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IPDC THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Agenda item for discussion IPDC future focus areas, priorities and project assessment criteria

INFORMATION NOTE

SUMMARY CONTENT OF DOCUMENT

This document summarizes possible future IPDC focus areas, priorities and project assessment criteria.

IPDC focus areas, priorities and project assessment criteria

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1. BACKGROUND

Based on discussions during the approval of projects at its 60th meeting, the IPDC Bureau may wish to consider new or adjusted focus areas, priorities and project assessment criteria for 2017.

2. DESCRIPTION

Current priorities and project assessment criteria are described in document “Current IPDC priorities areas and project assessment criteria”.

The areas that IPDC focuses upon have been revised over the years, and amended by the IPDC Council or Bureau depending on emerging media development needs.

Currently these areas are the following:

1. Supporting media pluralism (particularly community media) and independence (improving self-regulation and professional standards)
2. Promoting the safety of journalists
3. Countering hate speech in media and social media, promoting conflict-sensitive journalism practice and/or promoting cross-cultural/cross-religious dialogue among journalists
4. Supporting law reform fostering media independence
5. Conducting media assessments and research based on UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators (MDIs), the Gender Sensitive Indicators for the Media (GSIM) or the Journalists’ Safety Indicators

6. Capacity building for journalists and media managers, including improving journalism education (using UNESCO's Model Curricula for Journalism Education).

Although these six have sometimes been called "IPDC priorities", they are more accurately described as "IPDC focus areas". They have equal status, and it is within them that specific project proposals are assessed on their merits as being "top" or "lesser" priority. Projects which fall outside these six areas are deemed ineligible for consideration by the Bureau.

3. DISCUSSION

Taking into account IPDC's current funding levels, the Bureau may wish to consider ways of further focusing its action more tightly. The following possibilities apply:

3.1 It could be possible to eliminate one or more of the six focus areas above. However, having the six does provide needed flexibility to UNESCO field offices, and project submitters in general, to adapt (within limits) to the different media development needs in their respective regions and countries. Narrowing the number of areas could therefore be detrimental to IPDC's overall impact on media development worldwide. Prioritisation within each of these six areas could be strengthened (see 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 below).

3.2 The number of focus areas has reflected past responses to developments. The IPDC Secretariat suggests that in future, new items be considered in a category designed to deal with temporary or transient issues, thereby enabling responsiveness to key issues without continuously expanding the six focus areas. We thus suggest a category for an "annual thematic allocation". For this, the Bureau would be able to specifically single out one topic of particular importance for the forthcoming annual cycle, and in this way be able to direct funding to emerging issues or needs, while still preserving the Programme's comprehensive six focus areas. For example, last session of IPDC Bureau provided a special allocation of US\$ 60,000 to projects submitted by Ebola-affected countries. If the idea is agreed, the quantum for such an "annual thematic allocation" needs to be decided well ahead of the next Bureau meeting. A suggestion is to earmark 10 per cent of funds raised for the "annual thematic allocation". In addition to this, the Secretariat could also seek to undertake special fundraising for whatever the theme would be decided to be.

3.3 Prioritization could come from an even more selective approval process, based on the quality of proposals, their expected impact and/or their multiplier effect.

3.4 Prioritization could also come from focusing on the gender-transformative potential of project proposals.

3.5 Also to aid prioritization, the Bureau may wish to decide to target support to LDCs, to PCPDs, to exclude middle-income countries from its list of eligible countries or to place its priority on a number of countries with particular needs over a period of time. Regional projects, where media from LDCs and other countries (not prioritized) would work together and benefit from each other, could also be given priority.

3.6 Finally, the Bureau may wish to reflect on pros and cons of requesting the Secretariat to free up Bureau members from having to assess all individual projects and from having to spend time discussing every individual project proposals where there are diverging views. Instead, the Secretariat could present the result of the overall project screening process, based on IPDC's thematic focus areas, priorities and overall strategy, with recommended budget allocations. In this scenario, the Bureau would still be in a position to retain final responsibility for project approval and allocation of funds from the Special Account, as per Article 6, item 2 of IPDC statutes. Bureau members would still have access to all project information as present, and could still raise issues with any specific project or allocation. However, the process of each member scrutinizing scoring each proposal would no longer be necessary. This scenario could release time for the Bureau to focus more on strategic considerations (such as size of projects, priority areas and regions, levels of funding, etc.), broader issues of media development, and policy proposals to present to IPDC Council.

4. CONCLUSION

Inputs from this discussion and any proposals to modify current focus areas or project assessment criteria will be considered at the end of the 60th session in the form of a Bureau decision.

The Bureau may wish to:

1. Carry forward (or amend) current focus areas;
2. Continue to accept projects under two budget ceilings: one for small projects (maximum of \$10 000) and one for larger projects (maximum of \$35 000).
3. Consider limiting the number of countries eligible for IPDC grants (e.g. focusing on LDCs, PCPDs, excluding middle-income countries and/or focusing on priority countries or regional proposals).
4. Consider increasing the priority given to gender-transformative project proposals.
5. Decide on an Annual Thematic Allocation of 10% of available funding for an important media development issue (e.g. Media and Migration) and invite UNESCO field offices to identify solid and innovative projects in this field to be submitted to the 61st meeting of the IPDC Bureau for consideration.
6. Request the Secretariat to explore a new procedure by which Bureau members would no longer need to spend time assessing all individual project proposals, but would instead be presented with the overall result of the selection process carried out by the IPDC Secretariat for final approval. The rationale would be to allow the Bureau to place more focus on the discussion of strategic considerations (such as size of projects, priority areas and regions, levels of funding, etc.), broader issues of media development, and policy proposals to present to IPDC Council.