U.S. Government Funding for Media Development

A Special Report to the Center for International Media Assistance

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CIMA — Center for International Media Assistance

NED — National Endowment for Democracy
Supporting freedom around the world

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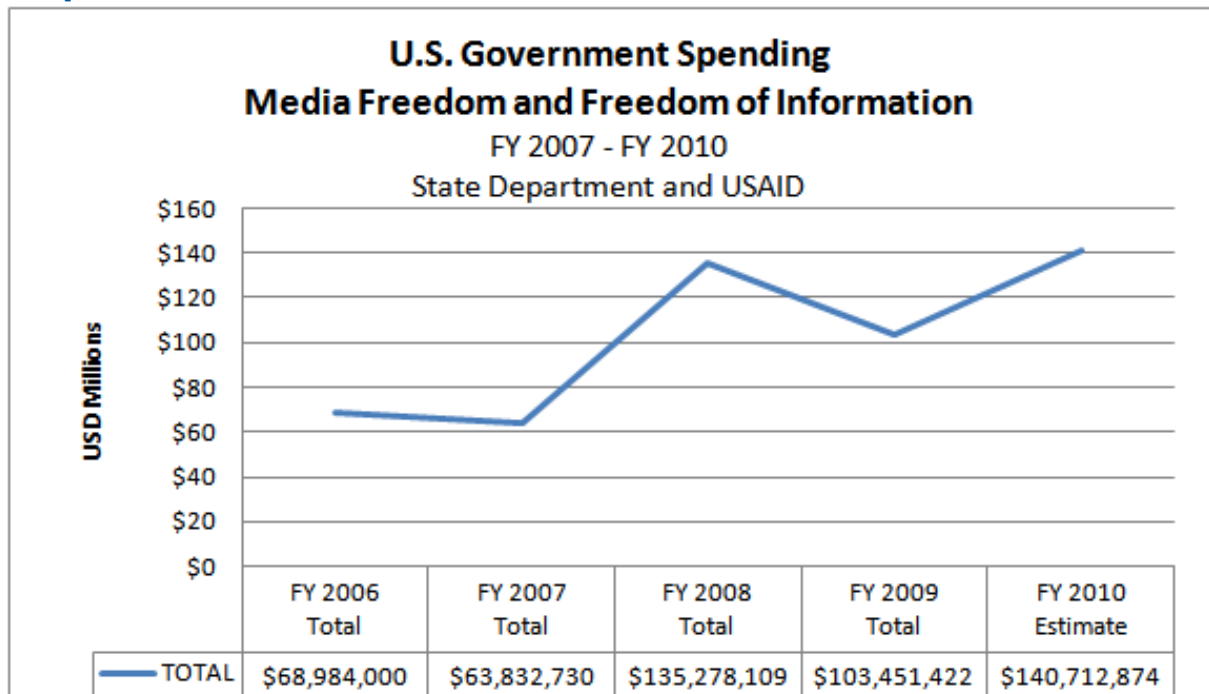# Trends in U.S. Government Funding for Media Development

Over the past five years, the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have spent more than a half billion dollars to support international media development. While this is a small amount relative to other international development efforts, it represents increasing investment in the sector.

The State Department and USAID budgets for fiscal year 2010 totaled more than $47.9 billion. Of this sum, less than .003 percent—or $140.7 million—was spent on media development efforts. Still, this represents a 36 percent—or $37.3 million—increase from media development spending in the previous fiscal year and an even more dramatic rise when compared with the $68.9 million spent five years earlier (see Graph 1).

This paper is the result of research by the Center for International Media Assistance, at the National Endowment for Democracy. The funding data was provided by the U.S. Department of State. The study was not exhaustive but rather aimed to provide a snapshot of U.S. government spending on media development.

Exact spending comparisons are difficult to make because some of the amounts reflected in this report represent actual expenditures (fiscal years 2006 to 2009) while others reflect current estimates (FY 2010). These comparisons also are complicated because U.S. government media development projects are often embedded in larger civil society and international development projects, making it difficult to capture the exact amount the U.S. government spends specifically on media development each year.

Graph 1:

U.S. Government Spending
Media Freedom and Freedom of Information
FY 2007 - FY 2010
State Department and USAID

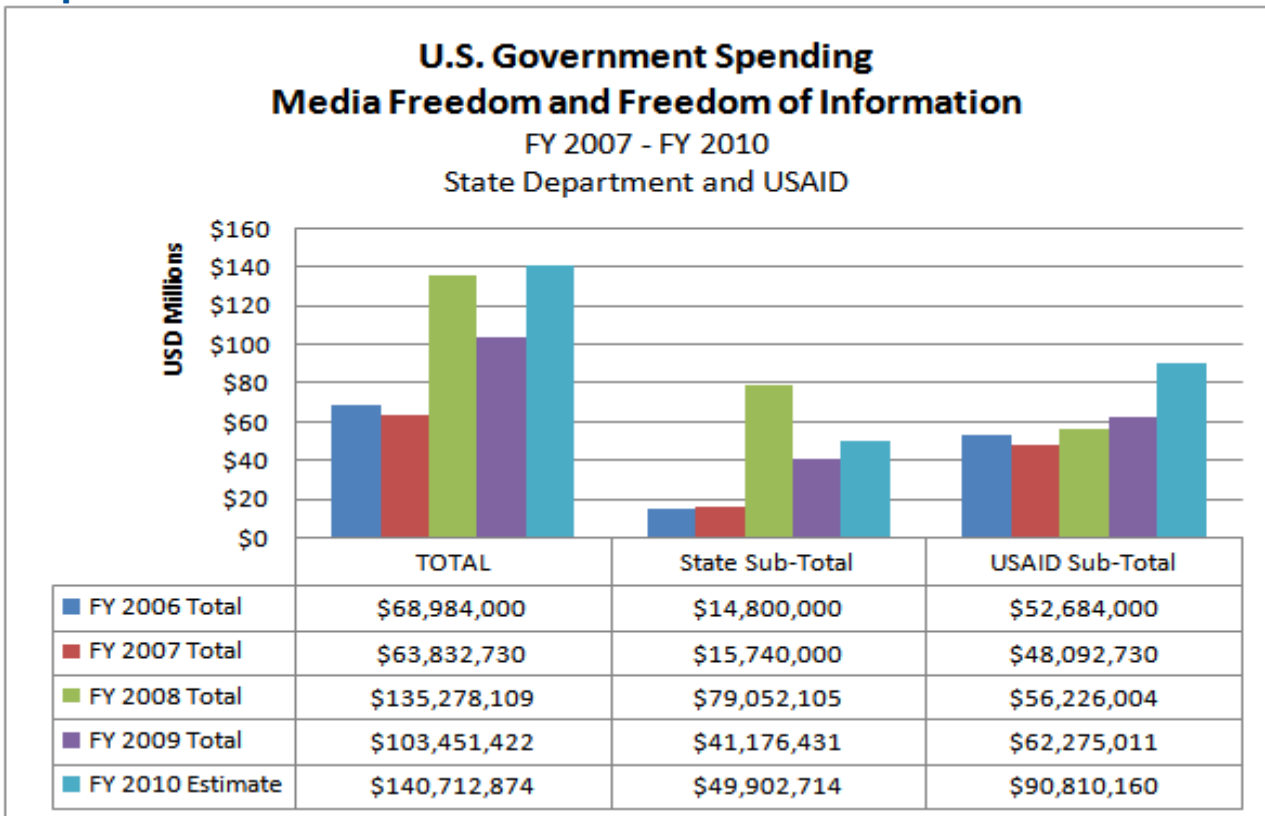|	FY 2006 Total	FY 2007 Total	FY 2008 Total	FY 2009 Total	FY 2010 Estimate
TOTAL	$68,984,000	$63,832,730	$135,278,109	$103,451,422	$140,712,874

This paper is not a comprehensive portrait of U.S. government funding for media development, but rather an analysis of a substantial segment of the funds being spent. The data compiled in this report highlights a number of significant trends.

U.S. government funding for media freedom and freedom of information—the two categories under which the State Department calculates spending by the department and USAID on media assistance—is at its highest level since CIMA began tracking funding trends in 2006. U.S. government media development experts attribute this rise in funding to large media development projects in Iraq and Afghanistan and increasing investments in digital media initiatives.

The two U.S. government bodies most directly involved with media development assistance are USAID and the State Department. Over the past several years both have significantly increased funding for media development. In FY 2010, USAID spent $90.8 million on media assistance and the State Department spent $49.9 million (see Graph 2).

USAID and the State Department support media development, media for development, and freedom of expression efforts around the world. While some experts surmise that the U.S. government invests more in media for development than media development projects, there are no precise figures to back up this notion.

Graph 2:

U.S. Government Spending
Media Freedom and Freedom of Information
FY 2007 - FY 2010
State Department and USAID

	TOTAL	State Sub-Total	USAID Sub-Total
FY 2006 Total	$68,984,000	$14,800,000	$52,684,000
FY 2007 Total	$63,832,730	$15,740,000	$48,092,730
FY 2008 Total	$135,278,109	$79,052,105	$56,226,004
FY 2009 Total	$103,451,422	$41,176,431	$62,275,011
FY 2010 Estimate	$140,712,874	$49,902,714	$90,810,160

It is important to note that other government agencies also have a significant impact on the media development field, most notably the Department of Defense (DoD), which spends millions of dollars each year on strategic communications and information operations. While little of DoD's work can be said to fall into the category of classic "media development" of the type practiced by USAID and State, its media-related initiatives often affect international media development efforts. The amounts reflected in this report do not represent spending by the DoD or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which runs such media outlets as the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia, and Alhurra.
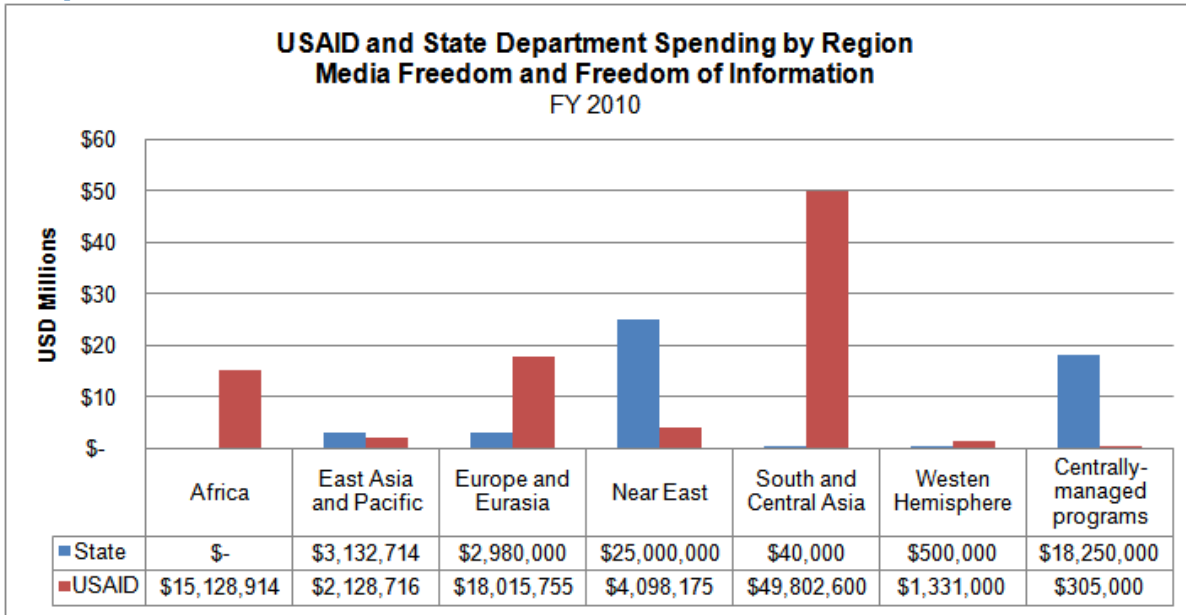
Who Works on Media Development?

As part of its work on civil society development, USAID's Democracy and Governance (DG) Office provides assistance for media development encompassing everything from professional standards of journalists to financial sustainability of the media. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), which provides fast, short-term assistance targeted at key political transitions and stabilization needs in crisis countries, also does media development work. OTI's media work focuses on supporting independent media outlets in challenging environments, such as Afghanistan, where it supported the establishment of a network of 41 community radio stations. Much of USAID's spending on media programming, however, is determined by its overseas country offices. Media experts from the DG Office and OTI often work closely with their counterparts abroad to give advice on media projects and provide technical assistance to USAID missions.

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) is the lead State Department bureau for coordinating efforts to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights globally. It is also the primary funder of media development initiatives at the State Department. DRL mainly funds media development initiatives in the form of grants, via the Human Rights Democracy fund. Recently, DRL has also begun supporting online freedom of expression programs through its new Internet Freedom Program, which manages the State Department's online censorship and circumvention initiatives.

Individual U.S. embassies also support media development programs through discretionary grants by local panels called Democracy Commissions, but the funding amounts are usually very small. The State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR) and the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia fund media development projects in post-communist states. And the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funds civil society programs, including media development, in the Middle East and North Africa. The State Department units that engage in media development usually do so in cooperation with or through USAID and its media experts.

Graph 3:

USAID and State Department Spending by Region
Media Freedom and Freedom of Information
FY 2010

	Africa	East Asia and Pacific	Europe and Eurasia	Near East	South and Central Asia	Westen Hemisphere	Centrally-managed programs
■ State	$-	$3,132,714	$2,980,000	$25,000,000	$40,000	$500,000	$18,250,000
■ USAID	$15,128,914	$2,128,716	$18,015,755	$4,098,175	$49,802,600	$1,331,000	$305,000

Although the State Department and USAID coordinate their international media development efforts, each agency's allocation of funds and regional priorities differ based on its unique goals. The mission of the former is U.S. foreign policy; the mission of the latter is development.

Because the priorities of the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) change yearly based on input from embassies and USAID experts, as well as congressional earmarks, the State Department's media development initiatives have tended to be shorter-term projects. In recent years, however, the bureau has funded more multi-year projects.

In FY 2008, State Department support for media development increased dramatically, from $15.7 million to $79 million. According to experts from the State Department, this spike was due primarily to a multi-million dollar State Department project to support the advancement of democracy and good governance in Iraq.[1] Smaller media development projects in Georgia, Ukraine, Egypt, Cuba, Cambodia, and Vietnam also contributed to the increase. In FY 2009, State Department funding for media development returned to previous levels, which have continued through FY 2010.

In contrast to the State Deparment's short-term media development projects, USAID typically supports multi-year iniatives based on longer term development goals. Consequently, USAID funding for media development fluctuates less over time. Over the past five years USAID funding for media development has increased, nearly doubling from $52.6 million in FY 2006 to $90.8 million in FY 2010.
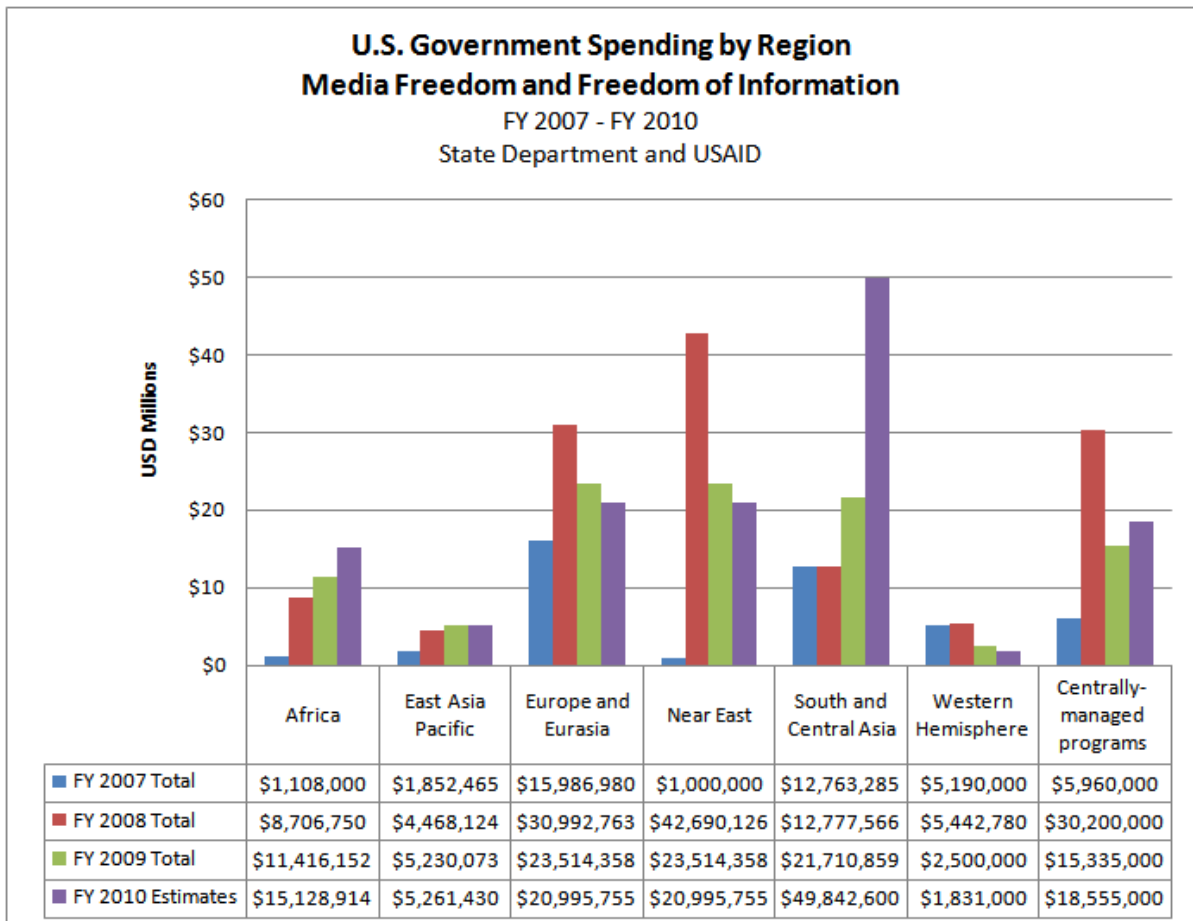
State and USAID regional priorities also differ. In FY 2010, most USAID funding for media development went to Europe and Eurasia and South and Central Asia—more than half of USAID's current media development programs are located in these two regions—while a majority of State's media development funding went to the Near East and DRL's centrally-managed democracy and governance programs[2] (see Graph 3).

Funding by Region

Over the past four years, U.S. government funding for media development has increased dramatically in the Near East and South and Central Asia (see Graph 4). Spending on media development in the Near East shot up in FY 2008, increasing from $1 million to more than $42 million in a single year. This rapid increase was due in large part to the sizeable State Department media development project in Iraq.

Funding for media development in South and Central Asia has also risen significantly. Last fiscal year, funding for media development in the region doubled, from $21.7 million in FY 2009 to $49.8 million in FY 2010. This increase was due in large part to new USAID projects in Afghanistan, including a $22 million grant to increase the reach and professional skills of independent media in the country, in addition to a variety of smaller projects in the region. Of the 42 countries in which USAID has an active media development program, 14 are in Asia.

Graph 4:

U.S. Government Spending by Region
Media Freedom and Freedom of Information
FY 2007 - FY 2010
State Department and USAID

	Africa	East Asia Pacific	Europe and Eurasia	Near East	South and Central Asia	Western Hemisphere	Centrally-managed programs
FY 2007 Total	$1,108,000	$1,852,465	$15,986,980	$1,000,000	$12,763,285	$5,190,000	$5,960,000
FY 2008 Total	$8,706,750	$4,468,124	$30,992,763	$42,690,126	$12,777,566	$5,442,780	$30,200,000
FY 2009 Total	$11,416,152	$5,230,073	$23,514,358	$23,514,358	$21,710,859	$2,500,000	$15,335,000
FY 2010 Estimates	$15,128,914	$5,261,430	$20,995,755	$20,995,755	$49,842,600	$1,831,000	$18,555,000

While funding for media development in Africa also has increased steadily over the past four years, it still receives only a fraction of the funding allocated to the Near East and South and Central Asia. In FY 2010, USAID funded sizeable media development projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia to increase the professionalism, enhance economic sustainability, and improve legal and regulatory environments.

Although funding for media development in Europe and Eurasia has decreased in recent years, it still remains an important region for U.S. government media development efforts. Since FY 2007, the State Department has supported media development projects in Georgia, Ukraine, Kosovo, Russia, and Moldova. USAID currently has active media development projects in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

Over the past four years, funding for media development has increased dramatically in the Near East and South and Central Asia

U.S. government-funded media development projects are rare in the East Asia and Pacific region and the Western Hemisphere. In recent years, the State Department has funded only a few programs in the East Asia and Pacific region—in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Malaysia. And, of the 42 countries in which USAID has an active media development project only three—Colombia, Haiti, and Venezuela—are in the Western Hemisphere.

In addition to shifting regional priorities, the focus of U.S. government media development initiatives has also changed. While journalism training has always been a core component of media development initiatives, recently there has been less emphasis on traditional journalism training. One USAID media expert estimated that in the 1990s, about 80-90 percent of media development funding was spent on journalism training. Today, he estimates that training makes up only about 50 percent of media development projects.[3] Other media experts noted that as more funding has been funneled into new digital media initiatives, training has become less of a priority.

Investing in Digital Media

In recent years, the State Department and USAID have begun investing more in digital media and online freedom of expression initiatives. According to one USAID media expert, U.S. government funders are far more interested in digital media than they ever have been.[4] Today nearly every U.S. media development grant encourages—and often requires—the incorporation of digital components.

In FY 2008, The State Department established the Internet Freedom Program to manage internet censorship and digital media initiatives. The program, which is overseen in tandem by DRL and the Department's Economic Bureau, is the only program in the State Department working solely on online censorship. Earlier this year, the Internet Freedom Program awarded a $5 million grant on Promoting Freedom of Expression and the Free Flow of Information through Technology and Access. According to DRL, the purpose of the project is to support innovative circumvention technologies for independent news content in repressive environments. While the Internet Freedom Program has a global focus, countries of particular interest to the program include China, Burma, Iran, Vietnam, Tunisia, and Egypt. One State Department media expert predicted that the program will start doing more work in Africa as connectivity in the region increases.

> *Today nearly every U.S. media development grant encourages—and often requires—the incorporation of digital components.*

One of USAID's largest media development grants offered in FY 2010, the Afghanistan Media Development and Empowerment Project (AMDEP), highlights the important role digital media play in USAID's media development projects. The grant offered a three-year, $22 million contract to establish a professional and sustainable independent media system in Afghanistan. Project goals include increasing the professional skills of independent journalists; improving the social and legal environment in which Afghanistan's media operates; facilitating dissemination of information through new media technologies; and increasing access to technology.

Other U.S. government media development projects focus more specifically on digital media development, such as the Mobile Khabar project, a one-year, $7 million contract offered by USAID. The goal of Mobile Khabar (which means "news" in both Dari and Pashto) is to create a mobile news service in Afghanistan that makes information and news available on mobile phones. Content will include radio news and information programs. This includes, in particular for individuals who may be illiterate, the audio portion of television programs, newspaper articles read aloud, and mobile blogs. The project is meant to expand news services and outreach, particularly in Pashtun areas, and challenge regional and local media to improve the quality and relevance of their content by providing them with a national audience.

Support for new digital media initiatives has contributed to the increase in U.S. government support for media development over the past several years, and experts predict these technologies will continue to play an important role in international media development efforts.

Endnotes

1   U.S. Department of State official, in telephone interview with author, October 29, 2010.

2   In Graph 3, DRL's centrally-managed programs are separated from other regional spending, but because these programs are implemented throughout the world, the regional totals reflected in the chart are slighly lower than actual expenditures by region.

3   USAID official, in interview with author, August 20, 2010.

4   USAID official, in interview with CIMA staff, September 17, 2010.

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