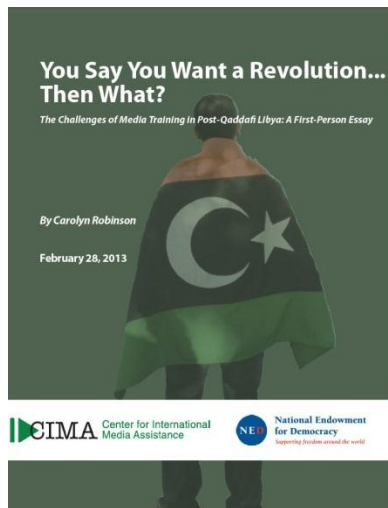


You Say You Want a Revolution...Then What? A Special Report to the Center for International Media Assistance



Training in Libya following the death of Moammar Qaddafi presented a unique set of problems in addition to the usual ones encountered by media development professionals around the world. This first-person essay by Carolyn Robinson, a veteran journalist and media trainer, outlines some of the unusual obstacles and challenges she faced in managing two USAID/OTI grants in Libya for Internews in the very early days after the revolution, and how her team came up with novel approaches to overcome the special circumstances they faced on the ground. The usefulness of this report comes not so much from what can and should be done for media development in Libya today, but in how to structure training in chaotic, post-conflict environments.

Following the death of Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi in the revolution of 2011, Internews became one of the first international media development groups to offer assistance in Libya. USAID and its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), along with implementing partner

Chemonics, moved quickly to make funds available for this project. This speedy start enabled Internews to generate goodwill, strong credibility, and considerable trust with its local partners.

The program sprang out of an Internews media assessment mission in Libya during the height of the conflict in May-June 2011, followed by a second fact-finding mission in October 2011 shortly after Qaddafi's death.

I spent four months as program director for Internews in Libya, from January to May 2012. Our small field team of four—our two Libyan assistants, our resident journalism advisor from Gaza, and myself, an American—faced a short timeframe, external operational delays, a very turbulent media scene, and a highly uncertain security situation. Despite these challenges, we organized five embedded trainings, nine open workshops, and two content analyses, most of which took place over a two-month span in March and April.

Under the terms of the grant, Internews was tasked to provide embedded trainings with three to four independent media partners in Tripoli and one or two in Benghazi. Ultimately we embedded a total of five trainers at all three of the independent,

locally-based news broadcast stations in the country: Libya Alhurra TV in Benghazi, al-Manara Radio FM in Benghazi and al-Aseema TV in Tripoli.

At the time of the trainings, there were no other private TV or radio news stations with headquarters based within Libya. All the other broadcast outlets were state-run, state-funded, or did not broadcast news programs. It was decided not to focus on embedding in print media due to the lack of clarity in this sector and the large number of constantly changing outlets.

Internews was also requested to provide one or two trainings that ran for up to a week and were open to all media in both Benghazi and Tripoli, as well as for journalists from media centers in other areas in the country. We ultimately hosted five open trainings in Tripoli and four in Benghazi. In both cities, the training topics included basic journalism skills, media management, TV and radio production, and election coverage, with an additional workshop in Tripoli on social issues reporting.

We created a foundational baseline content analysis of major TV and radio outlets providing news programming in Tripoli and Benghazi. The radio content analysis included Libya FM and Sawt Tarabulus in Tripoli, and al-Manara FM, Benghazi FM and Libya Alhurra AM in Benghazi. The TV content analysis included Libya TV, Libya Wataniya TV and al-Aseema TV in Tripoli, and Libya Alhurra TV in Benghazi. Additionally we were able to include a highly watched Libya satellite TV news station, al-Ahrar, which broadcasts from Qatar.

Our four-month project faced a host of challenges: a constantly shifting media landscape, which made training, assessing media needs, and measuring local media content difficult; finding the right local partners; contending with security concerns and ever-changing visa requirements; operating in a cash-only economy; reporting to multiple funders; and trying to coordinate donor efforts.

In general, a speedy, lean start served us well. Our agenda was manageable and addressed clear needs without being overly ambitious. Our team was small but acted quickly when lucky breaks came our way. The value in this example of media training in Libya comes when considering how to handle other post-revolutionary situations, such as what will someday be the case in Syria. Here are a few useful lessons we gleaned from our experiences in Libya that might apply to other countries as well.

Use a journalism trainer who can help with assessment missions and also spend a few days giving a basic journalism training onsite. This approach serves two goals—one, to provide immediate training, and two, to give the opportunity for a closer, onsite assessment. Doing this builds trust and goodwill and paves the way for future trainings, or serves as a determining point to

cut off future assistance, as the case may be. Needs assessment meetings may seem like a harmless interruption in the day of a local media manager, but they can become very annoying and frustrating for those on the receiving end. International NGOs can do better than this. For example, Internews was part of a large, multi-nonprofit assessment mission to Libya in late October 2011, shortly after Qaddafi was killed. This was an extremely effective example of international media coordination and one that should be emulated.

Consider asking local media to pay for training programs. Ask appropriate partner stations to share program costs. This can lead to a more serious focus on the training program. Most media organizations will welcome free trainers, but may essentially just ignore them once they arrive.

Reduce the administration burden. Short-term grants need a light administrative load—the simpler the better.

Simplify monitoring and evaluation. Only very basic M&E can reasonably be accomplished in short-term grants.

Streamline communications. Instead of back-and-forth e-mail streams to resolve complex questions, which might take days or even weeks as program staff in various time zones respond, consider holding a global Skype meeting with the goal of resolving an issue at the end of it. This can save everyone a lot of time and hassle.

Designate a specialized in-house manager to navigate the closeout process. A program manager at headquarters who can focus especially on overseeing the grant closeout process is an extremely valuable member of the team.

[You Say You Want a Revolution...Now What?](#) is a publication of the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA). The Center is an initiative of the National Endowment for Democracy that works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of media assistance programs by providing information, building networks, conducting research, and highlighting the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies around the world. An important aspect of CIMA's work is to research ways to attract additional U.S. private sector interest in and support for international media development.

CIMA convenes working groups, discussions, and panels on a variety of topics in the field of media development and assistance. The center also issues reports and recommendations based on working group discussions and other investigations. These reports aim to provide policymakers, as well as donors and practitioners, with ideas for bolstering the effectiveness of media assistance. For more information on CIMA, please visit <http://cima.ned.org>.