Investigative Reporting in Emerging Democracies:

Models, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance

By Drew Sullivan

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CIMA Center for International Media Assistance

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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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Drew Sullivan is a journalist, editor, and media development specialist who has spent the last decade working with news media in emerging democracies. He is the founder of the nonprofit Journalism Development Network. He designed, built, and directed the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, an independent, regional investigative news organization, where he still serves as an advisor. With CIN and other leading regional investigative centers, he helped found the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Program (OCCRP) and served as its first director and now editor. He has taught and has run management training projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Tajikistan. He is the former print media advisor for the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) and has consulted and trained for Internews, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), and the Center for War, Peace and the News Media. He is the author of a 2010 CIMA report, *Libel Tourism: Silencing the Press through Transnational Legal Threats.*

As a journalist, Sullivan served as city hall reporter and investigative reporter for the *Tennessean* newspaper in Nashville and news data manager for the Associated Press's special assignment team in New York. He has served on the board of directors of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting.

His journalism projects in emerging democracies have won a number of awards, including the Daniel Pearl Award, the Online Journalism Award for investigative reporting, the Global Shining Light Award for reporting under duress (with SCOOP), the IRE Tom Renner Award for Crime Reporting, the Overseas Press Club Award (both with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)), and the Transparency International Integrity Award in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Before going into journalism, he was a structural dynamicist on the space shuttle project for Rockwell International Space Systems (now Boeing). Sullivan holds a B.S. degree in aerospace engineering from Texas A&M University.

Disclosure

The author has worked with numerous media development organizations including many who are discussed in this report. This includes, but is not limited to, IREX, Internews, CIN, OCCRP, ICIJ, and ICFJ. In addition, he serves on the management or board of directors of CIN and OCCRP.

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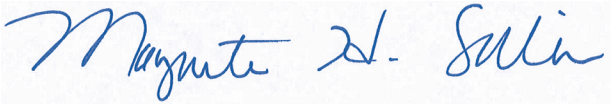
Preface

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) at the National Endowment for Democracy commissioned this study of lessons learned while implementing investigative reporting projects in emerging democracies. This report should serve as the opening of a dialogue among aid recipients, implementers, and donors about supporting investigative journalism. It continues a line of reports looking at the important field of investigative reporting: CIMA has also looked at funding of investigative reporting, safety of investigative journalists, legal threats to investigative reporting.

CIMA is grateful to Drew Sullivan, a veteran investigative journalist and media development specialist, 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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Executive Summary

Investigative reporting has long been a tool that media development implementers have used in their efforts to improve the media landscape in emerging democracies. In the past few years, however, there has been a renewed and perhaps greater emphasis on investigative reporting by the development world and donors. Part of this stems from the irresistible lure of supporting courageous investigative media that can oust a prime minister or drive out corruption. Part of this is more pragmatic: trying to find cost-effective ways to make real, sustainable improvements.

As in the newspaper industry that spawned it, investigative reporting in the media development world is often more discussed than practiced. In the media industry, investigative reporters make up only a tiny percent of the staff of media organizations and even less of the news product. In media development, while many programs are labeled as investigative reporting projects, that label has often been imprecise or even misapplied. Media development implementers talk a lot about supporting investigative reporting, but the resulting trainings are more often a mixed bag of basic and intermediary journalism skills. Frequently the resulting work product does not reach even the best existing local standards. And the definition of investigative reporting and professional standards can vary from country to country and even reporter to reporter.

Despite its uncommon practice, investigative reporting has traditionally been at the forefront of media that cause the most change and reform. It is vital to democracy. But seeding and nurturing investigative reporting is far more difficult than is commonly understood.

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There are a number of challenges that have so far limited the development of investigative reporting. These include poor financial support, a lack of investigative professionals working in the development community, inherent safety and legal issues that must be overcome, sustainability issues endemic in investigative reporting, low professional standards in the media in emerging democracies, and a cultural gap between practitioners of investigative reporting and media development specialists. However, the media professionals consulted for this report believe the challenges can be overcome by readjusting expectations, by greater professionalization of the media development sector itself, and by better connecting the worlds of media development and journalism.

There are a number of well-developed models that can help spur investigative reporting. Some of these show great promise and have delivered real success, but expanding the use of these models means changing the way media development is done.

The gap between traditional media support organizations in the West and the development community must be bridged. Western media organizations often ignore development organizations and even governmental donors because they see them as precisely the kind of organizations that should be scrutinized by media. The development community must find a way to tap their expertise. Donors and media development implementers must develop a greater understanding and appreciation for the craft and culture of investigative journalism. Long-range media development strategies in investigative reporting must be more carefully designed with input from journalists after analyzing best practices. Long-term planning should include a more creative mix of approaches.

A consensus of what is good journalism is also needed. Too often donors or developers praise and support media that most professional journalists would say have serious shortcomings and that lack the basic elements of good journalism. Political and cultural considerations often win out over journalistic ones. Media development implementers should agree on what constitutes good journalism and investigative reporting.

Scope and Methodology

This report examines the practices used by media development implementers to spur investigative reporting in those parts of the world where they work. It focuses on governmental as well as private donors, but the field is broad and this report is not intended to look at all aspects of investigative journalism development. For example, funding of investigative reporting is an important issue but requires a comprehensive polling of donors, which is beyond the scope of this report. Instead, the report examines self-reported techniques of development professionals and their experiences.

While the point of this report is not to criticize development specialists, it is sometimes instructive to look at what doesn't work and why. However, it is nearly impossible to comprehend all of the many uncontrollable circumstances that may affect the success of any given program. Therefore we also rely on the expertise of donors, implementers, and journalists in the field to provide their analysis of what works and what doesn't.

The research draws in particular on several key sources:

- Interviews by phone and e-mail with more than 30 investigative journalists, media development specialists, NGO officials, and donors.
- A broad literature search of governmental reports, academic and legal journals, websites, and news articles.

Overview: Investigative Reporting

In the world of journalism, investigative reporting gets more than its fair share of attention. In the United States, the Watergate story is renowned. The image of the intrepid reporter ignoring personal danger to write the story that rights a terrible wrong is deeply ingrained in the American psyche, defining the U.S. ideal view of governmental accountability and watchdog journalism. That mythology, repeated in movies and books, has gained a foothold in the imagination of reporters in many other countries including places where governments are corrupt and autocratic and reporting is truly a dangerous profession.

The story of the Watergate scandal, which faced initial skepticism, grew under the longstanding credibility and the depth of the reporting of the *Washington Post* until it could not be denied. It brought down a corrupt government. However, recreating Watergate-like stories around the world is a gargantuan task filled with many unforeseen problems.

The most fundamental problems are the lack of a universal definition of investigative reporting, any agreement on its standards, and even its purpose. Most reporters around the world cannot agree on what level of proof is needed, whether a journalist's opinion should be included in a story, what ethical guidelines should be followed in the reporting and a host of other issues. The truth is that what is commonly called investigative reporting around the world often relies on unsubstantiated hearsay, unnamed sources, hidden cameras, unverified documents, and paid or compromised sources.

Other problems abound. In the last decade, media have changed drastically around the globe, and media development implementers often teach concepts no longer practiced in their own newsrooms. For example, the rigorous copy-editing procedures once common in U.S. newsrooms have been abbreviated, leading to less staff and more mistakes. As the advertising-based business model that has served Western media for more than a century falters, formerly stable news organizations face a difficult and unknown future.

New nonprofits have sprung up to fill the void in watchdog journalism left after mainstream media eliminated project teams as part of budget cuts. These nonprofits are still in the process of defining new economic models. Overall, investigative reporting, which is expensive but returns a low volume of stories, suffers from inadequate resources more than any other area of journalism. In the development world, implementers face not only differences in standards and definitions, but also differences in language and journalism culture. They face undeveloped advertising markets deeply connected to political interests as well as inadequate legal safeguards, aggressive governments, and criminals seeking to curtail their work. In short, it's a very difficult job.

Why Investigative Journalism

For more than a decade, civil society organizations, donors, and the development community have recognized investigative reporting as an essential component of any healthy civil society sector in developing democracies.

"Investigative journalism is one component of media development but an increasingly important one," said Meg Gaydosik, senior media development advisor with USAID. "While the tools may have changed, accurate, documented investigative reporting is still one of the most important functions of the media."[1]

Donors have added investigative reporting components into media strengthening programs, anti-corruption programs, accountability programs, and others. Over the years, increasingly tenders have specifically mentioned investigative reporting in both USAID and European Union grants.

"I would certainly choose IR [investigative reporting] over other media issues if the choice had to be made. IR usually directly contributes to promoting a number of reforms necessary for democratization such as anticorruption, transparency, accountability, rule of law, etc. So you get more than just free media by supporting IR," said Ivana Howard, senior program officer at the National Endowment for Democracy.[2]

Investigative reporting is increasingly important in mitigating corruption, which is a major impediment to developing democratic institutions and laws. Most anti-corruption programs are designed to change government but they are based on the goodwill of the government itself, while media are external and allow an independent check on that goodwill.

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As USAID says on its website, "corruption poses a serious development challenge. In the political realm, it can seriously undermine democracy and good governance … Corruption also undermines economic development."[3]

Corruption can destabilize existing democracies, prevent accountability mechanisms from acting, suppress transparency, and render election systems irrelevant. USAID and other donors recognize that media, when working in harmony with civil society actors, can be instrumental in preventing a country from becoming a captured state.

The interaction of these ideas is complex. One of the most basic tenets of democracy is the right to vote. However, the amount of information available to a society directly affects the efficacy of voting. According to one study: "Voters may retain the power of the vote and have a high regard for process but lack the information they need … Individual citizens are poorly placed to investigate, whereas power-holders are often well placed to control what the public knows of their dealings. Reforms in this case should aim at strengthening conditions of public judgment."[4]

In countries such as some in Central Asia, autocratic regimes have relatively free elections, but these elections are controlled by eliminating the ability of independent media or the public to discuss and reveal corruption. With little information and few choices, leaders are re-elected in what are effectively sham elections.

"Particularly in emerging markets, in societies that are democratizing or in transition, the need for this kind of journalist is paramount because the secrets are so well hidden; the lack of accountability is so severe," said David E. Kaplan, director of the Global Investigative Journalism

Network (GIJN) and a long-time international trainer.[5] "The need to establish a tradition of investigative inquiry is essential in these regions."

Defining Investigative Reporting

There is no universal definition of investigative reporting, especially in the media development arena.

"I think there's a lot of talk going on about [investigative reporting], but people aren't necessarily talking about the same thing," said Mark Whitehouse, IREX's vice president for media. [6] "What do we mean by investigative reporting? What do you mean by it, and then when we're doing our projects, what does the donor actually mean by it?"

Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), the oldest and largest association of investigative journalists, defines investigative reporting as:

> 1) In-depth, detailed, original work through a reporter's own initiative, 2) upon matters of great importance to readers or society, 3) where information is actively and intentionally hidden from the reporter or public.

The Dutch investigative reporters group VVOJ defines investigative reporting simply as "critical and thorough journalism."[7] Other journalists will claim all "good" journalism is investigative reporting. Investigative reporters, especially U.S. investigative reporters, tend to rely on the more rigorous definitions.

In emerging democracies, the definition is even less fixed, and stories, such as analysis or even outright opinion pieces, are often labeled investigative reporting simply if they are critical or involve leaked documents. The stories can be shallow, inaccurate, or politically motivated but may still be seen by a majority of journalists as investigative reporting.

However, professional groups recognize that the very best investigative reporting tends to follow the IRE definition. And most respected journalists believe that investigative reporting cannot be done without the development of specialized skills and hard work.

"Investigative reporting involves 'systematic inquiry'–that is the dictionary definition of investigation. And you generally can't do a systematic inquiry in a day or even three days. Certain truths cannot be uncovered unless you have the time to do a systematic or long term inquiry," Kaplan said.[8]

In a larger sense, investigative reporting has "always been the R&D–the research and development–of journalism. It is important because it teaches new techniques, new ways of doing things, and those blend down into everyday reporting. It brings standards of accuracy and credibility that all stories deserve. So you're raising the bar for the entire profession," said Brant Houston, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Chair in Investigative and Enterprise Reporting at the University of Illinois and a co-founder of the Global Investigative Journalism Network.[9]

These broad and loose definitions are promoted and reinforced by some donors and implementers. Because of problems like this, Whitehouse said, IREX uses the term

enterprise reporting instead of investigative reporting to reflect the broader skill set needed in emerging democracies.

"I think sometimes the term [IR] just gets in the way," Whitehouse said.[10]

Definitions of professional standards for accuracy, fairness, level of proof, ethics, and context are important. While it is not common, it is possible to find trainings where journalists from different cultures will encourage students to lie, pay money for information, bribe government officials, use hearsay, and other abuses of the commonly accepted international standards.

Investigative reporting requires exposing hidden truths. Reporters must understand often arcane government and business systems, and deal with often reluctant sources, get the proof needed from documents that may be in the hands of a very few people, and then tell complex stories in simple and compelling ways. This must sometimes be done fighting physical and legal dangers. The list of skills needed to do the work at a high level include:

- Development of sources–especially reluctant sources–who may have reasons *not* to talk
- Advanced interviewing, including police-like interrogation techniques
- Advanced data and information-handling ability, including computer-assisted reporting
- Deductive reasoning
- A thorough understanding of business, finance, and government
- Advanced research ability
- Familiarity with public records and the use of freedom of access to information rules
- Good writing and presenting stories with an understanding of informational graphics
- Basic understanding of human psychology

A decade or more–and continuous learning–may be needed to develop and refine these skills.

The Nonprofit Movement

In the West, mainstream print media, the long-time major sponsors of investigative reporting, have faced more than a decade of declining circulations, leading to cuts in newsroom staff. Newspapers that once employed as many as 800 reporters now employ less than half of that number, and they continue to shrink.

Newspapers have closed. Print news holes have shrunk. Exacerbated by a now four-year economic downturn, many media outlets face demise. Europe and Asia did not initially experience the same drops but that is changing, and many media organizations are starting to make deep cuts. Many countries in less developed parts of the world have been spared this fate

for now largely because they still have a growing middle class, newspapers are still cheap and Internet penetration is low. However, they are already beginning to face the same problem as Internet penetration accelerates.

Investigative reporters and projects teams were among the first casualties of the cuts. Today, only the largest or most committed U.S. newspapers maintain full-time investigative staffers, and there has been a cheapening of what is considered investigative reporting in an effort to persuade readers that they are still getting hard-hitting news.

In this void, nonprofit investigative organizations have proliferated. Nonprofit investigative reporting organizations have existed since the 1970s, but they were few. Recently, dozens of these organizations have sprung up. While the U.S. and Scandinavian countries led the development, enterprising centers were established in the Balkans and Eastern Europe after the collapse of Communism, largely because reporters could not write the stories they wanted to, as major media in their countries were dominated by political interests. In the early 2000s, centers in Armenia, Romania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina began operating. As layoffs increased in U.S. newsrooms, veteran journalists opened small investigative centers in the United States. This trend expanded globally. Today around the globe, there are more than 100 nonprofit groups that support investigative journalism, with their numbers growing.

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Development implementers and donors have embraced this trend. In fact, the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia-Herzegovina (CIN, in its Bosnian initials) was started as a development initiative by the author of this report in 2003. Most non-U.S. centers have received some international assistance, with the Open Society Foundations and USAID among the early and most significant supporters.

A handful of regional networks and support organizations are helping these organizations and investigative reporters, using different models.

In Africa and the Middle East/North Africa regions, the Forum for African Investigative Reporters (FAIR) and Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) support networks of investigative reporters. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in Washington has a global network of journalists who focus on high quality global projects. The Danish network SCOOP works in former Soviet states and Eastern Europe, funding and supporting investigative stories and reporters using a model similar to the U.S.-based Fund for Investigative Journalism by giving direct grants for reporting.

Three groups focus on helping investigative journalism organizations:

- The Global Investigative Journalism Network, formed in 2003, is a worldwide

network of investigative reporting organizations, with more than 70 member groups in 35 countries. It hosts a regular international conference aimed at training reporters, provides help to centers on capacity building and reporting, and works to network journalists worldwide.

- The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project was formed in 2006 initially as an umbrella group to help centers in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states achieve sustainability and improve standards. The 15 member centers get access to libel and slander insurance, funds for cross border stories, technology, commercial databases, and other resources. OCCRP has expanded to develop tools and resources for all investigative centers like the Investigative Dashboard.
- The Investigative News Network (INN), formed in 2010, has more than 70 members in the United States and Canada. It is similar to the OCCRP model in offering members help on sustainability models, technology, collaboration, and back-office support. INN members include many of the small American centers formed in the past few years.

Similar efforts are planned for Europe.

Attention has focused on sustaining the nonprofit model. Donors often push for sustainability models that do not rely on donations from institutions indefinitely. However, since the first major nonprofit, the Center for Investigative Reporting in the San Francisco Bay area, opened its doors in 1977, the nonprofit model has succeeded admirably. Few investigative centers have closed, and many have thrived. What is new is the sheer increase in the number of centers worldwide, more than half of them appearing in the last few years. This has led donors and nonprofit managers to question whether such large numbers are sustainable.

Challenges to Investigative Reporting

Almost every country has examples of courageous journalists exposing deeply held secrets. A yearlong survey of investigative stories shows that the numbers of investigative stories are growing, and journalists worldwide are showing an increased enthusiasm for this most difficult form of reporting.

The growth of investigative reporting organizations and the increased representation of countries in journalism contests also demonstrate that journalists, often on their own, are doing an excellent job of pushing the envelope. Each year, between 30 and 70 journalists are killed worldwide demonstrating the danger of this work, yet their colleagues carry on.

However, investigative journalism in its most advanced and robust form is still largely unknown in most of the world. Some countries of Central Asia, Oceania, and Southeast Asia have only the most basic investigative reporting. Even in some European and Latin American countries, where there are excellent reporters who do excellent work, they tend to fall short of the possibilities. The typical problems:

- No tradition of investigative reporting, which sometimes clashes with local community standards
- A dearth of some basic and many advanced investigative skills
- A lack of resources to spend the months sometimes necessary to produce a detailed and accurate story
- Limited access to tools and knowledge to use them that could simplify newsgathering and analysis
- A shortage of investigative teams, investigative editors, and other experts to call upon so that every story is not a solo effort
- A lack of reliable access to information
- Owners with no interest in investigative journalism or owners with political connections not willing to underwrite the best journalism
- Aggressive governments who punish journalists or news organizations for intrepid reporting
- A serious lack of safety and legal protections

Competing Cultures

In many countries, the most serious impediment to investigative reporting is the presence of strong but outdated media traditions inconsistent with democratic principles. For example, in Eastern Europe and some former Soviet states, the media have a long history of directly participating in the political process by providing the forum for a high-level discussion among the political elite.

"Great" local journalists were often political insiders who were known as much for their influence than for any journalism skills. They focused more on influencing the political process by engaging in a high level dialogue with the political elite rather than serving readers. But this is an outmoded approach for a democracy, where it is the readers who influence the outcome of elections. While it is slowly changing, too many regional journalists doggedly stick to a journalism that addresses the interests and needs of the political elite and ignores the public as irrelevant. The result is political coverage with no context, too much opinion and insider information, and not enough of the basic news people need.

This model discourages serious investigative reporting. To this day, many journalists in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet countries care more about imprinting their opinion on stories than serving the public. While they may see these goals as the same, they are not.

In many other countries, especially but not exclusively the Middle East and North Africa, community and religious standards trump investigative reporting, which must often avoid a long list of taboos.

"I don't think you can say that investigative reporting should be recommended for all countries in the developing world," said Sheila Coronel, the director of the Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University and a founder of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, one of the pioneering nonprofit centers. [11]

Donor Expectations

Any long-time investigative reporter would agree that investigative stories are seldom predictable. Great stories may fall into a reporter's lap and can be done quickly and cheaply or they can drag on interminably as key documents are painstakingly gathered and proof sought. A story can take up to a year, depending on the number of reporters involved, the degree of complexity, and the time needed to sort through the data.

When a story is published, it is often difficult to assess its impact, making monitoring and evaluation challenging. Even what may seem like a clear result for the common good–the indictment of a politician or the jailing of a crime figure–might be due more to political or business rivals using the journalism as an excuse to rid themselves of unwanted persons or competition than to the actual journalism.

Donors, meanwhile, yearn for strict schedules, predictable results, and clearly documented effects.

"You need a flexible donor who understands that things aren't always clear. We've been fortunate but others have not," said Rosemary Armao, an editor at the OCCRP and a professor of journalism at the University at Albany.[12]

Investigative reporting is difficult and needs sustained support. Unlike a daily beat reporter who must record what has happened that day, an investigative reporter must take considerably more time to dig below the surface and have higher level skills needed to find hidden documents, develop reluctant sources, plan confrontational interviews, and analyze statistical data. In journalism, it takes many years to develop a good investigative journalist. Yet too many donors

demand and too many implementers promise to develop sophisticated skill sets in short periods of time–often a few days to a week.

"It's clear that long-term, sustained support, whether from USAID or other sources, is required to build trusted networks of journalists as well as improve the professional skills of those practicing this type of journalism. One or two people can still do a great job investigating a story, but it helps if there are more people who can add to the content, explore other leads, share contacts, and documented proof," USAID's Gaydosik said.[13]

Designing Investigative Reporting Programs

A good program design includes a well thought out definition of investigative reporting and journalism standards, an understanding of how to teach the specific skills needed for the craft and a realistic structure to overcome the problems reporters face. Many programs fail to reach this goal. That starts with the donor or implementer.

"What happens is [the program] is often very ill-thought out, and the organization running it might actually be a human rights or civil society organization, whose expertise isn't in journalism. Their idea of doing a seminar is ... to get a trainer hopefully from a Western European or American newspaper with a not-very well selected group of people and hopefully that will then inculcate ... the idea of investigative reporting. That's not going to happen," said Simon Derry, trainer and regional director at BBC Media Action.[14]

Part of the muddying of the concept comes from local organizers or donors who have never worked in journalism and local journalists who haven't worked in investigative reporting at a media organization that meets high international standards.

"It is pretty clear that some people in the development world have a limited understanding of what investigative reporting is. You can't design an effective strategy if you yourself are unclear about what is involved," Armao said.[15]

Standards

Like the definition of investigative reporting, there are not agreed upon standards for investigative reporting around the world. In many places, standards are so low as to make investigative journalism nearly impossible. Development organizations face a similar problem. Because organizations have a mix of local and international staffs, the standards are not in synch.

A common standard in many countries is that a newspaper is good because it is moderate, or oppositional, or non-nationalistic, or some other desired political quality. In many cases, politics has trumped journalism in the media development field

The quality of a story is immediately apparent to a careful reader. The sourcing of the story, the transparency of the newsgathering process, the depth of the understanding of the story, and the understanding of the context of the story is available from the story itself. If the story is not clear and concise, the journalist does not clearly understand the issue. If the story is inconsistent or wrong on facts, the journalist's standards are suspect. If the story is filled with opinion, the

journalist has a bias. However, critical evaluations of journalism are done only informally, or worse, only by local staff who sometimes do not have the perspective necessary to evaluate stories fairly.

Development specialists need to achieve a greater consistency in assessing local media. One way is to allow professional journalists to assess stories.

Lack of Expertise

Investigative journalism programs too often lack experts in investigative reporting. To teach investigative reporting, implementers should rely on an investigative reporters or editors.

Often, journalists who make a living doing development work are asked to teach a wide variety of skills, including investigative reporting. Perhaps any professional reporter with international standards can tackle a one-day training in a country with poor journalism standards. But tackling complex investigative reporting that takes weeks, months, or years requires expertise–practitioners who have been on an investigative team or, ideally, served as investigative editors.

"I think it is hard to find qualified people to do the kind of complex training that investigative journalism demands," the GIJN's Kaplan said. "All good reporting uses some investigative techniques, but investigative journalism is broader than that. It is a way of thinking; it is a set of methodologies that are a craft, and one needs to have practiced the craft. It takes years to master."[16]

Another problem: overreliance of some programs on local staff who may not meet international standards.

"I think sometimes cost pressures or the pressure to show you've localized do push you to do that," said Whitehouse of IREX. "Do the institutions exist that I can adequately do this work? If the answer is no, or partially no, then you … [should] work to build up those skills. If the answer is yes, then of course donors should be supporting that."[17]

Investigative reporting manuals and programs abound. The story-based inquiry system by Mark Hunter at the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD) done for UNESCO is one of the better known.[18] Sheila Coronel's investigative journalism book, *Digging Deeper: A Guide for Investigative Journalists in the Balkans*, is also good and is available in English, French, Arabic, and Chinese.

Investigative Editors

One area has been almost completely ignored by the development community: the investigative editor. Like an orchestra conductor, an investigative editor helps to coordinate multiple reporters working on one project, keeps the reporters focused during the many months of reporting the story, upholds the standards, and keeps the team efficient. The editor often makes a good project great. There are many stories in journalism of project teams producing great work until the editor leaves.

Yet there has been almost no training of investigative editors in the development world.

"Investigations are complex creatures," said Kaplan. "You need a coordinator, and you need someone who will keep his eyes fixed on the big picture. Even the best reporters can get mired in the weeds, or get lost in the trees and not see the proverbial forest. You need an experienced hand that has access to different techniques and knows where to find them, who can suggest different kinds of sources, different ways in to particularly hard problems."

There are very few investigative editors in new democracies.

Developing an investigative editor is hard; it requires someone with experience, organizational skills, and abilities of teaching effectively. An editor must be in many ways the best investigative reporter on the team.

Also needed are investigative journalism mentors–experienced investigative reporters who have faced and overcome many of the problems new practitioners can expect to face. Mentors and editors can teach the standards in a real world setting. But too often, the beat journalists in a small country are hired away by international organizations to serve as spokespersons or other lucrative jobs.

Ultimately, it is the editor who sets standards. Yet editors are seldom developed effectively by implementers, who often cannot get them to agree to training. Implementers must offer much more effective and worthwhile training to convince editors to take time from their busy schedules or they must catch them earlier in their career.

Legal Threats and Physical Safety

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), three quarters of all reporters killed are killed because of their journalism. Inherent in teaching investigative reporting is preparing journalists to protect themselves both legally and physically. Other CIMA reports have dealt with this issue in great depth.

Investigative reporters are more the most at risk, and programs for them must be designed and implementers must be ready to deal with these complex and difficult issues. That requires more time, more expertise, and more monitoring of the newsgathering process.

This specialized training and expertise is not commonly found. Most training programs are designed for war zones and civil unrest. The author knows of no available training dedicated to protecting reporters against an assassin. Only a few investigative centers or organizations have safety programs to protect reporters from government actors or organized crime figures that might seek to harm them. The failure to adequately understand this issue by implementers or donors put journalists unnecessarily at risk.

One way is to avoid this type of training or reporting.

"You want to push the envelope, but the danger is pushing too far, and … endangering people," Whitehouse said.

Sustainability

Sustainability, both programmatic and organizational, should be built into the very fabric of programs.

In some developing countries, such as Brazil and India, growing economies may produce profitable media enterprises that can sustain investigative reporting. In more challenging environments, nonprofit centers may be the only independent media. While many of these centers are inexpensive to operate, the lack of a tradition and economic incentives to encourage individual donors and foundation grants takes away a critical tool for achieving sustainability. These centers must derive commercial and other means to supplement donations and grants.

"Can we expect someone in a developing country to do what we in the U.S. haven't figured out, or what people increasingly as well in Western Europe haven't figured out how to sustain it?" Whitehouse asked. "Of course we have to try."[19]

Donors need to understand that this is a long process that cannot be completed in a one-year grant. Nonprofits must have realistic, long-term strategic plans. Even in the United States, organizations that have many donors available to them are struggling with this issue. It is a problem that the journalism industry as a whole must confront.

"You know if someone looked at the Philippines Center and told it, 'Prove you're going to be sustainable in four years,' would anyone have funded them? We should keep pushing to say we need to take risks. We need to support projects that in the end may not make it, may not be sustainable," Whitehouse said.[20]

Goals of Donors and Donor Support

The goal of media development implementers, local non-governmental organizations, and donors is to overcome these challenges and achieve independent media with high standards and that can hold government accountable. But for many donors, that goal is not always the most important. Except for a few major donors concentrating on media, such as the Open Society Foundations, many development agencies include media as secondary or tertiary goal.

"I think the problem with media development in general is that funding the press is not seen as an end in itself but as a means to an end, whether it's fighting corruption, bringing about democracy, bringing about gender equality, sustainable development, or whatever the fashionable buzzwords are at the time," Coronel said.[21]

Coronel recalls looking for funding for her center in the Philippines in the mid-1980s at a time when few donors considered funding investigative reporting.

"When we started doing this in 1989 there was a great deal of skepticism. Funders couldn't understand what we wanted to do, what we're all about. I don't think they understood what investigative journalism was. We got our first grant, reluctantly, from the Asia Foundation. The Asia Foundation representative said at that time he thought it was the riskiest grant ever given," she said.

"Investigative reporting is risky, because you're never sure of what the outcomes will be. It's politically risky, it's physically risky, in countries where journalists are attacked. Twenty years ago investigative reporting was something that donors didn't think about funding, and that has obviously changed now in many ways, even in the mainstream donors … are now going into investigative reporting with a lot of enthusiasm in many parts of the world," Coronel said.[22]

While the funding levels have changed, the risk remains, especially if public funding is involved.

"Donors are not only worried about whether we are going to get a reporter killed; they're also worried whether we're going to embarrass them with the host country by writing something inconvenient. It's a difficult line to walk–a political minefield. It's easier just to support planting plants or immunizing children," Armao said.[23]

Recent grants have given a big boost to the total available funding to investigative reporting in developing countries. Groups in Latin America, such as ABRAJI in Brazil and the Center for Investigative Journalism in Chile (CIPER), have successfully developed local sources of funding, and development agencies continue to provide important support to organizations in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides large sums annually to groups that include SCOOP, which gives grants for investigative projects in Eastern Europe, and Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, which attracts about 300 reporters from Morocco to Iraq to its annual conference.

When CIMA looked at this issue in 2007, it found only $2.6 million was spent on investigative reporting nonprofit groups in developing and democratizing countries. Yet just one recent USAID grant awarded to the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and the OCCRP

designated $1 million per year for three years to expand OCCRP's network across Eurasia. In 2012, CIMA estimated media development funding on investigative journalism at $12 million annually. Much of the funding is still related to other goals and not specifically for investigative reporting, but increasingly donors are making it clear that they will consider such proposals.

Approaches

Implementers use several approaches to develop investigative reporting: classroom training; setting up grant-making organizations; directly funding investigative projects; and supporting investigative reporting centers, teams, or networks.

Training

The first media development programs focused mostly on training. Investigative reporting trainings have been done hundreds of times over the past decade in upwards of 100 countries. People interviewed for this report alone have done more than 200 of those trainings.

Classroom training techniques have changed over the years. Typically, they first involved U.S. college professors traveling to remote countries to teach working journalists. As time went on, the professors were increasingly replaced with working journalists from the United States and Europe. These were increasingly replaced with regional and local journalists. Classroom theory has evolved; it is now less about classroom lectures and about practical exercises. Many training programs now include working on stories and doing follow ups.

"If you define success as what you do that leads to better and more investigative reporting, which I think is the ultimate success, then really more of the hands-on practical efforts" work best, Whitehouse said. "Supporting actual means for people to have an outlet to do it and have it aired or published is the most effective."[24]

Using "parachute professors"–trainers who arrive with little or no local knowledge or language skills–is a discredited approach in the development field. "It is happening less, but it still does happen. There should be closer scrutiny perhaps," Whitehouse said.[25]

Trainers have noted that too often when reporters go back to the newsroom following training, they are prevented from implementing what they have learned either by their editors or by the first major problem they encounter.

"Investigative reporting is unique. You can't predict the problems you will face. It is, in part, the art of solving problems and does not lend itself to a classroom without sustained practical exercises," said Armao, a long-time trainer.[26]

However, classroom training still has an important role especially in countries where journalists are not yet ready for other approaches, Coronel said.

"I think the tendency is to plan trainings in very one-off way and not link to any programmatic goals. Having done these things in the past, it is good to do one-off trainings in the beginning in the country which has no notion at all of investigative reporting. Just introducing the idea to them and showing some examples is good," Coronel said.[27]

Trainers also agree that advanced training with motivated and more sophisticated journalists does have value, especially if it is followed up with practical field experience. The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), a coalition of local centers started by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, runs an annual summer school that is an example of this. The respected program trains more advanced journalists in a week-long setting and draws students from a wide area. It uses the top local and international trainers.

Funding Investigative Stories

A number of donors have sought to improve investigative reporting by providing funds for local journalists to do such reporting. This overcomes the first major problem of not having enough resources. The first investigative nonprofit, the Washington, DC-based Fund for Investigative Journalism, founded in 1969, has long used this approach. Reporter Seymour Hersh received $250 from the fund to investigate the My Lai massacre. A later grant of $2,000 helped him finish the story, which won Hersh a Pulitzer Prize.[28]

A number of donors have sought to improve investigative reporting by providing funds for local journalists. This overcomes the first major problem of not having enough resources.

In 12 countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, SCOOP, run by the Danish Association of Investigative Journalism (FUJ), has been the dominant practitioner of this approach.

"The SCOOP model gives enthusiastic journalists a chance to follow their own ideas–even if the media they work for are financially weak," said Brigitte Alfter, director of the European Fund for Investigative Journalism and a co-founder and a manager of the SCOOP Project. Alfter says the model was built after Ukrainian journalists became frustrated with training programs.

"The strength is that it builds on the ideas for investigations developed by journalists in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union themselves. SCOOP does not commission or promote investigations of specific issues. The starting point for every investigation is an idea from an individual journalist or a team of journalists," Alfter said.[29]

SCOOP provides funds for journalists to do regional stories and also serves as a network of regional journalists. Other NGOs in Europe and the United States use a similar approach, such as the Belgium-based Pascal Decroos Fund.

This approach is an excellent way to give reporters the resources they need to produce stories, some of which otherwise might not ever be published. Just doing long form investigative work helps provide the practice journalists need. Many of the region's best investigative reporters have used SCOOP funds to report and write stories, some of which have won national, regional, and international prizes.

The limit to this approach is that stories will often reflect, at best, the local standards. If local standards are good or improving, this is very effective. If they are not, it will not quickly improve the standards. Nevertheless, all countries and regions should have such a fund available.

Mentoring Investigative Stories

Another approach, which complements the SCOOP model, is to directly fund investigative reporting using an experienced team of editors or reporters working with journalists. This can be done over a short period of time or as part of a larger standing organization. An editor, typically an experienced one who understands international standards, leads a team of reporters working on stories.

This approach has been used by ICFJ in Georgia and Azerbaijan and in a two-year training of reporters on trafficking issues in 2004, which generated dozens of investigative stories.

Often, however, these techniques have been embedded into many programs over the years, especially in specialty reporting areas such as training to cover elections or trafficking, where the outcome may be a voters' guide or an investigative project. Sometimes they go on for weeks, but other times just days. Most implementers agree that the longer the project goes on, the more effective it is.

"[Many of these trainings are] short term, topic-specific and work more to benefit a few individuals for a brief period of time rather than the practice of [investigative reporting] as a whole. I think this model has evolved due to the short-term availability of limited amounts of funding," said Gaydosik of USAID.[30]

This approach is expensive because it requires specialized international trainers and more time to do a story. It can also be complex because it requires operating a virtual newsroom, including arranging for legal protection and taking responsibility for safety.

However, it does create an environment where journalists work under the highest standards and the end product tends to be of higher quality. If done over a long period of time, it can lead to powerful investigative stories or projects that may be important for the country or region in question.

The Journalism Development Network, founded by the author, has extensively used a long-term approach first with the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was founded in 2003, and later with the OCCRP program founded in 2006.

Supporting Investigative Centers, Teams, and Networks

Donors have supported investigative reporting by directly funding indigenous investigative reporting centers, newsroom-based investigative teams, and journalism support organizations.

There has been an incredible growth of non-profit investigative centers that operate as independent news organizations. Sometimes these are the only independent news organizations in a country, and many have become important locally as a unique source of investigative news. When combined with an experienced mentor, this can lead to some of the best reporting as well as some of the most sustainable skill development.

"Formal or informal nonprofit organizations that function as professional 'collectives' appear to be evolving into one of the best ways to increase production of good investigative content. With the decline of traditional media everywhere … this seems to be the model that's emerging as a

viable alternative to the investigative units formerly supported by very large media companies," Gaydosik said.[31]

These centers range from the small, individually run center to organizations like BIRN Kosovo, which has a staff of 45. Some focus exclusively on investigative reporting like the Center for Investigative Journalism (CRJI) in Romania or the Center for Investigative Reporting-Serbia. Others, like BIRN Kosovo, function as independent production companies that do public interest programming as well as some investigative reporting.

The quality varies from local standards to international standards. The best of these have been able to attract funds from donors. Typically, funds are provided for developing sustainability, supporting cross-border reporting, or reporting on issues such as corruption, organized crime, and elections.

Some donor funds have gone to building investigative teams in news organizations–a rarity in emerging democracies around the world. OCCRP works with the investigative teams of *Novaya Gazeta* in Moscow and the *Kyiv Post* in Ukraine. ICFJ has placed a Knight fellow in Egypt who is focusing on promoting investigative reporting but often acting as an investigative editor. However, the scarcity of investigative teams and investigative editors makes this a small part of the overall industry.

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Funds have gone to organizations that support these organizations as well, such as GIJN, INN, and OCCRP. These organizations work toward building networks, improving sustainability, building infrastructure, and doing cooperative work.

Donors have been instrumental in the creation of such entities, although a common belief in the development field is that donors should not fund startup organizations. The reality is that any organization that is primarily grant supported must get a startup grant at some point. A notable example of a donor startup is USAID's creation of the Bosnian Center for Investigative Reporting. Controversial at the time, the center survives almost a decade later with a proven track record. The Open Society Foundations, both locally and in London, has been instrumental in a number of seed grants for investigative startups in the Baltics, Macedonia, and Hungary.

Besides investigative centers, there are other investigative organizations that receive donor attention. Membership associations for investigative reporters have been successful in some countries. Examples of these include VVOJ in the Netherlands, ABRAJI in Brazil, and IRE in the United States. These organizations typically provide annual and regional conferences, training, networking opportunities, awards, and help. They tend to be in more developed countries, where investigative reporting is firmly entrenched.

A hybrid of the investigative center and the membership organization is the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. ICIJ has a membership of about 160 reporters around the

world. While initially most were in developed countries, ICIJ has increasingly pushed into new democracies. Reporters work on ICIJ funded stories, which have traditionally met a high standard.

Investigative journalists need networks for efficiency. Information may be available in one country but not in another. Having colleagues who can help you get records in their country makes reporting cheaper, better, and faster. These contacts help not only in investigative reporting but in daily journalism as well. But daily journalists seldom take the time to make these connections. Investigative reporters are more likely to do so, and they spend enough time with their colleagues to develop a level of trust. Overall, networking is critical when working across cultures.

The Global Investigative Reporting Network has been instrumental in bringing reporters together from all over the world. Founded in 2003, it grew out of a series of global conferences on investigative journalism, which have hosted about 3,500 journalists from more than 100 countries. The organization has formed a secretariat and is growing rapidly. ARIJ, BIRN, FAIR, OCCRP, and SCOOP all support networks of journalists and engage in network building exercises.

Some organizations use journalism exchanges. The Knight fellows program operated by ICFJ sends journalists to work in new democracies, while the Alfred Friendly Press Fellowship and fellowships at Harvard and Stanford bring journalists to the United States. None of these focus on investigative reporting, although all do regularly work on investigative-related projects or accept investigative reporters.

"Exchanges can work well if they are oriented to practical skills application. They work best when people are paired with those operating in similar environments," Gaydosik said.[32]

Some Lessons Learned

A decade or more of media development work has left many involved in the practice with some hard earned lessons.

It is important to bridge the gap between the development business and journalism. Few veteran investigative reporters are involved in media development. One serious deterrent to involving more investigative journalists in development programs is that there are simply not many around and the best are typically in high demand. And many are better at reporting than teaching or mentoring.

In the United States, there are a number of investigative reporting organizations that do training and have close ties to well-known investigative journalists. But this leads to another fundamental problem: Many investigative journalists and almost all U.S. investigative journalism organizations will not accept government money. Since the U.S. government and the European Union are probably the world's largest media development donors, this poses problems. Organizations like the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and its parent, the Center for Public Integrity; IRE; and ProPublica not only will not accept government money, but some won't work with those who do accept government money. While this practice is understandable, bridging the gap would give investigative reporting efforts in emerging democracies greater access to the very people who could help them the most.

A second problem is that governmental money causes reporters trouble in some parts of the world. "In a society like Russia, there are too many questions about who supports your investigations and why they are doing it," said Roman Shleynov of the Moscow newspaper *Vedomosti*, who has worked with ICIJ, OCCRP, and other international organizations.[33]

ICFJ, OCCRP, ARIJ, and a few small investigative centers worldwide have managed to bridge this gap by structuring grants to eliminate a direct connection to government funds.

For example, ICFJ accepts governmental money from USAID for a regional investigative reporting program done in partnership with OCCRP. ICFJ contractually does not exercise any editorial control over OCCRP, which does the journalism in partnership with local media. OCCRP does not exercise editorial control over the local content of partners. This provides two degrees of separation between the government and local organizations. In this structure, the donor and the editorial organization have no relationship.

Organization can overcome the stigma of taking government money among their journalism peers by establishing their bona fides as quality journalism organizations. ARIJ, BIRN, FAIR, OCCRP, and others have all done award winning journalism, regularly attend worldwide journalism conferences, and contribute to journalism worldwide. They are recognized first as journalism organizations.

Governmental and other donors should explore ways to work with mainstream media organizations to develop joint government/private partnerships or other creative solutions to allow greater involvement of these organizations.

Funding for Investigative Journalism

"I don't think there is sufficient funding for the development of local or indigenous media. Most people–including those in the USA–are not nearly as interested in international affairs as they are in what is happening in their own backyards … Investigative reporting is respected by both donors and citizens, but it's costly and by necessity, support is concentrated to benefit a small number of people," Gaydosik said.

Newsgathering using investigative techniques is expensive. Unlike other forms of journalism that produce daily or weekly content, it can take three months to a year to birth a story that involves reporters, editors, photographers, Web designers, informational graphic designers, lawyers, and others. Not all stories work out, and the costs of failed projects are significant in investigative reporting. Most importantly, investigative reporting must be supported for years as new practitioners learn from veteran reporters and perfect their skills. It can take years to develop a successful investigative organization.

"The real problem is that the field of media development in general is severely underfunded, considering the need out there and the resources that are currently available to meet that need. Investigative reporting is just one aspect that really needs attention," Kaplan said.

The Open Society Foundations shoulders almost the entire burden outside of governmental donors. Their body of work is exemplary and they almost singlehandedly support the most important media projects in the developing world. While the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is a significant donor to ICFJ and does fund the important Knight fellows program, its work is almost exclusively through ICFJ, and compared to its important work in the United States, its international work is limited. Except for the occasional projects, foundations such as McCormick, Pew, Rockefeller, and many others are largely absent in the investigative reporting field.

When American donors do go international, there is an understandable tendency for them to fund American projects. This is partly because they often have longer track records together. But there are many international organizations with strong local knowledge that are unknown and may already be doing the same work. Some donors need to develop a better understanding of the available options.

One reason this happens is that it is complex working abroad. The media scene in places such as Russia, China, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East are sometimes as bewildering to donors as they are journalists.

Another serious problem facing media funding is the advent of the strict monitoring and evaluation tools used in many new donor organizations. Many newer donor organizations, especially those with Silicon Valley connections, rely heavily on metrics that favor easily measured outcomes such as how many lives can be saved per dollar. These metrics work well in hunger, immunization, and AIDS treatment programs, which are often favored by these donors. Less appealing is media development, whose impact cannot be so easily measured. Nor is it easy to show media's effect on the corruption that leads to the poverty that leads to the hunger in the first place. In the end, the symptoms and not the disease are treated.

"The dilemma is obvious: No donor wants to throw money out of the window without knowing the effect. On the other hand a long term change of structures often cannot be measured

immediately," said Alfter of SCOOP. "We were allowed a slightly more risky set up, where immediate results could not be measured in easy figures like participants in a certain class." Yet SCOOP had output in terms of unveiled corruption, trafficking, fraud, and other findings, that in several cases had true impact and lead to changes in the community or even country.[34]

Best Practices

Best practices for approaching a development program have been improved and refined after a decade of experience.

Implementers have long known there is not a template media development solution for all countries. That is especially true for investigative reporting. Each program in each country must be designed according to local needs, but it is important that donors, implementers, and NGOs make sure they are working with experienced investigative reporters. As one wouldn't ask a heart surgeon to operate on the brain, one shouldn't expect a general assignment, feature, sports, or lifestyle reporter to teach investigative reporting or oversee an investigative project.

Assessing the Media Environment

Before media development programs in support of investigative journalism are launched, there should be a thorough assessment of the media environment. The assessment should consider:

- Is there active investigative reporting being done? How prevalent is it in mainstream media?
- How do local journalists define investigative reporting?
- How is it done now? What is the average time spent on an investigative project? How much is spent on a story? How many reporters work on it?
- How do international journalists with respected standards assess past stories?
- What are the local standards for fairness, accuracy, clarity, ethical behavior, etc.?
- Who edits investigative stories? Are there local investigative editors? Are they dedicated to these stories?
- What interference do they face from local authorities? From publishers? From advertisers?
- What are the attitudes of local journalists? Are they at odds with international practices? Why?
- What training is available for investigative reporters? How effective is it?
- What investigative reporting organizations exist? Are they effective? Are they sustainable? Are they meeting the needs of investigative reporters? What needs are unmet?
- What are the current safety and legal practices and how do they compare to international standards?

All interviewed said it is important to get this phase right. Once these issues are well understood from both the local perspective and international perspectives, plan can be developed.

Selecting the Right Plan

Designing the right program for the right country is crucial. For governmental donors, those plans are often developed in local assistance offices and based on the needs as perceived by government officials and their understanding of the situation. Over the years, these plans have covered the full spectrum of competencies. In all cases, plans can be improved by a good assessment completed prior to initiating a project. Tenders should allow a greater degree of input by bidders to approach issues in creative ways that may have not been considered.

For private donors, these plans usually come from local organizations pushing a particular solution to a particular problem. Donors then assess these in their overall vision. Here, assessments and larger plans still play an important role. Although no donor has funds to fix all media problems, they should (and often do) have an understanding of what is being done and what is needed. The problems come in when donors who are not familiar with a region enter a market with ambitious and misdirected plans. Each naturally has to be designed to meet the needs of a specific country.

"There are some countries that just really aren't ready for this kind of investigative reporting; they just don't have the resources or the political constraints are too daunting," said ICFJ Vice President Patrick Butler.[35]

Sheila Coronel agrees that investigative reporting won't necessarily work in some countries in the developing world. "Obviously it depends on a lot of factors," she said.[36]

Some of these factors include:

- The tolerance of the government to media and criticism
- The health of the media industry
- The independence of local media
- The plurality of the local media
- The independence of the advertising sector
- The professional standards in place in media
- The perception by local journalists as to what is their role in their country
- The opportunity to get access to information
- The legal environment
- The integrity of the judiciary, police, and prosecutors
- The degree to which reporting is unsafe

"Programs have trained the reporters but not taken into account the bigger issues, and not done anything to address management of media, and conflicts of interest that they have that might prevent good investigative reporting," Butler said.[37]

An axiom in any development work is to first "do no harm." If media are operating under a repressive and hostile government, such as in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, or Burma, that is not likely to accept any revelations by the media about the government, then it may not be wise to insist journalists go out and muckrake. Other countries have limited media systems that may be decades away from muckraking. In these situations, pre-investigative reporting practices may be used. In-depth feature stories that don't address corruption or malfeasance can be used to learn skills and gain experience.

In countries where there is a robust journalism culture and good standards and a healthy industry, a membership organization or network may make sense. Reporters in these media environments have reached a point where conferences where they share skills often meet mid-career training needs.

In general, the approaches that are most commonly used for investigative reporting are as follows:

Approaches	Cost	When Appropriate	When Less Appropriate
Training	Very Inexpensive	Training is best when there is either no investigative reporting present in a country or more advanced investigative reporting in a country. In countries with no investigative reporting, reporters have to start understanding basic concepts. If countries with high standards in place, training can enhance and reinforce those standards and indoctrinate new reporters.	In countries that have poor standards, training will seldom fix the problem. In most cases, reporters will learn new skills and standards but are unlikely to be able to implement them. Editor training should be used instead. One off trainings should be avoided – they are cheap and ineffective.
Funding Investigative Stories	Inexpensive	Appropriate in all countries at all times. This is especially effective in countries with higher standards but limited resources such as Pakistan.	In countries with poor standards, this will provide important experience, but will not likely lead to a significant improvement in journalism.
Mentoring investigative teams or editors	Expensive	If paired with editors with high standards, this works well in improving standards in countries with chronically low standards. If done at local standards, it will not help.	This is money wasted in countries with high standards and a robust industry.

Approaches	Cost	When Appropriate	When Less Appropriate
Supporting Investigative Centers	Expensive	This is appropriate to some degree in every country. It is better in countries where standards are higher. It is a very good approach in countries with little or no independent media.	Where possible, support should focus on centers with high standards. If high standards are not present, editors with high standards should be brought in. Cannot survive without high standards. Sustainability is issue with small countries – must be able to have high enough standards to sell content to international media.
Supporting Membership Organizations	Inexpensive	Membership organizations are best for countries with high or improving standards, large media industries and robust markets.	This approach should be avoided in small countries, countries with low standards and those with weak industries. Regional organizations can be used with groups of small countries and a common language. If standards are low, this could reinforce the low standards.
Supporting Networking	Inexpensive	This is appropriate to some degree in every country where a critical mass of like-minded journalists is present.	If standards are low, this could reinforce the low standards.
Editor Training	Inexpensive	This is appropriate to some degree in every country. This is especially effective in countries with low standards if high standard editors can be brought in.	If standards of editors are low, this could reinforce the low standards.
Pre-Investigative In-depth Features	Inexpensive	Appropriate for countries with no investigative reporting and basic journalism structures	Waste of funds in other countries.

Intangibles and Recommendations

More than any area of journalism, investigative reporting relies on passion. Journalists cannot spend six months of their lives risking danger and lawsuits while laboriously digging through tens of thousands of documents unless they have a true desire to instigate change, correct injustices, or tell the hard truth. But there is bad passion as well as good passion. Many are passionate about change but for political reasons and not democratic reasons. Assessing passion is an art that takes time. It cannot be easily or accurately evaluated by a simple grant proposal. This is one of the many areas where assessments are more art than science.

Achieving successes in developing media isn't based only on the quality of the plan or the competence of the implementer. Luck, interactions between personnel, and larger economic and political trends all play a role in determining the fate of a project. All good organizations fail at some time. It is motivation, commitment, and a thorough understanding of media that ultimately pays the most dividends.

Still, the following best practices are recommended:

- The management and design of projects in investigative reporting should be led by an investigative reporting editor if possible or a veteran investigative reporter. Training and editing should be done by the same people.
- Applicants for such positions should be carefully vetted to make sure they have experience in investigative reporting and not just journalism in general.
- Training should focus on developing investigative editors.
- Organizations need to better assess the quality of local media using both local journalists and journalists with a thorough knowledge of international standards.

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