



## SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

### STRENGTHENING INDEPENDENT MEDIA

October 4-11, 2009

### DRAFT REPORT

#### Introduction

In October 2009, a group of major donors from private foundations and aid agencies held a groundbreaking meeting in Salzburg, Austria on Governance, Development, and Media: Aligning Strategies to Maximize Results.

The group, made up of leading development figures focusing on governance and media, came together as part of the Salzburg Global Seminar's Strengthening Independent Media Initiative (SIM), and resolved to actively pursue the practical connections between media development and the new field of "media for development." This process aspires to forge new possibilities for collaboration between those donors who support the development of independent media, and those who are using media to advance social goals in specialized areas, such as public health and poverty alleviation.

The SIM initiative, started in 2008 by the Salzburg Global Seminar, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the Global Forum for Media Development has four principal goals: to bring greater strategic focus and coordination to the field of independent media development around the world; to increase the flow of financial support from private as well as public sources; to promote the use of promising new technologies into the media development sector; and to improve coordination between funders, trainers, and media development implementers.

In pursuing the practical connections between media development and the new field of "media for development" the SIM Initiative will seek to transcend specific stories and campaigns and work towards the advancement of new media "ecosystems." Specialists in media development are exploring ways to expand the ecosystems to contribute more extensive coverage of issues in the public interest. Specialists in media for development have seen that investing in media ecosystems can help advance their priorities through supporting media platforms that are reliable, respected, and sustainable.

Both the media development and media for development sectors recognize that the innovations in new media technology offer unprecedented opportunity. At the same time, these rapidly evolving ecosystems will also require new commitments to research, monitoring and evaluation tools, and material support to understand and husband it well.

The donors identified a group of common goals that suggest opportunities for common effort.



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### Key Areas of Interest for Potential Collaboration

#### 1. Transparency from Information Providers

There is a pressing need for public data producers to be more transparent. Citizens need to know the sources of public information and how those sources are collected. This includes data provided by non-governmental organizations and multilaterals such as the World Bank and the UNDP, as well as the findings of academics, private research centers, and governments. In developed and developing world countries, public information should be made available digitally as well as in traditional ways, and donors should engage data producers to be more transparent and to provide information in ways that is widely accessible.

#### 2. New Training for Content Producers

In many countries, journalists and other content producers need to acquire new skills in computer-assisted reporting and digital storytelling to complement their existing strengths in critical thinking and analysis. These skills are critical to better interpret information for the public benefit. Increasingly, citizens can themselves be independent content producers. Emerging and self-sustaining professional journalism organizations should be encouraged to include such citizens in their training and to support the creation of new partnerships in content production.

#### 3. Fostering Multiple Channels of Communication

3a. Innovating and Identifying Appropriate Channels: When the goal is to deliver information to those who would most benefit from it, both the media development and the media for development sectors should seek to support innovation in new media platforms and traditional platforms.

3b. Scaling/Sustaining Channels: Media donors should also support the development of stable media organizations by offering strong, appropriate, and adaptive business models; access to resources; management skills; and supportive institutions to help them take root and provide consistent, reliable information – on any subject – to the public.

#### 4. Citizen access and engagement

The universal ability to “seek, receive and impart” news and information is needed to advance all positive human endeavors. Media-related projects of every kind should experiment with various ways for citizens to access and engage with news and information, including traditional journalism and public-service messaging.

### Key Points and Conclusions

1. **Collaboration within the donor community could be a key factor in advancing this process.** The global economic crisis and the simultaneous transformation of media technologies have altered the balance between traditional journalism and new media platforms. As donors race to keep pace with the change, they will need new



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ways to maximize their investments and monitor the results of their efforts. Collaboration could allow the community to achieve more with finite resources.

2. **There is a need for increased consultation to promote coherence in the international media assistance sector.** As traditional donors alter their focus and new donors multiply, it requires effort to enhance collaboration and reduce overlapping (and even conflicting) projects. The task of media assistance in developing countries is expensive and complex, touching on infrastructure, education, and legal structure. Through information-sharing and consultation, donors may accomplish more by dividing up the tasks.
3. **The quest for greater coherence will require more information towards planning and analysis, and better access to existing research.** Helpful research is being produced in various academic and professional institutions, but it is fragmented and dispersed. Likewise, some work in the critical area of monitoring and evaluation is advancing, but with little ability to develop common methods and indicators. The media assistance community needs to expand existing research, develop more targeted research, and create a shared resource base for both research and tools for monitoring and evaluation. Such a resource, developed as a curated online site to host social networking, could support the ongoing consultative process.
4. **New media models have generated a demand for new funding, new expertise and new investment models.** There have been some striking advances in this field, such as the models promoted by the Media Development Loan Fund ([www.mdlf.org](http://www.mdlf.org)). The media assistance field would benefit from more experimentation and development in this area, as well engagement with some of the new funding sources and foundations that are now active in this space. Engaging with new models of investment could help to attract these new donors and investors to the field, and “grow the sector” by providing significant private funding to international media enterprises. MDLF’s new model of equity investment offers the added advantage of building in management support for organizations that are learning on the job.

### Key Areas of Potential Strategy Alignment

1. Describing the Landscape: The Need for Collaboration on Research, Indices, and Monitoring and Evaluation

Many meeting participants noted the need for more sophisticated and coherent data on media development, as well as the need to standardize indices for monitoring and evaluation.

Several important examples of existing research were discussed, including Pippa Norris’s findings from Public Sentinel: News Media & Governance Reform, a forthcoming CommGap report.



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However, the group noted that the need for – and investments in – research is growing. While much relevant research is being produced by academic institutions and think tanks, it is often produced in a fragmented way. Academic institutions, such as the Berkman Center at Harvard, the Annenberg Schools at the U Penn and USC, and the Oxford Internet Institute produce floods of reports, but not all of them are applicable to international media development. At the same time, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and the American Political Science Association hold annual meetings that circulate hundreds of international studies, without presenting an efficient way of mining them for practical use. Marguerite Sullivan informed the group that the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA /NED) has taken an important initiative in this area by creating a bibliographic database on media development research.<sup>i</sup> This extraordinary resource could offer a foundation for a new platform for expanded research and networking.

The meeting also addressed the related question of indices. It is difficult to measure progress in media development without a set of baselines, but such baselines are difficult to come by – especially as new program areas and new technologies proliferate. There is still a role for traditional measures, such as the Freedom House map of press freedom and IREX's Media Sustainability Index, or MSI.<sup>ii</sup> However, the MSI, which measures conditions for independent media, only covers 76 countries at the moment. There is a pressing need to extend the MSI to the Americas and to additional area of Africa and Asia – perhaps beginning with individual countries of special interest to the development community. A preliminary agreement was made during the meeting among several donor agencies to collaborate on making this index more globally representative.

A number of significant research projects and indices are still in a pilot phase, without the funding to build them out as systematic resources. Donor coordination could play an important role in determining which themes and projects should be given priority, and constructing models for their development.

Strong research and accurate indices are critical for the planning phase of media assistance projects. But donors are increasingly emphasizing the monitoring and evaluation process as a means to assess their impact. The global economic crisis obliges some foundations to cut programs, and others to address increasingly urgent needs. Program officers in both categories are under more pressure to demonstrate that projects make a practical, measurable difference in society. (Media projects are especially vulnerable to this scrutiny, due to their disrupted business model, transformative new technology, and nascent academic foundations.) Media monitoring and evaluation is still in its infancy, and many organizations – both donors and implementers – are creating in-house models. This can lead to the creation of conflicting models, or the comparison of dissimilar indicators for similar projects. Furthermore, many implementers in the new digital media community resist the notion of monitoring and evaluation in itself, arguing that their projects evolve in a realm of experimentation that does not lend itself to external measures.

One first step could be to the online publication of a set of “best practices” in monitoring and evaluation, and make the processes and indices more transparent through discussion.



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### 2. Making a More Complete Economic Case: the Need to Bring More Economists and Political Scientists into the Media Development Sphere

In recent years development economists have begun to look at the role of the news media in combating corruption and contributing toward good governance, suggesting a powerful economic argument for increased media assistance. On another front, institutions with an interest in promoting social development goals – notably public health and environmental protection – have been exploring the role of “media for development” in advancing these goals.

Several individuals have served as powerful voices in linking media assistance to broader development goals, including former World Bank economist Daniel Kaufmann (now at the Brookings Institution) and Oxford professor Paul Collier, author of *The Bottom Billion*. The field of media assistance would benefit greatly were additional voices from the fields of economics and political science to advance and articulate these relationships in the policy sphere. They could also serve to expand a community of interdisciplinary and applied researchers in the fields of media, economics and governance.

### 3. Building the Case for Transparency: The Need to Focus Resources on Accountability for Development Impact

Recent research (by the World Bank Institute and others) has drawn attention to the role of media in promoting transparency and accountability. Democratic development depends on an active exchange of accurate and vital information between governments, citizens, media, and institutions that monitor public issues. For example, the World Bank produces data to monitor the performance of governments, pointing out shortfalls and signalling corruption. Ideally, citizens should be able to obtain and utilize this information, with the help of media that presents it in a clear and accessible fashion. But in many developing countries, this exchange is stalemated by censorship, a dearth of media that can serve this purpose, and a lack of public education and engagement.

The current era of media development offers new possibilities to stimulate this process. An unprecedented amount of information is being produced by an increasing number of institutions, including governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and think tanks. New possibilities for disseminating this information are arising among both traditional media and new media models, including online citizen journalism and social media.

However, these elements would benefit from assistance in forging connections. It is still too easy for World Bank data to languish in little-read publications, for journalism to miss reporting opportunities on major issues, and for social media to remain focused on entertainment and social networking. These elements of civil society need to explore new forms of data presentation and story-telling to communicate important information to the public, and to generate action in the public interest. Similarly, organizations rooted in civil society can be trained and encouraged to gather information at a grassroots level and feed it back into the development process, creating another dimension of accountability.



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Public and private donors have an opportunity to play a critical role in promoting this four-part process by:

- a. Working with governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations and think tanks to produce and disseminate information that promotes transparency and accountability
- b. Supporting the training of journalists, citizen journalists and social media organizations to interpret, categorize, and disseminate this information;
- c. Supporting innovation and fostering, scaling, and sustaining new and existing platforms and channels for news and information to be extended to the public.
- d. Engaging with citizens and civil society organizations to utilize this information and contribute information back into the development process.

#### 4. Enhancing the Enabling Environment: The Need for Investment and Partnerships in Transparency and Legal Defense Initiatives:

One of the prerequisites for progress in media progress is a favorable enabling environment, in which national laws and regulations promote freedom of expression and the evolution of professional standards. Many regions of the world still labor under punitive legal structures, and violence is an ongoing concern among traditional journalists and bloggers alike. One participant pointed out during the meeting that there are currently more bloggers in prison than traditional journalists.

As a result of the meeting, the Open Society Institute and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation have agreed to explore ways to collaborate in promoting press freedom and improving the regulatory framework for the media. Both OSI and Knight have been early and significant supporters of international press freedom initiatives. Over the past decade, OSI has advanced programs in the study and reform of legal and regulatory environments in a number of countries, which complements Knight's work in the field.

#### 5. Promoting Sustainable Models for Media: The Need to Reinvent the Media Investor

For many years, most contributions to media development have taken the form of grants. In the mid-1990s, the Media Development Loan Fund pioneered a new approach, involving low-interest loans combined with management support. The MDLF model has been a stunning success, with a near-perfect repayment record. Now the Omidyar Network is exploring parallel models of investment for social impact, and other foundations, such as Skoll, have expressed interest in developing their own innovative models to support social entrepreneurship.

This is a critical area for several reasons. As new media technologies challenge traditional media business models in the West, the shift is testing the role of the news media as a democratic institution. New business models in media are evolving on many different platforms and in many regions – as opposed to being “exported” to developing countries as in the past.





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Donors now have the opportunity to build programs with flexible investment models and to dramatically increase the amount of available funding. There is also the possibility of attracting new investors in low-interest media loans. This could include both major investors and participants in micro-finance models (a “kiva.org” for media projects). The involvement of new investors will place a new emphasis on market development and the creation of successful business models.

In order to thrive, these new approaches to investment would need to address a number of issues on a local level, including communications infrastructure, the regulatory environment, and the recruitment of regional investors. While traditional media will necessarily remain an area of interest, this approach will focus attention on digital media projects and their potential impact on governance and development.

In this fashion, the new wave of media investment will need to work closely with parallel programs in transparency and accountability and enhancing the enabling environment. As one participant noted, this new wave of media investment will also need to help create a new wave of media investors.

### 6. Creating an Online Information “Ecosystem” for Donors: The Need for Structured Information-Sharing

As the donor community wrestles with more and more complex issues, the need for shared information becomes acute. Media assistance donors have funded a number of experiments in social media, and it is now an opportune time to apply these lessons on behalf of their own community. The creation of an online media development portal could help to gather and rationalize academic research, data, project planning, and contact information for specialists and local partners -- transforming confusion into efficiencies.

Ideally, the creator and host for such a platform would be a trusted “honest broker” within the community that can interact comfortably with both donor and implementing communities. Such a platform cannot substitute for the process of periodic face-to-face meetings, but it can greatly increase their effectiveness in the interim.

Furthermore, a site that contained a well-organized set of links could add coherence to evolving disciplines such as monitoring and evaluation. Advances could be easily updated, complemented by search-engine and RSS functions.

## Recommendations

1. The media donors initiative should build on the advances made at the Salzburg meeting through follow-up sessions to define and advance specific areas of interest.
  - a. The first should be a meeting to explore strategies for promoting research. This could be held in New York in January, in conjunction with the OSI meeting.



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- b. The second meeting, to explore social entrepreneurship and social media, could be held in London in April, in conjunction with the Skoll World Forum (April 14-16, Oxford).
2. The donors community should support a radical reformulation of the connection between media and development thinking, creating new interdisciplinary networks among academic and professional individuals and institutions who can advance the field.
3. This should include a large-scale expansion of research. A number of promising research projects exist, but have only been carried out for restricted geographical areas. (One example is the Media Sustainability Index, which covers 76 of the world's 194 countries.) Research is also needed to explore the efficacy of media development projects themselves, to work towards a consensus regarding what it is possible to achieve.
4. The donors community should hold a follow-up meeting in the spring of 2010, to further explore how social media functions in a development context and how best to support it.
5. Participants in the Salzburg SIM initiative need to move the process forward by engaging in interim activities. At the Salzburg meeting, organizations volunteered to take on the following tasks:
  - a. Marguerite Sullivan said that CIMA / NED would continue to commission research reports on relevant topics, and further expand the CIMA online archive on media (in the form of both summary and full reports).
  - b. Bettina Peters and Joyce Barnathan from the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) are committed to serving as a conduit between the donor and the implementation communities. The GFMD will seek to bring more new media and citizen journalism organizations into the process.
  - c. The Salzburg Global Seminar will continue, through the SIM Initiative, to offer a platform for further consultation and collaboration. It will serve as a physical and virtual meeting ground for the community, seek to develop a better communications structure, and increase outreach to donors on the periphery. It will also tap the Seminar's international network community of leading academics and experts for intellectual contributions to the field.
6. The donor community will work towards building out the SIM website to maintain the flow of communications between meetings. The website could add research and news feed components, as well as curated social networking to expedite collaboration.





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### **Strengthening Independent Media**

The “Strengthening Independent Media Initiative” (SIM) is a three year-program conducted in partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD). It has organized a series of meetings bringing together leading organizations in international media development, to promote collaboration and enhance the understanding of this rapidly evolving field.

The October 2009 seminar consisted of two components. The first, “Seeding Tomorrow’s Media” (October 4-7) invited individuals and organizations who are advancing innovative projects in new media in developing countries, as well as selected representatives from the donor community. The implementers were invited to the pre-donors meeting to provide insights on the ways in which the impact of mobile phone networks, increasing broadband availability, access to open source software and solutions, and the role of new media entrepreneurs and activists are redefining the ways in which development organizations and foundations think about their resources and investments. The findings and results of the meeting were then be fed directly into the donors meeting, seeking to challenge some of the conventional wisdom about the way in which new media ecosystems are best funded, supported, and sustained.

The second meeting was called “Governance, Development, and Media: Aligning Strategies to Maximize Results” (October 7-11). It included representatives from a number of major U.S. private foundations engaged in media projects; bilateral aid agencies; and the World Bank Institute, as well as several representatives of major implementation organizations. The meeting was designed to reach across the boundaries of policy, strategy and practice, to identify points of intersection among donor communities concerned about governance, development and media, and to explore how coordinated approaches to research, program design, investment, and measurement could increase synergy and impact across discrete development fields.

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<sup>i</sup> See <http://geniehost25.inmagic.com/dbtw-wpd/searchMediaBib.html>

<sup>ii</sup> See <http://www.irex.org/MSI/index.asp>