



INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT

# Paving the way for good journalism

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IMS 

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International Media Support (IMS) is a non-profit organisation that works to support local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition. Across four continents IMS helps to strengthen professional journalism and ensure that media can operate in challenging circumstances.

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Cover photo: Detained Myanmar journalist Wa Lone speaks to reporters while escorted by police to a court for his ongoing trial in Yangon on 20 April 2018. Two Reuters journalists were arrested while investigating a massacre of Rohingya Muslims, pushing ahead with a controversial prosecution that has sparked global outrage. Photo: Sai Aung Main/AFP

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A young girl wearing a blue hijab is shown in profile, looking down at a smartphone she is holding in her hands. She is in a dimly lit room, possibly at night. To her left, there is a window with blue wooden shutters. The room's walls are a dark, textured color. The overall mood is quiet and focused.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA SUPPORT

PAVING THE WAY FOR GOOD JOURNALISM

International Media Support is a non-profit organisation that works to support local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition.

We support the production and distribution of media content that meets internationally recognised ethical standards and work to ensure safe media environments with sound laws for journalists. We do this because citizens and leaders need information they can trust to make the decisions that develop their societies in a peaceful and democratic way.

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# Uniting to protect good journalism

"Just breathe." Those were the words of a good colleague in response to the question of how he survived almost two decades in prison under an authoritarian regime in Myanmar for practicing his right to freedom of speech. His answer was simple, but powerful. Because in it lies the motivation of the individual to power on and guard the human rights that are his – and ours. Rights to freedom of speech, media freedom and access to information that citizens of the world have gained and agreed on collectively. Rights, which in 2017 – 2018 unfortunately appeared to be in recession, in developing countries and in some of the world's oldest democracies.

Media freedom and the right to freedom of expression cannot be viewed in isolation of the global risks our world faces today. In fact, these rights are inherently born out of the regional and global frameworks that emerged after the Second World War: from the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the Sustainable Development Goals. They define the standards by which we abide and inform the goals for which we strive. But global wealth disparity and inequality, interconnected with other factors such as migration, conflict and anti-establishment populism are challenging the very core of these institutions. We see a shift in the focus of governments from an outward-looking stance seeking global agreements to a more inward-looking approach that seeks to protect internal domestic interests first.

In IMS we will continue to do our part in looking outwards, to help protect and strengthen the institutions of global cooperation that we are part of and which provide a global framework. We do this by working both at the local level and at the global level. Our push to boost the UNESCO-led UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity through our Global Safety Programme and through an alliance of like-minded media freedom organisations is one such example. Another is

our part in the Global Network Initiative, a forum for global ICT companies like Google and Facebook and human rights groups that holds them to account on freedom of expression and privacy issues.

This year's Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index also speaks of a global democratic demise, pointing to dwindling popular participation in politics; declining trust in institutions; and a widening gap between political elites and electorates. These are all issues that balanced, reliable and critical media have a role in addressing – the type of media and journalism that IMS seeks to strengthen and promote.

*In IMS we will continue to do our part in looking outwards, to help protect and strengthen the institutions of global cooperation that we are part of and which provide a global framework.*

But good quality journalism faces a crisis in the onslaught of disinformation, increasing villainization by power holders and extremist groups, falling revenues and radical changes in news consumption in the face of new online platforms and social networks. In this year's Annual Report, we seek to showcase some of the innovative approaches employed by our partners in Asia, Africa and the Middle East to grow and engage with audiences while ensuring quality content and financial sustainability.

Good, critical journalism may come at great cost to the individual journalist. Already now, 2018 is set to become a bloody year for journalists with multiple, targeted attacks on media workers in especially Afghanistan, but also in other parts of Asia, the Middle East and South America. IMS' analysis in its publication *Defending Journalism* around national safety mechanisms and best practices shows how



Jesper Højberg, IMS Executive Director. Photo: Rasmus Steen

different approaches to journalists' safety have played out in seven countries around the world. None of these approaches are a one-size-fits-all. But what they do have in common is a comprehensive approach that involves actors from state to local authorities, media and civil society. In this year's report, we look at how local experiences can provide input to global solutions in efforts to improve the safety of journalists.

Attention to the unacceptable plight of female journalists in terms of safety and harassment as well as online cyberbullying especially came to light in the wake of the global #MeToo campaign. As our work with female journalists in countries like Jordan, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Somalia shows, harassment of female journalists within the media sector cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of gender discrimination in society. Harsh economic conditions with lower salaries for women and cultural barriers that do not support women in media jobs are all factors that contribute to the vulnerability of women in the journalism trade. There are however ways in which to push for change in practice and behaviour, as we illustrate in this year's annual report.

In a so-called post-truth era where information is used to misinform, confuse or influence adversaries

and allies through media and new technologies, the work of IMS becomes even more important. As the case of Ukraine shows in this report, disinformation is indeed a key feature of hybrid warfare – but has also come to dominate media discourse. Promoting quality journalism and the environments that enable this, as well as bolstering the mechanisms that seek to counter mis- and disinformation, can contribute to fighting this trend.

However, to make significant impact, government actors, tech companies, media, civil society, and news consumers must unite in a concerted approach to safeguard the human rights and democratic development we have fought hard to achieve. The time is not to look inwards, but to engage globally.

Jesper Højberg  
IMS Executive Director

# Where we work

## ■ Programme countries and ■ countries with smaller regionally linked projects

These are countries with full-scale IMS programmes, as well as countries in which we had small-scale activities that are tied to our regional engagement in the Middle East and North Africa.

Africa	Asia	Eastern Europe, the Caucasus & Central Asia	Middle East & North Africa
1 Burkina Faso	6 Afghanistan	11 Russia	13 Algeria
2 Mali	7 Myanmar	12 Serbia	14 Egypt
3 Niger	8 Pakistan		15 Iraq
4 Somalia	9 Philippines		16 Jordan
5 Zimbabwe	10 Sri Lanka		17 Lebanon
			18 Libya
			19 Morocco
			20 Palestine
			21 Syria
			22 Tunisia
			23 Yemen

## ■ Thematic countries and countries with short-term engagements

These countries include those in which IMS was engaged primarily with thematic issues such as safety of journalists or investigative journalism, and countries where we have short-term engagements. These countries are:

Cambodia, Colombia, The Gambia, Indonesia, Liberia, Kenya, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Ukraine, Venezuela

**Venezuela:** IMS, together with the NGO Expresión Libre, has initiated a series of dialogue meetings between government-friendly and opposition media outlets to promote mutual ground for future news coverage.

**Colombia:** IMS's partner FLIP is advocating for the need for media houses in high-risk zones to incorporate safety protocols into their business models.

**West Africa:** Media and police dialogues organised by IMS and Media Foundation for West Africa in Ghana (2016), Liberia (2017) and Sierra Leone (2018) to promote better relations during elections resulted in a best practices report published in April 2018.

**Niger:** IMS and CSC (le Conseil Supérieur de la Communication) have secured the adoption of a new law on advertising, which will be decisive in how media can access advertising revenue.

**Investigative journalism:** New Google-supported digital platform developed with Danwatch strengthens reach of locally produced investigative journalism by linking up the journalists with international media outlets.

**Africa:** The Migrant Voices project is training journalists from four African subregions in reporting on migration issues, lending a voice to migrants. More than 60 print, online, audio and video productions have been published.

**Tunisia:** Le Syndicat National des Journalistes Tunisiens (SNJT) has developed the 'Collective Agreement for the media in Tunisia', which, once finalised, will provide a framework that guarantees journalists' rights.

**ARIJ:** In 2017, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) supported a total of 65 investigations out of which 14 were cross-border. One story led to talks in the Lebanese Parliament to draft a new law to end child marriage.

**Syria:** Together with Syrian media partners, IMS designed and carried out the Syria In Depth journalism project. Over six months, 16 Syrian journalists based inside and outside Syria were trained and cooperated on investigative stories on issues from corruption to environment with subsequent national and international coverage.

**Russia:** In the lead-up to Russia's 2018 presidential elections, an IMS-supported team monitored Russian media's election reporting showing an imbalanced coverage in favour of President Putin's government.

**Iraq:** A continuous message of peace is being spread by a Mosul-based media network (neproo.net/blogs) of 30 male and female journalists representing all ethnic and religious minorities.

**Myanmar:** The election of the first ever Community Radio Council in the Ayeyarwady region will help secure better access to radio broadcasted information for the region's rural population.

**Pakistan:** The Safety Hubs initiative for journalists in Pakistan run by Freedom Network is expanding its base from five to eight press clubs. The five clubs alone cover more than half of the country's 20,000 journalists.

**Afghanistan:** Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) was named the International Press Institute's 2017 Free Media Pioneer for its work to support the Afghan journalist and media community.



# Media goes glocal: Local experiences provide global solutions to safety

By Robert Shaw

Too often attempts have been made to unilaterally push safety policies and resolutions for journalists from a global level down to the national one. Too often assumptions are made based on what should work as opposed to what does work.

Here we take a critical look at one of the oldest national safety mechanisms and one of the newest national safety mechanisms to see how the 21<sup>st</sup> century global safety debate has evolved and how local experiences can and should lead this debate.

## BRIDGING THE GAPS

With nine UN resolutions on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity passed over the past five years, the first steps have been taken to raise these issues at a global level, but still this is not translating into enough tangible action on the ground at national level. In fact, it took four years for HRC Resolution 33/2<sup>1</sup> to break new ground, by calling on States to take action on specific issues including arbitrary detentions, encryption, digital security and gender-based attacks. UN Member States now need to show their commitment to ensuring these resolutions and monitoring reports translate into operational change on the ground in their respective countries, so that journalists may do their jobs as society's watchdogs without fearing for their safety.

As part of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, IMS' analysis in its recent *Defending Journalism*<sup>2</sup> publication around safety mechanisms and best practices, show how different approaches to journalist safety have played out in countries like Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. Combined, the safety efforts in these countries have directly rescued more than 1,000 journalists menaced by terrorists, other armed groups, criminal networks and powerful individuals, many in positions of authority in their countries. They saved hundreds of others from prison or crippling fines,

pushed for prosecutions in cases where journalists have been killed or attacked and in other ways improved security for journalists.

These countries still remain immensely dangerous for media practitioners. Many of the initiatives featured have flaws. They struggle with a lack of capacity and political will to address impunity, volatile political and security environments, weak or corrupt law and order institutions and divisions within media communities, among other hurdles. But their accomplishments make the case that concerted efforts through national coalitions and partnerships or under state-led safety mechanisms can build a safer climate in which the media can work. They exhibit a variety of good practices to inform comprehensive, action-oriented strategies for stakeholders to adapt.

This comprehensive approach means involving a wide range of actors from the state and the media, but also building on a wide range of strategic measures – from short-term training activities to building national and regional safety alliances and state-led safety mechanisms – tailored to the local context. Until recently, this has not been sufficiently recognised or pursued aggressively enough by neither the UN nor governments and international media support organisations. Much of this work involves identifying constantly changing gaps in these systems and working with local partners to connect the dots so these gaps can be either bridged or closed.

## RETHINKING THE COLOMBIAN "MODEL"

Between 2015 and 2017, in Colombia, IMS' long-term partner the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa known by the Spanish acronym, FLIP, decided to both break away from the much-touted state-led safety mechanism set up at the turn of the century and at the same time focus more on embedding safety within the newsrooms of the Andean country's media.



In July 2017, International Media Support and the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee and SEPAR International conducted a three-day 'war reporters' course. Afghan journalists were delivered a holistic curriculum that covered physical, medical, psycho-social and digital security. Photo: SEPAR International



According to the FLIP's safety expert Jonathan Bock, global expectation continues to back somewhat blindly the process, without any real critical analysis. Little recognition has been overtly made that what worked in 2000 might not still work 15 or 20 years later.

In 2015, Reporters without Borders (RSF) and Fecolper called for an overhaul of the flawed mechanism as part of the Periodismo en Riesgo (Journalism in Danger) campaign,<sup>3</sup> joining the FLIP to pinpoint issues of inadequate funding, corruption, bad decision-making, difficulties with evaluating risks and choosing appropriate responses, and unjustified delays. But still, significant lessons remain unlearned outside of Colombian circles.

"The Colombian national mechanism inadvertently showcased protection as a synonym for safety without including the prevention or prosecution factors," says Bock. "This meant that the Colombian design was copied and pasted into the Mexican mechanism, replicating the same mistakes".

According to FLIP's Jonathan Bock, a former *Semana* magazine editor, the new approach of the UN Plan of Action<sup>4</sup> is a game changer, not because it contributes to better protection but because it opens the global safety discussion to other elements such as justice and the importance of involving other actors, such as the media itself.

Since October last year, the FLIP has been trying to renegotiate the basic premise of the mechanism to anticipate risks and include judicial investigations and prosecutions.

"The Colombian mechanism became a body that assigned security measures but did not investigate or work on prevention, a term that in terms of public policy had little meaning. By this I mean that the mechanism was designed to put out a

*"There was a time when there was no system governing the country, be it local, regional or federal. The only thing you could deal with was clan militias, warlords, pirates and terrorist groups like Al-Shabab."*

– Abukar Albadri, programme advisor for the IMS-FOJO Somali Media Programme

fire, but not to prevent the next case from occurring and even less so to understand its causes," says Bock.

#### LOCAL EXPERIENCES GOING GLOBAL

Taking time to step back and ask the right questions about the right issues is key. Learning from what works and what doesn't work has to be the litmus test for the international community.

"This is key, and we are convinced that the analysis of local experiences is extremely valuable," says Bock. He explains that the kidnapping and killing of two Ecuadorian journalists and their driver by a FARC faction earlier this year in Colombia meant that the first thing their Ecuadorian colleagues from the Quito-based *El Comercio* newspaper want to see are the lessons learned from the Colombian and Mexican mechanisms to figure out what their organisations have learned the hard way.

The FLIP has indeed helped other organisations figure out what really works and provided direct support to help their Somali colleagues in 2016 as they had just begun developing a new media industry and media support safety mechanism.

"There was a time when there was no system governing the country, be it local, regional or federal. The only thing you could deal with was clan militias, warlords, pirates and terrorist groups like Al-Shabab," says Abukar Albadri, programme advisor for the IMS-FOJO Somali Media Programme. "As a journalist doing your day-to-day work, you have to learn to survive within this mix."

#### LOCAL SAFETY TRAINING BUILDS TRUST

Over the past two years, IMS-FOJO has slowly but surely worked with local and international partners to build up trust across an extremely polarised media sector. Since 2012, when a new internationally-backed government was installed, Somalia has been inching towards stability, but the new authorities still face a challenge from Al Qaeda-aligned Al-Shabab insurgents and ISIS.

"In some of the regions, they control everything, and journalists simply cannot go there," says Albadri. "And even in the other regions they can still reach and kill anyone and make threats," he added. "They target and threaten journalists that don't tell the stories they want to be heard. And they kill them if they resist."

To help mitigate this, over the past two years IMS and FOJO have trained over 300 journalists in tailor-made safety workshops and Albadri says the journalists have become very good at analysing physical and digital threats and monitoring risks.



Pakistani journalists and politicians pray for the journalists who were killed in the line of duty as they mark World Press Freedom Day in Islamabad, Pakistan, 3 May 2018. Photo: Sohail Shahzad/EPA

#### CASE | SAFETY HUBS – SAVING LIVES OF PAKISTANI JOURNALISTS

In mid-2017 a young journalist based in Pakistan's troubled tribal areas bordering Afghanistan was confronted by a local cleric and accused of being blasphemous in one of his reports. Blasphemy carries a mandatory death penalty under Pakistani law and even allegations can put lives in danger.

Sensing trouble as an angry crowd gathered near his house, he immediately called the IMS-supported Journalist Safety Hub at Peshawar Press Club close to the tribal areas where the hub manager, trained in threat response, promptly mobilized help to whisk him to safety to Peshawar. From here, the case was referred to the Pakistan Journalists Safety Fund (PJSF), another IMS-supported initiative, which urgently helped relocate him to another city at a safe house where he remains.

"I am alive today because of the Safety Hub, which relocated me [within Pakistan] or I would have been lynched for sure," says the journalist, who is unnamed in this article due to security reasons.

"My family did not have the resources to resist [the local pressure against my alleged crime] and there is no mechanism [in the tribal areas] that helps journalists," he adds.

Mashal Khan, a blogger in Mardan close to Peshawar, was lynched and killed in April 2017 on blasphemy charges, which later were proven false in court.

Pakistan is one of the world's most dangerous places to practice journalism. Since 2000 at least 117 journalists and media assistants have been killed. Over 2,000 have been attacked, injured, abducted,

arrested, and harassed. The level of impunity is high – only the killers of two journalists have been identified and convicted.

In 2015, IMS established Safety Hubs at Pakistan's five largest press clubs whose members in total comprise of over half of the country's 20,000 journalists. Due to its effectiveness, another three press clubs joined the Safety Hubs Network in early 2018. Manned by managers trained in rapid threat response, along with communication and logistics resources, the hubs have provided legal, medical, and relocation assistance to over 90 journalists so far. It is estimated that the lives of at least 40 of these journalists have been saved by relocating them from conflict zones and often imminent mortal threat.



Afghan journalists stand in front of the broken glass of a shop at the site of a suicide bombing in Kabul, Afghanistan, 29 August 2017. Photo: Rahmat Gul/AP

*"To presume that media owners simply don't want to put hard cash into newsroom safety is largely false [in the case of Columbia]."*

– Jonathan Bock, FLIP safety expert

During the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections in Somalia, more than eleven radio stations were shut down by the government and local authorities for reporting stories on the elections. Eight journalists were arrested and six were killed. Four years later in the run-in to the 2016 presidential (which was in the end postponed until 2017) and parliamentary elections not one media house was shut down and no journalists were killed. "Many of the journalists we trained were frontline election reporters," says Albadri.

"We got support from our Colombian colleagues at the FLIP as well as partners from Afghanistan to support us and learn about what works from build-

ing safety alliances to state dialogue and safety training in Somalia," details Albadri. "We made sure that these trainings were also tied into work building up greater understanding between journalists and the local authorities. Unlike the 90s when no trust existed, we worked with reporters to help them understand that they could be independent and still have a good working relationship with the government, in particular the federal security forces. Now the journalists can move with less risk and cover more than before. Now, unlike before, they know what to do and how to survive".

Somali local media dynamics are very complex and thorough risk assessments around the media and political situation need to be carried out before international organisations try to provide support. According to Albadri, this doesn't always happen. "Since 2015, we've waited patiently until all local partners were on the same page and happy with the safety mechanism," he explains. "Before moving we make assessments of the ever-changing political and safety context using information from all sides. We try to stay on top of change and involve everyone

without leaving anyone behind." This is not easy in a country like Somalia where clan politics alone set the inclusive bar quite high.

Ironically, Albadri explains that much of the success of the local safety system in Somali comes down to keeping out of the media limelight and just getting on with things slowly but surely.

"The SMSJ [Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists] will get some coverage, but we try not to overdo it given there are a lot of sensitivities," he says. "We also make sure that the core of the work is done by Somalis and that's why the local safety training is organised and moved forward by local partners and local journalists. In this way, ultimately they help themselves and we're just there [in the background] to support them. The local partners need to be empowered and have as much ownership of the process as possible," says Albadri.

#### LOCAL MEDIA INDUSTRIES WANT TO INVEST IN SAFETY

FLIP's safety expert Jonathan Bock agrees that ownership of the safety process is key and none

more so than for the media industry itself. At a global level, the debate often centers on the idea that the industry doesn't want to invest in safety and this assumption leads to the analysis that journalists don't have the means to apply safety measures or make use of safety mechanisms because no formal safety protocols exist within their media houses.

In the case of Colombia this assumption doesn't hold up against what actually works.

"We've learned that it was a misconceived idea that the media industry doesn't want to develop internal safety protocols," says Bock. "To presume that media owners simply don't want to put hard cash into newsroom safety is largely false."

"From big national outlets based in the major cities of Colombia down to small news outfits and community radios in high risk border zones, over the past two years we've seen that owners do want to put money into safety," said Bock.

So far, seven of seventeen media outlets have successfully begun the process of restructuring their internal machinery from corporate governance to differential risk analysis and physical/digital security. "They want to be involved, to know what the UN safety plan is all about and who is doing what internationally on journalists' safety," says Bock. "The industry's interest is real, and this is about finally realising that much of the issue of prevention and protection of journalists is in their own hands."

#### CRACKING THE IMPUNITY NUT

However, along with prevention and protection, the crucial elements of prosecution and impunity remain a major challenge for the media sector.

"Without an investigative arm or an ability to punish the intellectual authors of the crime, the UNP [Colombia's National Protection Unit or UNP as its known by its Spanish acronym] evades dealing with the underlying issue or threat," details Bock. "Keeping journalists on a protection payroll for more than ten years is not a solution."

To tackle this issue, the FLIP decided to focus on supporting the case of journalist Luis Antonio Peralta Cuéllar, who was murdered in February 2015





*Defending Journalism*, a global study by International Media Support was launched in November 2017 and analyses the efforts to safeguard journalists in seven countries where environments of conflict and instability challenge the ability of journalists to produce critical, in-depth journalism.

in the southern town of Doncello in Caquetá state. "We took the case from the very beginning, designing a strategy that includes legal representation, advocacy and research, which can be a formula that guarantees the greatest possible pressure for the State to ensure justice," says Bock.

According to Bock, in February 2018, a court in Florencia, the capital of Caquetá, handed down a sentence of 58 years and three months against the man who shot Peralta. "This is a milestone in the history of crimes against journalists."

He explains that while it's not a silver bullet response, but it does show how simple deficiencies within the state system can be resolved and critical cracks start to appear in the unbreakable wall of impunity. "I don't see this success as a coincidence and it certainly gives us a way forward," says Bock.

In Somalia, even the prosecution of individual cases is very difficult.

"The judicial system in Somalia is not yet well established," says Albadri. "Not many cases have been investigated and brought to justice."

Over the past decade, CPJ reports that at least 50 journalists have been killed in Somalia in the line of duty.<sup>5</sup> "There's not much we can do here unless the police or judiciary release the reports of the investigations to the media house or the family of the journalist in question," says Albadri.

## CASE | MEDIA AND POLICE: A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP

During elections both media and security forces play important roles. Unfortunately, there is often an inability for the two parties to fully appreciate the function of one another. In a West African context this has too often resulted in clashes and mutual distrust with the media viewing the security forces as oppressors of free speech and the security forces seeing the media as reckless and with no regard for the security of the state.

To improve this problematic relationship, IMS together with Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), and in cooperation with ECOWAS, initiated police-media dialogue sessions in connection with the elections in Ghana (2016), Liberia (2017), and Sierra Leone (2018). The goal was to get the two parties to talk and build mutual understanding for one another's roles in securing free and fair elections.

A report published in May 2018 by IMS, MFWA and ECOWAS gathers the best practices and results of the dialogues. During or following the elections in Ghana in 2016 and Liberia in 2017 there were no reports of election-related attacks of journalists (at the time of writing there was no data available on Sierra Leone), and in Liberia both the media and the police noted that the elections had been more transparent than previously. In Ghana, there have been calls to replicate the dialogue forum across the country to ensure that police and media nationwide were on the same page.

Sulemana Braimah, Executive Director of MFWA, says of the project: "With better mutual understanding, security forces can carry out their mission of maintaining public order while respecting freedom of expression and the safety of journalists."



Voters and soldiers argue on the military presence at the polling stations in Freetown on 31 March 2018 during the second round of Sierra Leone's presidential elections. Photo: Issouf Sanogo/AFP

One of the future practices suggested by a Ghanaian police official as an outcome of dialogues was that police corps should have a dedicated media engagement strategy and personnel to handle media requests.

## CONNECTING THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL AGENDAS

Both the UN Plan of Action and IMS acknowledge that the task is complex and that relevant actors need to develop strategies, which are comprehensive and able to address the complexity of threats against journalists. These range from reactive measures, from assistance to journalists in distress, to preventive measures, such as advocacy, training and particular focus on ending impunity through effective judicial measures.

Still, for this comprehensive approach to work it is key that a constant back-and-forth connection is maintained between national and global agendas.

*By connecting safety into the wider global agenda, the recommendations stress the need for countries to develop their own safety mechanisms to protect journalists and end impunity.*

This underscores the importance of the latest UN position in June last year,<sup>6</sup> where UNESCO and the OHCHR, with input from CSOs working on the safety of journalists, amongst these IMS, issued action-oriented recommendations to ensure States deliver tangible results around the protection of journalists. By connecting safety into the wider global agenda, the recommendations stress the need for countries to develop their own safety mechanisms to protect journalists and end impunity for crimes against them. Here, States will need to boost their own internal lines of communication as well as work closely back and forth with both the media industry and civil society.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Shaw works as Global Safety Programme (GSP) manager for IMS. He is a safety specialist with 15 years of experience supporting journalists at risk. An Irish former investigative journalist, Robert Shaw also has extensive experience reporting on conflict and humanitarian beats, with a focus on Latin America.

## NOTES

- 1 HRC Resolution 33/2 The safety of journalists (2016).
- 2 International Media Support (2017).
- 3 FLIP (2015).
- 4 UN Plan of Action on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity (2012).
- 5 CPJ (N.A.).
- 6 OHCHR (2017).

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# Connecting with audiences through quality journalism

By Michelle Betz

"If journalism serves a core democratic function, without which democracy itself is all but inconceivable, then journalistic excellence must also factor into the quality of democracy."<sup>1</sup>

Journalism's crisis of credibility, public trust and relevance continues to threaten fact-based, quality journalism more than ever. But what is quality journalism, why the crisis, and how can media development organisations support partners to ensure that they reconnect to audiences around the world, particularly in conflict-affected environments or those with closing space?

Defining quality journalism can lead to substantial debate. However, for the purposes of this article we believe that "quality represents the ability of journalism to fulfill its functions".<sup>2</sup> And those functions include serving the public as watchdog and providing a public forum for discussion. Quality journalism is also fact-based and fact-driven.

This crisis in fact-driven, quality journalism is due to a number of factors, as the dynamics of the media eco-system are changing considerably. The media are no longer exclusive holders of power in the media eco-system while the power the audience wields is perhaps greater than ever because of technology and social media's enormous influence. The digitalisation of news media has enabled changes in news production as well as in news consumption, both on the level of individual practices as well as organisational and social.<sup>3</sup>

Today, journalists and editors compete with multiple other platforms for market share – be that in terms of ratings, circulation or ad revenue. The trend has therefore been to prioritise "the popular over the pertinent, the racy over the relevant, the weird over the worthy".<sup>4</sup> In addition, the speed with which the web has allowed for targeted content and fragmentation of audiences means that audiences can search, and readily find, content that is

optimised for them and read only about their specific interests.<sup>5</sup> This democratisation of information is essentially a positive development, but can have great negative consequences if it runs unchecked. The fact is that quality and news media are becoming more vulnerable to manipulation and capture.<sup>6</sup>

One might also ask whether quality journalism is losing ground to niche or stakeholder-driven media, which Mark Lee Hunter defines as: "media created and controlled by communities of practice and interest" and stakeholders as "people who affect or are affected by issues and organisations."<sup>7</sup> However, if we revert to this article's definition of quality in that it represents the ability of journalism to fulfill its functions of serving the public, there is no reason that niche or stakeholder-driven media cannot be considered quality journalism – as long as it serves the public.

Also pertinent is the issue of objectivity. Bolette Blaagaard, for example, notes that "journalistic objectivity is a set of practices that provide an ethical evaluation and interpretation, grounded in the particular situation and *specific to the news-medium for which the journalist works* [emphasis added]."<sup>8</sup> Blaagaard goes on to say that the entire notion of objectivity is constantly negotiated, something that should be monitored as IMS continues its work in areas of closing space.

So what can media houses do to address this multi-faceted crisis and ensure quality journalism *and* reconnect with audiences?

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

A crucial element of media development is adapting to the local context which includes understanding the media environment and the audience. Content providers need to know and understand not only the needs of their audience but more fundamentally, who their audience is. Knowing and understanding the audience as individuals and communities







This photo taken on 15 January 2018 shows employees of online portal Rappler at the company's editorial office in Manila. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's move to ban critical news website Rappler from covering the presidential palace is a threat to press freedom, rights and media groups said on 21 February 2018. Photo: Ted Aljibe/AFP

is a necessity for media business models so they can better produce content that is relevant, thereby helping to ensure the commercial survival and success of the media operations.

Previously, "journalism mainly observed its audiences via audience research and punctual feedback, for example, via letters to the editors".<sup>9</sup> Today we see the audience playing a "much more central and explicit role in everyday newsroom routines".<sup>10</sup> Some researchers suggest that audience engagement may be the panacea the media world is looking for to ensure its survival. As Nelson writes:

"Audience engagement advocates argue that journalism must explicitly consider and communicate with its audience in order to better understand and meet their news media needs. Doing so will pro-

duce more collaborative news from a wider variety of viewpoints, which will return the large swaths of people to journalism who long ago abandoned it for more entertaining fare."<sup>11</sup>

Audience engagement comprises two aspects when it comes to the audience: consumption and participation. In other words, audience engagement also means understanding "how people attend to information about issues of public concern, become aware of the intricacies of these issues, and address each other about such issues".<sup>12</sup>

Clearly then, the relationship between journalism and audience is changing in the "context of continuous mediatization; that is, an interwoven change of media, culture and society." Yet this relationship and the transition that accompanies it is neither

## CASE | KALFADHI CONNECTS YOUNG SOMALIS WITH THEIR PALIAMENTARIANS

The level of knowledge about the political system in Somalia is concerningly low amongst the country's young population. Kalfadhi, a new, independent news outlet focusing on Somali politics, aims to change that. Hosted by IMS-Fojo and with a roster of exclusively young journalists Kalfadhi reports directly from parliament in an explanatory fashion through social media channels.

According to 24-year-old Kalfadhi-contributor Abdullahi Aydarus, his work and training with Kalfadhi has enabled him to learn about good governance, transparency, and parliamentary procedures - something he was unaware prior to the launch of Kalfadhi in the summer of 2017.

"When I was born, we didn't have a functional government in Somalia. It is important to report on governance so that the future generations will learn about good governance through our work. We

need to have people with strong understanding of these issues to help prevent the kind of bad governance that we have been through in the past," says Abdullahi Aydarus.

And Kalfadhi is certainly striking a chord among young Somalis. With more than 3500 followers on Facebook Kalfadhi's content is reaching thousands of Somalis. A few videos have even gone viral on Facebook with a reach of more than 50,000 and hundreds of shares.

In addition to the more regular news coverage, the Kalfadhi website contains a repository of key information on the parliament, including profiles of MPs, draft bills, laws, and explanations about the workings of parliament.

28-year-old Hassan Aweys, another Kalfadhi-contributor, also did not learn about law and governance in school. He now has a better understanding of the bicameral system, the legislative deliberations, and

the effect it has on Somalia's political workings that many MPs are involved in private businesses or live outside the country.

Hassan Aweys proudly states that it makes him happy to work for Kalfadhi and report on current political affairs with a focus on accountability and good governance: "I hope that I will make an impact through my work, and that when people ask who worked on this platform I can proudly say I was part of it."



Kalfadhi news editor Abdurahman Taysiir at work in Mogadishu. Photo: Abdihamid Abdiiaziz/Radio Ergo

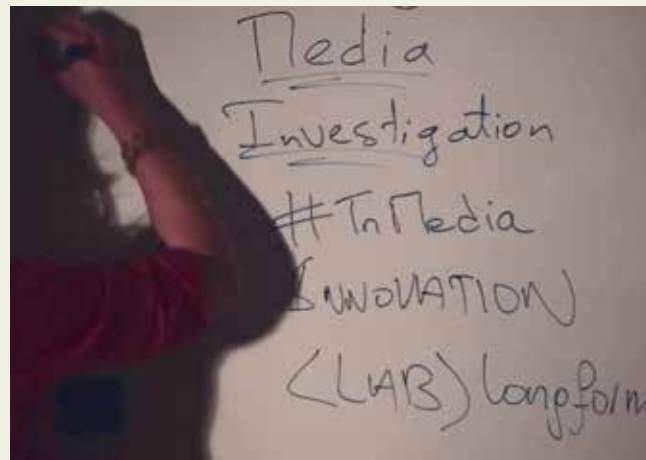
experienced the same by all nor is it simultaneous.<sup>13</sup> There are many who believe that a renewed focus on local or hyperlocal audiences and audience engagement is a critical move "towards making the news industry both relevant and sustainable again".<sup>14</sup>

This is likely to be even more important in areas of closing space or conflict-affected environments. For example, conflict often happens in certain villages or neighbourhoods as opposed to strictly nationwide. This means that specific audiences will seek information that is pertinent to them and, as a result, we see this new focus on local and hyperlocal and the context-driven audiences that come with it.

## FORGING TIES

According to J. Nelson the future of journalism will be based on a novel form of news production that "combines aspects of traditional reporting with collaborations between foundations, community activists, and data scientists" while seeking funding from grants and donations rather than ad revenue. They will also "actively court audience participation, and frequently partner with a variety of civic organisations in addition to more conventional newsrooms".<sup>15</sup> And this is precisely what we are seeing in many instances.

In Somalia, for example, the IMS-supported Kalfadhi, was recently set up in Mogadishu. The online platform seeks to provide a space that allows for bridging the gap between government and citizenry and more



Examples of journalistic stories as they appear on Inkyfada.com



**CASE | INKYFADA, DIGITAL INK WITH STAYING POWER**

In Tunisia, an online outlet by the name of Inkyfada, supported by IMS, has since 2014 published its well-researched and highly visual stories and done so with success. The average number of readers is 70 - 10,000 readers per month. However, investigative stories related to the Panama papers or other in-depth investigative can generate up to 1 million visitors.

As many new media initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa, Inkyfada aim to critically challenge the official narratives.

“The good story for us is a story that can give people the information they need in order to form an opinion. And then we want to counterbalance the unique voice of the mainstream media who

just broadcast the official [government] version without any contextualisation, without any critical questions,” says Malek Khadhraoui, editor of Inkyfada.

Inkyfada’s website, Inkyfada.com, has both a French and an Arabic version, just as every story is beautifully visualised through unique pictures, thoughtful illustrations, and infographics that summarise the often vast data sets.

“This is the DNA of Inkyfada. It works just like a media lab for journalists, developers, and graphic designers,” says Malek Khadhraoui.

The work process of unique content and packaging certainly calls for the label ‘slow journalism’, and despite a staff of more than ten

people, Inkyfada only publishes a handful of stories each month. The published stories are of high quality and aim to have staying power. One example is a story with an interactive map of attacks and activities related to terrorism in Tunisia that is being continuously updated, and thus also functions as an online archive.

“This kind of content creates a long-term relationship with readers and generates regular traffic on the website. The map has become very valuable for researchers, other journalists and people who write about Tunisia,” says Malek Khadhraoui.

specifically encouraging youth engagement. Kalfadhi focuses on parliamentary and governance issues and aims to promote openness and stimulate citizen engagement especially among young people and does so through its website, Facebook page, WhatsApp messaging, YouTube videos and a Twitter account.

The focus of their audience engagement ambition is particularly young people in the capital, Mogadishu. This demographic focus is critical as the country has an overwhelmingly young population<sup>16</sup>. In fact, one could argue that Kalfadhi is a hyperlocal outlet as it is “geographically-based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organisations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement.”<sup>17</sup>

While Kalfadhi has only recently been launched, they hope to grow, develop, and engage a loyal audience in a country where youths traditionally have very little involvement with their politicians. Part of the equation is building trust and loyalty and a sense of common purpose amongst their readers and contributors.

Indeed, some researchers argue that it is through participation that the media can achieve a closer relationship with their audiences and strengthen the bonds of mutual trust while potentially creating a sense of community or belonging. “Loyalty is not achieved exclusively through the inclusion of forms of interactivity, but primarily by providing quality content, and also drawing the audience into a common news project,” as Masip et al. write.<sup>18</sup>

**BUILDING LOYALTY THROUGH AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

Daraj, a recently established Lebanese for-profit outlet that IMS works with, has found ways to overcome some of these challenges by working as part of a consortium. According to Alia Ibrahim, one of three Lebanese co-founders of Daraj, their goal is to create a platform on which others can share their content. “We aim to be big - it won’t work unless it is big,” she says.<sup>19</sup>

Daraj’s big break came thanks to their part in the Paradise Papers consortium. As one of 95 media outlets that worked with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists the Daraj journalists had the opportunity to collaborate with other professionals which allowed for mentoring and growth in investigative journalism in the region

and for Daraj specifically. And perhaps equally important, this work allowed *Daraj* to build trust with audiences:

“This [work on the Paradise Papers] was the first test of our credibility,” says Alia Ibrahim.<sup>20</sup>

Since it started publishing in November 2017, Daraj “has released a series of stories linking top officials in Jordan, Egypt, the UAE, and Qatar to offshore tax havens. Among other continuing ripple effects, pressure is building on the Turkish prime minister to resign after his two sons were found to be among those with secret accounts.”<sup>21</sup>

Another IMS partner with a local focus and audience engagement focus is Rappler, a Manila-based online platform. In its first six months, Rappler grew quickly. Its best month of traffic saw nearly 3 million pageviews, with most months clocking between 2 million and 3 million hits with most traffic coming through social media channels.<sup>22</sup> Maria Ressa, Rappler’s CEO credits the site’s web-native DNA for its rapid growth: “In Rappler’s first month, we hit the traffic it took the largest Philippine news group a decade to reach. That’s the power of social media.”<sup>23</sup>

Rappler has a unique way of encouraging audience engagement and gauging participation through something called a “mood meter”. Readers are prompted to choose their response to the articles they read from eight different emotional reactions. Maria Ressa explains: “When you look at how terrorism spreads, you look at how emotions spread through large groups of people. You take the idea that emotions are important in decision making. And on social media, what spreads fastest, it’s actually emotions more than ideas.”<sup>24</sup>

*“If you actually go through the exercise of identifying how you feel, you’re more prone to be rational. If you can identify how you feel, you will be more receptive to the debate that’s in front of you.”*

- Maria Ressa, CEO, Rappler, Philippines

So Ressa came up with the idea to track the emotions that news stories elicit from the audience. Readers engage and content producers learn about their audiences. Ressa believes that “if you actually



go through the exercise of identifying how you feel, you're more prone to be rational. If you can identify how you feel, you will be more receptive to the debate that's in front of you."<sup>25</sup>

Audience engagement and quality content is a difficult act. Sustainability is the next critical part of the equation.

#### SUSTAINABILITY AND GOING FORWARD

It is undoubtedly tricky to know, serve, and understand your audience while ensuring sustainability. One does wonder whether quality journalism can only be commercially viable if catering to a niche market, such as Kalfadhi, or is publicly funded. This is particularly true at a time when advertisers are looking "to reach as wide an audience as possible, [when] audience size has become the currency by which advertisers evaluate the quality of a news site"<sup>26</sup> – not the quality or even quantity of engagement.

Yet, what we are seeing in the projects mentioned above (Daraj, Rappler and Kalfadhi) can provide some spark of hope. All three outlets seek to engage with their audiences, and are at the same time pursuing partnerships and collaborations that allow them to tell stories and conduct investigations that may have gone undone without the support of colleagues around the world. These outlets have also identified a niche that was previously unfilled and are doing their best to fill these gaps while ensuring quality journalism that will garner trust, loyalty, and audience engagement.

One out of many threats to the sustainability of new niche media is that of capture, which can, for example, implicate not only politicians but potentially donors and media support organisations such as IMS. One recent study of media development efforts in Afghanistan concluded "that in countries with heavy foreign intervention, where imported journalism values are layered upon previous and continued institutional arrangements and where violence and instability continue unabated, news media work is prone to 'capture' by a variety of actors outside media organisations. [...] We found that capture tended to stem from issues related to funding from donor countries, NGO contractors, foreign governments and political groups, and national and local governments."<sup>27</sup>

There also exists the potential of participatory fatigue and disengagement. A decade ago there was widespread optimism about the economic and democratic potential of audience participation and

engagement in the media and while some of this has led to increased engagement and involvement, there are also examples of participatory fatigue and disengagement. So how can media organisations, in areas of closing space, ensure ongoing participation and engagement? This is clearly an area in which more research and work need to be done to understand engagement more fully and to design support mechanisms that can more aptly address the needs of media outlets as well as audiences.

*A decade ago there was widespread optimism about the economic and democratic potential of audience participation and engagement in the media. While some of this has led to increased engagement, there are also examples of fatigue and disengagement.*

Finally, how does one actually measure quality journalism? As Lacy and Rosensteel ask: "How can we measure quality of source diversity, content diversity, and exposure diversity?"<sup>28</sup> How can we measure impact or the quality of journalism's contribution of said quality journalism to the community? Additional research is still needed, not only in audience research as suggested above, but also with regards to impact as implied by Lacy and Rosensteel.

For now, the research and the anecdotes both suggest that attempts at engaging the audience, ensuring quality journalism, and building trust and loyalty while aiming for sustainability are making some headway in such diverse contexts as Somalia, the Philippines and the Middle East.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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#### NOTES

1. Scheuer (2008), p. xi.
2. Lacy and Rosenstiel (2015), p. 9.
3. Kramp and Loosen (2018), p. 205.
4. McNair (2000), p. 7.
5. Vehkoo (2010), p. 30.
6. Ibid., p. 28.
7. Hunter et al. (2016), p. 5.
8. Blaagaard (2013), p. 1080.
9. Kramp and Loosen (2018), p. 207.
10. Ibid.
11. Nelson (2017), p. 2.
12. Ørmen (2015), p. 18.
13. Kramp and Loosen (2018), p. 208.
14. Nelson (2017), p. 13.
15. Ibid.
16. The median age in Somalia is 16. See [http://analyticalreports.org/pdf/UNFPA\\_PESS\\_Vol\\_2.pdf](http://analyticalreports.org/pdf/UNFPA_PESS_Vol_2.pdf) for further discussion and breakdown.
17. Metzgar et al. (2011), p. 774.
18. Masip et al. (2015), p. 248.
19. Kieffer (2017).
20. Schapiro (2017).
21. Ibid.
22. Lafrance (2012).
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Nelson (2017), p. 7.
27. Rely and Zanger (2016), p. 10 and p. 18. The authors identify six distinct forms of capture: economic, political, cultural, legal, bureaucratic and societal.
28. Lacy and Rosenstiel (2015), pp. 55-56.

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A Chinese TV journalist makes her report in Tiananmen Square during the opening of the first session of the 13th National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, 5 March 2018.  
Photo: How Hwee Young/EPA

# Women in media: Fighting trolls, norms and the occasional bully

By Malin Palm.  
Contributing author Simbiso Marimbe

Shaista Seham, a Pakistani journalist living in Islamabad, lost her job after declining advancements from the editor of the newspaper where she worked. He had invited her to a room he had reserved to discuss 'professional issues'.<sup>1</sup>

Shaista Seham's story is one of many tales of sexual harassment and abuse told in the wake of the online campaign #MeToo which took off in the last months of 2017 as women around the world began revealing harassment or abuse experiences.

The hashtag #MeToo was used by more than 4.7 million people in 12 million posts on Facebook during the first 24 hours alone. Across industries and countries, the stories revealed abuse at a scale that has made it impossible to dismiss sexual harassment of women in the workplace as a minor problem only happening to a few.

The media business is no exception. Female journalists globally are exposed to harassment from colleagues and managers, as well as from people they interview.

## 2000 "UGLY" MESSAGES PER DAY

In the Philippines, reports on government corruption and President Duterte's "war on drugs" have led to daily harassment for Maria Ressa. Ressa is the CEO and executive editor of Rappler, an independent news media platform combining professional journalism with citizen journalism. An average of about 2,000 "ugly" messages per day on her personal Facebook page is not unusual. In the UNESCO report *An attack on one is an attack on all*, Maria Ressa explains that every journalist in the Philippines reporting independently on politics is subjected to highly coordinated online abuse by armies of "super trolls", whom she believes are part of a coordinated campaign. Female journalists are especially exposed to these attacks.<sup>2</sup>

"They attack your physicality, your sexuality. When you are denigrated and stripped of dignity in this

way, how can you maintain your credibility? All of these things work together for a single purpose and that's to prevent journalists from doing their job," Ressa says.<sup>3</sup>

That harassment and discrimination of female journalists is pervasive is also the conclusion in a new IMS survey from Jordan<sup>4</sup> and a 2016-study from Afghanistan<sup>5</sup>. 42 and 69 per cent respectively of the female journalist respondents had experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment while at work.

"There are no women in Afghanistan who have not been subjected to sexual harassment," says Sosan, a journalist from Kabul. "All of us, from the time we leave home until we return, are subjected to harassment in different forms, ranging from perverse comments to being shoved, touched, and showered with insults."<sup>6</sup>

In Zimbabwe, Gender and Media Connect (GMC), formerly known as Federation of African Media Women (FAMWZ), in partnership with the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ), have been grappling with the scourge of sexual harassment in the media. Since 2012, GMC and ZUJ have been involved in awareness raising activities and supporting media houses in developing gender and sexual harassment policies with little traction. This led to the publication of the report: *Who Can I Tell? What Should I Do? Sexual Harassment in The Media* by the FAMWZ and ZUJ in 2014.<sup>7</sup> Both organisations say that the challenges in addressing sexual harassment are multifaceted.

Harassment within the media sector cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of gender discrimination in society. Harsh economic conditions and rising unemployment levels are major contributors to the vulnerability of junior and entry-level journalists, mostly female, who fall prey to their seniors. Lower salaries for women, temporary work contracts, lack of labour rights, inadequate



**CASE | HARASSMENT – PART OF THE JOB FOR FEMALE JOURNALISTS IN JORDAN**

*“Journalism is not a women-friendly environment and never will be.”*

– Deputy managing editor at a Jordanian daily

An IMS-survey from March 2018 sheds light on the working environment of female journalists in Jordan. Although limited in scope, the survey's statistics indicate that female journalists are severely underrepresented in the Jordanian media business. They represent only 23 per cent of the total work force, and even less in leadership positions. Of the 53 female journalists and journalism students participating in the survey more than 40 per cent have experienced either verbal or physical harassment as part of their job – a concerning high percentage despite the relatively small sample size.

One journalist recounts one of her early experiences in the business like this: “I was a fresh graduate and the editor began to talk to me about sexual matters and told me he could touch me without rupturing the hymen.”

Jordan's media environment generally does not offer adequate systems that can receive complaints from female employees, just as there is a need to simply recognise harassment as a problem, as illustrated in the survey's interviews with two dozen editors, media experts, and policy-makers. Some openly stated that they considered the findings exaggerated.

Not surprisingly perhaps, more than two thirds of the surveyed women felt that their professional progress has been hampered merely because of their gender.



Two journalists from an IMS supported network of women reporters in the conservative region of Karak, Jordan. 2017. Photo: Henrik Keith Hansen/IMS

child care facilities, and negative attitudes towards women working outside home, are all contributing factors to the existing glass ceilings that prevent women from advancing their career. Contexts and norms vary from country to country, but with 94 of the CEOs and 83 per cent of the top management of the world's 100 largest media corporations being men,<sup>8</sup> the current state of affairs is set to reproduce itself with men in power and women in subordinate positions and more vulnerable to harassment.

**CYBERSPACE – THE HARASSMENT AMPLIFIER**

Despite hopes that the Internet would make it easier for marginalised groups to participate in the public debate, cyber space is proving to be no safer than the real world. In fact, misogyny, racism and homophobia is often amplified online, as anonymity provides a distance between victim and aggressor that effectively removes social and moral barriers.

More than 25 per cent of the verbal, written and physical intimidation threats that female journalists receive happens online according to the report *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media* by International Women's Media Foundation.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, chatroom participants with female usernames receive 25 times more threatening and sexually explicit private messages than those with male or ambiguous usernames.<sup>10</sup>

The situation tends to be even worse for people from ethnic, religious, sexual and other minorities. Aleena Sajwal, a transgender online activist from Hyderabad, Pakistan who writes about LGBTQ rights and questions gender norms, describes in the Freedom Network report how she gets constant threats on Facebook and Twitter. “Women are vulnerable, and transgenders even more so,” she says.<sup>11</sup>

**STAYING POWER IN PLURALISM**

The harassment and discrimination of women in media as both working journalists and as voices represented in media has a direct impact on society. The IMS-Fojo report *Gender in Myanmar news* published in late 2017 documents that female Burmese reporters on average use 25 per cent more female sources than their male counterparts do.<sup>12</sup> This impacts directly on the number of voices and stories aimed at women and contributes to the underrepresentation of female voices in media content.

According to the global media monitoring report *Who makes the News* from 2015, women make up only 24 per cent of those heard about in the news, and only 15 percent in content related to poli-

tics and government.<sup>13</sup> Of course, this is partially a consequence of the fact that women are underrepresented in government and politics in almost all countries in the world. It can create a democratic problem when politics and media alike are all male-dominated businesses.

When female journalists are harassed and discriminated against in their workplace, it becomes a threat to the whole media industry and the society it operates in, because media's role is to provide all citizens with information that allows them to make informed decisions. Good journalism requires a story to be covered accurately, and from as many angles as possible. If women and minorities are not fully included in the media production, media will miss voices, stories and perspectives and hence fail in being professional, ethical and of public interest. Gender inequalities and other discrimination is a concern for much more than the affected groups; it becomes an obstacle for media to be truly pluralistic, representative and free.

*“... chatroom participants with female usernames receive 25 times more threatening and sexually explicit private messages than those with male or ambiguous usernames.”*

**CHANGE IS NOT MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**

Although harassment and discrimination are complex issues, often deeply rooted in cultural attitudes and values, a lot can still be done.

For Maria Ressa, the turning point came in early 2017, when she received the kind of threat that women journalists are increasingly familiar with internationally: a call for her to be gang-raped and murdered. A young man wrote on Rappler's Facebook page: “I want Maria Ressa to be raped repeatedly to death. I would be so happy if that happens when martial law is declared, it would bring joy to my heart.”<sup>14</sup> This time, Ressa didn't stay quiet. Instead, she asked her online communities to assist in identifying the assailant, who turned out to be a 22-year-old university student. When his university learned of his activities, he was forced to call Ressa and apologise. “Speaking up and speaking out brings protection through awareness,” Ressa says.<sup>15</sup>

Few countries in the world have proper legislation against online harassment. As a necessary measure



Members of the Myanmar Women's Journalist Society Executive Committee Thae Ko, Maw Jay and Thu Zar (left to right) participating in an organisational development workshop in August 2017. Photo: Chris Peken

**CASE | FEMALE SOURCES UNDER-REPRESENTED IN MYANMAR MEDIA**

Only 16 percent of the voices in Myanmar news media are female. That is the conclusion in an IMS-Fojo funded study, *Gender in Myanmar News*, conducted by Myanmar Women's Journalist Society (MWJS).

“Media is a tool to enhance gender equality and the survey illustrates that there is room for improvement in how news media portray men and women. Only 0.8 per cent of stories from our media study challenge gender stereotypes and only 6 per cent are considered to have gender awareness,” says Ellie Swindon, Gender Advisor at IMS-Fojo.

The data behind the study is collected from an analysis of 2500 media stories from 42 news outlets working within radio, TV, online and print. Another finding in the study is that when women are heard in the media they are more likely to be quoted in relation to a personal experience they recount rather than as experts.

“As journalists, we have to challenge gender stereotypes in our reporting. We have to challenge the view that women are victims and that men are survivors. We need to interview and source more female experts, and thereby balance male and female voices in our reporting,” says Ma Zin Mar Lar Htay, journalist and co-founder of MWJS.

To support a more balanced gender representation in Myanmar media the study also has a number of recommendations for both journalists, civil society groups and media training institutions on how to address the issue by consistently challenging the stereotypes. But leadership within media must also act:

“Chief editors and media house owners should encourage guidelines that help to ensure that men and women's voices are given equal space in media,” says Ellie Swindon.





Demonstrators supporting the #MeToo movement stage a rally to mark the International Women's Day 8 March 2018 in Seoul, South Korea. Photo: Ahn Young-joonw/AP Photo

to combat harassment, a first step is adjustment of the national legislations to encompass all forms of harassment and make sure that they are in sync with the reality of the internet.

Cyberbullying policies are enforced through self-regulatory mechanisms that social media companies have in place to address incidents on their platforms. These mechanisms can include reporting tools, blocking and filtering software, geofencing and human or automated moderation systems. Copyright laws can be used – or one can threaten to use them – in the cases where someone publishes sexual, nude or other degrading photos of a victim.

### THE POWER OF SOLIDARITY

#MeToo has given rise to an exceptional show of solidarity needed for change to happen. Solidarity was also an important factor when five female journalists in Moscow, Russia, publicly accused the head of the Duma's foreign affairs committee of making advances. At least one of the journalists recorded the incident, which was investigated by the State Duma's ethical committee. The committee, however, dismissed the sexual harassment accusations, saying the allegations may have been coordinated to tarnish the Duma deputy. As a response, around 20 Russian language media outlets withdrew their journalists from covering Russia's lower house of

parliament.<sup>16</sup> This highlights that gender inequalities and discrimination is a concern for many more than those affected; it becomes an obstacle for media to be truly pluralistic, representative and free. Eventually, on 8 of March (International Women's Day) the head of the Duma's foreign affairs committee issued a public apology.

The power of unity should not be underestimated. Arguably, the solidarity and safety in numbers during #MeToo is exactly what turned it into such a compelling and formidable force leading to the downfall and disgrace of top-positioned perpetrators and pushed workplaces around the world to address the issue of harassment and discrimination.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Malin Palm works as Gender Advisor in International Media Support. A Swedish national and specialist in conflict resolution and sexual and gender-based violence in conflict zones, Malin Palm joined IMS in 2015.

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## The case of Ukraine: Countering disinformation

By Vitalii Moroz & Tetiana Matychak

In February 2017, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu acknowledged for the first time in a public speech that Russia's information army had been established and was operational:

"The information operations forces have been established, which are expected to be a far more effective tool than those we used before for counter-propaganda purposes. Propaganda should be smart, competent and effective."<sup>1</sup>

These words of a top Russian official speaking openly about hiring information specialists to disseminate state-sponsored propaganda and thus employing information warfare, made no attempt

to hide this blatant strategic focus on information mobilisation as a weapon of war. With advanced technologies, the strategic use of information to inform, confuse and influence adversaries and allies through multiple platforms and channels has become a powerful tool alongside military action. The current world order is increasingly confronted with hybrid threats – a concept that stems from Russia's foreign policy and the ISIL/Da'esh campaigns going far beyond Syria and Iraq. Information is a key feature in hybrid warfare, a sophisticated weapon, which has caught many a nation unprepared. Now the scramble is on to design the appropriate defense. In Ukraine, civil society and government authorities are employing a broad societal

approach to counter and soften the impact of information warfare. This article highlights a number of those initiatives.

### DISINFORMATION AND THE CASE OF UKRAINE

Ukraine has been the target of disinformation emanating from Russia earlier than many European countries and the US. Over the past 5–6 years, much has been written about a targeted information/disinformation strategy led by the Kremlin to influence and sway public opinion in favour of its actions. With the illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the Kremlin scaled up a now well-documented disinformation and propaganda campaign through mainstream and social media in Ukraine.

Exporting to international audiences what could be described as "alternative views" of events, the Kremlin has employed various channels, including TV stations, news agencies, think tanks and Russian supported foundations, special authorities (Rosstrudnichestvo), transborder social and religious groups, social media and trolls<sup>2</sup> to carry its messages to targeted audiences in Ukraine.

Roman Dobrokhoto, editor-in-chief of The Insider, a Russian online news site dedicated to investigative journalism and debunking fake news, was interviewed by Danish Broadcasting Corporation during his participation in an IMS debate in Copenhagen on fake news in April 2017. Photo: Line Wolf Nielsen/IMS

### WEAPONISATION OF INFORMATION

The concept "weaponisation of information" was quoted for the first time by Leon Aron, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in November 2015 while discussing Russian information warfare. According to Aron, the "weaponisation of information occurs when it provokes strong negative emotions leading to hatred and worse".<sup>3</sup>

In October 2017, the Council of Europe published the report *Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*.<sup>4</sup> The report identifies three key types of "information disorder": mis-information, when false information is shared, but no harm is meant; dis-information, when false information is knowingly shared to cause harm; and mal-information, when genuine information is shared to cause harm.

The Kremlin now controls all key national TV channels in modern-day Russia. Government-controlled TV stations receive generous financial support from Kremlin to expand their activities while delivering tailored messages. According to the Information society (2010-2020) state programme, in 2014 key Russian TV channels, including Russia-1, Russia-24, RTR Planeta, received \$721 million in the form of state subsidies.<sup>5</sup> The budget of the Kremlin's "soft power" RT channel, which broadcasts in English, Spanish, French and Arabic, was estimated at \$323 million in 2017.<sup>6</sup>

Modern Russia described by Peter Pomerantsev as "postmodern dictatorship"<sup>7</sup>, emphasizes the use of media as the tool to flood audiences with conflicting messages, create information chaos, and blur the boundaries of what is true and what is false. "Unlike Soviet propaganda, modern Russian methods of information warfare do not merely advertise the Kremlin's agenda. Instead, they are committed to creating confusion, hesitation, and distraction," says scholars Edward Lucas and Peter Pomerantsev in Minich and Rybak.<sup>8</sup> By flooding audiences with conflicting messages, creating information chaos, the boundaries of what is true and what is false are blurred.

In Ukraine, Russian TV channels were the most influential source of Russian-led propaganda and disinformation in Ukraine until 2014-2015, when the broadcasting of 77 out of 82 channels was restricted by the authorities on Ukrainian cable networks. Ukrainian TV channels were losing the competition against Russian channels because their budgets were ten times smaller.<sup>9</sup>

In 2014 when Russia illegally annexed Crimea, 27 per cent of Ukrainians watched Russian TV channels.<sup>10</sup> In 2016 their viewership dropped to 6 per cent due to a government decision in Ukraine to cease broadcasting of Russian TV channels in the country.<sup>11</sup> Until April 2017, three of the five most popular websites in Ukraine – VK.com, Yandex and Mail.ru respectively – were Russian, controlled by the Russian Government.<sup>12</sup> Through these communication channels used extensively by Ukrainian officials and journalists, Russian intelligence services were able to geolocate the deployment of Ukrainian military units. This was one of the reasons why the Ukrainian government by way of official sanctions, restricted access to Russian social media networks. As a result of the government restrictions, none of the Russian websites were listed in the top-10 most popular websites in Ukraine as of April 2018 according to Kantar TNS.<sup>13</sup> VK.com dropped from

### *By flooding audiences with conflicting messages, creating information chaos, the boundaries of what is true and what is false are blurred.*

third to eleventh spot on the list of Ukraine's most popular sites.<sup>14</sup>

Another strategy is to use statements made by politicians and leaders from the opposing side and use these out of context to further one's own purpose. For example, there were fake "bottom-up initiatives" in Ukraine. In 2017, Ukrainian media were trapped in propaganda, quoting "letters of trade unions" that called for the resumption of economic relations with Russia. Some Russian media outlets subsequently used these letters in a different context to support their narrative that Ukrainian citizens wanted to continue to belong within the "Russian world".

#### POP CULTURE AS HUMOUR-DRIVEN PROPAGANDA TOOL

Mass culture has also been reported by NATO analysts as an important weapon in information war, providing examples of Russian late-night shows broadcast on Ukrainian TV channels as "a massive humour-driven propaganda tool."<sup>15</sup> The degree of cultural penetration is identical to the degree of ideological penetration, Ukrainian experts say.<sup>16</sup> Pop culture such as TV series, TV entertainment shows, stand-up comedy shows, movies, and books have all been used to convey political ideas packaged in a light, charming format, which is easily consumed and then subsequently reaffirmed in news broadcasts directly after the shows.

#### DESTABILISING DEMOCRACIES WITH FALSE INFORMATION

Ukrainian media and cyberspace have been flooded with disinformation related to the illegal annexation of Crimea and political power struggles. Often, the aim is to push people to question the very concept of democracy and give rise to mistrust in democratic institutions or governments in countries traditionally understood to be democracies. In one such example, according to the NGO Euromaidanpress.com, Kremlin-led propaganda incited Ukrainians to instigate an overthrow of its post-Euromaidan leaders in a "Third Maidan" uprising (providing analogy to the outcomes of Euro-maidan protests in 2013-2014) and suggested that the EU had ignored the European Union aspirations of Ukrainians and abandoned them.<sup>17</sup> Kremlin-con-

trolled RIA Novosti Ukraine, reporting from Kyiv in October 2017, echoed the message in the article titled: *Third Maidan. Ordinary people ask Petya (Poroshenko, President of Ukraine, ed.) to go away!*<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, Kremlin-led propaganda has been known to promote an apocalyptic discourse in Ukraine, proclaiming "the last days" of Europe.<sup>19</sup> Thirdly, it dehumanises the enemy for citizens<sup>20</sup> of opposing sides and tries to demoralise the citizens of opponent countries by disseminating discouraging messages in the media outlets of these states. For example, Kremlin-led propaganda spread the story in Russian-owned Ukrainian media that Ukraine was unable to mobilise the number of soldiers needed to fight in the conflict zone of Donbass. This, to weaken the national disposition of Ukraine as a state.<sup>21</sup>

The tactics of weaponisation of information are indeed more consistent than what meets the eye. Therefore, the resistance to it should be systematic and comprehensive.

#### COUNTERING DISINFORMATION IN UKRAINIAN MEDIA

Many of the existing media and CSO initiatives to counter disinformation that have been grown in

Ukraine especially since 2013 are thought to have informed many similar initiatives in other parts of the world.

The most aggressive attacks of Kremlin-based propaganda unfolded in Ukraine's information space in 2013-2014. At that time, the Ukrainian state was not equipped to resist such a massive flow of disinformation. Thus, several organisations were established to combat the onslaught: Stopfake, the Ukrainian Crisis Media Center, and the UkraineWorld project. All continue to be dependent on foreign funding, mainly from the EU and/or US.

The Stopfake.org website was created on 2 March 2014 by students, graduates, and teachers of the Mohyla School of Journalism at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Initially a volunteer-based project, it was the first of its kind in Ukraine to debunk disinformation about Ukraine. Stopfake monitors Russian, Ukrainian, and European media in search of possible disinformation. Staff utilise OSINT technologies – searching and analyzing data from open sources, verifying the origins of photos and videos with geolocation tools, and other methods. If the news does not correspond with the verified facts, it gets debunked on the website

#### CASE | STICKING TO THE FACTS IN ZIMBABWE

In March 2018 the first national fact-checking platform in Zimbabwe was launched. The online platform, ZimFact, is dedicated to fact-checking news and information in order to give the public verified news and real facts.

"The major aim of fact-checking platforms is to reduce the circulation of false claims, to improve public understanding and to help discourage public officials, authorities, private, and public bodies from disseminating misleading information," said Alec Muchadehama, chairperson of the ZimFact Management Committee at the launch event.

The platform is managed by the Voluntary Media Council of Zimba-

bwe in partnership with IMS-FOJO with support from the Swedish Embassy in Harare, European Union and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The idea behind ZimFact is to provide basic facts on important sectors and issues such as child and maternal mortality rates in Zimbabwe or the actual state of the country's national debt. Another aim is to raise the general public's trust in the media with ZimFact as a kind of benchmark and a good partner of the media, Alec Muchadehama underlined at the launch event.

"In the era of fake news, it is important for us as the media to fact-check and use those tradi-



First national fact-checking platform launched in Zimbabwe in March 2018. Photo: zimfact.org

tional ways of verifying information from our sources," said Japhet Ncube, editor of The Star Newspaper in South Africa attending the launch of ZimFact.

"This platform is going to help South African newspapers to get the Zimbabwe story right. This platform is going to make our work easier," he said.



with evidence. Using these technologies, Stopfake staff have debunked more than one thousand false and manipulative messages.

The Ukrainian Crisis Media Center (UCMC), [ucmc.org.ua](http://ucmc.org.ua), also initially volunteer-based, was established in March 2014, uniting public relations and international relations experts to provide balanced coverage of Ukrainian events for domestic and international audiences. UCMC is now a key non-profit platform for public societal discussion in Ukraine involving experts and civil society activists.

Ukraineworld.org was launched in 2014 consisting of an information group of Ukrainian experts working with Western journalists to coordinate civil society groups' work with unbiased information about Ukraine and fight disinformation. UkraineWorld now unites more than 300 disinformation experts from Ukraine and abroad.

## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO COUNTER DISINFORMATION

Ukrainian authorities have taken a number of steps to curb disinformation in media. In a contentious move, the government regulator National Council on Television and Radio broadcasting of Ukraine in 2014 banned cable operators from broadcasting 77 out of 82 Russian channels in 2014-2017. On 15 May 2017, the President of Ukraine signed decree #133/2017 imposing sanctions against Russian tech companies. On 1 January 2017, a law adopted by Parliament prohibited the import into Ukraine of any printed products containing anti-Ukrainian content, also a controversial move.

Another tool employed by the Ukrainian government is media literacy, improving young people's and ordinary citizens' ability to critically digest information. In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science approved an all-Ukrainian experiment on media education for 2017-2022 entitled "Standardization of the cross-cutting socio-psychological model of implementation of mass media education in Ukrainian pedagogical practice."<sup>22</sup> Ukrainian schoolchildren can now study media literacy as an option at school.

## THE ROAD TO COUNTERING DISINFORMATION

In the era of hybrid threats, where conventional and unconventional techniques are combined to gain an advantage over the enemy, media development actors increasingly play a role to address disinformation as an unprecedented attack on societies in the cognitive domain. But media develop-

ment organisations acting alone could easily turn into a game of whack-a-mole. As the Ukrainian case study clearly demonstrates, the acute threats faced from disinformation can only be addressed through a multidimensional approach.

Addressing disinformation through a multi-stakeholder approach is the only likely way societies can build resilience against weaponized information. Instead of simply contesting disinformation, government actors, tech companies, civil society and news consumers need to work together to establish both short and long-term solutions. This involves promoting good journalism; continuing research and analysis rooted in practice; bolstering countering mechanisms such as the EU's East StratCom Task Force; enhancing more robust cooperation between civil society, academia, and tech companies and designing education and media literacy programmes.

For media development organisations like IMS, the focus should remain on promoting robust, ethical journalism and working to enable the environment that surrounds and makes it possible. Media and information literacy, especially in environments where democratic institutions are under threat or are failing, is equally important to help the public to navigate in the digital space. The research, analysis and fact-checking produced by various actors – from grassroots movements to recognised academic institutions – should feed the public debate to expose disinformation tactics and advocate for the importance of a comprehensive, broad-based response that cuts across society seeking to build resilience.

*[Experts within IMS have penned the latter section on recommendations]*

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## New visual identity for IMS

# IMS paving the way for good journalism

What is a logo? A mere stamp? A symbolically wrapped narrative?

We are proud to introduce our new logo which mirrors the organisation's values and strengths and reflects our Nordic roots. IMS was founded in 2001. Our new logo reflects the international organisation that IMS is today.

### BLACK INK

The foundation of the new logo is black and white symbolising ink on paper. Imagine the stains left on your fingertips from freshly printed newspapers.

### THE LOGOMARK

The circle is an unbroken line illustrating IMS' comprehensive and persistent approach. Simultaneously, the circle refers to the global dimension of our work. The waves inside the circle mirror the soundwaves of two different voices pronouncing "IMS". They symbolise the importance of flexibility and adaptability and of creating a bridge between the many local initiatives we support and the international human rights principles we embrace together.

### TAGLINE

Our new tagline speaks to the core of IMS' mandate.

### SECONDARY COLOURS

The secondary colours that frame our new visual identity are based on the elements of bedrock and water, visualising two of IMS' core values: A solid rights-based foundation; and a flexible approach constantly adapting to change.

### IMS STAFF ABOUT IMS

As part of IMS' new visual identity development, a number of staff members were interviewed about the work of IMS and our mandate. On the next page is a selection of their responses.

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IMS' new logo and visual identity is developed by NR2154.

### IMS STAFF ABOUT IMS

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*"Media and journalism are important tools to help create societies where people are informed and can make informed decisions. We want to contribute to enlightening people so that they can make their own decisions."*

– Line Wolf Nielsen, Communications and Press Coordinator

*"IMS is a practitioner, someone working actively in the field, but has a lot of expert knowledge. And is able to apply that (...) It is not a researcher, but someone working actively on the ground, while understanding the bigger picture."*

– Emilie Lehmann-Jacobsen, Programme Development Advisor, Asia

*"You can develop something truly new by bringing partners together or bringing in new individuals with new, powerful ideas. Create new collaboration."*

– Jesper Højberg, Executive Director

*"This is something that distinguishes us from others: we work with many different experts and disciplines which makes our way of working very flexible."*

– Nicole Choueiry, Programme Manager, Tunisia

*"A successful partnership is one that is progressive and mutually beneficial."*

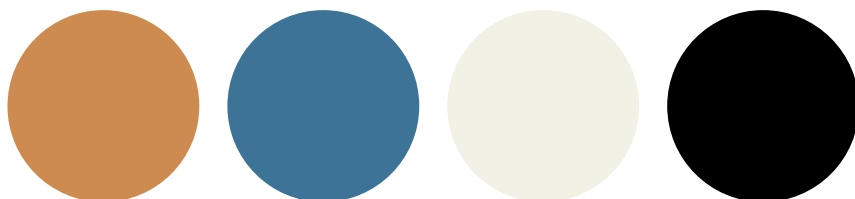
– Gulnara Akhundova, Head of Department for Global Response

*"Participation is a keyword. We are not here to teach or just give funds. We want to do something together with the partners."*

– Rasmus Steen, Programme Manager, Documentary Film

*"Good journalism is aware of its biases but always presents history factually and fairly and is representative of the diversity of its citizens."*

– Simbiso Marimbe, Programme Manager, Zimbabwe





# A tri-city celebration of photography: Connecting Cairo, Copenhagen and Ramallah

What happens when amateur photographers of all ages are given the same themes on the same day at the same time in three different cities across the world to interpret and photograph?

These photos from Cairo, Ramallah and Copenhagen are the result of the first ever Tri-City Photo Marathon held on 21 April 2018.

The photos link creative photographers from the three cities through their shared interest in storytelling through pictures. The overall theme was to illustrate "something" and "its opposite".

The winning images on these pages illustrate "the world's ugliness" and "its opposite".

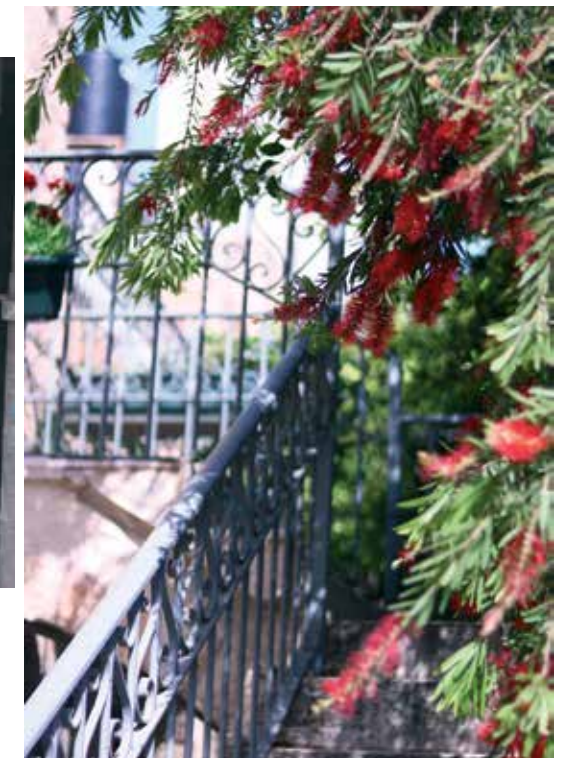
## Copenhagen | Photo: Ronni Jørgensen



## Cairo | Photo: Sherif Elkomy



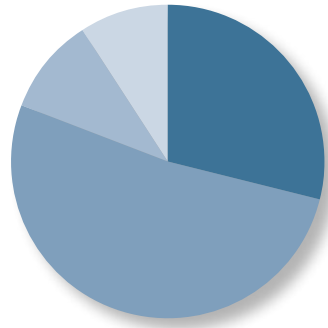
## Ramallah | Photo: Aseel Abu Maialeh



## Financial overview 2017

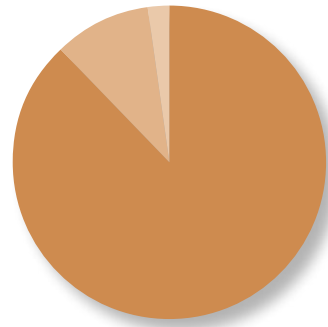
### FUNDING

	EUR	%
■ Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassies and Danida	4,598,820	29%
■ Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassies and Sida	8,472,774	52%
■ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassies and Norad	1,604,192	10%
■ Other donors	1,412,230	9%
Other income and funding	1,344	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,089,360</b>	<b>100%</b>



### EXPENDITURES

	EUR	%
■ Activities	14,146,410	88%
■ Cost of doing business	1,628,496	10%
■ Development & other activities	314,454	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,089,360</b>	<b>100%</b>



## IMS Board Members 2017

### Mr Andrew Puddephat

Chairman of the Board  
Executive Chair, Advisory Board, Global Partners  
Digital, United Kingdom

### Ms Ann-Magrit Austenå

Vice-chairman of the Board  
Secretary General, Norwegian Organisation for  
Asylum Seekers, Norway

### Mr Jens Otto Kjær Hansen

Principal, Danish School of Media and Journalism,  
Denmark

### Ms Tine Johansen

Vice-president, The Danish Union of Journalists,  
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### Mr Gene Kimmelman

President and CEO, Public Knowledge, Georgetown  
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### Mr Lars Møller

Journalist and media consultant, Denmark

### Mr Edetean Ojo

Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda, Nigeria

### Ms Charlotte Flindt Pedersen

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### Mr Holger Rosendal

Head of Legal Department, The Association of  
Danish Media, Denmark



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