



IN BRIEF...

Media and freedom of expression

Democracy requires universal freedom of expression and free media access. Sida's media support seeks to strengthen free speech in the developing countries, so that every human being's right of self-expression and right to information can be realised.

Access to wide-ranging, diverse media is a guarantee that different voices will be heard and reach the general public. Sida provides long-term support for networks and organisations that pursue these objectives. Journalists play a key role

in a country's progression towards democracy.

Journalists in fragile democracies need good examples, encouragement and external support if they are to be able to contribute to social development. Sida therefore supports deve-

lopment of journalism and seeks to promote the capacity of independent media to facilitate the public's access to information and social debate.

Sida's support also includes development of new media, since the new technology changes the preconditions for journalistic work.. This applies both to journalism as a craft and the scope for obtaining and disseminating information.

Political conditions

General political and economic liberalisation during the 1990s changed the media's scope for functioning and evolving in many developing countries. Liberalisation has also given organisations working to strengthen respect for freedom of speech a foothold. Independent newspapers and broadcasting stations have been set up, boosting free debate, dissemination of information and scrutiny of the state and society.

Media owned and controlled by the state, which still predominate in many cooperating countries, have incurred competition. But access to media is still largely confined to well-educated people in urban areas. Since most inhabitants of most developing countries lack formal education and many live in rural areas, it is more difficult for them to participate in public debate. This gap impedes poverty reduction and democratic development.

Despite liberalisation, the media are still fighting an uphill battle in many countries. Even if free opinion-



PHOTO: HOWARD BURDITT/REUTERS

Journalists in Zimbabwe demonstrate against restrictions imposed on freedom of expression in their country. Criticism of the regime has been silenced by persecution of journalists and the bombing of a printing-press. Sida funds organisations that work for freedom of expression in Southern Africa.

moulding is formally guaranteed, freedom of expression, information and the press may be inadequately respected. The media and journalists are subjected to threats and pressures from strong economic or political groups.

In countries where most people have access to state-controlled media only, Sida can support activities that strengthen the editorial independence and professionalism of these media. Sida seeks a dialogue with the cooperating countries regarding the notion of 'independent media'. This dialogue is aimed at reaching a shared value foundation of the principles that should underlie freedom of expression and all citizens' right to a forum for debate and information. This dialogue has proved fruitful; the basic principles are shared more often than might be expected.

Without an active media policy for freedom of the press, journalists' working conditions become very insecure, especially since very few belong to trade unions. Poorly trained and paid journalists have difficulty in defending journalistic ethics. Insecurity is another reason why corruption and self-censorship exist among journalists.

Sida provides support for:

- Media organisations that work for freedom of expression and information and against laws that restrict press and broadcasting freedom. Organisations or groups that combat restrictions on freedom of expression and provide legal aid in the media sector are key partners.
- Local media, e.g. small radio stations, help to foster diversity and pluralism, and boost popular social debate.
- Basic and in-service training of journalists, photographers, and radio and TV producers. This training should be aimed primarily at enhancing journalistic skills, professional ethics and subject knowledge.
- Public-service activities, with an emphasis on radio and film media.

Media organisations

Organisations for freedom of expression, such as Article XIX, the

International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), work both globally and regionally. This helps when writers or publications need direct protection. Sida also supports the Panos Institute, which works globally with media in sectors central to Sida — the environment, media monitoring in conflict situations, HIV and Aids, reproductive health and gender issues.

'We can bring what's going on into the public eye, and condemn those who threaten journalists in their work. MISA, the Media Institute of Southern Africa, also provides financial assistance for journalists accused of slander,' says Luckson A. Chipare at the organisation's head office in Namibia.

The net publication *Algeria Interface* is another Sida-supported project. This newspaper provides its readers with information that is otherwise hard to come by in Algeria.

Local media

In the countryside, radio — which does not call for major investments in technology — is the paramount medium. Support for local media is required to help bridge the gap between urban and rural areas.

On local radio, people whose opinions are otherwise seldom heard can take part in social debate, in live broadcasts. The local media are also hothouses for journalists, permitting the profession to recruit people whose background and experience differ from those of the educated elite.

In Vietnam since 1994, Sida has supported a project in which journalists and technicians from the Swedish Broadcasting Company and its Vietnamese counterpart have been collaborating to develop local radio. Formerly, all material was taped and controlled. More broadcasting time and live broadcasts have permitted the creation of radio programming that is genuinely relevant to listeners. Listener ratings have risen markedly.

'Local radio has become a forum for public debate in Vietnam,' says Jan Petterson, who heads the local-radio project.

With technological development, it

is now also possible to broadcast local cable TV in countries where all TV production used to be centrally controlled. The Internet is an immense asset for local editorial offices, too. Up-to-date news and backgrounders, as well as opportunities for training and exchange of information, are available.

Training

Lack of professionalism among journalists hampers efforts to establish independent media. Untruths and rumours in the media can result in a backlash, which impairs people's confidence in free media. It is also difficult to bring about reforms in legislation on freedom of expression if journalists themselves do not know what form such legislation can take. Training to boost journalists' professional skill and ethics and their subject knowledge is therefore a key element in Sida's support.

Training in financial administration for media-enterprise leaders is another part of Sida's media support. Although many new publications and radio stations are being started, not enough is known about making a media company viable in the long term.

One of Sida's partners is a Swedish institution that has long experience in the field, FOJO (the Institute for Further Education of Journalists). FOJO runs, for example, the TV journalists' training course at Birzeit University in the West Bank.

The countries around Lake Victoria — Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda — are all affected by the environmental degradation around the lake. During 2002, Makerere University in Uganda is to start training journalists, with Sida's help, in long-term monitoring of environmental concerns.

'Environmental issues will, we hope, increasingly come into focus,' says Monica Chibita of Makerere University. 'Bettertrained journalists bring about broader and more readable coverage of the environment.'

In admission to this coveted training course, one aim is to ensure as even a balance of the sexes as possible. The course is the first of its kind in East Africa, and one objective is, using information on environmental



PHOTO: ULF GÄRDEBO

Live broadcast from the volley-ball tournament in Nin Thuan, Vietnam. The radio reporters – who previously wrote telegrams only – go round interviewing the spectators and players. Live broadcasting was part of FOJO's further training of radio journalists in Vietnam.

issues, to reverse the adverse trend in the region. The project also seeks to strengthen other institutions in the sector that train students in investigative journalism and the role of the media in war and conflict situations.

Minority groups find it difficult to make themselves heard in many countries, and Sida therefore gives priority to projects giving pride of place to these groups' rights, knowledge and culture. In Guatemala, for example, Sida supports a course of training in journalism that caters primarily for the Maya Indians in the country. The majority of inhabitants belong to various Maya peoples, each with a distinctive language, but the media and society alike are entirely dominated by the Spanish-speaking mestizo (mixed-blood) majority. The training focuses on basic journalistic skills, but also methods adapted to the Maya peoples' news requirements. The aim is to boost their participation and rights in society.

Public service

Public access to media that are free from commercial and state interests requires radio and TV channels with a public-service orientation. These can provide an independent range of programmes characterised by quality, breadth and depth that give the public access to information and social debate.

In the third world, there is no scope for funding public services with tax revenues or licence fees. Commercial radio is often dominated by entertainment and music. In Tanzania, Sida has embarked on a dialogue with both private and state-run media on ways of developing broadcasting media with a public-service emphasis.

Partners

Sida cooperates with the media sector as well as the rest of civil society and individual countries, provided that the various parties' priorities agree. The aim is to lay the foundations for encounters and collaboration between people who work in the media or for freedom of expression. Establishing and developing institutions, such as schools of journalism, are ways of promoting the profession's development. Exchange of experience and development of skills in the media sector also take place through institutional networks, research and debate. Sida is endeavouring to increase coordination with both bilateral and multilateral donors.

Media support

Media support from Sida is conditional on fulfilment of Sida's general aims. In addition, the project must be sustainable, promote local know-how and be based on personal responsi-

bility. Where media projects are concerned, there is a marked risk of aid dependence. Project applications should therefore also include a clear description of how the support is to be phased out.

Long-term projects that may become self-funding are a higher priority than short-term ones. Cooperation is increasing with Swedish institutions that have specialist expertise. Sida is striving to mediate and facilitate cooperation between countries, institutions and organisations.

Sida's action programmes

Poverty reduction

A variety of independent media accessible to all citizens narrows the information gap that exists in many developing countries. By identifying problems and creating a debate, the media can make people more aware and active. Critical scrutiny, dissemination of information and popular education through the media can help to improve health, extend schooling and boost financial support, paving the way for poverty reduction.

Gender equality

The media can promote knowledge of gender issues by, for example, questioning stereotyped images of male and female roles. They can also pay attention to women's scope for participating in decision-making processes. Accordingly, it is particularly important to support women's opportunities for vocational training in the media sector. This may increase the number of women in senior positions and result in the emergence of women's networks in professional and trade organisations.

Democracy, human rights and peaceful conflict resolution

Freedom of expression and access to a free press are human rights. Access to all-round information and free exchange of opinions are crucial to citizens' ability to take a stance, reach well-founded decisions and make free choices. Free media can also protect individuals from the abuse of power.

The media are a key provider of information in conflict situations.

But in some cases the media also risk being used as part of the power game, to spread disinformation. It is therefore important to support the positive forces working for independence, reliability and humanitarian information.

Environmental awareness

Information in the media about environmental problems is a precondition for reaching the public and solving the problems. Environmental organisations can provide information through their own publications or by passing on material to other media.

Internet links

MISA, Media Institute of Southern

Africa: www.misanet.org

Panos Institute: www.panos.org.uk

Further training in journalism, FOJO:

www.fo.hik.se

Algeria-Interface:

www.algeria-interface.com

Article XIX of the AfricaProgram-

me: www.article19.org

Reporters Without Borders:

www.rsf.fr

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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