Rapid Response

International Media Support’s Rapid Response mechanism is the organisation’s ability to provide urgent support to local media caught in emergencies and conflict. The RR mechanism is global and flexible; it entails interventions which are context-specific, targeted, and limited in scope as well as duration.

The aim is to enable media to continue to operate and do so safely while producing reliable, accurate, and conflict-sensitive information for the public.

Why media support is vital in emergencies

- Good journalism can help promote dialogue and reconciliation during conflict. But media can also reinforce tensions, incite violence and disrupt peace efforts through one-sided and inaccurate coverage.
- Access to credible and reliable information is often more limited during crises. In certain contexts, ensuring that media are able to provide information may help save lives.
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- Media are often targeted physically or politically, or face logistical, financial and other challenges.
- Unrest frequently leads to censorship and self-censorship.
- Media support should be an integral part of all stages of emergency response — be it prevention, mitigation, disaster relief, recovery, or reconstruction. New technologies have only made the role of media in such situations more relevant.

Types of interventions

IMS divides its RR interventions into the following contextual categories:

- Emergencies, e.g. conflict or natural disaster.
- Drastic change in political context (positive or negative), e.g. a peace agreement, end of a repressive regime, sudden political tension or polarization.
- Rapidly closing space and/or media under threat.
- Early warning — either worrying trends, e.g. tension between media and security forces, poor coverage of certain issues such as radicalization; or preventive action, e.g. preparing media for potentially divisive elections.

Recent interventions

- Cambodia: Acting in response to a rapidly closing space, IMS has helped strengthen the capacity one of the only remaining independent media organizations and bring together like-minded local actors.
- Indonesia: Following the earthquake that hit Sulawesi island in September 2018, IMS launched an initiative offering trauma counselling for journalists affected by the natural disaster.
- Mali: In this politically fragile country, IMS helped organize a series of activities aimed at preparing media for the presidential elections in 2018, including safety training and dialogue meetings between journalists and security forces.
- Myanmar: Reacting to the crisis in Rakhine state, IMS supported safety measures for journalists and the production of balanced and professional coverage of the situation.
- Venezuela: In a country marred by social unrest, economic meltdown and extreme polarization, IMS supported a series of dialogue meetings for journalists from both sides of the political spectrum to discuss issues related to freedom of expression, roles and responsibilities of professional media, “fake news”, etc.
- Desk studies and missions aimed at assessing the needs of media facing conflict, emergency, or political transition. Recent work has covered Bangladesh, Cuba, Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua, Philippines, and Tanzania.