

## Foreword

The World Bank has long recognized the role that media play in development. It has done so through advocating the importance of an independent press; providing training for journalists; and offering technical and financial assistance to commercial media organizations through its private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC). At present, there is an intention to broaden the focus to include broadcast media. With this guide the World Bank Institute seeks to support the development of an independent and diverse broadcasting sector that can contribute to the public interest.

Of paramount importance is the policy, legal, and regulatory framework that influences the shape, content, and social impacts of the broadcasting sector as a whole. This is the subject matter of the current guide. It includes not only protection of basic freedoms of expression, but also issues such as the structure and functioning of regulatory bodies, management of the radio-frequency spectrum, and licensing requirements that enable broadcasting diversity. Good practices from a wide range of countries are included. The enabling environment for broadcasting has significant consequences for governance and accountability: It can enable people in the developing world to become informed and empowered, or not.

Radio broadcasting can be very accessible, even for illiterate and semiliterate people in remote locations. It can influence people's understanding of their context, interests, and view of themselves. In the many places where listening to the radio is a group activity, its content easily provokes comments and discussion. Often issues that previously could not be discussed become permissible as people refer to what they have heard. The social impacts can be pervasive and profound.

Broadcasting also provides platforms for publicly airing concerns, raising questions with experts on the air, and solving problems. Community radio programs, for example, often involve the whole listening audience in discussing matters important to them, in their local languages. This in turn strengthens people's ability and confidence in framing and analyzing issues, engaging in informed debate, and pressing local officials for actions. This process helps people to

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identify and grasp opportunities, address collective problems, and resist manipulation. It also strengthens people's resolve to make their government accountable and strengthens their outspokenness against abuses. From Ghana to Indonesia, groups have gone "on the air" and named officials who have stolen public funds or not delivered a long-promised road—and they have seen an active response. Such public condemnation makes officials change their calculus of their prerogatives and their responsibilities.

Broadcasting is a potent vehicle for scaling up and embedding civic engagement in the life of poor constituencies in developing countries—and in the expectations of government officials.

Freedom of information and expression and a robust mix of broadcasting ownership and uses—commonly referred to as commercial, public service, and community broadcasting—are critically important to develop and sustain an informed, engaged society. With this book, we show that improving the enabling environment for the broadcasting sector is important development terrain, where country-specific analysis and assistance are long overdue.

Rakesh Nangia  
Acting Vice President, World Bank Institute, 2001–2007