

## **Response to the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid from Michael Foley on behalf of the School of Media, Dublin Institute of Technology,**

This submission deals with issues relating to media development.

The School of Media has four undergraduate degree programmes in media, photography and journalism. It also has a number of Masters programme, including an MA in journalism and an MA in International Journalism. The School and some of the staff have been involved in media development and other deveopment work for mangy years and has gained considerable experience (see Appendix 1). We have also developed research capacity in the area of media development.

The School of Media at DIT has been involved in media development going back nearly two decades, both as individuals and also as a School. Much of this work has been in transitional democracies in the former Soviet world, though as individuals we have also experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. Along with this practical work, we have also produce theoretical work analysising the impact of media on democracy building and goverance. We believe it is part of our brief as a teaching and research body involved in the professional formation of journalists and other media workers to analyse media and share our views, insights and findings with a wider community. Consequently we think it appropriate to make a submission to Irish Aid

There are a number of similarities shared by the eight developing irish Aid priority countries. All suffer from extreme poverty, but also from varying degrees of corruption, lack of transparency and a lack of a free press.

Those priority countries, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Vietnam and Timor-Leste, have, in many cases, also suffered from war and political instability; they were often colonised, with all the issues that raises; they are also countries with severe problems in terms of governance.

Governance has become an issue, and rightly so. Those involved in development aid have long harboured concerns about how the aid money is spent, how much might get creamed off by corrupt officials, and is it getting to the people it is meant to be helping?

The White Paper states:

We will actively support the development of free and independent media in our partner countries as an important actor in the promotion of accountability and good governance.

One of the key issues the review of the White Paper says could usefully consider include;

Good governance and human rights – respecting human rights, preventing corruption, and improving accountability are all central to development.

We would maintain that most, if not all, of the key issues to be considered in the review of the White Paper would benefit from a consideration of media and the professionalization of its practitioners.

There are real links between poverty and bad government and also a disfunctional media. The now oft quoted comment from the Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen that: “No substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press,” or when he wrote: ‘I would argue that a free press and an active political opposition constitutes the best early warning system a country threatened by famine could have’ (Sen, 1999: 181), is now more or less accepted.

Good governance and press freedom are probably somewhat low on the emotional appeal register with it comes to a collection tin waved under someone’s nose. But if the child whose face might adorn the collection box is to get the money and the benefits it would bring, then one must take Sen’s quote and use it as the basis for examining the priority countries, to see if a pattern emerges.

All the Irish priority countries are low on Transparency International’s ranking. Transparency International ranks Zambia at 91, the best performer among Irish priority countries, The worst are Uganda and Timor Leste, both coming in at 143 in the world. For comparison Ireland comes in at 19. Transparency International ranks countries based on how well they do out of ten, where ten is least corrupt and most transparent. Ireland gets 7.5, while the Irish Aid priority countries score between 2.4 for Uganda and Timor Leste to 3.2 for Zambia.

The degree of press freedom that exists is a remarkably good indicator of the health of democracy and civil society. Ireland’s priority countries are not necessarily the world’s worst countries, and some have even shown a small improvement. However, none of the priority countries are ranked as free according to press freedom watch-dogs such as Reporters without Frontiers, Freedom House or the International Press Institute. These rankings are not without their own problems, but however one might view such ranking, there is no doubt a trend emerges.

Zambia, for instance, ranked 91, often restricts freedom of speech. The government, like so many African governments is unwilling to make information available to journalists. A proposal in a new constitution that would give access to information was rejected, as was a provision protecting media from state interference. Journalists have been harassed and the ruling party leaders have brought cases of criminal libel against journalists.

The International Press Institute has described Mozambique as “a difficult country to work in as a journalist”. Criminal libel is often used against journalists and threats of

violence, detention means news outlets practice self-censorship. Even though protection of sources is guaranteed in the constitution journalists are often harassed so the authorities can identify sources, according to the US press freedom organisation, Freedom House.

The New York based Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) found that in Ethiopia, another of Ireland's priority countries, seven journalists were being held late last year "on vague accusations of terrorism". The government has banned newspapers and self-censorship is, unsurprisingly, common. Foreign reporters have been expelled. Among the crimes journalists have been accused is genocide. Two Swedish journalists were held for reporting on separatist rebels.

The director of the CPJ, Joel Simon, in its annual publication, *Attacks on the Press*, a few years ago, said: "Democracy's foothold in Africa is shallow when it comes to press freedom."

Press freedom and other practices common in democratic countries are not luxuries to be encouraged once the problems of poverty have been over come, but are part of the process of dealing with poverty and is an important element of good governance. Journalists using professional methods and aware of their role in a democratic society can serve as a warning of things going wrong. The publication of investigative articles exposing corruption, bribery, the misappropriation of public funds, the abuse of power and fraud, can serve as eye-openers for the general public. Journalists have a vital role in uncovering inefficient public services, natural disasters, organised crime; humanitarian and financial aid that fails to reach its intended recipients, as well as perform a vital role in areas such as public health information.

Since the collapse of Communism, organisations, including the EU and the Council of Europe, have been funding journalism training and education in the former Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe, in an effort to encourage the development of democracy. If there is a link between corruption, bad government and poverty, then a vibrant press must be encouraged. If we are stop famine and corruption, lessen the effects of disasters and end poverty, maybe Irish Aid should consider funding and ensuring that those journalists in Africa who are trying to improve their own societies, have the necessary skills and support to do so.

The question, though, how is this done? In the past media development in Eastern, South Eastern, the Caucus and Central Asia has relied on training working journalists in a range of areas, from ethics, to reporting on trafficking or covering elections. Skills areas, such as radio, print or television reporting or editing have been offered by western agencies, usually employing western journalists with little or no understanding of local cultures or language, who offer something called "western journalism" or Anglo Saxon journalism. All the evidence from for the former communist countries suggests that years of training at huge expense has not worked.

...most training sessions have been too short: they have been too theoretical and general and: they have insulted the participants by revealing the visitors' total ignorance about their countries and by preaching the ABCs of journalism to experienced professionals. Ekaterina Ognianova (1995: 36):

Media development is less developed in Africa, with many programmes training people to offer development or health information using the media, the media as a simple information conduit rather than a player and contributor to good governance.

More recently there has been a deeper understanding of the links between journalist and democracy building, so the questions must be asked, how is the media in Africa to be improved so that it can provide transparency, contribute to the strengthening of democracy and the protection and promotion of human rights?

At DIT we have moved from the training model to an education model working with the journalism schools in emerging or transitional democracies, helping them change their curriculum and develop new teaching ideas and methods. In this we have developed a new model for media development, often working closely with the BBC World Service Trust, now called BBC Action, and the children's UN agency, UNICEF.

If media development failed to work in the former Communist countries it is because what was on offer was an ideal, a version of western journalism values, or as the British media academic, Colin Sparks, described it:

The Anglo Saxon model of the media is a largely imaginary construction. Like some mythological beast, it is an impossible amalgam of selected features of two incompatible systems, joined together without regard to its possibility of existence, In this case, the two parts might be characterised as the *New York Times* and the BBC— although with both presented in an idealised form. (Sparks, 1998:176)

In other words, what failed was an attempt to export something without regard to the culture or history of the countries themselves.

Working with universities in Eastern and South Eastern Europe and North Africa has also contributed to our own development as a centre for research into media development. Our MA in International Journalism incorporates material learnt from these activities, while we have developed our own research capacity up to PhD level and other research projects.

We have worked with media academics and NGOs, mainly communications officers at UNICEF Country Offices..

This model, which we pioneered by cooperating with journalism schools, would appear to have been endorsed in recent research by the Media Map Project the two- year

research project carried out by Internews and the World Bank Institute and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The international development community needs to spend less time training journalists and more time on efforts to build country level leadership for a strong and independent media as a key institution of development.

Mark Nelson and Tara Susman-Pena (2011)

The leaders we have identified are journalism and media academics and those working for NGOs, often the communications officers in Unicef, who are usually former practitioners with good contacts within the local media and journalism schools.

Universities are publicly funded bodies that are repositories of culture. They also inform the culture and interpret it. If journalism is about certain values, of truth, accuracy, verification and also involved in story telling and informing public opinion, the inculcation of those values should take place within an intellectual context that will allow a new journalistic voice to emerge within the parameters of those values. Western journalism schools can provide one side of the partnership, teaching skills, curriculum development and contacts, universities as public trustees can ensure the specific cultural relevance of international initiatives with journalism education acting as part of a broader process of educational and cultural exchange.

Unlike the training model of media development what we are proposing is long term but, we believe, more sustainable. This long term view of media development is also increasingly being borne out by organisations such as BBC Action (formerly BBC World Service Trust) and Unicef. As the quote above from the Media Map project shows there is increasing awareness that media development is a long term project that must involve those who understand the context both cultural and commercial and also the impact of technology is having on media. While there is a role for short term training that should be done in the context of retraining and up-skilling journalists who have already been educated as to the role journalism should play.

If Irish Aid is interested in extending its involvement in media development, we at DIT's School of Media would be delighted to share our experience, research and expertise in whatever way is appropriate.

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Reference

Ognianova, Ekaterina (1995) Farewell to Parachute Professors in East-Central Europe, *Journal of Mass Communications Education*, Spring Vol 50 No 1 pp 35-47.

Mark Nelson and Tara Susman-Pena (2011) A Report on the Media Map Project p5 <http://www.mediamapresource.org/research-and-resources/> (access 16/3/2012).

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom* Oxford.

Sparks, C. (1998) *Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media*, London, Sage.

## **Appendix One**

Media development has been an important part of democracy building as well as development education for the past two decades and we at DIT's School of Media have been involved in it since the 1990s.

In time we have developed an expertise in working with the journalism schools in emerging or transitional democracies, helping them change their curriculum and develop new teaching ideas and methods. In this we have developed a new model for media development, often working closely with the BBC World Service Trust, now called BBC Action, and the children's UN agency, UNICEF.

Working with universities in Eastern and South Eastern Europe and North Africa has also contributed to our own development as a centre for research into media development. Our MA in International Journalism incorporates material learnt from these activities, while we have developed our own research capacity up to PhD level and other research projects.

We have worked with media academics and NGOs, mainly communications officers at UNICEF Country Offices..

### **Projects:**

1995 With the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). Perm, Russia, seminars for journalists on the European Convention of Human Rights and journalism. Report on state

of journalism in the region completed for the IFJ.

1996 With the IFJ. Monitoring media during the first Palestinian Authority elections and gave classes in election coverage to Palestinian journalists.

1996 Reports on women in conflict and on the role of Radio Kwizera in refugee camps in Tanzania.

1997 with IREX/Pro Media. Minsk, Belarus. Course in basic journalism. Consulted with the Belarus Association of Journalists. Report compiled on the future training needs.

1997 and 1998 with IREX/Pro Media. Zagreb, Croatia. Consultant to the Croatian Journalists Association on ethics and professional practice to young journalists.

1999-2000 for EU TACIS project for Belarus and Ukraine with the Institute of European Affairs, Dublin and the Europäische Akademie Berlin. Journalism Training Initiative. Book on journalism training completed and launched at European Commission, Brussels.

2001-2002 For the IFJ. Consultancy for the Journalist Association of Macedonia, Formulated a code of conduct.

2004-5 School of Media was a partner with the BBC WST, on an EU Phare project, Technical Assistance for Improving the Professional Standards of Journalism, Bulgaria. The School of Media at DIT supplied the Key International Expert for the Curriculum Development component, as well as a number of other experts. We also organised seminars in Dublin and London for academic colleagues from Bulgaria. This project was centred at the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Sofia University, with whom we developed strong links to this day.

2005-6 Partnered with the BBC World Service Trust, IREX Europe and others in an EU TACIS funded project on Curriculum reform at the Institute of Journalism, Taras Schevchenko University, Kiev, Ukraine, and two other Ukrainian universities. This project utilised the model we developed for the previous Bulgarian project, a model the BBC WST/ BBC Action has used elsewhere.

2006 Consultancy for BBC WST to prepare a report on curriculum reform at the L'Institute de l'Information et de la Communication ( ISIC), Rabat, Morocco.

2008 to present. With colleagues from DIT's Centre for Social and Educational Research (CSER) the School of Media was commissioned by UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) to develop a syllabus for journalism and professional communications departments in CEE/CIS on the subject of Journalism and Children's Rights. The outcome was *Children's Rights and Journalism Practice - a Rights Based Perspective*. This includes a text book for students, teachers material, a web site and a training for professors programme. The English language version can be found here:

<http://elearning-events.dit.ie/unicef/index.htm>

or

[http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/resources\\_18244.html](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/resources_18244.html)

To date the School of Media has trained academic staff in the universities listed. Training has been given at a number of seminars at central locations, including Dublin. This training has included embedding child rights into journalism, as well as teaching methodologies and assessment. This project is ongoing.

### **Turkey**

Istanbul University  
Galatasaray University  
Gazi University  
Ankara University  
Anadolu University  
Bilgi University  
Istanbul Aydin University

### **Georgia**

Media Diversity Institute  
Media Council  
Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management  
BA and MA programmes in Journalism, Faculty of Journalism, Tbilisi State University  
Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development

### **FYR of Macedonia**

The Law Faculty, University "St. Kiril and Metodij", Skopje  
Interdisciplinary Studies of Journalism at the Law Faculty, University "St. Kiril and Metodij", Skopje

### **Serbia**

Faculty of Political Sciences, Belgrade State University

### **Montenegro**

Faculty of Political Sciences, Montenegro State University

### **Azerbaijan**

Baku State University  
Baku Slavic University  
Khazar University

### **Kyrgyzstan**

Journalism Department, Kyrgyz National University  
Kyrgyz Russian Slavic University

UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa has indicated an interest in implementing the curriculum. DIT worked with a Portuguese academic colleague in Mozambique.



Many of these projects have included conferences in Dublin, liaising with agencies, research and a commitment from all staff and even students.

We believe a cultural affinity exists between post-colonial countries and that there are close ties between Ireland and Africa. When we co-operate with academic and journalistic colleagues internationally we bring both our journalism experience, in print, broadcasting and online, as well as academic expertise in law, ethics, history, media studies, sociology and understanding of curriculum design. What our colleagues in the host countries contribute is a cultural understanding of the media needs of their own country and how what we can offer can be interpreted for their culture, so that their students and graduates learn to tell stories that resonate with their audience.

### **Our staff**

Harry Browne, BA (Harvard), MA (Columbia), formerly a journalist at the Irish Times, has researched migration-related topics in Europe and the United States. A lecturer specialising in journalism practice, political communications and the history of the press. He is a contributor to publications and websites in Ireland and beyond.

Tom Clonan, PhD, a retired Irish Army captain and lecturer in communications, has considerable experience in the Balkans and the Middle East. He is a regular media contributor on issues relating to conflict and security.

Michael Foley, BA, MPhil, has worked in media education and training in Eastern and South Eastern Europe since the 1990s, as well as North Africa and the Middle East and has completed research into media development. He worked as reporter at *The Irish Times* newspaper and continues to contribute to that newspaper

Ian Kilroy: MA in English; MA in Journalism. He lectures in investigative reporting, news reporting and narrative journalism. Former Arts Editor at the *Irish Examiner*, he also reported for *The Irish Times*, covering American politics.

Brian O'Neill, PhD, is an expert on media literacy and global digital safety initiatives. He has worked on the UNICEF project below as well as the Bulgarian and Ukrainian projects. He is also a member of the IAMCR International Council.

Kate Shanahan, BA, MPhil, is a journalist and radio and television producer. She teaches journalism practice, TV and on-line journalism. She is currently working on a national children's news website with content supplied by journalism students.

Barbara O'Shea BA, Masters Development Studies, LLM International Human Rights Law, has worked in development and democratisation programmes in Cambodia, South Africa, Bosnia and the Palestinian Occupied Territories. As a radio producer she travelled to Africa, Asia and South America reporting on development issues. She produced the RTE radio programme on development issues, *Worlds Apart*.

