

DIGITAL RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION SERIES 8

A NEW DEAL FOR JOURNALISM IN AFRICA - PART 2

How market regulation will bring platforms to pay fair value for public interest journalism

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The content distribution and referral services that multinational digital platforms have built their businesses on have caused an escalating existential threat to news media businesses worldwide. The threat is not only to the commercial viability of news and information businesses but also to journalism's social function.



Although the problem is global in both nature and scale, Australia's Online News Act has demonstrated that solutions are rooted in local action – principally through market regulation that protects the social function of journalism by safeguarding the contestability of news media businesses in online markets. However, market regulation by itself is unlikely to solve the decline of news media businesses and journalism.



African governments have an opportunity to develop Australia's breakthrough market regulation intervention to offer a more structural solution to the threat that platforms pose to the sustainable supply of news and information services. This can be done by creating public media funds whose institutional architecture is closely aligned with the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information.

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1

INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 of *A New Deal for Public Interest Journalism in Africa*, I argue that charting a new path for the sustainability of public interest media in Africa requires an urgent rebalancing of bargaining power between news and information services and digital platforms.¹ I describe how public interest journalism and its social function are jeopardised by the loss of advertising revenue by news and information services to platforms.

In Part 1, I propose three pillars grounded in the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa² to underpin this rebalancing exercise, namely:

- i. the designation of public interest journalism as a public good,
- ii. the incorporation of national public media funds to resource the supply of public interest journalism and safeguard its public value, and
- iii. drawing the revenue for these funds from a collective fee mechanism paid by digital indexing and publishing platforms as fair compensation for their use of news and information content.

In this paper, I develop this proposal further by describing the relationship of power between platforms and news media businesses, and why it requires rebalancing through public power. I describe the recent market regulatory approach taken by the Australian government, why it shows promise, the limitations it presents, and how these might be overcome if African countries should adopt it. I then outline some of the institutional arrangements required for regulation to be effective in supporting the resilience of news and information services in decentralised content distribution environments through which digital platforms have market dominance.

2

THE POWER OF PLATFORMS

The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the vital importance of reliable, credible news and information services for access to accurate information. It also showed how vulnerable that supply infrastructure is to the market conditions in which it operates. Since the emergence of the pandemic and its

impact on global markets, hundreds of news and magazine publications have closed, and thousands of jobs supporting the supply of credible journalism are being shed annually. Media publishers, the media development community, and governments across the world agree that without a new deal

1. Phamodi, S.J. (2022) *A New Deal for Journalism in Africa: Three Pillars for Bringing Platforms to Pay Fair Value For Public Interest Journalism*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, accessible at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/africa-media/19206.pdf> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

2. African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) (2019) *Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa*, accessible at <https://www.achpr.org/legalinstruments/detail?id=69> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

for their future sustainability, media businesses are imperilled, and so are the fundamentals of journalism and its social value in democratic societies. But the pandemic is only one of the compounding factors resulting in declining news and information services, as described in Part 1. The growth and business practices of platforms such as Facebook and Google in discovering and consuming online news and information services have also played a substantial role in this decline.

As the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) determined in its 2019 Digital Platforms report,³ the business models and operating practices developed by platforms such as Facebook and Google created significant power imbalances between themselves and Australian media businesses. On one side, they compete with media businesses for consumers' attention by delivering a variety of content – including news and information – at no cost to a substantial user base. On the other side, they compete with those same businesses for advertising revenues based on their command of that user base's attention.

As a result of the unprecedented networking power of platforms in these interrelated markets, it's easy to see how Australian media businesses – including those narrowly focused on supplying news and information services – would be unable to compete with the likes of Facebook and Google in either of these markets. Instead, Facebook and Google became unavoidable trading partners for Australian media businesses through the decentralised distribution and audience referral services which underpin their respective business models. As the ACCC determined, “many news media businesses would be likely to incur a significant loss of revenue, damaging their businesses” if the users of platforms such as Google [and Facebook] could not click through to their content offerings from their respective platforms.⁴

However, the dynamics described by the ACCC are not unique to the Australian case but are broadly descriptive of the relationship between platforms and news media businesses worldwide. Further, among the indirect effects of these dynamics is the attribution of the content offerings served to users (and their brand loyalties) to the platforms themselves rather than to their original publishers,⁵ further eroding their brand strength and revenues.

On this basis, the ACCC would determine that these platforms had substantial bargaining power over news media businesses and would introduce a market regulation intervention through the News Media Bargaining Code to rebalance the scales.⁶ The code sets out rules for negotiations – including fair compensation for platforms' use of news and information content – between digital platforms designated by the Treasurer to be subject to the code and news media businesses. It imposes a procedure whereby an individual news media business or collective may trigger a negotiation under the code. If those negotiations fail within a prescribed period, an arbitration is automatically activated, the outcome of which is final and legally binding on the parties.⁷

No digital platforms have been designated by the Treasurer to date, nor have any negotiations been triggered under the code. Instead, keeping true to the code's impact statement, the potential of being designated a digital platform under the code encouraged platforms to quickly reach bilateral commercial agreements with news media businesses to compensate them for using their content.

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3. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) (2019) Digital Platforms Inquiry, accessible at <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Digital%20platforms%20inquiry%20-%20final%20report.pdf> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 4. It is worth considering the submissions made by both Facebook and Google where they both conceded the reliance of news media businesses on their referral services in order to reach audiences. Meta (2020), Response to the Australian mandatory news media bargaining code concepts paper, accessible at <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Facebook.pdf> (Accessed 25 November 2022); Google (2020), Mandatory News Media Bargaining Code Response to the ACCC's Concept Paper, accessible at <https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/Google.pdf> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 5. Kalogeropoulos, A. and Newman, N. (2017) I saw the News on Facebook. Accessible at <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-07/Brand%20attributions%20report.pdf> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 6. ACCC (2020), News Media Bargaining Code, accessible at <https://www.accc.gov.au/focus-areas/digital-platforms/news-media-bargaining-code/news-media-bargaining-code> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 7. ACCC (2020), Australian news media to negotiate payment with major digital platforms, accessible at <https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/australian-news-media-to-negotiate-payment-with-major-digital-platforms> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

3

REBALANCING THE POWER

The Australian approach has, so far, offered the most promising pathway to rebalancing the relationship of power between digital platforms and news media businesses by responding to the two pillars of market regulation. Firstly, the ACCC's recognition of the social value of news and information services set the stage for a consumer protection intervention that calls for the government to safeguard these services to protect democratic participation and consumers' need for regular, accurate and relevant information. Secondly, and perhaps because of the government's preference for commercial solutions for market problems, it solved the market contestability of news media businesses by compelling the parties to determine the terms of that market contestability between themselves or risk the government doing it for them – which is a significant advancement from the stalemate that they had come to. The Canadian government, similarly disposed in its preference for commercial solutions to market problems, was prompted to follow Australia's lead by proposing the Online News Act, which takes a materially similar approach and is now being processed by the House of Commons.⁸

The approach taken by Australia in the News Media Bargaining Code is not without its limitations, however. The most significant of these is that since its enactment, none of the bilateral agreements between digital platforms and Australian news media businesses has been made publicly available. This is mainly because these agreements are structured through

discretionary grant investments⁹ and bilateral value-exchange agreements rather than under the public process defined by the Online News Act.¹⁰ Although these instruments might have contributed substantially to strengthening the viability of news and information services (without disclosures, one can never really know), these are awarded on an ad-hoc basis and are limited to only a few news media businesses selected by platforms. Moreover, they fall short of standardising the fair value because news and information content suppliers enrich the content offerings that platforms deliver to their users and from which their substantial profits derive.¹¹

There are at least two reasons why, in Africa, the state intervention must go further than in Australia and perhaps even what Canada has proposed: to mitigate market concentration; and to promote content diversity through intentional investments.¹²

Firstly, limiting the state intervention to only providing for discretionary investment or bilateral negotiation between parties unduly advantages larger media businesses with greater market dominance. Short of enacting a policy instrument prescribing value exchange between digital platforms and news and information services for journalistic content, this arrangement simply codifies the status quo. It is already unlikely for parties to come to an agreement without guidance from a higher authority; the relevant determinants of

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8. Parliament of Canada (2022), Bill C-18, accessible at <https://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/c-18>, (Accessed 25 November 2022); Government of Canada (2022), The Online News Act, <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/online-news.html> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 9. Miller, G. (2022), Canada's Online News Act is angering Meta and Google. Here's a timeline on how we got here., accessible at <https://www.cjr.org/widescreen/a-canadian-platforms-and-publishers-timeline.php/> (Accessed 25 November 2022); Pichai, S. (2020), Our \$1 billion investment in partnerships with publishers, accessible at <https://blog.google/outreach-initiatives/google-news-initiative/google-news-showcase/> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 10. The different approaches applied in various parts of the world are discussed in OECD (2021) Competition issues concerning news media and digital platforms, OECD
 11. Competition Committee Discussion Paper, pp 27 – 36, accessible at <https://www.oecd.org/daf/competition/competition-issues-in-news-media-and-digitalplatforms.htm> (Accessed 25 November 2022) and in Dugmore, H. (2021) Thinking globally, acting locally: Reviving and sustaining South African journalism in a post-Covid world, p49, accessible at https://www.africanplatform.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Thinking_globally_acting_locally.pdf, pp36-48 (Accessed 25 November 2022). Fisher et al provide further descriptions of the impact and shortcomings of the Australian approach to rebalancing bargaining power Fisher, C., McCallum, K., Park, S. (2021) Is the news media bargaining code fit for purpose?, accessible at <https://theconversation.com/is-the-news-media-bargaining-code-fit-for-purpose-172224> (Accessed 25 November 2022). Similar shortcomings are evident in the French context Rosemain, M. (2021) Exclusive: Google's \$76 million deal with French publishers leaves many outlets infuriated, accessible at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-google-france-copyright-exclusive-idUSKBN2AC27N> (Accessed 25 November 2022).
 12. Owen, T. and Dwivedi, S., Canada's Online News Act shows how other countries are learning from Australia's new bill, accessible at <https://www.niemanlab.org/2022/08/canadas-online-news-act-shows-how-other-countries-are-learning-from-australias-news-bill/> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

content value; and an efficient, affordable deadlock-breaking mechanism. This all results in risky, costly and protracted arbitration processes. Only large and well-heeled news and information services with a relatively higher appetite for risk would be able to consider those measures, while smaller and more risk-averse services would continue to decline under increasingly perilous market conditions. This would go to formalise cartels and further deepen the growing crisis of concentration in the ownership of news media businesses.

Secondly, without the introduction of more direct mechanisms for bringing smaller and independently owned news and information services to the bargaining table on a more equitable footing with their larger and more resourced counterparts, content diversity will continue to be threatened. Small, local, and niche news and information services play an essential role in contributing to content diversity. They often serve the news and information needs of marginalised and underserved geographic communities and interest groups who, themselves, bring diverse perspectives and broaden the representativity of media in their role as a deliberative public sphere. By relying on discretionary investment mechanisms or bilateral negotiation of value exchange alone, small and independently owned providers of news and information services would be forced to compete with their larger counterparts on unfavourable terms for access to this newly opened revenue stream. This would potentially lock them out of agreements altogether, starving underserved regional audiences and special interest groups of access to original and relevant journalistic content.

Now, governments may elect to enact policy instruments that require digital platforms to contribute to the promotion of journalism and the news and information services that make it possible by way of discretionary investment, negotiation through a bilateral or collective bargaining framework, or both. All these measures can certainly go some way to slow down the rapid decline of journalism we are witnessing. However, to support its continued sustainability, governments must consider more robust measures to protect and promote public interest journalism that can be equitably accessed by a wide range of news and information services. I propose that among these measures must be a compulsion on digital platforms to contribute to a collective levy for public interest journalism that can be disbursed equitably to media businesses through a duly incorporated public media fund.

As I argue in Part 1, enacting this mechanism to collect fair value from digital platforms for the fund would be a key test of trust and collaboration between governments and news and information services – particularly for Africa, where the relationship between these actors has been historically fraught. On the one hand, it requires governments to be bold enough to recognise and vindicate the right of news and information services to contest the market fairly based

on their intellectual production in the public interest as it is defined by broad and diverse publics themselves rather than unilaterally by governments. On the other hand, news and information services would have to concede the collection and disbursement of some of this revenue by this government fund to the benefit of all news and information services eligible to access the fund in line with mutually agreed institutional arrangements and disbursement criteria.

Without these concessions from both parties, as has happened in Australia and France,¹³ only the digital platforms and commercial media cartels which enjoy market dominance in the short- to mid-term will succeed at the expense of media diversity and the sustainability of public interest journalism in the long-term.

Even with these limitations, the Australian approach has provided some compelling frameworks to consider, but for the African context, these require further and contextually relevant elaboration. In South Africa, for example, the map that the Australian framework provided has prompted the development of a position paper by the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF)¹⁴ that calls for a bargaining framework that takes the form of the News Media Bargaining Code but with more robust and equitable measures in response to the Competition Commission's Online Intermediary Market Inquiry.¹⁵

The position paper is underpinned by five principles that respond to some of the limitations the Australian News Media Bargaining Code failed to consider by calling for:

- an inclusive approach that enables collective bargaining on behalf of small news publishers in order to address the risk of greater market concentration in the media and less media diversity;
- ensuring criteria for determining levels of compensation that do not disincentivise innovation or exacerbate market incentives for poor-quality journalism;
- introducing safeguards that ensure that decisions about participation are made by an impartial, reputable, and representative industry body;
- ensuring that final payment terms are transparently disclosed to enable accountability; and
- avoiding undermining the fundamentally open nature of the internet or limiting access to news by precipitating the removal of news content from technology platforms.

South Africa's market inquiry is yet to be concluded, and it is still to be seen whether the more focussed inquiry that investigates the relationship between digital platforms and news media businesses proposed by SANEF will be conducted by the Competition Commission. Even so, it is evident that the Australian approach not only shows promise but is gaining traction in opening new avenues for compelling platforms to pay fair value for the news they use.

13. These and further harms are discussed in OECD (2021), pp 22-26.

14. Albeit under an altogether different regime to the Australian approach. See Rosemain, M. (2021).

15. South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) (2022), SANEF Calls for Competition Reforms in Support of Journalism Sustainability, accessible at <https://sanef.org.za/sanef-calls-for-competition-reforms-in-support-of-journalism-sustainability/> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

4

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Making the case for a public financing instrument with the mandate to safeguard the sustainable supply of public-interest news and information services is perhaps the easiest part of striking a new deal for public-interest media in Africa. And as we have learned from the Australian case and elsewhere, public power can be thoughtfully and effectively exercised to compel platforms to contribute their fair share to resource the sustainable supply of news and information services in the public interest. But if these revenues are to be effectively brought in service of the sustainable supply of public interest news and information services, they must be directed through a public financing instrument – a national public media fund – in ways that safeguard their independence, credibility, and diversity. Below I propose some of the underpinning principles and institutional arrangements which align with the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, framing how we might establish national public media funds to have the greatest chance of operational success.¹⁶

A CLEAR PUBLIC INTEREST MANDATE

National public media funds must be established as publicly held but independently administered public grant-funding mechanisms. Public media funds should have a clearly defined public interest mandate of funding initiatives to support public interest news and information content that enhances access to information, freedom of expression, and substantive participation in public life for a diverse public. The scope of the mandate might include initiatives that support news and information content covering specific themes or topics such as climate, health and gender across a range of media formats or those targeting underserved audiences such as children, neglected regions and cultural and linguistic groups. The scope might even be stretched to include initiatives supporting innovation in the development of professional capacity or processes that aim to improve the supply and delivery of reliable and credible public-interest

news and information services. To this end, the ambit of what constitutes the public interest must be clearly defined in keeping with the Declaration of Principles¹⁷ to provide the necessary guidance for investments to promote the supply of adequate, diverse, and politically balanced information.

How the public interest mandate is defined is significant not only for the kinds of initiatives that receive support but also for the kinds of institutions that should be able to apply for and access the support national public media funds should offer. Media users look to a wide range of services, including public-owned, private commercial, and community media, to fulfil their need for diverse and balanced news and information. In light of this, the Declaration of Principles mandates that states not only take positive measures to promote a diverse and pluralistic media¹⁸ through policy and other means to enable a rich and diverse deliberative public sphere but also to promote a conducive economic environment in which media can flourish. This includes the provision of financial or other public support for the sustainability of media through a fair, neutral, independent and transparent process based on objective criteria.¹⁹ Therefore, access to the support of national public media funds by media becomes imperative.

To this extent, access should be defined against the public interest objective that the content or initiative fulfils rather than where ownership of the news and information outlet resides within the prevailing media mix in which it functions. Public-owned outlets should, therefore, not dominate in their access to funding by virtue of their public ownership alone. However, there should be an equitable distribution in the value of disbursements made across all outlets (public and privately owned), which is informed by their reach, core mandates, and the extent to which their business fulfils the public interest mandate as it has been defined.

16. Competition Commission South Africa (2022), Online Intermediation Platforms Inquiry, accessible at <https://www.compcom.co.za/online-intermediation-platforms-SANEF> elaborates several of these principles in SANEF (2021) Media Sustainability and Universal Access to Public Interest Journalism, accessible at <https://sanef.org.za/media-sustainability-and-universal-access-to-public-interest-journalism/> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

17. Principle 11.3, Principle 13.6.

18. Principle 11.3.

19. Principle 24.1.

A PROFESSIONAL CODE OF STANDARDS, ETHICS, AND PRACTICES

The fund's mandate must go beyond an open-ended description of the kind of content it supports. It should go on to define the professional code of standards, ethics, and practices by which the content it supports should be produced – particularly in the case of news content – establishing a minimum standard for all media to aspire to in the production and delivery of quality, credible and reliable news and information services. Subscription to this professional code should be a condition that qualifies the news and information outlets seeking support for their public interest initiatives.

In line with the Declaration of Principles, the code should favour a self-regulatory model whereby the standards are defined by the media themselves in a transparent and participatory process.²⁰ Further, the code should be legally enforceable to the extent that it provides for a reasonable and lawful complaints procedure administered by an independent authority. This authority should also have the responsibility of promoting its popular understanding and use by practitioners and media users alike, as well as enforcing compliance with its prescripts through a transparent and independently managed complaints procedure.²¹

INDEPENDENCE

The conditions assuring the independence of public media institutions have been a long-standing point of contention between state actors, media, and media support actors in Africa. Even where these role-players agree on the necessity of direct public investment in the sustainability of public interest media and journalism, some of the conditions set by governments for that public funding have threatened the independence of journalism from undue state power and influence. These conditions typically pertain to regulatory frameworks which may be viewed as creating excessively restrictive and disproportionate conditions for entry into and participation in national media markets, as well as moves to vest authority and discretion over the development and enforcement of the professional standards governing the practice of journalism exclusively in the state.

In many African countries, the state's discretion over public sector advertising expenditure has been perceived to be handled in ways that tend to reward outlets that produce media narratives that cast the state and public officials in a positive light while punishing those outlets which are perceived to be critical.²² Even in countries with relatively high levels of protection for independent media and the practice of journalism, public funding of media is believed to carry an increased risk of state interference in media production processes and narratives.

National public media funds, their governance structures, and operations must therefore be constituted in ways attuned to these risks, whether real or perceived.

In the same way that the Declaration of Principles details the conditions for independent public service media,²³ the establishment of national public media funds must be guided by the same principles. They should be governed by transparently constituted, diverse boards, and their operations and how they are funded must not easily avail them to undue political or commercial interference.

Among the structural arrangements to ensure this is that national public media funds are governed by a cross-sectoral board responsible for reviewing applications and making awards. The composition of this board must, minimally, balance representation from government, civil society, and professionals with credible expertise in the study, practice, and management of journalism and media, including in digital media markets. Significantly, the board should be appointed by and answerable to a broadly representative multi-party structure such as the national legislature rather than the executive arm of government whose exercise of power tends to follow the authority and influence of a singular or dominant political party or interest.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

National public media funds should make disbursements through at least two funding instruments. The first and core instrument must fund the production of content (individual stories or a body of work) that responds to a clearly defined public interest subject or agenda within a predetermined mix of public interest themes. This should be cross-weighted by selection criteria that balance sound (radio and related formats), audio-visual (television and related formats), and print-digital delivery formats in line with the dominance of the corresponding mediums on which they would be carried. Therefore, where radio is the most widely accessed format for news and information services, formats that lend themselves to being carried on radio should receive a proportionate share of support. In this way, core news and information beats that support substantive participation in public life continues to receive a base level of support.

Disbursements through this instrument should balance thematic content diversity with several relevant representational criteria, including linguistic diversity, emphasising underserved and marginalised languages; regional relevance to bring underserved and marginalised geographic communities into the body of the deliberative public sphere; the cultivation of gender diversity in both lead journalists, sources and intended impact of stories; and so forth.

20. Principle 16.

21. Principle 18.

22. Ogola, G. (2017), How African governments use advertising as a weapon against media freedom, accessible at <https://theconversation.com/how-african-governments-use-advertising-as-a-weapon-against-media-freedom-75702> (Accessed 25 November 2022).

23. Principle 13.

An essential condition of this funding instrument is that the public interest content or projects it supports must be made freely available to audiences and should never be held behind paywalls. This is in keeping with the mandate of national public media funds to develop and enrich the deliberative public sphere by supporting the sustainable supply of public-interest news and information.

The second instrument should support initiatives developing promising new products, revenue models, processes, and services producing shared value across media organisations and outlets that produce public interest news and information services. These may include products and processes that: break ground in cultivating and reaching new audiences; develop new models and approaches to collecting, processing, and delivering news and information to audiences; transition legacy media and their audiences to accessible, affordable, and compelling digital content delivery platforms, etc.

Disbursements through this instrument must be targeted at stimulating innovation and the transformation of the market and operating conditions in which news and information services function and translate these into value they can share between themselves and their audiences.

To promote the equitable distribution of disbursements from the fund and promote media diversity, the distribution formula governing disbursements should be weighted to favour independently owned news and information outlets over those belonging to large groups. Included in the determination of the distribution formula should be consideration of the revenue thresholds of the news and information services applying for access to the fund, with the degree of access to support also being informed by relative turnover with the view to favour outlets with lower revenues or access to fewer resources.

5

CONCLUSION

News media businesses and the news and information services they offer have been among the most adversely affected by the business models that emerged from the innovation of platform services. For their content to reach their intended users, it must be carried by platforms – enriching the user experience and revenues of these platforms without accruing a fair share of the value derived from the use of their news. These business models not only deprive news media businesses of the value they create in producing credible, relevant, and reliable news and information, but they also erode journalism's very social function. Various governments worldwide have begun looking into the regulation of digital markets as among the tools to support the contestability of news media businesses and protect the social function of journalism. If African news media businesses are to survive, they and their governments must look to global interventions

to inform the protection of local content markets. The Australian Online News Act offers the most promising approach, however, African content markets require more than just a market-based solution.

African news media businesses and governments have an opportunity to co-create public media funds that can mobilise long-term, equitable, and developmental resourcing to news media services that can support the delivery of credible and diverse news and information services, as well as springboard innovation that can ensure their sustainable supply. This will require trust, compromise, and cooperation in the public interest. The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa continue to provide the framework for how to achieve this.

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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

fesmedia Africa is the regional media project of the Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Africa. Its work promotes a free, open, liberal and democratic media landscape that enables ordinary citizens to actively influence and improve their lives, as well as those of the communities and societies they live in. *fesmedia* Africa believes that in order to participate in public life and decision-making, people need to have the means, skills and

opportunities to access, exchange and use information and knowledge. They need to be able to communicate and exchange ideas, opinions, data, facts and figures about issues that affect them and their communities.

For more information, visit:

<https://fesmedia-africa.fes.de/>

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More information on the subject is available here:

<https://fesmedia-africa.fes.de/>