

Freedom of Expression



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AGENCY

Department for Democracy
and Social Development

Division for Culture and Media

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Preface

THIS STRATEGY for Sida's media development co-operation has been worked out during 1992 by the Section for Culture & Media at the Education Division. The strategy will be revised from time to time. Revised March 1996. We therefore welcome comments.

March 1995

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1. General

1.1 SPECIFICATION

Sida media development co-operation consists of contributions to radio, print media, television and news bureaux, as well as support to auxiliary functions relating to these media.

Supporting media of communication serves the comprehensive goal of promoting "freedom of expression" and thus forms a part of Sida's policy to promote democracy and human rights. Media development co-operation aims to support the development of civil rights and political participation in the recipient country (the rights of the first generation) and to facilitate diversity of cultural expression.¹

1.2 BACKGROUND

During the period, 1977-1982 Sida gave assistance in the communication sector. 95 per cent of the assistance was directed to telecommunications, and 5 per cent to media. The latter supported the training of journalists, radio producers, broadcasting technicians and the rural press.

The assistance was primarily channeled to Sida programme countries in Africa.

Later in the 1980s and in years since, the focus of support has broadened to include projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The record to date shows difficulties with media development co-operation primarily deriving from various external constraints imposed on the media sector. In situations of oppression Sida assistance has sought to make it harder for governments to hinder

freedom of expression.

Where greater freedom prevails development co-operation has sought to promote and vitalize democratic processes.

The assistance extended has been relatively limited. Professional training has been the prime focus.

Tendencies towards greater media freedom are apparent today. Greater freedom will give assistance measures greater leeway.

Some difficulties remain, however. For example, the governments in many recipient countries keep a controlling and limiting hand on the media sector; assistance extended to individual media risks establishing financial dependency; and so forth.

2. The Media Sector

2.1 MEDIA WORLDWIDE

Differences in socio-economic development prevail in the realm of the media, media technology, media ownership and the use of media for communication and information.

On the one hand, information and the media are considered so vital to our industrial societies that we sometimes describe them as "information societies".

On the other hand, millions of people in developing countries have no word for radio, television, satellite or rotary press in their mother tongues.

Be that as it may, media – and broadcast media in particular – are potentially present everywhere.

Transistor radios have, for example, come to villages around the world much earlier than either electricity, reliable drinking water, measles vaccine or a school.

2.2 MEDIA IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The gap between wealthy industrialized countries and poor developing countries, together with the concentration of

(1) In addition to media development co-operation of these kinds, Sida also supports media and media components within the framework of other projects and programmes in other sectors, e.g., infrastructure and health. Furthermore, assistance to the media sector is included in various frame organizations' aid projects, e.g., radio and television production within projects to promote children's rights. (A frame organization is an organization with which Sida has a special agreement concerning cooperation for development assistance).

technological development in the former, has paved the way for the penetration in developing countries of media operating out of industrialized metropolises.

Given this development, voices were raised in the 1970s calling for a New world information order, in order – above all – to break the global news oligopoly which a handful of news bureaux based in Europe and the USA (most of which anglophone) had acquired.² One consequence of the prevailing concentration of influence is that European and North American perspectives dominate the media news in developing countries.³

The media sector in many countries is unevenly developed in terms of geographical reach, target groups, quality and diversity.

The government and organizations close to the government (the ruling party/parties, state controlled trade unions, etc.) predominate among owners of the broadcast media and exert considerable influence over broadcasting; in many countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, they also have control of the press.

The sector is often disadvantaged by a general lack of legislation and/or contractual agreements that safeguard the sectors independence and define various actors' rights, tasks and integrity.

Where freedom of the press has been formally statuted, the practical exercise of the freedoms that exist may nonetheless be hindered by such factors as general poverty, lack of professional competence, lack of branch cohesion, and a heritage of government dominance over the media.

Self-censorship on the part of editors and journalists/producers, too, may seriously limit, and sometimes set aside, the

professional integrity of individual media and the "watchdog" functions of journalists vis-à-vis holders of power.

In addition to economic factors – the high costs of production and distribution, weak revenue bases (advertisements, sponsoring) and weak purchasing power among the general public – other factors such as the political attitudes expressed in legislation on freedom of the press, freedom of expression, etc., set the bounds for what the media can do.

Widespread illiteracy and linguistic diversity are other potent factors affecting the value and meaning of media to individual citizens and to society as a whole.

In Africa and Asia a colonial heritage of centralized and state-owned media, particularly in broadcasting, lives on.⁴

In Africa, with the exception of a very few countries which have traditions of news gathering and reporting independent of the government, there are relatively few independent print media.

These, like most state-owned organs, are generally based in the capital and are owned by religious groups, women's groups, human rights organizations, and unions. Few print media are published for economic gain.

Multinational companies control some media in some countries.

In a few countries newspaper publishers' associations coordinate collective purchasing, printing and distribution.

In the current democratization process independent media have increased in number and importance in several African countries.

There are signs, albeit weak ones, of emerging alternatives to state ownership and control in broadcasting, as well.

In South Africa, the oppressive institutions once created to enforce apartheid have made

(2) The McBride Commission, appointed by UNESCO, called for measures to redress the imbalances and inequalities prevailing in global news flows and to promote greater pluralism with regard to news sources and channels.

(3) Today three news services – Reuter (U.K.), AP (North American) and AFP (France) – have hegemony.

(4) The following description principally applies to the recipients of Sida media development co-operation.

conditions particularly difficult for the media and journalists.⁵

Among *Asian countries*, India, Sri Lanka and other countries of southern Asia have traditions of an independent press, whereas state ownership and influence is dominant in south-east Asia.

The state is the sole actor on the broadcasting scene in most Asian countries.

In *Latin America* media ownership is more widely distributed among religious groups, public institutions, NGOs and commercial enterprises. Private (non-government) ownership and independent journalism have longer traditions in Latin America than in most other parts of the third world.

More and more countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are involved in the democratization process.

Demands for democratic government and respect for human rights are voiced with varying emphasis and varying success all over the developing world.

3. Media Development Co-operation: Objectives

Under the comprehensive goal of defending freedom of expression, Sida media development co-operation aims to

1. stimulate the growth and vitality of media sectors that are characterized by pluralism, professionalism and integrity and reach a large share of the general public, serving citizens' right to all-round information and the free exchange of ideas and opinions; Such a media sector works for, and is strengthened by:

- freedom from dependence on a single power base, or a few powerful interests, in society;
- organizations which further the needs

and interests of the media, professional and other groups in the sector and which serve the sector's training and education needs;

- the broadest possible *pluralism* of political opinion;
- a broad spectrum of media which can reach the greatest possible share of the population (*popular participation* and *media reach*).

Furthermore, the media sector is strengthened by:

- laws and agreements which codify freedom of the press and the rights and tasks of media vis-à-vis the government, society and citizens;
- an independent system of justice that can secure the observance of pertinent laws and statutes.

Such an independent, professional and pluralistic media sector

- constitutes a vital democratic resource through the contribution it makes to the development of a free exchange of ideas and all-round information.

Such flows of communication and information, together with the individual citizen's right to information, are essential to the ability of the citizen's to make well-founded decisions and free choices on issues of importance to their lives and to society as a whole.

2. Furthermore, Sida media development co-operation seeks to promote the growth and vitality of individual media, particularly radio, press and news services which are characterized by experience, quality, diversity and integrity.

Media which serve many different functions can contribute to democratic, economic and social progress, judged from the point of view of both individuals and households and of society at large.

3.⁶ Sida media development co-operation

(5) This strategy was written before the change-over to a democratic form of government in South Africa.

also aims to encourage the emergence of media and media components in projects and programmes in other sectors of society such as health and medical care, education, human rights, environmental protection, etc.

4. Strategy for Media Development co-operation

Measures in support of the media in countries receiving Swedish development assistance should be focused on four areas:

- A. Survey of the media sector
- B. Development of the media sector as a whole
- C. Assistance to individual media
- D. Development co-operation for professional training.

A. SURVEY

Effective measures in support of the media, the media sector and professional training will vary according to the specific conditions that prevail in each country or region.

The drafting of projects and programmes should therefore follow a survey of the media sector in the country or region in question, which will also benefit follow-up and evaluation of the projects.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA SECTOR AS A WHOLE

The prime purposes of support to the development of media organizations are

- to assist and strengthen the professionals working in the sector and to bolster their integrity.

Strengthening the professional organizations of journalists, photographers, radio

and television producers and other vital groups as an aid to their professional development and to promote their interests is one means toward this objective. Such measures might include direct assistance to federations of journalists, producers, editors and publishers, and station managers.

- to strengthen the status, integrity and responsibility of the media with respect to freedom of the press, freedom of expression and freedom of information.

Thus, Sida may support organizations which cast light on, investigate and do scientific research about infringements of these freedoms.

Sida may also provide assistance to legal aid funds, to organizations within the sector for the maintenance of high ethical standards and to funds and advisory organs for assistance to individual media.

- to enhance the efficiency of media through sector-wide assistance to production and distribution.

E.g. assistance to joint distribution schemes for newspapers, collective purchasing, as well as audience and readership research.

Sida may support the development of regional cooperation and coordination in the media sector.

C. ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL MEDIA

Sida should primarily focus on radio, print media and news bureaux.

Sida should assist individual media, but with caution, so as to avoid distortions of competitive relations or aid dependency. Caution should also be observed in connection with support to private media enterprises for acquisitions in other countries.⁷

Considering that media operations not always are profitable, the receiver and donor should have agreed from the outset as to the necessity of financial planning with a view to

(6) The strategy set out here refer primarily to development co-operation of the type described under items 1 and 2.

the eventual phasing out of external development co-operation.

Sida development co-operation should primarily be administered in the form of training that is integrated with material production assistance and reader/audience surveys.

Sida may support news gathering, the expression of opinion, cultural expression, education, advice and information, as well as audience/readership research.

Sida may support activities in specified areas, e.g., production of environmental news, programmes on human rights issues, and so forth.

Sida may also give assistance to media output for special target groups within the general audience, e.g., radio and television programmes, newspapers, supplements/ columns for children and youth, for women, ethnic minorities, etc.

• Radio

Sida should give priority to broadcast media, especially radio, in order to give broad sectors of the population access to media.

Radio is relatively cheap with respect to both production, distribution and reception/use.

Television still has rather limited reach in most developing countries. Television is also a comparatively costly medium.

• Print media and news services

In order to contribute to greater pluralism in the media sector Sida should support print media. Print media also merit development co-operation in that they contribute to the literate environment.

National and regional news services which work for greater measures of independence in

journalistic coverage also merit development co-operation.

In order to contribute to greater pluralism as well as broader reach on the part of the media Sida should support the media which offer widespread access (often radio stations), which strive to provide all-round information, a free exchange of ideas and a representative selection of opinions in their copy/programme output (including state-owned media where the owner has relinquished all control over editorial policy and operations).⁸

In order to compensate for geographical concentration of media output, Sida should support media which are well rooted in the local community (e.g. branch editorial offices), and not least local radio.

D. DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Sida should primarily support:

- * primary and continuous training of journalists, photographers, radio/TV producers, etc.

Training programmes can focus on

- *production skills*, e.g., news values, feature writing/producing, studio management, music and drama production, local news coverage, indigenous language production;
- *specialized knowledge*, e.g., the environment and natural resources, health and medical care, business economics, democratic processes, and
- *more overriding professional skills*, e.g., journalism ethics, journalistic

(7) One possible way might be to make foreign currency available in a public bank account, payable on receipt of a corresponding or otherwise agreed sum in the national currency by the company in question. A precondition for development co-operation of this kind is that the company's operations maintain a standard that is representative of the branch in question. Assistance is given in accordance with the current rules for currency support.

8. A distinction should be drawn between control over editorial policy and operations and the responsibilities of ownership. The integrity, rights and responsibilities of such media can be specified in an agreement (as is the practice with regard to many public service broadcasting organizations). There is a vital difference between state-owned, government controlled media which represent the needs, views and interests of the powers of state, and state-owned, but non-controlled media which represent the views and interests (pluralism) and needs (public service) of the general public.

integrity and human rights, modes of interaction between media, government and the citizen's.

* continuous training of other media staff

Training may focus on skills in the area of studio engineering, production leadership/ planning, desk management, archives and library services, distribution, advertising sales and account management, readership/ audience/market studies.

The training, in the form of courses, seminars, workshops, etc., should primarily be offered in the country or region in question.

This does not exclude the possibility of supporting training activities which are offered in Sweden or a third country.⁹

Sida can support media training and auxiliary activities in conjunction with general elections and referenda.

(9) In the case of training in Sweden or the Nordic countries the possibility of arranging elements of the course with the participation of Swedish/Nordic colleagues should not be neglected. Both as an aid to practical and theoretical aspects of the training, but also in order to establish liasons between the Swedish/Nordic resource base and trainees so as to facilitate future collaboration.



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