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RISK, RESILIENCE AND FUTURES:

A report on Media Viability in Indonesia



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Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia
November 2026

Risk, Resilience and Futures:
A Report on Media Viability in Indonesia

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Foreword

At a Crossroads: The Future of Media Sustainability in Indonesia

The crisis facing media and journalism is no longer simply a matter of business survival. It is also a crisis for democracy, freedom of expression, and the public's right to reliable information. As news organizations grapple with economic pressures, digital disruption, concentrated media ownership, and the growing influence of major technology platforms, much more is at stake than the survival of individual companies. The future of independent journalism itself is at risk.

In recent years, Indonesia's media industry has faced mounting challenges. Traditional business models are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, advertising revenue continues to decline, and dependence on digital platforms has grown. These pressures have contributed to widespread layoffs, deteriorating working conditions for journalists, and increasing threats to editorial independence. Alternative and local media have been particularly vulnerable, often operating with extremely limited resources while struggling to sustain their work. Yet a diverse, independent, and sustainable media landscape remains essential to a healthy democracy.

For AJI Indonesia, media sustainability or media viability must be understood as more than an organization's ability to remain financially afloat. A viable media outlet is one that can sustain its operations while safeguarding editorial independence, upholding journalistic ethics, protecting the rights and welfare of media workers, representing diverse perspectives, and holding those in power accountable.

This broader understanding also places responsibility on the state. The government has an important role in creating a fair and supportive media ecosystem, protecting press freedom, promoting economic fairness in the digital economy, and addressing monopolistic practices and unequal relationships between news organizations and technology platforms. At the same time, government involvement must never become a means of influencing editorial decisions or restricting the independence of the press.

This report, *Risk, Resilience, and the Road Ahead: A Report on Media Viability in Indonesia*, presents an assessment of alternative media in Indonesia using the Media Viability Indicators (MVI) developed by AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group. The assessment takes a descriptive and exploratory approach, seeking to understand the conditions in which alternative media operate and the wider ecosystem that shapes their sustainability. Its purpose is not to test hypotheses or rank individual outlets, but to provide a grounded picture of their strengths, vulnerabilities, and challenges.

The assessment forms part of a broader effort to understand media sustainability in Indonesia and develop a framework for measuring media viability that reflects the country's particular circumstances. Conducted through a collaboration between AJI Indonesia, BBC Media Action, and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), this work is intended to contribute evidence to ongoing discussions about the future of journalism and provide a foundation for more informed policy reform. We hope the findings will encourage meaningful dialogue and collective action among government institutions, media organizations, journalists' associations, civil society, and others committed to protecting press freedom.

At AJI Indonesia, we believe that sustaining the media is not simply about preserving an industry. It is about protecting the public's right to know, safeguarding democratic space, and ensuring that journalism can continue to serve as an independent voice capable of scrutinizing those in power.

Without a free, independent, and sustainable press, democracy loses one of its most essential foundations.

We hope this report offers valuable insights and contributes to the collective effort to secure the future of journalism in Indonesia.

Nany Afrida
Chair, AJI Indonesia

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Executive Summary

Indonesia's democracy remains in transition, often characterized as a *flawed democracy*, where democratic institutions coexist with practices that continue to undermine their effectiveness. This uneasy political environment has profound implications for journalism, both as an industry and as a public service. In a functioning democracy, the media provide a space for public debate, enable citizens to engage with issues that affect their lives, and hold those in power accountable. Quality journalism is central to this role. For news organizations to fulfil it effectively, however, they need sustainable financial support from those who recognize journalism not merely as a commercial product, but as an investment in public knowledge.

In Indonesia, that foundation remains fragile. Public engagement with journalism and levels of news literacy are relatively low, while the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and digital disruption have severely weakened traditional media business models. Declining revenues have increasingly affected the production and distribution of news, forcing many organizations to reduce costs by scaling back resource-intensive reporting or abandoning it altogether. Government support for journalism remains limited and carries potential risks of political interference. Together, these pressures have left Indonesia's journalism ecosystem struggling to maintain both its quality and long-term resilience.

The challenges are not unique to Indonesia. Across the world, news organizations have faced persistent instability arising from environmental disasters, public health emergencies, and political upheaval (Scott, Bunce & Wright, 2019). In response to these pressures, Deutsche Welle (DW) introduced the Media Viability Indicators (MVI) framework in 2020, with support from UNESCO. The framework approaches media viability through two interconnected dimensions: the economic sustainability of news organizations and their credibility and standing within society. Both are essential. Financial stability enables journalism to continue, while public trust helps sustain its relevance, legitimacy, and future.

Drawing on international approaches to assessing media viability and the particular challenges facing Indonesia's media landscape, AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group identified six key indicators: **quality content, public engagement, organizational strength, financial sustainability, technology adaptation, and legal recognition and protection**. Together, these indicators examine not only the internal capacities of alternative media organizations but also the external conditions that influence their ability to survive and thrive, including government policy, the role of the Press Council (*Dewan Pers*), the wider journalism community, and public participation.

This assessment examines the viability of alternative journalism in Indonesia using the framework developed by AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group. Designed as a descriptive and exploratory study, it seeks to understand the conditions under which alternative media operate and the ecosystems that shape their sustainability. Rather than testing a

hypothesis or ranking individual outlets, the assessment provides an evidence-based picture of their strengths, vulnerabilities, and prospects for the future.

The framework draws on several established approaches to media viability, particularly the model developed by DW Akademie. At its core is the understanding that media resilience emerges from the interaction between an organization's internal capacity and the wider environment in which it operates. This includes market conditions, regulatory frameworks, technological infrastructure, and audience relationships. AJI Indonesia adapted this approach to reflect the circumstances of alternative media operating outside the country's mainstream media industry.

The report presents the findings of the 2026 MVI pilot assessment, which serves two purposes. First, it provides an initial picture of the viability of alternative media in Indonesia. Second, it offers an opportunity to test and refine the assessment framework and its procedures before they are applied more widely. The assessment adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data collection with numerical scoring during the analysis stage. Consistent with DW Akademie's MVI methodology, qualitative judgments from informants were translated into scores to support the interpretation and comparison of individual indicators.

The assessment was conducted at two complementary levels. At the **newsroom level**, the research team examined four alternative media organizations operating in different circumstances. Through direct observation, document reviews, and interviews with media managers, the assessment explored their editorial governance, financial management, human resources, and technological capacities. At the **regional and national levels**, interviews with stakeholders outside the participating newsrooms provided insights into the wider media ecosystem, including regulation, markets and funding opportunities, digital infrastructure, audience relationships, and legal protection.

Examining both levels is essential because media viability cannot be determined by organizational performance alone. Even a well-managed newsroom may struggle to survive in an environment that offers little institutional, financial, or legal support. Equally, a supportive ecosystem cannot compensate entirely for weaknesses within a media organization.

Key Findings

1. Quality Content

Quality content received the highest score among the six indicators, with a national average of 3.2. Although this remains within the *semi-viable* category, it is close to the *viable* threshold of 3.26–4.00. Bandung recorded the highest score at 3.5, followed by Kupang at 3.3.

These findings highlight a defining strength of alternative media in Indonesia: their enduring commitment to quality journalism that serves the public interest. From their establishment, many of these organizations have placed democratic values, human rights, and independent reporting at the heart of their editorial missions. Despite considerable operational and financial pressures, these principles continue to shape their journalism and organizational identities.

2. Public Engagement

Public engagement achieved an average score of 3.0, placing it within the *semi-viable* range of 2.51–3.25. Bandung led with a score of 3.4, followed by Jakarta at 3.0.

For alternative media, public engagement has become more than an editorial practice. It is increasingly central to their sustainability strategies, helping organizations strengthen their social impact, build lasting audience relationships, and explore new funding opportunities.

Engagement extends beyond inviting readers to comment on published stories. Many alternative outlets actively involve their communities through discussions, regular gatherings, and other forms of direct participation. However, these efforts are not always supported by formal internal guidelines, while external regulatory support remains inadequate.

3. Organizational Strength

Organizational strength received an average score of 2.7, placing it in the *semi-viable* category. Jakarta, Bandung, and Kupang fell within this range, while Makassar was classified as *less viable*.

Many alternative media organizations are led by journalist-activists who bring substantial experience in journalism, advocacy, and community organizing. This background provides a valuable foundation for developing organizations that are both mission-driven and responsive to public needs.

Nevertheless, experience and commitment do not automatically translate into strong institutional structures. Significant challenges remain in establishing adequate employment protections, social security arrangements, and mechanisms to safeguard journalists' rights and welfare.

Strengthening these systems is essential if alternative media are to move beyond dependence on individual commitment toward greater organizational resilience.

4. Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability emerged as one of the most serious challenges facing alternative media, recording an average score of 2.4, the lowest among the six indicators.

The results varied across the four cities: Jakarta: 2.1 - *Less viable;* Bandung: 2.8 - *Semi-viable;* Makassar: 2.0 - *Less viable*; and Kupang: 2.6 - *Semi-viable*

These findings reveal the continued difficulty alternative media face in developing reliable and diversified revenue models. Funding opportunities remain limited, while much of the available advertising and sponsorship market continues to favour larger, mainstream media organizations.

Consequently, many alternative outlets rely heavily on grants and a narrow range of financial resources. Their limited ability to attract advertisers, secure sponsorships, and develop alternative revenue streams leaves them vulnerable to financial uncertainty.

Without more sustainable funding arrangements, even organizations with strong editorial commitments and public support may struggle to maintain their operations over the long term.

5. Technology Adaptation

Technology adaptation recorded a national average of 2.6. Although this falls within the *semi-viable* category, it is only marginally above the *less viable* threshold, indicating that technological resilience remains fragile.

Most alternative media organizations have adopted basic digital tools for producing and distributing journalism. However, their ability to develop, maintain, and independently manage the technological infrastructure needed for long-term sustainability remains limited.

This dependence creates significant vulnerabilities, particularly in digital security. Without adequate infrastructure, technical expertise, and cybersecurity capabilities, alternative media face heightened risks of hacking, digital censorship, and removal from online platforms, especially when their reporting challenges powerful political or economic interests.

Limited control over their digital infrastructure also weakens their ability to respond effectively to technological restrictions and digital repression.

The score of 2.6 therefore represents an important warning. While alternative media have made progress in adopting digital technologies, they have yet to establish the systems and capacities necessary for genuine technological independence.

Without sustained investment in infrastructure, digital security, and technical skills, their long-term resilience will remain uncertain.

Legal recognition, protection, and access to information received an average score of 2.4, placing the indicator in the *less viable* category.

Alternative media continue to face substantial barriers to formal recognition, effective legal protection, freedom of expression, and access to public information.

One particularly significant challenge concerns the verification process administered by the Press Council (*Dewan Pers*). Many alternative media organizations lack the institutional and financial capacity to meet the administrative and factual requirements involved.

These requirements cover legal entity status, organizational structures, employment arrangements, editorial content, and other institutional criteria. Although intended to establish professional standards, they can be difficult for smaller, community-oriented, and nonprofit media organizations to fulfil.

As a result, alternative outlets may remain outside formal recognition and protection mechanisms, despite producing journalism that serves the public interest.

This gap highlights the need for a more inclusive regulatory environment that recognizes the diversity of media organizations operating in Indonesia while continuing to uphold professional journalistic standards.

Based on these findings, the assessment identifies three priority areas for strengthening the long-term viability of alternative media in Indonesia.

First, safeguard quality journalism and strengthen its public impact.

Alternative media should continue to protect the quality and independence of their journalism as the foundation of public trust. This includes expanding collaborative reporting initiatives and strengthening the connections between journalism, public advocacy, and efforts to advance social change.

By combining rigorous reporting with meaningful public engagement, alternative media can reinforce their distinctive role in Indonesia's democratic landscape.

Second, address structural weaknesses in financial sustainability and legal protection.

The two weakest indicators, financial sustainability and legal recognition and protection, require coordinated action beyond individual media organizations.

The government, working through the Press Council, should strengthen mechanisms for recognizing and protecting alternative media, ensuring that they can operate with rights and safeguards comparable to those available to mainstream news organizations.

Establishing a journalism trust or endowment fund is particularly urgent. Such a mechanism could provide more stable support for public-interest journalism while reducing dependence on international donors, commercial sponsors, and government grants that may carry political risks.

Financial resilience should also be strengthened through practical financial management training, support for developing business models suited to alternative media, and greater opportunities for international networking and collaboration.

Third, deepen public participation and invest in technological resilience.

Alternative media should build on their existing strengths in public engagement by expanding reader and subscriber communities, encouraging peer journalism, and creating more opportunities for meaningful audience participation.

At the same time, technological capacity requires sustained attention. Digital adaptation remains uneven, particularly in relation to cybersecurity and protection against digital attacks.

Targeted training, infrastructure development, and investment in digital technologies are therefore essential to strengthening the independence and long-term viability of alternative media.

As a pilot study, this assessment is limited to alternative media organizations operating in four selected locations. Its findings provide valuable insights into the conditions facing these outlets but should not be interpreted as representative of Indonesia's entire media landscape.

Future assessments should therefore expand their geographical and institutional coverage to include both alternative and mainstream media across the country.

Chapter I
Introduction

Chapter I
Introduction

The State of Journalism in Indonesia

Indonesia remains a democracy in transition, often described as a *flawed democracy*, where democratic institutions exist alongside political practices that continue to limit their effectiveness. This condition has significant consequences for journalism, both as an industry and as a public service. In a democratic society, the media provide a forum for public debate, allowing citizens to discuss issues that affect their lives through independent journalism and opportunities for open participation. At the heart of journalism is the responsibility to inform the public and hold those in power accountable. Fulfilling this responsibility requires news organizations to be supported by people who recognize journalism not simply as a commercial product, but as an investment in public knowledge.

In Indonesia, however, this foundation remains fragile. Public interest in journalism and levels of news literacy are relatively low, while the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and digital disruption have placed considerable pressure on mainstream media business models. What began as a revenue crisis has increasingly become a crisis in news production itself. Declining income has affected the resources available for reporting and distribution, forcing newsrooms to reduce costs, scale back investigative work, or abandon resource-intensive journalism altogether. Government support remains limited and may expose news organizations to political interference. As a result, the country's journalism ecosystem continues to face serious challenges in maintaining both quality and resilience.

These pressures reflect a wider global pattern. News organizations around the world have experienced persistent instability caused by environmental disasters, public health emergencies, and political upheaval (Scott, Bunce & Wright, 2019). In response, Germany's Deutsche Welle (DW), with support from UNESCO, introduced the Media Viability Indicators (MVI) framework in 2020. The framework assesses the sustainability of media organizations and journalism as both an economic activity and a social institution. It emphasizes two interconnected foundations: an organization's financial sustainability and its credibility and standing within society. Together, these factors shape the ability of journalism to remain relevant, independent, and viable over time.

Over the past two decades, two broad models of journalism have become increasingly visible in Indonesia. The first is represented by established commercial media organizations such as *Tempo*, which rely on advertising, commercial partnerships, and diversified business activities to sustain their operations. Alongside its investigative reporting, the Tempo group produces daily news and generates additional revenue through training, database services, podcasts, and other ventures. This model reflects

the conventional corporate approach to journalism, characterized by professional newsrooms, established institutional structures, and broad audiences.

The second model is represented by digital alternative media, which have expanded alongside the rapid growth of internet access and social media use. Among the early pioneers was Watchdoc, a small production company specializing in investigative documentaries. Other outlets, including Konde.co, Jaring.id, The Conversation, and Project Multatuli, subsequently emerged with distinct approaches to public-interest journalism. Many operate through nonprofit structures, are led by journalist-activists, and maintain relationships with international organizations and networks.

More than 25 years after Indonesia enacted its Press Law, the ownership structures and editorial practices of mainstream media have undergone relatively limited change. Political polarization, disinformation, and insinuation continue to influence the information environment, particularly in digital spaces. One of the most significant consequences has been the erosion of quality public-interest journalism: reporting that informs citizens, encourages policy reform, and scrutinizes abuses of political and economic power. The financial difficulties experienced by established news organizations such as *Tempo* magazine, *Koran Tempo*, and *The Jakarta Post* illustrate the pressures facing media institutions with longstanding traditions of critical and investigative reporting. The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these challenges, threatening journalists' health while disrupting newsroom operations. Research conducted by Masduki for UNESCO and the London-based Public Media Alliance (2021) found that more than 70% of media companies were experiencing a crisis, while over 40% had reduced staffing, salaries, or other operational expenses. Social distancing restrictions added further obstacles to reporting and news production.

These developments also reflect a deeper structural shift in the role of news. Increasingly, journalism has been treated primarily as a commercial commodity, moving away from its traditional function as a *public good* and, in some circumstances, becoming a *political good*. For journalists committed to editorial independence, this shift has created tensions between professional values and the commercial or political interests shaping newsroom decisions. Some journalists have responded by leaving established organizations to pursue independent reporting, becoming important figures in the development of alternative media. Within mainstream newsrooms, political, economic, and public interests frequently compete. Commercial media organizations may normalize intervention by owners whose business or political interests influence editorial decisions. Alternative media, by contrast, generally seek to maintain clearer boundaries between public-interest journalism and the personal political preferences of journalists or managers. Public political endorsements by established newspapers illustrate the complex relationship between journalism and politics. Examples include *The Jakarta Post*'s endorsement of Joko Widodo during Indonesia's 2014 presidential election and *The Washington Post*'s endorsement of Barack Obama in the United States.

This report examines alternative media as part of Indonesia's longer historical tradition of the resistance press and *pers perjuangan*, journalism associated with the struggle for independence and social change. It also draws on the principle of media pluralism, which recognizes that commercial, alternative, and other forms of journalism should have equal standing within a democratic media system. Since the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, however, commercial interests have become increasingly dominant in Indonesia's media landscape. Commercial news organizations occupy much of the

public sphere, while the politicization of editorial institutions has raised concerns about journalistic quality and independence. Research published by PR2Media in 2024 on media ownership and political affiliations examines these structural challenges and identifies areas requiring policy reform. Protecting Indonesia's democracy therefore requires more than defending the existing media industry. It calls for policies that actively support media diversity, including affirmative measures that recognize the distinctive contributions and needs of alternative journalism.

The relationship between alternative media and digital activism provides another important dimension of this discussion. A 2021 study examining violence against journalists and alternative media in Indonesia identified strong connections between alternative journalism and online civic mobilization. Three cases illustrate this relationship: reporting on the mining conflict in Wadas, Purworejo, Central Java, by journalists based in Yogyakarta; digital attacks targeting Project Multatuli and the public response that followed; and the hacking of journalist Sasmito Madrim's social media accounts. These cases demonstrate how threats against journalists and independent outlets can generate collective digital resistance. Hacking, online harassment, and other forms of intimidation have prompted coordinated responses, including online campaigns, mass sharing of journalistic content, digital posters, republication initiatives, and collaboration across civil society networks. In this environment, alternative media increasingly serve not only as producers of journalism but also as platforms connecting reporting, public advocacy, and broader movements defending freedom of expression.

Why Alternative Media Matter

This assessment begins with a central proposition: journalism is not disappearing; the platforms through which it operates are changing.

Digital disruption has challenged conventional media business models, but it has also created opportunities for new forms of journalism, new organizations, and new relationships between journalists and their audiences. Digital technology has been a major force behind this transformation.

As digital journalism has expanded, Indonesia has seen the emergence of numerous alternative outlets operating through smaller, more flexible organizational structures. Drawing on Fuchs (2010), these organizations can be understood as *small newsrooms* engaged in public advocacy journalism.

Digital journalism refers to the production and distribution of journalistic content through internet-based platforms, including websites and social media. These technologies enable journalists to report more quickly, collaborate with audiences in developing and evaluating stories, and distribute information at considerably lower costs than conventional media systems.

The scale of Indonesia's digital population further reinforces these opportunities. A Katadata survey (2021) estimated that the country had 196.7 million internet users, representing nearly 70% of its population, with internet coverage reaching

approximately 72% of the country. These users constitute both existing and potential audiences for digital journalism.

Although journalism serves a public function, media organizations still require viable operating models. Broadly, two funding approaches can be identified.

The first is the **for-profit model**, in which journalism operates as a commercial enterprise and news is treated as a product sold to readers, viewers, or advertisers. This model has a long history in Indonesia, including the newspaper *Indonesia Raya* in the 1950s and later *Tempo* magazine.

The second is the **nonprofit model**, which has developed significantly in other regions, particularly Latin America. Lugo-Ocando and Requejo-Alemán (2014) examined the emergence of nonprofit investigative journalism agencies and the influence of international donors on their development. Their research explored how these organizations were established, how they mobilized public funding, and how their editorial practices offered an alternative approach to investigative and in-depth reporting. For nonprofit journalism organizations, long-term sustainability depends not only on securing financial resources but also on consistently producing quality journalism that contributes to democratic accountability.

Alternative media that rely on public participation face a particular challenge. They need to protect their editorial independence from funding arrangements that may compromise their public-interest mission, while also requiring an enabling legal environment that supports their registration, operations, and access to financial resources.

This is particularly important for investigative journalism, which has become closely associated with alternative media. Investigative reporting often involves uncovering information deliberately concealed from the public, examining irregularities in political or economic conduct, and holding public officials and powerful institutions accountable.

Such reporting is frequently expensive, time-consuming, and risky. It may require months of investigation and involve journalists, whistleblowers, security officials, victims, and other vulnerable sources (Wiesand, 2016).

Alternative media therefore operate under conditions in which their public value can be substantial, even as their financial and institutional resources remain limited.

Karasova (2023) identifies several political and economic characteristics that distinguish alternative media from mainstream journalism. Alternative outlets tend to demonstrate a strong commitment to public service and maintain close relationships with critical civil society movements, particularly those advocating democratic communication.

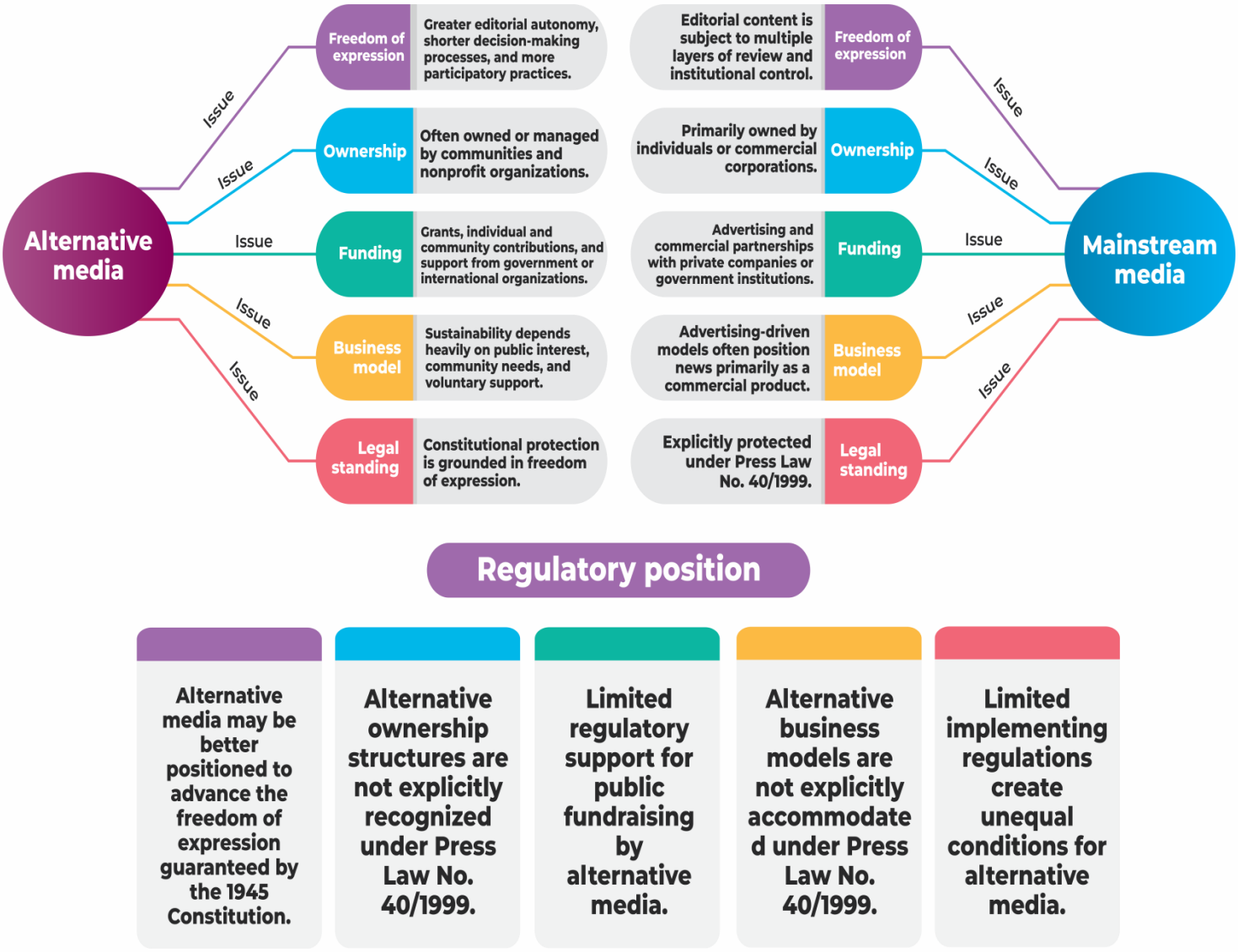
Their editorial approaches are often more participatory, inclusive, and attentive to gender and power relations. Rather than treating victims and marginalized communities merely as subjects of reporting, they seek to involve them as active participants whose perspectives shape journalistic narratives.

Alternative media can therefore be understood as *critical media organizations*, encompassing citizen journalism, grassroots media, and alternative systems for distributing information.

Mainstream media, by comparison, are often characterized by more hierarchical organizational structures, established bureaucratic procedures, and stronger commercial orientations.

The following table summarizes key differences between mainstream and alternative media in Indonesia, including the regulatory challenges faced by alternative outlets.

Infographic Table 1
Comparing Mainstream and Alternative Media



(Source: compiled by the authors from various sources)

The comparison highlights a fundamental concern: alternative media perform public functions comparable to those of mainstream journalism and should therefore enjoy equivalent rights and legal protection.

Yet Indonesia's regulatory framework does not adequately accommodate the organizational structures, funding arrangements, and operating models commonly used by alternative outlets.

Although freedom of expression is guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution, translating that constitutional protection into effective institutional recognition and legal safeguards remains a challenge. These structural inequalities provide an important rationale for conducting a pilot assessment specifically focused on the viability of alternative journalism.

Understanding and Measuring Media Viability

Media viability is a broad concept that extends beyond the financial survival of individual news organizations. It encompasses funding arrangements, fair market competition, the integration of digital media business models, and the emergence of new actors in the media ecosystem.

These actors include digital service providers, content distributors, video-on-demand platforms, independent production companies, corporate media subsidiaries, and public broadcasters.

Understanding media viability is important for two main reasons.

First, it enables media practitioners to identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of their organizations. A clearer understanding of the operating environment allows newsrooms to respond more effectively to technological disruption, financial pressures, and changes in audience behaviour.

Second, it provides media advocates, development organizations, and policymakers with the evidence needed to design appropriate support mechanisms and regulatory interventions.

Academic research and frameworks developed by media development organizations, including DW Akademie and Free Press Unlimited, generally approach media viability through two interconnected perspectives.

The first concerns the **economic sustainability of news organizations**, particularly in response to the pressures created by digital disruption and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second takes a broader institutional perspective, encompassing professional standards, organizational culture, legal protection, employment security, and the working conditions of journalists.

While the first focuses primarily on the organization as an economic institution, the second recognizes that journalism's sustainability also depends on the people who produce it.

The term *viability* does not have a widely established equivalent in Indonesian. For this assessment, the concept is closely associated with *ketangguhan*, or resilience.

According to Global Media for Development and the Global Media Investment Fund, media resilience refers to an organization's ability to maintain the operational

resources necessary to protect editorial independence and continue serving the public interest.

BBC Media Action, an independent charitable organization, initially defined media viability primarily in terms of sustainable finances that allow media outlets to preserve their public credibility while producing quality content responsive to audience needs.

Over time, however, this understanding has expanded beyond economics to include political, economic, and social dimensions, particularly in fragile environments where digital disruption has fundamentally reshaped media ecosystems.

A consultation document on media viability in Tunisia, developed by Alkhatt and the Global Forum for Media Development, similarly uses *media viability* and *media sustainability* as closely related concepts.

The document recognizes that news organizations may initially achieve financial stability through government funding or support from private business owners, including companies and foundations. Yet these funding arrangements can create significant risks when financial support becomes a means of influencing editorial decisions.

Media viability must therefore also encompass professional standards, editorial independence, organizational diversity, and the ability to produce journalism that earns public trust.

Diversifying funding sources is particularly important because reliance on a single financial supporter can increase vulnerability to external interference.

More broadly, media viability indicators examine the interaction between organizational performance and the wider political, legal, economic, and social environment.

Media viability, sustainability, and resilience can therefore be understood as **the capacity of individual media organizations and the wider media ecosystem to sustain the production of high-quality journalism over time.**

This understanding brings together four essential dimensions:

1. The financial sustainability of the news industry.
2. The ability of media organizations to produce journalism independently.
3. The quality and professional integrity of journalistic content.
4. The capacity of news media to serve citizens and maintain public trust.

DW Akademie's MVI framework identifies five dimensions that influence the performance and sustainability of media organizations.

Politics.

The political dimension examines how national and local political conditions shape media independence, pluralism, and access to information.
It considers the extent to which government institutions influence or control news organizations, as well as the ability of the legal system to protect journalists and citizens.

Key assessment questions include:

- Does the country have an independent judiciary that applies the law fairly to individuals and businesses?
- Is the relationship between government institutions and news organizations professional and mutually respectful?
- To what extent can journalists and citizens access public information?

Economics.

The economic dimension focuses on the financial conditions and market structures affecting media organizations, journalism, and audiences.
It examines the relationship between revenue generation, market competition, and editorial independence.

Key assessment questions include:

- Can media organizations maintain editorial independence from their funding sources?
- Does market competition encourage or undermine quality journalism?
- Is there sufficient public demand for quality news, and are audiences willing to pay for it?

Community.

The community dimension considers audience capacity, public values, and the relationships between media organizations and the communities they serve.
It examines trust, emotional connection, media literacy, and opportunities for participation.

Key assessment questions include:

- Can citizens distinguish reliable information from misinformation?
- Are audiences able to produce and contribute content responsibly?
- Do media organizations have access to reliable information about their audiences' needs, interests, and media consumption habits?

Technology.

The technological dimension examines whether media organizations have access to the infrastructure, resources, and skills needed to produce and distribute journalism in a digital environment.
It also considers digital accessibility, payment systems, privacy, and the protection of digital rights.

Key assessment questions include:

- Can citizens across different regions access journalistic content and make payments through reliable digital systems?
- To what extent do government institutions and media organizations protect citizens' digital rights, particularly their privacy?

Content and competence.

This dimension examines the quality of journalism, media ownership structures, professional capacity, and the independence of media practitioners.
It considers whether news organizations can produce accurate, diverse, and impartial reporting that serves the public interest.

Key assessment questions include:

- Do journalists possess the skills needed to produce balanced reporting based on diverse and credible sources?
- Are media ownership structures transparent and supportive of diverse perspectives?
- Do ownership arrangements restrict editorial independence or prioritize the political and commercial interests of media owners?

How the MVI Framework Is Scored

Each of the five dimensions is assessed through five main indicators, producing **25 indicators in total**. These are further divided into **119 sub-indicators**, each examining a specific aspect of media viability.

Every sub-indicator is scored using a four-point scale:

- **4:** Conditions strongly support media viability.
- **3:** Conditions generally support media viability, although some challenges remain.
- **2:** Conditions provide limited support and present significant challenges.
- **1:** Conditions create serious obstacles to media viability.

Where a sub-indicator is not relevant to the country being assessed, it receives a score of **0** and is excluded from the calculation of the average.

The score for each main indicator is calculated by averaging the scores of its relevant sub-indicators.

This structured approach allows assessors to identify strengths, weaknesses, and priority areas for intervention across different dimensions of the media ecosystem.

The MVI framework provides a practical evidence base for media managers, donors, policymakers, researchers, and media development organizations.

For media owners and managers, it offers a way to assess organizational vulnerabilities and identify opportunities for strengthening operations.

For donors and development practitioners, the framework helps determine where financial, technical, or institutional support is most urgently needed.

For researchers, it provides a structured foundation for examining the changing conditions of journalism.

Human rights organizations monitoring freedom of expression, particularly in post-authoritarian societies, can also use the indicators to track emerging threats and assess the effectiveness of legal protections.

Similarly, publishers exploring new audiences and business models can use indicators relating to digital transformation and audience behaviour to assess demand for journalistic products.

Developing a media viability index for Indonesia would therefore provide valuable evidence for national policymakers and international organizations seeking to respond to the crisis facing public-interest journalism.

This assessment contributes baseline information on the sustainability of journalism in the aftermath of COVID-19, drawing on internationally recognized indicators while adapting them to Indonesia's circumstances.

It also addresses an important gap in existing research. Previous Indonesian studies have examined the pandemic's effects on journalistic practices and media businesses (Suprayitno, 2020; Parahita et al., 2020; Indah, 2020). However, comparatively little attention has been given to the future of journalism as a democratic watchdog, particularly investigative reporting conducted outside mainstream media institutions.

Over the past five years, media sustainability has attracted growing attention among journalists, researchers, and media development organizations worldwide.

IREX, based in Washington, has developed international assessments of media health that examine factors ranging from financial performance and technological capacity to editorial freedom.

Frère (2013) similarly understands media sustainability as the ability of journalism and news organizations to continue operating effectively and producing quality reporting despite political and economic pressures.

Three Major Challenges Facing Media Sustainability in Indonesia

In Indonesia, discussions about media sustainability have largely centred on three interconnected challenges.

First, the declining viability of conventional media business models.

Print, radio, and television organizations have experienced significant disruption as audiences and advertising revenue shift toward digital platforms.

The internet has transformed how news is produced and distributed, allowing information to reach audiences more quickly and at lower cost, often without the extensive organizational structures traditionally associated with large media corporations.

This shift has encouraged the emergence of smaller, independently established media organizations.

At the same time, global digital platforms have become increasingly influential in the news economy. News aggregation services and advertising platforms, including Google, have captured substantial portions of digital advertising revenue, placing conventional media organizations under growing financial pressure.

The relationship between news publishers and digital platforms is also highly unequal, particularly because platforms retain control over the algorithms that determine content visibility and distribution.

Second, the deterioration of journalistic quality in an increasingly competitive digital environment.

The rapid expansion of online news outlets has contributed to the proliferation of clickbait, misinformation, and disinformation.

As competition for attention intensifies, some organizations prioritize traffic and engagement over accuracy, depth, and public value.

This creates a broader crisis in the quality of information available to citizens.

The longstanding expectation that online news should be freely accessible has also complicated efforts to develop sustainable reader-funded models.

Unlike print journalism, where audiences traditionally paid for newspapers or subscriptions, digital news has frequently been distributed without direct payment.

Consequently, news organizations face significant challenges in persuading audiences to contribute financially to the production of quality journalism.

Third, the disruption of journalistic operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Movement restrictions and public health measures fundamentally changed how journalists gathered information, conducted interviews, and produced news.

The pandemic created two contrasting developments.

On one hand, declining revenues triggered widespread layoffs, reductions in production, and, in some cases, the closure of media organizations.

UNESCO (2021) reported that 40% of news media experienced multidimensional crises involving employment losses, reduced production, or organizational shutdowns.

On the other hand, the pandemic accelerated digital transformation. Several established media organizations moved more of their operations online, integrating digital technologies into reporting, production, distribution, and marketing.

Beyond the mainstream media industry, a growing number of alternative journalism initiatives have emerged, particularly in investigative and data-driven reporting.

Organizations such as Project Multatuli, Konde.co, and Magdalene.co were established by experienced journalists, many of whom previously worked in mainstream newsrooms.

Their emergence offers grounds for optimism. Although traditional media platforms continue to face disruption, journalism itself remains active and capable of adapting to new conditions.

After examining international media viability assessment models and considering the particular characteristics of Indonesia's media ecosystem, AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group identified six indicators for assessing alternative media:

1. Quality Content
2. Public Engagement
3. Organizational Strength
4. Financial Sustainability
5. Technology Adaptation
6. Legal Recognition and Protection

Each indicator examines two interconnected levels: the internal conditions of alternative media organizations and the external environment in which they operate.

The external dimension includes government institutions, the Press Council, other actors within the journalism sector, and the wider public.

The six indicators are defined as follows.

1. Quality content

Quality journalistic content may take various forms, including written articles, photographs, infographics, videos, and audio reporting.

Within the MVI framework, quality content is characterized by several essential principles. It should be produced through independent journalistic processes; prioritize quality over the volume of published content; serve the public interest; represent minority and marginalized communities accurately and fairly; uphold human rights principles; critically examine dominant political, economic, and social powers; and demonstrate originality and provide clear attribution to information sources.

The availability and sustainability of quality journalism are also influenced by external conditions, including:

- Public demand for quality journalistic content.
- Citizens' willingness to participate as sources.
- Government transparency and access to public information.
- The existence of a culture that supports collaborative journalism.

2. Public engagement

AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group defines public engagement as the extent to which audiences and communities can actively participate in journalistic processes and related public activities.

This includes:

- Involving the public in producing content and disseminating information.
- Providing opportunities for audiences and communities to contribute articles or other forms of content.
- Organizing activities that encourage collaboration between media organizations and the public.
- Inviting citizens to propose story ideas through open editorial meetings, whether online or offline, as well as polls and surveys.
- Providing accessible channels for audiences to respond to published journalism.
- Involving communities in policy advocacy through training, campaigns, and other collective initiatives.
- Enabling audiences and community members to share ideas and narratives actively.
- Creating community spaces that connect audiences and the wider public around shared interests and concerns.

3. Organizational strength

Organizational strength refers to the institutional capacity of alternative media to operate effectively, independently, and sustainably.

A strong alternative media organization should:

- Have a recognized legal structure, such as a limited liability company (*PT*), limited partnership (*CV*), cooperative, or foundation.
- Be managed by a team rather than relying entirely on one individual.
- Maintain a clear vision and mission grounded in humane and progressive values.
- Develop and regularly review organizational work plans.
- Establish governance arrangements that protect editorial independence and newsroom autonomy.
- Employ personnel with relevant expertise in journalism, public engagement, and financial management.
- Invest in the professional and organizational development of its team.
- Develop workplace policies and standard operating procedures through participatory processes, including clear provisions on rights and responsibilities.
- Recognize and value staff achievements.
- Provide appropriate support for employee welfare, health care, and employment rights.

4. Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability concerns an organization's ability to secure, manage, and maintain sufficient financial resources without compromising its public-interest mission.

The MVI Working Group identifies the following characteristics:

- Access to diverse funding sources, with greater diversification contributing to stronger viability.
- Operation on a nonprofit basis, with the capacity to cover operating costs at a minimum.
- Transparent financial management.
- The ability to access different funding mechanisms and opportunities.
- The capacity to mobilize financial support directly from audiences.
- Accountable financial systems designed to prevent fraud and misuse of funds.

5. Technology adaptation

Technology adaptation refers to the ability of alternative media organizations to use digital technologies effectively while protecting their operations and journalistic independence.

The indicator covers:

- Access to and effective management of technologies required for producing and distributing journalism.
- Staff capacity to operate relevant digital tools and systems.
- Organizational preparedness to prevent and respond to digital attacks.
- Journalists' knowledge and practical skills in digital security.

6. Legal recognition and protection

Legal recognition and protection refer to the regulatory and institutional conditions that enable alternative media to operate safely, independently, and on equal terms with other news organizations.

The MVI Working Group identifies several essential elements:

- More accessible verification procedures administered by the Press Council.
- Equal recognition under press-related legislation.
- Equal access to Press Council assistance when alternative media face disputes, threats, or violence.
- Strong legal protections for press freedom and freedom of expression.
- Tax relief or other fiscal support for media organizations during periods of crisis.
- Recognition of journalism as an essential public need.
- Effective copyright protection for journalistic work.
- Equal treatment of journalists and media organizations in carrying out their professional responsibilities.
- Transparent and inclusive media ownership regulations that encourage diversity.

Chapter II
Methodology

Chapter II
Methodology

Assessment Framework

This study evaluates the viability of alternative journalism in Indonesia using the Media Viability Indicators (MVI) framework developed by AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group. Descriptive and exploratory in nature, the assessment seeks to understand the conditions in which alternative media organizations operate, including their internal capacities and the wider ecosystems that influence their sustainability. Rather than testing specific hypotheses or comparing the performance of individual outlets, it aims to provide a grounded understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and structural conditions shaping alternative journalism in Indonesia.

The assessment framework draws on several established approaches to media viability, particularly the model developed by DW Akademie. This model understands media resilience as the outcome of interactions between an organization's internal capacities and its external operating environment. Financial conditions, regulatory frameworks, technological infrastructure, market dynamics, and audience relationships all contribute to an outlet's ability to sustain independent journalism.

Building on this approach, AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group adapted the framework to reflect the distinctive characteristics of Indonesia's media landscape, with particular attention to alternative news organizations operating outside the mainstream media industry. The adaptation recognizes that the sustainability of these outlets depends not only on their organizational performance but also on the political, economic, legal, and social conditions in which they work.

This report presents the findings of the **2026 MVI pilot assessment**. Beyond documenting the current conditions facing alternative media, the pilot also provides an opportunity to evaluate the framework itself, including its indicators, data collection procedures, and assessment methods. The lessons generated through this process are intended to inform further refinement of the MVI framework and support its wider application in future assessments.

Assessment Approach and Data Collection

The assessment employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data collection with quantitative scoring during the analysis stage. This follows the methodological principles of DW Akademie's MVI framework, which relies primarily on qualitative evidence while translating informants' assessments into numerical scores to facilitate the interpretation and comparison of individual indicators. The assessment was conducted at two complementary levels.

1. **The newsroom level (Organizational case study)**. At the organizational level, the research team examined four alternative media outlets operating under different circumstances. Data were collected through direct observation, reviews of organizational documents, and interviews with individuals responsible for managing the participating newsrooms. This component focused on the internal capacities of each organization, including editorial governance, financial management, human resources, and technological infrastructure. It was designed to identify the organizational strengths and constraints affecting their ability to produce independent journalism over time.
2. **The regional and national level (Media Ecosystem Assessment).** At the broader ecosystem level, the research team interviewed stakeholders outside the participating newsrooms in each city. These interviews explored the external conditions influencing media viability, including regulatory arrangements, market conditions, funding opportunities, digital infrastructure, audience relationships, and legal protection.

Assessing both levels was essential to developing a more complete understanding of media viability. An organization may demonstrate strong editorial and managerial capacities yet remain vulnerable when its external environment provides inadequate financial, institutional, or legal support. Conversely, favourable external conditions do not necessarily guarantee sustainability when an outlet faces significant internal weaknesses. The assessment drew on three principal sources of evidence:

1. **Structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).** These involved relevant stakeholders and were guided by the MVI indicator framework to ensure that discussions addressed the key dimensions of media viability.
2. **Direct newsroom observation.** The research team examined how participating media organizations were managed and operated, including their editorial processes, organizational practices, and published journalistic content.
3. **Document review.** The assessment examined internal organizational records relating to editorial performance, financial management, and staffing, alongside relevant research reports, publications, and other secondary materials.

To gather and assess this evidence, the research team employed four data collection methods: **surveys, focus group discussions, interviews, and document review**. Together, these methods provided qualitative insights and supporting information for the subsequent scoring process. The fieldwork was guided by two overarching research questions:

1. What challenges do alternative media organizations in Indonesia face in maintaining their viability amid digital transformation and a political system undergoing a transition toward oligarchic democracy?
2. What strategies, interventions, and policy recommendations could help address these challenges and strengthen the long-term viability of alternative journalism?

These questions guided the collection and interpretation of evidence across both organizational and ecosystem levels.

Survey

The survey was designed to capture perspectives from a broad range of stakeholders involved in or affected by Indonesia's media ecosystem.

The intended respondent groups included managers of alternative, mainstream, and community media; academics specializing in communication and law; news audiences across conventional and digital platforms; social media influencers; representatives of vulnerable and marginalized communities; journalists' and media associations; local government officials; business representatives; legal institutions; funding organizations; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); students; community groups; relevant government ministries; and members of regional legislative councils (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, or DPRD). Within the media sector, the respondent categories included:

- Journalists, with a target of two respondents per city, or eight in total.
- Editors-in-chief representing alternative and mainstream media organizations, with one from each category.
- Journalists, reporters, and editors from media organizations not directly included in the assessment.
- Representatives of journalists' associations, including AJI, PWI, IJTI, and PFI.
- Representatives of media industry associations, including AMSI, ATVSI, PRSSNI, and SPS.
- Audience representatives, with a target of two respondents per city, or eight in total.
- Members of reader and subscriber forums.
- Representatives of vulnerable, minority, and marginalized communities.
- Young people and members of specific community groups, including artists, history enthusiasts, and religious communities.

This broad stakeholder coverage was intended to capture different perspectives on the conditions affecting media viability, from professional and institutional concerns to public expectations and community experiences.

Document Review

The document review provided contextual and supporting evidence for the assessment. Materials examined included:

- Official websites of alternative media organizations.
- The Press Council's website and relevant government websites.
- Social media accounts managed by alternative media outlets.
- Relevant publications, including academic journal articles and books.

These sources were used to complement information obtained through surveys, interviews, and direct observation, particularly in relation to organizational practices, institutional arrangements, and the wider media environment.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were incorporated to complement and deepen the survey findings. Beyond gathering additional perspectives, the FGDs were intended to identify potential responses to the challenges threatening the sustainability of alternative journalism.

The research team planned at least two FGDs representing different geographical contexts: one in **Jakarta**, representing western Indonesia and Java, and another in **Denpasar**, intended to bring perspectives from areas outside Java and eastern Indonesia.

The planned discussions involved a diverse range of participants, including managers of alternative, mainstream, and community media; communication and law academics; representatives of news audiences; influencers; vulnerable groups; journalists' and media associations; local government representatives; business stakeholders; legal aid organizations; international donors; student activists; relevant ministries and government agencies; and members of regional legislative councils.

By bringing together stakeholders with different professional backgrounds and institutional roles, the FGDs were intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers facing alternative media and to explore practical opportunities for strengthening their viability.

Selection of Assessment Locations and Media Outlets

For the pilot assessment, AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group selected alternative journalism as its primary focus and used **purposive selection** to identify four media organizations in four different cities.

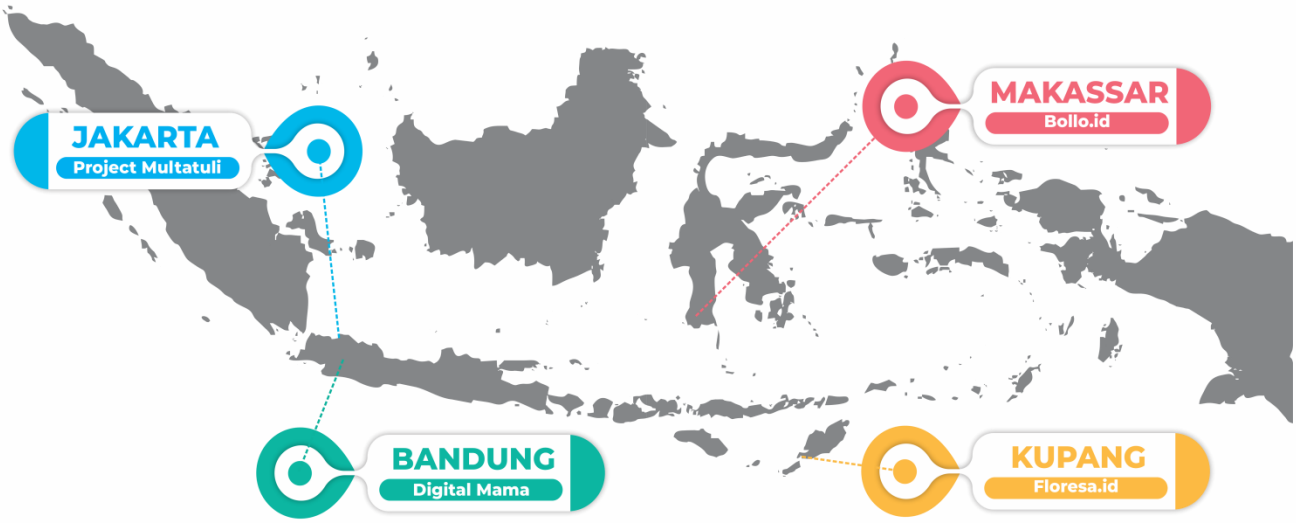
The selection was designed to reflect variations in geographical setting and newsroom characteristics. It included organizations based in the national capital, a major city on Java, and provincial locations outside Java.

Despite their different operating environments, the four selected outlets shared an important characteristic: a commitment to producing in-depth or investigative journalism that serves the public interest.

This approach allowed the assessment to examine alternative media organizations facing different institutional, financial, technological, and regulatory conditions while maintaining a common focus on public-interest journalism. Details of the selected media organizations and assessment locations are presented in the following table.

Infographic Table 2
Alternative Media in the Assessment

Alternative media	City / province	Characteristics of the area	Type of newsroom
Project Multatuli	Jakarta	National capital	Investigative journalism on a range of national issues
Digital Mama	Bandung, West Java	Major urban centre on Java	Community-based journalism, in-depth reporting, and local investigations
Floresa.id	Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara	Provincial setting outside Java	Local reporting and investigative journalism
Bollo.id	Makassar, South Sulawesi	Provincial setting outside Java	Local reporting and investigative journalism



The four outlets were not selected to represent the entire alternative media sector in Indonesia. Instead, they were purposively chosen as information-rich cases that could provide insights into the challenges, operating conditions, and resilience of alternative journalism across different geographical and institutional contexts.

Informants

The assessment involved **47 informants across four cities**: 12 in Jakarta, 11 in Bandung, 12 in Kupang, and 12 in Makassar. The assessment guidelines specified a minimum of 12 informants per location, selected purposively according to their expertise, professional experience, and familiarity with local media issues.

Informants were drawn from five stakeholder groups: managers and staff of alternative media organizations; journalists' organizations and media associations; government institutions and regulatory bodies; civil society organizations and legal aid groups; and academics and news audiences.

This combination was intended to capture both internal and external perspectives on media viability. Media managers and newsroom staff could provide direct insights into organizational operations, while external stakeholders offered a broader assessment of the surrounding ecosystem, including regulation, funding opportunities, institutional support, and access to public information.

To protect confidentiality, informants are not individually identified in this report. Findings are presented through aggregated scores and unattributed quotations, except where individuals explicitly agreed to be named.

Assessment Instrument

The MVI assessment instrument comprises six indicators, 37 sub-indicators, and 85 core scored questions. Each indicator incorporates both internal factors, relating to an outlet's organizational capacity, and external factors, reflecting the wider environment in which it operates.

This integrated approach allows assessors to identify whether the principal barriers to media viability arise from within an organization or from conditions beyond its direct control.

The structure and scope of the assessment instrument are summarized in Table 3.

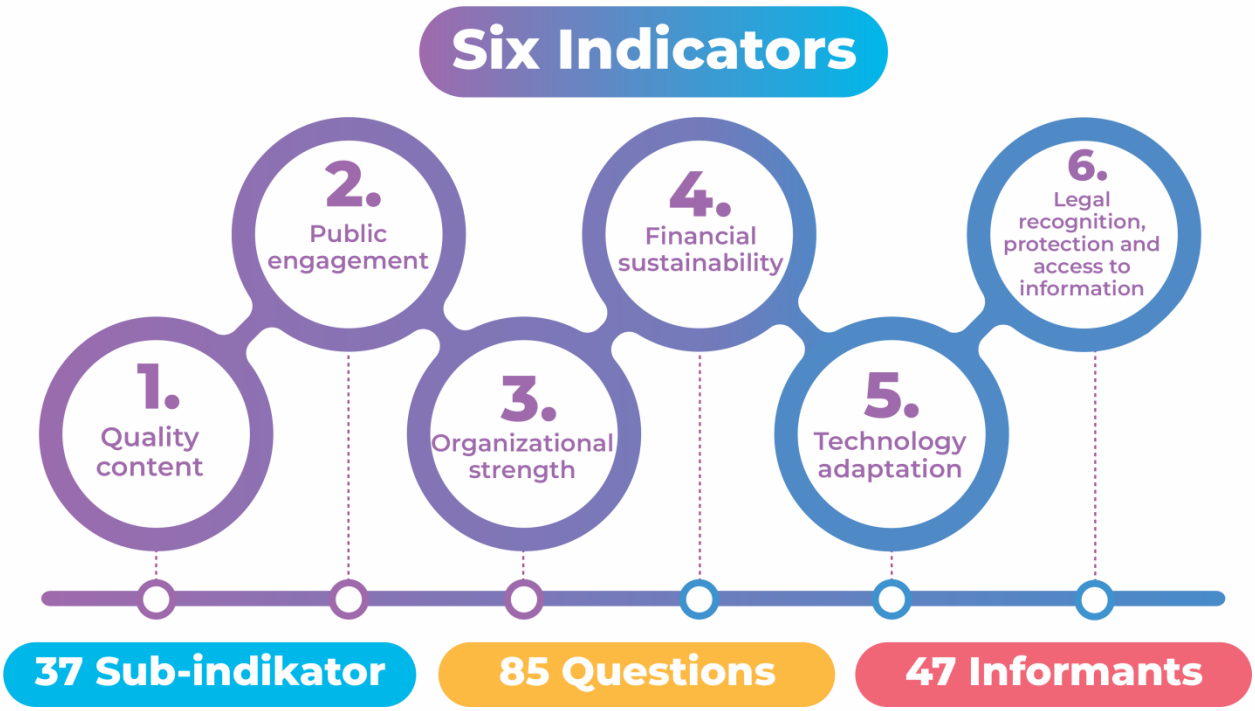


Table 3
Media Viability Assessment Indicators

Indicator	Sub-indicators	Questions	Scope of Assessment
1. Quality content	8	18	Public-interest journalism, editorial independence, human rights and democratic perspectives, representation of vulnerable groups, originality and verification, public demand, collaboration, and training
2. Public engagement	5	13	Opportunities for public participation in content production and funding, collaborative community activities, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression
3. Organizational strength	3	9	Social security and employment protection, professional media networks, and access to qualified personnel
4. Financial sustainability	6	13	Funding diversification, financial management, external funding, advertising market, regulatory conditions, and funding collaboration networks.
5. Technology adaptation	7	14	Access to production technologies and digital platforms, data analytics, digital security, innovation, audience literacy, digital infrastructure, fairness of platform algorithms
6. Legal recognition, protection and access to information	8	18	Legal status and Press Council verification, journalist protection, press dispute resolution, freedom of expression, public information, digital freedom policy

Each question is assessed using a **four-point scoring scale**, supported by written descriptors that explain the conditions associated with each score:

- **4 - Best:** The most favourable condition.
- **3 - Good:** A generally favourable condition.
- **2 - Poor:** An unfavourable condition.
- **1 - Worst:** The least favourable condition.

These descriptors are intended to promote consistency in how informants and interviewers interpret and apply the scoring system.

For example, when assessing whether an outlet has a formally registered legal entity, the descriptors range from a fully established and well-organized legal structure to the complete absence of such an arrangement.

In addition to the 85 core questions, the instrument contains supplementary questions used specifically during newsroom interviews. These explore issues such as staff

understanding of editorial independence, financial auditing practices, reserve funds, and organizational break-even points. Responses to these supplementary questions provide additional context for the organizational case studies but are **not included in the calculation of core indicator scores**.

Assessment Stages

The MVI assessment follows a structured sequence to support consistency, transparency, and methodological rigour. Assessors are expected to understand each stage and its requirements before beginning fieldwork.

The process consists of six main stages:

1. **Define the assessment scope.** Establish the objectives, identify the media outlets or geographical areas to be assessed, and determine the expected outputs.
2. **Establish the assessment team.** Appoint a research coordinator, enumerators, interviewers, observers, and other relevant personnel. Assign responsibilities and agree on a work plan for data collection and analysis.
3. **Conduct a kick-off meeting.** Ensure that all team members share a common understanding of the MVI framework, assessment procedures, scoring descriptors, and their respective responsibilities.
4. **Collect field data.** Gather evidence through newsroom observation, content analysis, structured interviews, surveys, and other relevant methods.
5. **Analyse the findings.** Examine the collected evidence using qualitative interpretation and quantitative scoring procedures.
6. **Present and disseminate the report.** Communicate the findings to the public, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders.

Before conducting structured interviews, assessors should review relevant background materials to develop a sound understanding of the national and local media environment.

1. The recommended materials include:
2. **Media Viability Assessment Toolkit** - AJI Indonesia (2025).
3. **Press Freedom Index** - Press Council (2025).
4. **Public Information Openness Index** - Central Information Commission (*Komisi Informasi Pusat*, KIP) (2025).
5. **Democracy and Internet Freedom Indices** - Freedom House (2025).
6. **An updated mapping of Indonesia's media landscape**, covering the number and types of media outlets, geographical coverage, editorial focus, ownership structures, office locations, audience reach and segmentation, ideological orientations, publication languages, and other relevant characteristics.

These materials provide essential contextual information and help assessors interpret field findings within the broader political, regulatory, and institutional environment.

The assessment progressed through preparation, fieldwork, analysis, scoring, and reporting, as illustrated in Figure 1.

During the preparation stage, AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group defined the assessment objectives and selected the participating media outlets. The team was organized to include a research coordinator, a writer responsible for each indicator, and enumerators and interviewers in the selected locations.

Particular attention was given to establishing a shared understanding of the MVI framework and its scoring descriptors to promote consistency across the four assessment locations.

The team also reviewed relevant secondary sources, including the Press Freedom Index, the Public Information Openness Index, Freedom House reports concerning press freedom in Indonesia, AJI Indonesia's annual reports on media and journalism, and regional media mapping data.

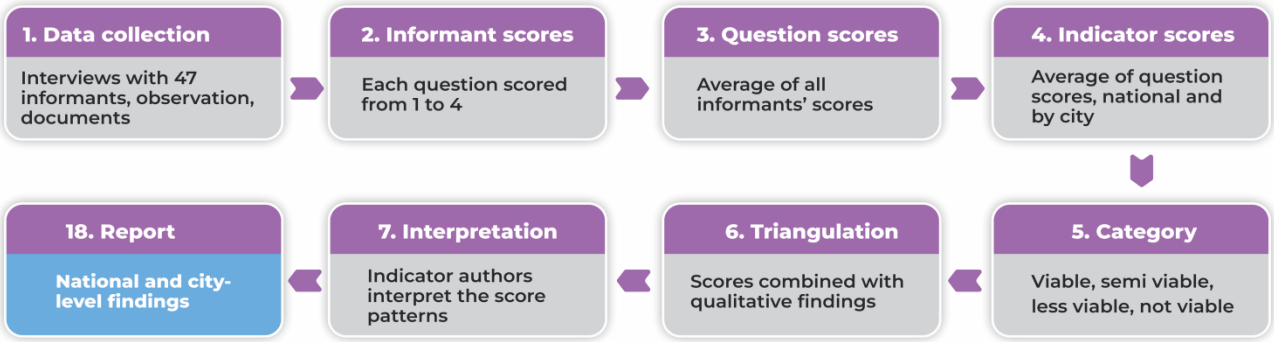


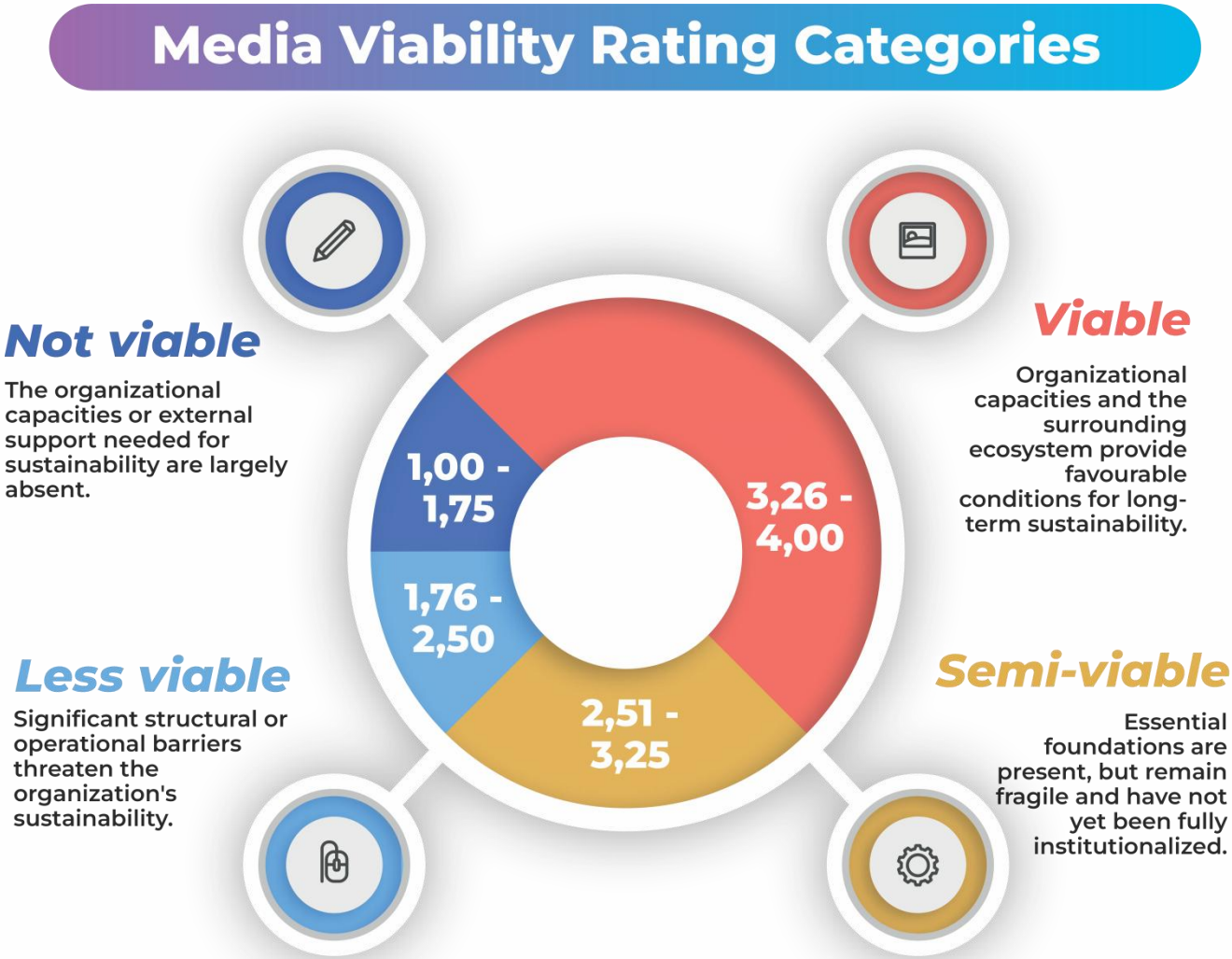
Figure 1. From Data Collection to Final Report

Fieldwork involved direct observation of the participating newsrooms, reviews of organizational performance documents and published journalistic content, and structured interviews with stakeholders in each city. Before beginning interviews, researchers explained the purpose of the assessment, obtained permission for audio recording, and ensured that informants understood the scoring system.

Informants were instructed to assess each question using the four-point scale, where 4 represented the most favourable condition and 1 the least favourable. The assessment instrument was finalized at the end of May 2026, and the scoring results were compiled in September 2026. Assessment scores were calculated using simple, unweighted averages. For each question, the score was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the responses provided by informants who answered that question. Missing responses were excluded from the calculation rather than treated as zero.

Each indicator score was then calculated by averaging the scores of its constituent questions. National scores were calculated using responses from all **47 informants**, while city-level scores were based on responses collected within each respective city. The numerical findings presented in Chapter III were compiled by the research team from the assessment data. To support interpretation, the scores were grouped into four media viability categories, as presented in Table 4.

Infographic 4
Media Viability Rating Categories



Scores were not interpreted in isolation. Each numerical result was considered alongside qualitative evidence from interviews, newsroom observations, organizational documents, and relevant secondary sources. The researcher responsible for each indicator integrated these sources of evidence to develop a contextual interpretation of the findings.

Limitations

All informants were informed about the purpose of the assessment and how their responses would be used before participating in interviews. Audio recordings and photographs were collected only with their consent, and individual responses were used exclusively for research analysis. As a pilot study, the assessment has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings.

1. **Limited representativeness.** The four participating media outlets and 47 informants were selected purposively rather than through probability sampling. Consequently, the findings describe the conditions of alternative media in the four assessment locations and should not be generalized to all alternative media organizations in Indonesia or to the country's media industry as a whole.
2. **Reliance on informant assessments.** The numerical scores reflect informants' perceptions and professional judgments rather than independently verified performance measures, such as audited financial statements. Although the research team triangulated interview responses with observations and documentary evidence, this approach could reduce, but not entirely eliminate, potential assessment bias.
3. **Potential bias in self-assessment.** Media managers may assess their own organizations more favourably, while external stakeholders may have limited knowledge of internal newsroom operations. Findings relating to organizational capacity should therefore be interpreted alongside evidence obtained through direct observation and document review.
4. **Small number of informants.** With 11–12 informants in each city, a small number of unusually high or low ratings could noticeably influence the average score. Differences between cities should therefore be understood as indicative patterns rather than definitive rankings of organizational or regional performance.
5. **Equal weighting of assessment responses.** The assessment applied equal weighting to questions and informant responses. While this approach makes the scoring process transparent and straightforward to reproduce, it does not account for potential differences in the relative importance of particular factors to media viability.
6. **Cross-sectional nature of the assessment.** The findings reflect conditions observed at a particular point in 2026. They do not capture changes in organizational performance or media ecosystems over time. Assessing such changes would require repeated measurements using the same instrument and comparable assessment procedures.

Implications for Future Assessments

The experience gained from this pilot will inform further refinement of the MVI instrument and its implementation procedures.

As an openly available assessment guide, the framework can be adapted and applied by journalists' organizations, researchers, and media outlets seeking to examine their own resilience and operating environments. The following section presents the general field guidance developed by AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group to support consistent application of the assessment framework.

Guidelines for Assessors

Assessing news media viability in Indonesia involves an evaluative mapping exercise designed to examine the conditions affecting media organizations and their operating environments over the preceding five to ten years. Descriptive and exploratory in nature, the assessment seeks to capture the actual circumstances of a particular media outlet or geographical area rather than test predefined hypotheses.

The assessment can be conducted at two levels: individual media organizations and the wider media ecosystem at the provincial or national level. Each requires a different combination of informants, data collection methods, and analytical approaches to reflect the scope and objectives of the assessment.

This guide provides practical guidance for conducting media resilience assessments in Indonesia using the Media Viability Indicators (MVI) framework developed by AJI Indonesia's MVI Working Group.

It is organized into three parts. The first introduces the general methodology underpinning the MVI framework. The second explains field data collection procedures, with particular attention to interviewing media managers and other relevant stakeholders. The third presents the indicators and sub-indicators in detail, together with tables explaining how data should be calculated and analysed to guide interviews and newsroom observations.

Together, these sections outline the procedures assessors should follow to collect accurate, comprehensive, and contextually relevant evidence. The guide is publicly available and may be adapted by researchers, journalists' organizations, media practitioners, and other interested parties according to their assessment needs.

Table 5 summarizes the data collection methods used in the Indonesian MVI framework and distinguishes between assessments conducted at the regional or national level and those focusing on an individual media outlet.

Table 5
MVI Data Collection Methods

Levels	Quantitative Methods		Qualitative Methods		
Regional or national level	Surveys of relevant stakeholders using the MVI indicators and sub-indicators.	Quantitative analysis of journalistic content published by selected media outlets, conducted by the research team.	Structured interviews and/or focus group discussions with regional stakeholders concerning the conditions of selected media outlets.	Visits to selected newsrooms to examine their organizatio-nal structures and operational practices.	Reviews of organizational records relating to editorial performance, financial management, staffing, and other relevant areas, alongside previous research and publications.
Single outlet (case study)	Surveys of managers responsible for the media outlet being assessed.	Quantitative analysis of journalistic content published by the participatin g outlet.	In-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders concerning the conditions of the participating outlet.	Direct observation of the participatin g newsroom to understand its manageme nt and daily operations.	Reviews of the participating outlet's organizational records, including editorial performance, finances, and staffing, supported by relevant previous research.

As Table 5 illustrates, both assessment levels employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Integrating these approaches allows assessors to develop a more comprehensive understanding of organizational conditions and the wider factors influencing media viability.

Following the MVI data collection model developed by DW Akademie, the assessment draws on two principal stages and sources of evidence.

First, documentary research provides background information through previous media index assessments, institutional profiles, and other relevant publications concerning the media environment in the area being assessed.

Second, interviews and surveys gather primary evidence from media managers and other stakeholders using questions derived from the MVI indicators and sub-indicators.

Although DW Akademie's original model is primarily qualitative, it incorporates a numerical scoring process during analysis. Informants' assessments are converted into scores, allowing researchers to interpret findings systematically across different indicators.

Preparing for Fieldwork

Before beginning data collection, assessors should familiarize themselves with the interview instrument and understand how each MVI dimension is defined and measured.

Relevant background materials should be reviewed in advance, including publicly available reports on press freedom, democracy, and internet freedom, as well as annual reports published by journalists' organizations such as AJI Indonesia.

Assessors should also consult publications from relevant independent regulatory institutions, including the Press Council (*Dewan Pers*), the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia*, KPI), and the Central Information Commission (*Komisi Informasi Pusat*, KIP).

Practical preparations are equally important. Interviewers should ensure that recording equipment is available and functioning, identify suitable interview locations, prepare note-taking materials, and review relevant background information about their informants.

For quantitative surveys, assessors should also familiarize themselves with respondents' profiles and characteristics.

These preparations are essential to maintaining the quality, consistency, and reliability of the information collected during fieldwork.

Conducting Interviews

At the beginning of each interview, assessors should clearly explain the purpose of the research, the nature of the MVI assessment, and how the findings will be used.

Permission must be obtained before making audio recordings or taking photographs.

Interviewers should also provide a straightforward explanation of the MVI framework, including its objectives, assessment procedures, and expected outputs. This helps ensure that informants understand the context of the questions and can provide relevant, informed responses.

Interviews should generally begin with broader questions before moving toward more specific issues. This approach allows informants to establish context and explain their experiences before addressing individual indicators.

Throughout the interview, assessors should adopt an attentive and neutral approach. Informants should be allowed to complete their responses without unnecessary

interruption. The interviewer's role is to ask questions, listen carefully, and seek clarification where needed, rather than challenge or debate the informant's views.

Where relevant, interviewers should also document contextual observations, including the informant's manner of speaking, body language, and the general interview setting. These observations can provide additional context when interpreting and reporting the findings.

Applying the Scoring System

Consistency in applying the scoring system is essential to the credibility of the assessment.

Before asking informants to assign scores, interviewers should explain the four-point scale and ensure that its meaning is clearly understood: **4 - Best condition**, **3 - Good condition**, **2 - Poor condition** and **1 - Worst condition**

Informants should understand the distinctions between the four categories and apply the scale according to the written descriptors provided in the assessment instrument.

Interviewers must also ensure that each question is clearly understood and that informants have sufficient knowledge or relevant experience to provide an informed assessment.

Responses should be grounded in the informant's understanding of actual conditions rather than speculation or unsupported assumptions.

Particular attention should be given to differences between local and national media organizations, as well as between conventional and online media. These distinctions are important because organizational structures, operating environments, and the challenges affecting viability may differ substantially.

The question guide is intended to provide a consistent framework for interviews without unnecessarily restricting discussion. Interviewers may therefore introduce follow-up questions when clarification or further detail is needed, provided that these questions remain relevant to the MVI indicators and the objectives of the assessment.

This balance between methodological consistency and flexibility allows assessors to gather comparable evidence while remaining responsive to the circumstances and experiences of individual informants.

Chapter III
Key Findings

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Key Findings

This chapter presents the findings across the six Media Viability Indicators (MVI). Each section begins with an overview of the indicator's overall score, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings for each assessment question. All scores are reported on a four-point scale, with the viability categories defined in Table 4.



a. Quality Content

Quality content: 3.2 (semi-viable)

Quality content emerged as the strongest of the six indicators, with a national average score of **3.2.** Although this places it within the semi-viable category, the score is close to the viable threshold of 3.26–4.00. Bandung recorded the highest score at **3.5**, followed by Kupang at **3.3.**

The findings suggest that a commitment to quality, public-interest journalism has been central to alternative media organizations since their establishment. Editorial independence, democratic values, and respect for human rights are deeply embedded in their organizational identities and continue to guide their journalistic practices.

However, two challenges stand out. Internally, these commitments are not always translated into formal editorial policies and operational guidelines. Externally, alternative media continue to face difficulties in building broader and more sustained public demand for quality journalism.

The following findings examine these strengths and challenges across the questions included in the quality content indicator.

Commitment to Public-Interest Journalism

Do alternative media consistently prioritize the public interest in their reporting?

Average score: 3.64

With an average score of 3.64, the highest recorded for any question in this indicator, respondents expressed strong confidence in alternative media's commitment to public-interest journalism. This commitment is reflected in editorial decisions and forms an important part of these organizations' identities. Rather than treating public-interest reporting as an occasional editorial priority, alternative media have generally positioned it as a defining principle of their work.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, standard operating procedures (SOPs), or internal policies that prioritize the public interest?

Average score: 3.00

Despite their strong commitment to public-interest journalism, not all alternative media organizations have formally documented this principle in editorial guidelines, internal agreements, or operational procedures. The average score of 3.00 reveals a gap between established editorial values and their formal institutionalization. Clear written policies would provide a shared reference for newsroom staff and help ensure that public-interest principles are consistently applied in reporting and editorial decision-making.

Editorial Independence

Do alternative media consistently uphold editorial independence in their journalistic practices?

Average score: 3.64

Editorial independence received an average score of 3.64, matching the score for commitment to the public interest. This finding reinforces the central role of independence in the establishment and continued operation of alternative media. For many of these organizations, editorial autonomy is not simply a professional standard but a fundamental reason for their existence.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, SOPs, or internal policies to safeguard and evaluate editorial independence?

Average score: 3.19

The score declines to 3.19 when respondents assess the availability of formal mechanisms for safeguarding editorial independence. While some outlets have established written policies and internal agreements, others continue to rely primarily on shared values and informal practices. This suggests that stronger institutional mechanisms are needed to ensure that editorial independence is protected consistently and can be evaluated over time.

Human Rights and Democratic Principles

Do alternative media consistently apply human rights perspectives and democratic principles in their newsroom operations?

Average score: 3.43

An average score of 3.43 indicates that human rights and democratic principles are strongly reflected in the way alternative media organizations operate. These values have shaped many outlets since their establishment and remain central to their editorial perspectives and organizational practices. The findings suggest that alternative media generally demonstrate a consistent commitment to journalism grounded in democratic accountability and respect for human rights.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, SOPs, or internal policies to uphold and evaluate their commitment to human rights and democratic values?

Average score: 3.04

As with public-interest journalism and editorial independence, the score is lower when attention shifts from principles to formal documentation. The average of 3.04 indicates that commitments to human rights and democratic values are not always supported by clearly documented internal policies.

Strengthening these mechanisms requires organizational agreement and a willingness to translate established values into written standards that can guide newsroom practices and support periodic evaluation.

Representation of Minority and Marginalized Communities

Do alternative media consistently prioritize issues affecting minority, vulnerable, and marginalized communities?

Average score: 3.51

A defining characteristic of alternative journalism is its deliberate attention to communities and issues that often receive limited coverage in mainstream media.

The average score of 3.51 reflects respondents' recognition of this commitment. Rather than attempting to cover the full range of news topics, many alternative outlets focus on the experiences, rights, and concerns of minority, vulnerable, and marginalized groups.

This editorial orientation helps distinguish alternative media from more general-interest news organizations and reinforces their role in broadening public representation.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, SOPs, or internal policies to support and evaluate their coverage of minority, vulnerable, and marginalized communities?

Average score: 3.02

Despite the strong editorial commitment reflected in the previous question, the availability of formal guidelines received a lower score of 3.02.

This recurring pattern suggests that alternative media need to strengthen the institutional foundations of their editorial priorities. Written policies and evaluation mechanisms would help ensure that commitments to inclusive reporting remain consistent across journalists, editorial teams, and changes in organizational leadership. Originality, Verification, and Journalistic Standards

Do alternative media consistently produce original journalism based on rigorous verification and transparent, accurate source attribution?

Average score: 3.57

The average score of 3.57 indicates strong confidence in alternative media's commitment to original reporting, verification, and responsible source attribution.

These practices are fundamental to journalistic credibility. The findings suggest that alternative outlets place considerable importance on producing independently verified content rather than relying on unverified information or reproducing existing reporting without adequate scrutiny. This commitment provides an important foundation for maintaining public trust in alternative journalism.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, SOPs, or internal policies to uphold and evaluate their commitment to original, verified journalism?

Average score: 3.09

The score falls to 3.09 when respondents assess the existence of formal guidelines and evaluation mechanisms supporting these practices.

Once again, the findings reveal a distinction between the professional standards observed in everyday journalism and the extent to which those standards have been institutionalized.

Formal editorial policies, verification procedures, and internal evaluation mechanisms would help protect the quality and consistency of reporting as organizations develop and expand.

Public Demand and Access to Quality Journalism

Does the public continue to prioritize reading and accessing quality journalism?

Average score: 3.09

An average score of 3.09 suggests that there is a meaningful level of public interest in quality journalism.

This represents an important opportunity for alternative media, which have consistently positioned quality reporting at the centre of their editorial missions.

Sustained public demand can strengthen the relevance of these organizations, support audience development, and create opportunities for long-term growth.

It also enables alternative media to maintain their contribution to public debate and remain connected to the issues affecting people's lives.

Are media and news literacy, as well as access to quality journalism, distributed equitably across Indonesia?

Average score: 2.47

The score of 2.47 reveals substantial inequalities in media literacy and access to quality journalism across Indonesia.

Geographical disparities remain particularly significant between Java and regions outside Java, especially eastern Indonesia.

These inequalities create barriers to the wider development of informed news audiences and limit the reach of quality journalism beyond more established media centres.

Addressing these gaps requires attention not only to the production of quality content but also to the conditions that enable different communities to access, understand, and engage with it.

Is the public willing to support the continued production of quality journalism, including through financial contributions?

Average score: 2.87

Public support is an important foundation for the sustainability of alternative media, particularly those seeking to develop reader-funded models through memberships, subscriptions, and community contributions.

In Indonesia, however, direct audience support remains limited, both in its current practice and in the extent to which its potential has been explored. The average score of 2.87 nevertheless suggests that opportunities exist to cultivate stronger relationships with audiences willing to support journalism they value and trust. For alternative media, translating this willingness into sustained participation and financial contributions remains an important challenge.

Collaborative Journalism

Is there demand among stakeholders, including donors, media organizations, and journalists' associations, for collaborative journalism?

Average score: 3.32

Collaborative journalism can strengthen the reach and impact of public-interest reporting by bringing together organizations with complementary resources, expertise, and audiences. The average score of 3.32 indicates relatively strong stakeholder demand for joint reporting initiatives.

Such collaborations provide opportunities to amplify important issues, extend the distribution of journalistic content, and strengthen the visibility of reporting that might otherwise have limited reach.

Are collaborative journalism programmes implemented regularly?

Average score: 3.00

Collaborative reporting has become increasingly established in Indonesia over approximately the past two decades, particularly through programmes and fellowships organized by media outlets, journalists' associations, and other institutions.

These initiatives operate at both national and regional levels and have helped create opportunities for joint reporting and professional exchange.

The average score of 3.00 suggests that collaborative journalism programmes are implemented with a reasonable degree of consistency, although further development remains possible.

Do collaborative journalism programmes contribute meaningfully to media organizations, including by strengthening public trust or creating additional funding opportunities?

Average score: 3.19

An average score of 3.19 indicates that collaborative journalism programmes provide meaningful benefits to alternative media organizations.

For newsrooms operating with limited financial and human resources, collaboration can make it possible to undertake reporting that would otherwise be difficult to produce independently. Beyond improving the quality and reach of journalism, these partnerships can strengthen public trust and provide additional sources of income.

For some alternative outlets, the financial support associated with collaborative projects contributes directly to their ability to sustain operations.

Training and Capacity Development

Do stakeholders, including donors, media organizations, and journalists' associations, provide training and capacity-building programmes for journalists and media organizations?

Average score: 3.09

Training and professional development initiatives have expanded across Indonesia over the past two decades, supported by journalists' associations, media organizations, media development institutions, and research organizations. These programmes have played an important role in strengthening journalistic knowledge and professional capacity.

The average score of 3.09 indicates that training opportunities remain available, although their reach and continuity could be strengthened.

Are training and capacity-building programmes sufficiently diverse and accessible to media organizations and journalists, including in editorial management, finance, public engagement, and organizational incubation?

Average score: 2.87

The average score of 2.87 suggests that existing capacity-building programmes remain relatively limited in scope.

Most initiatives continue to concentrate on editorial and journalistic skills, while other competencies essential to organizational sustainability receive less attention.

Yet the long-term viability of alternative media depends on more than producing quality reporting. Newsrooms also require expertise in financial management, organizational development, audience engagement, community building, and sustainable business models.

Expanding training beyond editorial practice would help alternative media strengthen the institutional capacities needed to sustain their public-interest missions.



b. Public Engagement

Public engagement: 3.0 (semi-viable)

Public engagement recorded a national average score of **3.0**, placing it within the *semi-viable* category (2.51–3.25). Bandung achieved the highest score at **3.4**, followed by Jakarta at **3.0**.

The findings indicate that public engagement is central to how alternative media organizations sustain their operations, strengthen their public impact, and develop potential sources of financial support. For these outlets, engagement extends beyond providing spaces for audiences to comment on published content. It also involves creating opportunities for meaningful participation through community discussions, collaborative activities, and regular face-to-face interactions.

However, two challenges remain particularly significant. Internally, limited staffing and the absence of formal engagement policies constrain organizations' ability to manage these activities consistently. Externally, inadequate regulatory protection for freedom of assembly and expression creates additional risks for media organizations and the communities they serve.

The following findings examine these dynamics across the 13 questions included in the public engagement indicator.

Digital Platforms and Audience Engagement

Do alternative media provide platforms for public engagement through their websites, social media accounts, or online discussion groups?

Average score: 3.43

Public engagement has been a defining strategy for alternative media since their establishment. Despite operating with limited resources, these organizations have prioritized creating spaces where audiences can interact with journalists and participate in discussions about public-interest issues.

The average score of 3.43 reflects a strong commitment to maintaining these platforms as part of their broader relationship with the public.

Do alternative media have dedicated personnel responsible for managing public engagement platforms?

Average score: 3.02

Human resource constraints remain a significant challenge for alternative media. Most newsroom staff have professional backgrounds in journalism, particularly reporting, leaving organizations with limited capacity to develop functions beyond editorial production.

The average score of 3.02 suggests that while some outlets have assigned personnel to manage engagement platforms, dedicated staffing remains difficult to sustain.

Strengthening public engagement therefore requires not only accessible digital platforms but also sufficient organizational capacity to manage audience relationships consistently.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, standard operating procedures (SOPs), or internal policies for managing and evaluating public engagement platforms?

Average score: 2.81

The score of 2.81 indicates that formal procedures for managing public engagement remain relatively underdeveloped.

Although alternative media recognize the importance of engaging their audiences, this commitment is not always reflected in written guidelines, operational standards, or evaluation mechanisms.

The findings point to a need for greater organizational awareness and shared commitment to formalizing engagement practices, ensuring that they can be maintained and assessed systematically.

Public Participation in Journalism

Do alternative media provide opportunities for the public to participate in producing, publishing, and distributing content through online and offline activities?

Average score: 3.09

Public participation in journalism has long been an important feature of alternative media. These organizations have traditionally created opportunities for audiences to contribute to the production and circulation of information.

Digital technologies have expanded these opportunities through websites, social media platforms, and other interactive channels. Offline activities, including open editorial meetings, also allow communities to contribute ideas and perspectives directly.

The average score of 3.09 suggests that alternative media have maintained a relatively open approach to involving the public in journalistic processes.

Do alternative media have dedicated personnel to manage platforms that enable public participation in content production and distribution?

Average score: 2.91

The average score of 2.91 reflects the difficulties alternative media face in assigning dedicated personnel to manage participatory journalism initiatives.

Small newsroom teams often require staff members to perform multiple roles, limiting the time and resources available for sustained audience participation.

Nevertheless, because these activities are closely connected to editorial production, existing newsroom personnel, particularly editors, may be able to help coordinate public contributions and strengthen participatory practices.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, SOPs, or internal policies for managing and evaluating public participation platforms?

Average score: 2.74

Formal governance of public participation received a relatively low score of 2.74.

As with other aspects of media viability, alternative outlets often demonstrate a practical commitment to participatory journalism without having fully documented the procedures that support it.

Developing written guidelines and evaluation mechanisms would help clarify responsibilities, maintain consistency, and ensure that public participation remains an integral part of newsroom operations.

Audience Contributions and Financial Support

Do alternative media provide mechanisms for audiences to contribute financially through donations, subscriptions, or memberships?

Average score: 3.17

Direct audience contributions represent an important potential source of sustainable funding for alternative media.

Memberships, subscriptions, and donations can help organizations develop financial relationships with the communities they serve while reducing dependence on external funding.

However, establishing and maintaining these mechanisms requires technological infrastructure and operational resources that smaller newsrooms may struggle to provide.

The average score of 3.17 reflects both the efforts alternative media have made to develop audience-funded models and the constraints that continue to limit their implementation.

Do alternative media have dedicated personnel responsible for managing audience contribution and fundraising platforms?

Average score: 2.89

Developing reader-funded journalism requires more than establishing a donation or membership platform. It also depends on personnel capable of managing contributions, maintaining relationships with supporters, and ensuring that the necessary administrative systems function effectively.

The average score of 2.89 indicates that dedicated staffing for these activities remains a challenge.

For organizations operating with small teams and limited financial resources, maintaining consistent fundraising and membership management can place additional pressure on existing personnel.

Do alternative media have adequate written guidelines, SOPs, or internal policies for managing and evaluating audience funding platforms?

Average score: 2.70

The average score of 2.70 reveals another gap in the formal institutionalization of public engagement practices.

Although alternative media have begun developing mechanisms for financial contributions, written procedures governing their management and evaluation remain limited.

Strengthening these arrangements would help organizations establish clearer responsibilities and more consistent systems for managing audience contributions.

Community Activities and Public Trust

Do alternative media regularly organize activities with audiences, communities, and the wider public, including discussions and training sessions?

Average score: 3.28

For many alternative media organizations, audience relationships extend beyond the publication and consumption of news.

Some outlets have adopted membership-based approaches that encourage ongoing interaction between journalists and their communities. Others organize discussions, training sessions, and public activities that provide opportunities for direct engagement.

The average score of 3.28 indicates that respondents recognize these initiatives as an important feature of alternative journalism.

Such activities can strengthen relationships with audiences and create opportunities for communities to participate more actively in public-interest journalism.

Does the public continue to regard the media as an important institution for protecting freedom of assembly and expression?

Average score: 3.40

The average score of 3.40 suggests that respondents continue to recognize the media's important role in supporting freedom of assembly and expression.

This finding is particularly significant in the context of concerns about declining democratic quality in Indonesia.

For alternative media, continued public recognition of journalism's democratic function creates opportunities to strengthen civic participation, amplify marginalized perspectives, and contribute to the protection of fundamental freedoms.

It also reinforces the importance of maintaining meaningful relationships between media organizations and the communities they serve.

Regulatory Protection and Freedom of Expression

Does the state provide adequate regulatory protection for freedom of assembly and expression?

Average score: 2.66

The average score of 2.66 indicates that respondents perceive significant weaknesses in the regulatory protection of freedom of assembly and expression.

These concerns are particularly relevant to alternative media organizations, whose reporting frequently addresses politically sensitive issues and challenges established centres of power.

Inadequate regulatory safeguards may increase the risks faced by journalists and media organizations, potentially undermining their ability to operate independently and sustain critical reporting.

Are regulations protecting freedom of assembly and expression, including protections for journalistic sources, effectively implemented?

Average score: 2.13

The lowest score within the public engagement indicator, **2.13**, concerns the effectiveness of regulations intended to protect freedom of assembly and expression.

Respondents expressed particular concern about whether existing protections are adequately implemented, including those affecting the safety of journalistic sources.

The protection of sources is essential to public-interest journalism, particularly when reporting involves sensitive information, vulnerable individuals, or potential abuses of power.

Weak implementation of legal safeguards can discourage public participation, expose sources to intimidation, and constrain journalists' ability to investigate matters of public concern.

The findings therefore suggest that strengthening regulatory frameworks alone may be insufficient without effective enforcement and institutional accountability.



c. Organizational Strength

Organizational strength: 2.7 (semi-viable)

Organizational strength recorded a national average score of **2.7**, placing it in the *semi-viable* category. Jakarta, Bandung, and Kupang were classified as *semi-viable*, while Makassar was the only location assessed as *less viable*.

Many alternative media organizations are founded and managed by journalist-activists with extensive experience in journalism and advocacy. This background provides a strong foundation for building organizations committed to public-interest reporting. However, experience alone does not guarantee strong institutional structures, particularly when it comes to employment rights, social security, and protection mechanisms for media workers.

The findings suggest that while alternative media have developed valuable organizational networks and professional expertise, their long-term viability depends on strengthening formal employment arrangements, institutional safeguards, and opportunities for developing future media professionals.

The following findings examine the eight questions included in the organizational strength indicator.

Employment Protection and Social Security

Do media workers, including general staff, freelancers, and content contributors, receive social security and health coverage through their media organizations or employers?

Average score: 2.53 — Semi-viable

The average score of 2.53 suggests that alternative media have made some progress in providing social security and health coverage, including through Indonesia's national social security system (*BPJS*) or comparable arrangements.

Across the four assessment locations, respondents indicated that these benefits are generally provided to journalists and other newsroom personnel. This is particularly significant given the limited financial resources available to many alternative outlets.

Nevertheless, the score remains close to the *less viable* threshold, indicating that employment protection is still fragile and requires further strengthening.

Are there government policies or programmes specifically designed to protect the employment rights of journalists, volunteer contributors, and informal creative workers?

Average score: 1.70 — Not viable

Government protection for the employment rights of journalists and other media workers received an average score of **1.70**, placing it in the *not viable* category.

This result points to a substantial gap in institutional protection, particularly for workers in smaller media organizations engaged in public-interest journalism.

Many alternative outlets have not completed the Press Council's verification process, creating additional challenges in obtaining formal recognition and institutional support.

Several have also experienced threats and intimidation while reporting, including digital attacks and visits by authorities. These incidents highlight the importance of effective legal and employment protections for journalists and other media workers.

Professional Associations and Institutional Networks

Do press organizations and media associations provide protection mechanisms or advocate for journalists' welfare?

Average score: 2.82 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.82 indicates that professional organizations and media associations are beginning to play a more active role in supporting alternative journalism. Although the inclusion of alternative media in established professional networks is relatively recent, several organizations have expanded their attention to the sector.

The Alliance of Independent Journalists (*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen*, AJI) continues to advocate for journalists' rights and protection. The Indonesian Cyber Media Association (*Asosiasi Media Siber Indonesia*, AMSI) has opened its membership to alternative outlets.

The Alternative Media Coalition (*Koalisi Media Alternatif*, KOMA), established in January 2025, also advocates for the recognition and protection of alternative media. These developments represent progress, although existing protection mechanisms remain insufficient.

Are there active associations or networks of alternative media at the national or regional level, supported by a broader institutional ecosystem?

Average score: 3.00 - Semi-viable

An average score of 3.00 reflects the continued development of alternative media networks and their supporting ecosystem.

Respondents across all four assessment locations reported that professional networks and collaboration among alternative outlets have expanded.

At the national level, KOMA has emerged as an important platform for collective advocacy and cooperation. With approximately **40 member outlets**, the coalition promotes legal protection for alternative journalism, collaborative reporting, and greater representation of public perspectives that receive limited attention in mainstream media.

These developments suggest that alternative media are increasingly strengthening their collective capacity rather than relying solely on individual organizational efforts.

To what extent do networks among alternative media organizations facilitate knowledge-sharing in management and organizational development?

Average score: 2.82 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.82 indicates that professional networks contribute to knowledge-sharing and organizational development among alternative media.

Through discussions, training, and collaborative initiatives, these networks provide opportunities for media practitioners to exchange experiences and address common operational challenges. AJI Indonesia represents one example of how professional networking can combine capacity development with advocacy.

KOMA also organizes organizational development classes for its members every two months, alongside collaborative reporting projects. These activities are particularly valuable for smaller outlets with limited resources to invest independently in organizational development.

Human Resources and Professional Capacity

Are qualified professionals available for alternative media organizations to recruit, including those with journalistic and non-journalistic expertise?

Average score: 3.00 - Semi-viable

The average score of 3.00 suggests that alternative media have some access to personnel with the skills needed to support their operations.

Staffing levels vary considerably. Some outlets operate with **one to five staff members**, others with **five to ten**, while larger organizations may have **ten to twenty**.

Outlets employing five to ten people typically have personnel responsible for financial management and public engagement alongside their editorial teams.

These non-editorial functions are increasingly important. Financial personnel help manage limited resources, while public engagement staff strengthen relationships with audiences and communities.

Such roles also support the broader mission of alternative media by connecting journalism with the public-interest values and community concerns that shaped these organizations.

How interested are university graduates in pursuing careers in journalism?

Average score: 2.50 - Less viable

Interest among university graduates in journalism careers received an average score of **2.50**, placing it in the *less viable* category.

Respondents indicated that journalism has become less attractive to young graduates amid changes in the media industry and digital employment landscape.

Demanding working hours, uncertain career progression, relatively low starting salaries, and the risks associated with field reporting are among the factors discouraging prospective journalists.

This presents a long-term challenge for alternative media, which already face difficulties attracting and retaining skilled professionals because of limited financial resources.

Without more attractive employment conditions and clearer professional development opportunities, recruiting the next generation of journalists may become increasingly difficult.

Are scholarships, internships, and fellowship programmes available to encourage young professionals to pursue careers in alternative media?

Average score: 2.53 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.53 suggests that opportunities exist for young professionals to gain experience in alternative media, although their availability remains limited. Many alternative outlets accept interns through formal scholarship or fellowship programmes, as well as independent internship arrangements.

These opportunities provide practical exposure to journalism and the management of small media organizations. The growth of start-up culture has also encouraged interest in understanding how independent media ventures operate. Meanwhile, alternative media have attracted increasing academic attention because of their involvement in public-interest issues and social advocacy.

Internships, fellowships, and research opportunities can therefore serve as important entry points for young people interested in alternative journalism. However, expanding these pathways and connecting them to sustainable employment opportunities will be essential to strengthening the sector's future workforce.



d. Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability: 2.4 (less viable)

Organizational strength recorded a national average score of **2.7**, placing it within the *semi-viable* category. Jakarta, Bandung, and Kupang fell within this category, while Makassar was classified as *less viable*.

Many alternative media organizations are established and managed by journalist-activists with extensive experience in journalism, advocacy, and community organizing. This background provides a strong foundation for building mission-driven organizations and maintaining their commitment to public-interest journalism.

However, professional experience and organizational commitment do not necessarily translate into well-established institutional structures. Significant challenges remain in providing social security, ensuring employment rights, and developing effective protection mechanisms for journalists and other media workers.

The findings suggest that while alternative media have developed valuable organizational capacities and professional networks, their long-term resilience depends on strengthening formal employment arrangements, institutional support, and opportunities for developing the next generation of media professionals.

The following findings examine these issues across the eight assessment questions included in the organizational strength indicator.

Employment Protection and Social Security

Do media workers, including permanent staff, freelancers, and content contributors, receive social security and health coverage through their media organizations or employers?

Average score: 2.53 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.53 suggests that alternative media organizations have made some progress in providing social security and health coverage to their workers.

Across the four assessment locations, respondents indicated that such benefits are generally available to both journalists and other newsroom personnel, including through Indonesia's national social security system (*BPJS*) or comparable arrangements.

This is particularly significant given the financial constraints under which many alternative outlets operate. Despite limited revenue and relatively low staff incomes, some organizations have made efforts to fulfil their responsibilities toward employee welfare.

Nevertheless, the score remains close to the *less viable* threshold, indicating that employment protection is still fragile and requires further institutional strengthening.

Are there government policies or programmes specifically designed to protect the employment rights of journalists, volunteer contributors, and informal creative workers?

Average score: 1.70 - Not viable

Government protection for the employment rights of journalists and other media workers received an average score of **1.70**, placing it in the *not viable* category.

This is the weakest result within the organizational strength indicator and points to a substantial gap in institutional protection for workers in alternative media.

Small newsrooms engaged in public-interest journalism are particularly vulnerable because they often investigate sensitive issues while operating with limited financial and legal resources.

Many alternative outlets have also not completed verification procedures administered by the Press Council (*Dewan Pers*), creating additional challenges in obtaining formal recognition and institutional support.

Several organizations have experienced threats and intimidation while carrying out their reporting, including digital attacks and visits by authorities.

These experiences reinforce the importance of effective legal and employment protections for journalists and other media workers, particularly those working in smaller and less formally established organizations.

Professional Associations and Institutional Networks

Do journalists' organizations and media associations provide protection mechanisms or advocate for journalists' welfare?

Average score: 2.82 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.82 indicates that professional organizations and media associations have begun to play a more active role in supporting alternative journalism.

Although recognition of alternative media within established professional associations is a relatively recent development, several organizations have expanded their attention to the sector.

The Alliance of Independent Journalists (*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen*, AJI) has continued to advocate for the rights and protection of journalists working in alternative media.

The Indonesian Cyber Media Association (*Asosiasi Media Siber Indonesia*, AMSI) has also opened its membership to alternative outlets, creating opportunities for broader institutional participation.

Another important development was the establishment of the Alternative Media Coalition (*Koalisi Media Alternatif*, KOMA) in January 2025. The coalition advocates for the protection and recognition of alternative media organizations.

These initiatives represent progress in strengthening institutional support, although the overall score suggests that existing protection mechanisms remain insufficient.

Are there active alternative media associations or networks at the national or regional level, supported by a broader institutional ecosystem?

Average score: 3.00 - Semi-viable

An average score of 3.00 reflects the continued development of alternative media networks and their supporting ecosystem.

Respondents across all four assessment locations reported that professional relationships and collaborative networks among alternative outlets have expanded.

At the national level, KOMA has emerged as an important platform for collective advocacy and cooperation. With approximately **40 member outlets**, the coalition works to strengthen legal protection for alternative journalism, encourage collaborative reporting, and amplify public perspectives that receive limited attention in mainstream media.

The development of these networks suggests that alternative media are increasingly moving beyond isolated organizational efforts toward collective approaches to institutional strengthening and public-interest journalism.

To what extent do networks among alternative media organizations facilitate knowledge-sharing in management and organizational development?

Average score: 2.82 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.82 indicates that professional networks contribute to knowledge-sharing and organizational capacity development among alternative media.

These networks provide opportunities for media managers and practitioners to exchange experiences, discuss operational challenges, and develop practical approaches to strengthening their organizations.

AJI Indonesia represents one example of how professional networking can combine capacity development with advocacy for alternative journalism.

KOMA has also introduced organizational development classes for its members, held every two months, alongside collaborative reporting initiatives.

Such activities are particularly valuable for smaller outlets that may lack the financial resources or specialist personnel required to develop management systems independently.

However, the score suggests that these initiatives have not yet developed into a sufficiently comprehensive support system for alternative media organizations.

Human Resources and Professional Capacity

Are qualified professionals available for alternative media organizations to recruit, including those with journalistic and non-journalistic expertise?

Average score: 3.00 — Semi-viable

The average score of 3.00 suggests that alternative media have some access to personnel with the professional skills required to support their operations.

Staffing levels vary considerably across organizations. Some outlets operate with only **one to five staff members**, while others employ **five to ten**, and a smaller number have teams of **ten to twenty**.

Organizations with five to ten staff members commonly have personnel responsible for financial management and public engagement alongside their editorial teams.

These non-editorial functions are increasingly important to organizational sustainability. Financial personnel support the management of limited resources, while public engagement staff help maintain relationships with audiences and communities.

Public engagement also serves a broader purpose for alternative media. It enables organizations to communicate the values of public-interest journalism, strengthen community participation, and maintain connections with the social movements and public concerns that shaped their establishment.

The findings therefore highlight the importance of developing balanced organizational teams with expertise extending beyond editorial production.

How interested are university graduates in pursuing careers in journalism?

Average score: 2.50 - Less viable

Interest among university graduates in pursuing journalism careers received an average score of **2.50**, placing it in the *less viable* category.

Respondents indicated that journalism has become a less attractive career option for many young graduates amid changes in the media industry and digital employment landscape.

Several factors contribute to this situation, including demanding working hours, uncertain career progression, relatively low starting salaries, and the risks associated with field reporting.

For many prospective employees, these conditions make journalism less appealing than other professional opportunities offering greater financial security or clearer career development pathways.

This trend presents a long-term challenge for alternative media organizations, which depend on attracting and retaining skilled professionals despite their limited financial resources.

Without improvements in employment conditions and career development opportunities, alternative media may face increasing difficulties in recruiting the next generation of journalists.

Are scholarships, internships, and fellowship programmes available to encourage young professionals to pursue careers in alternative media?

Average score: 2.53 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.53 suggests that opportunities exist for young professionals to gain experience in alternative media, although their availability remains limited.

Many alternative outlets accept interns, both through formal scholarship or fellowship programmes and through independent internship arrangements.

These opportunities allow participants to gain practical experience in journalism while learning how smaller media organizations operate.

The growth of start-up culture has also encouraged interest among young people in understanding how independent media ventures are established and managed.

At the same time, alternative media have attracted growing academic and professional attention because of their involvement in public-interest issues and social advocacy.

Internships, fellowships, and research opportunities can therefore serve as important entry points for young professionals interested in alternative journalism.

However, expanding these pathways and connecting them to more sustainable employment opportunities will be essential to strengthening the sector's future workforce.



e. Technology Adaptation

Technology adaptation: 2.6 (semi-viable)

Technology adaptation recorded a national average score of **2.6**, placing it within the *semi-viable* category (2.51–3.25), but only slightly above the *less viable* threshold.

This result reflects a fragile stage of digital adaptation among Indonesia's alternative media. Most participating newsrooms have adopted the basic technologies required to produce and distribute journalism. However, their access to reliable technological infrastructure, advanced digital security systems, and independent distribution channels remains limited.

These weaknesses have implications beyond operational efficiency. Alternative media frequently report on politically and economically sensitive issues, making their digital infrastructure and online presence particularly important to editorial independence. Without adequate technological safeguards, they may face heightened exposure to cyberattacks, online censorship, and restrictions imposed by digital platforms.

The findings therefore suggest that technological adoption has progressed further than technological resilience. While alternative media have demonstrated considerable adaptability, their long-term sustainability will depend on stronger infrastructure, investment in digital skills, and greater independence from dominant technology platforms.

The following findings examine these challenges across the seven sub-indicators and 13 assessment questions.

Access to Production Technologies and Distribution Platforms

Sub-indicator: Media organizations have access to the technologies and physical equipment required to produce and distribute information fairly and independently of political interests.

Do alternative media have adequate and up-to-date equipment for producing journalistic content?

Average score: 3.21 - Semi-viable

The average score of 3.21 indicates that alternative media generally have access to the essential equipment required for their daily journalistic operations.

Although the score remains within the *semi-viable* category, it approaches the *viable* threshold of 3.26.

This suggests that participating newsrooms have developed a reasonable degree of operational independence in content production. Basic equipment shortages no longer

appear to be the most significant barrier, and outlets are generally able to produce journalism without relying entirely on borrowed resources.

Nevertheless, the score does not necessarily indicate that newsrooms possess the advanced equipment or technological infrastructure needed to support more demanding forms of journalism over the long term.

Do alternative media have fair access to available production and distribution platforms?

Average score: 2.94 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.94 suggests that alternative media generally have technical access to major digital production and distribution channels, including social media, search engines, and news aggregation platforms.

However, access does not necessarily translate into equitable visibility or distribution.

The difference between the scores for production equipment (3.21) and platform access (2.94) points to a broader structural challenge: while alternative outlets can publish their content, they have limited control over how widely that content reaches audiences.

Digital distribution is increasingly shaped by commercial algorithms whose operation and decision-making processes are often opaque. This can disadvantage public-interest journalism, particularly when platforms prioritize engagement and advertising performance.

Alternative media may also be vulnerable to changes in platform policies, reduced content visibility, or restrictions affecting politically sensitive reporting.

The findings highlight the need to distinguish between the ability to access digital platforms and the ability to compete fairly within them.

Data Analytics and Audience Strategy

Sub-indicator: Media organizations have access to internal data analytics tools, including dashboards, audience insights, engagement metrics, and real-time performance information.

Do alternative media use data to inform their content planning and audience strategies?

Average score: 3.26 - Viable

The use of data for editorial planning and audience development received an average score of **3.26**, reaching the minimum threshold for the *viable* category.

This finding indicates that alternative media are increasingly incorporating audience data and performance metrics into their editorial and distribution practices.

Tools such as Google Analytics, engagement dashboards, and audience insights can help newsrooms understand how readers interact with content, identify issues that attract public attention, and make more informed distribution decisions.

This represents an important development for organizations traditionally guided by strong editorial commitments and public-interest missions.

However, the score sits precisely at the viable threshold, suggesting that data-informed practices may still require further institutional development.

The challenge is to strengthen analytical capacity without allowing traffic metrics or engagement targets to determine editorial priorities at the expense of independent, critical journalism.

Digital Security and Data Protection

Sub-indicator: Media organizations can prevent and respond to cyberattacks, protect digital assets and personal data, and implement appropriate security measures, including layered protection and compliance with data protection requirements.

Do alternative media have adequate digital security systems to protect their digital assets?

Average score: 2.83 - Semi-viable

Digital security received an average score of 2.83, indicating that alternative media have developed some awareness of cyber risks and adopted basic protective measures.

These may include two-factor authentication, password management, regular data backups, and website encryption through SSL/TLS certificates.

Such measures provide an important initial level of protection against common digital threats.

However, the score suggests that security arrangements remain uneven and are not always supported by comprehensive organizational policies, regular security assessments, or established incident-response procedures.

This is particularly concerning for outlets engaged in investigative reporting on politically or economically sensitive issues.

A coordinated cyberattack could disrupt newsroom operations, compromise sensitive information, or force an organization to seek emergency technical assistance from external press freedom networks.

Strengthening digital security therefore requires moving beyond basic protective practices toward systematic organizational preparedness.

Technological Innovation and Staff Development

Sub-indicator: Media organizations actively monitor technological developments, experiment with new tools, and adapt their production and distribution practices.

Do alternative media regularly experiment with new technologies in content production and distribution?

Average score: 3.21 - Semi-viable

The average score of 3.21 reflects a relatively strong willingness among alternative media organizations to explore and adopt new technologies.

Despite limited budgets and small teams, many alternative newsrooms demonstrate flexibility and creativity in responding to changes in digital journalism.

This adaptability is an important organizational strength, allowing outlets to experiment with new production tools and distribution methods without relying on large institutional structures.

However, the score remains just below the *viable* threshold.

The findings suggest that technological experimentation is not always supported by sustained research and development. Innovation may depend on individual staff members, informal learning, or trial-and-error approaches rather than an established organizational strategy.

To strengthen long-term technological resilience, alternative media need to translate this willingness to experiment into more systematic innovation practices.

Do alternative media allocate adequate resources to research, development, and technology training for staff?

Average score: 2.57 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.57 places investment in research, development, and technology training near the lower boundary of the *semi-viable* category.

This finding reveals a significant gap between newsrooms' willingness to experiment with technology (3.21) and their capacity to invest in the skills and resources needed to sustain technological adaptation.

In many alternative outlets, digital competencies are developed through self-directed learning or participation in training programmes organized by donors, journalists' associations, and media development organizations.

Dedicated organizational budgets for technology research and staff development remain limited.

For newsrooms operating under persistent financial pressure, immediate reporting expenses and personnel costs often take priority over longer-term investment.

Without consistent support for technological learning, organizations risk falling behind as digital tools, distribution systems, and security threats continue to evolve.

The findings therefore highlight the importance of making technology training and development a regular organizational priority rather than an occasional activity.

Audience Digital Literacy and Online Participation

Sub-indicator: Audiences have sufficient media literacy to participate constructively in online discussions, assess information critically, and follow responsible digital communication practices.

Are audiences able to engage critically and constructively in online discussions while respecting digital communication ethics?

Average score: 2.70 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.70 suggests that alternative media have begun to develop audience communities capable of engaging in substantive public discussion.

However, the overall capacity for critical and constructive online participation remains limited.

Strengthening this capacity requires more than providing comment sections or social media channels. Media organizations also need to encourage informed discussion, establish clear community guidelines, and create spaces where audiences can exchange perspectives responsibly.

Moderated forums, community discussion groups, and participatory journalism initiatives could help support healthier forms of engagement.

Media literacy activities and the involvement of experienced community members may also contribute to more constructive online conversations and greater resilience against misinformation and polarization.

Do audiences actively seek credible news sources and possess basic independent fact-checking skills?

Average score: 2.60 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.60 indicates that audiences' ability to identify credible information and independently verify news remains relatively weak.

Although some audiences of alternative media demonstrate critical awareness and seek information from trusted independent sources, these practices are not yet sufficiently widespread.

Many people continue to encounter news primarily through social media feeds, where information is often consumed quickly and without systematic verification.

Limited familiarity with practical fact-checking techniques, such as comparing multiple sources, conducting reverse image searches, or consulting official documents, can further increase vulnerability to misinformation.

For alternative media, strengthening audience verification skills represents an opportunity to extend their public-interest mission beyond producing reliable journalism to helping citizens assess information independently.

Do audiences understand basic digital security principles and critically recognize biased or manipulative media narratives?

Average score: 2.64 - Semi-viable

The average score of 2.64 suggests that audiences have some awareness of information manipulation, political propaganda, and biased media narratives.

However, this awareness does not necessarily extend to practical digital security and privacy protection.

Readers may recognize misleading framing while remaining unfamiliar with the risks associated with personal data exposure, digital footprints, doxing, or online intimidation.

These vulnerabilities are particularly relevant when audiences participate in discussions about politically sensitive issues.

Alternative media could help address these gaps by incorporating accessible digital security education into their public engagement activities.

Practical guidance on account protection, privacy settings, secure communication, and responsible online participation could strengthen audience safety while supporting more informed civic engagement.

Digital Infrastructure and Equitable Access

Sub-indicator: Digital infrastructure and services are distributed equitably, enabling citizens across different regions to access digital content and communication technologies.

Is digital infrastructure, including electricity, transmission facilities, and broadband internet, sufficiently and equitably available to support access to media content?

Average score: 2.30 - Less viable

The average score of **2.30** places digital infrastructure availability within the *less viable* category.

This finding highlights persistent inequalities in access to the infrastructure required for reliable digital communication.

Although mobile connectivity has expanded, communities outside major urban centres may continue to face unstable electricity supplies, limited broadband coverage, weak network signals, and high connectivity costs.

These conditions restrict audiences' ability to access digital journalism consistently, particularly content requiring substantial bandwidth, such as investigative documentaries, interactive graphics, and multimedia reporting.

The findings demonstrate that technological resilience depends not only on the capabilities of individual newsrooms but also on the quality and accessibility of the infrastructure available to the communities they serve.

Is internet access stable, affordable, and supported by modern broadband infrastructure?

Average score: 2.30 - Less viable

Internet stability, affordability, and broadband quality also received an average score of **2.30**, indicating significant barriers to equitable digital access.

In areas with limited fixed broadband infrastructure, audiences may depend heavily on prepaid mobile data and experience inconsistent network performance.

The cost of connectivity can influence how people consume information, encouraging them to prioritize essential communication and lower-bandwidth content over longer articles, interactive reporting, or documentary videos.

These conditions may limit the reach of alternative journalism, particularly among audiences outside major cities.

Improving access to reliable and affordable internet services is therefore an important external condition for strengthening media viability and ensuring that quality journalism can reach diverse communities.

Platform Algorithms, Revenue Sharing, and Institutional Fairness

Sub-indicator: Digital platform algorithms operate transparently and fairly, while regulatory arrangements support equitable relationships between news organizations and technology platforms.

Are digital platform algorithms transparent and fair, including in revenue-sharing arrangements that support the financial development of local media?

Average score: 2.02 - Less viable

The average score of **2.02** reveals substantial concerns about algorithmic transparency and the fairness of revenue-sharing arrangements between digital platforms and local media.

This result reflects the unequal relationship between smaller news organizations and dominant technology companies.

Alternative media depend on digital platforms to reach audiences but have limited influence over the algorithms that determine content visibility and distribution.

Changes in these systems may occur without sufficient transparency, creating uncertainty for organizations seeking to maintain consistent audience reach.

At the same time, existing digital advertising and revenue-sharing arrangements are perceived as providing limited financial returns to smaller news outlets.

These conditions reinforce the need for alternative media to reduce excessive dependence on traffic-driven revenue models.

Developing memberships, direct audience contributions, community-supported funding, and other forms of diversified income could help strengthen financial independence while reducing exposure to changes in platform policies.

Do digital platforms provide useful performance analytics and funding programmes that support journalism?

Average score: 2.38 - Less viable

The average score of **2.38** suggests that the analytical tools and financial support programmes offered by major digital platforms do not adequately meet the needs of alternative and local media.

Although platforms provide performance dashboards and audience metrics, these tools often emphasize reach, clicks, and engagement rather than the broader social impact of public-interest journalism.

For alternative outlets, evaluating success requires more than measuring traffic. It also involves understanding how reporting contributes to public awareness, community participation, and democratic accountability.

The findings suggest a need for more relevant analytical tools, accessible funding opportunities, and support mechanisms that recognize the distinctive purposes and operating conditions of alternative journalism.

Do digital platforms maintain effective communication with media organizations and manage news distribution algorithms fairly?

Average score: 2.19 - Less viable

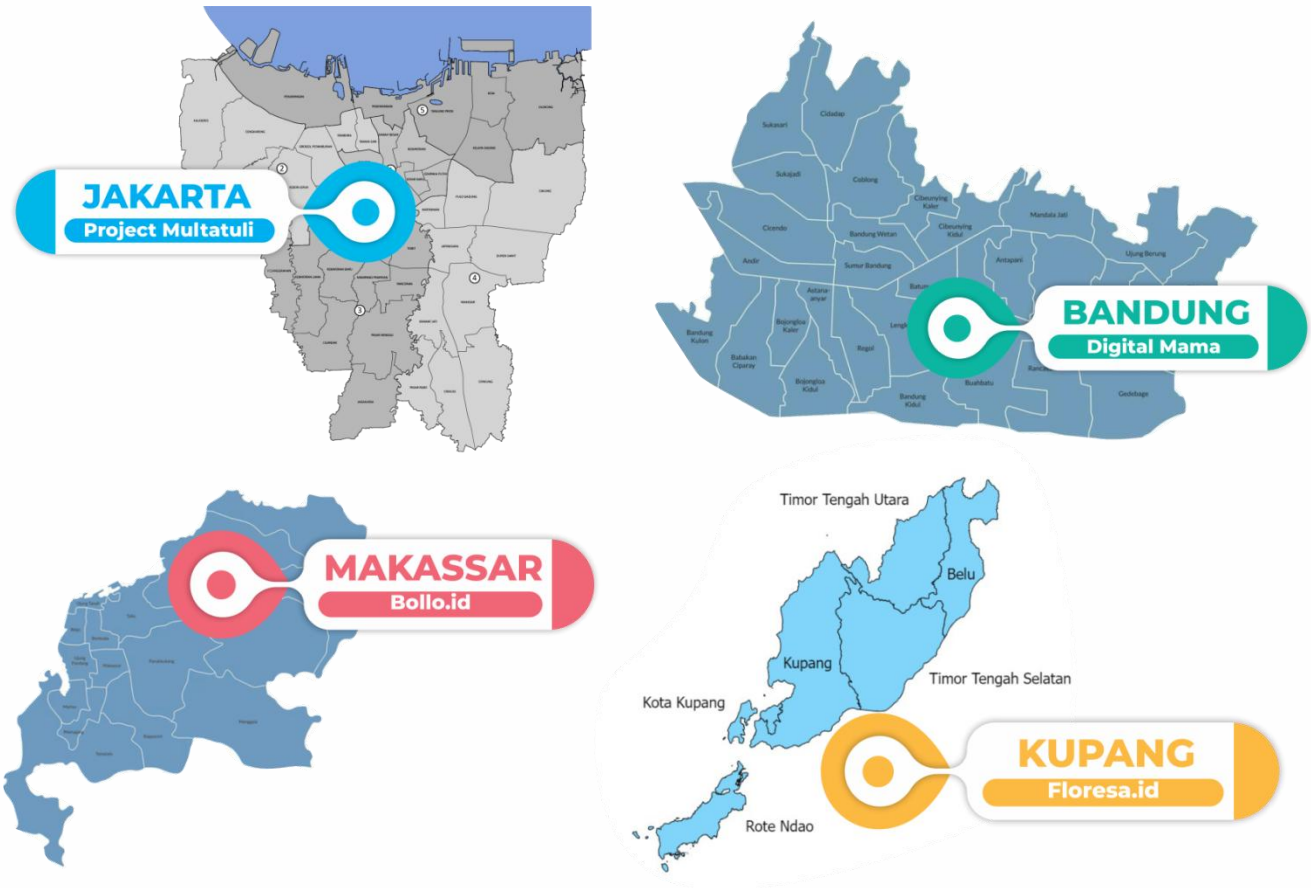
Communication between digital platforms and alternative media received an average score of **2.19**, indicating significant weaknesses in platform accountability and institutional relationships.

Respondents identified limited opportunities for direct communication with major technology platforms, particularly when media organizations experience changes in content visibility or distribution.

Communication may rely heavily on automated notifications, leaving smaller newsrooms with few opportunities to seek clarification or resolve problems.

This imbalance creates uncertainty for organizations that depend on external platforms to distribute their journalism.

More transparent communication channels, accessible support mechanisms, and fairer processes for managing content distribution would help reduce these vulnerabilities.



Chapter IV

Conclusions and Recommendations

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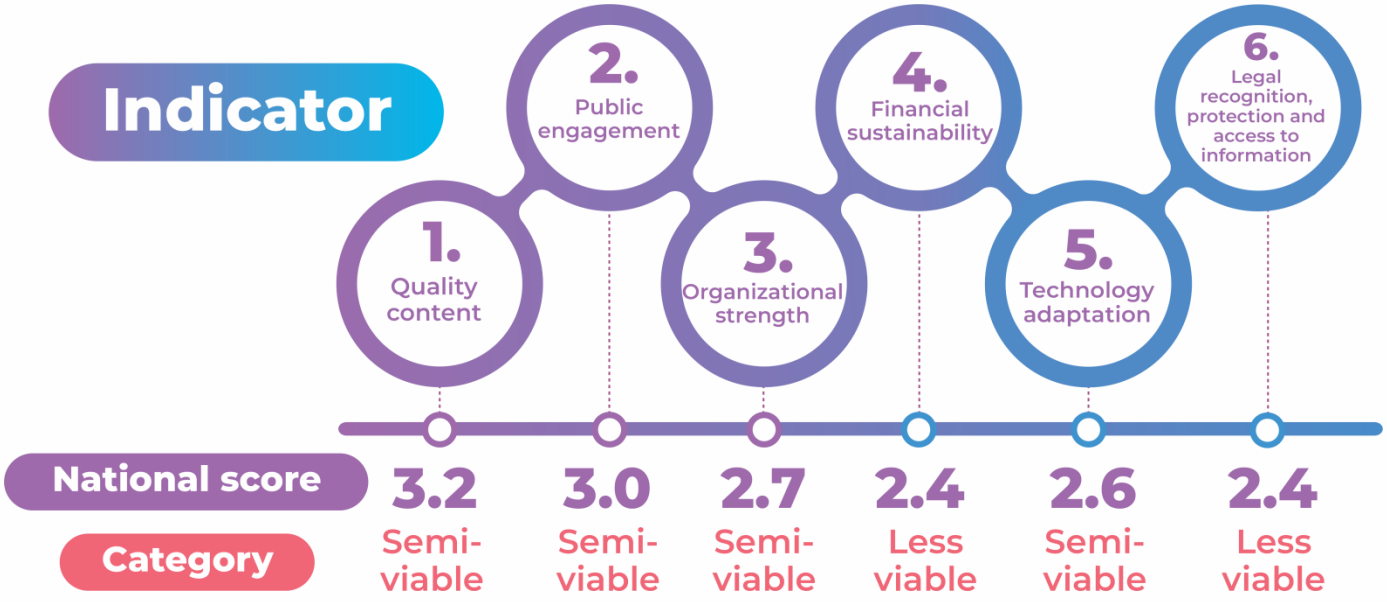
Conclusions

The pilot assessment reveals that Indonesia's alternative media remain vulnerable despite their strong commitment to public-interest journalism and democratic values. None of the six Media Viability Indicators (MVI) reached the *viable* category, indicating that the sector continues to face significant challenges to its long-term sustainability.

Four indicators were classified as *semi-viable*: quality content, public engagement, organizational strength, and technology adaptation. The remaining two, financial sustainability and legal recognition, protection, and access to information, were classified as *less viable*.

These findings highlight a central tension in Indonesia's alternative media ecosystem. While many outlets demonstrate strong editorial independence, meaningful public engagement, and considerable organizational adaptability, these strengths are not yet matched by adequate financial resources, institutional safeguards, or a sufficiently supportive operating environment.

Infographic 6
Scores at a Glance



(Source: compiled from the assessment findings in Chapter III)

1. Quality content

Quality content emerged as the strongest indicator, with a national average score of **3.2**. Although classified as *semi-viable*, the result approaches the *viable* threshold of 3.26. Bandung recorded the highest score at 3.5, followed by Kupang at 3.3.

The findings confirm that alternative media have consistently placed quality, public-interest journalism at the centre of their organizational missions. Editorial independence, democratic values, and respect for human rights are deeply embedded in their professional identities and reporting practices.

However, these commitments are not always supported by formal editorial guidelines, standard operating procedures, or internal evaluation mechanisms. Externally, building sustained public demand for quality journalism remains a challenge.

Strengthening this indicator therefore requires both the institutionalization of established editorial principles and continued efforts to expand public appreciation of independent journalism.

2. Public engagement

Public engagement recorded a national average score of **3.0**, placing it within the *semi-viable* category. Bandung achieved the highest score at 3.4, followed by Jakarta at 3.0.

The findings demonstrate that public engagement is an important strategy through which alternative media strengthen their relevance, extend their impact, and explore opportunities for financial support.

Unlike approaches that limit audience interaction to comments on published content, alternative media often develop more participatory relationships through community discussions, public meetings, and collaborative activities.

Nevertheless, limited staffing, insufficiently documented engagement procedures, and weaknesses in regulatory protection continue to constrain these efforts.

Sustaining meaningful public participation will require stronger organizational systems and a more enabling environment for freedom of assembly and expression.

3. Organizational strength

Organizational strength received a national average score of **2.7**, placing it in the *semi-viable* category. Jakarta, Bandung, and Kupang were classified as *semi-viable*, while Makassar fell within the *less viable* category.

Many alternative media organizations are founded and managed by journalist-activists with extensive experience in reporting, advocacy, and community organizing.

This experience provides a valuable foundation for developing mission-driven organizations and professional networks. However, it does not necessarily translate into strong institutional arrangements or comprehensive employment protections.

The assessment identifies continuing weaknesses in social security coverage, employment rights, and protection mechanisms for journalists and other media workers.

These challenges suggest that organizational resilience depends not only on experienced leadership and professional commitment but also on the development of formal governance structures, adequate staff welfare provisions, and sustainable career pathways.

4. Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability was among the two weakest indicators, with a national average score of **2.4**, placing it in the *less viable* category.

The results varied across assessment locations:

- **Jakarta:** 2.1 - Less viable
- **Bandung:** 2.8 - Semi-viable
- **Makassar:** 2.0 - Less viable
- **Kupang:** 2.6 - Semi-viable

These findings indicate that financial insecurity remains one of the most significant threats to the survival of alternative journalism in Indonesia.

Many alternative outlets have yet to establish stable and diversified business models. Their opportunities to generate revenue are constrained by limited access to advertising and sponsorship, competition with established mainstream media, and dependence on a relatively narrow range of funding sources.

Grants remain important for sustaining operations, but excessive reliance on external funding can create uncertainty and limit long-term financial planning.

The findings therefore point to an urgent need for alternative financing mechanisms, stronger financial management capacity, and business models that reflect the distinctive missions and operating conditions of alternative media.

5. Technology adaptation

Technology adaptation recorded a national average score of **2.6**, placing it near the lower boundary of the *semi-viable* category.

The result reflects a fragile stage of technological development. Most alternative newsrooms have adopted basic digital tools for producing and distributing journalism, but many lack the infrastructure, resources, and technical capacity required to maintain long-term technological independence.

Digital security is a particular concern. Without sufficiently robust infrastructure, systematic security procedures, and trained personnel, alternative media remain vulnerable to cyberattacks, content restrictions, and disruptions to their digital distribution channels.

These risks are especially significant for outlets reporting on sensitive political and economic issues.

The findings also highlight the unequal relationship between alternative media and dominant digital platforms, whose algorithms and distribution policies can substantially influence the visibility and reach of independent journalism.

Although alternative outlets have demonstrated adaptability and a willingness to experiment with technology, these strengths have not yet translated into comprehensive technological resilience.

Sustained investment in digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and staff development will therefore be essential to preventing further vulnerability.

6. Legal recognition, protection and access to information

Legal recognition, protection, and access to information recorded a national average score of **2.4**, placing it within the *less viable* category.

This result reflects continuing difficulties faced by alternative media in securing formal institutional recognition, obtaining effective legal protection, exercising freedom of expression, and accessing public information.

One significant challenge concerns the Press Council's verification procedures. These include administrative requirements relating to legal status, organizational structure, employment arrangements, and journalistic content, followed by factual verification.

For smaller alternative outlets operating with limited resources and unconventional organizational structures, meeting these requirements can be difficult.

Inadequate recognition and protection increase their exposure to threats, intimidation, and interference.

The broader environment for press freedom also remains concerning. AJI Indonesia's 2025 report documented **89 cases of violence against journalists**, including **29 digital attacks**.

Concerns about digital freedom have also prompted legal challenges. On **22 July 2026**, AJI Indonesia, SAFEnet, Magdalene.co, and Project Multatuli filed a judicial review challenging provisions of Government Regulation No. 71/2019 concerning content moderation, arguing that they threatened freedom of expression and the right to information.

These developments reinforce the importance of an enabling legal and regulatory environment for independent journalism.

Ultimately, the survival of alternative media cannot depend solely on their internal capabilities. It also requires effective legal safeguards, equitable access to information, and digital governance policies that protect rather than restrict journalistic independence.

Recommendations



The assessment identifies several priorities for strengthening the long-term viability of alternative media in Indonesia. These require coordinated action by media organizations, professional associations, policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders within the journalism ecosystem.

1. Preserve Quality Journalism and Strengthen Public-Interest Collaboration

Alternative media should continue to protect the quality and independence of their journalism as the foundation of public trust.

This includes maintaining rigorous editorial standards, strengthening investigative reporting, and expanding collaborative journalism initiatives that allow organizations to share expertise, resources, and distribution networks.

Greater attention should also be given to connecting journalistic reporting with public advocacy and civic engagement, while maintaining editorial independence and professional integrity.

The relationship between journalism and social advocacy is a distinctive feature of many alternative media organizations in Indonesia. When supported by clear ethical standards, this approach can strengthen the public impact of reporting and deepen relationships with the communities these outlets serve.

Alternative media should also formalize their editorial commitments through written policies, operational guidelines, and evaluation mechanisms to ensure consistency as their organizations develop.

2. Strengthen Legal Recognition, Institutional Protection, and Financial Sustainability

The two weakest indicators, financial sustainability and legal recognition, protection, and access to information, require particular attention from actors beyond individual media organizations.

Legal and institutional protection

The government and the Press Council should work toward a more inclusive framework for recognizing and protecting alternative media.

Verification procedures should be reviewed to ensure that legitimate alternative journalism organizations can obtain appropriate recognition without being disadvantaged by their size, limited resources, or nonprofit operating models.

Alternative media should have access to legal protections and institutional assistance comparable to those available to established mainstream news organizations.

Regulatory reforms should also address laws and policies that may restrict freedom of expression or expose journalists and their sources to unnecessary risks.

Relevant provisions of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (*UU ITE*), the Personal Data Protection Law, and related legislation should be reviewed to ensure that their implementation does not undermine press freedom, journalistic independence, or the public's right to information.

Financial sustainability

A dedicated **journalism trust or endowment fund** should be considered as a mechanism for providing more stable, independent support to public-interest journalism.

Such a fund could help reduce excessive dependence on international donors, commercial sponsors, and government funding arrangements that may create political or editorial risks.

Its governance would need to safeguard editorial independence, ensure transparency, and provide equitable opportunities for smaller alternative outlets.

Financial support should also extend beyond direct funding to include capacity-building initiatives in financial management, revenue diversification, organizational development, and business model innovation.

Alternative media should be supported in developing financing approaches suited to their public-interest missions, including memberships, subscriptions, community contributions, and other sustainable revenue streams.

International partnerships and professional networks can further contribute through knowledge-sharing, technical assistance, and opportunities for institutional cooperation.

Across these areas, the state's role should be to establish supportive regulatory and infrastructural conditions without compromising the independence of journalism.

3. Expand Public Participation and Strengthen Technological Resilience

Alternative media should continue developing participatory relationships with their audiences and communities.

Reader and subscriber communities, collaborative reporting, peer journalism, and other forms of public involvement can strengthen audience loyalty, deepen civic engagement, and create opportunities for financial support.

However, these activities need to be supported by adequate staffing, clear organizational procedures, and mechanisms for evaluating their effectiveness.

At the same time, technology adaptation requires more systematic attention.

Although many alternative outlets have demonstrated considerable flexibility in adopting digital tools, their technological capabilities remain uneven, particularly in digital security and the prevention of cyberattacks.

Training and investment should therefore prioritize cybersecurity, secure data management, digital infrastructure, and the development of staff competencies.

Media development organizations, professional associations, and funding partners can play an important role in helping smaller newsrooms access technical assistance and build sustainable digital systems.

Strengthening technological resilience will help alternative media protect their operations, maintain editorial independence, and respond more effectively to changes in the digital environment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Assessments

The principal limitation of this assessment is its scope. As a pilot study, it examined alternative media in four selected locations: Jakarta, Bandung, Kupang, and Makassar.

The findings provide an initial picture of the conditions affecting participating outlets and their operating environments, but they should not be interpreted as a comprehensive assessment of all media organizations across Indonesia.

Future assessments should expand their geographical coverage and include a broader range of alternative and mainstream media organizations.

A more extensive assessment would provide a stronger evidence base for understanding differences in media viability across regions, organizational models, and types of journalism.

It would also support the development of more targeted interventions to strengthen the sustainability of independent, public-interest journalism in Indonesia.

The central conclusion of this pilot assessment is that alternative media have demonstrated strong editorial commitment and considerable adaptability, but their sustainability remains constrained by financial insecurity, institutional vulnerabilities, and unequal conditions within the wider media ecosystem. Strengthening their future requires not only more resilient newsrooms but also a legal, economic, and technological environment in which independent journalism can thrive.

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Further Reading

The following resources provide additional perspectives, conceptual frameworks, and practical guidance for understanding and assessing media viability.

- **Measuring Beyond Money: The Media Viability Indicators (MVIs)** - *DW Akademie*. Presents a comprehensive framework for assessing media viability across five interconnected dimensions: economics, politics, content and expertise, technology, and community. It provides a structured approach to collecting, analyzing, and comparing evidence on the conditions affecting media organizations and their operating environments.

- **Rethinking Media Viability in the Digital Age** - *DW Akademie*. This discussion paper examines media viability beyond financial performance, emphasizing the wider structural and institutional conditions that shape media sustainability. It also explores how digital transformation has disrupted traditional media business models and created new challenges for independent journalism.

- **Draft Indicators for Media Viability** - *UNESCO*. Proposes an additional category of indicators to complement UNESCO's existing Media Development Indicators (MDIs), with particular attention to the economic, financial, and business conditions affecting media organizations. The proposed framework contributes to broader efforts to assess the sustainability of media systems.

- **The Media Viability Manifesto** (mediaviabilitymanifesto.org) - *Global media development community*. Outlines a shared framework for strengthening media viability through coordinated action, context-sensitive approaches, and collaboration among stakeholders. The manifesto emphasizes the importance of developing solutions that respond to local conditions while advancing a common understanding of the challenges facing independent media.

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A report on Media Viability in Indonesia



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