



Concept note

Media and fragile states

Wednesday 9 – Friday 11 October 2013 | WP1278

Partners

- BBC Media Action
- BBC World Service
- Free Press Unlimited
- HIVOS
- Open Society Foundations

Context and aims

The High Level Panel of Eminent Persons Report recommending a new development framework to replace the existing Millennium Development Goals has proposed an “indicative” set of twelve new universal goals, including - within a goal of ensuring “good governance and effective institutions” - that “people enjoy freedom of speech, association, peaceful protest and access to independent media and information.”

This is arguably the first time that support to media and access to independent information have been so explicitly defined as a core element of a future development agenda. This conference will examine what such support means, especially in those fragile and conflict-affected states which have become high development priorities and where the challenges to independent media are often greatest.

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 and of support to the media within the Busan framework, is not yet clearly developed.

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 objectives are 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;
- explore which strategies have and have not worked in supporting media in fragile states to date with an eye to determining the most useful steps development and diplomatic organisations can take in understanding, responding to and supporting media in these contexts.
- consider linkages between media and broader governance support that targets

domestic accountability in contexts of fragility and transition.

Themes for discussion

Media in fragile states and countries in transition: an overview

- how the media has featured in current donor strategies
- role of the media in governance
- prospects and reality of the media shaping democratic change in fragile states
- media trends in fragile states

Media as a driver of accountability and peace-building

- ways in which the media can constitute a source of accountability
- how the media compares to other institutions as a source of accountability
- role the media can play in fostering political cohesion across diverse communities
- conditions that are necessary for the media to play this positive role

Challenges to media in fragile states: conflict, co-option, corruption, censorship

- safety and security of journalists
- ways in which fractured media systems can exacerbate political polarisation
- economics of media in fragile states and vulnerability to co-option/capture
- censorship and corruption

Lessons from case studies

- what does and doesn't work, what have we learned from interventions to support media in fragile states
- possible case studies to choose from include: Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Kenya, Burma, Libya, Mali

Break out themes, such as:

- media freedom and freedom of expression in fragile states: how to overcome the challenges
- what needs to happen to make donor support more effective
- the economics of media: how can financial sustainability be achieved, and are there alternatives support strategies
- digitally divided or united support strategies: how to integrate digital and traditional media in fragile states

Support to media and access to information in the post-2015 development agenda

- ways in which the commitment in the High Level Panel Report might translate into support and what forms it could take
- how actors can work to keep independent media, access to information and freedom of expression on the development agenda

Participation, format and venue

The conference will be a 48 hour, off-the-record round table discussion, held at Wilton Park's residential venue in West Sussex, starting at 1500 on Wednesday 9 October and ending at 1630 on Friday 11 October. One quarter of the meeting will take place in break out group sessions, allowing in-depth discussion of key issues. The conference will have some 60-70 participants from fragile states, donor development and diplomatic agencies responsible for strategy and policy in fragile states, and media experts.

Enquiries about the programme and general enquiries to:

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