Promoting the Safety of Journalists and Combating Impunity

Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):	Global
Duration (in months):	36 months
Name and unit of project officer	Sylvie Coudray, CI/FEM/FOE
Partner(s) institutions:	UN system, intergovernmental organizations, governments, professional associations, media houses and NGOs
Total estimated budget inclusive of Programme Support costs	USD 1,000,000 – USD 5,000,000

Rationale and background

In the last 10 years alone, more than 600 journalists and media workers have been killed worldwide. According to the latest biennial UNESCO Director-General *Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity*, presented in March 2012, the Director-General made 62 public condemnations against the killings of journalists in 2010, with a further 65 public condemnations in 2011. In 2012 alone the Director-General condemned 123 killings of journalists, almost doubling the number of killings compared to previous years. The majority of these journalists were not killed in crossfire, but rather by being hunted down and murdered, often in direct reprisal for their reporting. In addition to risking their lives, journalists reporting on local conflicts, corruption and other illegal activities also face threats of abduction, hostage-taking, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention. The safety of media workers is of great concern to society, since it is a prerequisite for preserving the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and several regional human rights instruments, such as the European Convention of Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Journalists are not only major users of the cherished right to freedom of expression (in the form of press freedom), but symbols for how a society implements the rule of law and

values the role of free speech as a right that is also integral to national development. When journalists, with their visibility, ar attacked, and when crimes against them go unpunished, self-censorship grows across the whole society, and the information environment becomes even further impoverished. In times of armed conflict, journalists are also protected as civilians according to Article 79 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions. Further, journalists are also entitled to the fundamental rights to life, liberty and security of the person, against arbitrary detention and to be treated humanely.

A free press (in print, broadcast and on the Internet) is a cornerstone of a democratic society, and is essential for the free flow of information that enables development and peace. Convinced by the fundamental role of media in recent years, different UN bodies have confirmed the importance of the protection of journalists: the UN Security Council condemned in its Resolution 1738 all attacks against journalists in conflict situations; and the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution at its 21st session on 27 September 2012 outlining the particular role of journalists on matters of public interest and condemning in the strongest terms all attacks and violence against journalists. The Human Rights Council also expressed its concern that attacks against journalists often occur with impunity and called upon all States to ensure accountability and to bring to justice those responsible, as well as to ensure that victims have access to appropriate remedies. In December 2013, the UN General Assembly passed for the first time a resolution that "condemns unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers, such as torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention, as well as intimidation and harassment in both conflict and non-conflict situations." The resolution also proclaimed 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity in Crimes Against Journalists.

Impunity, which puts freedom of expression and press freedom at peril, is not compromised solely by a lack of legal standards in many countries, but also by a lack of implementation of existing standards. Absence of implementation is linked partially to ignorance, but also to a lack of political will and institutional design issues. The consequences of impunity run deep as they lead to media's self-censorship, which reduces citizens' access to important information on issues of public interest, thereby diminishing transparency and accountability in governance.

The present project aims at improving the safety of journalists in the context of the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, endorsed in April 2012 by the UN Chief Executives Board. This UN Plan is an overall response to the problems of journalists in danger. It is a unique mechanism and the first attempt to systematically bring all stakeholders, including the UN system, Member States, international and regional organizations, academia, and the media itself, together to solve the challenges of safety of journalists and combating impunity at the global, regional, and national level.

In the context of the post-2015 development agenda, it is an appropriate time to promote the safety of journalists as agents of the public interest and human rights defenders. Women and youth who do journalism in particular need support, both off-line and online. The protection of journalists should not be limited to those formally recognised as journalists, but should cover others who contribute significantly to journalism, including community media workers, citizen journalists, and those who may be using new media as a means of providing public interest information.

Why UNESCO ?

Given its track record in promoting journalists' safety worldwide, UNESCO is well placed to address this issue. UNESCO is the mandated agency within the UN agency that promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The Organization has taken the lead in coordinating the development and implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. UNESCO works in cooperation with stakeholders and actors across the various UN agencies, and leading global and regional NGOs promoting press freedom and freedom of expression as well as national authorities and national media houses. As part of the UN Plan of Action, UNESCO has developed the Journalists' Safety Indicators based on the internationally recognized UNESCO Media Development Indicators. Their purpose is to enable a comprehensive assessment of the level of journalists' safety in a given country and assess the actions undertaken by various stakeholders in addressing safety and the impunity of crimes committed against journalists. In seven countries over the past year, UNESCO has been intensively working on coalition-building and other activities (such as training security forces on freedom of expression and relations with journalists) within the framework of the UN Plan. The lessons of this experience are invaluable for continued and expanded development of results in the numerous sectors of society which are bound up with the safety of journalists.

Furthermore, UNESCO has over two decades of experience in providing technical advice on legal, regulatory, policy and other critical issues, as well as educating journalists and building capacities for media professionals and institutions, thus playing a strong role in the field of freedom of expression and media development. Over the years, it has gained a high level of respect among governments, media organizations and media professionals and has accumulated good practices in order to maximize the impact of its programmes.

This project will reinforce UNESCO's Regular Programme and Budget (37 C/5), Major Programme V, Expected Result 1: "*The environment for freedom of expression, press freedom, journalistic safety and self-regulation is strengthened, for both on- and off-line media platforms, and especially in post-conflict countries and countries in transition, through favourable policies and practices.*"

Overall Goal/Objective

To promote a free and safe environment for journalists in both conflict and non-conflict situations, with a view to enabling an informed citizenry that is capable of strengthening peace, democracy and development worldwide by combining actions among the UN system, intergovernmental organizations, governments, professional associations, media houses and NGOs.

Specific objectives
a) To ensure effective implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity by strengthening UN coordination mechanisms in order to work in close cooperation and in a harmonized manner.
b) To support Member States in ensuring the right to freedom of expression and press freedom, the safety of journalists and remedy the problem of impunity, particularly in countries and regions directly concerned.
c) To expand the work of intergovernmental institutions and other organizations such as NGOs, professional associations, academia and media houses by promoting the harmonization of their work on the issue of safety and impunity in compliance with the UN system.

d) To build partnerships among all stakeholders in media development programmes, awareness-raising campaigns and actions aimed at promoting the safety of journalists and the combating of impunity, including by sharing information and good practices.

Main expected results

Expected Result 1

UN coordination mechanisms are strengthened and harmonized; current and new actions are implemented to raise the impact of work on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity

Expected Result 2

Member States are advised on the implementation of existing international standards at national level and on the development of journalist safety mechanisms, as well as supported in regard to the sharing of good practices and capacity-building among various actors, including the criminal justice chain, to promote a safe environment for journalists at national level

Expected Result 3

Other intergovernmental organizations and other organizations such as professional associations, media, academia and NGOs are reinforced and their work is harmonized with the UN Plan implementation

Expected Result 4

State institutions, governments, media houses and other key stakeholders have increased awareness of the importance of safety of journalists and combating impunity, and of ways to achieve these conditions

Activities and outputs/deliverables relating to the achievement of expected results

UNESCO works to implement the UN Plan of Action in a comprehensive way:

These seven activity fields entail:
1. Conducting research on areas Journalists Safety Indicators, digital safety for journalists, and the safety of women journalists.

2. Raising awareness through major events such as World Press Freedom Day and International Day to End Impunity;
3. Building coalitions with various partners;
4. Trainings for journalists, media owner, security forces, and judiciary; and model curriculum for journalism schools;
5. Promoting regulatory reform to better protect journalists;
6. *Sharing of good practices;*
7. Reporting on the progress of the UN Plan and being accountable to all the stakeholders (including contributing to the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly on the November 2013 Resolution on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity)

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

The direct beneficiaries of the project are journalists and media workers, in particular countries and globally. Other stakeholders include UN agencies, international and regional professional organizations, non-governmental organizations in the field of press freedom, national authorities (including security forces and judicial personnel who deal with freedom of expression issues) and media houses. Activities will be designed to build capacities of local stakeholders to ensure sustainability beyond the completion of the project. The ultimate beneficiary is the global public which benefits from the free flow of information.

Implementation strategy

The implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is outlined by the Implementation Strategy adopted in Vienna, Austria (23 November 2012) and the UNESCO Work Plan on the issues approved by the 191st Executive Board in April 2013. It follows the general principle of a multi-stakeholder approach involving Member States, UN agencies, civil society, academia, and the media. Concretely, it involves seven pillars of actions: Research, Awareness-raising, Building coalitions, Supporting training, Supporting regulatory reforms, Compiling and sharing good practices, and Reporting to stakeholders. UNESCO has been tasked specifically with the overall coordination of the implementation of the UN Plan of Action and the sharing of information amongst UN agencies.

How is gender equality addressed in the approach?

One of the basic principles guiding the UN Plan of Action is the importance of gender equality. A gender-sensitive approach is taken throughout the work of the UN Plan; this approach is reflected in every dimension of the Implementation Strategy. Many actions are specifically focused on the safety of women journalists. Evaluation and monitoring will include specific gender-sensitive indicators.

Sustainability and exit strategy

The project is designed to ensure sustainability of results beyond its finalization. Policymakers and beneficiaries will be empowered with new capacities to continue actions after funding and technical support have come to an end. Moreover, ensuring the safety of journalists also forms part of UNESCO's Regular Programme, and therefore the Organization's activities in this area will continue after completion of the project. The mobilisation of other bodies within the UN, the media and civil society will help build further sustainability. In this way, the project will contribute to the longer-term objectives of contributing to an enabling environment for freedom of expression and the strengthening of peace, democracy and development worldwide.