



**Report on the International Programme for the Development of Communication
(IPDC)**

**By Suzanne Bilello
Senior Public Information and Liaison Officer
UNESCO**

**30th Session of the Committee on Information
New York, 30 April 2008**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates and Committee Members, Friends and Colleagues, thank you for this opportunity to present a brief overview of the current activities of UNESCO's **International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)**. A report of all our activities in 2006-2007 that includes regional distribution of programs is available as an information document.

The IPDC is the only multilateral forum in the United Nations system designed to mobilize the international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries.

The overriding objective of IPDC – which is guided by an Intergovernmental Council composed of 39 member states elected by UNESCO's General Conference – is to contribute to sustainable development, democracy and good governance by fostering universal access to and distribution of information and knowledge through strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries in transition in the field of electronic media and print press as well as the promotion of freedom of expression and media pluralism.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental element of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is widely seen as underpinning overall democratic freedoms. Media outlets are crucial to the exercise of freedom of expression because they provide the public a platform through which the right is effectively exercised.

In this sixty year anniversary of the Universal Declaration, it is an appropriate time to review the activities of one of our flagship programs and one that this Committee has endorsed.

The efforts of the IPDC have had an important impact on a broad range of fields covering, among others, the promotion of media independence and pluralism, development of community media, radio and television organizations, modernization of national and regional news agencies, and training of media professionals.

Since its creation by UNESCO in 1980, the IPDC has raised some US\$ 93 million dollars for more than 1,100 projects in 139 developing countries and countries in transition.

During the period 2006-2007, the IPDC Bureau supported 113 media development projects in 66 countries totalling US \$2.65 million dollars. And just last week, the IPDC Bureau met and approved for 2008, seventy projects in 50 developing countries for a total amount of almost \$2 million US dollars.

DEFINING MEDIA DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

At its 25th session in 2006, the IPDC Council launched a broad consultation among media experts, professionals and donors, as well as representatives of relevant UN agencies, to define indicators of media development in line with the priority areas of the Programme. The purpose of these indicators is to enable development agencies, policy makers, project proponents and other stakeholders to determine the level of media development in a given country and identify the areas in which assistance is most required.

On 10-11 December 2007, a total of thirty experts from various regions of the world and various professional backgrounds attended an Expert Group meeting at UNESCO Headquarters to discuss and finalize a set of media development indicators to be submitted to the 26th session of the IPDC Intergovernmental Council in March 2008.

The IPDC Council unanimously endorsed the finalized set of media development indicators proposed by the international expert group. After a long debate, delegates agreed that the proposed set of indicators constitute an important diagnostic tool for assessing media development. The Council approved a decision inviting the IPDC Bureau and other stakeholders working the area of media development to apply the indicators when determining support for communication development strategies within the overall context of national development. The Council also invited the Director-General of UNESCO to share the Media Development Indicators with UN agencies as an important contribution to define the United Nations' unified approach towards Common Country Assessments (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in the fields of media development and good governance.

Pilot-testing is now being envisaged in a selection of countries in different regions in 2008 and 2009, and Croatia and Benin have already requested to be among the first national case studies for the new assessment Framework.

SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

At its 26th session a few weeks ago, the IPDC Intergovernmental Council adopted a decision calling on governments to report to the Director-General of UNESCO on their investigations into the assassinations of journalists and other intentional crimes against media personnel. The Council invited the Bureau of the IPDC to explore how appropriate projects that support local capacity building in safety and protection of journalists can be given priority, and requested the Director-General to provide the IPDC Council at its 27th session with an analytical report on the basis of responses received from Member States concerned.

The adopted decision, announced by the newly elected IPDC Chairman, Ambassador Walter Fust (Switzerland), recalls UN Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006), which refers to the Geneva Conventions and to the responsibility of Member States to “comply with the relevant obligations under international law to end impunity”. The Council’s decision requests Member States to assume responsibility for monitoring the investigation of killings condemned by the Director-General of UNESCO and informing the Organization of actions taken and of the status of the judicial inquiries conducted into each case.

Over the past two years, UNESCO has publicly condemned the killings of 121 journalists – 68 in 2006 and 53 in 2007. The 26th session of the IPDC Council hosted a debate which underlined the challenges of protecting journalists, and proposed measures to encourage higher level advocacy both nationally and internationally. Statistics compiled by the Committee to Protect Journalists between 1992 and 2007 show that only 6.7% of cases concerning the assassination of journalists resulted in the conviction of those responsible.

Thank you.