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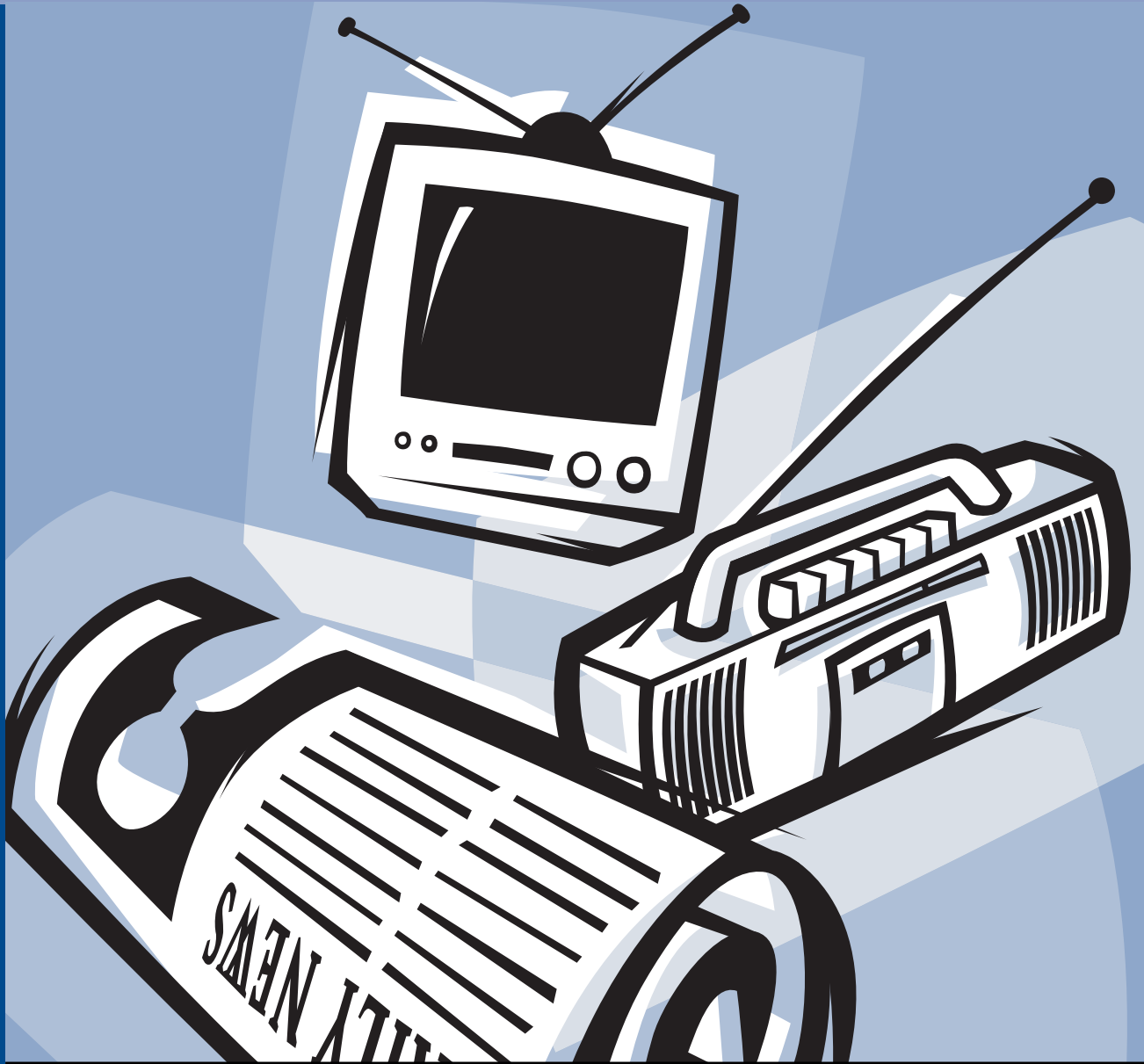
Policy and Programmatic Lessons

Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination
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USAID's Media Assistance

Policy and Programmatic Lessons

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

EU/TACIS	EU Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States
FDA	Food and Drug Administration (U.S.)
FLAG	Firm Level Assistance Group
FTA	free trade agreement
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
FTC	Federal Trade Commission (U.S.)
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services (U.S.)
HIID	Harvard Institute for International Development
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPC	implementing policy change
IPR	intellectual property rights
IR	intermediate results
IRIS	Center for Institutional Reform and the Informal Sector (University of Maryland)
ISO	intermediate support organizations
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MAP	Morocco Agribusiness Promotion
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MSME	micro, small, and medium enterprise
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIS	New Independent States
NTAE	nontraditional agricultural export
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation

OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID)
PEG	Partnerships for Economic Growth
PFF	Partnership for Freedom Program
QIZ	Qualified Industrial Zone
RAEF	Romanian American Enterprise Fund
RCSA	Regional Center for Southern Africa
REIP	Rural Enterprise Investment Partnership
REU	Rural Enterprise Unit
RNM	Regional Negotiating Machinery
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SEED	Support for East European Democracy (U.S. Department of State)
SEETI	Southeast European Trade Initiative
SEG	sustainable economic growth
SIECA	Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration
SME	small and medium enterprise
SO	Strategic Objective (USAID)
SOE	state-owned enterprises
SpO	Special Objective (USAID)
SPS	sanitary and phytosanitary
TCB	trade capacity building
TTC	trade technical unit
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USTDA	U.S. Trade and Development Agency
WAPP	West African Power Pool
WARP	West African Regional Program
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Context

Since the early 1980s, USAID has supported the growth of independent media as a part of its strategy for promoting democracy and open societies. Earlier programs focused on Latin American countries, training journalists and assisting independent media outlets. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, USAID launched a major effort to develop and strengthen independent media in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It also started media programs in other parts of the world, albeit on a modest scale. USAID spent over $264 million on media assistance from 1985 to 2001.

During July 2002–June 2003, USAID's Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination undertook a thorough assessment of the Agency's media assistance programs. It organized a series of workshops on media assistance programs, conducted fieldwork in Bosnia, Central America, Russia, and Serbia, and undertook an intensive literature review. This paper presents a set of policy and programmatic findings and recommendations that have emerged out of the assessment. It also proposes a framework that indicates what type of programmatic interventions can be carried out in different political systems.

Major Findings

1 **USAID media assistance was effective in promoting and strengthening independent media.**

Although many media interventions suffered from design and implementation problems, USAID media programs as a whole succeeded in promoting and strengthening independent media in recipient nations. They helped establish independent media outlets, improve professional standards for journalism, make independent media outlets economically more viable if not always profitable, reform legal and regulatory regimes governing media, and promote media organizations and associations committed to the notions of free press and democracy.

Country studies provide examples of the achievements of USAID programs. In Central America, the USAID-funded Latin American Journalism Project (LAJP, 1986–96) not only improved the professional standards of print journalism, but also led to the establishment of a regional journalism training institute, the Center for Latin American Journalism, in Panama. In Russia, USAID provided extensive training, technical assistance, and programming support to about 600 regional television stations. These have emerged as profitable media enterprises, positively affecting the future of the entire broadcasting sector. In Bosnia, as a result of the assistance provided by USAID and other donors, a vibrant media sector has emerged that offers Bosnian citizens a wide range of information and opinions as well as an alternative to the nationalist press. However, ethnic tensions and nationalist political parties continue to cast a shadow over the future of independent and balanced media. USAID assistance has helped independent media survive the authoritarian regime of Milosevic, trained hundreds of journalists to improve their skills and expertise, and built institutional infrastructure that enabled independent media to compete with state-owned media enterprises.

The success of USAID programs does not mean that the entire media sector has been transformed. For example, in Russia USAID assistance was instrumental in the growth of regional television stations, but it did not have much impact on the regional print media or the national media. Moreover, the progress has not been linear. Many programs suffered setbacks.

Three factors particularly contributed to the success of media assistance in case study countries. First, at the time of the assistance, all countries were undergoing internal political transformations that made media assistance acceptable to many, if not all, political leaders and members of civil society. Second, USAID and other donors made major resource commitments for building independent media. The availability of generous resources enabled implementing partners to develop comprehensive, multifaceted, mutually reinforcing media interventions. Third, USAID and its partners took a long-term view of independent media.

2 **Comprehensive training programs had multiplier effects on upgrading the professional skills of journalists and instilling the norms of free press. But they suffered from implementation problems.**

Professional training helped institutionalize the notions of press freedom in many ways. Often the training programs covered professional ethics, editorial independence, and the operations of the free press in Western democracies. More importantly, training exposed local journalists to norms of news reporting and coverage, multiple checking of sources, and the presentation of different viewpoints—essential for the working of free press. In many instances, training programs also educated participants about their legal rights and responsibilities. The cumulative effect was that large-scale training programs helped disseminate and institutionalize the norms and values intrinsic to a free press.

Training programs improved the technical skills of journalists. Often, the journalists who received

training shared their newly acquired expertise with their colleagues in their media outlets. The presence of trained professionals encouraged others to improve their skills, often by availing themselves of educational and training facilities. The trainees also became the trainers in many instances. For example, USAID's two major partners, Internews and IREX, now largely rely on their trained local staff to conduct training courses. This was not possible in the past. When USAID worked with local educational institutions to conduct training, it also contributed to the strengthening of their training capacities. It often provided grants and technical assistance to improve their curricula, upgrade their technical capabilities, and even retrain their teachers. Examples include the Montenegro Media Institute, the Albania Media Institute, the Slovak Media Institute, and the City TV Foundation in Slovakia. Such assistance has helped build local institutional training capacity.

While their overall contribution has been both positive and significant, many training projects initiated in the 1990s in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia suffered from limitations. Sometimes training was undertaken without a systematic needs assessment. Little effort was made to ascertain specific needs of the local journalists that could be addressed through training. Much of the training in the early 1990s was conducted by expatriates, who had neither proficiency in the local language nor sufficient understanding of the environment in which the trainees worked. The selection of the participants has been problematic in many cases. Because of the time pressure and limited dissemination of information about the training facilities, journalists from small media outlets or from remote areas were often underrepresented. Short-term training courses of a day or two proved of limited value, and in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID and other international donors made quite limited investment in long-term training. Many international NGOs preferred to provide direct training or to establish their own institutes rather than work with local universities and other institutions.

3 | **The economic sustainability of the independent media outlets remained a major problem.**

To promote economic viability of independent media firms, USAID activities included training in business, accounting, and management; giving on-site technical assistance to improve management and increase sales; providing access to marketing information; and even helping local entrepreneurs establish firms engaged in audience and marketing research. Such activities, however, achieved only limited success.

Many media outlets were not interested in economic independence. In former communist countries, many owners and editors viewed the media as a public good and strongly believed that society should subsidize them. Still others found it easier to cut deals with special interests rather than take drastic measures to increase sales and advertising or reduce expenses. Independent media were also at a disadvantage vis-à-vis state-owned media enterprises, which received preferential treatment in many former communist countries. As a result, independent media firms had problems competing with state-owned media outlets. In countries such as Albania, Bosnia, Russia, and Serbia, the media market was oversaturated. Too many newspapers, periodicals, and radio and television stations competed for the same advertising and audience share. Many business training programs designed to improve economic viability were not quite effective: they provided general information, not knowledge that could be put to immediate use. As democracies stagnated in many parts of the world, independent media faced increased political interference and manipulation. Finally, economic viability was hampered by weak country economies.

4 | **Progress promoting legal and regulatory reforms was slow and halting.**

USAID has been providing legal assistance to draft new media laws, or revise existing ones, to ensure the media equitable access to public information, fair market entry, and editorial freedom. It has given legal assistance to reform libel laws. It has provided technical and financial assistance to regulatory bodies, helped indigenous organizations that push for legal and regulatory reforms, and given legal assistance to journalists. Finally, USAID has supported attempts to develop indigenous legal expertise in media laws and regulations.

Such efforts have been only partly successful. The pace of legal and regulatory reforms has been slow and halting. For example, Albania took seven years after the fall of the dictatorial regime to pass and implement new media laws. After four years of a new government, Slovakia has only half of the media laws deemed necessary for a free press. Among the case study countries, Bosnia is the only country that has successfully instituted essential legal reforms and constituted a relatively independent regulatory board. Its Communications Regulatory Agency has established transparent, fair broadcast regulations that removed political manipulation from licensing process and virtually eliminated inflammatory broadcasts. Progress in Indonesia, Russia, and Serbia has been mixed.

USAID and other donors have generally encountered numerous obstacles in promoting legal and regulatory reforms. First, despite public commitment, many governments were reluctant to introduce major legal reforms that might undermine their direct or indirect control over the media. The legislative process to revise or draft new media legislation was time consuming, requiring political will and commitment that were often absent. It was not easy to evolve a consensus among the competing interests of the legislature, government, media owners, and journalists for drafting media laws. In the case of broadcast media, many firms that owned broadcasting licenses did not favor an open system, as it might challenge their privileged position. Moreover, the newly enacted media legislation was not always satisfactory and often left loopholes that defeated its purpose. Even when necessary reforms were enacted, they were not effectively implemented because of bureaucratic inertia, political manipulation, and poor functioning of law enforcement agencies.

5 **Donor coordination of media assistance was limited except in crisis situations.**

USAID has succeeded in working closely with other donors in conflict situations. For example, it cooperated with other donors very well in Serbia. Earlier, it reasonably coordinated its activities with other bilateral and multilateral organizations in Bosnia after a few initial missteps. The level of donor coordination in Afghanistan, East Timor, and Kosovo has been also encouraging.

However, donor coordination has been limited in many nonconflict societies for many reasons. USAID has its own rules and requirements to allocate resources that are not always compatible with those of other donors. The situation has been further compounded by limited coordination within USAID itself, among its regional bureaus and overseas missions on one hand, and the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) on the other. Moreover, as the largest and most powerful donor in media assistance, USAID is often looked upon as "big brother" by other donors, who are naturally concerned that its agenda will dominate in coordination efforts. Consequently, there is some psychological resistance, which is understandable but hardly conducive to donor coordination. Finally, the limited technical expertise on media assistance among many donors inhibits the development of common strategies and programs.

6 **USAID has not focused on community radio stations, which can promote both democracy and development in poor countries.**

Although USAID has provided some assistance to community radio stations, it has not invested in their development on a global basis. However, well-managed community radio stations can be powerful tools for promoting grassroots democracy and development, as they provide information about local as well as national and international events. They also enable people to express their views and concerns on problems that are uppermost in their minds. Community radio is also helpful during local and national elections. For example, in Mali and South Africa, community radio played a role in voter education programs. In many parts of the developing world, community radio disseminates information on agriculture, microenterprise, and other economic development programs. Radio programs give news and advice on topics such as public health, childrearing, family planning, and HIV/AIDS. Major attractions of community radio stations are their low cost and easy accessibility.

7 **Built-in safeguards to ensure the independence and integrity of media programs from political manipulation and interference worked well.**

USAID media assistance programs often were received with doubts and apprehensions by recipient countries. Entrenched political interests were occasionally suspicious, if not hostile. Many independent journalists, intellectuals, and leaders also entertained reservations about foreign assistance programs influencing their media. USAID has followed many strategies to ensure the integrity and transparency of its media interventions. One strategy that was successfully used in Latin America was to appoint a board of advisors that included eminent journalists, media educators, and media owners from the region to design and implement the program. The high caliber of the advisory board allayed any misgivings about USAID intentions. Second, USAID has often left design and implementation responsibilities to local partners. For example, USAID provided grants to many media outlets, organizations, and associations all over Eastern Europe and Eurasia. At the same time, providing funding through NGOs allowed USAID to remain at arm's length from the recipients. Third, USAID has worked with other international organizations so that the media assistance gains credibility as a multilateral—rather than bilateral—program. Finally, USAID did not impose any restrictions on editorial freedom of media outlets receiving its assistance. All these strategies worked well and could be replicated when necessary.

8   Independent media building has served U.S. national interests.

A global analysis of USAID media programs indicates that independent media assistance has contributed to the achievement of many foreign policy goals. It often, though not always, produced the same results that public diplomacy sought to achieve. In many countries, support to independent media created political space that enabled the United States to pursue specific foreign policy goals, such as holding of elections, promotion of human rights, or political reconciliation.

For example, in Bosnia and Serbia, USAID-assisted independent media outlets were the "voices of moderation and peace" in an environment charged with hatred and violence. Although these media outlets did not support every U.S. policy or action, they played an important role in the achievement of the U.S. foreign policy goal of political and economic stabilization. In Serbia, independent media supported by USAID and other international donors facilitated the regime change and paved the way for democracy. By helping Radio B92 and linking it with a network of radio stations (ANEM), international assistance undermined the regime's direct and indirect control over news and information. USAID media assistance also helped promote similar objectives in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and East Timor.

Moreover, USAID media programs often expanded foreign journalists' understanding of the United States through training, exchange visits, and publications. Finally, it should be mentioned that media assistance contributed to the U.S. foreign policy goal of promoting economic development and democracy abroad.

Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

No major changes in existing policies and programs are required or proposed here. The following recommendations either reinforce the need to continue existing policies and programs or emphasize a few minor revisions.

- USAID should consider expanding its media development programs, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

- USAID should strike a balance between short- and medium-term training and long-term training designed to create a cadre of media professionals who can train a new generation of media professionals.

- USAID should increasingly engage U.S. universities to build and strengthen indigenous educational and training capacities.

- The goal of media assistance should be the promotion of the media sector and not the survival of every media outlet.

- USAID and other donors should exert sustained political pressure on governments to promote legal and regulatory reforms.

- USAID should explore promising modalities for coordinating its media interventions with other donors.

- USAID should consider ways to expand its support to community radio stations in Africa.

- A clear distinction between media development and public diplomacy should continue to inform USAID media assistance programs.

- USAID should undertake more independent evaluation of media assistance projects.

Programming Strategies for Different Societies

The analysis of USAID media programs suggests that different media development strategies are needed in different political systems. For the purposes of media assistance, the countries in

which USAID operates can be classified into the following categories: closed, semidemocratic developing, wartorn, postconflict, and transition. The opportunities and challenges for developing viable media intervention differ in each.

While USAID cannot launch major programs to establish independent, sustainable media in closed societies, it can initiate modest interventions to lay the groundwork for independent media in the future. Possible examples include support for nascent civil society groups that have potential for promoting independent media; modest training programs in local educational institutions for improving technical skills of print and broadcast journalists and overseas travel grants; and scholarships and exchange programs for local journalists.

Since there are political openings in semidemocratic societies, USAID and other international actors can undertake a wide variety of media programs that take into consideration existing conditions. Examples of these programs may include short- and long-term training of local journalists, support for privatization of state-owned broadcast and print media, assistance to media firms to promote their financial independence, promotion of civil society organizations and media associations, and support for legal and regulatory reforms.

In countries with ongoing civil wars, USAID can support modest media programs that support humanitarian assistance efforts, provide unbiased information, and even reduce political tensions. Such programs can include support to alternate media for advocating peaceful resolution of con-

flict; local media for disseminating information about humanitarian assistance, military actions, and other activities affecting the safety and security of the civilian population; temporary radio production and transmission facilities to broadcast information about humanitarian assistance programs; and external broadcasting of independent media back to the country. Other projects can include cross-training of journalists from both sides of ethnic conflict and targeted peacebuilding initiatives in low intensity conflicts.

Postconflict societies offer tremendous opportunities for establishing democratic institutions and practices; therefore, USAID and other donors enjoy considerable flexibility. Examples of the types of programs that can be undertaken in these countries include technical and financial assistance for establishing a legal framework and independent regulatory bodies for free media, training journalists, promoting economic viability of media outlets, and establishing civil society and media organizations that articulate the interests of journalists and a free press. Finally, transition societies refer to relatively socially and economically advanced societies, in which the political order has collapsed. This opens the way for liberalization and democratization. Such countries include East European and a few Eurasian countries after the fall of the Soviet Union. Chile also entered this category after Pinochet left office. As in postconflict societies, unprecedented opportunities for promoting independent media exist in these countries. Practically, all of the programming strategies suggested for postconflict societies are also applicable to transition regimes.

Introduction

Since the early 1980s, USAID has supported the growth of independent media as a part of its strategy for promoting democracy and open societies. Early programs focused on Latin American countries, training journalists, and assisting independent media outlets. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, USAID launched a major effort to develop and strengthen independent media in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It also started media programs in other parts of the world, albeit on a modest scale. USAID spent over $264 million on media assistance from 1985 to 2001.

An analysis of USAID programs indicates that it has been using the following strategies to promote independent media.

■ *Upgrading journalism skills and expertise.* This strategy has focused on improving technical and professional skills of journalists through short- and long-term training, visiting tours to the United States and other Western countries, publication of books and literature in local languages, and building local institutional capacities for training.

■ *Improving the economic viability of independent media.* USAID has provided management and business training, on-site technical assistance, and support for audience research. In addition, it has given financial and commodity assistance to selected media outlets, particularly in the Balkans.

■ *Building or rebuilding physical infrastructure for the broadcast media.* USAID has been assisting in repairing or building infrastructure for the broadcast media in countries such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia to facilitate the flow of information.

■ *Programs and programming assistance.* USAID and its partners have provided assistance to radio and television stations to produce broadcast programs. They have also produced and disseminated programs among media outlets on important development issues such as health, education, and democratic institution building.

■ *Facilitating legal and regulatory reforms.* USAID has facilitated legal and regulatory reforms to establish the foundations for free press. It has also provided technical assistance to appropriate legislative and regulatory agencies, supported indigenous efforts for reforms, and given assistance to building local institutional capacities in this area.

■ *Strengthening indigenous associations, organizations, and institutions that directly or indirectly promote growth of independent and responsible media.* USAID has provided technical and financial assistance to journalists' unions and associations, trade associations of media owners, civil society organizations engaged in democracy promotion, and educational institutions imparting training in journalism.

During July 2002–June 2003, USAID's Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (PPC) undertook a thorough assessment of its media assistance programs. It organized a series of workshops on media assistance programs; conducted fieldwork in Bosnia, Central America, Russia, and Serbia; and undertook an intensive review of literature. In addition, PPC commissioned two short papers to

analyze media assistance programs in Africa.[1] This paper presents a set of policy and programmatic lessons that have emerged out of the assessment. However, the paper focuses only on key issues and does not fully capture the richness and breadth of ideas, insights, and recommendations contained in the country studies and other analyses.

A few expressions used in this paper require clarification. *Media* is broadly defined to encompass both print and broadcast media. It includes newspapers, periodicals, magazines, radio and television stations, and the internet. Independent media indicates non-state media, that is, enterprises owned by individuals, corporations, and nonprofit organizations. Such a definition leaves aside the controversial issue of control over media by economic and political interests. *International community* refers to all bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, international NGOs, private foundations, and other organized groups engaged in international assistance.

Media assistance refers to financial, commodity, and technical assistance provided by the international community to build and strengthen independent media. Its primary purpose is to develop an indigenous media sector that promotes democracy and development. Such media development is distinct from the State Department's public diplomacy efforts designed to facilitate positive international attitudes toward U.S. policy concerns and interests. USAID media assistance is not about "selling America" but about creating indigenous capacities that promote public discourse on vital policy issues and enable citizens to effectively participate in economic and political life. As a USAID reports puts it: "It is about training and supporting indigenous, professional media whose first loyalty is to their own citizens, rather than to their patrons in the U.S. or at home."[2]

The paper presents both findings and recommendations. It also proposes a conceptual framework illustrating different kinds of media assistance that can be undertaken in different political systems.

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[1] The details about these studies are given in the bibliography.

[2] Allen Hume (2002).

Major Findings

1 | **USAID media assistance has been effective in promoting and strengthening independent media.**

Although many media interventions suffered from design and implementation problems, USAID media programs as a whole succeeded in promoting and strengthening independent media in recipient nations. Country studies unmistakably show that media programs had positive and significant impacts. They helped establish independent media outlets, improve professional standards for journalism, make independent media outlets economically more viable (if not always profitable), reform legal and regulatory regimes governing media, and promote media organizations and associations committed to the notions of free press and democracy. Some examples include the following:

■ Latin American Journalism Project (LAJP [1986–96]), implemented in partnership with Florida International University, has been widely credited with improving the professional standards of print journalism in Central America. It trained thousands of journalists, published standard textbooks on journalism, and held regional meetings with networks of journalists and media owners. One of the major achievements of the project was the establishment of a regional journalism training institute in Panama, the Center for Latin American Journalism.

■ In Russia, USAID has funded a wide range of media programs since 1992. With USAID support, Internews has provided extensive training, technical assistance, and programming support to about 600 regional television stations all over the country. As a result of this assistance, these stations have emerged as profitable media enterprises, positively affecting the future of the entire broadcasting sector. In addition, USAID has assisted many media and civil society organizations during their formative stages. Notwithstanding some setbacks in media free-

dom under the Putin administration since 1999, a more decentralized, vigorous regional TV industry and a growing media-sector NGO community have remained as strong voices for a free press and democracy. USAID also provided assistance to the print media, but its impact has been limited for various structural, economic, and programmatic reasons.

- In Bosnia, USAID media programs implemented through many institutional partners, including IREX and Internews, have had profound effects on the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords and the consequent democratization of the polity. The country now has a vibrant media sector that offers Bosnians a wide range of information and opinions and an alternative to the nationalist press. The combination of financial aid, equipment, and training in editorial and business skills has helped foster a new generation of independent-minded media that are outside direct political control. However, ethnic tensions and nationalist political parties continue to cast a shadow over the future of responsible news reporting and coverage.

- USAID worked with IREX in providing massive media assistance to Serbia both prior to and immediately after the NATO bombing. Its assistance helped independent media survive the authoritarian regime of Milosevic, trained hundreds of journalists to improve their skills and expertise, and built institutional infrastructure that enabled independent media to compete with state-owned media enterprises. USAID assistance also helped the broadcast media reach a large audience. The quality of the news has improved over time, and the country now has many independent media outlets that have been introduced to professional norms and ethics.

  However, USAID efforts to promote legal and regulatory reforms and the economic sustainability of independent media have been only partly successful. Many media outlets still depend upon external assistance and local patrons, and the country has a long way to go in establishing legal and regulatory regimes on par with those of democratic societies.

- In Indonesia, USAID has channeled resources through Internews to over 50 radio stations to improve professional standards and increase audience shares. It has provided essential equipment, software, and training to the journalists and station managers. It has also supported the production of radio programs on a wide range of topics that are relayed by radio stations. Preliminary investigation indicates that the program has been relatively successful, and news coverage and reporting have improved in the assisted stations. With USAID support, Internews also helped establish a Media Law and Policy Center in the University of Indonesia.

A caveat is necessary, however. The success of USAID programs does not mean that the entire media sector has been transformed. Complex transitional media systems often develop unevenly across subsectors, with some areas registering more gains than others. For example, while in Russia USAID assistance was instrumental in the growth of regional television stations, it did not have much impact on the on the regional print media. As discussed later, USAID had greater success improving professional standards than in pushing legal and regulatory reforms. Moreover, progress has not been linear. Many programs suffered setbacks, but these were overcome with considerable ingenuity and initiative.

Three main factors contributed to the success of media assistance in case study countries. First, at the time of the assistance all countries were undergoing internal political transformations that made media assistance both necessary and acceptable to many if not all political leaders and members of civil society. LAJP was launched when the wave of democratization was sweeping over Latin America. Russian media programs started in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, when there was a widespread yearning for a free press and an open political system. USAID launched media programs in Bosnia and Serbia when those countries were struggling to establish a new

political order after the conflict. USAID also start-ed media assistance in Indonesia after the fall of the Suharto regime. These internal changes created constituencies for media reform and a favorable climate to USAID media assistance programs.

Second, USAID and other donors made major resource commitments for building independent media. USAID expended over $44 million in Russia alone. The total international expenditure on the media sector in Russia has been estimated at about $100 million. USAID and the State Department invested about $30 million in post-Dayton Bosnia by 1999. If the resources expended by the European Union, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and prominent NGOs are included, the total investment is considerably higher. The same is true of Serbia. Even in Central America, USAID provided $12 million. The availability of generous resources enabled implementing partners to develop comprehensive, multifaceted, mutually reinforcing media interventions.

Third, USAID and its partners took a long-term view of independent media, with the exception of USAID/OTI, whose projects in Bosnia and Serbia were designed to meet the immediate need to pro-vide balanced news and information. The long-term focus enabled USAID to undertake many institution-building activities.

2	**Comprehensive training programs had mul-tiplier effects on upgrading the professional skills of journalists and institutionalization of the norms of free press. But they suffered from implementation problems.**

Since the beginning of media assistance, USAID, the State Department, and other international organizations have focused on imparting profes-sional training to journalists. Such initiatives included short- and long-term training, participa-tion in seminars and conferences, exchange visits to Western countries, publication of books and train-ing materials in local languages, and support to enhance local institutional capacities in journalism.

USAID-supported professional training programs improved news content and coverage. For example,

the quality of news in many Central American countries improved as a result of massive journal-ism training undertaken by LAJP. In Russia, news coverage has improved in regional television sta-tions that participated in USAID-funded training programs. Their news departments are becoming more sensitive to the need for accuracy, balanced coverage, and presentation of different viewpoints. In Serbia, highly professional media organizations have emerged, albeit in small numbers. Although the professional standards are generally low, media outlets (such as B92, Beta, FoNet, Vreme, and Nin) that received USAID assistance generally maintain relatively high professional standards. Professional training has also contributed to more balanced news reporting in Bosnia.

Professional training also helped institutionalize notions of press freedom in many ways. Often the training programs covered professional ethics, editorial independence, and the operations of free press in Western democracies. More importantly, training exposed local journalists to norms of news reporting and coverage, multiple checking of sources, and the presentation of different view-points, all of which are essential for the working of free press. In many instances, training programs also educated participants about their legal rights and responsibilities. The cumulative effect is that large-scale training programs helped disseminate and institutionalize the norms and values intrinsic to a free press.

USAID's experience suggests that well-designed, comprehensive training programs can go a long way in improving journalists' technical skills. Often, the journalists who received training shared their newly acquired expertise with their col-leagues. This happened without any conscious design or effort. Junior colleagues often learned by watching or assisting the trained professionals, particularly in the case of broadcast media. For example, in regional television stations in Russia, many fellow journalists learned techniques of edit-ing or reporting a story simply by assisting their trained colleagues. In other cases, the presence of trained professionals encouraged others to improve their skills.

In some cases, the trainees became the trainers. In Central America, LAJP alumni started teaching journalism courses in local institutions, improving the standards of training. In Guatemala, they established new training programs for journalists. Many journalists trained through USAID-funded programs have been engaged in part-time training throughout Eastern Europe and Eurasia. USAID's two major partners, Internews and IREX, now largely rely on their trained local staff to conduct training courses. This was not possible in the past.

The emergence of local trainers has resulted in two positive developments that have in turn facilitated the growth of professional skills. First, since it costs less to hire local trainers than to bring in experts from the United States or Europe, more people have been trained within the same budget. Second, as the local trainers invariably possess a better understanding of the conditions in which journalists work than do expatriate trainers, the training often became more relevant to the needs of the journalists and the media owners.

When USAID worked with local educational institutions to conduct training, it also contributed to the strengthening of their training capacities. It often provided grants and technical assistance to improve their curricula, upgrade their technical capabilities, and even retrain their teachers. Examples include the Montenegro Media Institute, the Albania Media Institute, the Slovak Media Institute, and the City TV Foundation in Slovakia. Such assistance has helped build local institutional training capacity. As mentioned earlier, LAJP helped establish a regional center for journalism in Panama with its own board of directors, mostly from Central America. Since 1996, with a modest staff of four, the center has been holding training programs for journalists.[3]

While their overall contribution has been both positive and significant, many training projects initiated in the 1990s in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia suffered from many limitations. Sometimes training was undertaken without a systematic needs assessment. Little effort was made to ascertain specific needs of the local journalists that could be addressed through training. For example, the National Press Institute in some cases did not undertake a survey before launching training activities in Russia. After the Dayton Peace Accords, international donors funded numerous media training projects that competed for trainees. Several Bosnian newspapers and periodicals bitterly complained to a USAID team that their journalists were being enticed away for training, resulting in manpower shortages.[4]

Moreover, much of the training in the early 1990s was conducted by expatriate instructors, who had neither proficiency in the local language nor sufficient understanding of the environment in which the trainees worked. This was often unavoidable because of the unavailability of local media experts. As a result, the expatriate trainers cited examples from their own experiences in Western democracies that made little sense to participants.[5] The situation was undoubtedly better when trainers taught technical topics such as camera operation, film editing, design and layout, or news management. As local trainers became available, this problem has been largely solved.

Selection of participants for training has been problematic. Because of the time pressure and limited dissemination of information about the training facilities, journalists from small media outlets or from remote areas were often underrepresented. Moreover, in many cases the same journalists

[3] The LAJP was designed to transfer journalist training and other activities to an independent center directed by journalists and media owners from Central America. It raised resources and mobilized media owners and journalists to establish a regional center. As a result of its efforts, the Center for Latin American Journalism was established in Panama in 1996. The center has been quite active since its inception. It is presently facing financial problems because of the downturn in the economy, but the management is confident that it will overcome the problems.

[4] This occurred in 1998.

[5] During the early 1990s, most trainers in Russia who taught at the print media programs were westerners. Often, they lectured rather than giving practical training: "Too much training I've seen is not training," commented a media consultant who has worked extensively in Russia. "It's yapping. Lecturing. Crowing about the first amendment. Western trainers talking about 'how I did it.' Not enough interactive training, not enough practice in seminars so that people get actual learning, not just theory." Such training was only superficially useful. It even created tensions between the trainers and trainees, who resented being lectured by foreigners with scant understanding of the local situations." Kumar and Cooper (2003)

participated in multiple training activities, thereby limiting the prospects for new entrants.

Short-term training courses that lasted a day or two proved of limited value. At best they exposed participants to new ideas or techniques but did not prepare them to apply them in concrete situations. For example the State Department funded short visits by journalistic luminaries to give lectures in Eastern Europe and Eurasia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Such visits did not have any tangible effects on the skills and orientation of the local journalists despite their high costs and visibility. In Eastern Europe and Eurasia, USAID and other donors made quite limited investment in long-term training. The high cost of long-term training, the perceived need for immediate help to the struggling media outlets, and the organizations' own need to show demonstrable results contributed to this development. Another important factor was that the media owners could not afford the long absence of their journalists. As a result, many of these countries still lack highly qualified media professionals who can assume leadership positions in educational and professional institutions. A new generation of media projects is addressing this problem.

Many international NGOs preferred to provide direct training or establish their own institutes rather than work with local universities and other institutions. Usually training needs are urgent, and it takes time to create or strengthen local institutional capacities. Moreover, the faculties of existing journalism institutions in developing and transition countries resist change and do not experiment with new approaches enthusiastically. The curriculum in these institutions is generally more theoretical than practical. Above all, international NGOs lack control over training when it is conducted by universities. For whatever reason, USAID and its partners have not done enough to build and strengthen local educational institutions. For example, Internews/ Russia expended millions on its own training programs and little on improving professional training capacities in universities. However, it should be recognized that in the countries of the former Soviet Union, universities were not suitable for providing urgent training to journalists and media owners.

The economic sustainability of the independent media outlets remained a major problem.

After the fall of the communist regimes, a relatively large number of media outlets emerged in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia. Some were founded by intellectuals and activists to support incipient democratic institutions. Others were launched by entrepreneurs to make a profit, if not in the present, at least in the future. In addition, many state-owned media were privatized in formerly socialist countries in Europe and Eurasia. Finally, the international community helped found new media outlets in wartorn societies of Bosnia and Kosovo that represented moderate voices and supported peace and reconciliation. The problem is that often the newly established media were not financially viable and survived largely on the support of local and international patrons.

To promote economic viability of independent media firms, USAID activities have included training in business, accounting, and management; giving on-site technical assistance to improve management and increase sales; providing access to marketing information; and even helping local entrepreneurs establish firms engaged in audience and marketing research. Such activities have achieved only limited success.

Contrary to the general impression, some media outlets were not interested in economic independence. Many owners and editors viewed media as a public good, and strongly believed that the society should subsidize them. This has been the case in former socialist countries such as Russia, Romania, and Ukraine. Still others found it easier to cut deals with special interests rather than take drastic actions to improve sales and advertising or reduce expenses. Many also treated their media enterprises as avenues to gain access to influential political and business leaders.[6] Another related problem was that managers and owners had little or no background

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[6] For example, IREX (2002, 153) notes: "Most of the national outlets, and many regional ones—whether print or broadcast—are owned or controlled by political and oligarchic business forces that see the media not as businesses, but as political tools." See Media Sustainability Index 2002.

in modern management and business operations. In recent years, the management of relatively large media enterprises has improved in countries such as Bulgaria, Russia, and Serbia.

Independent media were also at a disadvantage vis-à-vis state-owned media enterprises, which continued to receive preferential treatment in many former communist countries. These included printing privileges, favorable rates for buying newsprint, renting state-owned properties, distribution through state postal services, and other direct and indirect subsidies. The state television received favorable treatment in the allocation of frequencies and transmission locations. Moreover, in many countries, journalists from stated-owned media also enjoyed privileged access to information, as they were supposed to follow the official line in news coverage.

The unsteady growth also created problems in transition countries. The emerging private sector was often insufficient to support the growing number of independent media outlets. Too many newspapers, periodicals, and radio and television stations competed for the same advertising and audience. Moreover, the presence of a large number of media outlets resulted in lower advertising rates and, consequently, lower revenues. Finally, many business training programs designed to improve economic viability have been ineffective, providing general information rather than knowledge that could be put to immediate use.

4   Progress in promoting legal and regulatory reforms has been slow and halting.

USAID has provided legal assistance to draft new media laws or revise existing ones to ensure the media equitable access to public information, fair market entry, and editorial freedom. It has supported independent analyses of laws pertaining to media and provided legal assistance for the drafting of appropriate legislation in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In addition, USAID has also supported initiatives to reform media laws and regulations in southern Africa by providing training and technical assistance. It has also given technical assistance to reform or establish regulatory agencies for broadcast media in many countries.

USAID also assisted indigenous civil society organizations that defended press freedom and protected journalists from legal and political intimidation. In Bosnia, Russia, Serbia, and Slovenia, such organizations have also pushed for legal reforms and monitored the implementation of the newly enacted press laws. USAID has also helped develop indigenous legal expertise, as most developing and transition countries suffered from a paucity of lawyers specializing in media laws. The Moscow Media Law and Policy Center (recently renamed the Institute for Information Laws) provides a good example of what a USAID-supported legal training organization can accomplish. Initially funded by USAID and a number of international donors, the institute has emerged as a respected training and consulting organization.

Despite USAID assistance, the pace of legal and regulatory reforms has been slow and halting. For example, Albania took seven years after the fall of the dictatorial regime to pass and implement new media laws. After four years of a new government, Slovakia has only half of the media laws deemed necessary for a free press. Among the case study countries, Bosnia is the only country to successfully institute essential legal reforms and constitute a relatively independent regulatory board. Its Communications Regulatory Agency has established transparent, fair broadcast regulation that removed political manipulation from the licensing process and virtually eliminated inflammatory broadcasts.[7] Progress in Indonesia, Russia, and Serbia has been mixed.

USAID and other donors have generally encountered numerous obstacles in promoting legal and regulatory reforms. Despite public commitment, many governments were reluctant to introduce major legal reforms that would undermine their

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[7] According to De Luce (2003), the CRA enjoyed credibility among broadcasters because its code of practice was seen as a reflection of international norms, its procedures emphasized due process, and its staff and executive bodies were composed of Bosnians as well as international representations.

direct or indirect control over the media. The legislative process to revise or draft new media legislation was time consuming and required political will and commitment that were often absent. In the case of broadcast media, many firms that owned broadcasting licenses did not favor an open system, as that would challenge their dominant position. This was the case in Serbia, for example, where many of the pro-Milosevic broadcasting stations opposed broadcasting reforms. Progress has been particularly slow in changing criminal libel laws in most countries.

It may also be noted that the newly enacted media legislation has not always been satisfactory. For example, in Serbia, the new government successfully pushed a new broadcast law through the legislature, but the law was considered flawed by many experts. Sometimes, sections of newly enacted media laws were amenable to different interpretations, and even conflicted with each other, as has been the case in Russia.

Even when necessary reforms are enacted, they are not effectively implemented for many reasons. To keep a grip on the media, government officials find loopholes in the legislation that violate the spirit if not the letter of the law. The reconstituted or newly established regulatory agencies were manipulated by ruling political leaders and government and often failed to follow transparent procedures to establish their credibility. In transition countries, the judiciary was weak and susceptible to political pressures. There was also the problem of corruption in law enforcement agencies. Aggrieved journalists and media owners found it more prudent to keep silent than to wage long, expensive legal battles with little prospect of success. Often, ignorance of the newly enacted press laws was widespread, and journalists were not aware of their legal rights and responsibilities. The paucity of the lawyers proficient in media law and its application compounded the problem. Most countries lacked skilled and committed legal experts to address cases related to violations of rights and freedom enjoyed by journalists.

5 Donor coordination of media assistance had been limited except in crisis situations.

USAID has succeeded in working closely with other donors in conflict situations. For example, it cooperated with other donors very well in Serbia. Earlier, it reasonably coordinated its activities with other bilateral and multilateral organizations in Bosnia after a few initial missteps. The level of donor coordination in Afghanistan, East Timor, and Kosovo has been also encouraging. USAID and other donors have saved resources by avoiding unnecessary duplication of activities and prevented local partners from manipulating one donor against another. They have also been able to devise and implement programs that were complementary to each other.

Several factors have facilitated donor coordination in wartorn and postconflict societies. USAID and other donors shared a sense of urgency and were eager to produce results. Consequently they were willing to accommodate each other's perspectives in shaping an intervention strategy. The donors' overarching objective of establishing peace helped them overcome bureaucratic obstacles. The local partners were also under pressure to cooperate with each other in conflict situations. These factors have been largely absent in nonconflict countries where donors lacked both political will and a shared strategy for media assistance. In such countries, donor coordination has been limited, each donor largely funding its own programs with little regard to the priorities and plans of others.

USAID has faced many obstacles in coordinating its programs with other donors in nonconflict societies. It has its own rules and requirements to allocate resources that are not always compatible with those of others. The situation has been further compounded by limited coordination within USAID itself—among its regional bureaus and overseas missions on one hand, and OTI on the other. Moreover, as the largest and most powerful donor in media assistance, USAID is often looked upon as "big brother" by other donors, who are naturally concerned that its agenda will dominate in coordination efforts. Consequently,

there is some psychological resistance, which is understandable but hardly conducive to donor coordination. Finally, the limited technical expertise on media assistance among many donors inhibits the development of common strategies and programs.

Influential local media organizations have emerged in some countries, which were able to attract funds from many donors for their activities, thereby contributing to a different kind of donor coordination. Perhaps the best example is provided by USAID-funded Internews/Russia, which recently received a grant of $2 million from the European Community as well as a grant of over $1 million from the OpenRussia Fund. Multidonor funding to a single organization can be construed as a form of donor coordination, as it confers many of the same benefits. It avoids unnecessary duplication of activities funded by different donors and protects the organization from the criticism that it reflects the priorities of a single foreign government. However, it also runs the risk of crowding out more natural recipients of international assistance.

6 **USAID has not focused on community radio stations, which can promote both democracy and development in poor countries.**

The national and international interest in community radio stations has grown in recent years.[8] During the past decade, many developing nations changed their media laws and regulations, paving the way for the establishment of community radio stations. Several international NGOs and multilateral and bilateral donors have started supporting them. Although USAID has supported media initiatives that included community radios, it has so far not made any major effort to promote them. The primary focus of its media assistance programs has been on independent (commercial) broadcast media.

Past experience indicates that well-managed community radio stations can be powerful tools for pro-

moting grassroots democracy and development. They provide information about local as well as national and international events. They are interactive; they enable people to express views and concerns on problems that are uppermost in their minds. Community radio is also helpful during local and national elections. For example, in Mali and South Africa, community radio participated in voter education programs. In many parts of the developing world, community radio disseminates information on agriculture, microenterprise, and other economic development programs. It also gives news and advice on topics such as public health, childrearing, family planning, and HIV/AIDS. A major attraction of the community radio stations is their low cost and easy accessibility to the people.

Despite their low startup and running costs, most communities in poor countries cannot establish community radio stations without outside assistance. They require resources to purchase essential equipment and train potential employees and volunteers. They need technical assistance to fulfill legal formalities and establish guidelines so that the local radio stations are not dominated by entrenched interests. Moreover, they require financial subsidies until they can sustain themselves through advertising and announcements. Consequently, international assistance channeled through NGOs or the national government, as is the case in South Africa, can be extremely helpful in helping communities establish their own radio stations to serve their needs and aspirations.

7 **Built-in safeguards to ensure the independence and integrity of media programs from political manipulation and interference have worked well in the past.**

USAID media assistance programs often encountered doubts and apprehensions in recipient countries. Entrenched political interests were usually suspicious, if not hostile. Many independent journalists, intellectuals, and leaders also entertained reservations about foreign assistance programs influencing their media. For example, LAJP was seen by some journalists in Central America and the United States as a CIA attempt to penetrate

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[8] See, "It's Our Radio: An Assessment of Community Radios in Africa," by Bill Simmering and Rachel Thompson. Paper submitted to USAID.

and influence Latin American media. In 2002 in Russia, President Putin suggested in a meeting with prominent media organizations that international media assistance programs represented foreign propaganda and interests. In Bosnia and Serbia, nationalist leaders and press routinely labeled USAID-supported media outlets as "foreign agents" who were trying to undermine the freedom and integrity of these countries. Such doubts and mis-understandings could undermine both the effective-ness and impact of media assistance.

USAID has followed four strategies to ensure the integrity and transparency of its media interven-tions. One strategy successfully used in Latin America was to appoint a board of advisors com-posed of eminent journalists, media educators, and media owners from the region to design and implement the program. The high caliber of the advisory board allayed any misgivings about USAID intentions.

Second, USAID has often left design and imple-mentation responsibilities up to local partners. For example, USAID provided grants to many media outlets, organizations, and associations all over Eastern Europe and Eurasia, which fashioned their own projects to fit their priorities and needs. Such partners enjoyed full control over their projects. At the same time, providing funding through NGOs allowed USAID to remain at arm's length from recipients.

Third, USAID has worked with other international organizations so that media assistance provides gains credibility as a multilateral—rather than bilat-eral—program in the host country. For example, USAID has pursued a multilateral strategy in Egypt where it participates in the Donor Media Consultative Group: Cairo.

Finally, USAID did not impose any restrictions on the editorial freedom of media outlets receiving its assistance. For example, in Serbia, USAID contin-ued to provide technical and even financial assis-tance to the media outlets that opposed NATO's bombing of Kosovo. Although USAID gave consid-erable assistance to Radio B92, it explicitly avoided interfering with its editorial policy or news cover-age. By following a policy of noninterference, USAID not only gained the trust of local media outlets but also helped them establish their credibil-ity in their own societies.[9] USAID media managers occasionally faced pressure from U.S. embassies that did not understand why it supported media outlets critical of U.S. policies or actions. A U.S. focus on short-term positive publicity at the expense of the longer term goals of independent and sustainable media, would have been counter-productive.

8 Independent media building has served U.S. national interests.

USAID media assistance achieved many U.S. for-eign policy objectives and often, though not always, produced the same results that public diplomacy sought to achieve. In many countries, support to independent media created political space that has enabled the United States to pursue its specific for-eign policy goals, such as holding of elections, pro-motion of human rights, or political reconciliation. For example, in Bosnia and Serbia, USAID-assisted independent media outlets were the "voices of moderation and peace" in an environment charged with hatred and violence. Although these media outlets did not support every U.S. policy or action, they played an important role in the achievement of the U.S. foreign policy goal of political and economic stabilization. USAID media assistance has also helped promote similar objectives in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and East Timor.

In Serbia, independent media supported by USAID and other international donors facilitated the regime change, paving the way for democracy.

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[9] As McClear, McClear, and Graves (2003) note, in Serbia, many independent journalists were highly critical of the NATO bombing of Kosovo. When the bombing ended, these journalists continued to receive U.S. support. Ljiljana Smajlovic, a political scientist for the weekly Nin, who has been critical of the United States herself said: "U.S. aid came with no strings attached, no stigma. That was miracle of it. The fact that Veran Matic made his stand against bombing con-firmed that the media remained independent and still got American support." The fact that the United States placed no editorial con-straints on the media it supported was vital to the success that media has in helping overthrow Milosevic.

International assistance to help Radio B92 and link it to a network of radio stations (ANEM) undermined the regime's direct and indirect control over news and information. By providing balanced news and coverage, independent radio stations strengthened opposition parties, bolstered the credibility of elections, and promoted a massive get-out-the-vote campaign. Moreover, they prevented the regime from manipulating election results. In the absence of independent media outlets, nourished and sustained by foreign assistance, the United States would have found it extremely difficult to pursue its policy goals in the Balkans and other wartorn societies.

Moreover, USAID media programs often expanded foreign journalists' understanding of the United States through training, exchange visits, and publications. For example, LAJP provided long-term training to hundreds of Central American journalists at the Florida International University. Their long-term sojourn to Miami made them familiar with the U.S. political and economic institutions and the role that the media plays in this country. In Russia, USAID and the State Department supported National Press Institute/Press Development Institute, which routinely organized dialogues among journalists, human right activists, and policymakers of the two countries, promoting mutual understanding. The institute's regional offices provided a forum for visiting U.S. journalists and experts. USAID has also supported exchange programs for journalists from East European and Eurasian countries. Anecdotal evidence suggests that as a result of their exposure to U.S. economic and political systems, foreign journalists were in a better position to interpret U.S. policies and positions to their audience, and they had a better appreciation of the working of the free press.[10]

Finally, it should be mentioned that media assistance contributes to the U.S. foreign policy goal of promoting economic development and democracy abroad. There is a broad consensus among development theorists that independent media is essential for sustainable development.[11] Independent media promotes internal debate and discussion on policy issues, promoting transparency. It facilitates political participation, makes leaders accountable to the public, and helps fight political and economic corruption. Independent media also contributes to the diffusion of scientific and technological innovations that affect the pace of economic advancement. Modern industrial and commercial sectors cannot grow well without unfettered access to information and ideas. Thus, to the extent that media assistance contributed to the growth and consolidation of independent media, it also helped realize a foreign policy goal of the United States.

Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

The above findings indicate that USAID media development strategies and programs are essentially sound. They have evolved as a result of experience and experimentation, and they have been effective in strengthening independent media in different political systems. Therefore, no major changes in existing policies and programs are required or proposed here. The following recommendations either reinforce the need to continue existing policies and programs or emphasize a few minor revisions.

1 | **USAID should consider expanding its media development programs, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.**

Most USAID assistance has gone to Balkans and countries of the former Soviet Union, as these countries offered unprecedented opportunities for the growth of democracy and independent media. USAID efforts in this part of the world have yielded positive results. However, it is important that USAID explore investing in independent media in Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of the developing world as a part of democracy promotion. Media development should be integral to democracy promotion efforts.

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[10] The author interviewed many visiting journalists as well as managers of the media exchange programs.

[11] This point has been suggested by David Hoffman in "Beyond Public Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs,* March/April 2002.

2 **USAID should strike a balance between short- and medium-term training and long-term training designed to create a cadre of highly trained media professionals who can train a new generation of media professionals.**

USAID has supported short- and medium-term training rather than long-term training in most transition countries. Such a course has been prudent for many reasons. The newly established independent media outlets urgently needed to upgrade the skills of their staff. Often such skills could be imparted within a few days. Moreover, these outlets worked with minimal staff and could not afford the absence of their staff for more than a few days. Finally, the journalists who took long leaves for professional training faced the prospects of losing their jobs. Consequently, short- and medium-term courses were ideally suited to the needs of the media owners and journalists.

However, countries that lack the traditions of independent media also need highly trained professionals to teach graduate and undergraduate courses in journalism and media management. Such professionals should possess systematic, comprehensive training in journalism or media management that can only be gained through intensive long-term training extending over 9–12 months. USAID has already started taking steps to support such training in many transition countries. But more needs to be done.

3 **USAID should increasingly engage U.S. universities to build and strengthen indigenous educational and training capacities.**

USAID experience in Central America suggests that strong journalism departments are ideally suited to provide long-term journalism training. They have highly recognized faculty and possess the necessary equipment and facilities. Moreover, they are known for their professional integrity and independence. Therefore USAID should consider working with strong journalism departments in U.S. universities to provide long-term professional training to over-

seas journalists or to assist foreign universities and training institutions in upgrading their professional competence.

4 **The goal of media assistance should be the promotion of the media sector, not the survival of every media outlet.**

USAID develops the independent media sector by upgrading journalistic skills, making media outlets economically sustainable, and developing an institutional infrastructure that is supportive of free media. Media outlets are essentially business enterprises that either grow or decay in a highly competitive environment. To support media enterprises for their past contributions or professed ideological orientation is not a prudent use of foreign assistance.

A caveat is necessary, however. In postconflict societies, many serious independent media outlets might not become economically sustainable for some time. Therefore, in such circumstances, USAID should be willing to support a set of high quality newspapers, periodicals, and radio and television stations. Even then, technical or financial assistance should be given only to those media enterprises willing to take concrete and concerted steps toward economic independence.

5 **USAID and other donors should exert sustained political pressure on governments to promote legal and regulatory reforms.**

As discussed earlier, a major impediment to legal and regulatory reforms is the reluctance of governments to introduce and implement them. Despite their professed commitment to media freedom, many governments do not want to give up their direct or indirect control over media. Experience has shown that both internal and outside pressures are necessary to pass appropriate legislation, establish effective, transparent regulatory regimes, and enforce new laws and regulations. Therefore, USAID and other international donors should not hesitate to expend political capital in pressuring reluctant governments to promote legal and regulatory reforms.

6 **USAID should explore promising modalities for coordinating its media interventions with other donors.**

The benefits of donor coordination cannot be overemphasized. Donor coordination saves resources by reducing unnecessary duplication of effort. It also prevents recipient organizations from playing one donor off another. But more importantly, it improves the credibility of media program, allaying the misimpression that USAID programs are politically motivated. Therefore, USAID should continue to make efforts to coordinate its activities with other donors. At a minimum, USAID and other donors should hold regular meetings with each other, share information, and explore new modalities for more intensive coordination. Two approaches are worth mentioning here. One is the consortium model, in which donors develop a shared framework for providing assistance. Once the framework is established, each donor designs its own projects that promote mutually agreed goals. USAID followed this model in Serbia. The second model is to fund a local or regional organization such as the Center for Latin American Journalism or the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which can assume the responsibility of developing and implementing appropriate projects and programs. This approach can be particularly relevant when the volume of international media assistance is limited.

7 **USAID should consider ways to expand its support to community radio stations in Africa.**

Although community radio stations can promote grassroots democracy and development, USAID has largely ignored them. It is recommended that the Agency reconsider its position and invest in promoting community radio stations, particularly in Africa. It can particularly promote the legal and regulatory frameworks for establishing them, impart basic training to managers and operators, and, when necessary, provide essential equipment to deserving stations. Such assistance can be channeled through existing civil society organizations.

8 **A clear distinction between media development and public diplomacy should continue to inform USAID media assistance programs.**

USAID should continue its focus on media development—as distinct from public diplomacy—for three reasons. First, as a development agency, USAID enjoys a comparative advantage over other organs of U.S. foreign policy apparatus in building economic and political institutions and capacities. The relative success of its media programs attests to that. Second, as indicated earlier, media assistance, despite its different objectives, can often accomplish the goals of public diplomacy. In addition to fostering economic and political development, media assistance promotes understanding and appreciation of U.S. democratic institutions and culture. Independent media also plays a watchdog role, promoting transparency in government and business. Moreover, it can reduce the potential for terrorism by strengthening independent media and providing a voice to marginalized segments of the population. Finally, for the success of media programs, it is imperative that journalists, media owners, intellectuals, and political leaders are convinced that the purpose is to promote independent media and not short-term political objectives. If USAID gets involved public diplomacy, its credibility may be undermined.

9 **USAID should undertake more independent evaluation of media assistance projects.**

As media assistance is relatively new and the literature extremely limited, there is a need to codify donors' experience to generate a body of systematic knowledge that can be used to develop new projects and programs. Evaluations of media projects by outside, independent evaluators can be very helpful in this connection. In the past, most evaluations have been internal, and have not followed any set standards. By including evaluation component in media interventions, USAID and its partners would be able to develop more effective and relevant projects but would also promote more academic research on international media assistance.

Media Development in Different Political Systems

An examination of the media programs supported by USAID and other donors indicate that different media strategies are usually required in different local contexts. For the purposes of media assistance, the countries in which USAID operates can be classified into the following categories: closed, semidemocratic developing, wartorn, postconflict, and transition. These categories were discussed and found useful in two media workshops that USAID held in 2003. Examples of the media development strategies that can be followed in these countries are given below.

1. Closed societies: Such societies have relatively closed political systems and are governed by monarchs, military dictators, or ideologues. Even though some countries have high per capita incomes because of extractive industries, their economies are generally underdeveloped. Deep political cleavages and tensions exist but remain dormant in these societies. The free press is almost nonexistent. The examples include Burma, formerly Afghanistan, and most Middle Eastern and many African countries.

In closed political regimes, USAID's options are limited, as it cannot launch major programs to establish independent, sustainable media. However, even under the worst conditions, it can initiate modest interventions that can lay the groundwork for independent media in the future. Possible examples include the following:

■ Support for nascent civil society groups that have the potential for promoting independent media. Such groups may include associations of local journalists, intellectuals, lawyers, and writers. USAID did channel some assistance to such groups in Eastern Europe during cold war.

■ Modest training programs in local educational institutions for improving technical skills of print and broadcast journalists. The underlying assumption is that journalism training will expose them to the norms of a free press and enable them to take advantage of whatever political openings exist or arise in the future.

■ Overseas travel grants, scholarships, and exchange programs for local journalists. It is important that the training be short term, as it is quite possible that the grantees who received long-term training abroad might not return and instead seek employment elsewhere. In such cases, the training will have no real impact on these societies.

In the past, USAID or other international agencies have not designed or implemented major programs for independent media development in closed societies. The situation is likely to change because of the growing interest in promoting democracy in the Middle East.

2. Semidemocratic developing countries: In the countries that appeared to have made tangible progress toward democratization, stagnation and even backsliding occur. Independent media remains extremely fragile in such countries, and journalists work under trying conditions. Subtle forms of censorship and self-censorship continue, and the legal and regulatory environment is not conducive to a free press. A majority of countries in Africa and Eurasia, and a few in the Middle East, fall into this category.

Since there are political openings, and a section of the political and bureaucratic elite is committed to political reforms, USAID and other international actors can undertake a wide variety of media programs, taking into consideration the existing conditions. Examples of these programs may include the following:

■ Short- and long-term training of local journalists. Professional training programs can be locally established to improve journalistic standards. USAID experience in Central America indicates that semidemocratic regimes do not object to the training of journalists if the focus is on "professionalism."

- Support for privatization of state-owned broadcast and print media. Faced with economic difficulties, some semidemocratic regimes are not averse to privatization, provided they can institute some kind of censorship and indirect control. Even then privatization can offer limited opportunities for change.

- Direct and indirect assistance to media firms so that they are run as sound business enterprises and are not dependent on governments or special interests for survival. Most semidemocratic or nondemocratic governments do not object to such assistance. However, financial independence will enable some media enterprises to be more assertive about press freedom.

- Promotion of civil society organizations and media associations that directly or indirectly support independent media. USAID and other donors have worked with local NGOs to promote democracy in semidemocratic societies with varying levels of success.

- Support for legal and regulatory reforms. Although most governments in semidemocratic societies resist legal and regulatory reform, occasionally there are openings that can be utilized.

As is the case with closed societies, strong political and diplomatic pressure is necessary to push for independent media in semidemocratic countries. Without such support, media programs cannot overcome the bureaucratic inertia and political opposition that they would encounter. If multiple donors work together, they increase chances of gaining political support for independent media development.

3. Wartorn societies: This category refers to countries with ongoing civil wars. Such societies tend to have highly authoritarian regimes and predatory social and political structures. Civil wars give the ruling regime a pretext to stifle whatever little freedom media enjoyed in the past. Usually the media becomes the mouthpiece of the conflicting parties.

USAID and other donors can do very little in such conditions, as the whole political environment, intellectual climate, and economic conditions are not suitable for outside interventions. However, the following types of interventions may be helpful:

- Support to alternate media that advocates peaceful resolution of conflict, if it exists. For example, the international donors provided assistance, albeit limited, to the newspapers and radio stations in Bosnia, Burundi, and Serbia during the ongoing conflict.

- Support to local media for disseminating information about humanitarian assistance, military actions, and other activities that affect the safety and security of the civilian population.

- Setting up temporary radio production and transmission facilities to broadcast information about humanitarian assistance programs. Such assistance is extremely useful for informing people about the availability of food and other supplies, medical help, and security precautions. Often the donor agencies also provide transistor radios to the populace as was the case in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

If support to independent media within the country is not possible, efforts can be made to support external broadcasting of independent media back to the country. USAID did this in Serbia under the Pebbles (Platforms for External Broadcasting) program, and it and other donors supported RTV B92's efforts to build transmitters around Serbia to broadcast back in. USAID has also supported Radio Racyja's efforts to broadcast into Belarus from transmitters based in Poland and Lithuania. These are extreme cases that should only be undertaken when there are strong indigenous broadcasters leading the project and when strong diplomatic support exists for the effort.

Cross-training of journalists from both sides of ethnic conflict, as Internews has done in Aceh and other conflict zones in Indonesia.

Targeted peacebuilding initiatives in low intensity conflicts. USAID and other international donors have supported modest initiatives designed to reduce ethnic and political tensions. Examples include Studio Ijambo in Burundi, Talking Drum Studio in Liberia, and Radio Okapi in Congo.

The type of support mentioned above can help in providing relatively unbiased news coverage of the conflict, information about humanitarian assistance and even help to reduce political tensions in low intensity conflicts. However, its overall impact on the growth of independent media is bound to remain limited.

4. *Postconflict societies:* This category refers to countries where conflict has ended, leading to the establishment of a legitimate government. Examples include Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kosovo, and Serbia. One distinguishing characteristic of these societies is that tremendous opportunities exist for establishing democratic institutions and practices.

USAID and other international organizations have extensively worked in postconflict societies. Examples of the types of programs that can be undertaken in these countries include the following:

■ *Establishing a legal framework for free media.* Legal assistance can be provided to the government, legislatures, and the NGO community interested in pushing a reform agenda. As mentioned earlier, USAID has provided considerable legal assistance to Bosnia and Serbia that has led to reform in media laws.

■ *Supporting the government in establishing appropriate regulatory bodies* for print and broadcast media in accordance with the norms of a free, independent press.

■ *Training journalists.* The standards of journalism deteriorate in the aftermath of conflict because of the additional restrictions imposed upon journalists during the conflict and a general economic decline. Therefore in postconflict situations, extensive training programs are necessary to improve professional standards. Such programs may include sensitivity training to journalist covering minorities, socially deprived groups, and the victims of war and bloodshed.

■ *Assisting independent media outlets* to enhance their economic viability and survival.

■ *Assistance for establishing civil society organizations* that articulate the interests of journalists and a free press. In fact, assistance to all democracy-promoting civil society organizations will directly or indirectly help independent media.

5. *Transition societies:* This category primarily refers to relatively socially and economically advanced societies in which the political order has collapsed, opening the way for liberalization and democratization. Such countries include East European and a few Eurasian countries after the fall of the Soviet empire. Chile also came under this category after Pinochet left office. As in postconflict societies, unprecedented opportunities for promoting independent media exist in these countries. Practically, all of the programming strategies suggested for postconflict societies have been followed in transition countries.

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