

Expert Group Meeting on Defining Media Development Indicators
UNESCO HQ, Paris, 10-11 December 2007

FINAL REPORT

An Expert Group Meeting on Defining Media Development Indicators was organized at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 10 and 11 December 2007 as a follow-up to the decision of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication at its 25th session in March 2006 to launch a broad consultation in this area.

Some thirty experts with various professional backgrounds (media development organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, academics and donors) took part in the meeting. All regions of the world were represented. Discussions were based on a draft discussion paper prepared for UNESCO by Mr Andrew Puddephatt, Director of Global Partners and Associates.

This meeting was part of a broader consultation process in which UNESCO involved a wide range of stakeholders. The Organization provided the opportunity to experts who were unable to attend the meeting to submit their comments on the discussion paper in writing. These comments were summarized and presented by Mr Andrew Puddephatt, who drafted the discussion paper, at the beginning of the meeting.¹

I. OPENING OF THE SESSION

Mr Wijayananda Jayaweera, Director of UNESCO's Communication Development Division, opened the meeting on behalf of UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information. Mr Jayaweera reminded participants the history of the initiative to define indicators of media development and spelled out its main purpose. The initiative is primarily designed to provide a tool to media professionals, policy makers, development agencies, implementers and project proponents to determine the level of media development in a given country and identify the areas on which national efforts and development assistance should focus. The establishment of indicators will also facilitate the assessment of the long-term impact of media development efforts.

Mr Jayaweera emphasized that it was not UNESCO's intention to make a comparative assessment of countries nor was it to override the work of other organizations that have monitoring systems on different aspects of media development (safety of journalists, freedom of expression, etc.). He also stressed the importance of the participatory and representative nature of the consultative process. Finally, he explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss and finalize a set of indicators for measuring media

¹ A number of comments were also received after the Expert Group Meeting and were taken into account in the final version of the paper. These include comments from the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the World Association of Newspapers (WAN).

development, which would be submitted to the IPDC Intergovernmental Council at its 26th session in March 2008.

Mr Bill Orme, Advisor for Independent Media Development at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who moderated the first session of the meeting, took the floor to congratulate Mr Puddephatt on the job he had carried out. He underlined that the indicators were not designed primarily for donors but rather for societies wishing to improve their media environment.

II. INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION OF DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER BY MR. A. PUDDEPHATT

In his introduction, Mr. Puddephatt reminded participants that the discussion paper was elaborated on the basis of a study of 26 existing systems of media indicators. He went on to explain the structure of the paper. It is built around the five following outcomes [now called *media development categories*] which are suggested for further elaboration:

- Outcome 1: the system of regulation and control
- Outcome 2: plurality and transparency of ownership
- Outcome 3: media as a platform for democratic discourse
- Outcome 4: professional capacity building and supporting institutions
- Outcome 5: infrastructural capacity

Each outcome is broken down into a series of categories of indicators [now called *issues*], within which a number of key indicators are suggested. The paper also offers guidance about means of verification and data sources.

Mr Puddephatt made it clear that the paper does not provide any fixed methodological approach, favouring a “toolbox” approach in which indicators are selected from a broad and inclusive list according to the specificities of the national context.

The author of the paper then referred to the difficulty posed by the absence of reliable, up-to-date and publicly available information on media development. He also spelled out the key assumptions of the paper as well as the main methodological challenges, all of which are clearly listed in the introduction of the background paper.

Mr Puddephatt ended his introduction by offering an overview of the comments he had received from experts who had not been able to take part in the meeting on the overall approach adopted in the paper. A first criticism made was that the paper included too many indicators and benchmarks for it to be a practical working document. It was suggested that they be boiled down to a core set of 10-15 key indicators. Secondly, some experts expressed their concern over the mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, of well-defined and more subjective indicators. Thirdly, it was argued that the toolbox approach could lead to subjectivity in the selection of indicators, in particular by governments. To this, Mr Puddephatt responded by reminding participants that the indicators were primarily designed for development agencies, media organizations and

civil society, rather than for governments. Other comments included the lack of attention given to the role of non-state actors, to content analysis and to print media.

III. SESSION 1: GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE PAPER

(i) Purpose of the initiative

The floor was then opened for comments from the experts. One of the first points raised was the need to clarify the **purpose of the initiative**: is it to be understood primarily as a toolbox to measure the impact of media development efforts over time or should it be viewed as a diagnostic tool for assessing the media situation in particular countries in order to define development priorities?

Most participants agreed with the objective of using the indicators as a **diagnostic tool** to assess the media ecology of a particular society; however, there was a consensus that the indicators should not be used as a prioritization tool. Rather, participants believed the indicators should serve to help stakeholders understand the media environment in which they operate as well as to measure the impact of media development efforts. They asked for it to be made very explicit that the purpose is to assist development, not impose conditionality.

It was suggested that the indicators could become an important **framework for dialogue between UNESCO/IPDC and member-states**, and that they could be used by IPDC to further refine its project criteria.

Several experts stressed the need to clearly define the **end-users** of the indicators as this will determine how they are to be shaped.

(ii) Clarifying the parameters of the exercise

Participants agreed that a **clear and robust introduction** stating the purpose of the document, its limitations and proposed use would be useful to clarify these issues.

It was suggested that the introduction should cite the five **UNESCO declarations on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Media** (Windhoek, Almaty, Santiago, Sana'a and Sofia), endorsed by the Organization's General Conference, as providing the overarching set of principles from which these indicators are derived. A few experts recommended that the full text of these declarations be reproduced in the paper as an annex.

Several participants emphasized the importance of providing in the introduction a clear **definition** of what UNESCO understands in this context by "**media**", that is news and public information, as opposed to entertainment media. Similarly, it was pointed out that the notion of "**media development**" should also be explicitly defined, on the basis of the Windhoek and subsequent declarations.

One expert proposed using the concept of “**knowledge society**” as a starting point to explain why the paper focuses on certain elements rather than others.

(iii) Methodological considerations

The experts welcomed the **pro-poor and gender-sensitive orientation** of the paper, though some considered they could be further reflected in the indicators. One participant felt that the pro-poor stance required fine-tuning in order to ensure that it was not reduced to mere lip-service. He suggested doing this by taking into account the general background features that relate to how people become and stay marginalized in society.

Regarding the concern over the mix of **qualitative and quantitative indicators** in the paper expressed by several experts who did attend the meeting, it was pointed out that pure objectivity is simply not possible in such an analysis due to the very nature of the field. Many elements of a media system do not lend themselves to quantitative measurement and therefore some of the indicators will be at least partly based on subjective perceptions. One participant called for this issue to be more clearly spelled out in the introduction, along with suggestions as to how to address this challenge.

The same expert asked for more effort to be made to take into account the **durability** of the things that are being measured. He explained that some of the indicators and means of verification vary from year to year, thus limiting the period of validity of assessments.

Concerning the **structure** of the paper, several experts questioned the choice of the term “**outcome**” to define the five major categories of indicators put forward in the paper, noting that some of them were not so much “consequences” of media development as “preconditions” of the same. It was also felt that the outcomes need to be viewed as **interlocking**.

Finally, one expert highlighted the challenge of translating these indicators into a **strategic, operational tool**.

(iv) Content-related remarks

Several participants asked for extra weight to be placed on the question of the **sustainability** of media outlets, in terms of editorial output, management and financial resources. They were in favour of viewing the media sector not only as an institution with functions in the public sphere but also as a business sector, operating in a competitive environment.

One expert suggested that more focus be given to the **global dimension of media**, claiming that the national focus adopted in the paper is too limiting, under-reflecting the reality of the global flow of information.

The same expert considered that too much emphasis was placed on the informational role of media to the detriment of its **educational role**, and underlined the importance of impact and content analysis.

IV. SESSION 2: DISCUSSION ON OUTCOME 1: THE SYSTEM OF REGULATION AND CONTROL

After a brief presentation of Outcome 1 by the author of the paper, the experts were invited to express their views on this chapter.

(i) Legal and policy framework

When discussing the legal framework regarding freedom of expression and the right to information, several experts called for the inclusion of indicators and means of verification that look not only at existing laws but also at **courts' decisions**, both at national and international level, in order to assess how these laws are applied in practise.

One expert also asked that the importance of an **independent and functioning judiciary** be mentioned more clearly, including the right of appeal to an independent body.

Concerning the issue of the **protection of journalists' sources**, a majority of experts were of the opinion that it was possible to have a very strong rule in this area without it having any other implication in terms of the regulation of the journalist profession.

Some participants felt that the legal regulation concerning wiretapping, searches and seizures should not be ignored in this section.

(ii) Regulatory system

The debate on this section of the paper was centred on the question of whether it is necessary to **distinguish** between the **regulation of the press and the regulation of broadcast media**. Some argued that unlike in the case of print media - and of the Internet for that matter -, the regulation of broadcast media can be justified by the fact that spectrum is a limited natural resource. Other experts pointed out however that advances in technology have greatly increased the number of available frequencies. Notwithstanding this, several participants emphasized that it was important to avoid giving the impression that spectrum could become infinite. Moreover, concerning print media, a cautionary note was sounded about endorsing any form of regulation in this area as this might be misinterpreted as an invitation to introduce a regulatory law on print media, which may very likely take the form of a licensing system.

Therefore, it was agreed that the paper would make it clear that UNESCO is not calling for increased regulation of the news media. Participants also proposed that it be explicitly stated that regulation is not about the restriction of freedoms but rather about providing a conducive environment for freedom of expression, diversity and independence. Finally, it

was decided that the term “regulation” would not be used for print media in the paper because of its negative connotations; rather, the emphasis would be on promoting press freedom.

(iii) Legal restrictions on journalists

A number of participants pointed out that the legal restrictions on journalists mentioned in this chapter should not be limited to defamation laws but also include restrictions based on **national security, hate speech, privacy, contempt of court laws, obscenity, blasphemy** and **prohibitions on false news**. Just as with defamation laws, it is necessary to state that these restrictions should be clear and narrowly defined in law, and justifiable as necessary in a democratic society, in accordance with international law.

Other points were made concerning more detailed aspects of the chapter.

V. SESSION 3: DISCUSSION ON OUTCOME 2: PLURALITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF OWNERSHIP

Sessions 3 and 4 were moderated by Mr. Sina Odugbemi, Head of the Communication for Governance and Accountability Program at the World Bank. Mr. Puddephatt opened session 3 with a brief introduction of the outcome concerning ‘Plurality and transparency of ownership’, following which participants were invited to present their comments.

One major point discussed during this session concerned the chapter as whole: an expert expressed her unease with placing so much authority in the hands of the **State as a regulatory force**, particularly when dealing with states with bad records in this area. She suggested giving more space to **self-regulatory mechanisms**. However, several other participants insisted that the existence of corrupt states should not be used as an excuse to deny the State its role in policy-making. Others pointed out the **limits of self-regulation**, for instance in dealing with issues such as media concentration.

One expert argued that one way to solve this dilemma would be to make a clear distinction between **legislation** on the one hand, which should broadly spell out the basic aims that are to be achieved, and **regulation** on the other, which should deal with the more technical aspects of how to achieve these aims. The former would be under the responsibility of the State while the latter could be left to independent regulatory bodies selected in a transparent way.

Another expert pointed out that insofar as the paper was not calling for additional regulation and constraints but simply recommending that **public interest considerations** be included in media legislation, there was not much cause for concern.

(i) Media concentration

Participants agreed with the approach adopted in the paper that consists in looking not only at the dangers of **media concentration by the State** but also of **private concentrated media**, which in some regions such as Latin America is the prime source of concern.

One expert proposed making a distinction between ordinary media concentration and concentration that is carried out **for political purposes**.

Regarding legislation on **cross-ownership**, one participant recommended including not only media content companies but also telecom companies and Internet-service providers.

(ii) State, private and community balance

A number of participants called for the term “State media” as a desired outcome to be avoided, favouring the term “**public media**” or “**publicly funded media**”.

One expert asked for the definitions of state (or publicly funded), private and community media to be clearly spelled out and for it to be stated whether the balance mentioned in the title of the section refers to the type of **ownership, social role or funding mechanism** and rationale of these media. He also felt that the **hybrid nature** of many media institutions should be recognized in the introduction of this chapter.

(iii) Licensing and spectrum allocation

The absence in this section of a call to specifically **use licensing to promote diversity** was noted and it was recommended that one be included.

One participant suggested that due to the ongoing bandwidth competition between broadcasters and telecoms, it should be a matter of public policy to ensure that **sufficient frequencies are allocated for news and public information**.

Referring to the current move toward **digitalization**, he suggested including some ‘must-carry’ obligations on satellite and cable, at a minimum, to carry PSB channels among the choices they offer as well as the possibility of obligations to promote diversity (e.g. in favour of minority channels).

(iv) Taxation and advertising

Several experts considered that **taxation** and **advertising** should be treated separately and contested the suggestion made in the paper that States should use advertisement to encourage media development.

VI. SESSION 4: DISCUSSION ON OUTCOME 3: MEDIA AS A PLATFORM FOR DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE

After a brief presentation of this outcome, which was described by some as the most normative and problematic of the five outcomes, participants took the floor.

Special mention was made of the need to emphasize in the introduction of this chapter that the objectives set out in this outcome are to be achieved “**within the prevailing climate of self-regulation and respect for the journalistic profession**”, rather than through additional regulation.

Participants debated on whether the analysis should be limited to **news media**. Some pointed out that non-news categories of media can play a very important role in promoting democracy, reflecting diversity and serving as a platform for good governance. Others, however, warned against the dangers of blurring the boundaries between news and other programming, citing examples where such a rapprochement has transformed news into entertainment.

One expert underlined that media should be seen as a platform for democratic discourse not only at national level but also **at global level**.

Regarding the **means of verification**, it was noted that while Outcomes 1 and 2 relate to a domain that is entirely under the authorities’ discretion, and in which the means of verification are easily identifiable as they are written texts (laws, regulations, etc.), Outcome 3 concerns mainly media enterprises and is as such much more difficult to verify. One participant suggested therefore including a recommendation to encourage media organizations to document all their decisions, e.g. their code of ethics.

(i) Media reflects diversity of society

On the need for media to serve the needs of all groups in society, several experts recommended stating explicitly that the objective is not just to promote media *by and for* minority groups, which could result in ghettos of marginalized media, but also to ensure that **mainstream media** discusses issues that affect these groups.

Another expert brought to the attention of participants the need to include the issue of **access** in this section (e.g. universal access to public service broadcasting, access of all groups to establish and maintain their own media, access to media in rural areas, etc.).

(ii) Public service broadcasting (PSB) model

Regarding the public service broadcasting model, one expert drew the attention of participants to the fact that while the paper states that the **goals of PSB** should be legally defined, it does not specify what those goals are (e.g. educate the public, provide balanced and informative news, promote cultures, provide children’s programming, etc.).

Another expert commented on the conflation the section appeared to make between **public service broadcast-ING** and **public service broadcast-ERS**, which failed to acknowledge the possibility of commercial or community broadcasters carrying out public service broadcasting and playing a role in fostering democracy and development.

(iii) Media self-regulation

A cautionary note was sounded about any prescriptive call for an **ombudsman** or **enforcement mechanisms**; it was pointed out that the utility and acceptability of such arrangements vary greatly according to the national journalism traditions and political culture.

(iv) Levels of public trust and confidence in the media

One participant was in favour of including the degree of **citizens' participation** in the media, of which the presence of citizen media organizations could be a key indicator.

Several experts warned against viewing **trust** as a synonym of **quality**. It was suggested that a point be added on **media literacy** to complement the public trust indicator.

VII. SESSION 5: DISCUSSION ON OUTCOME 4: PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

In his introductory remarks, the moderator of sessions 5 and 6, Mr Guy Berger from the University of Rhodes, South Africa highlighted the challenges of journalism education in a rapidly changing world. According to him, if the objective is to build knowledge societies, then capacity building should consist in fostering **more media** and **better quality media**. He also stressed the need to take into account not only the **production** side but also the **consumption** side, i.e. building the capacity of people to deal with more media through media literacy programmes. He spelled out some of the issues that would need to be discussed during this session: what **bodies of knowledge** are required to achieve these objectives? **Who leads** the capacity building efforts? What **methods** are to be favoured? Who are the **beneficiaries** of the training?

Mr Andrew Puddephatt then briefly summarized the key points of Outcome 4 and mentioned one of the comments he had received from experts prior to the meeting regarding the need to include **training in media literacy**.

(i) Availability of professional media training

On the issue of training, one participant recommended leaving out the term “**formal**” when speaking of the qualification programmes that exist for journalists, noting that it could imply the need for professional accreditation procedures, which international professional media organizations do not wish to support.

It was also suggested stating explicitly in the introduction that training should be **research-driven**, i.e. informed by needs assessments, impact studies and by contemporary intelligence on changing media trends. Regarding professional training, one participant asked for it to be made clear that the media industry should be the primary determinant of the training needs. Another emphasized that training should be **tailored to the realities of people's work schedules**.

A number of participants proposed adding **training on risk awareness** and other **specialized training** among the key indicators. The importance of **IT training** was also highlighted. Finally, special mention was made of the balance between **theory** and **practice** within journalism schools.

More generally, participants felt that it might be useful to include an indicator stating that training is available **across a range knowledge fields**: contextual (including law, global media), technical, ethical, specialist, media role, etc.

A number of experts asked for it to be clearly stated that the training offered should address **all levels of skills and seniority** – students, entry-level professionals, already working journalists, but also citizen journalists and audiences/consumers. It was argued that **media literacy** training, geared to the evolving communications environment, should therefore also be included.

A call was made for more emphasis to be placed on the business aspect of media; in this view, participants suggested separating training for journalists and training for **media management** into two categories in order to give the latter more space.

One expert proposed adding an indicator on the existence of **innovative platforms** that combine training and production, arguing that this could address the issue of non-availability of traditional training institutions in many developing countries.

The need for an indicator dealing with the availability and state of **equipment** in media training institutions was also mentioned by several participants.

Regarding the **means of verification**, one participant suggested adding course syllabi and number of faculty members teaching the courses; availability of textbooks and teaching materials in local languages; as well as access to information and connection to the Internet. Several participants emphasized moreover that the focus should not just be on numbers (of courses available, journalists trained, etc.) but also on the quality, relevance and application of training. Another expert pointed out the difficulty of assessing the link between the quality of training attended and the quality of journalism that comes out of it. Finally, the difficulty of verifying these indicators in the case of ongoing training, which is nearly entirely under the responsibility of top management, was underlined by one participant.

(ii) Presence of trade unions and professional organizations

One participant called for the inclusion of an indicator on the **recognition of trade unions** as negotiating partners by employers' groups, both on labour and on professional issues.

Several experts recommended avoiding reference to any specific international professional association when speaking of the **affiliation of trade unions** to respected bodies.

A number of experts also underlined the need to take into account whether media professionals are **punished** or victimised for being part of an independent trade union.

It was also suggested breaking out the indicators concerning **owners/employers** from those concerning **journalists**.

The level of remuneration of journalists was mentioned as another important indicator worth flagging up.

Finally, one expert recommended adding a point on the defence of **women professionals' interests** by the media trade unions.

(iii) Presence of civil society organizations (CSOs)

One participant considered it useful to add a reference to the **independence** of civil society organizations.

A request was formulated by several experts that the question of **media literacy** be developed in this section as well.

One expert considered that insufficient attention was given to the role played by CSOs in **preserving the public interest** in media content.

VIII. SESSION 6: DISCUSSION ON OUTCOME 5: INFRASTRUCTURAL CAPACITY

A first general request made during this discussion was to mention in the introduction of the chapter the need to take into account the **economic reality** as an underlying factor, and to look out for developments away from traditional media and business models within the context of a fast-changing technological environment.

(i) Availability and use of technical resources by the media

Concerning the technical facilities of media, one expert suggested stating that state, private and community media have **appropriate** rather than *comparable* technical facilities, regarding the original wording unrealistic.

It was also proposed that an indicator be added measuring whether **adequate printing and distribution facilities** are available to print media.

(ii) Press, broadcasting and ICT penetration

A few participants proposed including **access to affordable satellite communications** as a significant indicator of a country's level of media development.

One participant was of the opinion that **communications infrastructure** could be further developed in this chapter, taking into account questions such as whether the country invests in achieving universal access to communications.

The ability of a society to produce and/or modify suitable **software** for media production was also mentioned as an important indicator.

Finally, regarding ICT policy, one expert suggested adding the existence of a **digital migration policy and strategy**.

IX. SESSIONS 7 & 8: FINALIZATION OF INDICATORS / DISCUSSION ON APPLICATION AND FOLLOW UP

These final two sessions, merged into one, were moderated by Mr. Alain Modoux, President of Orbicom and Communication Director of the Media & Society Foundation.

Mr Wijayananda Jayaweera, representing UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, reminded participants that the paper which would result from this Expert Group meeting would be presented to the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) at its 26th session on 26-28 March 2008.

Before launching the debate, Mr Modoux evoked the possibility of the IPDC Council preparing a **draft resolution** based on this paper for the next UNESCO General Conference. Such a resolution could serve to reiterate the principles laid out in the five previous UNESCO declarations on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Media (Windhoek, Almaty, Santiago, Sana'a and Sofia) endorsed by the Organization's General Conference. This proposal was supported by a number of participants.

Regarding the revision of the paper, several experts stressed that the basic principle should be to keep the paper as **concise** as possible.

A number of experts underlined the need to view the paper as a **living document** that will be tested and adjusted on the ground by its ultimate intended users – the journalists, media organizations and citizens' groups working to strengthen media on the local level. For many, involving local stakeholders in the process constituted a crucial element. The representative of the UNDP at the meeting mentioned the possibility of selecting 5-10

pilot countries to test the indicators and informed that UNDP would be very willing to assist in this process.

For participants, the rapidly changing technological environment was another reason to ensure the flexibility of the document. Several experts proposed reflecting the fact that this paper was not a finished template in the title.

One expert proposed the development of a **handbook** to provide guidance for collecting and evaluating data. This proposal was supported by several experts.

Regarding **means of verification and data sources**, while participants accepted that they could not be more detailed at this stage, several mentioned the possibility of highlighting where gaps exist, both to indicate the limitations of the paper as a diagnostic tool and to advocate the development of such data, particularly at global level. The Director of UNESCO's Communication Development Division stated the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) would take every effort in making statistical data available in all the areas where such data is lacking.

Mr Jayaweera spelled out the **possible applications** of the indicators envisaged by UNESCO, including using them for developing Common Country Assessments (CCAs) of the media sector of selected countries within the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the "Delivering as One" approach, which is currently being tested in 8 pilot countries. He stressed that the indicators could be used by a variety of stakeholders, and in particular by local actors as a negotiation tool, an analytical tool and an empowering tool.

It was suggested that the indicators could also be used to facilitate the **selection and evaluation** of projects by the IPDC.

By way of conclusion, the author of the paper, Mr Andrew Puddephatt, thanked participants for their constructive interventions, emphasizing that they would certainly contribute to strengthening the paper. He also thanked UNESCO staff for their helpful assistance.

The Director of UNESCO's Communication Development Division also expressed his appreciation to the experts and underlined that the meeting had proved very useful in putting together their expertise. He gave special thanks to Mr Andrew Puddephatt for his excellent work and for having responded to all the comments with great patience and intelligence, as well as to the moderators of the sessions – Mr Bill Orme, Mr Sina Odugbemi, Mr Guy Berger and Mr Alain Modoux. He closed the meeting by paying tribute to the late Mr Torben Krogh, former Chairman of the IPDC, who was at the origin of this initiative.



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