

## **Terms of Reference: Mapping Assessment of Myanmar Independent Media Landscape**

14 February 2024

### **A. Background**

The Swedish Burma Committee (SBC) has supported local organisations that promote human rights and democracy in Myanmar since 2010. SBC has also provided funding for independent media in Myanmar. Recognising the importance of access to reliable information, not least following the military coup of 2021, SBC is now looking to expand its support to independent media in Myanmar with Oak Foundation as its back donor.

SBC's support to independent media in Myanmar recognises the critical democratic roles that independent media plays in providing independent and reliable information, scrutinising those in power and enabling a free public debate. The overall goal of our media programming is to strengthen people's access to independent and reliable journalism, including in minority languages. We are looking to support media outlets that provide unbiased and accurate reporting. Adherence to basic journalistic principles is important to us. In particular, we have the ambition to provide more resources to independent news reporting and investigative reporting. We are looking to support relatively established media organisations, large or small, rather than individual journalists.

Recognising the importance of access to reliable information by communities and activists facing severe repression, propaganda/disinformation and armed attacks by junta forces, reinforced support for independent media was identified as a priority in Oak Foundation's 2023 Myanmar Strategy Review.

Given the multiplicity of media sector actors involved, SBC seeks to conduct a Mapping Assessment to understand the post-coup media landscape more deeply. The aim of the assessment is to guide SBC in designing a strategic programme and facilitate strategic selection of partners. To this end the assessment will provide an overview of the media landscape, point out opportunities for intervention and provide examples of relevant independent types of media actors to support. In addition, the study will inform SBC and Oak Foundation about challenges and opportunities for media sustainability, and provide information about key interlocutors, including donors.

The assessment will be based on a desk study/literature review and interviews with key stakeholders.

### **B. Key Assessment Questions**

The Mapping could usefully address the following topics and questions, which are indicative and not exhaustive.

**1. Landscape Delineation** (international, national, regional, local). The focus, for the purposes of this media study, should be on print, broadcasting (radio, TV) and use of digital platforms for dissemination, rather than blogs or citizen journalism).

- Describe the media landscape in Myanmar. What are the main channels used for disseminating news? How has the media landscape changed since the coup?
- Who are the main media actors? Who are the new/emerging players in the sector versus long standing media and what do they bring to the table? Are there media organisations that can be considered independent, if so how many and which ones?

- We would be particularly interested in understanding the independent media landscape in conflict areas, including in central Burma.
- Describe the ethnic media landscape, what role does it play?
- In Myanmar there are several media sector networks linking server smaller media organisations (for example Burma News International), what are the merits and shortcomings of supporting such networks?
- Access to media/ media consumption. To what extent do people have access to independent media today? How has this changed since the coup? Do some groups have more access than others? Why? What implications does that have? Are there differences related to gender, ethnicity, geography, patterns of conflict?

## **2. Characteristics of independent media organisations; Reach and Quality**

- Based on existing audience surveys, what type of reporting is requested by the audience? Are these requests being met?
- What is the reach of independent media organisations in Myanmar? Are there gaps in terms of reach (e.g are there parts of the county or certain groups that independent media organisations cannot reach? Why?)
- What online platforms are most effective in distributing news? What are key opportunities and challenges in online dissemination?
- Overall, are media houses/platforms striking an appropriate balance between audience reach and quality?

## **3. Sustainability**

- What are the current financial sustainability challenges and limitations (e.g., social media monetisation policies such as Facebook, YouTube)?
- What are the opportunities? Is some level of monetisation possible? Provide any useful examples of sustainable approaches or examples of good practice.
- What ways can donors encourage sustainability and support preparedness for media monetisation?

## **4. Stakeholders**

- Who are the key media development actors/donors & what role do they play (NED, MDIF, IMS, Internews, Deutsche Welle, OSF)? Give an indication of any particular focus, their grant-giving and portfolio size.
- Does donor funding match what media organisations are requesting? For example, core support vis-à-vis capacity building.

## **5. Opportunities for support**

- Based on SBC's goals for media programming in Myanmar, what types of media support could be appropriate to expand? Are there particular actors that the consultant would recommend SBC to approach?
- What are the main needs in terms of capacity building for media organisations (e.g. gender, digital development, monetisation strategies etc.)?

## **C. Structure and content of the report**

- The Assessment should include a succinct Executive Summary, which could be read as a stand-alone summary.
- It should also include a section that describes the methodology used.
- In addition to presenting the findings of the mapping assessment, the report should also include robust and clear recommendations for SBC based on identified gaps and opportunities.

- The report should include clear references to sources used but names and details of persons interviewed may be anonymised if deemed appropriate.
- Robust and clear Recommendations should also be included. Based on the above mapping and identified gaps, opportunities and challenges- What type of media would be important to support and why? These will influence the contours and extent of SBC/Oak Foundation grant support moving forward.
- If possible, provide examples of independent media that could be relevant to support based on the mapping

#### **D: Time frame and Deliverables**

The proposed assignment will begin in February 2024 and end before 5 April 2024. The overall maximum amount is 10,000 USD.

A report (estimated to be around maximum 15 pages) addressing the above topic areas and questions, will be presented to SBC and Oak Foundation, for discussion and review by 27 March, with a discussion to take place on 2 April with any subsequent amendments submitted by 5 April.

#### **E: Qualifications of the Consultant**

The selection and oversight of the Consultant will be conducted by SBC senior programme manager.

*Required qualifications:*

- Documented relevant knowledge and experience of working with the Myanmar media sector, preferably in development cooperation.
- Prior experience of conducting evaluations / assessments of the Myanmar media sector.
- Ability to write clearly and concisely.

*Desired qualifications*

- Knowledge of Burmese and/or other relevant local languages is desired in the consultancy team. If one consultant does not have knowledge of the relevant language(s), this requirement can be filled by another consultancy team member.

#### **F. How to Apply**

If interested in this assignment, please submit a work plan (including a proposed budget of maximum USD 10,000) and, the CV of the proposed consultant(s) to Liz Tydeman, senior programme manager at SBC by 28 February to [liz@burmakommitten.org](mailto:liz@burmakommitten.org)