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MOHANNAD MERGHANI/BBC MEDIA ACTION

COUNTRY CASE STUDY: **SOUTH SUDAN**

Support to media where
media freedoms and rights
are constrained

▶ Executive summary

Front cover

A presenter reads the news at a radio station Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western South Sudan.

In 2011 South Sudan came into being as the world's newest nation. After more than 20 years of war, an overwhelming vote for separation from the North has given the South Sudanese the opportunity to fully govern themselves for the first time. But the vote for independence was only the beginning: the Government and people of South Sudan now face the tremendous challenge of building their new nation out of a fragile and fractured state, and combating the ethnic, religious, gender and cultural rifts that divide the country.

The people of South Sudan expect change – and quickly. There is a clear hunger from all parts of the country for information on how – and whether – this change is happening, on how to engage with development issues, and on ways to enable ordinary people to exercise their new rights as citizens of an independent state. Progress on development tops a long list of expectations that people have of their Government. But there is a gulf between these expectations and the realistic future of South Sudan: many people believe, for example, that an independent South Sudan will resemble Kenya in 10 years' time – a goal that is simply unachievable.¹

Failure to deliver on these expectations could generate a backlash against the Government of South Sudan (GoSS). Recent history has been characterised by the quest for independence, which has acted as a unifying force. But, post-independence, deep tribal divides continue to drive conflict and fracture society.

An inclusive national conversation that connects decision-makers and ordinary people and helps to shape

■ ■ The entire media sector continues to need long-term support from donors in both financial and political terms, such as strong advocacy for media laws and protests about the widespread intimidation, detention and mistreatment of journalists. ■ ■

a realistic vision of South Sudan's future is critical to averting possible backlash and to ensuring accountable governance and development. Such a conversation also has a key role to play in mitigating and managing conflict by supporting interaction between groups and across fracture points within society.

South Sudan is, however, a vast country. There are few opportunities for face-to-face interaction between ordinary people and the Federal Government and, in many ways, the media is the sole avenue for a much-needed national conversation.

Radio is a preferred and trusted source of information and communication, with an estimated three quarters of the population listening to radio each day. While only a few organisations have been able to invest in and conduct substantial research on these issues, research from BBC Media Action, Internews, International Media Support (IMS) and the National Democratic Institute all point to the role media can and should play in society – particularly in relation to governance – among South Sudanese from all walks of life. However, the media

sector is new and, in general, lacks the confidence and the experience needed to effectively support an inclusive and effective national conversation. The state broadcaster provides the country's only television station, as well as 10 state radio stations. Several national radio stations exist, including the UN-supported Radio Miraya and the USAID-supported Sudan Radio Service as well as the state-run networks. Around 20 private and community FM stations serve parts of the country. A handful of newspapers cater largely for Juba, the new capital of the country.² Internet penetration is limited, but online channels played a galvanising and politically influential role throughout the path to independence.

The country's most popular – and perhaps the most politically robust – broadcaster is Radio Miraya, a project of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, managed by Fondation Hironelle and drawing much of its strength from its attachment to the UN Mission. Both the NGO Internews and the Catholic Radio Network have community stations across the country, often broadcasting in local languages to rural communities. South Sudan's state radio and television is also scheduled to transition to a public service broadcaster, although it is unclear how this will happen, how the process will be supported and what sources of funding are available to undertake work on the grand scale proposed by the Ministry of Information.³ The entire media sector continues to need long-term support from donors in both financial and political terms, such as strong advocacy for media laws and protests about the widespread intimidation, detention and mistreatment of journalists.

South Sudan is hugely reliant on – and one of the biggest recipients of – development assistance. Media sits oddly within this picture. On the one hand, there has been substantial investment in media. Figures obtained as part of this research estimated a total spend on media support in excess of \$13 million in 2009.⁴ On the other hand, support is uncoordinated and has occurred largely outside the substantial harmonisation efforts that underpin development assistance in South Sudan. To date, individual and divergent donor priorities have shaped South Sudan's emerging media sector and its people's access to information.

Research conducted as part of this case study explored these issues, particularly in relation to the potential and actual role of media in supporting public dialogue and freedom of expression in South Sudan, and with a particular focus on how donors are supporting this role.

Key themes emerging from this research do not constitute a set of recommendations, but provide a snap-shot of current challenges that could underpin strategy and policy development in relation to media support in South Sudan:

- **Ensure media support meets the needs of people:** There is considerable scope for under-funded and under-skilled community and state radio stations to better serve the information and communication needs of people outside Juba. The



Left
A journalist conducts an interview in rural South Kordofan, in the south of the country.

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current focus of GoSS is on equipping and upgrading the skills of the state broadcaster and there has been substantial donor investment in national media. But is this adequate to meet the information and communication needs of the South Sudanese?

- **Consider alternative ways to harmonise support:** Substantial harmonisation efforts have failed to bring media support into the fold, with most media support delivered outside these arrangements. Concerns about a lack of coherence remain, with no clear mechanism to address this.
- **Consider the role of communication in peace-building:** Media and communication have huge potential to support a peaceful transition to self-governance. The sheer distance and disconnect between seats of government and rural communities is a major communication challenge, and the media is perhaps the only instrument that can reach and connect both.
- **Ensure plans are sufficiently long-term to support change:** Expectations of South Sudan's peace dividend are high. But breaking a decades-long cycle of conflict and tackling the raft of development challenges facing the country must be considered long-term goals, with appropriate support throughout.
- **Invest in research, and consider pooling resources where possible:** Conducting large-scale research in South Sudan is expensive and logistically problematic. Opportunities for joint research should be examined and where appropriate, pursued.

Background and methodology

This report is one of a series of case studies examining support to, and development of, the media in countries where media freedoms and rights to information and communication are restricted – with a particular focus on people, politics and media. Five case studies focus on Bangladesh, Cambodia, South Sudan, Syria and Uganda. They consider the impact of both policy and practice, and are intended to feed into decision-making at both levels to enable delivery of more focused and effective media support.

Three central questions guided case study research:

- What is the state of media freedom and public dialogue in the country?
- Who is supporting the media (i.e. donors and international civil society organisations) and how?
- What has been the impact of this support?

Studies draw on substantial desk research and in-depth interviews conducted over a period of up to nine months. Semi-structured interviews with key media and development stakeholders gathered information on a variety of approaches to, and expectations of, media support. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and in-country where possible.

The South Sudan case study interviewed 20 organisational representatives and independent consultants, including from local and international civil society organisations, donors, media outlets and officials of the Government of South Sudan.



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▶ The country context

Independence: a bloody 60 years in the making

The South's independence movement dates back to 1955, following the declaration of Sudan's independence from Britain and Egypt. Close ties between Sudan and Egypt, and Egypt's central involvement in independence negotiations, sparked fears among Southerners that the predominantly Arab and Islamic North would seek to dominate the more diverse South. In contrast with the North, the South is mixed, both ethnically and linguistically, with more than 50 tribal groups and as many languages or dialects. South Sudanese follow traditional indigenous religions, Christianity and Islam.⁵

A mutiny by Southern army officers that began in August 1955 triggered the birth of the South's independence movement, and one of the world's longest-running civil wars, with only a tenuous respite under the Addis Ababa Ceasefire from 1972 to 1983.

The conflict ended, officially, with Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Under both the Addis Ababa Ceasefire and CPA, South Sudan operated as a semi-autonomous region, enabling the Southern

People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to manage its own governance within a highly restrictive and fractious political environment.

After the signing of the CPA, the new Government of South Sudan (GoSS) was headed by an internationally educated former rebel leader, John Garang, who filled two posts: President of South Sudan and Vice President of Sudan. Garang's rule lasted only six months before he was killed in a helicopter crash in Uganda. Salva Kiir – another former rebel – replaced him and retained power following general elections in 2010.

The CPA included provision for a referendum on South Sudan's independence, which took place in January 2011. An overwhelming vote for independence paved the way for the country's formal independence on 9 July 2011.

Public jubilation and anticipation surrounded the referendum and independence celebrations. People's expectations of life in an independent South Sudan are buoyed by optimism – but there is also an underlying sense of anxiety. The country faces a raft of development and governance challenges that would tax any government, let alone the relatively inexperienced South Sudanese leadership.

Above

School children in Iriya, South Sudan, stand around a map of the united Sudan made out of stones a week before the declaration of independence of South Sudan.

The legacy of violent conflict

Over 20 years of conflict has wreaked havoc on the South's people and its infrastructure, and has severely undermined the country's development.⁶ More than two million people are believed to have been killed during the second Sudanese war, and tens of thousands displaced.⁷ There have been many and varied causes of violent conflict, from lack of governance structures in remote areas through to resource disputes, the ethnicisation of politics, and chronic under-development.

Between the 2005 CPA and the 2011 referendum, the prospect of independence from Khartoum united the South. Leading both the regional Southern government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, Salva Kiir oversaw a peace that was fragile and interrupted, but presided over the establishment of the South's governance structures from the earliest days of the Government, which was based in a series of tents in the South's capital, Juba.

But the period of transition has been far from bloodless. Ethnic clashes persist throughout South Sudan today, and cattle raids in late 2011 and early 2012 have been violent and deadly. One attack in early 2012 confirmed that pockets of the country are still at odds with the raft of nation-, peace- and state-building efforts that are proliferating across the country. International and local media reported on a meeting in Mayendit County, convened with local and UN officials to resolve cattle disputes. The debate was soon drowned out by gunfire that left a reported 37 people dead and many more injured.⁸

Security, therefore, remains a high priority for the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and international partners. The transition of the SPLM from a rebel movement into a legitimate force has been rocky, with militia groups splintering off from the main force, and a series of conflicts between the army and these groups marking both the election and referendum years, 2010 and 2011, as faction leaders – and their political sponsors – jostled for power within the new regime.

A donor-driven development agenda?

South Sudan's emergence as the world's newest country, its recent history and the immediate challenges it faces, are intrinsically linked to external influences. The scale of these challenges has attracted substantial international attention and support, including a massive upsurge in official development assistance (ODA) since 2005 (Figure 1). Sudan was the largest recipient of development assistance in the world in 2009, which accounted for 4.4 per cent of its gross national income.⁹ It is almost impossible to distinguish between assistance provided to Sudan and South Sudan as OECD figures are not reported by region; these figures should, therefore, be seen as indicative.

South Sudan in brief



South Sudan is a vast, land-locked country the size of one-third of Western Europe, with an area of 619,745 sq. km (239,285 sq. miles). Straddling the White Nile, the country is characterised by vast grasslands and wetlands, with highlands close to borders with Kenya and Uganda. Disputed census results from 2008 put the then region's population at 8.26 million.

The population is young, with more than half of all people (51%) under the age of 18 and predominantly rural (83%). More than half of the country's population lives below the poverty line. Literacy is estimated at around 27% of the population; only 16% of women over the age of 15 can read and write.

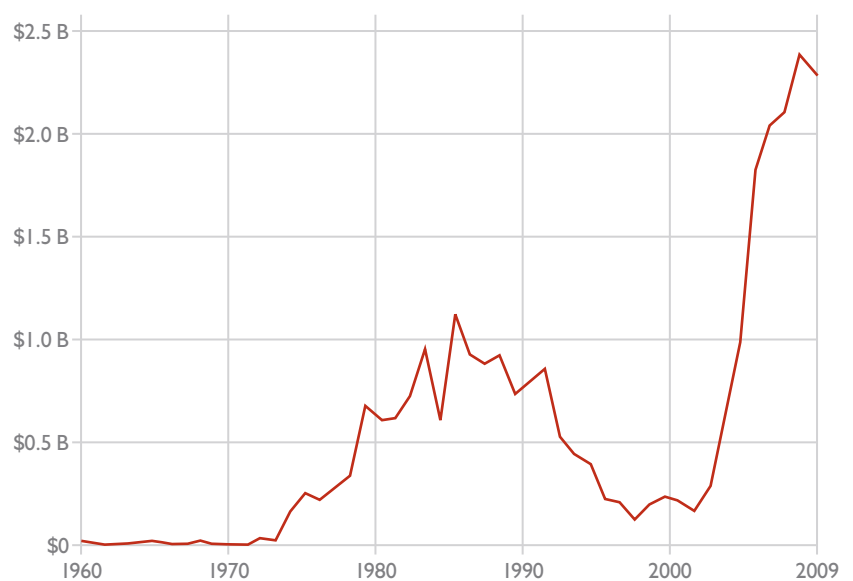
South Sudan is ethnically and linguistically diverse. While English and Arabic are the official languages, tribal languages are spoken throughout the country. In contrast with its predominantly Muslim neighbour, Sudan, the majority religions are Christianity and animism.

Despite widespread poverty and poor infrastructure, the White Nile valley is one of the richest agricultural areas in Africa. Most of the population (78% of all households) rely on crop farming or animal husbandry as the primary source of livelihood.

South Sudan has abundant oil reserves. However, its only pipeline runs through Sudan, and oil has been a contentious issue between the two countries for some time. In March 2012 Salva Kiir and his Kenyan and Ethiopian counterparts announced the launch of a four-year project to develop the Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor (Lapsset). The project will see South Sudan eventually reduce its reliance on Sudan, with Lamu intended as its main export outlet. However, a crisis that flared up in April over disputes around the Heglig oil field almost lead to an all-out war between the two countries, and a halt in oil production cost South Sudan 98% of its revenue.

Sources: Republic of South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics, BBC News South Sudan profile, CIA Factbook.

Figure 1: Trends in development assistance to Sudan



Source: OECD DAC

While most OECD donors have, at some point, committed financial support to Sudan (and now South Sudan), several maintain a special interest in South Sudan's emergence as an independent state.

The 'Sudan Troika', the three governments that supported the CPA negotiation process, comprises Norway, the UK and USA. Between them, they provided 49.5 per cent of ODA between 2000 and 2009.¹⁰

 The media is one of the few realistic means to generate national engagement on the country's vision and negotiation on development challenges – the absence of which could further fracture an already fragile peace. 

The United States is the largest donor to South Sudan and addressing the region's humanitarian needs has been a key foreign policy objective for both the Bush and Obama administrations. Right-wing Christian groups in the US are thought to have played a key role in driving Sudan up the policy agenda,¹¹ and the US has had extensive sanctions against Sudan in place since 1997 for "continued

support for international terrorism, on-going efforts to destabilize neighbouring governments, and the prevalence of human rights violations".¹² While these sanctions do not apply to newly independent South Sudan, US involvement in activities that involve or benefit its northern neighbour – including any involvement in the petrochemical industry – are still prohibited.

Norway was one of the few European countries to contribute to the UN mission in Darfur. It is a member of the Joint Donor Team and continues to push for effective North/South negotiations over security and oil. The UN Special Representative in South Sudan, Hilde Frafjord Johnson, is a former Norwegian Development Minister.

A role for the media in South Sudan's 'window of opportunity'

South Sudan's independence has been regarded as both a critical turning point and a window of opportunity. Expectations of GoSS and of the 'peace dividend' are phenomenally high. The South Sudanese are measuring the success of the new nation in peace and stability, in the provision of basic services, the swift development of infrastructure and the accountable delivery of aid.¹³

Maintaining the solvency of South Sudan as a nation depends on the Government's ability to manage these expectations, to maintain peace, promote inclusion, and to demonstrate to its people that the democratic structures that are in place can deliver peace and development for the whole country.

Effective communication is critical to these efforts, particularly in breaking down the 'them and us' divide between GoSS and ordinary people by engaging them in, and informing them about, the development process. In a country one-third the size of Western Europe, with

only basic transportation infrastructure, any direct interaction between senior-level politicians, state officials and ordinary people is limited. The media is one of few realistic means to generate national engagement on the country's vision and negotiation on development challenges – the absence of which could further fracture an already fragile peace.

According to Hakim Moi, Co-Director of the Association for Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS), there is substantial public appetite for such a conversation.¹⁴ The South Sudanese are voracious consumers of radio who place a premium on access to reliable and trusted information and they have clear expectations on the role of the media in governance:

"I can't face politicians face-to-face, but through the media I can ask the politicians questions."

Urban male, 18-25 years old, Upper Nile

"Most of our people in the villages don't know what is happening. If they did not have radio, they would always remain in the dark."

Rural male, 18-28 years old, Lakes state

"Radio has encouraged the people of Lakes state and also the leadership because they have a station where they can go and directly communicate with the people."

Rural male, 18-28 years old, Lakes state¹⁵

There is, however, a clear gap between people's expectations of how such a conversation should unfold, and the capacity of GoSS and the media to support this. A sense of what should happen is not being born out in reality and people feel alienated from the political process across the country. They feel that a lack of transparency hides corruption and tribal favouritism for jobs and contracts, and that current political processes – including democratic elections – rarely work for them:

"The politicians have never brought to us any report on their work and we don't know what they are doing whether represent us or not".

Rural woman, 18-25 years old, Magwi¹⁶

"Even in the next four years, nothing will improve and there will be no media laws. This Government is still very young with no political will. After independence, things like the rate of property will increase, and a lot of challenges will come up. I doubt the Government's capacity to fully address these issues."

Nhial Bol, Editor of *The Citizen* newspaper¹⁷



SVEN TOREIN/PANOS

▶ The media context

The dominance of radio

Radio is the single most important source of information for the people of South Sudan, with some surveys suggesting that up to 96 per cent of the population accesses information through their radios. Research by BBC Media Action and Internews in rural areas found that 63 to 82 per cent of respondents cited radio as their most used source of information. Trust levels are also understood to be high, with up to 70 per cent of radio listeners claiming that radio is their most trusted source of information.¹⁸ It is relatively accessible, not dependent on literacy, and radio listeners are served by an existing network of local and international services.

The reach of radio expanded steadily throughout the period of semi-autonomy from 2005 to 2011. Leading up to the referendum for independence, the SPLM encouraged the establishment of privately-owned FM

stations throughout the (then) region. Platforms for Southerners to express their views and access the outside world supported the agenda of GoSS for autonomy and its longer-term ambitions to situate an independent South Sudan in the global political context. While the Khartoum Government regularly issued warrants for the arrest of South Sudanese journalists, these were routinely ignored by GoSS. Khartoum’s direct control was effectively limited to media originating in Sudan, including southern newspapers still attempting to print in Khartoum, given the lack of printing facilities in the South.

As of 2010, around 20 private and community FM stations served parts of the country and 10 radio stations operated as part of the South Sudan Radio and Television Network – one per state. A single television station – South Sudan Television – broadcasts from Juba. National and international broadcasters have built loyal followings among the South Sudanese: Radio Miraya – run by the UN Mission in South

Above

A policeman listens to the radio as he guards the power plant in Bentiu, South Sudan.

Sudan and Fondation Hirondelle – is credited as the most listened-to radio station in the country, and the BBC World Service has a substantial audience.²⁰

There’s also a huge appetite for local radio, especially outside the capital Juba. Rural audiences – and women in particular – struggle with both English (the official national language) and Simple Arabic (the national lingua franca). Radio is a significant source of local news and information, bringing local communities together and also connecting them to national issues and to information in languages they can understand and feel part of. Through local radio, people are able to discuss, report on, and reflect problems, issues and concerns in local languages and in ways that are relevant to them. This, in an environment as complex and linguistically diverse as South Sudan, is extremely important.

The television market is expanding in the state capitals – mainly accessible through communal viewing in small roadside cafes. South Sudan Television is broadcast on digital satellite television, and groups watching ‘event television’

such as football are a common sight across the country wherever generators can be run. As the infrastructure in South Sudan develops, television viewing will increase exponentially, tied closely to urbanisation and the spread of generators and electricity supplies.

Financially, radio and print media rely heavily on donor funding and advertising (much of the latter coming from NGOs and GoSS).²¹ State media is poorly funded and suffers from poor infrastructure and a lack of investment in staff. Private and community media rely on funding from individuals and development assistance – much of which is paid for air-time to broadcast programmes and public service announcements.

Government and the media: a fractious relationship

The media in South Sudan has its origins in Sudan’s authoritarian regime and a bloody struggle for independence. It has played a central role in this narrative,

Media consumption and communication in South Sudan

Radio remains the only effective way of reach the majority of South Sudanese, with under 20% thought to make regular use of television, newspapers and internet:

- The country’s single television station, South Sudan TV, has a relatively low and restricted audience (17.4% of people watch regularly, according to Internews), particularly outside Juba where television ownership is low.
- Distribution and readership of newspapers is extremely limited outside Juba (18.8% according to Internews). The *Juba Post* has a circulation of approximately 2,000 and *The Citizen* reports a circulation of approximately 4,400. Low rates of readership are attributable to low literacy rates and logistical distribution challenges.
- Only one in 10 South Sudanese regularly use the internet, although access to information via the internet is believed to be increasing, especially among younger people.

Nearly three quarters of the population listen to the radio each day. While there is little comprehensive data on media consumption across the country, surveys have put daily radio listenership figures at between 74% and 93%.

Internews research conducted in 2011 found radio to be the most popular (63.1%) and trusted (70.3%) source of information for most respondents across all research sites, followed only by word of mouth and churches/mosques. Figures vary but these trends are broadly confirmed by BBC Media Action and NDI research conducted in 2010.

Sources: International Telecommunications Union; BBC Media Action research conducted in 2010; and Internews research conducted in three rural communities in 2010-11.



YASUYOSHI CHIBA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Above
Men walk into the small building housing the Southern Sudan TV station in Juba.

at times driving political change, conflict and the desire for secession. As a result, partisan and often aggressive language is still common today, in everyday conversation and in the media, with the frequent use of such terms as ‘enemy’, ‘oppression’, ‘fear’, ‘shameful’, ‘shambolic’, ‘wrath’ and ‘intimidation’.

While studies across Africa have suggested a trend towards political co-option and ownership of media – with radio station ownership, for example, considered a fundamental requirement for candidacy – South Sudan’s story is unique, and bound up in its journey to nationhood.

There is general recognition among GoSS and development partners of the importance of South Sudanese media in supporting the new country’s governance and social development objectives. Mustafa Biang Majak, Director General of the GoSS Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, sees a key role for the media in the future of South Sudan, though his description of its nature is limited and not particularly conducive to constructive and inclusive public debate: “They [media] play a big role to disseminate policies of the new nation” and “reflect the image of South Sudan both locally and internationally”. Other official rhetoric points to a broader envisaged role for the media in supporting two-way communication between GoSS and South Sudanese and in enabling people to participate more effectively in the running of their country.²²

Media faced a challenging and confusing array of legal and physical limitations under the CPA, with the laws of the Khartoum government often conflicting with the practices of the then Government of Southern Sudan. That Government was relatively permissive, setting up South Sudan Radio and Television and enabling more freedom than the Khartoum Government. Newspapers, hampered by lack of printing facilities in Juba, were often subject to intimidation and arrest warrants from Khartoum where some were printed. Others circumvented this tight control by publishing in Kampala or Nairobi before transporting the papers to Juba.

During the lead-up to independence, editorial staff from the Sudan Catholic Radio Network and *The Citizen* newspaper were detained by government officials. When Nhial Bol Aken, Editor in Chief of *The Citizen* raised concerns around security agencies collecting money from foreign journalists, he was held without charge for four hours.²³

Post-independence, the media continues to operate in a legal vacuum. Nhial Bol Aken describes the journalists’ quandary as “no freedom, but no direct censorship”. Arrests and intimidation of journalists, and temporary closure of media outlets, are relatively common.²⁴

Reports of threats and physical abuse have continued beyond independence, with the most recent and prominent related to the arrests of Peter Ngor Garang and columnist Dengdit Ayok in November. News reports cite Ngor’s descriptions of being held in a dark, unventilated cell, being beaten and denied medical treatment.

Annette Yabu, of the *Juba Post*, explains how journalists are affected on a day-to-day basis. “When we go for public forums and presidential events, the security think we are spies. When we go into no-go ... areas, they think we are being used by terrorists groups to work for them and get information. The security are the organised forces – the unidentified forces. Sometimes it is hard to tell. They might hijack you from somewhere and they will never show any identification. You can never know who they are apart from knowing that they are ‘security’.”²⁵

GoSS appears to be distancing itself from the actions of security forces, while generally painting a picture of ‘relative press freedom’. Mustafa Biang Majak, Director General of the Ministry of Information says: “If you compare with other parts of the world, journalists [are] ... killed and tortured. Here in the South, we do not have that. Yes we have journalists who have been arrested for hours or three days but never sentenced in a court of law. Sometimes, there are those who have interfered or rubbed shoulders with the wrong branch of the security thus the arrest for some hours.”²⁶

Despite these challenges, media regulatory reform is clearly on the agenda, at least on paper.

Three media bills (the Right to Information Bill, South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation Bill and Media Authority Bill) originally introduced to Parliament in 2007 have yet to be passed. A number of organisations have supported advocacy around these bills, including under the aegis of the IMS-led consortium Promoting Freedom and Expression and Civil Society Involvement in Developing Democratic Media Legislation in Sudan. Hakim Moi, Director of the Association for Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS), views the bills as fundamental not only to the media’s ability to operate independently and effectively, but also to the relationship between GoSS and the media.²⁷

Through the pending media bills, the Ministry for Information has an official mandate to establish an independent South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation and, in the interim, to promote public service broadcasting through existing entities.²⁸ The Public Service Broadcasting Bill currently under consideration provides guidance on the establishment of the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation and guiding principles; however, until the bill is passed, substantial progress in this arena seems unlikely and the bill does not specify how the Corporation will be a financially viable entity.

While studies across Africa have suggested a trend towards political co-option and ownership of media – with radio station ownership, for example, considered a fundamental requirement for candidacy – South Sudan’s story is unique, and bound up in its journey to nationhood.

▶ The media and public dialogue

Why the media struggles with its 'fourth estate' role

There is, as yet, little opportunity for the citizens of the world's newest nation to enter into a dialogue with their leaders via the media, though there is massive and untapped potential to do so. Indeed, given the size of the country and the physical barriers to meeting with leaders, media may present the best and only avenue for ordinary citizens to have such a dialogue.

There are, however, three significant and enduring barriers that impede the media's ability to fulfil its role as the 'fourth estate'.

Media capacity

Low levels of education across South Sudan and poor pay for journalists both exacerbate a lack of professionalism and capacity that impedes the media's ability to provide high quality public interest media. Media houses struggle to bring in sustainable revenue and, therefore, struggle to pay salaries consistently and retain staff, who simply cannot support themselves on a journalist's wage. Several initiatives have aimed to address issues around education and professional training for journalists, though few (barring the BBC, Sudan Catholic Radio Network and Internews initiatives) have been able to work with local radio stations on a sustained basis (i.e. for more than a year).

Language barriers

While English and Simple Arabic are the national languages, these fail to take into account many parts of the country where only local languages are spoken. While broadcasting in these two languages would reach most of the population in state capitals, in rural areas and amongst the least educated in the community – often women – there is little understanding of either

language. Radio stations face a constant challenge to serve audiences in a language they can understand and that will allow them to participate in discussions.

Media access limitations

To sit and listen to the radio is a sign of status in itself. Research conducted by the London School of Economics asked women why they didn't listen to the radio; the response was laughter, and an explanation that they were either too busy or not welcome to sit and listen with men. Most stated that they received information from their men-folk, their chief or from public meetings.²⁹

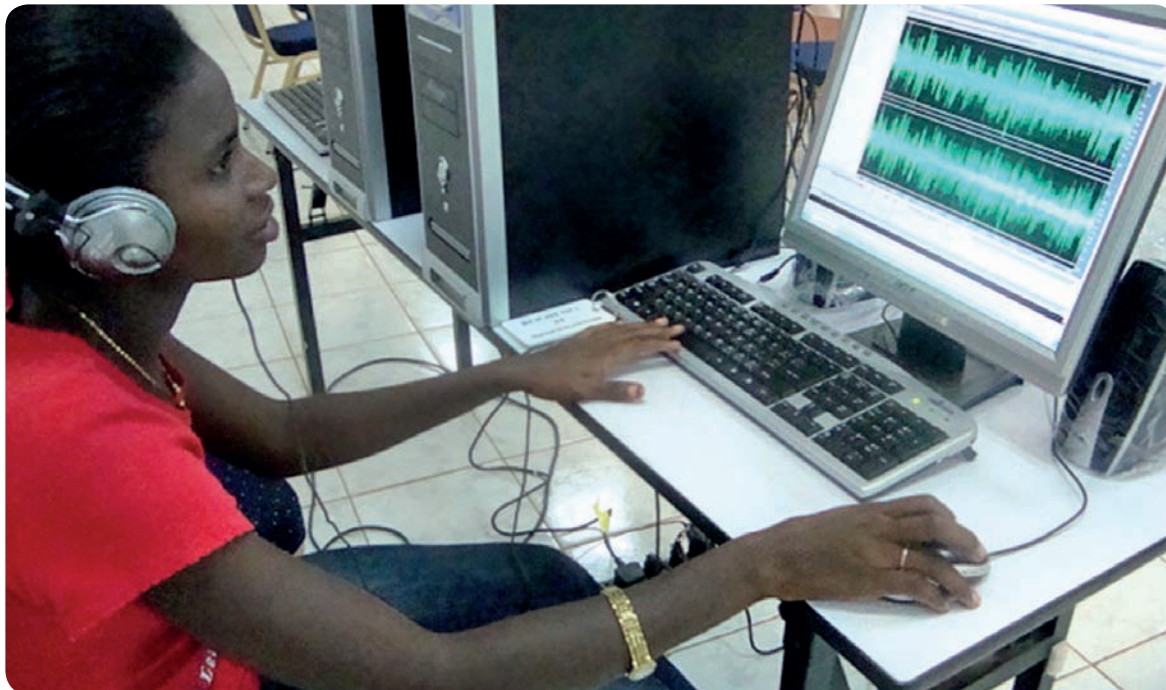
Cost remains a major barrier for both media providers and individuals. There is little incentive for GoSS to improve its own broadcasting infrastructure. NGOs with a mandate to reach the hardest-to-reach are limited by the prohibitive cost of establishing additional FM transmitters. For individuals, the cost of buying radios and batteries reduces media access. A solid shortwave radio set costs around \$36, with a small FM radio costing around \$11. Batteries are often of poor quality and short lifespan, and they represent a luxury item to people in rural areas – most of whom live on less than \$2 a day. USAID distributed more than half a million wind-up radios with solar panels in South Sudan, though reports from the Sudan Catholic Radio Network (SCRN) suggest insufficient knowledge of how to care for wind-up radios, resulting in water damage to sets.³⁰

One of the key challenges highlighted by Mustafa Biang Majak is lack of infrastructure, combined with a lack of solutions to this: "the media is not well equipped ... We have people who are qualified here in the South. They only lack facilitation and equipment. ... The donors need to know that if they are to help the South, they should provide workable solutions like equipment for the media to do their work effectively."³¹

Right
Journalists receive
training at a radio station
in Rumbek, Lakes State,
Central South Sudan.



MOHANNAD MERGHANI/BBC MEDIA ACTION



Left
A journalism trainee works on her editing skills in Juba.

▶ Donor responses and media support

The political economy of donor support to media

Mapping South Sudan's biggest donors against existing aid harmonisation mechanisms and the most prominent supporters of media development in the country yields some interesting results. The international support effort surrounding South Sudan's transition to independence was hailed initially as a potential model for aid harmonisation. However, in more mainstream areas of governance – and particularly public services delivery – the impact of harmonisation efforts have been called into question.

The Joint Donor Team (JDT) was established in 2006 by the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. They were later joined by Denmark and Canada. Inevitable divergence of donor priorities has made it difficult to agree on overarching strategies, and whole areas of focus are considered beyond the Team's mandate – support to media being one key example.

Few donors have prioritised ongoing support to media within a broader strategy that incorporates media and communication explicitly. For example, European Commission adviser Ambra Longatti points to an immediate and pressing EU focus on supporting the establishment of local and central government structures, providing technical assistance to GoSS for governance and rule of law. Support to media may be delivered under a separate mechanism that is yet to be launched.³²

Several donors have invested heavily in media development in Southern Sudan over the past 5-10 years. Accurate figures are almost impossible to obtain, as funding is spread across multiple projects and budget lines, though estimates obtained through this research indicate a spend in excess of \$13

million in 2010.³³ It is difficult to assess what proportion this represents of overall aid to South Sudan. However, available OECD figures show a total ODA figure in 2009 of \$735 million, less than 10 per cent of which (\$73 million) is likely to have been invested in governance and civil society.³⁴

The vast majority of this investment aims to enhance political participation and the use of radio as an educational service. US funding has supported the establishment of a number of radio services, and a number of other donors have combined capacity building with provision of equipment.

Historically, Norway, the UK and USA have been the most active donors across all areas of development assistance in South Sudan, and all except the USA are members of the Joint Donor team. In 2011-12, based on data made available by respondents to this study, the biggest supporters of media in the context of governance are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID and Norad. Their funding mechanisms are bilateral – not through the JDT.³⁵ As a result, donor harmonisation objectives that underpin the operation of the JDT could be said to have had little impact in terms of a coordinated approach to media support.

Lack of coordination has been a significant concern for both donors and implementing agencies, particularly during the period of heavy investment and activity leading up to elections and independence.³⁶ In addition to managing support to electoral processes and to the post-independence GoSS, South Sudan's development partners went through substantial strategic revision over the course of 2011, and 2012 brings new challenges. The number of media development partners working in-country has fallen

■ ■ The number of media development partners working in-country has fallen since independence. ■ ■

since independence. At the same time, several key donors have clearly prioritised technical assistance to government and regulatory bodies; the extent to which demand-side accountability, including public dialogue through the media, is being supported – and the rationale for this – remains unclear.

Media support – an overview

Following a period of significant investment in media in 2010-2011, only a handful of large-scale media support projects still support the local media, as opposed to

the national NGO-run radio stations, Miraya and Sudan Radio Service (SRS). BBC Media Action and Internews both manage large-scale, multi-year projects from their Juba offices, working to support and build the capacity of community and state radio stations in a number of locations across the country. Plans are underway to establish a media academy in Juba with funding from Norad, implemented through a partnership with Norwegian Church Aid and AMDISS, although these plans have been in development for some years with no substantial implementation as yet.

The role of national and international broadcasters

Given the size of the media and communication sector in South Sudan, national and international broadcasters play a relatively important role in meeting the information and communication needs of people throughout the country.

The BBC World Service is listened to in both Arabic and English. The World Service's first ever audience research in Southern Sudan in 2007 research reported a 14.3% marketshare, though more recent research (2010) in Warrup, Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Unity states found reported listenership levels to be significantly higher – between 30% and 59%. Internews research conducted in 2010/11 in rural sites found the BBC to be the second most important source of media information after community radio stations – more important than both Radio Miraya and the Sudan Radio Service.

The only near-national broadcaster is Radio Miraya ('mirror' in Arabic), a partnership between the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan and Fondation Hirondelle. Audience figures range substantially, with BBC Media Action research measuring listenership across states at levels between 9% and 70%. Established in 2006, Miraya is one of the longest running UN radios established as an integral part of a peacekeeping mission. Over this time, Fondation Hirondelle has built a substantial operation that invests significant resources in building capacity of its predominantly local staff.

Both Radio Miraya and the BBC World Service meet a specific set of information needs. Content – particularly that of the BBC – focuses broadly on issues from predominantly national, regional and international perspectives. Overwhelmingly, audience preferences measured as part of BBC Media Action research in 2010 found local news and discussion to be the most-valued media output (ranging from 86-91% in three states). This data clearly points to audience preferences that national and international broadcasters are not able to meet.

Broadcasting in English and Arabic only, one of their key limitations is in effectively engaging rural audiences, i.e. the most marginalised and excluded groups within society. This, arguably, is one of the key nation-building and state-building challenges facing South Sudan, and one that neither broadcaster has a remit to meet.

Further challenges relate to the sustainability of Radio Miraya. UN radio stations train and pay their staff well. If/when the station closes or transitions to new management, there is a risk that rather than continuing to work in the media, trained staff will move into other sectors, for example taking up better remunerated positions with international NGOs.

Given the hole that will be left by Miraya's apparently inevitable departure, an exit strategy is critical – something that UN radios have not always done well. A recent paper on UN broadcasting pointed out that 'the end-mission plan has been usually just to pull the plug—literally—and put the radio equipment back into UN shipping containers until the next mission.' Fondation Hirondelle's Yves Laplume says Miraya is working with the state broadcaster as a major component of its exit strategy, but clearly there are significant limits to the extent to which state radio could effectively fulfil this role.

Sources: BBC World Service research, 2007; BBC Media Action research, 2010; Bill Orme, 'Broadcasting in UN Blue: the unexamined past an uncertain future of peacekeeping radio', 2010; interviews conducted in Juba, May 2011



Above
Trainee journalists
in Juba practice
using digital
recorders.

MOHANNAD MERGHANI/BBC MEDIA ACTION

► Research on media and communication

Conducting research in South Sudan is logistically challenging and prohibitively expensive. Understanding of media consumption and habits and people’s expectations of media for the future of South Sudan is, therefore, somewhat limited. It is also a challenge to understand these issues within the broader development context, given that a substantial amount of data collected by international organisations (OECD among them) have not been disaggregated by region, and will not be until 2012.

A number of organisations prioritising research, understanding of audience needs and engagement with programmes have adopted a variety of methodologies to generate data and impact assessments over several years.

A significant amount of media mapping and reporting on media freedom issues has emanated from two consortia: Promoting Freedom and Expression and Civil Society Involvement in Developing Democratic Media Legislation in Sudan³⁷ and the Sudan Media and Elections Consortium.³⁸

Between them, these two consortia have published a number of comprehensive reports over the past seven years: ‘Mapping the Void’ mapped the then-region’s media sector and people’s access to media, as well as identifying key obstacles impeding the development of the media.³⁹ ‘Assessment and outline of a strategy for media support: Media in Sudan at a crossroads’ updated and built on information contained in the consortium’s 2003 report ‘Media and peace in Sudan – options for immediate action’. Five key areas are identified as critical areas for donor support:⁴⁰

- policy development and legal reform
- media associations
- quality of journalism
- media operations
- coordination and strategy development.

There has, to date, been limited progress against the objectives outlined in the ‘media support’ section of this case study.

Three research initiatives developed in the years 2009 to 2011 warrant particular mention:

- In 2011 Internews published ‘Light in the Darkness: Internews Radio in Southern Sudan and the Three Areas – Findings of Community Impact Assessment’. This comprehensive report is based on Internews impact research that sought the views of approximately 750 community members through focus groups, 150 community leaders, and a range of broadcasters within Internews’ target communities. The study provides detailed information on audience preferences and priorities.⁴¹
- ‘The impact of the *Let’s Talk* civic education programme: Examination of listener discussion, attitudes, and behaviour’ is based on a field experiment to examine

the impact of NDI’s civic education radio programme.⁴² It is part of a substantial global effort to examine the usefulness of randomised controlled trials to provide an objective assessment of the impact of media and media interventions on governance, including studies by the Oxford Centre for the Study of African Economies and E-GAP, a network of researchers working on governance field experiments. Similar field experiments have been conducted in Nigeria and Mozambique by leading economists, including Paul Collier.

- Research by BBC Media Action in 2010 aimed to assess the impact of its work with seven radio stations across the country, working with state radio, SCRN and Internews community stations. An ambitious programme of quantitative and qualitative research aimed to generate a better understanding of audience needs and expectations of media in relation to governance and a wide range of other development issues.⁴³

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) also conducts major focus group research biannually that, while not focusing specifically on media, provides a useful barometer of public opinion intended “to help policy-makers better understand the views of citizens as they make important decisions that will shape the future of the region”.⁴⁴ Radio Miraya undertakes annual audience research, though this tends to be limited in scope to meet the station’s requirement for reach figures and market analysis and the findings are not consistently published.



Right
A trainee journalist hits the streets of Juba.

MOHANNAD MERGHANI/BBC MEDIA ACTION



JB RUSSELL/PANOS PICTURES

► Where do we go from here?

Above
A man dancing with the flag of the newly independent Southern Sudan during independence celebrations in the capital Juba.

South Sudan has been considered to be ‘at a crossroads’ for the past two years. While elections and independence were crucial milestones in the country’s establishment, the next 12-24 months will prove decisive in terms of the country’s democratic development. Levels of social capital are high and still riding a wave of optimism and the sense of achievement surrounding independence, but will quickly wane if expectations are not managed and met at reasonable levels. The government’s ability to maintain and build social capital will depend on its ability and willingness to engage South Sudanese effectively across the country in a national conversation on the new nation’s future and the challenges it will face as it develops.

What is clear from research conducted by NDI, BBC Media Action and Internews – and confirmed through interviews conducted for this case study – is that there is significant demand from citizens for information on governance

and development, and for platforms to participate in dialogue on development issues. Given the pressures on GoSS to deliver on development and the peace dividend, these platforms will be particularly critical in providing a mechanism for communication and dialogue. In the context of South Sudan’s communications challenges, radio will be a crucial medium to connect people with their elected officials, and particularly to ensure that debate and discussion happens beyond Juba.

Given the capacity challenges that continue to face the media in South Sudan, external support will continue to lay the foundations for their ability both to function and to become less vulnerable to the political and financial constraints that surround their operations. There is a clear need for ongoing, coordinated support if the media is to become an effective stimulus for public dialogue and a strong mechanism for political accountability, especially in rural areas where civil society is, at best, nascent.

Supporting GoSS and its partners to fight corruption also requires a concurrent support strategy that provides citizens and civil society organisations with a means to check government decisions and spending. Failure to build the demand side of accountability is likely to undermine overarching objectives in this area.

While it is not the role of this report to set out a strategy for media support in South Sudan, several themes have emerged from this research for consideration by stakeholders as they draw up plans for this crucial period in the country's history.

Ensuring media support meets people's needs

Substantial support to media in South Sudan has, to date, focused largely on national broadcasters, and the GoSS agenda in terms of media support appears to be centred on development of the state broadcaster, with apparent potential for Chinese and/or Japanese funding to support this. The potential benefits and risks of media support need to be carefully weighed up in the context of broader development challenges to ensure that a national focus does not further marginalise communities that are already geographically disengaged from peace- and nation-building processes. These risks will be particularly acute when the time comes for Radio Miraya to execute its exit strategy.

Considering alternative ways to harmonise

It was hoped that South Sudan would provide a model of donor harmonisation, embodied in the Joint Donor Team. Most media support, however, has happened outside the JDT under bilateral arrangements. Many of the strategies that drive media support differ among donors, which has had an undoubted impact on the extent to which joint mechanisms are considered feasible or appropriate. Attempts at coordination within the NGO community have been hampered by practicalities, including a lack of permanent presence due to financial constraints. At the same time, coordination remains a serious issue, particularly for donors, and new ways to address these concerns are needed.

Considering the role of communication in peace-building

South Sudan is a very fragile country whose recent history is characterised by civil war and inter-group conflict. The process of transitioning to self-governance is made doubly difficult by the related challenge of building a more peaceful society. Media and communication could have a substantial role to play in addressing the causes of violent conflict. This role has not been substantially supported to date, and could be considered at this crucial moment.



MOHANNAD MERGHANI/BBC MEDIA ACTION

Taking a long-term view

South Sudan is emerging from decades of conflict that has continued to simmer and even erupt post-independence. Based on substantial research, the World Development Report 2011 noted that "Creating the legitimate institutions that can prevent repeated violence is, in plain language, slow. It takes a generation. Even the fastest-transforming countries have taken between 15 and 30 years to raise their institutional performance from that of a fragile state today... to that of a functioning institutionalised state."⁴⁵ Support to media – as an accountability institution in its own right as well as a means of connecting people with each other and with policy-makers – should be planned with this long time-frame in mind.

The importance of research

Conducting large-scale research in South Sudan is expensive and logistically problematic. Stakeholders should consider, where possible, pooling research resources that more effectively inform a joined-up understanding of how people obtain information, what they expect of the media, how they interact with decision-makers and how communication can foster moderation, mitigate conflict and contribute to the country's ability to foster its own development.

Above
Gathering material for broadcast, Juba.

Even the fastest-transforming countries have taken between 15 and 30 years to raise their institutional performance from that of a fragile state today... to that of a functioning institutionalised state.

Appendix

| Organisation | Background | Support |
|--|---|---|
| Association for Media Development in South Sudan | The Association for Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS) was formed in 2003 by editors and owners of media outlets in South Sudan. It is an umbrella organisation working primarily on policy and advocacy for the media sector in South Sudan. | Regulatory reform, provision of shared professional facilities and knowledge exchange |
| BBC Media Action (formerly BBC World Service Trust – WST) | BBC Media Action has worked in Sudan since 2005 and has a permanent country office in Juba. The organisation's early core work from 2005 involved the production of Darfur Lifeline, a humanitarian programme broadcast on BBC Arabic, targeting the six million people in internally displaced camps and host communities in Darfur. Now based in Juba, BBC Media Action focuses on governance and media capacity building and working with media to support improved health and education outcomes. Its Voice and Participation project, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs ran from March 2010 to December 2011. Working closely with 10 state and community radio stations, the project focused initially on strengthening stations' capacity to meet the challenges of the 2010 elections and the 2011 referendum. | Inclusive governance; support to community radio; capacity-building; education (emerging) |
| Chinese Government | In October 2011, China announced a grant of 200 million Yuan (around \$31.5 million) for development projects in South Sudan. While the specific objectives are unclear, as is the likely extent of Chinese involvement, the Chinese Ambassador to Juba, Li Zhiguo, said the grant would contribute to education, health, water supply, agriculture and media development. | Not known, but media development has been mentioned |
| European Union | In 2011 The European Development Fund (EDF) committed €200 million to facilitate development in South Sudan. Funding was allocated to education, health, agriculture, food security and democratic governance to 2013. EU officials have confirmed that funds will support GoSS capacity building. Ambra Longatti, Deputy Head of Office and Operations Manager (Governance) says support to civil society – and media – is beyond the scope of this funding, with a separate announcement on civil society support expected in 2013. ⁴⁷ The EC has supported media projects over the past five years, including a grant of €11 million to support rehabilitation of the Juba (formerly Nile) printing press; support to the consortium Promoting Freedom of Expression and Civil Society Involvement in Developing Democratic Media Legislation in Sudan; and 'Assignment Justice: A practical guide for Sudanese journalists' published by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) in 2009. | No current focus on support to civil society or media, both of which the EC would normally fund through non-state actor, democracy and human rights instruments |
| Fondation Hirondelle | Fondation Hirondelle established and manages Radio Miraya, one of the UN's largest radio projects. It broadcasts largely in English and Simple Arabic, meaning that among urban populations it is very popular. In rural areas community radio stations often take the news from Miraya and translate into local languages for less educated populations who cannot access Miraya due to language difficulties. | Provision of reliable, accurate and impartial information in English and Simple Arabic, with a national focus; capacity-building |
| International Media Support | IMS has collaborated closely with partner organisations in Sudan and South Sudan for almost a decade. IMS' overarching objective has been to support independent media and to promote freedom of expression, thereby supporting the peace process and the democratic transition in Sudan and South Sudan. Substantial work has been undertaken as part of consortia comprising both international and local media development and human rights organisations. While it does not currently have a permanent presence in South Sudan, IMS has an ongoing relationship with AMDISS. | Regulatory reform and media freedoms |
| Internews | 'Radio for Peace, Democracy and Development' launched in 2006 and has operated with USAID funding (until 2008) and a sub-grant from the Mercy Corps' Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan (LINCS) project (2008-2011). This ambitious project has established and operated six community radio stations in areas that were particularly underserved by media and information. Stations provide an open forum for debate and dialogue on a number of issues, including tribal conflict. Programming also supports wider development objectives, including education, health, culture, women's issues and agriculture. | Establishment and support to community radio; capacity building; inclusive governance |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| National Democratic Institute | <p>NDI's core mission in South Sudan is civic engagement, which has for sometime involved a substantial component of media programming. NDI's Country Director, Rick Nuccio, says that media is likely to remain a key focus of NDI's strategy going forward. Its flagship programme 'Let's Talk', and NDI's distribution of radios, is considered an important part of the organisation's programming in Sudan.⁴⁸</p> | <p>Civic engagement and provision of reliable and accurate information, supporting democratic processes and engagement</p> |
| Netherlands (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) | <p>From 2010-11 the Netherlands funded the BBC Media Action (then World Service Trust)-implemented Voice and Participation project. The project aimed to strengthen national and local media to report effectively on the 2010 elections and 2011 referendum, and to develop the media as a positive agent of social and political inclusion for all Southern Sudanese people.</p> | |
| Norwegian Church Aid | <p>Media support is not considered part of Norwegian Church Aid's core work, but by virtue of it being one of the few agencies present in Sudan and South Sudan throughout the civil war, it has been involved in media support to varying extents since the 1970s.⁴⁹</p> | <p>Communications infrastructure and support to local institutions</p> |
| Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norwegian Agency for Development (Norad) | <p>A Norad evaluation of support to human rights noted a trend towards funding more initiatives at lower costs per project, despite a commitment to funding "fewer and strategically important [human rights] cooperation partners and thematic areas". While more than 80% of total human rights support in Sudan is classified as support to civil society development, historically very little of this has focused on support to media and the free flow of information (an OECD DAC classification). This balance may shift in relation to Norad's assistance to South Sudan with Norad's decision to fund the Media Institute of South Sudan from 2011 over a period of several years.</p> <p>Aside from high-level policy guidance on support to freedom of expression, Norad has 'no uniform strategy or results framework in the FoE [Freedom of Expression] portfolio'. Norad and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have, on occasion, devolved responsibility for programme development and evaluation to partners such as Norwegian People's Aid and International Media Support (IMS). This has worked well at times, but Norad notes a "loss of control and the need for a large deal of trust in programme implementers... [as well as] a loss of coherence when it comes to programmatic strategy."⁵⁰</p> | <p>Freedom of expression, rights to information and communication</p> |
| Norwegian People's Aid | <p>Nina Pederson, NPA's Programme Manager (Civil Society) describes media as central to the organisation's objectives. "Democratic development and freedom of expression is the essence of NPA ... [and] media is a pillar of this." NPA is currently exploring plans to establish a media centre in Yei with funding from NORAD. Plans are also being considered to sponsor a number of journalists to study investigative journalism.⁵¹</p> | <p>Freedom of expression and democratic development</p> |
| United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | <p>UNDP has invested significant amounts in media development and monitoring as part of its support to the referendum and subsequent elections over the period 2009-2011. Referendum and election-related projects, including civic engagement programmes and providing training for journalists on key elections issues, have clearly identified strengthening media as a key objective. While there are clear parallels between these and UNDP's longer term programmes to deepen democracy in a number of African countries, electoral projects in South Sudan have been relatively short in duration and therefore limited in scope to span the electoral cycle.</p> | <p>Supporting democratic political processes and institutions</p> |
| US Agency for International Development (USAID) | <p>USAID is one of the largest investors in media development in South Sudan. Speaking at the International Engagement Conference for South Sudan on 14 December 2011, US Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton said: "History teaches that failing to serve communities at the peripheries leads to instability. Two-thirds of South Sudanese are below the age of thirty, and the government will have to open up the political space to allow a young and diverse population to take part in civil society, a free press, and genuine political competition."</p> <p>'Effective, Inclusive, and Accountable Governance Strengthened' is one of USAID's four strategic development objectives in South Sudan, and its Transitional Strategy (published June 2011) specifically refers to media support: "USAID will strengthen the capacity of citizens, civil society, media, and other nongovernmental actors to hold the GOSS accountable and ensure that it is responsive to its citizens."⁴⁸</p> <p>USAID is one of the world's few donors with dedicated, in-house media development expertise. Michael J. Edd, Team Lead, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID Sudan, notes that this is particularly beneficial in terms of strategy and decision-making. USAID is the sole funder of the Sudan Radio Service and funds the Internews community radio network.⁵²</p> | <p>Educational radio; civic engagement; and establishing and supporting community radio</p> |

Continues over page ▶

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