

VIKES



Evaluation of the Regional Independent Media Support Programme

NICARAGUA, EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS, 2017–2019



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
**The Finnish Foundation for
Media and Development (VIKES)**

PROJECT PARTNERS
Onda Local, Nicaragua
Centro Humboldt, Nicaragua
El Faro, El Salvador
Pasos de Animal Grande,
(First phase of the programme),
Honduras
El Criterio & ContraCorriente,
(Second phase of the programme,
Vikes supported some activities but
not as an official project partner), Honduras

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Acronyms

CSO	Civil Society Organization
ForoCAP	Central American Journalism Forum
FLIP	Foundation for Press Freedom
IREX	The International Research & Exchanges Board
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
PCIN	Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VIKES	The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen







Remembering
journalist Ángel Gahona,
one of the first victims
in the current crisis
in Nicaragua.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

Executive Summary

 VIKES has been actively engaged in efforts to improve the press freedom and its corollary, freedom of expression in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras. It has supported independent journalists and the use of digital media, which holds great potential as a resource for press freedom and is an application of the individual human rights principle of freedom of expression¹. In the VIKES regional programme, digital media serve as a platform for dialogue across the borders and permits innovative approaches to the distribution and acquisition of information.

While the press freedom and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights, the complicated political situation in the region and security issues have posed challenges for action for independent media. According to the World Press Freedom Index² all the countries in the region are worse now than they were ten years ago. Many independent journalists have been forced to exile or abandon their activities as a journalist. While journalists in Central America face harsh censorship, those who continue to work and speak out should be supported and defended. Without this, the corruption, repression and lack of human rights would go undocumented. In their general role, independent journalists, whom VIKES is supporting, are not human rights defenders. Nevertheless, on many occasions, their work contributes to the promotion or protection of human rights when they report on human rights abuses and bear witness to acts that they have seen.

It is ideal in any democracy that the citizens are well informed about the society they live in, and the decisions they make about society. Taking account the actual situation in the region, the support that VIKES provides for independent journalism is more urgent than ever. Journalists in the region are facing unprecedented challenges, from declining revenues, a broken business model and a new form of censorship, threats to journalists' safety and misinformation campaigns. In these conditions, the work that VIKES has been doing in the region has been relevant and successful. It has promoted the right of civil society to information and the right of media to freedom of expression.

Activities that were planned in the programme document on the defense of fundamental rights to exercise free speech and democracy were implemented, and positive results were achieved. All the partner organizations have strengthened the exercise of democracy through digital media and investigative journalism, promoting citizen participation in public policies and improving the open-access and right to information.

Networking and cooperation between independent media, journalists and CSOs are more reliable than ever in the region, and a new concept of collaborative journalism was introduced with positive results. VIKES supported media and independent journalists in producing high-quality information and investigative stories, supporting them to attract wider audiences.

¹ New Media: The Press Freedom Dimension, Challenges and Opportunities of New Media for Press Freedom, Paris, 2007, UNESCO

² rsf.org/en/ranking

Training in business development, marketing and effective management was organised by the programme, and the financial sustainability of partners was improved. Even so, the independent media in the region is still dependent on external funding and will be, until the political situation in the region will improve.

To be more effective and to improve the effectiveness of the Regional Independent Media Support Programme in the future, VIKES should increase the number of the partners and independent media representatives (also those currently exiled) to receive support from the programme. The main problem of independent public media remains the lack of financing and security. In a meeting with independent journalists in Nicaragua, where the government has threatened to continue to imprison journalists and publicly insults media professionals, they underlined the importance of solidarity networks among international organizations and press associations. According to them, VIKES has done bold work, and its efforts have supported the professionals who remain to practice “survival journalism” and need all the backing to continue to inform the population.

As the current safety situation for media in the region is worrying, the preparation of journalists in security issues by VIKES has been beneficial and appreciated by the partners. VIKES has improved the safety of journalists and media workers by providing practical know-how on safety and security issues, which can be used in harsh working conditions.

According to the programme partners, the support from the Regional Independent Media Support Programme has been extremely relevant for them. VIKES' partners receive financial support also from other donors, but VIKES in addition gives technical assistance and has a presence in the region, which has a substantial value for the partners. For the beneficiaries it's fundamental that VIKES is a foundation of journalists, and understands the problems of the media professionals, who dedicate their work to inform people in challenging conditions and who moreover has the knowledge how the voiceless can be involved in public discussion.

Summary of recommendations

- The VIKES programme has achieved positive results with its actual programme design and the **programme components should remain the same**: support for implementation of business and marketing strategies, support for networking and training and support for content production utilizing investigative methods. The main recommendation for the design of the next phase is to use **flexibility** in the planning process.
- **Increase the quantity of direct beneficiaries** with independent journalists. In Nicaragua, independent journalists have established an organization called Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua (PCIN) to improve the freedom of expression of media. It would be logical to include PCIN among the beneficiaries.
- **Support journalist in exile** and include them in the project activities.
- **Inclusion of low income, disabled, indigenous and ageing habitants**, as the digital divide deepens. Among the VIKES partners Onda Local has the best reach out strategy which it could share with other media.
- At the end of the current phase of the project, VIKES should **enforce a light institutional capacity assessment of all its actual and potential partners**. Based on the analysis of the institutional capacity, VIKES can start a process with each partner to elaborate a detailed plan for their institutional strengthening.
- Considering that every partner organization has its particular needs for institutional strengthening, they should also have a **comprehensive monitoring and evaluation matrix**. In the matrix, it is essential to separate indicators for input (monitoring) and indicators for impact (evaluation). VIKES should measure how well its partners have managed to achieve results and not if they have implemented their inputs.
- It might be a good idea to **separate the partnership agreements and the rest of the budget lines**. Until now, VIKES has used an activity budget, but a line-item budget could fit better for the programme.
- For the last three years, VIKES has given **financial support for its partners to participate in the Central American Journalist Forum**. According to partners, the ForoCAP has given them a significant amount of new ideas and better tools how to improve their work and reach out to the audience. VIKES should continue this funding and be a long-term partner for the Forum.
- **Increase coordination with other donors**. Due to the political and safety situation in the region, several donors have decided to support independent media in the region, among them several NGOs from USA and European Union. One of the new actors is a basket fund called "Fondo Comun". During the next phase of the programme, the articulation between the donors is even more crucial than before. VIKES is in a vital position in this donor coordination because it has technical assistance in the region. This gives an added value for the VIKES programme, but it's also an additional responsibility for the technical assistance.



The people in Nicaragua have called for freedom of expression in the protests of past years.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

1. Introduction

 The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES) has supported journalists and media workers in Nicaragua since 2007. The current project, under the evaluation, to support independent media in Central America, started in 2017 with 2-year funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Phase two is implemented in 2019-2020, also with the ministry's financial support. The total funding for the two periods in 2017-2020 is about 550 000 EUR.

The project has focused on three areas:

- 1) Providing support for competence and skills development to independent media and CSOs in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador to improve financial sustainability and reduce dependency on external funding. To achieve greater self-sustainability, organizations need training in business development, marketing and sales, as well as in strategic planning and effective management.
- 2) Supporting networking and cooperation between independent media, journalists and CSOs to encourage collaboration in defending the operating environment for media and civil society and provide training in different topics.
- 3) Providing training and support to media, CSOs and independent journalists to produce high-quality information and investigative stories that provide divergent information and viewpoints compared to mainstream media and attract broad audiences.

During the second project phase, the role of networking has increased. Independent media, journalists and CSOs have been brought together to enhance mutual learning, but also to support cooperation to defend the freedom of expression, access to information as well the operating environment for both media and civil society.

Programme beneficiaries

The immediate beneficiaries are independent media houses and journalist cooperatives, local and national radio stations, independent journalists, editors, producers, journalism experts and civil society communication staff in three Central American countries (Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras).



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Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

2. Partner Organizations

 The partner organization in different countries of the region have been chosen carefully, using the following criteria: quality of the journalistic investigations, use of digital media, willingness of networking and desire to improve their business development and self-sustainability.

2.1. Onda Local (Nicaragua)

Onda Local is an independent Nicaraguan media that has existed since 2000 as a radial platform. In 2014, they had pushed a digital transformation and launched the website, where they publish news, reports and different audio-visual content to promote citizen participation, women's rights and environmental issues with a critical analysis of reality. They also support the rights of youth, disabled and different ethnic groups of the Caribbean coast and their information policy is guided by gender sensitivity and generational approach, with strong local focus and principles of independent journalism. Their team has received several awards at the national level.

Onda Local has developed various journalistic investigations and broadcasted radio productions supported by VIKES. It is one of the few independent Nicaraguan media with a critical vision that continues to operate from inside the country, despite the government's siege against the press and independent journalists.

www.ondalocal.com.ni

2.2. Centro Humboldt (Nicaragua)

Centro Humboldt has positioned itself as a reference body on environmental issues at the national and regional level, framing institutional activities in territorial development and environmental management. This has been done through partnerships with civil society organizations, horizontal relationships with local authorities' groups, and the support of different sectors that share same visions, principles and strategies for solving environmental problems and promoting sustainable development.

The main objective of Centro Humboldt is to achieve an environmentally sustainable territorial development, with a focus on rights and equality among the people, strengthening the technical capabilities and management of the most vulnerable sectors.

Two years ago, VIKES supported Centro Humboldt to create an audiovisual environmental programme. In June 2019, the programme "*Espacio Verde*" (*Green Space*) was launched, and so far, it has made five productions and six promotional videos. This product is disseminated through social networks and has had a good reception.

www.humboldt.org.ni

2.3. El Faro (El Salvador)

El Faro is an editorial project created in May 1998 in San Salvador, and it's the first native Internet newspaper in Latin America. Since then, it has had a firm commitment on investigative journalism, production of documentary films, live events, radio broadcasting, books and other formats of communication.

El Faro has become a regional benchmark for an independent, transparent and reliable journalism on corruption, organized crime, migration, culture, inequality, impunity and human rights. For coverage based on these themes, it has received several national and international awards.

Currently, El Faro is composed of a team of 31 people, of which 21 work exclusively on journalistic functions, and they have their multimedia production area. It also has about 15 external collaborators who, through opinion columns and blogs, support debate and interaction with their readers.

www.elfaro.net

2.4. Pasos de Animal Grande (Honduras)

Pasosdeanimalgrande.com is a digital newspaper which focuses on freedom of expression and addresses issues of human rights in Honduras. It has coordinated actions and maintains partnerships with civil society organizations working on human rights issues. It has also coordination with a network of journalists in the central area of Honduras and an international network that responds to violations of freedom of expression and works with safety issues of journalists. Authentically the partner organization was indeed created to support journalists, workers of the media and vulnerable groups of Honduras (youth, women, indigenous people, disabled and LGBTIs) to exercise their freedom of expression and to document human rights abuses.

Nevertheless, after the first year of the second phase of the programme, the partner organization in Honduras was changed. VIKES organised a new identification process to find adequate partners in Honduras and now it has established a good working relationship with El Criterio and ContraCorriente.

2.5. El Criterio (Honduras)

CRITERIO.HN emerged as a project of entrepreneurial journalists, with extensive experience in investigative journalism. Its team is engaged in the exercise of ethical and professional journalism. *El Criterio* provides in-depth journalism to understand more clearly the different social phenomena, related to corruption, violence, poverty, social exclusion, transparency, accountability, economic, gender inequality, violations of human rights and the environment. It also aims to influence political decision-making processes for the adoption of the best public policies that benefit the population.

El Criterio has eight permanent journalists who conduct in-depth journalism and research. These journalists receive fees from organizations that are subsidizing the projects during the year 2020 (Open Society Foundation, and National Endowment for Democracy (NED)). *El Criterio* also has around fourteen columnists, who carry out their work as freelancers and who position issues of national interest, with a critical, analytical and proactive approach.

El Criterio has not been an official project partner of Vikes, but some activities have been supported.

www.criterio.hn

2.6. ContraCorriente (Honduras)

ContraCorriente is a communication platform that focuses on in-depth journalism, the production of transmedia contents that tell the reality of the political situation of Honduras and the region, with innovation and new narratives as fundamental pillars to explain what happens in a country.

Its strategy is to tell the causes and consequences of social phenomena in Honduras and the region and form a new generation of journalists and communicators who explain the story of Honduras. It has five permanent journalist and several freelancers.

El Criterio has not been an official project partner of Vikes, but some activities have been supported.

www.contracorriente.red



Hans Lawrence, reporter for the digital media Nicaragua Investiga is being helped to go to hospital after being attacked by supporters of Nicaragua's president, Daniel Ortega.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

3. Current Situation of the Independent Media in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras

 The complicated political situation in the region and security issues have posed challenges for independent media. According to the World Press Freedom Index³, all the countries in the region are worse than they were ten years ago. Of all the regions in the world, the American continent has suffered the most considerable deterioration (3.6%) in its regional score of press freedom. This was not just due to the poor performance of the United States, Brazil and Venezuela. Nicaragua fell 24 places, one of the biggest in 2019; El Salvador dropped 15 and Honduras 5 places in only one year.

Many independent journalists have been forced to exile or leave their activities as a journalist. Therefore, new media solutions hold great potential as a resource for press freedom and freedom of expression. Digital media serve as platforms for dialogue across the borders and allow for innovative approaches to the distribution and acquisition of knowledge. These qualities are vital for press freedom, but they also may be weakened by attempts to regulate and censor both access and content.

Today in Central America, digital media helps the independent journalist to publish their articles, but at the same time, it also makes it difficult for professionals to earn their income. On the other hand, digital media mainly reach people on in the urban area, but not in the countryside.

3.1. Nicaragua - Ranking in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index 114/180 (78/180 in the 2013)

Since the political protests erupted in April 2018, the regime of Daniel Ortega has notably intensified its crackdown on independent media. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has openly condemned the escalating attacks on the press, censorship and closure of media outlets and arbitrary detention and prosecution of journalists in the country. Journalism as a whole is stigmatized, and journalists are often the targets of harassment campaigns, arbitrary arrest and death threats. At demonstrations, reporters are treated as participants and are often physically attacked.

³ rsf.org/en/ranking

3.1.1. Protocol on Attacks on Press Freedom in Nicaragua (Observatory on Press Freedom)

In October 2019, Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua (PCIN) created its Protocol on Attacks on Freedom of the Press, taking as a reference the norms and experience of the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) of Colombia. The purpose of the PCIN Protocol is to document, attend, report and monitor cases of violations of freedom of the press, freedom of expression and access to information. This protocol indicates 20 types of crimes against freedom of the media. Moreover, it establishes a series of recommendations and procedures to follow, depending on the nature of the crime. According to the protocol, PCIN activates protection mechanisms for journalists at risk and provides psychosocial support to victims of attacks.

3.1.2. Monitoring Findings by the Protocol on Attacks on Press Freedom

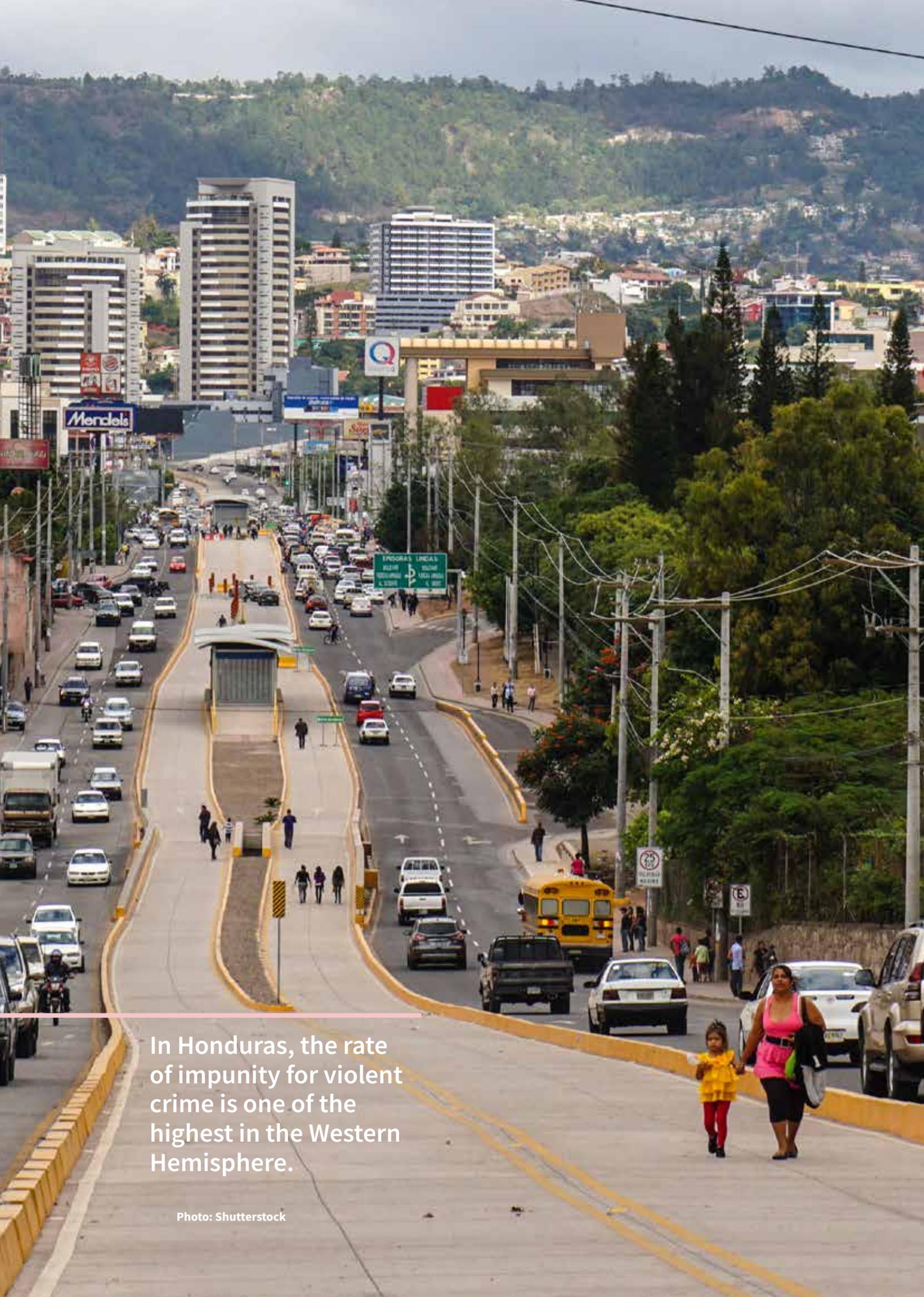
During the last semester of the 2019 (from October 1 to December 15) the following attacks on freedom of the press and access to information have been documented:



The state of impunity in Nicaragua is alarming in the face of attacks on human life, judicial siege, discrediting campaigns, physical aggressions, the illegal theft of journalistic equipment, unlawful detention of journalists by paramilitaries and National Police officers of Nicaragua, disrespecting the procedures established in the Criminal Code during the arrests. More than a third of these attacks (39%) were directed against female journalists. Among the 13 cases of documented aggressions against women journalists, in four of these, aggressions were identified as sexual violence, which is expressed in actions of blackmail, groping, threats of rape, harassment and cyberbullying. These crimes against women journalists were carried out by paramilitaries, public officials, fanatic supporters of the government party and national police officers. Most of the harassment cases occurred while women were carrying out their journalistic work, and it has constituted a mechanism of torture and abuse of power.

3.2. El Salvador - Ranking in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index 81/180. (38/180 in the 2013)

The media are among the victims of the widespread violence and drug trafficking in El Salvador, one of Latin America's most dangerous countries. El Salvador's legislation provides the media with little protection, and officials harass and threaten journalists who try to investigate corruption or government finances. For example, authorities attempted to intimidate a team of investigative reporters with the online magazine Factum in February 2019 in a bid to get them to reveal their sources for a story that criticized the government.



In Honduras, the rate of impunity for violent crime is one of the highest in the Western Hemisphere.

Photo: Shutterstock

According to Freedom House⁴, El Salvador's constitution protects press freedom, and several media outlets engage in critical coverage of the government and opposition parties. However, the government has increasingly taken antagonistic stances toward the media, and journalists' work is further impeded by organized crime and general insecurity.

Journalists and media outlets continued to face intimidation and violence during the year, including pressure from politicians and threats from security forces while reporting at crime or accident scenes. The newspapers *La Prensa Gráfica* and *Diario de Hoy* have suffered cyberattacks allegedly carried out by associates of San Salvador's mayor (during that time), Nayib Bukele. With the suspects facing trial during 2016, Bukele and allied politicians denounced the two papers and called on the public to boycott them. A journalist with *La Prensa Gráfica* reported receiving threats via social media in November.

Two weeks after the field mission of this evaluation Nayib Bukele entered the halls of the National Assembly, already full of heavily armed soldiers and police officers, and took the seat of the president of the Legislative power, and became the President of El Salvador. He threatened to stage a coup against lawmakers in a week if they don't approve a loan to fund his security plan. Those events were a stark reminder of a violent past of the country that most of the population had hoped the country had left behind.

3.3. Honduras - Ranking in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index 146/180 (127/180 in the 2013)

President Juan Orlando Hernández, who secured a second term in 2017 with the fraudulent election, has stepped up control over news and information and taken a range of initiatives to silence the most outspoken journalists, after the revelations of his proximity of drug trafficking. The security forces, especially the military police and army, are responsible for most of the abuses and violence against media personnel.

In the country racked by violence, organized crime and corruption, the impunity rate is among the highest in the Western Hemisphere. Journalists working for opposition or community media are often the target of death threats or violence or are forced to flee abroad. They are also often the targets of abusive judicial proceedings, and prison sentences for defamation are common, sometimes accompanied by bans on working as a journalist after release.

According to Honduran National Commission for Human Rights, over 70 journalists and other media workers were killed in Honduras between 2001 and August of 2017. PEN International reports that violence against journalists continued despite the Honduran government's pledge at the United Nations in May 2015 to improve its human rights record.

Journalists have begun to silence themselves out of fear for their lives and the censorship by the government goes beyond attempting to silence journalists; it also restricts the information government agencies are allowed to release to the media and the public. A new law approved by 2014 assigned responsibility for releasing information to individual government agencies, instead of the more independent Institute for Public Access to Information. As a result, government transparency and the public's right to information has suffered.

⁴ freedomhouse.org/country/el-salvador

4. Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

 The primary purpose of this evaluation was to get an independent review of the implementation and results of the Regional independent media support programme, and to get recommendations for the next phase of the programme, to be planned in 2020.

The programme and its activities supported by VIKES in Central America have not been evaluated before. Therefore, this evaluation has tried to compile lessons learned during the long-term cooperation of VIKES and its Nicaraguan partners and use them as a recommendation for the strategic planning of the next phase.

4.1. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluator has used the Evaluation Manual published by Finnish MFA in 2018. This manual offers guidance on how to commission, manage and implement evaluations of development cooperation activities funded by Finland.

4.1.1. Desk Review and Analysis of the Secondary Data

The desk review was an essential part of the assessment — by collecting, organizing and synthesizing available information and gain an understanding of the country context and main challenges of the media in the region. It also helped to identify gaps to address during the in-country fieldwork. Desk review activities included material produced by VIKES partners, such as articles, audio-visual material and project documents, like annual progress reports. During the desk review, the evaluator was also scanning the literature, reviewed previous research findings, analysed secondary data, and created a reference list of the organizations and key persons to be interviewed.

4.1.2. Documentary Analysis

The evaluator analysed all available documents that are directly related to the evaluation questions:

- **Management documents**
- **Annual reports of the partners**
- **An overview of the media environment and the role of the key players**

The idea was to review all the programme documents, that helped to answer the evaluation questions and get partial answers to the evaluation questions based on reports. The documentary analysis also helped to understand what issues are still to be studied and assumptions to be tested during the field phase.

4.1.3. Developing the Tools for Analysing the Results by Indicators

After the desk review and analysis of the secondary data, the evaluator developed the tools to be used in the field phase. Evaluation tools ranged from questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The most important new tool was the questionnaire, which was sent beforehand to the partners for additional information which was not found in their annual reports. This additional information enabled the measurement of the specific indicators in the project log frame.

4.1.4. Field Phase of the Evaluation

Field phase of the evaluation was implemented between 19.01 – 25.01.2020 with the following meetings:

- 19.01.2020 Meeting with VIKES representative Kimmo Lehtonen and members of the independent media (Nicaragua).**
- 20.01.2020 Meeting with the representatives of PCIN, and Observatory of Freedom of the Press (Nicaragua).**
- 21.01.2020 Meeting with the representatives of the Onda Local (Nicaragua).**
- 22.01.2020 Meeting with the representatives of the Centro Humboldt (Nicaragua).**
- 23.01.2020 Meeting with Jordi Melendez, General Director, Factual Innovation and Investigation company**
- 23.01.2020 Meeting with Rafael Henrique (Oxfam) and representatives of Fondo Comun (Nicaragua).**
- 24.01.2020 Meeting with representatives of El Faro (El Salvador)**
- 25.01.2020 Meeting with VIKES representative Kimmo Lehtonen (El Salvador)**

Evaluator didn't go to Honduras due to the lack of time, but the questionnaire was sent to the implementing partners and they send their responses to the evaluator.

5. Key Findings

 Digital media has become a useful tool to generate contact with the population due to the censorship and closure of traditional media. Despite the current political problems in the region and lack of security, VIKES has managed to achieve relevant results with its partners in all the three areas of the programme:

1. All the partner organization have managed to improve their fundraising from the private sector (publicity and consulting services). This does not mean that they have managed to reach financial independence. In the current political situation, they still need external funding and technical support, until the political and security situation improves.
2. Networking and cooperation among independent media, journalists and CSOs have improved more than anticipated, partly because of the political situation, severe working conditions and lack of security. Collaborative journalism⁵ is a growing practice in the field of journalism and has improved the networking and cooperation among the journalist and is currently practiced by both professional and amateur reporters.
3. All the training activities for the partners have been provided as planned, in coordination with other like-minded organizations. As a result of these activities, partner organizations have elaborated and started to implement their strategic plans to produce high-quality information and investigative stories. The training of journalists has facilitated that they can offer articles with more information, which has allowed the population to understand the situations they have been experiencing, as well as write about environmental issues that were not previously addressed.

Training sessions provided by VIKES on security issues have been more critical than foreseen in the programme design process. All the VIKES partners face security threats in their work, and it would have been irresponsible from part of the VIKES to support their daily activities without investing at the same on their security.

Under the regional scenario, the CSO alliance with independent media has been strengthened. This strong alliance is playing a fundamental role in raising awareness of specific issues that happen in the region, within them the violation of human rights, lack of gender equality and also the climate and environmental crisis.

According to the partner organizations and other donors in the region, the VIKES programme has been relevant and improved the capacity and conditions of investigative journalism. It has had an acknowledged impact by enhancing their technical capability, marketing capacity, working conditions and security of the media representatives. Effectiveness of these activities has been high, due to the high quality of the trainers. Still, the efficiency should be improved by increasing the number of partner organizations and individual journalists who practice investigative journalism and are part of the same reds and networks as VIKES partners.

⁵ Collaborative journalism is "a cooperative arrangement (formal or informal) between two or more news and information organizations, which aims to supplement each organization's resources and maximize the impact of the content produced."

Although the programme has been successful and extremely relevant for the region and its partners, it has not achieved all expected results due to external factors. Some assumptions, which were already identified in the logical framework, came true due to the worsening political and safety situation in the region. Nevertheless, thanks for the flexible implementation strategy and high dedication of the partners for their work, the worst scenario was avoided.

5.1. Improvement of Business and Marketing Strategies

VIKES had hired a consulting company SembraMedia to build up business and marketing strategies for the partners, focusing on funding opportunities and different models for self-sustainability of independent media. SembraMedia shared a report with recommendations to each partner organization to improve the actions and give the necessary tools for the business and marketing strategy.

VIKES also used a consultant from Factual consulting to support each partner in specific aspects of their productions and institutional operations. A consultant also provided advice on editorial, audiovisual and audience-related productions for every partner.

The idea to hire external consultants has been strategic and it has guaranteed the achievement of the indicators of the first outcome⁶ of logical framework.

5.2. Country Specific Findings

5.2.1. Nicaragua

Central America is experiencing a profound political and social crisis, where independent media are censored by large companies as well as by governments. Similarly, in the case of Nicaragua, there is a vast vacuum of sources of official information. Therefore, with the VIKES program, the work of the independent press has been reinforced to perform quality journalism, but also to diversify their sources of income.

The decline of the national economy is estimated to be more than 5% a year, which affected financial resources that are used for advertising and publicity. Even worse, private sector is afraid to advertise via independent media because it can jeopardize their relationship with the government and can put them under tax scrutiny or other economic pressures. For several years, independent media haven't had access to Ortega's government advertising, which is a revenue stream that has historically been crucial for the survival of media in the country.

In a recent context of censorship, where several traditional media house and broadcasters have been confiscated or closed, information through digital platforms has been an alternative. The use of innovative technology solutions, supported by VIKES, has allowed digital information to increase media coverage at local, national and regional levels.

⁶ Independent media and CSOs in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras have created well-functioning business and marketing strategies which are implemented, organizations fundraising has been improved.



All the trainings were carried out as planned.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen



Security has become a major issue for training of journalists in Central America.

Photo: PBS News Hour

5.2.1.1. Onda Local

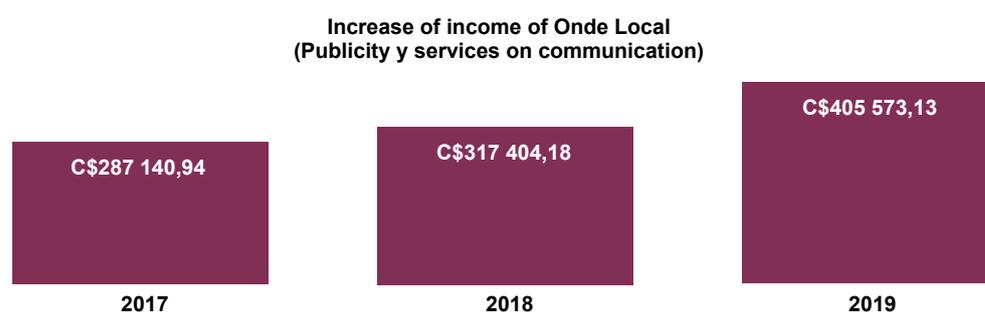
Onda Local transformed in few years from an eminent radio programme to a multiplatform communication space, with the programme support. Now it disseminates its journalistic content through the website www.ondalocal.com.ni, where it publishes the editions of the programmes, reports, multimedia investigations and editorial notes. It furthermore has a Podcast channel on Sound Cloud and Ivoox and a video channel on YouTube. It also publishes content on Facebook and Twitter.

Onda Local managed to increase its revenues from different sources to produce independent quality journalism, which is considered a huge surprise, if one takes into account the socio-political situation of the country that has caused a decrease on income for other media.

Institutional positioning among the population and source of information through partnership created at the local, national and regional level

Onda Local was a radio broadcast programme until March 2016 by Radio La Primerísima, which allowed it to have superior coverage in geographical terms. For political reasons, *Onda Local* programme was suspended in Radio La Primerísima and is now broadcasted on Radio Universidad, where it has alliances with local media to air their programs (Radio La Costeñísima in Bluefields, Youth Radio in Puerto Cabezas, Radio Vos in Matagalpa and Radio Camoapa in Camoapa).

Onda Local has also opted journalistic collaboration with a new media that has been created, such as Article 66, La Obrero de la clave, Nicaragua Investigate and La Lupa. They have additionally been a part of regional research with Mongabay Latam, Connectas and is currently promoting a collaborative investigation with Criteria of Honduras another VIKES partner) and working with a more significant investigation about the links of mining companies with political power, in alliance with Nicaragua Investigate and Confidential. The *Onda Local* website has moreover been a platform to publish investigations of other journalists who have won journalistic production scholarships and who do not have a means of communication to publish. To achieve these results, VIKES has given technical advice and financial support for *Onda Local*.



Institutional positioning among the population and source of information through partnership created at the local, national and regional level.



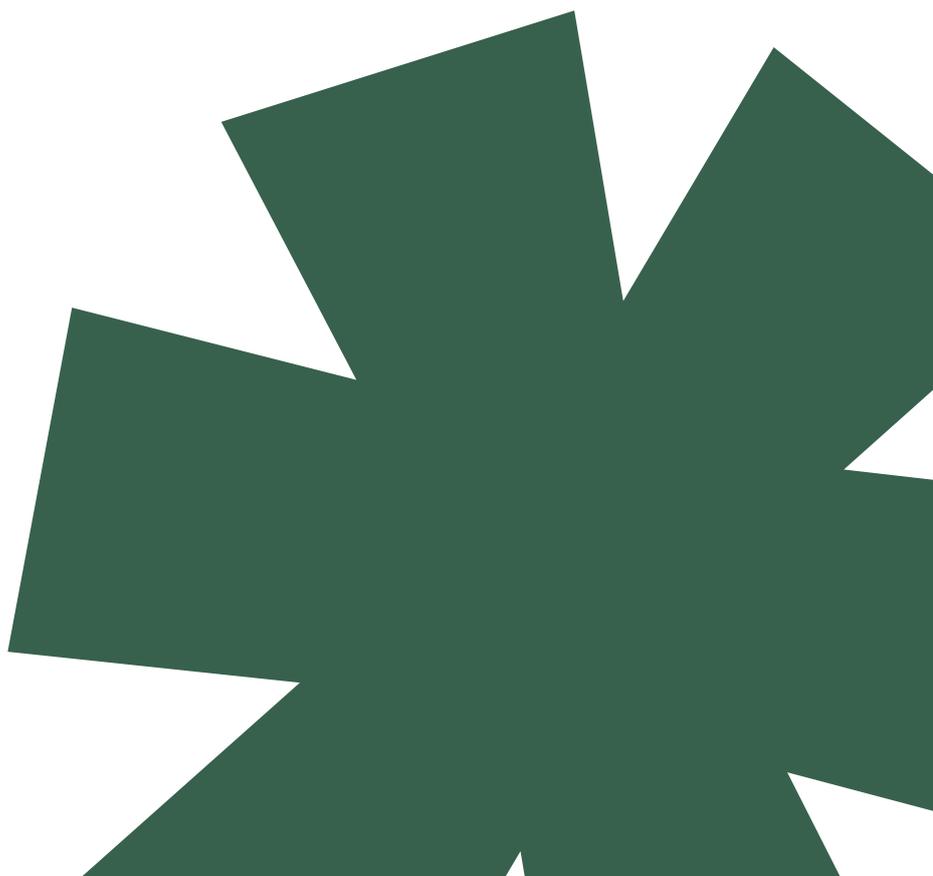
The printing press of the daily La Prensa was held up for a year and a half when the Nicaraguan government confiscated all paper imported from abroad. Alvaro Rivera has been at the head of the written press for more than 30 years.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

The programmes of *Onda Local* are transmitted and published on their website that has accumulated more than 150 thousand unique visits, during the last two years. On their Facebook site, followers have been increasing considerably. Before 2018 the programme had just over 5,000 followers, and up to date, there are more than 40,000. The coverage has expanded beyond Nicaragua, with the United States, Costa Rica and Spain, from where more traffic is generated to the *Onda Local* website. The use of new technologies, supported by VIKES, has improved their ability to create national and regional information and data network platforms.

According to Google Analytics data, from April 1 of 2018 to January 20 of 2020, the countries that concentrate the greatest visits to the *Onda Local* site are: Nicaragua 69.73%, United States 12.20%, Costa Rica 3.44%, Spain 2.69% and Mexico 1.62%. Of the people who visit the page 58.8% were women. The expanded coverage opens a real opportunity for *Onda Local* to become a relevant information space for Nicaraguans abroad. According to UNHCR, more than 70 thousand people left Nicaragua between 2018 and 2019.

Nevertheless, the number of site visits (6,000 unique monthly visits on average) make it unlikely that the financing of *Onda Local* programmes will happen through the sale of direct or programmatic advertising. Paradoxically, the country's political situation can be an opportunity to establish alliances with local, regional and international organizations, as well as donors and other actors that support freedom of expression in the region.



Business model and increase of the revenues

Since the last year, *Onda Local* has started reviewing and updating its marketing strategy and implementing a plan that contains different income models, including projects, financed by associated organizations, to the sale of publicity in the radio space and on the web. At the same time, with the technical assistance of the programme, they reviewed their rates and updated the analysis of traffic statistics and visits, both on the web and in social networks, to have a more punctual profile of users and subscribers. The new structure of the website interface was also taken into account, which has evolved the way it presents its contents and thus offers advertising spaces and packages to potential customers.

During the evaluation field phase, *Onda Local* received a proposal from the new development partner to secure additional funding for investigate journalism, which will improve its capacity to produce independent quality information during the next years. Even though *Onda local* has managed to create its business model with support of VIKES and its revenues from the social networks and publicity has increased, it still depends on the support of different donors and organizations.

5.2.1.2. Centro Humboldt

With the financial and technical support of VIKES, Centro Humboldt has managed to increase and strengthened its alliances with local, national and regional media. Journalists and communicators have been trained on environmental issues in several communities in the country. These training sessions have allowed the organization to create a direct link with local communities. Centro Humboldt has also participated in all the regional trainings and managed to create an institutional contingency plan to enhance their safety issues and risk management. Moreover, the communication office has participated in security workshops, focused on computer security, personal security and emotional health, organized by the programme.

Institutional positioning among the population and source of information through partnership created at the local, national and regional level

The political situation of April 2018 affected that several media channels that disseminated the information produced by Centro Humboldt were closed or their offices and studios were confiscated by the government. Nevertheless, Centro Humboldt has managed to improve its institutional positioning among the population with its participation and presence in new networks in local, national and regional level.

In the last three years, more than 100 articles and approximately 160 videos have been published on the organization's website. It is worth mentioning that the current communication team started its work just three years ago in the institution, inspired by the VIKES programme. With the support of its communication team, the organization has experienced significant growth in its social media channels. It has positioned itself as a leading agency in environmental and climate issues in the country. In 2019, they received 317 visits from national and local journalists and even some international media, including Mangabay, CNN and ACAN EFE. Constant communication is maintained with the journalist interested in environmental issues through a WhatsApp group, emails, press conferences and workshops for journalists and communicators.



Environmental protection and journalism on environment are not a very popular fields in Nicaragua.

Photo: Hermes Rivera / Unsplash

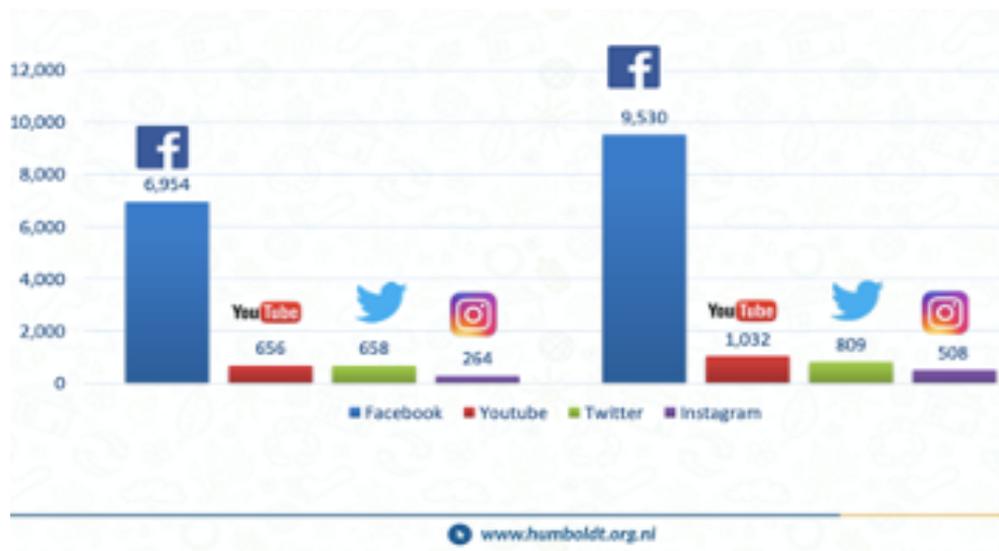
The communication team has created new products, such as the "Espacio Verde" (Green Space) program, which is one of the few environmental programs in the country. Likewise, the radio programme "La Voz del Productor" (Voice of the Farmer), where producers share their experiences in climate change adaptation practices.

Green Space programme was launched on 5th of June 2019, the day of the environment. The first programme had 620 views on the YouTube Channel of Centro Humboldt. After that, the amount of the viewer has steadily grown, and the team has given a promotion for the programme, visiting Channels 12 and 36, Radio Universidad, Canal Católica de Nicaragua.

Centro Humboldt has additionally created three networks of communicators to cover environmental issues. These networks are formed with young people, between the ages of 13 to 25, and they come from rural communities. The programme has trained members of these networks, and there has been good media coverage from these communities.

Business model and increase of the income

The organization has recently managed to create their own business and detailed long-term marketing plan. Centro Humboldt have managed to increase their sales of consultancies, especially to allied organizations, including consultancies conducted by the communication office, which have generated at least \$ 10,000 revenues last year. This kind of actions were not carried out before a new approach of the VIKES programme to promote self-sustainability of independent media. Thanks to this new approach, Centro Humboldt has recognized the importance of taking a step further in the search for funds and started the path towards sustainability of the organization.



In the image above, one can observe how much the site traffic increased in different social media platforms from January 2019 to December 2019.

The Office of Communication has generated a growth in all the social networks of the institution, including visits to the website, which during the last year increased up to 90,123 site visits. The institution continues to diversify its sources of income and considers that revenues can also be achieved by the Communication Office with specific products, such as “*Espacio Verde*” (Green Space). In this process, the technical and financial support from VIKES has played a fundamental role.

During the second semester, the Green Space programme was strengthened with the production of four broadcasted programmes which reached 210,970 persons on Facebook. Also, an exclusive YouTube channel for the programme was created with its promotion plan.

Centro Humboldt is conducting a follow-up of social networks to understand how different strategies are working. They also use this information when they sell digital advertising. During the last year, the followers in the various social network increased by an average 48% reaching to 123 people.

In the image below, one can observe how much the site traffic increased in different social media platforms from January 2019 to December 2019.

Due to the censorship and closure of traditional media, digital solutions have been a useful tool to generate contact with local, national and regional media.

5.2.2. El Salvador

5.2.2.1. El Faro

El Faro is now more regional than it was five years ago when they started to collaborate with VIKES. They have more presence currently, although it is not yet on the level of the rest of the countries of the region, they would like to be. For example, they started to work closely in Nicaragua since the crisis triggered in 2018. During the last years, they have also accompanied the caravans of migrants from El Salvador to Tijuana and explained this new phenomenon.

During the last three years, El Faro has participated in research initiatives in collaboration with other media houses, such as The New York Times, Univision and El País. These major networks have allowed El Faro to participate and create new inter-institutional work dynamics. Some of the published collaborative research has had a good impact and have even received awards such as The Hillman Prize award or the King of Spain Award, as was the case of the Special Migrants to Refugees.

www.elfaro.net

El Faro has furthermore participated in physical, digital and emotional health workshops for all its journalists, and they have established security protocols for the different field coverage, mainly those that involve leaving El Salvador.



The digital media house El Faro organizes annually ForoCAP, the regional forum on journalism.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

Institutional positioning among the population and source of information through partnership created at the local, national and regional level

El Faro is now the leading referent of investigative and independent journalism in El Salvador and Central America. Their work is covering issues of corruption, impunity, historical memory, inequality, culture and migration. These investigations have given them a lot of credibility in the region, which has been accompanied by a new institutional communication strategy, partly thanks to the collaboration with VIKES. Also, institutional campaigns have been carried out that seek to position the central values and attributes of El Faro journalism.

Business model and increase of income

Since El Faro has started to work with VIKES, there has been a sporadic growth on advertising. For example, with the support of technical assistance of VIKES, the year 2018 was the best in the history of revenues and sponsorships. However, in 2019 the revenues dropped due to the uncertainty in the advertising market because of the elections.

In order to improve the situation, El Faro was able to obtain a diagnostic on their digital marketing and in the management of its audiences, supported by the institutional strengthening component of VIKES programmes. As a result of this, El Faro relaunched a Citizen Excavation movement as a membership system, based on contributions from readers, and designed a newsletter system as a part of their communication strategy with the audience. El Faro's improved capacity to communicate with their audience is one of the main stakes for their long-term sustainability. The communication with the audience is essential for El Faro in two ways: by getting to know its audience in terms of habits, demography, age and interests, so that their marketing strategies can better reach the different target audiences; and by getting to know their audience better, that they can have the right marketing tools to monetize it (Crowdfunding, subscription programs, events, etc.).

At present, El Faro has a long-term business model and a detailed marketing plan for the media. There is a certain clarity of how their income is expected to evolve in the coming years, and at the same time, there is a clear one-year communication strategy. El Faro receives income from advertising, event sponsorships, contributions from readers and journalistic alliances.

5.2.3. Honduras

In 2017 VIKES made a first attempt to start a pilot partnership with Pasos de Animal Grande (PAG), a digital media which focuses on freedom of expression and addresses issues of human rights in Honduras. Their staff (two persons) was trained together with Nicaraguan partners in exclusive VIKES workshop on fundraising, business models and management.

Later on, some serious problems took place, mainly because of the unprecedented decline of personal resources. Violence against journalists in Honduras left the partner media without a human rights journalist. She was forced to go into exile after being arrested when she was covering the judicial process of the detained students. Also, the workload of the director – she also leads a Human Rights organization ASOPODEHU⁷ - did not allow her to participate in VIKES sponsored activities. Therefore, it became practically impossible for VIKES to continue the pilot partnership for the second year, and the decision of ending the partnership was taken by consensus. Anyway, the door was left open for possible cooperation in the future.

⁷ La Asociación por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos

After the first experience in Honduras, VIKES understood that the work with Honduran journalists requires a clear medium and long-term strategy, which considers the complexity of the political context, complicated circumstances at media field and the seriousness of the physical threats to journalists. Later on, VIKES coordinator visited Honduras three times and identified other independent media to work with. Since then, two independent digital media, *El Criterio* (Tegucigalpa) and *ContraCorriente* (San Pedro Sula) have participated in FOROCAP annual events and workshops.

El Criterio has also received financial support for three investigative reportage productions. Since fall 2019 they have received consultancy support to develop their business and marketing strategies. Institutional support has been given for the Honduran Network of Young Journalists, in alliance with other media in Honduras. The idea is to train new journalist and later on capture them to work for the independent media.

6. Thematic Outcomes

✿ 6.1. Digital Security and Personal Safety

VIKES partners have participated in various digital security workshops, in which they have acquired knowledge regarding encrypted files, secure emails, computer protection, VPN on cell phones and computers, as well as configuration of tools and applications. VIKES has organized these safety trainings that focused on physical security in cooperation with IREX's Regional Office (www.irex.org). These workshops gave partners an idea of how to act in extreme situations, and today most of the partners have developed and implemented their security protocol.

6.2. ForoCAP (Foro Centroamericano de Periodismo/Central American Journalism Forum)

El Faro has been organizing a Central American Journalism Forum (ForoCAP) for several years. This Forum has created an unformalized network of independent media in the region where El Faro is identified as a reference. In the Forum, there are workshops for regional dialogue and specialized training in journalism that seek to provide tools and support for each media to do better journalism.

During the last three years, VIKES partners have participated in the Forum, promoted by El Faro. In this Forum, all the participants have access to the latest experiences in the Latin American region in innovative journalism techniques. Learning the latest techniques has given new ideas to the partners in search of advanced techniques and presentations of their media. Several partners mentioned that it was useful for them to learn multimedia tools for data presentations, videos and photographs. All the VIKES partners consider that the workshops held in the Forum have given them new ideas and technical tools, how to improve the quality of their journalistic work.

6.3. Gender Approach in Partner's Journalistic Production

It isn't effortless to evaluate how much the programme has improved the gender approach of the partner's media production because one of the criteria's how VIKES has chosen its partners, was a gender approach in their productions. Nevertheless, today partners have incorporated a fundamental gender perspective to their productions to promote the active participation of women in politics to end the gender discrimination.

In the information policy of Onda Local, the gender approach is contemplated as one of the fundamental values, by promoting affirmative actions that enable the exercise of women's rights. In the daily journalistic exercise, Onda Local highlights women as key actors and use a non-sexist and inclusive language. They also make women's problems visible, use them as a source of information and protagonists of their stories. For example, the following journalistic investigations were implemented by Onda Local during the second semester of 2019: Interruption of pregnancy, femicide and violence against women, Political participation of women and women and disability - a double disability.



Vikes has been supporting its partners in participating the ForoCAP.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

El Faro has also taken significant steps in incorporating the gender approach to journalistic production. In the ForoCAP of 2019, one of the workshops offered to journalists was “Journalism with a gender approach” given by the Gender Editor of the newspaper El País from Spain. Besides, in the same ForoCAP, a debate was organized on how media work has addressed the new feminist wave in the region. Furthermore, El Faros editorial has covered cases of gender violence, inequality in access to abortion when there have been cases that endanger the physical or emotional health of mothers or cases of sexual harassment in public institutions. Even that quite a few thinks have been done, journalists in El Faro are conscious that gender approach should still be further strengthened in the newspaper.

6.4. Investigative Journalism on Human Rights and Democratic Governance

It was interesting to observe that all the VIKES partners use a rights-based approach in their journalism, which aims to enable media to observe the violations of rights and to make news considering the rights of the people. Thus, it is a type of journalism that aims to improve the rights of the population and contribute to the democratization process. VIKES partners not only report events but also add more in-depth analysis to their journalism. Through analysis and the bringing together of multiple perspectives, they create the potential for a more knowledgeable, well-rounded and aware public. This increased awareness can lead to a stronger civil society and a more active population.

VIKES partners not only report events but also add more in-depth analysis to their journalism.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen



7. Conclusions

 The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES) is a journalists' solidarity organization devoted to strengthening democracy and progressive civil society by supporting freedom of expression, quality journalism and media diversity around the world. Due to the political situation in Central America and the lack of freedom of the press, it's more than justified that VIKES currently work in the region, where independent journalists and communicators have to face government censorship and high-security risk.

Most of the governments in Central America violate their duty to guarantee the rights of journalists, by becoming the first aggressors to freedom of the press, information and expression. In this critical security situation, VIKES has a crucial role in supporting media workers and investigative journalism, when independence and diversity of media have been and is threatened, and press freedom, as well as the civic space, are constantly shrinking.

VIKES is devoted to quality journalism, and understands what institutional strengthening of independent media means. It's not only to have the latest technology for digital media or new equipment's, but it's more like having institutional strength, rigor and honesty to explain the most complex social and political issues to citizens. In that sense, the implementation of the VIKES programme in the region has allowed the construction of networks, reporting stories that do not only tell the day to day events but explains the most complex social and political problems in the region and invest strategically to build a more reliable and financially viable media institutions in the long term.

VIKES support partners to develop their business and marketing plans, and its partners have created new products that aspire to strengthen their business model in the long term. These new ways of presenting contents and using opportunities of digital media have been translated into more traffic to partners website. At the same time as VIKES partners have consolidated their business and marketing strategies, governments in Central America has increased fines, taxes, and licensing to pressure critical media, and steers state advertising to friendly outlets, which causes economic problems to independent media.

Additionally, VIKES has reinforced its partners to develop a working relationship with audiences as one of the long-term sustainability strategies. This has created a better understanding of the needs of the audience and create a more strategic approach to segmentation and communication.

VIKES partners also receive funding from other donors, but according to them, the support of VIKES has been extremely relevant for them. Partners stress the importance of technical assistance and the presence of VIKES in the region. For beneficiaries its quite essential that VIKES is an association of journalists that understands the problems of media professionals, who dedicate their work to inform people in challenging conditions and who have the power to make sure that also the voiceless will be heard in public discussion. Technical presence in the region is an added value of the VIKES programme, which the other donor, who gives financial support from abroad, don't have.



Most of the governments in Central America violate their duty to guarantee the rights of journalists, by becoming the first aggressors to freedom of the press, information and expression.

Photo: Kimmo Lehtonen

8. Recommendations

VIKES has given decisive technical assistance and financial support for its partners for several years and has achieved positive results. Today VIKES is already known in the region and could use this “additional value” to improve the impact of its activities and work with a larger amount of independent journalist to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

The VIKES programme has achieved positive results with its actual programme design and programme components should remain the same.

- **Support for implementation of business and marketing strategies**
- **Support for networking and training**
- **Support for content production utilizing investigative methods**

The main recommendation for the design of the next phase is to use flexibility in the planning process. The most critical point in the planning is the analysis of the institutional capacity of partners and the elaboration of the need assessment⁸, which should ensure that all the partners receive relevant support for the programmes. As a result of the assessment of institutional capacity, VIKES will have required information about every partners needs to support their institutional strengthening. Some of the older partners might only need a little help to start the implementation of their business and marketing strategies, and some of the new partners may only need training in elaboration of specific marketing strategies. Not everyone fits the mold.

The other reason for flexibility is the fact that all the partners receive support from other donors as well. Most of the donors don't have a presence in the region, and hardly any of them have technical assistance like VIKES. This situation gives a particular advantage to VIKES because it can design with its partners were the complementary funding from VIKES offers more added value.

8.1. Increase the Quantity of Direct Beneficiaries with Independent Journalist

Harsh working conditions in Central America have forced journalist and communication experts to use more digital media and "collaborative journalism" as a mechanism to defend the freedom of the press and right of the population to be informed.

⁸ A needs assessment is a process used by organizations to determine priorities, make organizational improvements, or allocate resources. It involves determining the needs, or gaps, between where the organization envisions itself in the future and the organization's current state.

8.1.1. Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua (PCIN) and Protocol on Attacks on Freedom of the Press

In Nicaragua, independent journalists have established an organization called *Independent Journalists and Communicators of Nicaragua* (PCIN) to improve the freedom of expression of media. PCIN is an umbrella organization which needs technical and financial support to start its activities.

PCIN has recently started to work on *Protocol on Attacks on Freedom of the Press* which is an Observatory that is collecting and disseminating information on human violations against the journalist. The *Protocol of Press Freedom Attacks* (Observatory of press freedom) developed by PCIN is not limited to taking actions only after the events have occurred. On the contrary, prevention mechanisms and measures are also created to resolve some of the root causes of violence and impunity against the journalistic and communicational staff. VIKES could support the implementation of these preventive mechanisms to improve the security of the media workers.

The objective of VIKES Regional Independent Media Support Programme is to strengthen the freedom of the press, information and expression. It would be logical to include PCIN among the beneficiaries and support at the same time the human rights and security of the journalist thru *Protocol on Attacks on Freedom of the Press*. VIKES already has a close relation with the Protocol, which has a small office space inside of *Onda Local* office.

8.1.2. Support Journalist in Exile and Their Inclusion to the Project Activities

According to data produced by Protocol on Attacks on Freedom of the Press, several journalists have left the country due to the threats for their families, including acts of intimidation and harassment as mechanisms to abandon their journalistic coverage. Forced exile places these journalists in a situation of economic vulnerability with limited conditions to practice their profession. VIKES with its partners should try to identify a mechanism on how to include the journalists in exile into the project and improve their possibilities to do journalist work.



**Digital divide is deep
in Central America.
Low income, aging,
disabled and indigenous
communities are excluded.**

Photo: Aaron Burden / Unsplash

8.1.3. Inclusion of Low Income, Disabled, Indigenous and Ageing Habitants

It seems clear that the digital media has been beneficial for freedom of expression and information. Nevertheless, at the same time, digital divide deepens for low income, disabled, indigenous, and ageing population. In Central America, gaps continue to exist- and widen- between those who are digitally “included” and “excluded”.

Lack of access to information of these particular groups is a challenge for the VIKES programme and its partner. How to reach out to indigenous communities, farmers and people with low income with digital media? This is an important issue when we consider topics like climate change or voter education. In environmental matters, it’s crucial to include farmers and indigenous communities among the citizen who receive information on ecological issues. Voter’s education programmes should reach out to the disabled and low-income citizen and not only the population who live in the cities and have access to the internet.

Among the VIKES partner *Onda Local* has the best reach out strategy, which it could share with other media. The solution is in networks and collaboration with different media. Nevertheless, this is something to take into account in the future project.

8.2. New Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring Systems

8.2.1. Analysis of the Institutional Capacity and Plans for Institutional Strengthening

At the end of the current phase of the project, VIKES should enforce a light institutional capacity assessment of all its actual and potential partners. In base on the analysis of the institutional capacity, VIKES can start a process with each partner to elaborate a detailed plan for their institutional strengthening (define what inputs are needed to achieve expected results) for the next phase of the programme.

8.2.2. Monitoring and Evaluation System (Result Matrix)

The main objective of the VIKES programme is the strengthening the institutional capacity of its partners by using different inputs, like support for competence and skills development, training and networking. Considering that every partner organization have their particular needs for institutional strengthening, they should also have their comprehensive monitoring and evaluation matrix. In the matrix, it is essential to separate indicators for input (monitoring) and indicators for impact (evaluation).

In a result matrix, the programme has to measure the impact of their inputs (training, technical assistance for capacity building, seminars, etc.). During the institutional capacity assessment, the partner organization identifies its institutional weaknesses (baseline), which it intends to improve with the support of VIKES. After that, the technical assistance of VIKES negotiates with the partner organization, what exactly should be the right inputs, how to improve the situation and what should be the results of this process (impact). In a result matrix, VIKES should measure how well its partners have managed to achieve results and not if they have implemented their inputs⁹.

⁹ In a new programme proposal for years 2021-2024, VIKES has already made these changes for their result matrix

8.2.3. Budget Model

It might be a good idea to separate the partnership agreements and the rest of the budget lines. Until now, VIKES has used an activity budget, but the line-item budget could fit better for its programme. VIKES partners should have all their costs under their partnership component in specific budget lines. With this money, they can acquire all the services that they need for their particular actions for institutional strengthening (training, seminars, etc.) and other specific activities agreed with VIKES.

On the other hand, VIKES should have its activities like seminars, training and capacity building under its own budget, when activities are offered for several partners and sometimes even other independent journalists.

Here is an example:

	2021	2022	2023	Total
Partnership component				
Partner No.1				
o Institutional Strengthening of the organization (training etc.)	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
o Support for the Investigative Journalism and Media production	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Partner No.2				
o Institutional Strengthening of the organization (training etc.)	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
o Support for the Investigative Journalism and media Production	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Partner No.3 etc.	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Seminars, conferences and training activities paid by VIKES				
Trainings/workshops/seminars for journalist and media houses	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Consulting services to support partners	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Technical support of VIKES				
Salaries (Home office)	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Salaries (Programme Coordinator)	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Travel cost	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00	€ XX,00
Accommodation in Nicaragua				
Etc.				

8.3. Central American Journalism Forum (ForoCAP)

For the last three years, VIKES has given financial support for its partners to participate in the Central American Journalist Forum. According to partners, the ForoCAP has given them a significant amount of new ideas and better tools on how to improve their work and reach out to the audiences. As expressed by the partners, in this Forum they get a lot of new ideas, which they further on implement with the technical and financial support of VIKES. ForoCAP has several donors, and VIKES funding goes to expand the number of participants. VIKES should continue this funding and be long term partner for the Forum.

8.4. Increase Coordination with Other Donors

Due to the political and safety situation in the region, several donors have decided to support independent media in the region, among them several NGOs from the USA and European Union. One of the new actors is a basket fund called "Fondo Comun"¹⁰, (COSUDE, Embassies of Luxemburg, Sweden, Denmark, Spain and Delegation of the European Union). The idea of the Fondo Comun is to support complementary activities for the VIKES programme¹¹. During the evaluation field mission, the main idea was that "Fondo Comun" could support the Nicaraguan *Protocol on Attacks on Freedom of the Press* to document the harassment of the journalist and give assistance for the journalist at risk. The observatory is already working in the office of VIKES partner "Onda Local" on a voluntary basis, and the director of the Onda Local is receiving training for this purpose at the FLIP¹² office in Colombia.

During the next phase of the programme, the articulation between the donors is even more crucial than before. VIKES is in a vital position in this donor coordination because it has technical assistance in the region. This gives an added value for the VIKES programme, but it's also an additional responsibility for the technical assistance.

¹⁰ In a Finland was a member of Fondo Comun until it closed its regional Embassy in Nicaragua in 2013.

¹¹ These negotiations have already started

¹² The Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) is a non-governmental organization that promotes press freedom in Colombia and oversees the right of citizens to be informed.



**Human rights violations
in Nicaragua have been
observed worldwide.**

Photo: 35 U.S. Mission Photo / Eric Bridiers

9. Annexes

9.1. Logical framework of the project 2017–2018

Overall objective	Indicators for overall objective	Source of verification	Assumptions
Contribute to sustainable and equitable development by promoting the right of civil society to information and the right of media to freedom of expression.			Social, economic, political, cultural, legal and climatic conditions do not affect the development work with journalists, independent media owners and civil society organizations
Project purpose	Indicators for project purpose	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Promote self-sustainability of independent media in Central America and civil society organizations in Central America by strengthening their capacities of business management, information production and creating partnerships at local, national and regional level.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The media receive income from different sources to produce independent quality information. 2. The independent medias manage to increase their source of information through partnerships created at the local, national and regional level. 3. Civil society organizations are able to strengthen their communication skills and improve the institutional positioning among the population. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Productions contracts with institutions, companies or NGOs. 2. Contracts with commercial and social advertisers. 3. Medias partnerships agreements at national and regional level. 4. Memory of participation at national and regional exchanges events. 5. Publications of journalists' productions. 6. Publications of civil society organizations work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social, economic, political, cultural, legal and climatic conditions do not affect the development works with journalists, independent media owners and organizations. 2. Political conditions of the countries do not affect the safety of journalists' research.
Result 1	Result 2	Result 3	Assumptions
Journalists and independent media owners manage their companies achieving efficient, innovative and a safe way.	The journalist has improved production quality and coverage adopting methods of journalism investigation, innovative techniques and creating networks among independent media.	Centro Humboldt and other civil society organizations have strengthened their communication work and positioning, internally and externally for institutional sustainability.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Journalists and independent media owners are available to establish contracts with various companies, institutions or NGOs. 2. Journalists and independent media owners are willing to invest in innovative projects underway. 3. Journalists, owners, independent media and organizations work without any type of threat. 4. The political conditions of the countries do not affect the safety of journalists doing research. 5. The independent media carry out their productions and disclosures without any problem related to the internet connection.

Indicators for result 1	Indicators for result 2	Indicators for result 3	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 80 % of independent media and journalists have a business and a marketing plan detailed for long term. 2. At the end of the project the independent media and journalists manage to increase their sales contracts with institutions, companies, NGOs or other medias. 3. Throughout the project at least 80 % of journalists are participating in training workshops based on safety and have a plan. 4. At the end of the project all the independent media operate through digital information the disclosure of journalistic production. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the end of the project there have been 20 journalism productions (radio, tv, press, digital) 40 % has a gender approach. 2. At least 50% of the journalism productions have quality to be presented at events and competitions at national and regional level. 3. At the end of the project journalistic productions have 60 % local coverage, 20 % national and 20 % regional. 4. At the end of the project using innovative technology allows digital information to increase media coverage at local, national and regional level. 5. For the first year of the project it has created an alliance between media at national and regional level through the exchange of information and data networking platform. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When the project ends at least 30 % of the urban population will have known more about the organizations work. 2. On the second year of the project there will be the existence of an online news programme reporting and raising awareness about the work of the organization. 3. At the conclusion of the project organizations have a network of journalists to cover environmental issues and will have made several publications (8). 4. Throughout the project communication unit and technical staff have participated in training workshops. 	
Sources of verification	Sources of verification	Sources of verification	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business documents and journalist plans. 2. Reports of workshops and technical assistance training. 3. Projects and contracts signed by independent media companies, institutions or NGOs. 4. Safety plans of journalists. 5. Report of the workshops participation. 6. Websites, blog, social networks of journalists with journalistic productions to date. 7. Database at the start and end of project. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recordings of productions (radio, tv , press, digital) made by journalists . 2. Publication of productions. 3. Comments and views of the productions in social media and web pages. 4. Evaluation report with emphasis on quality and gender criteria of journalistic productions. 5. Reports of meetings between journalists and partnership agreements markers for the exchange of information and production. 6. Memories of events are presented where journalistic productions and register for contests. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Database at the start and end of project. 2. Programme online, comments and views on social media and website. 3. Reports based on environmental and human rights organizations working issues. 4. Reports and lists of training workshops. 	
Sources of verification	Sources of verification	Sources of verification	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business documents and journalist plans. 2. Reports of workshops and technical assistance training. 3. Projects and contracts signed by independent media companies, institutions or NGOs. 4. Safety plans of journalists. 5. Report of the workshops participation. 6. Websites, blog, social networks of journalists with journalistic productions to date. 7. Database at the start and end of project. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recordings of productions (radio, tv , press, digital) made by journalists . 2. Publication of productions. 3. Comments and views of the productions in social media and web pages. 4. Evaluation report with emphasis on quality and gender criteria of journalistic productions. 5. Reports of meetings between journalists and partnership agreements markers for the exchange of information and production. 6. Memories of events are presented where journalistic productions and register for contests. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Database at the start and end of project. 2. Programme online, comments and views on social media and website. 3. Reports based on environmental and human rights organizations working issues. 4. Reports and lists of training workshops. 	

Activities for result 1	Activities for result 2	Activities for result 3	
<p>1.1 Execution of a baseline study at the beginning and ending of the project with information of each media.</p> <p>1.2 Training course on planning and management of media companies.</p> <p>1.3 Training course on marketing.</p> <p>1.4 Consulting and technical assistance for developing business plan, creation and brand registration, and fundraising campaigns.</p> <p>1.5 Exchange of experience and media formulation with other Central American countries.</p> <p>1.6 Course on TIC development, website design, digital platforms, crowdfunding.</p> <p>1.7 Design an operation of web or digital platform in two languages (Creole and Spanish).</p> <p>1.8 Course on safety procedures of journalists and media companies.</p> <p>1.9 Purchase and provision of equipment: camera, smartphone and tables.</p>	<p>2.1 Meetings of coordination and planning of journalists in every area of local, national and regional action to define research topics and the role of each one.</p> <p>2.2 Meetings of the advisory committee.</p> <p>2.3 Creating alliances and networks of partnerships with national and regional media</p> <p>2.4 Implementation of network activities with the exchange of information and data for journalistic production</p> <p>2.4 Productions of reports (tv, radio, press, digital) based on themes defined by every media at local, national and regional level.</p> <p>2.5 Production of two edition of radio programme Onda Local in Nicaragua based on: -Human rights defenders. -Freedom of speech of journalists in Nicaragua.</p> <p>2.6 Conducting a discussion forum on freedom of journalism expression at regional level.</p> <p>2.7 Broadcasting of journalism productions in different media at local, national and regional level.</p> <p>2.8 Disclosure of journalists' production through digital media, digital platform, web and blog.</p> <p>2.9 Making radio programs for disclosure of journalistic productions chains.</p>	<p>3.1 Execution of a baseline study at the beginning and ending of the project with information about the coverage of institutional activities.</p> <p>3.2 Production of the newscast online named " green space ".</p> <p>3.3 Conducting training workshops with journalists, and production of reports based on climate change, risk management and sustainable energy.</p> <p>3.4 Training course on NTIC.</p> <p>3.4 Training course on media management.</p> <p>3.5 Conceptualization, creation and implementation of a fund-raising campaign.</p>	
Means	Means	Means	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Local -Facilitator -Mobilization (transport) -Materials and equipment to facilitate -Advisory committee, journalists and media - Documents of cooperatives, media -Equipment for journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Local -Mobilization (transport) -Facilitators -Working plan -Journalists, medias, consulting group - Equipment (recorder, recording photographic and camera phones, batteries, computers etc). -Plans and script writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local -Mobilization (transport) -Facilitators -Working plan -Journalists, staff of organizations -Equipment (recorder, recording photographic and camera phones, batteries, computers etc) 	

9.2. Result Logframe Vikes' Central America Project 2019-20

Results	Indicators	Baseline 2019	Target 2020	Verification	Assumptions
Impact					
To enhance citizens' access to information through supporting independent and diverse media and CSOs to find the means for sustainable operations as well as for defending their operating environment, and hence strengthen the civil society and democracy in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras.	1) citizen satisfaction on information provided by independent medias. 2) self-sustainability rate of independent media and CSOs. 3) change in operating environment for independent media and civil society; change in access to information.	1) No baseline 2) % of self-financing of partners (2017): -El Faro 35 % - Onda Local 10 % - C Humboldt 0 % 3) operating environment is difficult in all three countries. In 2018 World Press Freedom Index Nicaragua is ranked 90th (75th in 2015), El Salvador 66th (58th in 2015), and Honduras 141st. Every country has a Law on Access to Public Information, but these laws are not implemented. WPF Index 2019: Nicaragua is ranked 114th, El Salvador 81st and Honduras 146th.	1) 80% of citizens who answered in media survey find that independent medias produce high-quality and relevant information that benefits people. 2) Partners self-finance rate is 20 to 50% of their overall financing. 3) Positive change in hostile environment against independent journalism and civil society activism; Journalists, CSOs and citizens report receiving information based on the Law on Access to Public Information.	1)) media survey conducted by partner medias measuring citizens' opinion. 2) partners' financial reports. 3) feedback and analysis from partners and other organizations; studies and information produced by IFEX, SIP, UNESCO, HHRR; Journalists', IREX, CSOs and citizen feedback on fulfillment of the Law on Access to Information in operating countries based on project evaluation and media survey.	Social, economic, political, cultural, legal and climatic conditions do not affect the development work with journalists, independent media owners and civil society organizations.

Results	Indicators	Baseline 2019	Target 2020	Verification	Assumptions
Outcomes					
<p>Outcome 1: Independent medias and CSOs in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras have created well-functioning business and marketing strategies which are implemented, organizations fundraising has been improved.</p>	<p>1) implementation of business and marketing strategies, analysis of impact, fundraising rates.</p>	<p>1) Nicaraguan partners (Onda Local and Centro Humboldt) don't have business or marketing strategies, but after first year's preparatory training and 2nd year's tailored training (SembaMedia) partners are ready to start working on a detailed, long-term business & marketing plan with professional assistance in 2019. Feedback on this process will be available in the beginning of 2019.</p> <p>In El Salvador a long-term strategy is developed for the measurement and analysis of El Faro's audiences in its different platforms during 2017-18 and media's institutional development was strengthened in two ways: First, through a strategic consultancy on issues of audience management that left specific diagnoses and proposals (most already implemented) to improve the relationship of El Faro with its community of readers, and second, with the reinforcement of the area 2 new community managers.</p>	<p>1) All partners have functional strategies in place that are implemented. Partners' receive at least 10% more funds through their own business and fundraising activities.</p>	<p>1) Partners feedback and reports, analytics data, external impact analysis.</p>	<p>Social, economic, political, cultural, legal and climatic conditions do not affect the development work with journalists, independent media owners and civil society organizations. Partners motivation for organizational development stays high.</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Independent medias and CSOs in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras are well-networked and have sufficient skills and knowledge for defending their work and operating environment for media and civil society.</p>	<p>2) number of networking events, number of participating organizations, participants' experience on usefulness of training and peer-support, created cooperation strategies, amount of the regional networking initiatives created by the programme participants.</p>	<p>2) Some of the partners know each other, but there's still need for wider networking between organizations. Mutual support has not been given, lack of peer-learning, links between independent medias and CSOs need strengthening.</p>	<p>2) 80% of participants find the provided training and networking events usefull. At least 10 organizations have found new contacts and managed to create usefull links to other actors. Plans for cooperation in defending operating environment have created.</p>	<p>2) documentation of events, participants' lists and feedback, partners' reports</p>	
<p>Outcome 3: Independent medias and CSOs produce high-quality information and investigative stories that provide divergent information and viewpoints compared to mainstream media and attract wide audiences.</p>	<p>3) Number of stories produced, quality of the content, number of readers</p>	<p>3) 8 investigative journalism productions was done in 2017 by media partners; no baseline data on reached audience per story.</p> <p>Two journalism awards won (Onda Local). El Faro's 10 piece reportage series was republished in other Central American media.</p>	<p>3) Investigative stories that trigger public discussion on national, regional and even on international level. are produced. At the end of the project, journalistic productions with regional approach have increased at least by 70 % by using innovative technology.</p> <p>All partners manage to reach out new audiences.</p>	<p>3) published stories, content analysis, media monitoring, analytics (web and social media)</p>	

Results	Indicators	Baseline 2019	Target 2020	Verification	Assumptions
Outputs					
1) Organizations receive relevant support for developing their business and marketing strategies.	1) feedback from partners, opinions of the usefulness	1) Onda Local and Centro Humboldt received support from an external consultant for developing their business models and marketing strategies during 2018. Feedback available from this process in the beginning of 2019; Two Honduran media houses participated in workshops handling fundraising, business models and administration management.	1) Organizations find the support given relevant for their needs, and have managed to proceed from planning into implementation.	1) project reports, feedback from media houses	Support and tailor-made assistance given by Sembra consultant can be run inside Nicaragua.
2) Organizations are trained to utilize digital tools and analytics for marketing and reaching their target audiences. <i>Removed from the budget 2019 because of FMA cut</i>	2) number of training and participants, quality of the training	2) No baseline done yet	2) Organizations have received relevant training for utilizing digital tools and analytics for marketing and communications. Participants report that they are utilizing what was learned in their work.	2) training feedback and outlines, questionnaire for participants.	
3) Partners conduct successful marketing campaigns and fundraising (e.g. crowdfunding) and develop services for fundraising that have found a relevant market niche.	3) list of campaigns, return of investment (ROI), number of agreed service contracts/sold services	3) In El Salvador El Faro is implementing "Citizen digging" crowdfunding campaign to support investigative journalism. C Humboldt planned to launch sale of specialized services at local and national level (as a part of new business plan and marketing strategy) and carrying out first fundraising campaigns in 2018, but because of the national crisis all actions were paralyzed and postponed	3) All partners are managed to make some profit through marketing and fundraising efforts.	3) partners' financial and narrative reports	The situation in Nicaragua is stabilizing and the partners can move forward in line with their strategy
4) Partners reach out to an increased number of audiences through their website and social media.	4) number of unique visitors online, follower rates in social media	4) Baseline data to be collected during the 1st quarter of 2019.	4) All partners receive minimum 10% increase in their audience and follower rates.	4) Partners' analytics	
5) Networking events and training have been organized linking together independent medias, CSOs and individual journalists.	5) number of training and networking events, number of medias, CSOs and journalists	5) 10 journalists from Nicaragua and Honduras (also from partner organizations) met during FOROCAP in El Salvador. This was proven to be a good event for networking and building base for future cooperation. HEFAT Security training organized with IREX El Salvador was provided to partners in Guatemala. C Humboldt organized 3 workshops for national journalists on environmental issues, and 4 workshops on journalism techniques for young communicators network Somotillo aerea.	5) 10+ networking events and training has been organized.	5) project documentation, participant lists	The situation in Nicaragua is stabilizing and the partners training can be carried out in Nicaragua.
6) Journalists have improved the quality and coverage of their stories adopting methods of investigative journalism.	6) percentage of training participants utilizing investigative methods, journalists' own understanding of the change in quality.	6) Baseline will be provided in the beginning of 2019 after getting the results from the project's first phase (2017-2018) 10 journalists (incl. partners) from Nicaragua and Honduras were trained in 2017 and in 2018 through their participation in specialized vocational journalism workshops in FOROCAP. Preproduction of C Humboldt's online programme Espacio Verde was done in 2018 and the programme will be launched at the 1st quarter of 2019.	6) 90% of journalists receiving training during the project utilize learned investigative skills in their work and report on improved quality.	6) journalists' feedback and interviews	
7) Partners have published high-quality news stories and other content utilizing methods of investigative journalism.	7) number of stories published, content of stories	7) 12 investigative journalism productions was done in 2018 by media partners (OL 5, CH 1, El Faro 4 and 1 by El Criterio Honduras). El Faro's reportages on Nicaraguan crisis were republished by the regional media and international media, like BBC, Time and El Pais.	7) 15+ investigative stories or other content utilizing methods of investigative journalism has been published.	7) partners' report, content analysis	

Activities					
AKP 1 Support for implementation of business and marketing strategies					
• Tailor-made support and training for partners in business development and marketing					
• Developing services for fundraising, conducting fundraising campaigns					
• Website and analytics of audiences, digital tools for marketing					
AKP 2 Support for networking and training					
• Supporting journalists to participate in Forocap					
• Other events, networking and training (improving operating environment, safety, investigative skills)					
AKP 3 Support for content production utilizing investigative methods					
• Partners´ regional productions					
• Partners´ national productions					

9.3. TdR of the Evaluation

2 December, 2019

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR PROJECT EVALUATION

NAME OF PROJECT

Regional independent media support programme

PROJECT PARTNERS

VIKES

Onda Local, Nicaragua

Centro Humboldt, Nicaragua

El Faro, El Salvador

DURATION OF PROJECT: 2017-2018 (phase one), 2019-2020 (phase two)

EVALUATOR(S): to be confirmed

LOCATION: Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador

TIMING: Initiation – December 2019/January 2020
Conducting evaluation in Nicaragua – January/February 2020

Debriefing of preliminary findings in Nicaragua – end of February / early March

Draft report in English by March 15, 2020

Two weeks for comments and the final version of the evaluation report in English, max 30 pages, by April 15, 2020

REPORTS TO: Project Coordinator and Executive Director of VIKES

BUDGET: 4000 EUR , consisting of a fee and travel and other costs related to the field work in Nicaragua. 50% of the fee is to be paid after submitting the draft report and 50% after the final report has been approved, no later than April 30, 2020.

BACKGROUND

The Finnish Foundation for Media and Development (VIKES) has supported journalists and media workers in Nicaragua since 2007.

The current project to support independent media in Central America started in 2017 with a 2-year funding from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Phase two is implemented in 2019-2020, also with the ministry's financial support. The total funding for the two phases in 2017-2020 is about 550 000 EUR.

The project focuses on three areas:

- 1) Providing support for competence and skills development to independent medias and CSOs in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador to improve financial sustainability and reduce dependency on external funding. To achieve greater self-sustainability, organizations need training in business development, marketing and sales, as well as in strategic planning and effective management;
- 2) Supporting networking and cooperation between independent medias, journalists and CSOs to encourage cooperation in defending the operating environment for media and civil society. Also training in topical issues (e.g. managing security risks) is provided;

3) Providing training and support to medias, CSOs and independent journalists to produce high-quality information and investigative stories that provide divergent information and viewpoints compared to mainstream media and attract wide audiences.

During the second project phase the role of networking has increased. Independent medias, journalists and CSOs have been brought together in order to enhance mutual learning, but also to support cooperation in order to defend the freedom of expression, access to information as well the operating environment for both media and civil society.

Project partners El Faro, Onda Local and Centro Humboldt have been supported to strengthen their capacities in business strategies and marketing, to develop investigative journalism and to produce independent content.

In Honduras, the difficult political situation and security issues have posed challenges for action. Therefore Vikes' support has focused on organizing activities and supporting content production and networking of few identified independent medias, such as El Criterio and ContraCorriente.

In 2018, journalism in Nicaragua became more dangerous than before. This had a significant impact on Vikes' activities and partners' daily work. Therefore, adjustments were made to accommodate also security trainings and actions in project activities.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The main purpose of the evaluation is to get an independent review of the implementation and results of the Regional independent media support programme, and to get recommendations for the next phase of the project, to be planned in 2020.

The projects and activities supported by VIKES in Central America have not been evaluated before. Therefore, it is also hoped that the evaluation will be able compile lessons learned during the long-term cooperation of VIKES and its Nicaraguan partners.

KEY QUESTIONS

The evaluation should cover the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and to some extent the impact of the project.

Evaluation questions:

- Is the current project relevant for the partners and reinforces the results of the previous work of Vikes in Central America?
- How well has the project or VIKES supported the capacity building of its partners, including income generation and independence?
- How well have the networking activities resulted in further cooperation among independent medias, journalists and CSOs?
- Have the trainings improved the quality of journalistic work?
- What could have been done differently?
- What could be learned from the project, especially regarding the potential next phase?
- Sustainability: Are the results of the project sustainable? How could sustainability still be increased?
- Impact: Has the project been able to contribute to the freedom of expression in Central America?

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EVALUATOR(S)

- Review of project documents and other material relevant to conduct the evaluation
- Design the evaluation methodology and data collection plan and agree the methodology and final research questions with VIKES.
- Evaluate the project as per the project objectives and verifiable indicators with stakeholders in Nicaragua (and/or El Salvador, Honduras).
- Provide a debriefing of the evaluation and the most important findings while in Nicaragua.
- Submit a draft report to Vikes, and collect and incorporate feedback into a final report.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluator(s) will design the process and methodological approach for the evaluation, to be submitted with the proposal. In general, participatory methods, a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, and a gender sensitive approach are recommended. A critical assessment and discussion of the project's strengths and challenges is welcome.

ROLE OF VIKES AND PROJECT PARTNERS

VIKES and project partners Onda Local, Centro Humboldt and El Faro will compile materials to be reviewed, provide contact information for persons to be interviewed as well as assist with the logistics during the evaluation.

VIKES and project partners will have the opportunity to provide their comments to the draft report as well as the final report before its approval. VIKES takes responsibility of the layout of the final report and will publish it on Vikes website.

LIMITATIONS

Possibilities to carry out interviews with stakeholders in Nicaragua, Honduras and in El Salvador are subject to the security situation in the region as well as to the budget available.

Review of material from Vikes' previous activities in Nicaragua is subject to time available.

EXPERTISE REQUIRED

- A minimum of 5 years of experience in related field.
- Qualification/training in evaluation and data collection tool design.
- Experience in conducting development project evaluation with participatory approaches
- Experience in media and journalism
- Good understanding of freedom of expression
- Familiarity with civil society organisations
- Familiarity and sensitivity the socio-political environment in Central American countries.
- Fluency in Spanish and English, both written and spoken.
- Possibility to travel to/in Nicaragua.

This Terms of Reference may be modified and finalized together with the evaluator.


VIKES