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DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

DAC Network on Governance

Mapping and analysis of ODA to media and the information environment

Draft v11 - 21 February 2024

34th GovNet Plenary Meeting
6-7 March 2024

This study has been commissioned by the OECD DAC Governance Network (GovNet) as part of its programme of work for 2023-2024 on "effective official development assistance (ODA) strategies to defend and promote the integrity of the information environment in a context of autocratisation". This empirical research and analysis will contribute to formulate updated operational guidelines and intervention strategies for GovNet members.

This report reflects findings from a quantitative mapping of ODA support (from DAC and non-DAC development partners who report to DAC) to public interest media and the broader information environment, and a qualitative review of development partners' policies and practices through four case studies of media assistance to Ukraine/Western Balkans, Myanmar, Tanzania and global core funding programmes since 2016.

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Table of contents

FIGURES

TABLES

BOXES

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

In a global context of autocratisation, there has been more censorship of the media, more journalists are being harassed, and freedom of expression has deteriorated across the world over the last 10 years. Global technology platforms have improved access to information for billions of people, but they also facilitate disinformation and misinformation campaigns and weaken the economic viability of print media, TV and radio stations.

Effective official development assistance (ODA) is one of the strategies to defend and promote public interest media, and the integrity of the information environment more generally. The OECD DAC Governance Network (GovNet) commissioned this study to improve GovNet members' responses to these mounting challenges. It is based on a quantitative analysis of development partners' funding reported to the DAC between 2002-2021 and a qualitative review of development partners' policies and practices through four case studies of media assistance to Ukraine & Western Balkans, Myanmar, Tanzania and global core funding programmes since 2016.

Interviews with 25 officials from development ministries or agencies and media experts, and a review of over 100 documents, confirmed that development partners are aware of the pressures faced by traditional and new media, and how the information environment can influence their wider democracy and sustainable development objectives.

Despite the global democratic rollback and decades of research on the vital role of public interest media and a healthy information environment for development, the sector only receives a very small share of total ODA. ODA for media and the information environment has increased since 2002, reaching USD 1.2 billion in 2021, but this only represented 0.5% of total ODA in that year. When infrastructure support is excluded, ODA for media fluctuated around USD 500 million a year since 2008 (representing 0.24% of total ODA in 2021).

Only up to 8% of ODA for media and the information environment (so 8% of the 0.5% of total ODA) is directly channelled to media organisations in partner countries, such as journalists, media outlets or civil society organisations working with media or on access to information. In contrast, 41% of ODA for media and the information environment is directly delivered to recipient governments, in particular for infrastructure programmes funded by the World Bank. Nearly a third (27%) of ODA for media and the information environment goes to organisations based in donor countries even when funding for international public broadcasters (such as Deutsche Welle or the BBC World Service) is excluded.

Overall, there is a discrepancy between rhetoric and resource allocation by the main development partners. In the context of increased authoritarianism and a reduction in media freedoms globally, diplomatic condemnation of violations of freedom of expression by Western Governments have become more frequent but these statements are not often matched by a significant increase in financial or human resources. Yet, support for the integrity of the information environment requires both diplomatic and development assistance. Moreover, technical expertise is limited. Even the largest funders only have a couple of media experts at headquarters and there are few dedicated policies, strategies or technical guidance to assist front line staff develop or manage relevant programmes.

Development partners are not yet using a broader 'information environment' lens, which includes not only journalists and media outlets, but also citizens' access to and use of information, the enabling media environment, the role of tech companies and funders within the system, and the physical infrastructure which underpin how information is produced, flows across a system and is used or misused. Only limited coordination was

observed between digital transformation and ICT infrastructure policies and investments with media and information policies and programmes. This risks creating incoherence and could cause unintended political consequences, for example, support for 'digital dictatorships' as the infrastructure funded by development partners could be used for non-democratic objectives.

The review of the evaluations or final completion reports of 25 programmes in the four case studies demonstrates that ODA can achieve important results. In worsening political contexts or under war conditions, such as in Myanmar or Tanzania, international cooperation can help media sectors survive and keep citizens as well informed as possible. Long-term and large investments can have a system-wide effect, such as supporting the transformation of Ukraine's media sector. Thematic programmes can be effective, such as shining a light on corruption and holding perpetrators to account through investigative journalism networks, for example in the Western Balkans. Well-designed capacity development of journalists, media outlets and the wider media enabling environment can ensure larger audiences are reached with better quality and more engaging information.

Lessons are still being learned on how best to prevent and combat disinformation, but the public would be less well informed if the reviewed information integrity interventions had not taken place. Financial viability of media has become a dominant concern; while programmes have contributed to improving business models, there remains a strong case for considering that public interest information is a global public good that requires ongoing subsidising in particular where market failure is manifest. Improved regulation of big tech platforms by the EU and US would also benefit public interest media globally.

The most common barriers to improving the quality and quantity of ODA for media and the information environment include pressures on overall ODA and the prioritisation of other crises (such as climate change or the war in Ukraine), limits in expert staffing, the political sensitivities of this agenda and a limited evidence base of the impact of projects. There are, however, several opportunities to improve both the quality and the quantity of ODA. The global threat to the integrity of information affects both countries that provide assistance and those that receive it. This realisation has prompted a spur in political statements and global initiatives. This study also demonstrates that ODA for media and the information environment can have beneficial impacts.

Aid effectiveness could be improved through more locally-led assistance for public interest media. Very few funders provide core or institutional funding (as opposed to funding for activities) which empowers partners to deliver their strategies and improve their organisations; Sida and the European Endowment for Democracy are notable exceptions in the sample. Most of the programmes reviewed operated through intermediary media support organisations. While this modality offers a number of assurances to development partners, the small amount directly reaching recipient-country based media organisations is not aligned with growing calls to localise development and decolonise assistance.

In addition, coordination and coherence between development partners could also be improved to respond to the increasingly well-coordinated and funded efforts of authoritarian governments to undermine the integrity of information. The multiplicity of global initiatives, such as the International Forum on Media and Democracy, the Media Freedom Coalition or the International Fund for Public Interest Media, is testament to the diplomatic importance of the agenda for some governments and international organisations. It remains a challenge to translate political ambition into more vigorous concrete action. Bilateral programmes and these global initiatives can become, collectively, even more effective through improved coordination and coherence.

While there are initiatives to improve access to evidence for development partners, this mapping showed there are still gaps in evidence, and opportunities such as the potential of

joint diagnostics, joint development partners' strategies and joint evaluations in partner countries. Evidence on how healthy information ecosystems benefit other development and diplomatic objectives, and how ODA programmes are effective in contributing to such healthy information ecosystems, would strengthen the political weight of this agenda in the face of competing priorities. This could lead to increases in both the quality and quantity of ODA and in expert staffing to improve aid effectiveness.

Acronyms

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation (UK)
BBCMA	BBC Media Action (UK)
BBCWS	BBC World Service (UK)
BII	British Investment International (UK)
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CFI	Canal France International (France)
CIMA	Center for International Media Assistance (US)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DWA	Deutsche Welle Akademie
GovNet	Governance Network (DAC)
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GFMD	Global Forum for Media Development
ICT	Information and communications technology
ICAI	Independent Commission for Aid Impact (UK)
IFPIM	International Fund for Public Interest Media
IMS	International Media Support
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
JF	Jamii Forums
MDIF	Media Development Investment Fund
MFC	Media Freedom Coalition
MRTV	Myanmar Radio and Television
NED	National Endowment for Democracy (US)
NHK	Japan's public service broadcaster
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD CRS	OECD Creditor Reporting System
OECD DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
ODA	Official development assistance
PRC	People's Republic of China
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TAI	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
TMF	Tanzania Media Foundation
RTK	Radio Television of Kosovo
UA:PBC	Ukraine's public service broadcaster
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTPC	Union of Tanzania Press Clubs
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy Institute

1.   Introduction

1.1.   Objective

This study has been commissioned by the OECD DAC Governance Network (GovNet) as part of its programme of work for 2023-2024 on "effective official development assistance (ODA) strategies to defend and promote the integrity of the information environment in a context of autocratisation". This empirical research and analysis will contribute to formulate updated operational guidelines and intervention strategies for GovNet members.

This report reflects findings from:

- A **mapping of ODA support** (from DAC and non-DAC development partners who report to DAC) to public interest media and the broader information environment.

- A **qualitative review** of recent and current development partners' practices drawing on existing evaluations and impact assessments to develop an understanding of the relevance, effectiveness (at output and impact levels), sustainability and coherence of current support to public interest media and the information environment.

1.2.   Methodology

The quantitative analysis used the data reported by DAC and non DAC development partners to the DAC through five purpose codes for the period 2016-2021.

The qualitative review is based on 25 interviews with DAC and non DAC members and media and information systems experts. The aim was to capture a diversity of approaches and perspectives. It is also based on a review of over 100 published and internal documents.

25 programmes were reviewed to identify trends in development partners' practices across four case studies representing different contexts and aid modalities since 2016:

- Ukraine and some regional Western Balkans programmes, facing disinformation from Russia and other threats to their information ecosystems.

- Myanmar, which saw a period of democratisation followed by a military coup in 2021.

- Tanzania, which came out of a period of restrictions on data and media in 2021.

- Core funding to specialised organisations as an alternative aid modality.

The case studies did not involve primary research but are based on a synthesis of independent impact or performance evaluations as well as internal project completion reports shared by interviewed DAC or non DAC members or other experts. No interviews with country-based staff or partners were undertaken to validate the findings of the case studies.

The team kept in regular contact with two ongoing projects with similar scopes: (i) the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) which has analysed support to media development for the 2010-2019 period[1] and (ii) the Transparency and Accountability Initiative which is mapping philanthropic assistance to media development.

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[1] Myers, M and Gilberds, H (2024) Are Donors Taking the Journalism Crisis Seriously? An Analysis of Official Aid to Media 2010-2019, CIMA [link].

1.3.   Definitions

This study uses the following definitions of the information environment, and how public interest media is situated within it.

Public interest media creates and distributes content that:

- Exists to inform the public on matters that concern them;

- Provides fact-based information in a trustworthy manner;

- Commits to the demonstrable pursuit of truth, for example through sourcing practices and the representation of the audiences it hopes to serve;

- Is editorially independent;

- Is transparent about processes, finances, and policies used to produce it.[2]

Public interest media can operate through TV, radio, print, websites, social media platforms or citizens journalists. Public interest media outlets can be independent non profit, for profit or publicly owned. They can operate at global, regional, national or community levels.

The **wider media sector** also includes commercial media houses which are not primarily committed to public interest media, as well as politicised or 'captured' media, whether public or private, which serve the interests of their owners and their political associates. The legal, regulatory and policy environment which affects the media, and citizens' access to information, is also part of the media sector.

Recent research[3] defines the global **information environment** as the space where humans, and increasingly machines, process information to make sense of the world. It includes the norms and rules determining information processing and content, the technologies used (print, radio, TV, digital, etc) and the different forms in which information is presented (spoken, written, image, etc). An **information ecosystem** is a geographic subset of this information environment where information is processed to generate a shared understanding.

Information integrity refers to the consistency and openness of access to pluralistic sources of verifiable information. Information integrity also requires audiences that understand information as originally intended by the producer/sender and an environment characterised by physical and digital safety.

Disinformation is information that is not only inaccurate, but is also intended to deceive and is spread in order to inflict harm. **Misinformation** refers to the unintentional spread of inaccurate information shared in good faith by those unaware that they are passing on falsehoods.[4]

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[2] Definition taken from the International Fund for Public Interest Media [link].

[3] Wanless, A and Shapiro, J (2022) A CERN Model for Studying the Information Environment [link]; Adam,I et al (2023) Emergency Management and Information Integrity: A Framework for Crisis Response; Rasch, C (2023) What makes for a healthy information ecosystem? A new visual tool [link].

[4] United Nations (2023) Information Integrity on Digital Platforms, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 8 [link].

1.4.   Outline

Section 2 of the report describes current challenges to public interest media and the information environment. Section 3 summarises the quantitative analysis of ODA. Section 4 presents trends in official development partners' policies and programmes, including global initiatives which are aiming to galvanise collective action. Section 5 synthesises findings from the case studies in terms of the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and coherence of ODA. Section 6 looks ahead at barriers and opportunities to improve the quantity and quality of ODA towards media and the information environment, while Section 7 presents some action-oriented conclusions.

The list of persons interviewed can be found at Annex A and of the documents reviewed at Annex B. Annex C provides a profile of the main development partners which were researched. Annex D presents information on the reviewed programmes.

2.   Mounting challenges for public interest media and the information environment

Information integrity, including through public interest media, contributes to democracy and other governance outcomes. It is recognised as part of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on public access to information (target 16.10) and there is solid evidence for its contribution to other dimensions of governance. Media is an effective accountability mechanism, and acts as check on corruption because it shines a light on abuses and can enable perpetrators to be held to account.[5] Information pollution can undermine the credibility of elections.[6] Dis- and misinformation can worsen social cohesion, especially as social media reinforces polarisation when it acts as an 'echo chamber'. By contrast, public interest media is, in the words of Ghana's former President Kufuor, "an issue of self-determination and our capacity to forge our individual and shared identities […] our ability to have our own media capability to tell our stories for ourselves" as part on ongoing processes of decolonisation.[7]

Access to accurate information from a plurality of sources contributes to several SDGs. This ranges from influencing social norms to access health services, as was visibly demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, to the effective functioning of markets for economic growth, or to analysing and responding to the climate crisis.[8] These potential contributions to democracy, human rights and development are being put at risk by the growing challenges faced by public interest media and the information environment.

In addition, for decades, the defence of global press freedom has been largely grounded in a human rights framework, linked to the individual right to freedom of expression as codified in international law. Recent thinking suggests that linking press freedom with a public interest framing would allow for the protection of press freedom based not only on the individual right to free expression but also on the collective social benefit derived from independent journalism.[9]

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) indicators show a dramatic erosion of information integrity in an increasing number of countries. Figure 2.1 below illustrates how several indicators related to civil liberties, press freedom and societal participation have fared between 2012 and 2022. In 2012 there were consistently more countries where indicators were improving than where they were declining. That picture changed completely in 2022 with all indicators diving under the diagonal line, convincingly showing that the number of countries where indicators worsen is far higher than the number of countries where indicators improve.

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[5] DFID (2015) Why corruption matters: understanding causes, effects and how to address them [link].

[6] UNDP (2014) Media and elections: a guide for practitioners [link].

[7] IFPIM (2021) Feasibility study: enabling media markets to work for democracy [link].

[8] Media Development Investment Fund (2023) The role of media: driving change towards the SDGs [link].

[9] Simon, J (2023) A New Paradigm for Global Journalism: Press Freedom and Public Interest [link].

Figure 2.1. V-Dem Information Integrity Indicators
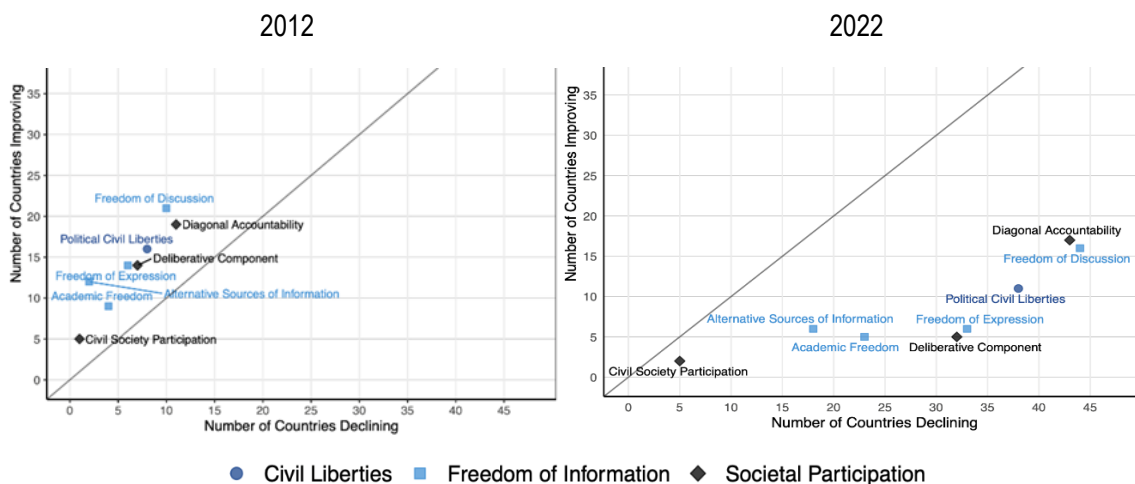
A comprehensive 2023 study further identifies the following threats to information integrity.[10]

Growing autocratisation across the world is associated with restrictions on civic space, deteriorations in freedom of expression, and growing media censorship. The V-Dem Institute's 2023 Democracy Report found that, over the last ten years, government censorship of the media had worsened in 47 countries (the worst performing democracy indicator), the harassment of journalists was getting worse in 36 countries, and freedom of expression had deteriorated in 35 countries.[11] Laws and regulations can restrict access to foreign funding or government subsidies; make registration complex and time-consuming; and facilitate judicial or administrative harassment of media. This can include controls on the production and use of public data. In these politically constrained environments, the government or their allies may own the largest media outlets, and governments and businesses can be reluctant to advertise in independent media outlets.

Sudden regime change can also limit access to information. Military coups in an unprecedented number of countries in recent years, or armed conflict, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, can lead to the tightening of laws and repression, destruction of media infrastructure, economic collapse which undermines the economic viability of media, and even the killing or exile of journalists. Regime changes result in significant reversals in the capacity of public interest media and in the integrity of the information ecosystems developed over previous decades, such as 20 years of media investments in Afghanistan prior to August 2021 and the return of the Taliban.

Global tech platforms (such as Meta, Google, YouTube, TikTok) have transformed the information environment. There are claims that these platforms are insufficiently regulated in the United States (US) and European Union (EU), with inadequate content moderation, and that they have enabled the spread of online violence and harassment (especially against women and minorities). Tech platforms have also facilitated the rise of 'influence operations' (propaganda, disinformation and online harassment campaigns – by foreign or domestic actors – making use of the characteristics of social platforms to

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[10] Radsch, C (2023) URGENT: Understanding and Responding to Global Emerging News Threats, Internews [link].

[11] V-Dem Institute (2023) Democracy Report 2023: Defiance in the Face of Autocratization [link].

influence public opinion, including during elections or referendums). Fact-checking and other countering disinformation efforts have grown in response to these trends. In some countries, tech platform regulations have been used by authoritarian governments to shut down media outlets: rules meant to protect digital privacy are used instead to censor investigative journalists and take down content, while media outlets do not have the financial and legal expertise to seek recourse.

Collapsing business models and autocratic investment undermine the viability of media. The traditional business model of independent media around the world is becoming less viable as advertising revenue has migrated to major tech platforms. Traditional and social media are less able to monetize their online platforms (for example, due to currency fluctuations, non convertible currencies, lack of credit card payment facilities and the absence of staff with relevant skills). Authoritarian governments have increased their financial investments in order to co-opt independent media in their own interests and thereby neutralise democratic accountability and control information narratives.

The 'platformatisation' of the information environment can have both positive and negative effects. The penetration of digital (social media and messaging) platforms, such as WhatsApp, can enable independent media to survive and reach new audiences, but also makes them vulnerable to the platform's specific technology, such as Artificial Intelligence and algorithms, and content moderation rules. This is also associated with a potential decline in the quality of journalism, as 'click-bait' sensational stories can attract more audiences than public interest reporting.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these trends, which UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, in supporting the creation of a new International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM), acknowledged as a potential "media extinction event". In addition to mis- or disinformation around the virus and vaccines, thousands of media outlets closed down or moved entirely online. Governments introduced new repressive measures which constrained the activities of journalists. The legacy of the pandemic remains visible today.[12]

These trends make 'news deserts' harder to combat. In geographical areas that are no longer served by traditional media, whole communities are deprived of information most relevant to people's daily lives. Those living outside the capital city, women, youth, refugees or other marginalised communities are particularly affected.

The integrity of the information environment is also undermined by large amounts invested in global disinformation by some governments.[13] The strategies used by Russia are well documented, and go beyond targeting governments in the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact region, to undermining trust in the EU, disrupting COVID-19 responses or influencing elections. Traditional Russian pro-government media have a global reach. Online Russian-sponsored activities include paid internet trolls (people who put manipulative and provocative messages on social media or websites through fake accounts).[14] Since 2022, Russia has been waging an information war against Ukraine, especially online, for example through falsely claiming that neo-Nazis are part of the

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[12] Economist Impact (2021) Breaking news: the economic impact of Covid-19 on the global news media industry [link].

[13] The exact amounts are difficult to confirm, but existing analyses point to substantial and consistent investments.

[14] Legucka, A (2020) Russia's long-term campaign of disinformation in Europe, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [link].

Ukrainian government.[15] The People's Republic of China (PRC) reportedly has spent billions in recent years "to exert control over the narratives in the global information space through advancing false or biased pro-PRC content and suppressing critical voice". Strategies include propaganda and censorship (for example by purchasing foreign media outlets), digital authoritarianism (exporting surveillance technologies, promoting authoritarian norms for digital governance), exploiting international organisations and bilateral partnerships to amplify its preferred narrative (e.g. regarding Taiwan or supporting Russian messages on the war in Ukraine), co-opting influential international voices or pressurising individuals and organisations through threats and punishments; and controlling Chinese-language media.[16] In addition, TikTok, a highly popular platform among youths across the globe, is a Chinese company, making it " extremely vulnerable to China's Communist Party demands".[17]

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[15] OECD (2022) Disinformation and Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine: threats and governance responses [link].

[16] Global Engagement Center (2023) How The People's Republic of China seeks to reshape the global information environment', US Department of State [link].

[17] Wang, Y (2023) The Problem with TikTok's Claim of Independence from Beijing, Human Rights Watch [link].

3. Trends and dynamics in ODA

3.1.   Methodology

The quantitative analysis is based on the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activities data.[18] Data for five purpose codes using the last year of available data (disbursements in USD in millions, at 2021 constant prices) were analysed:

- **Media and free flow of information (15153)**: Activities that support free and uncensored flow of information on public issues; activities that increase the editorial and technical skills and the integrity of the print and broadcast media, e.g. training of journalists.
- **Communications policy and administrative management (22010)**: Communications sector policy, planning and programmes; institution capacity building and advice; including postal services development; unspecified communications activities.
- **Telecommunications (22020)**: Telephone networks, telecommunication satellites, earth stations.
- **Radio/television/print media (22030):** Radio and TV links, equipment; newspapers; printing and publishing.
- **Information and communication technology (ICT) (22040):** Computer hardware and software; internet access; IT training.

Traditionally GovNet had a narrower focus on the "Media and free flow of information" purpose code. The inclusion of four other purpose codes related to the information environment is a first attempt to broaden the scope of analysis.

ODA for public broadcasting corporations from Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and France was manually removed from the CRS dataset.[19] ODA funding for international public broadcasters (mainly Deutsche Welle and BBC World Service), constitutes a large share of ODA to media and the information environment (32% overall, and 46% of DAC disbursements 2016-2021) for 'media and free flow of information' though they are not primarily media development interventions.

As there is no separate code or marker, it was not possible to identify ODA for 'communications for development'. Such programmes use the media to communicate specific messages (e.g. public health campaigns) but are not always aimed at strengthening media and the information environment. They are also sometimes reported under other development sector codes.

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[18] https://stats.oecd.org.

[19] The quantitative data for France (and the exclusion of French ODA for international public broadcasting projects) have not yet been fact-checked by the French government.

3.2.   Trends for 2002-2021

ODA for media and the information environment has increased since 2002 but it remains a very small share of total ODA. ODA disbursements for support to media and the information environment increased from USD 347 million in 2002 to USD 1.2 billion in 2021 (see Figure 3.1). This represented 0.5% of total ODA in 2021, ranging between 0.35% and 0.68% of total ODA over the period. Even if ODA for international broadcasters is included (as in Figure 3.2), information environment ODA still only ranged between 0.4% to 0.8% of total ODA. The 2013 and 2019 peaks are due to large one-off increases in EU and World Bank funding related to infrastructure.

Funding for international broadcasters has inflated ODA disbursements. It represented 14% of total ODA for media and the information environment during 2002-2021, rising to 32% for the 2016-2021 period. This recent increase is explained in part by the UK government's decision to fund the BBC World Service through ODA since 2016.[20]

Figure 3.1. Total ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2002-2021
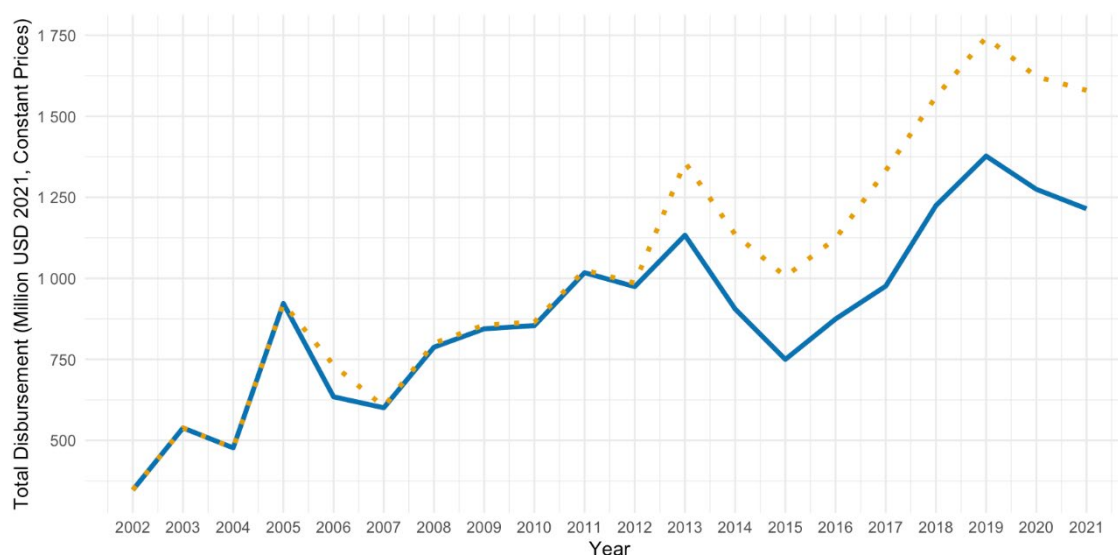
Note: Dotted line represents disbursements including international broadcasting.
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

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[20] HM Treasury and Department for International Development (2015) UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest [link].

Figure 3.2. Share of ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2002-2021 Relative to Total ODA
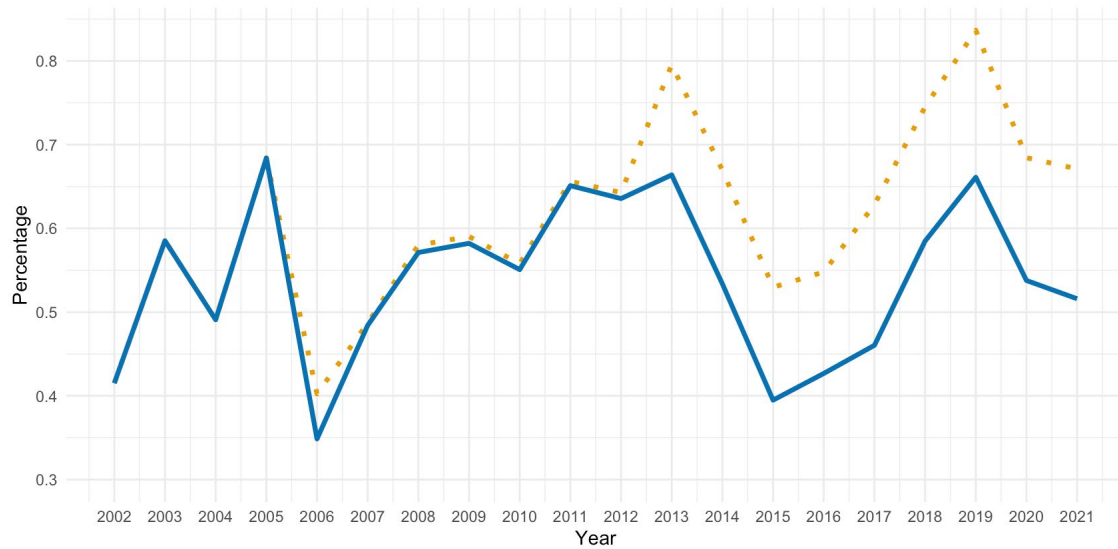
Note: Dotted line represents disbursements including international broadcasting.
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 3.3. DAC ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2002-2021
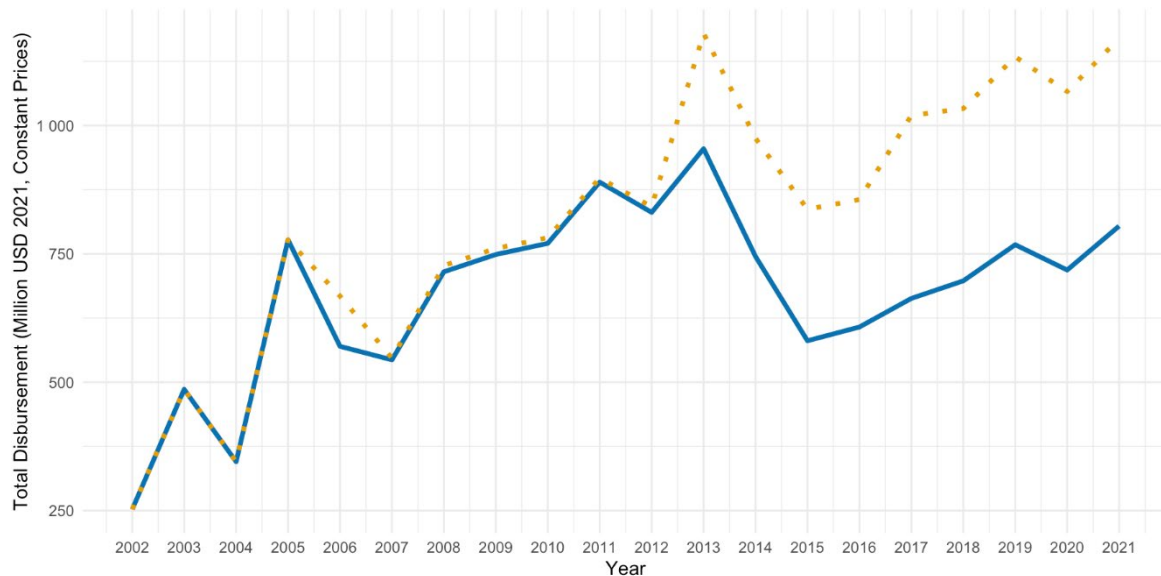
Note: Dotted line represents disbursements including international broadcasting.
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

To better understand the composition of ODA, two composite categories were created:

- **Media and information:** purpose codes "15153" (Media and free flow of information), "22010" (Communications policy and administrative management), and "22030" (Radio/television/print). This category refers to different aspects of

the information environment, including media sector development, with the exception of physical infrastructure.

- **Infrastructure**: purpose codes "22020" (Telecommunications) and "22040" (Information and communication technology). This refers to infrastructure such as broadband or for mobile telephony expansion.

Despite the mounting challenges described in section 2, support for media and information fluctuated around USD 500 million per year, since 2008 (in blue in Figures 3.4 and 3.5) representing a mere 0.24% of total ODA in 2021.[21] By contrast, funding for infrastructure has increased significantly since 2002, due to the growth in ICT investments and the digital transition (in green in Figures 3.4 and 3.5).

Figure 3.4. Distribution of Total ODA for Media and the Information Environment by Purpose Codes 2002-2021
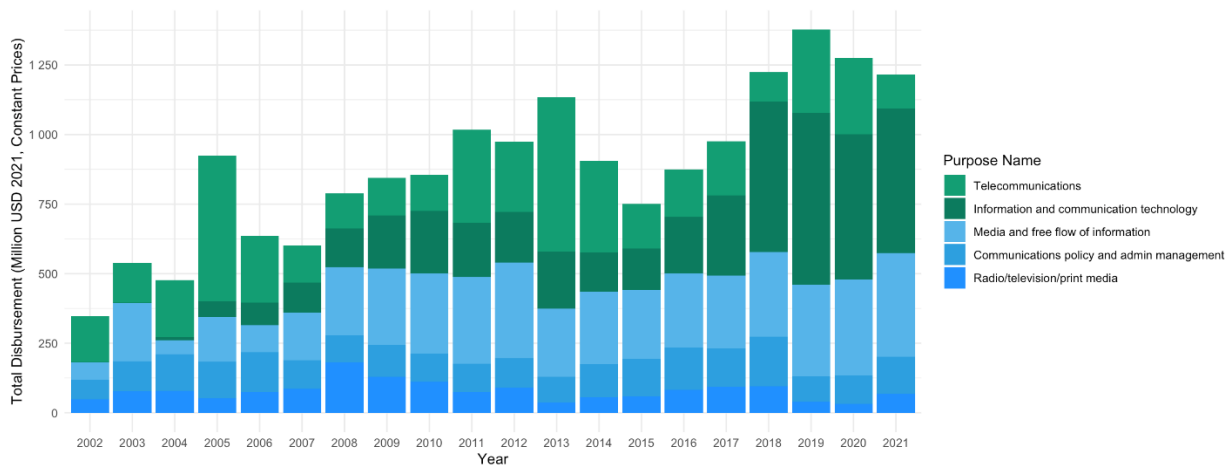
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

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[21] The 2024 CIMA study, which uses a narrower definition of media assistance (for example excluding public service messaging or public diplomacy), found a similar level over the 2010-2019 period.

Figure 3.5. Total ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2002-2021 by Categories

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

3.3.   Trends for 2016-2021

To understand better recent developments, the rest of the analysis focuses on the last five years of available CRS data. Over 2016-2021, ODA disbursements for media and the information environment totalled USD 6.92 billion, with USD 3.86 billion for infrastructure and USD 3.1 billion for media and information. (See Annex C for more details on individual agencies).

The World Bank is by far the largest overall funder, with USD 2.2 billion or 32% of total ODA to media and the information environment (Figure 3.6). This was approximately 16 times more than the next non DAC multilateral funder, UNICEF, and Türkiye, the top non DAC bilateral funder. The majority (88%) of World Bank International Development Association funding is for infrastructure, delivered through partner governments. Funding classified as media support is usually not a standalone media programme, but a component of a World Bank operation, for example on access to data for decision-making.

The EU institutions are the largest DAC donor for media and the information environment, with a steady increase since 2016, and with around half this expenditure going to infrastructure. Only two out of the top ten DAC donors have reduced their disbursements since 2016, Japan and Korea. Expenditure from the US and Sweden is almost entirely for media and information, whereas expenditure from Korea and Australia is almost exclusively for infrastructure with a significant decline in 2019 and 2020 respectively. The UK, Norway, Germany and France have increased their infrastructure investments in recent years but more funding continues to go to media and information (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.6. Top DAC and non-DAC Donors 2016-2021
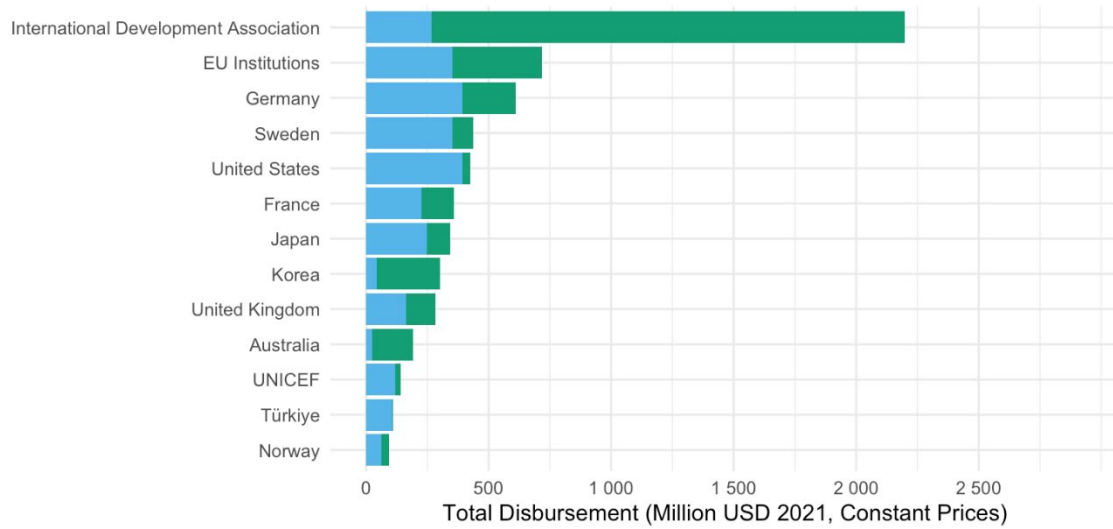
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 3.7. Overview of Top DAC Members' ODA for Media and the Information Environment by Categories 2016-2021
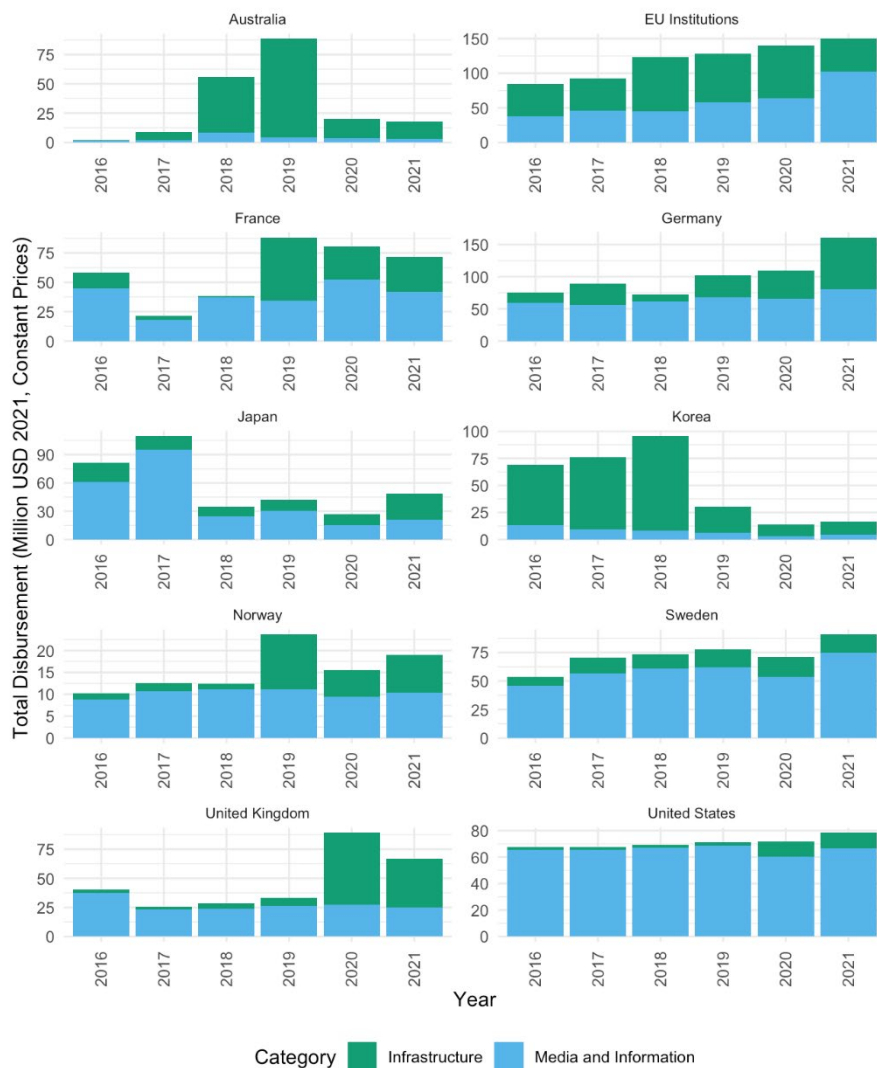
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Sub-Saharan Africa is the largest regional recipient (USD 2.6 billion, representing 38% of total 2016-2021 expenditure), with three quarters allocated to infrastructure. Excluding regional and unspecified programmes[22], South and Central Asia and Europe are the second and third largest regions, with Europe the second region for media and information (USD 598 million). Six of the top ten recipient countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ukraine is by far the largest recipient of media and information support (USD 115 million between 2016-2021), followed by Myanmar and Ghana. This is illustrated in Figure 3.8 below. The left-hand side of Figure 3.8 indicates the top regional recipients of ODA for media and the

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[22] The proportion of ODA reported as 'regional and unspecified' is unusually high compared to other development sectors, particularly for the 'media and free flow of information' purpose code. 'Regional and unspecified' means that programmes cannot be linked to one particular geographical region and it is therefore a separate category.

information environment (country programmes, regional programmes, regional or bilateral unspecified programmes). The right-hand side indicates the top recipient countries (excluding countries that are part of regional programmes or programmes with no country focus and/or regional and unspecified).

Figure 3.8. Top Recipients of ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2016-2021 (Country)
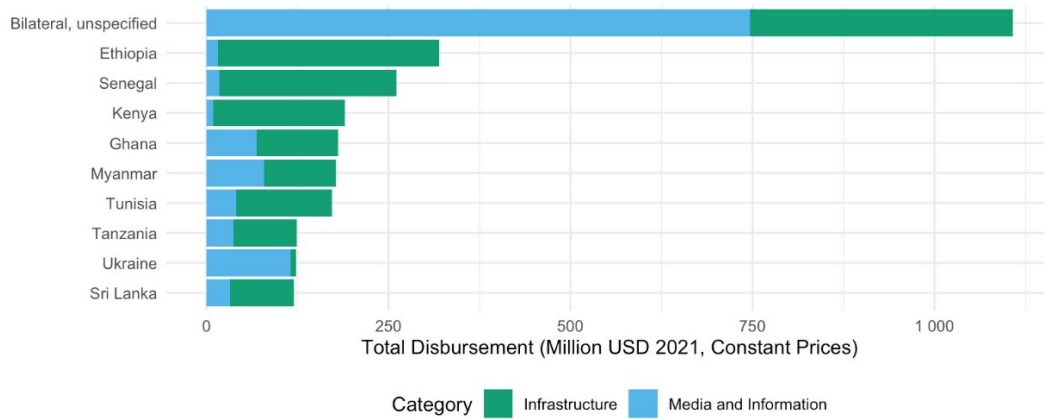
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 3.9. Top Recipients of ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2016-2021 (Region)
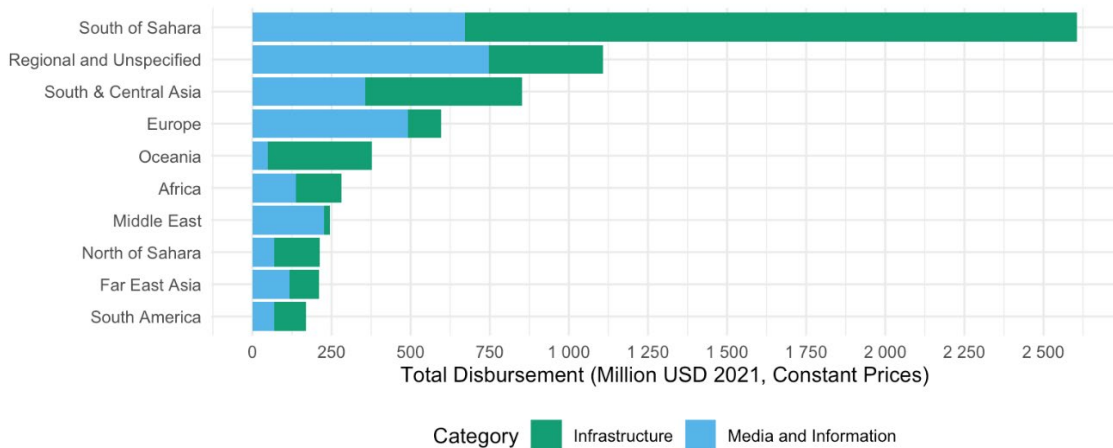
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Only up to 8% (or USD 100 million) of ODA for media and the information environment directly supports media organisations in recipient countries. There is no DAC delivery channel code which would capture this. This estimate is based on the sum of funding directly received by private sector organisations (USD 459 million), NGOs (USD 140 million), and public corporations (USD 1.7 million) in recipient countries between 2016-2021 (not all of which are public interest media organisations). This

represents 0.16% as a share of total ODA, or 0.1% of total ODA if infrastructure is excluded, and only 0.08% of total ODA if only the 'media and free flow of information' code is used (see Figures 3.9).

41% of ODA for media and the information environment is delivered directly to recipient governments, including loans for infrastructure, reflecting the high proportion of World Bank funding for infrastructure. 'Media and free flow of information' is the only code where recipient governments are not the main delivery channel and where there is a much greater diversity of recipients, in particular public corporations and international or donor countries NGOs. Figure 3.10 shows the delivery channels for the 'media and free flow of information' purpose code, which corresponds to 27% of all ODA for media and the information environment.

Funding delivered through donor country-based organisations (such as central government, public corporations or NGOs) represents 27% of the total. Looking at the type of delivery channel regardless of location, funding to recipient or donor governments and public corporations dominate at 57%. Only 15% of funding is delivered through NGOs, universities or research organisations (whether international, in recipients or in donor countries), and 16% to the private sector.

Figure 3.10. Delivery Channel Categories: ODA for Media and the Information Environment 2016-2021[23]
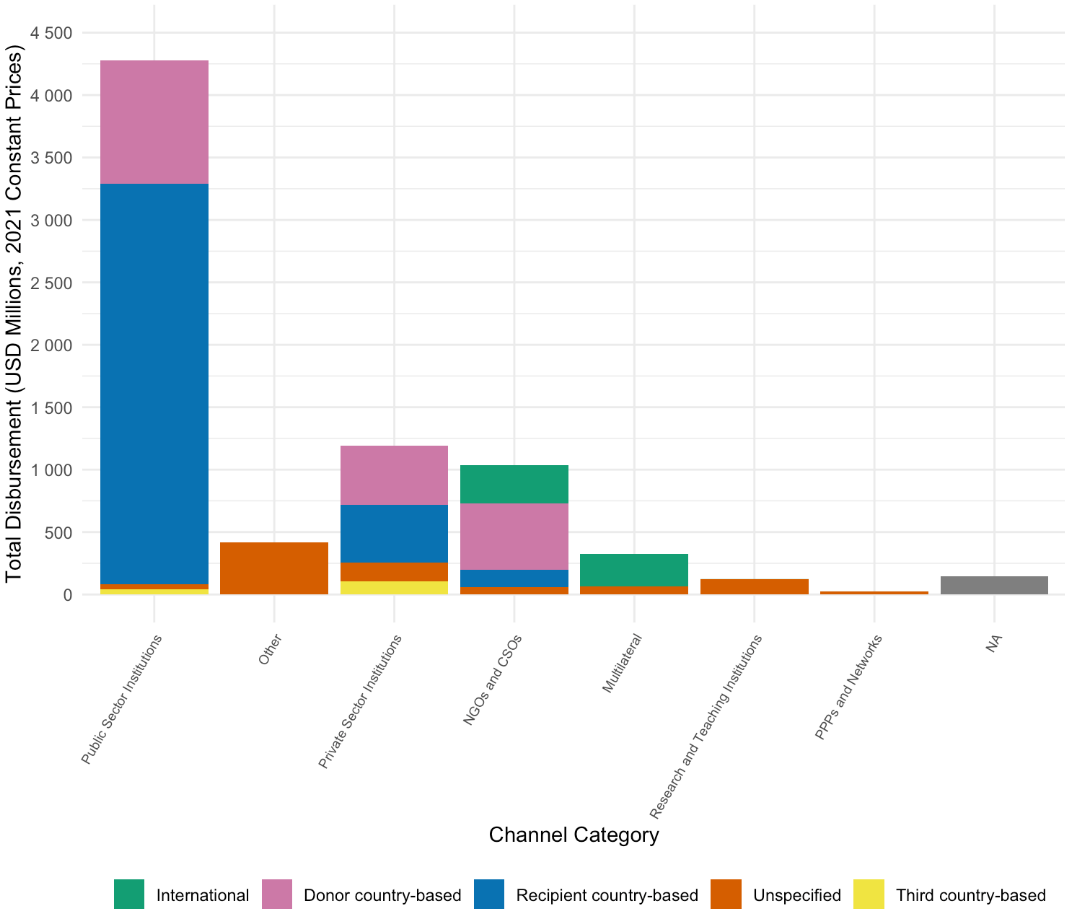
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

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[23] Figures 3.9 and 3.10 illustrate the delivery channel categories' distribution of 2016-2021 ODA for media and the information environment. Delivery channels were categorised into five groups based on their reported channel codes: "International," "Donor-Country Based," "Recipient Country-Based," and "Third Country-Based". When a delivery channel's designation was not specified, it was classified as "Unspecified".

Figure 3.10. Delivery Channel Categories: ODA for Media and Free Flow of Information Purpose Code 2016-2021
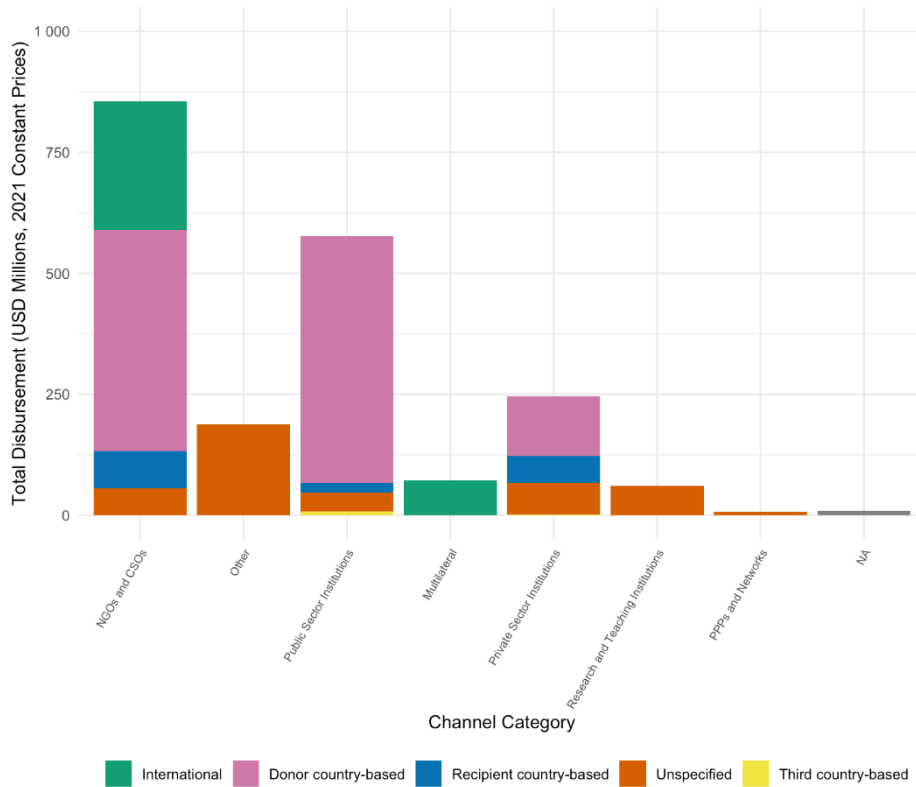
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Philanthropic funding for media and the information environment was USD 517 million between 2016 and 2019, a fraction of official funding. Funding by philanthropic organisations which report to the DAC amounted to $ 412 million for media and information, and USD 104 million for infrastructure. The largest funders are Fundación Televisa (Mexico), which provides in-kind donations as part of a media conglomerate, followed by US-based foundations (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation and Open Societies Foundation). Latin America and the Caribbean is the largest recipient region given the scale of Fundación Televisa donations.[24] A forthcoming study on philanthropic funding by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative will provide up to date data and analysis.

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[24] OECD Centre on Philanthropy (2023) Private Philanthropy for Development: how does philanthropy contribute to media and development [link].

4. Support to media and the information environment: the how and what

4.1. Introduction

This section of the report is based on interviews with development partners and independent experts, and a review of official policies, strategies, guidance and lessons learned documents.

Support to media and the information environment falls within three main policy areas for development partners assistance:

1. **Governance, conflict and fragility**: freedom of expression (human rights approach), media sector development, citizens' access to information and government transparency, digital democracy/internet freedoms, e-government systems and processes, media for governance and accountability (e.g. the role of media in elections), media for peacebuilding (e.g. the role of media in social cohesion). This has been the main focus of the mapping.

2. **Digital transformation and physical infrastructure**: digital inclusion, tech innovations, ICT infrastructure (telephone, broadband), telecoms regulations. This mapping was unable to review such assistance as it was not possible to obtain enough interviews with relevant leads in development partners' organisations.

3. **Media and other channels to disseminate information on specific development objectives**: this broad category can include communication for development designed to encourage changes in behaviours or shifts in social norms to advance health, environmental or other development objectives with the aim of empowering or advancing the interests of specific communities. It can also include strategic communication programmes to disseminate information about the priorities and interests of development partners. This study did not review such assistance, with the exception of two programmes included in the sample (see the next section 5).

4.2. Governance policies and strategies

Most development partners interviewed have made high-level diplomatic or development statements about the importance of media and the integrity of the information environment. Most of their global media and information policies or strategies are found either within overall foreign policy or development strategies or within their democracy and human rights policies. For example:

- **JICA's** global agenda includes media under its governance strategy. It is one of four themes under rule of law, covering (i) strengthening functions of public broadcasting and (ii) media-related policies and institutions that serve as the foundation for fair, neutral, and accurate reporting [link].

- **Sweden's** 2018-2022 global thematic development cooperation strategy for human rights, democracy and the rule of law includes a standalone objective on freedom of expression [link]. The current and previous (2016-2023) global Swedish policy framework for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance also make commitments on freedom of expression, free and independent media and a free, open and safe internet. [link].

- The **US** 2022 National Security Strategy prioritises action to support democracy and human rights, including media and the integrity of the information environment, as consistent with US values and to promote global peace, security, and prosperity [link]. The 2021 Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal

boosted funding for free and independent media, and for advancing technology for democracy, such as Open, Interoperable, Reliable, and Secure Internet [link].

Very few development partners have dedicated media policies or strategies. Examples include:

- **United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation** (UNESCO), the UN lead agency for communication and information, which is responsible for international norms and conventions [link].

- **Norway** has published a freedom of expression strategy for both foreign policy and development (2016, updated in 2021 [link], whose implementation is currently being assessed).

- Indicating a strengthened attention to media in recent years, **France** published in November 2023 a Road map on media and development (2023-2027) [link].

Traditional policy priorities listed in those documents include:

- **Freedom of expression** and the protection of journalists (e.g. physical safety, online security training, assistance to journalists in exile)

- **Capacity development** of journalists and media outlets (e.g. training of journalists, journalism schools/universities, economic viability of media outlets, organisational development of public broadcasters and independent media, transition to online formats, editorial and management systems)

- **Citizens' access to information** (e.g. media and information literacy, open government, right to information)

- **Enabling environment** (e.g. laws, regulations, policies to protect freedom of expression and govern information environment more generally)

More recent priorities include:

- Greater attention to **business models and media viability**, and other threats posed by tech platforms and 'media extinction events'. This was a long-standing tradition of US assistance, but it is now increasingly recognised by other development partners.

- **Countering dis- or misinformation** (e.g. training of youth, teachers and local officials in critical thinking, fact-checkers, the role of trusted independent media as part of response, as well as strategic communications and public diplomacy activities). This is an area where development partners have to combine their security, diplomatic and development resources, and where they are developing expertise.

- **Human rights approach to digital** (open, free, secure internet; journalists online protection/digital security). This is an extension of a human rights-based approach to digital development, paying attention to online rights and obligations. Some interviews noted a potential tension within the field of digital governance, as human rights may be a less mainstreamed concern in ICT and infrastructure.

Some themes are less recurrent:

- Freedom of expression in **culture and arts** is not always included in policies and programmes towards media and the information environment. Exceptions include France, Norway and Sweden.

- **E-government** is not always associated with the free flow of information. The actual delivery of services through digital platforms is of a different nature, but e-government policies, systems and processes enhance government transparency and accountability, and therefore citizens' access to and use of information. They are an important part of the information environment.

- As explored below, policies and strategies on **digital transformation and infrastructure** are often separate from governance priorities which cover media and the wider information environment.

There is a degree of specialisation across agencies. Some development partners have adopted a specific focus or developed areas of expertise over time. This is in part related to the main delivery modality which they adopt. Some examples are:

- Some development partners mostly focus on **ICT infrastructure**, for example the World Bank, whose Articles of Agreement limit its ability to address what can be perceived as more political themes.

- **JICA** has prioritised support for the transition of state-owned broadcasters into independent **public broadcasters**, with current support to Ukraine, Kosovo, South Sudan, and (until 2021) Myanmar. It mostly draws on the technical expertise of Japan's public broadcaster (NHK).

- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has a strategic partnership with the **Deutsche Welle Akademie** (DWA) since 2013, which receives 80% of a dedicated federal budget line for freedom of expression. DWA has developed significant expertise on **media sector development**, including on the viability of media.

- The UK's single largest investment focused on **media for development** through a GBP 90 million (2011-2017) global grant from the then Department for International Development (DFID) to **BBC Media Action** (BBCMA), the BBC's international charity. The grant focused on media for governance, health and resilience. In recent years, with the merger of DFID with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in 2020, the focus of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has diversified, spanning media freedom, media sector development, media for development, and digital transformation.

- **Baltic countries**, such as Estonia and Lithuania, are sharing their domestic expertise with countries in their region and beyond, on **countering disinformation**. Separately, Estonia is also sharing expertise on **e-governance**, as a country which made rapid progress in this area. Information environment support represents a higher proportion of ODA for these countries than the global average, for example 4.2% of Estonia's ODA expenditure for 2016-2021, compared to 0.5% globally.

- **The historic divergence between support for private or public sector media seems to be coming to an end**. The US had traditionally supported the financial sustainability of independent media, while European and Japanese agencies prioritised public service broadcasters. All development partners now recognise the threat to independent media's viability as private funding shifts to global online

platforms, public broadcasters remain underfunded and finding alternative sources of funding in low-income countries is very difficult.

4.3.   Operationalisation of policies and strategies

Development partners do not resource to the same extent the operationalisation of their high-level commitments on media and information integrity, in terms of funding, staffing and technical guidance. In addition, the decentralised nature of many development ministries and agencies can make it challenging to carry through central priorities.

Funding tends not to be earmarked for media and the information environment. Germany is an exception with a parliamentary budget allocation to BMZ of EUR 30 million annually since 2013 for media sector development, as is the 2021 US Presidential Initiative. More often, financial resources may come from human rights and democracy budget lines (e.g. EU, UK, Norway), or from regional or bilateral allocations based on regional or country strategies.

Technical expertise is limited; even the largest funders only have a couple of technical experts at headquarters. For example, while the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) is one of the top funders, it does not have a dedicated person overseeing its media portfolio, whereas it had two media experts ten years ago. Instead, two democracy advisers include freedom of expression within their mandates and there is one dedicated expert on freedom of expression and ICT. Most agencies or ministries have one to two media experts or media lead centrally, whether they are some of the largest spenders (BMZ, JICA, or Norway's development cooperation agency, Norad) or outside the top ten (such as Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC, or the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP). Exceptions include France, with six staff in the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs' media and culture team, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with three media experts in the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance. In addition, ministries and agencies can have dedicated countering disinformation teams with media expertise, such as the EU's East Stratcom Task Force, or the US Global Engagement Center which can use ODA.[25]

In terms of technical advice, there are a few dedicated guidance documents to assist front line staff develop or manage relevant programmes. The following ones tend not to adopt a wider 'information environment' approach:

- **SDC** (2020) SDC Guidelines for Media Assistance [link].

- **FCDO** (2020) Media Freedom Diagnostic Tool (internal).

- **USAID** (2021) Media for Democracy Assessment Tool [link].

- **Sida** (2010) guidelines for media development [link] have not been updated, but Sida has published a series of technical notes on different aspects of digital security, including in 2022 on human rights-based approach to digitalisation [link].

- Guidance on addressing dis- or misinformation has been published by **UNDP** in 2022 [link] and by **USAID** in 2023 [link], using a wider information integrity lens.

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[25] This finding is based on interviewees' best assessments of full time equivalent (FTE) staff in their ministries or agencies. It does not include staff working on central policy or programmes on mis/disinformation, digitalisation or ICT infrastructure, nor staff working on regional or country programmes at headquarters or in the field who may have significant expertise.

Specialised organisations, such as UNESCO, DWA or BBCMA, have published numerous high quality guidance documents on media assistance, but they are not necessarily geared to advise the staff of development partners how to design, implement or monitor media and information environment programmes. They target practitioners, such as the **UNDP** (2015) media and elections guide [link].

In addition, some development partners can access technical expertise to design, manage or monitor programmes. For example, SDC staff can access the expertise of the Swiss NGO Fondation Hirondelle which collaborated with the Swiss agency to develop its guidelines and technical resources [link].

Overall, there is a mismatch between rhetoric and resource allocation. This is also the main finding of the 2024 CIMA study of donor assistance. In the context of increased authoritarianism and a reduction in media freedoms globally, diplomatic condemnation of violations of freedom of expression by Western Governments have become more frequent. This is visible in declarations and policy statements, such as from the 2021 Summit for Democracy. However, these statements are not often matched by a significant increase in financial or human resources. While eight of the top ten DAC funders have increased their expenditure for overall media and the information environment since 2016 (with only Japan and Korea cutting their expenditure), when infrastructure investments are taken out, ODA for media has remained stable since 2008 at USD 500 million a year, despite the recent challenges reviewed in section 2, and their wider effects on governance and development.

There can also be a disconnect between diplomatic visibility and funding. Some of the governments active in international platforms are not among the top funders, while some development partners do not seem to be leveraging the political influence their large funding could generate. For example, Sweden is the third DAC funder but Sida is not as active as other bilateral actors internationally and it has not synthesised and disseminated the lessons from its systematic programme evaluations, including the value added of its core funding approach. In contrast, Switzerland is not a top ten DAC funder, but SDC has been paying more attention to media as a governance issue as part of its response to authoritarianism, and developed technical resources for its staff.

4.4.   Media and information as both a development and diplomatic priority

Public interest media, and information environment integrity, are relevant for both foreign policy and development. Interviews illustrated how they can be mutually reinforcing, but that there were differences in programming approaches.

Development approaches are more likely to consider the longer-term development of the sector, including the need for regulation or financial stability, as well as funding for infrastructure investments. Development agencies fund longer term and larger scale programmes, including media/digital for development or infrastructure interventions, which can contribute to their economic development, climate change or health objectives.

Diplomatic approaches tend to stress democracy and human rights dimensions, **as well as geo-strategic concerns** (such as dis- or misinformation, especially in the European Neighbourhood). Projects tend to be shorter term, with smaller budgets and targeted at a specific organisation. These projects can also cover strategic communications or public diplomacy, to extend soft power and promote values. For example, the EU's strategic communications to promote EU values and EU accession uses 'blended finance' including ODA and non ODA resources.

Box 4.1. Combining diplomatic and development approaches in the UK approach

In 2023, the UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) reviewed UK Aid's approach to democracy and human rights (2015-2021). It noted how the creation of FCDO, a combined development and diplomacy ministry, had the potential to lead to a more coherent approach, and encouraged FCDO to publish a strategy to that effect.

ICAI found that UK Aid had achieved some encouraging results on media, such as improving the representation of excluded groups in Pakistan or testing sustainable funding models for media outlets in Serbia. The UK had contributed to the creation of new global platforms, such as the Open Government Partnership and the Media Freedom Coalition, where diplomatic initiatives and development funding came together. ICAI suggested that programmes would benefit from a more systematic approach combining the protection of media freedoms in the short term (a diplomatic priority) with helping the media sector develop over the longer term (a development priority).

ICAI noted that the UK government could, at times, find it challenging to assist journalists, human rights defenders and CSOs under threat from government repression – in part because of fear of damaging its relationships with partner country governments, and to avoid causing harm to those at risk. UK Aid also preferred funding specific activities rather than providing core funding, though the latter could be useful in helping organisations withstand pressure from their governments.

The 2023 UK International Development White Paper [link] set out new commitments on support to media and FCDO is due to publish an Open Society and Human Rights Strategy in 2024 which will set out how it combines diplomatic and development resources to achieve its objectives, including on media.

Source: ICAI (2023) The UK's approach to democracy and human rights [link]

There has been an increasing number of global initiatives that address different aspects of the information agenda. They include co-funding initiatives, pooling together financial resources from different governments towards existing or new international organisations or programmes, such as UNESCO, the UN lead agency on this agenda; international or regional norm setting initiatives, such as on the regulation of tech companies or artificial intelligence; diplomatic initiatives to leverage the influence of like-minded governments at international, regional or country levels, for example in response to threats faced by journalists or to promote democracy; or thematic networks to bring together expertise on targeted issues, such as disinformation or digital governance. While these initiatives are of a different nature, they often combine both financial and diplomatic dimensions. Examples provided in interviews include (in chronological order):

- **UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issues of Impunity** (2012) [link] and the associated **Global Media Defence Fund** (2020) [link]. The Plan of Action aims to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers. It was the first UN initiative on these issues, under UNESCO's leadership, and in collaboration with UN bodies, national authorities, media and CSOs. The Plan is anchored on the three pillars of prevention, protection, and prosecution of the crimes against journalists and promotes a safer environment for journalists and

media workers through six key approaches (awareness raising, standard setting and policy making, monitoring and reporting, capacity building, academic research, and coalition building). Since 2020, the Global Media Defence Fund has supported over 80 projects around the globe involving nearly 3,000 journalists, 600 lawyers and 120 CSOs, and directly supporting over 1,000 cases of legal assistance provided to journalists in distress, over 70 instances of strategic litigation undertaken to contribute to standard-setting precedents in Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists, and over 150 investigations on crimes against journalists – among many other activities.[26]

- **International Forum on Information and Democracy** (2018) [link] and the **Journalism Trust Initiative** [link]. Reporters Sans Frontières and France launched the Information and Democracy Initiative during the 2018 UN General Assembly which led to a new Partnership and a Declaration endorsed by 51 countries which defines the principles of the global communication and information space and calls for structuring platforms to implement them. The objective is to implement Article 19 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in the digital era. A Forum brings together states, civil society, media and digital platforms to discuss regulation and self-regulation solutions to ensure democratic safeguards in the digital era [link]. In addition, Reporters Sans Frontières and France have set up the Journalism Trust Initiative which is developing an international norm for media with a certification process, in order to facilitate fundraising.

- **Media Freedom Coalition** (2019) [link]. The MFC was established in July 2019 at the Global Conference for Media Freedom and now comprises 50 member states from six continents. MFC member states work closely with civil society (through the Consultative Network), legal experts (through the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom) and other international bodies such as UNESCO, as well as journalists and media workers themselves. The MFC advocates for media freedom through a combination of advocacy, diplomatic interventions, encouraging and supporting legal reforms, international events, and making funds available for media freedom initiatives.

- **International Fund for Public Interest Media** (IFPIM), (2022) [link]. The International Fund is a major new, independent multilateral fund designed to scale up financial support to independent media in low and middle income settings and to work over the long term to support system wide solutions to the market and financial challenges confronting public interest media. IFPIM has raised more than USD 50 million and has been registered in France with a status akin to that of an international organisation. It is co-chaired by Nobel Laureate Marisa Ressa and the CEO of CNN (and formerly of the BBC and New York Times) Mark Thompson.

- **GovNet Media Principles** (2023) [link]. In parallel to this mapping study, GovNet is leading a consultation on draft principles on 'relevant and effective support to the media and the information environment'.

There is a clear potential for these global initiatives to become collectively more effective. While most initiatives have usefully raised awareness, mobilised funding or coordinated new joint actions, most interviewees also raised several concerns. Some initiatives have been evaluated, but this is not the case for all of them, and funders did not

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[26] UNESCO (2022) Outcome of the Regional and Thematic Consultations to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity [link].

always find it easy to see their results. Due to the number of initiatives, it was often difficult for governments or CSOs to engage in all of them (at political or technical levels, or through funding), even when the agenda was a recognised priority. Development officials are not always aware of global initiatives in which their diplomatic counterparts are involved. At times, there was also a perception of rivalry between some of the global initiatives on related themes. By contrast, some of those directly involved in these global initiatives considered that they express an increasingly concerted and joined up international response and that they are complementary and coordinated.

4.5. Coordination between the governance and infrastructure elements of the information environment

To follow the spirit of the information environment approach set out in the introduction, the mapping included the digital transformation and infrastructure elements of the information environment.

However, while GovNet has ready access to governance leads, it proved much more challenging to interview digital transformation and infrastructure leads. They belonged to other teams in different departments within an agency (such as the Digital Development Global Practice in the World Bank, [link]) or even entirely separate agencies, such as the activities of the Agence Française de Développement [link] rather than the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs or Canal France International in France, or British Investment International [link] rather than FCDO in the UK.

Some development partners prioritise digital transformation and data environments over other aspects of the information environment, in particular the World Bank, Korea and Australia. These priorities can include funding public digital infrastructure, broadband connectivity, internet regulation, cybersecurity and digital skills initiatives. They can also promote the availability, integrity and more equal use of data such as recommended in the World Development Report 2021 *Data for Better Lives* [link]. This group of development partners appear to keep their distance from the more political aspects of the agenda, such as public interest media. For example, they may prefer to refer to 'data' which informs decision-making rather than to 'information' which has a broader scope.

Digital governance and digital democracy were the main areas of overlap and coordination between the governance and digital transformation agendas. Development partners have recognised the importance of regulating the digital sphere, and some are extending human rights priorities online, with a call for an internet that is open, interoperable, and respecting democracy. Some development partners are making explicit efforts to link these digital and democracy agendas through targeted new programmes, as summarised in box 4.2.

There is a real risk associated with such a separation between governance and infrastructure policy and programmes. Investments in physical infrastructure (e.g. for broadband or mobile networks) have the potential to increase access and use of information, with associated benefits (e.g. in terms of access to services or job creation). However, this infrastructure can also be used for surveillance, disinformation or population control. Corruption risks are also high in infrastructure projects. In the worst-case scenario, physical infrastructure investments, and associated policy and technical advice, could go against the funders' own governance objectives in the same country. For example, funding for long-term digital infrastructure improvements could increase a state's capacity for surveillance and disinformation which is a significant risk given the global democratic roll-back. For

example, a study on Myanmar concludes that "the military is well-positioned to establish a digital dictatorship" because of its control over digital infrastructure.[27]

A broader information environment approach has the potential to manage such risks, if policies and programmes are well coordinated as part of a joint strategy. For example, it would require much more systematic and effective mainstreaming of transparency, accountability, and participation principles and human rights standards (such as on freedom of expression) in digital infrastructure interventions. However, as these are managed by different teams or agencies, sometimes at arms-length from the lead ministry, joined up country strategies across infrastructure and other aspects of the information environment appear challenging. Almost all interviewees recognised poor joined up thinking or coordination was a weakness, but workloads as well as the different timeframes and scale of interventions made regular coordination or human rights assessments challenging (e.g. infrastructure programmes operate on longer time scales, with much larger budgets and different objectives, such as economic growth).

Box 4.2. Digital Democracy Initiatives

The US and EU have both identified the need to bring together democracy assistance and digital transformations. The **USAID Advancing Digital Democracy initiative** (budget, duration) will help convergence broadband expansion and democratic values [link]. It will address legal and regulatory issues, embed respect for human rights and democracy in tech designs, and facilitate mechanisms to hold government and tech companies to account on this agenda.

The **Denmark/EU Technology for Democracy Initiative** (EUR 51 million, 2023-2026) will support multi-stakeholder action coalitions to implement the Copenhagen Pledge on Tech for Democracy. These will bring together independent media, human rights and democracy defenders with governments, tech industry and multilateral organisations to deliver concrete solutions.

Source: Interviews, websites.

4.6. The value of an information environment approach

Interviewees were asked whether the 'information environment' or 'information ecosystems' was a lens used within their organisations, and if not, whether they saw the potential for its added value. Most interviewees agreed that there had been a tendency to focus interventions on journalists and media houses. They thought a holistic approach would be much more effective, including citizens' access to and use of information, the enabling media environment, the role of tech companies and funders within the system. There was some discussion as to whether physical infrastructure should be included, as it was seen as a non-governance agenda which would broaden the scope too much. However, there was acknowledgement of the risks when excluding the infrastructure dimensions of

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[27] Ag et al (2023) Public interest infrastructure: Digital alternatives in our data driven world and journalism's role in getting there, IMC [link], p37.

the information environment, such as unintended support for digital autocracy by agencies which focus on capital investments, as noted above.

The 'information environment' or 'information ecosystems' lens is, however, not yet widely used within agencies, nor systematically understood (especially in terms of how broadly they should be understood, and how positive characteristics, such as information integrity, should be defined). UNDP is an exception; it has been working since 2020 to promote healthier information ecosystems and greater societal resilience to information pollution. It has developed a new tool, iVerify, to combat information pollution during elections [link]. Seeing the world through the lens of how information is produced, flows across a system and is used or misused, requires a shift in mindset. To make progress, agreement on a definition as well as the policy and operational implications of an information environment approach is needed.

5. Results and impacts

5.1.   Overview

To obtain a more granular understanding of development partners' programmes, their results and emerging lessons, a case study approach was adopted. Independent evaluations or reviews from the development partners interviewed for their programmes in Ukraine, Western Balkans, Myanmar and Tanzania, were requested, as well as their main core funding or central programmes. Selection criteria were:

- A **range of countries which received the most assistance** across different regions. Sub-Saharan Africa is the top region across all purpose codes and Europe is the top region for media and free flow of information which was the focus of the evaluations.

- A **range of contexts** (improving and deteriorating freedom of expression, facing different types of dis- or misinformation, with different levels of capacity and prospects for economic viability for media outlets).

- A **range of aid modalities**, including core funding and peer to peer support. It was not possible to review both media sector and wider information environment programmes, as only evaluations related to **media programmes** were shared.

Ukraine was selected as the top recipient for media and information. **Myanmar and Tanzania** were included as they were among the top ten recipient countries across all the codes with opposed political trajectories during the review period. Some **Western Balkans** programmes were reviewed to capture the work of a wider range of development partners. Five global or **core funding programmes** from European donors were examined to identify lessons from these different modalities.

Overall, **25 programmes were reviewed** funded or co-funded by the EU, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the US. Programme implementers were international specialised media support organisations such as BBMA, CFI, DWA, Journalism Development Network, Media Institute Fojo, International Media Support (IMS), Internews, NHK (Japan's public service broadcaster), and UNESCO. They sometimes operated in partnership with international NGOs, such as FHI 360, to deliver programmes which included civil society, or with specialised IT or engineering companies. Some programmes had long suppliers chain, such as the UK FCDO which used two international private sector companies to manage programmes in Tanzania which included media as one of several partners, and through them funded BBC Media Action and local media organisations. Very few programmes had formal agreements with regional or local organisations to act as sub-contractors. The only local direct beneficiary was the Tanzanian recipient of Sida core funding, the Union of Tanzania Press Clubs.

The programmes for which evaluations or completion reports were received are summarised in Annex D. These cover most of the largest programmes in the three countries prioritised. Due to the sensitivity of programming in Ukraine and Myanmar (since 2021), there are no direct quotes from their evaluations and media partners in these countries are not named, unless the evaluations are in the public domain.

5.2. Relevance

Almost all the evaluations found that programmes were relevant given their global, regional or country contexts. They also responded well to some of the recent trends identified in previous sections, such as media viability, better use of online platforms or legal expertise to challenge government interference or repression, including online. When there had been major contextual changes, such as the war in Ukraine, the coup in Myanmar or Tanzania's evolving political environment, most programmes were successfully adjusted, either in terms of their objectives and activities (e.g. shifting to back up broadcasting capacity or journalists' safety, and reducing policy advocacy) or their partners (journalists, outlets or CSOs still willing to engage in reporting and advocacy).

Programmes often had to adjust their overoptimistic designs in these changing contexts. For example, USAID's Civil Society and Media Activity in Myanmar (2014-2018, USD 20 million) aimed to improve engagement between the public and the government by supporting local civil society and media organisations. As the political context worsened following the 2015 elections, recipients of public interest reporting grants "found it difficult to participate in uncensored public dialogue regarding democratic reforms or to attend related activities without fear of arrest". The Activity nonetheless supported the production of over 6,000 public interest reports, doubling its target, but reduced its efforts to influence the media environment.[28]

Relevance was lower for two programmes which were designed with insufficient consultations with local partners or inadequate needs assessments for the participants in trainings and other activities.

Only a couple of evaluations refer to programmes undertaking media ecosystems assessments which help situate them in the wider sector (e.g. USAID programmes in Myanmar and Tanzania). Apart from the Carnegie Ukraine emergency response project (see box 5.8), none assessed the wider information environment, and none made explicit links to wider digital transformation or ICT infrastructure objectives (even for development partners which funded these latter interventions in the same country).

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28 USAID (2017) Mid-term Performance Evaluation of USAID Burma Civil Society and Media Activity

Table 5.1. Case study country contexts and development partners' objectives

	Contexts (2016-2023)	Objectives
Myanmar	During Myanmar's period of democratisation (2008-2021), access to information improved, including through the use of mobile media and social networks. There were some efforts to change the legal and regulatory framework, with steps towards transforming the state-owned broadcaster. In February 2021, a military coup followed by repression led to thousands of journalists and activists going into exile or to opposition-held areas. The military regime is sustained by China and Russia; it censors independent media and uses disinformation to legitimise its rule. During the period, ethnic conflict has been associated with hate speech against minorities and censorship of media reporting on the conflict	During the first part of the period, development partners focused on media sector professionalization, transforming the state-owned media into a public interest broadcaster, and reducing hate speech and improving representation of minorities in the media. Following the coup, development partners have prioritised journalists' safety and assisted media in exile or in opposition area to move online and better understand their audiences
Tanzania	Under President Magufuli, laws and regulations were used to control media and civil society, which used self-censorship to avoid reprisals. He also undermined official statistics, with prison terms for officials who improperly released data and restrictions on independent data collection. The information environment started to improve in 2021under President Hassan with opportunities for civil society to influence changes to legal and policy frameworks related to media, communication and data.	During the period of political repression, development partners helped local media navigate restrictions in partnership with civil society, professionalise their operations, including by moving online and improving their business models, with a focus on community radios. Advocacy on legal, regulatory and policy reforms has increased since 2021.
Ukraine	The sector was dominated by oligarch-controlled private outlets and state-owned media. Since 2014, the government has improved the media environment with the creation of a new public broadcaster and greater transparency on media ownership. Over the period, there has been an improvement in media freedoms, with a more diverse media better able to understand audience needs. Russian disinformation intensified since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the military attack in 2022.	Throughout the period, development partners have aimed to improve the diversity and professionalism of public interest media, including of the new public service broadcaster and local media in the regions. Since February 2022, programmes have helped the media adapt to the war conditions. Countering Russian disinformation is another priority.
Western Balkans	The media environment is 'captured' by political or business elites who use media outlets to further their interests. Most governments have authoritarian inclinations and use their control of media outlets, internet or cable providers, government advertising and regulations to limit freedom of expression. There are massive investments from Russian and Chinese companies or their proxies disseminating disinformation.	Programmes focus on improving the financial viability of independent media, its capacity to resist political pressures, and to better represent youth and minorities. Regional programmes fund investigative journalism (on organised crime or corruption) or aim to counter disinformation.

Source: Based on reviewed programme evaluations

5.3. Effectiveness and impact

1.1.1. Measuring output, outcome and impact level results

All programmes were able to monitor and report on their activities and outputs but most programmes tended to generate poor quality outcome and impact data, often because of inadequate monitoring frameworks. The outcome and impact of capacity development programmes should be the easiest to evaluate, but this requires pre-training needs assessments and post-training follow-up, baseline and end of programme organisational assessments, and clear capacity development objectives, which were not always undertaken. Assessing the effectiveness of media literacy and counter-disinformation operations is particularly challenging because it requires measuring changes in beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, which only a few programmes assessed systematically. A frequent weakness in the evaluations reviewed was the absence of evidence for attribution or contribution claims, especially when numerous development partners operated in the same country or with the same partner organisations. Overall evaluations tended to have a positive bias, even when they were done independently, and this was taken into account in the synthesis of findings in this report. Guidance is available on how to evaluate media programmes, and it could be followed more systematically.[29]

Only a third of the programmes or their evaluations used a theory of change approach. While almost all the programmes had results frameworks, few used theories of change or regularly monitored and adapted their programme assumptions. Sida's theory-based evaluation of its three projects in Eastern Europe is an exception.

Only three programmes used an outcome-mapping monitoring and evaluation approach. This included Sida's support to the Union of Tanzania Press Clubs (UTPC) Strategic Plan (2016-2020). The transition away from a logical framework was well suited to Sida's core funding of the Strategic Plan but UTPC was not fully able to use the new methodology, which also had a substantive impact as it changed how UTPC prioritised its activities.

Some specialised media support organisations are undertaking more regular impact evaluations, and have in-house expertise. For example all long term BMZ-funded DWA projects undertake independent evaluations, and the summaries are published on its website [link]. CFI, as part of its transformation, is committed to undertaking impact evaluations once programmes have closed (see box 5.1). While some development partners commission regular performance and impact evaluations (such as USAID or Sida), the decentralised nature of these organisations can mean that learnings have not necessarily been synthesised and disseminated across the organisations or the wider development assistance community, to ensure feedback into policy and programmes.

No thematic evaluations of a development partner's entire media and information portfolio were received, nor assessments of the collective development partners' assistance to the same country (e.g. Myanmar, Tanzania or Ukraine) or to the same organisation (e.g. Ukraine's public service broadcaster). This is a missed learning opportunity across the media assistance community, on which GovNet members could act. The Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) International Media Policy and Advisory Centre [link] is an important initiative towards more effective and impactful sector support, and which makes evidence accessible to funders.

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[29] For example, Donnelly, K (2020) Decoding Media Impact: Insights, Advice and Recommendations, Media Impact Funders [link].

Box 5.1. Canal France International's transformation

Canal France International (CFI), created in 1989, traditionally produced radio and TV programmes which were broadcast across Francophone Africa. In 2015, the French government changed CFI's mandate, to transform it into an implementing organisation for media sector development and media for development programmes. CFI became a subsidiary company of France's international public service broadcaster, France Media Monde. An independent review assessed CFI's performance in 2020 and concluded that it had successfully implemented its strategic transformation.

CFI carries out the priorities of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, from which it received two thirds of its funding for 2015-2019. For example, most interventions are delivered in Africa and the Middle East in line with French development cooperation and diplomatic priorities. To diversify its funding base, CFI implements not only French government programmes, but also those of other development partners, such as the EU, and collaborates with other media support organisations, for example in the creation of Myanmar's first journalism school. CFI has also diversified its beneficiaries and the type of support it provides.

CFI's independent review encouraged the Ministry to produce a strategy for media and development, which was issued in 2023. It also recommended that CFI formalise its theory of change to demonstrate how it is contributing to the Ministry's priorities, and undertake more systematic monitoring and evaluation, including impact evaluations. With a view to strengthening the evidence base, in addition to final project evaluations, CFI now uses its own core budget to fund some impact evaluations after projects have closed.

Source: Mouterde, F et al (2020) Évaluation de l'action de CFI agence française d'aide au développement dans le domaine des médias (2015-2019) Planète Publique

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Outcomes and impacts from case studies

This section summarises some of the most significant higher-level results identified by the evaluations reviewed. Outcomes and impacts are treated together, as programmes set them at more or less ambitious levels, and often used similar indicators.

Programmes in Ukraine provided the most credible evidence of development partners **influencing the public interest media sector as a whole**, rather than individual journalists or outlets, because of the scale and duration of funding, including both independent media and the transformation of the public broadcaster (see box 5.5 below).

In the more politically difficult contexts of Tanzania and Myanmar, the combination of development partners' programmes also had a systemic effect. US and European development partners **assisted journalists, media outlets and media support organisations to survive during periods of political repression**, and prepared them to engage in policy reform once there was a political opening (see box 5.2).

Box 5.2. Defending freedom of expression in Tanzania

Boresha Habari ('Better News' in Kiswahili, Tanzania Media and Civil Society Strengthening Project, USD 9.7 million, 2017-2023) was the largest media sector programme at the time, covering 9 regions and working with over 100 media outlets and CSOs which received grants and capacity development. It enabled these media outlets and human rights organisations to keep functioning and even challenge repression during clampdowns on freedom of expression. The US based International Center for Not-for-Profit Law provided legal expertise and training resources to the Legal and Human Rights Center, the Media Institute of Southern Africa – Tanzania and the Tanzania Editors' Forum, which also received grants. This enabled them to challenge court rulings on behalf of journalists, run a legal support fund, maintain a press violations database, train human rights monitors, analyse legal changes, and raise awareness among parliamentarians, media professionals, civil society and the public about free speech, and of individual cases. Once the political context improved in 2021, Boresha Habari-supported organisations have been able to advocate in favour of reforms to the legal and regulatory framework, for example proposing amendments to the Media Services Act.

On a much smaller scale, **Sida's core support for UPTC** (USD 3.56 million, 2016-2020) enabled the country's 28 press clubs to continue to operate during a more challenging period. Tanzania's shrinking space meant that UPTC could not contribute to a higher level objective of improved freedom of expression. However, in contrast to Boresha Habari, UPTC's role in relation to freedom of expression was not clear; the evaluation found there was no consensus on whether stakeholders perceived it mostly as a capacity development organisation, an advocacy organisation, or both.

Source: Programme evaluation reports

Most media programmes include some form of capacity development for journalists and other media professionals, often in the form of training, combined in some cases with the organisational development of media outlets. A credible outcome or impact indicator is an increase in audience numbers, and improved audience feedback on the quality of the programmes that the beneficiaries of capacity development produce (for example, as reported under the BBCMA Global Grant, Ukraine programmes or the Tanzania Boresha Habari programme). Through the programmes reviewed, millions of media users are better informed, through higher quality and more relevant radio, TV, press and social media programmes.

Outcomes or impacts can also be found in terms of new voices being heard in the information environment. For example, in Serbia, a DWA project (2020-2022, USD 1.46 million) contributed to a shift in perception among local media, with more space for young journalists and media content for young people, in a region with significant youth migration. Project partners, such as media outlets or Serbia's youth advocacy organisation,

KOMS, now "form a network that has the potential to contribute to longer-term changes in the media landscape and society at large".[30]

The evaluations provide solid evidence on how community radios can be strengthened to better serve the needs of their users on a more sustainable basis. Community radio stations are particularly valuable to combat 'news deserts' as they can provide locally-relevant information tailored to the needs of specific communities. Several programmes demonstrated how they helped community radios to better understand their audiences and seek advertising or other revenue. For example, 14 radio stations supported by USAID's Boresha Habari programme in Tanzania have increased and diversified their revenue, including through bartering, which can be attributed to new business development and marketing skills.

It has been challenging to make progress with public service broadcasters. Interventions aim to reduce political control over these broadcasters, as they transition from state-owned entities to independent public broadcasters, and to improve the accuracy, impartiality and quality of their programmes to increase their audience reach. In a global context of growing autocratisation, this is becoming even more difficult. JICA specialises in supporting the transition into independent public service broadcasters and has helped Nepal, South Sudan, Myanmar, Ukraine and Kosovo. Box 5.3 summarises some lessons from the last three countries, including the ongoing political challenges.

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30 DW Akademie (2022) Giving young people a voice: Innovative digital media in the Western Balkans, Evaluation Report Executive Summary [link]

Box 5.3. Impacts and sustainability of Public Service Broadcasting projects

JICA's projects in Ukraine, Kosovo and Myanmar can demonstrate progress towards their outcomes, in terms of better management of equipment and improved production capabilities for new programmes (education, agriculture, emergencies). Impact and sustainability have been more challenging, in part because impact statements were set at very ambitious levels.

In **Ukraine**, JICA was one of several development partners supporting the creation of a new PSB, **UA:PBC** out of 32 small media outlets (2017-2022, with a USD 2 million contribution). Whereas at the start of the project, the public broadcaster was considered a government mouthpiece and had a small audience, a 2020 survey showed that it had become the 7th most watched station and ranked 4th in terms of trust. In a market dominated by four oligarchic media groups, this indicated some progress towards JICA's ambitious impact statement of UA:PBC becoming the most trusted public interest media organisation in Ukraine. The EU's assistance to UA:PBC over the same period was larger (2017-2021, budget TBC). It set a less ambitious impact which was met, to become "a trustable independent source of information for an increasing number of its audience from 1.97 million unique users in 2020 to 4.5 million unique users and thirteen million views in 2021 and with improved quality and quantity of content".

JICA's support to the **Radio Television of Kosovo** (RTK, 2015-2019, USD 2.28 million) generated greater collaboration between Albanian and Serbian journalists which operate two separate RTK channels, sending a positive message of reconciliation to Albanian and Serbian viewers. However, demonstrating the challenge of community cohesion, the endline survey shows a declining trust in RTK by Serbs, at a much lower level than for Albanians. This fell short of JICA's impact statement, for RTK to become "a model of mass media in Kosovo to deliver accurate, impartial and fair information to all ethnic groups".

JICAs **Myanmar Radio and Television** (MRTV, 2016-2020, USD 2.77 million) project exposed management and staff of the state-owned broadcaster to new ethical standards and ways of producing higher-quality programmes, such as by explaining the concept of objective reporting. However, MRTV's popularity declined from 1st to 3rd, as new private broadcasters entered the market, even though MRTV improved its audience trust and fairness in reporting. The democratic transition was stalling, inhibiting media organisational and institutional reforms, as indicated by the delays in the legal framework to create a public service broadcaster.

In terms of sustainability, JICA raised **concerns over the financial viability** of the three broadcasters. They relied on government subsidies, which created a challenge for their editorial independence. Ukraine's UA:PBC's budget was regularly below the legal provision of 0.2% of the national budget, and at the time the Myanmar project was ending, the government was indicating its plan to cut MRTV's budget. For the EU project evaluation, UA:PBC's ability to continue producing in wartime conditions after February 2022 is a testament to the sustainability of the support.

Source: JICA Project Completion Reports for the three projects [links to be added]; DW Akademie summary of EU Support to the National Public Broadcaster of Ukraine programme evaluation, 2021 [link to be added]

Several programmes delivered outputs in terms of fact-checking and disseminating evidence-based information, but they do not always document outcomes or impacts on combating disinformation. For example, while the Tanzania government denied the existence of COVID-19, in 2020 Boresha Habari supported fact-based coverage of the pandemic and enabled media outlets to produce relevant health information with 300 awareness-raising/fact-checking pieces on COVID. The fact-checking site Nukta Habari debunked COVID misinformation and reached over 331,000 people online within three months. The programme's evaluation report, however, does not document how these initiatives were combined with others, and whether they collectively contributed to an outcome-level result in terms of the wider population's awareness and behaviour change in relation to COVID-19.[31]

Lessons need to be learned on an ongoing basis on how to make countering disinformation initiatives more effective. A USAID literature review of randomized control trials found that there was insufficient evidence from the Global South, especially on interventions that experts consider the most likely to work (such as through social norms and institutional change).[32] In Ukraine, evaluations found that the effects of Russian disinformation remained the same or had worsened despite development partners' interventions. Individual fact checkers or training initiatives were not sufficient on their own. The combination of debunking/inoculation, investing in educational systems to promote critical thinking, investing in independent media sectors, and understanding the needs of different communities and their specific vulnerabilities was likely to be more effective.

The review shows a mixed picture in terms of the attention to gender, marginalised groups and human rights-based approaches across the programmes. These issues were not systematically mainstreamed or monitored, unless funders required such attention. They tended to be more mainstreamed in Myanmar given the need to prevent hate speech, promote local languages and improve the representation of Myanmar's diverse ethnic groups in a civil war context.

Media or communications for development programmes can have some impact on the development of the media sector in addition to media users or thematic objectives (e.g. government accountability or health behaviour change). This is illustrated by some of the unintended positive effects of UK Aid's largest media programme, BBCMA's Global Grant (see box 5.4). However, as these results are usually not the main objectives of such programmes, they are not always documented, and they are not prioritised by programme management or funders. In the case of BBCMA's work with community radios and local governments in Tanzania, one of its reviews concluded that "capacity building activities would be more sustainable if also accompanied by actions to increase the media sector's ability to influence the development of media regulatory policy, and to take action to meet existing compliance requirements" in an increasingly repressive civic space context.[33]

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[31] Harford, N and Myers, M (2022) Evaluation of Boresha Habari project of Internews, Tanzania, iMedia.

[32] Blair, R et al (2023) Interventions to counter misinformation: lessons from the Global North and applications to the Global South, University of Chicago.

[33] DFID (2020) Institutions for Inclusive Development Project Completion Report, through which BBCMA work was funded between 2016-2018, before the grant was moved to the Accountability in Tanzania Programme Phase 2.

Box 5.4. Large impact evaluations

BBC Media Action's Global Grant (GBP 90 million, 2011-2017) invested heavily in research to monitor the programme's impact and outcomes. The logframe even included an outcome on the influence of its policy and evidence. To monitor results, BBC MA undertook regular baseline, midline and endline surveys of the audiences of the TV and radio programmes it co-delivered with national and local media outlets.

The Global Grant's intended impact was to "*facilitate more accountable state-society relations and governance; healthier populations; increased ability to cope with crises in 15 target countries, with a particular focus on fragile states*". By the end of 2016 BBC Media Action had successfully achieved two out of three impact level targets:

- **Impact indicator 1: Governance:** Percentage of people reached through factual programming who strongly agree the intervention is playing a role in holding government to account. In 2016, nearly a third of the audience (32%) strongly agreed that BBC Media Action's programmes played a role in holding government to account (increasing from 9% in 2011, against a target of 27%)

- **Impact Indicator 2: Health:** Percentage point difference between people exposed to the intervention in key target populations reporting healthy behaviours and/or supportive social norms compared to those unexposed. This indicator showed a 6 percentage point difference between people exposed to the intervention in key target populations (pregnant women, mothers of young children, husbands and mothers-in-law) in Ethiopia and Bangladesh which reported positive Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child health practices and/or supportive social norms, compared to those unexposed (against a target of 8% and a 0 baseline in 2011).

- **Impact indicator 3: Resilience and preparedness:** Percentage of people reached by the intervention who report their resilience to shocks and/or stresses in their environment has improved as a result of the intervention. Almost half (47%) the people watching a BBC Media Action reality show programme on how to adapt to environmental shocks and stresses were able to take actions, such as protecting their water supply and housing (against a target of 15%).

- **Impact beyond the logframe:** While the Global Grant was a communications for development programme, it did have some documented impacts on media sector development. There is some evidence of increased capacity of journalists and media outlets to produce programmes without BBC MA support (in particular as a result of embedded mentoring), and stimulating the public's demand for information.

Source: DFID (2017) Project Completion Report BBC Media Action Global Grant

How results were achieved – programme duration and budgets

Interviews and the document review provided insights into how some of these results were achieved. The first insight relates to the duration and size of funding.

Long term sustained and holistic support across elements of an information ecosystem can achieve outcome level results. Even if not all supported media outlets will survive, programmes that invest through a large number of diverse media organisations can have system-wide impacts (see Ukraine box 5.5).

Box 5.5. Success factors for Ukraine's improved media ecosystem

Support to Ukraine has been exceptional in terms of scale and duration, and has continued since February 2022 despite wartime conditions.

Success factors include the combination of:

- Ukrainian domestic actors who wanted to see change happen (at a regulatory level, in public broadcasting, in independent media outlets at central and local levels)

- the motivation created by European Union standards and associated funding (the EU's largest programme in Ukraine to support the transformation of the public broadcaster, coordinated with other support, such as from Japan)

- the US long-term support since the 1990s, with the largest assistance to the independent media sector in Ukraine

- the ability to work across the school system and with local officials for countering disinformation, tailoring to the needs of specific communities

- ongoing presence of international media support organisations which developed and maintained trust with their local partners, and supported the creation of Ukrainian intermediary specialised organisations

While the Ukrainian media sector remains dominated by oligarchic media groups, and state control over public messages has become stronger since 2022, international support has contributed to the growth of a more diverse public interest media sector.

Note: Synthesis of confidential evaluations of Ukraine programmes received by the review team

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Working at scale over a long-time frame on a consistent issue, even if not an entire media system, was an important success factor. For example, UNESCO's Judges Initiative has trained over 32,000 judges in more than 160 countries over 10 years on international and regional standards for freedom of expression, access to information and the safety of journalists [budget and independent evaluation to be requested]. UNESCO demonstrated results through survey feedback from participants and evidence of institutional changes (e.g. landmark jurisprudence by regional human rights courts and

national Supreme Courts in compliance with international standards; some domestic laws on media freedom reformed to comply with international standards).[34]

Some small to mid-sized programmes were also able to achieve institutional change when they made use of windows of opportunities and created coalitions. For example, the Jamii Forums (JF) benefited from a 2-year GBP 103,000 project through the FCDO Accountability in Tanzania Phase 2 programme. As Tanzania's political environment improved, JF was able to influence the government to adopt a Personal Data Protection Act in 2022 which protects personal data, places restrictions on personal data collectors and processors, and establishes a Personal Data Protection Commission. JF adjusted its approach to influence different Ministers of Information, Communication and Technology, senior officials, parliamentarians, and telecoms companies. It drew on the civil society Coalition on the Right to Information to make the case for the Act. It used both formal and informal approaches, including an evidence-based Model Bill. The project also supported the JamiiCheck tool [link], a Swahili fact-checking and whistleblowing portal on the JF website which is the most visited website in Tanzania with over 3 million visits per day and 600,000 registered members. Citizens now can fact-check and expose any misinformation.[35]

By contrast, projects which supported regional interventions or small-scale interventions in one country with limited funding found it much more challenging to demonstrate outcomes. The evaluation of two USD 4 million, five year regional Sida projects in Eastern Europe concluded that they could only demonstrate that they had contributed to their partner organisations' continuing to function with independence, but not media system-level changes. However, the third regional Sida project was one of several development partners' support for the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, one of the world's largest investigative reporting platforms [link]. The evaluation could show a degree of positive contribution towards addressing corruption (e.g. officials leaving their posts or international authorities taking action). This is likely to be related to the much larger and stable funding base of this public interest media organisation.

How results were achieved – reliance on intermediary organisations

The next set of lessons refers to how development partners and their intermediary organisations worked with their national or local partners.

All but one programme operated through intermediary organisations to reach national or local media partners. Some of the reviewed evaluations noted that when these media organisations received funding via intermediaries (e.g. grants covering salaries, equipment, reporting costs) rather than just benefited from programme activities offered by the intermediaries (e.g. training, study tours, technical assistance), they had more control over how to achieve their priorities. This funding could be used to put into practice the mentoring and other technical advice development partners offered and could thereby contribute to more sustainable capacities. There are strong arguments as to why intermediary organisations are needed (e.g. to provide technical expertise, target resources, monitor progress, ensure coordination and to make up for limited management capacities within development partners' agencies). However, the little amount reaching local organisations is not aligned with growing calls to localise development and to decolonise assistance.

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34 UNESCO (2023) Ten Years of UNESCO's Judges' Initiative: Strengthening the Rule of Law, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (2013-2023)

35 KPMG (2022) Accountability in Tanzania Phase 2 Final Report.

Only one programme provided institutional support to a national organisation in Tanzania. This is consistent with the quantitative analysis which concluded that only up to 8% of ODA for media and the information environment directly reached recipient country media organisations. Sida is one of the few agencies which prioritises core funding based on local and international organisations' strategic plans, from the UPTC in Tanzania to UNESCO at a global level. The European Endowment for Democracy also mostly provides core funding to media in the European Neighbourhood. Box 5.2 above illustrated how Sida funding enabled this network of press clubs to survive at a time of increased government restrictions based on their own strategic plan. However, development partners' experiences with the Tanzania Media Foundation (TMF, link) illustrate some of the challenges when directly supporting national organisations, as this strategy can entail higher risks as well as higher longer term returns. TMF had been set up as a multi-donor funded project in 2008 to provide grants to national and local media for public interest and investigative journalism reporting. It became an independent national foundation in 2015 but lost some of its development partners funding in the succeeding years in response to management challenges.

Core support to international organisations was valued when these clearly added value as intermediaries and conveners. For example, evaluations and interviews noted that UNESCO has a privileged role, with better access to governments and the ability to facilitate donor coordination, as the UN lead agency. The evaluation of Swedish core support to WITNESS, an international NGO which enables grassroots communities to use videos and ICTs safely, ethically and effectively for human rights change found that it was able to advocate with global tech companies to reduce harm to activists, translating their concerns in technical terms. The evaluation praised its role as a connector based on "an equal and decolonial partnership, where WITNESS is seen as an activist ally".

Several evaluations stressed the importance of intermediary organisations building trust with local partners, which improved relevance and ownership of the interventions. Programmes with deep roots in the country can develop an extensive network and a good reputation, such as some of the reviewed programmes prior to the coup in Myanmar. These evaluations praised the operations of intermediary media support organisations, which understood their contexts, had broad networks and were trusted by their partners (e.g. Internews, IMS, BBCMA, DWA, etc). Using local implementers was a particularly effective strategy (e.g. training by local as opposed to international organisations, and establishing national training organisations) which reduced costs and contributed to sustainability.

Flexibility, especially when supporting local media who need highly tailored assistance, is an important success factor. All the programmes reviewed had to adjust to COVID-19 which affected their results. But the rapid changes in context in Myanmar in 2021 and Ukraine in 2022 required development partners to pivot their modalities of support. While development partners could have invested to a greater degree in preparedness ahead of Russia's invasion, their projects' objectives and ways of working were adjusted relatively quickly.[36] Even in Myanmar, the media sector has been able to continue reporting, including from exile in Thailand or from opposition-controlled areas in Myanmar, because of quickly reoriented international support. Looking across the development partners, Sida was particularly praised for its flexibility, as well as the trust and understanding it generally showed as a funder.

Peer to peer support is not a common modality. It was used in particular by the Baltic states to share their domestic experience of tackling disinformation with Ukraine and other

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[36] Adam, I et al (2023)

Eastern European countries, with which they had historical links. Their approach stressed the importance of not imposing their own models, but sharing options. Interventions were funded through their own ODA resources, as well as via funding from EU and other development partners. JICA also uses a peer to peer approach by drawing on NHK for this assistance to public sector broadcasters, offering exposure to Japan's expertise but avoiding the imposition of its model.

Evaluations highlighted the value of networking to achieve outcomes, especially for cross-border investigative journalism at the regional or global level, such as the multi-donor funded Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (across Eastern Europe in this study's sample). However, networking between media organisations and with media support organisations can be difficult due to competition for funding, and required time and resources. Boresha Habari's evaluation concluded that more efforts were still needed in Tanzania to increase collaboration between media and CSOs, which had been an under-resourced part of the programme.

How results were achieved – lessons on capacity development

Finally, as most programmes had some elements of capacity development, the evaluations offer useful insights on the comparative value of different approaches. Evaluating the impacts of training requires pre- and post-training assessments which were not consistently undertaken in the sample of programmes. Impact evaluations can also have ambiguous results (see box 5.6).

Box 5.6. Randomized control trial of training in Tanzania

An impact evaluation using a randomized control trial with 600 persons concluded that an intensive training initiative for journalism students in Tanzania in 2019 had a mostly null effect. In other words, it could not detect a measurable impact. The students gained the same knowledge of practical journalism practices, ethics, gender diversity and inclusiveness with or without the training.

While this finding could have been due to how the training was conceived and delivered, or challenges with the impact evaluation itself, it is consistent with the growing evidence-base on the limited efficacy of stand-alone trainings, and the importance of complementary activities such as mentoring and opportunities to implement what was learned.

Source: USAID (2021) Impact Evaluation of Intensive Journalism Training Activity in Tanzania

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For students and young journalists, training was valuable, for example in a Ukraine evaluation. However, establishing local training organisations was often a more cost effective and sustainable approach than using international, ad hoc trainers.

The BBCMA global grant, Ukraine and Western Balkans evaluations conclude that **mentoring was more effective than short-term trainings for experienced media professionals**. BBCMA's capacity-building through intensive embedded mentoring was singled out as effective by its independent reviewers. This usually involved both management and production staff, focusing on the development of professional and soft skills through the co-production of a TV or radio programme, as well as station-

management such as revenue and fundraising strategies, audience research and gender training.[37] This capacity building approach focuses on four levels: audience, practitioner, media organisation and media systems.[38] USAID Tanzania's Boresha Habari programme concluded that adding stipends to training and long term mentoring enabled trainees to use their skills by producing new content. Several evaluations also found that trainings and capacity development initiatives could usually be improved through better needs assessments and tailoring to organisations.

5.4. Sustainability

Some programmes supported short-term media sector sustainability (or survival), when they enabled journalists and media outlets to survive periods of great pressure, such as the constrained political context in Tanzania, or the coup in Myanmar by moving to opposition held areas or neighbouring countries.

Some evaluations identified sustainable improvements in individual, organisational, or network capacities which lasted beyond a programme's duration. However, they documented fewer longer-term institutional changes (e.g. in terms of laws or policies). Some examples of more sustainable changes included:

- The continued use of new formats, management or editorial systems once programmes ended (e.g. across most Ukraine, Tanzania and Myanmar programmes or in the BBCMA Global Grant).

- The documented use of newly developed advocacy skills and tools once the political context improved (e.g. in Tanzania post 2021).

- The continued operations of networks, for example for investigative journalism across the Western Balkans. Though youth networks are more unstable due to fluctuating staff as they grow older, DWA's Serbia project showed how the new youth media network had become embedded in the work of local organisations.

Programmes have found different ways of strengthening public interest media's financial viability:

- **Media Development Investment Fund** (MDIF)'s innovative model for debt and equity financing complemented by technical assistance supported by Sida. 98% of the media companies which benefited from the MDIF were in countries with unfree or partly free media ecosystems. Accessing MDIF funding meant they did not have to rely on government or private sector advertising which could compromise their independence (see box 5.7).

- **Business model experimentation in the Western Balkans**. In a captured media environment, where governments are acquiring media outlets, internet, and cable providers to control the market, the USAID Balkan Media Assistance programme strengthened the management and editorial capacity of 11 media partners, including platform convergence and transition to a digital first approach, which helped generate new revenue streams. Strategic changes included adding subscription services, developing new content formats, and incorporating audience analytics into content monetization strategies.

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[37] DFID (2017) BBC Media Action Project Completion Report.

[38] Parkyn, R and Whitehead, S (2016) Media Development: an Evaluation of Five Capacity-Strengthening Projects, BBC Media Action Research Report

Box 5.7. Media Development Investment Fund, a creative approach for financial viability

The Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) is a New York-registered not-for-profit company that provides affordable debt and equity financing to independent news and information businesses in countries where access to free and independent media is under threat.

In conjunction with a 2015 grant agreement with Sida, MDIF established (i) a loan fund providing affordable debt financing to established independent media in OECD DAC partner countries (to finance investments in equipment, software, content production and office space, as well as working capital and shorter-term cash flow loans); (ii) a private equity financing facility investing in early to mid-growth stage media businesses via equity financing for digital news start-ups, primarily in the form of working capital financing, and (iii) technical assistance tailored to each client to support business development. The guarantee structure is designed to expand the financing that MDIF can make available to independent media – including higher-risk media projects – by attracting additional capital from social impact investors.

An evaluation found that MDIF had improved the capacity of independent media businesses in countries where political and economic factors make it very difficult to practice good journalism. By December 2019, MDIF had a portfolio of USD 115.2 million in 42 independent media companies across 28 countries. It had reached an estimated 128.9 million people with news and information. 80% of the companies it had supported had met or exceeded expectations on the desired outcomes of improved ability to manage the news business, improved financial viability, and improved audience reach, making them better able to expose corruption, hold governments accountable, and provide relevant information on social issues to more people. A CEO of a company it had supported said: "*Rappler applied for loan assistance because we were under attack by the Philippine government. It is a lifeline, not just in terms of its commercial value, but the greater psychological impact when you're in the middle of a battle.*"

Another evaluation concluded that Sida's provision of the guarantee was recognized as pioneering and unique in the media, democracy and human rights sector, and that MDIF played a fundamental role in crowding in investors. The first loan fund raised USD 5.9 million from seven investors, including MDIF's contribution. With a duration of seven years after the initial closing, it provided loans to 12 media companies in 11 countries. Sida also contributed to some of the costs of the private equity fund, which had raised USD 12.9 million from five investors by December 2018, including MDIF's contribution. With a duration of ten years, it had invested USD 5.78 million in six digital media companies in five countries. The guarantee was successful in that it attracted several investors who had previously not invested in MDIF, including two more commercially minded investors. The evaluations made recommendations to attract more investors and to adjust the loan and equity structure.

Source: Steele, J. (2020) Evaluation of Assistance Provided under Sida-MDIF Guarantee Facility and Grant; Transform Finance (2020) Independent Evaluation: Assistance provided under Sida-MDIF Guarantee Facility and Loan Agreement

However, all evaluations found that longer term financial viability for public interest media remained a challenge. Some interviewees argued that public interest media will require grants or financial subsidies over the longer term, in particular small, independent

media houses outside capital cities. Such subsidies would be in line with ODA provided to improve other types of public services, such as health or education, one of the reasons for which IFPIM was established. Financial challenges in our sample of programmes include:

- Myanmar's independent media currently depends to a high degree on external support to survive in exile or from opposition-controlled areas.

- While Ukraine's public broadcaster has been able to make better use of its limited budget (e.g. through human resources and financial management measures), an evaluation found that there was no prospect of receiving a higher state budget and its audience reach remains small relative to other media.

- Tanzanian journalists, media outlets and training organisations have developed better skills and systems, and acquired new equipment, but these cannot be consistently used when pay remains low and equipment cannot be maintained or upgraded, and when there are limited domestic options for private sector financing.

5.5.   Coherence

Coherence and coordination within and between programmes were highly varied, with room for improvement. Smaller projects did not always have the capacity to engage in coordination. The largest programmes in the case study countries usually had the capacity to avoid duplication and some even supported development partners' coordination structures (e.g. in Ukraine or Myanmar). However, the evaluations showed that some large programmes were not always well coordinated with the funder's wider portfolio (e.g. other Sida or USAID programmes in the same country or region). Large programmes could also find it difficult to ensure their local partners were aware of all their activities or could network effectively (e.g. in Ukraine).

Though there are some effective media sector development partners' coordination mechanisms in Ukraine and the wider European partnership, coherence challenges remain in these and other case study countries. This includes a risk of duplication of funding for local organisations which have limited financial absorption capacities, or inconsistent development partners approaches towards the same local partner, as documented in the Tanzanian programmes evaluations. Consistent with earlier findings in section 4, none of the evaluations noted strategic or operational coordination with programmes focused on digital inclusion or ICT infrastructure.

Box 5.8. Info Integrity Ukraine

Info Integrity Ukraine was a project to facilitate multistakeholder coordination across the information ecosystem to address immediate conflict needs in Ukraine in February 2022. Its final report reached a damning conclusion, noting a lack of coordination, significant duplication of efforts, not knowing what other stakeholders were doing, whom to go to for help or how to navigate other stakeholders' organizational culture.

Source: Carnegie (2023)

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6. Barriers and opportunities to improve the quality and quantity of ODA

6.1. Barriers

The overall objective of this assignment is to help GovNet formulate updated operational guidelines and intervention strategies on how ODA can better respond to complex global challenges by strengthening the information environment. The interviews with development partners and researchers identified a set of barriers as well as opportunities regarding how the quantity and the quality of ODA could improve.

1.1.2. Limits in available ODA

Some development partners have seen reductions in overall aid allocations which make it challenging to maintain, let alone increase, funding towards the media and the information environment. However, when media freedoms have been treated as a relative political priority, it has been possible to protect some programmes from more major cuts. For example, UK FCDO funding for media and information programmes stayed at the same level despite major overall cuts to ODA since 2020 and a 33% cut in ODA for democracy and human rights.[39]

Interviewees suggested that other themes benefited from greater political prioritisation, such as responding to the war in Ukraine or addressing climate change. It is by demonstrating their relevance to these objectives that aid allocations towards media and the information environment could be increased. For example, as seen in the case study, independent media and combating disinformation in Ukraine and the European neighbourhood has been a consistent policy and programme priority.

Limited staffing

Most of the interviewed ministries or agencies have limited in-house expertise on media assistance, with one to two media experts centrally. This applies to some of the largest funders as well as to organisations spending smaller amounts. Different elements of the broader media and information environment are resourced differently. For example, within FCDO, there are 2.5 FTEs working on media development and programming issues but the digital inclusion team has nine FTEs.

Political sensitivities

Investing in a country's public interest media, protecting journalists facing censorship or repression, or countering disinformation are profoundly political interventions. They can directly challenge those who hold power in partner countries.

Not all governments or development agencies have the same appetite to take on such political risks. Development partners are more willing to address what is a geo-political priority through the Eastern Europe Partnership, but this is not replicated in other regions where other geo-political interests are at play. Nordic countries, which rank highly in global freedom of the press indicators, appear more willing to take relative risks than some other countries. Multilateral funding or global initiatives, often combining diplomatic and development resources, such as the Media Freedom Coalition, are one way of mitigating such risks.

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[39] UK Aid ODA's target was reduced from 0.7% to 0.5% of Gross National Income in 2020, and a third of the ODA budget was allocated to in-country refugee costs in 2022. See House of Commons Library (2023) UK aid reductions since 2020 and outlook from 2023 [link]. ICAI (2023).

Limited evidence base

The research for this mapping study has identified challenges in the quality of programme evaluations which would constitute a solid evidence base to justify greater investment in media and the information environment. There are targeted initiatives to compensate for this lack of systematic evidence, including the 3iE Evidence Gap Map on Independent Media and Free Flow of Information [link] or the GFMD International Media Policy and Advisory Centre [link] programme mentioned above. A concern raised in some interviews was the dominance of English in these initiatives.

As long as media and the information environment are seen principally as a governance issue, interviewees felt there would be limited uptake within development agencies to increase resources. The cross-cutting benefits of access to accurate and timely information as a result of a stronger media and information environment needed to be demonstrated for sectors as diverse as climate or health, as well as the effectiveness of potential media interventions.

Joint work to overcome performance measurement challenges, to commission multi-funder evaluations and to undertake joint learning processes could potentially increase confidence in the value of investments in media and the information environment, not only for governance objectives but for all policy objectives.

6.2. Opportunities

1.1.3. Threats also affect development partner countries

The integrity of the information environment is not simply a development challenge, but increasingly recognised as a global challenge. The negative impact of foreign disinformation campaigns, the consequences of COVID-19 misinformation over vaccines uptake and the positive effects of investigative journalism such as the Pandora and Panama papers have raised political awareness of these issues.

The global nature of these challenges can increase incentives for OECD DAC members to invest in more effective standards and regulations (such as the EU regulation of tech platforms described above), or to create innovative financing mechanisms for public interest media (such as IFPIM or MDIF).

Political prioritisation of media and the integrity of information environment

Some of the development partners interviewed pointed to a growing political interest in media and the information environment in their agencies. Within USAID, the Administrator's background as a journalist raised the political profile of the agenda. France has recently stepped up its engagement in international initiatives.

The potential for better coordination and cooperation

In regions and countries where they exist, development partners coordination groups are considered to have been effective in ensuring improved information sharing and even joint programmes (see Ukraine or Western Balkans case studies). However, this was not the case in every country, and there are concerns over double funding or stretching the capacities of the few local organisations working in the field.

The number of global initiatives demonstrate the potential for political commitment and funding from a limited set of international funders or technical partners. However, given the limitations on financial and staff resources identified above, and the political risks associated with supporting media, some interviewees called for greater targeting of efforts and avoiding duplication between these global initiatives.

This fragmented coordination to support the integrity of the information environment is inadequate in the face of increasingly strategic, well-coordinated and highly-resourced authoritarian efforts at disinformation and controlling independent media.

7.   Conclusion

Seeing the world through the lens of how information is produced, flows across a system and is used or misused, requires a shift in mindset. This conclusion sets out some steps towards such a shift.

OECD DAC members are aware of the importance of the integrity of the information environment to achieve their development and foreign policy objectives, and of the central role played by public interest media. This is reflected in their political statements and policy documents. They are concerned by the global trend of autocratisation and have experienced domestically the challenges faced by media and information ecosystems, from the rise of social media and online platforms which threaten the survival of traditional media, to disinformation campaigns which undermine trust in public institutions, such as elections, and in COVID-19 responses.

Yet, OECD DAC members have not responded to these challenges with a proportionate increase in ODA. While ODA for media and the information environment has increased from USD 325 million in 2002 to USD 1.2 billion in 2021, this only represents 0.5% of total ODA in 2021. Excluding investments in infrastructure, ODA for media and information has remained flat at around USD 500 million a year since 2008. Technical expertise remains limited within ministries or development agencies.

The absence of strategies and ways of working that include digital transformation and ICT infrastructure investments alongside media and information environment programmes can reduce coherence and even generate unintended political consequences. Media and information programmes require ICT infrastructure, especially as information and disinformation is mostly disseminated online. But who owns and controls the use of this infrastructure is critical, as development partners could end up supporting 'digital dictatorships'. Coherence and risk management would require much more systematic and effective mainstreaming of transparency, accountability, and participation principles and of human rights standards (such as on freedom of expression) in digital infrastructure interventions.

The review of 25 programmes in this report demonstrates that ODA can achieve important results. In worsening political contexts or under war conditions, international cooperation can help media sectors survive and keep citizens as well informed as possible. Long-term and large investments can have system-wide effects, such as supporting the transformation of Ukraine's media sector. Thematic programmes can be effective, such as shining a light on corruption and holding perpetrators to account through investigative journalism networks. Well-designed capacity development of journalists, media outlets and the wider media enabling environment can ensure larger audiences are reached with better quality and more engaging information.

Lessons are still being learned on how best to combat disinformation, but the public would be less well informed if the reviewed information integrity interventions had not taken place. Financial viability of media has become a dominant concern; while programmes have contributed to improving business models, there remains a strong case for considering public interest media as requiring ongoing subsidising in the face of disinformation campaigns and the dominance of global tech platforms. Improved regulation of these platforms by the EU and US, and stronger regulatory influence from low or middle income countries, would also benefit public interest media globally.

There are opportunities to improve aid effectiveness and encourage more locally-led development. Only up to 8% of ODA for media and the information environment is received directly by media organisations in recipient countries. Very few funders provide

core or institutional funding (as opposed to funding for activities) which empowers partners to deliver their strategies and improve their organisations; Sida and the European Endowment for Democracy are notable exceptions in the sample. Most of the programmes reviewed operated through intermediary media support organisations. While this modality offers a number of assurances to development partners, the small amount directly reaching recipient-country based organisations is not aligned with growing calls to localise development and decolonise assistance.

Coordination and coherence between development partners could also be improved to respond to the increasingly well-coordinated and funded efforts of authoritarian governments. The multiplicity of global initiatives is testament to the diplomatic importance of the agenda for some governments and international organisations, but it remains a challenge to translate political ambition into improvements on the ground.

While there are initiatives to improve access to evidence for development partners, this mapping showed there are still gaps in evidence, such as what works to counter disinformation and how best to ensure media financial viability. This is related to challenges with measuring outcome and impact (and not just results), the limited number of impact evaluations and of regular multi-donor evaluations (as opposed to single project evaluations or internal reviews) and the perception of a dominance of English in research initiatives. There are opportunities for collective learning, such joint donor strategies and joint evaluations of media and information environment programmes in partner countries. Additional evidence on how healthy information ecosystems benefit other development and diplomatic objectives, and how ODA programmes are effective in contributing to such healthy information ecosystems, would strengthen the political weight of this agenda in the face of competing priorities. This could lead to increases in both ODA and expert staffing.

Finally, at a more technical level, the quantitative analysis revealed some weaknesses with CRS codes which do not adequately report ODA investments in media and the information environment. Several development partners (including the US and France) considered that they were under-reporting their investments when using these codes. The codes do not seem to have adapted to the current reality of the information environment, where telecommunication policy and infrastructure can clearly influence the free flow of information (through tech platforms or infrastructure, also in autocratising contexts). The difference between some codes was also not clear (e.g. between codes for media and free flow of information, and for radio, TV and press interventions). Many projects are likely to have been misclassified as a result. It would be helpful for OECD DAC members to give the organisation a mandate to look into improving reporting through CRS codes.

Annex A: List of interviewees

Susan Abbott	Information Resilience and Technology Adviser, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, USAID
Maria Arnqvist	Policy Specialist Freedom of Expression & ICT, Sida
Matthew Baker	Learning Adviser, Evidence and Learning Team, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, USAID
Toby Bateman	British Investment International
Nick Benequista	National Endowment for Democracy, CIMA
Claire Bigg	European Commission
Helena Bjuremalm	Deputy Head, Democracy Unit, Sida
Guilherme Canela	Chief of Section, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists, UNESCO
James Deane	Co-founder and consultant, International Fund for Public Interest Media
Alan Dreanic	Deputy Director General, Canal France International
Ute Eckertz	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
Steven Feldstein	Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Heather Gilberds	National Endowment for Democracy, CIMA
Craig Hammer	Senior Programme Manager, Development Data Group, World Bank
Niamh Hanafin	Senior Advisor, Information Integrity, UNDP
Wera Helstrøm	Senior Advisor, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Keiichi Hashimoto	Law and Justice Team, Governance Group, Governance and Peacebuilding Department, JICA
Ulvi Ismayil	Senior Media Adviser, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, USAID
Michael Jarvis	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
Sarah Lister	Director of Governance, Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, UNDP
Lauri Luht	Regional Head, EU Eastern Neighbourhood, Estonian Centre for International Development
Alessandra Lustrati	Head of Digital Development and Deputy Head, Development Policy Department, FCDO
Jan Lublinski	Head of Department Policy and Learning, Deutsche Welle Akademie
Ross McDermott	EECAD Resilience Programme, FCDO
Joshua Machleder	Senior Media Adviser, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, USAID
Shannon Maguire	Senior Media Advisor, Technical Support Office, Democracy & Governance Division, Europe & Eurasia Bureau, USAID
Dan Malinovich	Elections Specialist, Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, UNDP
Mary Myers	Media development consultant and CIMA study researcher
Yery Menendez Garcia	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
Tom Millar	European Commission
Mira Milosevic	GFMD
Julien Musseau	Media and culture team, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
Megumi Nakamura	Law and Justice Team, Governance Group, Governance and Peacebuilding Department, JICA
Cristina Ordóñez	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
Dovilė Paužaitė	Counsellor, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Lithuania to the OECD
Ian Paterson	Head, EECAD Resilience Programme, FCDO
Alastair Rabagliati	European Endowment for Democracy
Amelia Timewell	Digital democracy team, Democratic Governance and Media Freedom Departmen, FCDO
Laura Toomlaid	Estonian Centre for International Development
Alicia Wanless	Director, Partnership for Countering Influence Operations, *Carnegie* Endowment for International Peace
Andreas Weber	Peace, Governance and Equality Section, Swiss Development Cooperation
Fredrik Westerholm	Sida
Justin Williams	Governance Advisor, Freedom of Expression and Media Development, Democratic Governance and Media Freedom Department, FCDO
Hanspeter Wyss	Peace, Governance and Equality Section, Swiss Development Cooperation

Annex B: List of documents reviewed (to be added)

Annex C: Development partner profiles

European Union Institutions

The European Commission's 2014 **Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline** [link] set the normative and policy framework. Programme funding can come from either country allocations or thematic budget lines. The **European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights** (2014-2020) [link] aimed to promote democracy and human rights worldwide through support to civil society initiatives which were more flexible and independent than bilateral programmes. The **Democracy and Human Rights Action Plan** (2020-2024) [link] includes support to media and access to information, and informs Multi-Annual Indicative Programmes at the bilateral and thematic levels. EU funding for independent media has seen a steady increase in recent years. Under the **Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme** (2021-2027), an estimated EUR 185 million are earmarked for support to independent media and harnessing digitalisation worldwide.

The Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance thematic team in the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships is responsible for global thematic programmes related to these topics. Central programmes include:

- The **Media for Democracy Programme** [link] raised the visibility of the agenda and contributed to a three-fold increase in bilateral programmes (to around EUR 50 million / year).

- **A Financial Framework Partnerships Agreement on Protecting Independent Media** has been signed with three consortia of media-development NGOs (up to EUR 20 million for 2023-2027). The agreement will allow strategic cooperation with selected NGOs that work to protect media freedom across the globe. Its objectives are to strengthen the resilience of media and journalists at risk, combat disinformation and hate speech, provide journalists operating in difficult environments access to professional development opportunities, and consolidate cross-border networks of media development organisations.

- The **Digital Democracy Initiative** [link] is a partnership between the EU and Denmark to promote and protect local inclusive space in the digital age (EUR 51 million, with a EUR 11 million EU contribution). Areas of action include access to digital technologies for women and girls, digital technologies to promote climate justice, youth participation.

ProtectDefenders.eu, the EU's mechanism to protect human rights defenders and independent journalists at high risk, is intensifying its work to protect journalists in countries in crisis. In 2021, the mechanism supported about 550 journalists worldwide.

In addition, over a third of the **European Endowment for Democracy** (EED) [link] portfolio is allocated to media-related interventions. EED has provided over EUR 80 million in grants to media over 10 years in total, in the European Neighbourhood region and beyond. Local independent media organisations can apply for a grant at any time via the EED website [link]. Its objective is to ensure media pluralism and access to independent information to local populations. Over 90% of the grant funding provided to media outlets is focused on institutional support.

The EU also has a **digital strategy and digital partnerships** [link] to ensure that technology works for the people, digital economies are fair and inclusive, and our societies are open, democratic and sustainable.

EU regulations can have global impacts. In particular, the **Digital Markets and Digital Services Act** (2020) [link] rebalances the rights and responsibilities of users, intermediary platforms and public authorities and applies to all digital platforms that connect consumers to goods, services or content. It introduces harmonised obligations for digital platforms that protect users' fundamental

rights online, such as: rules for removal of illegal content online; new powers to scrutinise how platforms work; safeguards for users whose content has been erroneously deleted by platforms; new obligations for very large platforms to prevent abuse of their systems; transparency measures on online advertising and on the algorithms used to recommend content to users. The EU funds projects to implement **UNESCO's Guidelines on Digital Platform Governance** and **UNESCO's Guidelines on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence**.

In terms of **staffing estimates**, there are at least 5 FTEs responsible for media across EU institutions, including one FTE in the Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance thematic team in the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships, two FTEs in the EU Diplomatic Service (EU External Action Service, EEAS) Human Rights Division on media freedom and on digital rights, and two FTEs under the Foreign Policy Instrument. There are other FTEs in other EU institutions, such as the EED and the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) to managing central media-support programmes.

Figure 0.1.ODA to Media and the Information Environment – EU Institutions 2016-2021
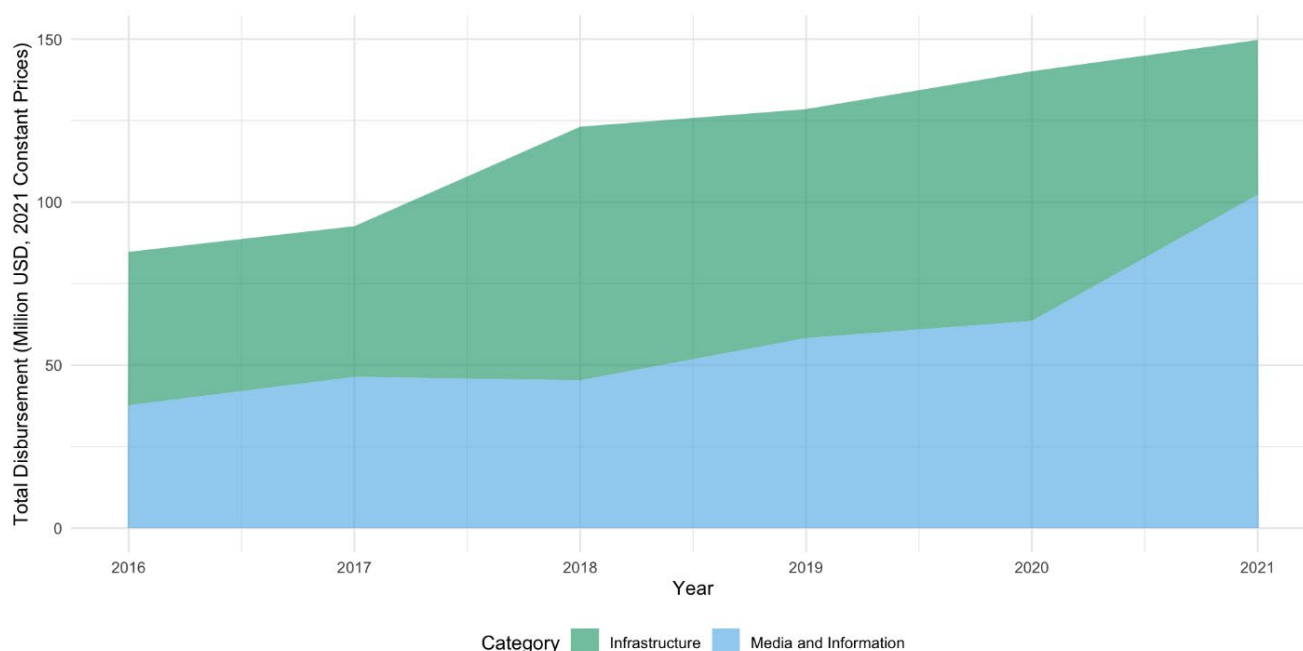
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.2. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – EU Institutions 2016-2021
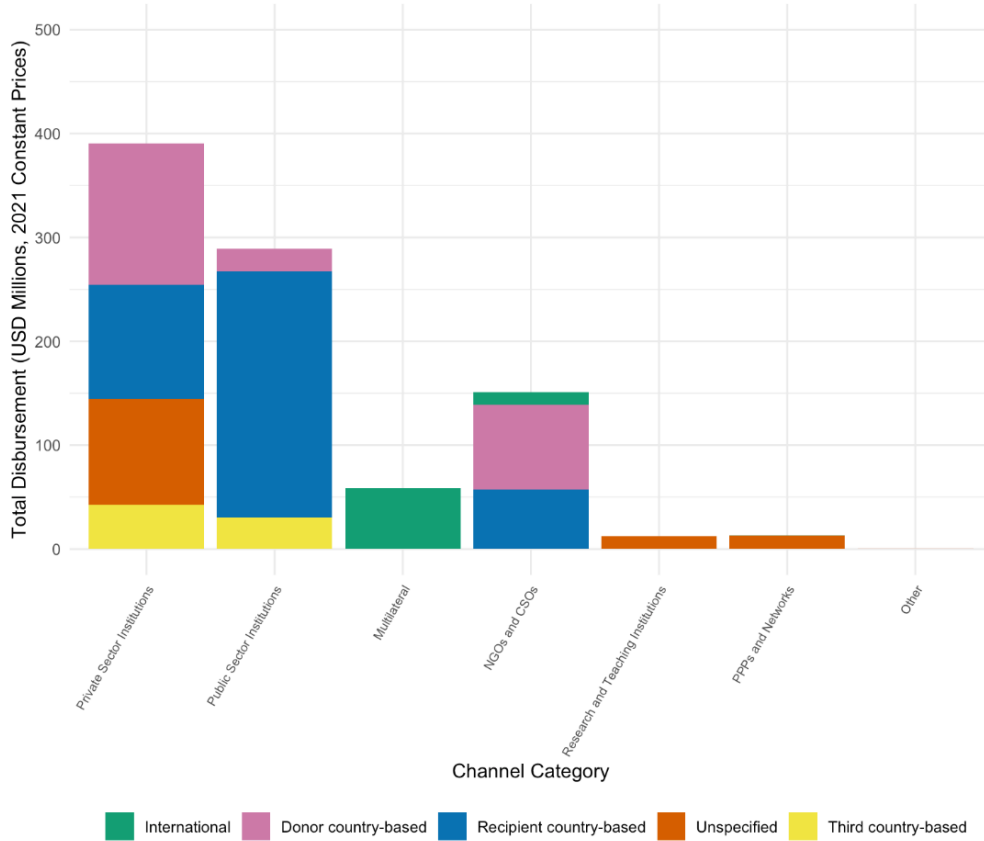
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.3. Top Recipients by Category – EU Institutions 2016-2021 (Country)
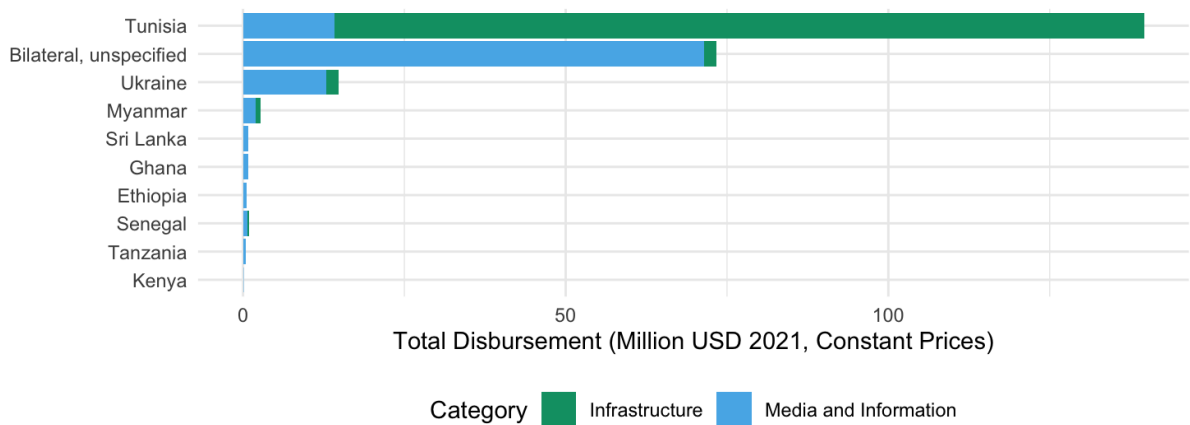
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.4. Top Recipients by Category – EU Institutions 2016-2021 (Region)
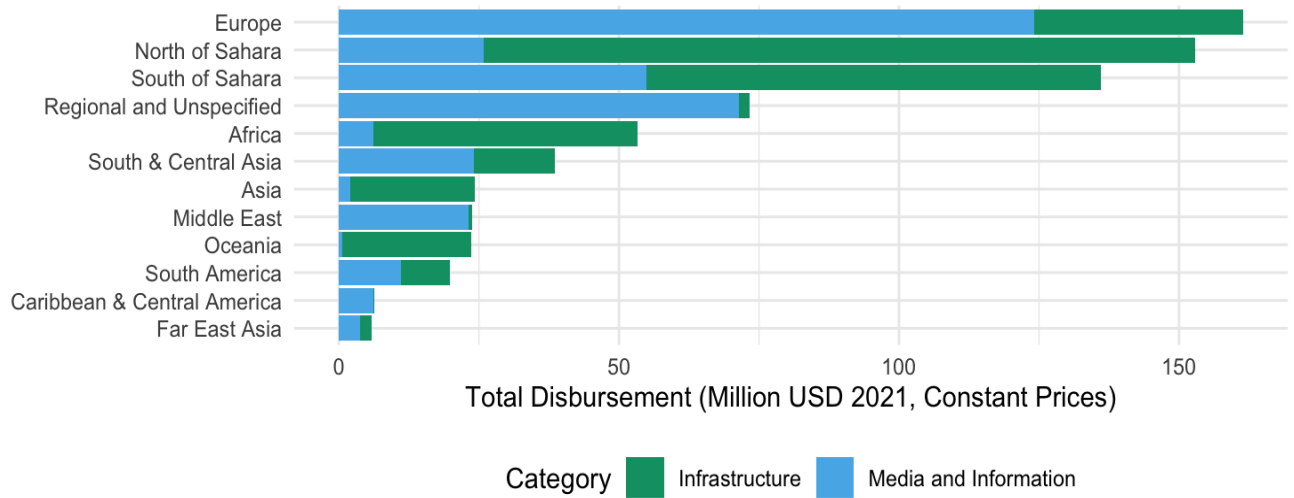
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.5. Top Agencies by Category – EU Institutions 2016-2021
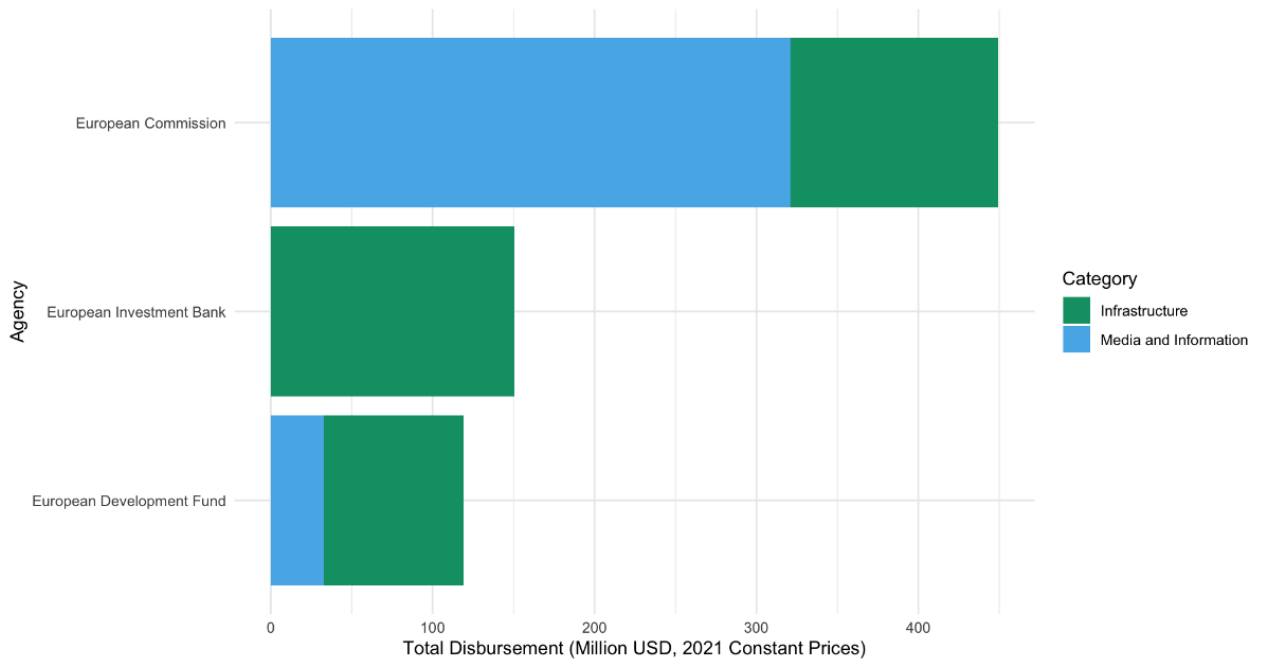
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

France[40]

The **Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs** sets France's development policy. While media (or governance more generally) is not included as a thematic priority in the Ministry's overall development strategy [link], the Ministry launched in November 2023 a **Roadmap for media support**, based on a broad consultation process, which sets its strategic direction for the 2023-207 [link]. Covering both media sector development and media for development, its objectives are to:

1. Improve the enabling environment for media
2. Support the production of reliable and quality information, and intensify the fight against disinformation
3. Strengthen the production and diffusion of information on the Sustainable Development Goals and global challenges
4. Improve the efficiency of interventions supporting media sector development

France's specialised organisation is **Canal France International** (CFI) [link] which receives core funding from the Ministry for around half its annual budget, but which can also implement programmes for other funders. Since 2015, CFI has undergone a transformation from an international public broadcaster producing content distributed in Francophone Africa to an international media support organisation. CFI prioritises Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa and the Middle East, in line with French ODA priorities.

French ODA is also delivered through the **Agence Française de Développement** (for loans to governments) and through **France Expertise** (for technical assistance). ODA for infrastructure related to media and ICT is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance.

France has sponsored a several international initiatives, such as the **Partnership for Information and Democracy** and the **Journalism Trust Initiative** in collaboration with Reporters without Borders, or its contribution to **IFPIM** whose headquarters are based in Paris.

In terms of **central staffing**, there are six FTEs in the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs' media and culture team.

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[40] The quantitative data for France (and the exclusion of French ODA for international public broadcasting projects) have not yet been fact-checked by the French government.

Figure 0.6. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – France 2016-2021
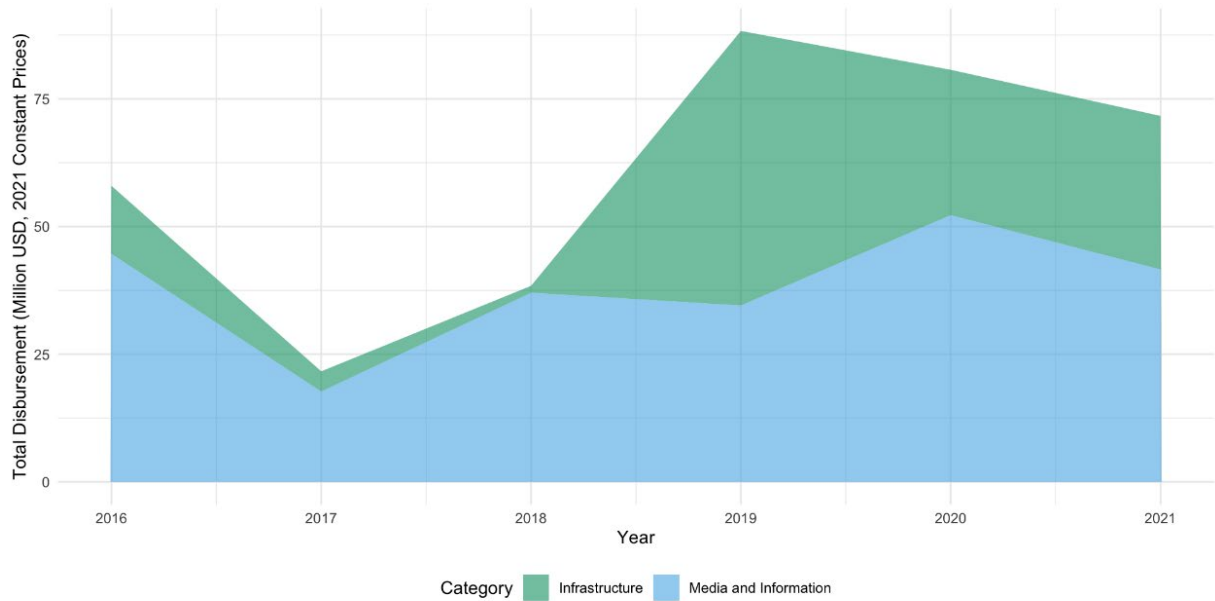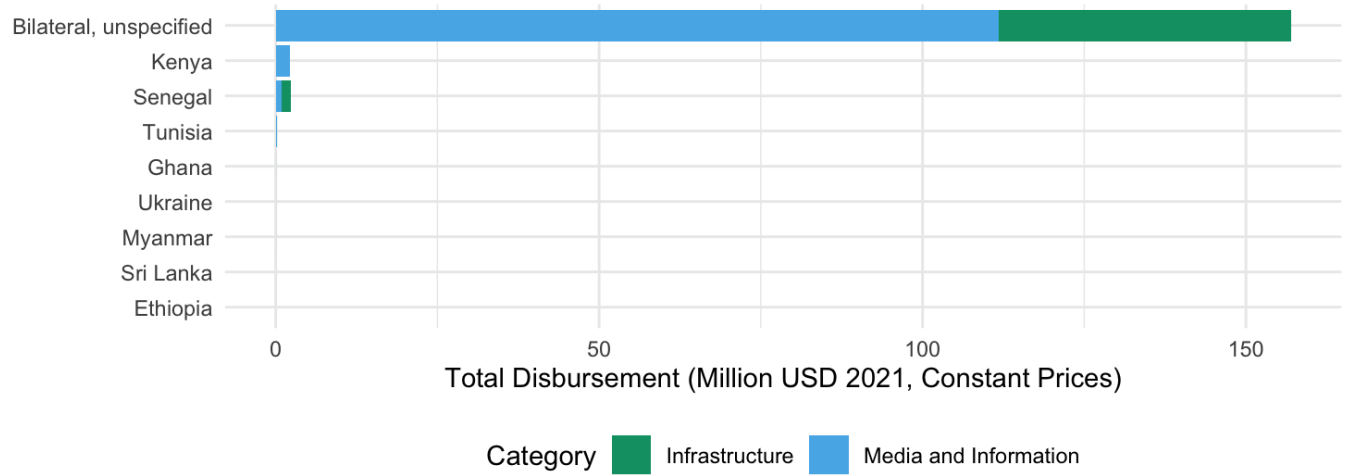

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.7. ODA to Media and Information Environment by Delivery Channels – France 2016-2021
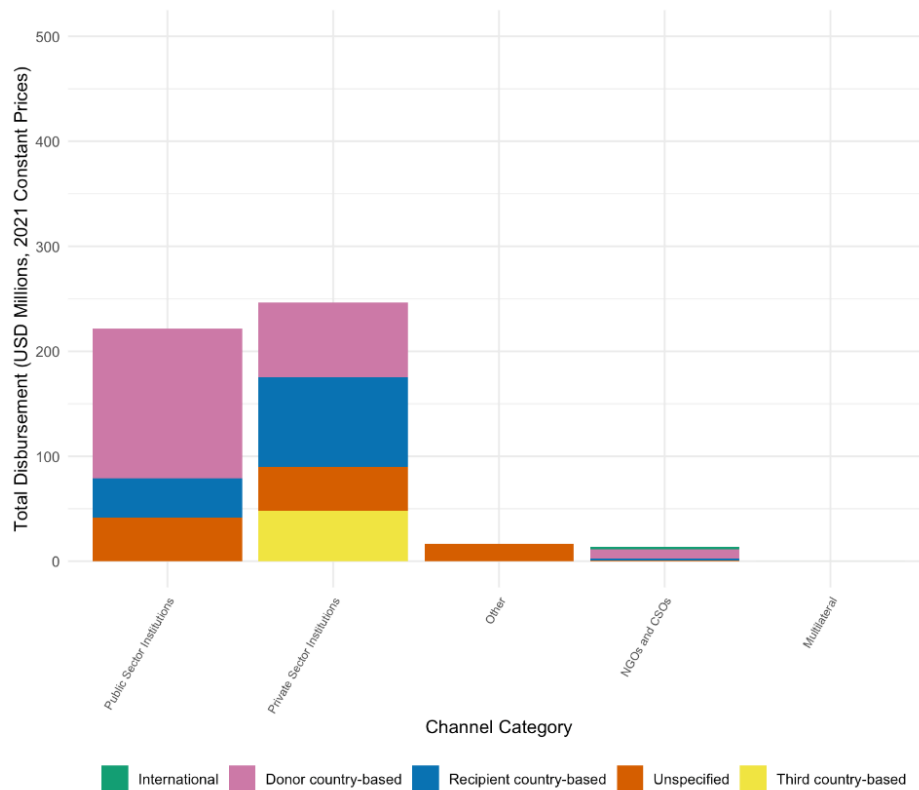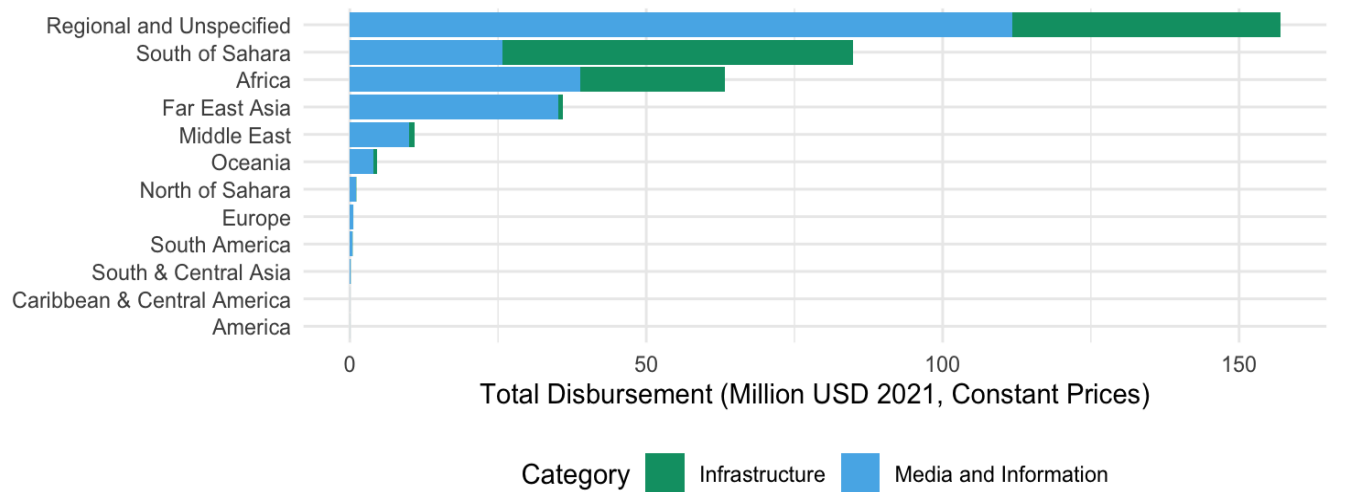

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

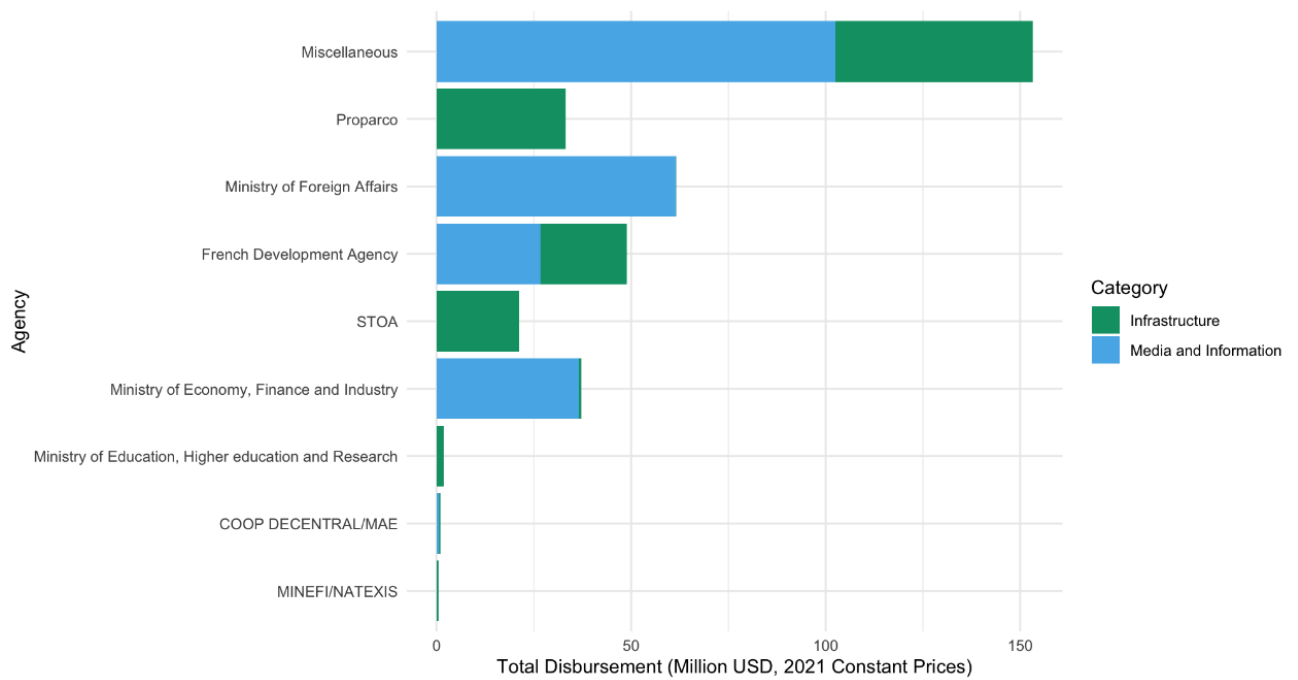## Figure 0.8. Top Recipients by Category – France 2016-2021 (Country)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.9. Top Recipients by Category – France 2016-2021 (Region)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.10. Top Agencies by Category – France 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Germany

Germany contributes to international development cooperation in the media sector through programmes funded mainly by the **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)**, and, to a lesser extent, by the **Federal Foreign Office** and other federal ministries.

Current strategy documents [link] of BMZ emphasize the importance of independent media, freedom of expression, and unhindered access to information.

Development cooperation in the field of media freedom and freedom of expression is an important pillar of Germany's support for democracy and good governance. It focuses on creating an enabling environment, in which a diverse media landscape can evolve, in which the citizens' right to access to information is safeguarded, and in which media workers can work free from fear and political pressure [link].

In 2014, the Bundestag, the German federal parliament, introduced a **budget line dedicated to media development** of currently EUR 30 million (2023), which is administered by BMZ. 80% of this budget line go to projects carried out by DW Akademie (see below) [link] and the other 20% for media development projects by German NGOs.

In 2020 and 2021, BMZ allocated additional resources to the sector to tackle COVID-19-related challenges to media freedom, including disinformation. In 2022, additional funds were deployed to mitigate repercussions of Russia's war against Ukraine.

With digital rights as a cross-cutting issue, BMZ´s strategic focus in media development lies on

- strengthening the qualification and professionalisation of journalists
- fostering Media and Information literacy
- improving political and legal framework conditions for media professionals
- expanding access to information and social participation through media,
- supporting the ability of media outlets and media landscapes to produce high-quality journalism in a sustainable way (media viability)
- promoting social dialogue

BMZ predominantly works on media development with its strategic partner **Deutsche Welle (DW) Akademie**, Deutsche Welle's centre for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. DW Akademie carries out development cooperation projects and acts as a global centre of expertise and think tank by testing new approaches, researching emerging issues such as Artificial Intelligence, and sharing insights.

Deutsche Welle is Germany's international public service broadcaster. It is funded mainly via the budget of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM). BKM funding for specific international programmes contributes to Germany's overall ODA. DW Akademie is funded mainly by BMZ, BKM and the Federal Foreign Office, while also carrying out projects financed by the European Union and other donors.

The **Federal Foreign Office** focuses on media freedom and is responsible for Germany's participation in international fora such as Media Freedom Coalition or Freedom Online Coalition.

Recently, the Federal Foreign Office, BKM, and BMZ have created the **Hannah Arendt Initiative**, which, in collaboration with civil society groups, supports journalists and media outlets at risk.

BMZ and the Federal Foreign Office also fund media and information interventions from other budget lines, for example governance programmes.

Mostly on behalf of BMZ, **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit** (GIZ) manages programmes in the fields of digitalization and development communication [link]. Further, Germany's development finance body, **Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau** (KfW) funds digital infrastructure investments [link].
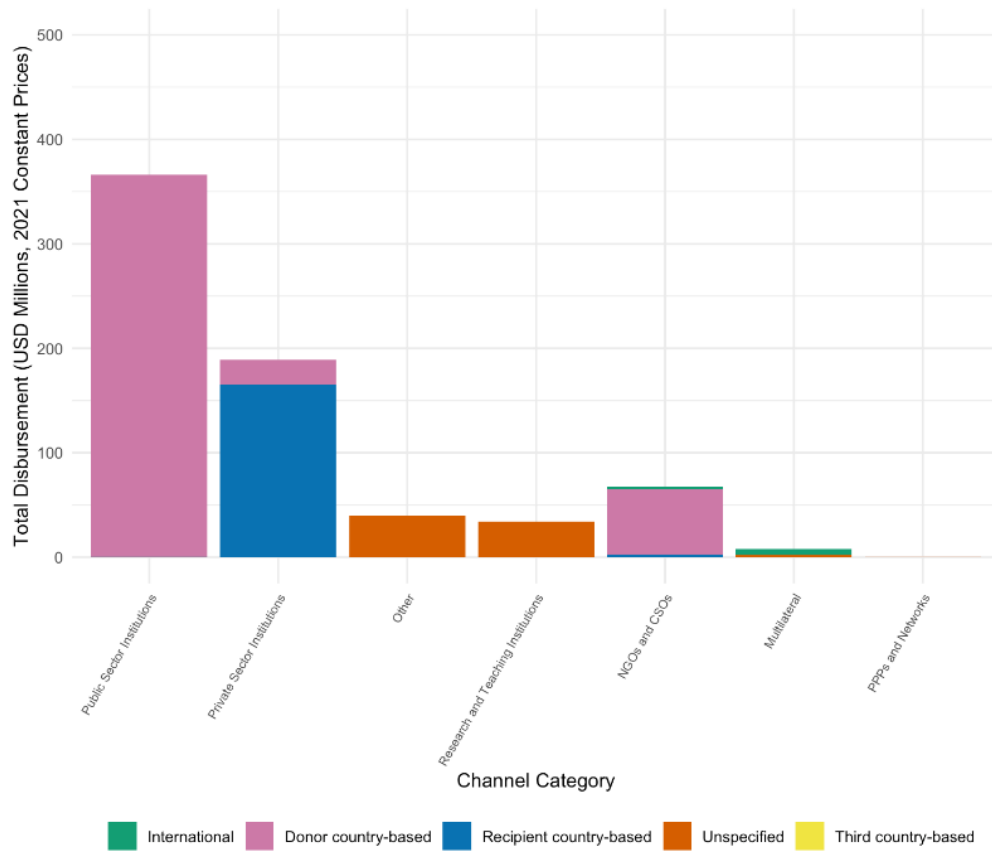
In terms of central staffing, BMZ has two FTEs dedicated to media development.

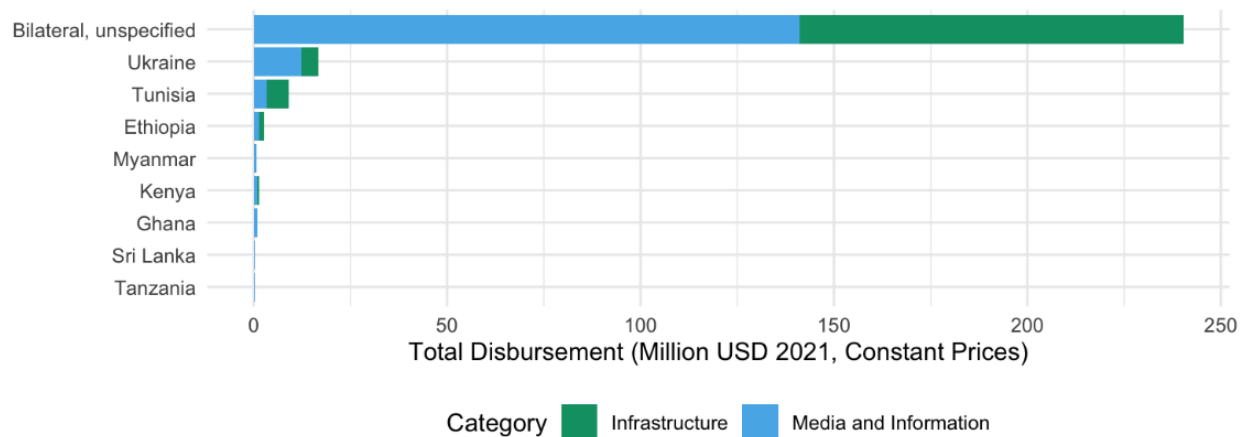Figure 0.11. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – Germany 2016-2021
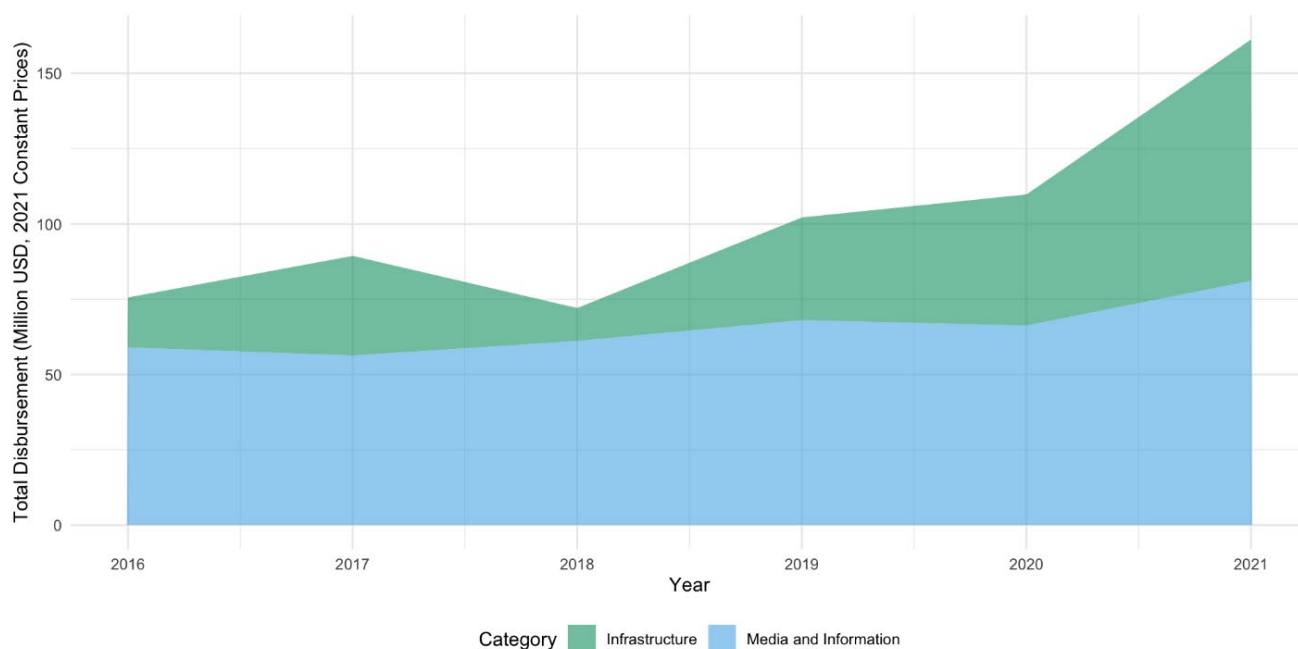
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.12. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – Germany 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.13. Top Recipients by Category – Germany 2016-2021 (Country)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.14. Top Recipients by Category – Germany 2016-2021 (Region)
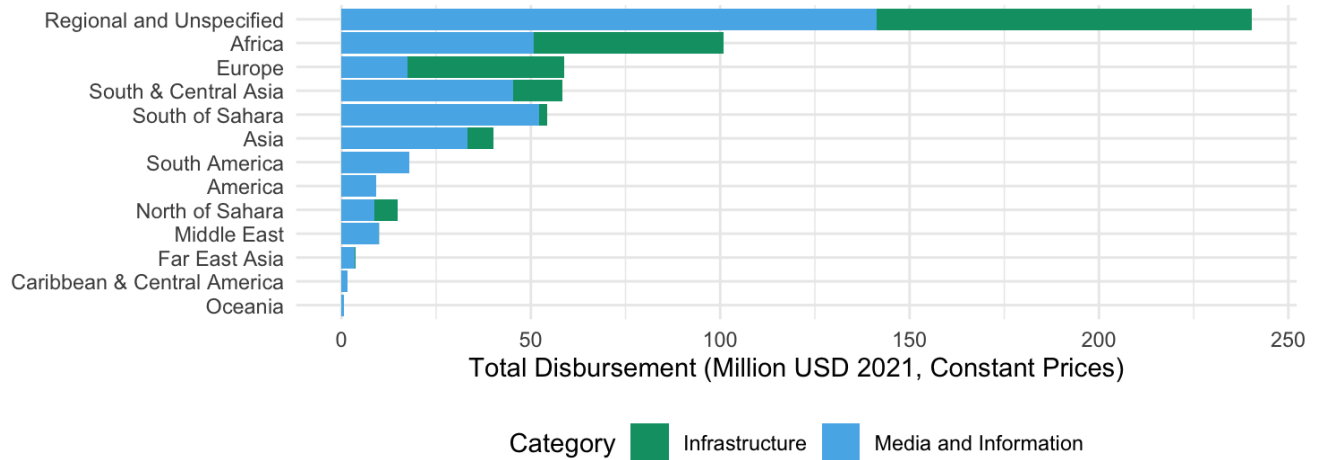
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.15. Top Agencies by Category – Germany 2016-2021
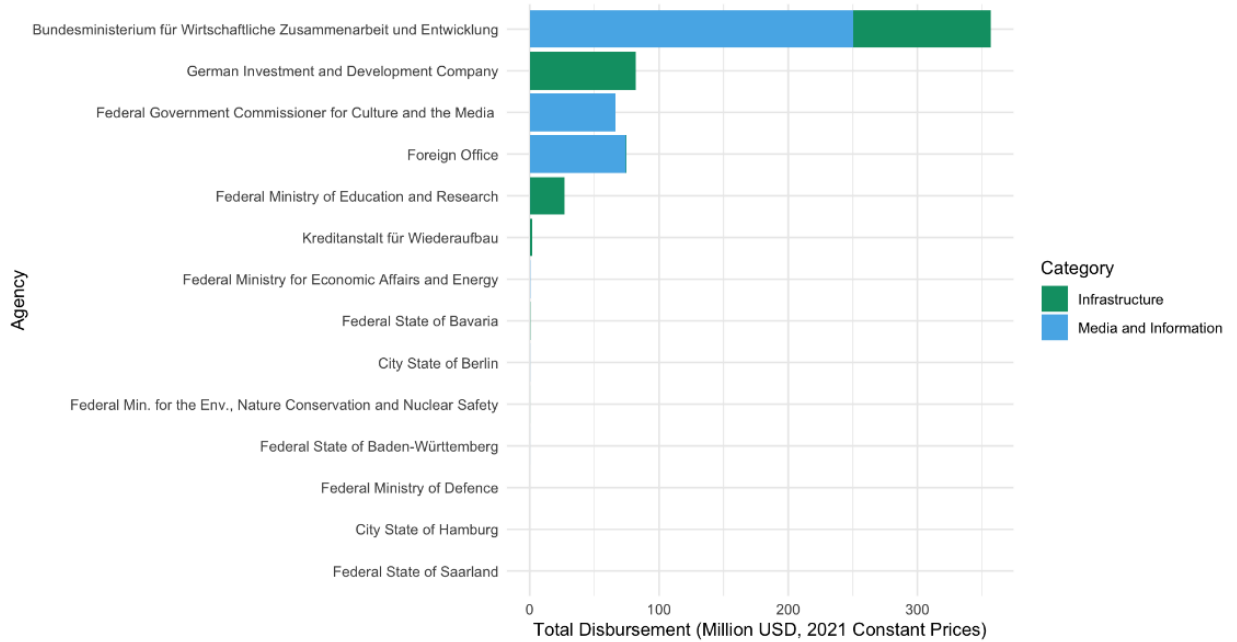
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Japan (JICA)

This summary only focuses on **Japan International Cooperation Agency** (JICA). 'Establishing the rule of law to protect fundamental human rights' is one of JICA's priorities. This includes 'strengthening the functioning of the media in an effort to protect freedom of expression—a fundamental human right that underpins democracy—and to guarantee people's access to accurate and impartial information'. JICA's strategy also emphasises the promotion of digital transformation and regional connectivity, especially in the Indo-Pacific region [link].

JICA has two media development priorities:

1. Strengthening the function of public broadcasting
2. Improving media-related policies and institutions that serve as the foundation for fair, neutral, and accurate reporting

JICA's media support started 15 years ago, with current programmes in Ukraine, Kosovo and South Sudan.

JICA shares the expertise of **Japan's public broadcaster, NHK**, the most trusted media in Japan, through the NHK Foundation with the provision of technical assistance and seminars in Japan. However, JICA does not limit its media cooperation partnerships to NHK.

Japan's reduced expenditure on media since 2017 does not appear to reflect an intentional policy of deprioritisation.

In terms of **central staffing**, JICA has two FTEs dedicated to working on media and information environment support in JICA.

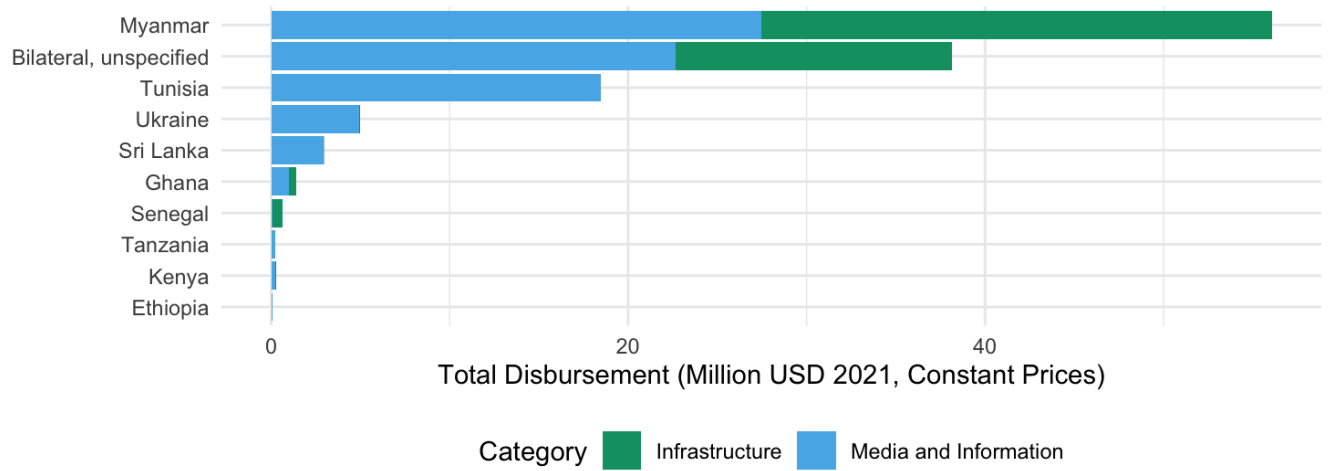## Figure 0.16. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – Japan 2016-2021
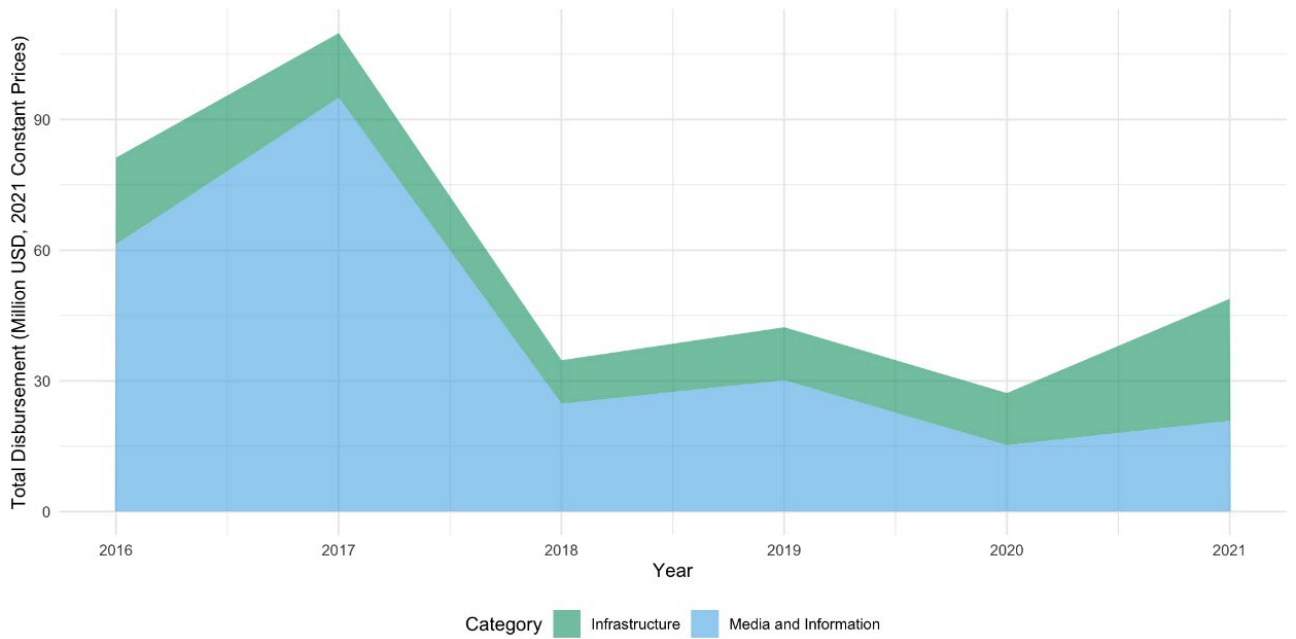
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

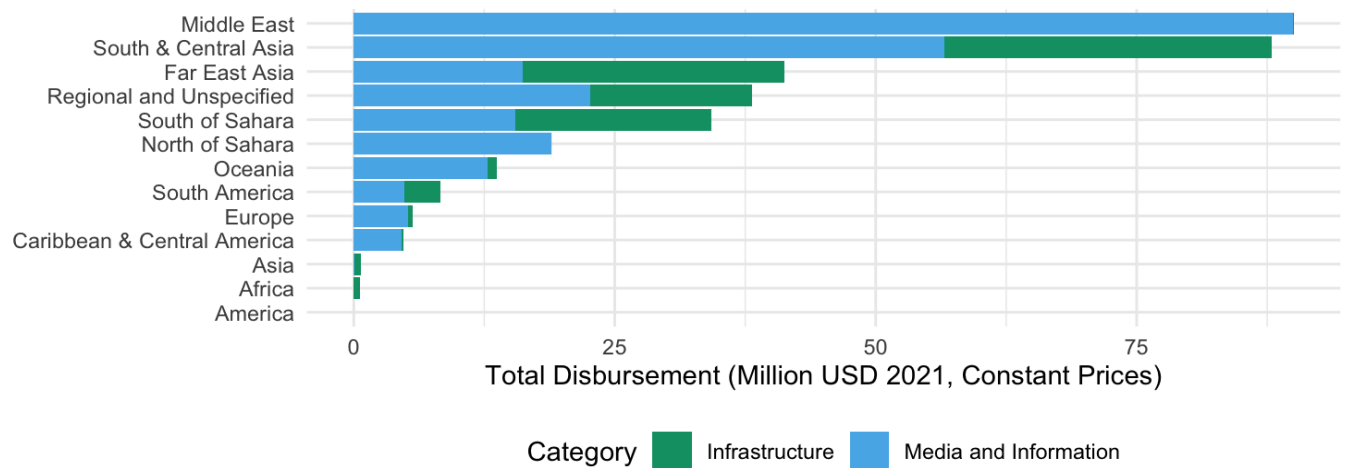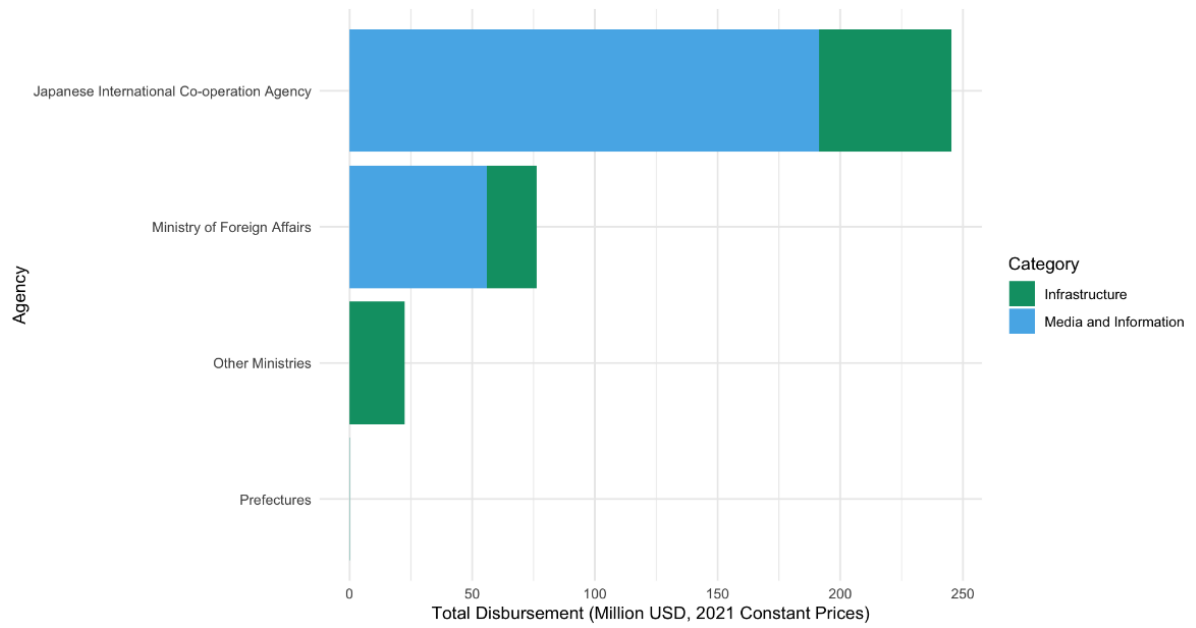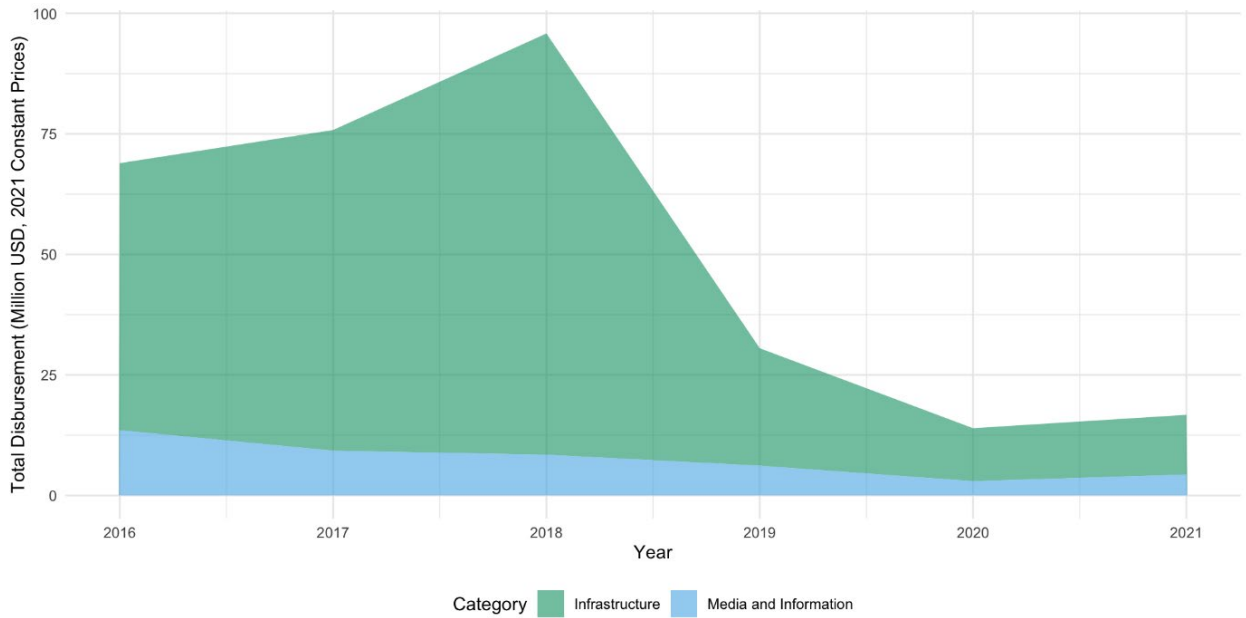## Figure 0.17. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – Japan 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF ODA TO MEDIA AND THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT
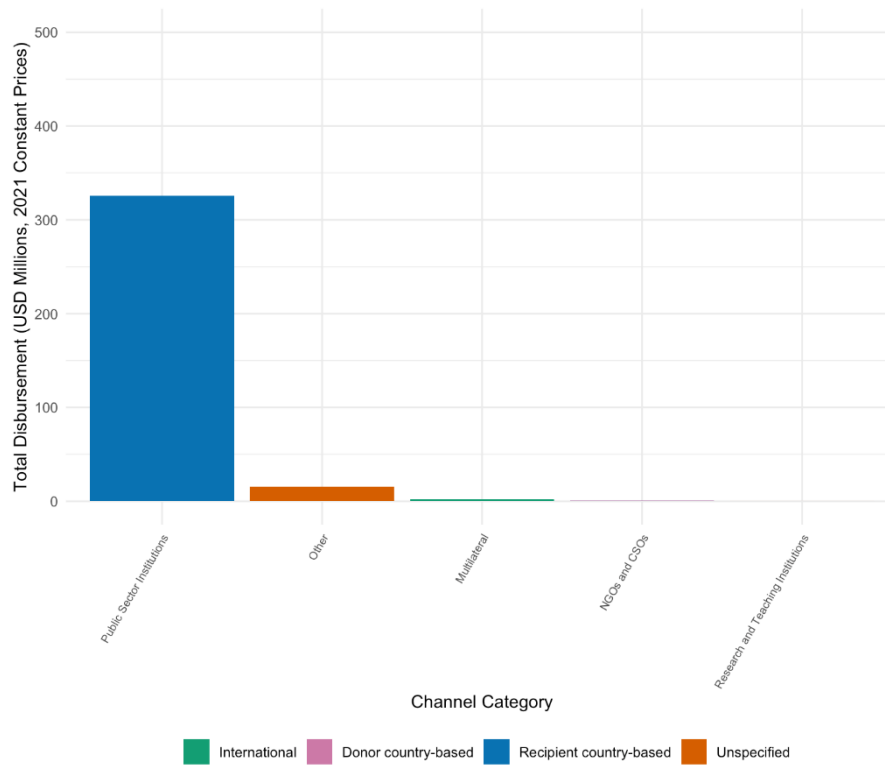
Figure 0.18. Top Recipients by Category – Japan 2016-2021 (Country)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.19. Top Recipients by Category – Japan 2016-2021 (Region)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.20. Top Agencies by Category – Japan 2016-2021
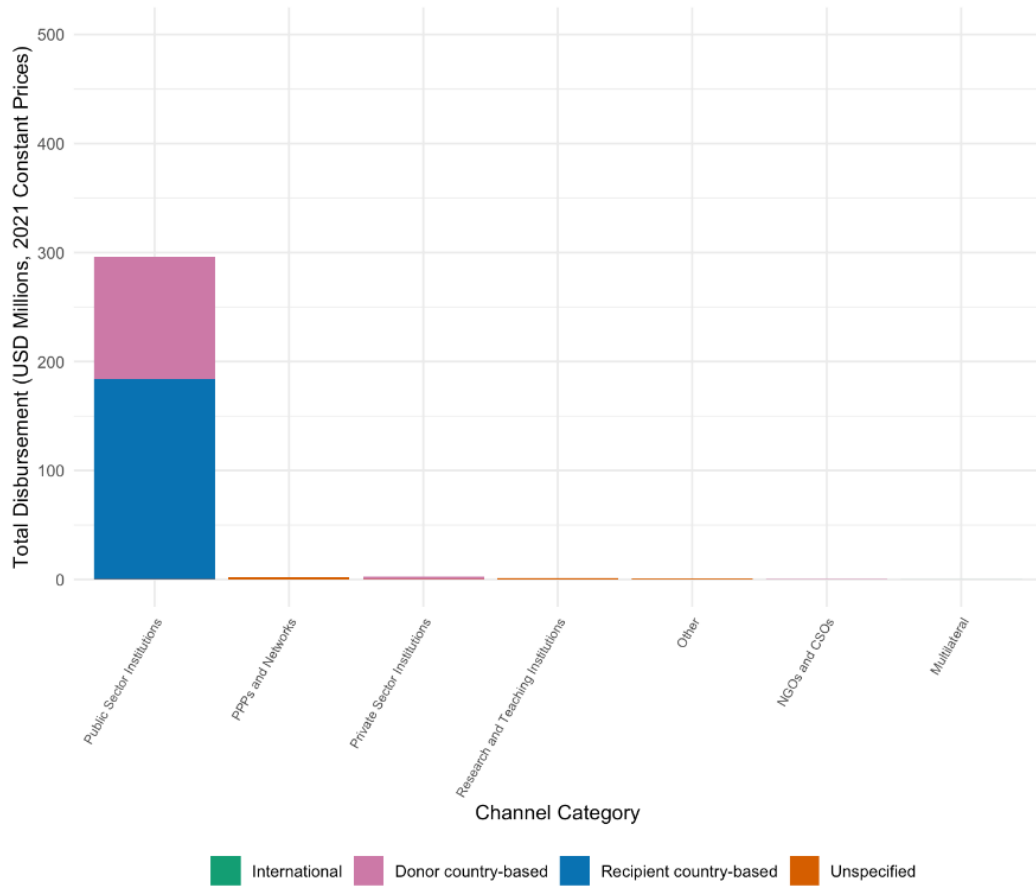

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Korea

As no interview was held with Korean officials, this profile only includes quantitative data.

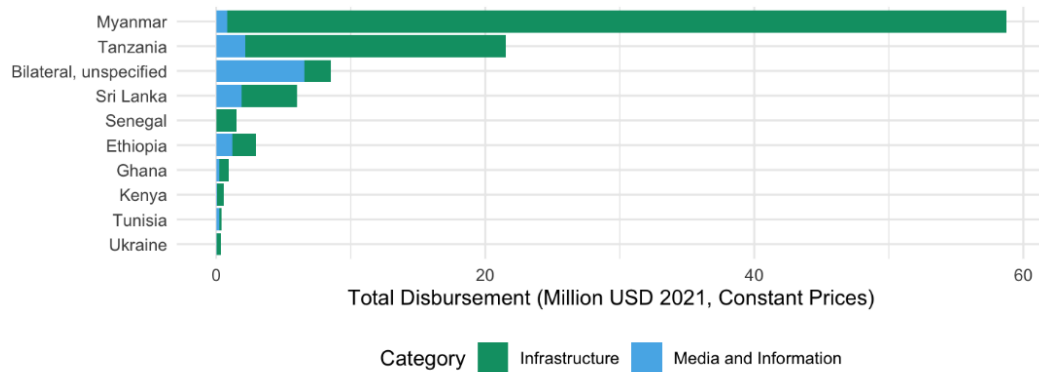Figure 0.21. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – Korea 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.22. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels - Korea
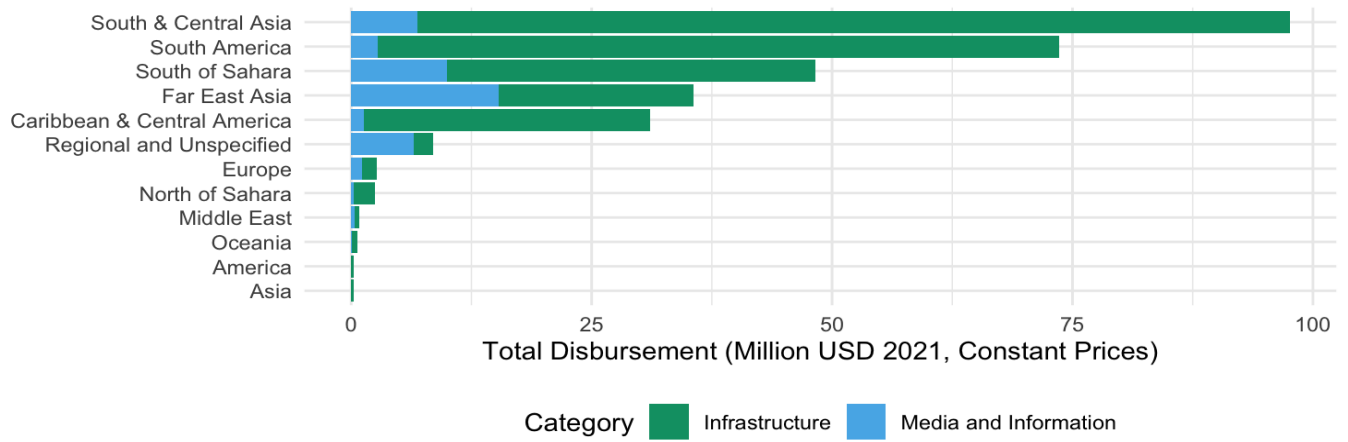

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

## Figure 0.23. Top Recipients by Category – Korea 2016-2021 (Country)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.24. Top Recipients by Category – Korea 2016-2021 (Region)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.25. Top Agencies by Category – Korea 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF ODA TO MEDIA AND THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT
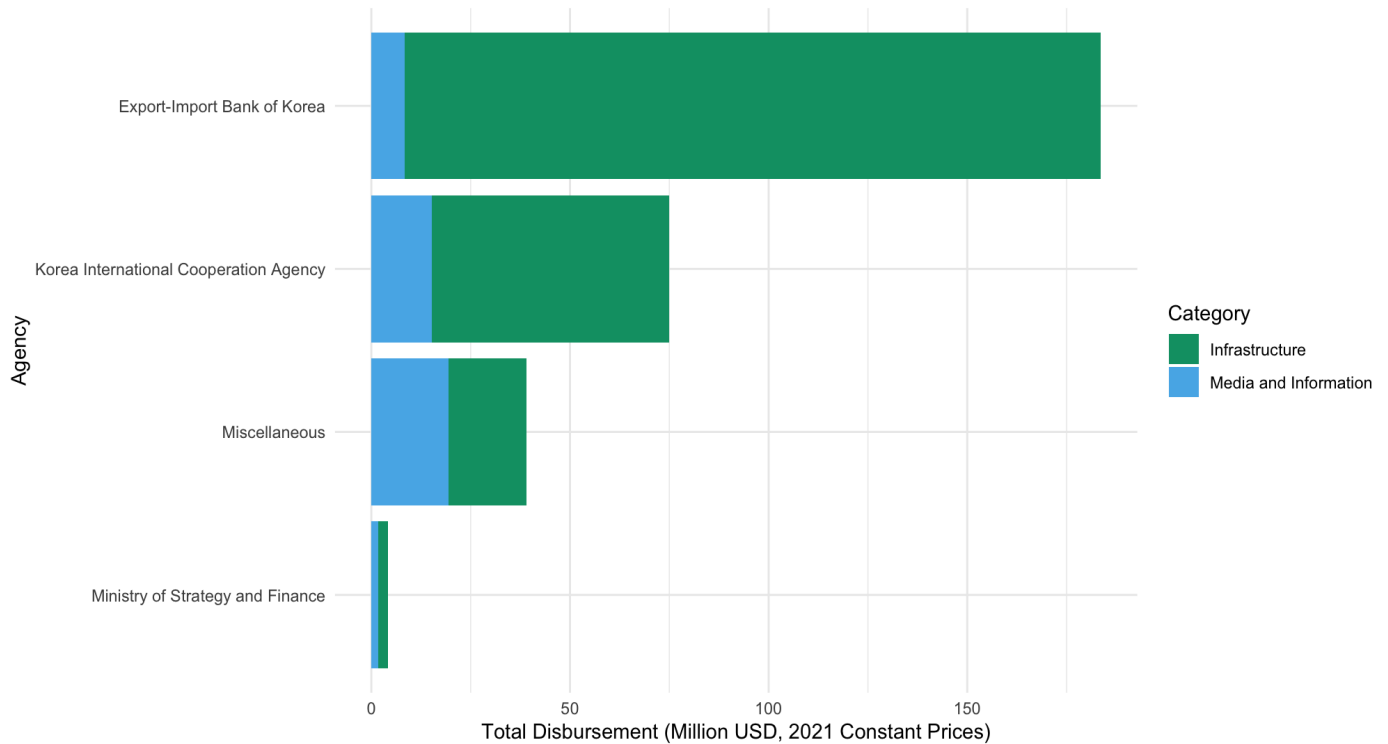
Norway

The 2014 **Foreign Policy and International Development White Paper** on human rights put an emphasis on freedom of expression [link]. Norway published its first international **Freedom of Expression Strategy** in 2016, covering both foreign policy and development. The second one in 2021 [link] put more emphasis on digital technologies and artistic freedom of expression. The strategy does not have financial commitments and there are no annual financial targets. NORAD, Norway's development cooperation agency, will report on the strategy's implementation by the end of 2023.

The 2021 strategy core objectives are organised under the following three chapters:

- Don't stop the press
- Right to know
- Safe environment for freedom of expression

In terms of programmes, the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**' human rights budget line includes freedom of expression. Embassies can apply to it to fund local projects. From August 2024, the Ministry will retain the policy lead, but **NORAD** will manage most of the funding. The Ministry also funds strategic partnerships with core organisations, which includes both core funding and project grants (e.g. UNESCO Article 19, MSI, etc).

Norway also promotes digital public goods and acts as the Secretariat of the **Alliance of Public Digital Goods** [link].

In terms of **central staffing**, there is 1.5 FTE staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs working on freedom of expression in the Section for human rights, democracy and gender equality (incl. media freedom and freedom of artistic expression). NORAD has one FTE dedicated to media and information environment issues.

Figure 0.26. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – Norway 2016-2021
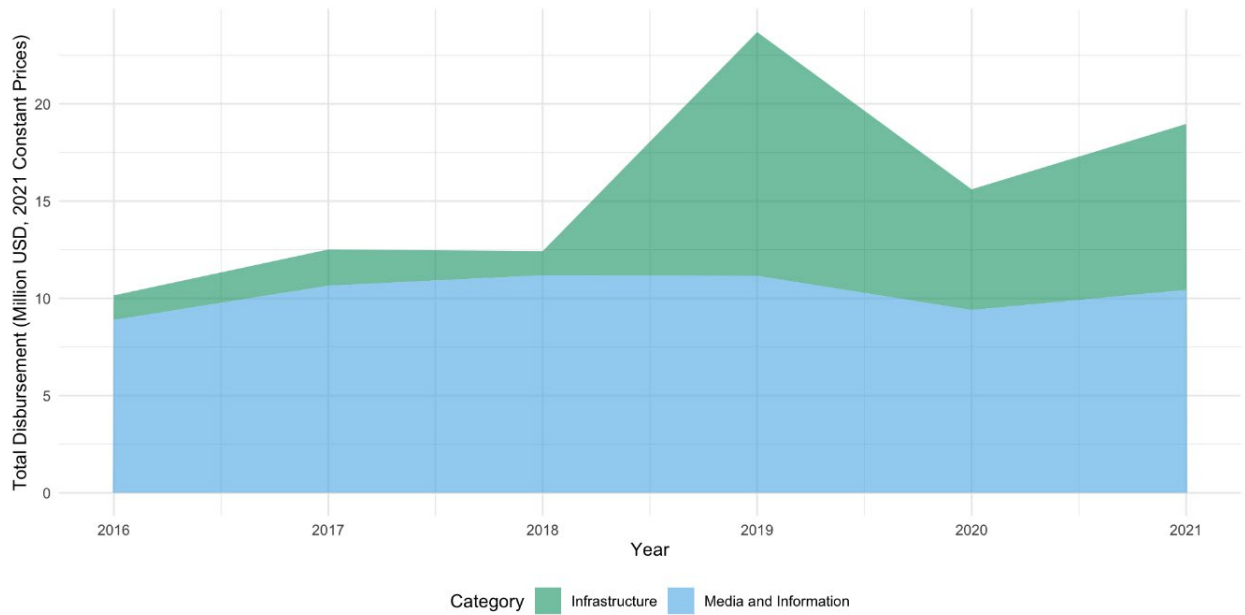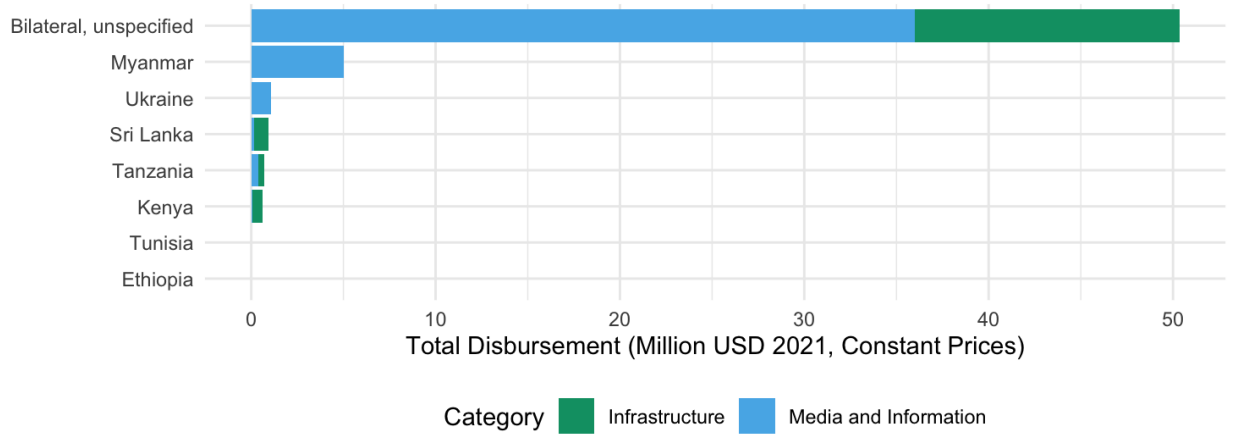

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

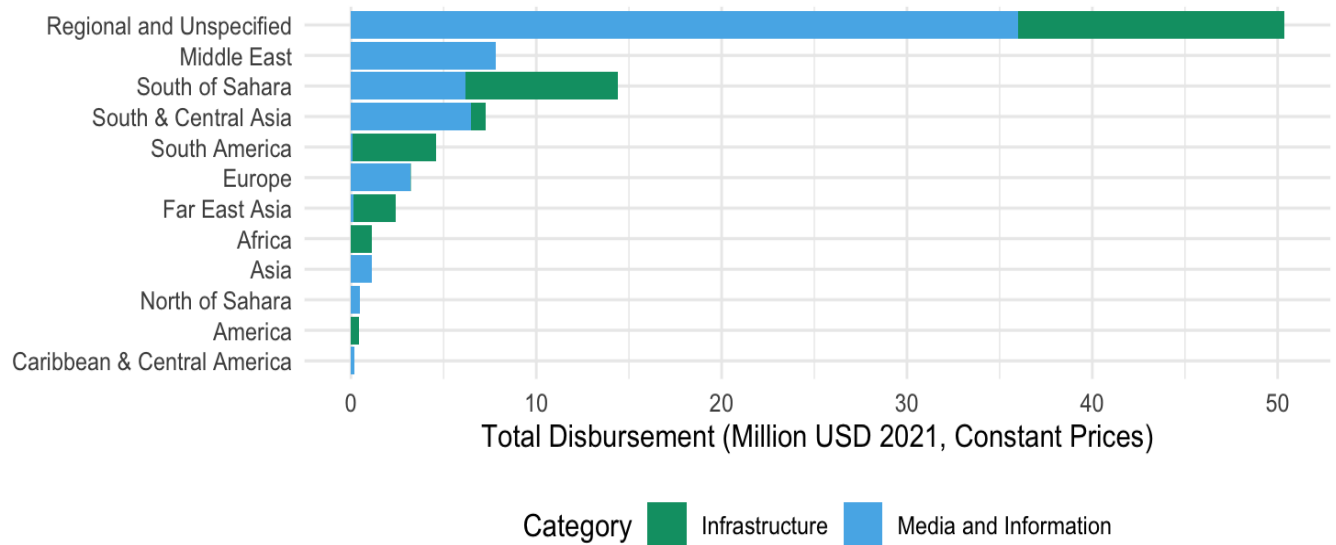Figure 0.27. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – Norway 2016-2021
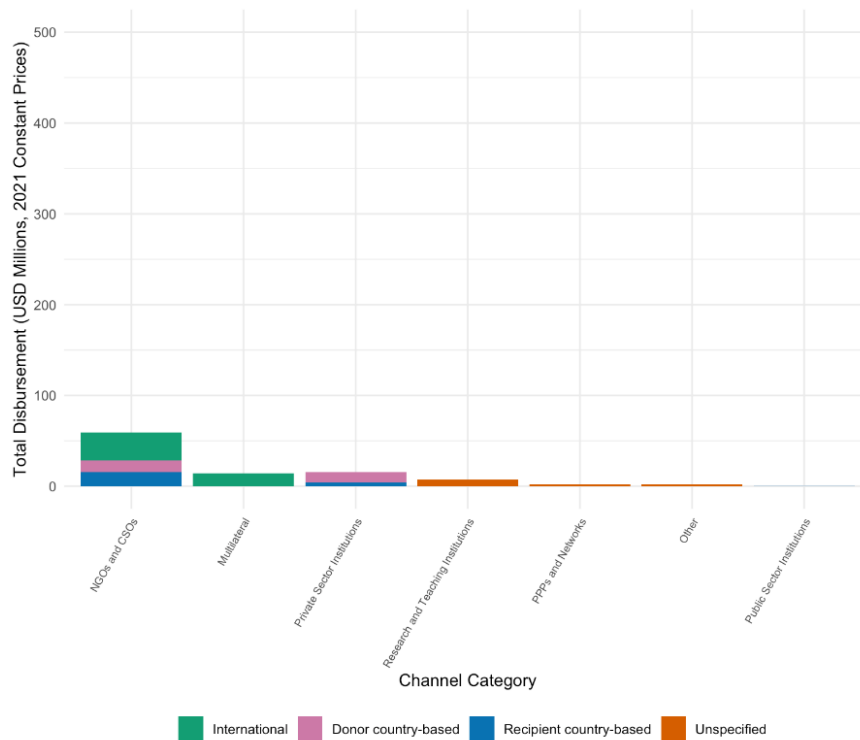
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.28. Top Recipients by Category – Norway 2016-2021 (Country)

Total Disbursement (Million USD 2021, Constant Prices)

Category ■ Infrastructure ■ Media and Information

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.29. Top Recipients by Category – Norway 2016-2021 (Region)

Total Disbursement (Million USD 2021, Constant Prices)

Category ■ Infrastructure ■ Media and Information

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.30. Top Agencies by Category – Norway 2016-2021
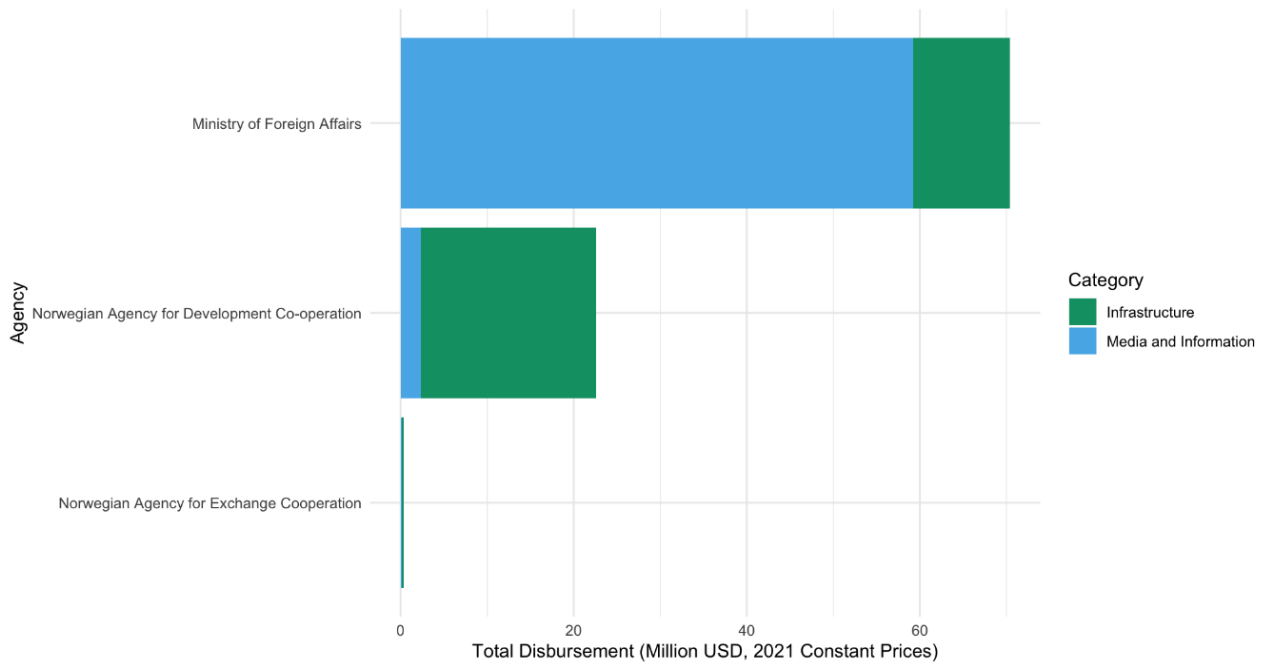
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Sweden

Sweden's development cooperation is guided by government strategies that either have a geographic or a thematic focus. Sweden's **Development cooperation strategy for democracy, human rights and the rule of law** (2018-2023) identifies freedom of expression as one of its nine priorities [link]. Media and the information environment is also supported through other thematic strategies and bilateral and regional strategies. The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** sets the overall policy and has some central programmes (such as support to IFPIM).

Sida manages most of Sweden's ODA for media and information environment programmes. Sida focuses on defending and upholding human rights, strengthening freedom of expression, promoting free and independent media online and offline, and supporting efforts to increase digital security. Sida is now bringing together two areas which were somewhat separate: (i) media and access to information and (ii) open, free and secure internet. Sida also supports culture from the perspective of freedom of expression (e.g. support for UNESCO normative standards and reporting on Convention for Freedom of Expression, Pen International).

Sweden's **Global Strategy for Economic Development** also includes some funding for media and communications, and is managed from another Sida department.

One of the characteristics of Sida support is its preference for **core or institutional funding** for international, regional or national partner organisations on the basis of their strategic plans (e.g. Internews, IMS, Article 19, Access Now, WITNESS, the Union of Tanzania Press Clubs, the Tanzania Media Council, etc). Sida also provides funding to UNESCO's main programmes (now through multi-donor basket funding).

Sida has also been able to invest in **innovating financing**, such as the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) which provides loans and technical advice to independent media.

Sida has two FTE staff dedicated centrally democracy and human rights, whose responsibilities include media, but no positions explicitly or formally dedicated to media. One exception is one FTE dedicated to freedom of expression and ICT (digital safety and free, open and secure internet) in the thematic support unit. Sida has two FTE staff on digitalisation.

There are two FTE in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one covering freedom of expression/media, and one covering human rights online.[41]
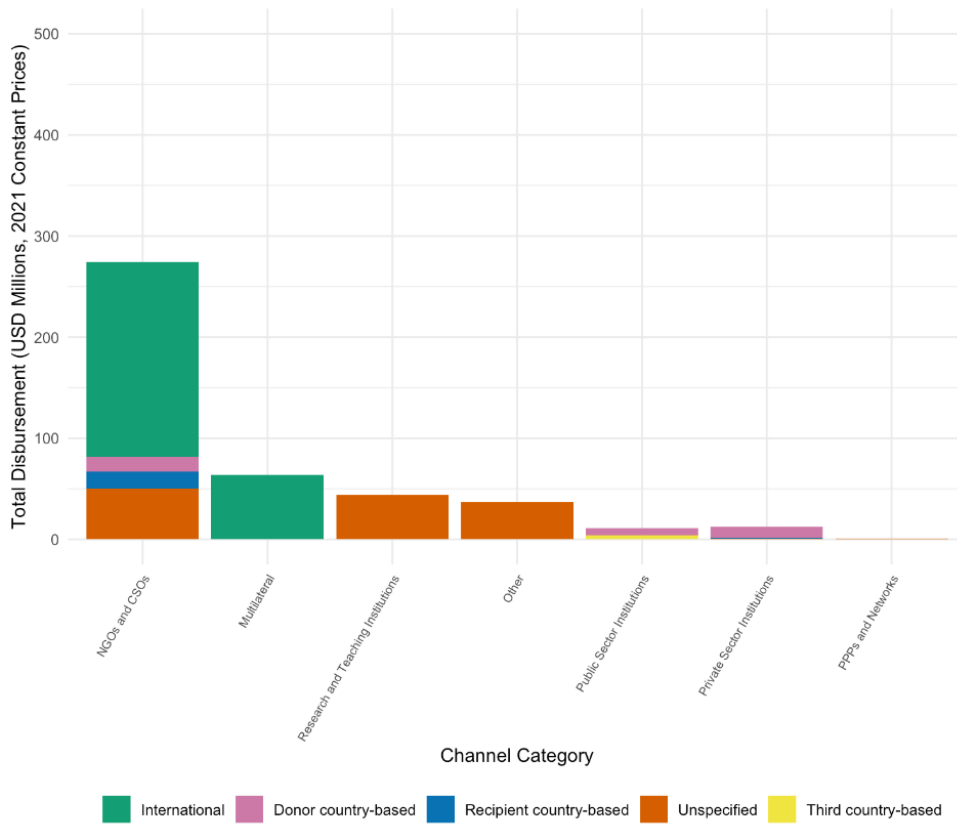
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[41] Ministry of Foreign Affairs staffing is to be confirmed.

Figure 0.31. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – Sweden 2016-2021
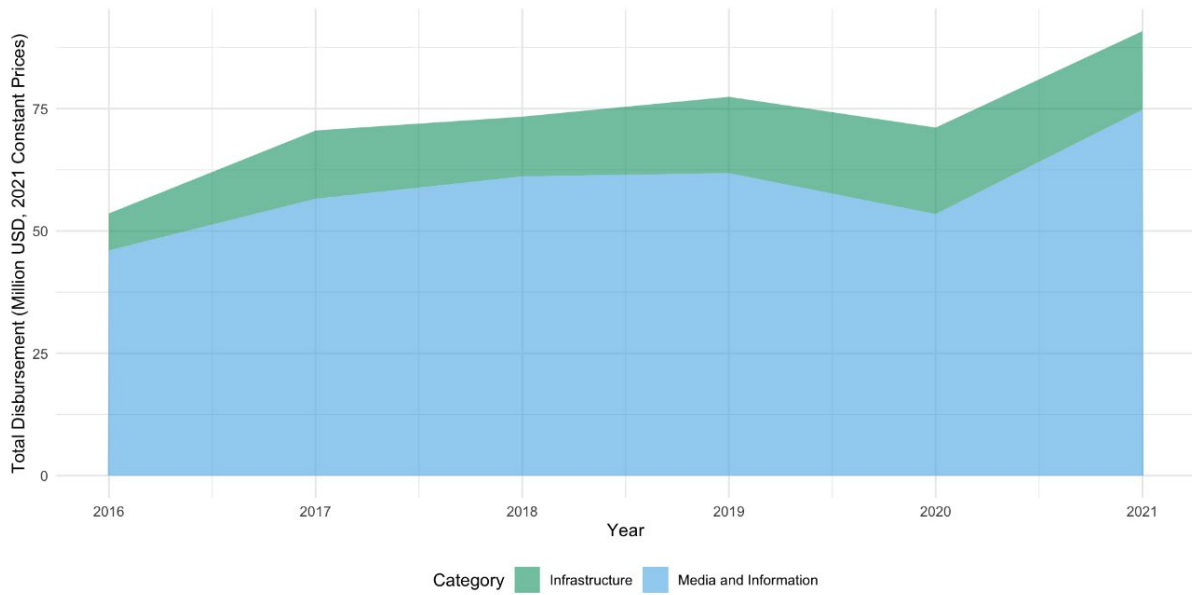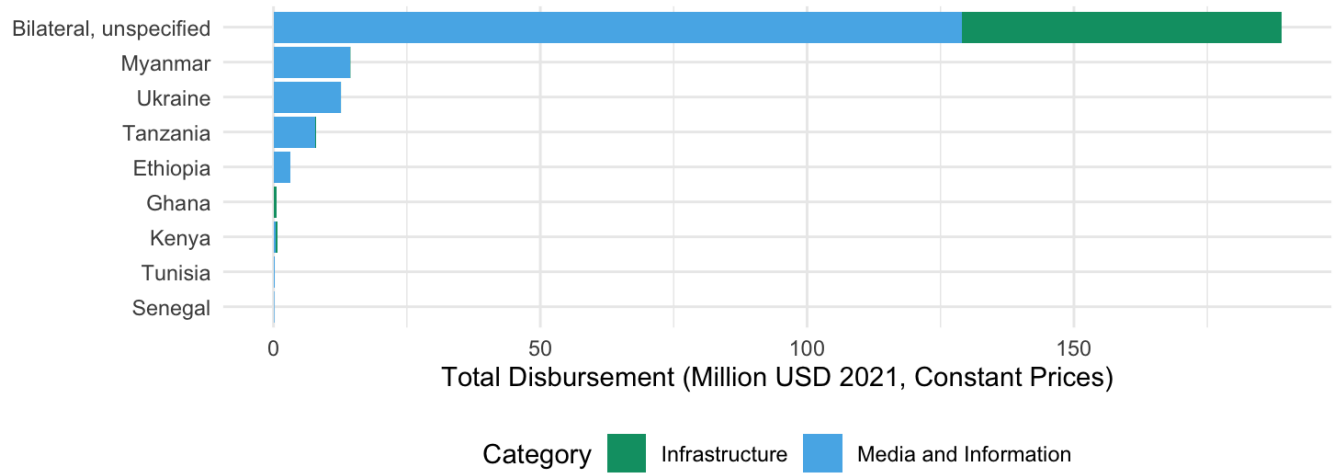

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.32. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – Sweden 2016-2021
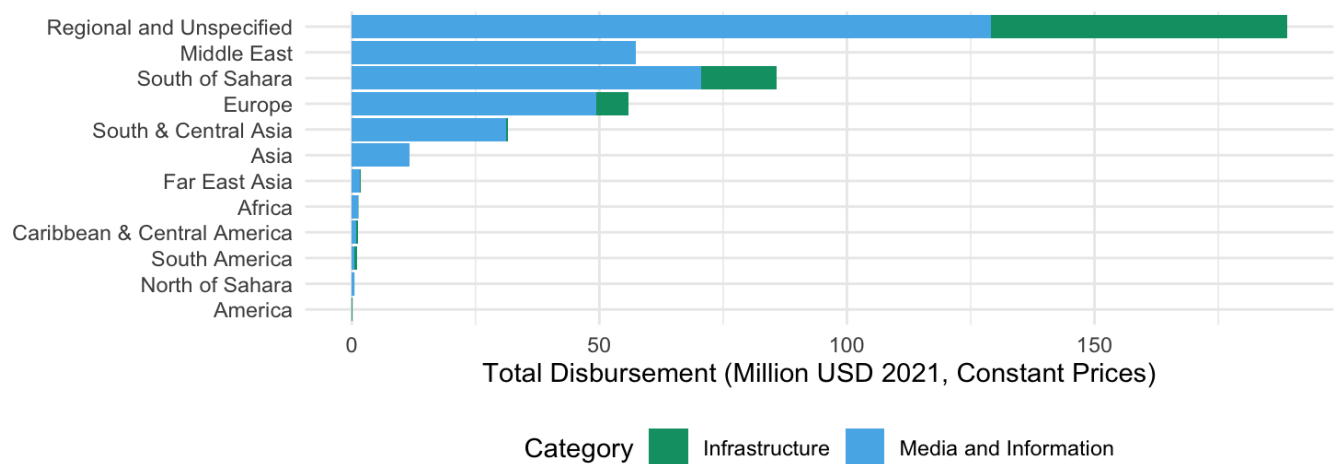

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.33. Top Recipients by Category - Sweden 2016-2021 (Country)
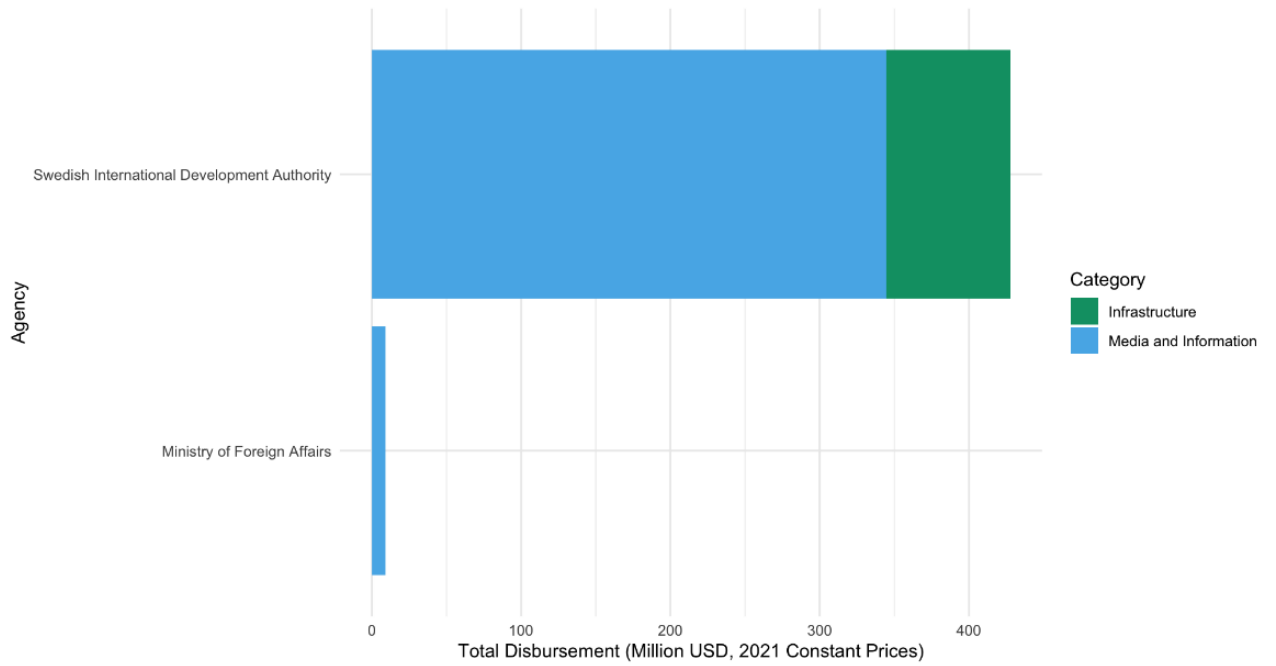

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.34. Top Recipients by Category - Sweden 2016-2021 (Region)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.35. Top Agencies by Category - Sweden 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

United Kingdom

The UK **Department for International Development** (DFID) funded both media for development and media sector development objectives through central and country programmes, such as the GBP 90 million Global Grant to BBC Media Action (2011-2017). DFID published its first digital strategy (2018-2020) in 2018 [link]. In its 2019 Governance Position Paper, it committed itself to supporting the development of healthy information ecosystems, including independent media [link]. The UK **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** (FCO) made media freedom one of its top human rights priorities in 2018, with funding for global and country initiatives available through thematic budget lines. In 2019, the UK co-founded with Canada the **Media Freedom Coalition**. In 2020, FCO and DFID merged to create the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

The 2023 **White Paper on International Development** [link] makes a commitment to 'support resilient, free, open and trustworthy independent media as a bulwark against disinformation, launching a new global programme on this in 2024'. FCDO is also preparing an **Open Societies and Human Rights Strategy** which will include media freedoms and media development.

FCDO's refreshed **digital framework** sees digital as a cross-cutting issue with four priorities (digital inclusion, digital transformation, digital responsibility, and digital sustainability) [link]. FCDO's digital development team and the democratic governance and media department are based in different FCDO directorates.

In terms of **central staffing**, FCDO's media freedom team in the democratic governance and media department includes 4.2 FTEs, of which to up to 2.5 FTEs work on media development and programming issues. There are nine FTEs on digital inclusion in FCDO.

Some of the main ongoing or recent FCDO programmes include:

- **Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development** (PRIMED, 2019-2023, GBP 10 million) to strengthen independent media in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone through a consortium led by BBC Media Action [link]

- **Counter Disinformation and Media Development Programme** (2016-2021, GBP 27 million, blend of ODA and non ODA, new phase ongoing) [link]. It aims to protect UK national security by reducing the harm to democracy and the rules-based international order caused by Russia's information operations, with interventions in the Baltic States, Central Europe, and Eastern Neighbourhood [link]

British Investment International (BII), the UK's development finance body, is responsible for investment in media and telecommunications infrastructure [link]. BII is a public limited company owned by FCDO. It operates as an arms-length body and agrees its strategic priorities every five years with FCDO, with which it discusses political and other investment risks. BII started investing in mobile phones in Africa in the 1990s, and currently has investments in Safaricom Ethiopia (a private mobile phone licence), Liquid Telecom (Africa's largest independent fibre, data centre and cloud technology provider), and WorldLink (the largest private sector internet service provider in Nepal). It also invested in telephone towers in Myanmar.

Since 2015, a large proportion of UK ODA for media has been allocated to the **BBC World Service**, the UK international public service broadcaster [link]. **BBC Media Action** is a separate organisation, the BBC's international charity, which delivers programmes for a range of funders and does not receive FCDO core funding [link].

Figure 0.36. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – United Kingdom 2016-2021
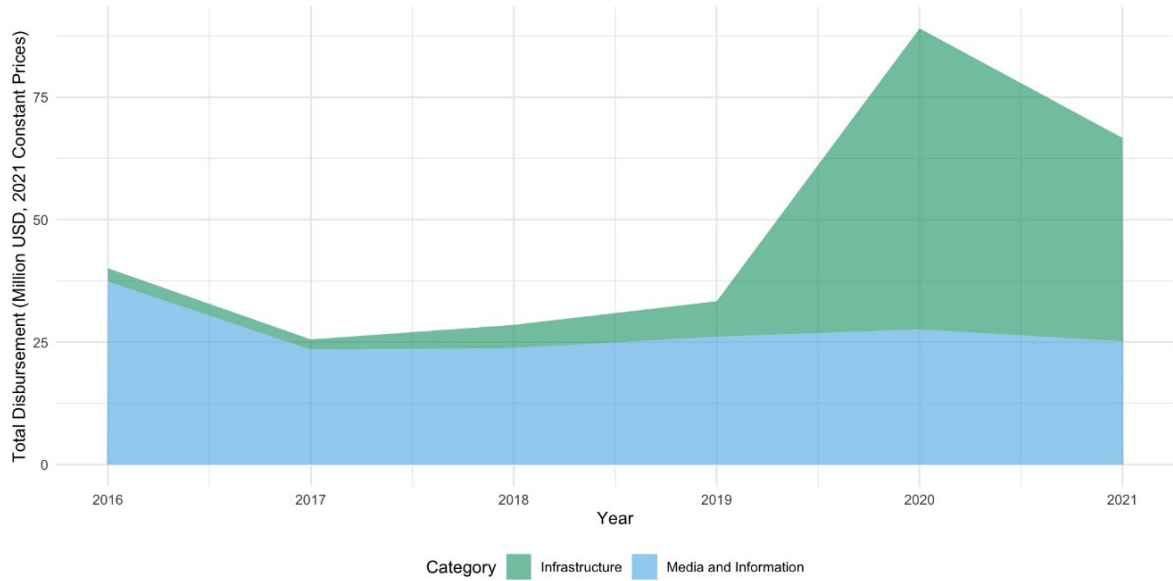
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.37. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – United Kingdom 2016-2021
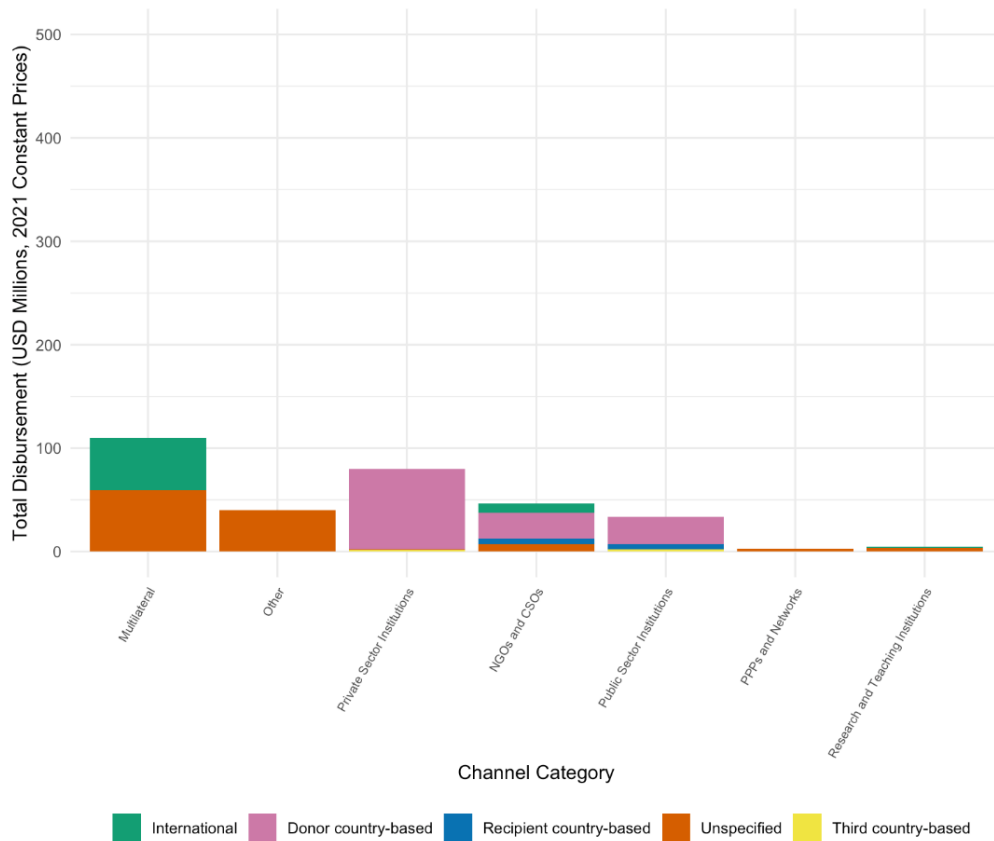
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.38. Top Recipients by Category – United Kingdom 2016-2021 (Country)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.39. Top Recipients by Category – United Kingdom 2016-2021 (Region)

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.40. Top Agencies by Category – United Kingdom 2016-2021
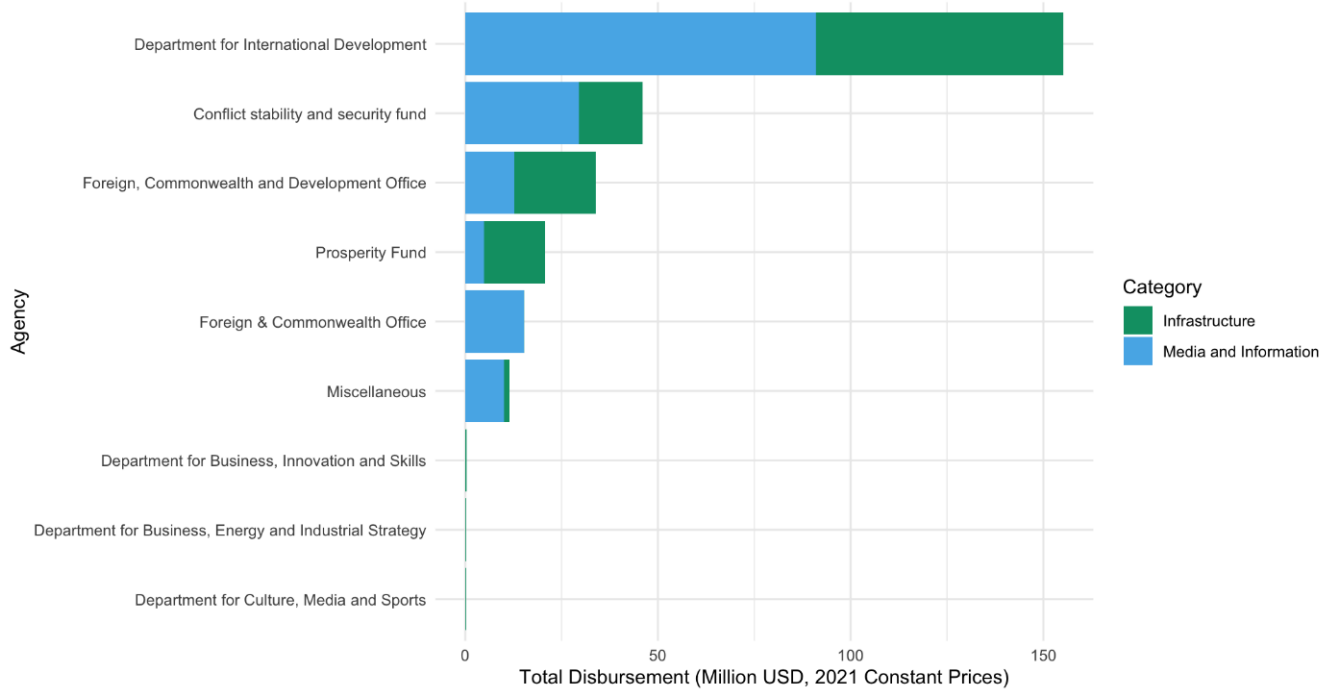
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

United States

The **National Security Strategy** supports freedom of expression as a U.S. value. There has been an increased attention to media and information environment since the **Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal**, announced at the December 2021 Summit for Democracy [link].

The U.S. **Department of State**, the **United States Agency for International Development** (USAID), and the **National Endowment for Democracy** (NED) all fund media and information environment interventions.

Within USAID, the **Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance** leads on media policy and guidance, provides technical expertise and manages global programmes. USAID priorities include media sector development (including media viability, professionalism and management skills), media through a human rights lens (press freedom, access to information), gender and marginalised communities, and public interest media as a public good. There is decreasing attention to communications for development. Media support is often related to civil society programmes [link]. USAID has a longstanding tradition of supporting independent media in the European Partnership, but programming in Africa and Asia has increased in recent years.

Central USAID programmes announced at the Summit for Democracy include:

- **Advancing Digital Democracy**, an initiative to foster open, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystems that advance, rather than undermine, democratic values and respect for human rights [link].

- **The Media Viability Accelerator,** a web-based platform that will help news media become more financially sustainable by accessing solutions and market insights to inform effective business strategies. It is a public-private partnership between USAID, Microsoft, and a coalition of media support organizations led by Internews.

- **Reports Shield** which helps news media avoid lawsuits and other legal threats by providing training, resources, and pre-publication review. The membership programme identifies qualified lawyers to respond to legal threats, coordinate and cover legal representation.

- A $20 million contribution to **IFPIM**.

USAID's 2022 **digital strategy** [link] aims to strengthen open, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystems. The USAID Digital Ecosystem Framework provides a way to understand a country's digital operating environment and informs the design of effective, sustainable projects, and activities [link]. USAID's innovation, technology, and research hub leads on digital innovation.

The NED funds the **Center for International Media Assistanc**e (CIMA) which is dedicated to improving U.S. efforts to promote independent media in developing countries around the world. It undertakes research and analysis, and supports international networking and lesson sharing [link].

The **Global Engagement Center** is mandated to counter threats from China, Russia, and Iran but also undertakes public diplomacy, strategic litigation, and some Ukraine programming support to independent media.

In terms of **central staffing**, USAID has three FTEs media experts and one FTE mis/disinformation lead in the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Governance.

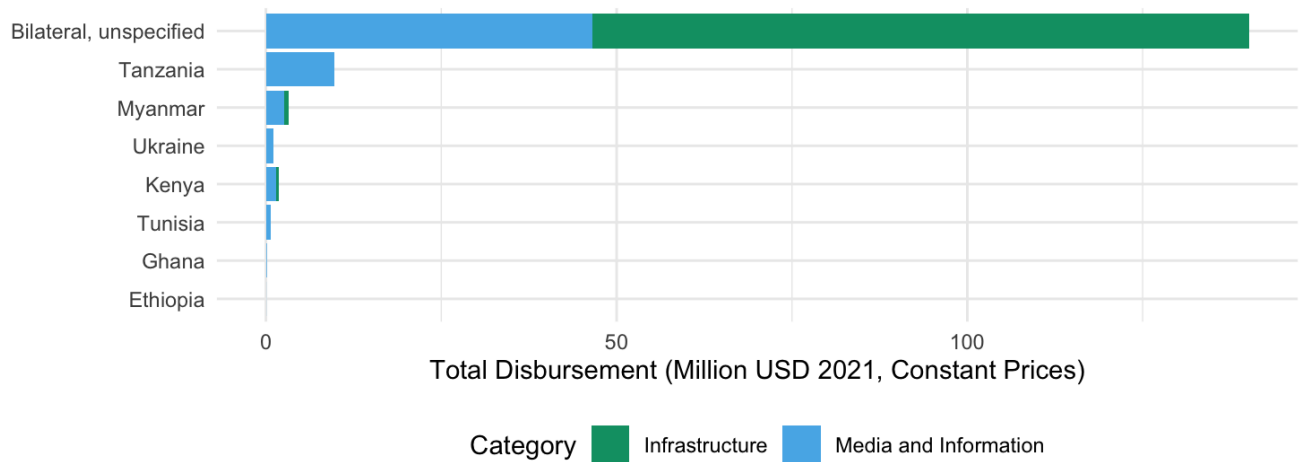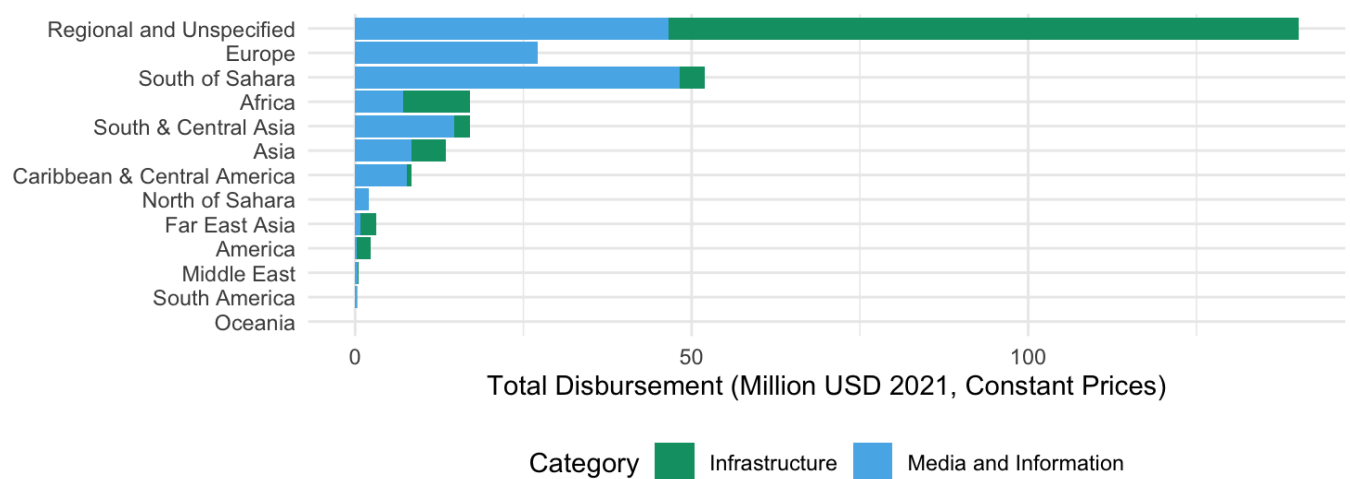Figure 0.41. ODA to Media and the Information Environment – United States 2016-2021
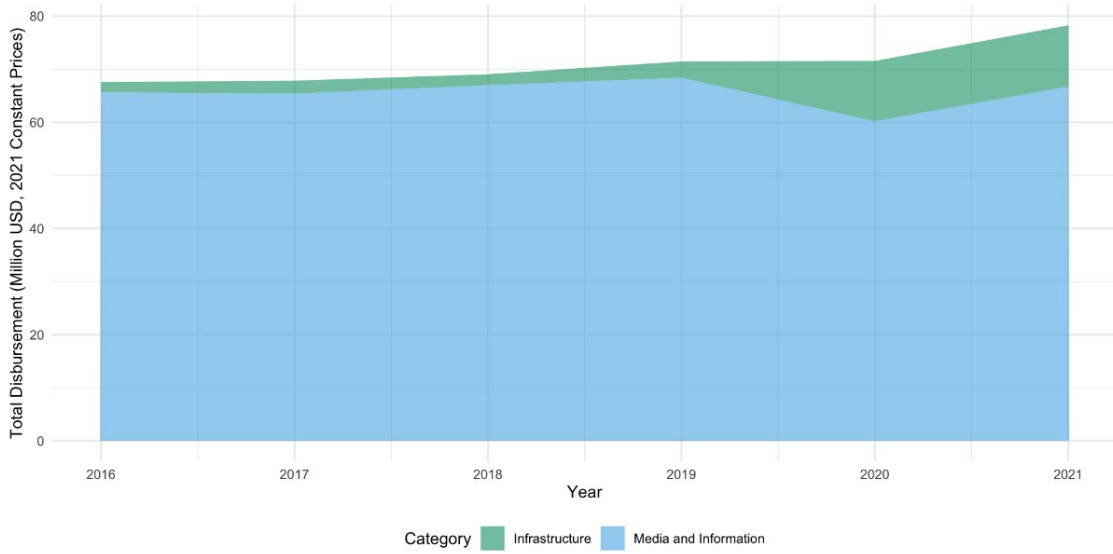
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.42. ODA to Media and the Information Environment by Delivery Channels – United States 2016-2021
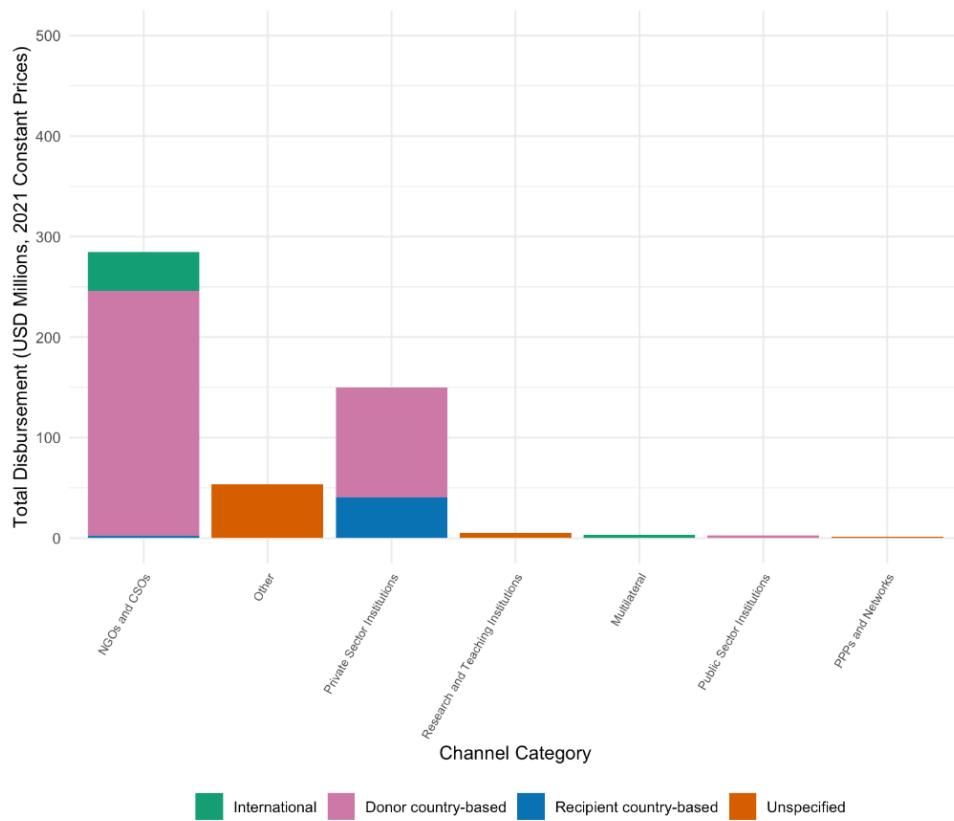
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.43. Top Recipients by Category – United States 2016-2021 (Country)

Total Disbursement (Million USD 2021, Constant Prices)

Category ■ Infrastructure ■ Media and Information
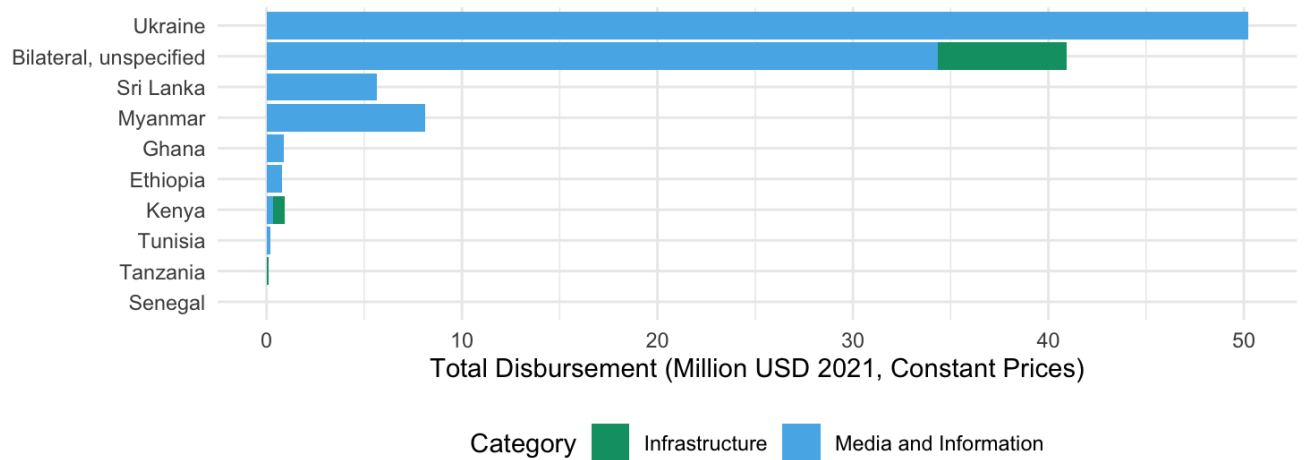
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.44. Top Recipients by Category – United States 2016-2021 (Region)

Total Disbursement (Million USD 2021, Constant Prices)

Category ■ Infrastructure ■ Media and Information

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 0.45. Top Agencies by Category – United States 2016-2021

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Annex D: Summary of reviewed programmes

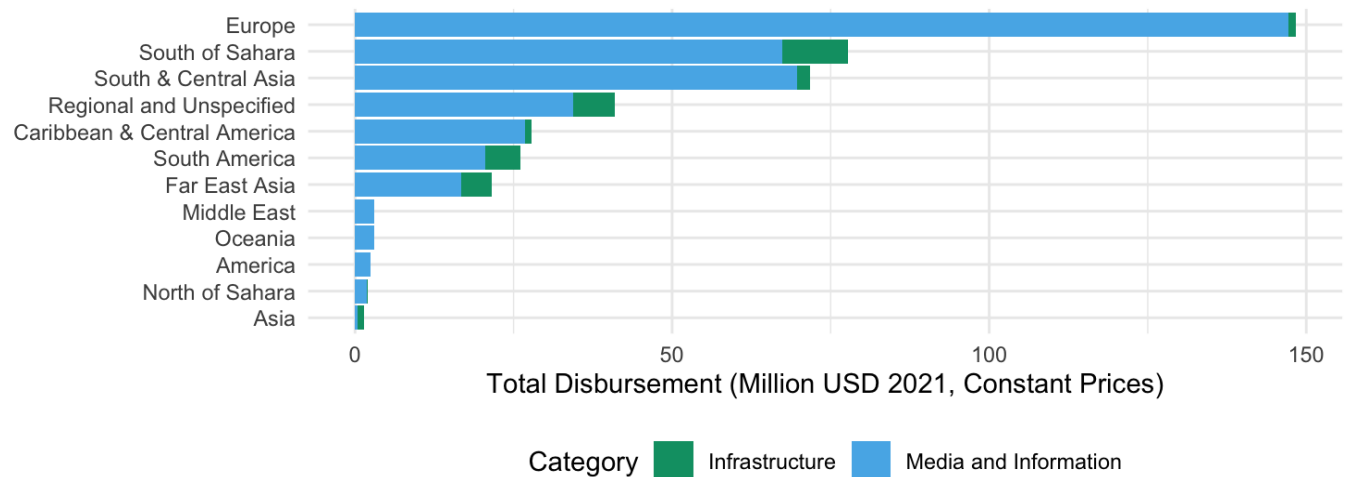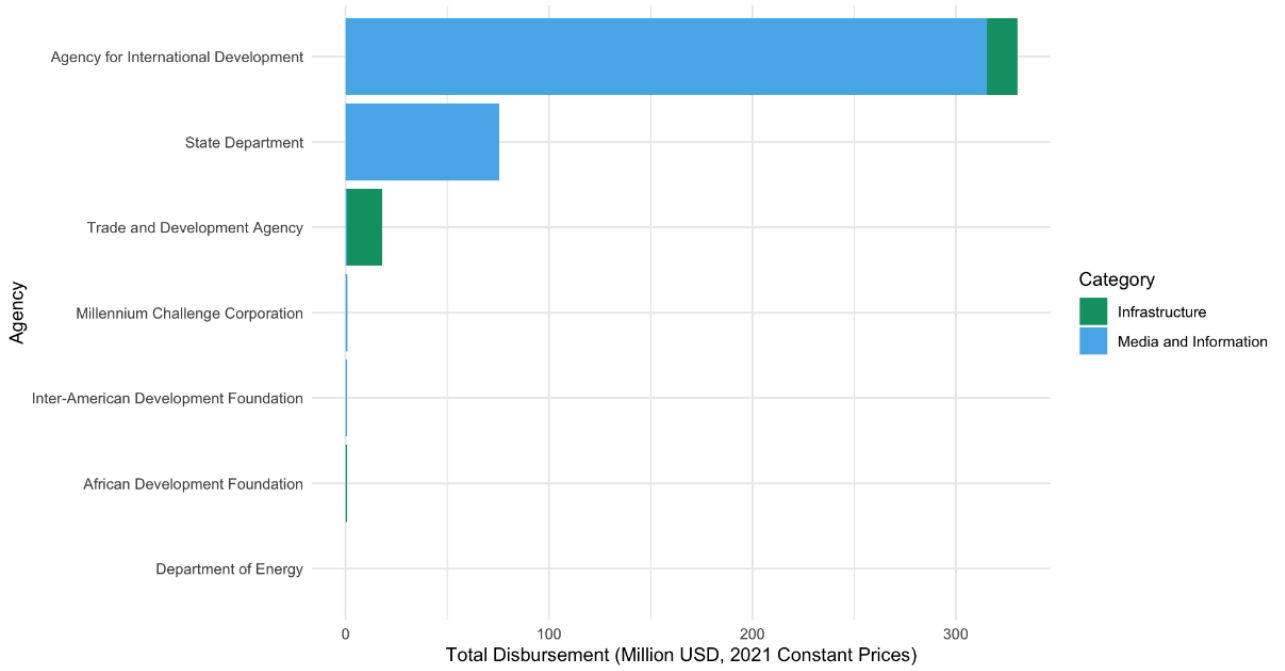| Programme	Objective	Funder	Implementer	Partners
Ukraine and wider Europe				
Support to the National Public Broadcaster of Ukraine (2017-2021, budget TBC)	To improve the effectiveness of the public broadcaster UA: PBC, to create a permanent basis of quality, objective, and unbiased news content for all population segments.	European Commission with co-funding from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs	International: DW Akademie, BBCMA, Niras National media watchdog	Public broadcaster UA:PBCSuspilne
Media program in Ukraine (2018–2025, USD 75 million) Link	To strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter the malign influence and support European integration.	USAID	International: Internews	19 local media organizations UA:PBCSuspilne
Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (2018-2022, SEK 35 million, USD 3.35 million)	Capacity building of Member Centers and of OCCRP with the end result of maximising investigative journalism and the role of independent media as a trusted source of actionable information to press for transparency and accountability, combat organised crime and corruption, and protect the rule of law and fundamental human rights	Sida	International: Journalism Development Network, Inc, USA	Member centres in the Eastern Partnership region and Belarus, in cooperation with the OCCRP network. Independent media outlets, independent journalists, human rights organisations
Strengthening Free, Independent, Professional Media in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia (2017-2022, USD 4.35 million)	Capacity building aiming at citizens' access to balanced information in the Central and Eastern European regional, through strengthening non-state media actors' resilience to continue to offer quality journalism as an alternative to misinformation	Sida	Swedish: Fojo Media Institute, Linnaeus University, Sweden Regional: Association of Independent Press in Moldova, Georgian Regional Media Association in Georgia, Regional Press Development Institute in Ukraine, and Media Initiatives Centre in Armenia	Independent media organisations in, or in exile of, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, (beneficiary countries) and in Poland, Latvia, and Sweden (for providing platforms and expertise)
Audience Understanding and Digital Support (2018-2022, USD 4.8 million)	1. Enhance the safety and security of selected human rights organizations/activists and independent media outlets/journalists in target countries. 2. Improve the quality of media content and financial sustainability of selected outlets by enhancing their understanding of audience needs.	Sida	International: Internews Regional: Independent Journalism Centre in Moldova, Internews Georgia, Internews Ukraine, and Media Initiatives Centre in Armenia (local branches of Internews now registered as independent NGOs).	Human rights defenders and independent media organisations in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and two other countries

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF ODA TO MEDIA AND THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

			Digital Security Lab in Ukraine Media Diversity Institute in Armenia	
Young Media—Media for and with Young People (2020-2022, budget TBC – EUR 1.35 million, USD 1.46 million) Link	To improve access to information and enable the participation of young people under the age of 30 in decision-making processes.	Germany	DW Akademie	Three local partners in Serbia, including KOMS (Serbian youth umbrella organization) A network of trainers and mentors from 11 media outlets
Ukraine: The Project for Capacity Development of Public Service Broadcaster of Ukraine (2017-2022, JYP 301,000,000, USD 2 million (funder's completion report)	Quality of the JSC"UA: PBC" programs is improved as a public broadcaster for delivering accurate, impartial and fair information within the entire territory.	JICA	Japan's PSB NHK experts	UA: PBC
USAID Balkans Media Assistance(2017-2022, USD 10 million) (implementer's final report report)	To make media more competitive in the local and regional marketplaces and strengthen the sustainability of the independent media sector across the region, particularly in the digital space.	USAID	Internews and FHI 360	11 key media partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia
Expressions Balkaniques (2020-2023, EUR 676,500, USD 730, 900)	To give young people in the Western Balkans the tools to express themselves openly on subjects that motivate them in each country.	French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs	International: Canal France International Local: Journalism training centres or organisations with expertise in journalism training Local youth structures	Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
Kosovo: The Project for Capacity Development of Radio Television of Kosovo (2015-2019, JPY 332,000,000, USD 2.28 million) (funder's completion report)	Quality of the RTK programmes is improved as an independent public broadcaster for delivering accurate, impartial and fair information to all ethnic groups.	JICA	Japan's public service broadcasting NHK experts	RTK
EU Information Centres in the Enlargement and Neighbourhoods regions (2011-2017, budget TBC)	N/A. Assumed to be to increase awareness of EU policies, projects, values and EU accession process	European Commission (EC) Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)	Contracted communications providers	[Missing information]

Myanmar

Civil Society and Media Activity (2014-2018, USD 20 million)	To expand and improve meaningful engagement between the public and the Government of Burma (GOB) as well as the flow of democratic reform-related information between Burma's historically divided central and peripheral regions. Additionally, to advance inclusivity	USAID	International: FHI 360 overall in partnership with Internews, Voluntary Service Overseas and Public International Law and Policy Group National: Three local intermediate support organisation and four local media intermediary support organisation	Local partners in 13 out of 14 States and regions. awarded
Myanmar Joint Programme of support to journalists and media companies (2020-22, EUR 10.5 million, USD 11.34 million)	Democratic gains in Myanmar are safeguarded while women and men have access to reliable information and news, and are able to make decisions on an informed basis (covering public interest journalism, safety of journalists, policies and laws)	EU, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden	International implementers: IMS Fojo	Local media houses and journalists, in and outside Myanmar, media support organisations, etc
Myanmar: The Project for Capacity Development of the Myanmar Radio and Television (2016-2020, JPY 402,000,000, USD 2.77 million(funder's completion report)	Human resources are developed in MRTV to deliver accurate, impartial and fair information to the people of Myanmar.	JICA	Ex-NHK Japanese engineer and journalists from a commercial TV (JET)	MRTV

Tanzania

Boresha Habari ('Better News') / Tanzania Media and Civil Society Strengthening Project (2017-2023, USD 9.7 million)	To support an open, inclusive environment in which media and civil society provide accurate and impartial information that promotes participation, inclusion, and accountability	USAID	Internews	Seven large grantees, mainly Tanzanian local media-support and human rights groups and the US-based International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. Other support to 16 community and local radio stations from nine regions. Small grants to 20 CSOs advocacy campaigns, 100 Tanzanian media outlets and local CSOs to help them report on specific issues .

Union of Tanzania Press Clubs' (UTPC) Strategic Plan (2016-2020 $3.56 million)	UPTC strategic plan: A democratic Tanzania fully embracing, a free, independent and strong media. Outcome challenges relating to three boundary partners: (i) press clubs, (ii) journalists, and (iii) media owners and editors.	Sida	Union of Tanzania Press Clubs	28 press clubs in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar
Accountability in Tanzania Phase 2 (2018-2022, GPB 22.8 million overall, USD 28.65 million) (implementer's final report)	To increase the responsiveness and accountability of Government in Tanzania, through a strengthened civil society (media included under the civic space thematic priority)	FCDO	KPMG Advisory Limited in Tanzania	Sub-components: BBC Media Action partnership with local radio stations Haba na Haba and Local Good Governance Programmes(2018-2022, GPB 1.1 million, USD 1.38 million) Jamii Forum (2021-2022, GBP 103,000. USD 129,000)
Institutions for Inclusive Development (2015-2021, GBP 13.3 million, USD 16.73 million) (funder's completion report)	To strengthen democratic institutions and governance in Tanzania by working with Parliament, political parties, civil society and the media to improve capacity and strengthen accountability mechanisms, promote institutions and political processes that are more inclusive and foster economic growth that provides more benefits for poor people.	FCDO	Palladium	Sub-component: BBC Media Action partnership with local radio stations (2017-2019, GBP 1.4 million, USD 1.76 million)

Core funding or global programmes

BBC Media Action Global Grant (2011-2017, GBP 90 million, USD 113 million)	To facilitate more accountable state-society relations and governance; healthier populations; increased ability to cope with crises in 15 target countries, with a particular focus on fragile states.	FCDO	BBC Media Action	Media outlets, central and local government authorities in 15 countries
UNESCO's extra budgetary project: Promoting democracy and freedom of expression (2014-2018, SEK 32 million, USD 3 million)	To foster peace, sustainable development and democracy through freedom of expression at global and regional levels.	Sida	UNESCO	[Missing information]
Multi donor programme on freedom of expression and safety of journalists (2017-2021, USD 15.6 million)	Outcome N° 1: Member States are enhancing norms and policies related to freedom of expression, including press freedom and the right to access information, online and offline, and are reinforcing the safety of journalists by implementing the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity Outcome N° 2: Member States have benefited from enhanced media contributions to diversity, gender equality and youth empowerment in and through media; and societies are empowered through media and information literacy programmes and effective media response to emergency and disaster	Sida, Norway, and Netherlands (98% of the budget) and 8 other funders	UNESCO	In 36 countries: duty bearers(governments, parliamentarians, judges, law enforcement). rights holders (journalists and media professionals, independent and community media outlets/associations; academia)
Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF, 2015-2019, USD 6 million)	To improve the management capability, financial viability, and audience reach of client news businesses, so that they are better able to expose corruption, hold governments accountable, and provide relevant information to more people.	Sida	MDIF	42 media companies in 28 countries where the media environment is unfree or partly free
Access Now – core funding and grant activities (2019-2022, USD 9 million)	To modernise and maximise the enjoyment of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the digital age	Sida	Access Now	Grassroots activists using ICTs for human rights in 130 countries
WITNESS – core funding (2019-2022, budget TBC)	To ensure that millions of people turning to video and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to create change can do so more safely and effectively	Sida	WITNESS	[Missing information]

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF ODA TO MEDIA AND THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT