

Journalism

– a renewed sense of purpose

Annual Report
2019



International Media Support

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An Iraqi protester puts the final touches on a mural painting amid ongoing anti-government demonstrations in the central city of Najaf on December 18, 2019.

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

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*People need
reliable
information
to hold power
to account*

JOURNALISTS COVER THE OPERATION PEACE SPRING IN TURKEY'S AKAÇKALE BORDER AREA NEAR THE SITE OF TEL ABYAD CITY OF SYRIA ON OCTOBER 10, 2019. / PHOTO: MAHMUT SENDAR ALAKUS/NADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

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IMS (International Media Support)
promotes press freedom, works
to save the lives of journalists and
paves the way for good journalism.



A silver lining in chaotic times

The initial six months of 2020 has made it abundantly clear to us all that we live in a highly globalized world. In the midst of nationalist tendencies in many countries and trade routes being disrupted, the interconnectedness of the world is more apparent than ever. In only a few months the coronavirus went from being a national issue in China to becoming a global crisis.

Against this dramatic backdrop, a review of the year 2019 through a lens of media and democratic development makes two global phenomena — or rather opposing movements — stand out. A continued democratic decline and the counteracting evolution of popular protest movements.

2019 was yet another year where we saw an increasing number of regimes around the world suppressing civic liberties of all kinds, including freedom of the press. According to Freedom House, in 2019 the global press freedom fell to its lowest point in more than a decade. Given journalism's crucial role in democratic development

and status as indicator of the direction a country is heading, this development is highly worrisome. With the arrival of the coronavirus, the limitations and attacks on the free press have only been exacerbated with direct hindrances in media distribution channels both online and offline and the passing of laws criminalising information that regimes and authorities categorise as 'fake'.

However, 2019 was also a year characterised by pushback through massive popular protest movements around the world. This has been the case in Chile, Nicaragua, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Hong Kong, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Liberia and many other countries. Many of the protests were sparked by specific events or legislative proposals nationally, and although they were not directly connected, the common trait for all was that they reflected (and still reflect) a deep-rooted frustration based in increasing inequality, a lack of accountability at the political level and a deficit of democratic participation, just as they have served as

inspiration for one another. The coronavirus brought many of these protests to a halt, but the grievances remain. At the time of writing, protests in new and innovative forms are reemerging with for example tweetstorms, demonstrations with social distancing, and car protests. The silver lining in this chaotic moment in history is that the global democratic decline is not taking place unchallenged. Populations want to have a say, and here the availability of independent public interest media as a vehicle for debate and sharing facts and information is critical.

Media for change

For IMS, those popular pushbacks are highly indicative of our partners' importance. Despite the mounting challenges, their work is becoming increasingly important and their operations increasingly innovative: In the Middle East and North Africa new audiences are being reached with taboo-breaking podcasts, in Zimbabwe, Sri

"we will bring all our firepower to bear and do our part to build on the opportunities and mitigate the challenges emanating from the pandemic and all the other challenges currently facing independent media"

PHOTO: JEPPE HEDEGAARD/IMS



Jesper Højbjerg, IMS Executive Director.

Lanka and Tunisia misinformation is being debunked through rigorous fact-checks, and across the continents the coverage of the coronavirus has been met with urgency, dedication and a renewed sense of purpose by all partners. With collapsed advertisement revenues and intensified repression and safety concerns, the plethora of challenges is unprecedented for most partners. However, with ample support and dedication they all have kept on producing valuable content.

For IMS, 2019 was also characterised by the intense work of revising the organisational strategy coming out in 2020. We know that societies are not peaceful and democratic without gender equality, and public interest media cannot contribute to a vibrant and inclusive civic space if they perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities. Therefore, IMS' gender approach advocates for public interest content and media that address the needs and interests of all genders.

This report has many good examples of how partners seek to change and challenge existing norms on this front and on other issues, but we do know that public interest media cannot go it alone. Rather, media

need to build relationships and alliances with civil society organisations around shared interests in defending and, where possible, expanding civic space, both on and offline. For more details about our strategic priorities, please go to page 46.

To bring about the changes IMS is working towards, we partner with public interest media operations, media support and other rights-focused organisations with a view to influencing other key stakeholders in the media ecosystem such as technology companies, the UN and other international bodies, as well as national governments.

One partner who has managed to carve out relationships with many relevant stakeholders is Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC). After more than ten years in Afghanistan AJSC is all set to move forward independently. It is a success-criteria - and one we work towards everywhere - to see long time partners continue on their own. For IMS, our Afghanistan programme remains hugely important to our institutional DNA as the work of building a nationally anchored safety mechanism from the ground up has informed much of our safety work elsewhere. I encourage you to read the article on page 38 about IMS'

engagement in Afghanistan and some of the milestones we have passed along the way. Although this report focuses on activities in 2019, we have included some of the work which partners have done in response to the pandemic. What I see is that even as the pandemic crisis exacerbates existing financial woes, it may also accelerate new models for sustainable journalism and instill a newfound appreciation for public interest media outlets in its audiences.

It is hard to know how long it will be before normality returns, or what normality will look like. But as a media development organisation working with innovative and independent media partners, we will bring all our firepower to bear and do our part to build on the opportunities and mitigate the challenges emanating from the pandemic and all the other challenges currently facing independent media.

Jesper Højbjerg

IMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Covid-19 is a stark reminder that people need news they can trust

Worldwide, media business models are collapsing with the new economic downturn, and attacks on media freedom have increased sharply. But if there is one ray of hope in the tragedy of the Corona pandemic, it could be that Covid-19 is re-awakening people to the vital role that independent media plays in their societies.



To map the impact of Covid-19 on independent media, we asked our partners to report back on the situation in their countries. The stories published on a dedicated website - and some of them featured below - showcase the creative ways in which IMS partners have responded to the crisis.

mediasupport.org/covid19

Sri Lanka

Media and fact-checkers tackle Covid-19 'infodemic'

Originally set up to fact check election stories, a network of stakeholders against disinformation re-grouped to debunk false Covid-19 claims. One of the first stories involved far-right nationalists using Covid-19 to fuel prejudice against Sri Lanka's Muslim community. Journalists and fact-checkers worked to debunk the malicious disinformation. "Coronavirus is our common enemy and we should be united against it," says former media minister, Imthiaz Bakeer Markar.

Jordan

Podcast is challenging the official Covid-19 narratives

With the launch of a new biweekly podcast focusing exclusively on Covid-19 in the Arab world, named Almostajad, Sowt goes behind the official numbers and shines light on the people who are most affected by the crisis. Their first podcast episode on the pandemic reached over four million people and Sowt is experiencing a rapidly growing audience for their critical take on responses to the crisis across the region.

Pakistan

Responding to Covid-19 challenges with innovation

Covid-19 presents journalists in Pakistan with additional challenges, but it also provides opportunities. As the government cracks down on press freedom, ostensibly to discourage panic and paranoia, independent media is filling the gap left by health authorities' low-quality public information.

Somalia

Radio is reaching even the most remote parts of the country

Radio Ergo's toll free mobile phone feedback platform allows journalists to respond directly to their community's concerns around Covid-19. Radio Ergo is working with UN agencies, NGOs, and the health ministry to fill the informational gaps their listeners are highlighting.

Documentary

Exploring shared experience

Daraj Media in Lebanon, together with IMS, commissioned five leading Lebanese filmmakers to produce short films about the lockdown. "We want to help people understand that the stress and negative emotions they're dealing with are normal reactions to an extreme situation like this," explains Daraj's executive editor, Alia Ibrahim.

Syria

Local radio station helps to flatten the curve

Seeing that authorities in North-East Syria were slow in responding to the pandemic, local radio ARTA FM made it their mission to inform listeners how they could stay safe and help reduce the burden on the region's healthcare services. Explainers targeting children were also produced.

Middle East & North Africa

In 2019 IMS supported 34 content producing media outlets in the MENA region. Partners target not only audiences living in urban environments, but also people in rural areas. All together IMS' content producing partners reach out to more than 11 million citizens in the region every month

50

50 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS GAINED NEW KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN SAFETY, GENDER INCLUSION, LAW REFORM, CONTENT PRODUCTION AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, WHILE STRENGTHENING THEIR ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY.

86%

AS A RESULT OF THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH IMS, 86 PERCENT OF PARTNERS FIND THAT THEIR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY HAS BEEN ENHANCED (2019 PARTNER SURVEY).

30

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM PARTNERS ARIJ, NIRIJ AND SIRAJ PUBLISHED MORE THAN 30 INVESTIGATIONS, SEVERAL OF WHICH LED TO WIDER INVESTIGATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF POWER HOLDERS.

"We, Moroccan citizens, declare that we are outlaws." These words headlined a manifesto that circulated on social media in September 2019. The cause: to abolish Article 490 of the penal code that punishes sex outside of wedlock. 490 women signed up and publicly declared that they were violating the law. The change was real: From that day, women from the movement were speaking up on radio, television, newspapers and everywhere they could. There were a lot of women's voices that were suddenly heard all around.

7amleh published the "Hashtag Palestine" and "Index of Racism" reports, both of which gained local and international media attention and helped launch the Palestinian Digital Rights Coalition. One of 7amleh's key findings is that hate speech is directed at Palestinians on social networks on average every 66 seconds.

To change local perception on women's rights **ARTA FM** decided to form a female football club – only to see the team crowned as Syrian champions early 2020. Besides promoting women's sport in the region, ARTA also works to empower women journalists. Before the radio station began broadcasting, only very few women worked in the media industry in the region. Today ARTA Academy provides training for women reporters, and many of the reporters working for ARTA FM are women.



Morocco

Libya

Nass Radio
Against a background of conflict, a divided population and a polarised national media environment, IMS initiated in 2019 a partnership to empower Nass Radio. The radio produces ethical content pertaining to human rights, citizenship and the rule of law, addressing human rights violations and enabling the active engagement of women and youth in the public debate. IMS extended the expert guidance of a senior Tunisian radio journalist to support the Nass Radio team in sharpening its editorial charter and its programme grid, comprising long-form reports, daily live and recorded audio programmes, talk shows and advocacy campaigns.

Palestine

Tunisia

Association for Development and Alternative Media (ADAM)
In partnership with Bashkatib - a regional NGO, new youth-run community media pilot project in Beni Khaled, an underprivileged agricultural hub provided a group of teenagers with intense training in journalism, photography and design. Result: the monthly publication El Mechaal! While roads were paved two weeks after the publication discussed the town's poor infrastructure; another article pushed the school director to announce the creation of a library.

Syria

Iraq

Iraqiyat, an online magazine focusing on women and promoting women's rights ran daily articles on women's proactive participation in the nationwide protests and had a major role in enhancing calls for increased accountability by publishing the names and photos of protesters who had been kidnapped. It aimed at increasing pressure on those behind the disappearances, which proved to be an effective tool.

Jordan

7iber
Its in-depth multimedia feature on Pakistani migrants in Jordan won the Tamkeen Award for Migration Reporting. Also widely read was its multimedia investigation into shrinking agricultural production in the Theeban district of Jordan. Busy bees 7iber published 106 features and analyses in 2019, tripling its target and doubling its output. It also increased the percentage of content produced by women and the total number of women freelance writers used.

Network news

Collaboration is the name of the game at the IMS-supported news platform that has fast become one of the most trustworthy sources of information in the MENA region

Authoritarian regimes have long controlled the media of the Middle East, learning from each another and sharing repressive tactics. Recently, though, the region has seen a slew of independent media challenge the status quo and provide alternative sources of news.

Chief among them is Daraj. Founded in November 2017, the Beirut-based organisation has fast become one of the most credible pan-Arab sources of information. Despite being in only its third year of operation, it has twice been named Best Digital News Start-up at the Middle Eastern Digital Media Awards.

The wellspring of Daraj's success is its network of writers and journalists striving to tell stories that the region's traditional media choose to overlook. In 2019, it published the work of over 300 journalists, more than triple the number the previous year. Its standout publications were long-reads and investigative journalism pieces — three of which won international prizes last year, paving the way for change and a wider public debate.

Collaboration is the watchword at Daraj, which covers more than 50 cities across the Middle East and North Africa.

For instance, one of the biggest stories it ran in 2019 was an investigation into the “sex for food” scandal at UN shelters in Syria, which it carried out in collaboration with Syrian Investigative Reporting for Accountability Journalism (SIRAJ).

“We take great pride in the impact that our stories had, especially at the level of covering under-reported beats,” says Alia Ibrahim, a co-founder of Daraj, whose slogan is ‘The Third Story’. “The most impactful stories were the ones that led to investigations like the Sex for Food story which lead to an inquiry within the UN.”

Based in an Art Deco building that's home to over a dozen start-ups, Daraj has 12 full-time staff. In 2019, all new hires were under 35; more than half were women — ensuring that 80 percent of Daraj's staff are women. Last year also saw it launch “Write for You, Publish for You”: a campaign to attract more female contributors. Daraj now publishes at least one story about gender a day. Overall, almost a third of its editorial output is gender-related.

Increasingly, too, Daraj aims to train journalists on the ground. For instance, throughout 2019, it provided mentoring for Yemeni news startup Al-Mushahid.

Mena Regional

CURRENT PROGRAMME
2016-2022

DONORS
SIDA, DAPP, Ford Foundation, OSF,
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Media content production
- MENA law reform
- Online media training
- Strengthening regional networks
- Investigative reporting
- Supporting new initiatives
- Documentary films

With IMS support, Daraj was tasked with strengthening Al-Mushahid's editorial and journalistic capacity. Similarly, cofounder Alia Ibrahim provided online training for journalists in Syria, Yemen and Gaza, as part of an IMS-supported course offered by the American University of Beirut.

With a growing audience across the Middle East and North Africa — including more than 100,000 Facebook followers — Daraj is well-positioned to undertake solutions-driven projects. A case in point is its collaboration with the Jordanian satirical news site Al Hudood — itself a pan-regional success story and IMS partner. Together they produced a video campaign raising awareness of various threats to the region's water supply.

The campaign typifies Daraj's fruitful relationship that IMS. “As important as the funds and the support we get from IMS are,” Ibrahim says, “we see even greater value in the time we're given to think and work together.”

On 8 March 2019, Daraj launched the campaign “Write For You, We Publish For You,” to specifically attract female contributors. This slightly boosted the total percentage of articles written by women contributors to 33%.





MURTAHA AL-SUDANI/ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

Iraqi women protesting at Tahrir Square in Baghdad.

Iraq

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2019-2020

DONORS

Sida, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Media law reform
- Safety for journalists
- Support to initiatives promoting religious minorities voices in the media and countering hate speech against religious minorities
- Conflict sensitive journalism and investigative journalism
- Gender

Writing the wrongs

With Iraqi society scared from years of terror and conflict, an IMS-supported editorial outlet seeks to promote social cohesion and provide a platform for women

Among the scores of stories published by the Iraq Media Platform (IMP) in 2019, few typified the outlet's approach quite like its piece about a former Islamic State sex slave who copes with her trauma by painting and uses art to bring together Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities.

The story demonstrated not only IMP's objective—to promote social cohesion in a country still recovering from years of Islamic State (IS) terror—but also its progressive view of gender roles.

"It is important that women are not depicted as victims," explains Kholoud Al-Amiry, a former Iraq correspondent for the pan-Arabic newspaper *al-Hayat*, who became IMP's editor-in-chief in 2019. "A woman can be strong—as strong as a man—and she should be given the opportunity to prove that she is an active part of building the state."

IMP provided a case in point last year. As part of a shift in strategy that saw

it relaunch its name and website, and start publishing in English, the online platform sought to improve the gender balance in its head count and content.

It succeeded on both fronts.

While the number of female freelancers making regular contributions rose sixfold and its four-strong editorial board is today split equally between men and women, topics covered in 2019 included women wrestlers in Basra and the first female taxi driver in Sulaymaniyah.

Last year also saw IMP expand its focus beyond Mosul to cover the whole country. Highlights included a video story from southern Iraq about the Sabian people and their co-existence with other religious groups, and an article about residents of Fallujah cleaning the graves of IS fighters; its publication fostered positive relations between the city's ethnic and religious communities.

With almost three-quarters of Iraqis now

using social media, another strategic priority for IMP in 2019 was to focus on Facebook. The approach clearly paid off. At the start of the year, IMP had about 26,000 Facebook followers; today it has more than 60,000.

Operating out of an office on the fourth floor of a 1960s-era building in Baghdad, with views of the old city and the oilfields burning outside the capital, al-Amiry and her social media editor are IMP's only members of staff; the platform relies heavily on freelancers.

International Media Support remains crucial to IMP's success. Last year, as well as supporting the platform via funding, IMS offered training in editorial content, audiovisual production, and gender mainstreaming.

"It is important that women are not depicted as victims"

Jordan

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2016-2020

DONORS

Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP)

FOCUS AREAS

- Good journalism and capacity building
- Gender
- Media law reform and advocacy
- Media business development and improving project management skills among local media managers



PHOTO: SOWT

Rana Daoud, host of Sown podcast Dom Tak, performs an episode live in Amman, Jordan.

In pod we trust

As podcasts grow in popularity in the Middle East, an IMS-supported platform in Jordan attracts plenty of buzz

While 2019 saw the launch of the Arab world's first daily news podcast, thanks to Al Jazeera, the marketplace was dominated by other heavy hitters — including the Jordanian podcast platform Sown.

Its audio division having been set up in 2016 by executive director Ramsey Tesdell, Sown produces high-quality, narrative-driven audio content for Arabic-speaking audiences. It also uses sound production to create a backdrop against which listeners can “consider and explore principles of equality, diversity, and human rights.” Sown's current roster of 18 podcasts includes two that launched in 2019,

thanks to direct support from IMS.

Dom Tak is a podcast about Arabic music. Season one told stories about Arab female musicians, and season two explored different genres of music in the Arab world. The most downloaded episode was about the Sudanese singer Aisha Falatieh, and was inspired by the April 2019 revolution that saw President Omar al-Bashir removed from power.

Eib (‘Shame’ in English) is a podcast that examines how ordinary people are affected by society's definitions of — and rules pertaining to — gender. Host Ban Barkawi tells the individual stories of people's experiences with issues that are rarely discussed in Jordanian society such as divorce, abortion, elopement, and sexual orientation. One standout episode in 2019 concerned a widow finding love again.

Sown means ‘voice’ or ‘sound’ in Arabic — and in its effort to create an independent platform producing high-quality audio content for Arabic-speaking audiences, it

is certainly making itself heard. In 2019, its podcasts were downloaded almost half a million times.

To reach different segments of the community — especially those who do not have access to the necessary technology — Sown broadcast episodes on community radio stations. Indeed, while podcasting may be a new medium, Tesdell says it harks back to a much older tradition. “Audio is an important tool for journalists and storytellers and we're really looking to the past to revive and modernise a traditional method of storytelling,” he explains.

In 2019, IMS worked very closely with Sown on its business plan and strategy, and Tesdell says IMS support was crucial in terms of providing not only a network, connections and knowhow, but also the resources to help Sown function and grow. Indeed, having started 2019 with three full-time employees, Sown now has around 15. It also works with many of freelancers in the Arab world and beyond. Moreover, to accommodate its rapid growth and increased production schedule last year, Sown expanded its offices in the historic neighbourhood of Jabal Amman, creating an in-house studio and adding new equipment.

“we're really looking to the past to revive and modernise a traditional method of storytelling”



PHOTO: LFJL

LFJL founder and director Elham Saudi, left, in conversation with Poonam Joshi, who sits on LFJL's board of trustees.

Libya

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2018-2020

DONORS

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Inclusive public interest journalism and content
- Gender and youth
- Community broadcasting

Ears to the ground

To challenge the distorted narrative and cover critical aspects of the Libyan conflict, IMS teamed up with a leading member of the country's civil society to produce a new podcast

When Tripoli erupted into violence in April 2019, following Khalifa Haftar's move on the Libyan capital, the international media took notice. The turmoil triggered more coverage of Libya than at any point since the outbreak of the civil war in 2014.

For some, the media spotlight was long overdue. But one leading member of the Libyan civil society saw a problem. According to the Lawyers For Justice in Libya (LFJL)—an independent NGO dedicated to strengthening the rule of law in the North African country—the international media focused overwhelmingly on the political and diplomatic interests at stake, but failed to cover violations of human rights or the rule of law.

LFJL moved swiftly to address the issue. With support from IMS—which likewise saw the consequences of distorted facts and critical aspects of the conflict being overlooked—it launched "Challenging the Narrative on Libya", an attempt to analyse

international media coverage of the Libyan conflict. Over several weeks, it monitored reporting on Libya and its analysis provided the basis of an online, interactive and regularly updated "media toolkit" for journalists interested in covering the legal and humanitarian aspects of the conflict.

Then, also in partnership with IMS, LFJL along with content creator Tariq Elmeri produced *Libya Matters*, a podcast aimed at challenging the mainstream narrative on Libya and providing a more nuanced perspective on the impact of the conflict on ordinary Libyans. Each episode sees LFJL director Elham Saudi interview a different expert about the current situation in Libya, and discuss relevant legal aspects, the impact of the conflict on civilians and vulnerable people, and topics such as the role of women and civil society.

"We felt that getting into people's earphones was one of the most honest and direct ways to have a conversation," Saudi

says. "The on-demand nature of podcasting means we can widen our audience, and we find that people come to the podcast for a specific issue or guest and then explore other episodes."

The 12-episode debut season of *Libya Matters* reached listeners well beyond its target audience of policymakers and diplomats. A second season is in the pipeline, and will create more space for Libyan civil society's voices, including experts and human rights defenders active in Libya.

LFJL is well-positioned to provide precisely that. With eight full-time staff across offices in London and Tripoli, it has maintained an uninterrupted presence in Libya ever since its launch in 2011, and with a growing network of activists, LFJL has insight, influence and trust in a country that is difficult for international organisations to penetrate.

"We felt that getting into people's earphones was one of the most honest and direct ways to have a conversation"

Palestine

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2018-2020

DONORS

Sida

FOCUS AREAS

- Freedom of expression and digital rights
- Independent journalism and documentary film making
- Gender equality and media



PHOTO: FILASTINIYAT

Dina Owisat speaking at the second round of the Palestine Debate Tournament held at Bethlehem university.

Occupational therapy

In a region that has endured occupation for decades, an IMS-supported NGO promotes freedom of expression and seeks to encourage the participation of women in public life

For most young people, graduating from college is a gateway to employment opportunities and financial security. Not in the West Bank or Gaza. Figures compiled by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics paint a dismal picture. Year after year, surveys show that more than half of young Palestinian graduates are unemployed.

The outlook is especially bleak for women. Last year, among 19-29-year old Palestinians holding a diploma certificate or higher, 68 percent of female graduates were out of work, compared with 35 percent of male graduates. The gender gap is

starker still for female journalists. In 2017, 75 percent of female journalism graduates aged 20-29 were unemployed — and on average spent 20 months out of work before getting their first job.

Enter Filastiniyat, a non-governmental organisation at the intersection of journalism, freedom of expression and gender equality. With 12 employees (all but two women), spread across offices in Gaza City and Ramallah, Filastiniyat seeks to encourage the participation of Palestinian women in public life — and to promote the rights and conditions of female journalists in particular.

Filastiniyat's flagship project is the Female Journalist Club. Established in 2010 to provide a "safe and independent venue" for women journalists, particularly in Gaza—which has been under siege for 14 years—the club provides a range of coaching, roundtable discussions and career development opportunities. In

2019, the club offered members training in mobile storytelling, investigative journalism, reporter safety and creative writing.

Another success story for Filastiniyat last year was NAWA, an online initiative set up in 2012 to support female freelance journalists in Palestine and provide a platform for marginalised voices as well as gender-sensitive and feminist reporting.

Last year also saw Filastiniyat unify the Palestinian journalists' syndicate, and continue to advocate for a 40 percent quota for female journalists at every level of decision-making with the syndicate. The NGO also continued its Palestine Debate programme, running courses in debating skills and critical thinking for more than 100 students in Gaza and the West Bank.

Filastiniyat's founder and director, Wafa' Abdel Rahman, says IMS' support helped the NGO make "a jump—not a step—towards sustainability" in 2019. In particular, IMS provided support through the Sweden-funded programme on regional and intentional exposure and strategy. It also helped Filastiniyat cover core costs—including salaries and administrative expenses—and enabled it to work more on bigger projects targeting new donors rather than seeking project funding on an ongoing basis.

"68% of female graduates were out of work, compared with 35% of male graduates"

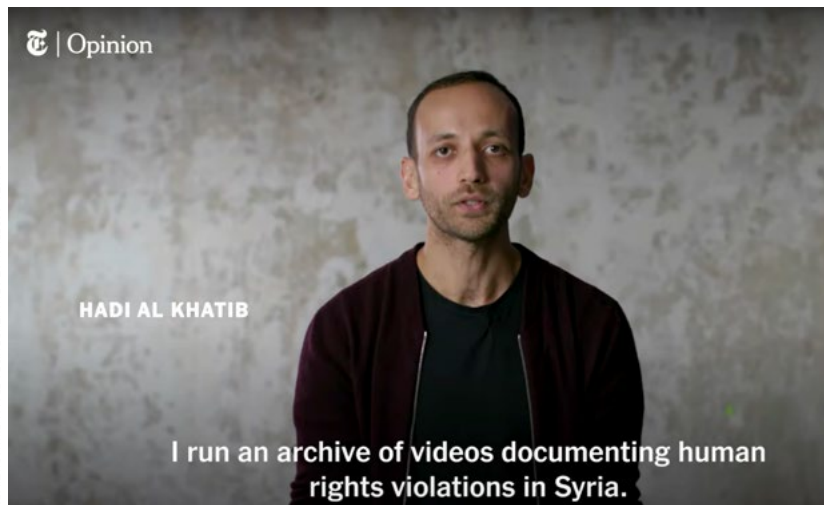


PHOTO: SCREENSHOT OF YOUTUBE VIDEO FROM NEW YORK TIMES

In the Opinion section of New York Times, Syrian Archive founder Hadi Al Khatib criticized YouTube for removing videos that included evidence of government attacks in Syria and elsewhere.

Syria

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2016-2021

DONORS

Sida, Norad, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

FOCUS AREAS

- Safety for journalists and risk management for media outlets
- Access to good journalism content reflecting and representing Syrian diversity
- Building institutional resilience
- Enable conflict sensitive public debate between and within Syrian communities inside and outside Syria
- Women & conflict - implementing UNSCR 1325 through media

The truth seekers

With IMS support, a group of investigators hunt down and verify evidence relating to human rights violations in Syria and beyond

On 21 August 2013, rockets containing the chemical agent sarin struck Eastern Ghouta, a rebel-held suburb east of Damascus. Hundreds of civilians were killed.

Among the parties building a legal case regarding the attack is Mnemonic, a Berlin-based organisation comprising 25 researchers, journalists, technologists, and digital security experts who curate, verify and investigate digital content relating to human rights violations and develop innovative open-source tools and methodologies to assist in their efforts.

The IMS-supported Syrian Archive project is Mnemonic's specific attempt "to stop the permanent erase of critical documentation and add value to visual open-source documentation for immediate humanitarian relief and advocacy, and for long-term legal accountability for crimes committed during the Syrian conflict."

In 2019, IMS provided financial support to the Syrian Archive to enable the project's Berlin-based team to provide vital

documentation of human rights violations; publish five full-length open-source investigations; complete six additional full-length investigations for publication this year; and develop its chemical warfare database containing documentation from over 190 sources that can be viewed, analysed, and downloaded.

To that end, the Syrian Archive's impact was apparent throughout 2019. Its investigative work resulted in an internal audit of the Belgian customs system; several parliamentary inquiries in multiple countries; a change in Swiss export laws to reflect European Union sanctions on specific chemicals; and the opening of additional investigations in Germany and the Netherlands related to shipments of chemicals to Syria.

According to Hadi Al Khatib, a founding member of the Syrian Archive, its most impressive result came in February, when a court in Antwerp convicted three Flemish companies of shipping sanctioned chemicals to Syria. Legal proceedings started in

2018 after the Belgian paper Knack published material that the Syrian Archive brought to light.

Meanwhile, the group's advocacy, policy activity and investigative work received extensive press coverage in 2019 including an investigative report in The New York Times on Russia's bombing of four hospitals, for which the Syrian Archive provided material.

Ultimately, says Al Khatib, preserving and verifying data related to human rights violations helps to create counter-narratives to the misinformation that arises during conflicts—and that "supporting independent reporting in turn will be a powerful tool to hold perpetrators of violations accountable and support the prospects of peace and justice."

"Preserving data helps to create counter-narratives to the misinformation that arises during conflicts"

Tunisia

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2017-2021

DONORS

Sida, Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Media law reform
- Good journalism content through empowering independent content producers, both men and women, that have an impact on the public debate
- Anchoring knowledge in institutions and promoting peer-exchanges, both national and regional
- Advocating media rights through support to key institutions defending the rights of media workers



PHOTO: CHEDIV BENIBRAHIM/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Women attending a march in Tunis calling for equal inheritance rights and gender equality.

Hair-raising truths

When Tunisia's #MeToo moment erupted last autumn, one media platform was perfectly placed to give survivors a space to be heard

Last October, a Tunisian student posted an accusation of sexual harassment by a politician — along with photographic evidence — to a private Facebook group. The post went viral, and triggered a tsunami of support, as Tunisian women from all walks of life flooded the group with their own stories of sexual harassment in a large show of solidarity - with that #EnaZeda was born - local dialect for #MeToo. Lawyers began offering pro bono legal assistance to survivors; women's rights groups started organising protests, sit-ins, and flash mobs.

One Tunis-based media platform soon

grasped the potential of the moment. Since its inception in 2013, Al Khatt has distinguished itself by producing high-quality journalism enhanced by cutting-edge technology and tools through its flagship project Inkyfada — a web magazine specialising in investigative and data journalism.

Now, as Tunisian women began to share their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse, many anonymously, Al Khatt decided to focus more on podcasting. In late 2019, Inkyfada launched its brand-new podcast division with #EnaZeda: Au-delà des témoignages, un acte politique — an in-depth account of Tunisia's #MeToo moment, hair-raising accounts of victims, and important questions on the future of the Tunisian feminist movement.

The success of the 40-minute episode only demonstrated the potential of the format. A second podcast, this time a series, soon followed, featuring eyewitness accounts of the Tunisian 2011 revolution. According to Inkyfada's editorial director, Monia Ben

Hamadi, podcasting is an “interesting middle ground” between print and visual journalism. “It can tell very intimate stories without focusing on the identity of the person, but rather only their story,” she adds.

IMS helped train members of her team on technical aspects of podcast production, including funding two workshops—one with the producers of Un podcast à soi, an acclaimed French feminist podcast on Arte Radio.

Besides podcasting, last year saw Al Khatt embark on another ambitious project in partnership with IMS. The Arabic-speaking world has the world's lowest rate of female economic participation, despite increasing levels of education among women. The role of language in preserving gender stereotypes provides a partial explanation for the discrepancy, with gender-biased language continuing to exacerbate already-strong male-centred attitudes and perpetuate the marginalisation and trivialisation of women.

A three-day workshop in December, brought together leading progressive media outlets in the MENA region. Already, Inkyfada's Arabic edition publish content in a gender-inclusive language. The workshop was only one of many events to come intended to broaden the debate and inspire other media outlets.

"It can tell very intimate stories without focusing on the identity of the person, but rather only their story"



PHOTO: RADIO LANA

In 2019, Radio Lana increased to 40 percent its weekly production of content focusing on women and minorities. Also impressive: almost two-thirds of Radio Lana's editorial team are now women.

Yemen

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2016-2020

DONORS

Sweden

FOCUS AREAS

- Community broadcaster(s)
- Independent media platform, including coverage of the peace process
- Investigative journalism
- Safety for journalists, including psycho-social support

Radio defying the odds

Despite the dire situation in Yemen one IMS-supported community radio station kept broadcasting — even adding programming designed to support listeners' mental health

Quitting was never an option for Radio Lana. As the situation in Yemen deteriorated in 2019, the tiny community radio station in the port city of Aden continued to broadcast. Indeed, amid political instability, a lack of basic services, an escalating economic crisis, abusive security forces, and broken governance, health, education, and judicial systems, Radio Lana never once went dark last year. Only technical issues at the tail-end of 2019 brought its regular programming to a brief standstill.

“Sometimes we had to suspend broadcasting for a few days if there was shooting, especially since our neighbourhood is close to the presidential palace,” explains Radio Lana's co-founder and editorial strategist, Nadia Al-Sakkaf. “At other times, reporters would have difficulty getting to work because roads were blocked by the fighting groups.

Even so, Al-Sakkaf says the biggest challenge that Radio Lana faced was instability,

whether because of the financial uncertainty that developed whenever advertising funds dried up, or because of fuel shortages, or because of the all-too-frequent power cuts that halted broadcasting, harmed equipment, and prevented access to the internet.

Survival amid such circumstances might be considered achievement enough for many media outlets, especially local broadcasters. But for Radio Lana's 10 members of staff,—five men; five women—Yemen's dire situation has sparked a flurry of innovative programming and a determination to service the community. From its base in the historic Khour Maksar district of Aden, Radio Lana broadcast from early morning until late evening, every day but Friday. It estimates its audience to be around three million listeners.

Arguably the standout achievement in 2019, however, was Radio Lana's introduction of a radio programme designed to support the mental health of its audience.

(According to the Yemen Data Project, more than 17,500 civilians have been killed or injured since 2015.)

Topics included negative media exposure and vicarious trauma; dealing with political differences; and dealing with the death of loved ones. Live-streaming and call-ins helped make the topics more accessible and relevant to Radio Lana's audience. “Listeners love to call and chat with the trauma expert and the reporters on air,” says Al-Sakkaf.

The programme stemmed from measures that IMS implemented first in 2018 and continued in 2019 to improve working conditions for journalists by providing psycho-social support, education and counselling. In co-operation with other partners in Yemen, IMS also enabled individual sessions for journalists with the programme's co-host, Lebanese trauma counsellor Dr Khaled Nasser.

The programme ran for two months and comprised 57 sessions, with participants coming from across Yemen. Participants experienced fewer flashbacks and showed a better social involvement and less rage. Its success has since inspired IMS's Yemen programme to share it with other IMS partners.

No woman,



no peace

By Malin Palm

Including women in peace processes is still not a given, despite the fact that it increases the chances of long-lasting peace and better the protection of vulnerable groups. Media has an important role to play by putting women's voices and perspectives in the forefront

In 2012, when the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC-EP) began peace talks with government negotiators, not a single woman was present. "Twenty men and no women. It was a shocking image of exclusion", Laura Gil, IMS' Colombia adviser, remembers.

Three years later this had changed so that one in five of the government negotiating team were female and close to half of the FARC delegates. The women on both sides worked intensely and strategically with the media to make their voices heard. However, change didn't come easy, Victoria Sandino, at the time a FARC commander

and one of the first guerilla peace negotiators, recalls: "The media frequently asked intrusive and insensitive questions such as 'were you raped?' or 'were you forced to undergo abortion?'" Little or no attention was given to their experience as FARC combatants or their political agenda".

The exclusion of women was not limited to the negotiation tables, but also manifested itself in and by media. Even today - and despite women being essential to achieving long-lasting peace - their experiences as active agents and survivors in conflicts are not pronounced publicly, their roles as experts and decision-makers go unnoticed and their needs remain overlooked.

But with the right support and guidance, media has a chance to lead in the developments towards gender equal representation, according to Laura Gil: "Media has

the power to amplify the voices of women, portray their active roles in peacebuilding, support their participation in public debate, challenge gender stereotypes and hold decision-makers accountable for women rights. But they need a push to realise this major potential".

Women in peace process

- Between 1992-2018, women made up only 13% of negotiators, 3% of mediators and 4% of signatories in major peace processes UN Women Facts and Figures: Peace and Security, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>
- In global media, just 31% of political stories were reported by women journalists, and as little as 9% of the sources in stories related to politics are women. (Global Media Monitoring Project, Who makes the news?, 2015).
- National defense, peace negotiations and war are all at the bottom 10 of stories containing women (Who makes the news, page 34).
- Only 24% of all persons heard, read about or seen in media are women (Global Media Monitoring Project, Who makes the news?, 2015).
- Women belonging to excluded groups such as ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, lesbian and transgender communities etc. are even more absent from the news, due to the double discrimination they face as women and members of a minority group.

A woman being interviewed by a community radio reporter, Myanmar, 2019.

Training, awareness raising and media development

Enter IMS' 1325 programme, launched in 2019. It is named after UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) which seek to increase women's participation and representation in peace processes, and it runs simultaneously in Colombia, Myanmar and Syria – three countries which are all torn by lengthy, brutal armed conflicts and which in different ways strive to find peaceful solutions. IMS' programme focus on increasing the number of women journalists reporting on peace processes and conflicts as well as making stories from women in excluded groups known to the public and decision makers.

“The goal of the IMS programme in Myanmar is a greater inclusion of women in the media and more news content on conflict and peace building that reflect women's perspective”, says Maw Day Myar, IMS' Myanmar adviser. “We do that through training journalists on how to add a gender perspective to conflict reporting and how to interview survivors of, for example, sexual violence and trafficking in a sensitive and respectful way. The training is done jointly with Women's League of Burma and other women's rights organisations, who will also be involved in developing editorial guidelines for Myanmar media on gender and conflict sensitive journalism.”

UNSCR Resolution 1325

- Resolution 1325 urges an increase of women participation and incorporation of gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts. It also recognizes the different experiences of women and men, and it calls for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.
- If women are included in peace processes, evidence indicates that women participants in peace processes are usually less focused on the spoils of war, and more on reconciliation, economic development, education and transitional justice – all critical elements of a sustained peace. (“The essential role of women in peacebuilding”, United States Institute of Peacebuilding)

Women stepping into the limelight

Media's responsibility is two-fold when it comes to supporting the UNSCR 1325: to make sure that women's active participation in the conflict and peace processes is reflected in the news and assure that both women and men report on these issues. The latter is one of the challenges that IMS' partner Syrian Female Journalists Network (SFJN) has worked strategically to solve, and it's important because women might have other views on which stories are important. In Syria, as in many other countries, many women also prefer

to talk to other women, especially on sensitive topics.

Approximately one third of all Syria's journalists are women. Radio hosts, documentarists, reporters - many women had a visible and important presence at the time of the peaceful protests in 2011 and in the first years of conflict. However, as the security situation deteriorated, only a few stayed inside Syria to report on the frontline while many fled to neighboring countries or to Europe.

For those who remained in Syria, reporting became practically impossible. The rise of warlords and exclusionary ideologies asserted pre-existing authoritarian and patriarchal structures. Many Syrian media outlets were harassed or threatened if they wrote about women's issues or featured a woman's image on their cover. In response to this external pressure, women were no longer allowed to have leading roles in the newsrooms and had their work taken over by male colleagues, for example when male sources would ask for male reporters.

Due to the circumstances of the conflict, most news from inside Syria from the first years of uprisings and until today has been covered by citizen journalists. Hayma Alyosufi, SFJN's Coordinator on Women, Peace and Security, explains that “Women, and men, without journalist training and with mobile phones as their only equipment, have become the new reporters. SFJN provide trainings in basic journalistic skills as well as courses on how to report on gender equality and peace in a responsible manner. Our hopes are that we will get to hear more stories by and about women, and that these women citizen journalists in time will get access to work in media houses”.

Professionalism and expertise will protect survivors

Another responsibility of media when it comes to covering violent conflicts is to put focus on the inordinate impact on women and girls, not least from the use of rape and other forms of sexualised violence.

“Gender equality is often accused of being a Western concept forced upon us, but what we do is to connect Syrian women with Syrian media”

Covering these types of crimes is a delicate matter, and it demands a certain level of resources and knowledge. Otherwise media risk accentuating the shame and stigma that surrounds sexual abuse and retraumatise the survivors.

“The general lack of sensitivity is attributed to a lack of awareness and training in ethical reporting”, says Maw Day Myar. “When journalists interview survivors, there is a carelessness in the line of questioning, such as asking the survivor up front to give specific details of the case or persisting with insensitive questions regardless of how the survivor responds emotionally. However, a carefully conducted interview – handled professionally with sensitivity and respect – could even be an important part of the individual healing process and societal reconciliation. This is the type of interview we teach in our trainings”.

One aspect of the trainings is to prepare the journalists to be patient and set aside as much time as the survivor needs to conduct an interview; just to build rapport might take several sessions in itself. Another is to encourage them to show empathy and let the survivor talk about the assault without interference – but that this does not mean that they should not fact-check. A third is to teach them what information they need from the survivors and what they can leave out if the survivor wishes to avoid sharing certain parts or details. Finally, there is the safety element: “Media frequently put survivors in danger by not protecting their identity. A few years ago, IMS conducted a media monitoring which found that one in four stories on gender-based violence gave away the identity of the survivor, either by sharing their name, photo, address or names of family members – or all of it. We teach journalists to handle all of their sources’ information with exceptional care”, Maw Day Myar states.

In Colombia, Laura Gil recognises the problems. Here, popular tabloid media reporting on gender-based violence continues to be direct and crude. They will report on violence against women, but as a crime of passion instead of as a serious societal problem and violation of women’s

human rights. According to media monitoring experts, stories of domestic violence and abuse are framed in the tabloid media as a dramatic soap opera. There is a lack of serious journalism around this theme, as well as a lack of editorial policy.

“One of the women’s shelters told us that they have stopped referring journalists to survivors of violence because of their bad experiences. For example, reporters would specifically ask to interview a “voluptuous woman” who has been a victim of domestic violence, with the aim of attracting as many readers as possible”, says Laura Gil. “Hopefully, with our training and the editorial guidelines on gender-sensitive conflict reporting that we work to get in place in Colombian media, this behavior will stop”.

Learning along the way

The IMS initiatives are still in an initial phase. Up until now, 37 Syrian and 24 Colombian journalists have completed the training course in gender and conflict sensitive journalism, which takes about a week. Laura Gil conducted a training for journalists in Colombia with both the media organisation Consejo de Redacion and Colombian women’s organisations.

“The level of recrimination from both sides took me by surprise. The session emphasized how much the general issues in media affect a field of coverage like gender and conflict – the shortage of resources and the high number of articles each journalist must produce during a day make it hard for them to cover a case of sexualised violence properly”, she says and continues:

“Sometimes I think that when it goes wrong, it’s due to fatigue more than lack of sensibility. You can’t require from journalists who struggle to publish ten articles a day to be able to set aside the time that dealing with a survivor of sexualised violence requires. Their management must be supportive and help create the conditions for them. We have to take all these business-related challenges into consideration in our programme so we can provide ideas for sustainable solutions.”

Joining forces to promote gender equality

One of the major strengths of IMS’ 1325 project is that it brings together media and women’s organisations to jointly define how to report on conflict from women’s perspective.

Hayma Alyousfi, SFJN’s Coordinator on Women, Peace and Security, confirms how important the cooperation between media and women’s organisations has been in Syria. “Building alliances with women’s organisations has really strengthened women journalists. Women’s organisations give access to their stories so media can cover the social justice work that is done in different communities. Based on this access, Syria-based female reporters have been able to cover more humanitarian angles of the conflict and peacebuilding efforts; the stories and struggles of women and children.”

In this project, it is also important that women’s organisations get a say in how women and their issues are portrayed. Hayma Alyousfi explains: “Gender equality is often accused of being a Western concept forced upon us, but what we do is to connect Syrian women with Syrian media”.

Laura Gil is also hopeful. “Social change is a slow process, and there’s still much to be done. But I think increasing the collaboration between media and civil society organisations is a significant step. I believe that we can create some important changes that can support the development so we in the future will have a lot more women in peace processes – both around the negotiation tables and portrayed in media – and a lot more women involved in the implementation of peace agreements,” she concludes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malin Palm is gender adviser at IMS

The programme (2019-2021) is implemented by IMS’ Global Response department in three countries and is financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Partners were at the forefront in media reform processes in Ethiopia and Sudan. They provided lifesaving information in conflict or disaster affected areas in Somalia, West Africa and Mozambique. Creative networks and fact-checkers in Zimbabwe held those in power to account during turbulent times, expanding their reach through new formats and engagement models. What ties all of these interventions together is the emphasis on inclusion and participation – in the form of coalition building, genuine engagement with those who are underserved and reliable content that matters.

25

THE IMS-RUN RADIO ERGO'S DAILY SHORTWAVE TRANSMISSIONS REACHED ALL AREAS OF SOMALIA WITH ESSENTIAL HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION PRODUCED BY AN UNRIVALLED NETWORK OF 25 OR MORE LOCAL SOMALI REPORTERS AND AN EXPERT EDITORIAL TEAM.

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mio.

RADIO BROADCASTS SUPPORTED BY IMS REACHED UP TO TWO MILLION SAHELIAN CITIZENS IN 2019.

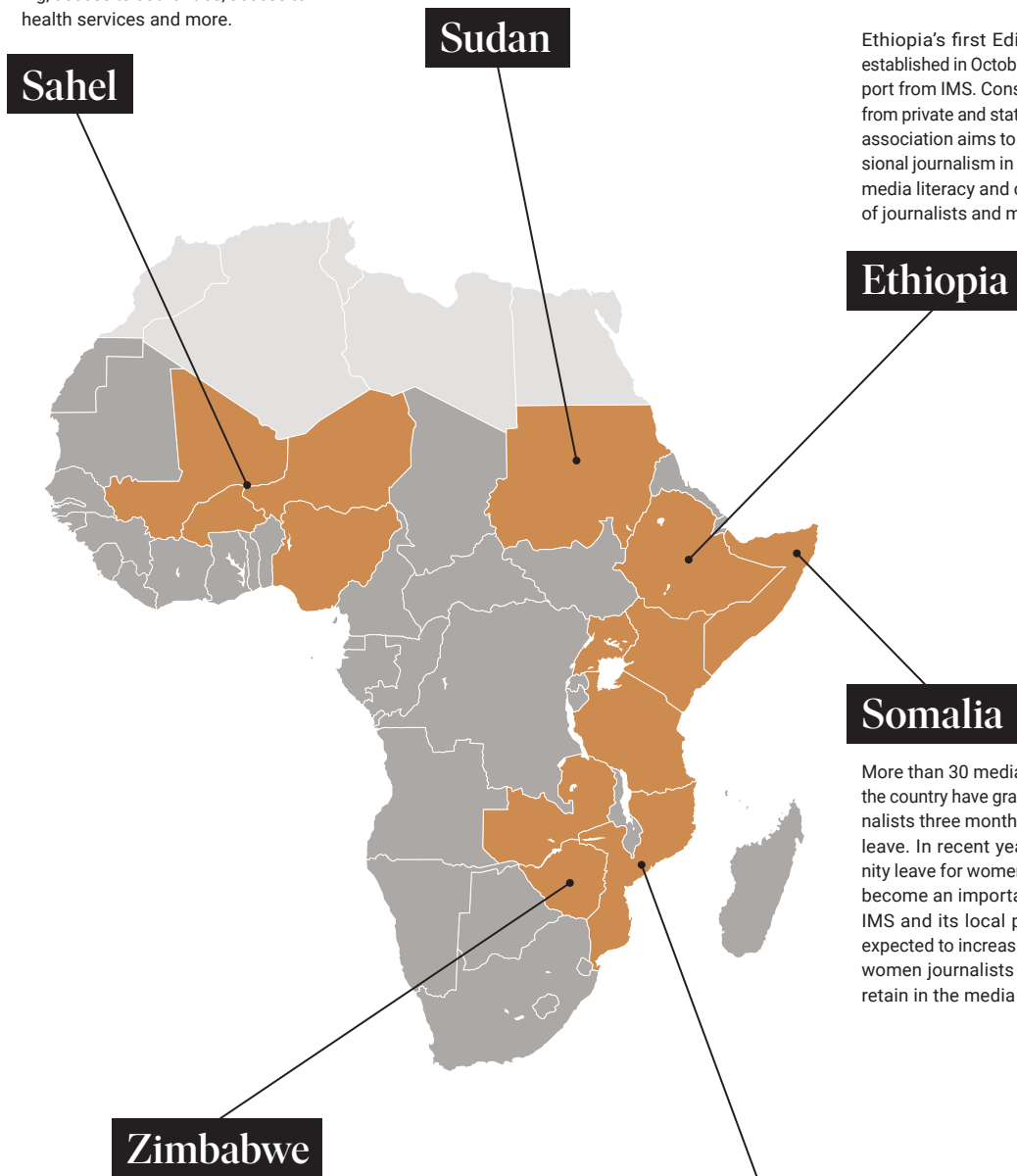
15

WITH OFFICES IN FIVE LOCATIONS AND 15 STAFF WORKING IN THE REGION, IMS MAINTAINED A STRONG LOCAL PRESENCE.

In the Liptako-Gourma (border zone between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso), IMS partners produced/ broadcasted 220 radio productions on security issues, peace promotion, resilience and social cohesion. Broadcasts reached up to two million Sahelian citizens, and radio debates generated positive change locally, improving local problem-solving, access to authorities, access to health services and more.

Responding to the historic events in Sudan – leading to the removal of President Bashir in April 2019 – IMS linked up with a group of Sudanese media actors in the country and in exile to explore ways in which independent media and grassroots media initiatives can play a constructive role in the volatile situation and in democratisation efforts going forward.

Ethiopia's first Editors Guild was established in October 2019 with support from IMS. Consisting of editors from private and state media, the new association aims to promote professional journalism in Ethiopia through media literacy and capacity building of journalists and media managers.



Sahel

Sudan

Ethiopia

Somalia

Zimbabwe

Mozambique

In 2019 the joint IMS-Fojo programme supported the citizen journalism project 'Open Council'. The project flags corrupt activities that contributes to water shortages and lack of adequate housing, which expose women and girls to unsafe water sources as well as poor housing facilities. The amplified coverage of these issues led to improved dialogue and engagement by elected councilors, members of Parliament and senators within those communities.

Building on previous experiences in Nepal and Indonesia, IMS partnered with FORCOM – a national network of some 50 community radios – to implement an intervention aimed at promoting accountability journalism during the recovery and reconstruction efforts following the devastating cyclone Idai that hit the central part of the country in April 2019.

More than 30 media houses across the country have granted female journalists three months paid maternity leave. In recent years, paid maternity leave for women journalists has become an important objective for IMS and its local partners as it is expected to increase the chances of women journalists to succeed and retain in the media industry.

Stories from the Sahel

In conflict-ridden regions of the Sahel, IMS works closely with media partners to foster inclusion, counter radicalisation and promote freedom of expression and accountability

By the time the young woman went into labour, she wasn't allowed to leave home. A nighttime curfew had been imposed in her village, situated in the conflict-ridden border zone between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger — one of several factors forging an increasingly hostile environment for civilians. With their baby on its way, the woman and her husband decided to head to their local clinic. Roaming in the night during the curfew, they were accidentally shot at by military troops based at the local G5 Sahel mission.

A radio journalist in Niger picks on the disturbing story. “We work for peace, and we produce radio programmes concerning security issues”, she says. “After this incident, we listened to the women, and they

said, ‘We do not decide when we give birth – we must have access to medical services after 22h!’ So we produced and broadcasted our radio programme. Local chiefs heard this program and appealed to the Prefect who talked to the military and explained what the women wanted. They listened and a solution was found. Now, after 22h, we have access to health services. Now when the women come to the radio, they are not shy, they discuss their problems with us. Before they did not come”.

The story epitomises IMS’s role in the border zones between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, where it works closely with community media and civil society to widen the space for freedom of expression and produce public interest media content. It

also demonstrates the power of community media platforms — and the inclusion of women’s voices in particular.

Tuning in to community radio

IMS’s local partner, CN-RACOM (the National Coordination of Community Radios in Niger), represents 184 community radios spread out across all eight regions of the vast West African country. Just one in five Nigeriens is literate, making radio by far the most popular media in one of the world’s poorest and least developed countries. In the rural areas — home to almost 85 percent of Niger’s 21.5 million citizens — community radio broadcasts in local languages are the main means of disseminating news and information. The situation is very similar in Northern Mali and East Burkina.

In 2019, IMS with CN-RACOM helped a transnational network of community radio stations and women’s groups in the three countries produce more than 220 programmes and reach up to two million citizens in the conflict-ridden Liptako-Gourma border zone. Conflict-sensitive programmes covered local communities’ struggles in an area that since mid-2019 has seen attacks on villages by terrorist and other armed groups multiply.

In general, IMS provides assistance and financial support to help professionalise content and develop the capacity of radio staff and civil society represented by the women’s groups. In 2019, IMS provided both production equipment and training, and it connected the community radio stations and women’s groups to other partners at national, regional and international levels.

Amina Maiga is a member of a Women’s listening club and working with Radio Annyia in Gao, Northern Mali. She is interviewing other women from the club.



PHOTO: JANE MÜLLER/LAISENIMS



PHOTO: JANE MOLLER LARSEN/IMS

Regional network meeting of partners and stakeholders in Sahel, 2019.

Sahel Regional (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger)

CURRENT PROGRAMME
2018-2021

DONORS
Danida

FOCUS AREAS

- Strengthening community radios
- Strengthening investigative journalism
- Enhancing regional collaboration and improve learning
- Advocacy for independent media in the Sahel
- Inclusion of women in media and gender-sensitive content production

Digging deeper

There is a desperate need to hold individuals and institutions to account for their activities in the Sahel. Yet local media outlets rarely have the time or the funds to dig deeper — and local journalists are not professionally equipped to carry out investigations. Throughout 2019, IMS worked closely with CENOZO, a network of investigative journalists in the ECOWAS (incl. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) who seek to expose corruption, organised crime, human rights violations, health and environmental concerns, and other uncomfortable facts that some wish to keep hidden.

Consider, for example, what happened in Burkina Faso last year, when CENOZO reported that imported chemicals were being added to local beverages, causing severe health risks. The investigation generated a lot of noise on social media until the authorities finally got involved. The Burkina consumer council challenged the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Commerce on the flaws in the system, holding them responsible for any public health issues that might arise from the toxic products. Following an inter-ministerial meeting between the Department of Health and the Department of Trade, officials set up a joint commission to control the import of food products.

Consider, also, the cross-border investigation carried out in 2019 by CENOZO,

which revealed the dire consequences of abusive pretrial detentions in Mali, Burkina Faso and the Gambia. It brought to light the deplorable conditions of prisons in the three West African countries, as well as the misuse of pretrial detention. More than half of the prison population is awaiting trial — sometimes for more than ten years. The investigation was built on strong collaboration between CENOZO and civil society, which enabled journalists to access prisoner data that not even officials in the justice system

were aware of. In Burkina Faso and Mali, lawyers are now working together to represent prisoners who have been detained for years and never gone before a judge.

IMS remains crucial to CENOZO's success. In addition to supporting the association and its investigations, IMS supported CENOZO journalists last year with trainings in investigative and conflict-sensitive journalism, journalist safety, datamining and fact-checking and analysing extractive industries and illicit financial trails.

A meeting in the women's listening club in Sebba, Burkina Faso, where members are developing a radio program.



PHOTO: JANE MOLLER LARSEN/IMS

"The investigation was built on strong collaboration between CENOZO and civil society, which enabled journalists to access prisoner data that not even officials in the justice system were aware of."

Voice for the voiceless

For more than two years now, the village of Kouakourou in central Mali has been held hostage by jihadists. Its inhabitants are struggling to survive. "Today we do not have the same market, because it is only us here", explains one local woman. "The people [from other villages] do not come here anymore. We are waiting for them. We have nothing left here". Indeed, because of the jihadists' occupation, life in the village is pretty much unrecognisable today compared to just a few years back. Schools are closed and health facilities are badly affected.

The story not only reveals the kind of survival mechanisms adopted by the local community — like the farmers who turned to growing vegetables just to survive — it also epitomises the kinds of stories published by Sahelien.com. A news site created by journalists from Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, it covers the Sahel — especially the zones that are least covered by national or foreign media — giving a "voice to the voiceless" and "leaving no-one behind".

A case in point was a story it reported last year from Djenné, in central Mali, about a young blacksmith who advocates ancestral values on how to make armed groups talk and negotiate. The story caught the eye of Malian authorities interested in how to apply conflict-resolution solutions based on local history and culture.

Another popular story last year came from Tillabéri, in Niger, where local civil society organisations spoke out about measures taken by the authorities to prevent violent terrorist attacks, which continued despite the presence of Nigerien soldiers in the area. Some have proposed the greater involvement of local communities. "In all societies, if the authorities do not reach out, no solutions can be found", argued one man. "Therefore, I suggest that authorities must include voices from youth, civil society, the local chiefs and the scholars of Islamic law so they together can reflect, discuss and decide which mechanism must be applied to solve these problems".

In 2019, IMS initiated close collaboration with Sahelien.com, supporting it with funding for content production, training and professionalisation, equipment and strategic networking.

In 2019, Sahelien.com produced 15 stories from the Liptako-Gourma area. The majority of these stories were produced in locations that are usually difficult for its journalists to access, notably due to the lack of sufficient financial resources. One of the objectives of IMS's partnership with Sahelien.com has been to provide the logistical and financial means for it to access these areas and cover stories that demonstrate major challenges.

Journalists interviewing a source during the national press freedom day in Niger, 30 November 2019.



PHOTO: JANE MÜLLER LARSEN/IMS

Network effects

Many of the problems facing the Sahel today tend to influence other regions, including the wider West Africa, North Africa, and Europe. However, all of IMS's partners in the Sahel lack the resources or the contacts to reach beyond their own outlets, regions or countries. Moreover, the lack of coverage of the Sahel — or at least the underrepresentation of the conflict-ridden regions — demands that media collaborate, especially because they typically face the same problems. Arguably, in fact, there is a profound need for collaboration and information sharing.

A strategic addition to IMS's Sahel programme is therefore to nurture horizontal, cross-regional synergies and international partnerships. In 2018, IMS launched the regional Sahel "Media & Development" network, which includes local partners, other key Sahelian media stakeholders, and likeminded international organisations. Through this network, IMS seeks to create solidarity and common ground, generate new partnerships and knowledge, and further amplify its intended impact. In 2019, 130 delegates attended such a network meeting.

Last year also saw IMS develop a regional Sahel advocacy plan with three national press houses and share research on how to regulate community radio in conflict zones.



PHOTO: ERIC LAFORQUE/ART IN ALL OF US/COMBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Oromo tv crew in a shrine, Oromia, Sheik Hussein, Ethiopia on August 11, 2019.

Ethiopia

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2019-2023: Media Reform in Times of Change (with Fojo Media Institute)

2019-2023: Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development - PRIMED (with BBC Media Action and wider consortium)

DONORS

Sweden, Denmark, DFID

FOCUS AREAS

- Media law reform and policies
- Institution building
- Journalistic professionalism
- Gender mainstreaming
- Humanitarian information
- Media development coordination
- Financial foundations for media

The road to reform

By providing international comparative analysis, IMS bolstered Ethiopia's comprehensive efforts to rewrite its media laws in 2019

For years, Ethiopia's media laws provided journalists with scant protection. Media workers in the East African country routinely faced harassment, censorship, arrest, detention, and other threats to their safety and security.

But all that started to change with the election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in April 2018. As the BBC reported, such has been the pace of change in Ethiopia since then "that it is almost like observing a different country".

Indeed, in stark contrast to its predecessors, which had long stifled freedom of expression, the new government initiated a massive reform and transformation period aimed at promoting and protecting media freedom. In particular, the Ethiopian legal and justice advisory council established nine working groups tasked with discussing a raft of new legislation. The Media Law Reform Working Group was given a mandate to create a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for independent

media to flourish in Ethiopia. In particular, it was asked to review three proclamations related to media and press freedom, access to information and computer crime.

The Media Law Reform Working Group convened meetings throughout 2019 and held public consultations with politicians, editors, and journalists.

Moreover, in order to base its legislative review on comparative analysis and ensure that the new laws met internationally accepted standards and best practices, the working group in 2019 sought advice from IMS and its Canadian partner, the Centre for Law and Democracy. Together, they supported the working group by organising technical consultation forums and conducting comparative studies and experiences, including 'best practice' legislation from countries that are relevant to Ethiopia.

To ensure the working group canvassed a wide range of opinions and concerns about the legislative reform, stakeholders included members of the media council,

editors, publishers, managers, journalists, professional associations, civil society groups and human rights lawyers. Written input—including commentary and analysis of the three proclamations—was also presented at public consultation forums and to senior technical experts, working group members as well as other senior lawmakers and media professionals.

The three proclamations now await the approval of the legal and justice advisory council. If approved, they will head to the Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives, or Parliament—the country's highest law-making institution.

"We sincerely appreciate the support of IMS and CLD's analyses," says Solomon Goshu, a highly regarded lawyer and journalist and the Chairperson of the Working Group. "We have duly considered the inputs and over 90 percent of these inputs and comments have already been incorporated into the draft legislation."

IMS's support for the Media Law Reform Working Group is part of its ongoing efforts to help reform Ethiopia's media policies, laws and regulations, promote democratic transformation and improve freedom of expression and media freedom in Ethiopia.

Somalia/ Somaliland

CURRENT PROGRAMME

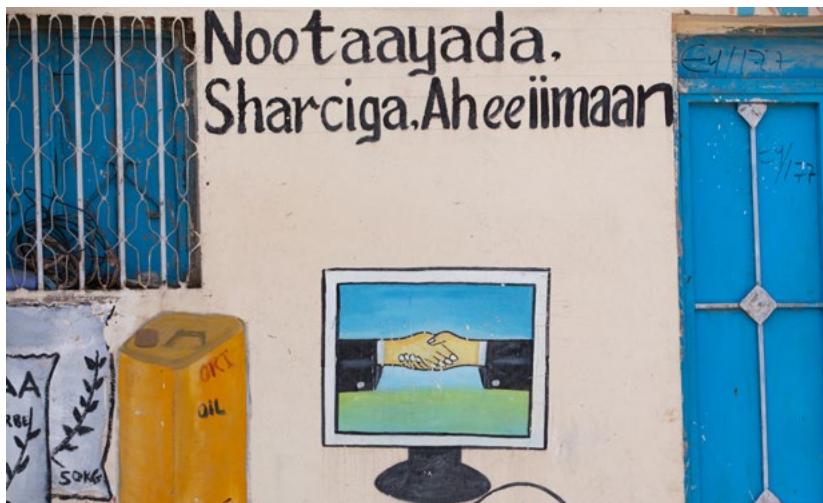
2014-2022

DONORS

Danida, Sida

FOCUS AREAS

- Safety & protection of journalists
- Media reform & media freedom
- Access to professional and public interest content
- Gender equality within the media sector and media content
- Humanitarian information
- Media innovation



Painted advertisement with a computer, Hargeisa, Somaliland.

PHOTO: ERIC LAFORGUE/ART IN ALL OF US; CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

A union standing tall

Journalists facing arrests, harassment and other violations of their media freedom get help from an IMS-Fojo supported association that safeguards media rights in Somaliland

Sagal Beel-deeq and her cameraman only wanted a few “vox pops” about the working conditions of street vendors in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. Yet their activity caught the eye of a local policeman, who arrested the pair, hurting Sagal in the process.

The incident, which took place in April 2019, would have been all too familiar to independent journalists working in the Somaliland last year. For instance, when Eryal TV aired a piece about healthcare, the journalist who produced it was detained by the district’s governor. Or when a government vehicle went off a bridge in Koodbuur

district, the reporters who rushed to capture footage of the incident were arrested and held for eight hours.

In all three cases, the journalists were released thanks to the efforts of Somaliland Journalist Association (SOLJA), a media association based in Hargeisa. Established in 2003, SOLJA works throughout the Somaliland region to defend journalists’ rights and empower its 600-odd members.

SOLJA certainly had its work cut out last year. Current concerns include the lack of a national media policy to guide the development of independent media in Somaliland, and widespread violations of media workers—including harassment, assaults, bans, arrests and constant online violations against women working in media. In 2019 alone, SOLJA recorded 29 journalist arrests and closure of four media houses.

However, SOLJA made headway last year in its efforts to defend media rights, thanks largely to support from IMS-Fojo.

For example, SOLJA’s legal aid office provided help to a number of journalists and media outlets whose rights were violated. It worked to secure the swift release of arrested journalists.

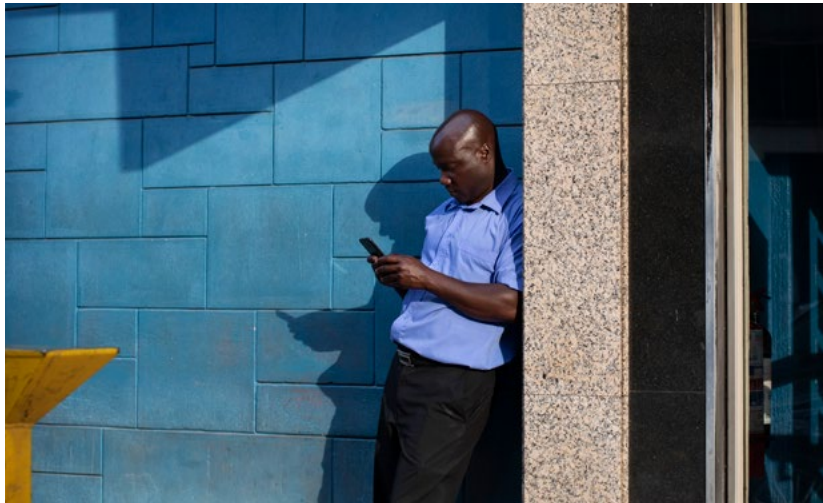
Yahye Mohamed, SOLJA’s executive director, says IMS-Fojo’s long-term support has helped SOLJA become an influential actor in Somaliland and foster an “enabling environment for media freedom”. He adds: “With IMS-Fojo partnership, our institutional capacity has developed, which makes it possible to carry out heavy media-law advocacy and provision of legal aid services.”

SOLJA also took steps last year to try to safeguard media freedom by establishing closer relations with law enforcement bodies. In October, with support from IMS-FOJO, SOLJA provided training to 18 police officers to help them understand freedom of expression, human rights and media law, and therefore help minimise media rights violations.

SOLJA also took steps to develop the capacity of local journalists and media outlets regarding online security and harassment management. In November, for example, it ran a two-day workshop on digital security for journalists, which 36 participants attended.

“In 2019 alone, SOLJA recorded 29 journalist arrests and closure of four media houses”

PHOTO BY: DAN KITWOOD/GETTY IMAGES



A man is checking his phone by the sidewalk in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2017-2019

DONORS

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) and European Union (EU) Delegation to Zimbabwe

FOCUS AREAS

- Capacity building of working journalists
- Development and strengthening of alternative media platforms
- Media stakeholder coordination
- Media advocacy
- Media monitoring, fact-checking and investigative journalism
- Gender mainstreaming
- Media self-regulation

Facing the facts

Amid a torrent of fake news, misinformation and propaganda, one IMS partner is leading the pushback in Zimbabwe — one story at a time

Robert Mugabe's sarcastic suggestion that he wed Barack Obama, following a US Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage. A report stating that about 70 percent of Zimbabwean men provide or care for children misidentified as their own. And a claim that Zimbabwe had shot up an annual index on African governance and leadership.

All three were news stories published in Zimbabwe in 2019 that were later debunked by ZimFact — an independent, non-partisan, online fact-checking platform.

ZimFact was launched in July 2018, ahead of a general election campaign widely perceived to be vulnerable to misinformation and political propaganda. Its mission then—and now—is “to help Zimbabwe’s media to deliver accurate, fair and balanced news and information.”

Crucial to its success is its activity on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Not only are these platforms used by broad swathes of Zimbabwean

society, they are also riddled with fake news, misinformation and propaganda.

“Politicians and their supporters are very active on social media,” says ZimFact’s editor, former Reuters bureau chief Cris Chinaka. “Our difficulty is not getting swallowed by them.”

Having supported ZimFact since its launch, IMS and Fojo Media Institute, who jointly implement activities, played a particular role in 2019 by providing the platform with logistical support. “They allowed us to do journalism and not worry about admin or logistics,” Chinaka says. IMS and Fojo also helped his team determine their strategy. “IMS and Fojo helped us map and reach out to our audiences,” he explains.

A case in point was ZimFact’s successful targeting of college students. The team visited a number of colleges in 2019 and provided students with media literacy training. ZimFact staff were subsequently able to join several closed WhatsApp groups, which allowed them to debunk fake news

circulating among students.

In July, for example, ZimFact disproved a story published in *The Herald* that the government had restored grants for students in higher-learning institutions. Then, in September, students asked ZimFact to assess the authenticity of an advertisement for nurse training. ZimFact swiftly concluded that the advert was a scam.

Both cases helped ZimFact generate significant traffic online and reach a wider audience. The Harare-based platform has just four editors, and Chinaka says they struggle not only with “the sheer volume of misinformation but also the absence of information.” Thanks to its increased visibility, though, ZimFact began to crowd-source information, allowing it to garner evidence from across the country and hold public sector officials to account for breaking their promises.

Further vindication of ZimFact’s model came from the mainstream media itself last year. Not only has Zimbabwe’s legacy media “embraced fact-checking,” explains Chinaka, but also outlets across the political divide are now publishing ZimFact’s editorial content — including the *Sunday Standard* newspaper, which has a column dedicated to it.

Asia

IMS works with 48 media and civil society organisations across nine countries in Asia to promote public interest journalism and create an enabling and safe environment for journalists. In 2019, we supported 21 content-producing media outlets of which many represent new media formats and engage audiences where the mainstream media has little or no reach

100

IMS AND ITS PARTNER ORGANISATION
AJSC ORGANISED A JOB-SEEKERS
NETWORKING PLATFORM IN KABUL FOR
MORE THAN 100 WOMEN JOURNALISM
GRADUATES AND STUDENTS.

13

MEDIA START-UPS TOOK PART IN IMS TRAINING
ON DEVELOPING AN ORGANISATIONAL
STRATEGY THAT HELPS TO ENSURE
SUSTAINABILITY AND AUDIENCE REACH.

56%

OF IMS ACTIVITIES IN ASIA FOCUS ON THE
SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS.

IMS' Afghanistan programme has established a formal trauma and psychosocial support mechanism, including online counselling in order to meet the needs of affected journalists and to strengthen the existing psychosocial peer-to-peer help system. The mechanism provides psychosocial first aid and stress management tools to journalists and media workers in their home provinces.

Safety hubs in partnership with IMS-supported Pakistani Journalists Safety Fund relocated five journalists to safety within the country after they had received death threats. They also provided legal assistance that helped two journalists secure bail after being arrested because of their work.

With IMS support for studio facilities, hardware and community building, Puma Podcast were able to improve their listener engagement. The increase in capacity has also brought down the cost of production with 35% and the costs per listener with 82%, making it possible to reach a larger audience with their in-depth, critical journalism.



Afghanistan

Pakistan

The Philippines

Sri Lanka

For the first time in Sri Lanka's history, the country's broadcasters met in January 2019 at a symposium to deliberate over the media's social responsibility. Initial steps were taken, and discussions opened on self-regulation and solutions to ensure ethical journalistic standards in the largely unregulated media landscape, often criticised for sensationalist reporting and ethno-religious biases. The unity of the broadcasters was initiated by IMS.

Myanmar

IMS-Fojo supported local partner Myanmar Journalism Institute to provide a financial investigative reporting course for experienced journalists. Along with the lessons, each journalist researched their own story on topics like electricity mismanagement, scholarship fraud and micro-finance. The stories were subsequently published by the journalist's respective media outlets.

Indonesia

For the first time ever, Indonesian media organisations, with the support of IMS, launched a dedicated safety for journalists committee in 2019. The country has never had a coordinated mechanism to handle violence against journalists, but now the ten organisations will continue to collaborate in systematised ways to deal with media safety and raise awareness of the importance of a free press.

Asia Regional Programme

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2018-2020

DONORS

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Strengthen innovative media in Asia to deliver accurate and relevant public interest journalism
- Strengthen and network media safety mechanisms in selected Asian countries to improve the safety of journalists in the region



PHOTO: CHRIS PEKEN

Audio training in Myanmar.

Changemakers in Asia

“There are big hills to climb, but we are still here”

– Devi Asmarani, Magdalena, Indonesian media startup

Media in Asia are under tremendous pressure to adjust their operations to match the requirements of new technological developments and media habits. At the same time, a pushback against freedom of speech and democratic development is curbing media freedoms. However, an IMS mapping of the media landscape in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines and Pakistan in 2019 showed that in this chaotic and changing media landscape, a series of innovative media have started to emerge, striving to produce public interest journalism. They are sources of inspiration for other media start-ups working under similar difficult circumstances in the region.

Eight of these media start-ups - excelling

They are sources of inspiration for other media start-ups working under similar difficult circumstances

in both radio, podcast and digital print and video-based reporting in Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar and Pakistan - are now part of IMS' regional Asia start-up network aimed at sharing best practices and aspiring new ways of doing journalism. The groundwork for this was laid at an IMS-supported gathering of start-ups from more than 30 countries in February 2019 in Thailand organised by Splice, a Singapore-based media start-up and growing online hub for media start-ups in Asia. “Firstly, it was a consolation that we are not the only financially challenged organisation. It is something most digital platforms face,” HumSub, a Pakistani online site, explained after the start-up gatherings. “Second, I came to know about solving that issue and learned what other platforms are doing. For example I never considered podcasting or newsletters before this event, and had only a vague idea about making a business model.”

Further IMS training in management fundamentals and strategy development led Lok Sujag in Pakistan, Herne Katha in Nepal and VoD in Cambodia to developed

their first organisational strategies. Frontier in Myanmar in partnership with IMS proceeded to develop a membership business model which has overtaken their ad revenues. Podcast frontrunners in the Philippines, Puma Media, are now advising fellow start-up, Nepal-based Herne Katha on podcast development. With the potential of becoming a regional hub for podcast training, support to improve Puma Podcast's studio facilities and hardware has increased monthly listens over a three month period from 40,000 to 73,900 listens.

Ensuring good public interest journalism can thrive requires a safe environment that journalists can operate within. The launch of the IMS-supported first ever national Philippine Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists in November 2019 following two years of cross-country consultations, secured the impressive backing of a broad range of actors from media to security forces, CSOs and academia. This process directly inspired the development of Indonesia's first Journalist Safety Committee since 1998 launched in June 2019 which is currently the only local entity providing legal and advocacy support to threatened journalists.



PHOTO: FRONTIER

Frontier has introduced a membership model intended as a safeguard for editorial independence and to reduce dependency on advertising and leverage their front runner position as a credible, authoritative source of news about Myanmar.

Myanmar

CURRENT PROGRAMME
2016-2021

DONORS

Sida, Danida, Norad, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union

FOCUS AREAS

- Media law reform
- Good journalism content and capacity building
- Expanding media outreach and access to information through community media
- Research on the media environment
- Safety for journalists
- Women & conflict - implementing UNSCR 1325 through media
- Media and self-regulation

Safeguarding independence

“Reporting on bad loans is risky business” the first edition of the newsletter *Frontier Backstage* states

The newsletter is one of several special services that members of the media outlet Frontier Myanmar are receiving, and the series provides a peak behind the scenes of Frontier’s production of investigative journalism. They share details of how the journalist pursued the story by chasing documents, sources and attending court hearings while facing legal threats; a thrilling insight into the workings of one of the independent media outlets in Myanmar, which often carries critical, in-depth stories on those with economic and political power.

The country’s political climate has started to deteriorate, and it has affected the ability of independent media to provide balanced coverage on important topics. The government started to strengthen state media while simultaneously undermine the credibility of private media, and a perception started to spread that media should support national interest rather than asking critical questions. These developments have led to increased self-censorship, and a lot of media have focused on supporting the government and military. However, Frontier stood their

ground and kept questioning powerholders, both online and in print, even as they faced serious challenges due to the financial constraints media have suffered by loss of advertising revenue to Facebook.

Frontier decided to embark on a membership engagement strategy, which could both build additional revenue streams and strengthen the connection with readers. The strategy was based on ongoing consultation with readers through focus groups and one-on-one interviews to understand the wishes of potential members. This information was followed by testing and adjusting diverse new media products made available for the members, with technical support by IMS and the Singapore-based Splice media advisory.

Throughout 2019, Frontier embarked on the development of a membership engagement strategy, which could both build additional revenue streams and strengthen the connection with readers. Their strategy was based on ongoing consultation with readers through focus groups and one-on-one interviews to understand the wishes of potential members. This information was followed

by testing and adjusting diverse new media products made available for the members, with technical support by IMS and the Singapore-based Splice media advisory.

Starting the membership engagement programme has ensured Frontier promising perspectives for building a sustainable income. Their strategy will continue to build on close consultation with members, strategic targeting of relevant audiences, creation of high-quality products that meet their audiences’ information needs, community-building around the membership programme, and clearly establishing Frontier’s values so members know what they are supporting.

With their membership engagement programme, Frontier has moved towards a sustainable revenue from readers and made an important push to safeguard their editorial independence.

Indonesia

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2017-2023

DONORS

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Map out safety problems for journalists in Indonesia from various perspectives
- Develop a collaboration and mechanism to address the issue of violence against journalist
- Set up funding for processing of cases of violence against journalists
- Launch campaign on journalist safety



PHOTO: JESPER HYNNE PETERSEN/DANWATCH

Participants in a masterclass in accountability journalism, Palu, Indonesia, 2. July 2019.

Trailing disaster funds

Even for Indonesia – a country far too familiar with natural disasters – the earthquake and tsunami that hit the island of Sulawesi in September 2018 was particularly devastating

More than 4,800 people were killed while tens of thousands lost their homes. It will likely take years before the main town of Palu and other affected areas return to normal.

IMS has previously assisted local media to disseminate life-saving information in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophe, for instance in connection with the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. However, media also play a vital role during the subsequent and protracted reconstruction effort. In the wake of the earthquake in Nepal in 2015, IMS and local partners developed a concept aimed at promoting accountability journalism holding authorities and aid organisations to account during the rebuilding of a society.

In the beginning of 2019, IMS' rapid response unit teamed up with Danwatch – a Danish media and research centre specialising in investigative journalism – and the Indonesian media organisation Tempo

Institute in an initiative based on the Nepal experience. In the course of the following months, a group of journalists from Palu were trained and coached in digging out and publicising stories related to the recovery. The investigations disclosed cases of faulty alarm systems, rotten food aid, plans to rebuild homes in areas vulnerable to future disasters, drug abuse among displaced communities, and much more. One story focused on acts of abuse and violence against women and children in temporary shelters. Among other things, it revealed how communal bathrooms were unsafe and frequently the scene of sexual harassment. To curb with the number of harassment cases, JMK-Oxfam started a campaign to change the location, design and lighting of the bathrooms.

While the local authorities often chose to highlight their own problems rather than addressing the issues raised by the journalists, the stories helped the affected

communities to better understand their rights during the recovery phase. "It turns out that the disaster did not stop corrupt behavior in Indonesia. Instead, the disaster is used to seek profits. These reports eventually became important material for the evaluation of disaster management policies in Palu," explained Ika Ningtyas who worked as mentor and coordinator on the project. Obviously, the effort also helped develop the skills of the journalists who participated. "Previously they only wrote talking news based on door-stop interviews or received press releases. Through the training, they finally understood how journalism should be able to present deeper reports or expose hidden things. They seemed to be proud of that achievement," Ningtyas concluded.

Finally, the Palu project helped to solidify the ongoing cooperation between IMS and Danwatch which combines IMS' nearly 20 years of experience in media development with Danwatch's cutting edge in practical investigative journalism. Most recently, the two organisations have launched a similar project to promote accountability journalism in Mozambique following the deadly cyclones that hit the African country in the spring of 2019.



PHOTO: ABUL MAJEED / AFP

Christian devotees attend Christmas Day prayers in Peshawar on December 25, 2019.

Pakistan

DONORS

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018-20
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017-19

FOCUS AREAS

- Promoting diversity and pluralism in media
- Supporting media safety for journalists and legislation
- Strengthening online civic activism by women
- Supporting innovative digital journalism

Bringing minorities into view

You can see them but often not hear them. Ten million Pakistanis from religious groups other than the Muslim are more talked about than allowed to speak for themselves

Pakistan is a Muslim-majority state with only five percent of its 200 million people belonging to religious groups such as Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmedis and others. With a constitutionally declared Islamic state, laws often discriminate non-Muslim citizens on the base of faith and Pakistan consistently fares poorly in international rankings on religious freedoms.

A content analysis of media coverage, conducted by local civil liberties organisation IRADA in late 2018 with technical assistance from IMS, revealed that in general media carry little or no reporting on religious minorities. When they do, they generally promote stereotypes, especially those linked to sensitive themes such as blasphemy; a crime that carries death penalty. Rarely are views, opinions or perspectives of religious minorities represented in media, rendering them voiceless to their own cause.

This started to change in 2019. The

Alliance for Diversity and Pluralism in Media was established by IRADA as part of an IMS programme, bringing together religious minority groups, commissions of minorities' rights, civil society organisations, digital media groups and senior journalists to lobby for greater visibility and voice – and sensitivity, not least – for minorities in media.

With technical assistance of IMS, Sujag, a digital news service seeking to be 'a voice of the voiceless' in the densely populated districts of Pakistan's Punjab province (population 110 million), started a series of ten-minute video stories featuring various religious minorities. Christians speaking out about their livelihoods, where men are restricted mostly to sewage cleaning; Hindus talking about being targets of retaliation for the way Muslims are treated in neighboring India; Sikhs sharing their challenges with being excluded by a quota system in universities and general issues like

the fact that most minorities are forced to adopt Muslim names to mask their public identities to ward off instant discrimination. This new kind of journalism, reaching up to 200,000 people on Sujag's social media platforms, relays rare, heartfelt and outspoken narratives from Pakistan's invisible margins to a mainstream audience.

"They say there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'; there are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard," says Tahir Mehdi, who manages Sujag. "We can't underestimate the importance of journalism focusing on religious minorities – it is bringing forth the voices of the 'deliberately silenced' and the 'preferably unheard' being ignored by Pakistan's mainstream media."

"They say there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'; there are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard"

The Philippines

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2018-2020

DONORS

UNESCO, European Union,
Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FOCUS AREAS

- Safety for journalists including safety training, response mechanism and dialogue with police and military
- Multi-stakeholder process around crafting a national Philippine Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists
- Journalism content with special focus on conflict sensitive journalism, peace-building, human rights, corruption and marginalized groups



PHOTO: JES AZNAR / STRINGER

Journalists and activists gather on the eve of the Ampatuan massacre trial on December 18, 2019 in Manila, Philippines.

Unity for safety

It took the Philippines a full decade to convict the masterminds behind the Ampatuan Massacre, which saw the murder of 32 journalists and media workers on the island of Mindanao

Despite the momentous verdict, the arduous ten years to deliver justice – for what was the single deadliest day for media workers in history – still underscored the impunity that backdrops all violence against journalists and the free press in the Philippines. The Philippines has long been one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists; since 1986, 156 work-related cases of journalist killings have been reported – for only 10 percent of which there have

been actual convictions.

While the Ampatuan verdict delivered a legitimate strike against impunity, it also highlighted the more fundamental – and more difficult – challenges that remain: to achieve sustainability in the process that delivered that victory and to institutionalise everything that went into that process.

It was therefore no coincidence that, in November 2019, as Filipinos marked the 10th year of the massacre, a multisectoral program led by journalists and media advocates launched the Philippine Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists (PPASJ). A first in Asia, a pioneer in the world, the PPASJ was the first such national framework for media protection anchored in the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Stakeholders believe that the impact of PPASJ goes beyond addressing media killings; they see it benefiting the overall environment for human rights and rule of law in

the Philippines. The very process of crafting the framework has brought together the public, private, and civil society sectors for the cause of press freedom. “Planning and implementation should be inclusive, engaging not only the media, but including government and civil society. The inclusive process we have been through is for us already a big win,” said Ramon Tuazon, President of the Asian Institute for Journalism and Communication.

In 2019 alone, that process saw three regional consultations and trainings on safety practices and mechanisms benefiting no less than 81 journalists, media workers, and trainers. More notable, the year also was highlighted by four rounds of dialogues, consultations and joint planning with the National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. More than 200 police and soldiers, from ground officers to regional commanders and generals, took part in these workshops, acknowledging their roles as stakeholders in ensuring a safe environment for a free press.

Through it all, IMS was a partner to the multisectoral Filipino community that forged the PPASJ. IMS remains in that partnership for the next chapter of the PPASJ: implementation.

The very process of crafting the framework has brought together the public, private, and civil society sectors for the cause of press freedom



PHOTO: PATHUM DHANANJAYARAJA/EDUONLINE

No fishermen went out to sea for three months after the Easter Sunday attacks in April 2019 and the ethnic and inter-communal violence that followed. Mainmarachchi Umma was blocked by local villagers from running her business until local fishermen invited her back to the beach and ensured her safety.

Sri Lanka

CURRENT PROGRAMME
2016-2019

DONORS

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
British High Commission in Sri Lanka

FOCUS AREAS

- Advocacy
- Investigative journalism
- Disinformation and fact-checking
- Media policy and law reforms
- Digital Safety
- Content production
- Business strategies and sustainability plans for media start-ups

Bridging tensions

Three weeks after the Easter Sunday bombings in April 2019, communal violence erupted in a few areas in Sri Lanka. The bombings carried out by an extremist Muslim group targeted three Christian churches and three five-star hotels located in Colombo, the capital

Religious tensions have been simmering in the country for several years. For RepublicNext - recently relaunched as EconomyNext - the new violence crystallised into an opportunity to explore the root cause for those tensions. Their talks with IMS about producing a series of short video documentaries now had a focus.

For years, it had been difficult to put a firm finger on the root cause of the tensions. But of late, there has been a point of departure; the breakdown in the educational structures with attempts to build respect for one another torn down and replaced with a more sinhala-centric ideology. Segregation of most schools, particularly outside Colombo, based on ethnicity and faith has taken its toll; now a larger portion of Sinhalese believes in the supremacy of their 'race'. Those most impacted

by this change are the 18-24 year olds. And the politicians have lost no time in fuelling the flames for their own gains.

For the team, 'it has been a journey of discovery since we began working on the series,' says producer Arjuna Ranawana.

Persuading community leaders and civil activists to participate was not easy. Only a few had the courage to immediately agree to speak openly and show their faces, but through trusted mediators and pre-interviews EconomyNext won their confidence.

Despite the fear and the hurt, 'we glimpsed many acts of humanity' says Ranawana. There was the radio station that helped heal one of the Christian communities targeted by the Easter bombings. Then there was the Muslim woman who lost her livelihood after the attack, only to see Tamil fishermen persuading her to

re-open her beach eatery where they usually came to have breakfast.

One documentary also spoke about the harassment Muslim women faced in the aftermath of the bombings. In a total of eleven videos, all of them four minutes long, the team brought forward heartaches and hopes of a diverse group of people.

Reception to the series has been varied. Some see it as supporting Muslims, others as part of the country's healing process. To generate more debate and awareness, plans have been made to screen the videos in public alongside panel discussions.

For IMS the videos represent an important inroad into playing a pro-active role with a media organisation that was willing to address the thorny issue of religious friction; a topic which mainstream media prefers not to engage in.

“Despite the fear and the hurt, 'we glimpsed many acts of humanity'”

Ten years in Afghanistan

Progress and hard-won safety gains for media

For over a decade, IMS has worked to build a safer environment for Afghan media workers. Today, the war-torn country has one of the most comprehensive set-ups for the safety and protection of journalists in South Asia – and because threats to the media have never faded, those safety structures are often put to use

By Göran Engström

In late September 2015, the Taliban overran the city of Kunduz, in northern Afghanistan. The fighting had lasted for months, with the militants taking over several districts around the city. Now, for the first time since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the religious hardliners controlled one of Afghanistan's major cities.

As the Afghan security forces retreated from Kunduz, to prepare for a counter-attack that would come just a few days later, the Taliban seized the opportunity to destroy some of the key features of the country's young and striving democracy – including several media houses.

For Kunduz's sorely tested journalists the escalating violence had now become a

matter of life and death. In an unparalleled mass evacuation, organised by IMS partner Afghan Journalist Safety Committee (AJSC), more than one hundred journalists and their families were rescued in a very short time.

Most likely, the resolute and well-organised rescue operation saved the media workers from a certain death. A coincidence it was not: the logistically challenging effort was the result of several years of cooperation between international stakeholders like IMS and the local media community, security forces and the government – not only in big cities like Kunduz, but also in many of Afghanistan's more remote areas.

For IMS and its local partners, this was an unequivocal acknowledgement of the success in building the much-needed safety mechanisms for Afghan journalists.

At the same time, the attack on Kunduz was a brutal reminder of how things had

been only a decade and a half ago, during the repressive rule of the Taliban – a time when human rights, media freedom, and freedom of expression were basically non-existent.

Where to begin?

In 2007, Susanna Inkinen joined the IMS programme in Afghanistan. At this point, the situation was dire. Almost six years had passed since the 9/11 attacks and the fall of the Taliban regime following the US invasion, but after a period of relative calm and progress across much of the country, the conflict was escalating again.

"I had first visited Afghanistan in early 2002, and back then, there were almost no media. When I started working on the IMS programme in 2007, the Afghan media community had expanded rapidly, but it was largely donor-driven, and all the efforts were very uncoordinated," Inkinen explains.

"There were hundreds of local media outlets, supported by international organisations and donors, but no one was monitoring the content, and there were no systematic mechanisms for local media workers for working together with the military and or the government or to protect the journalists," Inkinen recalls. "The media community was suffering. Journalists were killed and traumatised."

Inkinen and the IMS team saw that

the first important step would be to identify who was doing what, when and where in the media sector – from international donors to working journalists and fixers. Next step would be to get a better idea of everyone’s needs and perspectives.

Listening to needs of local journalists

In February 2008, IMS started to develop its first safety-training course to support journalists. The funding came from Sweden and Norway, and the idea was to gather journalists from southern Afghanistan in Kabul. About 15 local journalists from Helmand and Kandahar came. The weeks leading up to the course had been turbulent, with several violent incidents and deadly attacks on journalists and civilians. The course in Kabul ensured that the journalists got a few days’ break – at least, once they had made the dangerous journey north, some by car, which required passing through several Taliban checkpoints along the way.

The Kabul course was less about traditional safety-training than it was an information exchange. “They wanted to learn the basic skills in first aid and conflict reporting, and we wanted to know about

their working situation in order to create a training curriculum for the future,” explains Inkinen. “We needed to understand the conflict from their point of view.”

At this early stage, Inkinen and her colleagues already understood that processing the Afghan journalists’ trauma would be an important aspect of IMS’s future activities. “Many of these guys had been harassed and tortured and had seen their colleagues and family members killed,” Inkinen recalls. “They were not able to concentrate, and we had to take breaks constantly during the training courses.”

Another realisation was that the work towards a safety mechanism wasn’t only a matter of providing practical tools, but also of spreading an awareness among Afghan media workers that keeping security measures was more important than a scoop - and that safety was not only about themselves individually, but a solidary effort.

“We worked with the idea that ‘safety starts from me’, which basically means that it is up to the individual journalist to take responsibility for themselves and their colleagues” Inkinen says and exemplifies: “If one person in a group of media workers, say, a tv-crew, has the capacity to question the safety of a certain mission or move, it might save the lives of the whole group.”

“The media community was suffering. Journalists were killed and traumatised.”

Working together for media security

The ideas of solidarity, collaboration and locally anchored efforts quickly became key concepts in the IMS programme in Afghanistan. In March 2009, at a multi-stakeholder conference arranged by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in Kabul, IMS received an official mandate to develop safety and protection mechanisms for media workers all over Afghanistan.

One groundbreaking outcome of the conference was the so-called Kabul Declaration. Its aim was to provide a platform for dialogue and discussion on ways to enhance the promotion and protection of freedom of expression, including the safety of those working in the media community.

Staff meeting in AJSC’ office in Kabul.



Afghanistan

CURRENT PROGRAMME

2017-2020

DONORS

Sweden and Norway

FOCUS AREAS

- Media safety - including training, monitoring and emergency response assistance
- Media law - supporting legal framework on media safety

“The Kabul Declaration was the crown pillar for the future work on civil society, media and human rights, based on a large-scale survey. With this unifying document that gathered many stakeholders with a shared set of goals and commitments, we had the starting point for the more coordinated efforts that was so needed,” Inkinen explains.

After the conference, IMS started to carry out training of would-be trainers along with its safety and protection courses for journalists. All of the activities were built on the risk analysis carried out regularly to address the needs of the media community in rapidly changing security environment.

Journalists in Afghanistan faced many threats at the time: the Taliban; the operating style of the national and international security forces in Afghanistan and the dearth of information they provided journalists; the poorly trained and underpaid

police force harassing and extorting journalists; and many more challenges. Even more vulnerable were the fixers exposed to kidnappings and deadly attacks in retaliation of their collaboration with international media. Only very rarely did a rescue mission prioritize local media workers.

According to Inkinen a first step in local advocacy work was to emphasize that Afghan media workers also had rights: “We engaged in everything from providing body armor and first aid training to the development of a standard contract for the fixers and their employers, stipulating who was responsible if something went wrong.”

The first-ever independent Afghan safety entity

IMS’ ambitions centered on reaching out to the provinces and create local networks and hubs, and those plans became a reality in 2010 when the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) was created, a milestone in IMS’ work in Afghanistan.

Before the committee’s existence, IMS had carried out its activities alone or with local and some international stakeholders. However, to build a nationwide safety-protection mechanism — and, in the long run, a national journalist federation, a proper legal framework and governmental support and recognition — IMS had to change tactics. “We understood that IMS would always be seen as an international entity, and that we had to find someone to

cooperate with, an organisation that could be registered as an independent Afghan entity,” says Inkinen.

In Kabul, a group of young, well-educated Afghans had formed Afghanistan’s New Generation Organisation. Its members were already working as journalists, translators and fixers when Inkinen persuaded them to cooperate with IMS on media safety issues. “These people wanted to be change makers,” Inkinen says.

Together they began the journey towards their shared dream: a safe media environment in Afghanistan. Since 2010, AJSC has expanded greatly. Through media houses and local hubs, the organisation is now present in all 34 of Afghanistan’s provinces, providing everything from digital security, first aid and safety training courses to psycho-social support and trauma counselling. Media workers also have access to 24/7 hotlines, updated risk analyses, and online communication groups where journalists in the field share new information with their colleagues.

“In the beginning, IMS’ experiences and support were needed. But our role has evolved from being the orchestrator to more of a supporter and adviser.” Inkinen explains and continues: “Today, it’s the locals who are running the show!”

To Inkinen, this is a source of pride: “Together we’ve created a safety mechanism for and by local media workers, and it is now so strong that we can stay in the background, only supporting with strategy development and guidance as needed.”

War reporting training in Kabul.



PHOTO: ILIAS ALAMI

FACT BOX

AJSC has driven many of the fundamental achievements made for the media community in Afghanistan.

- In 2013 it led the formation of the Afghanistan Journalists’ Federation (AJF).
- In 2016 it was one of the key players behind the establishment of the Joint Committee for the Safety and Security of Journalists (JCSSJ).
- In 2020, it published “A Roadmap to Protect Press Freedom During the Reconciliation Process”, with the purpose of protecting and preserving press freedom and freedom of expression.

“Gender specific safety has been a priority since our first comprehensive strategy for the programme was created in 2009 and I would like to focus even more on this issue going forward.”



PHOTO: AJSC

Today there are about 1,300 women journalists in Afghanistan. In cities such as Kabul, women media workers are common, but in some provinces there are no women journalists at all.

FACT BOX

One group that has witnessed significant change—and fluctuating fortunes—down the years has been Afghanistan’s female media workers.

IMS and Afghan Journalist Safety Committee (AJSC) have had a strong focus on gender, with activities ranging from gender-based safety trainings and conflict-sensitive reporting to job fairs tailored to female media workers. AJSC and IMS also developed the first anti-sexual harassment guidelines in Afghanistan.

Najib Sharifi, AJSC’s director since 2011, expands: “What have been the key ingredients in our collaboration have always been hard work, passion and local decision making – with support and guidance from IMS. Today we have the tools and strategies and are well prepared to continue on our own.”

“- Another ingredient is craziness. I think you have to be a little bit crazy to embark on this mission,” Inkinen chips in, which Sharifi confirms as he laughs.

Future challenges – and means to tackle it

Next year sees the conclusion of IMS’s ten-year-long programme in Afghanistan. IMS is handing the reins and responsibilities to AJSC. “We are not divorcing our Afghan counterpart,” Inkinen underlines. “I hope we can end up in a situation where we can

bring them on board, not only as a partner but as an entity to develop and enhance IMS’s other activities in the whole Asia region.”

“I hope we can expand our efforts for women journalists too. Gender specific safety has been a priority since our first comprehensive strategy for the programme was created in 2009 and I would like to focus even more on this issue going forward.”

When it comes to future challenges for the Afghan media community, there are many uncertainties. According to Najib Sharifi, Afghanistan might lose up to half of the country’s 400 media outlets due to financial problems in the slipstream of Covid-19. Another major challenge to the Afghan media community is the peace talks with the Taliban. While Afghanistan’s constitution is currently very supportive of press freedom, that could change fast if the Taliban were to gain political power.

“We are very worried, mainly because the Taliban disagrees with the very idea of press freedom,” says Sharifi. In fact, he adds, the militants’ hostility to the media is the very reason that AJSC published the roadmap to protect press freedom during the reconciliation process (see Fact Box above) to help create a mechanism to preserve the freedom of press.

Since its launch a decade ago, AJSC has racked up a number of important achievements, Sharifi says, including improved media laws, enhanced safety for media workers and the creation of a strong implementation group for the protection of

journalists—jointly handled by the media community and the government.

He also describes the creation of the Joint Committee for the Safety and Security of Journalists—now a powerful nationwide body—as a “significant success”, one that has been copied and implemented in many other countries. “It is probably the most holistic mechanism for journalist safety in the whole world,” Sharifi argues.

Inkinen agrees: “Looking at IMS’ imprint after our first ten years in Afghanistan, I’ll say that we have played a significant part in the development of professional ethical journalistic standards anchored in the local communities. We’ve supported the creation of safety tools and strategies, and opened up for new, cross-sector collaborations. But just as importantly, we’ve raised awareness and contributed to a mindset that puts safety first”

Despite the many lurking obstacles, Sharifi sustains a positive outlook: “An attack like the one in Kunduz in 2015 can definitely happen again. But we’ll be better prepared and build on experience.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Göran Engström is a freelance journalist focusing on armed conflicts, migration and human rights. Since 2003 he has been covering the Middle East, Eastern Europe and South Asia, from 2006 with particular emphasis on Afghanistan.

Pairing strategy with innovation and advocacy

In IMS' Global Response department the toolbox is varied and wide-reaching, stemming from documentary film to rapid response over advocacy and research

26

INDIVIDUAL MEDIA WORKERS AT RISK FROM 12 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES RECEIVED ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE DJ SAFETY FUND IN 2019

There's no doubt that the rights-based world order is challenged. Freedom House's global freedom index has declined for 13 years in a row¹, and nearly six out of ten countries are now "seriously repressing civic freedoms".² The last few years have seen a high number of journalists jailed, which suggests that "the authoritarian approach to critical news coverage is more than a temporary spike".³ There has also been a widespread pushback against women's rights.⁴

Global challenges require global cooperation. Essentially, this department is strategically engaging in the continued promotion of the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity and in defending media freedom through research and advocacy.

A particular focus in 2019 has been on developing and strengthening a gender perspective in IMS programmes and with partners; encouraging cooperation amongst the media, humanitarian aid and human rights sectors to improve protection strategies; increasing engagement of diverse stakeholders on safety issues and supporting a stronger approach to impunity.

Global Response inform not only partners and external stakeholders. The beauty of activities in the Global Response department and its work is in its strategic mainstreaming into other IMS programmes and as provider of policy and methodological input on especially gender, media safety and digital issues.

Another main focus point has been to raise awareness on media's instrumental role in challenging harmful gender stereotypes, its ethical role in the portrayal of gender-based violence and other forms of gender inequality, including threats specific to female media workers.

No Means No!

Documentary film continues to be an instrumental tool to tell important stories that would otherwise struggle to make it into mainstream media. Efforts of placing the topic of gender-based violence on the global agenda and end the silence that surrounds it are invested in the concept "NO MEANS NO" at film festivals and events, with a topical movie screening followed by a

debate. In 2019, the concept was implemented at film festivals with full day seminars in Palestine, Jordan and as an event at UN City Denmark.

Safety for women – and women journalists IMS has produced four reports covering these issues in whole or in part in 2019. “The safety of women journalists: Breaking the cycle of silence and violence” was launched in November 2019. Its findings prompt the need for a better understanding of how gender-specific threats and concerns can be better integrated into national safety mechanisms and inform debate and actions by media owners and editors, policy makers, press freedom organisations and journalists. This publication was translated into Spanish, Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Somali and Burmese for distribution to local IMS partners in programme countries where the need for a more robust gender perspective is critical.

Many of the regimes now restricting human rights are democratically elected ones with authoritarian tendencies that are quick to limit or curtail the rights to information, assembly and expression, particularly in digital and networked spaces. Often, there is also a lack of commitment to gender equality, limiting women’s opportunities to participate in politics and peace building, which hampers efforts to prevent and end conflict.⁵ To support an IMS programme on the constructive role media can play in the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 a study on UNSCR 1325 and its intersection with media has been commissioned. Results from the project will influence future advocacy efforts.

Saving lives and seeking structural change

Many of the regimes now restricting human rights are democratically elected ones with authoritarian tendencies that are quick to limit or curtail the rights to information, assembly and expression, particularly in digital and networked spaces. Often, there is also a lack of commitment to gender equality, limiting women’s opportunities to participate in politics and peace building,

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Not all news is bad. Moves towards greater democracy and freedom have been seen, often with little warning and led by popular movements, as recently in the Gambia, Tunisia, Armenia, Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon and Ethiopia. These moments of change present windows of opportunity for improving the media environment. But reform can be hampered by the

DOCUMENTARY FILM

From idea to the Oscars

Were it not for documentary film, many important stories would never be told. Rasmus Steen, head of IMS Documentary Film, firmly believes in the impact and power of documentary films. He offers support and sparring to documentary projects across the world to ensure an alternative platform for marginalised voices and issues. The Danish-Syrian documentary film “The Cave” is a case in point. The film portrays the brutal reality of an underground hospital in Ghouta, Syria under siege – but it also shows how hope and human solidarity can survive in even the darkest times. I can’t see any other media that would tell this story in such a thorough way. It has it all; a gripping narrative structure, astounding characters, amazing images, raw sounds, and – essentially – an important story to tell,” says Steen.

“The Cave” received a nomination for the 2020 Academy Awards for best documentary feature – the third IMS-supported production nominated for an Oscar in this category in as many years

Steen is certain that a film like “The Cave” will serve as important documentation of the war crimes committed against the Syrian population and helps put the war in Syria on the agenda long after most international media and correspondents have left the country.

Another example of a documentary premiering in 2019 that has backed political and social change is “Khartoum Offside” by the Sudanese director Marwa Zein. The film follows a women football team in Sudan. Sudanese law does not allow women to play (or to make film), but this group persistently fight for their right to practice their sport and establish a women’s league. A few months after the film premiered, Sudan got its first women’s football league. “It is the courageous women on the field who made this happen, but Zein’s documentary film kicked off the conversation and gave the issue broader political attention,” says Rasmus Steen.

“The Cave”, directed by Feras Fayyed takes place in the underground tunnels of a hospital in Eastern Ghouta, near the Syrian capital Damascus. The film premiered at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival, where it won the People’s Choice Award for Documentary.



PHOTO: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

lack of preparation for a new, more conducive media environment and a limited understanding of the role of public interest media. With rapid response interventions, IMS can swiftly engage with change makers and create activities that build on local needs as well as learnings from other contexts. (See box for more details).

Both media and civic organisations have a responsibility and mutual interest in pushing for democratic reform where opportunities arise, and in resisting the further curtailment of rights when threatened. Seeking influence at the policy and decision-making level with international and regional organisations, such as UN and Council of Europe institutions, individual states and other stakeholders to promote media freedom and safety of journalists is a priority. This also extends to the private sector: Recently, IMS has contributed to the multi-stakeholder debate around disinformation

and other issues related to the rise of technology, for example by connecting local partners to technology companies open for national dialogue such as we have done in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Ukraine.

Our cross-border, cross-sector collaboration on improving media self-regulation within the ITP-programme (see box for more details) is another tool in enhancing democratic and conducive frameworks beneficial to a free and independent media sector.

100

**IN 2019, 100 PARTICIPANTS
TOOK PART IN THE
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
PROGRAMME (ITP)**

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME ON MEDIA SELF-REGULATION

ITP – seeking to inspire and improve

Lack of regulation in the digital sphere; implementation of repressive media laws; shrinking spaces for freedom of expression; insufficient income revenue for the media capture of independent media; disinformation and uncontrolled development of AI - these are some of the serious challenges in the media landscape today. In many ways, these developments are related to the need of functional regulatory, self-regulatory and co-regulatory mechanisms on all levels – from local to global.

As the industry's landscape has transformed over the last decades, earlier models for media regulation have become obsolete. Today, self-regulation must contain cross-cutting actors working together for new structures and policies that include freedom of expression, media policy, journalism as well as updated self-regulatory institutions and media regulatory frameworks. With The International Training Programme (ITP), funder Sida and implementers IMS, Fojo, Niras and Global Reporting emphasize a holistic perspective on regulation and self-regulation of media. The carefully selected participants in the 15-months programme all work with media in different ways, and during the programme, they will set a goal for a transformation which they will implement in their respective countries.

"This programme is the only one of its kind," says Emma Lygnerud Boberg, IMS' ITP focal point. "The participants are the driving force – they implement their own projects, and with their new capacities and network, they continue the work after the 15 months are up."

As a part of the programme, participant groups from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe in turn spent three weeks in Denmark and Sweden. It is an important component of the programme to introduce them to other media systems and open up to new perspectives.

"Our role is to support the participants, provide interesting examples and facilitate conversations that wouldn't take place otherwise. We combine, for example, civil rights lawyers, parliamentarians, media workers and civil society representatives, and we give them a space for discussions on challenges and opportunities for changes in their respective media system that wouldn't be possible in their own countries. I think this cross-cutting approach is one of the major strengths of the programme which will help create sustainable solutions."

RAPID RESPONSE

When disaster strikes – local media steps up

When Cyclone Idai made landfall and devastated large parts of central Mozambique in March 2019, local media were not spared. At community radio station Rádio Águia, the roof blew off and rooms were flooded, and as Andreas Sugar, Head of the Rapid Response Unit at IMS, was shown around the premises of Rádio Águia, he saw how knee-height water marks were still visible on the walls.

In the months after the cyclone hit Mozambique, Andreas Sugar went on a mission to the Southern African country to explore how local media could contribute to the reconstruction of the country. The support was to take place under IMS' rapid response mechanism that helps journalists to operate safely while producing reliable, conflict-sensitive information for the public, which can be of vital importance during conflict, disasters or other challenging situations.

From previous post-disaster missions in Nepal and in Indonesia, Andreas Sugar has seen how local media has a crucial role to play as intermediary between the local population and aid agencies:

"Local media – in the case of Mozambique, community radios – are in a unique position to provide the glue between the national and international aid efforts and the affected communities.

They can disseminate information about reconstruction plans and help manage local expectations but at the same time amplify the concerns of the people on the ground and hold government and aid agencies to account."

Although Mozambique has experienced its share of floods and other natural calamities in the past, it has never experienced a disaster of the same magnitude as the cyclones in the spring of 2019. Consequently, the population was unfamiliar with and unprepared for the recovery and reconstruction process that followed. The effort will take years and is likely to bring with it unfortunate side effects such as corruption, sex for aid and excessive bureaucracy.

In this context, local media like community radio stations can play an important role informing and giving voice to communities and carrying out accountability journalism. On his mission to Mozambique, Andreas Sugar saw yet another example of the important role that media play in local communities:

"In these kinds of situations, it is paramount that the affected people are both informed and heard. Community radios can ensure both."

GLOBAL SAFETY



PHOTO: EUROPA PRESS NEWS/EUROPA PRESS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Journalists are seen filming officers of the National Police during a demonstration, October 2019, Barcelona, Spain.

Global Safety – informing political priorities and grooming innovation

IMS' Global Safety Programme (GSP) works with international partners to support the creation and development of national-led safety mechanisms – both people and processes – that need to be in place to ensure that the safety tools – both reactive and proactive – at a country's disposal are used to maximum effect to manage risk for journalists and media houses. No single tool improves the increasingly hostile conditions in which many media workers operate. Rather this requires a multi-pronged approach that promotes the "three P's" (prevention, protection and prosecution) adopted by UNESCO, the UN agency coordinating the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

WHAT WE DO

- Develop innovative methods to interlink the four pillars of democracy and civil society around the three Ps of safety – Prevention, Protection and Prosecution.

- Connect the national, regional and international emergency response, advocacy and media development communities and build strategic alliances.
- Support these alliances to coordinate and deliver a range of digital, physical and psycho-social tools, ranging from reactive measures, from assistance to journalists in distress, to preventive measures, such as advocacy, training and focus on ending impunity through effective judicial measures.
- Develop a comprehensive action-orientated approach to gender-based violence against the media and how to counter it at national level.

Seven years after it was approved, the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity has focused attention on the dangers that media workers face. But, for lack of political

will, the UN action plan has done little to deter those responsible for the escalation in attacks on the media. In the fall of 2019, IMS launched a pilot in The Gambia's capital of Banjul with an aim to support a global mechanism to address impunity. The pilot draws inspiration from the recommendations of UN Special Rapporteur Agnès Callamard on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions that call for stronger investigations by States and accentuates the importance of robust, collaborative support to combat impunity and protect journalists.

Another result of work in 2019 is the report "Shared responsibility: Safeguarding press freedom in perilous times". Building on previous IMS research and drawing on six country experiences – Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia and the Philippines – the report explores how stakeholders are working through institutional mechanisms, coalitions, national plans of action, partnerships and joint actions to implement robust approaches that not only respond to threats and attacks against journalists, but also proactively address conditions that make practising journalism a risky profession.

Notes

- 1 Freedom House: Democracy in Retreat: Freedom in the World 2019
- 2 CIVICUS: New Report: 6 in 10 countries now seriously repressing civic freedoms, 27 November 2018
- 3 Committee to Protect Journalists: Hundreds of journalists jailed globally becomes the new normal, 13 December 2018

- 4 AFP, UN chief warns of worldwide pushback against women's rights, March 11, 2019. Available from <https://www.france24.com/en/20190311-un-chief-warns-worldwide-pushback-against-womens-rights> [accessed September 24 2019]; OHCHR, Women's rights facing global pushback from conservative and fundamentalist groups, UN experts warn, June 22, 2018. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23244&LangID=E> [accessed September 24 2019]

- 5 Taylor, S., & Baldwin G. (2019) The Global Pushback on Women's Rights: The state of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Available from https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1909_Global-Pushback.pdf
- 6 Taylor, S., & Baldwin G. (2019) The Global Pushback on Women's Rights: The state of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Available from https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1909_Global-Pushback.pdf



Photographer at work in Faryab province, Afghanistan, October 2019.

Paving the way for good journalism

IMS' vision of peaceful, stable and democratic societies sustained through strong and effective public interest media has never been as relevant during the organisation's 20-year history as it is today

As we started to review our strategy in early 2019, our partners and staff were feeling the full force of a perfect storm of resurgent authoritarianism, climate change and technological disruption that was brewing when we drew up our previous strategy.

Then, after a year of careful reflection and consultation, Covid-19 struck, laying bare the paradox the new strategy seeks to address: while the need and demand for reliable information - in the form of ethical

and trusted journalism and other forms of fact-based media "content" - is greater than it has been in decades, the media's ability to produce and distribute it in viable ways is severely challenged. No more so than in the places where IMS works; countries and regions experiencing armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, rapid political change and authoritarian rule that also rank among the most hostile and volatile media environments in the world.

With that in mind, the IMS' strategic priorities for the coming years are:

Ethical and inclusive content

IMS will continue to support the production and distribution of public interest content with funds and expert mentoring, with a focus on in-depth and investigative journalism and documentary film, as well as coverage by hyper-local media. IMS will facilitate collaboration between public interest media, and also their co-operation with civic organisations. All content IMS supports will be guided by ethical standards that media partners and IMS agree to up front. These standards will, among other things, address the fair and accurate portrayal of women, men and marginalised groups.

Viable media

Public interest media partners also need to be able to produce and distribute their coverage of public interest issues without depending on donor funding or risk being captured by political and commercial interests. Therefore, public interest media partners will also receive bespoke assistance that helps them to:

- Grow and engage with their audiences in a way that builds the audience's trust in the media and enables audiences to assess information more critically;
- Diversify their income streams;

- Develop and apply innovative business models and inclusive organisational strategies;
- Survive shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Collaborate with other media in areas of common interest.

Safety, protection and impunity

IMS will continue to work with national and international partners to set up and run locally anchored mechanisms that address the safety of media workers. These will be responsive to the differing safety and protection needs of men and women working in the media. No single tool improves the increasingly hostile conditions in which many media workers operate; it takes unity and a joint strategic approach among different stakeholders to effectively address media safety challenges.

Policy and law

IMS will engage with social media platforms more directly about the impact they have in conflict zones and look for ways in which disinformation can be rapidly identified and addressed. At a national, regional and global level, IMS will contribute to the ongoing search for balanced policy solutions to disinformation and hate speech, and the regulation of online content with a view to improving audiences' access to and trust in public interest content and preserving freedom of expression more broadly.

IMS and partners will also build and strengthen advocacy alliances and coalitions in programme countries that involve not just media and media support organisations, but also civic organisations and movements with a common interest in creating an open and inclusive civic space – particularly those representing the interests of women and marginalised sections of society.

Alliances rock!

Public interest media cannot go it alone. Rather, they need to build relationships and alliances with rights-based civic organisations around their shared interests in defending and, where possible, expanding civic space, both on and offline.

Often civic organisations can provide access to those on the sharp end of poverty, inequality and other topics of public interest that media workers look to cover. Civic

Definition

Public interest media are editorially independent media operations that strive to produce and distribute public interest content. Public interest media can be commercial, public service or community media and can operate online, as broadcasters, and through print or other channels.



PHOTO: GERO KIEFER/DORSSINGIMS

Mood board from IMS' stall at a public event at Copenhagen Business School, April 2019. The fair showcased institutions and organisations working with the UN Development Goals.

Group photo from a co-creation workshop in Copenhagen, October 2019. This IMS “visioning charrette” was used to bring IMS staff and partners together in an effort to make use of collaborative, participatory and co-designed approaches to media development. The aim was to come up with new ideas for how to strengthen independent media and freedom of expression and seek insights on how the use of digital technology and innovations in news and information are created, delivered, and shared in current society and how this is impacting media development.



organisations can also help their constituents and beneficiaries who live beyond the media’s usual reach to access the stories media workers produce.

IMS will facilitate these alliances, as well as act as a bridge between our local partners and relevant global policy fora, representing partners’ views and interests to the latter and feeding back to the former.

As always, the foundations for IMS’ work are international human rights standards and the principles of ethical journalism, which also prescribe the role of proactive, civic-minded media that IMS is looking to foster.

Such a role is necessary if public interest media are to gain, develop and maintain the trust of their audiences through creative forms of engagement that are now essential for the media’s long-term viability.

To bring about the changes IMS is working towards, we will partner with public interest media operations, media support and other rights-focused organisations, also with a view to influencing other key stakeholders in the media ecosystem such as technology companies, the UN and other international bodies as well as national governments.

Cross-cutting elements

Rapid response

IMS’ Rapid Response (RR) mechanism represents the organisation’s ability to provide – at short notice and with flexible funding - timely and unique support to local media caught in emergencies, conflict or sudden political change. The mechanism is global and entails interventions that are context-specific, targeted and limited in scope as well as duration. The aim is to enable media to continue operating and to do so safely while producing reliable, accurate, diverse and conflict-sensitive information for the public. At times, RR will act as a preventive measure during an unexpected clampdown on media and civic actors. At other times, it will be a response to situations in which media experience a sudden opening-up of a previously closed society.

Digital freedom

Media workers operating online need to be safe and protected from attack just as those operating offline do. All media workers need laws, policies and regulations that uphold and protect their rights to free expression, information and privacy. The Internet and other digital communication technologies influence every aspect of IMS’ work.

Gender equality

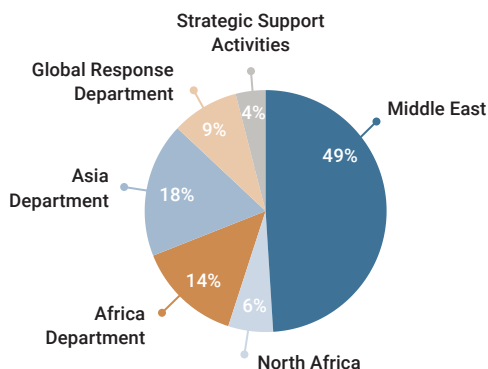
Societies are not peaceful and democratic without gender equality, and public interest media cannot contribute to a vibrant and inclusive civic space if they perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities. Therefore, IMS’ gender approach advocates for public interest content and media that address the needs and interests of all genders. In line with Article 19 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, IMS works to ensure that women and men will have the same rights to freedom of expression and access to information. IMS’ commitment to gender equality in and through the media is summarised as:

- Promoting ethical and diverse public interest content that is gender-sensitive and transformative;
- Developing gender-sensitive policies and practices in media houses that encourage women’s participation in media production;
- Ensuring that all women and men as well as members of marginalised groups have access to public interest content that is relevant to and representative of them.

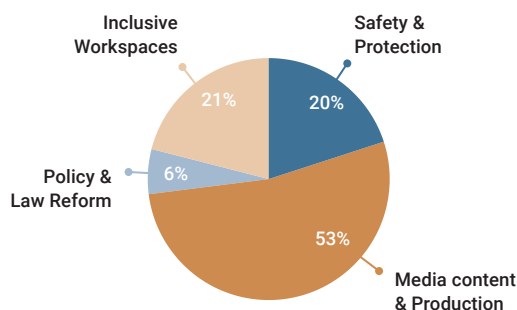
Financial overview 2019

IMS is generously financed by Nordic donors, the EU and global foundations.

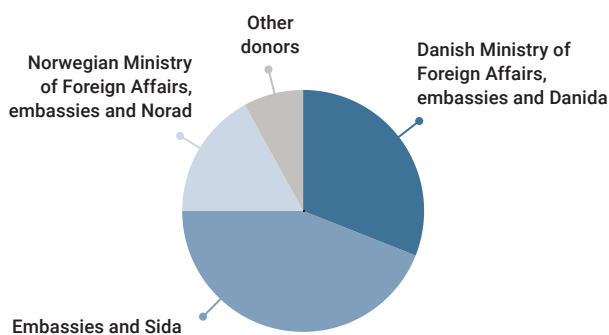
IMS funding / departments



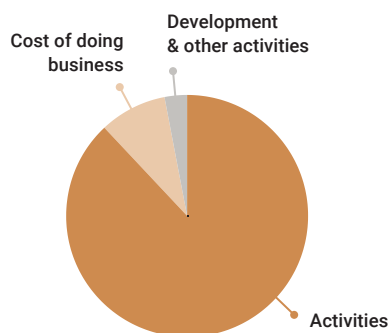
IMS activities / service lines



Funding



Expenditures



	EUR	%
Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and Danida	6,198,211	31%
Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and Sida	8,686,624	44%
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and Norad	3,432,302	17%
Other donors	1,553,216	8%
Other income and funding	-	0%
Total funding	19,870,353	100%

	EUR	%
Activities	17,377,063	87%
Cost of doing business	1,821,267	9%
Development & other activities	672,023	3%
Total expenditures	19,870,353	100%

IMS quick facts*

*2019

117

STAFF MEMBERS

34

STAFF NATIONALITIES

43

STAFF AVERAGE AGE

15

NEW STAFF MEMBERS IN 2019

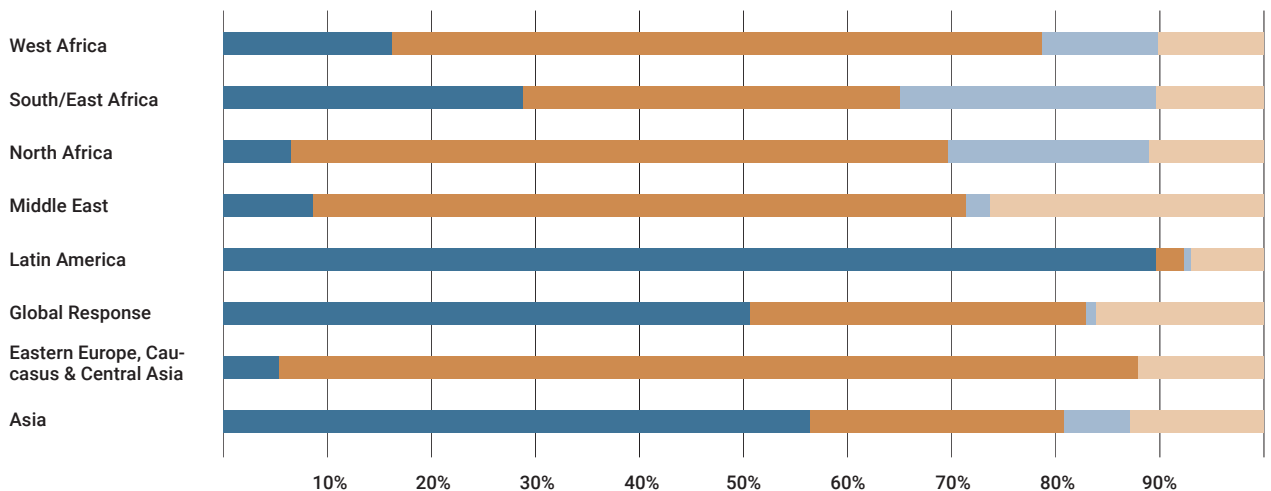
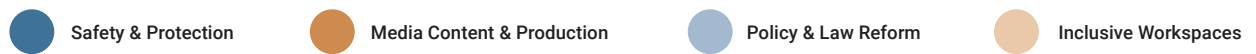
56%

WOMEN STAFF

310

PRIVATE MEMBERS

IMS Work / Geographical Areas



IMS Board 2020

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Chair of the Board, International Media Support, Executive Chair, Global Partners Digital UNITED KINGDOM

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Louise Brincker

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Ann-Magrit Austenå

Vice-chair of the Board, Secretary General, Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers NORWAY

Lars Møller

Journalist and media consultant DENMARK

Annika Palo

Senior Adviser, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) SWEDEN

Trine Nielsen

Principal, Danish School of Media and Journalism DENMARK

Edetean Ojo

Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda NIGERIA

Moukhtar Kocache

Independent adviser and consultant LEBANON/UNITED STATES

Tine Johansen

Vice-president, The Danish Union of Journalists DENMARK

Charlotte Flindt Pedersen

Director, Danish Foreign Policy Society DENMARK

Public events



PHOTO: IMS

IMS director Jesper Højberg moderating a panel on media and peace processes in June 2019 at Bornholm Democracy festival, Denmark.



PHOTO: IMS

Newly minted IMS ambassador journalist Iben Maria Zeuthen talks about her motivation for collaborating with IMS, December 2019.



PHOTO: IMS

IMS programme manager Manja Kamwi talking about how to promote women in media in a panel discussion with Danish Union of Journalists at Bornholm Democracy festival, June 2019, Denmark.



PHOTO: IMS

IMS co-organised a panel debate on challenges, responsibilities and solutions for media's coverage of rape with UN City Copenhagen, November 2019.



PHOTO: IMS

IMS' Emilie Lehmann-Jacobsen moderating a public debate in Copenhagen, Denmark, on cyber-terrorism, trolls and tech giants, August 2019.



PHOTO: IMS

IMS ambassador Iben Maria Zeuthen in conversation with Rasmus Tantholdt, Danish foreign correspondent from TV2 at an evening event, October 2019.



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