

PARALLEL WORKING GROUPS

Conference delegates were divided into three parallel working groups and asked to discuss the following:

1. The key roles (mission) of the ARFMD
2. The key issues for media development in Africa
3. Sustainability and capacity building of media CSOs in Africa

GROUP REPORTS

Group 1:

Proposed Vision: A free, vibrant, professional and sustainable media in Africa.

Proposed Mission: to promote an active and effective forum for networking among organisations committed to media development in Africa. (this is a refinement of the broader mission which is ‘to serve as an active and effective forum amongst organisations’).

Proposed Roles: Three roles related to mission:

- To harmonise info sharing in order to minimise duplication and conflict
- To enhance networking and joint programming amongst partner organisations involved in media development
- To work in partnership under a common voice in engaging donors and governments etc. on media development issues in Africa

Key issues:

1. *Capacity (or lack of capacity) which has five dimensions:*
 - a. professional capacity related to training, general professionalism, ethics, the practice of journalism as a profession;
 - b. lack of capacity within media organisations themselves in terms of financial management, managerial capacity, lack of capital;
 - c. lack of capacity in media support organisations with respect to training, capacity to advocate for the media, monitoring issues;
 - d. weak infrastructure to support development of media infrastructure;
 - e. media content - especially in areas of development, specialised reporting, etc.
2. *Problem of legal and institutional framework.* Need to advocate for better laws; seek governments to observe international laws and put in place regulations that conform to international standards.
3. *Safety and security of journalists:* effective strategies to support journalists in danger. Where necessary establish emergency funds, legal funds, remedies for ‘legal’ ambushing of media workers

4. *Lack of investment in media:* This could be solved through state incentives for investment in the media, e.g. a community media fund, subsidies for media support.

Sustainability and capacity building of media CSOs

1. To sustain their activities media CSOs need to tap into local sources of funding; look for funding from national sources and other indigenous organisations;
2. Programme development and management of governance of media CSOs. Many media CSOs have problems in management and governance in terms of transparency and accountability.

Additional comments from group:

- ☒ *Professional standards:* What is the meaning of such professional standards? There is need to look into the constitution of, and capacity of regulatory bodies. Self-regulation is a problem on the whole continent. These two points should receive closer scrutiny

Group 2:

The regional body should develop founding documents to discern the values it subscribes to. Issues, especially around gender equality and equity that are fundamental to any forum dealing with media development in Africa, are currently not well articulated.

Proposed Vision: A free, vibrant, professional and sustainable media in Africa.

Proposed Roles:

1. The role of facilitator is key to managing the information flow/exchange of information, probably through set-up of a database that provides information, amongst others on:
 - a. the media landscape in each country
 - b. list of media organisations in each country, their leanings, their activities;
 - c. information on tools/best practices used by others to see how these tools can be localised.
2. Providing solidarity across borders.
3. Facilitate joint lobby and advocacy campaigns on specific issues in Africa, e.g. media laws, critical issues that affect the media within Africa;
4. Need to develop a code of conduct for support organisations (role of the forum)

Key issues:

1. There is a need for sustainable funding for media in Africa. Support organisations should make an assessment of how funds are currently distributed; necessary to see the level of support that is adequate.
2. Media content is no longer diverse. Look into support initiatives to ward off this trend.
3. Develop an understanding of the different roles and contributions made by all sectors of the media, including mainstream, alternative and community media

4. Technology: countries are at different levels of development. Some countries already advanced and able to provide citizens greater access (universal public access to media). Media development strategies should be relevant to national infrastructures
5. Ownership and control of media. This requires greater interrogation. Guidelines (affecting policy and regulation) should be developed
6. Media cannot play its proper role because of lack of standards/guidelines/benchmarks with respect to wages. Such standards/guidelines are even more important at national level to guard against the exploitation of media workers;
7. There are different skills within different media, probably in the same country. This opens the debate on capacity development strategies. How do media organisations in the same country support each other?
8. In Africa there is a juniorisation of newsrooms. This is a major issue as senior journalists have left the newsrooms. Mentorship programmes no longer exist and there is an overall reduction in fellowship schemes.
9. Tabloidisation of the media

Sustainability and capacity building of media CSOs

1. Need for those who assist support organisations to undertake a needs assessment to ensure the nature and level of support that is adequate. No one-size-fits-all approach. Support organisations are not meant to be launching pads for political ambitions.
2. Donors should not set agenda for support organisations. Preach a bottom-up approach.
3. Invariably there is talk about sustainability. There is also social and institutional sustainability of support organisations who need to sustain themselves beyond the financial needs.
4. Training: there is need to look at sharing of curricula between training institutions to produce fairly proficient levels of training. Possibly the database for training and media support organisations can avoid duplication
5. Support organisations: greater synchronisation of activities at national, regional and Africa levels; who is doing what and what kind of support is given?
6. There should be some kind of approved standards that govern the work of support organisations

Additional comments by group:

Group spoke about migration of skills and the payment of media workers, the prohibitive cost of trainers. The database should include resources people; shared resources with respect to consultant and training fees.

Group 3:

Proposed Vision: A free, vibrant, professional and sustainable media in Africa.

Roles:

Build capacity of regional networks

Key issues:

1. Viability of press/media enterprises
2. Legal framework for protection of information and training of journalists
3. Lack of research in media sector
4. Financing mechanisms of media development organisations

Sustainability and capacity building of media CSOs

1. Use in priority of local skills. Have to exploit local skills. Identification and exchange of best practices between organisations
2. Creation of channels of dissemination of information
5. Improved networking and sharing of information between members of the African network

General comments:

- Rhodes University hosts has an Education and Training database for training on media which could be useful to members of the network.
- MISA is currently developing its online interface which will hold a lot of the information that participants are seeking.