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How to fund investigative journalism

Insights from the field and its key donors

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About the report

This report is designed to give funders a succinct and accessible introduction to the practice of funding investigative journalism around the world, via major contemporary debates, trends and challenges in the field. It is part of a series from DW Akademie looking at practices, challenges and futures of investigative journalism (IJ) around the world.

The paper is intended as a stepping stone, or a springboard, for those who know little about investigative journalism, but who would like to know more. It is not a defense, a mapping or a history of the field, either globally or regionally; nor is it a description of or guide to how to conduct investigations or an examination of investigative techniques. These are widely available in other areas and (to some extent) in other languages already.

Rooted in 17 in-depth expert interviews and wide-ranging desk research, this report sets out big-picture challenges and opportunities facing the IJ field both in general, and in specific regions of the world. It provides donors with an overview of the main ways this often precarious field is financed in newsrooms and units large and small. Finally it provides high-level practical advice—from experienced donors and the IJ field—to help new, prospective or curious donors to the field to find out how to get started, and what is important to do, and not to do.

The report is structured in a way that each chapter can be accessed separately.

We are grateful both to our expert interviewees and reviewers for their time and insights, and to many others working in and around the investigative journalism field, who provided us with other valuable information. All input from the interviews—in order to enable interviewees to speak with maximum candor—is anonymized and synthesized, except where it would be artificial to try to obscure the source of particular insights, in which case quotations are provided with permission.

Sameer Padania

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Why might funding investigative journalism be relevant for a donor?

A ten-point primer on trends and opportunities

- 1. Investigative journalism is a small but key part of the flow of quality information in society and in communities. It challenges vested interests, and so is often subject to various threats from those whose interests it threatens, including governments and corporations.
- As IJ—through dying business models, lack of resources, government pressure and other factors—gets squeezed out of many newsrooms, some journalists have been setting up or working with independent investigative organizations. These don't always fit easily into internal grantmaking categories, so donors might need to find new or alternative ways to provide them with funding.
- 3. Independence is critical for IJ, but it does not automatically bring stability or control—for some it does, but for many, the price of independence is increased precariousness.
- 4. Many IJ units rely on a handful of primary sources of funding, including philanthropic funding, making them vulnerable both to donor priorities per se, and to changes in donor priorities, for example, where donors provide project funds or thematically-tied funds.
- 5. Core funding is key to the field. Specialist funders tend to provide core multi-year funds as these provide a measure of stability and flexibility to the grantee—and maximize its independence. But there aren't many of these specialist funders, and their resources are, of course, finite.
- 6. Many funders are understandably keen for their grantees to be financially sustainable, as part of which they encourage grantees to develop greater revenue diversity. Research shows—and interviewees affirm—that revenue diversification can bring additional overheads by requiring more specialized staff to manage new areas of activity.

- 7. Some in the field—and some donors—argue that IJ is a public good that performs key democratic functions and is therefore beyond such market-driven logic, and should be wholly subsidized, perhaps even with a sort of universal basic income for qualifying organizations, on the basis that it is highly specialized and hard to fund but benefits everyone.
- 8. Some organizations have adopted an approach—also attractive to donors—that seeks to increase their engagement with their audiences—for income through donations and membership, for solidarity, for collaboration with expert audience members. Any such route is not just a bolt-on activity, but leads to having to rethink how the organization works.
- 9. There is an increasing effort for donors to exchange experiences and channel their funds for greater impact and to avoid any possible political backlash.
- 10. To reach a more diverse range of IJ grantees, some donors have adapted their application and reporting processes—making them more journalist-friendly, grantee-led—and are providing more predictable streams of funding.

Ten key principles for funders of investigative journalism

A ten-point primer based on advice from the field and key donors

- 1. Have realistic expectations—the field is small, underresourced, and faces many adversaries, but is tenacious and resourceful; even if you have to ask about 'sustainability', also try to think about 'viability'.
- 2. Il is not easy or simple to fund as it differs from region to region, level to level — do your homework and due diligence, and make the application path as easy for the grantee as possible; unlike civil society, journalism groups are not fluent in donor language.
- 3. Get advice and recommendations from peers and/or trusted advisors, including experienced players in the fieldand share what you can (safely) so other funders can make use of it.
- 4. Beware the "donor darling" effect—it can be tempting and more efficient to give to those with an established track record with other funders, but the IJ field needs new, different and diverse organizations and approaches, as the nature of its adversaries is also constantly evolving.
- 5. Provide core funding if at all possible, and multi-year if you can—it protects II's independence and gives it maximum operational flexibility, including experimenting. Resist the temptation to fund individual pieces of content or specific investigations.
- 6. Be prepared to fund the "unsexy stuff" that grantees may not know they can ask for—a finance manager can be transformative, and supporting business/organizational development and building capacity within organizations can be incredibly valuable.
- 7. Consider also supporting the infrastructure of the field, at all levels including the local—networks, conferences, fellowships, legal assistance funds, safety and security, technology development.

- 8. Also be prepared for adverse public, political or even legal attention as a funder or investor supporting public-interest or investigative journalism—for example, some governments may try to restrict cross-border philanthropy.
- 9. Be aware of your and your institution's power—many funders unintentionally distort the incentives for IJ groups by providing thematically-focused funding, or expecting particular kinds of impact or collaboration.
- 10. Be led by your grantees on how they think of impact, rather than dictating an impact framework, be mindful of overburdening them with bureaucratic demands, and be understanding that collecting data and determining impact in I] is more art than science—and support them to buy in expertise, should they need it.

Executive summary

Funding investigative journalism (IJ) is much needed and crucial to the field, but it is also something that requires careful approaches and specialized knowledge. For donors, investigative journalism has a particular attraction in comparison with other parts of the public interest journalism field: its method is rigorous, its ethics unimpeachable, and its moral authority critical. However, donors need to be careful that the way they fund IJ does not undermine the very quality that attracts them to IJ—its absolute independence.

The first question to ask yourself as a donor is: Why are we supporting or thinking of supporting journalism in general or investigative journalism in particular? Because we believe that it is a public good in and of itself and as such plays an important role in society? Or because it is manifestly an important and influential means of conveying messages, and changing minds and behaviors that we as an organization care about?

Even though there has been rapid growth—against daunting odds and adversaries—in the number of independent investigative units and centers around the world, IJ remains a very small field. However, it has achieved global profile and a disproportionate impact.

IJ organizations come in all shapes and sizes, including:

- small independent groups of journalists publishing online;
- national, regional and international not-for-profit investigative centers;
- investigative units within both public service and commercial media;
- units embedded within university departments;
- field infrastructure organizations such as networks and conferences;
- expert intermediary funds specially focused on supporting IJ.

They consistently have to display **inventiveness**, **adaptability and resilience**—with notable examples coming to international attention, such as Rappler in the Philippines, and amaBhungane and the Daily Maverick in South Africa, Egypt's Mada Masr, and India's The Quint. There has also been a wave of investigative startups across Latin America, such as Consejo de Redacción in Colombia or Brazil's Agência Pública. Others, such as the UK's Bureau Local, have inspired peers in other countries to take and adapt their model, as in Germany with Correktiv Lokal, or with the Latin American (and now European) journalism network, Chicas Poderosas.

Yet, while the field is growing, and is punching well above its weight, in reality most IJ units around the world are **precarious**, **struggling to survive**, living "hand-to-mouth". Many independent IJ organizations and units depend on philanthropy for

a portion or majority of their income and to "keep the doors open" (or stay viable).

Despite the many bleak signals, it's also important to note that this is a time of unprecedented collaboration and innovation — mainly in Europe, the US and Latin America, but increasingly elsewhere, too. Investigative organizations and networks are in the vanguard of experimentation in the field of journalism in several ways. Through their cross-border networks and collaborations in the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), Forbidden Stories, European Investigative Collaborations (EIC), among others, they are leading the way in making a virtue of working in transnational settings. Working in cooperative and distributed network structures, they are proving that taking a collective and systemic approach to journalism can have major effects, even on questions of policy, equity, democracy and justice. Moreover, groups like Bellingcat have shown the use of open source investigations; many others have been pioneering the use of drones, cameras, open data, artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technology for their investigations. These methods can also help raise the quality of journalism itself.

Our findings show that there is a viable future for investigative journalism at all levels, local to international, if systematic, predictable, stable funding for networks, centers, journalists, technologies and collaborations can be found. Funders acknowledge that most manifestations of IJ around the world will be non-profit, with remarkable, honorable exceptions. That said, all interviewees agree that IJ needs support for an infusion of skills in organizational management and development as a springboard for its future progress, especially if donors want to encourage IJ groups to develop greater revenue diversification as a route to viability. Our interviewees emphasized that this is a core challenge and that donors should play a key part in strengthening the overall environment to catalyze better business and organizational practices.

While threats are many and spreading, the investigative field is full of adaptive, tenacious, entrepreneurial people, committed to informing the public and holding power to account, and the examples and strategies we outline in this paper do show that it is possible not only to survive while doing this, but to progress and grow. **Supporting greater diversity** in the field, both nationally and internationally—who contributes to its agendas, who speaks on panels, and who leads organizations and networks—should be a priority as the field grows in strength and influence.

Funders need to listen more to the needs of the field, to design application and funding processes responsive to journalism's

needs, and to continue to support its core infrastructure. They should find ways to make funds available to investigative centers and organizations not on donor priority lists, or even in democracies under pressure. Whether this is through existing networks, aligned funding, co-funding, pooled funds or a major new global fund, as has been mooted in 2019, the diversity and amounts of these funds need to increase. Perhaps, said one interviewee, it's not the journalists who need to be sustainable, but the funding.

Funders also need to be prepared that supporting IJ will bring—in some places, and with some adversaries—reputational costs. Those trying to shut down or discredit IJ, and journalism more broadly, often turn the spotlight on the sources of funding to try to impugn the integrity of both donor/investor and recipient/investee.

While the overall picture seems asymmetrical and difficult, the message from interviewees of all stripes is that this is in fact a time of great opportunity and promise, and that well-prepared and flexible donors can make a huge difference to the pace of change and progress in the investigative field, even in highly challenging circumstances.

Investigative journalism @ DW Akademie

DW Akademie, the media development branch of Deutsche Welle, strengthens the human right to freedom of expression. Together with our partners, we play a leading role in the development of free media systems, creating access to information, setting standards for education and independent journalism. One important element in this is investigative journalism (IJ). It holds those in power to account and can trigger changes in legislation, administration, in public as well as in private systems. Our aim is therefore to ensure that IJ can survive and thrive.

We take care to understand structures, practices and challenges of investigative journalism around the world. Based on this conceptual work we promote professional exchange and support IJ networks. We also provide specialized organizational consultancy in this domain. Our country teams currently work with partner organizations in a number of countries, among them Colombia, Jordan, Mongolia, Namibia, Pakistan, Uganda and Ukraine.

1. A brief snapshot of investigative journalism today

1.1 Defining investigative journalism

Investigative journalists, journalism educators and academics have produced many definitions (Aucoin 2006; Hunter 2011). Some argue that all journalism has by definition to be investigative, and that all forms of journalism that are not, are a form of promotion. Others place emphasis on how IJ makes hidden things public, and others on the length and depth of the reporting involved. Investigative journalists interviewed for this report, for example, distinguish between investigative reporting, in-depth reporting, watchdog or accountability reporting, or other forms of long-form writing. Those involved in the field of cross-border collaborative journalism are finding new and distinct qualities that emerge through the dynamics of mass collaboration and coordinated publication (Sambrook 2018; Alfter 2019).

In order to explain the distinctiveness to non-specialists, David Kaplan of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), the major international infrastructure organization for the investigative field, defines the five key characteristics of IJ as follows:

- it is in-depth, systematic and original;
- it uses large amounts of documents and data to follow trails;
- it starts with a hypothesis and seeks evidence to prove or disprove this hypothesis;
- it makes public secret or hidden findings;
- it aims at social accountability.

We propose to use this as our starting point in this report, supplemented by the nuances suggested by our interviewees that the characteristics and boundaries of IJ may vary between different geographies and localities, in different cultural settings, and according to topic. They suggest that in these diverse contexts, **investigative journalism can mean different things and have more elastic boundaries** that respect the spirit if not always the letter of this and similar high-level definitions (Jurrat, Lublinski, and Mong 2018).

In zones where checks and balances on power, corruption and information are weaker or non-existent, such as many parts of the Middle East, the notion of investigative journalism is intimately bound up with 'change' (Bebawi 2016), to the extent that Bebawi specifically calls it "impact journalism" rather than investigative. In Africa, too, the intention of investigative journalism to trigger action or change processes is an important element (Lublinski, Spurk et al. 2016). This desire for change also exists in Asia but, conversely, there is much more pressure from governments on journalism, including investigative journalism, to focus on national unity, social harmony, hierarchy, authority than in other parts of the world. In a 2019 New York Times profile of Chinese investigative reporter Liu Wanyong, the paper noted that "Instead of investigations, the [Chinese Communist] party wanted "positive-energy stories" that would make people feel good as the economy sours".

1.2 The investigative field

The investigative journalism field has achieved new profile and impetus in recent years with the global impact of collaborative, cross-border investigations like the Panama Papers (RISJ 2019), with the startling rise of open source investigations through groups like Bellingcat, and with the inventiveness, adaptability and resilience of many investigative media around the world—Rappler in the Philippines, for example, amaBhungane and the Daily Maverick in South Africa, India's The Quint (Posetti 2018), the UK's Bureau Local (Posetti 2019), and a wave of investigative startups in Latin America—against daunting odds and adversaries.

This gives the impression of a robust field punching well above its weight. Interviewees agree, however, that while the potential of and interest in investigative journalism has rarely been higher, this small field is in a precarious position, and needs more substantial, predictable, long-term funds from a wider variety of donors and other sources to consolidate its position, and realize its potential.

In many parts of the world, however, faced with the broader headwinds that are making life difficult for journalism in general—structural changes like the decline in advertising revenues, and adversarial challenges like hostile governments, for example—IJ is not viable without philanthropic funding or generous individuals, ideally providing core funding which reinforces IJ's agency and independence. Where it is able to make revenue of some kind, its own editorial rhythms and cycles are so different from daily or schedule-driven newsrooms that its economic incentives and commercial attractiveness are a completely different proposition.

1.3 Investigative journalism in specific regions

While Kaplan's definition noted above is appropriate to many contexts, interviewees asked us to note that in other contexts —resource-poor or fragile states, adversarial or captured media environments, some Global South democracies, for example—it may be more difficult for journalists working with investigative techniques or with an investigative ethos to meet all of those criteria. Our interviewees told us that, while there are certain bedrock criteria, the contours of investigative journalism may shift depending on where it is being done, or who is doing it. Interviewees consistently asked us to try to avoid relying solely or primarily on systems and frameworks set in and framed by the anglophone Global North.

Our regional expert interviewees each gave us a *tour d'horizon* of the major issues present in Sub-Saharan Africa, East and South-East Asia, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Across the continent, the overall political environment for independent media is hostile, and in most countries the commercial environment for any kind of public interest journalism is weak, especially outside major cities and media groups; competition is fierce and margins are tiny if not non-existent. Regional and continental IJ networks exist but are not yet as robust as those in other regions. The only four markets where interviewees felt IJ centers may be minimally viable—i.e. managing to survive in the market, rather than being hand-to-mouth or disproportionately reliant on foundation funding (Ntibinyane 2015)—are Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. One interviewee noted that, in many countries, journalists earn so little from their jobs that they are forced to accept money from other sources, such as soli or other forms of off-books payments, or they are under pressure to take money from civil society or donor organizations to attend workshops. There is a perception that there are a handful of local gatekeepers to international funding and that, in order to access this money, good relationships with these gatekeepers are essential. Other than Open Society Foundation (OSF), there are few, if any, consistent or substantial funders of IJ in the region.

Latin America

Threats remain and in places are mounting, especially in Central America, Mexico and Venezuela, or in right-wing settings like Brazil. There are a few solid investigative units and networks, but a host of others that are either very precarious or weak. This is partly because many IJ units start as a group of journalists with a strong mission, but without a business plan, a tech team or a sense of how to master distribution. Investigative networks exist both on the regional and national levels, with the Latin American Investigative Journalism Conference COLPIN acting as a key coordinator and conference in the region, but other venues such as Media Party Buenos Aires also bring investigative journalists together with many other stakeholders across the broader media and technology spheres. There is a growing appreciation of the importance of community-building for independent journalism, and lessons to be learned from groups like Argentina's Chequeado, or Chicas Poderosas, which has built a strong network of women journalists and allies across the region, who also produce investigations on a range of topics related to the status of women in Latin America. There are few major funders for journalism, let alone IJ—with OSF, Luminate and Ford Foundation among the leading international donors, and Avina Foundation one of the leading funders from within the region.

Asia (mainly South-East, East and South Asia)

A region rich in media innovation and energy. There are major anchor names in the IJ and mission-driven field—from Rappler in the Philippines, Malaysiakini in Malaysia, Tempo in Indonesia, and other businesses, publications and centers across the region—and they are managing to survive and even prosper in highly competitive and adversarial climates

(although there is churn in the wider media startup field). There is considerable innovation happening in the field in the face of the major constraints faced by IJ's in China and India, for example, and this is beginning to be more widely understood in the anglophone sphere. Hyper-connected but authoritarian environments like China can give rise to new and exciting IJ methods, including in the environmental sphere (Tong 2018)—or in terms of new business models (Zhang 2018). In some countries, even referring to "investigative journalism" can be "asking for [trouble]"—though some have tried to argue that "speaking truth to power is an Asian value" (Coronel 2014). In those cases, interviewees told us, the most productive angle is to focus on, for example, the open data ecosystem, on entrepreneurship and sustainability, and on consumer rights- or public safety-focused journalism, both of which have widespread public support and can outflank attempts to control online discourse. International or domestic donors find it hard even in some of the democratic countries in the region, but regional IJ projects do exist.

Europe

The region has a larger concentration of regionally-based funders and funding mechanisms than the other parts of the world, and a growing diversity of national and cross-border networks involving or led by investigative journalism. Media capture in Eastern Europe is at systemic proportions, and independent investigative journalism under constant political, legal, physical, digital and economic attack, both at the national and local level. There is insufficient coordination or information-sharing between and across networks. Networks of regional centers offer a crucial source of innovation, solidarity, resources and expertise to mitigate the threats and to continue to produce high-quality IJ from inside even very hostile states, but the cost and risk of this is high. These networks are varied in style and composition and while they do compete in some senses for funding, they also often overlap with each other, and collaborate and share data, resources and journalists. Key networks include the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), European Investigative Collaborations (EIC), Black Sea, and the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN). These are often composed of national centers for investigative reporting. The annual Dataharvest conference in Belgium serves as the continent's key meeting place for investigative journalists and networks. Major European philanthropic donors include the Adessium Foundation, Luminate, and the Open Society Foundations, alongside many smaller donors, especially in Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands. Intermediary funds like JournalismFund.eu and IJ4EU provide a buffer between individual funders and the II field. Efforts are underway to try to engage a wider range of funders to the journalism field through networks like the Journalism Funders Forum, the Expertenkreis Qualitätsjournalismus of the Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen, and the pooled fund, Civitates (which, though not a journalism funder, has touched on topics of interest to IJ).

1.4 Impact and the risk of funding investigative journalism

For donors **investigative journalism has a particular attraction** in comparison with other parts of the public interest journalism field. Its method is rigorous, its ethics unimpeachable, and its moral authority critical. As one interviewee noted, Asian governments are wary of investigative journalism because of the perception that it has the power to "bring a government to its knees."

Investigative groups and their donors define impact in many different ways, including:

- exposure of wrongdoing, corruption, criminality, etc.
- resignation, dismissal, prosecution of wrongdoers;
- adoption or reform of legislation;
- recovery of public funds.

One of the risks of foundation funding is that **foundation priorities supersede and distort the priorities of grantees** (Benson 2018)—in this case, investigative journalists. In short, the IJ field needs funds, and this can lead IJ organizations to seek to bend themselves into shapes that are more donor-friendly, including in articulating their impact in particular ways, or agreeing to work on particular topics. This power dynamic has been particularly studied in the Global South (Schiffrin 2018; Gadzekpo, Paterson, and Wasserman 2019), but is also a factor in other regions. The very quality that attracts many donors to IJ is the same thing that donors ought to draw a clear ethical red-line around, for example, by providing core funding, funding through independent intermediaries, or by supporting grantees to define impact approaches, rather than imposing them.

The presence of IJ in the public sphere is now acknowledged as something of a **cultural force**—through the major ICIJ and similar investigations, through further popular culture representations (such as Kenya's Top Story reality TV show, in which IJ students compete against each other in a show reminiscent of The Apprentice), and through—more darkly—the **killings of journalists** around the world, and latterly in Europe.

The collective profile and impact of models like the Panama Papers, the Daphne Project, GuptaLeaks ("South Africa's Watergate or Pentagon Papers moment" as one interviewee called it), and Bureau Local has spillover effects both within and across borders (Graves 2019). But outside of such high-profile and coordinated investigations, the IJ field still struggles to popularize its own work in ways that are compelling to larger, more general audiences.

How can IJ find ways to collect, present or share its information that allows people to engage more? Some (like Bureau Local) are trying theatre pieces, for example, and others, such as civil society organization Global Witness, have tried atten-

tion-grabbing events involving journalists and investigators such as their "Kleptocrat's bus tour of London" (Global Witness 2016). One starting point might be through collaboration with the field of 'engaged journalism', in which many journalism groups—including South Africa's Daily Maverick—are reorienting themselves to be much more centered on their audiences' needs (Charamboulos 2019).

1.5 Investigative journalism meets innovative methods

This is a time of unprecedented experimentation and innovation, driven as much by necessity as curiosity or technological advances (Breiner 2019). Investigative organizations and networks are in the vanguard of experimentation in the field of journalism in several ways.

Through their cross-border networks and collaborations in the ICIJ, Forbidden Stories, EIC and many other instances around the world, IJ is leading the way in journalistic collaboration and cooperation, and in working in transnational settings (Sambrook 2018; Alfter 2019).

Some frame this work—bringing together multiple IJ units, media outlets and networks to work collaboratively on the same body of evidence—as a new ethos within journalism, a **journalistic commons** focused not on competition for scoops, but in genuine collaboration in the collective transnational public interest. Through their cooperative and distributed network structures, they are proving that ways of working that take a collective and systemic approach to journalism can have outsized effects, even on major questions of policy, equity and justice.

The perceived crisis around misinformation has prompted many to think hard about new methods and approaches to how to uncover and establish facts, including how to work across formerly rigid silos. Many in IJ—while retaining their own values, autonomy and distinctiveness—are of necessity, for example, engaging more systematically with groups specialized in other open source and civil society forms of investigation. A number of interviewees argued that the sector's donors, who sometimes draw quite rigid boundaries around whom they consider journalists and what they consider journalism, need to become more flexible in funding cross-disciplinary or hybrid forms of investigative journalism. Interviewees called on the field and its donors to embrace open source forms of investigation, to explore much closer ties with other stakeholders involved in investigation, and to address power imbalances within the IJ field itself to make it more diverse and representative.

1.6 Threats and pressures on investigative journalism

Investigative journalism, like journalism in general, is **under pressure worldwide from an array of pressures and threats**. Investigative journalism, challenging, vested interests and things the powerful would rather keep hidden, is at the sharpest end of these threats. The common threats faced by IJ are intensifying in some places and for some types of IJ actors particularly.

Investigative journalists and IJ more broadly face threats on several levels:

Physical threats

The threat of violence continues to affect IJ in all regions—whether to individual journalists, to infrastructure, or to the ability to access spaces to report. While this risk has been a condition of working life for many journalists around the world, it has only latterly become, with the killings of three investigative journalists in the last two years, a genuine threat to life within the EU. The brevity with which we note these here is not intended to minimize their importance, but we recognize that these are better documented and analyzed in other places, such as CPJ (Committee to Protect Journalists), RSF (Reporters Sans Frontières) and their regional and sector-specific partners, for both up-to-date analyses and statistics, and platforms for action.

Political and legal threats

Investigative journalists have long had to contend with denials, mudslinging, legal cases, arrest and imprisonment, and other tactics to frustrate, discredit or diminish their reporting. Now politicians around the world—including in stable democracies—are using these tactics in a preemptive way to **undermine the legitimacy of journalism** as a way of establishing truths about the world, and to erode the gains made towards greater transparency and accountability, by weakening access to information laws and freedom of information regimes, for example.

They can range from anti-journalist rhetoric to outright denunciation, from legislation to politicization of other mechanisms (such as investment rules), malicious or frivolous lawsuits, and other forms of interference and disruption. Their use is growing in all regions in concert with trends such as the rise of the hard right, growing trends in state and media capture, targeting of cross-border philanthropy and investment, and so on. Recent cases in 2019 such as police raids on journalists in Northern Ireland and Australia illustrate that it is becoming less and less taboo for even democracies to target journalists under the law.

Digital threats

While investigative journalists are perhaps more aware of the range of digital threats to their work than other types of jour-

nalists, many journalism organizations around the world—including public-interest and investigative ones—remain poorly equipped to deal alone with the range of digital threats that can be deployed against them. These can include penetration of private and sensitive material or communications, Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) or other attacks on websites and social profiles, targeted harassment of organizations and individuals, and doxxing (releasing hacked private data to embarrass the hacked individual). Many of these threats are disproportionately targeted—in the broader journalism sphere—against women and other systematically excluded or marginalized groups and minorities within IJ, to intimidate, silence or drive them offline altogether (OSCE 2016).

While the regional and international IJ networks can and do provide some support in terms of advice and infrastructure, and the technologies and protocols around major cross-border investigations are ever more sophisticated, interviewees say this remains a major gap and vulnerability. Though open source or low-cost tools exist to support resource-poor newsrooms to access important technologies like leaks platforms, in reality most are not equipped to deal with the level of technology and security required to implement more complex solutions like these. At the same time, relying on corporate or commercial technology—which can be better equipped to deal with such digital threats—can undermine or compromise IJ groups' independence in other ways (Nechushtai 2018).

Economic threats

Independent IJ groups—because their work is harder to find markets for—face different challenges to those faced by more commercially attractive media, and so solutions for the latter group might not map across to the IJ field. IJ groups in general are **struggling to raise even basic funding**. In many countries, especially smaller ones, there is no market to speak of, no local source of philanthropic funds (and no prospect of getting onto priority country lists for international donors), little prospect of sustainable crowdfunding, no culture of media-related membership, and often a significant level of media capture by adversarial interests. More worryingly, there is a feeling that most units are struggling with **not having core skills in how to run a business or an organization**, and that this needs to be elevated to a much higher level of priority among donors.

Information, misinformation and disinformation

There is a **crisis of information** in many parts of the world. Journalism—and IJ particularly—represented an important and legitimate system of public knowledge, but various trends have eaten away at this status. Some of these come from the changes in technology and digital media and changes in the power dynamics around how information is produced and distributed—the so-called "democratization" of publishing.

Equally, some stem from deliberate and systematic efforts by some governments and their allies to undermine basic concepts such as truth, facts and knowledge, which had seemed shared and immutable, but in fact now appear malleable and volatile. Other threats include 'stealth communications' like PR (Curry Jansen 2019)—some newsroom journalists report receiving more than 100 PR messages a day. As trust in the media declines in general (Newman 2019; McKewon 2018; Edelman 2019), interviewees worry that this has spillover effects even for more trusted forms of journalism like IJ.

Some questioned whether 'trust' is the right framing for investigative journalism—the defining quality of IJ may be rather that it is perceived to have 'integrity' and is therefore inherently 'trustworthy'. In conversations about media sustainability, for example, even those interviewees advocating a 'survival of the fittest' market-driven approach to journalism acknowledge that investigative journalism 'must be saved', as it is not generally commercially viable.

As donors and other actors seek to respond to the perceived crisis of mis- and disinformation, some see **funding IJ** as a key way to push back on these phenomena—as it is research-based, involves uncovering new facts and setting them in a broader context, and is often backed by voluminous documentation. IJ certainly has a role to play, but must find ways to avoid being co-opted into other battles. Recent research on three Global South investigative newsrooms (Posetti 2019) shows that these newsrooms—Rappler, The Quint and Daily Maverick—have each had to grapple with this dynamic. They have had to 'embrace' the role of fact-checkers, as this is a key part of their emerging day-to-day value to society, but this has brought other benefits. Others, too, may be able to straddle these two roles

1.7 The need for more diversity

As with any field that has grown somewhat organically and quickly, and that faces both existential pressures and resource constraints, the field's focus is on meeting large-scale and existential challenges. But as the field grows in size and influence, structural and practical challenges also emerge.

The message from outside Europe and the US is that the field has been—to this point—largely framed and dealt with from a Northern, white, often male, anglophone perspective. A female interviewee recounted being told that her inability to fundraise sufficiently for her organization from US donors particularly could be solved by "hiring a middle-aged white dude." Others said that the field—both in their respective regions and internationally—now needs to diversify, especially at leadership levels, so that agenda-setting for the field (including in how conferences are programmed, who gets to speak and about what) is more equitable.

When probed on whether examples of women at senior levels within the sector, including Maria Ressa of Rappler, Marina Walker of ICIJ and Lina Attalah at Mada Masr, showed a positive trend, one interviewee stated that this did not change the **experience of women working in less prominent settings**, or in the majority of male-dominated newsrooms around the world. Dimensions of diversity and plurality that interviewees mentioned included gender, national origin, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, disability, and class (to which one might also add neurodiversity).

Another interviewee stated it in starker terms: "Investigative journalism needs to decolonize." By this, they meant that because the values, norms and chief examples of the field have largely been set by its US and northern European white participants, peers working in other contexts around the world are seen as heroically attempting to reach that norm the best they can. This interviewee gave the example of how journalism conferences often place journalists from difficult or crisis situations on panels about those crises, rather than simply as professional peers. While this is an outlier statement, it is echoed by another interviewee who noted that, "What 'investigative' means in different parts of the world is very cultural."

Regional gatekeepers

In certain regions, the 'donor darling' effect can lead to a broader gatekeeping effect, where access to major donors means having to go through a particular local or regional ally or intermediary, and new entrants find it hard to get on donors' radar. Donors should guard against reinforcing this effect inadvertently or deliberately, whether funding directly in such regions or through collaborative or pooled funds. Donors should regularly refresh their knowledge of the range of players in an environment, and to try to get an independent read on power dynamics in the field, especially if they are not based there—perhaps by using independent local or regional researchers or consultants. At the same time, artificially introducing competition or rivalry by funding another actor where it is not warranted can be just as damaging.

"Network pluralism"

Some advocate for greater 'network pluralism'—meaning that, although the IJ field is small, the networks supporting and connecting the field, the technologies enabling and underpinning it, and the conversations about the field's present and future need to be more independent, inclusive and diverse. The field also needs stronger and more diverse funding relationships, and greater equity in relation to big tech. This is both in order to develop greater resilience and redundancy, and in particular regions to avoid an over-concentration of power in particular networks, venues or organizations, especially within regions.

2. Why does investigative journalism need donor funding?

Figures for public interest funding of journalism around the world are notoriously laborious to compile and are considered unreliable. That said, even the indicative research conducted by both the investigative journalism and media development fields into funding of journalism suggests that the amount spent globally is striking. The GIJN claims that **IJ receives just 2% of all media support** (Kaplan 2013; Sullivan 2013), which itself represents a tiny fraction of global aid flows. Research and surveys indicate that IJ units and networks are systematically underfunded, even compared to other parts of the journalism field. While there are high-profile examples of healthy and even growing IJ organizations internationally, the reality is that the majority of the field is financially precarious and organizationally fragile—and that is without taking into account the often hostile environments they work in.

2.1 How investigative journalism is financed

Since the unbundling of media, and the shift towards digital advertising, it has become more apparent how IJ has been historically cross-subsidized by other, more commercially attractive or viable parts of media businesses. The decline in print revenues and the squeeze on television news and current affairs has, for example, led to a shrinking in the quantity of investigative units within established news organizations worldwide. This is partly compensated for by the rise of non-profit newsrooms around the world (Ntinbyane 2016). In many cases it has been donors, including governments, philanthropy, wealthy individuals, and generous audiences who have shouldered the burden of funding investigative journalism. Furthermore, public service media continue to support IJ in many countries where public service broadcasting is truly independent.

Research for this report reinforces the conclusions of previous publications (Schiffrin 2016; Jurrat 2018; Requejo-Aleman 2014; Ntbinyane 2015) that most investigative newsrooms and publications around the world, outside of a few well-funded markets, are essentially "living hand-to-mouth" as they are illequipped to compete in commercial markets, and do not have the specialist staff who could anchor other forms of revenue generation. While there are a variety of methods, in aggregate, that seem like a coherent set of practices for conducting and improving revenue generation and fundraising, in reality, there are deep systemic issues which donors and other supporters of IJ can help the field to grapple with, in order to help it fulfil its mission and potential.

Long-term stability is never guaranteed

As noted, journalism is both in a period of great turmoil and of great opportunity. Some interviewees expressed the fear that donor pressure on journalism organizations to demonstrate and document impact is distracting them from their

core mission and purpose. Others, like South Africa's the Daily Maverick, argue that this is a **practical necessity** and have parlayed their role in breaking the Gupta Leaks scandal into a highly successful membership program, which has in turn forced the organization to think deeply about its own model and purpose (Benson 2018; Barber-Green 2018).

Diverse trends and pressures on donors and philanthropies, including the need to demonstrate impact have, over recent years particularly, infused the donor space with the language, and assumptions and logics of market-based solutions (e.g. social entrepreneurship, Silicon Valley startup culture). A number of interviewees noted that this is a tension in the field that needs continued discussion, research, experimentation and support—the implication is that there needs to be a **diversity of economic logics and paradigms** for IJ organizations to operate under. Mada Masr in Egypt, Belgium's Apache and Scotland's The Ferret, for example, have chosen a cooperative model of ownership and governance..

Advice from media funding experts is that grantees should "know who they are," meaning that in dealing with any new sources of funding, they should **not stray from their values**—becoming unmoored from them renders an organization less attractive and less relevant. Donors have a strong normative role in making sure their funding is not distorting organizations' own incentives, to the extent possible. One donor advises her organization's grantees to have a page on their website detailing their policy on what funds they will and won't accept.

What our interviewees do emphasize strongly is that there are certain pre-conditions for investigative units and organizations, wherever they are in the world, to be given the best possible start in life, or the best possible chance of growing or scaling in the right way—and other conditions that limit or frustrate growth. As in other resource-constrained fields, early on the burden of running organizations usually falls on the shoulders of the founder or most senior person — often an editor — who ends up acting simultaneously as editor-in-chief, chief operating officer, human resources director, bookkeeper, finance director, social media outreach officer, fundraiser, and grants compliance officer. This is obviously unsustainable, and in terms of supporting the viability of organizations, is more likely to lead to a mixture of Founder Syndrome (Hume & Abbott 2017), control freakery, and burnout. At minimum, say our interviewees, having a person involved at an early stage who is competent in business matters—even in basic things like how to reconcile bank statements—gives a level of stability and independence that potential funders will note and value.

As Sembra Media's data shows in Latin America (Sembra Media 2017), having a dedicated sales person can increase overall sales by double-digits. Bellingcat—not necessarily a core IJ field member, but widely cited nonetheless—noted that,

without a specialist part-time fundraiser, and subsequently a business director, both their growth and organizational discipline might have been compromised. Finding donors who understood these points in their organizational trajectory, and committed to supporting these costs directly, helped them to level up each time.

Having funders who understand these needs, and the need to underwrite these core costs, or for their grantees to access independent expert business consulting services, can be a huge boost to grantees.

2.2 Editorial + business + tech = success?

Our interviewees consistently told us that supporting IJ means more than simply supporting the field to report. In the contemporary media environment, in order to be viable, IJ organizations need traditional IJ expertise, alongside deep technical expertise and strong organization and business management skills. But accessing—or knowing where to access—these skills is a persistent challenge for IJ practitioners wanting to build stronger organizations.

The challenge lies in matchmaking, many interviewees told us. Journalists emerging, for example, from newspapers to launch their own initiatives, don't usually have the tech or business contacts, nor the funding relationships to access diverse startup resources. Bringing together successful grantees and examples from the field or from adjacent fields, to share and exchange these kinds of learnings and practices, whether exclusively among IJ organizations, or a wider selection of public-interest media grantees, could work for certain kinds of donors or regions. Aspects of this happen already in the existing field conferences, such as GIJN, in long-standing international convenings like ISOJ (International Symposium on Online Journalism) in Austin, Texas, Buenos Aires' Media Party, Africa's Media Indaba, and in the more recent and startup focused Splice Beta in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Some initiatives do exist in these areas, and networks like Hacks/Hackers could prove a valuable ally in this respect.

A form of local field presence—either an organization, or a physical hub, like Myanmar's Phandeeyar or the wave of tech hubs across West Africa—that is independent from IJ centers (and other journalism entities), but understands these pressures, and can support that matchmaking, may be a viable way to catalyze. One solution might be to mandate a support organization to work across a cohort of grantees, as MacArthur Foundation does with Reboot for its work in West Africa. Another might be to support a new independent organization which specializes on organizational and business development for public interest journalism groups and networks, including investigative journalists. Another idea suggested by an interviewee is building a back-office infrastructure for small jour-

nalist teams to plug into, so they can focus on their reporting, while the back-office team takes care of the finances and basic operations.

Either way, interviewees emphasized that this is a core challenge for the sector's viability, and that donors will play a key part in strengthening the overall environment to catalyze better business and organizational practices.

3. How to get started in funding investigative journalism

Funding in the investigative field often requires a **closer collaboration** and **higher trust level** between grantmaker and grantee and, at times, special arrangements to protect both. In light of the sensitive, adversarial and even hostile environment that investigative journalists and their supporters face, and the broader ructions affecting the journalism field as a whole, the overall message from our 17 interviewees was that both funders and the IJ field need to remain alive to a **constantly shifting range of possibilities**, and that **the days of stable and static models are over**. Everyone—as one donor put it—needs to be on a trajectory to somewhere. In this section, we attempt to summarize the scaffolding that new, curious or less experienced donors will need to enter the space with intentionality and respect.

3.1 Laying the groundwork

All advice from both donors and grantees points to the fact that this is **not** an area in which to dabble lightly. It is understandable that donors or civil society organizations seeking to make an impact would look to investigative journalism as potentially producing a highly tangible form of accountability. Would-be funders and backers of investigative journalism units need to **be well-prepared and well-informed**. This involves doing solid groundwork, on the field, on potential avenues for support, and on your own practices and structures.

The first question to ask yourself—as a donor—is why are you supporting or thinking of supporting journalism? Because you believe that journalism is a public good in and of itself, and as such plays an important role in society? Or because it is manifestly an important and influential means of conveying messages, and changing minds and behaviors that your organization cares about?

While in other parts of journalism there is some debate over which approach is right and should hold sway, in the investigative field our interviewees' consensus is that **IJ** is a public good that merits funding, rather than a tool that is designed to secure specific kinds of impact. Experienced donors cautioned against thinking about investigative journalism as a tool to solve specific thematic questions or problems, except where this is driven by the journalists and their partners themselves.

One donor observed that the field in the US has received a "Trump bump"—a spike in support for IJ organizations after the election of Donald Trump to the US Presidency. This rise in funding has not, the donor said, been replicated in other places where similar types of leaders or politics prevail.

Read current thinking and analysis

The first step for any curious funder is to read around the topic. In contrast to, say, ten years ago, there is now a considerable amount of information out there about the IJ field. There are numerous guides to what IJ is, how to do it, and who and what constitutes the field, with most collated at the GIJN's online helpdesk.

Some feel that in some locations, the secret to IJ's independence and resilience will be found through commercial or market sustainability in some form. Making at least part of its revenues from the market—so goes the thinking—demonstrates that there is demand for the organization's services, and insulates it from accusations of, for example, instrumentalization by foreign or international funders.

Others feel that it is inappropriate to force IJ groups to seek revenue, as donors or governments should provide for it as a public good. While this is the case with, for example, public service media, this school of thought suggests that funders ought to fund IJ groups, as the "business model is not functioning throughout the world. It should not matter whether it is financially sustainable or not. [...] The whole of journalism is destabilizing as it changes."

To get a general overview of and introduction to funding journalism and media, we recommend reading two primers—the Media Impact Funders Global Media Philanthropy: What Funders Need to Know About Data, Trends and Pressing Issues Facing the Field (Armour-Jones and Clark, 2018) and the Ariadne Network's An Introduction to Funding Journalism and Media (Padania 2018). These provide an accessible overview of the broad debates and techniques in the sector around the world.

3.2 Think in terms of 'viability' as well as 'sustainability'

Many donors have long focussed on sustainability and on financial sustainability in particular. Recent research from DW Akademie, among others, suggests that donors and IJ media need to think more in terms of viability, by not thinking about sustainability solely or primarily from a financial angle.

This seam of work—which has been discussed and articulated in a range of settings beyond DW Akademie—suggests that those supporting and running IJ projects think in a systematic way about the dimensions that impact on IJ beyond pure economic sustainability. For journalism organizations to be viable—in other words to be able to survive against the multi-dimensional threats, and to take advantage of the multiple opportunities of the new environment to continuously produce quality content—actors need to be cognizant of a wider array of areas (see figure below):



3.3 Why should philanthropy step into the funding gap for investigative journalism?

Philanthropy has specific advantages compared to other equally valuable sources of funding. It is often able to provide core funding, or funding for experimental or pilot approaches. In some cases, such funders have the ability to fund more rapidly and flexibly than other kinds of funders.

Core funding—also known as General Operating Support or unrestricted funding—is critical to the IJ field, as this gives IJ organizations and networks the maximum independence to use the funds, and minimal restrictions from the funder side. All the funders interviewed for this paper strongly encouraged new donors considering entering the field to adopt core funding on principle, rather than trying to fund specific investigations, or content on specific areas. Investing in the core capacity of the IJ field in the places donors care about is more likely to have spillover effects for transparency and accountability, for civil society, and for democratic governance than investing in specific investigations. IJ groups themselves noted that, due to the limited amounts of funding available in general and the difficulty in getting conversations with many potential funders, most II applicants find it very difficult to access this kind of unrestricted funding. One funder program officer specifically said they are moving towards taking all calls and enquiries to try to make this easier for potential grantees.

Many donors both in the IJ field and beyond are encouraging grantees to work towards **greater revenue diversity**—having enough sources of income that if one or two fail, the organization is still able to continue operating. Recent research from the non-profit world shows that the effects of revenue diversification strategies are not yet clear and can place added strain on organizations to have to manage multiple and diverse sources of income from different constituencies with divergent needs (Lu 2019). More urgently, say interviewees from both the IJ field and its donors, many IJ groups do not have a basic understanding of how to run a business/organization, let alone of how to seek funds from and report to a philanthropic donor organization. This is independent of whether interviewees believe that IJ organizations should have to operate according to market conditions or not.

As a response to this, interviewees agreed that philanthropic donors and others backing the field ought to provide two layers of professional support:

- to journalists particularly around the core skills needed to run an organization in general, especially but not exclusively in terms of financial management
- more specific and targeted support to strengthen particular elements that are business-critical: identifying potential business models, revenue diversity, tech, general business development, engagement, growth. Each of these areas will require specialized staff, as they are easy to do inexpertly.

3.4 New actors — shouldn't Silicon Valley be footing the bill?

Facebook and Google take, between them, more than 70% of digital advertising revenue. For this, and many other reasons,

both companies have had to develop structures to support journalism, both in terms of the technological and conceptual transition to a digital-first world, and then with actual funding to help media organizations conduct experiments. Their **interventions have not been universally praised**, though Google has come away with fewer brickbats, focusing on funding media innovation and new revenue models.

Google particularly has interacted with investigative journalism, by providing independent IJ groups (among many others in the journalism field) with funding to experiment and innovate through its European Digital News Initiative Innovation Fund, and subsequently through its international News Initiative Challenges in different regions of the world. Another significant investment in the sector came from Jigsaw (formerly known as Google Ideas), which supported the technical development and improvement of Investigative Dashboard, a free but password-protected collection of tools essential to the work of investigative journalists everywhere.

Experiments such as Bureau Local and The Ferret's fact-checking service, both in the UK, would perhaps have been lost in philanthropic limbo had they not received unrestricted funds from an innovation-focused funder. More traditional media development- and freedom of expression-oriented funders have taken note, and many are either creating their own innovation funding programs, or supporting joint or external ventures like SAMIP in South Africa, or the Prague Civil Society Centre's Switch Fund. Other grassroots initiatives like the New Ventures Lab of the feminist IJ network Chicas Poderosas have focused on strengthening media entrepreneurship among women investigative journalists in Latin America.

As new actors—donors, technologists, new forms of journalism and civil society organizations—enter and reconfigure parts of the field, there is considerable scope, say our interviewees, for concerted, imaginative and ambitious action. Should large-scale funds like the proposed \$1bn Global Fund for Public Interest Media, which includes a strand on investigative journalism specifically, come to fruition, there may be a further levelling up of the sector.

3.5 Safety and security considerations when contacting or meeting field actors

Donors should be better prepared for talking to field actors—whether investigative journalists themselves, or people who work with or support them. Whether visiting them in person or communicating through email/chat/voice, be mindful of their security and time. You need—as with other grantees with potential security or surveillance challenges—to be flexible and considerate to what means they might choose to communicate with you instead of unencrypted email or phone calls. Simple steps that might help include installing Signal

on your phone, being prepared to use Jitsi instead of Skype, and in some cases, getting assistance ahead of time to use encrypted email (PGP). As for in-person meetings, while it is valuable and instructive for donors to see the environment in which a potential or current grantee works, in some locations you need to assess the risks to them and yourself of doing so. Sometimes it may be more efficient and secure to meet at conferences like the GIJC or the regional network conferences, or to work or even fund through trusted expert intermediaries such as regional IJ networks.

3.6 Engaging with investigative journalists, networks and organizations

Field organizations—including grantees—can be an invaluable source of analysis and recommendations, though this requires additional levels of trust. To avoid potentially awkward misunderstandings, be absolutely clear about the intent and purpose of your interaction, including whether you are considering them for funding or not. Scarce funding can engender a competition mindset between existing grantees and other potential grantees. As part of your conversation, ask them what they think of your funding approach and application process, and how it might be better tailored for journalism organizations.

This dynamic is covered in Luminate's recent publication that summarizes what their investees think and feel about their approach, and donors more broadly. (One of our interviewees lamented the "increasingly transactional nature" of much of the field.) This might raise unfounded expectations.

Transnational networks that support the field and that do investigations

The international and regional networks that provide infrastructure and connective tissue to the field have grown considerably, and through their respective web presences now provide increasingly valuable ways and means for journalists to connect, share and learn. Interviewees stress that these networks are a central and crucial part of the infrastructure of the field—and in regions like Eastern Europe, said one interviewee, "the networks are the only game in town, as they are not so vulnerable to capture as a single organization or center."

From the GIJN (Global Investigative Journalism Network), to ANCIR (African Network of Centers for Investigative Reporting) in Africa, ARIJ (Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism) in the Middle East, and COLPIN in Latin America, and smaller gatherings like the Logan Symposium, funders can find a wide variety of advice and resources, giving a field perspective on the challenges, adversaries and threats facing investigative jour-

nalism, as well as the considerable potential upside. These are valuable starting points in any given region, and their session notes and tipsheets are very useful for getting a rapid summary of a particular issue, approach, or area of work.

The GIJN website—which shares its own analyses of trends and issues in the sector around the world on its blog—is, for example, gradually building up a Resources section (helpdesk.gijn.org) that will act as a repository of knowledge covering many topics of interest to the IJ field.

Many academic researchers have conducted high-quality analyses of aspects of the field over the years, among them journalism educators who have a professional background in investigative journalism. A key jumping-off point into such literature is the International Journalism Education Consortium (jec.org), which, on limited resources, collates and shares "research and resources" about IJ from around the world, and feeds into the biennial GIJC's academic track.

Commission targeted research and share it publicly

Donors and field actors may also have recommendations of researchers, field actors or consultancy organizations to whom you could turn for more specialized or tailored advice.

This can be particularly useful where there are language gaps (e.g. between anglophone, francophone, lusophone and other language groups in Sub-Saharan Africa) or particular domain or questions on complex topics. Where commissioning knowledge of this kind, we would encourage you to ensure that some or all of this research is contributed to the public domain, perhaps via networks like the GIJN, so that others can benefit from it.

Seek peer advice from specialized philanthropic IJ donors

Public and philanthropic donors are getting more engaged and networked, as evidenced by the launch of a variety of donor-oriented mechanisms, such as the philanthropic Journalism Funders Forum in Europe and the international series of Defending Media Freedom conferences inaugurated in July 2019 by the governments of Canada and the UK. While there is still a concentration of expertise and dedicated funds in a small subsection of these funders, the circles of conversation and interaction between donors have unquestionably widened and to some degree become more transparent. While donors have a generally narrow information circle, and their true information needs are not being adequately met, there has been a steady improvement in the amount of digestible and relevant information on innovations in journalism, and in the IJ field specifically, for example, from a variety of sourc-

es, including the US-based Nieman Lab of Harvard University, and the Singapore-based Splice Newsroom.

There are few specialized, long-term and large-scale funders of the investigative journalism field internationally, but all are keen to see new donors bring resources to the field and are used to talking to potential new entrants to the space to help them understand how best to get started. They are extremely motivated to share their expertise with peers and new entrants, whether direct to others, through networks, meetings, conferences and roundtables, or via blogs, reports such as this one, and other publications.

Geographic and thematic philanthropic networks such as WINGS, EFC, and Ariadne have also started to discuss and even in some cases provide resources or discussion spaces for their member funders. If you are a member of such a network, it's worth asking them if they have a focal point on journalism or media as a sector, as this can be a source of contacts and support.

Prominent private philanthropic donors to the field include the following:

- The Open Society Foundations' Program on Independent Journalism (PIJ) (osf.to/journalism) has a longstanding Investigative Journalism portfolio that funds globally, and is seen as the leading international philanthropic funder of IJ; other thematic and regional OSF programs (interviewees mentioned the African foundations OSIWA, OSISA and OSIEA) also support investigative journalism in a variety of ways, often in consultation with the PIJ or other funders.
- The Adessium Foundation (adessium.org), which funds IJ as part of its Public Interest Program, also funds investigative journalism networks and organizations in Europe and beyond, as well as other organizations focused on transparency, accountability and good governance.
- Luminate, formerly the Governance and Citizen Engagement program of the Omidyar Network, founded by eBay co-founder Pierre Omidyar, is also a significant supporter of investigative journalism networks and newsrooms around the world, as well as the broader supporting environment, such as legal defense (luminategroup.com/posts/blog/supporting-groundbreaking-journalism-our-effort-to-resist-the-assault-on-the-media).
- The Reva and David Logan Foundation (loganfdn.org/ ourapproach.html) has IJ as a core area of support, and backs the annual Logan Symposium; not to be confused with the Logan Family Foundation, which also supports IJ, but not the Symposium.
- The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (kas.de) is particularly active in supporting high-quality training for investigative journal-

ism in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, including through support for the GIJN's Asia conference, Uncovering Asia, its Investigative Manual, and other resources.

- The Ford Foundation (fordfoundation.org) in Brazil has long supported—in partnership with other regional and international donors—investigative journalism in Brazil and in other parts of Latin America.
- Other donors are entering the field via other angles, for example, supporting new and emerging investigative techniques such as open source investigation, practiced most famously by Bellingcat, but also by major human rights organizations like Amnesty (citizenevidence.org).

Other donors or funding sources — including governments and major CSOs

Governmental support for investigative journalism presents a complex challenge. While governments are responsible for respecting and upholding international human rights standards and media freedom principles, some governments—even established democracies—are also at the forefront of undermining the legitimacy of journalism, media freedom and the safety of journalists.

The joint UK/Canadian government initiative to convene governments, philanthropy, civil society, media, academics and other stakeholders attempted to galvanize an international response in favor of media freedom with the July 2019 Media Freedom Conference in London, and the planned 2020 follow-up in Canada.

Government or intergovernmental support for investigative journalism is not for everyone, but where it is available, it can be an invaluable source of funds, and many of these donors are increasingly aware of the possibility of collaborating with philanthropic sources of funding.

The following is a selection of donors that support IJ as an end in itself or as part of other programs:

- USAID, SIDA (Sweden) and the Danish MFA/Danida were all mentioned by interviewees as particularly longstanding supporters of IJ.
- Donors in the OECD/DAC group focused on governance, GovNet, have consulted regularly on whether and how best to coordinate support for journalism in the context of transparency, accountability and good governance.
- The European Commission set up a Technical Advisory Facility called Media4Democracy (media4democracy.eu) to advise its delegations around the world on how to support

journalism, freedom of expression and freedom of information. This small team works with expert organizations and consultants to provide tailored advice to the EU's in-country teams in often very sensitive locations.

Further governmental donors are the German BMZ and UK's DFID. They support IJ organizations directly or via international media development organizations as strategic partners, such as DW Akademie.

Funds from Foreign Offices or development ministries are also available via local embassies—e.g. North American, Western/Northern European, or Australian—funds via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or development ministries, or via cultural institutes such as the Goethe Institute, British Council or Finnish Cultural Institute. The EU's delegations outside the EU are increasingly engaging on issues related to information and journalism.

4. How best to fund investigative journalism?

There are a number of tried and tested ways to support investigative journalism outlets. However, the answer, emphatically and unanimously from our interviewees, is that core, unrestricted, general operating support funding is by far the best kind, especially multi-year funding. This should be taken as a very strong signal for new and curious donors to the field. This includes not only trusts and foundations, but also high net worth individuals (HNWIs), who, our interviewees tell us, can be extremely valuable and rapid supporters of IJ work, but also sometimes tie their funding to specific outcomes, and can be quick to cut it off.

Interviewees told us that it is **best practice not to fund individual investigations or specific content**, both to insulate the donor from accusations of interference and instrumentalization, and to protect the grantee from risks that they will be seen as a sockpuppet. Many investigations do not come to fruition, or give unexpected outcomes, and tying funding to particular goals or outcomes could be problematic. Providing organizations with core funding permits them both to experiment and to choose what to investigate and when, and is therefore **core to their independence**.

Even where an IJ organization receives offers of funding related to their work on a specific topic, they should **insist that funding should be offered as core**. "The only way we could have done all the experiments we have is if we have core money," says Megan Lucero of Bureau Local—and that flexible funding came not from a traditional philanthropic source, but from Google's DNI Innovation Fund.

Thematically-focused funds

Many other donors support investigative journalism through funds or grants that focus on specific themes and topics. This is equally true of CSOs that focus on particular thematic or advocacy areas. They believe that the independence of the IJ organizations they work with insulates them from accusations of instrumentalization.

Specialist or experienced IJ donors advise against these kinds of funds, as, even if there is editorial freedom within the topics, they represent a potential control over IJ actors that runs counter to the research-based and open-ended ethos of the sector and the method. In cases like these, firewalled structures like JournalismFund.eu, that accept funds from donors, but act as a strict intermediary and buffer between donors and journalists, might be one option to explore. That said, market realities in many countries mean that investigative organizations in these locations can't afford to ignore thematic driven funds even if they are compromising newsroom independence.

Some of those working in the field with restricted or thematic grants of this kind have found that it places them in a difficult

position. Whereas with core money, organizations and journalists are entirely free to decide what is spent on which investigation and in what way, with ringfenced money this can be much more prescriptive, and can leave IJ organizations open to accusations of instrumentalization. One journalist told us how they had been questioned by prosecutors who were most concerned by whether, having received project funds, their donors had told them to carry out an investigation on a particular topic. While this was the only direct account of this specific dynamic, given the demonization of particular funders, such as the Open Society Foundations, or indeed government funds from particular donors, this is a risk that donors need to discuss clearly and openly with potential grantees.

4.1 How to find whom to support

Funders tell us they struggle with their pipeline, and with finding diverse enough potential grantees or investees to consider. Conversely, if they are considering funding in a highly sensitive area where there may only be one organization it is possible to support, how do they do so without adversely affecting or overloading that group?

Given the sensitivities in the IJ field, many donors seek recommendations from other donors, or share recommendations with them. This can be an efficient, if untransparent way of determining an organization's suitability, or sharing, discussing or allaying concerns about them, or making contact with them via an existing donor.

That said, many worried about the "donor darling" phenomenon, where "funding attracts funding"—in other words, where donors gravitate towards supporting groups supported by other donors, instead of finding other groups to support.

Using the many sources of information outlined earlier in this report, and in our bibliography, should help you at least to build up a better picture of the range of possibilities.

4.2 Types of investigative journalism organizations and structures

IJ is conducted and published in many forms around the world. The majority of investigative journalists working in the world today see their work published in print or text-based forms, but other products and modes of presentation do exist, from audiovisual formats as part of news and current affairs programming on (especially public service) television and radio, as podcasts, or on video-sharing platforms like YouTube, in documentary form, and photojournalism.

As the **financial crisis affecting traditional media has caused widespread media closures and job losses** in many countries

— meaning that there is less scope and support for investigative journalism in established newsrooms currently—there has also been a flowering of smaller units and newsrooms around the world. Many of these are fully-fledged independent organizations, others are units within academic institutions, and a significant portion are little more than a group of committed journalists with a web presence. These have been the subject of coverage, study and analysis by media journalists, practitioners and academic researchers, including a range of the studies noted in the bibliography for this report.

Research conducted over the past four years (2015–2019) shows that IJ has a range of options open to it in terms of structures, ways of securing support, and ways of generating other kinds of revenues, in order to support the core mission of IJ. Structures that have been extensively analyzed in other literature include:

- Non-profit newsrooms like ProPublica, Correctiv, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism; many investigative units and organizations worldwide take some form of this status—the mushrooming of such newsrooms in the US on the back of an upsurge in media philanthropy has been a major phenomenon.
- Hub-spoke structures, in which the IJ newsroom acts as a platform and coordinator for a wider range of actors, like Bureau Local, are beginning to spread as a way of anchoring the need for increasingly diverse expertise and insight from professionals and citizens with journalistic expertise. The Bureau Local model has received support from Google's DNI and from OSF, as specialist journalism funders, but latterly has attracted funding from non-journalism funders, such as the place-based Lankelly Chase Foundation, which sees a different kind of value in the interdisciplinary local networks developed through Bureau Local.
- Cooperative structures, in which journalists own and govern the organization, are increasing in popularity. Standout successes in democracies like the UK (The Ferret, The Bristol Cable) and Belgium (Apache, Medor), economically straitened places like Greece (Efimerida ton Syntakton), and more adversarial environments such as Egypt (Mada Masr) serve to show the potential strength of such structures. Many, but not all, include some element of reader or citizen involvement in ownership or governance, and as such, with their publicly legible structure, financial transparency, open ownership and (mostly) local focus, are seen as part of a range of options for strengthening the bonds of trust and accountability with publics alienated from other media.
- Cross-border networks are one of the most important journalistic structures to have emerged in recent times. ICIJ, OCCRP, BIRN, EIC, OxPeckers, Connectas, and many other networks have built impressive track records. Given that

many targets of investigation—corruption, illicit financial flows, trafficking, and other challenges—are inherently transnational or cross-border in nature, cross-border networks in regions and sub-regions have evolved in response.

- University-based investigative centers provide a combination of advantages to investigative work—a stable infrastructure, a research and teaching environment, often with opportunities to work in an interdisciplinary way, and a ready stream of students eager to work on investigative projects. Examples include Wits University in South Africa, Consejo de Redacción in Colombia and Plaza Pública in Guatemala. CIJ in London's City University also use their status to convene key field actors, and to hold important discussions pushing forward both practical and theoretical considerations.
- Open investigation networks like Bellingcat represent a hugely promising hybrid form of investigation bringing together journalists, subject experts, forensic experts and citizens. Using the techniques of open source intelligence, they have managed to unearth evidence pertaining to extremely difficult and complex investigations like the disappearance of Flight MH17. While the results of their investigations are not yet always accepted in the way that more traditional investigative work might be, they are increasingly influential in setting standards in how such evidence might be admissible in justice processes. Forensic investigations units like Forensic Architecture have similarly brought techniques from architectural and other practice to human rights-related investigations.
- Units or roles internal to other organizations, especially CSOs like Global Witness, which has investigative journalists on staff, and uses investigative journalism techniques in some of its work, or Greenpeace, which has created an independent and firewalled editorial unit—Unearthed—within its own organization, may be a model for CSO involvement in investigative journalism in the future. Other CSOs, like the Natural Resource Governance Institute, support investigative journalists in mainstream media with training and materials to be used in covering topics of interest to them—this is more akin to thematic funding through intermediaries.

Due diligence — an essential step

One donor respondent insisted on the need to do thorough due diligence on grantees, both to establish their strengths, and to understand their risk profile. This can be burdensome and stressful for grantees, and it can be tempting for them to try to put the best face on unflattering information, but it is an essential part of the trust at the heart of the grantmaking process.

Donors like SIDA and OSF, for example, have famously exhaustive due diligence processes, so organizations making it through these processes have, if not an imprimatur, then an indication that they are robust and trustworthy enough to receive funding, or that their risk profile has not precluded them from receiving funding.

Dimensions to look at for IJ organizations specifically might include:

- over-reliance on one form of funding, e.g. philanthropy or a rich benefactor:
- transparency about the source of all its income—and what agreements are in place related to the provision of that money;
- strong editorial policies that clearly protect and firewall editorial independence, investigation of benefactors and funders where appropriate;
- reserves for legal defense or at least, access to some sort of legal support, including legalling of material for publication.

4.3 Overcoming obstacles to funding

Funders and supporters of investigative work of many kinds know the obstacles they face in trying to get resources to those carrying out the work. As researchers, commentators and advocates have repeatedly pointed out, there is a growing "war on journalism". Here we highlight specific challenges for funders of investigative journalism, and how funders are trying to respond, specifically to anticipate as they consider funding IJ work at home and abroad.

Donor coordination as a response to 'closing spaces'

Countries around the world such as Russia, Hungary, Poland, India, Brazil, Turkey and Israel have brought in restrictions or greater scrutiny on recipients of foreign funds, have changed or used the law to target funders and recipients, and have even harassed donors and their grantees either into silence or withdrawal (Carrothers and Brechenmacher 2018). This comes in addition to the abuse of other forms of domestic media repression, through media-bashing, withdrawal of government advertising, physical and digital threats as described earlier, and the seemingly unstoppable force of media capture (Dragomir 2019), which philanthropic capital cannot outweigh. In many countries, there is little, if any, philanthropic funding of domestic origin available for journalism. The phenomenon of 'closing space' continues to make this more acute in some countries where the authorities are actively seeking to throttle or cut off sources of funding to local independent media, including IJ (Carrothers and Brechenmacher 2018). There are signs that, for example, community foundations are engaging in journalism funding, and their umbrella body may be one place to focus advocacy and resource attention.

Examples of genuine current donor coordination and peer learning in the media space are rare outside of the US (Media Impact Funders), Europe (the nascent Journalism Funders Forum (Borger 2019), and the Democracy cluster of the European Foundation Centre) and Germany (e.g. Expertenkreis Qualitätsjournalismus und Stiftungen). Some donor groupings focused on other issues—e.g. Ariadne (human rights and social justice), OECD/DAC GovNet (government donors focused on governance, accountability and transparency), the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (mix of private and government donors) — are variously addressing how they might better support journalism and quality information more generally. Efforts are being made to research and design structures that would enable a wider variety of funders to contribute to larger-scale funds for both investigative journalism and public-interest media more broadly (GFMD 2019; Lalwani 2019).

Donors in Latin America and in Europe have reacted with different joint responses. In the case of Latin America, for example, Velocidad is a joint investment fund involving Luminate, OSF and Ford, which seeks to support and invest in media startups, including those with an investigative focus (Estefan 2019). In Europe, a strongly-worded joint statement at the European Foundation Centre's conference in Warsaw, Poland, in 2017 both offered a rebuke to illiberal governments cracking down on civil society and the media, and promised a coordinated response. This came eventually in the form of the Civitates Fund, a pooled fund from 16 European donors which, through its sub-funds on closing space and on the digital public sphere, specifically seeks to strengthen in-country coalitions of actors, including journalists and investigative journalists.

While there is undoubtedly new energy in the philanthropic sphere in both Africa and Asia, such new donor initiatives have yet to coalesce in either region.

Local legal and policy frameworks—e.g. media law, investment rules

Legal cases against the media are a key strategy of disruption. The media industry, including some of the IJ field, has little or a just-in-time approach to legal protections, say our interviewees. The asymmetry of the legal resources available to local investigative news organizations versus those available, for example, to the subjects of their investigations is stark. Wealthy or super-wealthy individuals and corporations are able to launch simultaneous cases in multiple jurisdictions, to take advantage of their respective protections and loopholes, in an active attempt to bankrupt and silence particular publications. While cross-border networks offer some protections and solidarity in this regard, smaller newsrooms and units are at a much greater risk of being targeted under

this kind of legal strategy than major publications such as Der Spiegel or The Guardian.

Media development actors have long recognized the need to support the enabling environment for media and journalism, whether in support of the media itself, governance, accountability and transparency, free expression, or other frames. Latterly, some have attempted to adopt the technical metaphor of the 'stack' to show the multi-layered, multi-stakeholder environment and the different kinds of support needed to sustain it (Perrin 2015; Locke Public Media Stack 2019).

In some instances, local investigative organizations have been able to crowdfund resources to fight legal cases, but this is not a sustainable long-term strategy, as it relies on network effects that not all organizations will be able to feed or marshal. The fact that adversarial governments are distorting and weaponizing investment rules to target troublesome journalism outlets, as in the case of Rappler in the Philippines, shows that any legal response needs to be multi-disciplinary and collaborative across different legal disciplines and domains including commercial, contract, and investment law, and can't solely be rooted in free expression.

There is a web of support available for the latter, but it is not sufficient to meet the worldwide demand. Legal support and human rights organizations, from the London-based Media Legal Defence Initiative and multi-region Article 19, and local and international networks of pro bono lawyers and law firms all provide different kinds of support to individual journalists and organizations. Other kinds of structures, like the African Legal Information Institutes, provide an anchor for public interest law in their respective countries and regions. What donors might consider is how — in this new and infinitely more complex environment—this kind of support could be more structured, easier to access and less reactive. Do donors need to come together to create a specialist new fund that supports this specifically, or some other related but concerted strategy? A new High-Level Panel of Legal Experts to "examine legal and policy initiatives that states can adopt to improve media freedom" was announced at the joint UK/Canada Global Conference to Defend Media Freedom in London in 2019 (Clooney 2019).

4.4 The importance of funding the "unsexy stuff"

Interviewees praised funders who are willing to fund the "unsexy stuff," like human resources, financial management and other business critical functions—or an independent review to look at how a grantee might improve and professionalize. "This," said one interviewee, "is true leadership in media philanthropy."

Almost unanimously our interviewees told us that **supporting investigative journalism requires the donor** (including civil society backers) **to be supportive and involved, but to be driven by the incentives and needs of the grantees**, rather than their own. This cuts to the heart of questions both about the value of IJ being in its rigorous independence and research-based methods, and about donor power, mission and market realities that are beyond the scope of this report.

One experienced donor observed that field funders can suffer from "donor fatigue" or follow "fashions," and suggested that this could be countered by better and more regular contact, convening and knowledge sharing between donor organizations.

Research

Apart from the donor supported initiatives highlighted in this report, both donors and IJ field members told us that **there** is a need for funders to commit a portion of their funding to supporting high-quality, systematic and accessible research on investigative journalism, the evolving shape and future of the field, its support structures, and what effects it is having.

Suggestions of how to do so included:

- a "State of Investigative Journalism" or similar annual independent index, including a look at the broader "enabling environment" for IJ;
- funding for more structured and long-term collaborations between academics and investigative journalism, and between research institutions themselves;
- the need for more interdisciplinary centers of expertise, bringing together journalism, civil society, and technology.

Some of these exist already, and might simply be better connected or linked up, and in other cases, this might involve developing new proposals or plans.

A genuinely global "State of IJ" report, for example, might not only draw inspiration and methods from—and/or involve—reports and indices from traditional press freedom and media development organizations including Reporters Sans Frontières, Freedom House, the Committee to Protect Journalists, IFEX, IREX and local and regional counterparts (one interviewee also mentioned the International Fact Checking Network), but also other high-quality and widely-covered annual research publications like the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, the Mozilla Internet Health Report, Amy Webb's media predictions, or Mary Meeker's industry-defining Internet Trends reports.



Synopsis

The investigative journalism field has won major successes in recent years and has deservedly gathered plaudits for its collective work. This has happened, as this and other research shows, despite significant resource constraints, powerful adversaries, and an increasingly chaotic information environment. For IJ to continue to grow, prosper, and have impact, it needs increased, multi-pronged support from a wider variety of donors and sources.

In summary, funders should:

- listen more to the needs of the field, and design their application, granting and reporting processes to be more journalist-friendly;
- learn from and collaborate with other donors, including, where appropriate, tech companies and governments;
- commit to supporting the field (including its infrastructure) with core funds for 5+ years, to allow new actors and initiatives to take root;
- find ways to support IJ groups not on donor priority lists, or in democracies under pressure, or that don't fit traditional funding categories;
- support the other institutions and parts of civil society that are key to a healthy information environment—access to information, open data, civic tech, legal empowerment, media development, and the research community.

As all of our interviewees have confirmed, this is in fact a time of great opportunity and promise and well-prepared and flexible donors can make a huge difference to the pace of change and progress in the investigative field, even in highliy challenging circumstances.

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