



University of
Sheffield | Disinformation Research Cluster

The new order of media assistance: Are urgent reforms needed?

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Forum Medien und Entwicklung (FoME)

Outline

#1

Context ... understanding the nature of “media assistance” programmes by emerging/returning actors

#2

Contrast ... comparing the principles, beneficiaries and approaches to media assistance of different actors

#3

Change ... situating *information sovereignty* at the centre of media assistance activities can strengthen .

Context

- The return (not arrival) of old (not new) players has disrupted **some** areas of the media development space.
- Examining the nature of some “media assistance” programmes by these “new” actors offers food for thought for practitioners elsewhere

Context | RT Academy Launches in Africa



<https://academy.rt.com/>

Context | Media Partnerships at Sochi 2019 & St. Petersburg 2023

Эксперты: отношения России и Африки в сфере медиа нужно строить без посредников



Директор информационного центра Организации Объединенных Наций в Москве Владимир Кузнецов
© Валерий Шарифулин/ТАСС

Генеральный директор ТАСС Сергей Михайлов сообщил, что агентство намерено активно развивать сотрудничество с коллегами в Африке, предоставлять жителям континента возможность ознакомиться с другой, отличной от большинства западных СМИ, трактовкой событий в Африканском континенте

СОЧИ, 23 октября. /ТАСС/. Отношения России и Африки в сфере информационных обменов, медиа и СМИ нуждаются в активизации и выстраивании без посредников. Такое мнение высказали участники Форума информационных агентств "Россия - Африка", проходящего в рамках саммита Россия - Африка в Сочи.

Source: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/7037458>

“We should stop seeing the things through the eyes of others — through the eyes of **Reuters or Associated Press**”
Director, Maghreb Arabe Presse.

“We should build a [Russian-African] partnership, which will allow us to **change the narratives on the whole continent**”
Director General, Ghanaian News Agency.

Context | China-Led Multilateral Media Forums & Summits



5th World Media Summit in Beijing



China-CELAC Media Leaders Summit



China-Central Asia News Agency Forum



Chinese-Arab Media Cooperation Forum

Context | Something on history

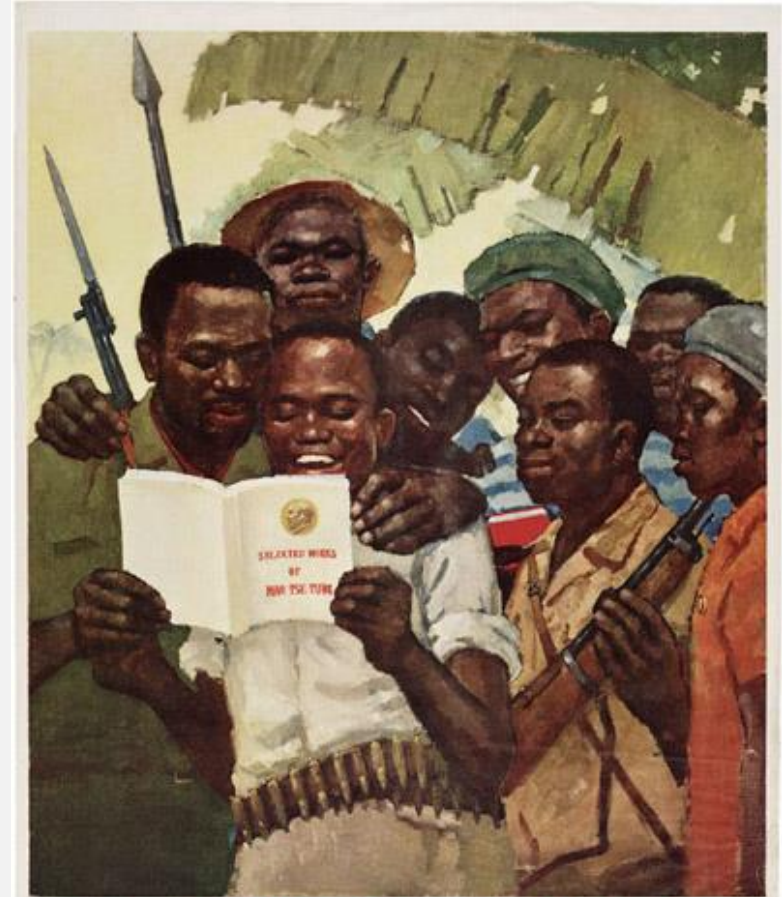


革命友谊深如海



chinese posters.net

Source: <https://chinese posters.net/posters/e15-837>



毛主席是世界革命人民的大救星

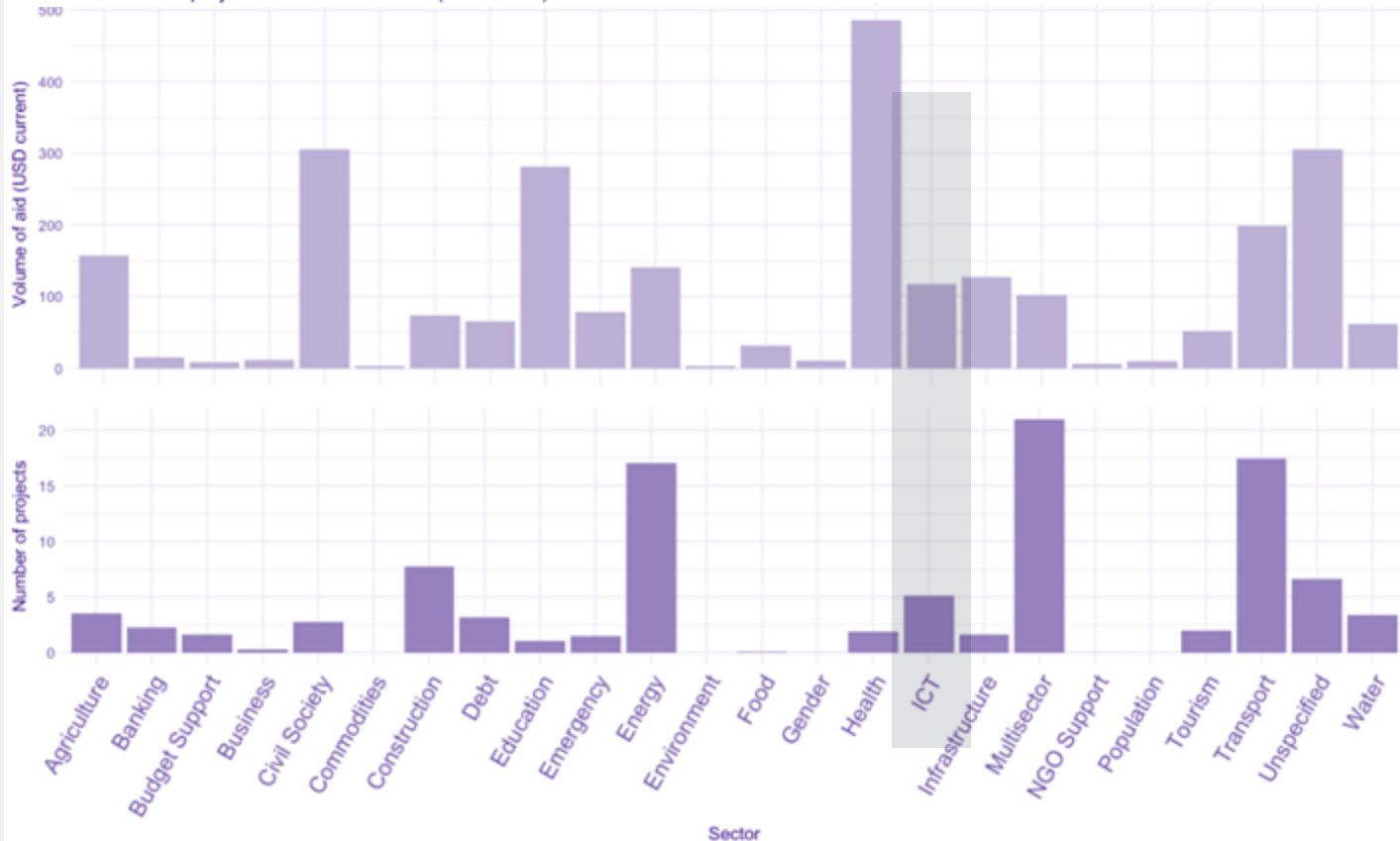
chinese posters.net

Source: <https://chinese posters.net/posters/e16-339>

Context | Chinese investment in media and telecommunications sectors

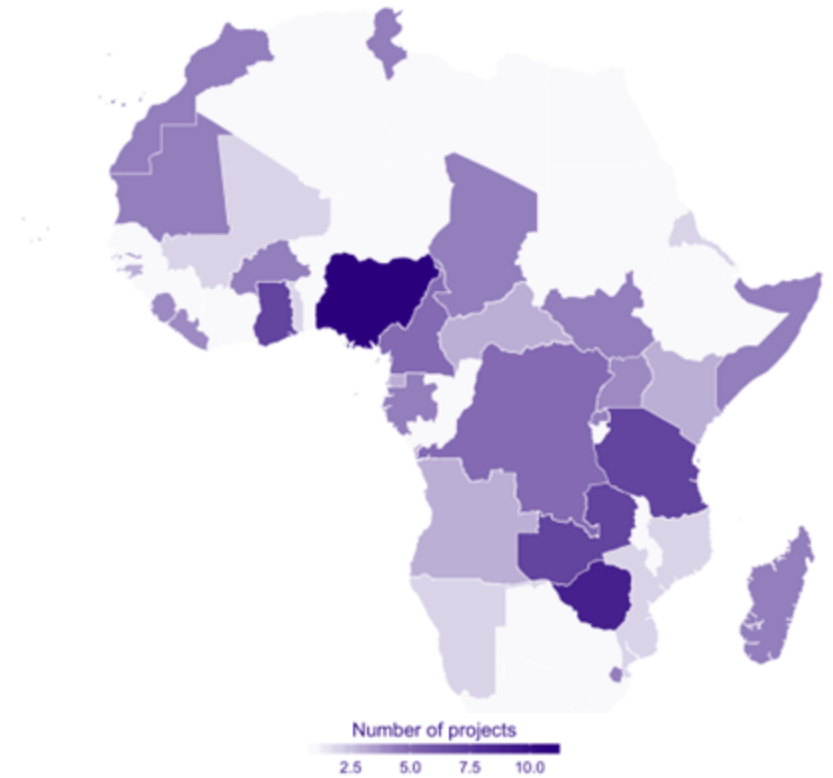
Chinese Aid to Africa by sector

Number of projects and volume of aid (2000-2013)



ICT-related aid projects by China in Africa

Total number of projects by country (2000-2013)



Data: AfricaAid 2017

Context | Chinese investment in media and telecommunications sectors

China grants 49.5 billion FCFA to Niger for telecoms services

Niamey, Niger (PANA) - China is to make 49.5 billion CFA francs available to Niger to finance the construction of fiber optic and other telecommunications services in the West African country, according to an agreement signed here Monday between officials of the two countries.

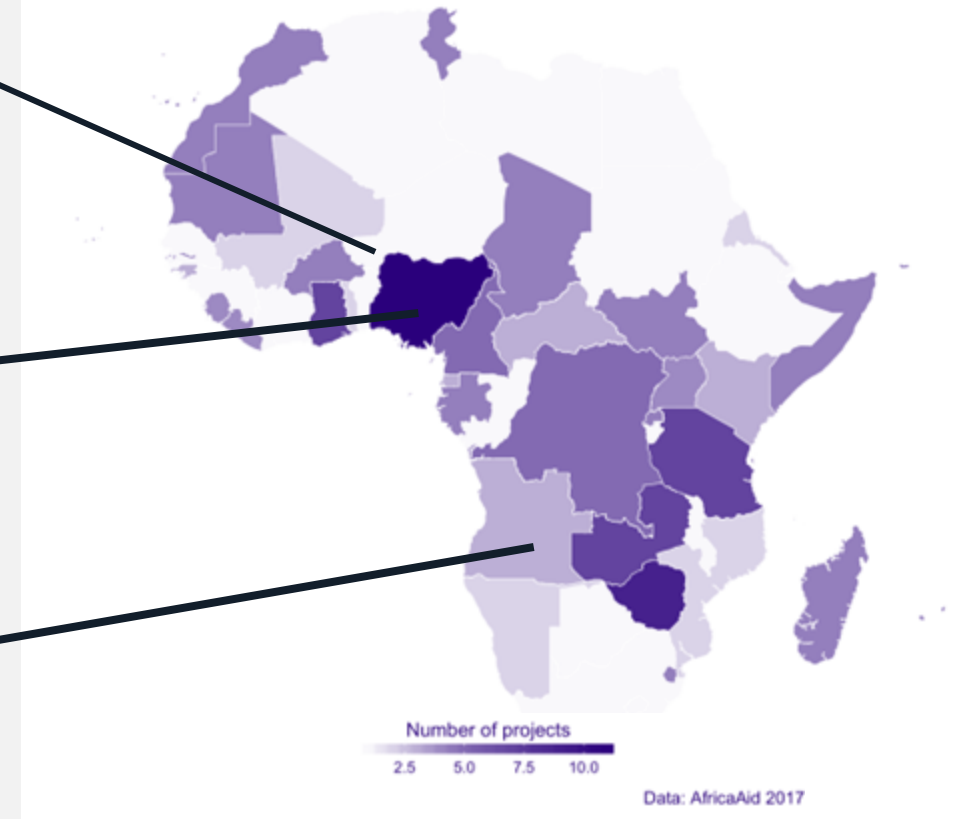
1,500 orphans, less privileged benefit from Huawei charity project

ON DECEMBER 16, 2013 8:44 PM / IN [NEWS](#) / [COMMENTS](#)



BY EMEKA AGINAM

ICT-related aid projects by China in Africa
Total number of projects by country (2000-2013)



the namibian

13 SEPTEMBER 2006

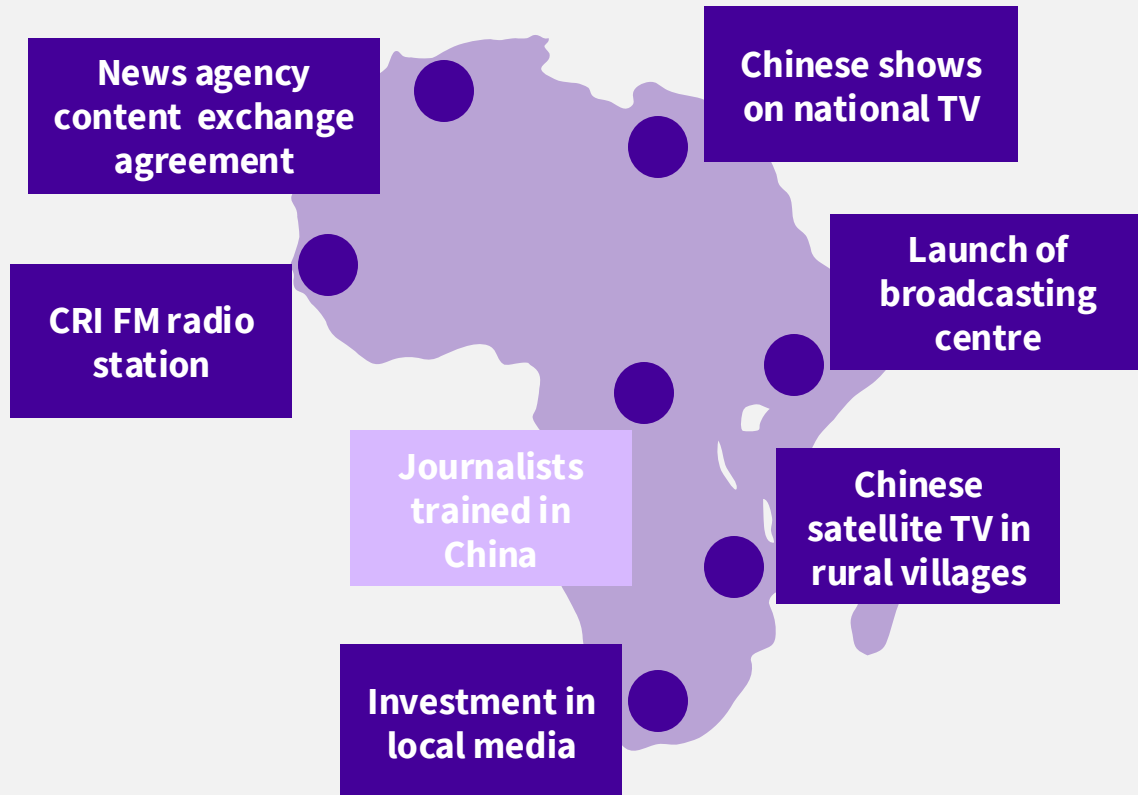
Namibia: China Chips in At Outapi

Tagged: [Asia, Australia, and Africa](#) • [Environment](#) • [External Relations](#) • [Namibia](#) • [Southern Africa](#)

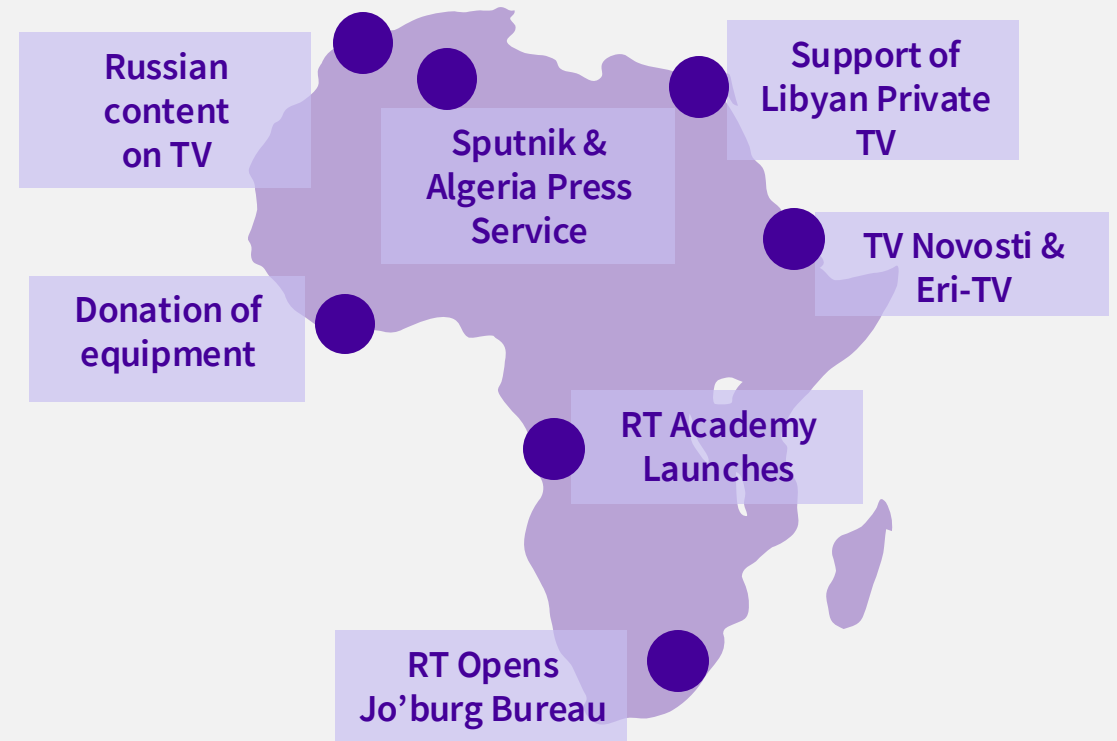


Windhoek — The Chinese Ambassador to Namibia, Liang Yinzhu, donated 100 computers and 30 printers to the Outapi Town Council in the Omusati Region on Monday.

Context | Types of “media assistance” projects by “new” actors



Source: [Madrid-Morales \(2021\)](#)



Source: [Birkevich \(2021\)](#)

Context | Training Courses Offered to “Developing Countries” in 2017

Programme	Length	Training institution
Seminar on Radio & Television for Senior Techniques Management from Developing Countries	14 days	
Seminar for News Reporters of Caribbean Countries	13 days	State Administration of Radio, Film and Television Training Institute
Seminar for Omnimedia Reporters of Developing Countries	14 days	
Seminar on Movie & TV Media and Brand Management for Developing Countries	20 days	Hunan Foreign Trade Vocational College
Training Course on Digital TV Broadcasting Techniques for Developing Countries	15 days	
Seminar on Telecommunication New Technology & Equipment Maintenance for Developing Countries	56 days	Wuhan Post and Telecommunications Research Institute
Training Course on TV Editing Broadcasting Techniques for Developing Countries	21 days	China Radio and Television International Economic and Technical Cooperation Corporation

Context | What do participants say of these training programmes?



Source: [YouTube](#)

en.people.cn

Friday, Dec 2, 2016 Search Archive Chinese

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English >>

28 African Journalists Complete 10-Month Media Fellowship in China

By Fredrick P. W. Gaye (fellow) (People's Daily Online) 16:16, December 02, 2016

中非新闻交流中心2016年项目结业招待会
Reception of China Africa Press Center Program 2016

CAPC Reception program on Dec. 1, 2016

Twenty-eight journalists from 27 African countries have completed a 10-month media and cultural exchange fellowship at the China Africa Press Center (CAPC) in Beijing, the People's Republic of China.

Source: <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/12/02/c90000-9150101.html>

Context | What do Chinese media training programmes look like?

“Seminar on New Media for Belt and Road countries”

Delivered by the “Research and Training Institute” of the “National Radio and Television Administration”, People’s Republic of China (RTI of NRTA)

Targeted at new media personnel from B&R countries at “cadres of section” or division level

Aims to “promote common media development”, as well as “international media exchanges and cooperation between China and B&R countries”.

Held online between September 16 and 29, 2021 (15 days)

Source: [Yau \(2024\)](#)

Context | What do Chinese media training programmes look like?

Part I: New Media Operation and Globalization Strategy

“The seminar introduces the concept and model of integration between traditional media and new media in the new media era, sharing China's new media operation experience and overseas dissemination.”

Part II: Status quo of China’s radio, television and new media

“[M]edia policies as well as rules and regulations, with its focus on China’s radio and television industry in promoting the construction of mainstream media”

Part III: Case sharing on post-pandemic new media business

“Industry experts are invited to introduce the reporting concepts and news practices in China’s fight against the pandemic, and to share successful cases related to China's new media business.”

Context | What do Chinese media training programmes look like?

Part IV: The construction of “Smart NRTA” and the application of new media technologies

“The seminar will introduce the research and application of China’s “Smart NRTA” digital technology and 5G technology in radio, television and online audios and videos, thus facilitating the development of new media industry in B&R countries.”

Part V: Theory and practice of media convergence in 5G era

Part VI: China's national conditions

“Introduce China's basic national conditions based on Xi Jinping's thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and share the achievements and experience gained since the founding of the People's Republic of China and China's reform and opening up. Introduce the achievements of China's Winter Olympics preparations and poverty alleviation activities.”

A hand holding a white mobile phone against a blue background. The phone is a flip phone, and the hand is positioned as if holding it. The background is a solid blue color.

Contrast

- Discrepancies between discourses of cooperation/aid of non-DAC countries and activities on the ground
- Overlap in perceptions towards DAC and non-DAC projects and activities

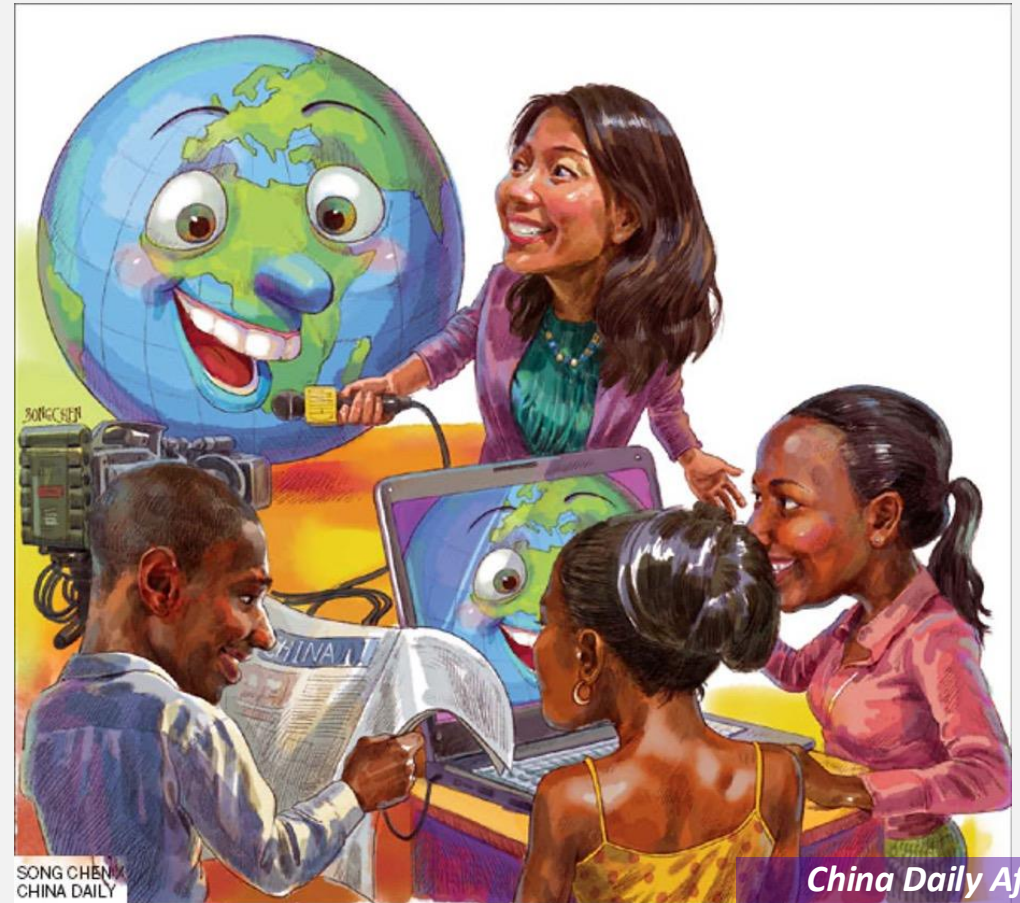
Contrast | China's approach to “media development”

- China's approach to development aid and cooperation is governed by a series of principles that have been immutable for some decades and expressed in a 2011 white paper:
 - Mix of multilateral and bilateral cooperation
 - Discourse of “**non-conditionality of aid**”
 - China sees itself as “the world's largest developing nation”
 - Cooperation is described as “**mutually beneficial**” and “**win-win**”
 - Chinese authorities talk of “media cooperation” rather than “media assistance”

Contrast | Partnership of equals?



The East African,
11 October 2014



China Daily African
Edition,
March, 2014

Contrast | DAC vs Non-DAC countries

- Cooper (2017) identified four key differences between China and OECD's DAC donors:
 - Support for “**independent media**” versus support for government
 - Involvement versus **non-involvement**
 - Training versus **infrastructure**
 - Diverse versus **unified support**

Contrast | Shared characteristics of key (most) DAC countries



**Media might
bring about
democratization**



**Importance of
transparency &
good governance**



**Citizen
participation at
the centre**



**Promote free &
independent
media**



**News should be
balanced &
unbiased**



**Benchmarking
progress against
global standard**



**Journalism
should be
monitorial**



**Universal media
ethics are
assumed**

Contrast | Shared characteristics of key non-DAC countries



Top-down non-participatory approaches



Activities are ideologized but pragmatic



Activities are (mostly) oriented at elites



Donor countries directly benefit from activities



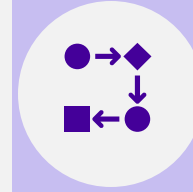
Information is seen as a foreign policy tool



Oriented to preserve status quo



Blurred lines with private sector



Anchored in modernization paradigm

Contrast | Comparing approaches

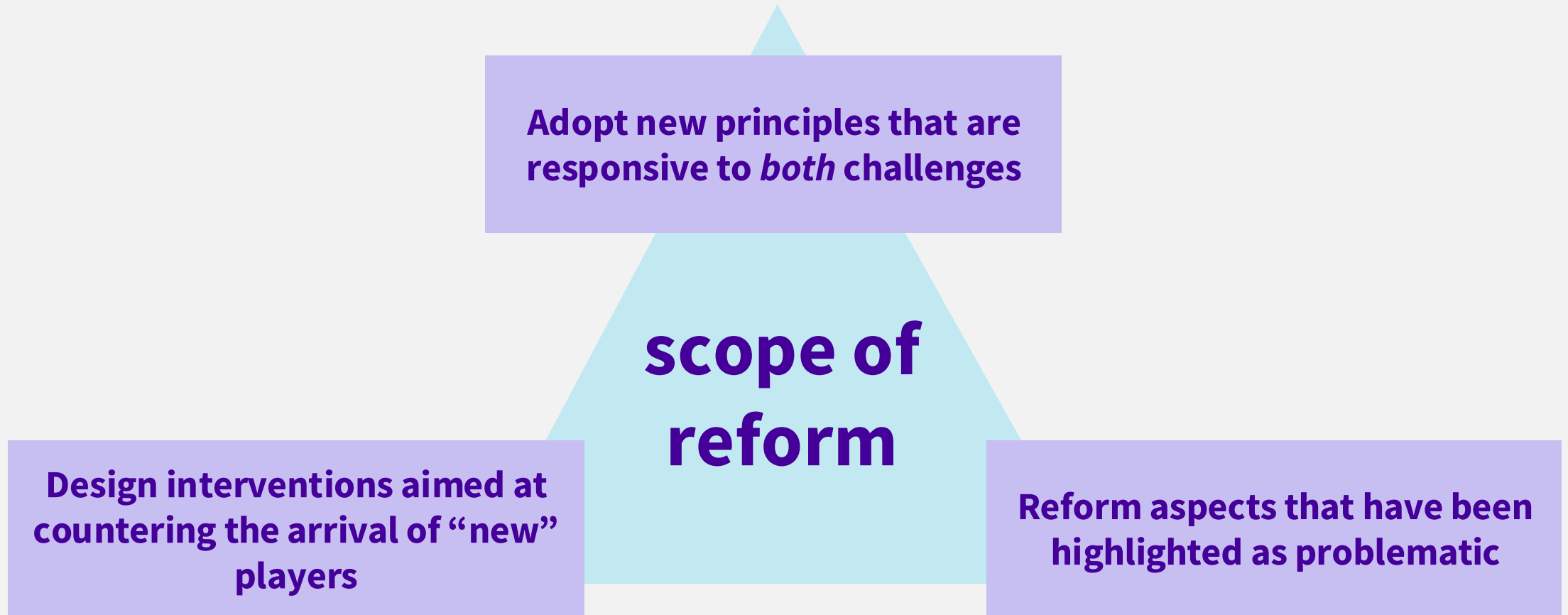
	Non-DAC Countries ("New Players")	(Most) DAC Countries
Who?	State-affiliated actors	?
What?	Status-quo preserving actions	?
For whom?	(Mostly) elites	?
Where?	Like-minded countries	?
How?	Centralised top-down	?
Why?	Strengthen donor countries	?

Change

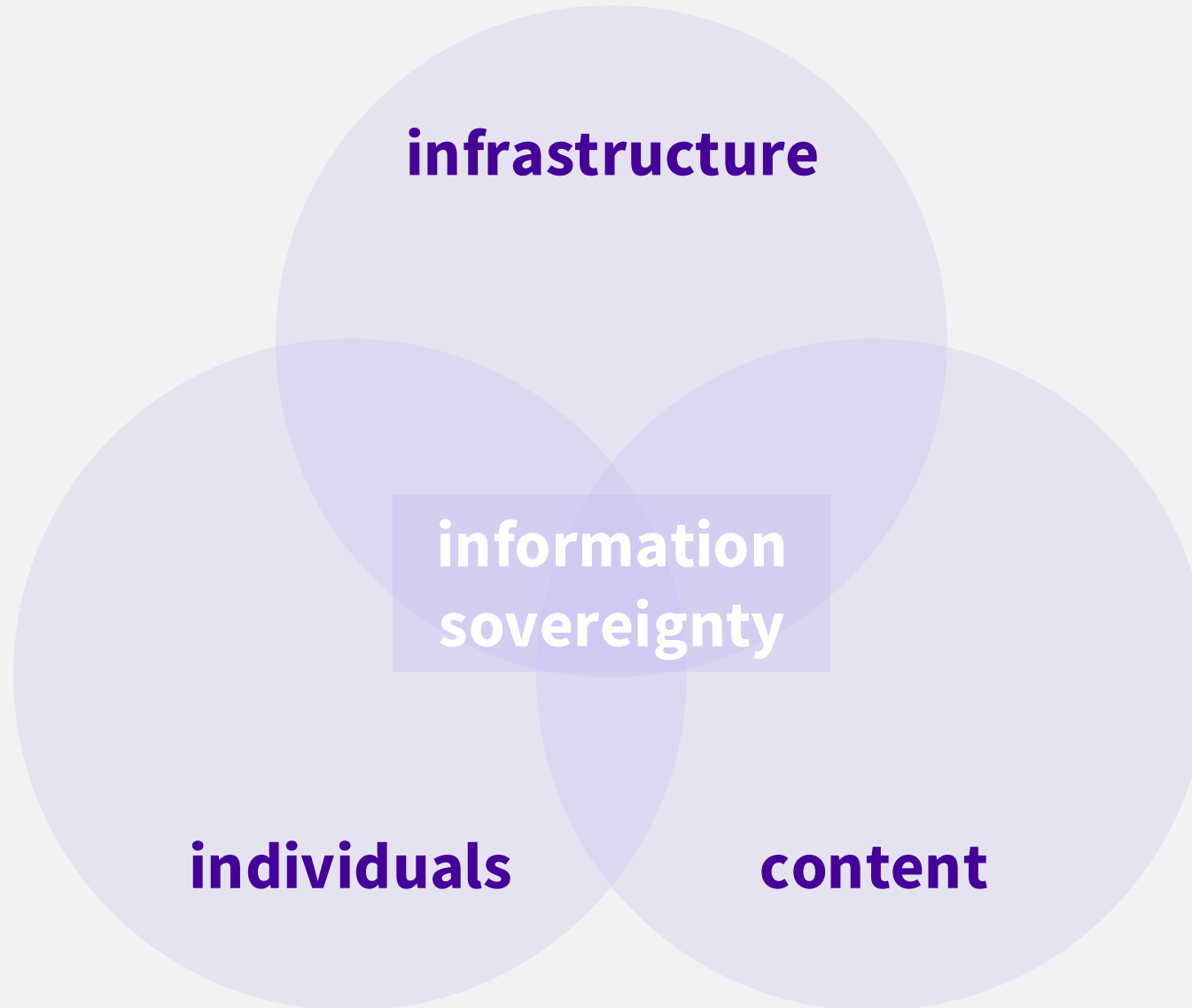
The background of the slide features a row of satellite dishes on a rooftop, silhouetted against a warm, orange-hued sunset sky. The dishes are arranged in a line, receding into the distance. The overall color palette is dominated by shades of red and orange, creating a sense of urgency and change.

- Building media assistance programmes that consider **information sovereignty** is crucial in this new information environment
- Strengthening **Information sovereignty** is needed because it is being eroded by non-DAC countries

Change | Possible directions of media assistance reform



Change | Dimensions of information sovereignty



Change | Information sovereignty as a pre-requisite

 U.S. Department of State (.gov)

Building A More Resilient Information Environment

The information space has become more crowded, more complex, more confusing, more contested than ever. That, in turn, creates an enabling environment for...

18 Mar 2024




 United Nations Development Programme

Information Integrity: Forging a Pathway to Truth, Resilience and Trust

This strategic guidance paper is intended to provide a framework for UNDP teams and their partners to develop coherent and effective...

23 Feb 2022



 Welcome to the United Nations

United Nations Global Principles For Information Integrity

The principles envision an information ecosystem that delivers choice, freedom, privacy and safety for all, in which people everywhere can express themselves...

09 Jul 2024



 Yle

Finland launches information resilience unit

Finland launches information resilience unit. National stockpile agency NESAs says it wants to make it easier to detect influence campaigns.

17 Aug 2022



 BBC

Digital and media literacy: Supporting resilience to mis- and disinformation

Information disorder, distrust and division are on the rise, and technology is evolving at lightning speed - leaving people unsure of what,...

1 month ago



Change | How to focus on information sovereignty



Questions





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