Briefing

Media and Good Governance

Key points:

1. Free, independent and plural media (radio, TV, newspapers, internet etc.) provide a critical check on state abuse of power or corruption; enable informed and inclusive public debate on issues of concern to people living in poverty; and give greater public recognition to the perspectives of marginalised citizens. Engaged citizens need information that allows them to exercise democratic choices.

2. Evidence shows that economic and political disincentives to public interest media are increasing. This suggests that development actors, including donors, have an important role to play in understanding and responding to market failures and media capture.

3. Transforming the way that media relates to both governments and audiences is extremely challenging, but can best be accomplished through *comprehensive* media development interventions. Integrated interventions which address four focus levels - populations, practitioners, organisations and systems – achieve the greatest and most lasting change.

4. Economic and political disincentives to public interest media are increasing. Donors have a role to play in building a strong media sector and in ensuring that public interest content grows – by supporting its development in the context of market failures and media capture.

1 Introduction

"Good governance is not just about government. It is also about political parties, parliament, the judiciary, the media, and civil society. It is about how citizens, leaders and public institutions relate to each other in order to make change happen."

Making Governance Work for the Poor: DFID White Paper, 2006

This briefing builds on DFID's commitments set out in our 2006 White Paper, Making Governance Work for the Poor. The main purpose is to provide an overview of the relationship between media and governance, and to highlight some of the principal opportunities and challenges to engaging with the sector. It is aimed at all staff across DFID working on media or governance issues, and is intended to complement the practical guidance contained in DFID's 2000 "Media in Governance: A Guide to Assistance".

The Note explains *why* and *how* the media is a critical sector in shaping governance relationships, and summarises key global trends in the media which are already leading to changes in country-level governance. The note explains some of the

incentives and disincentives driving the sector which can lead the media to play either a positive or negative role in strengthening democratic politics. It pays particular attention to the role of the media in fragile states.

The paper concludes by identifying key lessons and principles for donors to increase the effectiveness of media development initiatives in order to help build democratic, capable, accountable and responsive states.

2 Why is media relevant for governance?

Democratic governance is about how citizens and state relate to each other….

Sustainable and successful democracies require more than elections, the existence of an independent judiciary and other democratic institutions and even a free press. They require the existence of an established, legitimate relationship between state and citizen. Such relationships are dynamic, complex and take many forms, but they depend in large part on how state and citizens *communicate* with each other. For governments to be accountable, responsive and effective, citizens need opportunities to communicate their perspectives and needs not only through the ballot box

> **Box 1: What is the media?**
>
> Media are (mostly) non state actors who define themselves apart from the state and from all other societal actors (what Edmund Burke described as a "fourth estate", distinct from government, church and electorate). While this notion of a free and independent media acting on behalf of the citizen against both state and other interests is a widespread ideal, the reality of most media worldwide is complex, rapidly changing and extraordinarily diverse.
>
> Media can consist of everything from national newspapers to student magazines, global broadcasters to community radio, websites and blogs to social networks and virtual communities, citizen journalists to government mouthpieces. This briefing focuses principally on media – and to a lesser extent on linked information and technologies - at a national level within developing countries.

but also between elections. Political processes are – essentially - communication processes, ongoing dialogues between people, parties, pressure groups and governments.

For men and women to be engaged citizens, they need information that allows them to exercise democratic choices. Healthy political processes therefore need open communication environments. The modern communications revolution – including the Internet and mobile phones – offers immense opportunities for people to access more information and knowledge and engage with those who govern them. But to make best use of these opportunities requires that different kinds of information, communication systems and technologies become more accessible, transparent and inclusive[1].

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[1] For more details see Panos London (2007) *At the Heart of Change*

## ....and media does much to determine the character of this relationship

Most people in most societies receive most of their information through the media. The media shapes in large part what people think of the issues and institutions that affect them. It is critical to the formation of public opinion. The character of the media tends to determine the character of public debate in democracy. A free media is fundamental to any definition of democratic good governance.

Whether, how and to what extent media contributes to better governance and improves the lives of poor people varies immensely from society to society. The extent to which media in any given society is free[2], plural[3], professional and able to, or interested in facilitating public discussion is dependent on many economic, political and other contextual factors. Many drivers of change studies have highlighted the importance of the media, but noted that their role is often poorly researched and understood.

Media issues have relevance to all aspects of the governance framework

State Capability: States require certain levels of public acceptance of their legitimacy and their actions to get things done. Lack of public understanding of public policy can be an obstacle to public acceptance. States that actively enable media freedom and pluralism can command greater legitimacy both with their citizens and internationally. Poverty reduction and other development strategies have been undermined through lack of wider societal ownership. Weak ownership is often rooted in lack of public understanding and public debate of the issues and policies. Media can provide access to information that enhances public understanding, as well as space for public debate.

State Accountability: The public watchdog role of the media can provide a critical check on government misuse of power or incompetence, and enable citizens to demand good governance. In many societies, state accountability relies upon the independence and capacity of the media to investigate and interrogate government policy in the public interest. Development policy places a central emphasis on citizens holding states accountable. An increased focus on budget support in development assistance strategies has added to the priority of supporting media in their watchdog roles.

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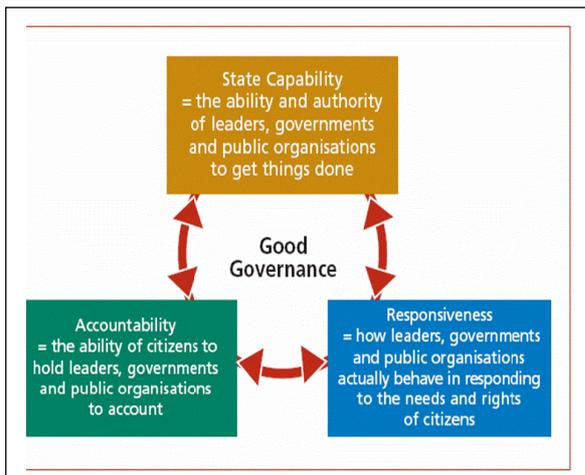
[2] Free media refers to a press not restricted or controlled by government censorship regarding politics or ideology.
[3] The UNESCO Declaration of Windhoek 1991 defines a pluralistic press as "the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community".

State Responsiveness: A free and plural media underpins the responsiveness of democratic states. Media reporting of public interest issues exposes problems in society, brings them to public and political attention and creates pressure for the state to respond rapidly (see Box 2). States without a free media have struggled to respond effectively to emerging crises, while those with a free media have rarely suffered catastrophic famines and other predictable disasters (see Box 3).

Box 2: Malawi's Development Broadcasting Unit

Malawi's majority rural population is among the poorest in the world. Government service delivery is weak and the agriculture, education and health sectors are badly resourced and managed. Media freedom is limited, as are the options for poor people to have a say on policy issues affecting their daily lives.

In 1999, DFID started supporting the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU), using participatory radio programmes to generate national dialogue about development activities. By championing the voice of the poor, the DBU aims to influence government policy and service providers.

The DBU has helped solve many village-level issues such as entitlements from the government, transparency, privatisation, HIV and AIDS. It has provided 56 communities in 28 districts with leadership and participatory management skills, basic rights training and basic radio production skills. This has led to more than 300 dialogues between these communities and about 100 service providers (public / private sector/ civil society). In approximately 70% of cases, these dialogues have resulted in the extension of service or an amendment in policy.

Box 3: Correlations between newspaper circulation and government responsiveness

A 2002 study in India found a strong, significant and positive correlation between newspaper circulation levels and government responsiveness: a one percent increase in newspaper circulation resulted in a 2.4 per cent increase in public food distribution and a 5.5 per cent increase in calamity relief expenditures. It appears that states with higher levels of media development are more active in protecting vulnerable citizens. Communication is an important facet of good governance, increasing the likelihood that the formal institutions of political competition (such as open elections) can deliver responsive government. Voters can only have real authority to discipline poorly functioning incumbents if there are effective institutions for information transmission.'

Besley, T. and Burgess, R. (2002). "Political Economy of Government Responsiveness" *Quart Jnl of Econ*, November.

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3 What's going on in the media? A quick overview of trends

Media within developing countries have undergone many profound changes in the last decade or so, which have important implications for citizen/state relationships. Although conflict, transitional and stable states have experienced rather different transitions in the media environment, some broadly generic trends can be identified that are shaping new media environments.

Media liberalisation is bringing new opportunities…

Widespread liberalisation of media has led to an explosive growth of media in most developing countries. In Uganda, close to 300 FM commercial radio stations are now registered whilst little more than a decade there were only two. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, eight radio stations in 2000/2 had grown to 150 by 2004/5. This multiplicity of new commercial as well as some community actors has transformed the media landscape, with some of the greatest change occurring in the radio broadcast sector, which has the greatest potential to reach the poor.

The result is a fundamental shift in communication patterns with both positive and negative implications for democratic governance. Governments are increasingly held to account by a vigorous and vociferous media, and societies are characterised by far greater public dialogue and debate as citizens converse with each other through talk shows, phone ins, and through new technologies (see Box 4). Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

Box 4: Supporting State Accountability through Media: the Bangladesh Sanglap

"Sanglap" is a Bangla word meaning "Dialogue" and forms the title of a series of "Question Time" style programmes launched with Dfid funding by the BBC World Service Trust in 2005. The programmes bring Bangladeshi politicians and other senior figures together in public, broadcast fora where they can be questioned by citizens. The programme was designed following detailed public opinion research highlighting low levels of trust in the political process, and lack of contact between politicians and the people they are elected to serve.

Programmes reach a weekly audience of more than 7 million people in the country. They are broadcast on the private television station, Channel I and by BBC Bengali Radio. Video vans have also broadcast the programme in remote and rural areas. While earlier Sanglaps were generally held in Dhaka and other cities, recent programmes have been organised in rural locations through a touring Sanglap "boat show". This has enabled some of the most isolated and impoverished communities to challenge politicians and debate issues affecting them.

The programmes are backed up with a rigorous and extensive research exercise providing both detailed analysis of the problems and perspectives of people in the country, and the value placed by them on the Sanglaps. Recent research results found that 86% of the audience felt that the programme improved political dialogue in Bangladesh, 89% felt it explained issues in ways that people could understand, 91% believed provided an opportunity to raise the voice of the people, and 86% felt the programme established a good standard for political discussion on radio and TV. Research informs all aspects of the project. Research on early editions of the Sanglap found that very few women – as low as four per cent – made up the audience. A special audience attendance team has since been established to raise this to a target of at least 40%.

…but does not always benefit poor and excluded citizens

However, highly liberalised media environments can also lead to capture of the media by narrow commercial, religious, ethnic or political interests. Commercial

media has increasingly focused on urban, consumer audiences who attract advertisers. Marginalised and poor populations have been left poorly served as a consequence. An explosion in media sources has not always been accompanied in an increase in training available, and so media standards have been mixed.

The impact on gender inequality has been complex. Talk shows and discussion programmes have often provided a better platform for women to communicate their perspectives into mainstream public debate, including via explicit channels targeting women - Mama FM, a community media station in Uganda, is just one case. At the same time, an ever-more commercialised and advertising-driven media has increasingly sexualised and objectified women.

State broadcasters, often former monopolies, are having to compete – often unsuccessfully - with new commercial entrants leaving them in crisis. As well as being principal government mouthpieces, these broadcasters are often the only media actors capable of reaching rural audiences across the whole of their countries. They have struggled to transform themselves into independent public service broadcasters and many have reduced services - such as cutting back on minority language programming, transmitter capacity and educational and agricultural extension services.

The capacity of many people to access reliable information on issues that affect their lives – particularly in rural areas – may be extremely limited as a result of these and other changes.

Liberalisation is not a good indicator of state stability

Broadcast liberalisation is uneven but the degree of liberalisation does not necessarily reflect state stability. Nepal has a highly liberalised media environment, while India retains a near state monopoly over radio (or at least news over radio) for example. Uganda and Ghana have liberalised broadcast environments, but so too do Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Botswana, a very stable state, has a relatively unliberalised broadcast environment, but so too (albeit in very different ways) does the crisis state of Zimbabwe. Both the rationale and consequences of media liberalisation require robust context-specific analysis.

New technologies are also transforming the communication landscape

New technologies, and particularly the mobile phone, have become increasingly ubiquitous in developing countries. The political, social and economic impacts of these changes require more research, but increased access to information, capacity to communicate, network and organise within society would appear to be having profound economic, political and social consequences.

The interaction between traditional technologies (such as radio) with new technologies (such as the phone) has created new fora for public debate. New technologies have led to the emergence of "citizen journalists" capable of shining a light on some of the most closed societies (events in Burma in 2007 are an example of this). Diasporic communities have exerted increasingly profound influence enabled by the internet. Resistance to state oppression has been greatly enabled by new

technologies, including mobile telephony. At the same time, blogs and SMS text messaging have been accused of playing a role in fanning hatred in the 2008 Kenyan crisis.

4 What drives the role of the media?

There are a number of positive incentives to acting in the public interest…

Development and democratisation strategies increasingly assume that media will play certain positive roles in society. Investments in building the media's capacity and freedom for action have direct benefits for promoting good governance and accountability, but it also can make a profound difference in terms of its effect in supporting and promoting other development goals, including poverty alleviation.

Investigative journalism can lead to increased circulation or audience (although it is not guaranteed), and can also lead to public recognition and status (including in the form of awards). Many media organisations continue to play a watchdog and public interest role because they believe that this is the historical role of media acting as a "fourth estate" (see Box 5). Some media explicitly profit from reputations built on strong, independent and reliable reporting and discussion. In some countries, radio talk shows expanding public debate have proved highly popular and lucrative. Ultimately, assumptions made by development actors that media – even a free media - will play specific roles in society, such as holding governments to account, need to be founded in clear analysis.

**Box 5: Media, Democracy and the Bottom Billion: A Charter for Democracy
(extract on the role of the media)**

"In the societies of the bottom billion the key media are probably the radio channels and increasingly the television. One rare and dramatic story from Peru illustrates this. The government of Alberto Fujimori was notably corrupt, so much so that the chief of the secret police, Vladimiro Montesinos, who was charged with the task of implementing all the corruption, decided to keep careful records. These records now provide a very rare quantitative window on political corruption, and John McMillan of Stanford Business School has analysed them. His work shows that the Fujimori government set out to systematically undermine each check and balance that restrained it. It bribed members of parliament, judges, newspaper editors and the staff of radio and television stations. If there was a restraint, the government undermined it. The amount it was prepared to pay reflected its view of the importance of each restraint.

From our perspective it is not just creepily fascinating to see a system of bad governance on display; it also tells us what is really important in the fight against it. Where the Fujimori regime put most of its money is probably where we should be most vigilant. While the official constitutional restraints, such as parliament and the courts were bought, the regime did not spend serious money undermining them. The newspapers were also bought, but it was the same story: thousands of dollars a month, not millions. Where the zeros rolled out on the checks was to buy the television stations. There were ten stations, and the government bought them at nearly a million dollars each per month. This money bought a proper contract – each day the station had to screen its evening news program in advance for Montesinos and make the required changes. So for the government it was the television news that was the vital restraint to control. Was this paranoia? No, it turned out that the government was about right. We know because the government had only bothered to buy the nine biggest television channels – it decided not to bother with the tenth, a tiny financial satellite service with only ten thousand subscribers. That is how the government fell. Someone leaked a video of Montesinos bribing a judge, and it was broadcast on this one television channel. Protest escalated uncontrollably.

So in Peru the key restraint upon the government was the media, and among the media, it was television. I think that in most bottom-billion countries television is still too limited to be the key medium; it is more likely to be radio. Thus among the checks and balances I would place keeping radio out of government monopoly control as vital. Radio stations are sufficiently cheap to establish that, freed from government restraints on entry, there are likely to be too many of them for the government to be able to control them all.

Extracted from Collier, P (2007), *The Bottom Billion: why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*, Oxford University Press, Pp 148 - 149

…but disincentives may be overwhelming.

However, there is wide variation in the degree to which media are either interested in playing, or are equipped to play, these positive roles. On the one hand, media can generate debate and dialogue, be a voice for the voiceless, reveal wrong-doing and contribute to deepening democracy. On the other hand, media is also capable of fostering ethnic hatred and division, acting in the interest of powerful political and economic elites, and covering up and distorting the truth.

Political disincentives include intimidation, censorship and attacks on media. Record numbers of journalists face death or injury in pursuit of their profession, and the number of media houses facing government sanction is growing. Journalists and editors often make easy targets, and the rewards for journalists for undertaking investigative or other public interest journalism are often scant. In particular, a focus on development issues is rarely regarded as a high status "beat", or rewarded with promotion. Simultaneously, media 'capture' by powerful elites and a failure to professionalise the media can lead to reporters demanding bribes to feature stories.

Media ownership and control can also be critical disincentives. When media outlets are owned or run by groups with vested interests (eg political parties, state, private sector, religious actors, etc), political patronage and editorial interference is likely to undermine journalist efforts to adopt a more critical stance. In the DRC, for example, most income for the 'independent' press is not derived from advertising but from payment from politicians, political parties and other public and private bodies paying for positive coverage of their activities.

Economic disincentives for media playing a public interest role are becoming more intense. Free and independent media in most developing countries are commercial in nature and face clear economic imperatives. Most media markets are increasingly competitive, and most income is generally derived from advertising. Many media operations place an overarching emphasis on maximising profit which generally means tailoring content to audiences that attract advertisers. This inevitably leads to a reduction in content relevant to or concerning people living in poverty.

A market failure can result where the cost of investing in public interest journalism outweighs the incentives of potential – but not necessarily actual – increased circulation. This includes investigative journalism which can be costly in editorial and financial resources, and prove unpopular to some advertisers – including government who often constitute a major source of media advertising revenue.

On balance, there is significant evidence to suggest that economic and political disincentives to public interest media are increasing. This suggests that development actors, including donors, have a role to play in building a strong media sector and in ensuring that public interest content grows – by supporting its development in the context of market failures and media capture.

5 How can media be supported to help build democratic, capable, responsive and accountable states?

Different types of states may require different approaches to media support…

A helpful way of categorising the types of media interventions that may be appropriate in different types of states is the BBC World Service Trust's 'Governance Continuum'. This typology encourages development actors to consider different media interventions according to whether states are *closed,* in *conflict, transitional* or *stable.* It views audience participation as critical to all governance work. Although

interventions will differ markedly according to whether states are closed, in conflict, transitional or stable, media has important effects in almost all states.

♦ In *closed states*, such as Burma, Zimbabwe or Iran, engaging in overt governance programming may be too sensitive. Instead, governance messaging can be integrated into programming by focusing on 'softer' issues like health and education, for example by exploring service delivery. At the same time, these activities can also lead to skills transfer (e.g. computer assisted journalism, importance of balanced presentation of facts drawn from multiple sources). Drama can be a useful format for exploring issues too sensitive for discussion in factual formats. And in some cases external programming (for example, www.zigzagmag.com, a radio and web initiative aimed at engaging Iranian youth) can create a platform accessible to those inside a closed country. Opportunities also exist for supporting external exiled media who can help mediate the public space when closed states open up. For example, DFID is supporting exiled Burmese media to provide a professional rather than partisan media response in the event of a transition.

♦ In *conflict and emergency states*, media work may focus primarily on providing lifeline programming (such as Darfur Lifeline in Sudan) designed to help audiences survive; however where possible conflict resolution and peace-building messaging can be integrated into this programming. Donors may also consider working with or creating local media platforms – radio in particular - that give voice to affected populations and in turn give credibility among affected populations to the messaging that may come from productions from the international community. Life- critical information programming can be made to evolve over time into programming that has governance dimensions for actors in conflict and disaster zones.

♦ In *states in transition*, it may be appropriate to support long-term, large scale initiatives focusing on media reconstruction and capacity building (see Box 6), media regulation, increasing dialogue and debate, and building legal structures to protect independent journalism. Media support in the context of elections (e.g. media support for public debate and election monitoring, independent media monitoring by civil society and others -see Box 7) can be particularly important. There may be continuing government control leading to opposition voices being excluded from media, or use of radio by parties in conflict to inflame tensions. To address the latter requires high standards of professionalism (such as objectivity and fairness) known and implemented by all media, and supported by transparent institutions and regulatory processes. In such instances, an appropriate focus may be on national policy, legislation and regulatory institutions for media that can foster democratic development and meet the needs of poor and marginalised people.   Media can emerge and change rapidly in states in transition, normally in response to market demand. Understanding these changes and supporting appropriate regulatory responses can help strengthen citizen-state relationships.

♦ As states become more *stable*, the focus shifts to facilitating governance through public service broadcasting support, media policy advice, budget monitoring programming, and support to dialogue and debate.

…and extreme care needs to be taken in fragile states contexts

The role of the media in the context of fragile and crisis states is a complex one. The critical role of the private Rwandan radio station, Radio Milles Collines, which was owned by family members of then President Habyarimana, in inflaming ethnic hatred in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 is well known. Partly as a result of such examples, a workshop organised in 2005 by the London School of Economic and the Annenberg School of Communication concluded that particular attention to how the liberalisation process was handled was important, especially when there is dangerous hate media around:

> *"In situations where the state is fragile.., and where the political process is unstable and de-legitimated, the primary objective of donor assistance should be supporting the formation of a functioning state. In such a scenario, unsophisticated liberalisation of the media can potentially undermine the state building project."*

Carefully designed media support programming based on detailed research should reflect the political, media and communication realities of the country concerned. Many media organisations argue that blanket conclusions or positions are inappropriate; policy positions (particularly regarding media liberalisation) and media support strategies (whether to prioritise them, what strategies to adopt) that 'do no harm' need to be informed by a context-specific analysis of the governance and media situation on the ground. In very few cases, however, is the role of the media marginal, and it is often central in shaping or reflecting power relationships in society.

The regulatory structure of media in transitional, conflict and fragile states is especially critical, and regulatory support can play a major role in reducing tension

and conflict. Box 7 provides an example of one of DFID's largest media regulation programmes.

Box 7: Media Regulation in DRC, 2004-2007

During the DRC's political 'Transition' - after the war and before elections - DFID helped fund the national media regulator, the Haute Autorité de Médias (HAM). This institutional funding was channelled through the Panos Institute Paris, which not only administered the finances, but also built HAM's capacity to better monitor radio, TV and newspapers.

The media in DRC is very diverse, plural and polarised along ethnic and political lines. It comprises at least 150 different radio stations and over 40 TV channels. Corruption is rampant and journalistic ethics are regularly flouted. It was important that the media was properly regulated and that dangerous instances of hate speech media were not allowed to grow and to derail the delicate political transition.

By the 2006 elections, HAM was noted for its even-handed approach to punishing political bias in the media - to the point of being sufficiently strong even to close down the government-controlled broadcaster, for a short period. The electoral campaign was tense - and sometimes violent, with political rivalries played out via the various broadcast stations controlled by politicians and political candidates. But it was generally agreed that the HAM fulfilled a vital role, reining in the worst political bias and preventing or punishing the hate-speech which occasionally emerged. The human rights organisation, Journaliste en Danger (JED), which was often in conflict with the HAM, admitted after the elections that: 'If HAM had not existed the situation would have been catastrophic'.

Others draw on alternative examples, such as the important role of a highly liberalised – and largely community - media in Nepal in helping to secure a peaceful democratic transition from monarchical dictatorship in 2005/6 (see Box 8). Here the media played a critical role in defusing rather than inflaming conflict. The role of the media in 2008 Kenyan crisis is complex. On the one hand, vernacular talks shows, blogs and SMS messaging are believed to have inflamed ethnic tensions. On the other, both mainstream and (the very limited) community media were key voices calling for calm (see Box 9).

Box 8: Community radio and popular protest in Nepal

Community radio is credited with a major role in the transition to democracy in Nepal. In February 2005, in response to worsening conflict between the government and Maoist rebels, the King sacked the government, closed the telephone and Internet systems and banned news reporting. Nepal's network of community radio stations – which reach almost 65% of the population - found ingenious ways of defying the ban: for instance, forbidden from broadcasting anything but music they started to sing the news. Then they became more openly defiant, informing people of their rights and the duties of government, hosting talk shows, and encouraging people to compose protest songs. They broadcast regular messages urging peaceful rather than violent protest. Community media largely maintained independence from the monarch, Maoists, government and political parties during this process. Their role contributed to bringing four million people out onto the streets calling for a peaceful resolution of the political crisis.

The Case for Communication in Sustainable Development, Panos-London, 2007

Box 9: Makutano Junction

In Kenya, DFID has been supporting Mediae to develop a highly popular local TV series called Makutano Junction. Each episode looks at a different subject, including Health, Education, Sustainable livelihoods, Rights and Governance. In the recent series, Makutano Junction developed a storyline focusing on the elections and dealing with issues such as registering, the importance of voting, challenges of bribery and co-optation of votes. It also illustrated the importance of women's role in politics.

The Makutano Junction election came on air exactly one week before the real election and the ex chief of the village - an honest woman - won the election whilst the aged corrupt MP was seen driving off in his black Mercedes still paying off disgruntled supporters through a slit in the darkened back window.

Research shows that the programme has an audience of just over 5 million people in Kenya and a further connection through SMS where some 1,700 people have sought additional information after each episode around the issues portrayed.

In the aftermath of the elections and ensuing violence, DFID supported Mediae to work with local peace initiatives to assist the peace and reconciliation process through short but powerful TV and Radio spots.

Integrated approaches are likely to have most impact.

There is increasing consensus that *comprehensive* media development interventions are most capable of effecting a sustainable paradigm shift in the way media relates to both governments and audiences. Experience demonstrates that interventions which address four focus levels - populations, practitioners, organisations and systems – in an integrated way, achieve the greatest and most lasting change. This is sketched out in the BBC World Service Trust operational framework below, which provides a useful way of thinking through the focus, aims and tools of a media development programme.

Framework for Design of Media Support Programmes (BBC WS Trust)		
Focus	Aim	Tools
Populations	Inform and enable individuals to **demand** good governance	Issue-based programming; public meetings; debates; listening clubs; interactive media platforms (like call-in programmes, community radio stations, participatory video projects etc.); citizen journalists.
Practitioners	Build **capacity** of media professionals, civil society activists, public/private sector workers, academics and teachers to increase **access to information** for populations; increase opportunities for media to connect with authorities and act as watchdogs.	Technical/editorial training; co-productions; networking between practitioners; audience research; communications training; training for outreach workers.
Organisations	Encourage **organisational change** in media houses, NGOs, multilateral agencies and government institutions that will support practitioners in their role as **watchdogs**.	Train trainers and managers; infrastructure support; audience research; editorial support; co-productions; communications training; development of public service ethos; financial sustainability capacity building; peer group exchanges.
Systems	Encourage **policy change** among governments, civil society, donors, multilateral systems, diplomatic community, and global business	Lobbying for transparency, accountability and participation; legislative/regulatory reform for free media and information; engaging government representatives in debates; support the regulatory bodies in appropriate circumstances

Reinforcing this comprehensive approach, two Africa-wide initiatives, the African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) and the Strengthening African Media Process (STREAM) - both supported by DFID and now brought together as the African Media Initiative (AMI) - have identified four main areas for media development aimed at overcoming market failures and delivering results for the poor:

1. Supporting media freedom and media/communication policy reform;
2. Building media capacities and improving media standards;
3. Strengthening audience research capacity, both to better inform programming, and to attract advertising revenue and investment;
4. Strengthening Investment, Infrastructure and the economic sustainability of public interest media.

The impact of media support has often been limited due to a number of gaps…

The current development architecture is not ideally equipped to respond to media support needs. A number of especially problematic gaps and weaknesses are:

- The information and communication needs of people living in poverty are poorly researched and defined, including in existing assessment methodologies;
- Existing tools, such as Drivers of Change analyses, consistently highlight the importance of the media (for example in enabling public debate, or ensuring government accountability), but rarely identify clear policy conclusions or priorities;
- Media support at country level is limited and coordination sometimes non-existent. This can lead at times to a dearth of understanding and support to media interventions, and at times to high levels of duplication;
- Media support initiatives are often partial, short term and impact is rarely assessed over the long term;
- Few development actors/donors have staff expert in or dedicated to media and development issues;
- Dependency on public and donor aid is partly driven by the sector's lack of business and investment planning and support, including limited audience research.

…but some key lessons reveal how media support can be more effective.

A diverse, dynamic and free media is vital to development. This can be accomplished by strengthening media infrastructure, capacity and professionalism; and supporting improvements in the quality and diversity of media content. Positive experience from media support initiatives around the world has yielded a considerable amount of information about what works, as well as what doesn't work. Based on these experiences, priorities that donors might consider include:

1. **Identifying how and why media matter in the lives of people living in poverty**: Carry out a robust sector analysis focused on identifying how media enable or prohibit engagement by citizens – particularly poor citizens – in decisions that affect them. This includes tracking the implications of profound and rapid change in technology and communications – such as mobile telephony – on politics, economics and the lives of the poor. It is also important to understand how these processes and opportunities affect men and women differently.

2. **Understand what can and cannot be supported**: Direct support to individual media organisations may be politically or commercially inappropriate (particularly if media organisations are allied with specific political groupings). Be clear about these and either work through trusted and independent intermediaries, or invest in cross-sector approaches, such as training and capacity building, press councils, printing cooperatives etc. Southern intermediaries, many of them media assistance CSOs, are central to long-term change and impact, but often lack capacity themselves. They need to be considered as both instruments of and targets of donor support. Direct support

to media sectors that explicitly focus on the poor and marginalised – such as community media – needs to be rooted in a clear development rationale, including recognition of the challenge that long-term support to community media may well create dependency problems.

3. **Treat information, communication and the media as public goods and invest accordingly:** Media and communication are public goods. Governments and development actors should take measures to enable the greater participation of poor and marginalised people in social, economic and political processes; and invest in strengthening those areas that the market alone may not provide, such as telephone access for poor people or high-quality public interest journalism.

4. **Encourage country level coordination and coherence:** identify development sector "leads" for media and communication support, including mapping of existing media support interventions and maximising complementarity between these.

5. **Analyse the political implications of support to the media:** media development programmes can sometimes be 'legitimised' via bilateral agreements between a donor and a host government in transition. Consider how a media assistance programme might relate to other DFID investments in-country and what impacts it might have on relations with the host government.

6. **Support an enabling communication environment:** Donors and reformers need to move away from a narrow focus on specific policy agendas towards broader support for the enabling environment and opportunities for progressive change. This might involve technical, financial or political support. Two elements of the enabling environment include:

    a) Regulatory framework: an appropriate legal framework and operating environment for the media helps guarantee media freedom and ensures media can operate without fear of retribution or closure. Different regulatory structures are likely to be appropriate to different states depending on where they are on the governance continuum (stable, transitional, conflict etc.)

    b) Access to information: information, transparency and good communication are essential to meaningful citizen-state engagement; free and independent media are necessary to make information available to poor people and provide channels for voice. Donors can support legislation on freedom of information, and structures and resources for implementing laws.

Further Reading and Resources

BBC World Service Trust (http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/index.shtml) and particularly the African Media Development Initiative at http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/AMDI/AMDI_summary_Report.pdf.

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Gamos, Impact of Communication in Development Knowledge Portal, http://www.icdev.info/

Global Forum for Media Development: (2006) *Media Matters: Perspectives on Advancing Governance and Development from the Global Forum for Media Development at* http://www.internews.org/pubs/gfmd/mediamatters.pdf.

The Communication Initiative http://www.comminit.com/en/demandgov.html.

Panos (2007) *At the heart of change: the Case for Communication,* Panos Institute, London: http://panos.org.uk/extra/heartofchange.asp

World Bank Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP) at http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTDEVCOMMENG/EXTGOVACC/0,,menuPK:3252017~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:3252001,00.html

World Bank Institute (2008), Broadcasting, Voice and Accountability: A Public Interest Approach to Policy, Law and Regulation http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=312911

UNDP (2006) *Communication for Empowerment: developing media strategies in support of vulnerable groups.* Practical Guidance Note. http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/A2I_guides_communicationforempowerment.pdf

UNDP (2003) *Right to Information* Practice Note http://www.undp.org/policy/docs/policynotes/a2i-english-final-4649027220103883.pdf

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