

# MFC Report: Why Media Freedom Matters

## Talking points

Please find below a series of talking points from the MFC report “Why Media Freedom Matters” (2024). The full report can be found on the MFC website [here](#).

Each point is accompanied by a page number in the report. This can be used to find the relevant section with additional detail. If needed, you can also use the end notes and references in the report to find the specific pieces of evidence supporting each point.

### **The intrinsic value of media freedom**

- The wide-ranging benefits that media freedom brings to society should in no way detract from the intrinsic (or normative) value that media freedom has. The most fundamental function of a free press – to inform the public – is vital for human prosperity and wellbeing. Media freedom is a critical aspect of the right to freedom of expression. (p6)

### **Media freedom and democracy**

- Media freedom is linked to citizens having greater political knowledge and being more likely to vote. (p7)
- Media freedom enhances political competition and makes elected representatives more responsive to their constituencies. (p8)
- Curtailment of media freedoms are often the first sign – a “canary in the coalmine” – when it comes to democratic backsliding. (p8)
- Free media can diversify the range of perspectives and issues under public consideration and can give a platform to marginalised voices as well as topics that have received little prior attention. (p9)
- Free media can help address gender disparities and discrimination, for example by raising the profile of issues and challenges that specifically affect women. (p9)
- An independent media sector that hosts a robust public discourse on economic and political issues can support nation-building. (p10)
- A well-balanced, independent media landscape can serve as a bulwark against misinformation, particularly when it has a sufficient level of trust and broad availability. (p10)
- There is a strong positive relationship between media freedom and the observed integrity and legitimacy of elections. (p11)
- Investigative journalism plays a key role in exposing corruption and can make a valuable contribution to society. In some cases the exposure of wrongdoing (such as tax evasion) can result in greater revenue flowing to the state. (p11-12)

### **Media freedom and health**

- A free media can promote public awareness and understanding of health issues and the rapidly evolving state-of-the-art of professional expertise and knowledge. (p13)

- A free media can help people with rare conditions or marginalised health needs to find each other and develop a collective voice. (p13) It can also put stigmatised health issues on the public agenda. (p16)
- A free media can mobilise more collective action to improve public health services and helps instil a greater sense of entitlement and legal drive to enshrine health care as a human right. (p14)
- Progress in democracy, including media freedom, has been found to be more important than GDP growth for reaping many health benefits. (p14)
- Media freedom can facilitate a more effective response to health emergencies. Independent journalists can also provide accurate information to counter the spread of misinformation, as was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic. (p17)

### **Media freedom and security**

- A free media reduces the risk of international armed conflict by putting security concerns on public and political agendas and by providing the public with information about the risks and realities of armed conflict. (p18)
- More media freedom is associated with a dampening effect on several dimensions of socio-political instability, including ethnic tensions, external and internal conflicts, crime and disorder, military participation in government and religious tensions. (p18)
- The freer the media, the less likely it is that governments will turn to violence against its own people when facing internal conflicts. (p18)
- In post-conflict situations, the media can make important contributions to reconciliation. Experts agree that efforts to promote unbiased reporting should be part of any successful peace agreement. (p19)

### **Media freedom and the economy**

- A free media environment can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of markets. For example, countries with greater media freedom have markets that are better at processing economic “bad news”. (p20–21)
- A free media plays a critical role in providing market participants with information to inform their decisions. Countries with more press freedom benefit from a more accurate picture of the operational health of their corporate sector. (p20)
- Companies receiving media coverage are less likely to mislead investors and customers. (p20)
- Countries that slip back in press freedom also experience dents in economic growth rates and their economic growth remains depressed for quite some time, even when press freedom is restored. (p21)
- Independent media has a strong track record of identifying corporate fraud, sometimes more effectively than the official regulator. (p21)

### **Media freedom and the environment**

- Independent journalism has been, and remains, at the forefront of highlighting important environmental stories including environmental crimes. Media stories can lead to the adoption of better environmental protections. (p22)
- A free media can give voice to communities and groups who are directly affected by environmental degradation and damage. (p22)
- Emerging evidence suggests a free media environment is good for the energy transition – it is associated with more rapid adoption of renewable energy. (p23)