



Challenges and entry points for regional media development support in Sub Saharan Africa





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides guidance on possible entry points for support to a qualitative and sustainable media sector in support of democratic governance on a regional level in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The report is the result of an extensive consultative process with media and civil society representatives in Southern, Eastern, Central and Western Sub-Saharan Africa. Three roundtable meetings were held during February 2019 with media experts and media representatives from each of the sub-regions.

The report is written from a media perspective and focuses on regional media initiatives and challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa. Seven focus areas that are instrumental for the future of quality journalism have been investigated:

- Professionalism - capacity to demand accountability
- Gender and media
- Financial sustainability and media diversity
- Access to information
- Safety of journalists
- Social media, disinformation and online harassment
- Media self-regulation and ethics

In the second part of the study, focus is set on what donors should consider when reviewing how regional media initiatives and processes can contribute to democracy and accountability. This second part can be seen as connecting local and national media stakeholders with regional initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as to the ongoing global dialogue on the need for increased media development, manifested at the international meeting organised by CIMA and Sida in Paris in March 2019.

The report lists seven recommendations on entry points:

1. Step up regional media support.
2. Focus on integrated, comprehensive regional approaches.
3. Stimulate regional coalition building.
4. Support regional innovative initiatives that demand accountability.
5. Prioritise regional support that promotes financial sustainability for the media.
6. Strengthen regional support for institution building, supporting self-regulation and ethics.
7. Fund regional processes that are anchored in national and local initiatives aiming at building trust and giving voice to the excluded.

1. Step up regional media support

Donors see media as a pillar of governance and democracy. Still, the total global spending on media development is only 0.3 percent of total official development assistance¹. If any sustainable results are expected to evolve, support for media development needs to be on par with the political rhetoric.

2. Focus on integrated, comprehensive regional approaches

In addition to being a small part of total development cooperation, most media development is focused on national processes, making support to regional processes almost impossible to measure in economic terms. So, while this study departed from investigating seven different regional focus areas related to regional media development, the conclusions and proposed entry points are based on the need for a comprehensive approach, unless donors step up considerably in volume. The focus areas investigated are deeply intertwined and progress in one specific area needs to be followed by progress in other areas in order to have a sustainable impact on media development and freedom of expression.

3. Stimulate regional coalition building

Journalists and publishers alone cannot save journalism. To ensure that African media organisations develop to become viable players in the changing political, technical and economic landscape, new coalitions need to be built and existing ones strengthened.

Multi-stakeholder coalitions as well as regional and international networks are an essential pathway to identify and deliver solutions to the complex challenges confronting media systems. These coalitions are striving to promote enabling environments and sustainable sources of journalism, making it possible for the media to provide citizens with the information and analysis they need, when and how they want it. Coalitions can, for example, establish collaborative decentralised media newsrooms, and platforms can provide opportunities for media to work in a more strategic and coordinated manner on relevant issues, and to build the political will needed to sustain progress.

Regional networks can also drive national reform efforts, especially when they can tap into regional inter-governmental structures and collaborate with regionally focused NGOs. There are a number of protocols that suggest a shared vision for free, independent and professional media in Sub-Saharan Africa that can be used for this purpose, such as:

- The Joint Declaration on Media Independence and Diversity in the Digital Age, adopted in Accra, Ghana, May 2, 2018
- The Joint Declaration on the Protection of Freedom of Expression and Diversity in the Digital Terrestrial Transition, adopted in San José, Costa Rica, May 3, 2013
- The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, adopted in October 2002, Banjul, Gambia
- The African Charter on Broadcasting, adopted at the UNESCO conference of May 3-5, 2001, held in Windhoek, Namibia
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (or the Banjul Charter) – a mechanism for promoting and protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms in Africa – which came into force on October 21, 1986

¹ <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/comprehensive-analysis-media-aid-flows/>

While advocacy targeting governments is important, it might be even more crucial to focus on global companies, such as Facebook and Google, which are hollowing the revenues of national and local media while refusing to take on a publishing responsibility. The companies need to be lobbied to be more transparent on how they collect and sell user information, as well as on how their algorithms favor extreme opinions while balanced public interest journalism is kept down in their ranking systems.

4. Support regional innovative initiatives that demand accountability

While the existing organisations do important work pertaining to legal protections, constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, they are weaker in the areas of digital access, infrastructure, and ICT policy. More capacity should be built to enable research into fast-evolving areas of the media, such as digital, mobile, and social media and the questions concerning freedom, independence, and sustainability that arise from this new and rapidly shifting arena. Media organisations should move beyond questions of freedom and independence in the political sphere towards finding new and innovative strategies for enhancing the media's capabilities, as well as invigorating citizen participation in the evolving digital landscape – with all the economic, political, and ethical questions that operating in this landscape bring about.

In the emerging Sub-Saharan African independent media, which to a large extent are non profit, public service or donor funded, due to the lack of financial incentives from the commercial media sector, the setting up of niche newsrooms and experimental media ventures for public good is an interesting development. These often small news media are investigating, fact-checking, dealing with public affairs, corruption, justice, education, health and so on. They are often informally connected, providing great potential for regional cross border journalism on suspected corruption and abuse of power.

5. Prioritise regional support that promotes financial sustainability for the media

Financial sustainability has for many years been low on the media development agenda. However, if the present vicious circle continues without support structures for financial sustainability, the mere existence of independent media will be threatened. In Zambia, for instance, there are very few media outlets left. In South Africa, 50 percent of all journalists have lost their job since 2000.

In countries with reasonably fast and not excessively expensive broadband (in Southern and Eastern Africa primarily South Africa and Kenya) legacy media is losing advertising revenue to Google and Facebook at an increasing speed. The trajectories differ in the respective countries, however, in the end they will meet a similar fate.

Although South Africa's media market operates at a very different level from most other countries in the region, the democracy supporting functions of media in South Africa have, as elsewhere, weakened dramatically over the past few decades with advertising income and user revenues declining and with a high risk of finding themselves in an even deeper hole when the global digital monopolies start to undercut local media's ability to operate.

The so-called duopoly, Facebook and Google, commands about 58 percent of global digital advertising (thereof 75 percent of mobile advertising), and about 25 percent of advertising all together. In South Africa the duopoly gets 67 percent of all digital advertising.

This report suggests - besides the adverse effect authoritarian regimes have on the independence of the media in terms of repression, censorship, negative regulation and journalists own self-censorship - four ways for media development organisations and donors to deal with media financial sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa:

- To handle the negative impact of digital disruption by supporting revenue generating innovations.
- To identify partners that can build private-public alliances to create awareness about the need for media independence and diversity as well as levelling the playing field between accountability supportive media and the social media advertising industry.
- To encourage strong media management skills that incorporate the competence needed to run a successful, profitable media outlet in the emerging digital media landscape.
- To find innovative ways of financially supporting media, without distorting the market and without threatening media's financial and editorial independence. There is presently a creative discussion around different kinds of partnership funds both at national, regional and international level within the media development community, that may result in solutions.

6. Strengthen regional support for institution building on self-regulation, ethics and fact-checking

Professionalism, ethics and self-regulation are unconditionally tied to each other. By addressing them jointly on a regional basis, citizens' trust in media can be improved and, as a consequence, financial revenues will follow.

Confronting the media crisis will also require institutions that can fairly and effectively govern and regulate media, including media councils, telecommunications and spectrum regulators, anti-monopoly authorities, self-regulatory bodies, journalist associations, press freedom advocates, blogger associations, universities and training/certifying bodies, and other institutions. With diverse members brought together by a shared interest in protecting the information space, these coalitions can work across borders and institutional barriers, and at multiple levels from the local to the global.

Building institutions that support self-regulation and ethics should be a regional issue that is of major interest for the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Such initiatives also include fact-checking and the handling of disinformation. These are procedures at the heart of journalism, but in the growing digital media landscape, it will require resources, tools and skills beyond the capacity of most media houses. In fact, there is already a trend where newsrooms no longer have the funds and capacity to fully cover the society they are supposed to report on, and where new independent outlets - web publications, fact-checkers, investigative units, corruption watchers, and social justice projects - have started to come to the rescue.

Finally, the capacity of the media relies to a large extent on a functional professional media association. In the present polarisation of the media sector, it is more important than ever to support the processes that unite media and journalists from a professional point of view, rather than a political.

7. Fund regional processes that are anchored in national and local initiatives aiming at building trust and giving voice to the excluded

Both during CIVICUS workshops held in 2019 and at the regional roundtable meetings organised by Fojo, trust has been a central concept. Or rather, lack of trust among citizens in both media and civil society.

While the roles of media and civil society are based on giving voice to citizens, many people view them as representatives of power. The result is a lack of trust from large segments of the population. This, according to workshop participants, is especially true for regional support, that often is seen as detached from local and national structures, but rather aiming upwards, feeding into intergovernmental and international structures.

How can support on a regional approach build trust? How can the two ecosystems be linked up? Can civil society and media cooperate in building coalitions to restore trust? How can rural and urban communities influence and be included by civil society and media? How can they make use of digitalisation and connect to reform processes on local, national and regional levels?

This is a challenge that cannot be ignored if media/civil society coalitions are to be successful in promoting democracy, accountability and the defence of human rights. This discussion will certainly be at the heart of the development of social media, including online media, in the years to come.

Final remarks

The study shows that the effectiveness of the Sub-Saharan media sector support is best assured by making it more demand-driven and coordinated. The discussions at the Sub-Saharan Africa roundtable meetings align with the global meeting with donors and media development organisations in Paris 2019, stating the need to bolster the effectiveness of international cooperation, emphasising the importance of providing support that is demand-driven, coordinated, contextually tailored and oriented toward long-term strategic goals.

This approach will require a move toward ownership at all levels of the process, with local practitioners enabled to experiment, learn, and lead the way toward impactful solutions.

A lot of resources on the regional level are presently put into advocacy and policy related issues. While this is commendable, there is a bitter irony in the fact that, media development making up only 0.3 percent of total official development assistance, limits the possibilities for African media development organisations to follow up on policy recommendations.

The lack of funding has consequently created an imbalance between the production of advocacy and policy documents on the one hand and practical activities to follow up these policies on the other hand. This is particularly true for gender related topics, where gender inequalities are stated in a great number of reports, but where funding for practical approaches to decrease these inequalities is lacking.

The need to ensure financing in order to connect advocacy processes at regional and international level with sustainable national and local organisations and processes related to media development, can thus not be overemphasised.



INTRODUCTION

Independent public interest journalism, has seen a steady decline in freedom, capacity, and influence for well over a decade, not only in Sub-Saharan Africa, but globally.²

Each year there are fewer and fewer people who call themselves journalists. The entire media landscape is changing. We are moving from ‘mainstream media’ to many different streams of information and deliberation, with the mainstream constituting one of many streams in today’s delta of crisscrossing channels of information and opinion. The roles and needs of journalists and media have however not disappeared. And the need for new and reliable information to debate and deliberate in public on a daily basis remains critical.

But as elsewhere in the world, flows of information and dialogue on the continent are fragile, tenuous, contested and vulnerable. In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, media owners and the political class are intermingled. In others, arrests of journalists and digital shutdowns continue. Almost everywhere, the three-sided markets of media, audiences and advertisers are broken, possibly beyond repair. At the same time, as new communication technologies enable new content and new forms of cheap distribution, new exclusions and inequalities in access to information and participation are created.

This report focuses on the news media’s function in the public interest: as a sentinel, a watchdog, an infomediary and a public platform. Despite the radical changes occasioned by the spread of digital communication technologies, these functions still depend fundamentally on the ability of societies to protect basic rights of freedom of expression and access to information, and to sustain the ethics and core practices associated with independent journalism, regardless of how it is funded.

The study has been commissioned and financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and carried out by Fojo Media Institute, Linnæus University. I would like to express my gratitude to the study team, the report authors and especially to all the African media experts and stakeholders that have contributed to this report with their in-depth knowledge and extensive experience.

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² Freedom House’s global index indicates press freedom fell to its lowest point in 13 years in 2017. Longitudinal public opinion surveys such as the Edelman Trust Barometer, AmericasBarometer, and Afrobarometer all indicate a general decline in public trust in the media. And measures of quality and sustainability, such as IREX’s Media Sustainability index, also point to a deteriorating environment for independent media.

1. BACKGROUND

PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

The report is the result of an extensive consultative process with media and civil society representatives in Southern, Eastern, Central and Western Sub-Saharan Africa. Three roundtable meetings were held during February 2019 with media experts and media representatives from each of the sub-regions.

The study aims to bring a variety of perspectives from across Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the study is based on consultations with media practitioners and media development experts from a wide variety of backgrounds both in terms of location and stakeholder type. Additionally, a number of individual interviews have been held and relevant studies and literature have been reviewed (see p. 41).

The main objective of the study is to provide guidance on possible entry points for support to a qualitative and sustainable media sector in support of democratic governance on a regional level in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study furthermore aims at mapping media organisations that carry out activities on a regional level.

The point of departure is that regional networks can be crucial intermediaries between the national and the global and an important source of learning and capacity development. Regional networks can also drive national reform efforts, especially when they can tap into regional inter-governmental structures and collaborate with civil society organisations.

The study feeds into a process led by a consortium where civil society representatives, media stakeholders and human rights defenders from Sub-Saharan Africa jointly explore new avenues for cooperation. The consortium is led by CIVICUS while Civil Rights Defenders and Fojo Media Institute function as international advisors.

The study should furthermore be seen as an attempt to bridge local and national media stakeholders consulted in this report with regional initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa and at the same time tap into the ongoing global dialogue on the need for increased media development, manifested at the international meeting in Paris 2019, organised by CIMA and Sida, where representatives of foreign ministries, official donors, private philanthropies and major media development organisations sketched out the elements of a more coordinated and effective media development agenda.³

The report is written from a media perspective and focuses on regional media initiatives and challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa. Seven focus areas that are instrumental for the future of quality journalism have been investigated:

- Professionalism - capacity to demand accountability
- Gender and media
- Financial sustainability and media diversity

³ <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/confronting-the-crisis-in-independent-media/>

- Access to information
- Safety of journalists
- Social media, disinformation and online harassment
- Media self-regulation and ethics

The research concludes that opportunities exist for donors to contribute to media development on a regional basis in Sub-Saharan Africa, though not necessarily separately within the different focus areas that have been studied. The report will refer to these opportunities as “entry points” because they are, in effect, the on-ramps to pathways for support.

LIMITATIONS

The study has narrowed down the potential entry points and regional partners based on the following principles:

- Focusing on approaches to strengthen the capacity to work towards accountability, in line with the Swedish strategy, including financial sustainability as a prerequisite for editorial independence.
- Ensuring that the added value for actors at local level is taken into consideration.
- Exploring innovative solutions to strengthen regional initiatives, but at the same time ensuring that there are viable regional initiatives to build upon.
- Ensuring a focus on gender.

While there are also many media organisations operating at national levels, these are not included in the mapping of organisations, as this study has a clear focus on regional processes and organisations.

Lastly, the report does not include a study of how citizens in rural communities can be engaged as stakeholders in relation to both innovative and legacy media on a national and a regional level. The authors of this report recommend that further research is made within this area, in particular with consideration to the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa’s large rural population also is the most information poor.

THE RELATION BETWEEN MEDIA FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Extensive research shows a clear correlation between media freedom and democracy. ‘Tracing the Statistical Correlation between Press Freedom and Democracy’ from the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), published in April 2014, concludes that:

“All of the types of analysis conducted for this report - the global level and time-series data, as well as the examination of trends in individual countries and the recent sub-category trends for Freedom in the World - have pointed to the strong correlation between changes in general levels of democracy and of media freedom, implying a symbiotic relationship between the two.”⁴

In “Giving voice to the voiceless”, Pippa Norris and Kieter Zinnbauer⁵ find that “media systems

4 By the Numbers: Tracing the Statistical Correlation between Press Freedom and Democracy, CIMA, 2014

5 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/giving-voice-voiceless>

characterized by widespread access and by an independent press ... experience less corruption, greater administrative efficiency, higher political stability, and more effective rule of law, as well as better development outcomes such as higher per capita income, greater literacy, less economic inequality, lower mortality rate, and greater public spending on health”

Stephen Armah and Loyd Amoah (2010) documented the findings from a wide range of studies in Sub-Saharan Africa providing empirical evidence that a lack of press freedom is strongly connected to higher levels of corruption.⁶

Media development is an objective underpinned by the understanding that free, independent and professional media is a cornerstone for democracy and so are the rights to freedom of expression as well as freedom to receive information, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

The media are crucial to the exercise of freedom of expression because they provide public platforms through which the right is effectively exercised. The role of the media is also more relevant than ever in our increasingly converged world of modern communications. The combination of cheap electronic devices linked to digital communications networks has opened up new opportunities for citizens to exercise their right to freedom of expression. However, the new digital media landscape has also facilitated hate speech, online harassment, disinformation and information gaps, as well as unequal opportunities to generate income from the internet.

GENERAL BACKGROUND RELATED TO SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA MEDIA DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

While this report has a regional focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, the regional differences between West, Central, South and East are considerable. Context also differs greatly between countries in the same sub-region. In some countries it is possible to refer to a media industry, while in others the media can at best be described as fragile and unstructured. Equally, the financial bases on which the media rely also vary considerably from country to country.

Access to the media is also extremely unequal and, again, there are great disparities: not only between different countries, but also within them. Generally speaking, while abundant in urban centres, many rural areas have limited or non-existent access to media sources. Consequently, people living in rural areas are often marginalised in terms of access to information. In addition, the media seldom cover the reality of people in these rural communities.

Given these realities, it is possible to make a general overview and background of the media context in today’s Sub-Saharan Africa.

After a wave of liberalisation in the 1990s, press freedom violations are now only too common and Sub-Saharan Africa is no exception to the general decline in world press freedom. As a region, Sub-Saharan Africa ranks third in Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, albeit with vast differences between states. Ghana (23rd), Namibia (26th) and South Africa (28th) are the highest ranked on the continent, falling within the “fairly good” category, while on the other hand, four Sub-Saharan African countries (Eritrea, Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia) are found at the very bottom of the Press Freedom Index, labelled “very bad”. The majority of Sub-Saharan African countries are ranked at the lower end of the spectrum as “problematic” or “bad”.

⁶ Media Freedom and Political Stability in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): A Panel Data Study,(2010)

On a brighter note, some of the continent's biggest press freedom enemies have recently departed, which has set high hopes for press freedom in some countries. In Ethiopia, the new reform-minded Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has released hundreds of political prisoners and journalists and embarked on reform processes in a number of areas, including a comprehensive transformation of the country's communications and media sector. While it is still uncertain how this reform will play out, going from one of the countries with the most imprisoned journalists in the world to none is a significant development in the right direction. In Gambia the new president has promised a less restrictive media law and the inclusion of free speech in the constitution. In Malawi, the media in 2017 played an important part in exposing huge cases of corruption leading to the downfall of a former minister of agriculture for abuse of power in public procurement.

In spite of these positive developments, Sub-Saharan media continue to face many challenges, some of which are growing. Technical developments in particular have led to new viewer and readership patterns and drawn advertising, a key revenue source, away from media. Google and Facebook are rapidly changing the media game plan globally and posing a huge challenge for media.

While Africa has seen some of the fastest growth rates in internet penetration, digital dividends have not been evenly distributed. Two out of three Africans are not connected to the internet and in some instances the digital divide has worsened. This means a great deal of Sub-Saharan Africa's population is entirely excluded from the benefits of new digital and global journalism - access to all kinds of information anywhere is only a reality for a few. Access to media (as well as to basic services and facilities) is lowest in the landlocked countries, which are economically disadvantaged and have large populations in rural and remote areas. Literacy, language, gender and education are further factors associated with limited access to media.

Regarding the legal framework in which the media evolve, even if freedom of information appears formally proclaimed in nearly all countries ⁷, in practice it faces many different obstacles.

The typically tense relations between political actors in the region is also reflected in the media, whose content often is leaning towards a certain political bias, functioning as an extension and fortification of the political ⁸. The professionalism and independence of many media houses and journalists can thus be rightfully questioned.

While women represent more than half of the population in many African countries, they are underrepresented or misrepresented throughout all existing media. Whether online or offline, news media or entertainment, women's voices are rarely heard. In addition, women are often portrayed in a stereotypical manner and less likely to hold influential positions in the media. The 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project noted that in Africa, women's relative presence in the news had increased from 19 percent in 2010 to merely 22 percent in 2015.

It is only in a very limited number of states that the media and journalists are able to function in a democratic framework, where they can freely inform the public without any serious hindrance. In the vast majority of countries, conditions are not yet in place for the development of a financially sustainable and professional media sector that contributes to accountability and democracy.

⁷ <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/a-regional-approach-to-media-development-in-west-africa/>

⁸ La liberté de la presse en Afrique de l'Ouest francophone. Étude comparée dans quatre pays (Bénin, Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal et Togo) entre 2001 et 2010 par Doucis Aissi



2. Investigation of seven focus areas related to regional media development in Sub-Saharan Africa

INTRODUCTION

The findings presented in this report are the result of an extensive consultative process with media and civil society representatives in Southern, Eastern, Central and Western Sub-Saharan Africa. Three roundtable meetings were held during February 2019 with media experts and media representatives from each of the sub-regions. Besides the roundtable meetings, a number of individual interviews were conducted. A complete list of all persons who have contributed to the report is presented in Chapter 4.3. In total, 69 experts and stakeholders have been consulted.

This chapter describes seven focus areas that contribute to the understanding of the challenges and possibilities of public interest journalism, particularly on a regional level.

1. Professionalism - capacity to demand accountability
2. Gender and media
3. Financial sustainability and media diversity
4. Access to information
5. Safety of journalists
6. Social media, disinformation and online harassment
7. Media self-regulation and ethics

2.1 PROFESSIONALISM - CAPACITY TO DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

BACKGROUND

Whatever the causes of the low state of professionalism in the media might be, the experts in all three roundtable meetings noted that the consequences are dire for both the industry and democracy. Furthermore, it is obvious that technical gadgets cannot replace the skills and knowledge of a good reporter. Basic journalistic skills are still at the heart when holding people in power to account - whether it is done in a digital environment or in a traditional newspaper. In addition to all different professional skills required in the demanding media landscape of today, including an understanding of the political economy, it is also important to understand the importance of gender sensitivity as well as conflict sensitivity.

In the digital media landscape, a broad set of skills are demanded: reporting, including video and photo, newsroom management, marketing and sales departments, social media competence, entrepreneurship, knowledge on audience surveys and applied audience relations. However, there is a lack of professionalism among journalists in East Africa due to inadequate university education, lack of newsroom investment in journalism, poor pay as well as brain drain from the media to more lucrative fields such as advertising, marketing and public relations.⁹ These perspectives were also reiterated in the roundtables, pointing

⁹ Mwesige, P.G & D.K. Kalinaki (2007). "East Africa: 50 years of media," in E. Barratt & G. Berger (Eds.). 50 Years of Journalism: African media since Ghana's independence. (pp. 97-109). Johannesburg: African Editors Forum, Highway Africa, and Media Foundation for West Africa.

especially to a disconnect between the media and journalism schools. Some experts claim that universities at best are educating journalists for a bygone era and at worst providing an education that does not prepare the students for the profession at all. The situation is aggravated by the fact that very few media houses are able to invest in newsroom training.

At the East Africa roundtable, participants also decried the “poaching” of well-trained journalists by the corporate world and the donor funded civil society sector, which rob newsrooms of institutional memory and experience. One particular observation on a Sub-Saharan level was that there are few specialised journalists who master issues that are key in public interest reporting, such as politics, economics, gender, climate change and environment. Participants at the sub-regional stakeholder meetings further noted that in many countries, major concerns remain about the state of professionalism, especially on broadcast and, more recently, online platforms, where “click-bait journalism” is found in abundance, while quality journalism and public interest journalism content is scarce.

Shrinking financial sustainability was another matter brought up, as it results in shrinking newsrooms and leads to decreased professionalism: a smaller number of reporters, faced with increasing demands on quantitative productivity, have now turned into desktop journalists instead of researchers of real-life events and meetings with real life people and duty bearers. Concerns about professionalism also revolve around low ethical standards, including the pervasive practice of journalists accepting money from sources (brown envelope journalism), flouting of basic journalistic principles of accuracy, balance and fairness, context and perspective, completeness, depth, and follow-up.

Participants at the roundtable meetings agreed that even if capacity building must always be a part of a strategy to increase professionalism, this measure alone is far from enough.

Pressure from advertisers, owners, as well as politicians are also blamed for the uncritical or promotional reporting that often fills newspapers, airwaves and the internet.¹⁰ Ultimately, capture of the media by individuals and companies closely tied to the people in power makes it many times impossible to even attempt to produce and publish professional journalism that holds people in power to account.

ANALYSIS

A report published by the Center for Media Assistance and Deutsche Welle in 2017 on the state of affairs for media in Sub-Saharan Africa notes:

“History reveals that the goals of both deepening and strengthening democracy in the region go hand in hand, but also that the region’s most dramatic democratic victories have been achieved when democracy activists and proponents of media pluralism have found themselves working towards a common purpose. Still, globalisation and the rise of digital communication technologies have also created new challenges and opportunities for media and democracy in the region that will require new coalitions and advocacy strategies.”¹¹

¹⁰ Africa Media Barometer, Uganda 2010, http://fesmedia.org/uploads/media/AMB_Uganda_2010_English_final.pdf

¹¹ Pathways to Media Reform In Sub-Saharan Africa: Reflections from a Regional Consultation, Herman Wasserman and Nicholas Menequista, Dec 5 2017, Center for Media Assistance and Deutsche Welle, <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/pathways-to-media-reform-in-sub-saharan-africa/>

An interesting development is happening in several countries, particularly in South Africa, where some newsrooms resemble a hybrid between a civil society organisation and a media outlet, writing and feeding material into mainstream media and community media. These stakeholders are many and are spread across newsrooms in both public and private sectors, sometimes at universities and sometimes by small independent journalism units, development minded NGOs or other civil rights organisations. The reporting is generally based on universal principles for quality journalism, even if there are exceptions. The sustainability, independence and professionalism of these operations, that are feeding free copy into mainstream and independent media newsrooms, remains to be seen. In most cases the funding has come from international donor agencies, philanthropists and to some degree individual small donations. However, given the need for coalition building referred to in Chapter 3, this is an interesting development of journalism that will require specific demands on professionalism.

2.2 GENDER AND MEDIA

BACKGROUND

A multifaceted reality appears when looking at gender equality, inclusion and media through a regional African prism. There is immense progress in gender balance to be seen in South African newsrooms while at the same time some of the Sub-Saharan countries are at the bottom of the list when it comes to gender representation among media professionals.

The roundtables confirm a positive trend in the region: more and more women engage in the practice of journalism. This is particularly true for education/training in journalism and communications which show progressively higher female enrolment rates. In Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, women make up 64 percent of those enrolled in journalism and communication studies.¹² A smaller increase in female trainers/tutors at universities and mid-career training institutes, up from 36 to 40 percent, was also registered in the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer.¹³

Also, the fact that women have stepped up their presence in the newsrooms was recognised by the experts consulted, although the regional differences vary greatly from very low representation in some countries (like Ivory Coast and Ghana) to South Africa, where gender parity in the newsrooms is a reality with 49 percent of the staff (journalists) being women. However, even in the frontrunner South Africa this shift is only partially reflected on a management level, with a growth of women managers from 25 to 36 percent during the last nine years. Furthermore, an increase of black women in top media management positions (from 6 percent in 2006 to 30 percent in 2018) was registered.¹⁴ The relatively high number of female black managers in South Africa is most likely an effect of affirmative action policy in post-apartheid South Africa. Interviews with women in editorial leadership positions indicate that some black women editors have been used as “window-dressing”, meaning that in practice decisions are taken elsewhere.¹⁵ Overall in the Southern African region women make up 40 percent of staff in media houses.¹⁶

12 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer. (Ibid.)

13 The SADC Gender Protocol Barometer is a CSO-initiative that was launched in 2009 to track how the SADC-countries are performing against the protocol. It covers 15 countries and is coordinated by Gender Links.

14 If one look at race, black men had made even more significant strides into top management; from 22% in 2006 to 50% in 2018. In the Glass Ceiling report from 2018 the respondents were for the first time given the option to identify themselves as “other” (gender non-confirming persons). The authors state that: “The fact that 2% of staff are not identified as male or female is itself an indicator of progress over the last decade.”

15 Zuiderveld, Maria, “Battling the ‘invisible nets’: Gender in the fields of journalism in sub-Saharan Africa” (2017).

16 According to the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2018).

The gender imbalance in management was a key issue for reflection in all roundtables. In Dakar, the situation was exemplified with Nigeria and Ivory Coast, which have 10 percent and 5 percent female managers respectively.¹⁷ The participants saw a correlation between the low numbers of females in management and reporting which is skewed towards male perspectives, experts and sources. In Dakar it was concluded that there is an apparent progress in terms of parity (gender balance in the profession), but in terms of content nothing has really changed during the last ten years. In fact, the situation has worsened when it comes to the use of stereotypes. Some representatives indicated that it is more important and effective to promote content on and for women than to aim for equality in the newsroom. One positive example mentioned was the establishment of "Les Panafricaines" - a network of African women journalists that has created a roster of women experts on various themes and areas to combat gender imbalance in the media.

In relation to the gender gap in access to information (for female journalists), the experts in Dakar noted that in more and more countries in the region, even though there is a desire in some newsrooms to improve the situation for women, the context of general insecurity may be an obstacle. One expert from Burkina Faso provided an example of a local media house headed by a woman but with an all-male cadre of correspondents - a situation that was explained by insecurity of working in the field due to terrorist attacks.¹⁸

The fact that women often hold "desk" positions affects the output, as they do not get the chance to go on the ground to collect information. Subsequently, opportunities for receiving more gender-balanced information are lost, as women journalists often have better access to female sources, as well as the ability to share experiences with the women interviewed - something which male journalists are not able to do to the same extent. Although the contribution of women journalists is essential everywhere, it is especially important in countries which are lagging behind in terms of gender equality and where women are marginalised.

Societal norms (especially family pressure) and stereotypes hold women back from challenging beats and field work. Few women are engaged in investigative journalism and conflict reporting. It is telling that in several countries in East Africa, although more than 65 percent of media houses surveyed reported the presence of gender related policies (on gender equality, sexual harassment etc.), less than 25 percent reported more practical policies such as availability of child care for women employees.¹⁹ The absence of enabling welfare policies thus continues to contribute to the exclusion of women in leadership positions in the media, further perpetrating exclusion of female voices in media content.

Sexism is a widespread issue in Sub-Saharan Africa and as such of course reflected and maintained by the media. New forms are also emerging in terms of cyber misogyny that is being used to try to silence female journalists. The expert meeting in Johannesburg concluded that female journalists appear to be harassed and threatened more often than men - often with verbal threats of sexual violence but also online. In Kenya, 7 out of 10 female journalists have been victims of cyber violence according to a study by Article 19 and the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK).²⁰ The report states that lack of digital skills among female journalists makes the situation worse. In South Africa "the challenges for women in the South

17 Number for Ivory Coast refers to dailies with only one out of twenty or so having a woman as a top manager.

18 The expert referred to was on the board of this particular media house.

19 International Media Women's Foundation (2018). Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media. Washington, DC.

20 <http://amwik.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Women-Journalists-Digital-Security.pdf>

African media are becoming less about numbers, and more about the underlying sexism in the media, with threats like cyber misogyny emerging”. Attention should be paid as “cyber misogyny may just be emerging, but like the speed of the social media that spawned it, it is guaranteed to spiral out of control if not addressed seriously”.²¹ At the same time, a change in climate with increased assertiveness from women about sexism and patriarchal domination was pointed at.

Given national variations, women in the region generally live in a vulnerable situation when it comes to threats and harassment. Women journalists give witness of how they have been harassed, experienced being excluded, diminished, neglected and taken down by men in what can be described as acts of “symbolic violence”.²²

ANALYSIS

Despite a partially positive trend, the main challenges remain with overall low representation of women in decision making positions and a gender imbalance in media content, where men continue to dominate. Again, South Africa can be used as an example where, in spite of gender parity among media professionals and an increase in female leadership, the gender balance in content has barely changed in the last decade (from 19 percent in 2009 to 20 percent in 2018). The expectations that parity in the workforce would automatically have an impact also on content²³ seem to have failed. This shows that there is an urgent need for further investigation on how different parameters interact and how the key issue with gender equality in content (numbers and stereotypes) best can be addressed.

An important point of departure for any regional effort in this field would be to acknowledge the variety within the region. In some countries, femininity (“the ideal media worker”) can be an asset and a path for a career, while journalism in other African countries is still regarded as a profession that is not really suitable for women. In such a multi-faceted reality, exchange of experience between Sub-Saharan countries on gender and media issues cannot be underestimated - hence, regional networking and platforms for exchange need to be promoted and funded.

Finally, one area of concern that is often forgotten in media development is gender equality in legal media reform. Presently, there is limited engagement in this area. On a positive note, Zimbabwe’s national gender policy from 2017 says government must mitigate future misrepresentation in the media. This could be used for advocacy and for holding decision makers to account, following the example of MISA Zimbabwe that already does gender audits of media related laws and policies.

2.3 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND MEDIA DIVERSITY

BACKGROUND

The financially critical situation can be exemplified by the Ivory Coast. Since 2011, in the aftermath of the post-election crisis, the financial situation of the media continues to deteriorate drastically. From 2011 to 2016, the turnover of the daily press fell by about 50

21 30% of women and 9% of men in the South African media industry find that women journalists face cyber violence according to the Glass Ceilings: Women in South African Media Houses (2018).

22 Women from Ethiopia, Zambia, Uganda and Nigeria interviewed in Zuiderveld’s “Battling the ‘invisible nets’: Gender in the fields of journalism in sub-Saharan Africa” (2017)

23 Having a diverse media workforce would pave the way for an industry that is reflective of the communities it represents.

percent from nearly 6 billion CFA francs to less than 3 billion (about 9 million euros to 4.5 million euros).

In East Africa, in the early years of the liberalisation of the media in the 1990s, the region saw the proliferation of different types of media, including private, community, and religious platforms, in addition to the state media that had dominated in the post-colonial period.²⁴ In Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda the media scene has continued to be vibrant during the last two decades. The landscape is full with a diversity of newspapers, radio and television stations broadcasting in a multiplicity of languages. Recent years have also seen the emergence of online news platforms that often break news via social media.

A major point of argument at the East Africa roundtable was whether the media in Sub-Saharan Africa command enough credibility, brand reputation and public trust to mobilise the kind of audience loyalty that has continued to support brands such as the New York Times and The Guardian in the United States and the United Kingdom respectively. It was noted, that what used to be quality media have dumbed down into “headline merchants” in order to continue attracting mass audiences. In line with this reasoning, participants at the Eastern Africa roundtable in Kampala noted that growth in recent years had been registered in entertainment and non-journalistic parts of the media business, while financing streams for traditional news have staggered. Advertising has also shifted to new forms, primarily experiential advertising and Facebook. Classic newspapers have been easy prey for specialised online advertisers, have lost almost all their bread and butter revenue from classifieds and are fast losing big brand advertising to Facebook and Google.²⁵

In particular, accountability minded media in Sub-Saharan Africa, be it radio, television, mainstream print or online media newsrooms, smaller independent journalism outlets or civil society watchdogs, are all facing a growing financial crisis due to digital transformation whereby print advertising revenue and circulation income is decreasing as readers/users are migrating to digital platforms.

Not only commercial but also political pressures have left especially smaller media houses exposed to “undue political and economic influences that limit their capacity to work independently and in the public interest”.²⁶ The tendency of governments not to allow for critical journalism was reflected at all three roundtable discussions, where voices gave witness of how very respectable independent news media often have been ‘tamed’ by governments. This is more often done by withdrawing advertising or co-opting individual journalists, by giving them brown envelopes, privileges and offering them well-paid jobs, than through direct threats or repression. More often than not, in “so many Sub-Saharan countries, governments have instituted media policies and interventions under the guise of promoting diversity and thereby fostering democracy, when the real outcome of these actions is to close down media spaces and opportunities to express alternative voices. This type of thing is not about media diversity at all.”²⁷

On a positive note, there is undoubtedly a democratisation factor involved in the explosion of the internet where the dominant user platforms are Google, YouTube and Facebook - as well

24 See Mwesige, P.G & D.K. Kalinaki (2007). “East Africa: 50 years of media,” in E. Barratt & G. Berger (Eds.). 50 Years of Journalism: African media since Ghana’s independence. (pp. 97-109). Johannesburg: African Editors Forum, Highway Africa, and Media Foundation for West Africa.

25 There is limited data available of the speed at which this is happening in Sub-Saharan Africa. Neither Facebook nor Google disclose country statistics on revenue in Africa while legacy publishers are reporting a fall in revenue.

26 Herman Wasserman & Nicholas Benequista (2017). Pathways to Media Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: Reflections from a Regional Consultation, p.11. Washington, DC: CIMA

27 Paying the Piper, p 19, Rhodes University.

as the messaging apps of which WhatsApp dominates the Southern African market. Users who have not been able to access newspapers or independent content on radio or television are suddenly exposed to a whole array of sources with both fact-based and sometimes completely falsified content. The internet has also provided for the relative success of investigative journalism and fact checking outlets, which are picked up by mainstream media or simply published on social media for the public to contemplate. This has translated into new revenue for some of these outlets. As an example, almost a third of the revenues to the investigative group amaBhungwane in South Africa comes from individual donations.

ANALYSIS

All participants at the roundtable discussions in Dakar considered financial sustainability central for journalism to uphold its role as a defender of democracy. Equally, at the Johannesburg workshop “financial sustainability” was given high priority. This is understandable in an ever-shrinking space where 50 percent of journalists have lost their jobs and the competition for donor funds increases where traditional income generating activities, such as advertising, and new ones, such as paywall models, largely are failing.

It was agreed that the media plurality and vibrancy of the last 20 years has masked underlying threats to media pluralism and financial sustainability. These worrying developments²⁸ can be summarised in the following analysis:

- Falling newspaper circulation following the disruption of legacy media by digital and new media. In Kenya the leading newspaper, the Daily Nation has lost between 50,000 to 70,000 copies in daily sales in the last 15 years, dropping to a daily circulation of just above 100,000. In Uganda, The New Vision has seen a dip in circulation of nearly 40 percent and is now averaging 20,000 copies a day.
- The continuing fragmentation of radio audiences coupled with the growing appeal of social media has affected the business viability of many radio stations.
- Weak advertising markets, which have not only affected mushrooming radio stations in many countries, but also seen significant dips in the profit margins of many newspapers.
- Mergers and conglomeration, which have seen bigger media groups swallowing smaller private and community media.
- Ownership of the media by private interests or ruling elites that are more concerned about the bottom line or political capital than the public interest mission of journalism. Professor Anya Schiffrin at Columbia University and others have also pointed to the “media capture” by political elites and oligarchs who use political and economic pressure to influence media narratives.²⁹
- Inadequate investment in journalism and newsrooms. Most media houses in Africa invest very little in the reporting/newsgathering process. As such, many journalists lack the resources to pursue and report stories in a manner that will have impact.
- Although this is rarely the subject of coverage in many African media outlets, advertisers continue to exert a lot of pressure on newsrooms.
- Commercial pressures also manifest themselves in other forms, including cutbacks in investments in journalism informed by drops in profitability of media businesses.

²⁸ These trends have been gleaned from different reports, including the Africa Media Barometer, Freedom House’s Freedom of the Press reports, CIMA’s “Pathways to Media Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: Reflections from a Regional Consultation” and the Eastern Africa Regional Stakeholders Meeting report.

²⁹ Anya Schiffrin (2019) (ed.) In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the Threat to Democracy. Washington, DC: CIMA.

2.4 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

In a good number of countries in the region, there are constitutional and increasingly legal guarantees of access to information in the hands of government agencies or public institutions. For example, Côte d'Ivoire, like 21 other African countries, allows its citizens, and thereby journalists, to have indiscriminate access to any document considered of public interest. To this end, a Commission of Access to Information of Public Interest and Public Documents (CAIDP) has been created. As an independent administrative authority, it can be seized by any citizen and journalist in case of refusal or bad will by a public institution to communicate a document of public nature.

In East Africa, except for Eritrea and Somalia, all countries have enacted specific right of access to information legislations with Uganda leading the way in 2005, followed by Ethiopia in 2008, South Sudan and Rwanda in 2013 and Kenya and Tanzania in 2016.³⁰ In countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, the law also applies to private bodies that either use public funds, or are holders of information with “significant public interest”. The Ugandan Access to Information Act does not apply to private bodies.

However, Africa Check reports that “the reality of accessing government information in Africa is often not at odds with the legislative frameworks in place to ensure the “right to know”.”³¹ In many of the more than countries with ATI laws in Sub-Saharan Africa, citizens and journalists are still often denied access to basic information about what governments are up to, making it difficult to hold their leaders to account.

Article 19 Eastern Africa has also noted that “implementation of access to information laws remains problematic and there is an increasing tide against accountability and transparency.” In particular, a culture of official secrecy in the public service entrenched over four to five decades in many countries stands in the way of the new openness. The report also shows that in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa there is “generally a very weak implementation of proactive disclosure, and low levels of utilisation of Internet and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to facilitate access”.

One specific form of obstruction of access to information is the excessive politicisation of the media. This is particularly true during electoral periods. For example, the presidential election campaign that took place in Senegal in February 2019 once again demonstrated violence against journalists considered as political opponents by their aggressors. In some cases, journalists working for the online press face additional difficulties when trying to access public information. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, they are treated in a different manner compared to professionals in other media when it comes to receiving accreditation to access certain institutions, such as press conferences, interviews and organised press trips.

It should also be noted that where there is insecurity as a result of terrorist attacks or conflict situations, journalists who cannot access the field are most often met by complete silence from the security forces when asking for official records. This total enclosure of information typically creates speculations and feeds rumours, promoting false information disseminated in particular via social media networks.

30 AFEX; “22 African countries have passed access to information laws” available at <http://www.africafex.org/access-to-information/22-african-countries-that-have-passed-access-to-information-laws> (accessed on March 2019)

31 <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-freedom-of-information-laws-on-the-african-continent/>

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), has “categorically” called for media and information reforms in all its member countries which in principle, but not necessarily in practice, have been adhered to by many member countries in line with the 2013 African Union Model Law on Access to Information. It also serves as a benchmark for measuring compliance with regional and international law.³² For instance, all SADC member countries are to turn their state broadcasters into public service broadcasters, migrating from analogue to digital distribution as well as allowing for media freedom and diversity. However, the difference in practice between an analogue “state broadcaster” and a digital “public service broadcaster” is yet to be seen.

On a positive note, participants at the Eastern Africa regional stakeholders’ roundtable noted that the growing number of open government initiatives in countries such as Uganda and Kenya, as well as the slow but steady growth of data journalism, provides opportunities for keen journalists to do compelling stories from the vast amounts of government data available online. This is indeed an opportunity that could be used to a much greater extent.

South Africa has the strongest provisions in the region for access to public information through the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2001. Although successive governments have tried to undercut PAIA with various kinds of security legislation backbenchers within the ruling party, opposition, lawyers, the press and civil society organisations such as the Right2Know Coalition have managed to protect the right to public access to government documentation. This has been particularly important in order to challenge the dubious use of public money, appointments of officials and issuing of contracts without appropriate tender procedures.

ANALYSIS

The presence of a right to information law is not a guarantee that citizens will actually access information in the hands of the State. As the Open Democracy Advice Centre noted in its 2017 report on the State of Access to Information in Africa, “The existence of an ATI law is a necessary, but insufficient, step for ensuring a positive access to information environment. Problems with the implementation of ATI laws often cited a lack of awareness of the laws, and weak political will for implementation...”³³

The overall implementation of access to information laws depends to a very large degree on if and how media organisations and civil society organisations are cooperating in challenging authorities to open up for more scrutiny, even transparency. Strong media associations and broad coalitions are key in this process.

2.5 SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

BACKGROUND

Speaking truth to power, investigating crime and corruption, holding governments to account, and reporting from insecure contexts often carry risks of violent retaliation, harassment or arbitrary detention³⁴.

Journalists and media professionals perform a critical role, reporting news and information to

32 State of access to information in Africa 2017, Open Democracy Advice Centre, <https://www.opendemocracy.org/za/images/docs/publications/ODAC%20Brochure%20Draft.pdf>

33 <https://www.opendemocracy.org/za/index.php/blog/174-state-of-access-to-information-in-africa-2017>

34 Trends in Media 2018 UNESCO

the public that can bring misdeeds to light, hold public institutions accountable and contribute to the creation of more just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Therefore, journalists serving at the frontline of the right to freedom of expression and access to information must be able to carry out their work without fear, reprisal or intimidation.

Beyond killings, journalists also suffer attacks such as kidnappings, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture. The list also includes threats and intimidation, beatings and confiscation of equipment (especially when covering protests), enforced exile and sexual harassment (particularly against women media professionals).

The trend in Southern Africa shows that the physical safety of journalists is generally improving. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) yearbook for 2017 states that the number of journalists killed in Southern Africa is decreasing. For example, in Angola, after the 2017 elections, the operational conditions for journalists have improved with growing confidence as reporting on government and the political elite's corruption is no longer resulting in criminal defamation charges - this as a result of the new president Joao Lourenco, who has started to clean up from his predecessor's regime.

On the other hand, UNESCO has ranked Somalia and South Sudan as “the worst and most dangerous countries” for journalists to work in Africa³⁵. Due to the ongoing conflict in Somalia, it has been reported that violence against journalists exercised by state actors, armed militias as well as non-state actors are commonplace. The same holds true for arbitrary arrests and direct censorship. For example, in April 2015, the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) stormed the offices of Radio Shabelle and Sky FM, forcing them to close and arresting at least 20 journalists. Although a majority of them were quickly released, the Radio Shabelle director Mohamed Muse and editor Ahmed Abdi Hassan were held for an extended period of time.³⁶

In addition, Zimbabwe has seen a rise in the number of physical violence against journalists. Between August and October 2018 alone, after the elections, 19 journalists were either beaten up or had their equipment confiscated by security officials while mostly covering protests.

In Rwanda, the threats and attacks against the media are compounded by the fact that the Rwandan judiciary is not independent, and many journalists view the threat of imprisonment as a key constraint on their work.³⁷

In Uganda, a total of 113 cases of violations against journalists and the media were documented by the Human Rights Network for Journalists–Uganda in their annual Press Freedom Index³⁸ released in 2018. According to the report, police officers were the leading violators of media freedoms, accounting for 83 cases out of 113 (73 percent). The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) and the Judiciary followed in distant second and third positions with six (5.3 percent) and four (3.5 percent) cases respectively. Police violations included 45 arrests and detentions, 21 incidents of assault, and seven cases of malicious damage to journalists' equipment.³⁹

35 www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/ADDIS.../Concept_Note.pdf

36 Freedom House; “Freedom of the Press 2016: Somalia” available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/somalia> (accessed on March 21 2019)

37 Freedom House; “Freedom on the Net 2017: Rwanda” available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2017/rwanda> (accessed on March 22 2019)

38 HRNJ-Uganda “Press Freedom Index Report 2017-Uganda” available at https://hrnjuganda.org/?wpfb_dl=71 (accessed on March 22 2019)

39 Ibid.

In Tanzania, the president John Pombe Magufuli has progressively tightened the noose around media freedom since his election in 2015. For example, freelance journalist Azory Gwanda disappeared in November 2017 after writing articles on the murders of local government officials and police officers by unidentified assailants on motorcycles.

Western and Central Africa as a region has suffered a lot of civil wars which inevitably puts the work of journalists at great risk. For example, the presence of armed terrorist groups makes it extremely difficult and even dangerous for journalists to have access to a growing number of territorial spaces: this is the case in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and even in Chad due to actions carried out by Boko Haram; this is also the case in Mali⁴⁰.

ANALYSIS

Locally anchored comprehensive safety and protection systems for journalists and media workers, adapted to the specific risk scenarios in countries and locations, play a decisive role. Such systems typically include preventive measures (risk awareness training, physical safety at media outlets, etc.) and responsive measures (risk monitoring, direct support to journalist under threat, legal aid). When feasible, these processes are linked to developing national safety plans, thereby involving the government and fostering their responsibilities as duty bearers.⁴¹

The UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is also vital to take into consideration when assessing media support in Sub-Saharan Africa. To further reinforce prevention, the UN Plan of Action recommends working in cooperation with governments, media houses, professional associations and NGOs to conduct awareness raising campaigns on a wide range of issues such as existing international instruments and conventions, the growing dangers posed by emerging threats to media professionals, including non-state actors, as well as various existing practical guides on the safety of journalists.

Safety of journalists should however not only be classified as physical threats against their person, but in this age of emerging technologies new threats also include cyber security issues. Journalists today publish their work on several platforms, and audiences are increasingly accessing content from a variety of sources such as digital news media, online blogs and social media rather than solely traditional news outlets. This is the trend globally, but Africa is also fast catching up on it, with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most popular social media platforms. Since telecom companies provide these platforms on discounted bundles, it makes them even easier to access.

As a result, journalists - particularly women journalists - face new threats of online trolling and hate speech which may intimidate them into silence. Investigative journalism missions face threats of the journalists having their electronic information intercepted by autocratic regimes, arbitrary use of surveillance malware to track and spy on journalists. This puts both journalists and sources at risk, and thus encourages self-censorship. Journalists are also being silenced through organised online attacks. Hence, continued support related to the safety of journalism is needed on all levels.

40 https://www.academia.edu/36170849/Pathways_to_Media_Reform_in_Sub-Saharan_Africa_Reflections_from_a_Regional_Consultation

41 IMS, Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, 2018

2.6 SOCIAL MEDIA, DISINFORMATION AND ONLINE HARASSMENT

BACKGROUND

Internet penetration has grown tremendously and citizens in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to increase their usage of Internet and social media. Journalists are also increasingly embracing social media to enhance their reporting while civil society groups have turned to these platforms for their campaigning and advocacy. This has devastating effects on the already failing trust in the media. The increasing spread of disinformation during the last years has left a huge impact on the reliability of not only online news, but on all news outlets. The debate has instead transcended from what to believe, to whom to believe. Lack of available information, largely due to closed and non-transparent governments in Africa, makes it easy for peddlers of disinformation to quote non-existing statistics and mislead people.

High digital illiteracy rates in the region make it easier for people to share information without evaluating it. An online survey by Herman Wasserman, University of Cape Town, and Dani Madrid-Morales, University of Houston, showed that Africans shared “fake news” with a much higher frequency than Americans do: 38 percent of Kenyans, 28 percent of Nigerians and 35 percent of South Africans acknowledged having shared stories which turned out to be made up. In the US, only 16 percent had. When asked whether they had shared stories that they knew were made up, one in five South Africans and one in four Kenyans and Nigerians said “yes”.

As far back as 2007, short message service (SMS) technology on mobile phones was blamed for stoking the fires through disinformation and misinformation that partly led to the political violence in Kenya in which more than 1,300 people were killed. Disinformation has quickly spread to WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and websites and remains a major concern around elections in the region.

The present situation is aggravated by the mechanics behind trolling and disinformation that are underpinned by social media platforms ad sales algorithms which are designed to stack up people against each other and increase click rates, and hence sell more ads. This is further aggravated by the fact that harassment and threats against journalists online tend to be part of organised propaganda schemes linked together in online distributed networks - aimed at changing what is perceived as a too liberal political culture. These organisations can use any means to distort election results by lowering the ceiling for independent reporting, often targeting women journalists. The aim: to make journalism a dangerous pursuit.⁴²

The power of social media, due to the fact that it can stir up dangerously high emotions, also gives people in power an excuse to shut it down to put a stop to political campaigns, and sometimes violence and riots. To the accountability minded media’s advantage there is of course also a bright side to social media. There is no doubt that rights minded citizens now can access an enormous smorgasbord of information - when the rulers are not switching it off, that is. There is a vigorous debate in the region to what extent social media’s negative influences can be reined in and by whom when one person’s freedom of speech affects other people’s freedom of speech and association.

A number of Sub-Saharan African countries have been relatively quick to implement various repressive cyber laws to deal with interference in elections, some of which have been seen

⁴² Fojo Media Institute’s and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs report #journodefender, pursued with the support of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gives many examples of social media repression against women journalists globally. www.journodefender.org

as infringements on freedom of speech. In 2017 the South African government introduced a Cybercrimes and Cyber Security Bill that included vague language which opponents feared would give security agencies enhanced investigative and surveillance powers. In December 2018, a new Cyber Crimes bill took cognizance of criticism and dropped the security aspect. Another draft bill in the making, Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill, that would make it a crime to bring “contempt and ridicule” to leading government figures, is expected to take note of freedom of speech criticism as well.⁴³ During the 2017 elections, Angola had its, rightly so or not, commotion moments with the opposition party UNITA rejecting the election results that it brought to the high court and lost. But there was no issue, or report, about freedom of expression being under threat, online or elsewhere.

Malawi is yet another country in the region that has been criticised for implementing cyber security legislation that has broad provisions that can be used to undercut freedom of expression provisions in the Constitution.

Mozambique introduced an electronic transactions act in 2017 that was equally seen by critics as risky from a freedom of expression point of view with provisions to make people criminally accountable. So far, the law - regulating private use of social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram - has not been tested in the courts.

In Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni last year cited the use of social media for ‘gossip’ and the spread of ‘prejudices’ and ‘insults’ to justify the imposition of a ‘social media tax’,⁴⁴ which the government has now admitted has reduced the number of Ugandans online. Earlier in 2016, the Internet was shut down ahead of the February general elections in Uganda because authorities said there were plans to use it to disrupt the polls. Other African governments have since copied Uganda in this matter.

Although some countries have enacted laws that ban or criminalise online harassment, more often than not they are employed selectively to protect the ruling elite. In Uganda, for instance, the recently enacted Computer Misuse Act has been used to bring criminal charges against academics and musicians who were critical of President Yoweri Museveni.

Participants at the Eastern Africa Stakeholder meeting noted that while there were valid concerns about the threat of online misinformation to democracy, governments in the region were using accusations of misinformation to clamp down on critical online spaces that had opened up in the last few years.

ANALYSIS

Discussions held during the Dakar roundtable agreed that disinformation is the key question for democracy in the region today. The problem covers the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa: disinformation goes from local to regional to global without verification.

In North America and Europe, fact-checking has emerged as one of the responses to disinformation online. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this practice has not fully taken root. With the blossoming of “fake news” and other disinformation instruments used by various lobby and interest groups, there is a need for capacity building of journalists on the verification of information including the use of online fact-checking resources.

⁴³ <http://pensouthafrica.co.za/a-deteriorating-freedom-misas-national-overview-of-media-freedom-in-south-africa/>

⁴⁴ See “Anger at Uganda’s tax on social media,” <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44682345>

Another method is to strengthen regional independent structures to ensure that the media adheres to the time-honoured journalistic principle of cross-checking information from multiple sources and disseminating accurate information using both traditional and new media. As special skills and tools for online fact-checking are required, it is not reasonable to expect all media outlets to house these resources. Hence, support to fact-checking mechanisms, preferably on a regional basis, is much needed to ensure accuracy in the information flow. As disinformation, hate speech and online harassment are often connected, such initiatives can benefit from being connected to fact-checking mechanisms.

2.7 MEDIA SELF-REGULATION AND ETHICS

BACKGROUND

On a global scale, the latest WAN-IFRA World Press Trend report concludes the obvious with quantitative statistics: trust is linked to performance, which in turn is a prerequisite for profitability. In building this trust, it is vital to have mechanisms that resolve editorial related complaints/disputes as well as a trusted process of assisting those treated badly by the media.

However, there is also a growing sense in the Sub Saharan Africa-region, discussed at the regional roundtables, that although journalists and the media put accountability of power holders at the forefront of their work, they do not themselves exercise it when it comes to their own conduct and work. This has a devastating effect on how journalism is perceived. Firstly, politicians and media regulators continue to point at low journalistic standards to justify their push for control of the media and stifling of criticism. Secondly, unethical practices and poor standards undermine media credibility and diminish public trust in the institution.

On a positive note, West and Central Africa is a region in which countries have opted systematically for the establishment of media regulation mechanisms, considering both self-regulation or regulation by peers⁴⁵, and institutional regulation through the establishment of bodies theoretically independent from the political power⁴⁶. Thus, 22 of the 35 members of the African Communication Regulation Authorities Network (ACRAN), headquartered in Benin, are states belonging to this area of Sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, since 1995, there has also been the establishment of media observatories whose ambition, in the face of their frequent "slippage", is to help journalists to self-regulate. Since 2000, these observatories have been structured within the Network of African Bodies of Media Self-Regulation (RIAAM)⁴⁷ at the occasion of its official launch in Cotonou, Benin. Although there is still much work to be done to ensure that these existing institutions and organisations can work independently⁴⁸, it is nevertheless clear that a culture of self-regulation has developed⁴⁹.

Self-regulation at the lowest level, in the newsroom, is a model that has shown good progress. These structures are not dependent on government interference or other interest groups. The only interest governing this process is increasing the confidence of the media consumers/participants. The typical model is based on a public editor, taking on the role of directly

45 Duplat, D. (2002). *Liberté de la presse, responsabilité des médias, l'Afrique sur la voie de l'autorégulation*. Editions du Gret. 99 pages.

46 de la Brosse, R. & Frère, M-S. (2012). « Media regulation in sub-Saharan Africa : Trends and stakes in French speaking countries », in *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, vol.33, n°3, pp.74-92.

47 Members are self-regulatory bodies from: Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, and Chad.

48 African Communication Research (ACR). (2012). *Special issue on Media Councils in Africa*. Vol. 5, No. 2.

49 de la Brosse, R. (2013). *Médias et démocratie en Afrique. L'enjeu de la régulation*. Bruxelles: Bruylant. 392 pages.

engaging editors and reporters on their performance, creating forums to openly discuss complaints with those aggrieved, ensuring a swift handling of complaints while at the same time providing hands-on capacity building on ethics. Kenya provides a positive example of this model. The Kenya Media Owners Association and Kenya's Editors Guild have formally agreed that professional conduct of journalists is essential for building trust among citizens, protecting people's reputation and building a brand to grow media business.

The Editors Guild and Media Owners Associations have also agreed that self-regulation should start from media houses and specifically in the newsroom. Therefore, an undertaking to set up offices of public editors in each media house to handle editorial complaints is on its way. The Nation Media has a well-structured system of handling complaints either directly received from readers or referred to from the Media Council of Kenya's Complaints Commission, setting an example.

ANALYSIS

Media experts at the Dakar meeting agreed that ethics and self-regulation should be a prioritised area. The region has witnessed the rise of self-regulatory structures both at national and regional level, whether for the legacy media or online, but they have been weakened and are presently dormant, partly due to the lack of sufficient funding.

Many of the existing organisations and institutions for self-regulation are built on obsolete, traditional pre-internet structures that are difficult to change. This situation is sometimes described as a trench war, where the media typically do not want any kind of regulation due to lack of trust in the government goodwill, as many governments primarily seem to be wanting to control the media rather than protect them. On top, civil society organisations that advocate for freedom of expression organisations often criticise the media for being too commercial and not producing public interest journalism. Hence, many of the obsolete organisations and institutions for self-regulation tend to be paralysed, including both voluntary and statutory structures. This situation results in a lack of constructive dialogue. As can be seen, the importance of establishing forums for a constructive dialogue cannot be overestimated.

Transparent and effective regulation and self-regulation that is independent from vested interests would on the other hand contribute to "journalism's public integrity and credibility", as African media experts have pointed out.⁵⁰ There is certainly a need for mechanisms, preferably coordinated on a regional basis, that can hold journalism accountable to the public even as it holds power to account. This can be done on editorial level (public editors), national level (media councils) and at regional levels (streamlining self-regulatory principles and modules, exchanging experiences between media, civil society and government).

⁵⁰ Herman Wasserman & Nicholas Benequista (2017). Pathways to Media Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: Reflections from a Regional Consultation. Washington, DC: CIMA.

3. Entry points - Recommendations

SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS ON ENTRY POINTS FOR REGIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT

The main objective of the study is to provide guidance on possible entry points for support to a qualitative and sustainable media sector in support of democratic governance on a regional level in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the first part of this study, seven regional focus areas related to media development and freedom of expression have been described and analysed.

In this second part, focus is set on what donors should consider when reviewing how regional media initiatives and processes can contribute to democracy and accountability. This second part can be seen as connecting local and national media stakeholders with regional initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as to the ongoing global dialogue on the need for increased media development, manifested at the international meeting in Paris, March 2019, organised by CIMA and Sida.

The study lists seven recommendations on entry points:

1. Step up regional media support
2. Focus on integrated, comprehensive regional approaches
3. Stimulate regional coalition building
4. Support regional innovative initiatives demanding accountability
5. Prioritise regional support that promotes financial sustainability for the media
6. Strengthen regional support for institution building supporting self-regulation and ethics
7. Fund regional processes that are anchored in national and local initiatives aiming at building trust and giving voice to the excluded

3.1 STEP UP REGIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT

Donors see media as a pillar of governance and democracy. Still, the total global spending on media development is only 0.3 percent of total official development assistance⁵¹. If any sustainable results are expected to evolve, support for media development needs to be on par with the political rhetoric.

Fortunately, the international community seems to be waking up to its responsibility to the independent media sector. At a February 2019 meeting entitled “Confronting the Crisis in Independent Media” held in Paris, representatives of foreign ministries, official donors, private philanthropies, and major media development organisations shared ideas on how to confront the crisis and sketched out the elements of a more coordinated and effective response. The Paris meeting can be seen as a peak of a series of meetings on media development, several of them held in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁵²

51 <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/comprehensive-analysis-media-aid-flows/>

52 <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/confronting-the-crisis-in-independent-media/>

3.2 FOCUS ON INTEGRATED COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL APPROACHES

As can be seen in section 3.1, support to media development constitutes a fragment of the total development cooperation. Furthermore, the lion part of media development is focused on national processes, making support to regional media development processes almost impossible to measure in economic terms.

From the perspective of the media industry, one may argue that the scarcity of regional media development projects is far from surprising. Media is typically related to national audiences or even local audiences within specific countries. Furthermore, media today is primarily occupied with how to survive in a local market where citizens rather look for free “news” in their social media flows. The situation is further aggravated by the giant internet companies, such as Facebook and Google, taking an ever-increasing share of the disposable revenues.

This fight for survival is indeed a matter of life and death, as can be seen by the constantly decreasing number of professional journalists being employed as well as the number of quality media outlets. Due to its size, South Africa is probably worst hit, with 50 percent of journalists having lost their jobs since the year 2000.^{53 54}

As regional cooperation is costly and does not generate immediate revenues, there is little sustainable cooperation on a regional Sub-Saharan African level. This is also reflected in donors lack of support to regional media processes: very few regional media development initiatives and organisations are supported by donors. Hence, while this study departed from investigating seven different regional focus areas related to regional media development, the conclusion and proposed entry points are based on the need for a comprehensive approach, unless donors step up considerably in volume. The focus areas investigated are deeply intertwined with each other and progress in one specific area needs to be followed by progress in other areas in order to have a sustainable impact on media development and freedom of expression.

3.3 STIMULATE REGIONAL COALITION BUILDING

Journalists and publishers alone cannot save journalism. To ensure that African media organisations develop to become viable players in the changing political, technical and economic landscape, new coalitions need to be built and existing ones strengthened.

Multi-stakeholder coalitions, as well as regional and international networks are an essential pathway to identify and deliver solutions to the complex challenges confronting media systems. These coalitions are striving to promote enabling environments and sustainable sources of journalism, making it possible for the media to provide citizens with the information and analysis they need, when and how they want it. Coalitions can, for example, establish collaborative decentralised media newsrooms and platforms can provide opportunities for media to work in a more strategic and coordinated manner on relevant issues, and to build the political will needed to sustain progress.

At a CIVICUS stakeholder meeting in February 2019, there were shown to be strong connections with civil society and NGOs in promoting key civic messages, while journalists as individuals often felt fairly isolated in relation to the larger institutional power players in the space. This is a well-known situation for many journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa, with some significant

53 Approximately 10 000 down by 50% to about 5000 in 10 years, according to research by Professor Glenda Daniels, Wits University, to be published in a report, State of the Newsroom, mid 2019.

54 <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-10-17-a-reflection-on-the-media-consolidation-and-convergence-or-shrivelling-and-sinking/>

exceptions, making them an easy prey for politicians and private entrepreneurs that are willing to pay to influence journalists' reporting.

Media sector focused coalitions, however, remain uneven. Hardly any country in Sub-Saharan Africa has multi-stakeholder coalitions capable of engaging effectively with regional policy-making processes and development agendas on media issues, and country-level coalitions and actors are unevenly connected to the efforts of regional blocs and international networks. Furthermore, in other multi-stakeholder coalitions focused on other governance issues, such as CIVICUS, the media industry is often poorly mobilised or not included.

Regional networks and coalitions can grow in Sub-Saharan Africa⁵⁵ with relatively small investments in research, workshops, and coordination. These regional networks can be crucial intermediaries between the national and the global and an important source of learning and capacity development. Another benefit of support to regional mechanisms, coalitions and institutions includes the potential for support from across borders, especially from countries that are relatively more open than their neighbors. Regional networks can also drive national reform efforts, especially when they can tap into regional inter-governmental structures and collaborate with regionally focused NGOs. There are a number of protocols that suggest a shared vision for free, independent and professional media in Sub-Saharan Africa that can be used for this purpose, such as:

- The Joint Declaration on Media Independence and Diversity in the Digital Age, adopted in Accra, Ghana, May 2, 2018
- The Joint Declaration on the Protection of Freedom of Expression and Diversity in the Digital Terrestrial Transition, adopted in San José, Costa Rica, May 3, 2013
- The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, adopted in October 2002, Banjul, Gambia
- The African Charter on Broadcasting, adopted at the UNESCO conference of May 3-5, 2001, held in Windhoek, Namibia
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (or the Banjul Charter) – a mechanism for promoting and protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms in Africa – which came into force on October 21, 1986

One practical example: in Southern Africa the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which entered into force in 2013, with media as one focus area, has been key.⁵⁶ It has been used by civil society to track and report on impact, and for successful advocacy and awareness raising. A regional South Africa-based CSO, Gender Links, has spearheaded this important work by monitoring the obligations of the protocol in 15 countries. Access to local data cannot be overestimated.⁵⁷

While advocacy targeting governments is important, it might be even more crucial to focus on global companies, such as Facebook and Google, that are hollowing the revenues of national and local media while refusing to take on a publishing responsibility or to be transparent on how they collect and sell user information, or how their algorithms favor extreme opinions, while balanced public interest journalism is kept down in their ranking systems. (See 2.5)

55 <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/a-regional-approach-to-media-development-in-west-africa/>

56 SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2018). <http://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/sadc-gender-protocol/sadc-protocol-barometer/>

57 Fojo's work in other countries has shown how important it is with access to local data on gender equality and media for advocacy and institutional capacity building. It has been instrumental in Somalia for the establishment of Somali Women Journalists (SWJ) and the successful work with promoting a gender declaration for media houses to sign.

Media and civil society networks can also be of vital importance by providing access to credible information on democratic governance issues that are of high relevance to nation-level political development related to SDG 16:10 and other SDGs on regional platforms/frameworks.

However, merely adding more networks and linking existing ones together across the region in a show of solidarity is not sufficient. While collaborations between existing like-minded organisations should be continuously supported, there is a growing need for media organisations to think strategically and ally with civil society, research institutions, policy think tanks and actors in the digital sphere that can contribute with new skills and strengthen engagement with policy-makers and powerful global players, in the digital arena in particular. Coalition-building can also be achieved by donors and implementers as a way of working, even built into the process of delivering other forms of programmatic support. The convening power of donors to bring together diverse actors is currently under-leveraged for confronting today's challenges to the media sector.

Finally, coalition-building can be done nationally, regionally, or globally, though many of the complex challenges facing media require coordinated action at all those levels. However, according to the consultative meetings, regional coalitions seem particularly well positioned to create those intersecting horizontal and vertical connections. These coalitions would seek their own path on how to develop democracy and protect freedom of expression and human rights. This study aligns to some degree with a CIMA study⁵⁸ that was recently conducted in West Africa in our conclusions, advising on possible avenues where strong coalitions are needed. The study recommends to:

- Put joint pressure on the social media giants, such as Facebook and Google, to take their publishing responsibility by being transparent, promoting public interest journalism and sharing revenues with national and local media outlets that produce the news that are spread in social media.
- Support fact-checking initiatives to handle disinformation and online harassment that distort the media landscape and fuel ethnic tensions.
- Formulate a network of media freedom and governance groups and enter into a memorandum of understanding with RECs.
- Advocate for supplemental protocols and a subsequent legislative review to align national legislation.
- Continue regional research to provide contextually relevant recommendations on media sustainability interventions.
- Integrate capacity-building efforts into broader regional governance agendas, including elections, peace-building and coverage of decisive processes in the RECs and the AU.

If such sustainable coalitions between civil society and the media are developed and supported, the two conditions listed below need to be taken into consideration:

1. Representatives for civil society need to understand the role of the media in a democratic society and not expect the media to be a vehicle promoting their agenda.
2. Media's role is to provide citizens with accurate and impartial information and hold people in power to account and, in line with this, they are expected to also monitor and be independent from civil society organisations.

58 <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/a-regional-approach-to-media-development-in-west-africa/>

In today's fast changing society, borders between civil society and media are constantly blurred. Sometimes this is for the benefit of democratic development and citizens' access to information and accountability, but it can also threaten the independence and confidence of the media. Hence, it is of vital importance to ensure that coalitions defend the right for media to be free and independent. It is also important to further analyse and define what kind of civil society and media cooperation that contributes to accountability and democracy, ensuring that neither media nor civil society organisations have been captured by economic interests close to power or by anti-democratic forces aiming at distorting the deliberative, democratic discourse.

3.4 SUPPORT REGIONAL INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES THAT DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

While the existing organisations do important work pertaining to legal protections, constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, they are weaker in the areas of digital access, infrastructure, and ICT policy. More capacity should be built to enable research into fast-evolving areas of the media such as digital, mobile, and social media, and the questions concerning freedom, independence and sustainability that arise from this new and rapidly shifting arena. Media organisations should move beyond questions of freedom and independence in the political sphere, to finding new and innovative strategies for enhancing the media's capabilities and invigorating citizen participation in the evolving digital landscape – with all the economic, political, and ethical questions that emerge in this landscape bring about.

In the Sub-Saharan African emerging independent media process, which is to a large extent non-profit, public service or donor-funded due to the lack of financial incentive from commercial media sector, the setting up of niche newsrooms and experimental media ventures for public good is an interesting development. These often small news media are investigating, fact-checking, dealing with public affairs, corruption, justice, education, health and more. They are often informally connected, providing great potential for regional cross-border journalism on suspected corruption and abuse of power.

These accountability journalism outlets are in effect acting as substitutes and are filling the gap left behind when mainstream news media have downsized their staff and ambitions for commercial reasons. The interlinkages between journalism outlets with external funding and agenda setting mainstream public and private media are essential for the establishment of a productive and democracy prone media landscape. Besides actually producing content and improving journalistic output, these media projects also have a professional skills aspect to them, whereby journalism meets other professions such as data scientists, health professionals, finance experts and lawyers in forming new ventures.

Given the democratic regression experienced in the region in past decades, persisting obstacles to media freedom and independence and emerging challenges in the shifting digital landscape, the media in Africa remain crucial for the deepening and broadening of democracy on the continent. The strategies suggested in this report are initial steps towards this ideal.

One South African report notes that it has become necessary to find new, less institutionalised ways to do journalism, where legacy media is being replaced with new smaller post-industrial

journalism units.⁵⁹ With new technologies becoming affordable to Sub-Saharan Africans, consumer patterns are changing rapidly, as audiences are gravitating towards cell phones adding to the media industry's already complicated situation.

To support this positive development, one path could be to create a regional endowment fund for the continent, focusing on issues of regional concern:

- Support cross-border investigative journalism.
- Capacitate media organisations on issues of sustainability, personal and data protection, ethical and professional standards.
- Protect media from external threats such as litigations, harassment, and imprisonment.
- Improve coverage of the Regional Economic Commission and inform how their decisions influence daily life on the local level.

A regional approach to these institutions could also include tying them closer to international networks, such as the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN) and International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). Previous cooperation that can be built upon includes projects such as Fatal Extraction, Panama Papers, and the Paradise Papers. However, there is also a need for internal homegrown collaborative efforts on issues such as poaching, human trafficking, antiterrorism, refugee crisis, climate change, environment and gender.

Finally, whatever the causes of the state of professionalism in the media it is obvious that technical gadgets cannot replace the skills and knowledge of a good reporter. Basic journalistic skills are still at the heart when holding people in power to account - whether it is done in a futuristic, digital environment or in a traditional newspaper. Coordinated structured training and continuous mid-career education for journalists will always be needed. Many participants at the roundtables feel that a majority of the training programmes have remained ad hoc, despite research indicating⁶⁰ that they have little impact on journalists' ability to hold people in power to account. There is need to ensure predictability and alignment on training opportunities available, but also for the training to be informed by participatory needs assessments by the media and not according to the perceived needs of donor funded organisations or UN agencies.

Finally, the general inability of universities to provide education that prepares journalism students for the profession in the digital landscape is an area where there is no visible improvement, according to the stakeholder meetings. If universities could be involved in a strategic cooperation on innovative, investigative journalism, this would greatly benefit future possibilities for public interest journalism that demands accountability from the people in power.

3.5 PRIORITISE REGIONAL SUPPORT THAT PROMOTES FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE MEDIA

Financial sustainability has for many years been low on the media development agenda. The reasoning has been that donors should not contribute to private companies making profit. Instead, equally important issues like safety for journalists and access to information have been highlighted. However, if the present vicious circle continues without support structures

⁵⁹ Paying the Piper: The sustainability of the news industry and journalism in South Africa in a time of digital transformation and political uncertainty. Digital Journalism Research Project, School of Journalism and Media studies, Rhodes University South Africa. May 2018

⁶⁰ https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/making_media_development_more_effective/

for financial sustainability, the mere existence of independent media is threatened. In Zambia, for instance, there are few media outlets left. In South Africa, as mentioned, 50 percent of all journalists have lost their job since 2000 as the media sector is shrinking and opportunities to do investigative reporting and other kinds of time-consuming journalism are decreasing.

There is a consensus that free, independent, professional media is a necessary pillar in a democracy. However, the liberal model for independent journalism is built on the notion of media outlets being financially independent from the people in power, whom they are supposed to hold to account. If the basic conditions for financial sustainability are absent, independent media will eventually perish - something which we presently see happening at an alarming speed.

To manage media in the rapidly changing digital media landscape is extremely demanding. As a result, many media managers in Sub-Saharan Africa are caught in old models for media financing, based on traditional advertising and old journalism logic, not taking into account the need for interactivity demanded by new generations. Among media, there is a strongly felt need to improve media management skills. As the methods and approaches needed for successful media management to a large extent are universal, there are several advantages of organising media management capacity building on a regional level, as this would also enable the different media houses to better cooperate and coordinate for the benefit of both their role as watchdogs as well as to make operations more efficient.

However, increased media management skills will not be enough to save independent, professional media in Sub-Saharan Africa. In countries with reasonably fast and not excessively expensive broadband (in Southern Africa primarily South Africa and Kenya) legacy media is losing advertising revenue at an increasing speed to Google and Facebook. The trajectory in the respective countries differ, but in the end they will meet a similar fate. Although South Africa's media market operates at a very different level from most other countries in the region, the democracy supporting functions of media in South Africa has, weakened dramatically over the past few decades. This development includes declining advertising income and user revenues. As a result, the local media may find themselves in an even deeper hole when the global digital monopolies start to undercut local medias ability to operate.

The so-called duopoly, Facebook and Google, commands about 58 percent of global digital advertising (thereof 75 percent of mobile advertising), and about 25 percent of advertising all together. In South Africa the duopoly gets 67 percent of all digital advertising.

What is clear from Facebook's 2018 annual report is that the company's revenue continues to increase despite massive criticism, as ad revenue went up by 38 percent in 2018 to \$ 55.8 billion.⁶¹

What is deeply worrying for media in Sub-Saharan Africa is that through its Free Basics, touted as a philanthropic exercise together with its Express Wi-Fi app (so far in Tanzania and four other countries) to bring Internet to the whole world, Facebook has collected more cross-border consumer data about Africa's media market than any other company or organisation.

Under these circumstances it is necessary to have a strong focus on financial sustainability and to find media development partners that have capacity to professionally deal with the growing threat on media sustainability, both in terms of business, content and advocacy.

61 <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2019/Facebook-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2018-Results/default.aspx>, https://s21.q4cdn.com/399680738/files/doc_financials/2018/Q4/Q4-2018-Earnings-Presentation.pdf

This report suggests - besides the adverse effect authoritarian regimes have on the independence of the media in terms of repression, censorship, negative regulation and journalists own self-censorship - four ways for media development organisations and donors to deal with media financial sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa:

- To handle the negative impact of digital disruption by supporting revenue generating innovations.
- To identify partners that can build private-public alliances and create awareness about the need for media independence and diversity, as well as level the playing field between accountability supportive media and the social media advertising and data monopolising industry.
- To encourage strong media management skills that incorporate the competence needed to run a successful, profitable media outlet in the emerging digital media landscape.
- To find innovative ways of financially supporting media, without distorting the market and without threatening media's financial and editorial independence. There is presently a creative discussion around different kinds of partnership funds, both at national, regional and international level within the media development community, that may result in solutions.

3.6 STRENGTHEN REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTION BUILDING ON SELF-REGULATION, ETHICS AND FACT-CHECKING

Professionalism, ethics and self-regulation are unconditionally tied to each other. By addressing them jointly on a regional basis, citizens' trust in media can be improved and, as a consequence, financial revenues will follow.

Confronting the media crisis will also require institutions that can fairly and effectively govern and regulate media, including media councils, telecommunications and spectrum regulators, anti-monopoly authorities, self-regulatory bodies, journalist associations, press freedom advocates, blogger associations, universities and training/certifying bodies, and other institutions. With diverse members brought together by a shared interest in protecting the information space, these coalitions can work across borders and institutional barriers, and at multiple levels from the local to the global.

The most ambitious media development initiative to foster and improve self-regulation, involving both media, civil society and government representatives, is the Sida funded regional ITP-programme "Self-regulation in a democratic framework". There are tremendous synergies to be found if a complementary structure is attached to the programme on a Sub-Saharan regional level.

Building institutions that support self-regulation and ethics should be a regional issue that is of major interest for the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in line what has been stated under 2.3 in this study. Such initiatives also include fact-checking and the handling of disinformation. These are procedures at the heart of journalism, but in the growing digital media landscape, it will require resources, tools and skills beyond the capacity of most media houses. Actually, there is already a trend, where newsrooms no longer have the funds and capacity to fully cover the society they are supposed to report on, and new independent outlets - web publications, fact-checkers, investigative units, corruption watchers, social justice projects - have started to come to the rescue.

Finally, the capacity of the media relies to a large extent on a functional professional media

association. In the present polarisation of the media sector, it is more important than ever to support the processes that unite media and journalists from a professional point of view, rather than a political.

3.7 FUND REGIONAL PROCESSES THAT ARE ANCHORED IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL INITIATIVES AIMING AT BUILDING TRUST AND GIVING VOICE TO THE EXCLUDED

Both during the workshops organised by CIVICUS and at the regional roundtable meetings organised by Fojo as a basis for this study, trust has been a central concept. Or rather, lack of trust among citizens, referring to both media and civil society.

The scenario is often described as two different ecosystems with few connections:

<u>ECOSYSTEM 1</u>	<u>ECOSYSTEM 2</u>
Urban	Rural
Online	Offline
Global	Local
Modern	Traditional

While media's and civil society's roles are based on giving voice to citizens, many people, especially in Ecosystem 2, see the media and civil society as representatives of power. The result is a lack of trust from large segments of the population. This, according to workshop participants, is especially true for regional support, that often is seen as detached from local and national structures and rather as aiming upwards, feeding into intergovernmental and international structures.

Social media has a role in expanding civic space when people are unable to organise physically. This is evident in the government responses with internet shutdowns, where social media, for a certain subset of citizens, constitutes a powerful tool and connector. However, social media is more utilised in urban areas, while the majority of citizens is living in rural areas. In rural settings, WhatsApp and radio remain the more popular forms of communication. Social media's ability to be transformational at rural grassroots and community level is thus limited, something which is further stressed from a gender point of view, as rural women/girls have less access to ICT and internet.

On this note, social media plays a legitimate role, as, even at the disposal of an urban population, it still has the ability to influence and force governments to react.

How can support on a regional approach build trust? How can the two ecosystems be linked up? Can civil society and media cooperate in building coalitions to restore trust? How can rural and urban communities influence and be included by civil society and media? How can they make use of digitalisation and connect to reform processes on local, national and regional levels? This is a challenge that cannot be ignored, if media/civil society coalitions are to be successful in promoting democracy, accountability and the defence of human rights. The discussion will most certainly be at the heart of the development of social media, including online media, in the years to come.

3.8 FINAL REMARKS

This study shows that the effectiveness of support to the Sub-Saharan media sector is best assured by making it more demand-driven and coordinated. The discussions at the Sub-Saharan Africa roundtable meetings align with the global meeting with donors and media development organisations in Paris 2019, stating the need to bolster the effectiveness of international cooperation, emphasising the importance of providing support that is demand-driven, coordinated, contextually tailored and oriented toward long-term, strategic goals.

This approach will require a move toward ownership at all levels of the process, with local practitioners enabled to experiment, learn and lead the way toward impactful solutions.⁶²

A lot of resources on the regional level are presently put into advocacy and policy-related issues. While this is commendable, there is a bitter irony that, as media development only makes up 0.3 percent of total official development assistance (ODA), the possibilities for African media development organisations to follow up on policy recommendations are practically non-existent. The lack of funding has consequently created an imbalance between the production of advocacy and policy documents on the one hand, and practical activities to follow up these policies on the other hand. This is particularly true for gender-related topics, where gender inequalities are stated in report after report, but where funding for practical approaches to decrease these inequalities is lacking.

To ensure financing to connect advocacy processes at regional and international levels with sustainable national and local organisations and processes related to media development, can thus not be overemphasised.

62 <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/confronting-the-crisis-in-independent-media/>

4. About the people behind the report

4.1 THE TEAM

LARS TALLERT

HEAD OF TEAM

The study team was headed by Lars Tallert, Head of Policy and International Development at Fojo Media Institute. Lars Tallert is a journalist with more than 30 years' experience of media and development cooperation in Sub Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and the MENA region. His earlier assignments include advisory functions and consultancies for the Swedish Prime Minister's Office, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sida, The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, OECD/DAC, UN Habitat, Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, the Regional Kurdish Government in Iraq as well as major Swedish companies such as Ericsson and ABB. For three years he was stationed in Managua, Nicaragua and worked, among others, for the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights under Vilma Nuñez Escorcia, Vice President of the International Federation for Human Rights. Since 2012, he has held different positions in the management for Fojo Media Institute. He is also Sweden's representative to the UNESCO IPDC Intergovernmental Council.

PROFESSOR RENAUD DE LA BROSSE

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

Renaud de la Brosse has contributed with expert information and writings on Western and Central Africa and chaired the roundtable consultative meeting in Dakar.

He is Professor in Journalism at the Department of Media and Journalism at Linnaeus University and Senior Lecturer at the Reims University in France.

Professor de la Brosse's areas of expertise cover the interdependence between media regulation and democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa; the effects induced by the technological convergence; and the current media and communication control within the strict framework of state sovereignty versus the international and transnational nature of information and communication regulation.

Among Professor de la Brosse's experiences and previous engagement, the European Commission can be mentioned, where he was assigned to do an Audit Identification of Requirements for Proposed Support for the Network of African Media Regulatory Bodies (NAMRB). Related to this and other studies he has had missions in Gabon, Chad, Benin, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast.

On behalf of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) he has participated in an expertise mission for the reform of the legal framework of the media sector and for the

capacity building of regulatory and self-regulatory bodies on the Ivory Coast. He is also author of the study *State of Media Regulation in the Francophone Space: Assessment and Prospects* and frequently makes presentations of regulatory practices in the French-speaking world.

DR. PETER MWESIGE/ACME

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

Dr. Mwesige has contributed with expert information and writings on Eastern Africa and chaired the consultative meeting in Kampala.

He is a recognised leader in the journalism, media and communication sector in East Africa, with extensive experience in the newsroom and the journalism classroom. He is a co-founder and executive director of the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME), a leading media support organisation on the continent. ACME champions journalistic excellence and supports the media in Africa to become or remain reliable, credible and independent sources of information, effective watchdogs and vibrant forums for public debate, promotes media literacy in Africa and advocates, promotes and defends press freedom and freedom of expression.

Dr. Mwesige also sits on the advisory boards of the International Journalism Fellowships of the International Centre for Journalists (Sub-Saharan Africa) and the international journal *African Journalism Studies*.

He has worked as Group Training Editor of Nation Media Group (NMG), East Africa's biggest multi-media company, where he was in charge of newsroom training at nearly 12 media outlets in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. He was before that Executive Editor of NMG's Kampala-based Monitor Publications Ltd, publishers of the *Daily* and *Sunday Monitor*.

A holder of a Ph.D. in Mass Communications from Indiana University, U.S.A., and a Master's degree in Journalism & Mass Communication from the American University in Cairo, Dr. Mwesige has also headed the Department of Journalism & Communication at Makerere University, Kampala, where he was also a senior lecturer.

He has published several articles in international journals and presented papers at numerous regional and international conferences.

Dr Mwesige has conducted research on the Internet and digital media issues and chairs the board of the Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) which champions progressive and inclusive ICT policy.

Dr Mwesige is an outspoken defender of press freedom and freedom of expression in the region. He has written numerous newspaper articles on media and democracy and has issued several press releases under ACME, speaking out against attacks on the right to free expression.

CHRISTER L PETTERSSON

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT EXPERT

Renaud de la Brosse has contributed with expert information and writings on Southern Africa and organised the roundtable consultative meeting in Dakar.

Christer L Pettersson is an international media advisor and author. He has recently written a global project study on propaganda against journalists for Fojo Media Institute in association with Swedish International Institute of Foreign Affairs, financed by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The study outlines how organised hate, threats and harassment against journalists deforms freedom of speech and proposes the formation of a new international centre to disclose and confront those who are pursuing hidden political agendas. The proposed centre aims to map global propaganda against journalists - women journalists in particular - and to support independent media, especially in countries where the level of propaganda is particularly divisive.

He has also produced a due diligence report on global funding to independent media for Sida, which strongly focuses on funding mechanisms for independent media in a time where old business models are failing and when there is a desperate need to build sustainable digital business models, not the least in democratically fragile countries. Among Mr. Pettersson's other recent clients are DCAF, the Geneva Institute for Democratic Control of Armed Forces and Unicef. He has managed newspaper projects in South Africa for Dagens Industri, been a media director for a black empowerment media company in South Africa and is a founder of internet media start-ups in collaboration with Business Day South Africa as well as a paid-for subscription based online newsletter. Christer was Africa correspondent for Dagens Industri and Dagens Nyheter for 12 years.

He has also reported as a freelance correspondent on India and the USA. Furthermore, Mr Pettersson has been a regional manager for the Nordic Public Affairs company Rud Pedersen in India, with primarily corporate clients.

As first an anti-apartheid official and thereafter undercover journalist, Christer reported, in collaboration with liberation minded and independent media, about the democracy process in South Africa during the 1980s while Nelson Mandela was still in prison and ANC was banned.

AGNETA SÖDERBERG JACOBSSON

GENDER EXPERT

Agneta Söderberg Jacobson contributed with her expertise in gender and media and wrote the gender chapter.

She is a media development specialist with more than 20 years of experience in international development work, specialized in independent media, gender equality and conflict analysis. As Senior Gender Advisor for Fojo Media Institute, Agneta Söderberg Jacobson oversees mainstreaming of gender in all programmes as well as on an organisational level. She has been engaged with Fojo since 2007, managing projects in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia as well as developing internal quality assurance systems.

She has special competence in conflict-sensitive reporting, the media's role in reconciliation processes and gender representation in the media. Previous to her employment at Fojo, she did consultancies related to media development and gender. Publications include Rethink (2003), Security - on whose terms? (2009), Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution (2010) and Equal Power - Lasting Peace (2012).



CAROLINE HAMMARGREN

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Caroline Hammargren has five years' experience working on partnerships and communications in the international development sector, most recently working with the UN in South Sudan. Previously she has also worked as a journalist for print, web and radio and she has been an editor and language teacher. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Journalism and English. She is Fundraiser & Programme Officer at Fojo.

JEAN MUJATI

REGIONAL ADVISOR

Jean Nyaradzo Mujati has worked in the non-profit sector in the Southern Africa region over the last 20 years. Working in Zimbabwe and South Africa, as well as on regional projects, she has specialised in democracy-focused projects and media development both with Southern Africa Research and Documentation Centre at the start of her career, and more recently since joining Fojo in 2015. She holds a Master of Arts degree in The Politics of Democracy: International Relations from Oxford Brookes University UK, as well as a Diploma in Mass Communication: Print Journalism from Harare Polytechnic in Zimbabwe.

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The team wishes to thank all media experts and media stakeholders from Sub-Saharan Africa that have contributed to the report with their knowledge and insights:

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- **William Bird**, Director, Media Monitoring Africa
- **William Nyarko**, Executive Director, Africa Center for International Law and Accountability



Annexes

Annex 1

Summary of stakeholder meetings in Johannesburg, Dakar and Kampala

Annex 2

Bibliography