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CIMA INAUGURAL REPORT RECOMMENDS GREATER U.S. SUPPORT FOR
INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ASSISTANCE

WASHINGTON—U.S. public and private donors should increase their support for international media assistance as it has become an integral component of democracy promotion around the world, according to a newly released report from the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED.) The report provides an in-depth assessment of U.S. international media development efforts funded by both the U.S. government and U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations. It recognizes the impact of a strong independent media on areas critical for democratic development, such as education, government accountability, public health, the empowerment of women and minorities, and the economy, and argues for greater investment in media development efforts around the world.

The report, *Empowering Independent Media: Strengthening U.S. Support for Free and Independent News Around the World*, examines the field from eight perspectives and offers recommendations to policymakers, donors, and implementers for each area: funding, professional development, education, the legal-enabling environment, economic sustainability, media literacy, new media, and monitoring and evaluation.

“This report will serve as an important tool for advocating for independent media’s greater role in the democratic development community,” CIMA Senior Director Marguerite H. Sullivan said.

The report’s recommendations include: promoting media development as its own sector of U.S. international assistance; taking longer-term approaches to projects; thinking locally; improving professional development; providing greater support for the legal-enabling environment; emphasizing media literacy more among government officials and the public; developing better resources and networking; building stronger media management; integrating new technology; improving monitoring and evaluation methods; improving coordination; and integrating communication for development strategies.

Empowering Independent Media is the culmination of CIMA’s work since its inception in late 2006, and draws upon CIMA’s reports, working groups, meetings, and additional research on topics ranging from

public and private funding of projects and the financial sustainability of independent media outlets to global investigative journalism and community radio.

CIMA works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of media assistance programs worldwide by providing information, building networks, conducting research, and highlighting the indispensable role independent media play in developing sustainable democracies around the world. For more information on CIMA, please visit: www.ned.org/cima/cima.html.

To subscribe to CIMA's mailing list for reports and events, send an e-mail to CIMA@ned.org, with the Subject heading, "Subscribe to CIMA Reports and Events."

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FACT SHEET

- U.S. funding for international media development in 2006 – both public and private – exceeded \$142 million. Government funding totaled nearly \$69 million, while private sector funding accounted for \$60 million, and government-supported nonprofit organizations (NED and U.S. Institute of Peace) totaled \$13 million. In contrast, in 2006, the U.S. spent nearly \$23 billion on official foreign aid.
- The three major U.S.-based private media assistance groups spent more than half of their combined budgets (or about \$23 million) on training and other professional development in 2006. Professional development is critical in many countries where professional standards are low or nonexistent, corruption is widespread, investigative reporting skills are weak, and equipment and technology are wanting.
- University programs should offer an important opportunity to instill basic skills in aspiring journalists. However, in many university programs, coursework focuses on theory over practical experience. Schools often lack student media outlets or do not encourage internships. With greater emphasis on basic skills, institutions should provide students with real-world experience, modern equipment, and opportunities to participate in student-run media.
- Laws curtailing press freedoms reach beyond censorship and criminal libel to include advertising, tax, and licensing restrictions. In addition, violence against journalists is prevalent and often goes unpunished. Legal assistance – like advocating for access to information laws – is an integral part of creating the environment necessary for robust independent media. Also important is training judging and legislators on the importance of protecting media.
- Media enterprises are too often unsustainable because advertising revenue is low or business skills are undeveloped. To combat this, media project should incorporate business management training, make low-interest loans available, and develop advertising and market research skills.
- Improving media literacy can make media sustainable by promoting the purpose of a free and independent media, which may not always be well understood among the public. Education is important for citizens and government officials to fully understand the media's role in society.
- Although new media tools have empowered a new generation of journalists, the media development field has been slow to adopt these tools as part of its training programs. While technology is no silver bullet, projects should incorporate new information and communication technologies into business and professional development models, when possible.
- The field also needs better tools for measuring projects' progress. Currently, there is not a consensus on the best methods to monitor projects, resulting, at times, in the misuse of indices to assess individual programs. Donors should include funds for evaluation in project financing, while implementers should continue to develop new and innovative measures of success.