INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT AND FOJO MEDIA INSTITUTE

A CHANGING ASIAN MEDIA

ASSESSING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVOLVING MEDIA IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT

FOJO:MEDIA INSTITUTE
Linnæus University

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABU: Asia Broadcasting Union

ACFJ: Asian Center for Journalism

ADB: Asian Development Bank

AIBD: Asian Institute for Broadcast Development

AIPP: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

AMIC: Asia Media and Information Centre

APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

ARIJ: Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CFI: Canal France International

CIMA: Center for International Media Assistance

COP21: Paris France Sustainable Development Forum 2015

CSO: Civil Society Orgsanisation

DW: Deutsche Welle

Fojo: Fojo Media Institute

ICT: Information and communication technology

IFEX: International Freedom of Expression Exchange

IFJ: International Federation of Journalists

IMS: International Media Support

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IREX: International Research & Exchanges Board

MICT: Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

OHCHR: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SEAPA: Southeast Asian Press Alliance

Sida: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

TI: Transparency International

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNESCAP: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNESCO IPDC: International Programme for the Development of Communication

UPR: Universal Periodic Review

WAN-IFRA: World Association of Newspapers and News Publisher

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an assessment of the current media environment in South and Southeast Asia with the ambition of identifying key needs and challenges for the media, journalists and the general public as well as suggesting interventions that can promote greater accountability, democratic space and areas for information sharing, networking and debate through professional and independent media in the region.

With the support of Sida in Bangkok, Thailand, the assessment was carried out by International Media Support (IMS) and Fojo Media Institute (Fojo) in 2017 through the study of existing reports, assessments and material covering the region as well as interviews with key informants, expert consultations and internal strategic theory of change workshops in Copenhagen and Stockholm. The assessment was motivated by Sida's strategy for regional development and cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021 as well as the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Although some South and Southeast Asian countries have been the world's top performers on a number of Millennium Development Goal targets[1], there are a number of goals and targets that will not be met without a major new effort – particularly when it comes to solutions for sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, and climate and disaster resilience. These issues require innovative approaches and the scaling up of proven approaches in regard to access to information and development of independent media in order to reach people whom development so far has left behind or excluded – such as the poorest communities, women and ethnic and religious minorities.

Findings from the assessment show that countries in the regions despite extreme diversity share many of the same challenges with their media environments – particularly when it comes to quality content production and distribution, journalist safety and impunity, the enabling legal environment, gender and social inequality as well as media and information illiteracy. With shrinking spaces for human rights in general and freedom of expression and press freedom in particular, populist politicians on the rise in most countries, "fake news" narratives eating away at trust in the media and audiences that increasingly gravitate online for information and show indifference towards paying for quality content, the media environment faces an overwhelming amount of challenges. At the same time the need for quality public interest journalism founded on ethical principles and rigorous techniques is ever more vital to secure the publics' access to reliable information so they can contribute to social and human development in line with the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

CONTENT QUALITY PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION UNDER PRESSURE

Increasingly, South and Southeast Asian media outlets experience have their news agendas being driven by social media-defined priorities and an obsession with breaking news. Many traditional media outlets are also compromising classic journalistic virtues such as relevance and double source validation in favour of sensational and tabloid formats to hold on to or grow their audiences. Furthermore, there is a fast-growing tendency to self-censor in the face of power and money, which further impacts on professional standards. The media are in other words increasingly becoming subject to media capture, where the media are being operated as an instrument for the pursuit of other interests. Lack of awareness on how to achieve financial sustainability to invest in quality journalism only contributes to the rout of traditional media, struggling to stay afloat, cutting costs and redistributing resources away from more expensive journalistic undertakings.

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[1] Overseas Development Institute, Projecting progress: the SDGs in Asia-Pacific, May 2016, www.odi.org/publications/10421-projecting-progress-sdgs-asia-pacific.

These trends are particular troublesome in South and Southeast Asia where the need for quality journalism within the areas of conflict-sensitive, peacebuilding, environmental and investigative reporting continues to be highly important for the further social development of the regions. The South and Southeast Asian regions are marked by a large number of conflicts, unrest and climate challenges that require attention from media. Without quality journalism that manages to reach out to and reach the targeted audience groups, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will prove difficult.

INCREASED PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL THREATS AGAINST JOURNALISM

Safety continues to be an overwhelming issue for media professionals all over the two regions. The situation is worst, of course, in open conflict areas like Afghanistan and to a certain degree Pakistan, but in all countries, there are serious concerns, heavily contributing to keeping the South and Southeast Asian countries at the bottom of the different press freedom indexes. Each attack against a journalist, physical or digital, is a threat against press freedom and freedom of expression. Furthermore, the widespread impunity for crimes against journalists fuels and perpetuates a cycle of violence which stifles public debate.

LEGAL STRUCTURES PROVIDE LITTLE SECURITY

Most countries in the two regions enjoy some degree of media freedom or space for citizens to push for more representative and accountable governance. Yet, the state of media freedom and the ability of civil society to push for improved democratic institutions, rule of law and government transparency is fragile with the space for civil society shrinking. One trend across the regions, is a backward drift in the media and public's ability to exercise their right to freedom of expression. This is reflected in a human rights environment with increasingly repressive legislation, violence against journalists and gender equality defenders as well as widespread impunity for the perpetrators of threats, violence and killings.

SOCIAL AND GENDER INEQUALITY IMPEDE MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Far from all groups are represented in the media in South and Southeast Asia – both in terms of people working in the media industry and people functioning as news sources. Indigenous people, ethnic minorities and women are discriminated in news rooms, rarely represented in news coverage and suffer from lack of access to information. Their voices and perspectives are clearly absent in many issues – despite the fact that they belong to some of the most vulnerable groups in society. In addition, these groups are often also excluded from participating in the public debate. There is a significant digital gender and social gap across South and Southeast Asia which only contributes to the marginalisation of the affected groups.

THE INTERNET AND ICTS BRING THREATS AS WELL AS REMEDIES

The arrival of the Internet and the spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have fostered widespread changes in South and Southeast Asia in terms of people having access to information and being able to participate in the public debate. But even though these new technologies may increase access to information, they are also bringing serious challenges with them. Unverified information blends with fact-checked journalistic content online and requires a lot of effort on the part of the audiences in the receiving end to sort the truth from the falsehood. Although designed to bring people together, social media often seems to be doing the opposite and fosters hate speech and conflicts. In general, there is a lack of awareness of the implications of having an online presence and leaving an online trail of data. In regard to journalists and other media professionals, the

assessment has identified a lack of awareness of the importance of digital data protection, online information sourcing and fact-checking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the assessment, IMS and Fojo recommend that future media development efforts in South and Southeast Asia are centered around securing the media's abilities to work for accountability, inclusion and stability. Quality journalism with a public interest focus is seen as vital to meet the goals. In order for media and civil society organisations to ensure rights-holders' access to information and enable the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, they need to deliver quality content in a cost-effective and compelling manner, which is accessible to all groups of society, including the most vulnerable. The assessment has found potential in innovative new media initiatives across the two regions that have proven their ability to empower, to engage and to build critical communities who actively take part in developing tomorrow's democracy. These platforms have demonstrated that new, innovative and sustainable distribution channels can be developed to reach and engage marginalised communities and create networks and cross-border editorial initiatives enhancing the regional dimension of media in South and Southeast Asia.

The assessment recommends that future media development assistance in the two regions is concentrated within three broad strategic intervention areas that over time will affect positively on accountability, inclusion and peace-building in Asia:

- Strengthening quality public interest journalism through support for networking and cross-border initiatives as well as capacity building and the development of financial sustainable business models with particular attention to innovative new media initiatives with a local or hyper-local reach;

- Implementing safety and protection mechanisms (including digital security) for journalists and other media professionals on local, national and regional levels;

- Enhancing thematic and contextual knowledge to assist innovative new media initiatives in navigating the media environment and securing most optimal conditions for disseminating quality public interest journalism.

The diversity of the region with a wide variety of political systems requires a great deal of flexibility for a potential regional programme that aims at meeting the needs listed above. Also, in a potential regional programme, collaboration with relevant media enterprises and organisations will be of critical importance for securing self-sustainability of the initiatives. The assessment ends with a series of suggestions for strategic and targeted partners in a potential regional media programme. It stresses the importance of including quality journalism outlets that have managed to develop financially sustainable formats that are inclusive, encourage civic engagement and are easily accessible across borders. These outlets, labelled innovative new media initiatives, may serve as inspiration for targeted partners such as traditional media seeking to develop and/or improve their digital strategy and aspiring and upcoming new media enterprises searching for financial sustainable business models supporting quality journalism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals[2], the nations of the world agreed on a roadmap to eradicate poverty including, for the first time, a goal to ensure "access to information and the protection of fundamental freedoms". Human development in the coming decades will increasingly depend on people's access to reliable information that allows them to hold their governments accountable for their efforts to achieve the individual goals within areas such as health, education, environment and gender equality. This is where good, public interest journalism and independent media can play a central role.

This report carried out by International Media Support (IMS) and Fojo Media Institute (Fojo) assesses the situation of the media in countries from the South and Southeast Asia regions. Primary attention has been given to countries where IMS and Fojo are present (such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines) but the assessment has also included perspectives from other countries that have significance for media and freedom of expression in Asia – such as India, Indonesia, China, Malaysia and Thailand. A number of countries in the South and Southeast Asia struggle with challenges that prevent them from developing professional media environments that in turn can support the work towards achieving the development goals and democratic development through an informed and participatory citizenry.

Tanyingone, Myanmar 2017. Photo: Chris Peken

The assessment therefore aims to provide an overview of the challenges, needs and opportunities facing media and media workers in order to inform future media development assistance in the two regions. The information and findings presented in the report build on expert consultations, workshops and thorough desk studies undertaken by IMS and Fojo with the support of Sida in Bangkok, Thailand. IMS and Fojo both have a strong track record of working with media development in the South and Southeast Asia regions with strong networks and partnerships amongst media organisations and civil society organisations.

Given the magnitude and diversity of the regions, this assessment makes no attempt to cover all media-related issues in South and Southeast Asia. Instead it focuses on what IMS and Fojo through consultations and data collection have found are dominating trends impacting on the media environments and cross-cutting issues that are deemed to be the biggest threats to independent and professional media, to media professionals and the general public's access to information.

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[2] www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org

The World Bank has in its reports[3] documented how coordination and cooperation, spanning social and political divides, is integral to ensuring good governance and achieving sustainable improvements in security, growth, and equity. Towards this end, vibrant media and informed citizen engagement are seen as essential to ensuring progress and more transparent and participatory policymaking. These basic assumptions have served as an underlying foundation for this assessment.

1.1. STUDY OBJECTIVES

The objective of the assessment is to provide an overview and analysis of the media development challenges and opportunities to design and provide effective and innovative media support in South and Southeast Asia and to ensure that a future media development programme strategy led by IMS and Fojo is properly anchored with core regional and national actors. In short, the assessment has had three main objectives:

- To provide an overview and analysis of the current media situation, the challenges and opportunities, in South and Southeast Asia;

- To identify ways in which media development assistance can be constructively allocated in response to the key challenges, the Sustainable Development Goals and Sida's strategy for regional co-operation in South and Southeast Asia;

- To guide Fojo and IMS in developing mechanisms that can assist media and civil society organisations in fragile, poor and protracted crisis countries in South and Southeast Asia.

It is the intention that IMS and Fojo based on this assessment will produce a comprehensive but focused programme strategy, including an implementation mechanism, which is appropriate, lean and effective for regional needs and opportunities, taking advantage of the best skills and experts available at both Fojo and IMS.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain stronger synergies and complementarities of approaches to address the key media development challenges in South and Southeast Asia, IMS and Fojo decided to join forces in the development of this assessment study. The two organisations both have ample experience of working in the two regions and their respecrtive mandates and strengths make it feasible to preview a future regional programme that can effectively address the main challenges within the parameters of the present assessment.

The methodology for producing the assessment has been based on: 1) a study of existing reports[4], 2) key informant interviews and consultations with sub-regional media and media development/freedom of expression experts and journalists in Southeast Asia (March 2017, Bangkok) and for South Asia (May 2017, Jakarta)[5] as well as internal strategic theory of change workshops with IMS and Fojo Asia staff in Copenhagen and Stockholm. The assessment team has interviewed a number of professional journalists (local as well as foreign correspondents), media activists, trainers and development specialists in the course of the data collection process. In order to protect the

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[3] World Bank worldwide governance indicators, 2016.
[4] These reports include reports and studies from UN organisations and other CSOs, reports and studies from international NGOs as well as studies and data collections from international media agencies. All reports are referenced on page 50 to 52.
[5] See Annex II and III. In the interest of keeping page numbers to a minimum, the annexes have not been included in this report but are available from the authoring organisations upon request.

identities of those who met with the team, no names have been disclosed in this report. The names are known to IMS.

The targeted countries covered in this assessment report are those where IMS and Fojo are already present or have a history, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines, but the media environments in the two region's remaining countries have also been taken into account. For each of the countries included in this assessment, country overviews of the situation of media, challenges, trends and opportunities[6] have been pulled together based on input from IMS and Fojo country staff, as well as from external experts consulted. However, these have not been included in this assessment report in the interest of keeping page numbers to a minimum, but are available from the authoring organisations upon request.

Intergovernmental and media development organisations on national, regional and international levels have been interviewed for the assessment. For a full overview of references and sources, please refer to the final pages of this report.

The assessment is carried out with support from the Swedish embassy in Bangkok and is aligned with the Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation in the Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021. It therefore focuses on the interface and dynamics between human rights (first and foremost freedom of expression and press freedom), gender equality and climate change. It will assess how regional development cooperation in the area of freedom of expression and media development can best address cross-border issues and challenges where solutions can best be sought through regional cooperation and by linking country interventions in regional fora.

Work on the assessment has been based on the assumption that access to quality information, produced and distributed in an ethical and professional manner, has strong potential to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. For this to take place freedom of expression, online as well as offline, is critical.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This assessment is structured around five main themes: the legal environment under which the media have to perform; the safety of journalists in the region; media and gender equality; media literacy; and, quality content production and dissemination.

These five themes have been selected on the basis of what the assessment, through research and consultations, has identified as key challenges facing media, journalists and the general public in terms of access to information in the region. The report pays particular attention to quality content production and dissemination. The assessment has identified this area as being of particular importance – from capacity building to financial sustainable business models.

The report derives at a series of key recommendations presented in chapter 4. On an overall level, the recommendations are targeted at three main focus areas related to media and human rights: accountability, inclusion and stability. IMS and Fojo see it as vital for the media to be able to hold governments and businesses accountable, to include ethnic and religious minorities and indigenous peoples and to assist in stability efforts through, among other things, participation in conflict-prevention and peacebuilding. Three different strategic

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[6] See Annex I. As with annex II and III, the annex has not been included in this report in order to keep page numbers to a minimum. It can be provided from the authoring organisations upon request.

intervention areas are identified for a potential future regional media programme: 1) assistance on content and distribution levels, 2) support for safety mechanisms, and, 3) thematic and contextual knowledge enhancement.

Finally, in chapter 5, potential partners are assessed – both potential targeted partners for a future regional media programme and suggested stakeholders and other possible donors worth considering.

2.0 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Diversity might be the most fitting word to describe the regions of South and Southeast Asia. Some of the smallest island states are found in these regions along with major populous countries like India and Indonesia. Geographical sizes and languages aside, the regions are also extremely diverse when it comes to political, economic and ideological underpinnings such as regime types, forms of governments and religions. The regions comprise everything from absolute monarchies and highly authoritarian states to varying levels of democracy; they are home to both high-income societies, developing and transitional societies; and, they lead the world in religious diversity. Migration (both historically and contemporary) defines and continues to define the regions of South and Southeast Asia[7]. As a consequence, numerous multicultural societies and diasporas can be found throughout the regions and most countries host ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples that live and travel across national borders and regional boundaries.

Overall, the two regions are characterised by a number of national, cross-border and regional challenges, not least in regard to poverty alleviation, financial crises, the impact of climate change, gender equality and shrinking space for human rights, including that of freedom of expression. Inequality, injustice and exclusion of large groups of society continue to undermine development progress in many of the countries in the region. Around 70 percent of Asia's populations live in rural areas, many are impoverished and often without access to basic services or to reliable information and without a voice in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods[8]. As an example, estimates show that 1.6 billion people in Asia as a whole live on less than 2 USD a day[9].

Conflicts and instabilities at several levels from outright armed conflicts to more shrouded struggles for social and gender equality plague the regions. Compared to the rest of the world, studies find Asia as a whole to be far more prone to conflicts than other regions – with Southeast Asia in particular being subject to an above-average number of internal and interstate conflicts over culture and identity[10]. Subnational conflicts over controls of a subnational territory are, however, the most widespread, enduring, and deadly form of conflict in South and Southeast Asia. Between 1992 and 2012, there were 26 subnational conflicts in regions, affecting half of the countries in the regions[11]. Even though some of these conflicts are among the longest-running in the world, they receive very little attention as they usually take place in remote, peripheral regions. Yet, they affect more than 131 million people – in particular the most vulnerable such as ethnic and religious minorities.

Religious sentiments have grown in most countries, also influenced by global trends of extremism and xenophobia and pose major challenges to the general human rights situation, especially press freedom and to gender equality, as well as to democratic stability and resilience. Moreover, corruption[12] and inefficiency in public institutions affect the two regions, particularly in countries lacking proper parliamentary systems, democratic institutions, civil society organisations and independent media to support government oversight and accountability. Strong nationalistic movements have emerged in a majority of the countries and there are serious issues tied to the

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[7] Catherine Gomes, The Asia-Pacific in the Age of Transnational Mobility: The Search for Community and Identity on and through Social Media, 2016, p. 6.

[8] IMS and Fojo Concept Note. Assessment study and programme document. Support to media in Asia and the Pacific, January 2017.

[9] Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation in the Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021, p. 3.

[10] Aurel Croissant and Christoph Trinn, Culture, Identity and Conflict in Asia and Southeast Asia, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015.

[11] The Contested Corners of Asia, The Asia Foundation, 2013, p. 1.

[12] According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 only Singapore stands out with low levels of corruption and a position as number 7 out of 176. TI writes in the report "Unfortunately, the majority of Asia Pacific countries sit in the bottom half of this year's Corruption Perceptions Index. Poor performance can be attributed to unaccountable governments, lack of oversight, insecurity and shrinking space for civil society, pushing anti-corruption action to the margins in those countries". See www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016.

discrimination of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, who also suffer from forced migration. The Rohingya persecution in Myanmar is just one of many more recent examples.

In some countries, these challenges are exacerbated by the effects of environmental degradation and climate change. Still, several countries in South and Southeast Asia prioritise economic growth at the expense of the environment, as well as over human rights and democracy. This has led to an increasing democratic deficit and lack of respect for human rights and land rights, which affects people's ability to demand accountability and to contribute to public dialogue and decision-making for more sustainable development. For this to happen, the public depend on information and access to professional and independent media content.

Another troubling trend is the pushback against democratic development, human rights and freedom of expression happening in many South and Southeast Asian countries. This trend of closing spaces across the region is pointed out in various studies[13] and documents systematic clampdowns on civil society and diverse voices, affecting in particular the most vulnerable. In some countries, elite groups have co-opted institutions that should in theory support democratic processes. Elections (often through unfair electoral processes) help elite groups to legitimately consolidate their grip on power, with the media being manipulated as political instruments to help maintain the status quo (what could be referred to as "media capture" or political instrumentalization of the media) or to incite to conflict and violence. In other countries, governments tolerate a certain level of democratic space, but are quick to take action through attacks or violence against the media when it starts to question the current status quo. In line with this trend, those in authority are gradually shrinking the spaces where the media, opposition parties and CSOs can operate freely to bring essential issues into the public domain. Diverse voices are heard less frequently and opportunities for political participation are diminishing.

This backward drift in freedom of expression is reflected in more repressive laws being enacted and applied, ongoing and increased violence against journalists and human rights defenders who offer alternative views as well as widespread impunity for the perpetrators of threats, violence and killings. It is a serious situation, which makes support for independent media, journalism and digital communication challenging but more essential than ever.

In the Swedish strategy for regional development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021[14], the many challenges of South and Southeast Asia are addressed at various levels. The strategy emphasises mutual interaction between human rights, democracy, gender equality, environment and climate change which connects to the Sustainable Development Goals – in particular SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. For South and Southeast Asia to progress on the Sustainable development goals, innovative, more holistic approaches are needed. Economic, social and environmental conditions and processes are to be understood and managed in an integrated context. Gender equality and the empowerment and rights of women and girls, are both goals in themselves and a prerequisite for achieving sustainable global development. Violence and armed conflict are among the greatest obstacles to economic and social development, and development cooperation is an important part of conflict prevention. An environmental and climate perspective, a gender perspective and a conflict perspective should therefore be systematically integrated into regional development cooperation in the South and Southeast Asian regions.

It is the belief of this assessment that the media plays an important part in promoting and assisting with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the main objectives of the Swedish strategy for regional development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021. As will become evident throughout the report, quality journalism with a public interest focus can contribute positively and significantly in terms of strengthening

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[13] Thomas Carothers and Saskia Brechenmacher, Closing Space: Democracy and Human Rights Support Under Fire, 2014, p. 5.
[14] Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation in the Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021.

the capacity of regional actors to promote greater accountability and increased democratic space, to promote human rights and gender equality, as well as enhancing regional collaboration to strengthen resilience to mutual environmental and climate problems and natural disasters. Securing the media's abilities to work for accountability, inclusion and stability should be of primary concern for regional media development efforts.

Positive developments are already emerging in South and Southeast Asia. This assessment projects that these will become invaluable for securing sustainable development in the two regions. Despite the gloomy picture, pockets of resistance and promising initiatives can be found in each and every country and civil society and quality media insist on preserving a place in the public debate on all issues related to social and human development, peace and environmental degradation. Technology is highly developed in almost all of the countries assessed in this report and new generations that are connected and in continuous contact and discussion via social media are rising and changing the mediascapes of the regions. These new civil society and media initiatives function as change agents and have clear perspectives for a future with societies built on the respect for human rights, democracy and the dignity of every individual.

3.0 KEY ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Due to the varying political contexts from conflict countries and authoritarian states to countries in transition and more established democracies, few regions in the world have more diverse conditions for media than South and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, having a long history of migration, being home to a number of multicultural societies and harbouring an abundance of ethnic as well as religious minorities living across national boundaries, the mediascapes of the regions cannot only be considered in terms of national boundaries. Communities whether being defined by religious, ethnic, cultural or political interests cut across borders and have an increasingly bigger role to play in terms of media consumption patterns. These variations in contexts from country to country and from community to community necessitate a subtle and flexible media development intervention strategy.

Not many countries in the region enjoy real media freedom and the space for citizens to push for improved democratic institutions, rule of law and government transparency is increasingly narrowing. A backward drift in the media and the public's ability to exercise its right to freedom of expression, reflected in increasingly repressive legislation, violence against journalists and human rights and gender equality defenders as well as widespread impunity for the perpetrators of threats, violence and killings[15] currently marks the region.

Furthermore, as part of a global trend, the media are increasingly becoming subject to media capture, where the media are being operated as an instrument for the pursuit of other interests[16]. Historically, media capture in the regions have primarily been discussed in terms of government control or political instrumentalization but other forms of media capture are in similar ways impacting the media environment and limiting the autonomy and free will of the media. The media may also be captured through ownership where wealthy individuals or corporations buy media to advance their own interests. Such forms of capture can for instance be observed in India. Another form of capture is through financial incentives where the media becomes captured by the financial sector in their hunt for profit. Such forms of capture can be observed throughout the two regions and is also often described in terms of tabloidization and the media's increased use of native advertising.

The most recent global overview from Reporters Sans Frontières[17] demonstrates this dire situation almost too clearly. Out of the 180 countries covered in the report, the countries in Southeast Asia are almost all placed in the lower third with Timor-Leste as the best placed at number 98 and Vietnam as the worst at number 175. In South Asia, the situation is almost equally serious. The best placed country is Bhutan at number 84 and the worst placed is Bangladesh at number 146. A similar picture is painted in the 2017 Freedom in the World Report from Freedom House[18]. Here only India is rated as free while Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh in South Asia are ranked as partly free and Afghanistan is ranked not free. In Southeast Asia, no country is ranked free. Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines are rated as partly free, while Brunei, Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam are rated not free. Overall, the two sub-regions have during the last two years gone backwards in both ranking studies.

In short, the assessment finds the biggest challenges for the media industry in the South and Southeast Asia regions to be poor professional standards (in some countries and in some local areas), scarcity of quality journalism, high degrees of censorship, lack of safety, insufficient gender and social equity, limited knowledge on

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[15] IMS and Fojo Concept Note. Assessment study and programme document. Support to media in Asia and the Pacific, January 2017.

[16] Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Media capture in the digital age, In the service of power: media capture and the threat to democracy, CIMA, 2017, p. 38.

[17] Reporteres sans Frontières, Classement mondial de la liberté de la presse 2017.

[18] Freedom House, Freedom in the World Report, 2017.

financial sustainability, issues with political and/or state involvement and more recently, the lack of trust by the audience. When it comes to challenges related to freedom of expression in South and Southeast Asia, concerns can be observed in a number of specific areas, namely press freedom, internet freedom, national security, terrorism and/or violent extremism, freedom of religion, and the relationship between business and human rights. These areas are in various ways impacting on the space for free and independent media in the two regions.

The assessment team have compiled a number of short portraits of the media landscape and the main challenges in the relevant countries in South and Southeast Asia, plus China, that can be provided by IMS and Fojo upon request. In the short analysis for each country we have looked at the present status, the legal framework, the situation of journalists' safety, professional standards and the role social media are playing as well as past and ongoing work by IMS and Fojo, possible strategic and targeted partners and the benefits for activities at the country level from the development of a comprehensive regional programme.

From the analysis of the media landscape in the assessed countries we can see that in order for media and civil society organisations to ensure rights-holders' access to information and enable the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, they need to deliver quality public interest content in a cost-effective and compelling manner, which is accessible to all groups of society, including the most vulnerable. We have chosen to label this type of journalism public interest journalism throughout the report and will return to the importance of this specific strand of journalism in section 3.1.

To sum up, the assessment has identified the following key challenges that require attention on the levels of accountability, inclusion and stability if the media are to ensure conducive conditions for contributing to an inclusive democratic discourse and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals:

- Populist politicians increasingly dominate and antagonise the political landscape, including media outlets;

- Unverified information on social media dominates over quality journalism;

- Information (and increasingly also digital) gaps in regards to marginalised and weak groups in society;

- Continuous problems with the legal environment for journalism – including lack of or inadequate access to information laws, freedom of speech laws and shield laws for journalists;

- Increased physical and digital threats against journalists;

- Widespread impunity for crimes against journalists;

- Lack of awareness on how to achieve financial sustainability for quality journalism;

- Limited regional collaboration and exchange of experiences;

- Shortage of comprehensive, in-depth research on the region's media landscapes, audiences' media uses and activities and financial sustainable business models;

- Less donor activity in media development.

In addition to the challenges, the assessment has unveiled a number of very promising initiatives when it comes to furthering the role that free and professional media can play in social and human development, as well as promoting peace and democracy. In all countries the assessment team have identified new small-scale media initiatives that work to widen the space for human rights amongst civil society groups and media outlets. These initiatives bode well for future media and human rights programmes and the assessment propose finding

inspiration in their business models and community outreach. A selection of these media initiatives will be mentioned throughout the report to highlight their potential as sources of inspiration for future programmes.

3.1 QUALITY JOURNALISM, CONTENT PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION

It is a basic assumption of this assessment that high quality journalism founded on ethical principles and rigorous techniques providing information, analysis and contextual background to – and engaging in a constructive dialogue with – its audience, fosters democratic participation and can contribute to social and human development. Likewise, quality journalism that manages to reach the targeted audience groups may also have a substantial impact on whether the Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved.

In short, IMS and Fojo connects quality journalism with the ideals of accuracy, independence, impartiality, humanity as well as accountability and transparency. Fact-based, balanced and fair reporting; ethical and responsible treatment of sources and topics; editorial independence; and, transparent working processes are all definers of the sort of quality journalism IMS and Fojo seek to promote. Furthermore, the content should be in the public interest – meaning the common good, the general welfare and the security and well-being of everyone in the community[19]. Any provider that produces and disseminates journalism according to these guidelines, regardless of platform, are seen as potential contributors to quality journalism.

It is important to note that content providers producing quality journalism are present in South and Southeast Asia. Many traditional broadsheet newspapers and some radio and television stations disseminate good journalistic content. Yet, the outreach of traditional media outlets has weakened and many audiences – not least the younger generations – favour social media as their channel for accessing news. Furthermore, audiences are becoming far more dispersed and no longer necessarily define themselves as belonging to a certain national community. Instead their attention is interest- and community-driven and connected to issues spanning across national boundaries – from religious and/or ethnic affiliations to civic activism and cultural passions. Being more confined to national boundaries, the legacy media have not been able to adjust to these changes with consequences for their reach and ability to withhold audiences' interest and dependency.

In addition, the research for this study has clearly displayed that trust in traditional media is increasingly hampered by opaque ownership structures linking the media with specific political or major economic interests. Although rarely transparent, different forms of media capture erode at public's trust in the media.

Based on the many interviews and meetings made within this assessment, it is clear that the media in basically all countries examined, in South Asia as in Southeast Asia, see their agenda increasingly being driven by social media-defined priorities and an obsession with breaking news. Furthermore, there is a rapidly growing tendency to self-censorship in the face of power and money, which further impacts on professional standards. However, many traditional media outlets are also increasingly compromising classic journalistic virtues such as relevance and double source validation in favour of sensational and tabloid formats to hold on to or grow their audiences.

It has also become evident that insufficient priority and resources are given to on-the-ground, long-cycle investigative journalism. In most newsrooms (and this is particularly clear in smaller media outlets), there is an excessive reliance on interns and stringers who often have none or little journalistic education and background. There is also a lack of technical specialists (beat reporters) as the 24-hour editorial deadline has demanded that

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[19] Ethical Journalism Network, www.ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/the-public-interest.

all journalists must be able to cope with all subjects. This constant deadline is leading to a blatant lack of fact-checking in many news outlets.

These deficits are only fortified by the widespread misinformation and propaganda efforts stemming from populist politicians, fundamentalist religious movements, extreme right-wing groups as well as individuals spreading misinformation as a living by taking advantage of social media algorithms all over South and Southeast Asia.

Outright attacks and incorrect information on the Internet thus pose growing threats against the journalistic profession. Simultaneously, populist politicians have hi-jacked the concept of "fake news", applying it to reliable and professional news media, dismissing them as biased and unfair, when they publish criticism related to accountability. All of this is contributing to the public's lack of confidence in the media and weakening the positive and constructive role that good journalism can play to promote equality and positive development.

It is in this complex and hastily changing landscape the assessment sees a need for ensuring better professional and ethical standards as well as for assisting new media enterprises that actually seek to comply with high journalistic standards while using the engagement and outreach mechanisms of social media. Overall, the relationship between social media and more traditional quality news media has proven to be an important issue to address, as it is necessary to find solutions to ensure space for quality journalism on online platforms and social media.

Yet, at the same time as technology and new actors in the media landscape provides an increasing number of channels and formats to produce and disseminate journalistic content, there is also a growing need to reflect on standards and content.

Even though a number of training programmes and initiatives with special attention to professional standards and capacity building of journalists have been instigated in South and Southeast Asia over the course of the last 40 years, such attention is as relevant as ever. Previous efforts, this assessment finds, have often been carried out on an ad-hoc basis instead of being integrated into content production processes which have weakened their sustainability. More holistic efforts on both local, national and regional levels are needed to overcome the current challenges facing quality journalism in the region.

Independent press councils and internal professional debates among journalists can further reflections on standards and ethics as can increased regional and international collaboration, including international trainings and conferences. Twinning arrangements between existing high-quality media public interest journalism initiatives and hyperlocal initiatives, especially from rural areas, is another possible way to further the quality of the reporting.

In the following key issues for the further enhancement of quality public interest journalism in South and Southeast Asia are dealt with in detail. Based on the findings of the assessment, IMS and Fojo recommends giving attention to areas such as conflict-sensitive reporting, environmental journalism, investigative reporting, innovative new media initiatives, financial sustainability, and regional and sub-regional reporting to support the continuous advancement of quality journalism in the regions.

3.1.1 REPORTING ON CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

An important area in the context of quality journalism is reporting on conflicts and peace-building. The regions of South and Southeast Asia are torn by a large number of open conflicts, almost all of them within the individual countries, although there are also long-standing frontier conflicts like in Kashmir. The media play an important role in reporting on these conflicts, not least in regard to the almost permanent human rights violations and, in

particular, the plight of women. They also play a role in the peace and reconciliation processes that luckily are underway in several countries. Even though, conflict sensitive reporting or peace journalism[20] methods have been taught in large parts of South and Southeast Asia, there are still several issues that requires attention. As will be discussed in the next section, the safety of journalists is one important area in need of support, but action is also needed when it comes to the media's approach to covering conflicts, disasters and unrest.

The media should ideally ensure that all voices in a conflict are heard but sometimes the reality is that the media may actively contribute to the conflicts. Biased media can incite public opinion or echo discriminating voices and tabloid formats provide distorted images and stories from the conflicts. The assessment has revealed that the present ownership structures of mainstream print and broadcast media in South and Southeast Asia unfortunately amplify the politically biased reporting on conflicts. In addition, lack of sustainable financial business models and increased competition for audiences and advertising revenues

Khost Province, Afghanistan 2015. Photo: Farooq Jan Mangal.

divert media attention from covering issues that do not imply more juicy news or human-interest stories. Although there are exceptions like the Panzagar or Flower Speech campaign started in 2014 in Myanmar[21], assistance is needed to secure media reports on conflicts and peace negotiations in ways that constructively further joint understanding and reconciliation and do not contribute to incitement through hate speech or very biased representation.

Furthermore, some conflicts in the region are barely reported on due to censorship or self-censorship. West Papua in Indonesia and the conflict in the South of Thailand are two such examples. Regrettably, there is a general tendency to report on ethnic conflicts solely from the point of view of the country capitals with local voices often being ignored as a consequence. Assistance to conflict-sensitive reporting should therefore also focus on support for reporting schemes on communities outside of capital cities, not least those working for minority or ethnic media communicating to minority groups.

In disaster situations media can also play decisive roles. Disasters unsettle the affected population and may trigger simmering conflicts or cracks in society. Information is paramount in preventing such conflicts flaring up and the media can assist in informing the public on how to respond and ensure that local communities have access to life-saving information in their own language(s). SMS and social media may be key in disseminating information rapidly. IMS has well-documented experience with working with local and hyper-local media in Nepal in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in April 2015 and in the Philippines following the Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. These lessons could be shared at a regional level as local and community media in basically all the countries assessed have a special role in the event of natural disasters.

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[20] Such as the PECOJON network with operations in the Philippines and the School of Peacemaking and Media Technology in Kyrgyzstan.
[21] www.dangerousspeech.org

Media can also play a role in countering violent extremism and terrorism. Especially on social media, radical voices have found space for propaganda and recruitment exercises. This has often led to legal initiatives by governments that have had the wanted or unwanted side-effect of limiting the space for freedom of expression. To counter these online information attacks, there is a dire need for fact-based quality journalism that is conflict-sensitive and radicalisation sensitive. Based on the assessment, IMS and Fojo have come to the conclusion that such support should not only be allocated to the production and distribution of quality, in-depth journalism by mainstream journalists, but also for media content produced and distributed by groups of vulnerable people themselves. This means greater emphasis on participatory and interactive content often produced in the community media sector. As will be touched upon next, the assessment has encountered a number of online-based initiatives in the region with community reach and participation that might prove resourceful for future media development projects focusing on conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding reporting.

Finally, the assessment recommends more research into conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding reporting to understand how support is best allocated. Innovative approaches to advocacy efforts and capacity building are clearly needed to overcome the many challenges this type of reporting faces in the region. Professional skills seem to be insufficient when obstacles such as the lack of sustainable business models and ownership structures are standing in the way of quality journalism. A more in-depth mapping of media outlets that have managed to strike a balance between delivering quality public interest journalism and being financial sustainable in the region would for instance be helpful to deliver well-founded suggestions for future media development projects.

MAIN CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Lack of reporting on conflict and sensitive issues	Collaboration with hyper-local and local media in disaster situations
Issues with censorship and self-censorship	Support for public interest quality media to disseminate information, including participatory community media
Few minority voices in conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding reporting	More research on conflict-sensitive reporting
Limited research on conflict-sensitive and peacebuilding reporting	

3.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM

Climate change represents one of the major challenges for South and Southeast Asia, and the media have a very important role to play in informing both about hazards and ways of resolving or mitigating them. The topic is much debated all over the regions and while some of the more difficult issues such as logging and managing water resources are often intentionally pushed out of the public debate, building resilience to the consequences of climate change is a discussion that resonates in basically all South and Southeast Asian countries. Civil protection, managing the big cities that grow exponentially and unstructured, health problems and how to deal with climate change-forced migration are topics that the media are covering.

Over the last years, South and Southeast Asia have seen an impressive number of environmental civil society groups establish new internet-borne outlets that advocate and provide information about climate change

consequences to the population[22]. Many of these sites are structured like media outlets and work together with media to disseminate their content and sources. These kinds of outlets are necessary in the often very complex and sometimes dangerous field of environmental reporting where big financial and political interests may stand in the way of disseminating information. Yet, for environmental journalists, especially those who work with investigative reporting on subjects that are sensitive and may involve strong political and financial interests (logging, land rights, freshwater and urban infrastructure), safety is a major issue. This assessment has found an unmet need to work with these reporters who often operate on their own or with civil society organisations that do not have the clout of larger media organisations to help ensure the safety of their reporters.

In addition, there is a special issue in regard to indigenous peoples and minority ethnic groups. It is often these groups that suffer from the plight of environmental hazards that follows in the wake of illegal and unsustainable industrial and agricultural practices with pollution, flooding or drought as consequences. This assessment therefore sees a clear need to raise the voices and concerns of minority groups in the media and thus in the public debate on environmental issues. Media outlets with these focal points do already exists in the region, like the Isaan Record[23] in Thailand, that provides information about environmental and ethnic issues in the North Eastern parts of the country, but establishing similar initiatives is recommended to support indigenous and minority voices in environmental issues.

Furthermore, while there are several excellent environmental reporters and online initiatives in the region, there is very little exchange across borders. There is a US based group of environmental journalists[24] that holds contacts to individual reporters all over the world and the Internews driven project Climate News Mosaic[25], a global collective of journalists working together online to transform the way climate change and the environment at large is communicated, is also worth mentioning. Some Philippine reporters have joined this group.

In the aftermath of the UN Climate Conference in Paris in 2015 (COP 21), France funded the initiative Medias 21[26], which among other things supports environmental reporting in 10 newsrooms in Southeast Asia. Also active in the region is the Earth Journalism Network[27], which supports local groups of environmental reporters with background material and access to relevant sources.

There is, however, no regional association for environmental reporters in South or Southeast Asia. Given the cross-border character of most of the issues environmental journalists are reporting on and the high costs involved in such reporting a regional network could prove highly useful. Not least due to the fact that most of the environmental journalists are freelancers working on their own, in small groups or sometimes associated with civil society organisations. It is expensive to undertake large investigative reporting projects and the assessment sees the need for establishing regional networks and databases and seeking out new financial models that can support these undertakings. Environmental journalism's obvious interface with science journalism and data journalism further supports the idea of assistance to the establishment of regional networks and databases with relevant background material and data. The ongoing Earth Journalism Network is currently working on such a strategy which will hopefully fulfil some of the needs identified by this assessment – such as collaboration across borders and databases with pre-packed background material and analysis.

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[22] Thirdpole.net, Earth Times.org; Greenfuture.sg; Mongabay.com to mention a few.
[23] Isaanrecord.com
[24] Global Investigative Journalism Network
[25] www.climatemosaic.wordpress.com
[26] Medias 21, journalisme et changement climatique, www.cfi.fr
[27] Earth Journalism Network, Internews, www.earthjournalism.net

When it comes to approaches to environmental journalism, the assessment team has encountered inspiring initiatives that could prove resourceful for future capacity building projects for environmental journalism. Some media outlets have made it their mission to show positive examples on how climate change threats can be neutralized and how more sustainable forms of living and working may mitigate some of the dangers. Focussing on solutions and not only on the problems through constructive journalism may be another way forward for the media in South and Southeast Asia[28].

MAIN CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
High risks and high costs for environmental journalists, especially those working in the civil society sphere or as freelancers	Building capacity and networks for environmental journalists
Shortage of indigenous and ethnic minority perspectives on environmental issues in the media	Developing a regional database for environmental journalists
Little regional collaboration among environmental journalists	Assisting media initiatives with indigenous and ethnic minority perspectives
	Supporting constructive journalism initiatives

3.1.3 INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Investigative reporting usually depends heavily on primary (and multiple) sources, use of public records and computer-assisted data crunching. It involves the forming and testing of hypotheses, and rigorous fact-checking. Such journalism therefore requires data skills and other specialised training. It is time-consuming, expensive, and its independence needs to be unimpeachable. This poses problems for many newsrooms in the region where there is neither the skills nor the resources to conduct such high-quality reporting.

National groups of investigative journalists do exist in the region like in the Philippines where some 300 reporters active in the field are connected through a simple SMS network[29]. Similar initiatives are also found in Thailand[30], India[31], and Vietnam[32]. The Philippine group has issued guidebooks[33] helping reporters but there is a huge need for practical web-based training and material in all the dominant areas of investigative reporting, including corruption and accountability of authorities and their connections to private enterprises and the financial world.

Suggestions for such training programmes include special toolkits for investigative reporting, source methodology and source protection, cross-border journalism, digital security and data journalism as well as knowledge about specific thematic areas. Protection of sources are particularly important – not least digital source protection.

As for reporting on more sensitive issues such as crime and corruption, special safety measures should also be taken into consideration. The topics covered are often those where powerful and sometimes criminal interests

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[28] Reuters-Thompson for example has a dedicated reporter working on environmental issues in the Asia Region.
[29] Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism
[30] Thailand Information Center for Civil Rights and Investigative Journalism.
[31] Center for Investigative Journalism and the India Crime and Investigative Journalists Association.
[32] Centre for Media and Development Initiatives.
[33] Titles at www.pcij.org

are involved and there has in the region been too many examples of investigative reporters who have been threatened, attacked and even killed.

On a regional level, networks across borders might prove beneficial. Investigative reporting often has a glocal perspective, taking its point of departure in the local communities and the problems existing there and demonstrating how these problems and the solutions to them are of regional or even global character - or the other way around, demonstrating how regional or global issues are relevant for the local communities. Participants in the sub-regional workshops noted that, it is important to create strong networks among journalists who work on investigative reporting, maybe emulating the IMS supported and highly successful Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) model[34], which provides support for practical reporting initiatives, collaborative projects, advocacy and safety training.

MAIN CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Lack of investigative skills and financial resources to undertake investigative reporting	Training programmes with attention to tool-kits, sourcing and source protection
Scarce knowledge on data and source protection	Safety measures for journalists
Serious safety issues for investigative reporters	Regional network for investigative journalists

3.1.4 INNOVATIVE NEW MEDIA INITIATIVES

The media environment in South and Southeast Asia is undergoing dramatic changes these years. With the growth of the Internet and the spread of new communication technologies, legacy media institutions are struggling to keep up and provide their audiences with high quality public interest journalism. People, especially the younger generations, are flocking to social media and for many these platforms function as primary news sources. Furthermore, as in other regions, audiences no longer solely define themselves in terms of nations but seek and consume information and news in a more individual, community- or interest-driven way making it increasingly difficult for legacy media to connect with people and disseminate quality content. Yet, in this chaotic media landscape a series of new quality journalism formats have started to emerge, using all the features of the social media networks creating a strong and lasting appeal to many parts of society. Small, but steadily influential citizen-driven, independent online and digital news services are redrawing the information map and starting to support the shift from corporate media to community-focused news and information online.

Media outlets such as Malaysiakini[35] in Malaysia, The Wire[36] in India, Prachatai[37] in Thailand, Rappler[38] in the Philippines are excellent examples of media that have found a way to deliver the kind of public interest journalism that the assessment sees a need for in the region. These media have found a way to deliver quality journalism all

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[34] Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, based in Amman, Jordan. www.arij.net

[35] An online news portal. Seen as one of the leading non-government owned paid-news agencies in Malaysia, www.malaysiakini.com

[36] A news website published by the Indian Foundation of Indepedent Journalism (FIJ) focusing on politics, foreign policy, political economy, science and development, www.thewire.in

[37] A non-profit newspaper focusing on news and commentaries on NGO's, social movements and human rights issues, www.prachatai.com

[38] An online news site (or social news network as they define themselves) that relies heavily on social media for news sourcing and news distribution, www.rappler.com

the while being financial sustainable – and securing high degrees of independence from political interests. As an example, Malaysiakini has by being a solely online enterprise found a way to circumvent parts of Malaysia's restrictive media legislation and create a community of support for independent journalism with paying subscribers. The Malaysiakini model suggests that there may be space in many media-constricted countries to practice significantly more independent journalism on the Internet than is normally allowed among traditional publications and broadcasters[39].

Worth mentioning are also Isaan Record[40] in Thailand, My Sansar[41] in Nepal, Groundviews[42] and Roar Reports[43] in Sri Lanka, HumSub[44], Pamir Times[45] and Lok Sujag[46] in Pakistan, Scroll[47] and IndiaUnheard[48] in India, La'o Hamutuk[49] in Timor-Leste, ICT Watch[50], Kumparan[51] and PRFM[52] in Indonesia, The Irrawaddy[53], DVB[54], Mizzima[55], Frontier Myanmar[56] and MyanmarStories[57] in Myanmar and Mindanews[58] in the Philippines. Several of these can be considered hyperlocal media initiatives that aim to reach out and engage communities in areas where the mainstream media has little to no reach.

Furthermore, they strive to produce quality journalism, encourage civic engagement and use interactive high-end technologies, inviting users of its services to actively take part in a conversation on issues that matter. Overall, it is remarkable to see how these new media formats manage to bridge the gap between traditional media and civil society that have grown in the last twenty years, not least in the fields of gender equality and climate change. By not being burdened by an old view of media's primary purposes (such as informing everyone on a general level) or audiences (such as audiences confined within a national context), they can achieve both hyperlocal and regional reach through issue-driven dissemination. Their scope may be hyperlocal but their work and content may be of interest throughout the region in particular for other hyperlocal initiatives with a similar focus – whether it being

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[39] Advancing independent journalism while building a modern news business: the case of Malaysiakini, CIMA, 2015, p. 4.

[40] An online news site that focuses on the social and political movements in the Northeastern region of Thailand, www.isaanrecord.com

[41] Nepal's most popular Nepali blogging site that has become an aggregator for citizen journalism, www.mysansar.com

[42] The first tri-lingual citizen journalism site in Sri Lanka, www.groundviews.org

[43] A news media platform delivering news on current affairs, lifestyle and business in English and Tamil, www.roar.lk

[44] One of Pakistan's largest citizen feedback information portals and the largest repository of citizen blogs on issues revolving around terrorism, radicalization, poor governance, citizens' rights, women's rights and minorities' rights, www.humsub.com.pk

[45] An online information network with news, views and stories for local communities in Pakistan's mountainous northern region of Gilgit-Baltistan bordering China and Kashmir, www.pamirtimes.net

[46] An independent non-governmental organisation working in Punjab province of Pakistan with a mission of empowering local communities through information, dialogue and skill-building, www.sujag.org

[47] An independent news site covering a variety of issues, www.scroll.in

[48] A community news service launched by the NGO Video Volunteers with contributions from a network of community video producers from across 23 Indian states and content spread via social media, www.videovolunteers.org/about/indiaunheard/

[49] The Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis providing indepth analysis of Timor Sea oil and monetary issues, www.laohamutuk.org

[50] A civil society organisation delivering news on human rights and RTI and supporting netizens in Indonesia, www.ictwatch.id

[51] An online information network with contributions from professional and citizen journalists that works with a hybrid format combining online news with social media concepts, www.kumparan.com

[52] A local radio station in Bandung that emphasises hyperlocality and works in close relation with the public through, among other things, social media, www.prfmnews.com

[53] Online news publication with a former history as an excile news medium operating from Thailand, www.irrawaddy.com

[54] The Democratic Voice of Burma, independent radio and television broadcaster, www.dvb.no

[55] A multimedia news organisation producing journalistic content to several platforms, www.mizzima.com

[56] An English-language weekly magazine with an online platform delivering news on current affairs and business, www.frontiermyanmar.net

[57] A photographic community based on Facebook where young photographers share stories and images with particular attention to socio-political issues in Myanmar, www.facebook.com/myanstories

[58] Online newspaper owned by Mindanao News and Information Cooperative Center serving the Mindanao region, www.mindanews.com

related to conflicts, environmental issues, gender, corruption and the like. The new media platforms collaborate with and sometimes create communities of interest, both at local and national level. Thanks to the digital format and internet presence, they can very easily work with media and other organisations in other parts of their own country or abroad. As for Rappler, one can observe that regional collaboration in Southeast Asia has already emerged with similar media like Malaysiakini in Malaysia and Kompass in Indonesia, not least in order to be able to raise the necessary journalistic resources for the kind of quality public interest and cross-border investigative journalism the world has come to know about from the Panama Papers.

From Rappler's Twitter profile. Photo: Rappler.

The assessment sees great potential in these platforms as they offer new opportunities for collaboration, and digital tools and constitute a potential for massive, cross-border reporting efforts. They are discovering that they are more secure and powerful in their watchdog work when they work together across borders. They are developing new digital tools to shed light on corruption, environmental crime, and injustice, with an international impact never before dreamed possible.

Although traditional print and broadcast media still play an important role for the dissemination of quality journalism in South and Southeast Asia, they are beginning to struggle faced with competition from the online sphere and they are gradually losing ground when it comes to addressing the young population segments in ways that these groups find meaningful and interesting. In almost every corner of the world, younger generations have turned to social media, especially Facebook, Google and YouTube for their entertainment, communication and information needs, including for news reports. Unfortunately, their demand is not always met with quality information products.

Yet, instead of lamenting the decline of legacy media it is important that those who believe that quality journalism is critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals work to support media platforms that have proven their ability to empower, to engage and to build critical communities who actively take part in developing tomorrow's democracies. Initiatives such as the ones mentioned above have shown that new, innovative and sustainable distribution channels can be developed to reach and engage marginalised communities and create networks and cross-border editorial initiatives across the South and Southeast Asia regions. The assessment sees potential in the regions to foster even more of these initiatives and recommends more in-depth mapping of already existing platforms as well as programmes that can support and enhance these and help to inspire and establish new ones on both local, national and regional levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Support for capacity development in quality content production, distribution, and citizen engagement utilising social media

Create knowledge hub for continuous mapping of initiatives, audience research and documentation of innovative practices on digital content productions and distribution and digital technologies

Develop sustainable funding mechanism for support of initiatives

3.1.5 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In the current media environment, media outlets are not able to be independent, or to keep pace with technology, unless they are financially sound. While new public interest media often set up a revenue generation organisation that is adapted to the digital media landscape, the situation is different for traditional media that originally based their revenues on classic forms of sale and advertising. As revenues from traditional media channels, such as print, generally are declining and digital revenues still are limited, the resources for investments in new digital initiatives must be taken by cutting cost elsewhere in the organisation. By doing so, the risk is eminent that the entire organisational structure of the independent media houses is undermined.

Furthermore, there is a variety of challenges in terms of developing sustainable business models for media outlets delivering news online. In South and Southeast Asia, the assessment has identified the following key challenges towards securing financial sustainability:

- the dominant role of large technology companies like Google and Facebook that attract a large share of online advertising;

- low average revenues per user, especially on the mobile web;

- a growing number of people who use ad-blocking software, which makes it even more difficult to earn money online, but is also leading to new formats of advertisement, such as contextual, native advertisement and branded content.

The challenges around advertising mean that more and more media houses are moving to various forms of pay models. Although the number is slowly growing, only a minority of online news users (especially on the regional level) have so far been willing to pay for online content.

Another track to follow is diversification and the move into e-commerce, B2B services, and so called off-line activities, such as events and merchandising. In this area, there is an urgent need to obtain more insight in new models of revenue and monetization among quality media producers.

Social media enables news organisations to reach a wider public, in particular younger people and other audiences that do not normally turn to the media houses sites or apps. But this implies a number of challenges related to editorial control, brand recognition, audience data, audience loyalty, and monetisation. These challenges need to be taken into consideration when addressing social media presence.

News organisations worldwide are addressing the growth of smartphone use by adapting their content to mobile devices, creating dedicated teams, adopting mobile-first approaches and focusing on the development of their news apps. However, the mobile advertising market is still much less developed than the desktop advertising market, and this represents a central challenge for the business of mobile news.

The challenge regarding financial sustainability can be summarised as constructing attractive business models that empower the strength of its journalism and its advocacies. This can include new concepts, for example based on custom combinations of content creation, native advertising, crowdfunding, social media engagement, crowdsourcing and big data. These concepts differ to a large extent on the traditional view of revenue generation by advertising and thus open up new possibilities, both for producing and communicating quality journalism and for finding ways of engaging the audience and stakeholders also to ensure financial sustainability for the news providers.

While most news media in South and Southeast Asia are struggling to find solutions to these pertinent problems some online news providers have managed to construct business models that make them financially sustainable and capable of delivering high quality journalism. It is the belief of this assessment that these media outlets may serve as inspiration for other media in the region.

Perhaps the best example is the Philippine media platform Rappler, which on its platforms both in the Philippines and in Indonesia has managed to become a financially sustainable media outlet with a large and fast growing "audience". Quotation marks are used because one of the defining features of Rappler and its likes in the digital media landscape is that the audience is an integral part of the news and story production and dissemination processes. Rappler is working in the triangle of quality journalism, civic engagement and the use of interactive high-end technologies, inviting users of its services to actively take part in the many events the platform is organising together with different civil society organisations.

Worth mentioning is also Malaysiakini in Malaysia (described in the previous section). Both media outlets have found innovative and hybrid solutions to the apparent problem of financial sustainability in a digital world. The assessment team knows of other similar platforms in the region whose models might also be beneficial to study in detail to construct a catalogue of approaches that can serve as inspiration for both traditional media with digital ambitions and new online start-ups in the region.

MAIN CHALLENGES

Traditional media losing revenue with consequences for their organisational structures and content production

Lack of knowledge on financial sustainable business models with room for quality journalism

RECOMMENDATIONS

Draw experiences from media platforms that have managed to strike a balance between delivering quality content and being financially sustainable

Build a regional peer-to-peer network to exchange innovative business models as well as models for audience research and audience participation

3.1.6 REPORTING AT THE REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL

The media in the region are very fragmented and based on the interviews there is a need for assistance to build regional networks of media that can handle reporting on cross-border and regional subjects, such as intergovernmental organisations, environment, corruption, conflict and peace processes.

In relation to the existing larger regional intergovernmental organisations, especially ASEAN, SAARC and the Asian Development Bank the assessment has found that most mainstream media do not report very consistently on them, and on social media this aspect is almost completely absent. For example, in the area of climate change, media could invest in trying to keep ASEAN accountable for its 10-year plan, be in dialogue with the organisation and monitor it. It could also be useful to bring reporters from the different countries together to develop a stronger capacity on reporting regional matters in relation to the regional intergovernmental organisations, both in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

There is very little feeling of connectedness among journalists in South and Southeast Asia. It will therefore be useful to develop simple mechanisms and have funds to facilitate intensified regional and cross-border networking and collaboration which should include dedicated online platforms for the collaboration. Likewise, the assessment team has received requests for a facility that would enable fact-finding missions and rapid response missions to conflict or disaster stricken areas.

Regional collaboration could also be imagined in terms of training and capacity building. So far, most programmes have had national scopes like the Fojo and IMS programme in Myanmar, but internationally and cross-border initiatives like the ongoing Fojo programme for collaboration between media training institutions in countries in the Mekong region[59] have the benefit of fostering cross-border exchange of information and experiences. This sub-regional project could therefore be used as an inspiration for strengthening regional networking among journalism training institutions.

MAIN CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Little regional collaboration Lack of quality reporting on regional intergovernmental organisations such as ADB, SAARC and ASEAN	Support cross-border journalism and regional collaboration on corruption, human rights, climate change and environmental degradation Capacitate journalists Enhance knowledge of regional governmental institutions among journalists

3.2 SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY

Perhaps the most important element of an enabling environment for journalism in the regions of South and Southeast Asia is the safety of journalists. Safe conditions for media professionals and addressing impunity requires solutions at both the national and regional level. Each attack against a journalist, physical or digital, is a threat against press freedom and freedom of expression. Furthermore, the widespread impunity for crimes against journalists fuels and perpetuates a cycle of violence which stifles public debate.

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[59] The Southeast Asia Media Training Network

From the interviews and meetings in relation to this assessment it is obvious that safety is still an overwhelming issue for media professionals all over the region. The situation is worst, of course, in open conflict areas like in Afghanistan and to a certain degree also in Pakistan, but in all countries, there are serious concerns, heavily contributing to maintaining the South and Southeast Asian countries at the bottom of the different press freedom indexes. For instance, despite positive development in countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar, it is concerning to see attacks on media workers escalating significantly.

IMS has in-depth experience setting up comprehensive, locally-led safety mechanisms implementing for journalists in a series of countries in the region such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippine, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Yet, despite these initiatives in the region led by IMS and others along with documented progress with pushing authorities to play a more active role in ensuring the safety of journalists, there is still much to be done to ensure that journalists can exercise their profession without fear in the region.

Given the complexity of these issues, ensuring the safety of journalists can only be achieved via a holistic approach that addresses the prevention of violence against media, the protection of journalists in danger, and the prosecution of perpetrators of crimes committed against media professionals. Also, these challenges need to be met on all levels – from hyperlocal to intergovernmental.

More specifically, the assessment finds a need to provision safety and protection measures for journalists in the region. This includes measures to protect the digital security of media workers, their sources and their audiences. Training in conflict-sensitive reporting on themes such as corruption and radicalisation will also contribute to enhancing safety.

Moreover, the assessment has from interviews with women reporters and media development organisations in the region found that the situation for women journalists is particularly difficult, not least as the traditional psychological and physical violence against journalists has been complemented with systematic social media harassment of reporters, especially in the form of trolling. This digital security issue is especially pertinent for women reporters and editors[60]. The assessment therefore sees a need for supporting the implementation of gender-sensitive personal risks assessments and risk-management procedures in all newsrooms together with explicit safety and ethical policies, protocols and practices.

When it comes to the protection of journalists in danger, it was suggested during work on the assessment to consider setting up emergency response units to assist journalists in finding safe havens. Funds to support media workers facing prosecution and scholarships for children of killed or imprisoned journalists were also among the suggestions. All of these could be initiated on a regional level.

On the issue of prosecution, the assessment team has also encountered requests for assistance in setting up a pool of experienced human rights and freedom of expression lawyers across the region, to assist both the media and civil society organisations in situations where they are charged with breaking the law.

To better understand the threats facing journalists in the regions of Asia, the assessment finds a need for more systematic, in-depth analysis of why journalists are attacked. The development of a regional database on violations against journalists should be considered as well as an Asia-specific, regional media freedom index, which takes into account local conditions and obstacles that global indices do not cover.

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[60] See for example "Trolling of Women Journalists Threatens Free Press", Inter Press Service, July 5, 2017 and "Chasing Stories, Women Journalists Are Pursued by Trolls", Freedom House, April 26, 2017.

Finally, on the issue of advocacy on a regional level, the assessment finds it to be of high importance to actively make use of intergovernmental organisations. Further advocacy work is needed to push governments to take responsibility for ensuring the safety of journalists.

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MAIN CHALLENGES

Journalists face a variety of physical as well as digital threats

Widespread impunity for crimes against journalists

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement personal risks assessments and risk-management procedures

Support training in conflict-sensitive reporting

Promote awareness on safety of women reporters through training and workshops

Set up emergency response units, including legal assistance

Establish funds for court fines and scholarships for children of imprisoned or killed journalists

Create a regional database on violations against journalists

Launch a regional media freedom index with consideration of local conditions and obstacles

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3.3 MEDIA AND GENDER EQUALITY

On an overall level, the South and Southeast Asian regions have serious issues related to gender equality, especially due to religious and traditional cultural patterns. The situation is generally better in Southeast Asia compared to South Asia where only Sri Lanka and the Maldives have a situation that UNESCAP describes as "fair"[61]. Although the region has made progress on several fronts in gender equality and women's empowerment, notably in education, women continue to experience discrimination in the labour market, as well as political representation and access to health[62]. Furthermore, gender-based violence continues to be a severe problem in the region where women and girls have a high risk of experience physical and/or sexual violence[63].

Similarly, this assessment finds areas of great concern with gender equality in the region's media sector. Though women's representation in newsrooms have been improving over the years, they continue to be marginalised and face discrimination in the workplace. A report from 2015 by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) showed that women make up 28.6 percent of the media workforce across Asia and the Pacific[64]. In addition, it documented a larger degree of job insecurity and lower advancement possibilities among women working in the media industry along with a significant gender pay gap and high percentages of sexual harassment experiences[65]. Preliminary data from new gender research conducted by Fojo, in collaboration with local partners in Cambodia,

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[61] Asia-Pacific Report on Beijing+20 Review, May 2015.

[62] UNESCAP, Sustainable Social Development in Asia and the Pacific: Towards a People-Centred Transformation, May 2017

[63] UNFPA Asia & the Pacific, Violence Against Women – Regional Snapshot, 2016

[64] Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in the Asia and the Pacific, International Federation of Journalists, 2015.

[65] According to the report, 34 percent of the respondents in the study had witnessed workplace sexual harassment and at least 17 percent of female journalists had personally experienced workplace sexual harassment.

Myanmar and Vietnam[66], confirm that sexual harassment is common and affects women media professionals in their daily work.

When it comes to gender and media organisations working at the global level, like the International Women's Media Foundation and the Global Alliance on Media and Gender, have found their way to South and Southeast Asia and acquired members here. Yet, as has become clear during interviews with journalists in the various countries, the mainly academic and research oriented networks are under-performing when it comes to addressing the practical problems women journalists face on a daily basis. The assessment has therefore identified the need to work on the conditions for women employed in the media industry with special attention to the safety of women reporters, both physically and digitally and actively support and empower women reporting from the frontlines.

Despite the grim picture, changes are underway in the region. For instance in Afghanistan a new television station run by women and programming for women has been established with donor assistance[67], and strong female reporters and editors who may serve as role models are present in all countries across the region. Furthermore, women journalists' networks and associations are present in a number of countries in the region. Although at early stages and in need of capacity building, it is a positive sign that such networks have begun emerging. There are at present women journalists' networks in India[68], Pakistan[69], Nepal[70], the Philippines[71], in Vietnam[72] and recently, also in Myanmar[73], but there is a need for more dialogue and networking amongst women journalists and also specifically amongst women editors. Such dialogue should also be taken to the individual newsrooms and not stay in conferences or capacity building workshops. A campaign led by leading women journalists and editors that works its way through newsrooms could prove itself powerful.

There is, however, little regional collaboration and networking. This assessment suggests bringing women journalists together across borders to strengthen both individual journalists and national organisations in promoting equality in the newsrooms. There are several women who can serve as role models, especially in India and in the Philippines. Some have during the work on this assessment explicitly expressed their readiness to contribute to cross-border and regional collaboration to further the respect for and role of women within the media.

In addition to the lack of gender equality in the newsroom, this assessment has also identified issues with gender balance in media content. Due to media's normative power to reflect daily life and to shape our understanding of gender, media play a vital role in constructing – or deconstructing – gender equality. Both the image the media disseminates and the platform it provides for women's voices impact the position of women in society. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325[74] calls for women's rights to participate at all levels of decisi¬on-making in all stages of conflict management including conflict prevention, peace processes and democratic transition. Only if media is open to women's active participation, can this become a reality.

However, in most media outlets in the region women's voi¬ces and perspectives are clearly lacking. Media in South and Southeast Asia often tend to perpetuate negative stereotypes and traditional conceptions about women's

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[66] Conducted as part of the Southeast Asian Network for Media Training Institutions in 2017.
[67] BBC, May 2017, www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-39991297/afghanistan-launches-tv-channel-dedicated-to-women
[68] Indian Women's Press Corps and Network of Women in Media.
[69] Women Journalists Pakistan.
[70] Working Women Journalists.
[71] International Association of Women in Radio and Television.
[72] Women Journalists Association.
[73] Myanmar Women Journalists Society.
[74] UN Security Council Resolution on women and peace and security, 1325, 2000.

1 TV studio, Kabul, Afghanistan 2013. Photo: Lars Schmidt.

capacities and victimise them rather than highlighting their capacity to bring about positive change. Women are typically being depicted as either victims, or family figures and sexual objects. According to IFJ's report on gender quality in the media in Asia and the Pacific[75], women in South Asia are more prone to be portrayed as "victims" whereas women in Southeast Asia are most commonly depicted as "family figures".

Furthermore, women are often underrepresented as news sources. In Thailand, a database with women experts within different political, social and technical fields that can be used by the media[76] is being established in response to numbers showing that less than 25% of media sources in the country are women. Such a database can be replicated in other countries throughout the region and could be complemented with dedicated media training for the registered women experts. This would also permit cross-border collaboration between the experts.

Both when it comes to fair gender portrayal in the news and the lack of female expert sources are other areas where professional journalism can play an important role by fighting against discrimination, providing reporting guidelines and promoting best practices. Promoting gender responsive policies or guidelines in media organisations/outlets is one way forward. The assessment also finds a clear need to support initiatives that promote gender equality by setting up databases with women experts and working towards avoiding stereotyping women in their most traditional roles. To deal with these issues it would be very useful to establish a monitoring mechanism that could monitor the gender gap in journalism, both when it comes to the production of content and sources used in the media. Such a monitoring mechanism is being developed in the IMS-Fojo programme in

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[75] Inside the News: Challenges and Aspirations of Women Journalists in the Asia and the Pacific, International Federation of Journalists, 2015.
[76] UNESCO Bangkok Women Make the News Database, Thailand.

Myanmar and could be replicated on a regional level. There are still very few studies made in the region on this and there is a an urgent need for more data to develop and target future programmes is paramount.

A third area of interest when it comes to gender equality and the media in South and Southeast Asia is women's access to information. Despite the widespread growth of digital technologies and mobile communication devices in regions, there is a significant digital gender gap, as those not connected tend to be women unable to afford access to the Internet[77]. In low- and middle-income countries, women are on average 14 percent less likely to own a mobile device compared to men – and in South Asia the figure is a staggering 38 percent[78]. The assessment therefore sees a need to work towards eliminating the existing digital gender gap and promote women's access to media, including communication technologies and the Internet. Yet, more information on women's access to media in the region is needed to properly identify the necessary remedies.

A final cross-cutting area of interest is to investigate further is how gender relates to reporting on climate change and environment. The media play an important role in making visible how climate change and environmental challenges affect different aspects of society, as well as the lives of ordinary citizens. Complicated relations can be explained and illustrated by the media, evoking engagement and action for change. One under-reported area of particular interest is gender dimensions of climate change. The fact that men and women have different impacts on the environment (e.g. a larger carbon footprint for men) is in itself newsworthy, on the other hand environmental challenges have differentiated impact on women and men (e.g. in some places women suffered harder from tsunamis). If such links were better known, precautions and proactive measures could be taken, and societies become more resilient. The lack of skills and knowledge on how to report on these issues (climate change in general, and gender in particular) is widespread, and the need for capacity building massive.

MAIN CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Lack of gender equality among journalists	Support regional collaboration of women journalists' network
Stereotypical gender portrayal in the news	Promote awareness of gender stereotyping in the news through training and workshops
Shortage of women experts as news sources	Create databases with women experts – on national as well as regional levels
Widespread digital gender gap across the region	Promote gender responsive policies/guidelines in local media outlets
	Promote women's access to information (including access to the Internet) by supporting innovative tools for dissemination of gender specific information

3.4 THE ENABLING LEGAL ENVIRONMENT FOR MEDIA

When considering the enabling environment for the media in a given society, a number of laws and regulations dealing with everything from competition law to freedom of expression should be taken into consideration. Laws

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[77] Digital Gender Gap Audit Scorecard Toolkit, Webfoundation, August 2016.
[78] Bridging the gender gap: mobile access and usage in low- and middle-income countries, GSMA, 2015.

that deal with ownership structures, access to information, government subsidies, copyright, censorship, national security, and working conditions all contribute to enable – and restrict – the media and the journalists operating within the industry. This assessment has worked with an underlying assumption derived from the Media Development Indicators[79] that a legal framework conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity can enable the growth of media and allow them to fulfil their function as watchdogs of society and helping to hold governments more accountable without fear of legal sanctions. Furthermore, the assessment sees such an enabling environment as critical as it affects content production and distribution at both the national and community level.

Although many of the countries in South and Southeast Asia have installed laws securing freedom of expression and freedom to information and abolished pre-publication censorship, this assessment has identified a number of laws that limit these freedoms, restrain the media and journalists' access to information in the region.

While there is a growing understanding in the region (particularly among Asian intergovernmental organisations) of the importance of access to information in advancing innovation and development, true implementation of laws securing the rights is neglected. It is noteworthy that Asia does not have a regional convention that protects human rights (and neither does any of the subregions) and Asia is also the only region that does not have a special rapporteur function on freedom of expression and press freedom within the framework of regional intergovernmental organisations.

Even though most countries in South Asia[80] and some in Southeast Asia[81] have access to information legislation in place, the implementation is often characterised by a strict interpretation to the benefit of the authorities. Furthermore, many journalists and other citizens are not aware of their rights or how to request access to information from the authorities. In addition, due to the lack of proactive public disclosure mechanisms a true culture of transparency is also lacking.

The assessment therefore recommends further support to promote access to information. The active engagement in the Open Government Partnership for some Southeast Asian governments[82] may be helpful to reignite access to information advocacy. Furthermore, UNDP and UNESCAP are both increasingly active in this field, but also ASEAN and ADB are looking into the area. Other possible levers for introducing access to information legislation worth mentioning are the Human Development Index[83] and civil society run national benchmark programmes, which can be used as a point of departure for more progressive social and political initiatives. There are also in most countries very active civil society organisations working on access to information and transparency in government, which often work systematically together with media outlets to further the debate. Collaboration on a regional level with these organisations might prove beneficial for future advocacy work.

When it comes to laws directed at the media defamation laws, incitement laws, blasphemy laws, restrictions on free internet use, including laws on cyber security, and censorship laws are all used to control the media on various levels.

Particularly the criminal defamation laws are in some South and Southeast Asian countries often used to scare away political and investigative reporting. The possibility of being arrested by the police, held in detention and subjected to criminal trials is a frequent occurrence in many of the countries covered in this assessment. Breaking

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[79] http://en.unesco.org/programme/ipdc/initiatives/mdis
[80] Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan.
[81] Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and China has actionable regulations for access to information.
[82] Indonesia and the Philippines.
[83] UNDP annual Human Development Index.

these laws can also lead to the imposition of harsh sanctions, such as a prison sentence, suspension of the right to practice journalism or a hefty fine. The same can be said about incitement and blasphemy laws. In countries without strong, independent courts (Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Bangladesh to mention a few), such laws also have the function to muzzle the media.

Furthermore, cyber-security is an increasingly urgent and legitimate concern but it is important that cyber laws are not used to limiting free speech and press freedom. In South and Southeast Asia, the assessment sees that national security interests and policies to oppose violent extremism are increasingly used as the reason for limiting free speech. Several countries have introduced such limitations and more are under way. A recent example is India's temporary shutdown of social media in the Kashmir district or the use in the Philippines of "cyber sedition" law[84]. From interviews and meetings in the region a concerted advocacy campaign was suggested but advocacy is also needed on a more general level.

The assessment has identified a clear demand for continuous advocacy work on, among other things, access to information laws, shield laws for journalists and the abolition of criminal defamation laws. It is important to continue the ongoing work with local groups on advocacy for reforms and adoption of international principles as laid down in international human rights laws and conventions. Furthermore, there is a need to work with intergovernmental and regional bodies on laws that support press freedom. In South and Southeast Asia, the space for free media is narrowing and legal protection of media professionals, including guarantees that ethnic media in indigenous languages can function without discrimination, is paramount.

The analysis has shown that media accountability systems constitute an important part of the enabling environment. Press councils, press ombudsmen and other regulatory bodies can play an important role for the independent, ethical and professional functioning of the media. In South and Southeast Asia, there are few completely independent press councils, and although they may exercise some impact when it comes to professional standards and defending press freedom there is still room for improvement.

Change is, however, on its way in some countries. Press councils have been established in Timor-Leste (with the approval of the Media Act in 2014) and Myanmar (in 2015) and although there is some cross-border collaboration between some of the press councils, the assessment has identified a clear need to develop a strong regional network connecting South and Southeast Asia in this field. Capable media associations on both national and regional levels that can stand together and speak with one voice when threatened may help spur on change in the region.

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[84] New York Times, 26 April 2017 and Rappler, 13 June 2017.

MAIN CHALLENGES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Threats against press freedom	Secure legal protection of media professionals
Lack of access to information laws, freedom of speech laws and shield laws	Support for press councils, press ombudsmen and similar regulatory bodies
Criminal defamation laws used to silence dissidence	Continuous advocacy work concerning, among other things, access to information laws, on national as well as regional levels
Cyber security laws used to limit free speech	
Lack of independent media accountability systems	Develop strong national and regional networks of press councils and media institutions

3.5 MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

The arrival of the Internet and the spread of information and communication technologies have fostered widespread changes in South and Southeast Asia in terms of people having access to information and being able to participate in the public debate. Figures from 2017 show that internet penetration has reached 46 percent in the Asia-Pacific region[85] with a 15 percent growth since 2015. In addition, most people with access to the Internet are actively using social media as a mean of communication and retrieving information. The region is home to some of the largest global growths in the number of social media users[86] and 36 percent of the population in the region were in 2017 active social media users. Yet, despite the positive image the new technologies are also bringing new challenges with them.

Unverified information blends with fact-checked journalistic content online and requires a lot of effort on the part of the audiences in the receiving end to sort the truth from the false. Although designed to bring people together, social media often seems to be doing the opposite and fosters hate speech and conflicts. Furthermore, trust in the mainstream media seems to be dwindling. According to the 2017 annual Edelman Trust Barometer[87], trust in traditional media has reached an all-time low. Even though the media in some Asian countries still benefit from high levels of trust (for instance in China, India and Indonesia), the downward trend is also very much present in the region. Populist politicians all over South and Southeast Asia increasingly attack the media with accusation of bias or feed into the narrative of the mainstream media being carriers of "fake news". With these challenges looming over the future of the media in the two regions, the assessment sees a clear need for supporting initiatives that contribute to cultivating more media-savvy publics – and media professionals. Targeted media and information literacy programmes that provide people with the skills of being able to critically evaluate and analyse information presented through the media, recognising, for example, when it might be distorted or prone to bias[88], is a solution supported by this assessment.

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[85] We Are Social, Digital in 2017: Global Overview, 2017.
[86] According to We Are Social's Digital in 2017: Global Overview report, North Korea, Myanmar and Laos are among the 10 countries with the largest percentage growth while China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Bangladesh, Japan and Vietnam have seen the largest growth in number of users.
[87] See www.edelman.com/trust2017/
[88] Susan Abbott, Trust in the digital age, in Reflections on media environment trends, IMS annual report, 2017.

Although media literacy has its critics[89], this assessment still recommends supporting innovative approaches to the promotion of media and information literacy among both journalists and the general population. Both groups may benefit from strengthening their critical eye and learning to navigate in an information deluged society. Particularly the younger generations who statistically are more active on the Internet and social media could benefit from increased awareness. Not only do they need tools to analyse and evaluate the endless amount of information they encounter on a daily basis they also need to understand the implications of having an online presence and leaving an online trail of data.

Newspaper vendor, Yangon, Myanmar 2014. Photo: Helle Wahlberg/IMS.

When it comes to promoting media and information literacy among journalists, IMS has experience from a former programme in Myanmar where it assisted with the establishment of the independent Myanmar Journalism Institute, with a broad coalition of stakeholders including the Government of Myanmar. Attention was given to training in the areas of photojournalism, conflict-sensitive journalism and basic skills across the country. Similar initiatives could be instigated in other countries in the region through collaboration with training institutes and media associations. The assessment in particular sees a need for programmes with attention to information sourcing and fact-checking.

When it comes to enhancing the level of media and information literacy among the general population, there are some examples throughout the region on both regional[90] and national[91] level that might serve as inspiration. In Cambodia, DW Akademie has for instance cooperated with Cambodia's Education Ministry to teach students about traditional and social media[92]. The programme among other things pays attention to how the media shape popular culture and opinion and how they influence personal choices. By learning how to navigate the Internet and protecting themselves online, the students become better aware on how the media works and how they can participate in – and contribute to – the public debate. Similar programmes could be introduced in other countries in the region where communication technologies and the Internet is growing at rapid speed. Yet, the assessment also recommends more background information and data on local conditions to identify specific needs and ensure sustainable impact.

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[89] See www.medialit.org/reading-room/seven-great-debates-media-literacy-movement-circa-2001
[90] Such as the ASEAN Youth media literacy workshop.
[91] In Thailand, Vietnam, India, just to mention a few.
[92] For more information, see www.dw.com/en/media-literacy-enters-cambodian-classrooms/a-35986176

MAIN CHALLENGES

Information overload

Hate speech and misinformation flourishing on social media

"Fake news" narratives causing mistrust in the mainstream media

RECOMMENDATIONS

Media literacy training programmes for journalists with special attention to fact-checking skills

Media literacy training programmes for the general population, particularly the youth

4.0 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC FOCUS

The regions of South and Southeast Asia are marked by a series of challenges ranging from conflicts and natural disasters to pushbacks against human rights and shrinking spaces for civil society. Being some of the most diverse regions in the world on ethnic, religious and cultural grounds, struggles for inclusion take place on a daily basis in most countries – from people fighting poverty and social injustice to forced migration and armed conflicts. All of these challenges on varying levels stall, hinder or even reverse development progress in many of the regions' countries. Even though some of the countries in the regions have been among the world's top performers on a number of Millennium Development Goal targets[93], there are a number of goals and targets included in the Sustainable Development Goals that will not be met without innovative efforts and methods – particularly when it comes to solutions for democratic governance and peacebuilding, climate and disaster resilience.

From a media development perspective, the regions face serious challenges in terms of reaching and engaging their publics. Large parts of the population in all of the assessed countries, even in remote areas, are connected to the Internet through smartphones and the reach of legacy media has weakened with many, the younger generations in particular, favouring social media as a primary channel for accessing news. In addition, audiences are becoming far more dispersed and no longer necessarily orientate themselves within a national context. Instead their attention is interest- and community-driven and connected to issues spanning across national and regional boundaries. Audiences' attention is diverted from media for the masses and increasingly directed towards horizontal, interactive networks of communication and information sharing. Knowing and understanding people as individuals and communities, rather than as masses, is becoming a necessity for media to operate and thrive[94] – and an important aspect for media development projects. Information today is often hyper-local, yet can reach audiences around the globe. Fostering an informed and participatory citizenry that is prerequisite for achieving democratic development and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals therefore requires attention to local and hyper-local media outlets and sourcing their potential for disseminating public interest journalism.

As identified in Sweden's strategy for regional development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region 2016-2021, approaches to secure sustainable development in South and Southeast Asia can only happen through mutual interaction between human rights, democracy, gender equality, environment and climate change. Holistic programmes that take all of these different aspects into account are deemed to have the greatest effect. An important element is the strengthened capacity of regional and national actors to promote greater accountability, conflict prevention and increased democratic space. It is therefore within this scope and with particular attention to the new media landscapes and audience structures in the regions, that the assessment has derived at a series of recommendations for future media development assistance in South and Southeast Asia. These recommendations are seen as necessary first steps and concentrate on areas where the assessment team finds most potential for assistance that can enhance sustainable development on a variety of factors. It is, however, important to stress that a potential regional programme would have to be flexible in nature and subject to change concurrently with changes in media landscapes and audience configurations.

Based on the findings of this assessment and with the current state of the media environment in the regions along with the rapid development and spread of ICTs, it is the belief of IMS and Fojo that innovative new media initiatives in South and Southeast Asia (such as Rappler in the Philippines Malaysiakini in Malaysia and Groundviews in Sri Lanka)) can widen the scope for free expression and foster better access to public interest journalism. This type of

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[93] Overseas Development Institute, Projecting progress: the SDGs in Asia-Pacific, May 2016, www.odi.org/publications/10421-projecting-progress-sdgs-asia-pacific
[94] Michelle Betz, The relevance of journalism in a post-truth era, IMS annual report, 2017, p. 11.

journalism in turn enhances local accountability, counters corruption and enables the public to engage in conflict resolution on a more informed basis.

Yet, for these new media initiatives to work and for public interest journalism to unfold its potential and engage audiences with ethical reporting and innovative formats, action is needed in three different areas: content production and dissemination; safety; legal and thematic knowledge enhancement.

Attention to content production and dissemination is key for a future programme targeted at public interest journalism. Securing quality content produced and distributed in an ethical manner stands at the centre alongside solid distribution channels that reach and engage the targeted audiences.

As has been addressed throughout the assessment, safety continues to be one of the main challenges facing journalists and media professionals in the region. Careful attention to this issue is therefore paramount to create safe working conditions for people working with public interest journalism – particularly in conflict and post-conflict zones. This includes professional journalists as well as citizen journalists, bloggers and other people disseminating information to a wider audience.

Finally, there is a need for knowledge enhancement on several levels. First and foremost, knowledge enhancement on right-to-information legislation, international principles on journalism and potential threats is needed among content creators and providers. Furthermore, more in-depth knowledge and research on issues such as the political economy of conflicts (e.g. ethnic and/or religious) and accountability issues and its implications for ethical reporting is needed to substantiate the development of programme mechanisms and mitigation strategies. A future programme should be able to assess the media situation concurrently and adjust to new challenges and situations. This requires continuous data gathering and assessments.

In response to the needed action and in support of the enhancement of public interest journalism in the South and Southeast Asian regions the assessment has evaluated the following three strategic intervention areas for a regional media development programme that over time will affect positively on accountability, inclusion and peace-building in Asia:

1) SUPPORTING PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM AND INNOVATIVE NEW MEDIA INITIATIVES

As has been explained throughout this assessment, the regions have seen a surge in innovative new media initiatives that bode well for the future of quality journalism with a public interest focus. Yet, while there may be fine examples of such reporting in many countries, there are also countries where quality journalism needs to be strengthened and it is critical to find ways, also at the regional level, to facilitate the development of this capacity.

IMS and Fojo, among other things, suggest establishing a regional network that collaborates on conflict and accountability issues; initiating collaborative efforts between global social media platforms in-country and between journalist initiatives and civil society organisations working on human rights, conflict and accountability issues; and, creating peer-to-peer supporting schemes and sustainable funding mechanisms to support the initiatives. However, one of the most important features will be capacity development in quality content production, distribution and citizen engagement with an emphasis on integration of social media platforms. Without downplaying the continuous role of existing legacy media outlets in the South and Southeast Asian regions, IMS and Fojo recommends that the attention of a future media and journalism programme in the regions is directed at platforms where people increasingly seek and get their news. As was emphasised in the findings of

this assessment, new online media platforms have a better chance at securing strong civic engagement in the regions than traditional legacy media outlets.

Harnessing the power of hyperlocal and forging collaborations on a regional level may also prove important for economic survival. Ensuring that the audience's needs are met and trust is built suggests a certain buy-in which would make maintaining or ensuring the survival of that particular outlet in the community's best interest[95]. Partnering with other hyperlocal outlets in the same region or country may not only increase reach of public interest journalism but can also illustrate common ground. Like Sida, IMS and Fojo finds cross-regional collaborations and networks to be an important factor in improving the management of challenges in the regions of South and Southeast Asia. When it comes to the enhancement of quality public interest journalism, regional collaboration would prove beneficial in undertaking for instance investigative and in-depth reporting in key thematic development areas that require specific skill-sets, access to relevant data and financial resources. Regional networks and collaborations would be crucial in advancing conflict-sensitive, environmental and corruption reporting in the regions as many of these issues are transboundary in nature.

Overall, IMS and Fojo recommend establishing sub-regional networks and cross-border collaborations between initiatives based on key in-depth investigative journalism themes of transboundary nature or of common public interests. Such networks would among other things pay attention mentoring and skills-building and enhance exchanges between content creators working on similar themes and stories in the regions.

2) SAFEGUARDING MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS IN ASIA

With safety being one of the key issues for journalists and other media professionals in the regions, IMS and Fojo find it to be of paramount importance supporting schemes that work towards creating safe working environments and protection mechanisms. Each attack against a journalist, physical or digital, is a threat against press freedom and freedom of expression. Furthermore, the widespread impunity for crimes against journalists fuels and perpetuates a cycle of violence which stifles public debate.

To meet the challenges, IMS and Fojo recommend establishing a regional platform for the strengthening and establishment of national protection mechanisms. Such a platform should assist promoting documented international best practices, develop standards for safety and ethical policies, protocols and practices and provide training on physical safety and digital safety as well as in conflict-sensitive reporting on themes such as corruption, radicalization, human rights violations and minority issues. Furthermore, IMS and Fojo recommend implementing the use of UNESCO's safety indicators and continuously assess and document the safety situation and adjust programming accordingly. More systematically, in-depth analysis of why journalists and other media professional are attacked is needed to develop sustainable prevention mechanisms.

3) ENHANCING THEMATIC AND CONTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT KNOWLEDGE

Finally, the assessment has throughout this report identified clear needs for more in-depth knowledge on several impeding issues related to sustainable media development in the regions. In order to assist the innovative new media initiatives central for a new regional programme, more knowledge on ethical reporting utilising social media components, implications from repressive online related legislation along with potential legal threats and financial sustainable business models are, among other things, needed. Furthermore, IMS and Fojo believe that a future programme would benefit from more strategic and applied research to continuously reflect upon approaches and

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[95] Michelle Betz, The relevance of journalism in a post-truth era, IMS annual report, 2017, p. 16.

develop the necessary mechanisms to meet new challenges and complications. It is therefore recommended to establish a knowledge hub for continues mapping of initiatives, audience research and documentation of innovative practices on digital content productions and distribution and digital technologies – and for assessing and raising awareness on possibilities and needs in areas related to rights-to-information legislation and Open Government.

Finally enhancing contextual knowledge on the themes that the media initiatives are reporting on is a recommended strategic focus. For instance in relation to conflict prevention and peace-building both media development programmes and reporters need to understand conflict, their root causes and possible solutions. While some conflicts are unique in nature they most often contain some common features from country to country. Similarly, when it comes to reporting on corruption in government and businesses, environmental reporting, ethnic minority issues etc. The better understanding of the complexities the more impact and change is likely to happen from the reporting and planned activities.

5.0 POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Fojo and IMS are as organisations characterised by philosophies of local ownership and the necessity of coordination and collaboration between all relevant stakeholders. Also, in a potential regional Asian programme collaboration with the relevant media enterprises and organisations will be of critical importance, not least because one of the main objectives of the programme is to facilitate and strengthen the regional and cross-border collaboration between these organisations in a sustainable way.

5.1 STRATEGIC AND TARGETED PARTNERS

For Fojo and IMS there are two types of partners in the two regions and the assessment as well as the many existing or past national programmes have given useful indications of both the strategic and the targeted partners. Strategic partners are seen as resourceful organisations and media with which the programme can collaborate as well as set up and implement the different programmes. Targeted partners are seen as organisations and media that the programme identify as possible change agents and wants to approach and capacitate.

From the overview of actors in the relevant fields in the two sub-regions found below, we can observe that on the strategic partners level, a regional programme must seek dialogue and collaboration with the main intergovernmental organisations, ASEAN and SAARC as well as with the Asian Development Bank and the main UN offices in the regions, especially UNESCO, UNDP, OHCHR and UNESCAP.

Furthermore, strategic partners are such organisations that are already active within relevant areas (freedom of expression/press freedom, climate change and gender equality). Here the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA) stands out but lacking a similar counterpart for South Asia. In terms of conflict-sensitive reporting, the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation in Jakarta and the Peace & Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON) might also be worth considering. Forum Asia on human rights and development is noteworthy for its focus on protect human rights and how it promotes collaboration and cooperation among human rights organisations and defenders in Asia. There are also international organisations with chapters or programme activities in the region that can serve as strategic partners such as Open Society Foundations, International Federation of Journalists, Article 19 and Internews. It is evident that also the national partners of IMS and Fojo of programmes in more than 10 countries are both strategic and targeted partners.

On the media side, strategic partners are first and foremost seen as those quality journalism outlets that have managed to develop financially sustainable formats that are inclusive, encourage civic engagement and are easily accessible across borders. Rappler in the Philippines, Malaysiakini in Malaysia and in Indonesia Kompas and Tempo constitute such important strategic media partners.

The targeted partners are the aspiring or upcoming new media initiatives that can replicate or advance the successful and exemplary formats and models of Wire and 101 India, Rappler in the Philippines and/or Malaysiakini in Malaysia formats such as Prachatai and Isaan Records in Thailand, My Sansar in Nepal, Groundviews and Roar Reports in Sri Lanka, HumSub and Lok Sujag in Pakistan, La'o Hanutuk in Timor-Leste, Kumparan and PRFM in Indonesia, The Irrawaddy, Frontier Myanmar, Mizzima and Myanmar Stories in Myanmar, Mindanews in the Philippines and several others. Some of these can be considered hyperlocal media initiatives aiming at reaching out and engaging communities in media environments where mainstream media does not reach.

It is also recommended to work closely with organisations that are coming forward developing networks and joint projects, especially within the fields of reporting on conflict, corruption, human rigths, climate change and gender equality.

For the collaboration with all partners the links to existing national and sub-regional programmes are essential and the experience, trust and networks built by IMS and Fojo will be an invaluable asset for the putting together of a coming comprehensive regional programme. The synergy and complimentarity which can be developed between the regional and national programmes will be multi-plier effect for the potential impact of the programme.

5.2 REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AND POSSIBLE DONORS

There are a number of regional organisations with relevance for the key areas of the assessment. The intergovernmental organisations are ASEAN, SAARC, APEC, UNESCAP, UNESCO and UNDP Asia-Pacific Centre as well as the Asia Development Bank and a number of regional professional organisations like SEAPA, Asia Broadcasting Union (ABU), Asian Institute for Broadcast Development (AIBD), and Asia Media and Information Centre (AMIC).

There are also a group of international media development organisations operating in the region like the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ-Asia and Pacific), Article 19, Internews, the Thompson Reuters Foundation, IREX, Deutsche Welle (DW), MICT, BBC Media Action and Canal France International (CFI). IMS and Fojo are also prominent actors in the region.

Furthermore, there are important international human rights organisations like the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch and at the regional and sub-regional level organisations such as Forum Asia, the Regional Rights Resource Team, Asia Democracy Network and the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

During the assessment study IMS was privileged to benefit from an invitation from Sida's Asia Office to attend their Regional Workshop on Co-Creation for Transformation, Effective Delivery on SDGs through Enhanced Cross-Sectorial Interaction in Bangkok on March 21-22. During these intensive two days, the assessment team had the opportunity to meet with representatives from a number of both political and more technical organisations such as PACT, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, the Earth Journalism Network affiliated to Internews, the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics, Asia Institute of Technology, the Mekong Institute and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP).

These organisations could be mobilised to promote effective responses to the many complex challenges related to the environment, gender equality and the shrinking space for free media at regional and sub-regional level. From our talks with representatives of many of these organisations it is also clear that they are interested in discussing ways forward that may contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in the region. There are, however, also certain reservations, partly due to political constraints – mostly for the regional intergovernmental non-UN organisations. To a certain degree this may also stem from a lack of adequate financial and human resources.

There is room for human rights defenders, press freedom initiatives and media enterprises to work more closely, also with the regional intergovernmental organisations and the UN, not least in relation to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), organised by OHCHR. To mention just one example of the potential for enhanced use of interregional mechanisms, most recently, during the global UNESCO World Press Freedom Day event in Jakarta 3-4 May 2017, the international media community strongly encouraged ASEAN to establish a regional mechanism

to deal with the safety of journalists in Southeast Asia along the lines that are known from the African Union, the Organisation of American States and the OSCE. No official reaction has been given from ASEAN, but from the talks the assessment team have had with representatives from the Human Rights Commission who took part in the events during World Press Freedom Day in Jakarta, there is some interest in developing a mechanism that could begin as a general complaint handling system. The Commission's mandate would furthermore allow for it to intervene in cases where the protection of media professionals is compromised. The political will for such an initiative is, however, unfortunately not very strong.

It should thus be considered how defined change agents can side with the European Union Delegation to ASEAN as well as with influential bilateral donors to achieve some pragmatic progress. It should also be considered if a stronger regional watchdog and monitoring mechanism could make better use of the UPR process in collaboration with the Asia Office of the OHCHR.

In the region, there are several active donors, in particular countries offering bilateral assistance in priority areas like agriculture and fisheries, telecommunication, and infrastructure. Not least the large East Asia countries and China and Australia are active in this regard. The ADB, the World Bank, the UN and – not least – the European Union are also active donors in the region, but it is characteristic that only very few donors have a comprehensive regional approach such as the one Sweden has offered with its strategy for regional development collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region.

Efforts should, however, be put into raising funds from a larger group of donors for the regional programme as well as for the links to existing or upcoming national programmes. It should also be possible to raise funds from the private sector both in regard to gender equality activities (the European and US fashion industry is big in the region and some of the leading companies have CSR policies in place that should be tapped in to) and high-tech online activities at the community level (IT, internet intermediaries and the telecommunication sector).

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Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC), Philippines

Article 19, UK

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Centre for Research on Development Communication, Vietnam

Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Committee to Protect Journalists, US

Communication University of China, China

Department of Government Information, Sri Lanka

FOJO Media Institute, Sweden

Free Press Unlimited, The Netherlands

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