

# A Call for Effective Support to Syrian Independent Media as a Key Component in Mitigating and Resolving the Syrian Conflict

WHITE PAPER



GLOBAL  
FORUM  
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DEVELOPMENT

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### **About this report**

This report is based on consultation, interviews and meetings with international and Syrian media and media development actors undertaken by the Global Forum for Media Development. GFMD is responsible for its content and made all efforts to consult as many stakeholders as possible in this context to arrive at a consensus of the needs of the Syrian media sector. We thank IREX, International Media Support, and the European Union for their financial support to produce this report, and all contributors for their input, whose names do not appear for confidentiality reasons.

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Forum for Media Development, a network of 180 NGOs active in media assistance worldwide, drawing on the input of more than 50 Syrian professionals and international media development organizations, calls for enhanced support to the Syrian independent media sector, ensuring it is a necessary element of donors' response to the conflict in Syria.

As the conflict enters its fifth year the toll on Syria continues to grow. Four million Syrians have become refugees, millions more are now internally displaced, more than 200,000 Syrians have been killed, towns destroyed, and extremists have seized control of large swaths of territory. A media war is taking place alongside the fighting. Syria has been the most dangerous country for journalists for the last three years according to major press freedom groups such as Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders. Killings, kidnappings, and death threats have become commonplace for Syrian journalists. Extremist groups deploy well-funded and effective propaganda that seeks to manipulate the mindset of Syrian citizens and challenges not only the long-established state media propaganda of the regime but also the attempts of the political opposition to convince

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Syrians of its approach to the Syrian conflict. Squeezed in the middle is a group of media professionals committed to independent journalism in the service of informing the population. Using television, radio, newspapers, the internet, and social media, and demonstrating the gains in professionalism they have made since 2011, they are struggling to provide Syrians with the news and information they need to first survive the conflict and then determine how they can resolve the conflict and move towards a more democratic and stable Syria.

Experience in conflicts, in former Yugoslavia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Afghanistan over the past twenty years has shown that citizens with access to reliable, professional, and independent news and information must be a key element in any effort to support a sustainable resolution to conflict that will begin a political process that will stabilize the situation, counter extremism, ensure more democratic outcomes. Donor support to Syrian media has been critical to ensuring that the nascent independent media sector grew and survived as the conflict worsened. However, four years into the conflict, donors, implementers, and Syrians must re-evaluate their approach based on the changing nature of the conflict and the lessons learned from previous support efforts. In its coordination work with Syrians and media development professionals working on Syria projects since 2013, GFMD has developed the following summary recommendations for donors, implementers, and Syrian media:

- **Long-term, flexible, and adequately funded donor engagement supporting independent media must play a key role in the response to the Syrian conflict.** Lasting popular support for a democratically oriented and moderate future for Syria will not be obtained without a population well informed by

an independent and professional media. **A long-term and flexible approach** builds trust between Syrians and internationals, allows the time needed to enhance professionalism of journalists, supports the development of engaging and informative content, and ensures that projects can respond quickly to changes in the nature of the conflict to maintain progress.

- **The Syrian audience must be central to donor projects, including support for understanding the news and information needs of the Syrian public and improving the distribution of independent media to the Syrian public.** Support must be for the ultimate benefit of the Syrian audience, allowing them to receive the most professional, objective, and comprehensive news and information possible through the media that best suit their information needs and preferences. This requires support for sustained audience research and content monitoring to ensure funding and program decisions are wisely made and support channeled to media that demonstrate a commitment to improving professionalism and reaching key audiences inside Syria or among the refugee population. These media must then have support to widely and effectively distribute their content, whether through broadcast, print, or online.
- **A comprehensive approach to the Syrian media sector will be most effective.** Providing support for professional journalism and content, distribution of print, broadcast, and online media, sound management, proper equipment and operational funding, and the safety and security of journalists will allow media organizations and journalists to work more effectively and sustain their improvements in the difficult Syrian environment.
- **Syrian media professionals, media development implementers, and donors must coordinate their work.** With limited funds and difficulty obtaining regular and reliable information from inside Syria, coordination takes on greater urgency. Financial and political support is needed to allow existing coordination mechanisms to operate on a more regular and comprehensive basis than is currently the case. Coordination efforts over the last two years have minimized overlap among implementers, led to some joint projects and ensured that Syrians have better access to provide their real world knowledge to the donors and media development implementers. Improved coordination will also ensure that projects developed by Syrians or by Syrians and international organizations in partnership will be the most effective and worthy of donor support. Successes include the Syrian Response Group for Emergency Assistance, the Syrian Newspaper Group, the Ethical Journalism for Syria Alliance, the Nai Network for Children's Media, and cooperation and shared services between Syrian radio broadcasters. However, the ability to involve more Syrians and smaller international NGOs and support more frequent coordination has been hampered by limited and short-term funding.

The Global Forum for Media Development is an international membership network of media assistance groups that highlights the importance of independent, pluralistic and sustainable media in social and economic development. For the past two years it has helped lead a coordination effort between international media development organizations and Syrian media professionals that has resulted in enhanced cooperation between donor projects, provided greater voice to Syrians on their specific needs, and improved the dialog between donors and the media development sector.

## II. THE SYRIAN CONFLICT AND THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF SYRIAN CITIZENS

What began initially as an unarmed uprising by a democratically oriented opposition seeking reform of the authoritarian regime has morphed into a conflict with complex battle lines. Extremist groups such as ISIL increasingly garner headlines and the attention of policymakers, but the reality is a complex array of opposition groups ranging from the democratically inclined to violent extremists fighting against a regime that remains responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths. As the Syrian conflict enters its fifth year, Syrian citizens continue to be caught in the middle and bear the brunt of the violence.

### THE TOLL OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

- More than 200,000 killed
- 7.5 million internally displaced people
- 4 million refugees in neighboring countries
- 80% of the population living in poverty
- A “lost generation” of youth

More than 200,000 Syrians have been killed. Nearly 4 million Syrians live as refugees in neighboring countries and more than 7 million are internally displaced inside Syria. Towns and cities have been destroyed. Health, education, and social support systems have collapsed in much of the country. Children have suffered deeply and threaten to become Syria’s “lost generation.” Over one million of the refugees are children with

limited access to the education they should be receiving and often with poor and inconsistent access to nutrition and health care. Half of the children in Syria cannot go to school on a regular basis. Human rights violations are commonplace – rape, murder, disappearances, mass killings have been used as tools of war. Economically, the conflict has shattered the country’s normal trade patterns, production, and systems of commerce. 80% of the population now lives in a state of poverty and the country has suffered economic losses of \$202 billion according to the UN.

The fate of Syrian journalists in this complex and violent conflict has mirrored that of the broader population. The Syrian Network for Human Rights reports over 450 media workers have been killed and over 1000 abducted or disappeared, with the regime responsible for over 80% of the deaths and abductions. Western press freedom groups such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders name Syria as the most dangerous country in the world for journalists. While CPJ reports the rate of journalists’ deaths declined in 2014, the rate of targeted killings of journalists nearly doubled as both ISIL and the regime have worked to silence independent voices. Journalists have been jailed by the regime and died in prison, forced into exile, or chosen to leave the profession due to the dangers. Others have chosen to take sides and have joined with the extremists or the opposition.

Parallel to the military conflict has been an intense media war being waged by the different sides in the conflict. The Assad regime controls a well-funded, ex-

perienced, and far-reaching state media that has sought to bolster his control by showing him as the only force capable of maintaining a stable Syria that will not fall to Islamic extremists. It counters claims of war crimes and use of chemical weapons while also showing the democratic opposition as weak, ineffective, and incapable of governing Syria. The regime and its allies have also become more sophisticated in their use of social media as a propaganda tool and their use of cyber warfare to attack independent and opposition voices.

The extremist opposition, primarily ISIL, has developed a well-funded and effective propaganda strategy to recruit Syrian and foreign fighters, sow fear in areas it is seeking to capture, and exert legitimacy in areas it controls. It uses social media and increasingly traditional media to convey these messages. In areas it controls it has established or taken over radio and newspapers and used these to establish its legitimacy by conveying its own sense of stability and normalcy while also demonstrating that it is succeeding in its goal to establish an 'Islamic Caliphate' that redraws borders imposed by foreigners. It aims at convincing youth that they can be a part of ISIL's successful venture and can serve a "noble" cause. The production values, cultural references, and sophisticated use of social media have distinguished ISIL from other extremists and form a key component of the group's strategy to not only take territory but win hearts and minds and establish legitimacy.

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, the umbrella group uniting moderate and democratically inclined opposition groups, has improved its information efforts aimed at swaying international opinion and convincing the population of its legitimacy and ability to deliver freedom and stability. What began as poorly coordinated and understaffed efforts after its creation in November 2012 have grown in complexity and sophistication. Its focus has been on getting information on the conflict to the widest audience possible with a focus on information that discredits the regime and extremists while secondarily providing useful information to Syrian citizens.

What the regime, extremist, and opposition media efforts hold in common is the goal to promote their ideology, show themselves to Syrians as the only effective and legitimate group to lead the country, and convince their respective key audiences outside the country that they are the key to settling the conflict. What regime, extremist and opposition do not pursue as their primary mission is the essential need for Syrian citizens to have access to accurate, independent, and professional news and information. Press freedom ratings show the effects of the violence, the propaganda efforts of the warring parties, and the repression of free expression by the regime and extremists – Syria ranks third to last in the world according to Reporters Without Borders press freedom index and ranks as "not free" by Freedom House's Freedom of the Press index.

But it remains essential that civilians have access to news and information on a regular basis and in a timely manner. They need information on the conflict that can help them protect themselves and their families – they need to know of the status of fighting, how and where to seek shelter if needed, and how to access humanitarian aid. They need information about normal life – education, culture, information for women and children, etc. They need platforms for an open dialog on the future of Syria where citizens can have a voice, "speak" to the opposition, and learn about the policies of opposition groups. **For the medium and long-term, access to reliable and accurate news and information must play a key role that**

**contributes to stabilizing the conflict, strengthens the resilience of the population, and counters radical agendas.** Faced with the propaganda efforts of the regime, opposition, and extremists, citizens need objective news and information on the military and political protagonists, their policies and strategies, and international efforts to mitigate and solve the conflict.

For the medium and long-term, access to reliable and accurate news and information must play a central role in resolving the conflict.

The base exists to move towards this information environment, with assistance from the donor community. There are journalists, citizen journalists, and media outlets striving precisely to provide the news and information Syrians need, against great odds. Many media have chosen to operate at least partially outside the country with reporters and staff inside the country and editors and reporters travelling back and forth. Others remain totally inside country. They run websites, social media and mobile efforts, radios and newspapers and strive to meet professional standards and serve their audience with limited resources, equipment, and training. They are underfunded, face violence and threats daily, and have difficulty accessing large areas of the country. But they continue their work.

This small group of committed media professionals grew out of the early stages of the conflict. Even prior to the 2011 uprising that sparked the current civil war, journalists and citizen journalists were reporting independently on Syria, primarily using social media and the Internet. Many were aligned with civil society and human rights organizations or opposition groups but they and independent colleagues sought to challenge the Assad regime's control of the media environment. They operated both outside and inside the country. Others worked in media in the country, subject to state efforts to control and curb independent reporting but they assisted these more independent news providers or sought to push redlines themselves. Donors played an important role in many of these efforts before the 2011 uprising with funding and training. Several international media development organizations had developed important ties to Syrian journalists through their work.

As the uprising escalated into armed conflict and eventually a civil war, the Syrian media itself began to split into pro- and anti-Assad groups and space opened for more media freedom in areas where the Assad regime had lost control. Citizen journalists began actively using social media as a means to report on the conflict. While this became a crucial source of information, much of it was not focused on serving the full information needs of the Syrian audience. The opening of territory also meant local media could operate free from the regime's suppression of independent media voices. While many also felt constrained by the opposition, they began reporting more freely than they had been able to previously.

With this opening space, new media outlets began to emerge with and without donor support that had a commitment to independent journalism at their core. New projects were developed that created online media outlets, supported radio networks, and supported local media outlets. As the conflict intensified, donors began supporting more media projects and developed new projects in close cooperation between Syrians and international media development organizations. Journalism training proliferated, with a mix of focused training efforts and one-off trainings. Support for online media efforts surged, for civil society organizations



and the opposition in addition to media professionals. As the conflict intensified, resources shifted into providing enhanced digital and physical security. What characterized these early donor efforts was a sincere effort to support increased and improved news and information for Syrian citizens, whether provided by professional journalists, civil society, or the opposition.

Donors, and many media development organizations, were not in a position to rapidly and effectively shift resources towards support for Syrian media, nor was independent media placed in a key role in helping to resolve either the humanitarian crisis or the armed conflict and creating the ground for a more democratic post-conflict Syria. They were operating in a conflict situation, under the repressive Assad regime, and in a country that lacked democratic habits and experience with free media. Given this, support for media development has remained a relatively small part of donor support provided in response to the conflict. This problem was compounded by the fact that most donors and many media development implementers were new to the Syrian environment and did not have the long-term understanding of the media environment or trusted relationships with media and civil society. Understanding of the Syrian audience, supported by research, was absent. The rapidly changing landscape also impeded the ability to understand how to best invest limited resources in developing the Syrian media. Many Syrians and international observers further believed that donors and policymakers were not effectively distinguishing between support for strategic communications for the opposition and support for development of a professional and independent media.

Entering the fifth year of the Syrian conflict however, Syrian journalists and international media development professionals have learned important lessons that can improve donor support for the Syrian media sector as a key component of strategy to mitigate the effects of the conflict, lay the groundwork for a Syria that rejects extremism, and contribute to a solution to the conflict that moves Syria towards a future that is stable and respects the fundamental rights of its citizens, including freedom of expression.

Beginning in 2013, the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) has convened a coordinating group that consists of more than 50 Syrian and internationals active in media and media development in Syria and that has met regularly over the past two years. At these meetings Syrians and international media development professionals have discussed how media assistance could be better structured to ensure a more robust independent media sector could gain a foothold in the country and offer an effective alternative to the propaganda efforts of the main protagonists in the civil war. Follow up surveys and interviews with participants in the coordination meetings have provided additional input. The resulting recommendations represent the consensus view that GFMD has seen emerge from this community of professionals and is intended to support development of media development strategies by donors, implementers, and Syrian media professionals that focuses on developing a resilient independent media sector in Syria.

# III. RECOMMENDED APPROACHES TO MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN SYRIA

Long-term, flexible, and adequately funded donor engagement will ensure that real improvements can be made in the sector

At the beginning of the Syrian crisis there was a proliferation of efforts to support the Syrian media sector, emphasizing the development of independent sources of information and support for the efforts of the opposition to convey their positions to the Syrian public. The donor efforts varied between short-term projects that included small grants, one-off or short series of trainings, and support for digital efforts. This support was vital for the sector as the stranglehold of the Syrian regime on media was abating in areas falling under the control of the opposition and as Syrians were increasingly able to and demanding access to information and news from multiple sources.

However, many of the projects did not have a long-term perspective, owing in part to the nature of funding and response mechanisms made available for the Syrian crisis response. These projects could not therefore develop the longer-term perspective for the journalists and media houses they supported nor could they develop the level of trust necessary to work effectively in a conflict environment. In addition, the crisis unfolded in a manner few could have predicted and the response mechanisms often lacked the agility and flexibility to respond to these changes. From burdensome vetting requirements to the time necessary to amend terms of reference, many projects were not able to respond as rapidly as necessary in such a crisis.

As the crisis has continued and deepened the need for flexible, long-term and adequately funded projects becomes even more evident. Syrian journalists, already struggling simply to report, have found it difficult to trust donors and implementers as processes have often been too slow, funding less than needed, and the commitment short-term. If international donors and implementers are to be true partners in developing a media sector in Syria, they must offer a long-term commitment to Syrian partners that is shown through long-term projects that support the needs of the Syrian media they are seeking to help. The projects must also be able to respond to a rapidly changing situation on the ground without undue delays. This requires donors and implementers to take risks as elements of projects may not develop as planned and may be deemed “failures.” However, the conflict situation in Syria requires this level of risk-taking and flexibility.

### GFMD therefore recommends that donors:

- **Ensure that professional and independent media play a key role in the response to the Syrian conflict.** As donors seek to counter extremism and radicalization, they must also understand that lasting popular support for a democratically oriented and moderate future for Syria will not be obtained without a population well informed by an independent and professional media.
- **Support projects of 2-3 years in duration and longer if possible.** They should allow for development of sound collaboration between the implementers and Syrian media to shape project design and implement the project given the constraints of the environment and should adequately distinguish between short-term and long-term results.
- **Provide flexibility and adequate scope for rapid revisions in project agreements.** Changes in the environment or obstacles encountered in implementing projects call for flexibility in reporting, monitoring, and implementation. Most donors have more flexible mechanisms and these are more suitable for the Syrian context. This is also important for encouraging more funding directly to Syrian organizations.
- **Provide enhanced funding for media support projects.** While donor funds are limited, media plays a crucial cross-cutting role in the conflict – informed and engaged citizens improve the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts, counter extremism, and reduce the human toll of the conflict. Media projects should be adequately funded and when funds are limited, donors should consider the merits of concentrating funding in fewer mechanisms.

## The Syrian audience must be at the center of decisions on media assistance

An independent media sector exists for the benefit of its audience. Projects and funding must therefore be developed with a better understanding of the information needs of the Syrian audience – what are their preferences for news and information content? How do they want to and how can they currently receive this content (radio, internet, television, print, social media), what content are they currently receiving and what is the quality of that content? If donors, implementers, and Syrian media themselves do not understand this, projects will not reach their intended audience and decisions on which types of media to support, which kind of content and journalism to develop, and which geographic areas to focus on will be made without understanding the ultimate effect of that support.

This requires regular audience research, ongoing content monitoring of the media – those that donors are supporting and other key media, and support for improving (and increasing) the distribution of independent media to the Syrian public. As noted above, as the conflict in Syria escalated, donors and media implementers moved to rapidly respond with many gravitating initially to digital media projects. However there was not a clear basis for this being the means to reach the audience in Syria so its actual effectiveness was not known. Donors have since expanded their support to other forms of media but largely without adequate data to judge whether that too will reach the audience intended. It is likewise vital that support

also be allocated to ensure that the media supported are able to distribute their content – whether print, broadcast, or internet – by providing support for the infrastructure, equipment, and operations required to improve content distribution.

Additionally, few donors or implementers have the resources to adequately monitor the media content their training, mentoring, and grants are supporting. From the perspective of results, this makes it difficult to determine the actual effect of projects on improving the quality of news and information that Syrians access and the overall professionalism of media supported by donors. However, little funding has been devoted to monitoring this content and many donors and implementers rely on anecdotal or sporadic checks on content.

**GFMD therefore recommends that donors support:**

- **Infrastructure, equipment, and operations to increase the distribution of independent media.** Many media lack the resources to effectively increase their audience by increasing the territory they cover. In addition, the conflict has disrupted print distribution channels and access to newsprint, limited access to broadcast infrastructure, and made access to online media more difficult. But concerted support for improved distribution can make a substantive difference and increase the reach of professional journalism if it is targeted to those media and networks that demonstrate professionalism and appeal to the Syrian audience.
- **Regular audience research inside Syria and among the refugee population.** The war in Syria presents serious obstacles to conducting traditional audience research but approaches exist (and have been used) to gather reliable data that can inform donors and implementers about the Syrian audience– including which media they consume, which media they trust, which types of news and content they prefer, how they receive or would like to receive news (radio, television, print, social media, etc.). This research can be conducted for the benefit of donors, implementers, and the media themselves who also do not have data on their audience and therefore cannot effectively make decisions that will improve their content or their market. A pool of donors can support research that is shared with Syrian partners and the media development community.
- **Regular content monitoring of donor-supported media.** As noted above, implementers have not had the resources to monitor the content of the journalists and media they support on a regular basis. This hinders the ability to determine success in training, mentoring, and grant support. It also raises the risk of not understanding the overall level of professionalism of media that may be receiving support or considered for support. Effective monitoring mitigates this risk, provides a gauge to judge success for implementers, and also provides a tool for the media themselves to improve their work.
- **Media that reach key audiences.** Donors and implementers need to determine, based on research, what key audiences need access to news and information and provide support accordingly. A balance must be struck between refugees and Syrians in the country, between territories controlled by different factions, and between different ethnic and demographic groups. However, without data, there is uncertainty about who is being reached through media development projects.

## A comprehensive approach to the media sector will be most effective

Independent media rely on a complex system that includes professional journalism, sound management of media enterprises, stable funding sources, proper means to gather and distribute news (through the internet, mobile systems, terrestrial broadcasts, and print distribution), modern equipment, media laws supportive of free speech, and the ability of journalists to work in a safe environment. Even in the war-torn environment of Syria, donors need a strategy that views the media as part of a system and ensures they are supportive of the key elements that can contribute to a foothold for robust and resilient media. This supports a longer-term strategy that will leave behind a strong core of media professionals, media enterprises, and citizen journalists who can help move Syria forward on a democratic path, while not sacrificing the short-term needs to ensure the Syrian population has access to news and information during this period of conflict.

Many early projects did not view the media as a system and consequently focused on narrow aspects of support, whether it was crisis reporting, online journalism, or use of mobile technology. Syrian journalists and media professionals recall that many journalists were trained but had difficult accessing supplies and their outlets had little support for running their outlet; digital security training was provided but not physical security training or vice versa; support for distributing content was lacking minimizing the audience reached; and support for journalists in exile was often lacking, often making it difficult for them to work openly as journalists when they were refugees. Projects do appear to be shifting towards a more comprehensive approach and this trend needs to be solidified and continued.

### **GFMD recommends that donors ensure that projects approach media as part of a comprehensive strategy that supports:**

- **Professional journalism and content that informs and engages the Syrian public.** Journalism, professional and citizen, needs to focus on the needs of the Syrian public and adhere to standards of professionalism. Donors need to support programs that provide intense and sustained professional development that is developed with Syrians themselves.
- **Sound management of media enterprises.** While the situation in Syria means financial sustainability is not a feasible near term goal, media enterprises need to be well managed to use resources efficiently, nurture and protect their staff, ensure operation as legal entities (in exile or in Syria), and understand and engage their audience. Without this basic management approach, journalism training will not succeed.
- **Appropriate equipment and support for newsgathering, production, and distribution.** Media need equipment to gather and produce news in the field whether they work for radio, newspapers, television, or Internet. Media outlets themselves need to be able to reach their audience which requires support for radio and television transmitters, newsprint, print distribution, and Internet bandwidth, software, and IT support.
- **Support for physical and digital security and psychosocial care of journalists and media workers.** Syria's journalism community faces daily threats to their lives, ongoing attempts digital threats to media and journalists, and

the trauma of war. Donors have invested in mitigating these problems and need to ensure that this support continues and includes safety equipment, safe houses, and emergency support for journalists in distress.

- **Financial and in-kind support for operations.** While sound management can ensure a more efficient operation, financial sustainability is not likely in the current situation and independent media face a better-supported media from the Assad regime and from ISIL. Training, mentoring, and equipment will not be effective without support for operations to allow media outlets to focus on producing and distributing content that reaches their audience.

## Syrian media professionals, media development implementers, and donors must coordinate their work

With security issues, difficulties operating in the country, and no clear base for projects to operate, coordination has been difficult between donors, implementers, and Syrian media professionals but the need for information sharing is even more important. GFMD has over the last two years created a mechanism that allows implementers to share lessons learned and coordinate projects, has brought Syrian together with implementers to discuss their needs and develop project ideas, and to build trust to allow better communication given the security situation. Even with limited funding and the inability to adequately expand coordination efforts to bring in more international and Syrian partners, the process has proven successful. Successes include the Syrian Response Group for Emergency Assistance, the Syrian Network for Print Media, the Ethical Journalism for Syria Alliance, and cooperation and shared services between Syrian radio broadcasters. However, the ability to involve more Syrians and smaller international NGOs and support more frequent coordination has been hampered by limited and short-term funding. A more robust process will ensure Syrians themselves are more engaged in contributing to donor and implementer project design and that Syrians can better access projects directly.

### GFMD therefore recommends:

- **All implementers share information as transparently as possible.** Implementers have been open in sharing information given security constraints. New implementers should contribute to this information sharing to avoid duplication, benefit from possible synergy effects and leverage different sources of funding.
- **Donors provide long-term and stable support for an independently coordination process that includes Syrians, implementers, and donors.** The coordination process has proven successful and engaged Syrians with implementers, improved trust between the Syrian media community and international implementers, and led to better leveraging of funds and coordination. Implementers and Syrians need to know this process is durable and long-term.
- **Donors enable Syrians to access funds and projects directly as appropriate.** Donors need to offer opportunities for Syrians to access project funds with as little difficulty as possible, whether this is directly or through streamlined and flexible mechanisms. Donors need to consider the language barriers and should include use of suitable languages in the calls for proposals and allow proposals in local languages.

The Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) is an international membership network of media assistance groups that highlights the importance of independent, pluralistic and sustainable media in social and economic development. Based in Brussels, it brings together 500 media assistance groups around the world with active membership in some 80 countries.

## GFMD GOALS

**Collaboration:** Creating a practitioner-led platform for the media development sector to advocate for support from donors, governments, opinion leaders and the wider public.

**Knowledge:** Promoting and disseminating research and analysis on the impact of media development on governance, civic participation, poverty alleviation, emerging crises, and economic well-being worldwide. It makes the case for media development as a primary pillar for advancing social, economic, and political development.

**Professionalization:** Establishing agreed-upon standards and ethics for media worldwide encouraging cross-sector cooperation.

**Shared learning:** Critiquing and evaluation media development work to identify and advance best practices, methods and technology.

Learn more on [www.gfmd.info](http://www.gfmd.info)

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