

A multitude of trends are converging to undermine the foundations of information integrity globally. AI-powered disinformation, weak laws and regulations and struggling news organisations are just a few of the factors making it ever harder for people to rely on the information they access.

Since the threats to information integrity are varied and complex, there isn't a single fix that will solve everything. What is needed is a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that reflects the complex and highly diverse nature of those threats: an approach based on collective and strategic action by local, regional and global actors with a shared interest in ensuring that everyone can make informed decisions based on access to trustworthy and timely information.

The IMS Information Integrity Solution Papers address a range of key threats to information integrity. The papers do not purport to be silver bullets, individually or together, nor do they claim to be exhaustive. Instead, they propose a variety of experience-based, workable solutions to mitigate some of the most prominent threats to information integrity and to the ability of people everywhere to access the kind of trustworthy and timely information they need in order to shape their own lives.

This paper looks at how coalitions comprising diverse actors are a key tool for effecting change on the ground.

Information integrity needs coalitions and alliances

THE PROBLEM

For decades, multi-stakeholder groupings, networks and alliances have advocated for improvements to information ecosystems across the world. These coalitions usually operate in volatile and fragile environments, which make them susceptible to setbacks, including capture by political and/or economic interest groups. Also, they rely on relatively short-term and inflexible funding cycles unsuited to the sustained campaigns needed to bring about transformative change. As a result, “most media and civil society collaborations lack the vision to effect lasting societal change”, says Dr Haron Mwangi, former CEO of the Media Council of Kenya, who studies coalitions.

A COMPREHENSIVE AND STRATEGIC APPROACH

Coalition building is “not about forming an institution, but a platform upon which the collective good is advanced”, says Tabani Moyo, director of MISA Zimbabwe and former chair of the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ).

MAZ was formed in 2004 to resist and challenge government repression by fostering unity within the media community. It helped secure constitutional guarantees of media freedom, which it recently used to successfully challenge restrictive sections of a new law. Today, MAZ serves both as an advisor to policymakers and an advocate for change: dual roles that are indicative of the improved relationship between the media and the authorities, which MAZ has helped bring about.

Meanwhile, Pakistan was one of five countries selected to pilot the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and Issues of Impunity. At the time, Pakistan was one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. Guided by the plan, the Pakistan Journalists Safety Coalition (PJSC) brought together media houses, civic organisations, human rights commissioners and parliamentarians to lobby for laws that protect journalists and bring their attackers to justice. This has led to the passing of two laws that established independent safety commissions to protect journalists under attack. The commission in Sindh province has responded to more than a dozen cases in 2025 alone, freeing journalists who have been arrested or kidnapped.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the Febrayer Network brings together writers, researchers and journalists to build the sustainability of the region's independent media. Collaboration gives Febrayer's members access to the resources, knowledge and expertise they might otherwise struggle to find. For example, Febrayer's Counter Academy caters specifically to independent media by combining training in journalism production with subjects such as critical thinking and alternative history. The academy has so far trained 90 young journalists from diverse backgrounds. Febrayer offers short-term financial support to media outlets that provide students with placements during the course, with some graduates then being hired by their hosts.

After collaborating with coalitions such as MAZ, PJSC and Febrayer and with other media development agencies for many years, IMS has identified the following factors that appear to be of significance for the ability of locally driven coalitions to emerge and thrive:

- The context - coalitions usually form and evolve in response to events that present rare, short-lived windows of opportunity to improve or protect the information ecosystem.
- The clarity and focus of coalitions' purpose, role and objectives and how these resonate with the interests and priorities of their members.
- The extent to which coalitions' structures suit their context and purpose.
- The willingness of coalition members to make proactive contributions and stand up for its goals.

Coalitions evolve in different ways, but the best results seem to come from taking an incremental approach towards a long-term objective: setting short-to-medium-term goals that allow coalitions to respond to opportunities and challenges as they arise, and to learn as they go.

As funders and advisors, media development agencies and donors yield considerable and often unhealthy influence. Yet their ability to initiate and, if necessary, drive new coalitions can be crucial. From the outset, they should ensure that coalition members set the agenda and can gradually take over the reins once they have the confidence and capacity to do so.

A coalition's sustainability is closely linked to its ability to remain relevant to its cause, while keeping overheads low and relying on members' contributions – in-kind, material and / or financial – as much as possible.

A coalition needs to draw on different perspectives, approaches and expertise to achieve its objectives, but these diverse interests should coalesce around a shared objective.

ASKS

To donors: Take a long-term view and prepare to be both flexible and patient. It can take years, if not decades, to bring about lasting, structural improvements in information integrity that will ultimately impact international development objectives. Coalitions need to respond to opportunities and challenges as they arise.

To media development agencies: Initiate coalitions if necessary and then mediate and facilitate. Make donors aware that change is likely to take a long time. Build interventions around flexible, pragmatic long-term support that enables coalitions to set their agenda and respond to often unexpected opportunities and challenges.

Coalitions: Keep your eyes on the prize. Develop a clear vision and navigate towards this. Have the confidence to push back if you feel donors and media development agencies are not buying into your vision and allowing you the agency you need to lead.

READ MORE

[Coalitions and coalition building to support media freedom.](#)