



Wilton Park



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Conference report

Media and fragile states

Wednesday 9 – Friday 11 October 2013 | WP1278

In association with:





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Executive summary

Diplomatic and development attention and support to fragile states has intensified in recent years. However, the role of media has not featured strongly in policy discussions on fragile states despite a strong argument that the political, developmental and social effects associated with changes to media and communication landscapes are critical to understanding the nature of fragility in the 21st Century.

This conference brought together donors, policy makers, academics, and experts from fragile states as well as from the media freedom and development communities. Saliency was added by recommendations from the UN High Level Panel Report on the post 2015 Millennium Development Goal framework arguing that freedom of the media and access to information should be integrated into a new set of sustainable development goals. The report also urged a continuing development focus on fragile states.

The conference set out to map the dramatic changes in media and communication landscapes, and the associated shifts in access to and control of information in fragile states. It sought to explore whether these changes were increasing or reducing fragility. It focused on whether – and when - more complex, crowded and fragmented media markets were nurturing positive democratic change or fostering increased division or polarisation of already fragile societies.

There are significant differences of opinion on the wisdom of encouraging unfettered media freedom and freedom of expression in fragile states. One view warns that more ubiquitous access to communication and free media can exacerbate the dangers of conflict and tension. Others argue that the prospect of democratic, developmental and social benefits as well as fundamental rights to freedom of expression should apply in fragile states as they do elsewhere. The importance of media as a source of accountability on the state remains critical, but transformational shifts in media and communication landscapes are creating broader and more intense effects on fragility, both positive and negative.

The spread of mobile technologies and social media has created new media environments in fragile states that have helped open up the public sphere. Control of access to information is, even if ever considered desirable, decreasingly achievable in fragile states as elsewhere. However, the increasing pressure of commercial imperatives can result in a failure of the media market to provide the programming needed to counter fragility.

A large degree of agreement emerged from the conference discussions around the following recommendations to address the challenges outlined above related to the media and fragile states:

- There is an urgent need for a renewed focus on the role of media and communication in addressing the challenges of fragile states, and this focus must address the current disconnects between people who work on fragile state issues and those who work in the media field.
- Key fora where fragile states policy is discussed – such as OECD’s International Network on Conflict and Fragility and the G7+– should consider these issues.
- Incorporating a role for media in Fragility Indexes could also be a valuable step in addressing current disconnects.
- Donor support to the media to date has been fragmented and ad-hoc. Developing more effective, efficient and comprehensive donor support requires investment in research to understand what works and what does not, when and why, in particular in cases where media support ends up promoting division.
- Embedding media analysis and support into response frameworks such as Post Crisis Needs Assessments constitutes one potential way of ensuring that donor support to media is as comprehensive and coherent as possible.
- The existing focus of support to fragile states – building the capability, legitimacy and accountability of the state – should continue, but needs to be complemented by a stronger focus on society.
- Strengthening media standards and codes of conduct that can advance freedom of expression while mitigating the use of inflammatory, polarising language are vital to the media’s ability to counter fragility.
- There is an important role for donors in correcting market failures by supporting content that counters fragility and helping media to reach audiences that lack commercial viability.

Introduction

1. The conference was held in the context of the international community’s renewed focus on Fragile States. These are states with an increasing proportion of the world’s poor, where development gains are hardest to achieve, where the rule of law is weak and where conflict is most prevalent or likely. The lack of security in these environments can also cause threats to international security. The OECD lists 46 countries as being fragile.
2. The 2011 New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States, agreed at the Busan Conference on Aid Effectiveness, articulated a fresh consensus on the principles and strategies underpinning development assistance to fragile states. The role of the media, however, and of support to the media within the Busan framework, has not yet been clearly developed.
3. The conference aimed to address this. Designed primarily for officials responsible for strategy and policy on fragile states in the development and diplomatic agencies of international donors - and with the participation of media and civil society representatives from those states themselves - the conference set itself three objectives. The first was to map the role of media in fragile states in the 21st century and assess whether media and communication should be an increasing priority for those policymakers engaged in supporting fragile states. The second objective was to explore which strategies have and have not worked to date in supporting media in fragile states and assess the most useful steps development and diplomatic organisations can take in understanding and supporting media in these contexts. The final objective was to consider linkages between international support to the media and broader governance assistance that aims to strengthen domestic accountability in fragile and transition states. A BBC Media Action report, [*Fragile States: the role of media and communication*](#)¹, provided a background resource for the conference.

4. Fragile states have become an increasingly important area of concern for the international development community. The OECD defines a fragile state as having 'weak capacity to carry basic governance functions, and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society'. Fragile states are important for the international development community because of their implications for domestic poverty and insecurity along with associated concerns for international security and terrorism. Aid spending on fragile states is also increasing; the European Union allocates half its development budget to fragile states.
5. Fragile states are also of importance because of their prominence in the planning for the post 2015 Millennium Development Goals framework. Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, one of the co-chairs along with UK Prime Minister David Cameron and Indonesian President Yudhyono of the High-Level Panel (HLP) advising the UN Secretary General on the post-2015 development goals, has called on the international community to put fragile and conflict-affected states at the centre of the future global development agenda.² The HLP report also explicitly recommended integrating a commitment to free and independent media and access to information into a new set of sustainable development goals.

Fragile states, donors and the media: key issues

6. To date, most donor and diplomatic approaches to fragile states have been very state centric, building capable and accountable state institutions and democratic processes such as elections. The underlying goal of these approaches is to establish a national identity around which a fragmented polity can cohere. As Paul Collier argues, 'well functioning states are built not just on shared interests but on shared identity'.³
7. Until now the role of the media has only been of peripheral importance to donors in their strategies of support to fragile states. However, rapid changes in the media environment have implications for fragile societies that demand the international community pay more attention to media than it has ever done before. States are losing their ability to shape a national identity, as their control over the public sphere is eroded through increased competition faced by their national broadcasters. Increasingly states and politicians have to compete with private media and rapidly spreading new technologies. As one conference participant said 'In the past we followed Kings. Now we follow the media'.
8. For the international community the rise of private and new media and the decline of state media creates a dilemma. Donors' primary partners in development efforts are national governments, yet these institutions must increasingly compete with public voices. The spread of new media and technologies has contributed to, in the words of the BBC Media Action's James Deane, "a rapid shift in the capacity of citizens with common interests or identities to forge new networks and organise collectively."⁴ Even where donors recognise and are willing to engage with this shift, supporting private media and public use of technologies carries the risk of compromising their primary development partnership with government, and donors are, as one representative from a bilateral aid agency noted, 'instinctively risk averse'.
9. There is a need, therefore, to redefine how the international community perceives the role of media in fragile environments, and perceptions of the media as a category and sector. This means a better understanding of why engaging with the media is a vital part of dealing with the challenges of fragile states, as well as reviewing traditional models of media support, such as the established focus on broadcast media or investigative journalism training. The rise of new forms of media, from citizen journalism to social media based initiatives, is a challenge with which donors and media practitioners must engage.
10. Yet achieving this redefinition is not easy. Donors have been sceptical in the past about engaging with the media sector, citing the lack of robust evidence demonstrating that

media support can have measurable impact as well as increased pressure on limited resources. Demands for more strategic media support programmes have also been countered by the argument that most donors already hold a substantial portfolio of such programmes. Their effectiveness is arguably weakened though by being spread across multiple sectors.

11. The lack of robust evidence that support to media has any measurable, or predictably positive impact has contributed to a very low ratio of donor funds allocated to the media, which for some donors is less than 1% of their entire aid budget. The lack of evidence also means that understanding when media can play a positive role and when it can play a negative role is an unresolved question. Critics argue that in divided societies free media can strengthen schisms, pointing to the promotion of hate speech and incitement to violence in fragile environments such as the Balkans, Kenya and Afghanistan as evidence that the media can increase, as well as counter, fragility. More recently, concerns about the way states use social media to monitor and target opposition has raised questions about the 'democratising' potential of new digital media. There remains a need for more robust evidence of the conditions under which media may contribute to as well as attenuate the political and societal fractures that underpin fragility.
12. The combination of increased international attention on fragile states, a changing media environment and an evidence gap mean that understanding how best to approach the core issues facing media support in fragile states is of vital importance. This report outlines the key points and conclusions that emerged from discussions about freedom of expression, accountability, donor responses and the implications of a rapidly changing media environment for the role of media in fragile states.

Media freedom and freedom of expression in fragile environments

13. The role of media freedoms and freedom of expression is the subject of heated debate in relation to the broader question of the media's role in fragile states. On the one hand, some argue that freedom of expression helps counter fragility through enabling dialogue and countering corruption, but that beyond all else it constitutes a basic human right. Others argue that in divided societies unfettered free speech can strengthen the voices of those who contribute to fragility, division and violence. Strengthening media standards and codes of conduct that can advance freedom of expression while mitigating inflammatory writing is vital to media's capacity to counter fragility.
14. Most donor support to the media is tied to specific governance objectives such as countering corruption or strengthening elections. This type of support is based on the belief that more information helps people make rational choices and that with the right information people will make choices that help counter corruption and uphold free elections. Many argue that increasing access to information and promoting healthy communication supports a wide range of development priorities, from fragility and conflict to justice and health.
15. In contrast, others argue that the primary purpose of media and journalism is to reveal the truth and enable freedom of expression, and not merely to serve as an instrument of democratisation. As one conference participant noted, "Journalism cannot and should not be scripted. Journalism is about the truth." This argument is based on the belief that freedom of expression and access to information can be best achieved through supporting independent media and public debate, not because they will necessarily contribute to specific donor priorities but because all human beings have the same rights. Media support should, in this view, help professional, locally based and 'ethical' media. It is perhaps unsurprising that donor support to this role of the media attracts far less resources than other forms of assistance.
16. But the case is not without contention. Firstly, there is limited evidence to show that

media interventions have measurable impacts on governance outcomes such as anti-corruption or elections. There is indeed evidence that in some conditions independent media has contributed to exacerbating violence and pre-existing grievances through misinformation and hate speech.

17. Secondly, there is disagreement about whether freedom of expression is a meta right or sits within a hierarchy of rights and below more fundamental ones such as the right to life or to a functioning legal system. As rights-bearing institutions in fragile and transition states are often absent or weak, appropriate standards and expectations for media would need to be developed. The lack of consensus on these two debates limits the establishment of coherent donor policy on media support in fragile states.
18. In light of this lack of agreement, the following recommendations for supporting freedom of expression were outlined at the conference. A first set of recommendations aimed at dealing with the key challenge of journalist safety. A second set on broader issues related to media freedom and freedom of expression in fragile environments was directed specifically towards international media, national media and finally to donors.
19. One of the first steps to support freedom of expression should be to consider strengthening legal frameworks capable of upholding freedom of expression and free media. The challenges of promoting freedom of expression in the context of fragile states are vastly different to their promotion in stable and mature democracies. These challenges include weak or absent rule of law and regulatory frameworks, high levels of insecurity and a lack of uniform social norms. Indeed, some argue that supporting free media should be contingent on the presence of these enabling institutions, and that media support should be part of a phased approach to engaging with fragile states.
20. Nowhere is this argument more of an issue than in the context of journalist safety. Speaking truth to power exposes journalists to risk and requires the protection of an independent judiciary and impartial rule of law. That there are more attacks on journalists in fragile states than anywhere else in the world should force a considered approach to encouraging independent and investigative reporting that might put its practitioners in harm's way. Change, however, is possible. For example, in Colombia a concerted effort on the part of national media and other civil society stakeholders to address the risks facing journalists has resulted in a far safer environment for journalists.
21. Making journalist safety a core part of conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts is important, as is increasing international attention on the issue of journalist safety. The example of the campaign against landmines was given as a model to help raise awareness. Incorporating measures of journalists killed or attacked in fragility indexes would help institutionalise international support. It was suggested that UNESCO together with the Council of Europe could push for the incorporation of journalist safety as an indicator of freedom of expression.
22. The international media, national media and donors all have vital roles to play in upholding freedom of expression in fragile states. The international media has a critical role in determining who has access to trusted information about fragile states and crisis situations, but faces tensions between the imperative to broadcast commercial content and its role in providing lifeline information services. At the same time, international broadcasters must compete for the trust of audiences in media markets where the East, and specifically China, is playing an increasingly important role, for example through significant investments in broadcasting capacity into Africa.
23. Recommendations to support the role of international media include strengthening the capacity to verify information increasingly supplied by local audiences, and in doing so contribute to including marginalised voices such as women and minorities in programming. Donors could strengthen international media's engagement in local media markets through support that enables them to partner and mentor local news

organisations by offering capacity building assistance through training, operations, digital safety and risk management.

24. National media are central to advancing freedom of expression in fragile states. They can help counter the divisions and violence so common to fragile states by fostering unity through national debate and the promotion of shared and tolerant identities.
25. These objectives require dedicated interventions, specific programming and editorial strategies that market forces alone will not meet. Support is required to address market failures. This is not just about journalism but other forms of programming too, including drama, sport and music, all of which can contribute to informing public debate and national identity. Yet interventions often fail if they are not context specific and do not take into account an assessment of the legal framework, the quality of professional training and the expectations of audiences in a given country.
26. Interventions that take place where national media is absent or dysfunctional may require complete development or substitution of domestic media, for example UN radio stations such as Radio Bar Kulan in Somalia. However, this should only be regarded as an interim measure until domestic alternatives develop. At the other end of the spectrum, where media systems are present but fragile, interventions should focus on the reconstruction or development of those systems, including electoral codes, protection of journalists and the development of media partnerships and alliances.
27. Donors have an important role to play in enabling media freedom and freedom of expression in fragile states, and it is a role that goes beyond being a source of resources. That role includes greater coordination, learning from best practice and practicing Do No Harm. Increasing coordination, for example through joint donor platforms and indexes of media support categories such as journalist safety or training, can make aid spending smarter. Developing case studies of good and bad donor support, from countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan or Iraq – can help shape good practice and guide donor strategy.
28. Finally, donors should consider adopting Do No Harm principles to media development in order to minimize the potential for causing unintentional harm.

Media and donor engagement: towards a comprehensive approach?

29. In fragile states donor support to the media is often fragmented and lacking coherence. Although donors share many common goals, particularly on strengthening accountability as a response to fragility, a comprehensive approach is limited by an absence of clarity about specific objectives and by lack of consensus about which support strategies are most effective. These gaps are compounded by limited evidence of the outcomes of support to the media and the low priority of the sector for donors.
30. While domestic accountability is a common area for many donors who provide media support, this support often divides between efforts designed to achieve specific accountability outcomes (fair elections, reduced corruption and so on) and efforts designed to promote media freedom. This division fails to recognise the need for a multi-dimensional approach to accountability and the importance of holding to account all actors that have a role in addressing fragile state challenges, from the state to the media and non-state actors such as NGOs, religious leaders and the private sector.
31. Yet whilst these fragmented efforts are united in their belief in the accountability function of independent media – for it was no less than Amartya Sen who argued that ‘free media prevents famines’⁵ – the case for a more joined up approach must overcome the challenge of evidence.
32. The difficulty of demonstrating the impact of efforts to support media in fragile states has held donors back from investing in media to achieve specific objectives. One reason given for the difficulty of demonstrating impact is the unrealistically narrow timeframe, often within a two year project cycle, in which donors expect reports of

impact. Another factor is that the in-depth, qualitative research required to demonstrate impact is expensive and donors rarely invest in this kind of assessment, instead relying on quantitative proxy indicators that provide the numbers needed to report to headquarters. The reliance on quantitative measurement also limits the ability to capture unintended negative effects of media interventions and the possibility of learning from projects that 'fail'.

33. Strengthening free media as an end goal is rooted in the liberal idea that open, rational debate will lead to speaking truth to power, holding the corrupt to account and ultimately, optimal decision making. It was suggested that media debates, and particularly those that took place on social media around the Tahrir Square protests, were good examples of people confronting each other and conducting rational discussions to form common understandings even across socio-economic, religious and ethnic divisions.
34. Yet there is still debate about whether a free media in and of itself can successfully strengthen accountability and governance. Despite comparatively free media environments and many examples of media investigations leading to arrests and imprisonment, some African countries still suffer high levels of corruption. And independent media, commonly conceptualised as public 'voice', may not always be the most effective mechanism through which to strengthen governance outcomes. For example, while public call-in programmes run by an independent community radio station in Kenya failed to pressure providers to deliver public services, a private radio station backed by a local politician was able to create a more direct and successful link between the demand and supply of public services. These examples point to the value that political economy analysis has to offer traditional media studies literature on these questions, emphasising the importance of conducting a rigorous power analysis of the context and countries in question before assuming roles that the media might play within them.
35. These are significant challenges to the development of a comprehensive approach to media support, and it is open to question whether a pan-donor comprehensive approach can ever be achievable. However, the following recommendation could at least strengthen the coherence and engagement with media in fragile states: In order to 'hardwire' media into donor assistance, media analysis should be integrated into assessment mechanisms such as the UN's Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA) and donors' Conflict Assessment and Country Assistance Plans. Although specific entry points are likely to shift over time, institutionalising media assessments into support frameworks will contribute to strengthening their role in donor strategies.

The economics of media in fragile states

36. Media in fragile states operate in complex and challenging economic environments. Advertising markets are usually weak, and there are often economic relationships between government, the private sector and third party interests with influence over the media market. As private sector media develops it must also contend with the rise of social media and online media platforms, posing further challenges for the financial sustainability of media in fragile states.
37. Donors looking to support media in fragile state must navigate the political complexities of the countries in which they work, recognise realistic timeframes of support and understand the broader economic environment in which the media operates.
38. It is often forgotten that supporting news media in fragile states will almost inevitably be perceived as political, as all media are viewed as affiliated with one political group or another and donor support to one media organisation creates perceptions of political bias. One way of addressing this challenge is to position support within the context of 'public interest' media and to promote non-partisan media support models such as basket funding that limit interference of donors in the management of media or in

content production. Political instability in fragile states further inhibits investment in an advertising market that is at best nascent.

39. Media support too often operates on short funding cycles that limit the ability of media organisations to achieve the desired impact and develop financial sustainability. Effective support that is able to overcome the challenges of complex economic environments must recognise that media institutions need long-term external backing. Examples of effective strategies include phased transitions of support from initial grants through high-risk loans to long-term loans that can be timed to phase down with the development of the media market. This phased form of investment recognises the commercial nature of private media while acknowledging the complexity of fragile state economies. Additional support beyond specific media projects could strengthen media institutions, for example through inputs in areas such as business development.
40. Finally, media organisations in fragile states often exist in environments vastly different from those in mature democracies. Making the economics of media work in fragile states requires the development of enabling environments that can support media growth and development. This enabling environment consists of a number of key areas, ranging from legal frameworks to operational advertising services.
41. Based on these three realities, seven recommendations to strengthen the economies of media were proposed:
 - Donor grants: donors should adopt a public service framework when considering the rationale and criteria for supporting news media. This means not only supporting organisations with clear public interest remits but also adopting models that uphold the principles of public interest media.
 - Syndication: where possible, linkages should be built between syndication networks and individual media to lay the foundation for future income generation. This can be catalysed through donor support for translation costs, the development of distribution networks and encouraging the production of content with a resale value, such as financial news.
 - Advertising: an effective media market requires advertising agencies and associated services. Supporting the development of robust audience surveys can help establish the information required to make advertising markets work. There are best practice models such as La Place Media in France. Persuading advertising giants like Google to implement changes, for example by increasing the number of contextually matchable language sets, can also assist the development of a functioning media market.
 - Loans and equity: commercial investors should be incentivised to give higher-risk loans, possibly through donor subsidies or risk-absorption. Loans should also include 'media friendly' components, like buy-back options for management and journalists.
 - Public donations and crowdsourcing: there is potential in exploring community networks and online platforms to request donations, possibly based around cause-based journalism, though this strategy has sustainability limitations.
 - Parallel businesses: donors should support and allow news media to build interconnected and mutually supportive businesses that can subsidise media operations, for example by establishing printing presses or running online platforms for advertising or peer-to-peer sales. There might also be value in the provision of business development advice and training.
 - Idea sharing: pioneering and small news media should be given access to global news media fora such as the International News Media Association (INMA) to allow them to draw on those networks, contacts and expertise. Organisation like the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), could also help with handling 'pre-loved' equipment.

42. Finally, in the complex environment of emerging media markets, donors need to find a balance between supporting 'noble' content such as human rights programming and entertainment programming such as music, which attracts, captures and retains audiences. Failure to find this balance and to address the broader complex financial issues that face media in fragile states can lead to media landscapes which lack the resources and resilience to make constructive contributions to addressing fragile environments.

New media ecologies, new donor strategies

43. Internet access and mobile phones have created what are termed new media ecologies that are characterised by complex and interdependent networks of interests and actors, including states, media institutions, civil society groups, citizens, and extra-territorial actors. In contrast with the past, the term 'the media' is no longer a national phenomenon and no longer constrained by classic broadcasting models.
44. These new media ecologies bring an unprecedented abundance of information to fragile states. This fragmentation can have benefits. For example, in Mali, broadcasting in the country's diverse languages helps people to understand the state of affairs and strengthens inclusion, leading to an observation that in Mali 'fragmentation is good for us.'
45. Given this markedly different media environment, media support approaches need to reorient themselves to address new challenges. There is a need for policy, strategy and interventions to focus on what will come in the future, rather than relying only on analysis of what has or has not worked in the past. This need can best be met through a comprehensive support strategy rather than by making a structural distinction between 'traditional' and 'new' media technologies.
46. A comprehensive strategy for engagement should be guided by focusing on three principles. These are assessment of the context, the design and support of appropriate evaluation measures, and a shift in intervention focus from individuals and institutions to broader media infrastructure with a view of the communication environment as platforms rather than mediums.
47. The first principle on which to base a comprehensive strategy is an assessment that seeks to understand the framework of new media ecologies in a specific fragile state. This should be guided by a flexible approach to media technology and an inclusive approach to local actors so that a clear and comprehensive picture of the media map is established.
48. The second principle is around appropriate monitoring and evaluation methodologies that can demonstrate the effectiveness of engaging with media ecologies in fragile states. At present there is a gap both in evidence around the effectiveness of engaging with media ecologies and in suitable approaches to collect what relevant evidence exists. One approach that might provide a suitable approach to generating evidence was to use measures of changes in information flows and forms of dialogue as evidence of intervention impact. This might also provide a broader indicator of a fragile states transition from fragility to stability.
49. The third and final principle that a comprehensive strategy should adopt is an acknowledgement that new media ecologies demand a shift in focus from institutions and individuals to infrastructure and platforms. Media development work has tended to focus either on institutions such as radio stations or regulatory authorities, or on individuals such as journalists, editors and owners. But new media ecologies demand a shift in focus to infrastructure such as internet access, mobile phone networks, and cable distribution arrangements, as well as to platforms such as online and mobile services and interactive broadcast networks.
50. Support at the level of infrastructure needs to engage with hardware, but also with

associated legal issues such as neutrality and surveillance as well as questions of rights and media education. Investment in hardware is required to address access issues and increase usability. Support to build the physical network at national and international level is needed, together with investment in local content creation on all relevant media platforms.

51. There is also a need to establish a regulatory environment conducive to supporting implementation, encompassing both national and international laws and policies. This environment should include engagement by donors in questions of net neutrality and associated issues as core elements of engaging in fragile states. The legal and policy frameworks also need to address the economic incentives required to drive the sector, from support to developing appropriate tariff rates to enabling business structures.
52. It is critical as well to develop legal frameworks to address questions of user rights in relation to privacy, security and protection, for example in relation to issues such as hate speech. In addition to legal frameworks, support to institutions such as universities, schools and libraries to advance user education, civic access and media literacy is of great importance.
53. Moving to support at the level of platforms, the focus shifts to an emphasis on information and knowledge production and dissemination. The focus of support to communities moves to the level of projects. Analysis at the level of platform needs to engage with understanding local needs and concerns, with an assessment exercise conducted to understand context particularly from a user's perspective. From this, appropriate standards and measures can be set to guide interventions as well evaluate the impact of interventions. Of course, audiences and technology users do not exist in a vacuum, and assessments must thus engage with understanding the nature of power and influence in a media ecology – exploring what counter-efforts, what other actors, what business and social forces exist and are influential in a specific complex media ecology.
54. Support at the level of platforms should seek to strengthen specific functions. These include the provision of accurate and timely information, and establishing platforms for dialogue and debate that are representative, inclusive and non-discriminatory. To protect these platforms support is required to develop policies and practices that are capable of managing hate speech and incitement to violence and the protection of vulnerable people.
55. The debate about the role of media in promoting or preventing fragility and violence applies to the role of new media ecologies too. Analysis of new media ecologies suggests that it is difficult to regulate or control hate speech and that regulation does not address the root causes of such speech. Strategies to strengthen the role of new media ecologies in addressing issues of fragility should include efforts to dilute or counter the influence of negative speech by strengthening accurate, independent voices and perspectives.

Conclusion

56. Media matters for fragile states. Although donor support stresses above all media's role in governance processes, media has many other roles too, such as promoting freedom of expression and providing support to specific sectors such as health, education and agricultural development. Developing a broader recognition of the roles that the media, and especially new media, play in a wider range of donor concerns will help advance support to the media in fragile states.
57. One of the big challenges that the development sector faces is reducing the disconnect between people working on fragile states and people working on the media. These disconnects inhibit fruitful collaboration and coherent support.
58. This conference started to address these disconnects and identified a number of entry

points through which to advance the role of media in fragile states. These entry points include incorporating a role for media in Fragility Indexes, taking up the question of investment and the role of the private sector, and exploring the potential for a comprehensive approach to media support, one that includes new media ecologies. The conversation about media support can also help to build bridges between the different elements of the conflict sector by supporting mutual learning about the role of the media in stabilisation and peacebuilding.

59. There was an acknowledgement that high quality media and accurate information are critical in fragile states, but that promoting freedom of expression carries with it the risk of promoting rumours and hate speech that can further divide fragile environments. To mitigate this risk there was an appreciation that media standards and mechanisms to hold media accountable were as important as strengthening independent media and new media ecologies. Supporting media specifically designed to provide accurate and reliable information, such as Radio Dabanga in Darfur, contrasts with approaches that provide general journalist training with no way of ensuring that these skills are used to repair rather than to divide fragile societies.
60. The conference set itself to achieve three objectives. The first was to map the role of media in fragile states and to assess whether donor support should be an increasing priority in the future. The overall conclusion was that the media has a clear role to play in addressing the challenges of fragile states and particularly in addressing questions of fragmentation and division that characterise fragile environments. The media, particularly broadcast media, has a clear and historic role in strengthening shared, unifying identities that can bind together where conflict has riven them apart.
61. But the nature of donor support needs to change. The rise of internet and mobile phone access – the new media ecologies – is linked to a shift in the control over media and public debate away from state and central authorities. This shift towards a more atomised, decentralised media environment has profound effects for donors wishing to influence the development trajectory of fragile states. To date, donors have oriented their development partnerships around state systems and institutions. In the age of distributed, decentralised new media ecologies, the political trajectory is now increasingly also influenced by an engaged, wired public. Donors must urgently incorporate this new reality into their policy of engagement.
62. The second objective was to explore which strategies have and have not worked and identify useful steps that donors can take. There was an overwhelming consensus that conducting thorough media assessments was a critical first step prior to any intervention. This assessment of the broader media ecology should be integrated into analysis of the political economy and drivers of change. Linked to this was a recognition that all media is political, and that the best strategy to mitigate political bias was through pursuing public interest approaches to media support. Donor support to media in fragile states has also not always adequately engaged with the particularities of the economic challenges facing media markets in those states. Donors must urgently engage with this dimension, since the business models of media in fragile states, as elsewhere around the world, are rapidly changing. A longer term view and more nuanced view of media sustainability is needed.
63. But the role of media in fragile states and the strategies that donors take to support media in fragile states are complicated. There is a lack of evidence about the impact of donor support, with specific challenges related to attribution and appropriate measures of impact. More significantly, the lack of evidence means there is an unresolved debate about how and when media may feed rather than help heal divisions and conflict, and what role donors play in enabling or mitigating this. Principles of Do No Harm in media support require greater evidence to support effective policy development.
64. The final objective of the conference was to consider linkages between international support to the media and broader governance assistance. Here, it was recognized that the debate is taking place at a time when new ways of thinking about fragile states are

developing. New actors, such as the G7+, are actively engaging in these debates and questioning old approaches. There is a huge opportunity to contribute and build on these conversations and debates.

65. These conversations can be continued in a number of fora. The conversation on identifying evidence and good practice can continue through renewed investment in relevant research and the dissemination of research findings through best practice training. This conversation needs to extend out beyond donors to include direct engagement with the media themselves, particularly owners and editors.
66. Donor discussions can be continued in policy development meetings, such as those of the OECD-DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF). Advancing the conversation about the role of information and communication in the post 2015 development agenda must integrate the outcomes of these discussions into the existing policy mechanisms in order to ensure that future development policy recognises the role of media and communication, particularly in fragile states.

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Wilton Park reports are brief summaries of the main points and conclusions of a conference. The reports reflect rapporteurs' personal interpretations of the proceedings – as such they do not constitute any institutional policy of Wilton Park nor do they necessarily represent the views of the rapporteur.

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¹ James Deane, *Fragile States: the role of media and communication*, BBC Media Action Policy Briefing, October 2013.

² Fitzgerald, D Post-2015 Peace and Stability, *Global Policy*, 10/10/2013
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2013/10/10/post-2015-peace-and-stability/>

³ Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (London: Bodley Head, 2009)

⁴ James Deane, op. cit.

⁵ Sen, Amartya. "Poverty and famine." *Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.*•(1981b). *Ingredients of famine analysis: Availability and entitlements*• *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 95 (1981): 745-762.