

The OECD-DAC Governance Network Contributing to SDG16 Implementation:

Media Development Options

- Food for thought contributed by the Center for International Media Assistance, BBC Media Action and the Global Forum on Media Development

Sustainable Development Goal 16 - Target 16.10 - Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

No one who has witnessed global events in the first years of the 21st Century needs convincing that news and information media are playing an unprecedented role in our public life. Political observers are documenting the impact of media on both sustaining and resolving conflicts, both contributing to and reducing polarization in politics, both aiding and impeding progress in government reform processes. The list goes on.

The media's role is a particularly critical issue for developing and fragile societies.¹ In countries with weak institutions, the media's impact is magnified, creating obstacles to reform, opportunities for fragmentation, and the shattering of political will. Failure to consider the role of media can threaten the success of development partnerships and donor support. At the same time, an independent, well managed news media—as a tool for increased accountability, government monitoring, and giving voice to underserved communities—can contribute to making such partnerships more effective.

GovNet has long recognized the important role of media as one of the key institutions of accountability, and has contributed to better donor approaches to media assistance through its regular work program and publications. The 2013 OECD/DAC study, *Accountability and Democratic Governance: Orientations and Principles for Development*, for example, produced guidelines for accountability support, with media as one of the core areas of focus.

The present document aims to make an updated case of the critical importance of media and media institutions within the GovNet's upcoming work on governance, accountability, and effective institutions. More specifically, it will outline the importance for GovNet to contribute to thinking about and implementation of the media aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Planned GovNet work on rule of law, access to justice, and corruption also intersect with media development work. Moreover, the GovNet will benefit from partnership and knowledge exchange with other organizations that are working on media development, institutional reform and internet governance.

Why Media Development Matters to GovNet

News and Information media provide a critical link between the state and citizens. Mass media not only acts as an information conduit on the policymaking *process*, it also provides the means by which information on actual policy *impacts* is delivered to citizens and back to policymakers. Better monitoring and evaluation of policy and markets are essential ingredients supporting greater accountability of leaders, and the media are among the most important institutions performing this function.

¹ See, for example: Deane, James. *Fragile States: The Role of Media and Communication*. BBC Media Action, 2013.

Open information flows can also promote institutional reforms by affecting people’s incentives and by creating ways to quickly share ideas and knowledge about potential course corrections and improvements. Greater access to information by the media can provide a voice for social groups who can help governments ensure that reforms are widely supported and sustainable. A credible and independent media is thus vital for improved economic, social, and governance outcomes.

While all DAC donors fund media development work at some level, the total effort is small compared to other sectors, estimated at about 0.5% of overall donor assistance funding. Much of that support is in the form of small projects, for example trying to prop up struggling media organizations or funding journalist training. A wide array of studies has concluded that a much more integrated, governance-centered approach is needed.²

A GovNet Contribution to Media Development

The GovNet has been asked to work on support to SDG16 specifically, and the Network may have a comparative advantage around target 16.10 to, “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”. From the media development perspective, creating an effective media environment is fundamentally a governance challenge and involves a wide range of stakeholders including political leaders, the private sector and civil society. The complex web of laws, regulations, practices, and behaviors that create the media environment are deeply intertwined with other governance norms and practices. Indeed, working to

Three Shifts in the Media Landscape

Three interrelated, seismic shifts in the global media environment make it critical for development practitioners to deepen their understanding of this important sector and its potentially adverse impacts:

A failing business model: The traditional advertising-based financing model for private media and failed reforms of public media puts high quality news and information out of reach of many countries.

A dramatic change in the way people get and distribute information: The growth of digital media and platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is undermining the role of news media institutions and impeding the production of quality, curated content.

A rise of authoritarian media that creates alternative “facts” and new means of political control: The spread of non-democratic regimes has coincided with and perhaps been precipitated by “media capture,” a new form of censorship and propaganda that depends on collusion between media oligarchs and authoritarian regimes.

² See, for example: Stiglitz, Joseph. 2008. “Fostering an Independent Media with a Diversity of Views,” in *Information and Public Choice: From Media Markets to Policymaking*, R. Islam, ed., World Bank: Washington, DC: pp. 139-152; Nelson, Mark and Tara Susman-Peña. 2012. “Rethinking Media Development,” A Report on the Media Map Project. Washington, DC: Internews. https://internews.org/sites/default/files/resources/Internews_1-9_Rethinking_Media_Dev-2014-01.pdf; For a review of the literature that explores the intellectual history of media development, see: Arsenault, Amelia and Shawn Powers. *Media Map Literature Review*. Washington, DC: Internews. <http://www.mediapapresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Media-Map-Literature-Review-Final.pdf>

reform the media environment without deep engagement with other governance actors is unlikely to succeed. A growing body of research shows that broad coalitions among multiple stakeholders are virtually the only way to achieve effective media reforms.³

Most importantly, reform of the media sector can work hand-in-hand and contribute to reforms in other governance areas. The World Bank Governance and Anticorruption Strategy adopted in 2007 emphasized that where weak governance and corruption pose obstacles for development, and where government commitment is uneven, one important entry point could be through helping countries improve the functioning and environment for the media. “Working for a more independent and diverse media sector can be a way to increase government accountability and to benefit the poor by enhancing their participation and dialogue,” the strategy argued.⁴ As the GovNet explores the political dimensions of governance and development work, incorporating a deeper understanding of the media is paramount.⁵

The Center for International Media Assistance, Germany’s Deutsche Welle Akademie and a large group of developing country media reform organizations are organizing a series of regional, multi-stakeholder consultations on media reform that will articulate priorities for action. Consultations have been completed in the Latin America and Southeast Asian regions, and an Africa meeting is planned in early 2017. These consultations aimed at identifying focused areas for global, regional and country-level action, and the results will be shared with the international donors and other actors in the field.

CIMA and Deutsche Welle Akademie, in turn, work within the broader framework of the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), which is a global network of media development practitioners and activists. Among other important efforts, GFMD has led the work on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators for access to information and safety of journalists by building a wider constituency in the Global South.

Three Dimensions of an Enabling Media Environment



Source: *The Politics of Media Development*, CIMA

Options for GovNet to Engage in Work on Media

So how should the GovNet engage on media? This complex area of policy reform desperately needs better integration with other reform areas and improved empirical evidence to inform policy makers

³ See, for example: Mauersberger, Christof. *Advocacy Coalitions and Democratizing Media Reforms in Latin America: Whose Voice Gets on the Air?* Springer International Publishing, 2016; Segura, María Soledad., and Silvio Waisbord. *Media Movements: Civil Society and Media Policy Reform in Latin America*. London: Zed Books, 2016.

⁴ World Bank. 2007. Main Report. Washington DC: World Bank Group.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/426381468340863478/Main-Report>

⁵ See: Deane, James. Making politics work for development is all the rage.” BBC Media Action

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/mediaactioninsight/entries/093b41bf-cf54-497f-99b7-33cb9b761a15>

and international donors. The Network has a history of working on the nexus of governance and media development, and principles for media development, as well as broader recommendations on donor programming around media development as part of a broader accountability system in its book on *Democratic Accountability: Orientations and Principles for Development* (2014)⁶. Please see below a list of topics and questions to be considered as the Network reflects on the key areas for engagement in the coming years:

1. The interplay between the broader governance agenda and media development

- a. How can the GovNet members contribute to integrating media environments into political economy analysis and ensure that governance interventions are supportive of a healthy media environment?
- b. Conversely, how can we better ensure that media development work is designed to capture its impact on governance areas such as accountability, Anti-Corruption, and effective institutions? How can we strengthen partnerships in this work, including with the Open Government Partnership?
- c. How can we strengthen approaches that target long-term systemic change, including through integrating media development within broader governance reforms?
- d. How can the GovNet's work contribute to the success of the SDG process, including the media-related indicators in Goal 16?
- e. How can issues of media and media development be better integrated into governance policy and research agendas?"

2. The politics of media development

- a. How do the political dimensions of media systems at the country level impact governance and media reforms? How do we use this knowledge for more effective reforms? How can the GovNet help development partners understand the benefits of—and make the political case for—high quality, independent media?
- b. How can GovNet help development partners develop approaches to coalition-building and South-South learning for enacting locally-driven media and governance policy reforms? How can this contribute to the Effective Institutions agenda?
- c. How can we enhance the engagement of multilateral development banks and other global institutions on media development issues, towards the creation of coalitions for change at the country, regional, and global levels?
- d. How can the GovNet play a more active role in South-South and triangular learning and knowledge sharing?

3. The legal and regulatory environment

- a. What are the key ingredients for an enabling legal and regulatory environment for pluralistic, independent media in the digital world of the 21st Century?

⁶ *Democratic Accountability: Orientations and Principles for Development* (2014)
<http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/governance/docs/For%20WEB%20Accountability%20and%20democratic%20governance%20Orientations%20and%20principles%20for%20development.pdf>

- b. How do we support developing countries' news and information needs in the setting of global Internet norms and standards?
- c. How can media reforms contribute to the GovNet's work on corruption and rule of law?

4. Public service media

- a. How do we create a public service media that sets a standard for objective information in the public interest as part of a diverse media sector?
- b. How do we define public service media in a new digital environment?
- c. How should public service media be funded?

In practical terms, a better integrated effort would mean more joint, multi-stakeholder analysis of the governance and media environments, more country-level dialogue about the interplay of governance and media, and more consideration of media within global aid effectiveness and institutional reform processes.

For too long, international donors have pursued media development work as a sideline activity, dismissing it as overly political, or approaching it as a crisis-driven, training-focused activity. This is not only inefficient, but unsustainable unless it is integrated into a broader governance reform agenda that addresses the wider enabling environment. For countries that are trying to address the three shifts in the media landscape that were highlighted earlier in this document, a focused effort by GovNet could be a critical component for building a stronger global effort on this critical subject. And integrating media development work into the governance agenda, partner countries and donors could see important benefits in terms of effectiveness and broader political support for both topics.