



Options for media development in Iraq

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This report is the work of *Index on Censorship*. Its opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of UNESCO, the United Nations or its agencies or partners.

Cover photo: A US army sign prohibiting public protests outside the Monument to the Unknown Soldier in Baghdad, a few feet from the enclosed Green Zone area that is home to the US-led coalition command.

Introduction

Development in transitional Iraq will largely depend on the effectiveness and accountability of its evolving representative government. A prerequisite for this will be the continued development of a professional and independent media, to convey reliable facts and support responsible debate representing the diversity of communities and views within Iraq.

The safety & security issue dominates the agenda. All media development in Iraq will be dependent on collective and coordinated steps to protect Iraqi journalists' rights to free expression, physical safety, access to training and fair state media regulation, approached from three directions of our own – working with journalists, working with civil society and working with the state.

And there is a fourth direction: winning support from the UN, Red Cross, Red Crescent and others to join a joint effort with Iraqi community groups and the clergy to persuade the combatants on *both sides* to recognise the right of humanitarian workers and journalists to remain neutral in conflict.

There is a need to shed light on dark corners where a culture of impunity grows. Throughout the world where journalists' freedoms to report freely and safely are at risk, international & local media rights groups are able to work together to publicise the threats and challenge the forces responsible. The current security situation in Iraq has largely prevented the establishment of such links. There is an urgent need for international free expression groups to establish a trained media rights unit and a network of free expression monitors in Iraq, backed up by quick response strategies, direct links to international networks and specialist reports for national & international distribution.

Addressing the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference in Belgrade earlier this year journalist-activist Remzi Lani of the Albanian Media Institute, described four phases in transitional post-conflict countries: decentralisation of the old state media; liberalisation under new media laws; fragmentation of audience and market and

liberalisation of the media itself.

Any owner of a TV can see that Iraq is not a post-conflict society. Yet all the transitional experiences listed by Lani are now underway in Iraq.

The pace of media decentralisation and liberalisation continues, with scores of new newspapers and broadcasters springing up across Iraq. Iraq's once all-controlling state media has been reduced to a single US financed agency, in the shadow of a booming media sector – albeit one only nominally independent and in thrall to politically motivated paymasters. Commercial independence is impossible in the present market, starved of advertising revenue and shackled by an easily abused distribution system.

Meanwhile the audience is fragmenting, between popular and political, between Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian and Turkoman languages, between political parties and religious confessions, and between conventional market sectors, sports, scandal, women's interests and more.

There is the imminent opening up of commercial terrestrial TV franchises to challenge the grip of half a dozen Arab satellite channels and the eventual successor to the much-derided Pentagon financed Iraqi state TV network.

The occupation authorities created a new media regulatory agency that, if it survives the transition to Iraqi rule, will be liberal by some Western standards and streets ahead of anything in the Arab world. Well advanced in terms of its radio licensing powers, it could become the catalyst for a flowering of independent regional and community radio of a kind almost unknown in the Middle East.

The revolution is being led by a new generation of media professionals who have either come from the pre-war Ministry of Information-run media or have recently entered the media fray with limited experience. Many Iraqi journalists have high levels of technical skills, but most lack training in use of new digital technology, professional reporting, editing and management. But slowly, the average Iraqi

journalist – simply by getting out and doing the job, day in day out – by a process of trial and mostly error, is getting more efficient, despite the lack of training and independent expertise that in normal circumstances would be flooding into Iraq.

The training programmes that serve them must have a nationwide, multi-ethnic, multi-media approach and be capable of operating on an unprecedented scale, with scores of publications opening up in Baghdad alone. They must emphasise professional responsibilities, balance, transparency and accuracy.

But they must also be highly practical – covering, in time, all aspects of journalism and production, from the management of classified advertising and distribution systems through to the production of sports features as well as political analysis.

Such programmes must, from the medium to the long term, work with the university system and the media profession itself if the Iraqi media industry's training capacity is to be sustainable without protracted dependence on international donors.

In the short term however, the pressures posed by the proposed deadlines for elections, referenda and the appointment of an elected government require the funding of quick, systematic and balanced training programmes that are consistent with this long-term aim.

The present economic circumstances in Iraq mean that few publications can operate without the need for a rich patron to underwrite their losses – with all that entails for a supposedly independent press. Alternative, independent sources of investment – not donation - could be made available to the independent media, possibly through the creation of a commercial media development loan fund, offering funds at preferential rates and supported by training programmes designed to enhance the media's commercial sustainability.

Most importantly there is the issue of safety. Only a broad campaign that brings state, the media, political factions, the judiciary, legislature and civil society together for

collective action can have a lasting effect on the present deadly situation. But in the meantime Iraqi journalists must continue to operate in the face of physical danger as well as potential direct censorship and other challenges to freedom of expression.

Abuses need to be tracked, logged and action taken, where possible, to ensure that the culture of impunity does not spread.

Much can be learnt from the experience of reporters in other conflicts, notably Colombia, where the media has been threatened by both sides, killers acted with impunity and the government and judiciary all too often failed to do its part in ensuring the safety of the media.

At the same time a constantly evolving media regulatory environment is changing the way Iraqi journalists are allowed to publish. These changes should be tracked daily – innovative ways should be found to ensure that Iraqi journalists are kept abreast and personally involved in the development of an industry that will allow them to work freely, professionally, responsibly and safely.

That said there is a need to ensure that the mistakes of media support programmes in earlier post-conflict situations are not repeated in Iraq.

While it is neither desirable nor practical that one organization take on the sole overall direction of international media assistance, the United Nations is well placed to persuade donors and NGOs to share information and strategy plans at all levels. The establishment of media centres – operating both virtually and on the ground in Iraq – should primarily act as a platform for sharing of information, joint initiatives and sharing of experience.

Media development strategy in Iraq should be designed to tackle immediate problems while building foundations for medium and long term initiatives. In the medium term these projects - and the resources they deploy – aim to support the Iraqi media as an independent entity and defend basic principles of free expression, self-regulation and self-sufficiency.

"In open, violent conflict information and communication structures are often completely disintegrated, emphasizing the need for reliable and credible humanitarian information about security conditions, displacement of people and the political situation. But media assistance and information intervention must ultimately be tailored to build local capacity to ensure sustainable transition to peace and democracy. The peace process itself demands functioning information channels, and the election processes need professional functioning independent media. In a transition phase, defining what is humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development is not always clear-cut, and very often a situation categorized as reconstruction is attributed to significant humanitarian interventions. Bridging the goals of rapid-response assistance and the longer-term objectives of promoting freedom of expression and developing independent and pluralistic media are necessary to meet the challenges of reconstruction and democratic transition, where peace building is but one objective alongside the development of civil society."

From the UNESCO Belgrade Declaration

This report and accompanying research

This report summarizes the conclusions of research conducted by *Index on Censorship* during a three month study of Iraqi media development issues conducted on behalf of UNESCO; the lead agency for UN guided media development & human rights education initiatives in Iraq. It outlines the objectives and basic methodology of the research and aims to provide background to the study process.

In practical terms the research sought to emulate the approach of UNESCO as the specialized UN agency for communication, which is to provide an effective link between normative and practical assistance in the field and act as an intermediary between UN agencies and programmes, IGO's, civil society partners and Iraqi media professionals.

This meant extensive consultation and

exchange of documents with various UNESCO departments, UNDP, UNAMI and a range of IGO and NGOs currently active in media development in Iraq. Thus we believe that the research and the programmes that have emerged from it are the result of the best available and most up to date perspectives on the Iraqi media situation.

They are also designed to make the best of the constantly changing security situation, and to take constructive account of work already done or planned, whether inside and outside the UN cluster system, whether implemented with or independently of the Iraqi authorities.

The study was conducted by Rohan Jayasekera, Associate Editor of *Index on Censorship* magazine in London. It began with meetings with all UNESCO, UNDP & UNAMI officials involved in policy setting regarding cluster 9 & 11 and the drafting of an interim list of a dozen possible areas for activity in the media development sector.

This list was continually revised and updated during the study period during which time each suggested activity was further developed each time new information was turned up. The result was some 15 areas of possible activity, nine of which were finally amalgamated into three full funding applications that were submitted to the UNDG ITF via UNESCO's own internal assessment process, then to UNDP and as the cluster manager.

In summary there were five main areas of outcome:

- Contributions to a series of formal proposals for programmes covering various aspects of Iraqi media development. These proposals are to be submitted to the UNDG ITF process for approval, funding and implementation as soon as possible.
- Detailed references on other areas of media development for submission as full proposals at a later stage.
- An independent analysis of options for media development in Iraq including new research and consultation with other agencies at work in and around Iraq.

- Background information “on call” for UNESCO & UNDP staff concerned with Iraqi media development.
- Travel to Paris and to Amman (present temporary base of the UN Iraq operation) to brief UNESCO, UNAMI & UNDP staff as required.

The core contributions to the full applications are included in the thematic sector reports that follow. They are intended to serve as a general reference on issues of media development in Iraq. They are the work of *Index on Censorship* and do not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO, the United Nations or any of its agencies or member states.

Human rights & Freedom of Expression in the new Iraq

As the UN itself notes the fall of Saddam Hussein “removed a government that preyed on the Iraqi people and committed shocking, systematic and criminal violations of human rights”¹. Journalists were not immune from these abuses. But since April 2003 the condition of media and human rights has improved in some sectors but worsened in many more.

The massive growth in the media in Iraq has not been accompanied by the kind of independent investment, resources and capacity building that was initially expected. In fact heavy investment in media development in Iraq under the US-led occupation was both misdirected and misused. It did almost nothing to support Iraq’s booming semi-independent print & broadcast sector, while an ambitious attempt to introduce an advanced media regulation system has run into problems since the declared end of direct Coalition rule in Iraq.

Yet enormous responsibilities are to be entrusted to the media in the run up to proposed elections in January 2005. Electors will not be voting by local constituency, and with the security situation likely to preclude widespread or effective campaigning, most will rely exclusively on the media’s reporting of

¹ Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of Human Rights in Iraq (E/CN.4/2005/4), June 2004

national party agendas to inform their decisions. The scores of newspapers that have opened up in the last 18 months in Iraq already struggle to cover these issues professionally and fairly. Nearly all are economically dependent on the financial support of individuals and factions, who aim to recoup their ‘investment’ in the weeks before the vote by demanding political favours from their editors.

Most seriously Iraqi media workers remain under daily threat in what remains the world’s most dangerous place for journalists to work. The extremely partisan nature of the country’s political contests, added to the general violence and criminality that plague Iraq, is certain to raise the threat levels. Yet there is almost no reliable data on the scale and cause of these or any other kind of rights abuses – the essential prerequisite to challenging them. The authorities, lacking clear direction on the always complex issue of balancing public order issues with freedom of expression, are under pressure to err on the side of safety and increase censorship.

Meanwhile the security situation has deterred all but a very few media development NGOs from trying to provide the kind of support - as consultants, trainers, human rights advocates and independent providers of resources – that is a normal feature of other post-war reconstruction programmes. To facilitate a broader, better & more sustainable defence of Iraqi free expression rights and human rights in general, Iraq needs consultative support, monitoring, advocacy & resources, backed by local and international networks and implemented by Iraqi experts and groups specially trained for the purpose.

All activities under consideration are in line with the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of Human Rights in Iraq (E/CN.4/2005/4) and in coordination with UNESCO HR curriculum cross-sectoral working group (ED, SHS, CI) and other agencies working under the Cluster 1, 9 & 11 programmes. In its active combination of initiatives to link political authorities, the media and civil society at various levels and in various activities, the project particularly reflects the objective of the UN Strategy for Assistance to Iraq to support civil society “due

to its vital role in the political dialogue processes at various levels... particularly human rights organisations and national media.”²

Reporters sans Frontieres' list of fatalities among media workers and journalists in Iraq since March 2004

18/03/04 Ali Al-Khatib, Al-Arabiya
 18/03/04 Ali Abdel Aziz, Al-Arabiya
 18/03/04 Nadia Nasrat, Diyala TV
 26/03/04 Bourhan Mohammad al-Louhaybi, ABC News
 19/04/04 Assad Kadhim, Al-Iraqiya TV
 07/05/04 Mounir Bouamrane, TVP
 07/05/04 Waldemar Milewicz, TVP
 27/05/04 Kotaro Ogawa, Nikkan Gendai
 27/05/04 Shinsuke Hashida, Nikkan Gendai
 03/06/04 Sahar Saad Eddine Nouami, Al-Hayat Al-Gadida & others
 15/08/04 Mahmoud Hamid Abbas, ZDF
 15/08/04 Hossam Ali, freelance
 26/08/04 Enzo Baldoni, Diario della settimana
 12/09/04 Mazen al-Tomaizi, Al-Arabiya
 07/10/04 Ahmad Jassem, Nivive television
 14/10/04 Dina Mohamad Hassan, Al Hurriya TV
 14/10/04 Karam Hussein, European Pressphoto Agency
 27/10/04 Liqaa Abdul-Razzaq, Al-Sharqiya
 01/11/04 Dhia Najim, Reuters

The programme's practical approach to media development is based on an assessment by media NGOs³ in 2003. This study was updated in turn by *Index on Censorship* during its 12 month programme of monitoring, training and publication that followed the original survey, and which included a study of media rights & media regulation in Iraq.

The report and the study clearly linked media development to the need to protect Iraqi journalists' rights to free expression, physical safety, access to training and fair state media regulation.

² A Strategy For Assistance To Iraq 2004, Synopsis: Abu Dhabi, 28 February 2004

³ A New Voice in the Middle East: A Provisional Needs Assessment for the Iraqi Media (PDF).

Index on Censorship drew on these conclusions during the drafting of this report and when playing a part in the practical design of the programme. The resulting programme aims to lay foundations on which an Iraqi-led and owned human rights community can be built. It approaches this task from three directions – working with journalists, working with civil society and working with the state.

Action to defend human rights & free expression

Of the key factors in Iraqi media development identified in May 2003 – the need to protect Iraqi journalists' rights to free expression, physical safety, access to training and fair state media regulation – it is safety that today tops the agenda. At time of writing observers were awaiting a final verdict on whether late-January elections could be held in Iraq as scheduled. The UN is monitoring the security situation on a daily basis, and down the line, judgments will have to be made.

What is certain is that the situation is utterly untenable as far as the media is concerned.

The number of deaths and rate of attrition suffered by the media in Iraq is already unacceptable: It is a certainty that more journalists will be killed and injured at a still greater rate if the election is held in January and the security situation is not improved. The choice of whether or not to hold the poll will be made by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) as the only legitimate Iraqi authority in charge of the organization and management of the elections; the United Nations is advising only.

But it is understood that the elections should be as inclusive and participatory as possible, so that the results are accepted as a credible reflection of the genuine will of the Iraqi body politic as a whole.

This cannot be done without the full participation of the media. Yet unless there is a successful ceasefire, the Iraqi media will, along with the IECI's own staff, bear the brunt of the violence against civilians.

There is no other obvious way of protecting the journalists on the ground except relying on the goodwill of the various opposing forces and their willingness to treat them as non-combatants. There is little chance of this. The US-led coalition forces and the interim Iraqi government's treatment of the international satellite TV station al-Arabiya alone bode ill.

The company has already suffered heavy losses in Iraq. Eight employees have died since March 2003, three killed by the US army in circumstances that have yet to be fully explained. Reporter Abdel Kader al-Saadi was detained by US troops despite being clearly identified as a journalist and in circumstances that gave rise to allegations of deliberate intimidation.

From the other side, al-Arabiya reports that the station has received numerous threats from claimed supporters of the Jordanian insurgent leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, demanding that it support the "jihad" against the US occupation and Iraqi government.

All Iraqi media faces similar threats and similar pressures, plus the attentions of an interim authority that has sought in the past to impose its views on the media and ordering it not to attach "patriotic descriptions" to the insurgents and criminals," and asked the media to "set aside space in news coverage to make the position of the Iraqi government, which expresses the aspirations of most Iraqis, clear," or face the consequences.

It is clear that Iraqi journalists will continue to risk their lives in their own country. They understand better than anyone that the election can neither be transparent or win the confidence of the Iraqi public unless the media is on hand to convey reliable facts and support responsible debate representing the diversity of communities and views within Iraq - before, during and after that election.

Yet it is equally clear that this will not be possible without more loss of life in the present security environment. There is no immediate likelihood that the situation will improve. It appears certain that not

only will more journalists and media workers be killed and crippled in the remaining days before the elections, but also that the pace of such tragedies will be stepped up as the vote draws near.

This poses an awesome challenge to any UNESCO-UNDP media development plan. All media rights groups support a coherent strategy that will bring safety into the mainstream of daily journalism and end impunity for attacks on media workers.

The Brussels-based International News Safety Institute (INSI) ⁴ has developed a strategy to support the training of working media staff in first aid, physical safety steps in various dangerous situations and a number of other initiatives. One important step could be the provision of properly marked bullet proof jackets and headgear for Iraqi journalists and training for Iraqi journalists⁵.

We can only reiterate that all media development in Iraq will be dependent on collective and coordinated steps to protect Iraqi journalists' rights to free expression, physical safety, access to training and fair state media regulation, approached from three directions – working with journalists, working with civil society and working with the state.

We also understand that some kind of representation needs to be made to the commanders of the combatants on both sides, that such an approach will have to represent the broadest possible range of civil and political opinion and have the blessing of the Red Cross, Red Crescent and the Iraqi clergy of all faiths and confessions.

Such an initiative will be central to restoring humanitarian workers and journalists' rights to claim immunity and independence in times of conflict.

⁴ In January 2004 IWPR ran two News Security Training Courses on behalf of INSI. The two workshops were held over three days and attended by 19 Iraqi journalists from five papers, one women's magazine, a radio station, two TV stations and Iraqi journalists working with the international media.

⁵ The current market price for an international media standard flak jacket and helmet is about \$950; a place on a five day training course close to \$2,000.

Unless there is action to stop combatants acting with impunity there can be no hope of taking effective action against forces that target the media.

However the *quid pro quo* of any claim to independence and impunity – as far as the media is concerned – is an understanding that with these rights comes a responsibility to behave professionally and without fear nor favour to one side or another. Such habits will only develop in the Iraqi independent media – as anywhere in the world – if there is a fair and transparent system of media regulation to deal with the unprofessional or partial.

And there is no point to instituting fair and transparent media regulatory systems unless the journalists under its rubric have the training and experience to contribute to the development and implementation of such a system.

Programmes

The programmes outlined here seek to address these all the issues collectively and coherently.

A first phase covers the development of a Media and Communication strategy for Iraq. The fine details of this strategy are beyond the scope of this report as they primarily operate around UN government level exchanges. However the main objective of this phase of the project is to support the development of a national Iraqi media and communication strategy at interim government level that promotes freedom of expression and respect for a free and sustainable media in line with internationally recognized standards; and secondarily, to encourage, support and facilitate the effective contribution of Iraqi media and Iraqi civil society to this process. It will meet a direct request from the Iraqi Ministry of Culture for assistance in this sector.

- Direct advisory support to the Government and relevant Ministries in the development of a media and communication strategy in line with internationally recognized standards.
- This support shared with the Government and relevant Ministries in

capacity building workshops for officials and staff

- An 'awareness programme' of training and advocacy support in association with the Iraqi media and civil society groups to encourage their active participation in the development of this strategy.
- An emphasis on coordination and the active involvement of state structures that play their own part in influencing media regulation, such as the ministry of justice, parliament and judiciary.
- A clear focus on journalist safety issues and access to information.

The project should reinforce the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Human Rights' capacity to make its future contributions to the media regulation debate in Iraq. The programme, which should be backed by procurement and staff training, also aims to support ministry civil service infrastructure and leave it with viable policy guidelines that will still apply after a change of government. All activities should be based on principles of freedom of expression as expressed in Article 19 of UDHR and respect for a free and sustainable media in line with internationally recognized standards.

Any strategy will be affected by the immediate future of the interim government's Higher Media Commission (HMC) and the occupation-era Iraqi Communications & Media Commission (ICMC). Both of these agencies have been jousting since mid-summer for the right to prescribe regulation for the Iraqi media. It is widely expected that elections will change both agencies' agendas, and possibly their personnel, but it is much less certain that the agencies will cease operation, as some have suggested.

This is particularly true of the ICMC, which presently has generous core funding from the US to set itself up, and under the terms of the original CPA order that created it, takes its revenue income from the sale of mobile phone and terrestrial broadcast licences. There has been a great deal of speculation about the future of the ICMC, but despite the efforts of prime minister Ayad Allawi and the chairman of his Higher Media Council Ibrahim Janabi, the ICMC

has survived and looks like it may continue to do so until the elections at least.

The ICMC's greatest problem is the fact that it was not able to prove its worth to the Iraqi media sooner, during the formal period of occupation rule. But it has so far seen off a number of serious political assaults. The sale of the country's first free mobile phone licences has already added millions of dollars into its books. While the Iraqi Telecommunications Ministry makes a case for claiming that income for its own works, the ICMC argue (along with the World Bank and the ITO) that independent regulators are preferred by the industry over state ones and that the lead investment in telecoms should come from the private sector. Notably the ICMC's strongest defender on precisely these grounds has been President Ghazi al-Yawer, who ran a telecoms firm in Saudi Arabia after going into exile.

Technically it remains at risk from a serious challenge in the Iraqi high courts. There's nothing in the Geneva Convention that would really validate the occupation's establishment of the ICMC. If it is to exist at all after the elections in January, its existence and mandate will have to be formally enshrined in a new law passed by the new Iraqi parliament. However the ICMC has always expected that it will have to gamble on parliament to protect it from any threat from an Iraqi government. It has a broad-based membership and is relatively non-partisan. The cases that are made in its defence now, its independence, the commission membership, the likely support from the private sector for an independent non-state controlled regulator, will still be valid in February 2005. If Iraq has a free-thinking parliament, willing to contest the new government's ambitions, it is possible that it will recognize the ICMC as its most effective ally in defending the independent Iraqi media.

In May 2004 *Index on Censorship* noted: *"For should anti-Coalition reaction sweep away the Commission after 30 June, Iraqi journalists will probably have to spend the next few years campaigning for a independent self-regulatory body that will look very much like the Commission does now. Much will also depend on the names*

and records of the people chosen to run it and to serve as Commissioners... It is they who must, to borrow a phrase, 'embed' the Commission into the Iraqi system, deep enough to resist efforts to scrap it or take it over. They will have to make the Commission hard to ignore." This opinion still stands.

As for the HMC, despite some high profile interventions, the body has failed to take hold. The Iraqi media is suspicious of the council's antecedents and intentions and the body itself has been roundly criticised by the international community for some of its proscriptions. An HMC directive telling news media to reflect government's positions in their reports was described by the IFJ as "an ominous development (that) suggests newspapers and television are going to face strong-arm tactics from the authorities to tow their line." In the last few weeks the HMC's position has weakened and the latest reports suggest that it is to be evolved into a cabinet level committee or junior ministry not unlike the UK government's Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)⁶. Ibrahim Janabi has recently approached international agencies for training and infrastructural support the HMC's future work towards the regulation of a free and sustainable media in line with internationally recognized standards, which if sincerely made, would be a positive request.

Monitoring and an end to impunity

The second phase covers monitoring & advocacy for freedom of expression & rights of the media. In Iraq the danger was specifically identified by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who noted that the security situation of journalists – Iraqis and foreign alike - is very difficult. "Many cases of killing and abduction have been reported since the end of the war. It should be noted that many Iraqi journalists

⁶ The DCMS's main role is to set the framework for public service broadcasting on the government's behalf and ensure that regulatory framework for broadcasting "fosters fair and effective competition; promotes high quality broadcasting from a diverse range of sources; provides a high level of consumer protection; and safeguards freedom of expression". It also sets licence fees and oversees the effective introduction of industry-wide new technology.

working for Western media are being targeted by insurgent groups. It is also reported that there are no proper investigations into attacks on and threats against journalists and it is feared that this will lead to self-censorship, in particular by Iraqi and other Arab journalists, to preserve their security.”⁷

Throughout the world where journalists' freedoms to report freely and safely are at risk, international & local media rights groups are able to work together to publicise the threats and challenge the forces responsible. The current security situation in Iraq has largely prevented the establishment of such links.

Some ideas are in development. OSI has provided funding for the Committee to Protect Journalists to develop a training programme that will underpin an Iraqi monitoring system for media rights abuses. *Index on Censorship* has its own plans for such a system based around monitoring, publication, online and in print locally. The Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR) monitors the local print media and frequently reports on Iraqi media issues.

With this in mind the objective of this phase of a possible UNESCO-led programme would be for international free expression groups to establish a trained media rights unit and a network of free expression monitors in Iraq, backed up by quick response strategies, direct links to international networks and specialist reports for national & international distribution. Main activities should include:

- Identification & training of a team of local trainers and legal advocates to act as a media rights unit to lead programme development in Iraq.
- Initiation of a programme of monitoring, investigation, and recording and where appropriate, legal representation, in cases of media rights abuses.
- The effective collection and redistribution of this information, and the means for other groups or agencies to

⁷ Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of Human Rights in Iraq (E/CN.4/2005/4), June 2004

follow up or act upon the information gathered.

- Publishing information in a variety of formats and languages for local, regional and international re-use.

This section of the programme should be particularly sustainable. The programme includes a strategy to develop the media rights unit into an independent Iraqi body, perhaps associated with an international NGO or a network such as IFEX⁸. Alternatively it could be absorbed into another indigenous media rights group in Iraq.

At the very least its trained staff could be taken on in some capacity by international media rights monitoring groups. But since it will draw very heavily on the contributions of existing Iraqi media workers, reasonable self-interest will hopefully continue to drive their participation in an evolving Iraqi media rights network.

Another way to track the most rapidly changing, potentially most regulated yet potentially most free media in the Arab world and sustain a monitoring operation that could cover such an important specialist area – more so even than the founding of a dedicated NGO - would be through the regular publication of a media news journal, similar to the UK Press Gazette or the US Brill's Content. A magazine specifically dedicated to Iraq's revolutionary environment for media development would keep Iraqi journalists informed and involved in the development of an industry that will allow them to work freely, professionally, responsibly and safely. It should also serve as a model publication that practically illustrates managerial and editorial best practice by hosting training covering every aspect of commercial independent media production.

Training for the industry

“The conclusion of Index on Censorship

⁸ IFEX (the International Freedom of Expression Exchange) has a dedicated programme to support the development of free expression & media rights groups in the Middle East. Contact Kristina Stockwood, at stockwood@ifex.org.

*after a year's work in Iraq, is that even a large scale deployment of international assistance to the Iraqi media will not fulfil all its needs. 'Tactical' training programmes in areas such as media regulation, technical training, especially in broadcast and specific subjects such as election reporting, can be effectively implemented. But the only long term 'strategic' answer to Iraq's media training needs is to build a system around the universities allied with in-house training in the media industry itself, similar to that which sustains journalism training on an industry-wide scale in Britain, the US and Europe."*⁹

A significant amount of time was spent on considering options for training of media workers and journalists in two areas: what could be provided by the international community, in Iraq or in safer locations abroad or in the Kurdish north; and what could reasonably be provided for by the existing Iraqi academic sector.

While a great deal can be done by international NGOs such as Arab Press Freedom Watch, *Index on Censorship*, IWPR, Internews and others, the UNESCO Communication and Information Sector has a specific and institutional interest in assisting higher education in Iraq to play its part. Its ideas for Iraq focus on addressing the needs of the media sector by supporting the creation of a sustainable and effective media-training programme. Assisting the development of a professional and independent media by providing media professionals with new technical skills and experiences is vital to ensure transparency and democracy. But in any country with an established media industry, the responsibility for training is shared between the academic and vocational colleges of further education and the industry itself, which provides its own in-house training. These training fora are mutually supportive and as self-sustaining as open-access education can be.

This is not to underestimate the contributions of AWFP, IWPR, BBC World

⁹ From *Index on Censorship's* June 2004 report to the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office on media training & development in Iraq.

Service Training Trust, and *Index on Censorship's* own Arab media experts in their work already done in Iraq. But given the security issues, the cost, inconvenience and dangers involved in transporting trainees to 'safe' venues abroad and in the northern governorates on a regular basis and considering the numbers of people involved, there is a strong case to be made for leaping right ahead and building a significant media training capacity into the country's existing universities.

Thus the first priority of the project should be to pave the way towards the creation of a new, fully-equipped and eventually internationally accredited journalism course at Baghdad University, with partner faculties at other universities to follow. The media-training sector in Iraq will ensure the higher educational sector meets the training needs of the media industry, including where necessary, supporting the media industry's own in-house training capacity.

Programme activities should prepare the ground for the opening of a vocational and post-graduate journalism course as part of the university's academic programme that will address these issues directly and indirectly and contribute to staff development, especially to updating of and vitalisation of research skills and subject knowledge, with special consideration of the needs of Iraqi staff.

The programme should address the immediate regeneration needs of the faculty of journalism in providing appropriate training of journalists through the launching of a vocational and post-graduate journalism course. It will also address capacity building of the faculty itself, include training of trainers and initiation of research development but also – vitally – to train core support staff and develop a management capacity able to strengthen and sustain the autonomous status of the faculty. Technical and material assistance plus selective procurement programmes will also address the needs of Iraqi research students left stranded by the loss of library, computing and technical facilities, destroyed in combat, or by looting and vandalism.

Iraqi university faculty members have had

little contact with the wider world for many years. There is a need for the renewal or establishment of contacts to give the wider perspectives required for updating both subject specific knowledge and pedagogic methods. Collaboration with universities in other countries, including exchange programmes, would help in the promotion of research and graduate studies in Iraqi universities.

Programmes for doctorate students joint research projects and joint supervision and examination and exchange programs with sister universities should be considered. Contacts would be established to promote the availability of post-doctoral fellowships for Iraqi researchers as well as catering for participation of Iraqi faculty members to conferences and research seminars. Furthermore scholarships and grants to enable some of the students to complete their studies abroad would also be included in the wider scope to promote twinning arrangements between Iraqi universities and international universities/faculties of journalism.

There is also a need to review the curricula of journalism faculties in Iraqi universities, so that they can be reformed to meet the needs and aspirations of the new Iraq. The Iraqi universities in conjunction with the relevant professional bodies must make the review. Inputs from Iraqi academics working in other countries, from universities in Europe and elsewhere and from international bodies active in the field of higher education could help greatly and would add credibility to the outcomes.

A good deal of thought was given to the institutional circumstances of Iraq's universities and a strategy that would allow a structured approach to developing an effective and sustainable journalism faculty.

The university system in Iraq is in flux and liable to managerial change in the coming months. Thus to preserve the integrity of the development process, any programme to introduce externally funded journalism training into Iraqi universities should be run externally (under the direction of a trust) and in full cooperation with the university, with a schedule to govern the eventual hand over

of the centre to full ownership by the universities involved.

The programme could be run a distinct set externally managed post-graduate and vocational study course and during the run-up to the handover, could draw in members of the existing Iraqi university faculty to train for increasing responsibility in its operation.

Capacity-building courses could be provided for trainers and university administrators with a view to their growing role in its day-to day management.

The dual identity of the programme as both academic (post-graduate) and vocational (professional) reflects the needs of both the Universities for resources and training, and the Iraqi media industry, which will require the course to provide vocational training for its working staff in various formats, as day-release, week-long, full and part-time and evening classes. It also reflects the reality of journalism training today, which needs to combine both practical and 'philosophical' approaches to journalism and its accompanying disciplines.

In practical terms this would involve the independent management of the courses for up to three years before the final handover.

This 'graduated independence' will allow the development of a course to a standard that will allow international accreditation by a partner university in Europe, Asia or North America; the training of academic and support staff to manage the course; a managed space that will facilitate international donor investment.

It also addresses a security issue as a training of trainers programme will involve much less transporting of people in and out of Iraq than conventional direct training of journalists by international groups.

With this in mind, a full partnership with one or more foreign universities will be essential. The programme team will reach a partnership agreement with an international university / faculty of journalism, to support course development and staff training, and the eventually support the formal accreditation of the vocational courses, and

their further development into fully-fledged post graduate degrees. The partner university will be required to support the development of an academic strategy to see the vocational courses integrated into the Iraqi university system, and from there to international accreditation and beyond.

The programme will promote and support professional exchanges between universities and training centres within Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Europe. Activities in conjunction with other UNESCO supported Cluster 9 programmes – particularly after the opening of the Media Resource & Training Centre – will facilitate networking and feature activities specifically designed to foster professional dialogue. This will include efforts to involve a fair proportion of women and minority participants.

This will require quite quickly, full terms of reference and an operational plan for the courses including training of trainers' programmes; a local Iraqi consultative programme; a tender document with full briefing papers for a contract for the external management of the course for a three year period and a briefing session for international educational bodies considering tendering for the contract. The final implementation strategy should:

- Create a distinct and independent structure for the first three years of the course programme that allows for external management and facilitates international donor investment.
- Develop a planned handover strategy, with training, to transfer the course department to the full management of the University after the three year project period.
- Ensure the handover strategy includes training of trainers courses for both university staff and media industry staff responsible for in-house training.
- In this and other ways to ensure the course programme directly supports training capacity building in the rest of the university and the media during the three year period.
- Ensure the fullest possible contribution of other university staff to the programme sessions, to build capacity

and synergy between the specialist course teams and the rest of the university.

- Implement all activities in coordination with the UNESCO education sector and other agencies working under the UNTFG funded Cluster 1, 9 & 11 programmes, especially that which already involves investment in the University.

Out of this strategy, the programme should quickly address:

- A needs assessment to identify the objectives and requirements for reform and to point to the ways in which UNESCO and other organizations can assist Iraqi higher education at this critical time.
- The preparation of terms of reference and draft operational plan for the development of a new post-graduate & vocational journalism course.
- Identification of core faculty members and facilitate their participation in initial training of trainers' programmes with a view to the establishment of a journalism-training course and to undertake the journalism teaching at the university.
- Identification of sister universities to promote collaboration and exchange (twinning).
- Development of curriculum and training components for vocational and post graduate journalism course at the faculty of journalism
- Training of trainers for post-graduate & vocational journalism course
- Capacity building of university administrators and other relevant university staff in university/faculty administration
- Offer access to information and learning facilities including libraries and data bases via the libraries of the Iraqi universities.
- Arrange short workshops and courses in advanced research methods
- Procure technical equipment, computers and research materials
- Creation of UNESCO Chairs on Freedom of Expression and Human Rights

The actual post-graduate & vocational course activities could be managed, possibly inside the campus, but not necessarily so – reinforcing the case for integration with planned UNESCO-UNDP media centre activities (see next section). The centre programme, designed to facilitate and support monitoring, training, professional contacts, information sharing and publication, will also provide flexible vocational training through seminars and workshops.

Training programmes and proposed media centres

Soon after the fall of Baghdad to US forces, UNDP moved quickly to open a media centre in the capital with a view to using it as a focal point for media development work. Two other centres were planned, in Basra and in the Kurdish northern governorates. *Index on Censorship* had visited the centre in late 2003 and spent an afternoon with the staff. The centre closed shortly after. The security problems were self-evident. It was a building run by a group with an open access ethos, well marked with the logos of an international agency, reasonably generously equipped with new technology, leaving it open to crime as well as politically motivated attack. The main problem however was the lack of actual programmed activities at the centre. The otherwise committed staff did not have the training or capacity to organise activities themselves, and at that time, the only international groups running media development activities in the city were *Index on Censorship*, which had adopted a strategy of moving between low profile venues not identified with international activity and IWPR, which had its own centre in the then relatively secure Mansoor district, home to the city's diplomatic residences. Thus the UNDP centre was effectively without content, despite the quality of its equipment and the start of a useful library of media references.

The original funding for the centre, provided by the Spanish government, was still available for centre activities, even though the security situation had collapsed to the point where any attempt to open a physical centre was impossible even to contemplate.

Thus this study considered the development of a programming policy for one or more future media centres, that could be funded, managed and implemented in a structured fashion, but initially based in venues in Amman or other city¹⁰ until a move to Iraq is possible. Partly in recognition of current security requirements and partly to facilitate use of expertise and resources from different partners in different subjects and countries, the programme's proposed activities could be incorporated into a 'virtual' programme of events in various venues around Iraq, the northern governorates and online under the media centre banner before security situation allows for the opening of the centre itself, whereupon the bulk of activities will be physically accommodated inside its gates.

The physical shift from online to regional events, to events in Iraq and finally to a dedicated Media Resource & Learning Centre, should be directed by an agreed security strategy, directed by a suitably trained individual approved or assigned by UNSECOORD.

The aim in both these 'virtual' and Iraq-based phases of the media resource centre's existence is to accommodate training activities in six key training areas plus safety training. However the centre will also host the different media training sessions that are an integral part of other UNESCO / UNDP Cluster 9 & 11 media development activities – in particular the programme Media & Human Rights: Promoting Human Rights & Freedom of Expression, submitted in tandem with this programme to the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund and already included as a Fund 'pipeline project'. The media centre will wherever possible seek to accommodate other UN endorsed projects to support governance, civil society & media development.

Cooperation between the different activities outlined by the UN's Strategic Plan for

¹⁰ This programme is designed to operate in tandem with UNDP sponsored Cluster 11 & 9 programmes, in particular those run by the Reuter Foundation. The Foundation has established training resources in Beirut, which may be of use to this programme during its international or 'virtual' phase. Offers of support for the possible location of external training in Dubai's Media City have also been received.

Human Rights¹¹ is essential to the effective and sustainable facilitation and support of the plan's monitoring, training, professional contacts, information sharing and publication.

The programme could be built around the development of modular training in six core subjects, each one guided by an individual dedicated team specially briefed and trained for the purpose. The module teams will include working university lecturers in Iraq and international experts, backed by support staff responsible for coordinating training programming, publication, curriculum development, liaison with Iraqi university staff, and reporting to UNESCO.

The six proposed core subjects are *Journalism Skills; Iraqi Civics & Civil Society; Iraqi Law & Politics for Journalists; Communications & Production Skills; Free Expression & the Duties of the Media; Training of Trainers*. A supplementary programme covers safety training for journalists & other media workers.

A key reason for adopting a modular approach to these subjects is to allow flexibility in recruitment of participants while increasing focus on individual subjects. The modules will progress at different speeds and involve different people from different academic and professional disciplines.

Furthermore the modules will create human and physical resources that can be utilised by other projects run under the Cluster system and possibly further afield, by agreement with programme and module team leaders.

Some of the modules could be able to draw heavily from the expertise and work of other programmes intended to begin before the end of 2003 and directed by UNESCO under Cluster 9 and 11. These other programmes will give a 'head start' to the activities described here.

By the end of phase one however all the modules – in terms of human and general

11 Human Rights in Iraq: Implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Iraq. Programme of Cluster 9 - "Good governance and civil society" (January 2004 – December 2005 – October 4 draft)

resources - should be of the necessary standard to be included in vocational study courses of international standard, run in partnership with the University of Baghdad and other university partners.

While the programme specifically covers the actual development of an independent Media Resource & Training Centre, UNESCO & UNDP do not rule out cooperation with other sectors or agencies working on similar venue-based schemes.

This programme was originally designed to provide 'programme support' in the form of actual events and training activities for a planned UNDP-run media centre in Baghdad and three sister venues. The UNDP centre was closed at the end of 2003 and plans to reopen it are pending.

Similar centres are also being considered by other groups¹². The possible physical accommodation of the centre on the University of Baghdad campus will also be investigated, pending security assessments and partnership agreements.

All UNESCO media activities in Iraq have been developed to complement and support each other and have been developed as part of a unified coherent programme of UN activities in the sphere of human rights in Iraq¹³. Some of these programmes are scheduled to begin before the programme outlined here starts, so they will feed expertise and resources into its activities.

The tabled proposals cover the first 18-20 months of activities only – a proposed two month preparatory period, followed by six

12 In addition to the UNDP plan, UK NGO the Institute of War & Peace Reporting plans to expand its existing Iraqi Media Institute operation in Baghdad and Suleymaniah in 2005 to accommodate pending programmes funded by the UK DfID and the US Americas Development Foundation (ADF). Also the CPA-established Iraqi Communications & Media Commission proposes to open an Iraqi Media Institute of its own in 2005. See later references. Other organisations have plans for, or working venues in place, inside and outside Iraq, including the ADF, Reuters Foundation, Iraqi Syndicate of Journalists, among others.

13 United Nations Strategic Plan for Iraq: The Human Rights Programme for Iraq - Programme of Cluster 9 "Good governance and civil society" December 2004 – December 2006. To be finalized at time of reference.

months of training and training of trainers and the projected opening of the Media Resource & Training Centre, then the start of the vocational study courses over twelve months.

Thus additional funding will have to be secured for an additional one more year of activities to cover the academic year 2006-07, based on the programme target of handing over the vocational study courses - and possibly an internationally accredited post-graduate degree course - to the ownership and management of the University of Baghdad, complete with trained staff (faculty and administrative) and physical resources by the end of summer 2007 at the latest.

Main activities and outputs should include:

- A 'virtual' (real life, but not focused on one physical location at this point in time) programme of media relations and media development activities under the media centre banner.
- A promotional and publication campaign to 'brand' the media centre in its 'virtual' and 'real world' phases.
- Creation and implementation of an Internet site strategy and the opening of a website or a section of an existing website to act as a portal or access point for media centre activities.
- Professional exchange and network established among media professionals in Iraq as well as between Iraqi journalists and international media organizations.
- Vocational and human rights training seminar series and workshops.
- Implementation of a public programming strategy, online, abroad and in various venues around Iraq, incorporating activities that would normally be housed by a physical media centre.
- Promote and support professional exchange initiatives and initiate networking facilities and programs to promote professional dialogue among local journalists as well as between Iraqi journalists and international media organizations.

- Training activities implemented in line with human rights and governance strategies

Other proposals

The ICMC has also tabled a plan to extend its work into training and media industry debates, by founding an Iraqi Media Institute that would play a key role in these areas. A programme including a full series of training activities has been developed and costed by the ICMC at £7.27 million (\$13.15 million) over three years, with £2.82 million (\$5.21 million) up front to get training together in the current (Iraqi) election period.

The Institute of War & Peace Reporting's existing training operation in Iraq has funding from the UK DfID until February 2005. Its plans for new work in 2005-2008 include a fresh professional needs assessment for media development in Iraq; more journalism skills and reporting training; media business development and management training and financial support for a selected group of media outlets; assistance in the development of professional associations and the further development of a regulatory framework.

In September 2005 IWPR was informed that the Americas Development Foundation (ADF) had been selected by USAID to implement a planned \$44 million Civil Society & Media Support programme in Iraq with IWPR engaged to establish five media support and training programmes in five regional civic centres to be established by USAID. IWPR has been informed however that these centres will probably not be established in the foreseeable future.

Investment in development to enhance media independence

The current economic climate in Iraq means that the Iraqi media cannot sustain itself without drawing on the support of factions and individuals likely to make political demands. There is a need to study the potential commercial viability of the Iraqi media market and the prospects for an independent media loans fund that can

support media infrastructure development, diversification and other means of guaranteeing plurality and independence through economic sustainability.

A useful start would be to prepare draft terms of reference and draft operational plan for the development of a new media loans fund and a programme of training courses for potential applicants to the fund and thereafter prepare a draft tender for an external contractor to open and administer the fund. A full assessment of the Iraqi media market's options for commercial viability and prospects for development could also include the identification of areas where targeted investment in research & training can enhance commercial viability and media market advantage

There should be close consultation with investment groups that run similar loan funds or preferential investment programmes for commercial operations in developing, transitional or post-conflict states at the World Bank, or the Media Development Loans Funds run in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Typically, loans from these kinds of sources cover printing presses, transmitters, antenna towers, new digital equipment or computers for actual publications, but they could also be extended to ancillary services such as advertising agencies, pollsters, and distribution, marketing and sales agencies.

The fund could also consider leaseback arrangements whereby equipment is purchased and leased to the applicant until the agreed purchase fee is paid back to the fund, whereupon the equipment would belong to them. Loans, which will have to be repaid, should still be offered at preferential rates, while the training programmes that accompany the loans application process

should not exclude charitable bodies, civil society groups, collectives or co-operatives.

Groups that lack obvious collateral could be helped by fund investment in equity. Joint equity in large scale investments such as new pre-press technology and regional broadcast facilities, if shared with Iraqi partners, would be one way to ensure that one provider's monopoly in a particular media service sector did not grant them undue influence over others.

Support to the media during the elections

A proposed three-part programme now under consideration for fast-track funding from the UN Trust Fund aims: To publish a reporters' election guide for the Iraqi media; to run an advocacy campaign to encourage full, fair and efficient disclosure of information to journalists covering the elections; to act effectively to enhance the safety of journalists and media workers.

Coordinated between UNESCO CI and SHS Sectors, the programme is designed to complement an existing UNDP directed programme to train Iraqi journalists in election coverage techniques run by the Reuters Foundation.

The first step could be the publication of a detailed election guide booklet for journalists contained in a clip binder for easy updating of its contents. The booklet will include guides to principles of professional reporting during elections, journalists' rights, election processes, contacts, background documentation and safety information among other important issues – some of which may not yet have emerged at the time of the submission of the application.

Under the tabled proposal the guides could be regularly updated by numbered replacement inserts. Journalists should be able to update any one of 12 separate

Arab Press Freedom Watch divides the newly emerged Iraqi print media into six categories:

1. Newspapers based outside Iraq, mainly in London or Kuwait, which share a high level of content, design and management (such as *al-Zaman* and *Sumer*).
2. Newspapers published by the IMN, which are financed and managed by the CPA (such as *al-Sabah* and *Sumer*).
3. Publications by political parties or factions, which include old publications like the Communist Party's *Tariq al-Sha'b*, the Kurdistan Democratic Party's *al-Taakhi*, and the Islamic Da'wa Party's *al-Da'wa*; papers published in the 1990s, mainly in autonomous Kurdistan and overseas, such as *Baghdad* published in Amman and *al-Ittijah al-Akhar* published in Damascus; papers published right after the fall of the Ba'ath regime, such as *al-Jarida* and *al-Sa'ah*.
4. Papers with an ethnic base, such as *al-Taakhi* and *al-Ittihad* which appear in Arabic and Kurdish.
5. Independent newspaper that appeared after the fall of the Ba'athist regime, published by groups or individuals, covering different fields such as politics, art, literature, sports and religion, including also some former Ba'ath officials and press veterans.
6. Temporary productions by local printers with a very low circulation, up to 5,000 copies per issue.

sections within the folders. New updates can be published and packaged – the recipient simply removes the old section, discards it and replaces it with the new updated section.

The new updates could be available online, or distributed in plastic packaging by partner media, or at programme events & seminars, by independent agencies such as civil society groups, or in certain circumstances, by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) - the authority responsible for certifying political parties, associations,

groups and independent candidates as political entities.

Election information from the IECI, the UN and the Interim Government will be considered for inclusion along with party political material – where such material is deemed essential to clarity and transparency. Thus an independent team of journalists directed by the project editorial manager should be essential to the entire process.

This team, guided by clear editorial policies and with reference to an independent editorial board, will filter and select the latest news and analysis for inclusion in the Background Briefing section of the file. This will include editorial contributions from top analysts and media, the UN and NGOs tackling campaign issues, from which journalists could be encouraged to quote from or republish in full.

Civil society groups, new advocacy groups and local activists could be encouraged to provide their own content, clearly marked as such. Educational material supporting both awareness seminars run under this project and those run as part of the UNDP-supported programme directed by the UK Reuters Foundation should be included for distribution and inclusion.

Similarly NGOs specialising in journalist safety training will also be commissioned to contribute content, possibly in support of their own media safety training. The file will also include a diary, contacts list and glossary of election terms. All this material will be accessible in an online archive, in Arabic and Kurdish and selectively in Assyrian, Farsi and other Iraqi languages, plus English. The programme will also include a series of participatory seminars to raise the level of debate on the media's role and rights during elections, based around the content in the guide.

In the second phase of the programme, the proposal suggests two nationwide campaigns.

The first could be a media & public awareness campaign backed by direct lobbying & advocacy initiatives that will encourage the election's lead participants –

the candidates and parties, but also civil society, and party, government and election officials - to ensure full and efficient disclosure of information.

Many new political actors will be interacting directly with the media for the first time and could be unfamiliar with the routines of releasing and distributing information effectively as part of the campaign process. Even fewer will have the experience and understanding to deal fairly with demanding and critical journalists.

But the free flow of information from the parties to the media, managed by efficient and accessible media relations officers, is essential to the accurate representation of the candidate parties' position to the general public.

Awareness seminars and training programmes will stress the importance of freedom of information to the political process. Political parties, associations and independent candidates registered as political entities with the IECI could be individually canvassed and responsible officials encouraged to attend seminars on campaign freedom of information. This will include publication of a special report on the issue, content for the reporters' election guide, online material and advertising.

The second media & public awareness campaign will encourage efforts to guarantee the safety of journalists and their right to work without threat. This will also be backed by direct lobbying & advocacy initiatives, publication and a major advertising & PR initiative. This programme could be developed with a specialist training agency with direct knowledge of the media workers' security situation in Iraq.

Specific attention should be paid during these two campaigns to address the needs of civil society and Iraqi officials. This will help to develop their capacity to deal with the media fairly and safely through targeted events within the two wider campaigns. This will include practical support programmes for Iraqi civil society and officialdom to develop their own strategies to work with the media, and support the full, fair and open dissemination of information.

Based on this strategy, immediate activities and outputs could include:

- Editorial, development & management plans for programme activities.
- Partnerships with media rights monitors, media safety advocates and Iraqi media development actors.
- Developed editorial and publishing capacity to handle & distribute programme editorial contributions and later updates.
- Publication of a detailed election guide booklet for journalists contained in a clip binder for easy update of contents, including guides to principles of professional reporting during elections, journalists' rights, election processes, contacts, background documentation and safety information.
- Editorial contributions from top analysts and media, the UN and NGOs tackling campaign issues, and media rights and safety. Regular updated inserts published by a dedicated editorial team & distributed by web, partner media and events.
- Develop and run a twin-track advocacy campaign, including advertising & PR initiatives, covering freedom of information and journalist safety
- Training seminars and awareness programmes for journalists to support the wider objectives of the project and to raise the level of debate on the media's role and rights during elections.
- Training and awareness programmes for Iraqi civil society and Iraqi officials to support the wider objectives of the project and develop their capacity to professionally deal with the media.
- A campaign to encourage the election's political participants to ensure full disclosure of information and the safety of journalists
- Translation of all content into relevant Iraqi languages, with selected translation into English and archiving online and the UNDP-Reuters Foundation NewsExchange (www.anbaliraq.net).
- An online editorial resource and reference shared with the UNDP-Reuters Foundation NewsExchange (www.anbaliraq.net).

Cross-sectoral translation, publishing, distribution & archiving, in print & online.

In summary, the proposal submitted to the UN-ITFG included the following objectives:

- Compiling an updated media & human rights needs assessment
- Steering a systematic consultation, mid-term review & evaluation process
- Publishing, translation, editing, distribution & archiving of content from the programme in print & online
- Translating & distributing a proposed UNESCO list that includes:
 - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*
 - How to File Complaints on Human Rights Violations* by Klaus Hüfner
 - Human Rights of Women*
 - Human Rights: Questions & Answers and Democracy: Questions & Answers*
 - UNESCO ED sector training kit
 - The Practice of Citizenship.*
- Translation of other key references on the media, election issues, gender equity & human rights Instruments.

Options for Broadcasting

The Iraqi Media Network (IMN) is still the national broadcaster of Iraq and has plans to transform itself into an Iraqi public service broadcaster, with an independent Iraqi governance structure and a commitment, to be outlined in its Charter, to a public service remit. It presently runs the only national terrestrial television and radio network in Iraq as well as a satellite TV service, which allows it to cover nearly 80 percent of the population. Its original board membership will probably be largely replaced in January with the involvement of the interim government & assembly.

Presently the current contract for the management of the IMN network is held by the US firm Harris Corp, with programming sub-contracted out to Lebanese Broadcasting International. This contract expires end of December; though some Harris technical teams will stay on to continue infrastructure development. When the Harris Corp contract expires, in theory it

will leave the existing board of IMN – the board set up by the CPA's Order 66 – nominally in charge of the national broadcasting network, but without any money to run it.

The general assumption is that the state will take it over and run it as straightforward organ of the state, as the Higher Media Commission's Ibrahim al-Janabi tried to orchestrate in autumn 2004, without success. Both Janabi and Allawi, frustrated by their failure to persuade the independent media to "set aside space in news coverage to make the position of the Iraqi government, which expresses the aspirations of most Iraqis, clear," aspired to a network of their own.¹⁴

But without international funding such a station would be a very expensive luxury for the Iraqi state. Whatever income it generates in its own right will be dependent on the Iraqi government being better broadcasters than Harris Corp and LBC and more attractive to audiences than all the new private TV networks that are blossoming across Iraq. It would struggle to attract the kind of technical and journalistic expertise it needs from the competition. Few Iraqi media high-flyers would want to attach themselves to a state broadcaster unless it gave its managers the kind of freedom of operation enjoyed by the BBC, US PBS, al-Jazeera or Abu Dhabi TV.

Thus the prospects for a state broadcaster may be so poor the state may be inclined to simply shut it down and lease its equipment to the private sector with a deal on broadcast time for its own occasional use. The lack of alternative options means that the proposals for a public service broadcaster as tabled by IMN still have life, as its clear commitment to public service broadcasting at least leaves it with hopes that it may win international funding support.

¹⁴ This eventually led to the resignation of Jalal al Mashta on 23 November as Director General of the IMN PSB in the face of government intransigence. Al-Mashta was a former editor of al-Nahda newspaper and an experienced radio & TV journalist & media manager at international level.

The IMN are proposing to make a straightforward request from the UN, EU or other donor for \$105 million over two years to turn IMN into a public service broadcaster. The requested amount is based on British media advisor Simon Haselock & ICMC chief executive Siyamond Othman's calculation that the network could raise its own income of \$165 million over the same period, from advertising, provision of technical services such as local transmitter services, one-off government grants and possibly some kind of UK-style licence fee.

In the interim period between application and hoped-for approval, which would coincide with the election period, IMN are also seeking funds to provide independent and authoritative coverage of the election campaign and the vote itself. This could include technical upgrades to improve its network interactivity; developing a number of new election programmes; producing voter education films and develop an existing but presently unused Iraqi second terrestrial channel to providing 24-hr coverage of political campaign developments.

The IMN could also produce detailed and tailored reports on broadcast media output through use of its existing monitoring systems, including reports on election coverage; monitoring for incitement or activities that breach IECI or ICMC guidelines, raw data for independent analysis or policy development by the UN or its associates. It might also be well placed to provide more accurate market studies to support independent media development through viable investment.

At the request of the UK Foreign Ministry, the BBC World Service Trust has prepared a plan to help the IMN equip itself for this latter task, starting with a comprehensive media landscape study in order to provide information about media consumption, tastes and preferences to inform the strategic media planning for the country. The first survey could be led by external experts and once the discipline is established by the Trust for the first survey, it could be handed over to the ICMC who should be able to commission future surveys directly.

One option that has not yet been tabled – to

the surprise of some observers – is some kind of UN broadcasting, even though locally supported production, just to get the UN agenda out and on-air, has been a feature of virtually every UN-led post-conflict intervention since 1989 and Namibia. In Cambodia and Rwanda the UN even had its own broadcast facilities. The IMN may be able to provide full technical support & rebroadcast facilities for a possible UN broadcasting team working along the lines of past UN post-conflict media operations. Apart from whatever the UN expected in terms of 'getting its message out', one advantage of a successful operation would be the opportunity for the authorities and general public to see a PBS in actual action – rather than be left to consider its virtues in as an abstract concept.

There are several satellite broadcast solution providers, including a satellite network run by the Iraqi media magnate Said al-Bazzaz, which enjoys much popular support and which is working on a terrestrial broadcast service. The BBC also has long-running plans in hand for a southern governorate based network based out of Basra and incorporating BBC WST training activities. There is also an established set of terrestrial & satellite broadcasters in the Kurdish governorates. The London based PR firm Bell Pottinger was hired on a \$5.6 million contract with the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004 to create television and radio commercials to explain the handover of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government in June.

The great force for the future in Iraqi media is radio. Though reconstruction of the country's broadcast relay network never progressed as quickly as it should have given the millions of dollars granted to US sub-contractors, the IMN's radio networks (Republic of Iraq Radio) and the UK sponsored Radio Nahrain in Basra are getting heard across the country. But the most striking results have been recorded by the new private stations such as Voice of Iraq on AM in Baghdad.

Then there are the new stations on the FM band – under military control during the Saddam era, and now virtually a clear spectrum for local radio – Hot FM and Radio

Djila, an extraordinary (by Arab standards) talk radio station that has had a striking effect on public debate. Iraq's multi-ethnic community also has its broadcast representation, including Ashur Radio which broadcasts in Assyrian and Arabic on shortwave Turkomaneli Radio and others, which broadcast in Turkish/Turkoman and a raft of Kurdish broadcasters.

The most developed and efficient operation of the ICMC was its radio licensing powers. The commission made the most of British Foreign Ministry support to develop a licensing regime and was able to draw on established British expertise to set it up, while it has access to advanced broadcast monitoring equipment to ensure fair and efficient frequency licence management. The Commission has licensed or registered interests from broadcasters across the country. The UN and UNESCO in particular should take steps to support this process and ensure that it supports and covers community radio as well as purely private popular broadcasting.

It would coincide with a renewal of interest in community radio as a potential force for change and development in the Arab world, marked by the 21 November signing of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Declaration of Marrakech and the publication in December 2004 of an Arabic version of UNESCO's How to Do Community Radio guide to the medium. The declaration and UNESCO recognise community radio as "media which are independent, community-driven and civil society based (and) have a particular role to play in enabling access and participation for all to information and communications, especially the poorest and most marginalized communities".

Thus UNESCO should be encouraged to devise a coherent strategy that will first preserve the strengths of the existing licensing system and extend support for community radio, then support legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that protect and enhance community media, and finally support training in radio across the board. Election media support programmes should pay particular attention to the radio sector.

Iraqi Media Conference - Safety, Regulation & Reconstruction

We also looked at the possibility of beginning the process of setting up a three day international conference to discuss three key issues: how journalists can best reduce the physical dangers of reporting in Iraq; how journalists should respond to drastic changes in Iraq's media regulatory environment; and how international community can best support the establishment of a professional, pluralist, independent media in Iraq. This conference could be held in Baghdad or the northern governorates, depending on security issues, or Doha, Abu Dhabi or London, depending on circumstances and focus, or in a city with a UN agency base, Paris, Amman, Geneva or New York. The general themes considered were as follows.

1. How journalists can best reduce the physical dangers of reporting in Iraq: There are different views on the ways the issues of safety can be approached. Various media rights organisations have different attitudes on the value and effectiveness of military-style 'hazardous environment training' favoured by Western media corporations. Others prefer to rely on direct advocacy and solidarity campaigns such as those established by Colombian journalists. Styles of advocacy also vary; some groups prefer to work behind the scenes, some in public, via letter, or protest, others prefer to name and shame individuals, sometimes aggressively so, others prefer more diplomatic approaches.
2. How journalists should respond to changes in Iraq's media regulatory environment: The Iraqi government has already begun to exert authority over the Iraqi Communications & Media Commission, supposedly intended to be independent of state control. Should the ICMC be defended? Does it offer better prospects as an independent champion of the Iraqi media than the country's media unions? What should be done with resources pledged to the ICMC? What are the government's true intentions – to control the media or to control incitement to violence? What

should be left to a future elected Iraqi parliament to resolve, and should media regulation be in the gift of the government – not the ICMC - in the meantime as communications minister Mohammad Ali al-Hakim has argued.

3. How the international community can best support the establishment of a professional, pluralist, independent media in Iraq: There is a need to ensure that the mistakes of international assistance programmes to support the media in earlier post-conflict situations are not repeated in Iraq. If it is neither desirable or practical that one single organisation or authority – Iraqi or international - take on the sole overall direction of international media assistance, how should resources be fairly divided in Iraq, home to what is now the Middle East's most diverse media? How can you build sustainability and commercial viability into the Iraqi media from the start, when the difficult state of the Iraqi economy means that the media may be dependent on the subsidy or the patronage of the politically ambitious for years to come?

Conclusion & comments

The first question asked of the Iraqi media these days is: "is it any good?" and the second: "How can it be made better?" To the first question I ask in reply: "How can you tell?" To the second I ask: "better than what?"

The aim is not to pass judgment for its own sake. The country is a dangerous place for Iraqi journalists, but it is still a competitive, semi-commercial environment. Investors, the few advertisers, anyone with a message for the public want to use the most professional outlets. Purveyors of 'humanitarian information' have to know that it is being handled fairly, promptly, accurately and effectively by the new Iraqi media gatekeepers. An effective media with a national perspective is particularly essential to the effectiveness of an election run on a national list system rather than by votes in local constituencies.

A fair assessment is handicapped by the fact that the media landscape is distorted by the sheer scale of the Occupation story – the issue that distracts from all others. And western observers have to do it from a distance. But from anecdotal evidence and reading BBC Monitoring and IWPR's media transcripts, speaking unscientifically and drawing only from the mainstream media, I think that on average the Iraqi media is getting better on its own without help - so far.

The pressure of competition and the simple exercise of doing the job day-in-day-out have improved the mechanics. The equation – professionalism equals quality, equals credibility, equals influence and eventually, commercial viability is perfectly well understood in principle, if not always in practice.

UNESCO, which is currently tasked with first defining a media development strategy for the UN in Iraq, then with the support of the UNDP, devising a programme to implement it. Among the proposals on the table are a detailed study of the media and the updating of 2003 needs assessments by various NGOs, including *Index on Censorship*.

How can such a report judge quality, or lack thereof? Such a survey might carry out a content analysis on news stories, measuring quality in terms of whether the reports reflect the entire community and cover a broad range of topics. Whether it balances stories with multiple points of view. They would have to ask whether authoritative sources are used, or whether statistics and academic research are presented accurately.

This is asking a lot of the Iraqi journalist. To start with, whole tracts of the country are too dangerous to cover. Like it or not, the real diversity of Iraq's media is in the diversity of publications serving Iraq's different communities – not just confessional, but extremist and moderate – and not just in the diversity of views expressed in each one. One of the hardest things to do in Iraq is to get that 'balancing' alternative point of view.

The high-tech media relations operation lifted wholesale out of the Washington Beltway and dropped into the Baghdad

Green Zone largely failed to serve Iraqi journalists. The worsening security situation has forced the authorities to close in on themselves. Access is even harder today. As for use of 'authoritative sources,' Iraq's advocacy groups, independent expertise and academia are in worse condition than its media. The result of this is that Iraqi media is a long way from fulfilling its true role: to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing.

The UNESCO-UNDP media and civil society strategy, to be funded from part of the 1.1 billion dollar UN Trust Fund for Iraq, has a particular strength in that it looks at the whole picture. There's support for the media, but also support for civil society, academia, think tanks, training for officials in dealing with the media, advocacy and advice on the establishment of fair media legislation, and all of that wrapped into a broader strategy of human rights and civil society development.

It's not the only strategy. Almost in tandem, the US, which has concentrated its substantial financial resources on its own programmes rather than the United Nations', has called on the Americas Development Foundation, which has \$44 million to spend from USAID for its own Civil Society & Media Support Initiative in Iraq, and which addresses exactly the same agenda as the UN's own Clusters.

For everyone, the security situation in Iraq has precluded the kind of media training initiatives that characterized international investment in media in other post-war situations – the Balkans, East Timor, Afghanistan. We should pay tribute here to the Institute of War & Peace Reporting and the BBC World Service Training Trust for persevering with their work in Baghdad and Basra, not to mention the dedicated Arab journalists & trainers¹⁵ who worked with Index on Censorship in Iraq. But this kind of venue-based training in Iraq, even where led by Arab & Kurdish trainers, is presently unsafe for all concerned.

¹⁵ They were Sihem Bensedrine, the Tunisian human rights activist and banned journalist; Yousef Ahmed, Palestinian media consultant and Amnesty International staffer; Yahia Shukkier, editor and chairman of the Jordanian Journalist Association's Freedoms Committee.

There are all kinds of ideas to deal with this situation, such as fixed programmes in changing venues, but most options either involve shipping trainees abroad – a dangerous activity – or giving out DVD & CD based training materials to Iraqi editors for their staff's use. All of us who worked in Iraq found that it was essential to meet editors and win their full support for our programmes. Now editors are simply bombarded with e-mails offering all kinds of training material and opportunities, but have little to go on when judging their likely value to their publications.

Index on Censorship's work in Iraq¹⁶ monitored the evolution of media regulation in Iraq, supported publishing and ran a series of seminars for Iraqi journalists over 12 months in Baghdad. The seminars were not conventional training, more a practical introduction to the confusing world of regulation, censorship, principles and responsibility that they had been pitched into. We hoped to keep Iraqi journalists up-to-date with the latest twists in a changing agenda.

Not only the law is changing. Perspectives on journalism training are changing as the media and its traditional values come under new scrutiny.

Principles of balance and fairness were once regarded as the key to professional journalism. Today Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's reflective and fascinating book *The Elements of Journalism* lists nine elements, and fairness and balance don't make the cut. They were found to be too vague to be essential. Old standards of reporting are wrapped in myth and misconception. Independence did not require journalists be neutral. "The concept of objectivity has been so mangled," they wrote, "it now is usually used to describe the very problem it was conceived to correct."¹⁷

To add to these mixed messages, Iraqis have seen US soldiers closing down papers, the Iraqi authorities picking up their bad

¹⁶ Activities were funded by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Human Rights Projects Fund and the Foreign Office of the Netherlands.

¹⁷ See also Journalism training and critical thought, Dominique Vidal, *Le Monde Diplomatique*. <http://www.ejc.nl/hp/jt/vidal.html>

habits of arbitrary justice, journalists targeted by both sides, a national broadcaster that was spectacularly mismanaged by US contractors and a western conceptualization of media that can find room for the nationalist rhetoric of Fox News, but not for al-Jazeera. These are powerful lessons and very bad ones. Is the Iraqi media better today? Better than what?

What does all this mean for training? Everything that the community of donor-funded international media trainers learnt about the importance of getting out of the classroom and getting into the newsroom over the last few years has had to be dropped – at gunpoint. The return to reliance on textbook training has highlighted its practical shortcomings at a time when old concepts of media essentials are being questioned.

This is not just a matter of security. These problems will not easily go away even if peace quickly returns to Iraq. Almost a year ago I addressed a conference in London run by IWPR and talked about the danger of 'guilt by association'. Today, with the Fallujah horrors on our screens and the polarization between US-led forces and the Iraqi majority nearly total, this largely unspoken problem is still with us.

Observers have posed the question whether those planning to intervene in Iraq's media – be they donors, IGOs or NGOs, investors, governments, or just concerned foreign journalists – will exert undue influence on media that they are trying to help to independence. I fear that whether or not this is so, the Iraqi media and the population at large may be suspicious of our motives.

I'm not sure whether it is possible to guarantee that an overtly US or UK led media development initiative in Iraq will be trusted. Some NGOs and a number of highly experienced Middle East based journalists have made it clear that they do not want to be associated with the US-UK occupation or its rump presence.

How will any international intervention help the Iraqi media be affected by the US government's own Iraq strategy? Will that strategy be perceived as a kind of rule by

proxy? How will US & British NGOs be received in Iraq in that context? Internews is one of the world's largest media training providers in developing and transitional states and convened the June 2003 Athens meeting that eventually gave rise to the ICMC, but is not yet committing itself to new work in Iraq, aware that their work in other Arab states might be compromised by misjudged associations made in haste.

It's all about perceptions. The Americas Development Foundation is a respected agency, but is best known in Europe for its US supported civilian work to underpin the Nicaraguan civil society movement that eventually did what US supported military operations had up to then failed to do – achieve Washington's strategic objective of bringing down their Sandinista enemies.

The continuing presence of US & UK troops further blurs military/civilian boundaries. Western troops and journalists mix in the field, embedded or otherwise, but with a few amazing exceptions, only on one side.

These are real doubts, and the general rule is, if in doubt when in Iraq, don't do it.

Speaking for *Index on Censorship* I welcome the way that UNESCO & UNDP look to the universities to take the lead in media training in Iraq, and plan to equip them to do so. A system where vocational and academic training share the curriculum is best implemented by the media industry and the further education sector in partnership, and is the only truly sustainable option. So the sooner work starts the better.

An important step will be to establish a Media Development Loans Fund, similar to that at work in central Europe and Africa, to provide independent sources of finance to Iraq's media, and break the grip of the privately wealthy individuals and political factions that currently underwrite the Iraqi media. Such a fund would come with training and capacity building, and strategically invest in pre-press and print technology.

It could support alternative distribution systems, fund accurate market research on which proper business decisions can be

made and where appropriate, specialist publications to foster diversity of coverage and opinion.

UNESCO – acting in response to requests from the present Iraqi authorities – is also addressing the legislative issue. Fair and transparent media regulation is the foundation on which an independent media can be built.

We will all have to consider the role of existing agencies such as the Iraqi Communications & Media Commission (ICMC), and the cabinet level media committee that can be expected to succeed the present ad hoc state Higher Media Council. And there's the issue of public broadcasting in Iraq, which is a huge issue – so huge, that it seems no one bar Simon Haselock and Siyamond Othman of the ICMC want even to think about it.

To repeat to most important point of all: It is clear that Iraqi journalists will continue to risk their lives in their own country. They understand better than anyone that the election can neither be transparent or win the confidence of the Iraqi public unless the media is on hand to convey reliable facts and support responsible debate representing the diversity of communities and views within Iraq - before, during and after that election.

Yet it is equally clear that this will not be possible without more loss of life in the present security environment. There is no immediate likelihood that the situation will improve. It appears certain that not only will more journalists and media workers be killed and crippled in the remaining days before the elections, but also that the pace of such tragedies will be stepped up as the vote draws near.

This is, again, an awesome responsibility for all concerned. But as we've heard, all these issues, concerns, principles and practices will come to a head during the forthcoming election. Only weeks away. What can we do?

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18 Parts of these conclusions were delivered to the International Media Support conference relationship between Media Development, Peacekeeping forces and Humanitarian Aid, in Copenhagen in November 2004