

(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION,
RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:

INFO
CORE

THE ROLE OF MEDIA
IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

INFOCORE Definitions

“Media Assistance”

© Georgios Terzis

Global Governance Institute

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A. DEFINITION

Media Assistance is the attempt to influence the media governance of a country or region in order to support the development of the proper functioning of liberal democracies in conditions of peace and respect of human rights.

The process of media assistance takes various forms/instruments (see B) and involves several actors (see C) that are described hereunder. Those actors mobilise these instruments in order to create interventions in the media governance of a country/region (i.e. media state policies, media markets and media related civil society) measured against the effort to develop societies that respect the rational choice of the majority during free and fair elections, whereby different groups of the local societies are represented, and their rights as well as the rights of neighbouring counties/regions are respected.

B. FORMS/ INSTRUMENTS of MEDIA ASSISTANCE

The types of media assistance projects can fall into four broad categories: Training, Media Content and Provision of Hardware, Institutional Core Funding.

a. Media Assistance Training

Given the generally low level of formal qualifications in the media, training and seminars are becoming very important for journalists and other media personnel, but not only for them. There are indeed three main categories of people that we could benefit from training. These are:

- Media technical staff can be trained in areas such as printing, recording, editing, Web design, digital archiving, etc.
- Judges, lawyers, members of the regulatory bodies, members of the parliament and other civil servants can be trained in areas such as press law issues (including access to information), freedom of speech, diversity, international conventions protecting journalists, mainstreaming human rights and gender, etc
- Journalists and journalism students can be trained on safety instructions, standard journalism skills, media management, creation of community media, human rights and ethnic minorities reporting, gender issues reporting, health-emergency or humanitarian reporting, peace journalism, web based and non-mainstream source reporting, conflict resolution theories, conflict analysis reporting, media and media-broker diplomacy, investigative journalism, etc

All the above training topics can be adopted for international journalists covering conflicts as well as local journalists in a conflict zones. Furthermore, they can be adjusted to the needs of aid workers and grassroots peace movements interested in working with media for peace oriented programming in workshops, community radio, television or the press.

b. Media Assistance; Provision of Content:

A discussion of the ways in which media assistance can contribute towards peace-building cannot stop at journalism but need to incorporate all mass media forms and genres distributed to mass audiences by any given technological means. These can include hard-news journalism, the Internet, advertising, public relations, movies, television and radio programs [such as peace reporting, soap operas, comedies, drama series, documentaries, roundtable talk-shows, peace songs, call-in shows, interviews], wall posters and matchbooks, cartoons, video dialogue, street theatre, popular music, and editorial exchanges.

DIFFERENT MEDIA AND GENRES/FORMATS APPROPRIATE FOR A PEACE MEDIA PROJECT

- ✓ Drama Series (Television & Radio)
- ✓ Documentary Series (Television & Radio)
- ✓ Magazine Show (Television & Radio)
- ✓ Roundtable Talk Show (Television & Radio)
- ✓ Peace Song (Television & Radio)
- ✓ Inter-Ethnic Team Reporting (Newspapers, Television & Radio)
- ✓ Video Dialogue
- ✓ Video Diary
- ✓ Internet Dialogues
- ✓ Call-in Show (Radio)
- ✓ Editorial Exchange (Print)
- ✓ Cartoons (TV & Magazines)
- ✓ Street Theatre
- ✓ Advertising, Public Service Announcements
- ✓ Posters and Matchbooks

(Source: Search for Common Ground www.sfcg.org)

c. Media Assistance Hardware

Because of the partial or complete destruction of the media infrastructure in areas of conflict the provision of media hardware is increasingly been recognised as an important area of humanitarian assistance. Provisions could include:

- Financial and technical support to local print and broadcast media to re-establish themselves. It is usually preferable to support and strengthen existing local media, but this assumes their editorial independence and ability to reach the affected population.
- The most common strategy, in case the former conditions do not exist, is to set up a new media facility which usually presupposes the co-operation of the local authorities
- Donating newspaper paper and printing machines
- Distributing radios and batteries or solar radios to the local population
- Donating computers and free access to Internet to media outlets but also audience members
- Setting up Internet portals for exchange of information and chat rooms for exchanges of opinion

- Donating mobile phones when absolutely necessary for the communication of the journalists
- Subsidising newspaper supplements
- Subsidising the printing of training materials
- Providing office equipment
- Creating Virtual Warehouses for the support of local media in importing the most suitable and cheapest equipment.

These provisions are accompanied with the appropriate training in order for the local media industry to function during the conflict while paying attention not to create long term dependencies. [Adapted and expanded from DFID, 2000, pp. 18-28]

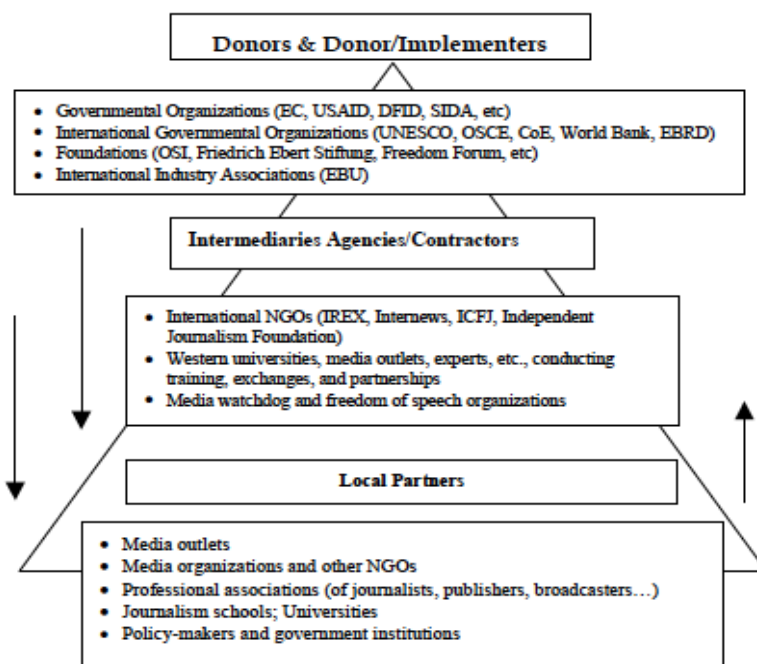
d. Institutional Core Funding

These include efforts to provide core funding for institutions playing an important part in the media sector such as local training institutions and journalism education programs, communications regulatory bodies, self-regulation bodies, journalists unions or other professional organizations.

C. MEDIA ASSISTANCE ACTORS

Several levels of actors participate in the field of media assistance and a major attempt to map them was done by Price in 2002 (see Figure 1). (Price et al., 2002, <http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/fileLibrary/PDFs/mediamapping.pdf>). Actors indeed participate in more than one level as the author admits; What is missing in the figure though is the mention of “public” implementers. They are funded by donors, but also by public money in their respective countries: BBC World Trust, Deutsch Welle Academie, RFI Formation, CFI and Académie France 24. They are not NGOs but act as “privileged intermediaries” for their main donor. The figure is also very “US oriented” and does not mention major non-American NGOs (IMS, Panos Institute, etc).

FIGURE 1
Donors and Actors



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