

Improving the laws for media freedom in Tanzania and Zanzibar

As part of the [INSPIRES project](#), Flexible Response Funds (FRFs) are designed to provide USAID missions and partners with easily accessible and flexible support in the form of technical assistance and subgrants to local organizations that can help address urgent and emerging threats to civic space.

In Tanzania, Internews collaborated with local partners the Tanzania Editors Forum (TEF) and the Tanzania Media Women's Association in Zanzibar (TAMWA) and their networks to undertake training, reporting, and advocacy to improve restrictive media-focused laws in Tanzania and Zanzibar. This was done through five key activities:

- Conducting training and mentorship for the media;
- Conducting training and mentorship for civil society organizations;
- Undertaking public advocacy with the Government of Tanzania and media stakeholders related to restrictive laws;
- Providing stipends and mentorship to journalists for legal reform coverage; and,
- Leading broader advocacy and outreach initiatives.

Support was provided over the course of 6 months from April - September 2022.

In this summary brief, we share learnings and lessons from key informant interviews and document reviews for these activities.

Outputs and Outcomes

The FRF activities in Tanzania were designed to produce several key outputs, including support to media and civil society through trainings, mentorship, and stipends and outreach to the Government of Tanzania.

Based on interviews with key informants who were involved in the program, the Tanzania team and partners achieved several key outputs, as highlighted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. FRF Outputs



14 trainings for media and civil society held to improve awareness of legal reform issues



120 stories on legal reform of media laws in Tanzania and Zanzibar produced



43 media houses involved in public advocacy and outreach on legal reform in Tanzania



At least **2** laws amended to be more progressive to media freedom

Evidence from key informant interviews as well as documentation from partners suggests that the FRF activities contributed to several key outcomes:

Amendment of media laws to be more supportive of media freedom. The most significant impact to which the FRF activities contributed was the change in several key media laws in Tanzania and Zanzibar. In Tanzania, Internews, TEF, and local partners were able to advocate for changes in restrictive language in the Media Services Act which would allow greater freedom for media outlets and journalists to operate in Tanzania. The revised Media Services Act is supported by several leading voices in the Government of Tanzania and is expected to be passed in June 2023. In the case of

Zanzibar, TAMWA and Internews were able to ensure the tabling of the new restrictive Media Bill, preventing further restrictions on media actors from being introduced.

Improved engagement between media and government stakeholders. In the process of advocating for changes in the law, Internews and partners undertook strategies that helped to strengthen the relationships between the government and the media. From reaching out directly to parliamentarians to holding meetings with civil servants working directly on the laws, several informants noted that these strategies have helped to build rapport and subsequent engagement between media and government. Beyond government officials, local partners also stated that the advocacy they led for legal reforms also improved relationships and strategic engagement between media organizations themselves, making them a more united voice for media freedom in the country.

Greater public awareness and support for media issues. Finally, informants identified significant improvement in public interest in and attitudes toward media issues which they attribute to the content produced as part of INSPIRES. The stories focused on legal challenges faced by journalists and media houses has helped to improve how the general public sees the media's role in Tanzania and Zanzibar and has had ripple effects on the government.



"We helped to create debate in the public, helped them to understand what was going on [with the media laws] and the gaps. And, at same time, this helped the government to be accountable. They saw that the people want this and not that, so the government had to act. When they found out that the media was doing all this content [about the government not acting], they asked us, 'why are you doing all of this content? We are ready to change.' So it helped to push them to act."

- Key informant interview, February 2023



Helping and Hindering Factors. Key informants were asked about factors perceived to help or hinder this work. Understanding these factors can help support the implementation of future activities.

Helping factors include:

- **Political context and will.** Since the new president came into power, informants noted that the government has expressed greater willingness to engage with civil society and the media, which they believe contributed to the success of these activities.
- **Local partner network.** The local partners brought a strong and expansive network in Tanzania and Zanzibar that allowed outreach and advocacy to have a wider reach and to speak for a large set of media stakeholders in the country.
- **Building on past work.** Informants also highlighted that the advocacy and outreach has built on work they began before INSPIRES which served as an important foundation for the legal changes observed during the project.

Hindering factors include:

- **Government delays and reshuffling.** While informants stated that government will to engage was generally positive, there were some bureaucratic challenges they had to overcome. These included: delays in the legislative calendar, turnover and changes in key government positions, and limited opposition by some government officials to changes in the media bills and acts.
- **Early obstacles with media engagement.** A key outcome of the project was stronger engagement between media actors; however, informant noted that they initially faced pushback from some media houses that worried that they would be excluded from the outreach activities and process.

For more information about this FRF, please contact: info@inspiresconsortium.org.