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United Nations Development Programme
Bureau for Development Policy
Democratic Governance Group

**Supporting Public
Service Broadcasting**
Learning from Bosnia
and Herzegovina's experience

public
service
broadcasting

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Further advice and information can be obtained from the Democratic Governance Group of UNDP. Contact Elizabeth McCall, Civil Society/ Access to Information Advisor at elizabeth.mccall@undp.org.

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Table of Contents

Acronyms

- 1 Introduction** *page 5*
- 2 Definitions and concepts** *page 7*
 - 2.1 What do we mean by broadcast media? *page 7*
 - 2.2 What is the difference between state, public service and commercial broadcasting? *page 7*
 - 2.3 International principles and standards for Public Service Broadcasting *page 9*
 - 2.4 Public service broadcasting and democratic governance reform *page 11*
- 3 Why is public service broadcasting important to UNDP?** *page 12*
- 4 Case study on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** *page 15*
 - 4.1 Introduction *page 15*
 - 4.2 A history of the broadcast media sector in BiH *page 16*
 - 4.3 Key features of BiH's broadcasting system in 2004 *page 17*
 - 4.4 The role of the international community in the reform process *page 20*
 - 4.5 Key achievements in BiH's broadcasting reform *page 20*
 - 4.6 Key challenges in undertaking broadcasting reform in BiH *page 21*
- 5 Learning from BiH** *page 23*
- 6 UNDP and broadcasting reform** *page 25*
- References and Internet sources** *page 27*

Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CRA	Communications Regulatory Authority
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EC	European Commission
FBiH	Federation of BiH
GFAP	General Framework Agreement for Peace
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBN	Open Broadcast Network
OHR	Office of the High Representative
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
RS	Republika Srpska
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to contribute to UNDP practitioners' understanding of broadcast media sector reform, especially reform concerning Public Service Broadcasting (PSB). The paper highlights some of the key challenges in broadcasting restructuring in trying to meet broader democratic governance and poverty reduction objectives, and is informed by a case study on broadcasting restructuring in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). UNDP has supported two projects in that country which aim to strengthen the broadcasting system in a way that respects diversity and the right of access to information.

1 UNDP Practice Note on Access to Information (October 2003)
www.undp.org/policy/practicenotes.htm

The paper is part of the materials developed and anchored in UNDP's Practice Note on Access to Information¹. The importance of an independent and pluralist media is stressed within the Practice Note. As with many other international organizations, UNDP is recognizing the role of information through a range of communication channels, yet UNDP's experience in how to establish a strong and independent media is still growing.

Public service broadcasting has the potential to play a crucial role in ensuring the public's right to receive a wide diversity of independent and non-partisan information and ideas. It can also help to promote a sense of national identity, foster democratic and other important social values, provide quality educational and informational programming, and serve the needs of minority and other specialized interest groups.

The media, and especially broadcast media, is a powerful tool. In the right hands it can help to promote peace and reconciliation but it can also feed tensions and promote violence. The case study explores the use of media in BiH before and after the conflict. The importance of an effective PSB system in conflict prone and post-conflict contexts cannot be underestimated. In societies emerging from conflict, an independent media can also play an important role in conflict resolution, reconciliation and prevention by serving as a non-partisan communication channel for the peaceful exchange of views and for raising awareness on peace-making and peace-building processes.

Comprehensive broadcasting reform programmes have been initiated in Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. These involve national authorities, global and local civil society organizations as well as UN agencies. In the last 10 years, several bilateral donors including the EC, Japan, Norway, DFID, USAID and others have increasingly allocated more resources and funding towards broadcasting reform. For its part, UNDP is receiving more

requests from national government counterparts for support to media development, including broadcasting reform (see *Access to Information: UNDP's Engagement and a Guide to Key Actors*, December 2003 - www.undp.org/oslocentre/access_rev.htm).

This paper has four sections:

- a) definitions and concepts
- b) the importance of PSB to UNDP
- c) the case study on BiH, some lessons learned from BiH that may be useful for other countries, and
- d) specific guidance on how UNDP can contribute to broadcasting reform initiatives.

2. Definitions and concepts

2.1 What do we mean by broadcast media?

The media consists of a variety of communication channels such as: radio, television, video and film; newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and posters; the internet, e-mail and telephones; theatre, dance, music and puppetry. Broadcast media is more narrowly defined and consists of 'electronic media', i.e. television, radio and the internet.

Broadcast media is extremely important in relation to other kinds of media because:

- In most of the world, broadcast media, and radio in particular, is the only effective form of communication. Radio is a much more cost-effective way of disseminating information and in many countries with high illiteracy levels radio may be the only means of delivering information on important issues.
- The ability of the broadcast media to reach a wide number of people renders it a powerful tool for furthering both political and commercial objectives. In many countries, the broadcast media is the primary source of news and information.

Recent technological developments, particularly the emergence and development of cable/satellite broadcasting and digitalization, have had a significant impact on broadcasting in three main ways: (i) removing barriers to entry – new media such as cable TV & cable radio as well as web casting have enabled more 'players' (both large and small/community based) to enter the media industry reducing the former monopoly of broadcasting; (ii) extending audience reach – especially to more remote areas; (iii) improving transmission - extensive developments in digital technology (audio/video coding) have made it possible to 'compress' digital data and thus reduce frequency requirements.

2.2 What is the difference between state, public service and commercial broadcasting?

The table below is a snapshot overview of some of the key differences and similarities between state, public service and commercial broadcasting models.

Table 1: Different Broadcasting Models

Type	State	Public Service	Commercial
Description	State authorities directly supervise the media system and have full control over content/ programming	The media system is defined through a carefully articulated <u>legislative framework</u> in which the media is in public hands but management/ operations enjoy substantial programming autonomy	Private ownership usually accompanied by some degree of state regulation
Operating Rationale	Programming driven by political interests	Programming driven by public interests	Programming driven by commercial interests
The audience	Citizens	Citizens	Consumers
Revenue sources	Taxes	Subscription fees from viewers/ listeners; State funding; Small amount of advertising	Advertising; Private investment

The media landscape of a country might include a range of broadcasters including commercial, community, state, public service broadcasters. It is wrong to assume that these different types of broadcasting are all mutually exclusive. For example, broadcasting regulations might place public service obligations on commercial broadcasters. Most countries presently aspire to a mixed broadcasting system which includes both public service and commercial broadcasters (and hybrids thereof). What is considered the most desirable mix of all three types (state, public service and commercial) is shaped by the economic, social, political, cultural and economic factors that characterize a specific country. Broadcasting systems can have any number of configurations: maintaining the state broadcaster but permitting significant private competition, privatizing the state broadcaster in whole or in part, as well as permitting competition and/ or moving the state broadcaster into a public service model, for example.

Community broadcasting (especially community radio) is an especially important part of broadcasting. It can be argued that community radio is public service broadcasting in its most decentralized and democratic form, in that a community radio station serves a defined geographical area of a village or a group of villages, and is owned and managed to serve a given community. Community media can in some cases be absolutely central for facilitating participation in local level governance. In many countries, there has been exceptional growth in community broadcasting and often in places hostile to national or full-service public broadcasters. However, the distinct nature of community radio which may not easily allow for integration of community programming into the national public broadcaster remains a challenge. Sometimes community radio may be seen unfavourably by emerging public service broadcasters who are fighting their own battles. Ideally the legislative and enabling framework (e.g. licence allocation) within a country should allow for the co-existence of public service, commercial and community broadcasters.

2.3 International principles and standards for Public Service Broadcasting

Article 19 (www.article19.org), an international civil society organization with expertise in international public service broadcasting standards, notes that although no international treaty directly addresses the question of PSB, there does exist a body of standards that are found in a number of international instruments, particularly within Europe. These instruments are listed under *International Standards and Principles* in the Resources section of this paper.

From these international standards at least six characteristics or standards of public service broadcasting emerge that need to be provided for in a broadcasting legislative framework.

1. **Universality** – the services of the public service broadcaster are available and accessible to the entire population in terms of content (languages) and technology (all people within an area in which a public service broadcaster is assigned a licence, must be able to receive the signals and the services delivered by the broadcaster).

2. **Diversity** - broad programme range. Public service broadcasters should provide a variety of programmes, including quality content of an educational and informative nature. The obligation of diversity in programming serves to ensure that the public has access to information about a wide variety of issues and concerns.

3. Independence from both the State and commercial interests - programming decisions should be made by public service broadcasters on the basis of professional criteria and the public's right to know, rather than by pressure from political or commercial interests.

4. Impartiality of programmes - Impartiality is closely related to independence. If it is inappropriate for the government to use public funds to promote its particular viewpoint, it is equally inappropriate, given its public mandate, for a PSB organization to promote a certain position or support a particular political party.

5. Concern for national identity and culture – in some countries this is an explicit obligation that reflects the role of public service broadcasters in building a sense of national identity, belonging and participation. At the same time, this principle is controversial as it may restrict editorial freedom and contribute to promoting a dominant culture rather than multiculturalism.

6. Financed directly by the public – many PSB systems are based on a general charge on users or a television license fee. License fees are generally regarded as being less susceptible to government interference, although typically public bodies set the rate of the license fee and where relevant apportion it among public service broadcasters. In some countries, the parliament directly votes funds for broadcasters. However license fees may be difficult and/or costly to collect and may be difficult to introduce for political and economic reasons, where they are not already in place.

Some argue that '**standard setting**' is another characteristic of PSB in that the absence of commercial pressure can encourage a higher standard of journalism which raises the bar for all journalists. Even in the presence of a commercial broadcast system, PSB can set the standard for professional journalism and other programming partially because it is freed from purely commercial imperatives which might sacrifice public service for profit and degrade journalistic performance.

These characteristics raise a number of issues that are continually debated amongst communication scholars and practitioners, governments, inter-governmental agencies including the Council of Europe, the International Telecommunications Organization (ITU) and UNESCO as well as amongst regional and national PSB associations.

- What makes public service broadcasters distinctively different and perhaps even necessary to meet the needs of a particular society?

- What issues does PSB seek to address? Should it be addressing minority needs and interests (gender/women, cultural, ethnic, national etc) that are not addressed by commercial broadcasters?
- What obligation does PSB have to provide information for enhancing citizenship and citizen participation in debate?
- In conflict and post conflict contexts, does PSB have a special responsibility (unlike commercial broadcasters) to provide essential information on security and humanitarian issues during conflict as well as to act as a mode for reconciliation and conflict prevention? Does it have a special responsibility to provide space for different parties to air their dispute in a peaceful manner?

2.4 Public service broadcasting and democratic governance reform

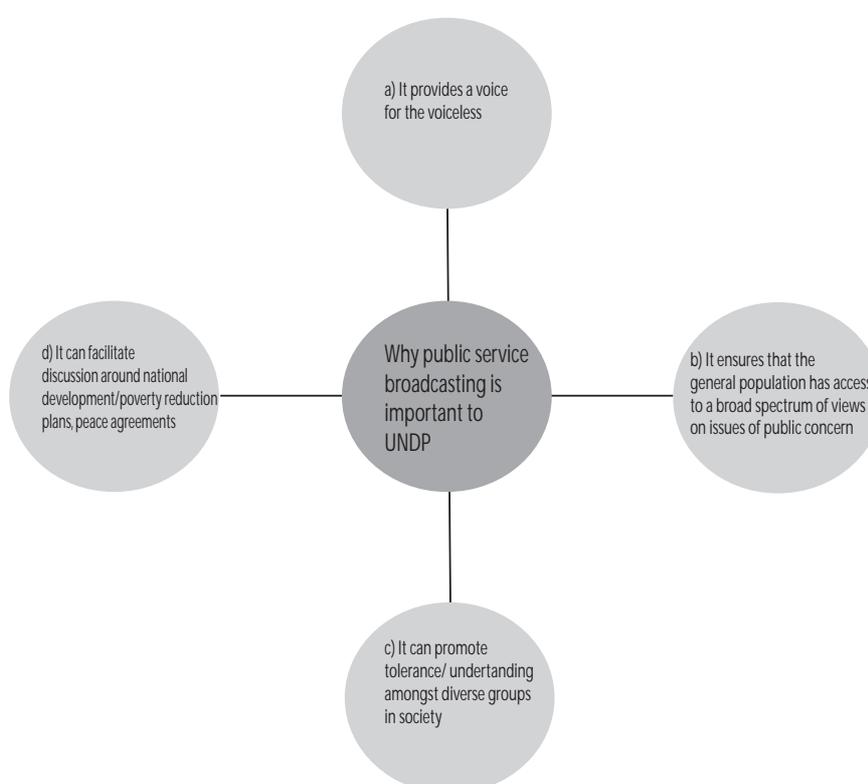
Over the years, the underlying principles for PSB have been questioned, particularly the assertion that PSB is the most effective model for meeting the information needs and interests of the population. However the experiences of several countries in which commercial broadcasting, as opposed to PSB, is dominant have shown that commercial models have significant weaknesses: there can be a loss of minority voices, a decline in programming for specific groups in society, an increasing trend in programme replication (content diversity is not always economically sound) and declining programme quality in favour of entertainment rather than information and education.

Public service broadcasting can be a more effective system to meet these ills but PSB cannot yield results faster than the wider evolution and consolidation of democratic governance in a country. **Media reform is only effective when it is part and parcel of broader democratic governance reform and is linked to other governance issues.** As such public service broadcasting is part of the democracy promotion arsenal and can contribute to it, but only at the same pace as the democratic evolution of a society.

3. Why is public service broadcasting important to UNDP?

Public service broadcasting has a key role to play in strengthening democracy and democratic governance as well as poverty reduction efforts by ensuring that marginalized and disempowered groups (those with neither political nor economic influence or power) have access to information and provide a voice for the voiceless.

Figure 1: Why public service broadcasting is important to UNDP



a) It provides a voice for the voiceless

Public service broadcasting has an obligation to promote alternative views for the purpose of enabling and encouraging debate that is vital for the functioning of democracy. This means facilitating different groups' access to the media/airwaves through supporting local programme production on themes and subjects that are of importance to for example poor and marginalized groups.

b) It ensures that the general population has access to a broad spectrum of views on issues of public concern

An important role for PSBs is to make governance institutions and processes better understood by the population, especially the poor and marginalized groups, by serving as the principal communication

medium for raising awareness and educating the public. Strengthening national capacities for developing quality local programming for radio (and TV) are critical in this regard. For example, the BBC World Service Trust (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/) is working with local media in BiH in a project called 'Our Town, Our Future' which will use radio drama to strengthen democratization, good governance and the rule of law in that country. The radio drama, set in a Bosnian local authority, seeks to raise awareness of the current weaknesses, as well as the best practices of municipal authorities. The project hopes to encourage community involvement in the development of the radio series with local consultative testing and focus groups. Up to 23 radio stations will broadcast the series and each station will produce its own radio phone-in to debate the issues raised in the drama. The soap opera is being produced using Bosnian directors, writers and actors.

c) It can promote tolerance and understanding amongst diverse groups in society

In societies, where ethnic tensions, repression, civil strife and violent retribution are deeply engrained, public service broadcasters can play a role in providing a space for diverse groups to debate and exchange views without violence. In the absence of a common national identity, state and commercial broadcast media can be extremely partisan. Public service broadcasting systems that are developed in accordance with internationally agreed standards require legal mechanisms that protect public service broadcasters from political and commercial influence as well as requiring programming to reflect the views of diverse groups.

d) It can facilitate discussion around national development/ poverty reduction plans, peace agreements, reconciliation/ dialogue processes

Public Service Broadcasting can and should play a central role in both conflict prevention and poverty reduction efforts, particularly by ensuring a freer flow of information and greater diversity in information. Market and other private sector forces do not satisfy all public informational interests and needs, and as a result need to be supplemented by PSB. For example, in **Sierra Leone**, the civil society organization Search for Common Ground (www.sfcg.org), is supporting a programme that facilitates dialogue about the country's efforts to achieve justice and reconciliation. By broadcasting twice-weekly radio updates about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court in local languages, SFCG hopes to create an environment where reconciliation can truly occur.

The TRC was established in Sierra Leone as a forum for developing an impartial history of the conflict and invites representatives from all groups in society to testify about their experiences during the war. In

In addition, the UN created the Special Court to prosecute war crimes. However, both the TRC and Special Court are located in the capital city and many of Sierra Leone's citizens who live in rural areas were uninformed about these important institutions and therefore unable to participate in them. In response to this issue, Talking Drum Studios began broadcasting twice-weekly features that described the proceedings of the TRC and Special Court and explained to listeners the rationale behind their creation. This initiative helped to increase public debate about Sierra Leone's peace process, as citizens were able to make informed decisions about the successes and challenges that the country faces in the post-conflict era.

4. CASE STUDY ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BiH)

4.1 Introduction

The following case study illustrates some of the difficulties in supporting and establishing a sustainable pluralist media in conflict contexts and is informed by two main exercises: (i) a mission to UNDP BiH for consultations with key stakeholders including UNDP Country Office colleagues, local media, CSOs, representatives from public service and commercial broadcasters, and donors, and (ii) a desk study of reports, evaluations and other documentation on broadcasting reform in post-conflict settings as well as specific project documentation related to UNDP BiH's support for the development of independent broadcasting.

UNDP is one of many actors supporting efforts in this area. Its contribution to the restructuring of BiH's broadcasting sector includes providing equipment support to an independent (but not public service) TV network in Banja Luka in Republika Srpska (RS); and

The media sector, especially the development of the broadcast media sector in BiH remains a complex issue. In the aftermath of war and the concurrent emergence of the new state structure, the broadcasting sector faced and continues to face significant operational (managerial, financial and technical) challenges.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), reached in Dayton in November and signed in Paris in December 1995, laid the foundation for the country's constitutional framework, including its governance structure, with the Federation of BiH (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS) as two constituent entities. Each Entity has its own legislature but they share an executive branch headed by a tripartite presidency made up of a Croat, Serb and Bosniak representative.

The country comprises three major ethnic populations: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs; the majority of Serbs living in RS and the majority of Bosniaks and Croats living in FBiH.

The Dayton agreement also provided for the establishment of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). The OHR, appointed by the UN Security Council, acts as an additional legislative body in BiH and has had an important impact on the legislative framework across many sectors. It has been the primary shaper of BiH's emerging media landscape, best articulated in its 1998 media strategy which comprised three main areas: (i) media restructuring and new media legislation (ii) encouragement of independent and alternative sources of information, and (iii) the establishment of a PSB system.

The OHR has broad powers including the right to impose legislation (which it has done repeatedly in the area of media and broadcasting

reform). The OHR also established an extremely important institution to regulate the broadcast sector – the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA). The CRA regulates broadcasting and telecommunications. It decides on the allocation of licences to broadcasters and it regulates programming content, e.g. the CRA monitors hate speech and politically motivated programming. The CRA is also empowered to take action against media outlets whose conduct is not professional (e.g. for deliberately inflammatory content).

While many of the features described above are specific to BiH, there are several characteristics BiH shares with other post-conflict countries. Some of these include:

- A history of the media being used by authorities and political parties to incite hatred and aggression against and between ethnic groups
- Considerable state/government/political party control over a highly centralized media
- Equal air time for ethnic languages of BiH citizens – Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages have equal status under the constitution
- Significant engagement by the international community — (international CSOs, donors, inter-governmental organizations) — in supporting media development. However, much of this support was uncoordinated and carried out in piecemeal fashion.

4.2 A history of the broadcast media sector in BiH

The broadcast media sector in BiH can be described in three time periods: pre-conflict -1992; post conflict 1995-2002; and 2002 to the present time. Some of the defining aspects of each of these time periods are detailed below

The pre-war & wartime media situation (- 1995)

- Highly centralized media controlled by nationalistic political parties, the military and the authorities
- Broadcasters disseminated biased and inflammatory information along ethnic lines. The media was used as a tool for misinformation.
- Lack of professionalism in the media – journalists worked for partisan media and their journalistic approaches were ethnically biased, focusing on the promotion of their own ethnicity and or/ the degrading of others'

Post-war media situation (1995 – 2002)

- Media infrastructure was either destroyed or left partially intact (e.g. transmission capabilities).

- Exponential rise in the number of international actors seeking to support the creation of an independent media system and reducing the power of the previous state monopoly over the media. Support areas included infrastructure/equipment, institutional reform, regulatory measures, journalists training, and media pluralism/media outlet growth. A lot of international donors and civil society organizations interested in providing support. The lead-up to the 1996 elections provided an important impetus for the creation of independent media.
- A huge explosion in the number of media outlets in BiH (over 200 radio stations and 71 TV stations).
- As is typical in most post-conflict countries, BiH had a weak economy with high unemployment. While there was a flourishing of independent media, some if not all of these initiatives were dependent on continued and ongoing donor support.
- A highly interventionist role for the Office of the High Representative (OHR) – the OHR established the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) and imposed several rules and legislation that shape BiH's PSB system.

The situation now (2002 - -)

- Commercial and PSB organizations exist side by side in BiH. However due to the current economic situation it is difficult for many media organizations (both public service and commercial) to survive. The limited advertising market and the low purchasing power of the population are the most problematic economic constraints. This vulnerability can expose the media to attacks on its independence.
- While the number of media outlets remains too great to be sustained by the economy of BiH, the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) continues to push for greater consolidation. According to the CRA as at November 2003, there are 183 licensed broadcasters in addition to the three main public service broadcasters. This includes 42 TV stations (16 public service, 26 commercial) and 141 radio stations (62 public service, 79 commercial).
- There continues to be political interference in the broadcast media and self censorship of journalists and editors. This is at all levels – national and local.
- The international community is pulling back support, creating serious consequences for the survival of many media organizations.

4.3 Key features of BiH's broadcasting system in 2004

BiH's broadcasting system is made up of both commercial and public service broadcasters. Both systems comprise networks of Entity and local level radio and TV stations.

The Public Broadcasting System

The international community, particularly European donors and the EC as well as the OHR, was fervent in its support for the development of PSB, especially for the creation of a state-wide public service broadcaster that would in their view serve to bring together the two Entities for the common good of the entire country.

Due to the failure of the leadership and authorities of both Entities in BiH to establish laws and legislation in regard to PSB and the refusal of political actors to affect changes to the broadcasting legislation, the OHR resolved to impose the legislative framework for PSB. This legislative framework for the most part meets international standards. The key legislation within the new PSB legislative framework states²:

² The Law on the Basis of the Public Broadcasting System and on the Public Broadcasting Service of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002).

- The PSB system in BiH shall be composed of three PSB organizations: one covering the entire country and one for each of the two entities.
- The public service broadcasters should be independent in their operations and shall have editorial independence and institutional autonomy.
- The principal responsibility of the public service broadcasters is to ‘accurately inform the public, to support democratic processes, to ensure an adequate proportion of news, cultural, artistic, educational, sports, entertainment and children’s programming and to ensure that the highest quality programming is available to the public of Bosnia and Herzegovina by presenting diverse and factual information’.
- Public service broadcasters are not allowed to broadcast material which by its content or tone incites national, religious or racial hatred, intolerance or discrimination against individuals or groups, or which by any reasonable judgment could incite violence, disorder or rioting or could encourage crime or criminal activity. The law also requires that at least 40% of programming must be domestically produced) and only a limited amount of advertising can be aired.

The Commercial Broadcasting System

Until 1996, with the creation of the Open Broadcast network (OBN), there were no commercial broadcasting organizations in BiH – all were previously state controlled. The absence of non-state networks was seen by the international community in BiH as an impediment to the consolidation of peace and stability, the re-building of communications amongst fragmented social and political groups and the development of long-term pluralism. Several donors believed the establishment of an independent network would be key in breaking the dominance of nationalist parties and attitudes. The OBN

was to be a national independent broadcaster providing objective and unbiased information to the entire population. The major donors to the OBN project included Sweden, US, Canada, Spain, Italy, EC and the Open Society Foundation. From 1996-2001, at least \$20 million went to the development and running of this independent network.

However, OBN collapsed and disbanded (broke off into smaller private/commercial networks) after donors refused to provide additional support following their dissatisfaction with the network's performance. Several donors, especially the European donors, shifted their attention and financial support to the establishment of a PSB system which created some rivalry and jealousies between the emerging PSB sector and the commercial broadcasting sector.

Many of the TV stations that were part of OBN continue to function outside of the OBN network umbrella. The main players in the commercial broadcasting sector include: the Mreza Plus Network of 5 TV stations (Hayat-Sarajevo, RTV Mostar, Oscar C, TV Tuzla as well as ATV Banja Luka. PINK BiH is also a large commercial regional TV network (based in Belgrade) with TV studios and programming in Sarajevo and Banja Luka. There are approximately 12 private radio stations (operating at national and Entity level).

Dual broadcasting system - there has been much uncertainty in BiH regarding the creation of a PSB system and its implications for the development and survival of the commercial broadcast sector. Many argue that the establishment of a public service broadcaster will endanger the survival of commercial broadcasting, while others in BiH argue that commercial broadcasting endangers the survival of PSB. Is there room for both? This will depend on the size of the cake i.e. population/audience size, the sources of income, the number of professional media personnel including technical staff etc. In many post-conflict, developing and transition countries, the economic situation is such that it can only sustain a limited number of public service and commercial broadcasters together. In BiH the context is marked by an over-saturated media market in which a large number (in proportion to the population) of media outlets are competing for a small advertising market. It could be argued that in post-conflict contexts, with a stagnant economy, a case can be made for prioritizing the establishment of PSB, with its more publicly minded objectives and 'supervised' professional standards particularly in ensuring the provision of accurate news and information. Such public broadcasters can end up setting the standards for the emerging commercial broadcasters.

4.4 The role of the international community in the reform process

Since 1996, donors and international civil society organizations specializing in media reform have been working within all sectors of the media – each with their own assessments, strategies, policies and ideals/ideologies. According to Media Plan Institute (www.mediaplan.ba), a local media training and research organization, 20 international organizations were working with BiH media in Sarajevo in 1997. Often these organizations selected projects with little coordination amongst themselves.

The international donor community has contributed considerable financial resources into media sector initiatives. USAID alone has invested approximately US\$30 million in support of independent broadcast and print media in BiH since 1996³. Many local media professionals were concerned that there seemed to be no comprehensive, coordinated, long term strategic plan which all of these international players supported.

³ Assessment of USAID Media Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1996 – 2002), Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (2003) - www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACR756.pdf

4.5 Key achievements in BiH's broadcasting reform

Successes in the reform and restructuring of BiH's broadcasting sector include:

- **Improved legislative framework** - the legislative framework brought about by the OHR, although not perfect has its foundation in established international standards concerning financing (subscription fees and limited advertising), programming, frequencies, confidentiality of sources, assets, governance and management. With regard to governance and financing, the laws provide for the establishment of a Board of Governors with rules governing appointment, duration and accountability mechanisms such as reporting to Parliament. The legislative framework also includes other media-related laws such as a Freedom of Information Act and the establishment of an Ombudsman.
- **Independent regulatory system** - the broadcast media is regulated by the Communications Regulatory Agency, which has been given broad powers, especially in the area of licensing and curtailing inflammatory, politically-motivated programming. The CRA operates at state level and in conformity with general principles of transparency, accountability, objectivity and fairness.
- **Co-existence of commercial and public service broadcasting** – commercial broadcasters in BiH are providing a range of news and opinion and are operating as viable businesses.

4.6 Key challenges in undertaking broadcasting reform in BiH

The restructuring and reform process of the broadcast media sector in BiH posed a number of challenges, including:

- **Lack of coordination among the key actors** – an analysis of needs as well as a coordinated strategic plan to meet those needs were never made. According to many involved in BiH's media sector, there was insufficient coordination at all levels including determining needs, developing a strategic plan and in the implementation. Many suggested that a formal coordination mechanism (e.g. focal point) would have been useful.
- **Lack of the right expertise** – for many working in the media and for the government in BiH, public service broadcasting was an alien concept, i.e. they did not fully comprehend the consequences of reforming a state broadcaster into a public service one. Several local media actors have said that the situation was made worse by the fact that the international consultants were not experts: they had media credentials but lacked the experience involving the transition from a state broadcaster to a public service broadcasting system. Such a project requires a deep understanding of the way the state broadcasters were currently operating – their strengths and weaknesses – and a clear view of what would be needed to create a public broadcasting system. It also needed to map the journey between the two in legislative and operational terms. This was not done in BiH.
- **Overcoming ingrained attitudes and practice (culture)** - public service broadcasters in developing, developed and transition countries were often once state institutions. Transforming state broadcasters into public ones will often require managing culture change – many media professionals in BiH had become accustomed to reporting biased news and information.
- **Limited focus on management capacity development** – a key area of donor support to strengthening the media sector in BiH was training, especially of journalists. However, there was considerably less support to providing management training, i.e. strengthening the local management capacities needed to run media outlets on a sustainable basis.⁴
- **Political resistance to reform** – the main political parties and authorities, who have been used to having the media at their disposal, stalled and obstructed attempts at reform resulting in the OHR having to impose legislation.

4 A notable exception is that between 2002 and 2004, the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID) provided support to the BBC Consultancy. This was invested purely in management capacity development. The BBC Consultancy was not a training project: but rather a management consultancy designed to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the broadcasters.

- **Donor dependency and (un)sustainability** – this continues to be extremely problematic. Such dependency seems to have been created by a limited appreciation of the need to focus on strengthening financial self sustainability at the outset of media/ broadcasting projects (for example, significant investments in training journalists but less focus on media outlet management). Assistance to BiH media needs to take into account the economic realities in which the media operate. There also needs to be more emphasis on establishing future local capacity from the point of conceptualization of a media support programme rather than as an afterthought.
- **Limited consultation with local stakeholders leading to lack of ownership** – there is a mix of views on whether there was sufficient consultation with local stakeholders. Several of the programmes supported by the international community have been criticized for not being sufficiently informed by the expertise of local people and that this has contributed to a lack of local ownership. However, others believe that there was sufficient local consultation (including with local politicians and some of those involved in domestic broadcasting before the war) but that the reason for the lack of ownership was that public service broadcasting is an entirely alien concept (see first point above).

5. Learning from BiH

There are several lessons that emerge from BiH's experience in broadcasting reform. A key lesson is that the process of media reform is just as important as the content. In many ways, the processes of formulating and implementing media reform strategies are closely related to the state of democratic governance in a country – culture and practice concerning transparency, participation, accountability as well as how media reform is integrated into wider democratic governance support.

In terms of the involvement and engagement of the donor community, including UNDP, there are two principal lessons:

1. Have a strategic plan –the key learning from BiH is the need for a strategic plan for media development. This should include an analysis of where the state broadcasters are – their strengths and weaknesses, the way that their systems operate, their true financial positions – and then look at what they need to go to become part of a public broadcasting system.

The strategic plan must:

- Include a needs assessment and a stakeholder analysis - the strategic plan should be informed by a comprehensive needs assessment/gap analysis. developed by credible broadcasting experts.
- Take a comprehensive approach – the strategy must include institutions, regulations, and human capacities
- Adopt a long-term approach - the strategy must recognize that key foundations (e.g. legislation, professional cadre of journalists, independent regulatory systems need to be in place and part of the new culture of openness) and that this takes time.

2. Focus on the enabling legislative and regulatory framework allowing for public service broadcasting. This requires a licensing regime which allows for a variety of services that provide information to the population. A PSB should be free from government interference and therefore should not be funded through direct taxation or levy but by advertising or a licence fee arrangement. This therefore requires a set of robust and 'liberal' media laws and regulations which enshrine public interest and freedom of information and meet internationally agreed standards.

Independent regulators need to have a carefully defined remit and mandate that preserve their independence and that gives them real powers to effect change.

In addition to these two main lessons, others include:

- ☑ **Ensure better coordination** of media sector support, especially where there are many international and national players. Ideally the coordination should rest with the government but in post-conflict situations this may not always be possible. In such contexts, how then can UNDP support or facilitate better coordination?
- ☑ **Ensure maximum input from local expertise** through extensive consultations – invest in undertaking a robust mapping of local organizations (including women’s groups) and people that have expertise in broadcasting issues
- ☑ **Ensure a focus on developing the capacities of local people** – it’s no use bringing in international consultants who will leave after a short period of time and who haven’t transferred important knowledge. Local capacity building should be a principal objective in any broadcasting reform initiative.
- ☑ **Build in financial self sustainability considerations at the outset** - more attention needs to be devoted to the financial viability of independent media outlets as a factor in their sustainability. This means that management, administration and ‘business’ training is given equal weighting to journalism training and other areas of capacity development.

6. UNDP and broadcasting reform

While UNDP will often not be in a position to finance broadcasting sector restructuring, the organization has much to contribute in other areas. UNDP's comparative advantage in supporting media reform includes: its unique relationship with government; using its coordinating and facilitation role; drawing on its expertise and experience in democratic governance and human development.

Unique relationship with government

- Governments are often reluctant to cede control of the media. UNDP has an important part to play in supporting training and sensitizing programmes for political parties and authorities at local and national levels.

Coordinating and facilitation role

- PSB can be an alien concept in many societies that are used to State broadcasters. UNDP can facilitate multi-sectoral policy dialogues which connect those knowledgeable about public service broadcasting (professional broadcasters from other countries and CSOs) with officials to increase understanding of what public service broadcasting is.
- Facilitate these groups to connect and dialogue amongst themselves but also with the international community.
- Bring together donors and local actors, especially around the undertaking of the needs assessment (and other diagnostic activities), the development of strategies (so that they are aligned with agreed overarching goals) and the implementation of specific support (so that duplication is reduced and lessons and experiences can be shared more effectively).

Expertise and experience in democratic governance, conflict prevention and in poverty reduction

- Examine broadcasters' own governance systems. to help strengthen and contribute to democratic governance objectives they must also have effective governance, management and processes. UNDP staff should be careful to assess how efficiently and effectively a broadcaster works. What is the output like? How do they manage the creative process? How do they choose ideas? How much money is spent on programming? What is the

percentage spent on other costs? How well is the staff trained? These are all questions that should be asked of a broadcaster before providing support.

- Ensure a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups – how are they affected by broadcasting reforms? What measures can be supported that improve poor people’s access to PSB?
- Develop a set of common themes and issues relevant to the conditions of media and peace building within the country
- Include a strong focus on media support, especially the mass media (radio, TV and print) in national conflict prevention/peace-building strategies.

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