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Mapping of media assistance and journalism support programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa

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FOREWORD

by Catherine Gicheru and Zoe Titus, GFMD Steering Committee Members

Across the continent, journalists, media outlets, and civil society organisations continue to play an essential role in informing citizens and strengthening democratic participation, even as the environment for independent media grows increasingly complex. Like other regions, Africa faces persistent challenges: limited funding for public interest journalism, rapid technological change that is reshaping media systems, and the need to keep pace with global trends such as the use of artificial intelligence in newsrooms.

Beyond funding gaps, developments across Sub-Saharan Africa point to deeper structural shifts in the media landscape. Global digital platforms are reshaping advertising markets, audience reach, and the circulation of news, often drawing value from local journalism without comparable investment or accountability. At the same time, emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, are entering newsrooms unevenly. A small number of outlets are able to experiment with new tools, while many others lack the resources, protections, or leverage to adopt them on their own terms.

In this context, AI risks deepening existing inequalities, accelerating disinformation, and amplifying online abuse - particularly against women journalists - rather than strengthening public interest journalism. These challenges are unfolding alongside growing political and regulatory pressure. As a result, Africa-led media organisations are absorbing rising digital, economic, and safety risks, while remaining largely excluded from the policy and funding decisions that shape the environments in which they operate.

Many countries are grappling with the implementation of critical media laws, the regulation of digital platforms, and the urgent need to protect journalists as they carry out their work. Across Africa, national media law reform remains uneven. Many accountability frameworks rely on outdated laws or punitive enforcement, while public trust faces pressure from political interference and disinformation.

In this context, research led by [NMT Media Foundation](#) across 11 African countries examines how media accountability works in practice. The study looks beyond formal regulation to assess complaint mechanisms, self-regulation, public engagement, and ethics in digital news

environments. Early findings show wide variation across countries and strong potential for locally grounded models based on transparency, independence, and public participation.

Recent developments in Uganda underline the seriousness of the current moment. In the wake of the January 2026 presidential elections, civil society organisations and media actors have faced increased restrictions, including NGO suspensions, an internet shutdown during the electoral period, and continued harassment of journalists. These developments raise renewed concerns about press freedom and access to information in the country.

Alongside these pressures, African civil society and media development actors continue to shape policy responses rather than remain on the margins. At the continental level, multi-stakeholder work at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights is advancing new standards on [data access](#), platform accountability, fact-checking, and public interest content. These processes bring journalists, regulators, and technical experts into shared policy space, grounded in African media realities.

Beyond formal policy forums, African actors are also asserting influence globally. Initiatives such as [M20](#) position information integrity as a public good and link media sustainability, democratic accountability, and digital governance in practical terms.

At national and regional levels, organisations pair policy engagement with action through strategic litigation, access to information implementation, journalist safety systems, and locally rooted sustainability models. Together, these efforts show African leadership shaping the rules and asserting influence over the conditions in which media operate.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, several cross-cutting shifts are becoming clearer. Media law, digital regulation, and competition policy are increasingly converging, with governments using economic and platform rules to shape media environments indirectly. Regulatory coordination is growing at the regional level, while civil society's access to these spaces remains uneven.

At the same time, limited experimentation with platform contributions to local media sustainability is emerging, though without consistent safeguards for independence. Together, these trends point to a policy moment where decisions made now will shape media viability and accountability for years to come.

Against this backdrop, we are pleased to share insights from the newly completed *Mapping of Media Assistance and Journalism Support Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa* report, which sheds light on the current media development and journalism support landscape across Sub-Saharan Africa. The report finds that journalist safety, digital rights, and gender-focused media support remain critically under-resourced, despite escalating risks and deep structural inequalities. It also exposes widening gaps in support for fragile states in Central Africa and parts of the Sahel.

While 326 programmes were identified across the region, financial commitments remain heavily concentrated in only a small number of countries. Zambia, Nigeria, and Mozambique alone account for **more than 60% of all mapped funding**.

The report also highlights the leadership of Africa-led organisations in programme implementation: delivery is relatively evenly split between **local organisations (41%) and international organisations (43%)**.

Despite this balance, Africa-led organisations continue to face structural barriers to accessing large-scale, multi-year, and flexible funding.

As with GFMD's previous regional mappings, the report underscores the persistence of short-term and traditional funding models, as well as the continued lack of innovative and sustainable investment approaches in support of independent media.

Most strikingly, the report reveals a major disconnect between media assistance budgets and the wider economic context of African media markets. Commercial media markets across the continent are expanding rapidly and are projected to generate **USD 28 billion by 2029** in South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya alone. Yet official development assistance dedicated to media remains marginal, accounting for **just 0.3% of global ODA** - approximately an annual average of USD 620 million worldwide, with Africa receiving only a portion of this.

We invite you to explore the full report and join us in the conversations ahead as we work together to advance Africa-led approaches to media sustainability, policy reform, and more equitable funding support.

Mapping of media assistance and journalism support programmes in the Sub-Saharan Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a mapping of 326 media assistance and journalism-support programmes implemented across Sub-Saharan Africa between 2020 and 2025. It provides an overview of how bilateral donors, philanthropic foundations and international and local organisations are supporting the region’s media and information ecosystems.

The mapping provides insights into funding flows, thematic priorities, implementing partners and structural gaps shaping media development. The overall aim is to strengthen coordination, local ownership and long-term sustainability in line with the OECD principles on effective media support. Drawing on data from the OECD-DAC purpose codes for media, the International Aid

Transparency Initiative’s data search tool - D-Portal, Aid Atlas donor reporting platforms (Sida OpenAid, FCDO DevTracker, NORAD, USAID, EU/INTPA, NED), philanthropic databases and implementer websites, the report consolidates funding information into a comparable dataset.

A total of **USD 518 million** in commitments was identified, with **USD 254 million** disbursed during the period. The mapping also compares donor support with the commercial value of African media markets using PwC Africa E&M Outlook data, revealing a stark mismatch between the scale of the region’s media economies and the relatively small volume of development financing.

KEY FINDINGS

Funding Scale and Distribution

- **326 programmes** were mapped across Sub-Saharan Africa (2020-2025)
- **Total committed funding: \$518,372,715.73**
- **\$254,174,824.48** disbursed during the study period
- Majority of funding is concentrated in Southern and Eastern Africa, with Zambia, Nigeria and Mozambique receiving **over 60% of the total commitments**

The data above shows that funding in Sub-Saharan Africa remains uneven. From the 326 programmes mapped, most

of the financial commitments are concentrated in just a few countries and regions, with Zambia, Nigeria and Mozambique alone absorbing more than 60% of all mapped funding.

This concentration reflects donors' preference for countries identified as reform priorities, but it also exposes a widening support gap for fragile states in Central Africa and parts of the Sahel.

Thematic priorities

Funding remains largely centred on:

- Democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression
- Capacity building and training

Emerging themes (which remain under-resourced compared to global trends) include:

- Disinformation & media literacy
- Digital innovation & media sustainability
- Investigative journalism

Under-funded areas are:

- Safety of journalists
- Digital rights
- Gender and media

Thematically, support prioritises **democracy, media freedom, and capacity-building**, which together represent more than half of all projects. While there is a growing recognition of issues such as disinformation, digital innovation and investigative

¹ *Perspectives from the Africa Entertainment and Media Outlook 2025–2029:* <https://www.pwc.com/ng/en/publications/entertainment-and-media-outlook.html>

journalism, these remain underfunded compared to global trends. **Safety of journalists, digital rights, and gender-focused media support** are critically under-resourced, despite worsening risks in these sub-sectors. The exit of USAID - which previously accounted for roughly a quarter of media assistance funding in this

mapping will create significant and uneven gaps across Sub-Saharan Africa, most acutely undermining democracy-linked media support and professional capacity-building, while further marginalising emerging thematic areas such as media sustainability, information integrity and investigative journalism.

Funding Models

- Looking at the nature of funding, grants dominate (93%) with limited blended finance or investment models available.
- Looking at the type of support provided:
 - Project-based funding: 67%
 - Core funding: 1%

The funding models above show that funding remains traditional and short-term: **93% of all support is grant-based and only 1% of funding provides core, flexible support.** This limits institutional resilience and long-term sustainability.

Implementation Architecture

- Balanced mix of implementers:
 - Local organisations: 41%
 - International organisations: 43%
 - Regional organisations: 4%
 - Not available: 8%
 - Other: 2%

Implementation patterns show a relatively balanced distribution between local and international organisations, but Africa-led organisations continue to struggle with access to large, multi-year funding.

Media Market Size vs ODA Levels

- African media markets are worth tens of billions annually and estimated to generate **US\$28 billion by 2029** in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya alone.
- In line with global trends, ODA dedicated to African media remains extremely small, as media development globally accounts for only around **0.3% of total ODA** – and Africa receives just one share of this already limited funding pool.

The comparison above shows that while Africa's media systems operate within rapidly expanding commercial markets, donor support remains limited, fragmented and project-based. Aid support is marginal compared to domestic market forces, creating a gap between the economic scale of African media and the resources available to strengthen its public interest functions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the findings indicate that while media assistance in SSA remains vital for democratic governance and information integrity, it is uneven, fragmented and misaligned with emerging structural challenges. It appears that traditional donor models, at least in the context of Africa, have not kept pace with the rapid digital transformation, revenue disruption, information disorders or algorithmic and platform dynamics affecting media across the continent.

To address these gaps, the report calls for:

- Greater investment in core, multi-year and risk-tolerant funding.
- Stronger regional mechanisms and more programmes managed by African-led organisations.
- Strategic alignment around digital rights, platform governance, AI, safety of journalists, and sustainability.
- Improved transparency and reporting from bilateral and philanthropic funders, and;
- Integrated media-support approaches embedded within broader governance, peacebuilding, climate, and development agendas.

In response to USAID's withdrawal - whose funding previously accounted for approximately 26% of mapped media assistance - the report recommends three priority actions:

1. Stabilise democracy-linked media freedom and professional capacity building through coordinated donor reforms in funding allocation, with greater use of multi-year and core funding rather than short-term, election-driven projects;
2. Highlight media sustainability, digital innovation and information integrity as funding priorities, recognising their heightened vulnerability following USAID's exit and their centrality to resilient democratic information systems; and
3. Expand pooled, blended-finance mechanisms to reduce over-reliance on single bilateral donors, enabling continuity, risk-sharing and longer planning mechanisms for African media organisations.

PURPOSE

This mapping aims to support more coherent, locally informed, and impactful media development strategies. In preparing the summary of mapped programmes dedicated to supporting media in Sub-Saharan Africa, the GFMD team aimed to identify the following:

- An overview of the **funding environment** in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Geographical distribution of the funding**: whether the funding was allocated to individual countries or distributed across multiple countries in the region and which countries that were the largest recipients of funding.
- **Programme descriptions**: the main themes and problems such programmes seek to address.
- **Type of funding**: Whether funding is core, project-based or other types.
- **Amounts of funding** allocated for media assistance programmes.
- **Sources of funding**: identifying the donors providing support and the number of programmes they fund.
- **Implementing organisations** - identifying the organisations implementing the programmes and/ or distributing funds to media organisations and journalists.

METHODOLOGY

At the outset of the mapping exercise, five African countries - South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique - were selected to provide an initial comparative lens based on their differing media-market sizes and their perceived relevance to donor funding flows. The intention was to examine how development assistance aligns with the commercial value of these media markets and to assess variations in aid distribution across these contexts. However, as the data collection process progressed, it became evident that these countries were not as central to donor investment patterns as initially assumed. To produce a more accurate, comprehensive and region-wide picture of media assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa, the scope of the study was therefore expanded to include all countries in the region.²

While the five original countries remain reflected in the dataset and are referenced where relevant in the report, they no longer constitute the analytical focus of the report. (See Appendix A for a full report). Data for this mapping was compiled by the researcher and drawn primarily from the D-Portal and applied OECD DAC purpose codes 15153 - “Media and free flow of information”, 22030 - “Radio/television/print media” and 15163 - “Free flow of information”, ensuring comparability.

Data was also drawn from development and humanitarian transparency portals such as Aids Atlas and Advancing Human Rights, as well as donor portals including Sida (OpenAid), FCDO Dev/Tracker, NORAD, USAID, EU, NED, Canada, and philanthropic foundations (Ford, MacArthur, Open Society Foundation, Luminare, and others) and implementer websites: Internews, MDIF, Fojo, IFPIM, UNESCO project pages. Additionally, inputs were also sourced directly from implementing partners approached by the Global Fund for Media Development (GFMD). Despite extensive coverage, gaps remain due to opaque philanthropic reporting, incomplete data, and overlapping programme classifications.

The mapping covered **326** media-related programmes implemented between 2020 and 2025, capturing donor type, implementing organisations, thematic areas, scope, and funding value. The amounts were processed and standardised in USD. Limitations include incomplete reporting for some sub-grants, unverified allocations and disbursement spending within some programmes and occasional classification inconsistencies.

Another incidental interest in this report is the comparison of the value of African media markets with development aid for media. To conduct this comparison, two complementary data sources and measurement

² The countries of the SSA are: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, The Countries of the SSA are: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

approaches were used: (a) PwC Africa Entertainment & Media Outlook 2025-2029 report and (b) the OECD-DAC codes discussed above.

Because no continent-wide dataset exists exclusively for “news media markets,” the revenue in the PwC Africa E&M Outlook report is a widely accepted proxy for the size of a country’s media economy. The Outlook provides annual and projected revenue data across TV, video,

music, internet advertising, gaming, OTT platforms and other media segments. The African market size (in billions) was compared against annual ODA flows (in millions). The comparison focuses on scale, proportion, and relative investment, rather than exact year-to-year matching. The purpose is to illustrate the structural mismatch between the size of African media economies and the very small volume of development financing dedicated to strengthening them.

MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FUNDING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: CONTEXT

Independent, diverse and plural media are essential for democracy, citizen participation and accountable governance. In low-connectivity and multilingual contexts, local media outlets and radio play an even more important role. With the shift to digital communications, there is an urgent need to fund digital infrastructures, content and innovation. The African Media Development Initiative (AMDI) argues that “fostering a stronger media in Africa is an indispensable part of tackling poverty, improving development and enabling Africa to attain its development goals.”³ Yet, despite this high value of media and its critical role in development outcomes, media development globally accounts for only around 0.3% of total Official Development Assistance (ODA), averaging US\$300-400 million per year between 2010 and 2019, compared to roughly US\$200 billion in overall ODA annually (CIMA 2024). African media support represents only one share of this already limited global media funding envelope, creating a structural resourcing gap that affects the viability and sustainability of media systems across the continent.

Despite their modest global share, Africa’s media and entertainment markets are already worth several billions of dollars annually, vastly exceeding the volume of development aid channeled to the sector. Recent PwC Africa Entertainment & Media Outlook data (2022-2026/2023-2027/2025-2029) show that by 2029, South Africa alone is projected to reach an entertainment and media market value of about US\$17.4 billion, with Nigeria and Kenya reaching US\$5,8 billion and US\$5.2 billion per year in E&M revenues.⁴

These three markets alone will therefore exceed US\$28 bn in annual E&M revenue by 2029. These three countries function as continental anchors and therefore offer a conservative minimum estimate of Africa’s overall commercial media market size.

Even if the definition of ‘media’ in the PwC Africa E&M Outlook report is uncertain and includes the entertainment sector, the stark disparity between the market value of the African media and the ODA figures underlines how small, fragmented and project-based donor funding is. Aid plays a catalytic and gap-filling role, but it is structurally dwarfed by domestic commercial dynamics.

The funding and support landscape shows a mix of donors - philanthropic foundations, development agencies and media-development organisations (MDOs) - active in the region. The IMS report “*Where is the Money? A Global Perspective on Forms of Funding, Financing and Investment for Public Interest Media*” (2024) shows that short-term project grants, mainly from donors and philanthropic organisations, dominate the funding landscape, creating instability and preventing long-term institutional growth. Because core funding is rare, most media outlets and organisations lack the stability needed for long-term institutional growth and are forced to operate reactively rather than strategically.

Donors traditionally support capacity-building (journalism skills, newsroom development/improvement), policy & regulatory reform (e.g. access to information laws,

³ African Media Development Initiative. Retrieved at https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/trust/pdf/AMDI/AMDI_summary_Report.pdf?utm

⁴ PwC (2025) Africa’s E&M shift: Fast, Focused and Future-ready. Perspectives from the Africa Entertainment and Media Outlook 2025-2029. Retrieved at <https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/africa-entertainment-media-outlook-2025.pdf>

community media regulation), infrastructure (e.g. community radio stations), and more recently digital transformation (online media, sustainability models). For example, a report on regional media development support identifies “professionalism”, “gender & media”, and “policy & regulatory environment” among key focus areas (Fojo 2020).

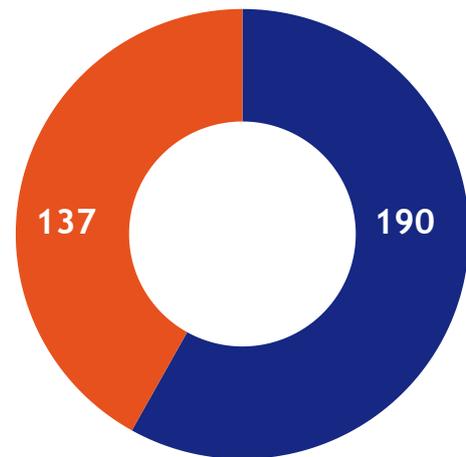
Several structural and sector-specific challenges undermine the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of media development funding in SSA. These include fragile revenue streams and business

models across media organisations, repressive operating environments and regulatory risks, capacity and human resource constraints within newsrooms, and persistent gaps in infrastructure and connectivity.

However, emerging trends in funding such as blended-finance approaches, investment and revenue-based models, local philanthropy, and regional networks and coalitions provide some hope for sustainable solutions in media development funding.

Ongoing vs Completed Projects

Among the 326 programmes, 137 are ongoing and 190 have closed. However, the bulk of financial value lies in ongoing projects, totalling \$290,236,201. This indicates an active pipeline but also significant renewal risk if major government-funded projects are not extended.



● Ended: \$228,136,515
 ● Ongoing: \$290,236,201

Graph 1: Project status

Regional Distribution of Funding: Committed and Disbursed

This section presents the geographical distribution of media assistance programmes across Sub-Saharan Africa. It highlights regional funding allocation and the number of projects implemented in each country, total funding amounts in USD, and their share of the overall total.

Region	Amount	Share
Amounts committed		
Central Africa	\$25,443,862	5%
East Africa	\$86,143,367	17%
Southern Africa	\$266,506,540	51%
Western Africa	\$140,278,947	27%
Total	\$518,372,716	100%

Table 1: Amounts committed

Region	Amount	Share
Amounts disbursed		
Central Africa	\$18,072,545	7%
East Africa	\$68,401,122	27%
Southern Africa	\$119,352,763	47%
Western Africa	\$48,348,394	19%
Total	\$254,174,825	100%

Table 2: Amounts disbursed

The recorded amount of committed funding was **\$518,372,715.73** and disbursed to projects was **\$254,174,824.48**. Based on **committed funds**, Southern Africa received the largest proportion of support, accounting for 51% of the total SSA funding pool, followed by East Africa at 17%, West Africa at 27%, and Central Africa at only 5%. The concentration of resources in Southern Africa and East Africa suggest that donors continue to prioritise countries perceived as strategic democratic anchors, politically stable hubs, or regional media centres, such as South Africa and Kenya and Tanzania, who host relatively mature markets and strong civil-society ecosystems. These facts make them natural focal points for programme investment and donor engagement.

West Africa, despite being home to vibrant media environments and population centres like Nigeria and Ghana, received a smaller portion of support (19%), possibly due to increased political stability in some parts of the region. The limited funding directed towards Central Africa (5%) underscores a longstanding gap. Countries in this sub-region face some of the most challenging media environments globally - characterized by weak regulatory systems, conflict and insecurity, restrictive civic space, and fragile media ecosystems. However, continued

under-investment in these regions can contribute to deepening information vacuums, weakening democratic participation and leaving journalists and media outlets in fragile states without the support needed to operate safely and independently.

There is a need for balanced and context-sensitive funding strategies - including risk-tolerant grants, local partner strengthening and safety-focused initiatives. This will ensure that media pluralism, media freedom and citizen engagement are supported across all regions, not only in those regions that have established institutional infrastructures.

In terms of disbursed funds regionally, the figure above shows that funding disbursements (US\$254.17m) are unevenly distributed across the continent. Southern Africa receives the largest share (47%), followed by East Africa (27%) and West Africa (19%), while Central Africa receives the smallest share (7%).

This distribution suggests that actual spending was almost half of the committed funding at the time of writing this report. The disbursement is shaped by donor risk tolerance, implementer concentration, and the presence of large multi-year programmes in a limited number of contexts.

Country funding allocation: Committed

	Country	Funding	Percentage
1	Angola	\$300,000	0.1%
2	Botswana	\$100,000	<0.1%
3	Burkina Faso	\$7,368,389	1.4%
4	Burundi	\$3,897,236	0.8%
5	Cameroon	\$1,057,874	0.2%
6	Central African Republic	\$23,849	<0.1%
7	Chad	\$4,915,232	0.9%
8	Congo	\$579,600	0.1%
9	Democratic Republic of the Congo	\$20,939,211	4%
10	Ethiopia	\$3,711,739	0.7%
11	Gambia	\$204,904	<0.1%
12	Ghana	\$2,262,490	0.4%
13	Guinea-Bissau	\$1,162,570	0.2%
14	Kenya	\$15,325,439	3%
15	Liberia	\$14,542,531	2.8%
16	Madagascar	\$3,197,068	0.6%
17	Malawi	£331,996	0.1%
18	Mali	\$540,347	0.1%

19	Mozambique	\$94,617,958	18.3%
20	Namibia	\$577,808	0.1%
21	Niger	\$71,535	<0.1%
22	Nigeria	\$106,640,472	20.6%
23	Rwanda	\$8,045,121	1.6%
24	Sierra Leone	\$1,791,188	0.3%
25	Somalia	\$7,138,615	1.4%
26	Somaliland	\$93,014	<0.1%
27	South Africa	\$16,756,193	3.2%
28	South Sudan	\$22,581,531	4.4%
29	Sudan	\$10,124,912	2%
30	Uganda	\$5,314,094	1%
31	United Republic of Tanzania	\$38,157,421	7.4%
32	Zambia	\$114,518,597	22.1%
33	Zimbabwe	\$11,348,543	2.2%
	Total	\$517,837,477⁵	100%

Table 3: Committed funding

The distribution of media assistance funding across individual countries in SSA as outlined in the table above shows significant disparities, with support concentrated in a small number of countries. Based on the data presented, **Zambia (22.1%)**, **Nigeria (20.6%)**⁶ and **Mozambique (18.3%)** count for more than 60% of all mapped funding. Nigeria’s allocation reflects its size, geopolitical importance and role as a regional media hub while Zambia and Mozambique appear to have benefited from substantial multi-year programmes associated with donors’ governance priorities in these countries in the last five years.

Tanzania (7.4%), **South Sudan (4.4%)** and **Democratic Republic of the Congo (4.0%)** also received notable funding levels, emphasizing donor attention to fragile democratic contexts, post-conflict environments and regions facing heightened threats to civic freedoms. In contrast Kenya (3.0%), South Africa (3.2%) and Zimbabwe (2.2%), despite being key media markets and regional journalistic centres, received comparatively lower shares. This suggests that donors may be shifting from large media.

However, Burkina Faso (1.4%), which is also facing deepening instability and severe restrictions on civic and media space following the military takeover, received limited funding. One plausible explanation is that support to Burkina Faso appears to be channelled largely through regional and international delivery routes rather than direct in-country programming. Donor support is often brokered through regional

intermediaries and international actors (e.g., CENOZO, MFWA, Fondation Hironnelle), diplomatic structures, and cross-border Sahel or West Africa initiatives. This mirrors trends in parts of the Sahel, Horn of Africa and Central Africa, where domestic philanthropic capacity is weak, and safety of journalist’s frameworks are externally driven.

At the lower end of the spectrum, several countries, including Central African Republic, Niger, Gambia, Malawi, and Angola, received less than 0.2% each. These countries face several vulnerabilities and media fragility but remain under-served by current funding overflows. Such under allocation may reflect donor risk aversion or limited implementing partners or shifting donor priorities. Importantly, some small states and conflict-affected territories (e.g. Somaliland, Guinea-Bissau) appear in the dataset but with minimal allocations, highlighting the need for more targeted and context-sensitive support.

Variation in funding across “high-risk” contexts does not necessarily reflect differences in need, but rather differences in donor feasibility. Donors are more likely to invest in fragile or conflict-affected settings where (i) reputable intermediaries and implementing partners are already established, (ii) programme delivery can be managed through regional platforms or trusted international actors. By contrast, equally high-need contexts may receive limited allocations where operating conditions are highly securitised, access is restricted and implementing partners face heightened exposure.

⁵ This total does not include regional and unclassified funds.

⁶ This represents a portion of the committed funds, which is slightly different from the funds actually disbursed at the time of mapping.

Main programmatic themes

The table below shows that media development funding in Africa continues to be located in traditional thematic priorities, with **Democracy, Human Rights,**

and Freedom of Expression (38%), and Capacity building and Training (24%), forming more than 60% of all projects.

Theme	Projects	Project Share	Amount Committed	Funding Share
Capacity-building and training	79	24%	110,142,645	21%
Content Production	13	4%	9,032,670	2%
Democracy, Human Rights, and Freedom of Expression	123	38%	190,394,355	37%
Digital Rights	1	0%	74,500	<0.1%
Disinformation, Media Literacy, and Fact-checking	17	5%	4,439,705	1%
Financial Sustainability and Digital Innovation for Media	17	5%	55,906,053	11%
Investigative Journalism	15	5%	5,124,975	1%
Participatory Development/Good Governance, Gender Equality	10	3%	109,095,547	21%
Research and Advocacy	5	2%	614,717	<0.1%
Safety of Journalists	6	2%	4,085,696	1%
Not Available	40	12%	29,461,854	6%
Total	326	100%	518,372,716	100%

Table 4: Main programmatic themes

Interventions in these two thematic areas often support legal and policy reforms, media advocacy, the promotion of freedom of expression, and newsroom training. The continued predominance of these themes highlights donors' belief that independent media ecosystems remain fundamental to accountable governance and citizen participation, particularly in fragile and hybrid political environments where democratic consolidation is uneven and threats to media freedom persist. It should be noted that from 2025, funding seems to be shifting towards security and information integrity.

There is, however, gradual recognition of emerging information ecosystems challenges - including the themes of **Disinformation, Media Literacy, Fact-checking (5%), Financial Sustainability and Digital Innovation (5%), and Investigative Journalism (5%)**. However, the limited investment in these fields shows two things: it is possible that donor strategies have not yet caught up with the fast-moving structural, technological and economic shifts shaping media and information system in Africa, and second, organisations on the continent advocating for media freedom and freedom of expressions are not adequately including emerging issues such as platform dominance, the impact of generative AI, and the disruption of revenue models for news media in their funding requests .

However, what remains of most concern is the limited funding for **Safety of Journalists (2%) and Digital Rights (0%)**, given the escalating threats to journalists, rising concerns about online freedom, privacy, and the growth of state digital surveillance capabilities. However, it should be noted that some of the projects

under Democracy, Human Rights, and Freedom of Expression include projects on digital rights, and the issue of safety of journalists is mainstreamed in some of the themes, so the situation is not necessarily as grim as it appears. Nonetheless, these two themes need serious attention from funders and international partners. Support for gender equality and media is also diminishing, with very few projects available in the consulted databases and other sources of information.

The sizable **“Not Available” category (12%)** further highlights information gaps in programme documentation, indicating the need for more improved and consistent thematic reporting.

When compared to other regions, media funding is increasingly prioritising digital innovation, investigative journalism consortia, newsroom technology adoption, audience-trust building and sustainable business models, especially in Europe, North America and Latin America. Multilateral actors and private philanthropic organisations - including Luminate, MacArthur, Open Society Foundations, and The Google News Initiative - have also moved aggressively toward supporting media viability, combating information disorders, and bolstering digital infrastructures. Looking at these emerging patterns, Africa's funding profile suggests a slower move towards innovative media funding models.

Overall thematic distribution indicates that while foundational priorities around democracy and capacity-building remain critical, African media systems require increased investment in forward-looking areas that can secure long-term media development.

Implications of USAID closure and funding cuts: Emerging thematic gaps

USAID has been one of the largest bilateral funders of media assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa over the years. In this dataset, it accounts for approximately 26% of total mapped funding commitment. Its funding for media and journalism support has been concentrated around the following thematic areas:

Democracy, Human Rights, and Freedom of Expression (largest share)

Before the USAID was dismantled, this was its dominant thematic focus. Programmes in this category typically aimed to strengthen independent and pluralistic media, promote enabling legal and regulatory environments, protect journalists, and support accountability, governance and civic participation. This emphasis points to the USAID theory of change that linked democratic resilience to media pluralism and accountability.

Capacity-building and professionalism (strong secondary focus)

A substantial share of USAID-funded projects focused on journalist-training, newsroom skills-development, institutional strengthening and professional standards.

Media sustainability and Digital innovation for media (limited but notable)

A smaller number of USAID programmes addressed the economic fragility of media through support for digital transformation, innovation tools, and alternative business models.

Disinformation, Media Literacy, and Fact-checking (niche focus)

Targeted funding supported counter-disinformation initiatives, media and information literacy, and fact-checking ecosystems, often linked to election integrity and civic education

Investigative Journalism and Accountability Reporting (embedded focus)

Support for investigative journalism was present but typically embedded within broader democracy or governance programmes rather than funded as a standalone thematic priority.

USAID's closure is likely to generate significant gaps in democracy-linked media support and professional capacity-building, particularly in countries where USAID had been a primary bilateral funder. This means that the closure will disproportionately affect media freedom, journalism, and newsroom capacity-building initiatives.

While other donors such as SIDA and the European Union remain active in these areas, they do not fully replicate USAID's combined emphasis on democracy systems and skills-based institutional strengthening. As a result, USAID's closure and the current funding contraction risks accelerating a shift toward shorter-term, election-driven, or issue-specific interventions, while weakening sustained investment in professional media capacity and democratic accountability infrastructures.

Compared to SIDA, EU and FCDO, USAID showed a more balanced portfolio, with emerging (though modest) attention to media sustainability, digital innovation and information integrity. However, a relatively high share of unclassified programming in this dataset does not reveal the full scope of USAID's media funding strategy.

The gap left by the USAID is particularly acute in funding areas that are emerging, including information integrity, media sustainability, and investigative journalism, where USAID funding played a catalytic but limited role. Without replacement funding or coordinated donor realignment, these thematic areas risk further marginalisation at a time when digital disruption, disinformation, and economic precarity are intensifying pressures on African media systems.

Type of funding

This section summarises the various types of funding support provided to media assistance projects. It distinguishes between programmatic, core, and technical support models, showing the number of

projects and corresponding funding allocations. The breakdown is organised by ‘Nature of Funding’ and ‘Type of Funding Support’.

Nature of Funding	Number	Amount Committed (\$)	Share (%)
Grant	296	484,746,663	93.51%
Not available	29	33,547,436	6.47%
Other	1	78,617	0.02%
Total	326	518,372,716	100%

Table 5: Nature of funding

Funding Type	Projects	Amount Committed (\$)	Share (%)
Core	12	3,799,477	1%
Not specified	65	140,184,375	27%
Other	4	7,015,718	1%
Programmatic or project based	227	347,734,599	67%
Technical or mentorship support	18	19,638,547	4%
Total	326	518,372,716	100%

Table 6: Funding type

Grants dominate media assistance initiatives in SSA and this reflects the continued reliance on traditional development cooperation mechanisms in the media sector. Of the mapped projects 296 were grant-funded, while only a small proportion were supported through alternative mechanisms. The dominance of grant-based support indicates that African media organisations and civil society

organisations lack access to commercial financing, blended capital and sustainable revenue streams.

In terms of types of funding support, **programmatic or project-based funding** remains the most common funding modality, accounting for 227 projects. This shows that donors continue to favour targeted interventions with defined timelines and deliverables.

While this form of support has its role, it can create dependency cycles and short-term planning horizons for media organisations.

By contrast, **core funding**, which provides long-term, flexible financial support, was observed in only 12 instances. The limited availability of core funding suggests that only a select group of organisations, often those with established governance structures, proven track records, or international credibility, are trusted with unrestricted funding. The scarcity of core support is not only common in Africa, but is a trend mirrored in global patterns in media assistance, despite widespread calls for more institutional strengthening to ensure sustainability. There is a possibility that there could be more core-funding support under the “Not Available” category.

Amounts of funding

The amounts include both funding spent between 2020 and 2025, (\$254,174,825) as well as funding committed during this period for distribution beyond 2025 (\$518,372,716).

Technical or mentorship-based support (18 projects) also appear as a significant funding type, pointing to the use of professional skills to strengthen newsroom systems, digital transformation and investigative capacity. However, the capacity-building projects seem to be limited and there is a need for deeper investment in long-term mentorship, innovation labs and organizational development ecosystems.

Overall, this distribution illustrates that African media assistance remains dominated by traditional grant and project-based support, with emerging but still limited diversification into core, technical and hybrid models

Sources of funding

This section ranks all identified funders by total committed funding (2020-2025).⁷

Donor	Projects Funded	Funding (\$)	Share of Funding (%)
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	43	141,835,978	27.21%
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	24	136,492,788	26.18%
European Commission	30	98,172,446	18.83%
UK-Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)	32	27,480,858	5.26%
Netherlands - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	23	19,364,736	3.71%
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	18	15,954,126	3.06%

⁷ Totals are computed from the ‘Amount of Funding’ field only in the Excel Sheet, excluding ‘Total Spending’ and ‘Other Amounts’.

Norad - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	6	12,215,219	2.34%
Germany - Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	42	13,418,370	2.57%
MacArthur Foundation	10	10,347,950	1.98%
United States Department of State	3	7,701,307	1.48%
Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada	3	7,574,710	1.45%
Google	1	6,609,443	1.27%
Canada - Global Affairs Canada (Affaires mondiales Canada)	3	6,218,795	1.19%
Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) - Intermediary funder	1	4,000,000	0.77%
Open Society Foundation & Luminate	1	4,000,000	0.77%
National Endowment of Democracy	42	3,016,058	0.58%
Gates Foundation	6	2,220,422	0.43%
Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)	2	1,746,278	0.33%
Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	1	1,159,551	0.22%
Free Press Unlimited - Intermediary funder	3	696,258	0.13%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark	5	304,889	0.06%
MAEDI	3	222,068	0.04%
United States African Development Foundation	6	219,403	0.04%

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland	5	127,512	0.02%
US Embassy	2	100,000	0.02%
H2N Network	1	38,449	0.01%
Commonwealth Foundation	1	13,215	<0.01%
Norwegian Government	1	10,003	<0.01%
Irish Aid	1	3,481	<0.01%
Total	321	521,338,330	100%

Table 7: Sources of funding

The table above indicates that media assistance in SSA is largely driven by a small group of influential bilateral and multilateral funders. SIDA and USAID emerge as the two largest funders, jointly accounting for most documented investments. SIDA’s long-standing commitment to media freedom, transparency and open civic space, coupled with USAID’s former broad portfolio supporting independent media, governance reform, and civil society strengthening shape the media development landscape across the continent. The closure of USAID points to a precarious picture in the future but also provides an opportunity for other funders to step up.

The European Commission, particularly its International Partnerships arm (EU/INTPA) also plays a significant role,

directing funding towards regulatory reform, media viability programmes and regional media networks. Additional allocations from the broader European Commission portfolio reinforce the bloc’s positions as a key strategic actor in democracy support and information ecosystem strengthening.

Overall, funding remains highly concentrated among bilateral Western donors, with limited representation from philanthropic foundations and emerging international funders. This concentration underscores both the continued importance of traditional democracy-supporting actors in supporting the African media sector and the associated risk of over-reliance on a narrow donor base.

Implementing organisations

This section lists the key implementing organisations responsible for executing media assistance and journalism

support programmes across the region. It indicates the number of projects managed by each organisation.

Implementing Organisation	Number	Percentage
International organisations in developed country	59	18%
Country of programme implementation	135	41%
Country of donor entity	83	25%
Region of programme implementation	14	4%
Not available	27	8%
Other	8	2%
Total	326	100%

Table 8: Implementing organisations

The implementation landscape reflects a relatively balanced mix of local and international actors delivering media development initiatives across the continent. Of the 326 mapped projects, 135 were implemented by locally-based organisations, while 142 were led by international entities and 14 by regional organisations operating across multiple countries.

The high level of local implementers (41%) indicates increasing recognition of the value of in-country expertise, contextual knowledge and locally grounded networks in strengthening of media ecosystems. At the same time, the almost equal number of projects led by international organisations (43%) reflects the continued influence and capital of global development actors. These organisations often bring financial resources,

technical and policy expertise to complex initiatives such as investigative journalism support, digital resilience, and media policy reform in emerging issues such as platform and AI governance.

Regional organisations (4%) represent a smaller yet strategic segment of the implementation ecosystem. These entities, including African media networks, continental journalism associations, and regional policy advocacy platforms, provide cross-border coordination, peer learning, and knowledge sharing. The relatively limited presence of regional implementing organisations points to an opportunity for further investment in regional collaboration mechanisms and coalitions.

SYNTHESIS OF INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this mapping exercise demonstrate that media assistance in SSA is maturing, but uneven, with a small number of countries receiving the bulk of the funding, while countries in fragile environments are neglected. Funders still recognize media on the continent as pillars of democracy and good governance, yet funding has not fully evolved to meet emerging priorities and structural sustainability needs.

Geographic concentration of funding

Funding remains concentrated in a few countries - Zambia, Nigeria and Mozambique account for more than 60% of total commitments - while fragile states and conflict-affected regions receive minimal support. Central Africa and parts of the Sahel, where the media and journalists face the greatest risks, are largely underfunded, often relying on intermediary organisations rather than direct investment. This imbalance risks deepening information vacuums and weakening civic participation in vulnerable contexts.

Structural funding gaps and sustainability risks

Short-term, project-based grants dominate the funding landscape, with 93% of support delivered through traditional mechanisms and only 1% allocated as core funding. This model perpetuates institutional fragility and constrains long-term planning. Innovative funding approaches, such as blended finance and investment models, remain rare and largely experimental, leaving many media organisations dependent on periodic donor priorities.

Local ownership and implementation dynamics

Short-term, project-based grants dominate the funding landscape, with 93% of support delivered through traditional mechanisms and only 1% allocated as core funding. This model perpetuates institutional fragility and constrains long-term planning. Innovative funding approaches, such as blended finance and investment models, remain rare and largely experimental, leaving many media organisations dependent on periodic donor priorities.

Thematic priorities and underfunded areas

While democracy, human rights, and capacity-building remain dominant themes, funding has not kept pace with emerging challenges such as disinformation, digital rights, AI governance, and media innovation and sustainability. Safety of journalists and gender/media issues are critically underfunded, even as threats to media freedom, online privacy, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence escalate.

Mismatch between market scale and aid flows

Africa's media and entertainment markets are projected to exceed US\$28 billion annually by 2029 in just three countries, yet donor funding remains marginal at US\$300-400 million per year of global ODA. This disparity highlights the need for innovative financing models that bridge the gap between public interest media and market-driven forces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Funding Strategy

- Introduce risk-tolerant funding models for fragile and conflict-affected states to counter donor risk aversion
- Create regional pooled funds to support cross-border media initiatives and reduce duplication
- Encourage dialogue with non-DAC donors and philanthropic actors for broader resource mobilisation
- Prioritise blended finance and investment models to complement traditional grants and foster sustainability
- Increase multi-year, flexible funding and expand core funding for media and freedom of expression NGOs
- Integrate media support into broader democracy, governance, climate, and peacebuilding strategies.

Thematic focus

- Scale up funding for under-supported areas such as safety of journalists, digital rights, and gender equality in media leadership and content
- Invest in emerging priorities like information disorders, media literacy, AI and platforms governance
- Support sustainable business models and audience-driven innovation

Strengthen local leadership and ownership

- Increase direct funding to local and regional organisations, reducing reliance on international intermediaries.
- Strengthen regional networks to enable collaboration and better advocacy
- Provide capacity-building for local implementing organisations to access multi-year funding and manage large-scale projects
- Encourage donor coordination platforms to reduce fragmentation and improve transparency.

Transparency

- Mandate standardised reporting on thematic allocations and disbursements across donors.
- Create open-access dashboards for tracking media assistance flows in SSA.
- Encourage philanthropic foundations to disclose funding data for better mapping and coordination.
- Support safety mechanisms for journalists
- Invest in digital innovation and fact-checking projects.

Strategic recommendations in response to USAID closure

- **Stabilise democracy-linked media capacity through coordinated donor realignment:** USAID's exit creates a risk to media freedom, governance and professional capacity-building. Funders should intentionally rebalance portfolios to protect these thematic funding areas through multi-year and core support, rather than short-term election-driven projects.
- **Treat media sustainability and information integrity as priority investment areas:** With the removal of USAID funding in emerging funding areas - media viability, digital innovation, and disinformation and fact-checking, these face heightened fragility. Therefore, these areas should be prioritised and be seen as essential to democratic information systems.
- **Expand pooled and intermediary funding mechanisms to reduce bilateral dependency:** USAID's withdrawal underscores the need for pooled, and blended-finance mechanisms that reduce over-reliance on any single donor.

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Highlights of Media Assistance in Five African Countries (2020-2025)

The mapping across the five focus countries (South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Mozambique and Zimbabwe), alongside regional datasets, reveals how donors strategically allocate resources to contexts where media ecosystems intersect most visibly with governance, democratic reform, conflict dynamics, and information integrity.

Key insights

- **Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa** emerge as the core “high-volume” recipients of both ODA and philanthropic funding. They host the continent’s largest media markets, strongest investigative journalism ecosystems, and most active civil society advocacy networks.
- **Mozambique and Zimbabwe** receive more selective but strategically significant support, largely linked to conflict-sensitive governance, election integrity, and freedom of expression.

Across the five countries, donor priorities converge around a set of recurring thematic pillars:

a) Democratic governance, elections, and information integrity

Donor funding is mainly centred on election-related support:

- In South Africa, election-period disinformation monitoring (e.g., OSF-funded Media Monitoring Africa programmes) dominates recent funding cycles.
- Kenya and Nigeria receive extensive support for anti-corruption reporting, election information integrity, and strengthening oversight institutions (e.g., FCDO’s Media for Accountability, EU-SDGN II in Nigeria).

Mozambique’s election-focused media assistance spikes around periods of violence and political instability, illustrating how donor engagement is often reactive and cyclical.

b) Freedom of expression, digital rights and media regulation

- Rights-based and regulatory themes are central for Kenya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe:
- Kenya has received sustained digital-rights and regulatory support through Article 19, CIPESA and Mozilla-funded programmes.

- Nigeria’s donor landscape is shaped by restrictive legal frameworks, prompting significant investments in **legal defence, fact-checking, and media freedom advocacy**.
- Zimbabwe receives targeted EU and SIDA support for media regulation and freedom of expression advocacy, though long-term structural funding remains limited.

c) Investigative journalism and public-interest reporting

- Nigeria leads the continent in donor-supported investigative journalism.
- MacArthur, Ford Foundation and OSF fund investigative outlets such as the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), Premium Times Centre, Daily Trust Foundation and The Cable.
- Kenya’s investigative and data journalism ecosystem is expanding, supported by civic-tech, open data initiatives and philanthropic funding.
- In South Africa, public-interest journalism receives significant innovation-focused support through SAMIP/Amplify SA.

d) Innovation, sustainability and digital transformation Philanthropic actors drive the bulk of innovation and sustainability support.

- In South Africa, SAMIP (Luminate/OSF/MDIF), Amplify SA (IFPIM), and the new Google-AIP Digital News Transformation Fund are major examples of digital innovation and newsroom sustainability initiatives.
- Nigeria’s Big Cabal Media and other digital-native outlets attract venture and philanthropic capital, signalling a hybrid innovation ecosystem rarely seen in other African countries.

e) Safety of journalists and conflict-sensitive reporting Mozambique represents the region’s most prominent case of conflict-centred media assistance, due to violence in Cabo Delgado.

- NORAD’s support to the Mozambique Conflict Monitor (formerly known as the Cabo Ligado) Conflict Observatory and UNDP’s safety initiatives for women journalists exemplify targeted safety programming.
- Regional and global safety mechanisms (UNESCO GMDF, IMS, CPJ partnerships) feature strongly in Zimbabwe and Nigeria, where journalists face legal and physical threats.

Despite these efforts, long-term, systemic investment in safety infrastructures remains limited.

Across all these countries, funding priorities converge around a narrow set of themes: democratic governance and elections, freedom of expression and digital rights, investigative journalism, and misinformation/information integrity. Philanthropic actors such as the OSF, Luminate, MacArthur and Ford Foundation are increasingly becoming visible, especially in South Africa and Nigeria, through their investments in digital transformation, innovation, and sustainability.

However, donor portfolios are dominated by short-cycle, election-linked, and project-based support, with limited core and institutional funding, resulting in weak long-term sustainability. There is a split where ODA drives regulatory and freedom of expression agendas, while philanthropy drives innovation and media sustainability. The focus on these five countries shows that starting from 2024 onwards there is a shift towards more systemic interventions:

- Platform accountability: South Africa's Digital News Transformation Fund (DNTF), funded by Google and the Association of Independent Publishers (API), to back small, local and independent publishers with digital transformation projects over three years.
- AI, misinformation and digital safety gaining prominence, especially through Mozilla, Meta, Global News Initiative (GNI), and CIPESA.
- Climate justice is now being seen as a governance issue, for example through DW Akademie focus on climate journalism, the European Union Green Deal diplomacy.
- Regional multi-country initiatives such as Brave Media (funded by BBC Media Action + EU) to strengthen independent, public interest media in more than 20 countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. In Southern Africa, the action is working closely with MISA Regional. The IDRC has provided a three-year grant to the Centre for Information Integrity in Africa (CINIA) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa to convene multidisciplinary partnerships to strengthen information integrity in the Global South.

Additional Insights from annual donor reports and other sources

To supplement the analysis above and obtain nuanced information on donor funding that may not appear in the OECD-DAC codes, annual reports between 2020-2024 from key media development donors were reviewed to deepen the understanding of how media-support funds are channelled across SSA. These included reports from DW Akademie, the European Union (EU), the Gates Foundation, Hivos, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and UNESCO. Additional research was conducted to zero in on 5 selected countries: Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Strategic concentration of resources & thematic priorities from donor reports

Across the donors discussed here, there is a clear geographic concentration of funding in a few key Sub-Saharan countries viewed as democratic anchors, media hubs or governance priority contexts. These countries include Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Donors consistently prioritise independent journalism, civic participation, digital rights, disinformation response, media sustainability and community media strengthening (Gates Annual Report, 2023; UNESCO Annual Report 2022, NED Annual Report 2024).

Donor-Specific Funding Patterns

DW Akademie

The DW Akademie remains one of the most prominent bilateral intermediary funders in SSA and allocates consistent multi-year funding with clear anchor countries: **Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique**. DW Akademie does work in Southern Africa (notably Namibia/Southern Africa hub) on media development, MIL, and innovative journalism. Emphasis is placed on:

- sustainable media business models,
- digital ecosystems transformation,
- investigative journalism, and
- community media empowerment.

Funding shows a recent shift from coverage breadth to fewer countries with deeper investments, strengthening sustainability.

European Union

The EU allocations emphasize media pluralism, legal reform, and disinformation mitigation as part of democracy and human-rights programming. EU media-assistance funding prioritises:

- Media law & pluralism analyses
- Public-interest media and accountability reporting,
- Disinformation resilience,
- Digital rights and media literacy, and
- Sector-wide reforms

EU funding for media in Africa, though small in amounts, is often embedded in governance and democracy programmes. The EU model focuses on the conditions for independent media to operate, rather than directly financing media outlets at scale. Partnerships are commonly structured through international implementers, with growing collaboration with African NGOs.

Gates Foundation

The Gates Foundation invests heavily in communications, advocacy, and public information campaigns, with Africa receiving a sizable share. The priority countries are: Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia. Gates supports media largely via public health advocacy, policy reform, youth/gender campaigns, and digital platforms - not via classic media-strengthening grants. Focus includes:

- Public-interest health and development journalism,
- Support to African media networks,
- Evidence-based information ecosystems.

Gates does not treat media as a stand-alone sector. Instead, media support is instrumental to health, youth, agriculture, and governance outcomes. The organisation follows a “strategic communications ecosystem” model. The Gates approach results in large-scale investment but often limited direct funding for media institutions themselves.

Hivos

Hivos channels media support through:

- Freedom & Accountability
- Civic Rights in a Digital Age programmes

African countries engaged through multi-country programmes (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Egypt). Hivos plays a niche role in supporting civic technology, open contracting, and independent media ecosystems, particularly in East and Southern Africa.

Media Freedom Coalition

The Media Freedom Coalition channels funding via:

- Diplomatic coordination
- Advocacy platforms
- Multi-stakeholder media-freedom initiatives

Emphasis is on policy reform, independence, and safeguarding civic space, often aligned with CIMA and global FOE partners.

National Endowment for Democracy

NED's support reflects a robust FOE and investigative journalism portfolio in Africa. Funding prioritises: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Mozambique.

Focus is on youth media development, satire for civic engagement, digital-rights advocacy, sustainable media business models, investigative journalism, and community media empowerment. NED's country-specific grants indicate targeted, bottom-up strengthening of media actors and civic voices.

Swedish International Development Agency

Sida stands out for direct grants and core institutional support to African media actors. It is one of the few donors providing core support and sets a best-practice example. Sida's model is unique and strategically significant and provides a type of support that remains rare globally and critical for long-term resilience and sustainability.

UNESCO

UNESCO (PDC & Media Development Programmes) funding supports:

- Legal and policy reforms
- Safety of journalists
- Community radio and access to information

Projects span East, West, Central, and Southern Africa, though typically at smaller grant levels, complementing larger bilateral programmes. While grant sizes are modest, UNESCO plays an essential role in norm setting and foundational institutional support.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Chiumbu is a media and communication researcher-practitioner with more than two decades of experience in research, strategy and consulting across Africa. She is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. She holds a PhD (2008) and an MA (1996) in Media and Communication Studies from the University of Oslo, Norway. Her work focuses on strengthening communication systems, promoting media freedom, and advancing social inclusion through participatory and evidence-based approaches.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD) is the largest global community for media development, media freedom, and journalism support. Through collaboration, coordination, and collective action the GFMD network of member organisations – as well as our dozens of partners – creates, promotes, and delivers policies and programmes to sustain journalism as a public good.

GFMD's International Media Policy and Advisory Centre (GFMD IMPACT) is a learning and knowledge-sharing destination for the international journalism support and media development community that brings together media development and journalism support groups, donors and funding organisations, academic and research institutions, as well as technology, media, and governance experts.

Read previous mapping reports:

- [Mapping of media assistance and journalism support programmes in the Asia, Pacific and Oceania region \(July 2025\)](#)
- [Mapping of media assistance and journalism support programmes in the Levant region \(March 2025\)](#)
- [Mapping of media assistance and journalism support programmes in the Western Balkans region \(May 2024\)](#)