

Thank you Chair for your kind invitation to address this session today on behalf of the World Bank. I am very happy to be here today with all of you.

The title of this session is: Quality Certification in broadcasting. Many of you may wonder what a multilateral development institution - that has historically been steeped in developing “traditional” , down-to-earth infrastructure projects - has to contribute to what, on the surface sounds like a very technical treatment and assessment of the broadcasting community at large.

The short answer is that the World Bank is beginning to recognize that Broadcasting is a very important factor in the development equation. Having said that, Quality certification does not work in a vacuum. It needs a context, a setting. The kind of Broadcasting questions that the World Bank is presently addressing do not zero in on certification issues.... At least not yet at this point.

So, what does the World Bank do in this arena?

The World Bank was born in the shadow of the second World War with an overarching premise ----- that poverty is at the heart of the inhumanity that becomes war. So our mission is not legal, although we rely on laws. Our mission is not political, although we rely upon nations. Our mission is not theological, although

we in good part rely upon faith that we must and can turn the dismal figures surrounding poverty and development around.

Our mission is developmental. It is not to enforce rights, but to engage and invest in such a way that they can be achieved. It is to use capital, information, knowledge, and partnerships to help make dramatic advances in the fight against poverty – regardless of whether that poverty is the cause or the result of hatred, discrimination and intolerance.

The World Bank of James Wolfensohn has worked to open up, to enlarge the group of stakeholders who participate in our projects. For we realize that development will not endure if it does not have broad-based local support and ownership, if it does not reach deep into communities and societies where real change takes place.

So we have sought out and heard the voices of the poor people – the voices of women, the voices of villagers, the voices of those without political power, who have equally legitimate claims on the future.

What we found out in our “Conversation with the Poor” is that poverty is not just about money. What differentiates poor people from rich people the most is not money, but the lack of voice; the inability to convey to the people in authority what it is that

they think; the inability to have a searchlight put on the conditions of inequity.

A viable media that gives voice to all, is at the absolute core of equitable development. If you cannot enfranchise poor people, if they do not have a right to expression, if there is no searchlight on corruption and inequitable practices, you can not build the public consensus needed to bring about change.

Now, this might sound like a strong statement from a staff member of the World Bank, an international institution governed by 180 plus member governments and constrained in terms of our Articles of Agreement from any involvement in political matters.

Well, it is, and it is not. While, on the surface these comments may appear crossing the line, if we look a little deeper we find that the issues of a broadly-based, free press and media are essentially economic and social issue, for both are key to development.

A functioning and independent media, long seen as central to democracy, is increasingly understood to be equally vital to improved economic outcomes. As Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate noted, the press and electronic media can prevent disastrous economic policies from being perpetuated and can keep the architects of such policies accountable.

The Bank's World Development Report: Building Institutions for Markets, carries a chapter on the Role of Media in Development. It documents that the press and media have acted as catalysts for institutional reform.

But the study also points to a variety of constraints – these constraints include vulnerability to arbitrary lawsuits, censorship, state ownership or dependence on state subsidies, blocked access to information – that effectively prevents the media from playing the role it might play in many countries where the Bank works.

The state of the electronic media in developing countries is further exacerbated by poor management skills, unreliable revenue streams, and unskilled and poorly paid journalists and media operators.

It is within this context that the World Bank has come out with a publication, entitled: “The Right to Tell – The Role of the Mass Media in Economic Development”. The book explores the role of the media as a watchdog of government and the corporate sector, and the policies that prevent the media from exercising that role. The book assesses, among others, the media's function as transmitters of new ideas, information and knowledge.

Because the World Bank now understands better the links between development and the issues of voice, accountability and transparency, the bank is now running courses for journalists in all regions of the developing world, and we are doing so with the approval of the respective governments.

The World Bank Institute, the “training and knowledge sharing arm” of the World Bank, has offered for the last five years training programs for journalists in all regions. The two core courses on “Investigative Journalism” and “Economics and Business Journalism”, have been delivered to more than 2.500 reporters and editors in some fifty countries, mostly in Africa and Eastern Europe, but more recently also in Latin America and Asia.

Increasingly these training programs are being delivered via video conference through the Bank’s Global Distance Learning Centers. We have satellite connections with our offices in the field, and we are using the power of the internet to bring video conferences to the field. I should add that many of the courses are run in collaboration with, or by international and local partners.

In addition to these core courses, the World Bank Institute has assisted with specialized programs on environmental journalism, reporting on the HIV/AIDS pandemic, ethnic conflict and on financial regulation.

The World Bank Institute has also worked with partner organizations in designing and delivering programs on media self-regulation and ethics, on media interaction with parliaments, and on access to information.

These latter programs were developed in response to the growing recognition of the importance of the media environment, and they have already had some impact, such as the Freedom of Information Act in Ghana, and the development of prototype codes of conduct for journalists in East Africa.

They have also had a positive impact on the press freedoms in other countries. In Sri Lanka, the new government decided to scrap both the criminal defamation laws, which had been used by previous governments to harass journalists, and the government-controlled press council. State-owned and privately-owned media organizations together formed a self-regulatory council, free of government control. The government has also introduced an access-to-information bill that is now being discussed in parliament.

Changes have also been made in Nigeria and Kenya. Both have taken steps to reduce government control of the media by embarking on comprehensive self-regulatory regimes while providing improved access to information. In other countries,

such as Malawi and Mozambique, steps are being taken to set up self-regulatory press councils.

We have seen that the demands and needs of media operations vary greatly. For example, in Africa there remains by and large considerable demand and need for journalist training, while in Russia, the greatest need is for improved management skills and financially viable news organizations.

Elsewhere, the most pressing problems may involve the legal environment in which journalists and media companies try to function professionally.

To enhance the impact of these initiatives, media development activities are closely coordinated with other World Bank governance programs. For example, training programs for journalists in covering budgets is aimed at countries receiving WBI programs for parliamentary budget oversight and training for auditors generals.

In putting greater emphasis on the “environment in which the media operates”, we collect relevant data on the laws and policies that constrain the press (and media) – and we then go out and provide training for media leaders and media associations that are in a position to advance an improved environment for the press in their countries.

Much more however needs to be done. We have not yet systematically engaged the larger broadcasting community. Initial steps, however, are underway to court the wider broadcasting community across the five continents to both disseminate and co-produce content that prioritize news and information on development. We expect to run an annual TV and Radio workshop to address these issues in close cooperation with the media practitioners. The first one will be launched in June of next year.

The Broadcasting industry has the potential to help build vibrant societies, by providing a check on the actions of all the relevant stakeholders of society, by stimulating public debate, and by providing information on how other institutions work. Radio and Television can do much to encourage, to bring the best out of people and institutions, be they economic, social, academic, or political, by enabling people at large to make informed choices.

We want to reach out to the broadcasting community of both the developed and developing world, both public service and private; for we think we are, in the end, after the same objectives:

So, how then does radio and TV impact on the broader aspects of the development equation:

- By imparting information and knowledge that is relevant in the fight against poverty,
- By imparting information and knowledge that is relevant in the fight against unacceptable child and maternal mortality rates,
- By imparting information and knowledge that is relevant in the fight against illiteracy that is destined to keep people in poverty,
- By imparting information and knowledge that is relevant in the fight against gender prejudices and discrimination,
- By imparting information and knowledge that is relevant in creating conditions for sustainable development and an environment that is safe to pass on to our children and our children's children
- By imparting information and knowledge that is relevant in the fight against racism, xenophobia, intolerance, and, in the end, war and human destruction.

We have been in touch with a host of broadcasting organizations. The objective of the dialogue has been to identify practical steps that will help the building of a mutually beneficial relationship, one that will have all the ingredients of “win-win relationships”.

We want to support the broadcasting community as advocates on behalf of the people, to afflict the comfortable, and comfort the afflicted.

The broadcasting community can do much to reinforce movement in the following areas.

Political empowerment – by involving the poor in the process of making policies that affect their lives.

The poor often lack the means to effectively voice their needs, learn about available public services, and pressure policy makers to be responsive to their interests and demands. RADIO and TELEVISION can improve information flows and communication services to make governments and organizations serving the poor more efficient, transparent and accountable. It can help give voice to the otherwise disenfranchised.

Economic development – by fostering economic growth and competitiveness. The key to poverty reduction, in the end, is sustained economic growth. By using the broadest spectrum of information and communication technologies, countries can make significant progress in the area of equitable economic growth and development.

Social empowerment – by helping to achieve social development objectives.

What I am saying here is that Radio and Television should not only be treated as a sector on its own, but also and mainly as a lens to re-think development strategies overall. Radio and Television offer the possibility of doing things differently in view of its reach and depth. It can do much to make great strides in traditional development sectors such as education, good governance, health, agriculture, and the environment.

The World Bank, I can assure you, is listening very closely to what you are saying here this week. And we look forward to a constructive dialogue beyond WSIS and WEMF.

I thank you very much.

Erich Vogt

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The World Bank Group