

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Westminster		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34 Communications, Cultural and Media Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Advancing Public Interest Media in African and Arab Countries		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2005 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Naomi Sakr Winston Mano	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor Reader	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 09/2004 ongoing 02/2002 ongoing
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> August 2013 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> Y/N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>The University of Westminster's Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI) is renowned for international research that takes a public interest approach, as reflected in the work of Prof Naomi Sakr and Dr Winston Mano, specialists in Arab and African media respectively, whose research has generated the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof Sakr wrote a commissioned UNESCO report used in developing a new public service television channel in Jordan; helped Sesame Workshop and the International Rescue Committee win funding to produce educational media for displaced children in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq; facilitated Arab-European knowledge exchange on children's media that has influenced creative practice in Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.</li> <li>• Dr Mano wrote a commissioned Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) policy framework document that has demonstrably aided Zimbabwean media stakeholders in their pursuit of a democratised media space; and contributed to an influential Call to Action on media reform issued by the Pan-African Parliament and adopted by 33 media organisations.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>International attention began to focus on media deficiencies in the Arab and African regions from 2001, following the 9/11 attacks by Egyptian and Saudi hijackers, political change in post-apartheid Southern Africa, and the intensification of the crisis in Zimbabwe from 2002 onwards. Much mainstream non-academic commentary on media shortcomings in Arab and African countries has focused on the media themselves, overlooking the wider political, economic and social dimensions which Sakr and Mano highlight in their research. Sakr and Mano's research has contributed towards a shift in discourse that recognises the multi-faceted and often structural constraints which affect Arab and African media similarly, despite concrete social and political differences between countries.</p> <p>In 2007, Prof Sakr, author of the prize-winning book <i>Satellite Realms</i> (2001), became founding director of the CAMRI Arab Media Centre, launched after CAMRI hosted a two-year series of ESRC-funded international seminars on the notion of an Arab public sphere. Sakr's research across this period, including her monograph <i>Arab Television Today</i> [1], showed how Arab media censorship remained entrenched across the region despite the rise of cross-border media and supposedly new media players. Her associated work on media reform, frequently sought after the Arab uprisings of 2011, has included a focus on openings for public service media. For instance, in a 2013 book chapter on Jordan [2], which built on her previous research on Jordan's 'stop-go' media transition (2002) and 'thwarted aspirations' (2012), Sakr showed how reform of its state broadcaster in the public interest was impeded by regional conflicts, geopolitical pressures, the power of the monarchy and elite alliances straddling business and the state bureaucracy.</p> <p>Sakr's research on Arab children's media, advanced by contacts developed at an Arab Media Centre conference on the topic in 2010 and facilitated by an AHRC-funded 3-year project on pan-Arab children's TV (2013-16), led by Sakr and undertaken by a five-person CAMRI team, has identified constraints on production and distribution of locally relevant screen media for Arab children alongside outcomes of these constraints for supply chains and intercultural collaboration. Her outputs from the project include two books (2017, 2019) and three solo journal articles</p>		

published so far. Sakr's sole-authored chapter in the first book [3], a collection she co-edited, unpicks causal processes and transnational interactions behind public initiatives adopted in the field of children's media in Egypt and Qatar and reveals the unstable role played in them by privileged individuals. Her co-authored chapter in the same volume examines the interweaving of commercial and political considerations behind the branding and rebranding of Al-Jazeera Children's Channel, showing how underlying brand values shifted in favour of a depoliticised form of nation branding which downplayed an earlier commitment to local creativity.

In 2009, Dr Mano founded the CAMRI African Media Centre and the *Journal of African Media Studies*, which provides a forum for debate on the historical and contemporary aspects of media and communication in Africa. Dr Mano gained prominence through his work on African journalism, which included editing a special 2005 issue of the peer-reviewed open access journal *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* that critically evaluated and investigated the ways in which local and global mass media were depicting the troubling events in Zimbabwe across the previous six years [4]. Mano's own contribution focused on the interplay between press freedom, professionalism and proprietorship in Zimbabwe and showed that far from being docile victims of the country's hostile media environment, most Zimbabwean journalists have 'resisted' or 'rebelled' and are developing sophisticated ways of negotiating the pressures exerted on them by private and public media proprietors.

In the period before Mugabe's 37-year presidency ended in Zimbabwe in 2017, Mano identified and elucidated the structural forces that can make journalists susceptible to undue influence, including poor terms and conditions of employment, obstacles to the creation of autonomous professional unions, and ethical codes dictated by authoritarian regimes. To ensure the kind of independence and impartiality required by public service media, Mano has used his research to provide Africa-based media creatives with strategies for redressing these structural problems [5]. This work led to Mano's involvement in African regional deliberations on media reform and other policy reform initiatives, including organising the 2013 interlinked CAMRI events, *New Thinking on Public Service Broadcasting for the Next Generation* and *Public Service Broadcasting in Africa – Continuity and Change in the 21st Century*, both with support from UNESCO and BBC Media Action. He also participates in the DFID-funded and BBC-led *Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development (PRIMED) Research Technical Advisory Group* (2020).

Having directly engaged with civil society organisations in Southern Africa for over a decade, Mano's 2020 article [6] posits that a more proactive network of civil society across Southern Africa can produce an impact on public service broadcasting (PSB) institutions in these countries by enhancing reform and accountability to the public. Mano identifies pathways towards increased cooperation among public service broadcasters, civil society coalitions and other stakeholders in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and, through a focus on two specific case studies, how such collaborative networks can engender a context within which a collaboratively defined PSB mission, institutional structure and programme outcomes are constantly foregrounded in the operations and performance of the broadcasters.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [1] Sakr, Naomi. 2007. *Arab Television Today*. London: I. B. Tauris. 249 Google Scholar [\[GS\]](#) citations as of 30/8/2020; positively reviewed in [Journal for Cultural Research](#) ('insightful and illuminating' in 'its comprehensive investigation of the socio-economic and political dynamics of the field'), and [Arab Media & Society](#) ('a fascinating perspective on the industry [...] a must read').
- [2] Sakr, Naomi. 2013. We Cannot Let it Loose: Geopolitics, Security and Reform in Jordanian Broadcasting. In *National Broadcasting and State Policy in Arab Countries*, ed. Tourya Gaaaybess, 96-116. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [3] Sakr, Naomi and Jeanette Steemers, eds. 2017. *Children's TV and Digital Media in the Arab World: Childhood, Screen Culture and Education*. London: I. B. Tauris. Sakr is sole author of one chapter and co-author of two others, including the introduction. Part of AHRC-funded research (AHRC AH/J004545/1, see below under 'Funding').

- [4] Mano, Winston. [2005](#). Press Freedom, Professionalism and Proprietorship: Behind the Zimbabwean Media Divide. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 2(0): 56-70. Special issue: *The Media and Zimbabwe*, ed. Winston Mano. Peer reviewed. 50 GS Citations (29/9/2020).
- [5] Mano, Winston. 2016. The State and Public Broadcasting: Continuity and Change in Zimbabwe. In *Global Media and National Policies: The Return of the State*, ed. Terry Flew, Petros Iosifides and Jeanette Steemers, 190-205. London: Springer.
- [6] Mano, Winston and Viola C. Milton. [2020](#). Civil Society Coalitions as Pathways to PSB Reform in Southern Africa. *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture* 11 (2): 135–158. Peer reviewed.

#### Funding

- AHRC: AH/J004545/1 Orientations in the Development of Pan-Arab Television for Children, February 2013-April 2016, Naomi Sakr (P-I), £424,031
- AHRC: AH/R001421/1 Collaborative Development of Children's Screen Content in an Era of Forced Migration Flows: Facilitating Arab-European Dialogue, October 2017-November 2018, Naomi Sakr (Co-I), £38,367

#### **4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

##### **Impact of Sakr's Input to the 'Support to Media in Jordan' Programme**

The Danish NGO International Media Support (IMS), active in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) since 2004, has worked with Sakr since 2008. In 2014, having won a contract from UNESCO to implement an EU-funded programme called 'Support to Media in Jordan', IMS commissioned Sakr to write a report on *Good Practice in EU Public Service Media and Contemporary Practice in Jordan* [A]. The report's purpose, combined with UNESCO's *Assessment of Media Development in Jordan* report, was to inform Jordanian government decision-making vis-à-vis the provision of public service TV. UNESCO's then Senior Project Manager for Support to Media in Jordan, writes in the report's preface that Sakr's research 'contribute[s] to the on-going discussion on how to expand media freedom, independence and professionalism in Jordan' and 'provides lessons learnt that could serve as an inspiration' for Jordan's 'state broadcaster JRTV in its ambition to transform itself to a public service media company' [A, p. 3]. In this connection, Prof Sakr was asked to present the report to Jordanian TV executives at a closed retreat in April 2015 [B, p.238].

Publication of the report in September 2015 was followed by plans for a new Jordan public service television channel, launched under the name Al-Mamlaka in July 2018. This reflected the report's recommendations 'in many respects', according to the lead International Expert on the Assessment of Media Development in Jordan project [C], who writes in a corroborating letter that 'the design and structure of the new station reflected the report's recommendations for public service media provision' [C]. He adds: 'As such, I believe that Professor Sakr's work as part of the Support to Media in Jordan Project contributed to the EU-UNESCO mandate to encourage development and reform of Jordan's media landscape' [C].

##### **Mano's Impact on Zimbabwean Media Reform**

Having identified a 2013 amendment to the Zimbabwe constitution as an opening for media reform, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) commissioned Mano to lead a team of consultants to produce a document entitled *Media Policy Framework for Zimbabwe: A Model By MISA-Zimbabwe* [D]. This is an up-to-date policy framework that draws from the 2013 constitution and corresponds with regional and international standards on media freedom, access to information, freedom of expression, privacy and related rights. MISA states that 'Dr Mano's insights [...] directly influenced MISA's thinking on the key issues and had an impact on how the new media policy principles were operationalised for stakeholders in a language and format that was more acceptable to our stakeholders' [E].

One such stakeholder is Radio Voice of the People (VOP), whose Executive Director is a trainer at the Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS), which lobbies for informed and participatory citizenry through the establishment of vibrant community radio stations. Mano's contribution to strategy adjustments adopted by the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe, of which these organisations are members, was recognised after the elections of July 2018, when incoming information minister Monica Mutsvangwa invited media advocacy groups to put forward media reform policies. As a document that gives clear policy direction on the steps / measures that Zimbabwe should put in place in order to democratise its media space, the VOP's director writes: 'In our engagements with the Ministry of Information in Zimbabwe during discussions on media policy reforms we frequently consult *Media Policy Framework for Zimbabwe: A Model By MISA-Zimbabwe* as a key resource' [F].

### **Mano's Impact on Broader African Media Reform**

Mano has contributed to initiatives such as the Pan-African Parliament, the legislative body of the African Union, who invited Mano to contribute as a Drafting Committee Member to the *Midrand Call to Action: Media Freedom and Public Broadcasting in Africa*. The Call to Action was issued by the December 2013 Continental Conference on Media Legislative Reforms and Transforming State Broadcasters into Public Broadcasters that was hosted by the Pan-African Parliament [G, H]. In a corroborating letter, the Chair of the Conference's organising committee confirms: 'Dr Mano's insights, drawn from his academic research, helped create a Call to Action that demanded legislative reforms to transform state broadcasters into public broadcasters. Mano's contributions, informed by his work on public service broadcasting, specifically helped draft the final Call to Action' [H].

As MISA writes, 'over 33 civil society organisations representing more than 200 advocacy, research, human rights, democracy and good governance networks in Africa have endorsed the Call' [I, p.35], and the Chair of the Conference 'believe[s] this adoption was of significant benefit to the agenda of reforming media legislation in Africa' [H]. This belief is shared by PEN South Africa, who in 2017 referred to the Call to Action as a key action in the 'growing movement in Africa towards the decriminalisation of defamation supported by associations of journalists and other media professionals, press freedom groups, human rights organisations and others'; such defamation or 'insult laws' are highlighted by PEN as a major constraint on press freedom [J, p.10].

The Chair of the Pan-African Conference's organising committee adds that: 'we believe the work of Dr Mano [...] provided crucial expertise and knowledge to advance PanAfrican media reform initiatives. It has benefitted the Pan African Parliament, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa and other organisations involved in media reform. Such expertise is drawn upon for strategising around the democratisation of media in this region and devising initiatives aimed at meeting this goal' [H].

### **Sakr's Impact on Media Provision for Arab Children**

During 2017 Sesame Workshop (SW), makers of the preschool show *Sesame Street*, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) applied for \$100m from the MacArthur Foundation to produce educational media for displaced children in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Following publication of her research in *Children's TV and Digital Media in the Arab World* (output [3]), SW sought Sakr's advice on networking with Arab broadcasters and regional contacts and solicited a letter from her in support of their semi-finalist application to the MacArthur Foundation's [100&Change](#) Prize; a prize for a proposal that 'promises real and measurable progress in solving a critical problem of our time'. In December 2017, SW and IRC [won](#) this large prize that enables them to make a difference in the world. The heads of SW and IRC thanked Sakr 'for lending your powerful voice through the letter you issued in support' [K]. Among other things, SW and IRC are using the funding for [addressing](#) 'toxic stress' among 9 million children refugee children and their caregivers through culturally relevant multimedia content.

In 2017-18, Sakr used her research to enable Arab experts to share and refresh their practice vis-à-vis children's screen media. As co-organiser of a series of AHRC-supported Arab-European dialogues in Manchester, Copenhagen, Munich and London in 2017-18 on the media needs of Arab children living in Europe through forced migration, Sakr steered industry discussions that challenged preconceptions about Arab childhoods and fostered deeper awareness of cultural sensitivities, as evidenced by participants from Egypt and the UAE [L].

For instance, Nathalie Habib, speaking for Blink Studios in the UAE, states that 'collaboration' with Prof. Sakr 'caused Blink Studios to raise awareness in Dubai and Abu Dhabi of trends in children's screen media in Europe with the aim of setting up further opportunities for Arab-European knowledge exchange in this specialised but crucial field' [L1]. It also empowered her to challenge 'issues of stereotyping and cultural misunderstanding' beyond the dialogue workshops, for instance among attendees at the biennial Prix Jeunesse international children's TV festival in Germany [L1].

The Egyptian Arts & Culture Programme Manager at the intergovernmental Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative (DEDI), Cairo, whose activities include training creative practitioners, also attests to having benefitted from his participation in the project co-led by Professor Sakr [L1], because it helped him gain 'a better understanding of production problems', 'enriched' his 'ability to recognise desirable and suitable qualities of children's media', and put him 'in a better position to carry out projects with regards to optimising the design of our collaborations and selecting suitable partners' [L2].

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [A] Sakr, Naomi. 2015. *Good Practice in EU Public Service Media and Contemporary Practice in Jordan. A Comparative Analysis*. Amman: UNESCO Amman Office. [\[link\]](#)
- [B] IPDC. 2015. Thematic Consultations section in *Assessment of Media Development in Jordan*. Paris: UNESCO [\[link\]](#)
- [C] Letter from Toby Mendel (UNESCO Consultant and International Expert on the Media Development Indicators phase of the 2014-18 EU-UNESCO Support to Media in Jordan Project).
- [D] Mano, Winston. 2015. *Media Policy Framework for Zimbabwe. A Model By MISA-Zimbabwe*. Harare: Media Institute of Southern Africa. [\[link\]](#)
- [E] Corroborating letter from MISA: Media Institute of Southern Africa
- [F] Corroborating letter by the Executive Director of Radio Voice of the People
- [G] The Midrand Call to Action Document: Media Freedom and Public Broadcasting in Africa, Pan-African Parliament, [2013](#)
- [H] Corroborating letter from the Chair of the Committee of the Continental Conference on Media Legislative Reforms and Transforming State Broadcasters into Public Broadcasters.
- [I] MISA. 2013. *MISA 2013 Annual Report*
- [J] PEN. [2017](#). *Stifling Dissent Impeding Accountability: Criminal Defamation Laws in Africa*
- [K] Corroborating letter from Jeffrey D. Dunn (CEO & President Sesame Workshop) & David Milliband (CEO & President International Rescue Committee).
- [L] Corroborating letters from: (L1) Nathalie Habib, Partner, Blink Studios, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Los Angeles; (L2) Mohamed Abotera, Programme Manager at Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative, Cairo