



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Press Freedom and Development

Information and communication play an important role in development. Creating, disseminating and sharing information and knowledge is a prerequisite for breaking the existing gaps between developed and developing

When 1,4 billion people live below the poverty threshold, freedom of the press would not necessarily be the first remedy that comes to mind. Nevertheless, there is a strong correlation between press freedom and development.

water and sanitation, vaccines, environment etc. It is therefore of utmost importance that there are free, independent and pluralistic media providing information to all parts of society.

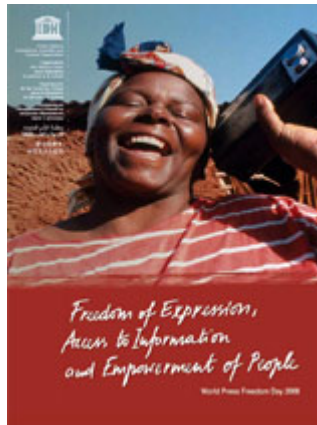
Press freedom can contribute to good governance when journalists act as watchdogs regarding the accountability of political authorities. One of the preconditions for good governance is a functioning legal infrastructure that protects independent and pluralistic media.

The 'Three Ds': Development, Dialogue and Democracy

UNESCO's work on press freedom centres on three key notions: Development, Dialogue and Democracy. They are all interlinked and one cannot be achieved without the others. Information is an intrinsic part of democratic control of State institutions, intimately linked to participatory democracy and the respect for fundamental rights.

The information gap hinders development

Freedom of expression and its corollary press freedom allow the most disadvantaged groups of society to become involved in initiatives that directly or indirectly affect them. The communities most affected by poverty are the ones least able to impart and obtain information; they are excluded from public debate and unable to influence decisions that have a profound effect on their everyday lives.



Access to information allows the discussion of a large variety of options and permits an informed exercise of voting through a real political debate. In particular, access to information facilitates participation, transparency and the struggle against corruption. Combating corruption at the same time encourages growth and

economic activity and the struggle against poverty.

Free, independent and pluralistic media provide a platform for dialogue between different stakeholders in society, from State authorities to civil society. This dialogue allows peaceful and open airing of differences and resolution of disputes. Peaceful conflict-resolution is

This is clear relating to basic services: as an example, community health depends on information related to clean

Press Freedom and Development

Press Freedom and Development

conducive to development while conflict that spirals into violence can wipe out years of progress.

Another facet of the positive role press freedom has is the empowerment of people. Press freedom is not a luxury or a finishing touch exclusively reserved for developed countries. It is, rather, one of the fundamental pillars, upon which peace, democracy and development lies in all nations.

UNESCO's Role

UNESCO seeks to foster development through the enhancing of press freedom by different means.

Sensitization - The UNESCO flagship event in raising awareness of the importance of press freedom is the World Press Freedom Day. This year the theme of the celebration is *The Potential of Media: Dialogue, Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation*. It will be held in Qatar on 3 May 2009 and gather 200 participants.

In October 2008, UNESCO organized, with the support of the National Commissions of Sweden, France and Latvia, an International High Level Symposium on Freedom of Expression: Development, Democracy and Dialogue. The Symposium was a part of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Symposium brought together more than 400 participants including government officials, policymakers, Nobel Prize Laureates and World Press Freedom Prize winners, as well as representatives of major non-governmental organizations and media professionals.

Legal and normative support - UNESCO provides support for the

elaboration of national legislation related to press freedom, to ensure they correspond to internationally-recognized democratic standards. An important part of this work is the acknowledgment of the right to access to information and freedom of information. UNESCO is working toward recognition of the freedom to access information held by public bodies as a universal right. Currently there are more than 70 freedom of information laws adopted across the world and 20 to 30 are under consideration.

Empowerment - Empowerment relies on access to diverse media outlets. UNESCO supports independent media, with a particular focus on local and community media. This is done notably through training and technical assistance. In 2008, the International Programme for the Development of Communication published *Media Development Indicators: A framework for assessing media development*. This manual helps countries to plan and implement strategies for media development as an integral component of development policies.

Post-conflict & post-disaster - UNESCO supports independent media in conflict, post-conflict and post-disaster situations to enable them to provide non-partisan information.

UNESCO's work includes the promotion of dialogue between media professionals in these areas and the rest of the world. It also provides advice to authorities of countries in post-conflict situations on such matters as the drafting of new media legislation.

To find out more:

Link:

http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php?URL_ID=2493&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Contact: s.coudray@unesco.org