents of violence targeting journalists in a year.	Proxy to indicate the extent to which media entities feel constrained in reporting or engage in self-censorship.
Number of crimes against journalists that are prosecuted in a year.	Proxy to indicate the presence of an enabling environment that effectively protects media and media institutions.
Extent to which the broadcasting code does not compromise the editorial independence of the media, for example, through imposing prior restraint.	Proxy to indicate the existence of an enabling environment that promotes fairness and impartiality.
Extent to which freedom of expression is guaranteed in law and respected in practice.	Indicates the presence of an enabling environment that broadly supports an independent media sector.
Extent to which access to information/right to information is guaranteed in law and respected in practice.	Indicates the presence of an enabling environment that broadly supports an independent media sector.
Number of websites blocked by the State because they have been deemed sensitive or detrimental.	Proxy for government censorship of media.
Extent to which effective regulations prevent undue ownership concentration and promote plurality.	Proxy for plurality and diversity of media.
Number of legal proposals submitted to competent authorities.	Shows the overall health of the legal and regulatory system and the functionality of democratic institutions.
Use of international/regional freedom of expression standards in decisions adopted by judicial and regulatory bodies.	Indicator of adoption of international standards and best practices and a sign that a human rights-centered approach to the legal enabling environment is being institutionalized.
Access to information requests by journalists and number of pieces elaborated on the basis of the information obtained.	Access to information is a fundamental right and the respect for requests by journalists is a key indicator of success in the democratic development of a country's media system. It is an essential component of the enabling environment.
Official web pages that fulfill applicable transparency requirements.	Indication that the State is providing key services such as open data that are essential to supporting an enabling environment.
Dimension 3: Cross-Cutting Issues—Gender, Youth, and LGBTQ+ in Media Programs	
Accessibility of media to women and other marginalized groups (program should specify).	Shows the diversity of media content—inclusiveness and representation.
Levels of participation of women and other marginalized groups in the media and the reasons for this.	Shows that women and other marginalized groups are able to work professionally or voluntarily in the media sector.

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Level of change in the overall amount of coverage marginalized groups and related topics of interests in media supported (adjust and specify which of the cross-cutting issues is the focus).	Shows that media content is diverse and representative of all segments of society.
Increased level of cooperation between CSOs that support positive social change related to marginalized issues and journalists and media outlets.	Shows interlinkage between media and civil society and that they are mutually reinforcing each other's work.
Percentage change in terms of how marginalized groups are portrayed in the media (adjust and specify which of the cross-cutting issues is the focus).	Shows progress made in terms of representation and portrayal—the quality of how they are depicted.
Percent of women in positions of management and ownership of the media.	Measure of women's equality, empowerment, and opportunity.
Number of youth-related media programs and youth-specific media development interventions.	Indicator of youth inclusion in media programming and representation.
Dimension 4: Newsroom Professionalization	
Outcomes related to improved newsroom professionalization, including training and education outcomes, show increased levels of: • Media education • Institutionalization • Quality and professional standards • Financial sustainability • Empowerment of journalists (Note—scores and data for each area can be derived from other Dimension 4 indicators listed in this table.)	These are overall relevance outcome areas that USAID has identified as important. Each sub-area has the potential to be scored and taken as a whole; these measurements would offer a comprehensive view of the overall health of newsroom professionalization.
Number of media outlets that have clear codes of ethics and professional editorial guidelines.	Indicates media capacity for self-regulation—proxy for professionalism/independence of the media sector.
Percent change of levels of understanding by media professionals and journalists around journalism ethics, professionalism, and standards of independent journalists and media.	Indicates the uptake and institutionalization of norms and standards around ethics deemed important for a professional media sector.
Extent to which independent journalist associations exist and disseminate good practice.	Indicates media capacity for self-regulation—proxy for professionalism/independence of media sector and enabling environment.

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Media and content producers demonstrate improved capacity to produce professional, locally relevant, and evidence-based news and information that is an alternative to disinformation and propaganda.	Indicates journalistic practices related to professionalism.
Independent media offers quality content and information in the public interest (including anti-corruption and accountability).	Information and journalism of high standards of quality and that have a public interest remit is a key indicator for the overall levels of professionalism of the media environment at the journalistic or media outlet level.
Local media and content producers demonstrate an increased capacity to produce social impact entertainment, which can often find itself outside of the crosshairs that target traditional news-focused media. Reality shows, media magazines, and other creative platforms allow sharing of information, fostering difficult discussions, and contributing to social norms.	Indicates the ability of local media producers and providers to provide content in the public interest. Such content is deemed as important in addition to basic news coverage or simply "protocol" journalism. Social impact entertainment may be more effective as a strategy and more conducive for democracy-related goals. The ability to offer such content is a positive sign for freedom of expression and a democratic media environment. The ability to produce this content without fear of jail time or criminal prosecution is also a positive indicator for a democratic media system.
Journalists capable of producing a wide range of creative, engaging, and balanced content and who understand how to utilize social media and distribution platforms for effect.	Indicates key qualities of a "21st-century" journalist—someone who is adaptive, multi-skilled, and able to use a variety of digital tools and technologies in story production and dissemination.
Newsrooms and media outlets are equipped with staff, systems, and skills-based competencies to leverage digital journalism skills for journalistic and **business purposes**.	Indicates newsrooms and media outlets are able to function with essential skills needed in the business, sales, marketing, and management of a news company.
Newsrooms and media outlets are equipped with staff, systems, and skills-based competencies to leverage digital journalism skills for journalistic and **reporting purposes**.	Indicates that journalists, newsrooms, and media outlets are able to function with essential skills in terms of reporting, editing, production, and delivery of news and information.
Dimension 5: Business, Sustainability, and Market-Based Capacity	
State does not discriminate through advertising policy or use advertising to favor certain outlets over others for political or other reasons.	Indicates the extent to which a level playing field exists in media advertising.
Number of target media entities that make new capital investments.	Proxy to indicate media outlets' ability to remain competitive.

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Average percentage of media revenues derived from advertising by target private sector independent media entities.	Proxy for the sustainability of private sector media. Indicator of viability.
Media diversify their revenue sources.	Indicates the health of a media business. Indicator of viability.
Media integrate data into their operations and use a wide range of KPIs, metrics, and analytics to refine their efforts, optimize results, and measure their effectiveness.	Indicates levels of professionalism in terms of both newsroom professionalism and media business operations.
Media successfully market themselves to audiences; their brands are strengthened and differentiated.	Indicates the health of a media business. Indicator of viability.
Milestones against media viability, sustainability, and profitability: Media outlets supported show demonstrated markers of progress (improved milestones and benchmarks scores) for local media outlets in terms of the progress made around business models. (Note—USAID guidance indicates that while media should be resilient, markets are challenging; in a closed space, a market-based model for commercial independent media may not exist, hence the need to develop off-shore methods of financing. This would require USAID buy-in and approval, but this type of support could also be factored into the media outlet's milestones and benchmarks for improvements made to business practices.)	Indicates the overall trajectory of media viability, sustainability, and profitability—three distinct but interrelated dimensions that show the overall health of the business facets of the media sector.
Dimension 6: Media, Community, and Social Influence	
Outcomes related to improved independent media engagement in community and society demonstrate the following qualities: • Levels of media consumption and literacy. • Levels of CSO and popular support for media. • Levels of relationships and media coalitions that promote press freedom, access to information, journalists' rights, other aspects of media, and democracy-related institution-building. • Percentage change in the perceptions and social norms, attitudes, and beliefs related to independent media (media and democracy). • Percentage change—inclusion of vulnerable groups.	These are overall relevance outcome areas that USAID has identified as important. Each sub-area has the potential to be scored and taken as a whole, these measurements would offer a comprehensive view of the overall health of media, community, and social influence.

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Percentage change based on audience research of media consumption of alternative media, public media, and community media	Indicates audience engagement, reach, and influence—key drivers of media's potential for impact.
For media development programs aimed at supporting PSB:[29] • The goals of PSB are legally defined. • The public service remit of the PSB is clearly defined in law. • The PSB has specific guarantees on editorial independence and appropriate and secure funding arrangements to protect it from arbitrary interference. • The PSB is publicly accountable through its governing body. • The PSB has a proven commitment to consultation and engagement with the public and CSOs, including a complaints system. • Public involvement in appointments to the governing body.	Indicates overall health of PSB—these are the essential indicators that signify a democratic PSB.
Dimension 7: Media and Information Literacy	
Percentage of population that trusts available news sources.	Proxy—trust comes from perceptions of the quality of media reporting and analysis and with levels of media literacy.
Percentage change in critical information consumption skills and behaviors.	Indicator for positive uptake of media literacy skills.
Percentage change of participants reporting a change in media consumption habits.	Indicates positive uptake of media literacy skills.
CSOs and media outlets share and disseminate media and information tips and best practices.	Indicates media and civil society are working together and collaborating on advocating for public understanding of media and information literacy.
Number of individuals reached by an awareness campaign who report they share knowledge and information they learn from a media and information literacy program.	Indicator of multiplier effects of media and information literacy programs.
The media literacy training curriculum is adapted to the local/national context.	Indicates policy-level outcomes of media and information literacy programs. Shows institutionalization of standards of media and information literacy will have the potential of being shared and respected.

[29] https://en.unesco.org/programme/ipdc

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Percentage of participants reporting they shared knowledge/skills that they received.	Indicates multiplier effects of media and information literacy programs.
Audiences demonstrate an improved understanding of core skills and competencies related to media literacy efforts; part of the measurement for this is seen through public demand for high-quality, independent reporting as an important step in combatting disinformation.	Indicates effectiveness of media and information literacy programs.
Number of media literacy trainers or trained ambassadors working in the country to continue promoting media and information literacy.	Indicates multiplier effects of media and information literacy programs.
Dimension 8: Practices Around and Access to Training on Journalism Safety/Security	
Percentage change on scores related to newsroom journalism safety and security audits—including measuring for physical, psychosocial, and digital security and safety practices.	Indicates journalism professionalism.
Media and civil society demonstrate improved understanding, skill uptake, and behavior change around digital, physical, and psychosocial security. This is seen through improved digital security practices.	Indicates journalism professionalism.
Journalism safety and security skills are transferred and shared within CSOs, media outlets, and their wider stakeholder communities.	Indicates multiplier effects of journalism safety and security programs.
Legal defense mechanisms and human rights lawyers are well placed to support and protect journalists' rights.	Proxy indicator for the enabling environment for free and independent media.
Inclusive and diverse journalism safety and security programming; i.e., local organizations support women and other marginalized groups, programming has a gender lens and is adapted to local needs and realities.	Indicates journalism professionalism. Proxy indicator for gender and marginalized groups' inclusivity and diversification goals.
Number of local CSOs and media (journalists or media outlets that have a security focus or beat) that focus on digital security, journalism safety, and related areas.	Indicates professional journalism.

INDICATOR	RELEVANCE
Dimension 9: Education, Universities, and Professional Development Training	
Number of undergraduate and graduate training programs, certifications, and continuing education opportunities for journalism, media law, and media studies.	Indicates the relative health of the educational system and the ability to train new generations of journalists and media professionals. Indicator of local capacity to provide education for the media sector.
Number of university programs offering hands-on, practical (as opposed to solely academic) journalism courses.	Proxy for the skill level of young/new journalists.
In-country academic and professional researchers show increased capacity and expertise in 21st-century journalism, media law, and communication studies and are included as part of local media development efforts.	Indicates local expertise and skills are sufficient to support and inform media development needs, priorities, strategies, and solutions.
Dimension 10: Donor & Peer Analysis	
Levels of donor coordination.	Indicates cooperation and collaboration between donors—needed to avoid duplication of funding.
Levels of data (M&E) sharing.	Indicates knowledge sharing and evidence-based development. Sharing of data and media development learning is a key component of modern, transparent development programming. Learning can only happen if data is shared and discussed.

Standard Foreign Assistance Indicators—The Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) was established in 2006 to coordinate U.S. foreign assistance programs. The media-applicable indicators are listed here for ease of reference.

F-Process Indicators Pertinent to Media Programs

INDICATOR ID (NEW | OLD)		INDICATOR TITLE	STATUS
DR.5		**INDEPENDENT MEDIA AND FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION**	
DR.5.1		**Professional and Institutional Capacities of Media**	
DR.5.2		**Independent Media and Free Flow of Information**	
DR.5.2-1	2.4.2-8	Number of training days provided to journalists with United States Government (USG) assistance, measured by person—days of training	Active
DR.5.2-1a	2.4.2-8a	Number of men	Active
DR.5.2-1b	2.4.2-8b	Number of women	Active
	2.4.2-9	Score on the Freedom of the Press Index	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-9a	Legal points (0-30)	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-9b	Political points (0-40)	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-9c	Economic points (0-30)	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-10	Rating on IREX Media Sustainability Index	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-10a	Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-10b	Journalism meets professional standards of quality	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-10c	Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable, objective news	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-10d	Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence	Archive 2016
	2.4.2-10e	Supporting institutions function in the professional interests of independent media	Archive 2016
DR.5.3		**Outlets and Infrastructure**	
DR.5.3-1	2.4.2-5	Number of non-state news outlets assisted by USG	Active
DR.5.3-2	2.4.2-11	Number of USG-assisted media-sector CSOs and/or institutions serve to strengthen the independent media or journalists	Active
EG.5		**PRIVATE SECTOR PRODUCTIVITY**	
EG.5-1		**USD sales of firms receiving USG-funded assistance**	
EG.5.2		**Private Sector Opportunity**	
EG.5.2-2		Number of private sector firms that have improved management practices or technologies as a result of USG assistance	Active

Additional guidance on Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning for Media Development Programs available at:

- Kalathil, Shanthi. Developing Independent Media as an Institution of Accountable Governance: A How-To Guide. World Bank Publications; Illustrated edition (June 29, 2011)
- UNESCO Media Development Indicators: A Framework for Assessing Media Development
- USAID's The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach
- GFMD's IMPACT site as a resource: https://impact.gfmd.info/#:~:text=The%20International%20Media%20Policy%20and%20Advisory%20Centre%20(IMPACT)%20is%20an,funding%2C%20and%20advocacy%20for%20media
- Deutsche Welle's Media Viability Indicators: https://www.dw.com/en/media-viability-new-indicators-show-what-is-at-stake/a-47874028