



Policy Paper

Media Recovery in Ukraine

Joanna Krawczyk

Experts listed as authors

Serhii Huz of Pylnyi Pohlyad in Kamyanske
(Dnipropetrovska oblast) and

Andrey Boborykin of Ukrainska Pravda (Kyiv)

Executive Summary

Two years into the full-scale war in Ukraine have acutely impacted the country's media landscape at national, regional, and local levels. At the country level, the intensity and terrorist nature of the war and the economic crisis caused by it have aggravated multiple hurdles for all media operations and increased risks for freedom of the press. At the regional and local levels, the safety and operations of local newsrooms were acutely impacted, leading to shutdowns, a lack of funds, shortages of employees, psychological stress and trauma, and a lack of or insufficient access to information. In turn, multiple communities faced significant challenges in navigating the critical information needs necessary for making informed decisions. As Ukraine begins its recovery and reconstruction, strong and independent media are essential to facilitating dialogue and reconciliation, overcoming the consequences of war, and its continuous efforts toward full democratic transition by enhancing transparency, accountability, and civic engagement. This paper details the necessity for support of nationwide and local media in Ukraine, highlights successful support projects, and provides specific policy recommendations for policymakers, donors, and international monetary institutions.

3.1 The Need for Media Support in Times of War: Current State of Media in Ukraine

The conflict in Ukraine has caused significant damage to the media landscape and posed multiple risks for independent journalism in Ukraine, including increased risks to the safety of journalists and to press freedom. Financial strains due to reduced advertising revenues and heightened operational costs further challenge media outlets. The critical role of media in providing accurate information to the public, countering misinformation and propaganda, facilitating

dialogue and reconciliation, and monitoring and reporting on reconstruction efforts has been weakened over the course of full-scale war due to the existence and further rise of news deserts.

One of the most recent research reports by the Media Development Foundation in Ukraine, published in February 2024, outlines the urgency of the rise of news deserts in Ukraine and the growth of the entire local districts (or the whole regions) into informationally unhealthy or partially healthy areas ^[1]. The tendency signifies that multiple local communities have limited access to sufficient information about public safety, healthcare, politics and governance, education, transportation, economic development, environment, and civic initiatives.

While the news deserts phenomenon in Ukraine is also part of the global tendency (the new studies in the European Union^[2] and United States^[3] outlined the key implications of the spreading news deserts), the full-scale war aggravates the tendency, since inadequate informational health in terms of ensuring critical information needs of communities 1) weakens public safety and national resilience, 2) adversely affects Ukraine's democratic transition, nourished by broad public awareness and informed decision-making at the local level; 3) increase the risks for strengthening the Russian propaganda and misinformation, in particular in the areas most affected by war (Eastern and Southern Ukraine). Thus, the issue of communities' access to critical information is the basis for understanding the media landscape impacted by multiple crises and the war in Ukraine.

Direct war consequences for media include:

- 1) journalists' victims of the war (Reporters Without Borders documented more than 100 journalists who have been killed, injured, kidnapped, taken hostage, tortured, or caught up in bombings^[4];
- 2) media shutdowns (233 Ukrainian media outlets have had to close since 24 February 2022, according to Reporters Without Borders and National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU));
- 3) displacement of journalists, lack of journalists, and damage to media infrastructure;
- 4) increased risks to press freedom and safety;
- 5) strengthening the propaganda component of the news structure as part of countermeasures in response to Russian disinformation.

The full-scale invasion and the terrorist nature of the war waged against Ukraine have brought multiple economic consequences that impact the media market and landscape at all levels. The economic crisis in Ukraine (GDP fell by 30% in 2022 – World Bank) has shrunk the Ukrainian market in general and the advertisement market in particular, which used to be a significant source of funding for independent media in the pre-war period. The heightened operational costs combined with the limited advertising market challenged all independent media.

The economic crisis was followed by a rapid increase in foreign development aid sent to Ukraine since February 24, 2022. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stated that the amount of foreign development assistance directed to support Ukraine in 2022 was US\$28.7 billion, almost 22 times higher than in 2015. This made Ukraine one of the world's largest recipients of donor assistance; development aid in the form of grants has become one of the most significant sources of funding for

nationwide and local media. According to MDF's research on the state of independent local media, 76% of surveyed online media outlets have between 70% and 100% donor funding in their funding models sample of 36 independent newsrooms)^[5]. The case study of eight major nationwide publishers has shown that all surveyed media outlets worked with donors with a share of donor support in their funding models between 30% and 95% in 2023 [link to the research that will be published shortly].

According to the survey by the MDF, the most pressing war-related risks brought by war for media in 2023 include:

- lack of funding;
- difficulties with finding employees;
- exposure to the ongoing war events and blackouts;
- severe psychological distress and trauma;
- mobilization;
- insufficient or lack of access to information, etc. ^[5]

Overall, the lack of funding was reported as the most pressing issue for independent local newsrooms in Ukraine. At the same time, while the financial crisis impacted all of the media, there are regional differences in the funding models of local publishers. The research by the MDF has shown that foreign aid in grants constituted 45% of the revenues of Western Ukrainian local newsrooms and 50% of those in Central Ukraine as of the end of 2023. In contrast, other parts of Ukraine had significantly higher shares of donor funding in the reported revenues: 73% for Northern Ukrainian local publishers, 87% for South Ukrainian local publishers, and 93% for those in Eastern Ukraine. Based on this data, the recent policy brief by the MDF advocates targeting Western and Central regions of Ukraine equally to Eastern, Southern, and Northern Ukraine when it comes to providing funding to enhance the country's resilience and decrease the number of news deserts.

While donor funding has become the most important source of survival for local publishers, the market formed by grant possibilities posed some challenges for many newsrooms in Ukraine, according to research by the MDF.

The current major characteristics and problems of donor funding in Ukraine:

1. Different goals of grant-supported media outlets. For most surveyed media outlets, in particular at the local level, the purpose of receiving donor support was to survive and meet basic needs, mainly ensuring salaries for staff. These teams often refused to make any other expenditures, such as office rent or equipment purchases, and experienced delays in paying salaries. The search for grant opportunities was constant, and the administrative burden of reporting and constant new commitments was high. A small part of the surveyed media had more stability in their work with donors.
2. Accelerated and chaotic growth of some media organizations through project grants. The constant need to find new grants has become a regular agenda for most editorial teams. For some of them, project grants aimed at implementing a specific project have become an opportunity to maintain their existence. Nonetheless, such grants impose additional administrative obligations on the teams and change existing priorities of work or even suspend them altogether. Project grants were often combined with training and hiring new staff. It was also common for editorial teams to combine several projects at the same time. Completion of some projects meant the search for new ones and new editorial transformations. An issue reported by all media outlets with a high share of donor funding was the short-term nature of grants and the lack of institutional funding that could allow the media to develop integrally.
3. Exhaustion of editorial teams persistently functioning in survival mode. The full-scale war has left media outlets vulnerable in every Ukraine's region. Two of the media outlets that MDF reached out to as part of the research were in the process of partially closing its production and

laying off part of its staff because of a lack of funding. Military service draft and staffing issues, saving funds on office rent, the introduction of remote work mode, and the constant need for donor support have put some media outlets in what some have called a "war for funding." Some outlets noted that the workload on their teams was much greater than they could handle, primarily because of a lack of staff and the inability to plan long-term personnel policies and invest in the training and development of specialists involved in short-term projects. Some editorial teams also noted issues in assessing the real cost of projects.

4. Need for long-term institutional support. All media outlets with a high level of donor support in their financial support models have noted the absolute need to attract donor support in the future and are looking for opportunities to receive institutional support. Thus, donor assistance for media organizations has become both an opportunity and a challenge in the context of war. The multiple increase in supply has enabled more organizations to continue to exist. At the same time, the donor support market has changed compared to the period of 2014-2021. The dynamics and experience of media organizations during the full-scale war of 2022-2023 also changed. As of the end of 2023, there were clusters of media organizations that had the stable experience of working with donors and those whose experience was chaotic.
5. Tenders of local authorities as a risk for editorial independence. As an alternative to donor funding, some local publishers began to look for opportunities for financing through participation in tenders of local authorities, which increased the latter's influence on the local media landscape and undermined the independence of newsrooms when the share of such non-donor funding in newsroom revenues was growing rapidly (or was the only source of the revenues).

Thus, given the variety of factors impacting the media operations in Ukraine in times of war and the different levels of urgency and intensity for different parts (regions) of Ukraine, the key issues and needs identified in recent research can be summarised into clusters.

Clusters of key issues:

1. Critical Information Needs: Ensuring the informational health of communities (local areas, regions, the country's level) by supporting media in order to provide access to critical information necessary for democratic transformations and preventing the reverse of democracy building;
2. Media Survival and Financial Strain: Preventing shutdowns of independent media outlets due to the lack of possibilities of funding in times of reduced advertising revenues and increased costs of operation, including security expenses;
3. Safety for Journalists: Overcoming the direct consequences of war resulted in media infrastructure damage, journalists' displacement, and overall level of security in the profession;
4. Threats to Press Freedom: There has been an increase in threats, harassment, and violence against journalists, limiting their ability to report freely and safely.
5. Democracy Transition and Watchdog Role of Media: war accelerated some of the Ukrainian transition processes, such as gaining the status of a candidate for accession to the EU; at the same time, the need for a watchdog role has increased, in particular at the local level
6. Help with the exhaustion of editorial teams persistently functioning in survival mode and accelerated and chaotic growth.

3.2 Existing Media Recovery Plans and Their Recommendations

Several initiatives and plans have been put in place to support the Ukrainian media landscape:

1. The European Union's Support for Ukrainian Media: The EU has provided financial support, training, and equipment to Ukrainian journalists and media outlets through various programs, including the European Endowment for Democracy (EED).
2. UNESCO's Response to the Crisis: UNESCO has been actively involved in providing emergency support, training on safety and digital security, and promoting freedom of expression.
3. Internews and USAID Initiatives: Internews, with support from USAID, has implemented projects to provide emergency funding, equipment, and safety training for journalists.
4. Ukrainian Media Fund: provides extensive grant support to Ukrainian organizations to enable them to carry out various activities, including content production, media monitoring, investigative journalism, and media literacy initiatives (€1 200 000,00 raised for Ukrainian media till April 2024)
5. The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF): launched the "Voices of Ukraine" program which includes journalist stipends, fellowships for media workers (furnished apartments, healthcare, psychosocial support, and professional training), and a conference on war reporting.
6. The International Media Support (IMS): focuses on ensuring the safety of journalists, sustaining national and regional media partners, and aligning global tech companies with local needs to counter disinformation and enhance resilience.

7. The Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF): focuses on enhancing the sustainability and resilience of regional newsrooms, particularly those near the frontline or in liberated territories.
8. Other: IREX, National Endowment for Democracy, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Prague Civil Society Centre, Civil Society Organization «Initiative Center to Support Social Action “Ednannia,” The Fix Foundation, International Renaissance Foundation, Media in Cooperation and Transition (MICT), Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Thomson Reuters Foundation, Solidarity Fund PL, n-ost, International Press Institute, The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, Goethe-Institut, Pact ENGAGE, Reporters Without Borders, ERIM Equal Rights & Independent Media, NDI, Chemonics, SIDA, People in Need, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, UNDP, Free Press for Eastern Europe, WAN-IFRA, European Journalism Centre, Open Media Hub, JX Fund – European Fund for Journalism in Exile, DT Global, Council of Europe. The British, U.S., Czech and Australian Embassies in Ukraine and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands also fund Ukrainian media. These initiatives have recommended several actions, including:
- Providing emergency financial support and equipment;
 - Offering safety and digital security training for journalists;
 - Promoting legal protections for journalists;
 - Supporting capacity-building programs and long-term financial sustainability of media outlets etc.

3.3 Expanded Policy Recommendations

Based on the recent research, existing recovery plans, and identified needs, the following expanded recommendations are proposed:

3.3.1 For Policymakers in Ukraine

1. Create a National Media Support Fund:

- Establish a fund dedicated to rebuilding and supporting media infrastructure. This fund should prioritize long-term institutional support for independent media organizations, focused on prioritizing sustainability of media operations and the professional growth of journalists (as opposed to the short-term project-centered grants), the grants for rebuilding damaged facilities, purchasing equipment, and providing operational support to media outlets.
- Despite limited trust in such a fund, given a history of short-lived initiatives, this is the most helpful a Ukrainian state could be – therefore, an institution should be put in place with a system of checks and balances. International Board of Directors, civic society organizations' participation, and the inclusion of independent lead editors into the decision-making process could be beneficial for media organizations without extensive fundraising history.

Examples from Other Countries:

- Norway: The Norwegian Media Authority administers a Media Support Scheme that provides financial support to media organizations, ensuring diversity and quality in media content.
- Canada: The Canada Periodical Fund offers financial assistance to print magazines, non-daily newspapers, and digital periodicals to support their operations and ensure the availability of diverse Canadian content.

- France: The French government provides subsidies through the Fonds de soutien à l'émergence et à l'innovation dans la presse to support innovative projects and digital transformation in the media sector.
- The Netherlands: Dutch Journalism Fund (formerly Dutch Press Fund) supported by the government of the Netherlands to strengthen struggling media and provide financial support to investigative journalism and the professionalisation of local media. Public Broadcasting Media Fund supports public broadcasting corporations, including local and regional public broadcasters.
- Sweden: During the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to a 50 percent drop in advertising revenue for some of the country's local and national newspapers, the Swedish government has announced a wave of financial support to help the culture and media sectors.
- Denmark: Danish Journalism Fund supports independent media outlets, focusing on investigative journalism and the professionalisation of local media. Also, Public Service Fund will be expanded to support Danish-language content for regional and national radio and podcasts. Independent Research Fund Denmark supports specific research activities including those in the media and journalism.

2. Strengthen Legal Protections for Journalists and Enforce Equal Access to Information Across Regions:

- Strengthen legal frameworks to protect journalists from harassment, violence, and censorship. Give more credibility to reports from organizations in the sphere – National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NSJU), Independent Media Union of Ukraine, Institute of Mass Information, Commission on Journalistic Ethics, etc. They possess in-depth knowledge of abuse against journalists and have experience in handling those cases. Acknowledge local media actors and their accounts of local cases.

- Provide additional support for Ukrainian civil society actors, ensuring fast and easily accessible legal aid for journalists who expose corruption at the community level as well as the national level.
- Amend the Criminal Code of Ukraine to increase penalties for crimes against journalists, ensuring that attacks on journalists are treated as severe offenses. Introduce specific provisions to protect journalists from Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) aimed at silencing critical reporting during the post-war period of recovery and rebuilding.
- SLAPP Cases: Ukrainian journalists have faced several SLAPPs, such as those targeting investigative journalists who expose corruption. By introducing anti-SLAPP legislation, Ukraine can deter frivolous lawsuits intended to intimidate journalists. If possible, waive any legal fees for small-scale media organizations, especially local ones.
- Establish a clear set of rules for access to information local authorities possess. As of now, there is a problem with different oblasts' military administrations interpreting access to information based on the personality of a person who has filed a request. It should be done by regulation.

3. Maintain Media Diversity and Pluralism:

- Promote Diverse Ownership: Provide incentives, such as tax breaks and grants, to encourage the establishment of media outlets by diverse owners, including women, ethnic minorities, and regional entrepreneurs.
- Independent local media should be the priority for National Media Fund programs or other recovery funds that include media operations. Following the end of the war, there is a risk of local and national political actors buying media outlets wholesale to gain influence. Those media won't need money from the funds as they would be maintained by owners. To level the playing field and establish a steady flow of vetted and independent information, small-scale

operations should be supported. Journalists' staying with local media organizations should be prioritized.

- Promote fair competition in media and limit monopolies. Transparent instruments for oversight of media ownership and control should be developed, especially at the local level, where large owners can create multiple newsrooms in one local area to control media policy and media products.

4. Support Media Literacy by endorsing model local media:

- Recognize leading media organizations in terms of adhering to journalistic standards, vetting information, and combating disinformation. Present them as model media organizations at a state level (already done by Filter project, it needs to be promoted more).
- Funding New Programs: New media literacy programs can be funded through public-private partnerships involving technology companies, educational institutions, and international donors. This can ensure a broad-based approach to fostering critical thinking skills among the population.

5. Modernise Public Broadcasting Services:

- Ukraine's public broadcaster, UA:PBC, faces challenges such as underfunding, political pressure, and limited reach. Increased and stable funding, legal guarantees of editorial independence, and enhanced digital capabilities can improve its performance.
- Improving Public Broadcasting: Enforce an established legal framework that ensures consistent funding for UA:PBC through a dedicated percentage of the national budget. Enhance its digital infrastructure to increase reach and engagement, especially among younger audiences.
- Facilitate fundraising efforts by Suspilne to employ and keep employed better professionals, maintain archives, seek funds for pinpoint enhancements etc.

- Develop rules for the media to withdraw from the wartime propaganda campaign and return to a balanced and diverse news report. This also includes ending the Wartime Single Marathon by Suspilne.

3.3.2 For Policymakers from Foreign Countries

1. Develop Long-Term Dedicated Media Support Programs:

Governments such as those of the United States, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the UK should develop further specific programs within their foreign aid frameworks dedicated to supporting Ukrainian media. These programs should focus on building media institutions or supporting existing ones. Not having institutional support is a major concern among local media as they do not have other major revenue streams, as of now. Sustainable long-term institutional support will allow the media to develop their organizations and provide better social support and benefits for their employees.

Existing Examples:

- USA: The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has established media support programs that provide financial assistance and training to media organizations in various conflict zones, including Ukraine.
- Canada: The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has incorporated media support into its international development programs, providing funding and capacity-building for media in emerging democracies.
- Germany: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) runs programs supporting media development in regions affected by conflict, providing both financial and technical assistance.
- Treat media support not as a one-off emergency response but as a long-term commitment. Develop multi-year programs that ensure sustained support and capacity building.

2. Offer Diplomatic Support for Press Freedom and Press Cooperation:

- Use diplomatic channels, including embassies, consulates, and international forums such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to advocate for press freedom and media resilience and recovery in Ukraine. Diplomats should engage in dialogue with Ukrainian authorities to support legislative reforms and protection mechanisms for journalists.
- Engage in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts to highlight the importance of press freedom. This can include:
 - o Raising media viability and press freedom issues in bilateral meetings between Ukrainian officials and representatives from the EU, U.S., and other democratic nations.
 - o Leveraging platforms like the United Nations Human Rights Council to bring attention to violations of press freedom and advocate for international support for Ukrainian journalists.
- Advocate for the presence of media subjects in Ukraine recovery debates and annual conferences.
- Invite media representatives, especially local ones, to give speeches on the recovery situation in Ukrainian regions. Recognize them as informed members of public interested in transparent process and anti-corruption initiatives.
- Facilitate international cooperation between regional and local media: provide funding for fellowships, friendly visits, and joint projects by Ukrainian local media organizations and local media outlets from your country.
- Specific Partnerships: Encourage partnerships between Ukrainian media outlets and international media organizations such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle, and the New York Times to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration.

3. Encourage Multilateral Cooperation:

Work with international organizations to coordinate media support efforts. Organizations like UNESCO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) have the expertise and resources to enhance the effectiveness of aid programs.

Additional Examples:

- The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA): Provides support for media development and press freedom initiatives globally.
- International Media Support (IMS): Engages in supporting local media in countries affected by conflict or political transition, offering safety training, financial support, and advocacy.
- The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ): Advocates for the rights of journalists and provides emergency financial assistance and safety resources.

4. Be Wary of Training Initiatives:

- Ukrainian media are voicing their 'training fatigue', as every organization is providing some sort of training programme. It is mostly conceived without cooperation with other organizations, so a lot of trainings are duplicates of other learning activities.
- One should be aware of training conducted by all the stakeholders to create or facilitate a learning opportunity that would be helpful for the local media outlets.
- Trainings do not possess an inherent value in themselves. Familiarize yourself with Ukrainian context to tailor your programme to local needs and issues. There is a market for foreign actors who understand Ukrainian local media struggle without adding another training on top.

5. Monitor and Evaluate Media Support Initiatives:

- Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact of media support initiatives. Use this data to inform future aid programs and ensure that they effectively meet the needs of Ukrainian media.
- Implementation: Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that includes regular reporting, feedback mechanisms from media beneficiaries, and independent assessments to measure the effectiveness and impact of media support programs.

6. Put Media Expenses Into Recovery Plans

- Media organizations could be an independent auditor of recovery spendings and procurements for a fraction of total recovery costs. They are interested in their local community and can provide a service for the local people.
- Put media development budgets into recovery budgets. This would ensure a steady flow of revenue for media organizations which will inevitably ensure a more efficient usage of recovery costs. This should be done especially for local investigative journalists as their output relies on media's funding.
- There could be a separate Media Development Fund of some sorts, but it should be tightly connected to total recovery efforts done by foreign actors.

7. Coordinate with Media and NGOs:

Work closely with local media organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to understand their needs and priorities. Tailor aid programs to address these specific needs effectively.

3.3.3 For Donors

1. Adopt a Multi-Faceted Support Approach:

- Financial Support: Provide core grants and low-interest loans to help media outlets keep employees, rebuild infrastructure, purchase equipment, and cover operational costs. For example, the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) offers tailored financial support to media organizations to promote sustainability and growth.
- Prioritize long-term institutional grants over short-term projects in order to allow the sustainable growth of independent media organisations. Consider the informational health status of the regions in Ukraine.

The assistance and support that could be provided for informationally healthy areas and news deserts varies significantly. Depending on the region's status, some areas, such as unhealthy regions or news deserts with limited access to critical information, might need media launch and relaunch programs. Conversely, support for existing organisations and initiatives might be necessary for informationally healthy areas to prevent them from transitioning into informationally unhealthy ones. For partially healthy regions, a combination of both approaches might be beneficial. Therefore, considering the informational health of local districts and communities in Ukraine (healthy, partially healthy, and not healthy regions) and targeting foreign development aid programs according to the region's health status might maximize the assistance's positive impacts on media development in Ukraine.

- Technical Assistance: Offer expertise and resources for digital transformation, cybersecurity, and technical upgrades. Internews has been successful in providing such support to media outlets in conflict zones.

- **Training Programs:** Fund training programs focused on journalistic skills, digital media, and investigative reporting. Organizations like the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) conduct workshops and provide fellowships to enhance the skills of journalists.
- **Safety Equipment and Training:** Donate safety equipment, such as protective gear and secure communication tools, to journalists operating in high-risk areas. The Rory Peck Trust provides safety training and equipment to freelance journalists working in dangerous environments.
- **National Conferences:** Representatives of national, regional, and local media should have multiple opportunities to unite, discuss the most pressing problems, and develop strategies to overcome them. Given the costs of holding such conferences, donor support is needed initially.

2. Prioritize Local and Regional Media:

Justification: Local and regional media are often the first to uncover corruption and hold local officials accountable. They play a crucial role in anti-corruption efforts and follow-the-money reporting. For example, regional journalists have exposed corruption in local government procurement processes, which would have remained hidden without their investigative work. Supporting these media outlets ensures that local issues receive attention and that there is accountability at all levels of government.

One of the most frequently voiced needs of local media is keeping the employees and ability to pay salaries to them, the lack of employees also contributes to issue of the administrative burden of reporting and constant new commitments. As low salaries, especially at the local level, are the key issue for most media organisations, the provided funding (with priority to long-term institutional support for local newsrooms or decreasing the administrative burden of reporting for small grants) should allow them to focus on providing adequate remuneration for work in journalism.

3. Encourage Collaborative Projects:

Fund collaborative projects that bring together media outlets, civil society organizations, and academic institutions to strengthen the media ecosystem and promote innovation. For example, the “Ukraine World” initiative by Internews and local partners combines media expertise with academic research to produce in-depth reports and analyses.

4. Flexible Funding:

Definition: Flexible funding means providing financial support that allows media outlets to adapt to changing circumstances and priorities. This includes multi-year grants with minimal restrictions on how the funds can be used, allowing organizations to allocate resources where they are most needed at any given time.

Desirable Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) Level: A desirable ICR level should be over 15%. This rate allows media outlets to cover overhead costs, such as administrative expenses, utilities, and rent, ensuring that they can operate sustainably and focus on their core mission of journalism.

5. Capacity Building:

Invest in training programs focused on the watchdog role of media, investigative journalism, digital skills, and financial management. For instance, the “Media Innovation Program” by IREX supports media outlets in developing new business models and digital strategies to enhance their sustainability and reach. Be careful to prioritize wise, strategic financial support over capacity building.

6. Safety Programs:

Fund initiatives that provide safety training and equipment for journalists working in high-risk areas. Programs like the Committee to Protect Journalists’ (CPJ) “Emergency Response Team” of 4201 Foundation programs offer crucial support to journalists facing threats and violence. Do not underestimate PTSD and trauma healing.

3.3.4 For International Monetary Institutions

1. Incorporate Media Support into Reconstruction Plans:

Recognize media as a critical sector in recovery plans. Include specific provisions for media support in funding agreements and reconstruction programs. Involve journalists and media organizations in developing such programs at an early stage.

2. Facilitate Low-Interest Loans for Media Outlets:

Provide low-interest loans and grants to help media outlets keep employees, rebuild infrastructure, invest in new technology, and ensure operational sustainability. Create special financial instruments tailored to the media sector's unique needs.

Conclusion

A resilient and independent media landscape is essential for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. By implementing these targeted policies and programs, stakeholders can ensure that the media continues to play a crucial role in fostering transparency, accountability, and civic engagement during this critical period. These specific recommendations will contribute to a robust media environment, supporting Ukraine's long-term stability and growth.

Author Biographies

Julia Hildebrand has 15 years of experience in building communities as well as engagement products for media. Since 2021 Julia has been project lead at CORRECTIV for the open-source software beabee and the CORRECTIV.Starhub, a community and resource hub for local media founders in Germany. As part of the founding-team at the Irish social startup ChangeX.org, Julia developed community software that allows people to start their own local projects and led on multimedia campaigns to grow the ChangeX community. At Deutsche Welle she worked with more than 30 newsrooms on developing social media strategies, guidelines and workflows for more user participation.

David Schraven, publisher of CORRECTIV, Germany's first investigative newsroom. He has worked at taz, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and the Welt-group, and was in New York for Time Magazine during 9/11. David founded the political blog "Ruhrbarone" and led the research department at Funke-Mediengruppe from 2010 to 2014. He served on the board of Netzwerk Recherche and managed its finances since 2011. David has received numerous awards, including the "Wächterpreis der Tagespresse" and the Research Prize of the Swiss Wolfgang-Fichtner-Foundation. His graphic report "Kriegszeiten" was nominated for the German Youth Literature Award.

Viera Zuborova, Director of CORRECTIV.Exile since June 2024, is a political scientist specializing in populism, extremism, social movements, civil society, political communication, marketing, intolerance, and hate speech. She has over ten years of academic experience and served as a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA). Viera was a Scholar-in-Residence at ISGAP, Oxford University, and a Visiting Ph.D. Scholar at Université Libre de Bruxelles. A regular columnist for Aktuality.SK, she co-founded three NGOs focusing on human rights, education, youth, and social issues. She has also worked with the IOTA Foundation and ORAM.

Joanna Krawczyk is a senior executive with over 15 years of experience in media development and philanthropy. She is the Deputy Managing Director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States East, focusing on political and security transformation in CEE and Ukraine's reconstruction. Joanna manages the Ukrainian Media Fund, supporting local media during the war and reconstruction. She is an Obama Leader, board member of the European Media and Information Fund, and advisory board member of Journalismfund.eu and Allianz Foundation's Risktakers project. Previously, she led News Partnerships at Gazeta Wyborcza and the Gazeta Wyborcza Foundation.

Maksym Sribnyi, Head of Research at MDF, MA in Journalism at NaUKMA. Previously worked with DW Akademie, Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, Ukrainian Institute of Media and Communications in different research projects. Interested in media as organizations and as a public institution.

Marta Puhach, Researcher at Media Development Foundation. Received REES MA degree from the University of Kansas, US, MA in East-European Studies from the University of Warsaw, Poland, and MA in political science from the University of Ostroh Academy, Ukraine. Interested in international aid studies, financial operations of media organizations, media consumption studies.

Valeriia Shemshuchenko, Researcher at the Media Development Foundation. MA in Public Policy and Governance, Kyiv School of Economics. An all-around researcher interested in role of media organizations in public sphere, its connection to authorities, and public good it produces.

The report **“Revitalizing Ukrainian Local Media: Research and Recommendations”** presents a vital exploration of the current challenges and opportunities facing local journalism in Ukraine.

This publication, a collaborative effort spearheaded by Correctiv and the Ukrainian Media Fund under the German Marshall Fund of the United States, emphasizes the critical role of community-focused development in sustaining independent local media.

Supported by the North Rhine-Westphalia state government, this comprehensive study, enriched by the expertise of the Media Development Foundation, offers a strategic roadmap for stakeholders dedicated to rebuilding Ukraine's media sector. The findings and recommendations outlined within underscore the necessity of a coordinated approach, involving policymakers, civil society, and international donors, to foster a resilient, transparent, and democratic media landscape in Ukraine.