

# **Working in Concert: Coordination and Collaboration in International Media Development**

*A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance*

*By Walter Dean*



**National Endowment  
for Democracy**  
*Supporting freedom around the world*

**The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA)**, at the National Endowment for Democracy, works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of independent media development throughout the world. The Center provides information, builds networks, conducts research, and highlights the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies. 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. The Center was one of the of the main nongovernmental organizers of World Press Freedom Day 2011 in Washington, DC.

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.

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He has been the primary facilitator of the Committee of Concerned Journalists training curriculum based on *The Elements of Journalism* (by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel) and over the past decade has discussed journalistic purposes, principles, and techniques at more than 100 news organizations in the United States and abroad.

While a senior associate at the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ), Dean co-authored *We Interrupt this Newscast*, (2007, Cambridge University Press) which examined 34,000 stories on 2,400 newscasts in 50 markets over 5 years and is the most extensive analysis of local TV news ever undertaken. He shared the 2004 Sigma Delta Chi Award for Excellence in Journalism Research and the Bart Richards Award for Media Criticism for the first of PEJ's annual *State of the Media* reports.

Dean was a producer and the news assignment manager of the Washington Bureau of CBS News for 14 years after which he served as associate director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism. He began his career at WOW-TV in Omaha, Nebraska, where he was a reporter, anchor, and associate news director. He is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a member of the Innocents Society, the chancellor's senior honorary.

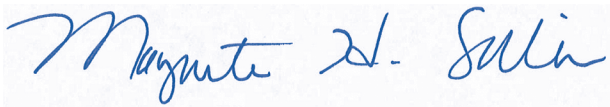
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# Preface

The Center for International Media Assistance at the National Endowment for Democracy is pleased to publish *Working in Concert: Coordination and Collaboration in International Media Development*. The report traces efforts to improve cooperation among donors and implementers in media development and examines the obstacles to such collaboration.

CIMA is grateful to Wally Dean, a veteran broadcast journalist and international journalism trainer for his research and insights on this topic. We hope that this report will become an important reference for international media assistance efforts.



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# Introduction

The end of the Cold War opened the door to international media development in Eastern Europe. Since then, as the field has grown and spread to other regions of the globe, one goal has remained elusive: a culture of coordination and collaboration among those in the media development community.

Donor “coordination provides synergy and cost-effectiveness, prevents duplication, and allows for a division of labor according to capacities” as human rights activist Aaron Rhodes wrote in a report about media assistance in the Balkans.<sup>1</sup> It also “establishes a common ideal in difficult situations: increasing impact.” Yet the media development community has discovered that cooperation is not spontaneous. Rather, Rhodes pointed out, it “depends on agreement about strategies, transparency, and a willingness to cooperate.”

Fundamental changes in the development marketplace and a revolution in communication caused by digital technologies have created a moment—whether of opportunity or necessity—to address this issue.

The “partnership paradigm”<sup>2</sup> is now a well-established principle of foreign aid, codified in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005, and the Accra and Busan Accords (2008 and 2011, respectively), which pledge to improve aid programs by “building more effective and inclusive partnerships for development to reduce fragmentation and deepen engagement with civil society.”<sup>3</sup> And indeed collaboration is expanding on many levels, from pooled donor funds to regional consortiums to international partnerships created during emergencies.

Yet the aid community, which during the past quarter century gave birth to thousands of media development initiatives costing billions of dollars, has too often been unable to agree on the priorities or frameworks for coordinating these efforts in the field.

“We have not found any single and successful model for media assistance nor is there any common strategy,” said Aidan White, who from 1987 until 2011 served as general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists. “This has meant that resources have been allocated on an arbitrary basis, usually driven by political and strategic considerations. This in turn has made co-ordination of effort difficult. There are good examples of professionals working together and occasionally political groups act with common purpose, but in reality, despite many hopeful starts, there has been precious little useful dialogue or open commitment between different parties—political, administrative, and professional—to establish durable structures for working together.”<sup>4</sup>

# Historical Background

The search for frameworks began two decades ago when the collapse of Communism and the subsequent war in the Balkans transformed media development in ways that made cooperation and coordination more necessary but also more difficult.

Following the implosion of the Soviet Union, a wave of Western “media missionaries” swept into the 15 former Soviet states, where they hoped to transfer to local journalists the ethics and skill sets that had worked so well in the west.<sup>5</sup> “As American journalism trainers in the early 1990s tripped over each other in foreign restaurants, they realized more coordination was required,” noted media analyst and journalist Ellen Hume.<sup>6</sup> Prominent U.S. journalists

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established organizations such as the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) to act as clearinghouses for training and research. Western governments were also active. In Russia, Internews became the U.S. government’s primary broadcast contractor and eventually built the country’s first independent TV network while the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) provided U.S. government funded media training in the former Yugoslavia and other former Soviet states.

Media development was soon overshadowed, however, by long simmering ethnic and nationalistic sentiments that erupted into violence. From 1991 to 1995, the former Yugoslavia was torn by “ethnic cleansing” and a series of brutal wars that killed an estimated 250,000 people, displaced another 3 million, and created the worst refugee

crisis in Europe since World War II. Worried that regional instability might spread, NATO was summoned and began a bombing campaign that eventually forced the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia to the peace table to sign the Dayton Accords.<sup>7</sup>

Media outlets aligned with warring factions spread nationalistic propaganda and fanned ethnic hatred and, recognizing the strategic value of information, the West targeted news organizations as vehicles to promote regime change. “For the first time in history,” writes Rhodes, who served as executive director of the [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights](#) between 1993 and 2007, “media support became a significant and even central strategy for the international community to address a range of political and social issues.”<sup>8</sup>

The Balkans crisis unfolded quickly, and the international community put aside differing philosophies about the region’s future to concentrate on extinguishing the violence before it spread. Over the 10 years between 1996 and 2006, according to an estimate by the Media Task Force of the Stability Pact for South East Europe, the international community poured upwards of \$400 million into media training and support in the Balkans.<sup>9</sup>

“A new generation of diplomats, attuned to the significance of news media and anxious to counter the influence of nationalist parties, identified media freedom as a crucial element in the

vast reconstruction effort,” wrote Dan De Luce in a USAID assessment of Balkans aid. “Bosnia became a kind of laboratory for international media assistance efforts, attracting substantial funding and high-level diplomatic interest.”<sup>10</sup>

Because “donor coordination provides synergy and cost-effectiveness, prevents duplication, and allows a division of labor according to capacities” it became, writes Rhodes, “*a conditio sine qua non* of media aid, which also establishes a common ideal in difficult situations: increasing impact.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the Open Society Institute (OSI, now the Open Society Foundations, or OSF) and smaller donors and implementers had begun meeting and sharing information prior to 1997, the big three donors—the European Commission, OSI, and USAID—effectively started coordinating their efforts in late 1997.<sup>12</sup> “All donors and their implementing partners did not follow the same path or always agree to fund the same outlets or proposals,” according to a USAID assessment.<sup>13</sup>

“However, they agreed on basic principles, including no assistance for the national state media and most assistance in the broadcast sector going to or through ANEM,” an association of independent radio stations.

*Ten Years of Media Support to the Balkans: An Assessment*, in which author Rhodes reviewed 37 reports on media support to the Balkans between 1995 and 2005,<sup>14</sup> describes media development that fell into two broad categories. As the type of aid changed over time, so too did the nature of cooperation.

The first phase was a groundswell of direct support to besieged media against state-controlled outlets:

“Assistance tended to be rapid, non-bureaucratic, and in many cases spontaneous, given under crisis conditions. Grants were made in cash, often by embassy personnel using year-end funds, or by NGOs operating with flexible funding.”

Because the choices were clear—alternative media in the region had identified themselves by their own voices—the strategy was relatively straightforward. “Donor coordination among specialized media support agencies was good in most target countries ... as agencies contributed to a process for sharing information, avoiding duplication, and achieving efficiencies through cooperation,” according to Rhodes.<sup>15</sup>

“USAID and other donors shared a sense of urgency and were eager to produce results,” USAID senior social scientist Krishna Kumar said in an assessment of U.S. media assistance policy. “Consequently they were willing to accommodate each other’s perspectives in shaping an intervention strategy. The donors’ over-arching objective of establishing peace helped them overcome bureaucratic obstacles. The local partners were also under pressure to cooperate with each other in conflict situations.”<sup>16</sup>

***As the fighting subsided and the humanitarian crisis eased, however, the emphasis shifted from providing life support for independent newsrooms to building a civil society with journalistic institutions that could become self-sustaining and a legal structure to support them.***



As the fighting subsided and the humanitarian crisis eased, however, the emphasis shifted from providing life support for independent newsrooms to building a civil society with journalistic institutions that could become self-sustaining and a legal structure to support them. Crisis coordination gave way to strategic planning, what a USAID report described as “a multiyear approach with a maximum of consensus among main donors.”<sup>17</sup>

Priorities became more intertwined with donor interests, Rhodes wrote, and decision-making was “often dominated by dilemmas about how to handle media that helped serve their political purposes but could not easily conform to the new challenges of post-conflict markets.” According to Rhodes:

International agencies refused to share information about their projects and differing political perspectives on media questions, particularly the role of public (versus privately owned) broadcasting, resulted in inefficiencies. Coordination varied with each country. Emergency support was coordinated in Serbia, as donors agreed on which media were considered key to ensuring diversity. In contrast, donor support was not well coordinated in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, with important exceptions; donors tended to compete, and lack of coordination resulted in support for the same project from different donors.<sup>18</sup>

A problem throughout the region was an unsustainably large number of news outlets—newsrooms kept alive during the war but too many for the free market to support afterwards. As donors reduced aid, news organizations became disoriented when confronted by revised donor demands to achieve market sustainability.

There were also fundamental differences about what kind of support was appropriate. The Europeans, with a history of taxpayer subsidies for media, believed public broadcasting should receive priority, while the Americans favored commercial enterprises. This resulted in “a fierce public debate among US and EU representatives in Kosovo about whether to support public or private broadcasting that lasted two years and caused delays in media development,” Rhodes writes.

Starting in 2000, OSF began a significant shift in funding, replacing direct financial support for media outlets with low-interest loans and investments through the Media Development Loan Fund.<sup>19</sup> In addition to loans or continued direct support of existing media, donor groups started news services, endowed media training and research centers, and equipped radio and television stations and broadcasting networks.

It was “naive to assume that strong foreign support for the independent media in the early stages of the transition would inevitably lead to reforms being easily concluded in later stages – without foreign support,” wrote Brankica Petkovic, head of the Center for Media Policy at the Peace Institute in Slovenia.<sup>20</sup>

Instead, there have been half reforms, which Albanian Media Institute Executive Director Remzi Lani said have produced a “partly free” but “re-politicized” news media “sandwiched between politics and business ... an extension of politics on one hand and an annex of various businesses on the other.”<sup>21</sup>

# Collaboration Today

Twenty years after the Balkans war, coordination and cooperation continues at the international level to be a search for common ground between those who view the media primarily as a tool to project national or organizational interests and those who believe embedding a journalistic process—verification, independence, comprehensiveness, and monitoring power—should be the foremost goal of media development.

Ad hoc cooperation typically found among those working in a country or region, meantime, persists at a high level. NGOs are comfortable with pooled funding arrangements and are becoming more adept at executing partnerships, though not so much with each other. Among donors, particularly non-governmental funders, participation in pooled funds and sector-specific funding partnerships appears to be increasing.

At the same time, structural changes in the media development marketplace are changing the role and frameworks of collaboration. “Traditional boundaries are blurring between private donors and government agencies, media companies and implementers. This trend can be expected to accelerate,” concluded CIMA consultant Anne Nelson in a report on trends in media development funding.<sup>22</sup> Among those trends:

- Media development is becoming more diverse with an influx of new funders and a democratization of the aid universe.
- Aid programs once defined by geography are increasingly without borders, more a layered mix of the geographic and the thematic.
- The focus on legacy news organizations and the journalism profession is shifting to new media and new providers of news and information.

Against this backdrop, cooperation and coordination is evolving in the following ways:

- At a time of economic stress and political demands for efficiency, cooperation and coordination is being adopted as an indicator of accountability, though collaboration is imprecisely defined and rarely assessed.
- International efforts to better coordinate foreign aid appear more likely to affect country-level aid delivery, especially partnerships with grantees and contractors, than the level of collaboration among major aid funders and implementers. As media development consultant Tara Susman-Peña wrote in a CIMA report, “Demand-driven interventions . . . start with a recipient country’s expression of its needs and are designed to meet those needs, ideally in collaboration with local actors. Donors’ budgets and strategies naturally reflect their priorities, which may be politically driven and will hardly ever precisely match the goals of the partner countries. Nonetheless, one of the primary principles of aid effectiveness, according to the Busan outcome document, is a focus on demand-driven aid.”<sup>23</sup>

- Competition among implementers and a tightening world economy will increase the power of funders but also the currency of collaboration. As demands for accountability increase, decisions about cooperation and coordination will be made earlier and flow top down from funders to implementers.
- While direct funding for media development has been essentially static, the amount of indirect aid appears to be increasing, perhaps significantly. A characteristic of indirect aid is that it involves a partnership, whether for funding or to integrate media development into another aid sector.
- Partnerships are often ad hoc, the result of informal networking, rather than through a structured organization or process.
- Increasingly, partnerships fund individuals rather than organizations and these more independent “entrepreneurial” fellows establish their own networks and partnerships in-country and on-line.

These “trends,” however, are mostly impressions because the “science” of collaboration is undeveloped. Though aid effectiveness seeks to “harmonize, align, and manage international aid with a set of monitorable actions and indicators,”<sup>24</sup> there is little data on the frequency, level, or models of collaboration in media development and precious little research into its impact. The focus of most media development research is on individual projects,<sup>25</sup> and collaboration, with no easily measurable goals, is studied only tangentially. “Successful coordination,” International Media Support (IMS) Director Jesper Hojberg said, “demands experience and no one has any—the methodology of doing it is not there because not many have done it.”<sup>26</sup>

“The whole question of trying to set common standards, whether it’s to do with evaluation or assessment or creating an enabling environment,” said White, “requires a strategic commitment to working together and providing a mechanism for allowing common understandings to be properly recognized and used as a basis for implementing work. We’ve had studies about how media development money has been used. But we are at a critical point because the changes that are taking place in the media sector itself (have) established a whole set of new problems which need to be dealt with.”<sup>27</sup>

“The overall picture is one of a lack of political commitment among developing countries to a robust media sector, a lack of strategic focus among development agencies, and fragmented, poorly coordinated approaches among donors and external support networks to media development,” said Mark Nelson of the World Bank Institute. “A lack of collective action is at the heart of disappointing progress in media development.”<sup>28</sup>

More than 100 governments, donor agencies, development banks, and international agencies have signed the Paris, Accra, and Busan accords. Since the Balkans war, however, the tendency of governments to view media development in the context of national interests—political, economic, and security objectives—has so raised the stakes of collaboration that the political risk of alignment with the efforts of others is often seen as outweighing the benefits.

“Donor nations take the view that media form a very important part of their internal political structures,” White said. Though “ready to discuss common development strategies for improving communications, transport, infrastructure, or for improving education or health,” governments are “very, very nervous about development programs that involve media” in their countries.<sup>29</sup>

Tensions surfaced at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, in December 2011 over efforts to bring the so-called BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) further into the aid effectiveness fold.

Busan delegates could not reach agreement on how to measure new standards for accountability and transparency, in part because of concerns that some new donor nations might be threatened by the notion of developing independent media.

“The carefully calibrated language of the Busan outcome document is that of the lowest common denominator,” said James Deane, the director of policy at BBC Media Action. “The danger is that the broader the consensus, the shallower it becomes and that some important things get left out. Are we moving now towards a development consensus that everyone can live with, but few really buy into?”<sup>30</sup>

American NGOs, according to former USAID officials Richard Blue and John Eriksson, “worry that too narrow adherence to [public diplomacy] principles by donors would foreclose host-country support for civil society-led development programs ... many host governments barely tolerate criticism and advocacy, preferring at best to see civil society as an adjunct to government for the delivery of health and other services. Adherence to the views of these regimes might well spell the end of USAID’s partnership with American NGOs that contribute to civil-society capacity building.”<sup>31</sup>

“Governmental donor organizations channel media development work through what you might call ‘privileged partnerships,’ national-based NGOs such as the BBC Media Action in the U.K., Internews and IREX in the U.S., IMS in the Scandinavian countries, Free Press Unlimited in the Netherlands, and the politically sponsored foundations in Germany,” White said. “Regrettably, political reasons, competition for limited resources, and very often the strategic imperatives of national governments get in the way of proper and effective coordination.”<sup>32</sup>

Describing a surge of international NGOs (INGOs) to the West Bank of Palestine in the late 1990s, Middle East media development specialist Julia Pitner reported, “Local perception—which is also frequently fact—is that they come to the region with agendas rooted in specific foreign policy objectives seeking ‘partners’ to unquestioningly carry out programs that seldom resonate with the political situation on the ground.”<sup>33</sup> Given the choice of refusing funds or fronting poorly conceived projects, “the operative motto is not community service but rather ‘take the money and run.’”

According to Pitner, “Encouraging cooperation and communication between funders and [local] NGOs would help combat perceptions that foreign funders and INGOs have ‘hidden’ agendas and would thus enhance local NGO’s confidence in the building of true partnerships.”<sup>34</sup>

# Some Approaches to Cooperation and Coordination

Absent an international framework to coordinate media development, donors have used a variety of ad hoc collaborative arrangements that include pooled funds, international “division of labor” partnerships, and emergency coordination.

## Pooled funds

Pooled funds allow a donor to participate in a broad range of activities by providing lower-cost and lower-risk entry into a region, country, or subject area that would otherwise be impractical, though the cost-effectiveness of these arrangements can vary significantly.

The UK’s Department of International Development (DFID), for example, lacked the capacity to manage its own civil society programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) but wanted to continue media support. A “silent” partnership with France Coopération Internationale (FCI) was established and a pooled fund, Project Medias, was created. Other donors were recruited and a stakeholders partnership, The Groupe Inter-bailleurs sur les Médias (GIBM), was set up to oversee the fund and coordinate strategy on issues such as media regulation, election transparency, and press independence.<sup>35</sup>

About \$12.5 million, or roughly 10 percent of the UK’s civil society budget for the DRC between 2008-2010, was channeled through the pool. The rest was turned over to the UNDP, which due to its size and perceived neutrality posed less political risk. A DFID evaluation, however, found that, “working through other donors was not as good value for money as it first appeared. What was saved in administrative cost was often spent on covering administrative costs of other partners.” When running its own programs, DFID’s oversight, monitoring, evaluation, and lobbying for humanitarian reforms accounted for about 5 percent of costs. UN agency management fees, on the other hand, range between 5 and 12 percent, amounts the evaluators said were “not always considered good value for money.”<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, a UN-commissioned study of 15 pooled funds in the Congo, including several that directly support media development,<sup>37</sup> concluded the approach is often more efficient and usually more effective, primarily because a big fund provides an economy of scale and larger volume of money for high priority projects.<sup>38</sup>

The UN study also found that collaboration at the top tends to filter down, that pooled money helps donors “enforce” cooperation and coordination at the field level.<sup>39</sup>

Individual entrepreneurship is a distinguishing feature of a more recent pooled fund, the \$1 million African News Innovation Challenge (ANIC). It is a multi-donor partnership with the African Media Initiative (AMI), the continent’s largest association of media owners and operators.<sup>40</sup>

Modeled after the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation’s Knight News Challenge, the annual online competition (<http://africannewschallenge.org/>) awards seed grants of from \$12,500 to

\$100,000 to developers of technology to improve mobile news distribution, data visualization, audience engagement, business models, or investigative reporting.

In addition to Knight, the Omidyar Network, Google, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and the U.S. Department of State have pledged either funding or technical support. The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers has also committed expert business mentorship and marketing support for ANIC winners.

“We’re trying to nurture a culture of innovation in African media,” said AMI’s digital strategist and ANIC project manager Justin Arenstein, a Knight international journalism fellow whose presence in Africa was made possible by a pooled fund that supports individuals rather than activities or organizations. The ICFJ, which administers the Knight fellowships, is AMI’s major partner.

Another idea is making the traditional journalism teaching fellow—the visiting professor, newsroom trainer, or development missionary—more of a venture capitalist, creating programs, in-country networks, and even fundraising.

The Knight Foundation has taken a lead in these efforts which Eric Newton, the senior adviser to the foundation’s president, describes as “new and different way of doing things.”<sup>41</sup>

“The previous fellowships, as good as they were, had the feel of the old *Kung Fu* TV show, with the hero wandering from town to town doing good deeds,” Newton said. “There was no doubt that good things happened, yet was very difficult to predict exactly what good things would happen and when. This makes funding more of a religious act of faith than an investment.”<sup>42</sup>

***As with other aspects of media development, cooperation and coordination often comes down to a matter of money.***

The entrepreneurial fellowship, on the other hand, “involves a good deal more collaboration simply because results are required,” Newton said. “Some of the collaboration is ‘up front,’ in the sense that a change might be seen as having greater transformational potential because of its sheer force—other funders are ready to put in resources to tip the balance. Other collaboration is ‘on the ground,’ as the fellow figures out what works and what doesn’t and helps a tactical team form.”<sup>43</sup>

Newton said the entrepreneurial fellow is more efficient because, “when the ‘goal’ and the ‘fellow’ are the ‘units of organization,’ rather than institutions, the whole thing is much less bureaucratic.”

“You could argue,” he said, “that the more collaborative an initiative is, the more difficult it can be to keep on path and sustain, and the less collaborative, the easier to do but with less impact. I don’t know if that is true or just a theory. Maybe the best way to find out, and to focus attention on the issue, would be to make it a requirement in all project evaluations—they would need to include a section on the role of collaboration, whether its application in this particular project was appropriate, etc.”<sup>44</sup>

The ICFJ, which places Knight international journalism fellows in dozens of countries around the world, has become a laboratory for the entrepreneurial fellow. Though retaining its traditional role as a “connector”—identifying, linking, and managing relationships between communities of need, expertise, and funding—ICFJ more recently emphasized “opportunity-oriented versus needs-oriented” programs, according to its president, Joyce Barnathan. “We changed our view of fellows as not just being good media people—good journalists—but also being entrepreneurial who can draw in millions of dollars from all over the world,” she said.<sup>45</sup>

As with other aspects of media development, cooperation and coordination often comes down to a matter of money. “Everything is about funding,” said journalism educator and trainer Sherry Ricciardi. “Everyone wants their own piece of the pie and they are very protective of that. Where it’s happening is because the donors want it to happen.”<sup>46</sup>

For example, abundant and steady donor support from Denmark, Sweden, and Norway<sup>47</sup> provided IMS “huge flexibility that allowed them to do many different things in different ways,”<sup>48</sup> according to media consultant Michelle Betz.

Efforts to carry out development work through such multilateral partnerships continue. In December 2012 USAID unveiled a \$45 million public-private partnership with the UK’s DFID, the government of Sweden, and Omidyar Network. The partnership, called *Making All Voices Count*, is designed to “support innovative solutions using web and mobile technology to grow the global movement for open government, transparency and accountability,” according to a USAID press release.<sup>49</sup> The partnership “will work in new democracies, primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to develop new pathways for citizens to provide robust feedback on how government is performing, and governments to respond to that feedback to ensure that political and economic progress reaches all citizens.”

## International Coordination

When IMS went into the field in 2003, it found that a “heterogeneity of intentions by donors and implementing agencies . . . resulted in a wide variety of outputs, sometimes with short-sighted and non-sustainable approaches, or with overlaps and inefficiencies,”<sup>50</sup> according to the report of a 2009 IMS partners meeting in Copenhagen.

Faced with what Director Hojberg describes as “a lot of blue sky and hot air” at the global level, IMS decided the best way to encourage international coordination was to “prove to donors that we can do it on the ground.”<sup>51</sup> Early partnerships were established around international missions to Liberia, Togo, Mexico, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and dealt with a combination of media development and press freedom. A regional partnership was created for Zimbabwe and country partnerships in Colombia, Gambia, Sudan, Togo, and the Maldives.

At three conferences between 2009 and 2012, IMS partners compared notes on definitions, frameworks, and best practices as well as a “flexible methodology” for mapping out partnerships and selecting countries where it might work.<sup>52</sup> The IMS coalition selected 14 countries across four continents for partnerships and reconvened in 2011 to review progress.<sup>53</sup>

The partnerships defined by IMS fell into four types:

- **Media development**, designed to build broad-based support for development of a media community over a long time frame and to address media policy and institution building, professionalism, and sustainability issues.
- **Advocacy**, intended to create partnerships among governments or multilateral bodies to focus on freedom of expression, press freedom, and safety issues.
- **Emergency**, to provide immediate assessment, safety, and capacity support to existing media in conflict and natural disaster zones.
- **Thematic**, which are not related to a specific country, but rather share themes such as global health or environmental issues, as they relate to journalism.

Five challenges common to all partnerships were identified:

**Lack of a long-term strategy to account for both high and low intensity periods.** Media development and advocacy partnerships have found it hard to maintain interest (including among the partners) in the wake of an iconic event. For example, in Burma and Nepal, partner organizations had to restructure projects and fundraising after peak events such as protests, elections, or the freeing of a jailed journalist. A Zimbabwe partnership was more successful because partners, in consultation with local media organizations, first agreed on long-term strategy before dealing with short-term priorities. The partnership must also be realistic, as in Sudan when it settled for a simple strategy of gathering many scattered safety courses for journalists under one umbrella.

In order to achieve continuity, IMS partners said a “complete agreement” on goals, organization, priorities, funding, and follow-up activities “must be in place from day one.” Donors should be brought on board in the initial stages, just as a fundraising strategy should be in place from the beginning. Experience, moreover, shows that collaboration among organizations sparks donor interest and can thus broaden the funding pool.

**Restrictive funding mechanisms.** Funding that emphasizes short-term need over long-term development is the biggest challenge for emergency partnerships. Because most emergency funding comes from the humanitarian sector, which uses short-term budget cycles, there is little emphasis on the long-term strategies used in media development. In Haiti, for example, the bulk of European public funding was channeled through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs and thereby tied to short-term funding of 6, 12, or 18 months.

**Insufficient national ownership.** Local institutions, media, and others should be brought to partnership meetings and encouraged to participate in planning strategy and choosing priorities. Relationships with in-country donors should be nurtured because they can often make quick funding decisions. It may also mean including state media, as it’s usually the most prominent news and information provider and employs many of a country’s most active journalists.

**Too little funding for the coordination of partnerships.** Partnerships need a structure, a leader, a lead organization with in-country experience, and a support system. Yet with no common



mechanism to offset the cost of staff and resources to manage a partnership, leadership usually gravitates to the largest (but not necessarily most appropriate) partner that, in turn, will likely contribute far more than others. This creates a dynamic in which one or a few organizations have deep buy-in, other partners significantly less.

**Staff turnover among local and international partners.** This affects trust and knowledge building. Especially for advocacy partnerships, in-country partners need the resources to keep everyone up to date about changes in the situation. Because advocacy work often attracts new supporters as issues are publicized, one-page background papers charting the partnership’s activities, members, and history can help. Ideally, a partner would assign the same representative to partnership meetings to ensure continuity.

**Unresolved thinking about how to evaluate partnerships.** Beyond the feeling that the coordinator should produce an annual overview of activities and results, the question of how to evaluate a partnership is elusive. In Belarus, indicators included the numbers of joint projects,

***The lack of a consistent funding stream to pay for coordination is a common and often overriding concern, even during emergencies when cooperation among donors is a priority.***

co-funded projects, and projects where other partners stepped in to fill gaps left when original partners disengaged, as well as the amount and type of information shared among partners and the number of people attending partnership events.

Hojberg said the partnerships helped “break down the level of ambition” among implementers without eliminating “hard competition.” Partners “do their own thing and join the coordination efforts when they see a need.” He noted that “in the Arab World last year, there was such a gold rush from international media organizations that suddenly everything we had

agreed on was suddenly forgotten, at least among some of the international actors.” In contrast, he said, in Libya “we went in as a joint Arab/international partnership group, which is the first time we have really brought the regional actors together with proper global actors.”<sup>54</sup>

The successes of the partnerships notwithstanding, IMS intends to reduce its leadership role. The issue is money. “Only by doing implementation have we been able to raise additional funds to do coordination,” Hojberg said. “But it’s not been possible to fundraise only for coordination. And that is an unfortunate part of the donor environment. Even though they (donors) love it, it’s been very difficult to create separate budget lines for coordination.”<sup>55</sup>

The lack of a consistent funding stream to pay for coordination is a common and often overriding concern, even during emergencies when cooperation among donors is a priority.

IREX’s vice president for media, Mark Whitehouse, said that it is easier for implementers to share information at the beginning of an intervention (the assessment phase) and the conclusion (the evaluation phase) than in the middle of a project. Competition is one factor. “When you’re in the middle of a project, I don’t think people necessarily want to share,” he said.<sup>56</sup> But another reason is a “vicious circle” of accountability in which aid effectiveness is measured by

indicators tied to specific objectives. “Unless collaboration is included in the scope of work,” said Whitehouse, “it will not be emphasized as much.”<sup>57</sup>

This is a point that Knight’s Newton emphasizes. Without this initial collaboration, Newton said, a project can turn out to be so customized to the requirements of a particular foundation that it makes it impossible for anyone else to join. “In other words, it is made so specific that it only makes sense to us,” he said. “Collaboration must be at the beginning so a project is not overly customized.”<sup>58</sup>

“They [donors] are so powerful in program development,” said the country director of another major NGO. “How do you have collaboration where donors share the load and create and manage programs that are not punitive?” Another country director said, “They push us for impact, but if donors are not coordinated, this is the beginning of dis-function.”<sup>59</sup>

Yet while coordination can help organize an increasingly complex and disjointed aid delivery system, there is no guarantee it will produce better decisions or outcomes.

“Though ‘the right amount’ of collaboration is necessary, the amount or type may well depend on the goal,” Newton said. “If the project succeeds without a great deal of obvious collaborating, that’s great. If it succeeds because of unprecedented collaboration, equally great. Success is the goal, collaboration is the tool.”<sup>60</sup>

The question, however, is when and how the tool should be used.

“The piecemeal approaches to media development to date are not getting visible or sustainable results, at least when viewed at the global level,” said the World Bank’s Nelson. “The international community needs to fundamentally rethink its approaches and better coordinate its work to generate more effective and far-reaching solutions. This means a new approach to media development that is broader than the narrow, sector-level interventions of the past, (and) integrated with other development programs that can help create stronger supporting institutions for the media.”<sup>61</sup>

## Emergency Coordination

After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the international community lined up to help, eventually pledging an estimated \$4.5 billion to relief and redevelopment efforts<sup>62</sup> that included aid to sustain or rebuild existing news outlets and journalistic organizations, establishing new information streams, and sharing information between those affected by the disaster and the many organizations trying to help. Not surprisingly, said veteran foreign correspondent William Wheeler, who has been tracking Haitian reconstruction for the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, Haiti became “the proving ground for contested theories on whether NGO-driven media development is a worthwhile venture, and if so, how it should be done.”<sup>63</sup>

As Haiti began to resemble what Wheeler called “the Republic of NGOs,” there was a need for coordination within the media development community and between the media development and the humanitarian, public health, and security sectors. Establishing channels to communicate with the country’s 9 million people, a third of whom were directly affected by the earthquake and the cholera outbreak that followed, was also a priority.

Probably the most notable partnership was Communications with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC), “the humanitarian system’s first attempt to provide an operational solution to the lack of systems to support communication work in humanitarian response,” according to an assessment of the project.<sup>64</sup>

Though small—it had only four full time staff members—and beset with organizational problems that according to an Internews/CDAC Learning Review<sup>65</sup> included “a lack of funding and initial strategic guidance” and “the shortage of formal status that . . . undermined accountability and predictability,” CDAC nevertheless improved communication among agencies and provided logistical support and coordination for implementer partnerships.

It proved, said Jacobo Quintanilla, Director of Humanitarian Information Programs at Internews and the first coordinator at CDAC Haiti, that “coordinated efforts to provide information to and communication with local communities in emergencies are vital, life-saving interventions.”<sup>66</sup>

Still, as Wheeler pointed out, “Nongovernmental organizations like the UN and Internews offer survivors basic, useful information, but do not build the foundation of a sustainable independent

***It’s not that cooperation doesn’t happen—it’s that implementers rarely work with each other. And when they do, the arrangements tend to be ad hoc and very localized, usually created for convenience or necessity in order to accomplish a specific task.***

press. Meanwhile, Haitian reporters are tasked with untangling an immensely complicated reconstruction process that, despite billions of dollars pledged, has shown little visible sign of progress.”<sup>67</sup>

Infoasaid (<http://infoasaid.org/>) is a recent UK Department of Development (DFID)-funded project that, like CDAC Haiti, provides logistical information that in the past would have typically been gathered and closely held by individual NGOs. Implemented by Internews and BBC Media Action, the Infoasaid website includes media and telecom “landscape guides” for at-risk countries that include profiles and audience data for media outlets and mobile phone companies and more traditional forms of communication such as religious

institutions and community networks. There are also several diagnostic tools for community and audience profiling, information needs and access assessments, communication strategy development and feasibility assessments, and an e-learning course about the key components of effective communication with crisis-affected communities.

NGO/implementer agency partnerships, nevertheless, remain the exception rather than the rule. It’s not that cooperation doesn’t happen—NGO country directors queried for this report say anywhere from 25 to 75 percent of their time is devoted to issues involving collaboration, and in times of crisis, emergency, or other fast moving events, communication and coordination may consume most of their efforts. Rather, it’s that implementers rarely work with each other. And when they do, the arrangements tend to be ad hoc and very localized, usually created for convenience or necessity in order to accomplish a specific task.

“We have failed at multilateral issues,” said Frank Vogl of Transparency International, “because there are too many players who want to lead. There is a tremendous competitiveness out there ... a broader coalition is needed.”<sup>68</sup>

“The whole world of information is changing and we have to use this moment of turbulence to break out of the boxes that we’ve put ourselves into,” White said. “The major foundations and donor agencies should push ahead with a new debate about coordination. The old ways of doing things are not going to be enough to cope with the problems we are going to face.”<sup>69</sup>

# Recommendations

- Media development implementers and donors should more clearly identify the costs and benefits of collaboration. Despite an abundance of anecdotal evidence, donors will need more “scientific” data before choosing cooperation over other important priorities.
- Donors and implementers should enlist the monitoring and evaluation community to study, evaluate, and produce indicators that might become a “science of collaboration” and to identify experts who could form the nucleus of a “practice of collaboration” within the M&E community.
- For each project, media development implementers should consider whether collaboration needs to be an objective and if so, budget for it. Just as 3 percent to 12 percent of a grant might be committed to evaluation, there should be a budget line to segregate funds for coordination. Burying the costs of coordination in “overhead” has reduced aid effectiveness by fostering a few large bureaucracies with excess coordinative capacity and many smaller organizations with far too little.
- Collaboration should be part of projects at the outset. It is difficult for implementers to share information and coordinate starting in the middle of a project.
- The media development community should reach out to more funders. Some donors, for example, never considered supporting efforts such as CDAC Haiti because they had never been asked. Funding an office to support a regional partnership, underwriting a regional or international conference, or endowing a fellowship to study a specific element of collaboration are examples of niche grants that might appeal to traditional and non-traditional donors alike.
- Donors should create incentives for grantees to engage in collaboration when appropriate. This could involve support for a coordinator or secretariat, supplementing the salary of a representative to a partnership, or requiring grantees to contribute information to media mapping databases.

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