# Media Development

UNESCO focuses on media plurality in developing countries.

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UNESCO approaches media development by focusing on developing countries. Based on the guiding principles of Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNESCO Strategy on Human Rights adopted in 2003, and its Constitution, the Organization promotes the free flow of ideas by word and image and collaborates in the advancement of mutual knowledge and understanding of all peoples, through all means of mass communication.
Human rights, equality, democracy and good governance are considered to be long-term guarantees of economic and social development.

### The emergence of a civil society

Media pluralism and press freedom have become increasingly crucial as preconditions for democratic development. Thus, media and communication development projects have become more important. Directly linked to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), media development underpins human rights, democracy and good governance. In formulating the MDGs, heads of state and governments declared that they *"will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law to ensure respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development"*. Serious inadequacies in media development prevent the emergence of a vigorous civil society in a large number of developing countries thus undermining the ability of the public to understand and deal with major issues. These inadequacies include a lack of media pluralism representing different viewpoints, as well as poor human and institutional capacities to deal with current and emerging issues in existing media institutions. Active citizenship is the best means of fostering development and preserving democracy and basic freedoms; especially in countries undergoing a transition from authoritarianism to democratic governance. Governments alone cannot address the problems of development; other sectors of societies must get involved.



DJ Elias Raul S. Langa on Radio Komati, in Manhica, Mozambique. Elias is also a farmer (© S. Santimano/UNESCO)

### Media and Democracy

The media plays an important and unique role in society.
First, they provide alternative venues for advocacy, presenting civil society perspectives and agendas on local, national and global issues adding credibility and access to those viewpoints by the larger community.

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Second, the media facilitates dialogue and debate between civil society and government. Third, the media can educate and inform the government and the public about the functions of civil society. Fourth, the media creates an environment for transparency. Fifth, as with other organisations, sectors and groups, civil society needs media to report on its accomplishments thereby enabling goodwill and a positive image that need to be strengthened for a credible civil society. Sixth, media partnerships with civil society can support popular causes and deliver public services, especially at the local level, where community media serve as catalysts for action.

The Windhoek Declaration, endorsed by UNESCO's General Conference in 1991, succeeded in bringing media development to the African agenda. This declaration brings attention to the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press as a prerequisite for the development and maintenance of democracy and economic development.

## UNESCO's training support

Training of media professionals is vital to developing countries. Too often, media professionals are challenged by inadequate skills and are unable to address major development issues. UNESCO provides support for the development of training support materials including: model curricula for journalism training, participatory research tools and methodologies, ICT based toolkits, community media handbooks, best practice sourcebooks, radio script collections, and TV training manuals and videos. Local language

media in most developing countries (whether private, public or community oriented) are constrained by many factors that affect their investigative capacity.  They suffer from a lack of capable trainers, training facilities, local language training material and the inability to release staff for training.

Pluralism of media channels and messages depends not only on the number of channels, but also on their diversity, effective distribution, accessibility and affordability.

An important advisory role is provided on media legislation and policy to promote freedom of expression as a basic human right and to foster media independence and pluralism as prerequisites for democracy. In zones of conflict, UNESCO collaborates with local media and mobilizes resources to strengthen their capacity as independent and reliable partners in the democratic process.  Through its flagship Community Multimedia Centres programme, UNESCO supports local capacities to develop content and community outreach, particularly in Africa where media development is a special priority.

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Multicultural online catalogue for independent producers and broadcasters:
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Media Education in the Mediterranean:
www.mediamentor.org