MEDIA
in Fragile Environments
The USIP Intended-Outcomes Needs Assessment Methodology

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Contents

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The USIP Intended-Outcomes Needs Assessment (IONA) methodology enables NGOs, donors, and policymakers to determine which kinds of media interventions can most effectively address issues affecting a fragile society. Using a three-stage process, IONA enables an assessment team to analyze the causes of problems producing social fragility, interview members of that society to understand what changes are desirable and possible, and generate a portfolio of media programs that balance the needs of the society in conflict with the capabilities of that society's media. IONA can be used to understand the broad sweep of conflict-related issues in a society to determine an appropriate media intervention strategy. Alternatively, sponsors may wish to use IONA to better determine an appropriate media intervention strategy to address an issue or campaign that they have already identified, such as corruption, ethnic tension, or gender violence, to name just a few. Finally, IONA is still a work in progress. Although the core methodology exists, USIP welcomes feedback necessary to refine the process and its supporting tools, template, and database.

Rationale for the IONA Methodology

The end of the Cold War accelerated the use of media in peacebuilding. Without the discipline imposed by the two rival superpowers, competing ethnicities emerged as a cause of major conflicts in the post-Cold War world. First in Rwanda in 1994 and then in the Bosnia in 1995, ethnic cleansing and genocide became the defining characteristics of savage regional conflicts. In both cases, media played a disturbing role in

accelerating the bloodshed. In response, the international community seized upon media as a policy tool with potentially great power to mend the causes of conflict.

Consequently, the past fifteen years have been a period of intensive experimentation in the application of media to peacebuilding. In Bosnia, the United Nations mandated regulatory changes curtailing hate speech; in Macedonia, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded children's programming teaching conflict-resolution techniques; in Burundi, foreign nongovernmental organizations established a news organization staffed by both Hutu and Tutsi reporters and intended to deliver unbiased and independent news. Substantial funding has been injected into various conflict zones to support media interventions. However, these interventions have not always been effective.[1]

Evaluations of projects in the Balkans and elsewhere reveal various reasons why media interventions intended to promote Western democratic principles and media systems free from government control have not always achieved their objectives:

➤ Media alone cannot create social or political change.[2]

➤ Media intervention strategies have been designed quickly and under far-from-optimal conditions, such as during violent conflict.[3]

➤ Media practices are subordinate to political will rather than independent of political influence.[4]

Although all these observations are true, they are inadequate as operational explanations. If media alone cannot create social change, what else should intervention designers use to complement media-based activities? If media interventions must be designed quickly, how can we accelerate effective intervention planning? And if media activities occur in a politicized environment in combat zones, how should those politics inform the design of media interventions? The problem is not limitations of the media or the uncertainties of a conflict environment, but rather that interventions are developed using methods that cannot fully accommodate these constraints. What media scholar Robert Manoff observed at a USIP conference in 1997 is just as true today: media interventions for peacebuilding are characterized by the absence

of a deliberate and systematic assessment methodology to determine the precise purpose of the specific intervention, why the intervention is needed, and exactly what the intervention must achieve.[5]

IONA seeks to address this problem by enabling a systematic definition of the target society's needs, the intervention's goals, and the criteria for successfully reaching those goals. IONA helps media experts define a media strategy that will effectively reduce conflict in a given society, or address a specific aspect of conflict such as corruption, displaced persons, or any number of issues. Using IONA, assessment teams should return from the field with an understanding of how targeted media investments will affect critical political and social problems. Additionally, with information acquired using IONA, funders can develop requests for proposal (RFPs) that clearly state what needs to be done, what success looks like, and how success will be measured during the implementation stage. By investing in an IONA-based planning study, donors can direct scarce resources to well-defined activities that evidence suggests will generate high returns. Furthermore, IONA findings help donors avoid those conflicts of interest in which implementers develop activities that better align with their own institutional capabilities than with the target society's needs. By defining how media consultants partner with donor organizations and how they identify potential media interventions, IONA seeks to ensure that both the donor organization and the target society get the media interventions that they need.

The community of consultants and experts that serve media donors also benefit from IONA. For those performing assessments, IONA offers a standardized approach that supports a rapid and efficient design of media interventions, a desirable outcome for what are typically fixed-price consulting engagements. Implementing organizations may find that they can better respond to donor needs when RFPs reflect IONA's clearly defined outcomes. Finally, should media interventions become more effective as a result of IONA, it is reasonable to imagine that donors will look to media interventions more frequently as a means for reducing conflict.

Benefits of the IONA Methodology

IONA offers a systematic process for integrating conflict and media assessments. Table 1 compares the problems embodied in current methods for media assessment with the advantages obtained using the IONA solution.

Table 1. Media Assessment Problems and IONA Solutions

Media Assessment Problem	IONA Solution
The media are treated as a discrete, limited set of practices. Insufficient attention is paid to the social, economic, or political environment in which media exist and operate. Consequently, non-media factors undermine an intervention's effectiveness.	**IONA seeks to understand the media in a broad social, economic, and political context.** By considering media and non-media factors in the design of media interventions, IONA formally integrates a needs/conflict assessment (supporting the design of interventions that have a clear purpose) with a media assessment (supporting the design of interventions that are realistic and possible).
Outcomes are imprecisely defined. A methodology that produces poorly defined or overly ambitious objectives tends to result in interventions that are reactive or opportunistic rather than proactive and strategic.	**IONA precisely identifies the outcomes and the means to attain them.** Outcomes are defined as specific changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of target groups and are enabled by a well-defined set of activities.
Evaluation targets activities and processes, not outcomes. Because short-term activities and processes are easily measured, they are frequently confounded with the objectives of the intervention that these activities are meant to achieve.	**IONA explicitly ties media intervention outcomes to specific activities.** This approach enables intervention managers to measure and track aspects that are relevant to intervention outcomes.
Absence of a common methodology hinders effective coordination among implementing organizations. Lacking a common understanding among organizations in the field regarding an intervention's goals, implementers duplicate effort and even work at cross-purposes.	**IONA enables effective coordination among implementing organizations.** This methodology for the collection, organization, and analysis of data improves the quality and timeliness of results. Standardized data structures facilitate comparison across and between intervention studies.

IONA is **systematic and rigorous.** Because the methodology enforces information consistency, data collected during field interviews are entered into the framework and are immediately available for analysis.

This improves both the quality and the timeliness of the analysis and its results. Further, as an **integrated** tool that combines a needs assessment with a media assessment, IONA generates interventions that are both purposeful and possible. It is **outcomes oriented.** By recommending interventions that have been assessed as both purposeful and possible, IONA helps increase the effect of donor investment. Finally, IONA is **formative**. It helps donors make sound decisions about media interventions before human or financial resources have been committed to implementing an activity.

IONA is intended to be accessible and useful to organizations that implement media interventions in conflict-affected environments. With repeated use, media intervention practitioners and donors will create a large database of case studies that can be analyzed to discern qualities of successful and unsuccessful media interventions in fragile societies. IONA tools, instructions, and other resources can be accessed at http://www. usip.org/publications/iona.

Overview of the IONA Methodology

To improve the effectiveness of media interventions, the IONA process builds interventions that are both purposeful (that is, they address issues of high importance) and possible (they have a high likelihood of success). For media interventions to reach their objectives consistently, they must be predicated on the answers to a set of three questions:

1. What are the capabilities of the media sector in the society under study?

2. What do people in a fragile environment identify as the most significant causes of a given problem?

3. For each problem, which solutions are practicable, and which kinds of media interventions are most likely to facilitate achieving that solution?

These three questions can be further elaborated to the following:

1.a What media exist?

1.b How do those media affect their audiences?

2.a What social problems cause instability or conflict and require change?

2.b Which groups in society are most affected by these problems?

3.a What activities will most likely realize the desired changes?

3.b Who will make the desired change take place?

3.c How can the media be used to facilitate the desired change?

3.d How can the media be changed to enable the desired change?

IONA provides a systematic approach to collecting and analyzing the information necessary to answer these eight questions and create a portfolio of important and effective media interventions.

Questions 1.a and 1.b define a baseline of the media capabilities in the society. What are the primary media channels? What segments of society do these channels reach? What kind of content is broadcast within those channels? How does that content affect different segments within the audience? Because IONA is designed to develop media interventions to support social change, the assessment team must begin with an understanding of what impact the media is currently having in the society under study.

Questions 2.a and 2.b allow the assessment team to identify the purposeful or important problems to target. That is, what media interventions can be designed for this society that target the problems identified? In most cases, these questions will surface issues for which media's capabilities should be used as a tool and applied to create social change. In the case of media, though, these questions will identify issues that prevent it from being an effective tool for social change and thus make it a target for social change.

Finally, questions 3.a, 3.b, 3.c, and 3.d enable the assessment team to develop a media strategy and a set of activities that offer the best chance of overcoming specific problems facing society and bringing about the desired changed.

To answer these questions, IONA uses the three-stage process shown in figure 1. In the first stage, Defining the Assessment, the assessment team works with the donor organization to scope the assessment, develop a best guess as to the nature of the media landscape and conflict environment, and create an interview strategy to test these hypotheses. As a general rule, IONA requires assessment teams to do much work early in the assessment process, leaving the later stages for validation and testing. In the second

Figure 1. IONA Staging

Stage 1: Defining the Assessment Perform initial conflict and media analyses to focus on fieldwork.		
	Step 1: Define the Scope of Work	Work with study sponsor to define issues to include in the assessment scope
	Step 2: Profile the Media Landscape	Develop a comprehensive profile of the current media landscape in the fragile society
	Step 3: Identify Issues	Identify issues that foster conflict and make a "best guess" as to the problems, needs, and objectives associated with each
	Step 4: Create an Interview Strategy	Develop an interview strategy to investigate and evaluate each issue
Stage 2: Interviewing Respondents Interview to validate and expand initial conflict and media analyses.		
	Step 1: Validate Media Profile	Interview media experts to verify accuracy of the media landscape profile
	Step 2: Validate and Rank Issues	Interview media experts to identify the high importance issues that generate the most conflict
	Step 3: Contextualize Issues of High Importance	Interview stakeholders to understand in-depth the problems, needs, obstacles, and activities that define issues of high importance
	Step 4: Convert Reported Needs into Intervention Objectives	Reconcile conflicting needs reported in interviews to create objectives for media interventions that build peace
	Step 5: Enroll In-Country Experts as Advisers	Identify in-country experts to evaluate final media intervention designs
Stage 3: Designing Media Interventions Use interview data to create effective, integrated media interventions.		
	Step 1: Finalize Intervention Objectives	Continue synthesis of needs to identify objectives that build peace
	Step 2: Design Media Interventions	Select media activities that realize intervention objectives

	Step 3: Validate Interventions with Experts	Receive feedback from in-country experts evaluating effectiveness of intervention designs
	Step 4: Report Results	Write up assessment for publication

stage, Interviewing Respondents, the assessment team enters the field to confirm what it has learned about the media and to determine the important issues confronting the target society and the corresponding objectives that will address these needs. By the end of the second stage, the assessment team has developed an understanding of media capabilities and potential intervention objectives. In the final stage, Designing Media Interventions, the assessment team develops media interventions by specifying those activities that will most likely realize the assessment's objectives.

In terms of how it collects and frames data, IONA does not distinguish between media and other institutions that play a positive or negative role in society; that is, the media undergo the same kind of examination and analysis as other social institutions. In assessing which tools to use to address conflict-related issues, however, it is important to recognize that media can simultaneously create problems and be part of the solution to other problems. In addition, media are only one of various tools that may be required for solving a conflict issue.

Likewise, IONA does not presume that media-based solutions are superior to others or that the media can or should replace other approaches to addressing a problem. We believe that IONA enables the assessment team to design media-based solutions with the greatest chance of achieving their objectives. At that same time, because IONA builds interventions based on issues identified in a conflict/needs assessment, the assessment team understands where and how their intervention can—and should—be effectively integrated with other kinds of interventions.

The IONA Framework

At the core of the IONA methodology is a data framework designed to capture social change. During a media assessment, the assessment team uses the IONA framework to organize information about social transformations that have already occurred in the target society. More importantly, the framework helps the team identify transitions that need to occur in order to achieve certain objectives that may help to reduce conflict and build peace.

The framework comprises six sets of components that define the desired social transformation. Shown in figure 2, these components are (1) the transformation from problem to objective (or need) defined in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (KAB), (2) obstacles that block that transformation, (3) facilitators that enable it, (4) the position on the Change Ladder, (5) the level of analysis, and finally (6) solutions activities, that is, activities designed to enable these changes and eliminate obstacles.
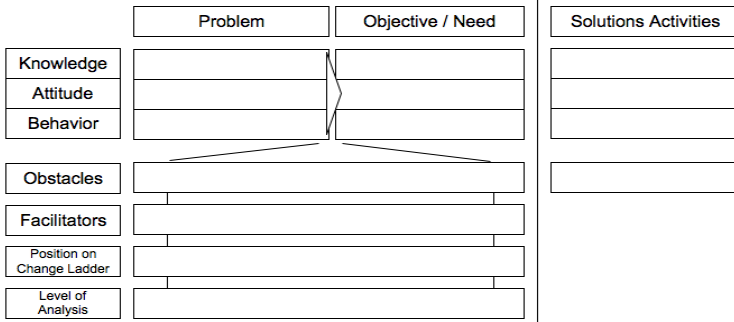
Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors

In describing the transformation of an issue from a problem state (one that causes conflict) to an objective state (one that builds peace), both the problem and objective states are defined in terms of the KAB of targeted groups in a society.[6] Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors are defined as follows:

➤ **Knowledge** is what people in the target society know be true based on cognitive rather than emotional responses.

➤ **Attitudes** are what a people in the target society believe. These are often the reasons why certain knowledge is deemed important or why people engage in certain behaviors.

Figure 2. IONA Framework

> **Behaviors** are what people in the target society do. Behavior is knowledge and attitudes made manifest in context, though not always with deliberate intent.

Although knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors can interconnect in various ways, IONA does not always assume a causal relationship among them. It cannot be assumed, for example, that knowledge alone leads to behavior change. A child soldier who learns about an amnesty program will not necessarily stop fighting. At the same time, if a child soldier stops fighting following exposure to an amnesty media campaign, it cannot be assumed that this soldier stopped because of the campaign. In order to design the media campaign most likely to yield the intended outcome, the field team must identify which change in knowledge, if any, has the greatest likelihood of motivating which kinds of change, if any, in attitudes or behaviors.

Because the IONA framework structures input data (transformations that have happened and transformations that respondents hope will happen) and output data (transformations that will actively build the peace), the desired state in a transformation is termed either a need or an objective. A desired transformation described by a respondent is a need. After considering multiple interviews that report similar or conflicting needs, the assessment team synthesizes these discovered needs into an objective that respects the various needs of the different respondents and their communities.

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