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A Draft Discussion Paper:
International Support to Media Development:
Context, Evidence, Challenges and Possible Strategic Principles

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A DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER

**International Support to Media Development:
Context, Evidence, Challenges and Possible Strategic Principles**

Prepared jointly by the World Bank's Communication for Governance and Accountability Programme (CommGAP) and the BBC World Service Trust

"If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter".

Thomas Jefferson

CONTEXT

1.   For much of modern democratic history, media has been considered one of the most powerful agents of democratic accountability. It receives special protection within most democratic constitutions expressly because an informed citizenry and a fourth estate capable of acting as a check on executive power are considered to be critical to good governance. Within the context of aid effectiveness and democratic governance agendas, few question the importance of a free, professional and plural media in contributing to good governance. In fact, extensive empirical research has demonstrated the connection between a free press and good governance. Despite this, several surveys suggest the issue languishes low in terms of governance priorities within development agencies[1].

2.   The purpose of support to media within democratic governance varies significantly across agencies. For some, it is explicitly focused on (and results therefore measured against) enhancing domestic accountability, improving service delivery, mitigating risks of violence (e.g. around elections) and other governance objectives. For others, it is shaped by a broader set of goals designed to promote political freedom, human rights and democracy. For most, a combination of objectives is apparent. Theoretical framings for support to the media also vary widely and cut across economic, political, sociological, anthropological and other disciplines (see for example, Box 1).

3.   Few OECD DAC members outside the US have specialised staff working on support to media[2] and media support is not generally mainstreamed. Responsibility for support can often sit within public relations or external communication departments rather than democratic governance units. While many DAC members have indicated that the issue should be a priority for domestic accountability, they also acknowledge a lack of analysis, capacity and resources to effectively support media as an accountability mechanism.

4.   Media assistance lacks integration into a broader policy agenda on governance and public sector reform. The role of the media in a country clearly situates it as an actor on the political stage. Nevertheless, many media interventions are localized and short-term, without being embedded in a broader governance framework. Media cannot fulfil their democratic roles if they are not embedded in an enabling regulatory environment and a culture of transparency.

5.   Media support is becoming a more professional and clearly defined sector and community of practice with the recent development of sector networks such as the Global Forum for Media

Development and the Communication Initiative. Total funding to media support appears to be increasing, but support to the sector within agencies may not be institutionalized or integrated into an overarching policy structure,[3] and may therefore not be efficiently utilized. Learning mechanisms tend not to be well developed within or across agencies, and research capable of guiding agency responses in this area tends to be sparse and poorly aggregated.[4]

6. There appears to be increasing demand for better guidance of which media support strategies are most effective in which contexts, what advantages and disadvantages media support has compared to other accountability mechanisms, and how and when development agencies can best support this field. This paper outlines some of the evidence base supporting arguments that media is an effective accountability mechanism and suggests some principles that may be useful to guide support in the future.

Box 1: Political accountability and informational deficiencies

"The idea of political accountability has been at the center of the development debate in recent years. The hope is that once democratic institutions reflect the will of the majority, effective development policies focusing on the poor will be implemented. Economic theory supports these beliefs. Becker (1983) shows that when political competition is fully secured, efficient policies will arise. Yet developing democratic institutions that depend on the will of the general population has been particularly difficult to achieve in many countries. These problems have often been linked to information deficiencies, i.e. voters' unresponsiveness to policies (e.g. Grossman and Helpman, 1996) in theory; media shortcomings (Besley and Burgess, 2002) and lack of accountable local institutions (Bjorkman and Svensson, 2009) in practice."

Extract from "Is information power? Jenny C. Aker; Paul Collier; Pedro Vicente

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Media, domestic accountability, and the role of development assistance

7. The GOVNET work stream of OECD DAC has selected media, alongside support to parliaments and political parties, as one of three key strands requiring greater clarity and focus in support to domestic accountability. As investment grows in other domestic accountability initiatives (many of which – such as budget monitoring, access to information, aid transparency – are informational in character), a key challenge is to inject more productive linkages with efforts supporting the domestic accountability role of the media.

8. Media development promotes voice, accountability and transparency through support to free and plural media. It is a broad field ranging from support to strengthen the political independence and economic sustainability of media to support to media interventions designed to enhance democratic practices. The former includes professional capacity building, support to enabling regulatory structures and protection of journalistic freedom. Assistance for media, social media and other communication related interventions designed to enhance democratic participation, political accountability and informed publics include support to media around elections, public debate initiatives and the provision of public platforms for people living in poverty or other marginalized groups, including young people, to have their voices heard.

9. Support to media in this context also encompasses strategies designed to respond to both the opportunities and challenges presented by increased global access to digital technologies. Such

strategies range from those rooted in recognition of the transformative democratic potential of new technologies (evidenced most dramatically and recently in Arab Spring revolutions early in 2011) through to those designed to counteract the causes and effects of increased incidences of the use of media and communication, including new communication technologies, to exacerbate tension and hate, especially in fragile settings.

10. Monitoring and evaluation of media support interventions has historically been considered weak in this sector, but the sector has become increasingly professional in recent years and impact assessment methodologies have become increasingly sophisticated and effective[5]. However, new evidence suggests that donors overall have not sufficiently used findings from evaluations to inform their strategies for support to the media.

11. Media is a domestic accountability mechanism, but is clearly just one of many. Uniquely, it has the ability to dramatically enhance the visibility and effectiveness of other accountability mechanisms within society.[6] An example of the enhancing effect of media coverage is presented in Box 2.

Box 2: Using Media to Enhance Accountability Mechanisms

Federico Ferraz and Claudio Finan report on the effects of media exposure of corrupt politicians in Brazil. As part of an anti-corruption program, Brazil's federal government audited the expenditure of federal funds by randomly selected municipalities. Results of these audits were made publicly available and covered by the media. The researchers found that citizens used this information to punish politicians that were performing badly. This effect was more pronounced in areas where local media disseminated the audit results.

Source: Ferraz, Federico and Claudio Finan. 2008."Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effects of Brazil's Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes." *Quarterly Journal of Economics 123(2): 703-45.*

EVIDENCE

Politics and corruption

12. A substantial literature exists in economics, political science, communication research and other disciplines supporting the impact of media on accountability (see, for example, Box 3). Media has been shown to play a role for fighting both systemic and petty corruption. Media coverage of corruption can lead to investigations, trials, resignations, and government policies. It can also influence the social climate in a society toward more openness and less tolerance for corrupt behaviour.[7]

13. Journalists in free media systems have fewer constraints on their reporting and more incentives to actively investigate the misconduct of public officials. This is reflected in empirical evidence showing that countries that score high on the Press Freedom World Wide Index or have a high penetration with ICT and high newspaper circulation also score lower on international corruption indices[8]. Evidence also shows the causal direction of this relationship: more press freedom leads to less corruption, there is no evidence that more corruption leads to less press freedom.[9]

14. On a project level, studies have shown that citizens use media as channel for accountability to monitor the delivery of public services. Once a grievance is made public, public outrage and increased public monitoring will motivate public authorities to correct these grievances. Media

coverage has been shown to level prices for school lunches[10], increase the portion of public funding that actually reached the intended programs[11], and curb corruption in public sectors[12]. By using adequate statistical controls, these studies were able to ascertain that media was indeed the main factor contributing to improved domestic accountability.

Box 3: The power of media as measured by the corrupt

"Which of the democratic checks and balances – opposition parties, the judiciary, a free press – is the most forceful? Peru has the full set of democratic institutions. In the 1990s, the secret-police chief Montesinos systematically undermined them all with bribes. We quantify the checks using the bribe prices. Montesinos paid television-channel owners about 100 times what he paid judges and politicians. One single television channel's bribe was five times larger than the total of the opposition politicians' bribes. By revealed preference, the strongest check on the government's power was the news media."

Jonathan McMillan and Pablo Zoido, 'How to subvert democracy: Montesinos in Peru', Journal of Economic Perspectives, Fall 2004

Service delivery

15.   Most governance actors acknowledge that citizens need information about public services if they are to hold government accountable for their provision. Access to information movements, budget monitoring initiatives and aid transparency efforts are just some initiatives that have focused on enhancing accountability by ensuring that citizens have better access to information on the services or initiatives that are designed to benefit them.

16.   Politicians have been shown to be more responsive to citizen needs if citizens have access to information on political decisions. This effect is particularly strong in clearly defined media markets, where elected officials tend to act more in the interest of their constituents, attend more committee hearings, and cast their vote less frequently according to their party's agenda[13].

17.   Media improve domestic accountability by putting issues that directly concern the interests of citizens and public institutions on both public and political agendas. The watchdog role of the media is increasingly also exercised by other sectors in society (civil society, citizens through enhanced access to information). The effectiveness of media as an accountability mechanism relies substantially on its capacity to take accountability relationships to scale and translate localised issues into large scale and often national public discourse. This forces governments to take note of and respond to these interests. The relationship between a free media and government responsiveness has been demonstrated with regard to public spending on education and health[14], prevention of famine and public food distribution[15] and relief spending[16].

Political participation

18. The relationship between politics, media and interpersonal communication is complex and has been substantially researched over several decades. Early evidence indicated a particularly significant role for radio in providing a critical platform for political debate and informing the electorate as well as having an impact on government resource allocation and responsiveness.

19. More recently, there has been substantial research conducted on the impact of media on political participation in developing economies. Findings are consistent with earlier studies: in a wide variety of contexts, media has a key role to play in informing individuals; providing an inclusive and critical platform for public dialogue and debate; stimulating interpersonal communication and ultimately, policy-making that benefits a greater number of people.[17] Research has also shown that the larger the share of uninformed voters in the electorate, the higher the likelihood that politicians will manipulate policies to increase their chances to get re-elected, even of those policies are not in the public's interest in the long term[18].

20. There is a particularly strong body of evidence that considers the role of the media in elections. Evidence from both developed and less developed countries has shown that people exposed to and engaging with high quality media that cover political issues are better informed, more civically engaged and more likely to vote.[19]

IS STRATEGY KEEPING PACE WITH FUNDING?

21. Support to media appears to be increasingly seen as an investment worth making by democratic governance actors. While the US continues to expend most resources in this area within the DAC, non-US actors also appear to be increasing their support to the sector. The US Department of State and US Agency for International Development (USAid) have spent more than half a billion dollars on media development in the past five years. Their combined budgets for 2010 saw $140.7 million allocated to media support, representing a 36% increase over 2009 spending and an even more dramatic rise from the 68.9 million spent five years earlier.[20] This does not include the greater amounts of funding dedicated to using communication to advance development objectives (e.g., around health care).

22. Figures for expenditure on media support outside of the US are available, though comparative figures are not available for 2010. OECD reporting from 2005 through to 2007, however, indicated an increase in donor assistance to the media sector – up from $USD 47.9 million to $USD 81.7 million over two years[21]. While consolidated figures are not available, EU mechanisms also provide considerable financial support to media. Some draft estimates, taken from a forthcoming report commissioned by the National Endowment for Democracy Center for International Media Assistance report can be found in Figure 1[22].

Figure 1: Non-US media assistance in 2009/2010

Media Assistance by Selected non US Bilateral Donors 2009/2010 estimates in $US millions
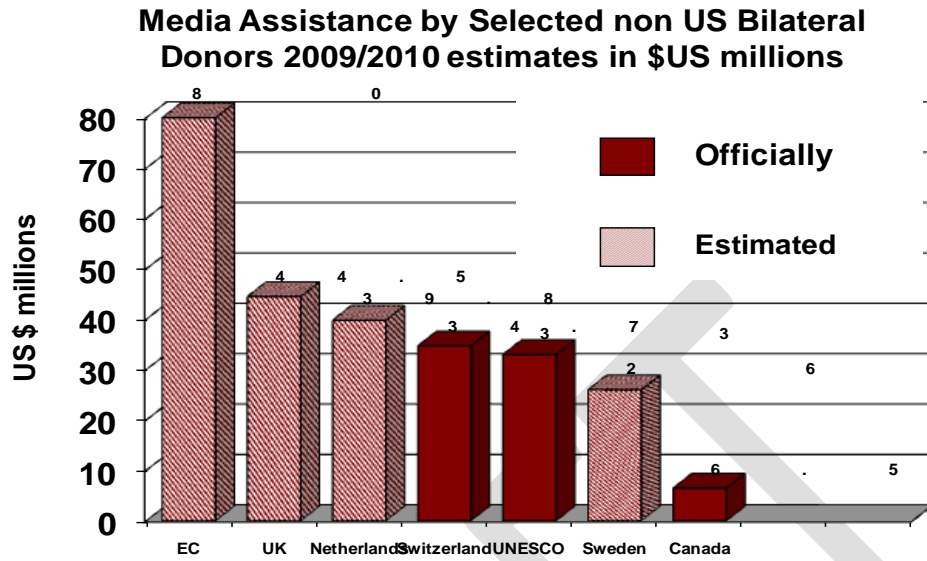
23. Despite this substantial level of investment, there are few institutional focal points within key donor organisations attempting to make sense of media's role in development, let alone as an accountability mechanism. The lack of a clear institutional home within the development or governance system may undermine efforts to better understand, measure, and strengthen the role of media as a domestic accountability mechanism.

24. The importance of media as a governance issue is differently recognised among governance actors, prioritisation of support to it varies greatly and the objectives of what that support is designed to achieve also tend to diverge. As a consequence, there is a lack of a clearly agreed strategic framework within which media support can be easily positioned. UNESCO has sought to develop a set of media development indicators[23] designed to address this issue, but it is unclear how widely these have been adopted by democratic governance actors.

25. Media assistance is often initiated by international donors without close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders in developing countries. However, development experience shows that development effectiveness depends on domestic ownership. At this point, donors often fail to engage in coalition-building with national government and relevant non-governmental actors to support media development.

26. A principal conclusion of a meeting held at Wilton Park prior to this GOVNET was that, while spending on media appears to be increasing across the democratic governance community, and while media's importance in shaping democratic governance outcomes is increasingly acknowledged, strategic thinking, learning systems and lack of agency capacity substantially inhibit the effectiveness of support in this area. Recommendations and principles from the Wilton Park meeting can be found below.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRINCIPLES FROM WILTON PARK MEETING ON MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

27.   In preparation for the OECD DAC GOVNET meeting on media and domestic accountability, a Wilton Park conference on *Media, Social Media and Democratic Governance* was held in May 2011. Its conclusions and recommendations were as follows:

28.   A series of <u>assertions</u> can be made about the growing importance of media and social media in shaping democratic and governance outcomes. Democratic governance systems the world over are being rebalanced in favour of the citizen and that rebalancing is being substantially – often principally – driven by changes in access to information and communication. Recent events in the Middle East have illustrated the scale and rapidity of this rebalancing, but the democratic impacts of enhanced access to independent media and to communication technologies are apparent in many settings, including in some of the poorest and most fragile countries. These changes have profound implications for accountability, state citizen relationships, democratic vitality and sustainability, national identities, conflict and stability. More fundamentally, a development paradigm that has been largely preoccupied in recent years with building the capacity of the state to provide services for citizens is being challenged by political increasingly shaped by information empowered citizens. These changes are not well captured or reflected in current governance analysis, research or strategies. They have implications for media, social media and those who work with them; for civil society, and for donors supporting democratic governance strategies.

<u>Implications for media and social media support organisations</u>

29.   *Domestic accountability implications for media, social media support strategies:* Media and social media are part of a growing, increasingly complex set of accountability relationships and movements. The role of media as a fourth estate is being increasingly complemented by civil society actors, access to information social movements and other citizen based or development driven accountability efforts. Intelligent and appropriate strategic linkages need to be developed across these accountability actors to include the media. Media and social media dynamics have much to offer but need to be better integrated into open development, open government and other open data based accountability movements.

30.   *Regulation in the context of democratic governance*: In particular, regulatory and legal information systems need to be more holistically developed in the context of democratic governance. Such systems need to intelligently encompass access to information, freedom of expression, freedom of association and other shared concerns in ways that are capable of being relevant to the full range of media and communication drivers, ranging from mobile telephony and social media to different forms of traditional media (community, commercial, public service, international). There is also an acknowledgement that media and social media can be used to control, foster tension and incite hate and that countering hate media, particularly within the context of state fragility, needs to be an increasing priority.

31.   Market forces provide strong incentives for media to play a strong domestic accountability role, but <u>market failure</u> is also substantial and arguably growing, particularly in relation to the accountability needs of people living in poverty. Donors have a continuing and important role to play where such market failure exists.

32. Media support is an increasingly professional and clearly identifiable sector. There is no clear corresponding sectoral response within donor and governance agencies.

33. Different donors have different <u>objectives</u> for supporting media. Some donors are focused on supporting media as a sector and measure success by the political independence, financial sustainability and professionalism of media actors. Others focus on more specific governance outcomes such as enhancing accountability (citizen engagement, mitigating conflict, enhancing accountability). Media support organisations need to recognise this and donors need to be clearer about what expectations they have of support to media. Greater dialogue and learning is required between different donors in this area.

Implications for Civil Society and Accountability Movements

34. Media is not just a tool to be used or an ally to be recruited – it remains a powerful accountability force in its own right. Its effectiveness is substantially rooted in the power of public discourse at scale, the capacity to place accountability relationships and issues on public platforms in ways that engage the attention of often millions of citizens. There is insufficient strategic linkage between media, social media and other accountability movements.

Implications for donors

35. Increasing funding for media support is not the principal concern of those focused on support to media, however much that may be needed. It is instead enhancing the strategic coherence and impact of support that is already being provided. Given the lack of capacity within and across the donor and development community, the most critical issue is achieving greater clarity of strategy, institutional learning systems, capacity to connect different areas where information and communication are shaping democratic governance outcomes.

36. A diversity of governance and donor approaches needs to be acknowledged, some of which focus specifically on supporting media as a policy objective in its own right as part of supporting democratic and political freedom, and some integrating media and social media issues into broader governance frameworks focused on achieving governance outcomes (e.g. improved service delivery). These objectives are complementary but could usefully be articulated more clearly by donors.

PRINCIPLES

37. Redesign regulatory and legal structures bringing together traditional media freedom and freedom of information with new social movement concerns of access to information, open government, open development, budget monitoring, aid transparency initiatives.

38. Media needs to be better linked and integrated into overarching accountability measures, but not only as an outreach tool. Social media and media unleash the power of public discourse and of public space.

39. Clarify and articulate how media support is being mainstreamed into democratic governance strategies, including risk analyses, governance assessments, drivers of change studies, poverty analysis.

40. Root strategies in the realities of people's lives. The degree to which people access, use and trust information, and how they communicate, is increasingly shaping social, economic and political outcomes. Better understanding of people's information and communication realities and how agencies can best respond and meet them is needed. This means ensuring that interventions are appropriate to country context. They need to be developed based on a thorough understanding of the context – i.e., through political economy analysis and other assessment tools.

41. Do no harm. Investment in media is critical, but investment in media without understanding what works and what does not work can cause harm.

42. Be cautious in instrumentalising the media, and especially in supporting strategies that potentially undermine independence. In particular, the practice of buying up air time by agencies or those they fund needs to be treated with caution.

43. Work with the market (creating conditions for independent, sustainable, professional media) but also identify and help address major problems caused by market failure.

44. Coherence is a problem that needs to be solved, especially at country level. Better systems need to be developed for who is doing what with what purpose and with what effect.

45. As with most development strategies, long term engagement is key to achieving lasting impact, but this needs to be matched with the capacity to understand and react to very fast moving information and communication environments.

46. Learn about and harness new technologies. Internet and mobile-focused support is not appropriate in all contexts. Needs analyses must properly assess media and communications environments to determine the most appropriate media platforms for supporting accountability. Where interventions do focus on new technologies, research should be incorporated to build a body of policy-relevant evidence to guide subsequent support.

NOTES

[1] See BBC World Service Trust. 2009. *Governance and the Media: A survey of policy opinion* (http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/governance_media_survey_April09.pdf). Interviews with a range of governance professionals revealed widespread acknowledgement "*that media is not yet receiving sufficient attention from the development community, despite a growing perception of its growing importance as an issue. There is an 'engagement gap' between the value assigned to its role by policymakers and the practical provision made for it in development planning, thinking and spending.*"

[2] Only the US, Sweden and Norway have staff specifically focused on media support as part of democratic governance among OECD DAC bilateral agencies.

[3] It is notable that the most recent and perhaps most useful published analysis of European spending on support to media was commissioned from the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States.

[4] For one of the few comprehensive and systematic overviews over relevant research and evidence see: Pippa Norris. 2010. *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.

[5] National Endowment for Democracy Center for International Media Assistance. 2010. *Good but How Good? Monitoring and Evaluation of Media Assistance Projects* (http://cima.ned.org/sites/default/files/CIMA-Monitoring_and_Evaluation-Report.pdf).

[6] According to the World Bank Social Accountability Sourcebook, "a common element of almost all successful social accountability initiatives is the strategic use of and support to both traditional and modern forms of media." (*World Bank: Social Accountability Sourcebook*, chapter 2, p. 21) (http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/PrintVersions/Conceptual%2006.22.07.pdf)

[7] There are numerous examples of evidence of impact from projects supported by media assistance organisations. Evidence in this paper is drawn from the broader research literature rather than the voluminous organisational reports. A main source for evidence is Pippa Norris. 2010. *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.

[8] Rick Stapenhurst. 2000. *The Media's Role in Curbing Corruption.* Washington, DC: World Bank Institute (http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pdf/media.pdf); Aymo Brunetti and Beatrice Weder. 2003. "A Free Press Is Bad News for Corruption." *Journal of Public Economics* 87 (7–8): 1801–24. Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay. 2006. "Knowledge-Driven Economic Development." Department of Economics Discussion Paper Series 267, University of Oxford (http://www.economics.ox.ac.uk/Research/wp/pdf/paper267.pdf).

[9] Rudiger Ahrend. 2002. "Press Freedom, Human Capital and Corruption". DELTA Working Paper No. 2002-11 (http://ssrn.com/abstract=620102) (p. 17).

[10] World Bank. 2002. *World Development Report*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

[11] Ritva Reinikka and Jakob Svensson. 2005. "Fighting Corruption to Improve Schooling: Evidence from a Newspaper Campaign in Uganda." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 3(2–3): 259–67.

[12] Nathalie Franken, Bart Minten, and Johan Swinnen. 2005. "The Impact of Media and Monitoring on Corruption in Decentralized Public Programs: Evidence from Madagascar." LICOS Centre for Institutions and Economic Performance Discussion Paper 155/2005, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium (http://www.econ.kuleuven.be/licos/DP/DP2005/DP155.pdf).

[13] James M. Snyder Jr. and David Strömberg. 2008. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability". NBER Working Paper No. W13878 (http://ssrn.com/abstract=1106604).

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[15] Amartya Sen. 1981. *Poverty and Famines.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Timothy Besley and Robin Burgess. 2002. "The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117(4): 1415–51.

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[17] James M. Snyder, Jr and David Strömberg. 2004. "Media Markets' Impact on Politics." Working Paper (http://americandemocracy.nd.edu/speaker_series/files/SnyderPaper.pdf). Peter T. Leeson. 2008. "Media Freedom, Political Knowledge, and Participation." *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 22(2): 155–69. Alessandro Olper and Johan F. M. Swinnen. 2009. "Mass Media and Public Policy: Global Evidence from Agricultural Policies." Paper prepared for presentation at the *International Association of Agricultural Economists Conference,* Beijing, China, August 16-22, 2009 (http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/51694/2/Olper-Swinnen%20IAAE%2009_2.pdf).

[18] Shi, M. and Svensson, J., 2002, "Conditional Political Budget Cycles," CEPR Discussion Paper No. 3352.

[19] Claes H. de Vreese and Hajo Boomgaarden. 2006. "News, Political Knowledge and Participation: The Differential Effects of News Media Exposure on Political Knowledge and Participation." *Acta Politica*, 41: 317–41. Jenny C. Aker, Paul Collier and Pedro C. Vicente. 2010. "Is Information Power? Using Cell Phones during an Election in Mozambique." Draft research report, November 2010 (http://www.pedrovicente.org/cell.pdf). Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter. 1996. What Americans Don't Know About Politics and Why it Matters. New Haven: Yale University Press; and many others.

[20] 'U.S. Government Funding for Media Development', *A Special Report to the Center for International Media Assistance* (http://cima.ned.org/sites/default/files/CIMA-U.S._Government_Funding_for_Media_Development-Report_0.pdf).

[21] These figures are indicative only: it is not clear what form communications spending or spending specifically earmarked as ODA for radio, television and print media actually takes, and there is no clear OECD definition of this area of support. Source: Funding for Media Development by Major Donors Outside the United States (http://cima.ned.org/sites/default/files/CIMA-Non-US_Funding_of_Media_Development.pdf).

[22] Data provided by Mary Myers, please treat as draft.

[23] Unesco. 2008. Media Development Indicators (http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=26032&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).