



# Media Development Initiative

## Learning Brief

2017–2022



Media  
Development  
Initiative



PNGAus Partnership



ABC  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

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## Acronyms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABCID	Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development
C4D	Communication for Development
CCG	Core Content Guide
COVID-19	Coronavirus
CSO	Civil society organisation
DCPP	Decentralisation and Citizen Participation Partnership
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
MDI	Media Development Initiative
NBC	National Broadcasting Corporation of Papua New Guinea
OB	Outside broadcast
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PWD	People with disabilities
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGEC	Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission
QTAG	Quality and Technical Assurance Group
SARV	Sorcery accusation-related violence
ToT	Training of Trainers
V&A	Voice and Accountability
VAW	Violence Against Women
WINS	Women in News and Sport (ABCID managed project)
WNB	West New Britain



## Executive summary

MDI serves as a capacity-building bedrock to the PNG media sector in strengthening organisational capacity and digital-readiness to produce quality audience-oriented content across multiple platforms. Further to the above, MDI have been a crucial intermediary in facilitating, through its partnerships with local media, robust citizen-government dialogue to uphold government accountability and citizen access to credible information sources.

This Media Development Initiative (MDI) Learning Brief captures MDI's legacy and contribution to the above impact streams and reflects on learnings achieved through the Phase 3 of MDI's operation between 2017 and 2022.

The MDI aims to support a more professional, free and diverse media in Papua New Guinea (PNG) that serves the public interest and facilitates democratic processes. In 2017, building on the earlier work with the National Broadcasting Corporation of Papua New Guinea (NBC), MDI was broadened to work with a mix of public and private media partners in PNG with an emphasis on Voice and Accountability (V&A). In October 2022, MDI will commence a new phase.

The brief was prepared by a desk-based review of program evaluation and progress reports and interviews with five MDI participants conducted online or by phone call. Adopting a thematic approach, the brief presents MDI's main impacts and learnings and highlights the key activities and stories of change. It is envisaged that this brief will be a valuable resource in planning activities for Phase 4 of the program complemented by the MDI Independent Review undertaken in August 2020.

Overall, during the Phase 3, MDI has strengthened the capacity of PNG media to promote diverse citizen voices and facilitate responsiveness of decision-makers. Despite the challenging operating environment constrained by the wider political, economic and technological forces and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, MDI worked closely with local media partners to promote V&A.

Key areas of impacts and learnings include:

- Stimulating citizen-government engagement on key public issues
- Providing quality content that promotes informed citizen participation
- Advocating gender equality, disability and social inclusion
- Embracing adaptability and innovation to drive evidence-based, locally relevant and digitally responsible initiatives

### Citizen-government engagement

MDI supported PNG media as an important agent of citizen-government engagement.

- **Press Clubs** and **Provincial Panel** extended access to and responses from decision-makers
- **Background Briefings** improved the quality of questioning to the decision-makers
- The **Talasea 'district hub'** initiative engaged media, civil society actors and local authorities and improved community dialogue on locally relevant issues

### Informed citizen participation

MDI assisted PNG media to produce and disseminate quality V&A content. Opportunities exist to improve the quality of V&A content that brings attention to the performance of authorities.

- **Core Content Guides** enabled media professionals to access researched information on national level issues
- **2022 national election** reporting activities promoted accurate and impartial coverage and encouraged participation of youth and first-time voters
- **Yumi Go Wer? training**, improved the quality of a provincial radio panel program and stimulated public debates on pressing issues faced by local communities

### Gender Equality, Disabilities and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

MDI promoted gender equality and disabilities inclusiveness in PNG media across professional and institutional development, content production and program evaluation. Opportunities exist to further advocate for rights and responsibilities of under-represented groups and seek better public services.

- **Women in the Media** research identified how to advance gender equality in the workplaces and reduce barriers to women's career development in the PNG media sector
- **Inclusive Reporting training and strategy** supported journalists to develop content that promotes social inclusion and represent diverse citizen voices
- **Julie's Story** film gave voice to a woman living with disability to raise public awareness about disability, bring the issues to the attention of decision-makers and seek change

### Adaptability and Innovation

MDI drove locally relevant, evidence-based, digitally responsible initiatives and built strategic partnerships. Opportunities exist to continuously generate latest insights on PNG media, develop digitally smart editorial processes, and strengthen multistakeholder engagement.

- **PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study** provided latest insights into how PNG citizens perceive governance and engage with media
- **Social media** activities promoted effective and responsible usage of social media in journalistic reporting and led to the development of social media policies and guidelines
- **COVID-19 response** supported remote delivery arrangements, accurate and inclusive reporting and strategies to tackle misinformation



- **Church media partnership** was established based on an important finding from the PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study that church media is one of the most trusted media sources in PNG

Discussions with MDI participants reveal that MDI activities brought meaningful impacts on the professional development of media practitioners in PNG. These included the opportunities to:

- Develop more engaging story-telling techniques that better reflect citizens' views
- Promote citizen-government debates on pressing public issues faced by the local communities
- Learn how to report news in digitally responsible and inclusive manner
- Collaborate with other organisations such as church media organisations and civil society organisations to increase citizen access and dialogue on key public matters
- Gain deeper understanding that stronger PNG media could lead to stronger Voice and Accountability in PNG and
- Be trained to train others so participants themselves facilitate the capacity-building process

Looking ahead, MDI is well-positioned to continue supporting PNG media as an agent of citizen-government engagement. Building on the learnings of Phase 3, there are important opportunities for MDI to assist PNG media to become more professional, inclusive and digitally smart and produce more quality V&A content. These opportunities include:

- Supporting PNG media to provide more content on government performance
- Generate reliable digital content and effectively tackle misinformation and create more citizen-government dialogues with increased participation of marginalised groups and strategic partnerships with civil society actors

## Introduction

### Background and context

The objective of this Media Development Initiative (MDI) Learning Brief is to provide a systematic overview of key impacts and learnings achieved through Phase 3 of MDI's operation between 2017 and 2022. This review was closely aligned with the program design and takes into account the change in Australia Aid priorities towards the end of 2020 with the introduction of a new policy (Partnerships for Recovery – Australia's COVID-19 Development Response) to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift in strategic focus subsequently led to a temporary re-alignment of the MDI program in accordance with the new policy.

MDI aims to support a more professional, free and diverse media in Papua New Guinea (PNG) that serves the public interest and facilitates democratic processes. MDI was first launched in 2005 as a media capacity building program that supports the National Broadcasting Corporation of Papua New Guinea (NBC). From 2011, MDI adopted a Communication for Development (C4D) focus to address development issues such as education, health and gender equality. While MDI has also worked with the wider media sector and development partners from the onset, MDI was broadened in 2017 to partner more strategically with a mix of public and private media in Papua New Guinea (PNG) with an emphasis on Voice and Accountability (V&A). In October 2022, MDI will commence a new phase.

In Phase 3, MDI sits within the Decentralisation and Citizen Participation Partnership (DCPP) and contributes to the DCPP goal: **PNG citizens engage and participate in the development of their communities**. The objective of MDI is that **PNG media enables citizens to effectively express their views and helps facilitate government responsiveness**.

As MDI comes to the end of Phase 3 and embarks upon Phase 4, it became important to reflect on the MDI's successes and learning points achieved over the five years and present the main impacts and learnings across the key activities that could be further built upon.

### Methodology

The brief was prepared by a combination of desk-based document analysis and interviews.

The document analysis entailed a review of MDI program evaluation and progress reports. These documents mainly included the program design document, annual review report, six-monthly progress reports, research reports and activity-related reports as well as the 2020 MDI Independent Review Report by the Quality and Technical Assurance Group (QTAG) and the DFAT management response to the QTAG's review.

Five 30-minute interviews were conducted online or by phone call with five respective MDI participants who took part in the 2021 MDI Tracer Study. The participants include: a female senior staff at national radio based in provincial area; a female senior staff at national newspaper based in capital area; a female senior staff at independent online media based in capital area; a female mid-career staff at church radio based in capital area; and a male mid-career staff at industry association based in capital area.

In the interviews, participants discussed:

- 1) How they were involved with the MDI
- 2) What they think was MDI's most significant impact on their professional development and the PNG media sector
- 3) Why they think developing media to strengthen V&A is important, and
- 4) What they think the future of PNG media will be.

The narratives of the five discussants are presented as stories of significant change in this brief.

Adopting a thematic approach, the brief consolidates the MDI's main impacts and learnings and highlights the key activities and stories of significant change.

### MDI Phase 3: Strengthening Voice and Accountability

MDI's work in Phase 3 has centred on the V&A principle to increase the capacity of PNG citizens to express their views (voice) and the responsiveness of the government (accountability).

This V&A principle recognises that citizens' engagement and accountability of decision-makers are imperative to the governance in PNG. Citizens need effective 'voice' to express their views so that decision makers can be held accountable for their actions and are more likely to respond to the needs and demands. The PNG media plays a central role in facilitating meaningful citizen-government interface and placing governance issues in the public domain. To fulfil this role, it is critical that PNG media acts as a neutral agent for citizen-state engagement.

MDI's efforts to support PNG media and strengthen V&A were grounded in local context and faced several significant challenges. As the QTAG's MDI Independent Review pointed out, **"the challenges confronting PNG's media and the impediments to achieving voice and accountability in the PNG context are significant and deeply entrenched"**.<sup>1</sup>

Although PNG media is relatively free, independence is declining. The 2022 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders ranks PNG at 62 (out of 180 countries), down from 46 in 2020 and 38 in 2019.<sup>2</sup> Contributing factors identified by the MDI Independent Review include: lack of funding and resources hindering investigative journalism; cultural context that reinforces unquestioning respect for 'Big Man' and 'Big Meri'; external editorial influence on traditional media, and dwindling pool of trained recruits and stark drop of people pursuing career in media.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, PNG media landscape marked by both stasis and change presents challenges with media access and consumption. Media reach remains limited in remote, mountainous areas where majority of population lives. The limited access to education and low literacy levels of this

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1 O'Keefe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) Media Development Initiative Independent Review, Quality and Technical Assurance Group (QTAG). Canberra: DFAT. p.12.

2 Reporters without Borders (2022) World Press Freedom Index, <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

3 O'Keefe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT. p.9.





population further hinders media access. While smart phone ownership and internet access increased, residents living outside urban areas, women and older citizens remain disadvantaged with digital access.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond the constraints of PNG media landscape, there are wider governance problems in PNG that impede V&A endeavours. The barriers observed by the MDI Independent Review include: weak relationship between the majority of Papua New Guineans and the state; weak government bureaucracy; and weak political parties and cultural reluctance to challenge authority.<sup>5</sup> The 2019 PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study found that among the people of PNG, there is **“general mistrust and dissatisfaction with government at the national level”**.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the political, economic, institutional and technological challenges and also bred problems of misinformation and disinformation. Despite operating in a difficult environment, MDI worked closely with local media partners at both national and provincial levels to promote V&A through a range of activities. As the MDI Independent Review commends, **“the (MDI) project has been very energetic in implementing a range of V&A and quality journalism activities”**.<sup>7</sup>

### Key impacts and learnings

In Phase 3, MDI has actively and consistently supported the capacity of PNG media to promote diverse citizen voices and facilitate responsiveness of decision-makers.<sup>8</sup> Across the many activities conducted by MDI, four key areas of impacts and learnings stand out.

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4 ABCID (2019) PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Report. Melbourne: ABCID, p.5.

5 O’Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT. p.11.

6 ABCID (2019) PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Report. Melbourne: ABCID, p.4.

7 O’Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT. p.12.

8 O’Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT.

To strengthen V&A, MDI has worked with PNG media to:

- 1) stimulate citizen-government engagement on key public issues
- 2) provide quality content that supports informed citizen participation
- 3) advocate gender equality, disabilities and social inclusion and
- 4) embrace adaptability and innovation

### Citizen-government engagement

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**MDI supported PNG media as an important agent of citizen-government engagement.**

**Opportunities exist to further facilitate responsiveness of decision-makers.**

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Guided by the V&A principle, MDI has approached PNG media as an important agent of citizen-government engagement. MDI worked with the local media partners in PNG to provide supportive structures that facilitate a meaningful citizen-government interface.

The MDI activities below supported PNG media to stimulate citizen-government engagement:

- **Press Clubs** and **Provincial Panel** extended the access to and responses from decision-makers
- **Background Briefing** activities improved the quality of questioning at Press Clubs
- The **Talasea ‘district hub’** initiative engaged media, civil society actors and local authorities and improved community dialogue on locally relevant issues

### Press Club and Provincial Panel

Press Club is an activity that creates opportunities for PNG journalists and media professionals to ask questions directly to the authorities and decision-makers on key public issues. MDI’s Press Club activity contributed to V&A by enlarging PNG media’s access to and responses from decision-makers. As QTAG’s MDI Independent Review notes, **“press club events ... provide public fora where decision makers can be held accountable by better informed and trained journalists”**.<sup>9</sup>

Press Club events were mainly organised by the NBC with MDI assistance<sup>10</sup> and provided a supportive structure for journalists to seek a response or commitment from decision makers on issues such as gender equality, education and fiscal accountability.

A range of topics were covered in the Press Club events during Phase 3. These included national issues of significance such as the Bougainville Referendum and the 2020 National Budget. With MDI’s interest to advance gender equality and social inclusion, Press Club topics also included education and technology challenges faced by youth<sup>11</sup> and economic empowerment of women.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>10</sup> Press Club events were organised by NBC with MDI support until April 2020. In May 2020, it became too resource intensive for NBC to manage with reduced teams. NBC gave MDI permission to manage Press Club activity until the end of Phase 3.

<sup>11</sup> ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 7.



Monitoring reports show that as a result of these Press Club events, improved quality of television, radio, online (online news articles and social media post) contents that reflect more diverse sources and inclusive topics were published by public and private media in PNG.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, despite significant disruptions, Press Club events were held remotely using Zoom and Facebook Live. In February 2020, a remote Press Club event supported PNG journalists and media professionals to seek information on behalf of their audiences and pose accountability questions to three expert speakers on the topic of Coronavirus, African Swine Flu and Measles, resulting in the dissemination of well-informed radio and online news content. The remote delivery arrangement ensured that social distancing could be maintained and participants could dial in or watch on Facebook from wherever internet access was available. Having used this remote arrangement with the MDI, in October 2020, NBC confidently joined an international forum organised by the World Press Club Alliance for Climate Change. This press club on climate change resulted in nationally broadcasted radio content segments on climate science.

In Phase 3, while the Press Club events were mainly based in Port Moresby and focused on national issues, MDI also initiated Press Club activities to be held outside Port Moresby to deal with public issues in the provinces. This initiative became ‘Provincial Panel,’ an activity that applies the Press Club concept in the provinces. In November 2019, MDI organised a two-day provincial panel on law and order issues in Kimbe, West New Britain (WNB). The panel show was broadcast from NBC WNB as a daily national broadcast show and as two outside broadcasts (OBs). The OBs enabled the local audiences to ask questions directly to the panel members. On the panel were WNB Governor, Minister for State Own Enterprises, Provincial MP, Local Mayor and Education Planner. The panel show was aired in the provinces and nationally. The provincial panel stimulated community dialogue including a focus group discussion with 11 young women from the Talasea urban community to discuss their experiences with law and order and pose questions to the decision-makers. Monitoring reports show that as a result of this activity, leaders in this province committed and disbursed funding towards preventing Kimbe’s urban lawlessness as demanded by citizens. In addition, the panel show reportedly prompted the return of Kimbe Town Peace and Good Order Committee meetings to address citizen concerns and also the movement of police vehicles from Port Moresby to Kimbe through the public private partnership with New Britain Palm Oil Ltd.<sup>13</sup>

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13 ABCID (2020) MDI Progress Report January-July. Melbourne: ABCID, p.13.

## Background Briefing

Introduced in 2017, Background Briefing is an activity that equips PNG journalists and media professionals with specific subject knowledge, networks and craft skills on how to ask questions at Press Club events. MDI's Background Briefings contributed to V&A by improving the quality of journalistic interaction with authorities and decision-makers. As described in QTAG's MDI Independent Review, **"background briefings (are) designed to strengthen the informed 'voice' of traditional media in their professional interactions with decision makers in seeking greater accountability"**.<sup>14</sup>

Background Briefings were arranged by MDI and delivered in the form of a presentation made to the reporters, occasionally assisted by an expert of the subject, before Press Club events. The activity incorporated discussion about craft skills, such as how to frame questions, so that reporters could skilfully seek a response or commitment from the speaker. While Background Briefings were delivered before mainly Press Club events, they have also been prepared before other district-level activities that provide citizen-government engagement. For example, Background Briefing on law and order issues in Kimbe, WNB, was provided to the local media partners prior to the Provincial Panel activity. The information provided in the Background Briefings was then compiled into Core Content Guides to assist with content making.

Monitoring reports show that reporters benefited greatly from gaining expert information on specific topics. For example, a participant gave the feedback: "Yes, this background briefing ... corrected a few misleading information published and gave facts on ... important events. Now I am prepared with basic facts." (BB #1 2019, male reporter)<sup>15</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Background Briefings were delivered remotely. Monitoring reports show that media partners appreciated not only that MDI provided continuous access to well-researched information but also that the information covered angles of COVID-19 not addressed by other sources, especially concerning social inclusion, gender and youth.

## Talasea 'district hub' initiative

Talasea is a small district in an island province of WNB. MDI's Talasea 'district hub' is a community-based activity that generates locally relevant content with media organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs) to engage citizens and incentivise greater responsiveness of decision-makers. The Talasea 'district hub' activity has received positive feedback for making significant contributions to V&A efforts. As the QTAG's MDI Independent Review remarks, **"the Talasea district hub stands out as one where MDI has been successful in engaging with media, civil society and local decision makers, including Open Member, to facilitate improved community dialogue"**.<sup>16</sup>

Talasea district was selected based on a District Assessment conducted by MDI and on recommendations from DCP. This dynamic activity was locally-based and benefited from the sustained presence of a local NBC station manager and a DCP adviser who facilitated engagement.

<sup>14</sup> O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT. p.12.

<sup>15</sup> ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report January-July, Melbourne: ABCID, p.7.

<sup>16</sup> O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.18.

<sup>17</sup> ABCID (2019) MDI Annual Review Report 2018-9, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 9-10.



The activity utilised a mix of traditional and digital media and also word-of-mouth communication to explore public issues faced by the local communities and actively involved youth and women.

To give voice to the youth, MDI facilitated a series of radio drama training for young people in Talasea to explore issues that affect them and express their views through radio drama storytelling. MDI worked with participants from church youth groups to write scripts for radio dramas that explore locally relevant public issues. The radio dramas covered topics such as health, unemployment, law and order, domestic violence, economic opportunities and COVID-19 related stories. The scripts were prepared for production and upon further development, aired on radio in partnership with NBC provincial stations in WNB and East New Britain. To facilitate discussions about local issues, the radio dramas were designed to be played in conjunction with a panel or talkback show. This approach enabled the panel to offer expertise commentaries on issues addressed in the drama and generate informed discussions by advising ways to deal with those issues and provide contacts of local organisations that could assist.

Moreover, MDI's engagement with women in Talasea and the facilitation of community dialogue have evolved organically to women's active engagement with the local level government election. With the support received from MDI through media skills gained in MDI workshops and one-on-one mentoring, a Talasea woman pursued her social justice and advocacy endeavours.<sup>18</sup> When she was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for her work in the community, she publicly acknowledged MDI's contribution to her success. Recognising the need for more women in leadership positions she ran for the local level government in 2019. While she did not get a seat, three other female candidates did. As QTAG's MDI Independent Review remarks, **"this (MDI's) engagement with women in Talasea) is an important outcome of the program's district level work"**.<sup>19</sup>

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18 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 16.

19 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT. p.17.

The Talasea district hub activity also stimulated responsiveness of decision-makers. MDI has worked with Talasea district MP Governor Frances Maneke to improve his communications with his constituency. While he eschewed social media, he agreed to send out regular newsletter in paper format for which MDI produced the template. MDI also held a ‘Working with the Media’ workshop attended by 7 (6 males, 1 female) members of the Talasea District Development Authority (DDA) to improve decision makers responsiveness to citizens.

Overall, Press Clubs, Provincial Panel and Background Briefings have significantly contributed to the capacity of PNG media to ask relevant and informed questions to the authorities on behalf of the citizens. Given the governance challenges in PNG more broadly, challenges remain with PNG media holding the government and decision-makers more accountable to the citizen needs and demands. As observed by the MDI Independent Review, **“eliciting greater accountability has been and remains a major challenge in the PNG cultural and political context”**.<sup>20</sup> The Talasea ‘district hub’ activity has laid a strong foundation for PNG community media to facilitate citizen engagement and prompt responsiveness of decision-makers at local level. The sustainability of this citizen-government engagement may be largely affected by whether there continues to be ongoing MDI presence. As QTAG comments, **“it is difficult to assess how this (responsiveness of decision-makers) would continue with MDI’s eventual absence (in Talasea district)”**.<sup>21</sup> One of the key learnings from all these activities is that there continues to be an important opportunity to facilitate government responsiveness more effectively and sustainably through multistakeholder engagement.

### Informed citizen participation

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**MDI assisted PNG media to produce and disseminate quality V&A content that raises awareness about citizen needs to decision-makers.**

**Opportunities exist to improve the quality of V&A content that brings attention to the performance of authorities.**

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An important aspect of strengthening V&A is that the needs and concerns of PNG citizens are ‘voiced’ effectively in the public domain so that the government has better awareness of citizen views and are more likely to respond to the needs and demands. To facilitate effective citizen participation, MDI assisted PNG media to provide quality V&A content that better reflects citizen views and raises awareness about citizen needs to the government and decision-makers.

The following MDI activities assisted PNG media to promote informed citizen participation:

- **Core Content Guides** enabled media professionals to access researched information on national level issues.
- **2022 national election coverage training** equipped PNG media partners to provide accurate and impartial reporting and encouraged participation of youth and first-time voters.
- **Yumi Go Wer? training** improved the quality of a provincial radio panel program and stimulated public debates on pressing issues faced by local communities.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.17.

## Core Content Guides

Core Content Guide is an activity that compiles researched information on a target public issue into a succinct document to assist PNG media partners with content making. Core Content Guides contributed to V&A by giving media professionals access to researched information on issues of national significance and improving the quality of media content that better reflects the issues faced by the local communities. As QTAG's MDI Independent Review describes, **“core content guides and production ‘bibles’ ... improve understanding of key national issues and how to cover them”**.<sup>22</sup>

MDI's Core Content Guides have been produced based on the information presented at Background Briefings. Once compiled, Core Content Guides were disseminated to PNG journalists by WhatsApp and email. Core Content Guides were continuously updated to give reporters and journalists consistent access to latest insights and relevant information on specific target issue.

Core Content Guides provided the PNG media partners with factual and contextual information on a specific subject. For example, a Core Content Guide on Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) covered information on: what BRC is, what the role and guiding principles of BRC are, voting and enrolment information for resident Bougainvilleans and non-resident Bougainvilleans (including those residing in PNG and those overseas) and frequently asked questions such as type of question asked on the ballot paper and the timings of the issue of writ and polling. The document also provided contextual information such as a brief history of the Bougainville Crisis, the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement, and the idea of peace by peaceful process based on the recognition of the use of violence in the past.

As a result of Core Content Guide activity, PNG journalists and media professionals had increased access to create well-researched content on public issues of national significance that have continuously been updated. The issues covered by Core Content Guide include education, health, disabilities, media freedom as well as COVID-related information during the pandemic.

## 2022 National Election

PNG held its national general election in July 2022. Elections enable citizens to select their leaders to represent them and hold the leaders accountable to support the citizens' interests. The media plays a vital role in sharing information with voters and empowering them to make informed decisions. Leading up to the election, MDI supported PNG media to cover elections accurately and impartially by offering training, sharing media expertise and providing technical and program support. MDI's election coverage activities contributed to V&A by equipping PNG journalists and media professionals with the skills, knowledge and resources to effectively share election information with the public and promoting informed citizen participation. As QTAG's MDI Independent Review recommended, **“the 2022 elections represent a potentially important moment for voice and accountability programming”**.<sup>23</sup>

MDI's election coverage activities were planned in consultation with media and institutional partners and drew on the experiences of past election coverage support. MDI especially encouraged the engagement of first-time voters, based on a consultation with International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) whose research finding indicated a large number of

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.34.



first-time voters in the 2022 election. In February 2021, a Content Advisor joined MDI to build the capacity of PNG media to cover the national election and develop ways to engage first time voters in the electoral process.

To engage first-time voters, MDI consulted with various youth organisations and electoral institutions to positively engage youth in the electoral cycle. MDI focused on encouraging the PNG youth to seek good governance practices in PNG leadership candidates and show the power of their vote. MDI's plan included.<sup>24</sup>

- Relationship-building with youth-oriented organisations to run a focus group about youth issues and equip the spokespeople with media skills to express their views;
- working with media partners to include voter awareness content within MDI activities
- mentoring young content makers as part of election coverage by media
- working with media partners on content styles that appeal to younger audiences
- devising social media strategies for media to connect with first time voters including youth, people with disabilities, young women and the LGBTI communities and
- timing the activities to suit the electoral cycle, such as focusing on voting in pre-election and following up on electoral promises post-election

In March 2021, MDI supported the PNG media professionals to participate in the IFES Information Integrity training, which was funded by USAID and delivered remotely from Australia. Applying the Training of Trainer (ToT) approach, this activity was delivered by the participants themselves by first training the experienced media personnel to train others. A focus of this training was on equipping the media professionals with social media digital verification skills to tackle the problems of misinformation. This was especially an important skill considering the rapid increase of social media in PNG, the COVID-19 Infodemic environment that exacerbated problems of disinformation, and the potential devastating impact of inaccurate election reporting on the election processes and outcomes. Following the training of trainers, MDI coordinated follow up training that was attended by 84 participants. The trained senior content makers could confidently train others to produce and disseminate accurate information on election coverage.

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<sup>24</sup> ABCID (2021) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 13.



Moreover, in partnership with the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC) and IFES, MDI co-facilitated a week-long training workshop on Election Awareness in April 2022. The pre-election workshop brought together media personnel from across the country to assist their understanding of the electoral process and accurately report on election events. This workshop was delivered by senior PNG journalist Scott Waide and also ABC's Election Coverage Advisor. A focus of this training was on the crucial role of media in a functioning democracy. It addressed not only the 'how' of election reporting but also the 'why' that underpins the need for impartial, accurate and engaging reporting.

This emphasis on the role of media builds on MDI's work that supported PNG media to cover the Bougainville referendum and local level government election in WNB. MDI has consistently emphasised the important role media plays in connecting issue-based discussion with election-based discussion and drawing a link between public issues and electoral accountability.

In addition to the trainings, MDI arranged online Background Briefing sessions for media on election in collaboration with the ANU and UPNG. Topics covered included women's participation in PNG elections, quality of PNG elections, PNG political parties and PNG electoral processes.

MDI also provided grants to news organisations to help them meet their costs for election coverage including equipment purchase and travels to ensure coverage included voices and issues beyond Port Moresby.

In addition, the community issues voiced by the PNG citizens in the lead up to the national election were addressed in numerous MDI-supported contents. The New Normal series, which primarily focused on COVID-19 recovery issues, highlighted social and economic problems that could be brought to the attention of existing and future decision-makers including election candidates.

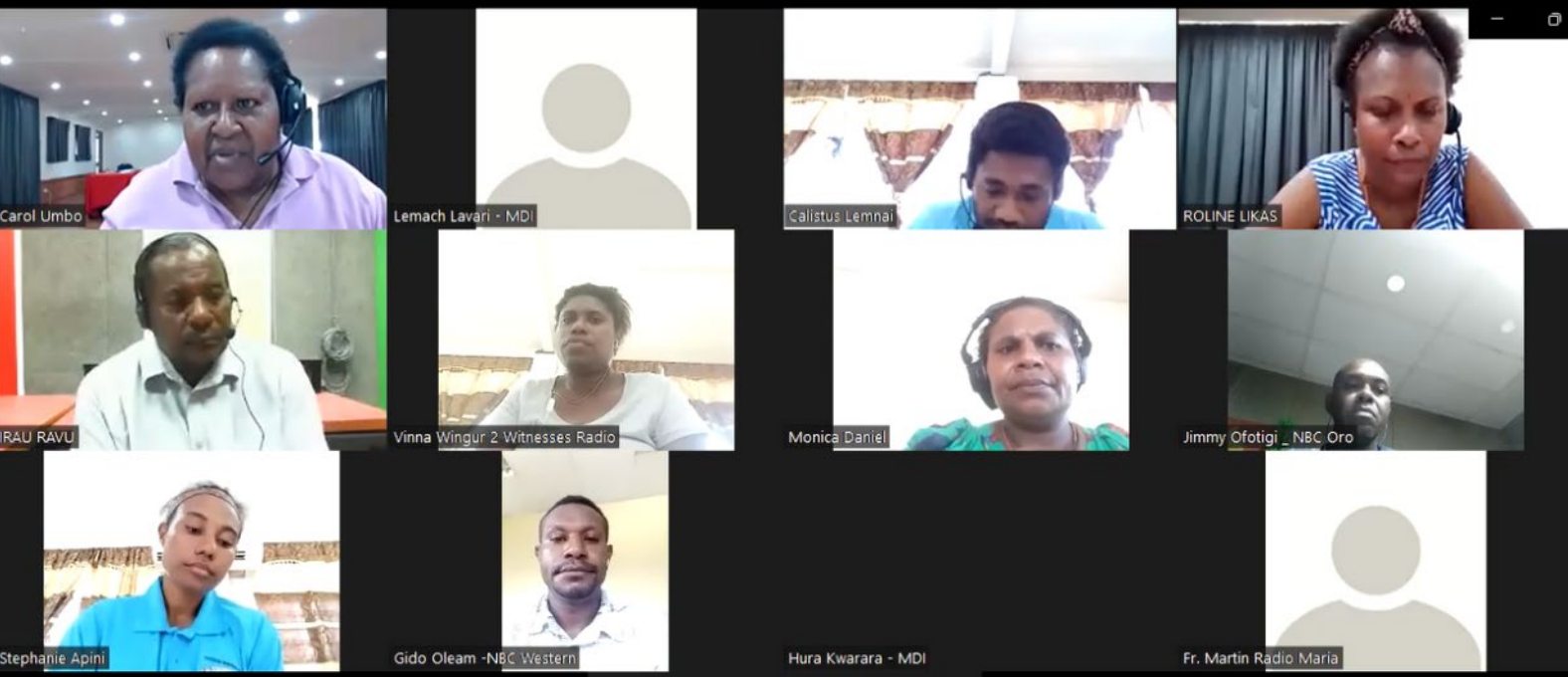
### **Yumi Go Wer?**

Yumi Go Wer? is an NBC radio panel program based in the provinces that promotes public discussions on governance issues faced by the local communities. This radio program covers 6 provinces encompassing Southern Highland Province, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, East New Britain, Milne Bay, Morobe and New Ireland. MDI's Yumi Go Wer? training activity contributed to V&A by building the capacity of radio content makers to produce more interactive and topical radio programs and promoting informed citizen participation of communities in the provinces to discuss the issues affecting them.

In March 2022, MDI organised a two-week training on how to produce panel shows for the Yumi Go Wer? program. 30 broadcasters from 19 NBC provincial radio stations participated in this training. Broadcasters from the Adventist and Catholic church run radio stations also attended.

While trainings have previously been conducted face-to-face, this radio panel show workshop was delivered online. To enable reliable access to online training, each radio station received packages that contained a laptop computer, Wi-Fi device, webcams and headsets and ensured participants received the necessary equipment to attend the online training.

This training activity adopted a ToT approach so that the participants themselves delivered the capacity building process. Three PNG radio experts—an Executive Producer of NBC Morobe Province; Activity Coordinator of Yumi Go Wer?; and Director of Provincial Radio, NBC New Ireland were first trained to train others then delivered the training to the PNG provincial radio broadcasters.



This training impacted positively on the production and dissemination of Yumi Go Wer? program. Three stations have relaunched their broadcast panel shows on-air, often streaming live on Facebook simultaneously. Monitoring reports shows that content makers are successfully producing engaging and topical programs that report on issues important to their communities. For example, the Southern Highlands Province aired its first show on law and order issues and discussed how police are preparing for the general elections in July 2022. Autonomous Region of Bougainville based its first show on the impact of climate change on the Cataracts Islands and addressed how the provincial government is responding to the immediate need for relief supplies. Radio East New Britain based its first show on election preparedness for the province.

Moreover, monitoring reports show that Yumi Go Wer? shows received good feedback from listeners through calls and text messages to their stations.

In Phase 3, MDI has impacted positively on supporting PNG media to produce and disseminate quality V&A content and facilitating informed citizen participation through activities such as Core Content Guides, 2022 election reporting coverage training and Yumi Go Wer? training. While MDI has greatly contributed to improving media content that better reflects citizen views in public debates, seeking greater accountability to those views remains a major challenge more broadly in PNG. One of the key learnings is that opportunities exist to further improve V&A content by bringing more attention to the performance of government in response to the citizen needs.

### Gender Equality, Disabilities and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

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**MDI promoted gender equality and disabilities inclusiveness in PNG media across professional and institutional development, content production and program evaluation.**

**Opportunities exist to further advocate for rights and responsibilities of under-represented groups and seek better public services.**

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The cross-cutting priority to advance gender equality, disabilities and social inclusion (GEDSI) has been an outstanding feature across MDI’s work to support PNG media and strengthen V&A. As described in the MDI Independent Review, **“MDI’s efforts to embrace gender and disability**

**inclusiveness have been energetic and effective and ...a noteworthy exemplar**".<sup>25</sup> QTAG notes that the makeup of MDI team itself is a powerful indication of gender inclusiveness being seen as vital:

**"With a woman leading the in-country team, the fact that it is one of the few Australian Government development programs run by a Papua New Guinean is another positive signal of its approach to inclusiveness; indeed it is an exemplar"**.<sup>26</sup>

MDI promoted GEDSI across all activities including professional and institutional development, content production and program evaluation.

The following MDI activities especially advocated GEDSI:

- **Women in the Media research** identified local solutions to reduce barriers to women's career development in the PNG media sector
- **Inclusive Reporting training and strategy** supported journalists to develop content that promotes social inclusion and represent diverse citizen voices
- **Julie's Story film** gave voice to a woman living with disability to raise public awareness about disability, bring the issues to the attention of decision-makers and seek change

## Women in Media

Women in Media is a research activity that MDI conducted in 2018 to promote equality of women in the workplaces in the PNG media sector. The Women in Media report provided an overview of gender diversity, policies, practices and opportunities for women working in PNG media sector with a focus on media outlets based in the capital, Port Moresby.<sup>27</sup> The report identified barriers to women's professional development in the PNG media sector and promoted local solutions to advancing gender equality. This MDI activity addressed the systemic barriers existing within the PNG media sector that prevents PNG media to become more professional, free and diverse — essential qualities without which V&A efforts cannot be truly effective. QTAG's MDI Independent Review commended that **"the Women in Media initiative was an early and important achievement and has been used to influence and inform PNG's mainstream media"**.<sup>28</sup>

Women in Media research revealed significant gender inequality in PNG media sector. Findings showed that women hold just over a third of senior management positions and less than 20 per cent of women make up the membership of governing body.<sup>29</sup> Content making divisions are the largest across media organisations and women only account for just over a third of content making roles.<sup>30</sup> Out of the 13 media organisations that participated in this study, only one in five had gender equality policies and just over one in ten conducted any equality monitoring.<sup>31</sup> The study also found that women face a range of challenges working in the PNG media sector. These include: safety concerns, sexual harassment, gender influencing career development, experiences of domestic violence, limited institutional support to balance work and family life and lack of confidence.

25 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.5.

26 Ibid., p.20.

27 ABCID (2018) Papua New Guinea Women in the Media: Research Report, Media Development Initiative, Melbourne: ABCID.

28 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) Media Development Initiative Independent Review by Quality and Technical Assurance Group (QTAG). Canberra: DFAT, p.15.

29 Ibid., p.6.

30 Ibid., p.8.

31 Ibid., p.6.

Women in Media report made comprehensive recommendations for media organisations to improve its policies and practices. These include: universal adoption of Code of Conduct, implementation of workplace gender targets and quotas, paid maternity leave, fair pay conditions, support for victims of violence, increased leadership training, and increased media coverage of gender inequality issues<sup>32</sup>.

The dissemination of this research report has led to responsiveness from media organisations to discuss with MDI about gender equality policy. Monitoring report shows that MDI shared gender inclusiveness strategies with media partners.<sup>33</sup> A media outlet sourced a gender policy from parent company and discussed future work with MDI to establish gender working group, gender quota and mentoring programs for women and allocate male reporters to cover women's issues. Moreover, a GESI officer in a media organisation produced a plan for gender activities based on the report recommendations.

Beyond informing the PNG media sector, the Women in Media research findings also contributed to broader research discussions on public policy issues in PNG. For example, the study findings were presented at the 2019 PNG Update, an influential public forum dedicated to discussing public policy issues in PNG organised by University of PNG (UPNG) and Australian National University (ANU).

## Inclusive Reporting

MDI's Inclusive Reporting workshop is an activity that equips PNG journalists and media professionals with knowledge, skills and networks to develop quality media content that promotes social inclusion. This activity contributed to V&A by placing the voices of under-represented groups such as women and People with Disabilities (PWD) in the public domain in an accurate, respectful and sustained manner.

MDI's Inclusive Reporting workshops entailed both awareness raising and network building components. This involved providing training to content makers with the knowledge and skills to report effectively on GEDSI and also connecting them with civil society organisations, advocacy groups and those with lived experiences of disabilities to establish possible avenues of collaboration.

In the 2019 Inclusive Reporting workshop, participants visited the Port Moresby Deaf Rugby Team to gather content. While gathering content, the participants acquired better understanding of communicating with communities of PWD including aspects of accessibility and the process to include people's views such as by working with a translator. The training was developed and implemented with the involvement of Disability and Social Inclusion Senior Coordinator at Abt Associates and Co-chair of the PNG Assembly of Disabled Persons. MDI also consulted with the ABC's Disability Inclusion specialist in Australia on developing the course content.

In the 2021 Inclusive Reporting workshop delivered online, MDI brought together local organisations to discuss language and representation issues in the media. As part of this activity, a representative of the PNG Assembly of Disabled Persons advised the PNG journalists and media professionals to become more accessible so that PWD can participate more effectively in both

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.13-14.

<sup>33</sup> ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 9.

creating and consuming news. Suggestions included pop-up newsrooms and spaces outside the traditional newsrooms especially for those who have mobility restrictions. There was also an emphasis on inclusive language in PNG media so that key issues faced by PWD can be discussed accurately and supportively in the public domain in ways that can lead to improved public services and prevention of discrimination.

Acknowledging the need for more inclusive language in PNG media, MDI initiated creating Background Briefings and Core Content Guides that specifically focus on GEDSI. Examples include: ‘How COVID-19 misinformation and stigma contributes to Violence Against Women (VAW)’ and ‘Universal Children’s Day November 20 – What are some key issues affecting children in PNG?’<sup>34</sup>. The Background Briefings on COVID-19 and disabilities inclusiveness brought the voices of the communities of PWD in the public domain to discuss their experiences of increased isolation and heightened ramifications when services and support become unavailable. Expert speakers stressed to journalists that PWD make up 15 per cent of the PNG population and the importance of the government to be inclusive in their COVID-19 prevention strategies.<sup>35</sup> MDI’s Inclusive Reporting strategy was also applied to actively target women and PWD as subject experts in the briefings.

As a result of MDI’s Inclusive Reporting workshops and strategies, PNG journalists and media professionals benefited from access to expert information on social inclusion and were encouraged to be more inclusive in their content making. For example, GEDSI focus was an important aspect of media contents addressing COVID-19 response. The MDI-supported content that embraced GEDSI include: Public Service Announcements (PSAs), radio dramas and cartoons that disseminated health messages about COVID-19 prevention; ‘Road to Recovery’, the national television series on PNG’s COVID-19 response; ‘PNG United,’ the provincial radio series on critical issues related to COVID-19, African Swine Fever and Fall Army Worm; and FM100 radio talkback program on COVID-19.

MDI’s Inclusive Reporting strategy impacted positively on PNG journalists’ news reporting perspective. As part of the ‘Road to Recovery’ television series, produced in partnership between NBC and EMTV, a female NBC reporter interviewed a woman with disabilities in Sorovi, Popondetta. Having shown how to apply inclusive reporting strategies to the content production process by MDI, the reporter was encouraged to produce more content that promotes social inclusion. As the reporter commented: “Content makers should continue identify and produce these types of stories. These are real life situation stories that can directly influence lives of other women or PWDs who are going through the same situation”.<sup>36</sup>

MDI’s emphasis on inclusiveness also extended to other under-represented groups including youth and rural populations so PNG media content represents the diverse interests and needs of all citizens. For example, voices of people living in the provinces were heard by a national audience through the NBC Stori Bilong Yumi series.

Overall, there has been an increase in female participants in activities and representation in content. However, there continues to be an under-representation of youth and PWD community in MDI supported content indicating opportunity for the next phase.

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34 ABCID (2021) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 18.

35 ABCID (2020) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 22.

36 ABCID (2020) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 11.



## Julie's Story

Julie's Story is a film that tells the challenges faced by Julie Nabog, a young woman in Talasea after she lost one of her legs in an accident. The film traces series of compounding challenges Julie confronted. Her career came to an end, and she was forced to leave home, leading her to become homeless with no government support. Having lost the other leg due to complications with diabetes, she experienced daily hardships accessing basic services such as not being able to access the markets or even hospital toilets due to lack of accessibility.<sup>37</sup> After Julie passed away, her legacy lives on through the film, bringing the issues she faced to the public domain for discussion.

Julie's Story was produced as part of MDI's creative hub activities in the Talasea district. This MDI activity contributed to the V&A endeavours by empowering a woman living with disability to voice the concerns and issues faced by PWD communities and bringing them to the attention of decision-makers.

Julie's participation in the production process brought rich insights not only from her personal experiences of living with disabilities but also from the role she had having worked as a disability support officer for a community development division in Talasea district. The film drew attention to Julie's personal stories of challenges and linked her lived experiences to the wider problems about gender inequality and lack of institutional support. The film provoked pressing questions about changes that need to be made. It called for better public services and delivery for people living with disabilities.

MDI supported the film to be disseminated in a manner that gets national coverage and stimulates community dialogue. The film was launched in Port Moresby in November 2018, broadcast on NBC, received news coverage and was subsequently screened in 2019 to an audience in Talasea district. At the screening in Kimbe, Talasea, the audience included members of the local and provincial government and business council.

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37 Koima, McPolly and Sorariba, Dickson (2018) 'Julie's story gives voice to people living with disability in PNG,' November 13, ABCID website: <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/julies-story-gives-voice-to-people-living-with-disability-in-png/10473616>

Monitoring report shows that despite the low level of workplace engagement on PWD in PNG, 80 per cent of participants at the screening indicated they are in the position to influence decision making within their organisation. This response was followed by positive suggestions for some changes in their workplace, as a result of attending the film screening session. As one participant commented:

**“We have addressed domestic violence, which we have a (...) registered a women’s group, which I’m the chairman of, and we have networking in all the company’s communities or compounds, which under that umbrella as well, we could specifically look at that area (disabilities)...”**

– Female, Corporate<sup>38</sup>

The support to produce and disseminate Julie’s Story film was indicative of the broader growing interest to explore important social and public policy issues, such as women’s economic justice, disabilities inclusiveness and job security, through creative content productions. As QTAG’s MDI Independent Review observed, **“this (film) initiative followed the request of NBC’s managing director to MDI to explore social drama as a means of promoting positive behavioural change”**.<sup>39</sup> This request led to the initiation of MDI’s social drama project, ‘Sagata,’ that explores everyday issues faced by families in PNG. Although the social drama could not proceed due to changes in funding priorities, the interest from NBC’s senior management suggested an increasingly responsive environment in PNG media to further investigate and promote GEDSI.

Overall, MDI promoted GEDSI across all their activities to support PNG media to become more professional, free and diverse. MDI’s strong emphasis on advocating GEDSI were demonstrated by activities such as Women in Media research, Inclusive Reporting workshops and strategy and Julie’s Story film. While GEDSI was not the main objective of MDI, it is also clear that advancing GEDSI significantly enhanced the quality of V&A efforts. As QTAG’s MDI Independent Review remarks, **“while any of these initiatives alone will not be enough to shift attitude and understanding of inclusiveness, together they add to a continuum of broader community effort. MDI’s contribution has been to strengthen the voice of those pushing for change”**.<sup>40</sup> Looking ahead, opportunities exist to continue working with PNG media to advocate for rights and responsibilities of under-represented groups such as women, PWD, youth and rural populations at the levels of professional and institutional development, content production and program evaluation.

### Adaptability and Innovation

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**MDI embraced adaptability and innovation to drive locally relevant, evidence-based, digitally responsible initiatives and build strategic partnerships.**

**Opportunities exist to continuously generate latest insights on PNG media, develop digitally smart editorial processes, and strengthen multistakeholder engagement.**

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The modality to embrace adaptability and innovation has enabled MDI to work effectively with PNG media partners in a difficult operating environment constrained by the wider political, economic and technological forces and disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. To mobilise V&A initiatives,

38 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 16.

39 O’Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.20.

40 Ibid.

MDI progressed adaptively and innovatively to drive locally relevant, evidence-based, digitally responsible initiatives and establish strategic partnerships.

The following MDI activities helped the work with PNG media and the V&A efforts to evolve adaptively and innovatively:

- **PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study** provided latest insights into how PNG citizens perceive governance and engage with media
- **Social media activities** promoted effective and responsible usage of social media in journalistic reporting and led to the development of social media policies and guidelines
- **COVID-19 response** supported remote delivery arrangements, access to accurate content and strategies to tackle misinformation
- **Church media partnership** was established based on important finding that church media is one of the most trusted media sources in PNG

### **PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study**

MDI's PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study is an extensive research activity that provided latest insights on PNG media landscape.<sup>41</sup> The study investigated what the citizen attitudes and perceptions of PNG governance are, how citizens engage with social and political issues, where citizens are accessing information and how they are consuming media. This MDI activity contributed to V&A initiatives by offering essential information about the relationship between media access and consumption and citizen-government engagement.

The findings from the study enabled MDI to support PNG media in a locally relevant and evidence-based manner and helped identify priority areas and opportunities for partnerships and collaborations. First, the survey data revealed that citizens face a lack of listening from leadership and have poor access to government leaders. This finding led to a recommendation to enlarge citizen's access to decision-makers and implement community-led grassroots initiatives that provide supportive structures for citizen-government engagement. Second, the survey data showed that church media is considered the most trustworthy source of information for all surveyed citizen groups. This data led to a consideration of partnering with church media to engage with citizens on bipartisan community issues. Third, the study found that there has been a significant increase in smart phone ownership and internet access since the previous MDI PNG Media Survey conducted in 2014 and a rapid rise of digital and social media. This finding has led to suggestions to focus on social media as a tool for civic engagement. Finally, the research revealed the cross-cutting issues that women and people with disabilities had limited influence on, and participation in, decision-making process. This data has led to a consideration to incorporate promotion of GEDSI in media development activities.

While the immediate benefits of this study to designing and evaluating MDI activities are clear, the findings generated from this study could also benefit other development initiatives in PNG.

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<sup>41</sup> ABCID (2019) PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Report. Melbourne: ABCID.



As QTAG's MDI Independent Review remarks,

**“The results of the survey provide important benchmarks and point to trends and perceptions which can be used to shape the focus of MDI and more broadly, other V&A type activities being undertaken by the Australia's aid program in PNG.”<sup>42</sup>**

Monitoring reports show that the study has helped shape programming in other initiatives. For example, Digicel Foundation used the data from the PNG Citizen Perception of Governance and Media Engagement Study to inform their decision making about their plans to support television programming focused on young people.<sup>43</sup>

### Social media activities

To support PNG media and strengthen V&A effectively, it became important to mobilise media development activities that were relevant and forward-looking. To be adaptive and innovative in a PNG media environment that is undergoing rapid rise in social media, MDI actively incorporated social media components in a range of activities with diverse stakeholders. As QTAG's MDI Independent Review remarked, **“MDI has been energetic in supporting and facilitating the use of social media whether by media organisations, community groups or decision makers”**.<sup>44</sup>

During this phase, MDI has facilitated social media activities in several significant ways. These activities included:

- providing social media training for journalists for content production
- supporting multiplatform delivery of content including both traditional media and social media formats
- arranging social media trainings for civil society organisations and youth groups,
- supporting the development of social media policies and guidelines and
- providing social media training for information integrity during COVID-19 pandemic and election period.

MDI organised social media trainings for PNG journalists and media professionals to equip them with the knowledge and skills to utilise social media effectively in their news reporting. In February 2019, a two-day social media training was delivered by senior PNG journalist, Scott Waide. Monitoring report shows that a participant applied this learning by producing a social media news content.<sup>45</sup> In June 2019, another social media workshop was delivered to PNG news reporters by a digital journalist and producer at ABC News. As a result of this workshop, participants gained increased knowledge on how to improve social media content, practical skills to produce quality content, and better understanding of how social media works with television, radio and print media, and the ethical considerations of social media including sourcing articles and copyright. MDI ensured social media trainings were also offered to PNG journalists at district-level.<sup>46</sup>

42 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.17.

43 ABCID (2021) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 10.

44 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.5.

45 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 13.

46 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 5.



Recognising the growing need to converge traditional media (television, radio and print) and digital media platforms in delivering news content, MDI actively incorporated multiplatform delivery of V&A content in activities. For example, MDI-supported television series, ‘Road to Recovery,’ produced by TVWan and NBCTV, was broadcast on both television and social media platforms.<sup>47</sup> MDI also supported provincial radio stations to incorporate social media in the content production and dissemination including podcast training. In 2019, applying the ToT approach, Acting Director of NBC Radio West New Britain was trained to train others to pass on the knowledge and skills of using podcasting radio production.<sup>48</sup>

MDI’s social media trainings were also delivered to civil society organisations and youth groups to raise awareness on how to use social media for open dialogue in a constructive and respectful way. For example, MDI’s social media training for civil society organisations in Talasea district focused on how to create responsible social media content and disseminate the information effectively in the public arena.<sup>49</sup> In addition, MDI ran a workshop called ‘Call to Action Scripting and Short Video Smart Phone Production’ that involved participants from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), church organisations and government departments. In the training, participants wrote stories that address issues affecting the local communities and portray those issues using video recorded on smart phone. The messages created with a ‘call to action’ format were then delivered to specific audiences via social media.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, MDI also ran social media workshop in collaboration with National Capital District Program with participation from 22 youths in Port Moresby. The workshop encouraged young people to tell their stories and provided trainings in interactive messaging and social media etiquettes. A youth participant provided the feedback:

**“After this training now I know how to use social media and online media responsibly and I have confident [sic] in myself that I will apply apps in designing and interactive messaging.”**

— Youth participant<sup>51</sup>

MDI’s social media training also included working with senior management personnel in media organisations and assisting the development of social media policies and guidelines. Adopting a ToT approach, NBC managers were trained to train others, and delivered training on NBC editorial

47 ABCID (2020) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 8

48 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 19.

49 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 6.

50 ABCID (2019) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 13.

51 Ibid.

and social media policies and emergency broadcasting policies in the provinces of Manus, Enga, Southern, Western, and Eastern highlands, East Sepik, Sandaun and Morobe.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, MDI also supported the participation of PNG media partners to attend a training activity focused on information integrity when problems of misinformation and disinformation in social media were fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>53</sup> The digital verification skills acquired through this training enabled PNG journalists and media professionals to tackle similar problems leading up to the 2022 national general election.

Overall, as proliferation of social media is expected to increase in the coming years, ongoing support for PNG media to better utilise social media is considered important. However, QTAG's MDI Independent Review cogently notes, clarity is required on the rationale and purpose of how social media might be used.<sup>54</sup> This recommendation considers several factors including uneven access and usage of social media across PNG, lack of understanding on how authorities and decision-makers use social media and the growing problems of 'fake news' and credibility issues.

### COVID-19 response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, despite significant disruptions, MDI continued assisting PNG media partners adaptively and innovatively to promote V&A. Among a range of COVID-19 related activities, MDI primarily supported PNG media by organising remote delivery of previously face-to-face activities, facilitating accurate and inclusive reporting about COVID-19, and developing strategies to address misinformation and disinformation.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the social distancing restrictions forced PNG media organisations to rethink the ways they produce and disseminate content. Many organisations turned to online methods to conduct activities that were previously done face-to-face. MDI supported the digital adaptation by assisting with remote delivery of activities. For example, MDI assisted the NBC to host its flagship discussion program, the National Press Club, via Zoom.<sup>55</sup> In addition, leading up to the Press Club, MDI hosted Background Briefings so PNG journalists can continue to access industry leaders, subject experts or professionals to ask questions on behalf of the citizens and produce quality V&A content. MDI created a closed Facebook group to stream the Background Briefing and invited content makers to participate. By keeping it to a closed group it allowed journalists to prepare questions for the National Press Club and ask questions in a supportive environment. As a result of participating in the MDI Facebook group, participants found that they could continue to generate well-researched content based on the information provided by MDI's online Background Briefings during the COVID-19 lockdowns. As a participant commented:

**“We have been able to still get updates for our newsroom utilising the Facebook Live option on the group. Other information and material posted in the group, including contacts have also been quite helpful.”**

– Participant<sup>56</sup>

52 Ibid., p. 11

53 ABCID (2021) MDI Progress Report January-June, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 6.

54 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.29.

55 ABCID (2020) MDI Progress Report July-December, Melbourne: ABCID, p. 12.

56 Ibid.

As part of COVID-19 response, MDI worked with PNG media partners to produce and disseminate accurate and inclusive media content about COVID-19. This included health messages with a focus on COVID-19 prevention such as the production of Public Service Announcements (PSAs), radio dramas and cartoons. These contents were produced with advice from the PNG National Department of Health and covered hygiene protocols such as washing hands and social distancing. To promote social inclusion, these contents dealt with issues faced by the community and represented women, men, young, old and PWD. PSAs were produced and distributed to NBC National Radio and provincial stations. They were also sent to Witnesses Radio, Hope FM radio and offered to all MDI partners, church media and the Department of Health for distribution. PSAs were converted to cartoon pieces to diversify the reach of New Normal messages and translated to local languages to ensure local communities can understand the message. COVID-19 themed dramas for NBC National Radio have also been produced with the approval from the Department of Health. MDI also produced COVID-19 related Core Content Guides and Background Briefings to promote well-researched and inclusive reporting. With an emphasis on GEDSI, MDI enabled PNG journalists and media professionals to access the issues faced by women and PWD and stimulate public discussions about the importance of COVID-19 response to be inclusive.

Moreover, MDI supported PNG media to produce contents that address the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and the livelihoods of PNG citizens. These issues were explored through the Road to Recovery television series, FM100 talkback show and NBC dramas.

MDI's COVID-19 response also involved addressing the 'Infodemic' environment rife with misinformation and disinformation. To empower PNG media partners with the knowledge and skills to identify different types of false information and report accurately, MDI facilitated PNG media professionals to participate in the IFES COVID-19 Information Integrity Training. This program also promoted fact-checked and science-based reporting to tackle misconceptions of vaccines. The training activity also raised awareness about the unequal impacts COVID-19 has on groups such as women and PWD and reiterated the importance of inclusive coverage.

In the face of growing distrust towards information, MDI's new partnership with church media has assisted to disseminate evidence-based information through church media sources PNG people trust. Working with church media helped solve some common misconceptions among PNG communities.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the difficult circumstances, MDI supported PNG media to produce quality V&A content. This ongoing support was enabled by MDI's digitally adaptive and responsible response to COVID-19 along with effective partnership with local media including church media. As problems of false information persist, there is an important opportunity for MDI to further equip PNG media with digitally smart editorial processes and strengthen the new partnership with church media.

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57 Lovai, Willie and Oata, Meinhard (2022) 'PNG churches address COVID-19 misinformation', June 6, ABC ID website: <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/png-churches-address-covid-19-misinformation/13908230>



## Church media partnership

During Phase 3, MDI established a new strategic partnership with PNG's church media. This partnership is based on the important finding that church media constitutes one of the most trusted media sources in PNG.<sup>58</sup> Effective partnership with church media has the potential to strengthen V&A efforts considering PNG churches' strong engagement with local communities and vital role in service delivery, and given also church media's existing influence on citizen attitudes and engagement. As QTAG's MDI Independent Review notes, **"strengthening links to the churches' media has the advantage of broadening the reach of MDI's V&A activities"**.<sup>59</sup>

To strengthen V&A in PNG, MDI has built meaningful partnership with church media in several ways based on findings from MDI's scoping study on church media in PNG.<sup>60</sup>

MDI facilitated collaboration opportunities within the church media sector and between church media with the wider PNG media sector. Noticing the limited interactions amongst church media outlets, MDI created opportunities for church media organisations to network. In March-April 2022, MDI facilitated the development of a church consortium made up of 6 church media organisations. This consortium builds robust networks of content sharing between church media. In addition, MDI facilitated collaboration opportunities between church media organisations and other media organisations outside of the church network. This engagement with the wider media assisted with producing content relating to specific communities or provinces. In March 2022, church media organisations participated in MDI's radio panel show training for NBC's Yumi Go Wer? program with 30 other radio broadcasters from 19 radio stations across PNG.

MDI also encouraged social inclusion in church media content production. MDI found that while church media partners were aware of the need for greater gender and disabilities inclusiveness in media content, there was no existing consistent editorial approach towards including vulnerable communities in reporting. MDI's Inclusive Reporting workshops were attended by church media organisations to encourage consistent commitment towards inclusive reporting.

In addition, MDI supported church media to develop informed responses to specific national issues that are relevant to the local communities they serve. For example, MDI's Background Briefings and Core Content Guides were made accessible to church media organisations to encourage greater discussion between policy makers and the communities represented by the church media outlets.

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58 ABCID (2019) PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Report. Melbourne: ABCID.

59 O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.24.

60 ABCID (2021) Church Media in Papua New Guinea, Melbourne: ABCID.

Moreover, MDI supported church media's capacity to utilise social media effectively. MDI found that there was consensus among the church media organisations on the importance of developing social media strategies. There was common interest to standardise messaging especially on COVID-19 related information and better integrate radio programming with social media platforms. Through MDI's church media partnership, church media organisations participated in various MDI-supported social media trainings. These included social media trainings focused on accurate and inclusive reporting, multiplatform delivery and digital verification skills.

QTAG's MDI Independent Review found that stakeholders' response to MDI's church media partnership has been "largely positive".<sup>61</sup> There is important opportunity for MDI to continue to strengthen church media partnership to achieve the overarching goal of V&A.

Overall, in a constantly evolving media environment, MDI worked with PNG media adaptively and innovatively to strengthen V&A. Looking ahead, there are opportunities for MDI to continuously generate latest insights on PNG media, develop digitally smart editorial processes, and strengthen multistakeholder engagement.

## Key learnings

As can be seen, in Phase 3, MDI centred on V&A principles and supported PNG media to become more professional, free and diverse and serve the public interests more effectively. MDI's key activities and its significant impacts demonstrate the ongoing importance of MDI to assist PNG media to strengthen V&A and facilitate democratic processes in PNG. As Phase 3 comes to a close, there are opportunities to build on the key learnings ensuing from this phase that could be further built upon in Phase 4.

The key learning points achieved through Phase 3 of MDI's operation are as follows:

### **Supporting MDI's media partners as agent of citizen-government engagement is essential to assisting PNG media to better serve public interests**

- MDI promoted citizen voices and facilitate responsiveness of decision-makers
- To do this, MDI provided supportive structures for media practitioners to access decision-makers, improve the quality of questions posed to the public authorities and stimulate community dialogue on pressing public issues
- It is important MDI continues assisting PNG media to facilitate meaningful citizen-state interface and place governance issues in the public domain in a sustained manner

### **Assisting MDI's media partners to produce and disseminate quality V&A content facilitates informed citizen participation**

- MDI assisted PNG media to produce and disseminate quality content that better reflects citizen views and raises awareness about citizen needs to the government
- To do this, MDI enabled media practitioners to access researched information on key public issues and gain journalism skills to stimulate public debates on issues faced by local communities in accurate, impartial and inclusive manner at national and provincial levels

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<sup>61</sup> O'Keeffe, Paxton and Vagikapi (2020) MDI Independent Review, QTAG. Canberra: DFAT, p.28.



- MDI's continued support to building media practitioners' journalism skills is crucial so the needs and concerns of PNG citizens can be 'voiced' effectively in the public domain. This includes investigative and digitally smart reporting skills with an emphasis on active participation of those from under-represented groups.

**Supporting MDI's media partners to strengthen their organisational capacity is essential to sustaining V&A efforts.**

- MDI supported PNG media to build their organisational capacity and motivation
- To do this, MDI supported PNG media organisations to improve editorial processes, develop social media policies and advance gender equality and disability inclusiveness in workplace policies and culture. MDI also encouraged participants themselves to facilitate the capacity-building process so learnings can be passed on more participatively and sustainably.
- MDI's work with PNG media partners to strengthen their organisational capacity and encourage more professional, inclusive and digitally smart practices remains essential to sustaining V&A efforts.

**Promoting GEDSI across all MDI activities helps advocate for rights and responsibilities of under-represented groups and seek better public services.**

- MDI promoted GEDSI across all activities so the voices of under-represented groups can be reflected across professional and institutional development, content production and program evaluation
- MDI's ongoing emphasis on PNG media to advocate for rights and responsibilities of under-represented groups such as women, PWD, youth and rural populations at the levels of content production and organizational capacity-building is vital to seeking better public services and enriches the quality of V&A efforts

**Embracing adaptability and innovation can help achieve MDI goals, even in challenging operating environment.**

- In a challenging operating environment marked by shifting media landscape, wider governance barriers and COVID-19 pandemic disruptions, MDI worked with PNG media partners adaptively and innovatively to facilitate V&A

- MDI drove locally relevant, evidence-based, digitally responsible initiatives and built strategic partnerships, most notably the church media partnership.
- MDI's adaptive and innovative efforts to generate latest insights on PNG media, develop digitally smart editorial processes, and consolidate relationships with organisations such as church media can help achieve MDI goals.

**Supporting MDI's media partners to transition to digital technologies and effectively utilise social media is pivotal to adapt to PNG's shifting media landscape.**

- MDI supported PNG media partners to transition to a media environment that is undergoing rapid rise in digital and social media.
- MDI provided social media training for journalists, CSOs and youth groups; supported the development of social media policies and guidelines; assisted with multiplatform delivery of content; and equipped media practitioners with digital verification skills.
- Supporting PNG media to implement digitally reliable content production and digitally smart editorial processes remain pertinent with a focus on effective usage of social media. Digital inclusion is also a consideration including PNG youth's social media engagement and barriers to digital media access by rural populations.

**Multistakeholder engagement is critical to sustaining effective citizen-government engagement and achieving accountability of decision-makers.**

- As accountability of government remains a significant challenge in PNG's political and cultural context, MDI engaged with multiple stakeholders to achieve responsiveness of authorities.
- MDI was broadened to work more strategically with a mix of public and private media partners and a range of CSOs addressing targeted governance issues to drive V&A efforts.
- MDI established church media partnership based on a finding from MDI's PNG Citizen Perceptions of Governance and Media Engagement Study that church media is the most trusted media source in PNG.
- MDI's commitment to multistakeholder engagement based on the recognition that PNG media constitutes one part of the broader V&A endeavours is crucial to sustaining effective citizen-state interface.





### Stories of significant change

Discussions with MDI participants reveal that MDI activities brought meaningful impacts on the professional development of journalists and media officers in PNG. (See Appendix B for full versions)

**Carol Umbo, Executive Producer, NBC Morobe**, found that participating in MDI's radio documentary training and the Training of Trainers training for a radio panel show equipped her to train other content makers to better tell the stories of PNG people living in the provinces.

For **Christine Pakakota, Editor-in-Chief, The National**, attending the COVID-19 Information Integrity training and the Inclusive Reporting Workshop helped her team to utilise social media responsibly and report news to the readers effectively and inclusively.

In the case of **Sincha Dimara, Editor, Inside PNG** (formerly Head of News, EMTV), MDI assisted her to produce a television panel show that promotes citizen-government debates on pressing public issues including gender-based violence (GBV) and sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV).

As for **Jeremy Mogi, Public Relations Officer, PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum** (formerly online news editor, EMTV), he was inspired by MDI's concept that stronger PNG media could lead to stronger voice and accountability in PNG.

In addition, **Vinna Wigur, Media Officer, 2 Witness Radio** (formerly media officer, NBC), saw that the otherwise disconnected church media actors could now work together through the MDI's church media partnership to increase citizen access and dialogue on important public matters such as national election.

The MDI participants' stories of change collectively demonstrate the ongoing challenges and opportunities for PNG media to amplify citizens' voices and promote government accountability.

## Appendix A: Summary of key activities and impacts

This section provides a quantitative summary of key activities and impacts in Phase 3.

### Press Club

Number of Press Clubs	26
Female participants	54
Male participants	72
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>126</b>

### Social Media

Number of social media related activities	7
Female participants	56
Male participants	56
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>112</b>

### Background Briefing

Number of Background Briefings	50
Female participants	196
Male participants	196
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>396*</b>

\*Some gender entries were unknown/blank

### Provincial Panel

Number of Provincial Panels	55
Female guest speakers on panels	21
Male guest speakers on panels	82
<b>Total guest speakers</b>	<b>103</b>

### Yumi Go Wer?

Number of YGW? trainings	2
Female participants	12
Male participants	21
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>33</b>

### Talasea 'District Hub'

Number of activities	14
Female participants	126
Male participants	87
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>213</b>

### 2022 Election Coverage

Number of election related trainings, including Background Briefings	9
Female participants	54
Male participants	57
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>108*</b>

\*Some gender entries were unknown/blank

### Core Content Guides

<b>Number of guides disseminated</b>	<b>57</b>
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## Appendix B: Stories of significant change

### Carol Umbo, Executive Producer, NBC Morobe

Carol has been involved with MDI for over 12 years. Since starting her career in provincial radio broadcasting as a reporter, to her current role as executive producer, Carol has participated in various MDI activities from journalism training to leadership and management training.

“The MDI trainings really assisted me from when I was a reporter to where I am now,” she says. **“The MDI gave the necessary tools and trainings and has really empowered me professionally.”**

The MDI activities that especially had positive impacts for Carol were the radio documentary training for the **Stori Bilong Yumi** program in August 2021 and the **Training of Trainers** training for the Yumi Go Wer? panel show in March 2022.



**“I really saw that these MDI trainings had impact on provincial content and it’s making radio more interactive, giving people the voice to talk about the issues affecting them. I’m very grateful to MDI for doing that,”** she says.

According to Carol, the MDI’s radio documentary training for the Stori Bilong Yumi program significantly improved the storytelling skills of the NBC content makers. **“It raised the bar in the way we produce programs in NBC ... in terms of the depth and the balance of the story and production,”** she comments. “I received many positive comments from the listeners and colleagues.”

Stori Bilong Yumi is a documentary style radio program that creates opportunity for Papua New Guinean people living in the provinces to tell their stories. “In English, it’s ‘Our Story.’ The program is the longest running program on NBC for more than five years. It’s a thirty-minute weekly compilation from various provincial radio stations and it’s aired on national radio and then relayed by the provincial radio stations,” she explains.

Disseminated to the NBC’s broader audience, the program gives those living outside the capital and in the provinces a national voice to discuss the things that concern them and bring these matters to the attention of decision makers.

Participating in the MDI’s Training of Trainers training for the Yumi Go Wer panel show has also had significant impact for Carol. In this activity, she was equipped with the knowledge and skills of how to train others and how to design learner-centred training materials. She then applied the learnings by delivering a radio panels programming training so others could produce engaging contents that address key issues.

**“It has enabled me to deliver a successful online training on panel shows. It was also the first time for me to conduct an online training and that opportunity launched me out,”** she says.

Yumi Go Wer? is an NBC radio program that facilitates debates on pressing issues faced by the local communities. “That radio panel show training, Yumi Go Wer?, has given our listeners an interactive platform to voice their thoughts. It was very good to see MDI coming and supporting that platform, because I’m one of the advocates of the talkback show,” she says.

In Carol’s view, these MDI activities not only had positive impact on the content production but also on the PNG media sector more broadly. **“We felt recognised and empowered to be the voice of the people. It ... gave us a sense of unity, too —the sense of unity and drive to continue to be that voice,”** she says.

Carol believes it is crucial to continue strengthening the PNG media to better facilitate voice and accountability. She explains:

**“It’s important in PNG because media in PNG is the voice of Papua New Guineans. People come up to tell their stories, especially in a country like ours that’s rife with corruption in high places and politics of leadership and public service. It is the people’s voice that can make the leaders accountable. I firmly believe that the more strengthened and empowered the Papua New Guinea media is, our people will be willing to speak up and demand answers.”**

To do that, Carol thinks it is important to recognise the power imbalances in the voices of the people and promote gender equality and social inclusion. **“In the programs that we do, I’m emphasising women’s issues, people living with disabilities, youth and the marginalised,”** she says. “I’m grateful to what MDI has done in reminding us that these are the people that need to be given voice as well.”

When envisioning the future of PNG media, Carol thinks the greatest opportunity lies in extending media freedom by strengthening investigative reporting skills and addressing systemic barriers. “I think that we are blessed because we enjoy our media freedom ... But I would like to see more investigative and analytical stories and encourage that in young reporters,” she says.

In her view, the capacity to ask questions critically and conduct in-depth inquiry on specific issues is deeply tied to systemic barriers. “We need to look at that because we are a country and nation that’s culturally bound. ...For example, how do we report on a politician who decides to take a second wife? You see, in overseas media, that’s a story. It’s a front page. In PNG, because of culture and taboo, we don’t talk about it. It’s something we need to break free from,” she says.

Carol is hopeful that tackling this challenge can further help PNG media to facilitate the voices of the Papua New Guinean people. “Over the next years or so, maybe there is something that [we] can work on ... [so we can] be the voice we’re supposed to be.”

### Christine Pakakota, Editor-in-Chief, The National

Christine attended the COVID-19 Information Integrity training in March 2021 and the Inclusive Reporting Workshop in October 2021. As a chief editor of a leading newspaper in PNG, she found that participating in these activities supported her team to report news to the readers effectively and inclusively.

**“After that [training and workshop], we ... ran our own programs based on what we did in our own individual newsrooms. I would say that it was very, very informative,”** she says.

The capacity to report the right information and facilitate informed citizen participation was especially pertinent in the COVID-19 Infodemic environment.



**“At the time with COVID-19, in PNG there was a lot of misinformation and that really impacted on how people took COVID-19 - was it very serious, what did they think of it? As media, we played an important role in ensuring that correct and right information was disseminated to our readers,”** she says.

To tackle the problems of misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and propaganda, the MDI supported the PNG media actors to participate in the COVID-19 Information Integrity training. This activity was run by ABCID and the IFES and funded by USAID. The training covered how to distinguish misinformation, disinformation and mal-information, how to effectively use social media and how to serve the vulnerable audiences.

**“It was important that the reporters understood where to get information from and the things they should look out for as misinformation,”** Christine comments.

After attending the training, she noticed that the reporters were utilising social media more effectively to verify information and applying this skill to not only COVID-19 related news but also election news.

**“They used that (learning) for COVID-19, and now with the election here, they actually use it also to help them digest and see: ‘this is social media policy, this is what I should do to ensure that it is correct, should I disregard it or should I continue to check on it.’ That has really helped them,”** she says.

For Christine, participating in the Inclusive Reporting workshop also had positive impact. This workshop equipped journalists with the knowledge and skills to accurately and respectfully develop content on issues such as gender and disabilities inclusiveness and children’s rights.

**“It was all about sharing information to people with special needs or disabilities, and inclusive reporting —how they can use the media to bring out the information about what they are doing,”** she explains. The workshop also focused on connecting journalists with relevant information providers, advocacy organizations and individuals with lived experience.

The opportunity to network with media professionals and civil society organisations through the MDI activities was especially valuable to Christine.

**“I would say [the most significant impact of MDI] is the networking — the bringing in of the people who have been in the system who know about the issues and for them to come and share,”**

Christine thinks the networks formed through the MDI activities can help the reporters to overcome the barrier they often face to question the authorities. **“We have a Big Man mentality here in PNG where there is a lot of ‘respect’. And ... journalists ...respect those in authority too much to put them on the spot, and are shy and probably don’t have the confidence to question,”** she says.

In Christine’s view, the connections built through the MDI activities encourage journalists to become bolder in holding the decision-makers to account.

**“With the MDI and the partnership we have and the various programs, I think that has given the reporters some form of confidence that: ‘You are the voice of the people, so you should work at holding those in authority accountable for the various decisions that they make.’”**

Christine also thinks the networks developed through the MDI activities can help tackle the unfair treatment of female reporters. “I believe there should be equality in [sic] both male and female in the newsroom. **When they (female reporters) get into the field, they should ...be free to move around and do their job freely without being harassed or being looked down on,**” she asserts.

Acknowledging that female reporters often become subject to public criticism instead of the issues they report, she shares her thinking that the networks help build solidarity in the newsroom and across the media sector.

“(When) a female reporter writes a story and goes on social media, ... rather than attacking the issue or discussing about the issue, people are very quick to say, ‘that’s a female reporter and that’s what a female reporter is good at doing that or this and that’. So I think it comes back also to the partnership and the network and the newsroom,” Christine says.

According to Christine, the future of PNG media is both promising and challenging. She is hopeful that media freedom will continue. However, she imagines the convergence of traditional and digital media and the rapid uptake of social media will continue to pose a challenge. “It has already been, and it is a challenge now,; traditional media against social media,” she says.

She foresees that the gap will widen between media organisations that embrace technological innovations and those who do not. “That goes back to respective media origins — whether you want to embrace the social media changes ... and move with the technology or you remain as the traditional newspaper media, print media that’s it... [and] don’t go down the line of digital or electronic media, social media,” she says.

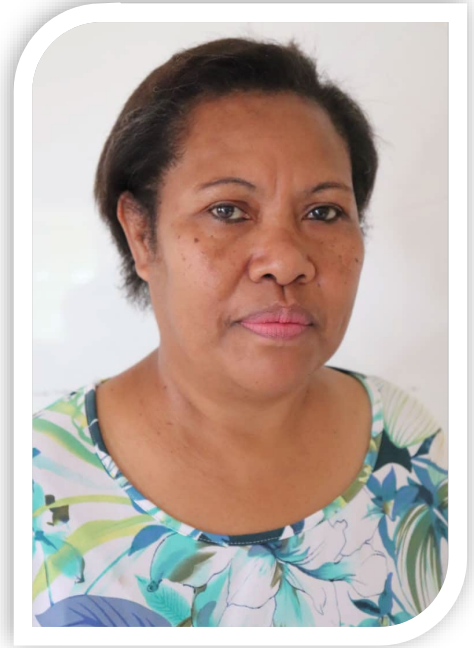
She also raises the challenge of trust and the growing importance of digital information verification skills and public digital literacy. “It will come to a stage when I hope and pray that people will be able to judge: Should I believe everything that comes from social media? Or do I ...believe the traditional media as they have the checks and balance system in place where they use that to check stories before they actually publish it?” she asks.

**Sincha Dimara, Editor, Inside PNG (former Head of News, EMTV)**

Sincha became involved with MDI in late 2021 to create a new television panel program, as Head of News at EMTV at the time. In consultation with MDI, she and her team brainstormed ideas for a panel show that drives engaging debates on pressing issues of national significance, such as leadership, governance, and gender equality.

In January 2022, Sincha and her team produced the first program. This program investigated the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) with a focus on Sorcery-Accusation Related Violence (SARV).

There are high number of SARV cases in the highland provinces of PNG. On average, 388 people are accused of sorcery each year.<sup>62</sup> Approximately 1 in 6 women accused of sorcery are killed, 1 in 4 women suffer permanent injury and more than a third of those accused of sorcery experience serious assaults, including torture that lasts for several days to a week or longer.<sup>63</sup>



With the support of MDI, Sincha and her team produced a panel program, which opened with a short feature video that introduced the problem, followed by a panel discussion involving experts on the subject.

While the panel discussions were held virtually and recorded online, Sincha and her team were able to travel to the highland province to create the short feature video. Sincha expresses her gratitude to MDI's travel assistance that enabled her to gain a better understanding about this problem from the perspective of those with lived experiences and the local community.

As a result of MDI's assistance, she was able to directly speak with the survivors and listen to their stories. She also gathered the views of women who were finding safe houses for women in this situation and speak with the local police based close to where recent SARV had incidents happened.

Sincha covered this national issue of horrific violence and institutional failure with care and a sense of urgency. One of the challenges she encountered was selecting visuals for public viewing that were accurate and engaging but also respectful. She had access to a video recording of a group of women accused of sorcery being tortured, which had been circulated on social media.

With MDI's emphasis on inclusive reporting and her interest to focus on the issue, she and her team decided against using this recording. Instead, she came up with the idea of replacing it with a drawing. "When we actually showed the video, everyone (her news team) was affected by it ... This is a group of women who had been tortured and someone filming it. And that went out on social media ... But I actually went a way around it [sic] and got drawings of it," she says.

Yet even when the pictures were drawn, Sincha still found the problem highly distressful and motivated her to further discuss about it. "Even the pictures that showed the women being tortured was, you know, just horrific. We needed to talk about it," she says.

62 National Parliament of PNG (2021) Report to parliament: Part 1 Inquiry into Gender-Based Violence in PNG, Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender-Based Violence, 9 August. Port Moresby: NPPNG, p.43. [https://019c6425-665f-436e-a27d-cf729793144f.filesusr.com/ugd/7f0c06\\_7579973a602943b1bb52fadf58b00453.pdf](https://019c6425-665f-436e-a27d-cf729793144f.filesusr.com/ugd/7f0c06_7579973a602943b1bb52fadf58b00453.pdf)

63 Ibid.

The most significant impact this MDI-supported project had on Sincha was the ability to bring this problem to the public forum for debate, seek change and hold the leaders to account. She asserts:

**“I felt that with the MDI’s collaboration then with EMTV to be able to do this program, a panel discussion, Q&A with the panelists and the public, being able to discuss the issues of importance, it will bring change and hold the leaders accountable to address these issues”.**

According to Sincha, this television panel program she initiated with MDI was innovative and has not been done before in PNG media. “For a long time, through television ... there was not much done on sort of a current affairs type panel discussion. We were looking at this as ... a first one,” she says.

Although the first show was done virtually, she was especially interested to do a panel show in an open forum where the panel and the audience could directly interact.

While Sincha looked forward to producing the second show, her involvement with this project ended abruptly. Just one month after the first program was completed, she and her entire news team were suddenly terminated.<sup>64</sup>

Her experience indicates a wider problem faced by PNG media and the volatile working environment with a high level of staff turnover. Although PNG media is relatively free, media independence in PNG has increasingly become endangered in the last few years.<sup>65</sup>

Given her recent experience, Sincha thinks that strengthening media to facilitate voice and accountability is all the more crucial.

**“It’s really important right now ... This is a whole news team from a television station that were terminated because the management disagreed with what we were putting out as news stories. And also to understand that this is a television station that is state-owned.<sup>66</sup> So higher up in the management level there would be some political connection and interference along the way. So it is crucial right now that the media, the rule of the media is understood, I would say, on all levels, in the government, in the private sector, in the media industry itself.”**

Today, Sincha continues to pursue voice and accountability in her new role as an editor at Inside PNG, an independent online news organisation that she and her team established after being terminated as a whole newsroom.

Her engagement with MDI also continues. Recently, she and her team were able to acquire the necessary resources and equipment to cover the elections with MDI’s grant assistance. She expresses her thanks to MDI for enabling them to cover the elections because it is an important event when people exercise their democratic right to choose their leaders.

When thinking about the future of media in PNG, Sincha is both hopeful and cautious about the media freedom in PNG. “I am hopeful that the media will ... have more say. ...I am hopeful for that because we are treading on dangerous grounds here with how media is being treated, so I’m hopeful that we will not go down that path and democracy will prevail,” she explains.

To protect media freedom, Sincha says it is important that media can work freely, fairly and without intimidation and suppression. “More awareness needs to be done on media rights and media literacy in PNG ... so that those who ... deal directly with journalists will know set boundaries and guidelines [sic] and journalists ... are aware of their rights to freedom of speech,” she says.

64 Reporters without Borders (2022) ‘Papua New Guinea TV news chief suspended for “insubordination”’, 13 February, <https://rsf.org/en/papua-new-guinea-tv-news-chief-suspended-insubordination>.

65 Reporters without Borders (2022) World Press Freedom Index, <https://rsf.org/en/index>.

66 EMTV is owned by Telikom PNG Ltd, a state-owned company, through its subsidiary, Media Niugini Ltd.



**Jeremy Mogi, PR Officer, PNG Chamber of Mines and Petroleum  
former Online News Editor, EMTV**

Jeremy has been involved with MDI since 2019 and has participated in several MDI activities related to social media engagement. He first attended MDI's social media training in June 2019. He then participated as one of the trainers for MDI's social media engagement and management training in October 2021, having been equipped to train others through MDI's Training of Trainers (ToT) model. From January 2021, he has been corresponding with MDI about election and youth engagement.

Jeremy does not identify himself as a journalist. A former high school teacher, he was an online news editor at EMTV when he first became involved with MDI. Currently, he works as a public relations officer at one of PNG's major industry associations. "I'm not a journalist by profession," he says. "One of the reasons why I was brought in as the social media manager for my former company was because of the analytical abilities."



Getting involved with MDI has stimulated his critical and analytical thinking about the media in PNG and the challenges it faces. According to Jeremy, the most significant impact MDI has made to his professional development and to the PNG media sector more broadly was the key concept underpinning MDI's work. He was inspired by the idea of 'PNG media' as an entity, which can then be supported to become more professional, free, and diverse to serve public interests.

"The creation of a document, which hopefully will lead to a policy, that can then be utilised by the media as a whole as an entire country—to me that was a big thing," says Jeremy.

Jeremy supports MDI's ideas and goals. However, he opines that while there is such a thing as a 'PNG media', the journalists, the management and the institutions that make up the PNG media industry have inconsistent understandings of the role of media. "Papua New Guinea's approach to the concept of just being free and fair and to influence media. It is in existence but doesn't understand its action," he says.

According to Jeremy, the biggest contribution he can make to PNG media as a result of participating in MDI's activities is to pass on to the new generation of journalists the key concepts of media promoted by MDI. Notably, these concepts are media as a professional, free and diverse entity; an agent of citizen-government engagement; and a facilitator of voice and accountability.

He shares that it is important for young journalists to have clear understanding of the role of media so their judgments are not clouded by what he considers to be several weaknesses in today's PNG media.

**“I think that’s where I feel is the biggest impact that I could give in terms of my participation to [sic] MDI. It allows me to drop in these concepts ... that could then be utilised ... hopefully five, years from now. ... You got a whole new generation of ... journalists that has [sic] a fairer idea of what does it mean to be a journalist without being influenced by a lot of weaknesses that are currently in existence within that industry in Papua New Guinea.”**

Jeremy thinks it is important to strengthen PNG media to facilitate voice and accountability. “It (media) is the voice between those who cannot be heard and those that have no choice but to listen, so the role of media in a country like Papua New Guinea is of paramount importance,” he says.

Yet he questions whether the PNG media can effectively reflect citizen’s views and facilitate informed citizen participation. “The mainstream media in our country —are they able to be credible enough to have that right to inform the nation? That’s what I feel is ... lacking,” he observes.

Jeremy expresses grave concerns about the future of PNG media and opportunities for change. For example, he raises the problem of PNG media’s perception of their audience. He finds that if PNG journalists are asked who their audience is, they are likely to say they report news for ‘Little People’ and not citizens of PNG. “They will ... give you the same answer: ‘Oh, we’re reporting for the Little People’. That is something that needs to change here,” he says.

Another challenge he identifies is the indicators media uses to measure its success. He feels that there needs to be more effective ways to evaluate citizen engagement. He says:

**They are going by the numbers by the sales ... They are going by the number of sponsors ... And they are going by the numbers of people that press “Like” ... on their social media accounts. Engagement online doesn’t necessarily transcend into an improvement of society.**

Moreover, he cautions that, while media freedom is necessary, PNG media needs to take more accountability for their own actions. He thinks the ‘fraternity’ mindset that is prevalent in the industry hinders the development of PNG media.

“PNG mainstream media will not take accountability for its own actions. They will hold everybody else accountable but not themselves. The PNG media fraternity will automatically defend the PNG media for any discrepancy,” he says.

For PNG media to have better future, Jeremy thinks the new generation of journalists and media professionals need to be equipped with critical and analytical thinking, ability to question the authorities and shifts in perception of their audiences as citizens.

While the advancement in technologies have created new opportunities, he thinks that shallow reading of citizen engagement is ineffective. He also hopes that PNG media will hold themselves accountable to a higher standard.

**Vinna Wigur, Media Officer, 2 Witness Radio**  
**Former Media Officer, NBC**

Vinna first began getting involved with MDI in 2008 to support an NBC-MDI youth radio project. Since then, Vinna has actively participated in a range of MDI activities that support youth media initiatives.

Having begun her career with no media background, Vinna found that participating in MDI's media training activities equipped her with the confidence and skills to do her job.

“Personally, I never had a media background; I'm not a journalist. But I feel that MDI has given me the opportunity through the trainings to become a better media officer. If MDI wasn't there, I wouldn't have come this far,” she says.

More recently, Vinna's involvement with MDI continues in her new position as a media officer at 2 Witness Radio (2WR), a Christian radio broadcasting organisation based in Port Moresby.

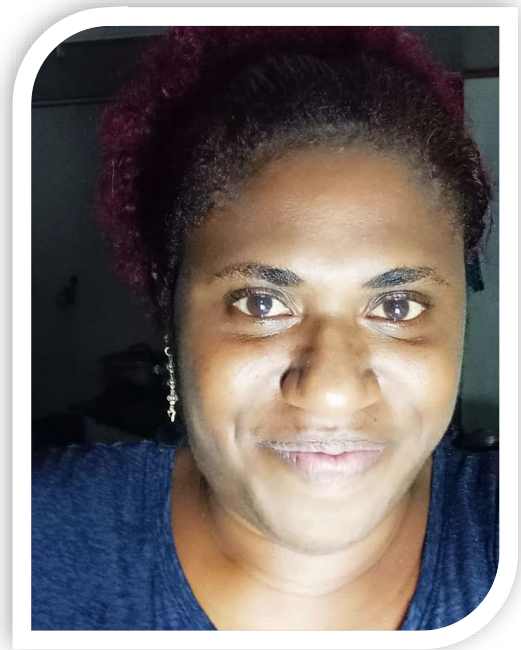
As part of MDI's new church media partnership program, Vinna participated in the MDI-supported radio panel program training and the MDI-run church media consortium meeting. In the radio panel show training for the Yumi Go Wer? program, she and her other church media colleagues participated in the provincial radio storytelling training and networked with 30 other provincial radio broadcasters from NBC radio stations.

This training gave the opportunity for church media partners to engage with media organisations outside the church network. In the church consortium meeting, she built networks with other church media organisations.

According to Vinna, MDI's church media partnership created a sense of togetherness among the church media organisations and a united focus to generate quality media content. In her view, this partnership enabled the church media organisations to look beyond the denominational differences to explore how they can work together to share content and serve their audiences better. She says:

**“MDI started a church media partnership. So now we share content with each other. ...You know, here in our country we have a church media organization run by different churches and different Christian denominations, but I see this partnership that MDI had initiated, it brought us together. We were not really looking at the church backgrounds that we came from, but we were more looking at what's the most important message that each of us can bring together using our platform...”**

The church consortium meeting was held a few months before the national election. In a highly sensitive period when inappropriate messaging can have devastating impact on the election process and outcome, she felt it was crucial that church media shares content



carefully. “One important message was the election; how to vote wisely and do content sharing,” she says.

MDI’s church media partnership enabled Vinna and other media professionals working in church media organisations to network, share content and collaborate so they can disseminate accurate and inclusive contents on issues of national significance such as elections to their audiences.

When envisioning the future of media in PNG, Vinna imagines growth in internet access, wider media coverage despite geographical challenges and increase in social media. Although growth in digital media might bring more opportunities, she thinks journalists and media officers will be confronted even more with the challenges of speed, trust and credibility of sources.

“Social media, it’s going to travel so fast. And it can break or bring out good as well. For us, as media officers ... that would be a challenge,” she says. She hopes that soon there will be strategies to tackle problems such as misinformation. “By then we should already have ways to combat misinformation,” she says.

Another challenge she thinks the PNG media will face is media freedom. “At the moment here in PNG, media officers, we don’t really have a body that protects journalists, reporter or program officers to protect from threats. I hope that by then there will be a body that strengthens the work of media and journalists in the country,” she says.

Faced with significant challenges and opportunities, Vinna believes it is vital to keep strengthening PNG media to promote more voice and accountability. “Media is a form of communication. Media brings significant effect to shape communities and bringing change and ... informing the leaders of the development,” she says.

Having worked with MDI for the past 14 years, Vinna acknowledges the positive impacts MDI has had on the development of PNG media, most notably NBC:

**“By now, I think all the media houses know what MDI has done working alongside NBC especially in the development of media offices, skills, training, radio broadcasting and media training. So MDI has done much than just individual.”**

As MDI has been broadened to work with other media partners in PNG, she is confident MDI will continue to impact positively on the wider media sector.

Her confidence in MDI to bring positive impacts and learnings comes from her personal experiences of being supported by MDI since the start of her career. “I see myself as, what should I say, a product of MDI,” she says.

Vinna’s stories show that the MDI’s impacts and learnings are not only diverse and broad across the different projects but also real and meaningful on the individuals. Even as she transitioned from NBC to 2WR, she knows she will bring the learnings she gained through MDI with her.

“It (learnings from MDI) continues to be with me everywhere I go,” she says.

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