Independent Media's Vital Role in Development

A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance

December 10, 2007

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), a project of the National Endowment for Democracy, aims to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of media assistance programs by providing information, building networks, conducting research, and highlighting the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies around the world. An important aspect of CIMA's work is to research ways to attract additional U.S. private sector interest in and support for international media development.

CIMA convenes working groups, discussions, and panels on a variety of topics in the field of media development and assistance. The center also issues reports and recommendations based on working group discussions and other investigations. These reports aim to provide policymakers, as well as donors and practitioners, with ideas for bolstering the effectiveness of media assistance.

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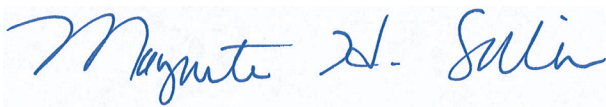
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CIMA Research Report: Independent Media's Vital Role in Development

Preface

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) commissioned this study on independent media's role in development to examine the various ways in which media today have a significant impact on decision making and the improvement of society.

CIMA is grateful to Peter Graves, an international development consultant with extensive experience in independent media development, for his research and insights on this topic.

We hope that this report will become an important reference for international media assistance efforts.

Marguerite Sullivan
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Introduction

Independent media play a critical role in building and sustaining democracies, societies, and economies around the world. They provide citizens with the information necessary to make informed political and economic choices. Independent media give voice to women, youth, and minorities, along with dissident political opinions. They also improve communities by providing citizens with important information on health, the environment, and rural development, and help people prevent and respond to disasters.

Advances in technology have allowed media to deliver news and information to growing numbers of people and to share stories as they occur across the street and around the world. The spread of the telegraph system enabled foreign correspondents to file their stories in hours rather than weeks. Radio broadcasts brought the sounds of the world into people's living rooms and provided real-time reporting of events as they unfolded. The arrival of television allowed people to see what they could only imagine previously. Cable and satellite technology created even more opportunities for people to be connected.

The ability to share information and images across national boundaries played an important role in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. CNN, started in 1980 by Ted Turner, broadcast to world viewers the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Empire in 1991. As Glenn Baker of the Center for Defense Information wrote in the script for "The 'CNN Effect': TV and Foreign Policy," "Thanks to satellites and instant global com-munications, TV images of the celebration circulated around the world. In the wake of the Soviet breakup, popular revolts brought down one communist government after another in Eastern Europe, news pictures of one uprising inspiring the next. Computers, fax machines, video cassettes, and pervasive

> As of September 30, 2007, more than 1.2 billion people, or 18.9 percent of the world's 6.6 billion people, use the Internet. Across the globe, 70 percent of North Americans had access to the Internet; 42 percent of Europeans; 21 percent of Latin Americans; 12 percent of Asians; 17 percent of Middle East-erners; and 5 percent of sub-Saharan Africans. Africa and the Middle East had the fastest-growing rate of Internet users, increasing 875 percent and 920 percent respectively from 2000 to 2007, or nearly four times the world average growth rate.
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> *Source: Internet World Stats, "Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics," http://www.internetworld-stats.com/ (Accessed November 1, 2007).*

media coverage provided the means for ordinary citizens to share ideas in ways that totalitarian governments couldn't control. In the end, communism was brought down not by military force but by the growing power of electronic communication."[1]

Another jump in the ability to share information occurred with the advent of the personal

computer in the late 1970s, and the Internet, popularized in the 1990s. Both have transformed how companies deliver news and information and how people receive it. Internet penetration rates have reached 85 percent in many developed countries, with millions of people having access to over one hundred million Web sites in many different languages.[2] At no time in history has the world been so closely connected, with so many people having so much access to information about themselves, their neighbors, their countrymen and women, and the world as they do today.

The advent of these new technologies has made control of information one of the modern era's most significant and pressing battles. With the control of information comes control over people's political, economic, and social lives, including the value of their education, health, and jobs. There are 1.2 billion people living on less than a dollar a day,[3] many of them in Africa and parts of Asia, where communications and media infrastructure are in great need of development. Providing opportunities for people to access information critical to their lives is one of the major development objectives of our time.[4]

To demonstrate the importance of fostering independent media, this report provides examples of how access to information has transformed political, economic, and social systems. It shows what can happen when conditions allow independent media to operate and flourish.

Media Create Political Change

Journalists, writers, and media professionals have been at the vanguard of most of the political revolutions that have taken place over the past three hundred years. The words of Benjamin Franklin and Jean-Paul Marat inspired the American colonists and French revolutionaries to take up arms against the monarchs who ruled them. Underground reports and revolutionary ideas, spread by printed leaflets and word of mouth, motivated Africans, Latin Americans, and others to challenge colonial rule. The valiant efforts of journalists and underground media to continue reporting under repressive circumstances helped keep the struggle for freedom alive.

Stories abound as to the significant role that Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and underground newspapers and radio stations played in giving hope to people living under communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Soviet citizens told stories of listening to VOA's shortwave broadcasts in remote fields late at night to hear news from the outside world, because the Kremlin controlled the content of local broadcast and print media.[5] Reporters from *The Sowetan* in South Africa, B92 in Serbia, Rustavi-2 in Georgia, *Ukrayinska Pravda* in Ukraine, and *An-Nahar* newspaper in Lebanon are among thousands of journalists who strove to tell the truth against great odds.

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The advent of the Internet and its capacity to breach national borders has created new opportunities for citizen journalists and bloggers from the Middle East, China, Belarus, North Korea, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere to write critically of their governments, although not without repercussions.

In February 2007, Egyptian blogger Karim Amer was sentenced to four years in prison "for writing blogs criticizing Egypt's Al-Azhar religious authorities, President Husni Mubarak and Islam."[6]

In China, more than 18,000 Web sites have been shut down since April 2007, because they were not registered with the government as required by law. The Chinese government also makes registration difficult. One Chinese blogger told Reporters Without Borders that when he tried to register, he was told "there was no chance of an independent blog getting permission to publish."[7] In advance of the October 2007 Communist Party Congress, Chinese authorities targeted sources of independent news and information, including blogs and online discussion boards.[8] The Chinese government reportedly had more than 30,000 Internet police monitoring Web users. The government has also installed detective software at Internet cafes that "records the Web sites people surf, their

identity card numbers, plus e-mails and message boards, and even games."[9]

In Burma, as part of a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in September 2007, the ruling military junta "cut off [Burma]'s Internet link in a bid to curb the flow of information on the deadly clampdown." Internet access was restored soon after, "but the government continued to ban foreign media, including the BBC and the Voice of America."[10]

Dictators and autocrats have good reasons for exerting direct control over the media. In a repressive country, media not under government control represent a threat to the regime and to the livelihood of government officials. A report by Freedom House ranking press freedom around the world in 2005 listed sixty-seven countries as "not free," with most of these countries governed by either semi-authoritarian (such as Vladimir Putin in Russia) or fully authoritarian (such as Kim Jong-il in North Korea) rulers.[11] Most of these governments place moderate to severe restrictions on broadcast and print media. The restrictions range from maintaining repressive laws that are used to intimidate journalists, such as in Algeria, where it is a crime to defame the president, judiciary, armed forces, and parliament, to complete control of all media, such as in North Korea, where no independent broadcast or print media exist and journalists are members of the ruling party and serve as mouthpieces of the regime.[12] In most "not free" countries, journalists are restricted from any critical or investigative reporting on government activities.

In some countries, journalists who cross the "red line" that separates what the government allows to be reported from that which it does not, risk both their freedom and their lives. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, between 1992 and October 18, 2007, 661 journalists were killed around the world (120 of them in Iraq). Seventy-three percent were murdered, as opposed to being killed in combat, crossfire or other circumstances. In 86 percent of the cases, the perpetrators carried out the crime with complete impunity.[13]

Media Reduce Corruption

One of independent media's primary roles is to be a watchdog over public officials' actions. Americans are well aware of the pivotal role that investigative reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein played in uncovering the Watergate story. Intrepid reporters the world over take on similar roles, in sometimes more perilous situations, uncovering corruption and crimes committed by government officials. Frequently, their efforts lead to the resignation of high-ranking government officials.

For example, the independent Kenyan press reported in 1996 on the improper business dealings of the minister of health, including bribe payments of 400 million Kenyan shillings ($6 million), which led to the minister's dismissal.[14] In 2000, a local television station in Peru broadcast a video that showed national security chief Vladimiro Montesinos, who was allegedly smuggling arms to Colombian guerrillas, "bribing an opposition member of Congress in return for voting for the incumbent government."[15] Peruvian newspapers picked up the story, and the revelations led to Montesinos' dismissal and the subsequent resignation of President Alberto Fujimori. Following the scandal, the newly elected president announced his intention to fight corruption.[16]

Investigative reports from Latin America to Africa and Asia show the power of the printed word, photograph, and video. In 1999, the deputy public health minister of Thailand resigned after allegations of corruption and bribery were reported by the local news media following a campaign by nongovernmental and grassroots organizations.[17] In 2006, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra resigned, prompted in large part by investigative news articles dating back to 2000 reporting that he had declared false assets, including selling a controlling stake in the telecom company Shin Corp. worth $1.9 billion, tax-free.[18] In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) reported that a State Court judge was guilty of misconduct related to sexual harassment, while another judge faced serious criminal allegations, including facilitating the arrest of political enemies. Both judges were replaced as a result of these stories. CIN stories on the underground labor market, food safety, health care system, higher education, and police corruption have led to government investigations, legal and regulation changes, and government actions to correct problems.

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There are now nearly forty nonprofit centers for investigative reporting and training around the world. They are linked to one another through their association with various international journalism associations, including Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., the International Journalists' Network, and the Global Investigative Journalism Network. The role of independent media in investigating public corruption is one of the cornerstones of good governance. More must be done in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere in the developing world to support and encourage this type of reporting.

Media and the Economy

According to CNNMoney, between January and May 2007, 372 mergers occurred across the world in traditional media—print, broadcast and cable TV, radio, and movies. Eighty-one of these involved U.S.-based companies. The deals, worth $93.8 billion, did not include online business, such as Google's purchase of DoubleClick for $3.1 billion or Yahoo! acquiring remaining shares of Right Media for $680 million.[19] News Corp's $5 billion purchase of Dow Jones demonstrates that even so-called "old media" have value, especially when analysts start calculating the online value of the media property.[20] In the United States, media revenue from the nation's one hundred leading media companies topped $287 billion in 2006.[21] Media's share in the overall world economy, however, is quite small, accounting for 1.76 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product in 1999.[22] Its indirect impact on a country's economy, however, is much greater.

Information is just as critical in the developing as in the developed world. The difference is the size of the economies and the amount of money people are willing to pay for it. Linking people with one another to share information—to trade and communicate—is a major reason why investors are willing to pay billions of dollars for media properties, and why media's influence in the developing world is as great as in the developed world. Information is at the core of commerce, with open markets governed by transparent pricing, known to buyers and sellers alike. It also fuels economic growth.

According to James Deane, managing director of the Communication for Social Change Consortium, media play a critical role in development by providing people with access to information; covering issues of relevance to those marginalized and living in poverty; reflecting impoverished peoples' perspectives in media coverage; and providing platforms where development issues can be discussed.[23]

In the World Bank's *World Development Report 2002*, then-World Bank President James Wolfensohn wrote about the need to build market institutions that promote growth and reduce poverty.[24] Wolfensohn stated that one of the four lessons of building effective institutions is to "[c]onnect communities of market players through open information flows and open trade. Exchanging information changes behavior. It creates demand for institutional change by holding people to account and by supplying ideas for change from outside the community. Linking communities of people in networks of information and trade is thus a priority for those building market-supporting institutions."[25]

As *World Development Report 2002* notes, advertising creates demand for products, which further increases economic commerce, and newspapers disseminate commercial news as well as drive commerce. As technology has changed, and information and news are spread globally at the touch of a button, more people have greater access to information that was previously confined to elites. Now the poor have more opportunities to receive information on local, national, and international events, and the media are reflecting in greater degrees the interests of both the rich and poor.[26]

Another World Bank report, *The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development*, makes a strong case that media influence economic, political, and social outcomes.[27] Editor Roumeen Islam writes, "The information industry, in which the media play a key role, tends to develop faster in democratic societies that generally foster freer information flows. However, the media industry can also promote greater degrees of freedom and stronger democracies over time."[28]

A case in point is Bosnia, where much of the media sector was destroyed by the 1992-95 war. Prior to the war, Bosnia had strong private, independent newspapers, such as *Oslobodjenje*, one of the best known newspapers in the region, but few private broadcast media existed. Immediately after the war, donors worked with Bosnians and international experts to build the independent media sector. Dan De Luce, the former director of media development for the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, noted: "U.S. media assistance has helped build a private media sector that offers Bosnian citizens a wide range of opinions and information and an alternative to nationalist or state media. Several print and broadcast outlets that received U.S. aid contribute to a more open, democratic climate. They are profitable businesses, or are moving toward profitability. The combination of financial aid, equipment, and training in editorial and business skills has helped foster a new generation of independent-minded media."[29]

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The importance of economic support to the survival of a media outlet operating in a hostile environment can be seen in Slovakia in the early 1990s. Members of Prime Minister Vladmir Meciar's government, most of whom were former communists, pressured the state-owned printing houses to not print *SME*, one of Slovakia's leading independent daily newspapers. *SME* was forced to use Petit Press, a private printer sixty-two miles from Bratislava, then drive copies to the capital to be distributed. This meant that articles for the newspaper had to be finalized by 4 p.m. every day, making the publication less competitive, and resulting in a significant circulation decline. With the company facing bankruptcy, Petit Press took a $350,000 loan from the Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF) to purchase and install a small second-hand, refurbished printing machine in Bratislava. The daily deadline was pushed to 10 p.m., allowing *SME* to report late-breaking news. *SME* became competitive again, which led to an increase in circulation. Because of its financial independence, *SME* was able to withstand further political intimidation, including large fines, court cases, and attacks by the intelligence services. According to Sasa Vucinic, director of MDLF, "Petit Press now publishes more than thirty publications and employs over 550 staff."[30]

Another MDLF project shows how emerging media can become profitable and also remain steadfast to the democratic principles under which they were founded. *Noseweek*,

a South African magazine, was started in 1993, after Nelson Mandela's release from prison, but before South Africa's first democratic elections. The magazine provided independent news and analysis of the major political, financial, and diplomatic events taking place in the country. In its first edition, published June 1, 1993, *Noseweek* uncovered illegal currency smuggling, conflicts of interest in the charities business, and insider corporate deals. In 2002, MDLF provided financing to help *Noseweek* make the transition from "intermittent" publication to a regular monthly schedule. It also helped the magazine develop an advertising sales strategy, which focused on small advertisers and avoided the larger South African companies that often held tremendous sway over other South African media. This strategy helped secure *Noseweek*'s financial independence, allowing it to cover news events with a highly critical eye, including corporate news, which had not received intense scrutiny in the past.[31] Since then, *Noseweek* has gone on to achieve financial sustainability, because it produces an independent, professional product, covers stories of interest to its readers, and provides a public service.

The Bosnian, Slovakian, and South African cases illustrate the important role that independent media play. Yet achieving and maintaining political and economic independence in the developing world can be difficult. In 2002, the World Bank conducted a study assessing media ownership in ninety-seven countries. Research showed that the government owns about 30 percent of the top five newspapers, 60 percent of the top five television stations, and 72 percent of the largest radio stations. Many of the private owners also have very close relations with the government, through business, family, or personal associations, making the state's interest in media ownership even greater.[32]

Although independent media are important to economic growth in the developing world, creating sustainable media businesses may not always be possible. Since advertising revenue may be extremely limited, many media outlets are dependent upon outside grants and loans in order to operate.

Media and Society

The impact of media on society was probably best summarized by Nobel Prize winner and Harvard University professor Amartya Sen, who famously said that "no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press."[33] As if trying to scientifically prove this statement, "a group of London School of Economics economists set out to uncover the relationship between food security and media penetration. In India they looked at the public distribution of food and state government expenditures on disaster relief related to the most vulnerable people and populations in selected Indian states. Their research revealed strong, significant, and positive correlations between newspaper circulation and government responses. A 1 percent increase in newspaper circulation is associated with a 2.4 percent increase in public food distribution, and a 5.5 percent increase in calamity relief expenditures. Their summary was that 'states with higher levels of media development are more active in protecting vulnerable citizens.'"[34]

The social impact of media includes improving the quality of education, informing the public about health threats and safe practices to avoid them, serving local communities by bringing attention to their needs, and in times of disaster, providing information and sources of assistance to people displaced from their homes. [35]

Media Improve Education

Media hold tremendous potential to educate by teaching people useful information to improve their lives. In Nicaragua, an innovative radio program to teach mathematics to primary school students improved test scores, especially for children in rural areas with limited access to quality schools.[36]

Editors of the Panamanian daily *La Prensa*, concerned that younger Panamanian students knew little of Panama's history, geography, and politics due to out-of-date textbooks, included a six-week educational supplement in the newspaper's Sunday edition (May–July 2000). Many schools added the supplements, which featured updated information about Panama, to their curriculum and the newspaper donated copies to 140 primary schools. A compilation of the supplements was also published for interested readers. According to the *World Development Report 2002*, "circula-

tion increased from 35,000 copies to 42,500 in the weeks that the supplements came out, and the added advertising more than offset the extra print costs."[37]

In Uganda, the government initiated a newspaper campaign aimed at reducing fraud by local government officials in charge of administering school budgets. The campaign informed people of the amount of grant money transferred to local governments for the public schools. Before the campaign, the schools received approximately 20 percent of the grants; after the campaign, the schools received 80 percent. According to Ritva Reinikka and Jakob Svensson of the World Bank Development Research Group, this shows that providing people with information through the mass media, such as newspapers, can reduce corruption, thereby improving schoolchildren's education.[38]

Media Support Disaster Relief

Media and access to information can play a crucial role when natural or manmade disasters strike. Radio Absoun in Chad, a community radio station serving refugees from Darfur as well as the local Chadian population, has proved instrumental in relief efforts. When fighting started in a region of northeastern Chad, resulting in the evacuation of medical staff from a local hospital, the radio station warned its listeners not to take their wounded there. On other occasions, Radio Absoun facilitated the exchange of information between relief agencies and refugees. When agencies urged refugees to cook on solar cookers, thereby reducing the amount of wood that needed to be gathered, the station explained the rationale to the local population. In another instance, the station helped overcome objections to a change in the food ration by explaining the benefits of flour being substituted for sorghum. According to the staff of Internews, the organization that set up the radio station, this was the first time refugees heard news that directly affected their survival, "including information on security, food rations, and water distribution; where to get health and immunization services; and what is happening in their home areas."[39]

Media Improve Health Practices

The effect media and access to information have on changing health practices has been well-documented. According to a report on how media change reproductive behavior in Africa, married, uneducated women in Zambia who are regularly exposed to broadcast media are twice as likely to use birth control as those exposed to no media. In a study in Burkina Faso that measured women's desire to have children, women who were regularly exposed to media and information about the responsibilities associated with raising children said they hoped to have an average of 3.7 children, while those exposed to no media said they wanted an average of 6.3 children.[40]

In 1990, the World Health Organization assessed the Philippine government's media campaign in support of regular vaccination for children. Its researchers found that the increase in the proportion of fully vaccinated children aged 12–23 months from 54 percent to 65 percent was "significantly attributable to that campaign." The vaccinations were also more likely to be started and finished on time.[41]

TV's influence on behavior

An example of how media can influence behavior patterns can be seen in the impact the Soul City health information initiative in South Africa had on its audience. A 2001 study found that 32 percent of African respondents with high exposure to Soul City TV said they always use condoms, compared to 31 percent with medium exposure and 28 percent with low exposure. Among the viewers between the ages of 16 and 24, 38 percent of those who watched Soul City TV said they always use condoms. In comparison, 26 percent of those who viewed television, but did not watch Soul City, reported that they use condoms.

Source: Media Matters: Perspectives on Advancing Governance & Development from the Global Forum for Media Development (Internews Europe) 62.

Media Serve Local Communities

While satellite TV and the Internet have expanded the ability to access and share information on a global scale, reliable information on local issues remains of critical importance. Independent media can play an important role in servicing the needs of local communities, whether it is reporting on crop prices, relaying information about medical services, or providing educational training.

An example is Radio Sutatenza in Colombia, which grew from an amateur radio transmitter in a small village in the late 1940s into a national media conglomerate in the 1980s, with activities ranging from printing journals and educational publications to distributing books and training peasant leaders. While it eventually closed in the early 1990s for financial reasons, the primary activity of the radio was broadcasting educational and cultural programming on topics such as "hygiene and basic health care, reading and writing, simple arithmetic, increasing productivity, and the recognition of personal dignity," according to Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, executive director of programs at the Communication for Social Change Consortium in Guatemala.[42]

The Gobi Wave Information Center in Mongolia is another outlet that provides its audiences with information important to improving their lives and communities. Gobi Wave was initially a repeater station for the state-operated Mongol Radio, which allowed the station only two hours of its own airtime per week. Wanting more airtime, the manager formed a nongovernmental organization to start Gobi Wave. With support from the local government and a variety of

Women's radio project in Zambia focuses on local needs

An innovative radio program developed by women representing thirteen women's clubs in rural Zambia led to material benefits for local communities. The program involved taping discussions among club members about local development issues and requests for development support. The discussion tapes were then sent to Lusaka, where a radio producer edited them into a single program, which was then aired nationally by Zambia state radio. After hearing about various community needs, the Ministries of Health and Education, the local political representative's office, and the Electoral Commission each responded. Some of the benefits to the communities included: drilling of water boreholes for two medical clinics; a community school for AIDS orphans; a solar panel for a medical clinic; a polling station; and new roofs for a school and a teacher's house. The program benefited the community in nonmaterial ways as well. Not only did village women report feeling increased respect from other villagers, but they also said that relations with the men in the community improved. The program was financed by Panos/Southern Africa.

Source: Kitty Warnock, Impact Evaluation Report: DTR Radio Listening Clubs, Zambia, Oct. 2001.

international organizations, including the Soros Foundation, USAID, and Developing Radio Partners, the station serves local needs on a budget of approximately $8,000 a year.[43] According to Developing Radio Partners, "listeners to Gobi Wave in Mongolia can learn how to start a small business, talk to the governor, and sell fermented mare's milk."[44]

The community-level need for access to information is especially evident in Africa, where community radio is an important source for relaying information to people as well as building communal ties. Community radio stations are local nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations managed by a board of directors, with a mechanism for community involvement and local management. These stations are usually low-powered, run limited ads, and have programming content that is often driven by community interests. Typically, they are supported through a combination of ad revenue and donations, which can be both international and local. Many of these community radio stations are highly successful in what they do, because they remain independent from the government or any other interest that might compromise the independent programming of the station.[45]

Media Influence Public Policy

Media also shape public opinion and influence public policy. According to Jaime Abello Banfi, executive director of the Fundación para un Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano, the News Agency for Children Rights, a Brazilian children and adolescent rights advocacy organization, increased the coverage of topics related to childhood and adolescence from 10,700 newspaper articles in 1996 to 161,807 in 2004. Banfi also noted an improvement in the quality of the coverage, with a 45 percent increase in articles focused on finding solutions.[46]

Worldwide, media are used to give voice to marginalized groups, such as women and ethnic and religious minorities, as well as to

B92 in Serbia and Social Programming

The mission of B92 in Belgrade "is to provide relevant high-quality programming in order to inform and entertain viewers, and assist them in gaining a better under-standing of the world around them." Started as a student radio station in 1989, B92 organized a network of radio and television stations that gave Serbians a source of news and information outside the control of the Serbian government, contributing to the eventual downfall of Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic. B92 has gone on to become one of Serbia's leading radio and television stations, providing Serbs with a variety of news and information, while remaining unflinchingly independent from government and any single source of revenue.

According to Veran Matic, head of B92, the station has conducted a number of social responsibility campaigns. One such campaign called on listeners to volunteer as blood donors, resulting in Serbian blood banks having sufficient supply for the first time in sixty-three years. The station also collected nearly €200,000 for the purchase of a new blood donation truck for the Blood Transfusion Institute. B92's goal was to show how the long-term problem of blood shortages could be eliminated through socially responsible media.

Another program assists victims of domestic violence. The station has launched a campaign to build at least five safe-houses for women and children throughout Serbia and help the women become financially independent. When the campaign is finished, B92 plans to hand over control to appropriate state authorities to continue the program.

Source: B92, "About Us," http://www.b92.net/doc/aboutus.phtml; interview with Veran Matic 8/22/07.

promote their rights. In Burundi, for example, the association BonSem produces a weekly radio show and publishes a newsletter designed to encourage discussion about how civil society can work for the political and economic inclusion of the marginalized Twa communities.[47]

According to Panos London's 2007 report *At the Heart of Change,* information and the media that deliver it are powerful agents of change that can help reduce poverty and the debilitating efforts of disease in the developing world. "Sustainable development demands that people participate in the debates and decisions that affect their lives. They need to be able to receive information, but also to make their voices heard. The poor are often excluded from these processes by geography and lack of resources or skills; and many groups—including women—are also kept silent by social structures and cultural tradition … Political processes are communication processes … Communication also lies at the heart of good governance … A healthy civil society is characterized by the vibrancy and quality of the networks between individuals, groups, institutions and organizations … Economic development also depends on communication at every level."[48]

Conclusion

The above examples illustrate how critical independent media are to democratic, transparent societies and how pervasive and influential media are in today's world. Citizens around the globe are seeking trustworthy information about issues that affect their daily lives— health, environmental, economic, community, and political —and it is imperative that they have reliable sources that they can trust.

The potential of media to encourage democratic development cannot be denied. Media give people a voice, acting as a balance and watchdog to potential government misconduct. Without a voice, citizens cannot be heard; with a voice, they cannot be ignored. Media provide a window into the inner workings of the government, thereby increasing transparency and reducing corruption. Not only are countries more democratic with free and independent media, but their governments are also more accountable.

Media's impact is not limited to the political realm. A country's economy benefits by being more open. By having access to economic information, citizens are better informed about what is happening in their communities and in commercial and financial markets, allowing them to make better informed choices. Overall society benefits, too. In addition to current events, media educate the public on issues related to health, the environment, women, children, and minorities. Independent media give voice to those whose voices often are not heard and engage marginalized groups in a more participatory discussion of programs that impact their lives.

Democratic, social, political, and economic development goes hand-in-hand with media development. While short-term projects that utilize media for specific goals—health information campaigns for example—have an impact on their intended sector, a more comprehensive media development strategy holds the potential to create the conditions for sustainable democratic and economic development. The establishment and nurturing of free and independent media is crucial across all sectors to achieve real and sustained overall development of society.

Endnotes

1 Glenn Baker, "The 'CNN Effect': TV and Foreign Policy," Center for Defense Information, May 7, 1995, http://www.cdi.org/adm/834/transcript.html

2 See http://www.boutell.com/newfaq/misc/sizeofweb.html for basic information on the Web and http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm for Internet usage statistics.

3 The World Bank Institute, *The Right to Tell: The Role of Media in Economic Development*, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Institute, 2002) v.

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