



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Special Edition for World Press Freedom Day | May 3rd 2016

UNESCO IN ACTION



**Nurturing Environments
for Freedom of Expression
in the Arab Region**

With the support of



SWEDEN



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

EDITORIAL



The unprecedented events that have shaken the MENA region since 2011 have had lasting and interwoven effects. By taking to the streets and confronting the hard, and sometimes violent, reality of censorship, people not only claimed their universal right to free expression but they also revealed to the world their determination to take responsibility for their own future.

Turbulent years have passed since the beginning of the 'Arab spring'. Freedom of expression has confirmed itself as a pivotal right for achieving other human rights, the rule of law and democracy, dialogue and peace, sustainable development and cultural diversity.

UNESCO, thanks to the critical contribution of the Governments of Sweden and Finland, has been accompanying more than nine member states in the framework of the projects "Promoting Freedom of Expression in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen" and "Promoting an enabling environment for freedom of expression". Governments, newborn national democratic institutions, hundreds of civil society organizations and thousands of individual beneficiaries have been supported in their transitions towards a freer and more democratic society.

Although many countries decided to engage in a long-term process of constitutional democratic reforms aligned to international standards and embedded in the core of these nations, there are still some conflict and post-conflict countries faced with a more complicated reality. In these countries, ensuring security for people expressing their opinions is still a matter of grave concern. This is most notably the case for media workers, who still face risks and even death as a consequence of their profession.

UNESCO has been committed to responding where necessary by offering immediate assistance, through cross-cutting projects pertaining to the security of journalists and the impunity of those who commit crimes against them, particularly in conflict areas where journalists are targeted. Awareness has been heightened for the public and the local authorities on issues such as impunity for crimes against journalists, for instance in response to the South Sudanese, Yemeni and Syrian humanitarian crises, while in Libya the main actors of the media landscape were encouraged to work towards a more ethical, professional and conflict-sensitive approach in treating and delivering information. UNESCO was also involved, alongside its partners in Morocco and Tunisia, in reform activities leading to a more professional, independent and pluralistic media environment.

This special magazine, prepared on the occasion of the World Press Freedom Celebration 2016 in Helsinki, highlights some key achievements through stories of project beneficiaries in the MENA region.

Sylvie Coudray
*Chief of Section for Freedom of Expression
Communication and Information sector
UNESCO*

©UNESCO 2016



The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO, concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The author is responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this publication and for the opinion expressed therein which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the organization.

By using the content of this publication the users accept to be bound by the terms of use the UNESCO.

This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>)

By using the content of this publication the users accept to be bound by the terms of use the UNESCO.
Open Access Repository (<http://www.unesco.org/openaccess/terms-use-ccbysa-en>)

SUMMARY

MOROCCO

6-9



ZAHRA OUHSSAIN

Pioneering web radio in the Amazigh language



DRISS EL OUALI

The right to access information: a crucial step in Moroccan progress

LIBYA

10-13



Madrid Declaration: a stepping stone for the development of the Libyan media sector



NABEEL AL-SHIBANI, GENERAL MANAGER OF LYBIA CHANNEL

Interview

"I think that we'll see freedom of expression in the future, and this is what we touched on in the Madrid Declaration. It noticeably impacted the media and their attitude in the following weeks."

LEBANON

14-15



Youth centres: a chance for better integration of Syrian refugees

TUNISIA

16-19



NOURI LAJMI

HAICA, an authority to accompany Tunisia's independent media development



SALAM MLIK

Young people on the air

SOUTH SUDAN

20-21



Voicing the voiceless in one of the world's newest countries

YEMEN

22-26



Supporting Yemeni media in promoting peace and dialogue



SHADHA HOTTAM, YEMENI JOURNALIST

Interview

"Journalists become the story when they are abducted, tortured and murdered."

MOROCCO

ZAHRA OUHSSAIN

Pioneering web radio in the Amazigh language

Zahra Ouhssain is a community journalist and activist. She is currently hosting a programme on the web radio e-Joussour and another weekly one on national public radio. She has contributed to various newspapers such as *Al Alam Al Amazighi* and translated several books into Amazigh, a Berber language spoken by 60% of the population in Morocco. Zahra is, as well, a vocal promoter of the Amazigh culture and a fervent advocate for human rights.

Activism was always the main drive in Zahra's life and career. Ever since her college days she has been campaigning for causes such as Women's Rights and Amazigh's rights and recognition. After graduating from university, she started working on a literacy programme targeting Amazigh women who were not only illiterate but could not even speak Arabic, which made them even more outcast.

She became proficient in all the three main Amazigh languages spoken in Morocco, and learned to write in Tifinagh (the Amazigh alphabet). After a couple of years, Zahra felt so unsatisfied that she decided to go back to school where she trained to become a professional journalist.

She forged her way through the profession but found it hard to keep her activism aside. In 2011, she became part of the launch of a new initiative in the landscape of community journalism: the e-Joussour web radio.

This web radio was designed as a platform for various voices of the community. It broadcasts for a total of 16 hours a day with programmes in French, Arabic and Amazigh. They cover a wide range of topics, including youth, society, politics, gender, and human rights.

After some time, Zahra and her partners realised that while community media were a step towards more

openness and diversity in the media landscape, their lack of recognition under the law was clearly a hindrance to their development and large-scale diffusion. Despite working at the webradio she could not be recognized as a professional journalist.

With the support of UNESCO, many actions were organized in order to raise awareness about the fundamental role of community/associative media outlets for a diverse audiovisual sector, and the need to have a legal framework supportive of community media. 'Thanks to UNESCO and the funds given to us, we were able to organize actions, training courses and workshops to heighten the awareness of the authorities and the general public about our cause. I also received training in news writing, recording and mixing which was greatly beneficial to me and aided my professional growth,' said Zahra Ouhssain.

In the future, Ms Ouhssain hopes to continue to collaborate with international partners towards full recognition for community media. In her view, 'community media and web radios are essential to the social fabric of the country, they are able to reach fringe populations and are a voice for the voiceless.'

"Community media and web radios are essential to the social fabric of the country, they are able to reach fringe populations and are a voice for the voiceless."





MOROCCO

DRISS EL OUALI

The right to access information: a crucial step in Moroccan progress

Driss El Ouali is the news editor of the on-line newspaper Sada Taounate where he also contributes as a journalist. A member of the Moroccan Media Federation (FMM: Fédération Marocaine des Médias), he is also president of the Moroccan Association of the Regional Press. As a volunteer, he is a member of the Moroccan Network for the Right to Access Information (REMDI), an organization comprising several NGOs campaigning for this right.

“This support allowed us to study the draft law in depth and write some amendments that would make the law not only compliant with international standards but also with civil society’s expectations.”

Never one to shy away from a challenge, El Ouali is a strong advocate for freedom. As a firm supporter of the right to access information, he believes it to be a ‘fundamental and universal human right’. This conviction has guided him throughout his career.

As a professional reporter, he has struggled with the direct consequences of a lack of access to information. Many of his investigations were hindered and even abandoned. He recalls in particular the inquiry into a public procurement process that he had to give up after being constantly stonewalled by the relevant offices.

While Morocco is about to adopt a law for implementing the right to access to information held by public bodies as enshrined in the 2011 constitutional reform, Driss El Ouali highlights the steady progress made to achieve this legal recognition. The Moroccan REMDI was very enthusiastic after the adoption of the new Constitution:

for the first time in its history, the right to access information was recognised and mentioned in the country’s founding text.

However, like his fellow activists, he felt that there was still a long and arduous road ahead before the texts could lead to a comprehensive law ensuring the real implementation of this principle. To work towards this objective, the REMDI enlisted the help of several partners, among them UNESCO.

‘The role of UNESCO was crucial as it provided us with support and expertise’, stated El Ouali. Through several training sessions and workshops, the REMDI was accompanied in its efforts to improve the efficiency of its advocacy strategy to promote a right-to-information law in compliance with international standards. ‘Round tables, with the participation of several international

experts, have been essential’, herecalled. ‘This support allowed us to study the draft law in depth and write some amendments that would make the law not only compliant with international standards but also with civil society’s expectations.’

On 28 September 2014, the REMDI Network, together with UNESCO, launched an initiative geared towards a wider audience. A dozen workshops were designed to present the draft law and raise awareness on the issues of the right to access information in schools. ‘These workshops are meant to explain to the general public that this right is important for each and everyone, that it affects our lives as citizens and we would benefit greatly, on many levels, by the adoption of a law consecrating this right. Such law would be a great step towards more democracy’, he concluded.

LIBYA

Madrid Declaration: a stepping stone for the development of the Libyan media sector

Madrid achieved an important milestone as it set a foundation from which to build professional media that are far-removed from violence and hate speech.



While the civil conflict was raging, a workshop of Libyan media managers from different areas of the country and from overseas took place in Madrid in July 2015. It provided an opportunity for influential executives and owners of media outlets to discuss in depth the role and responsibilities of media during times of conflict. Though the participants acknowledged the diversity of political viewpoints among them, they nonetheless agreed that they faced common challenges and were able to identify together some key shortcomings and gaps in capacity. Most importantly, they were able to agree on essential ethical principles and standards to be respected by their outlets and identify areas where they needed to enhance their own capacity to report in a conflict-sensitive manner that contributes to reconciliation and peace building.

The workshop ended with the signing of the Madrid Declaration in which about 30 senior media managers and owners of media outlets expressed their rejection of violence and hate speech, and agreed to abide by the inter-

national standards of professional and ethical reporting at all times in their work.

The second meeting, held in October 2015, was much more practical as it was attended by operations-level management. It began with a review of the Madrid Declaration and the principles embedded within the text. Over the following four days, the discussion focused mainly on the implementation of those principles into daily management through key functions such as editorial policy, finances, administration and human resources.

The meeting ended with the signing of a statement on 'Professional and Ethical Obligations of Libyan Media Managers in the Current Time of crisis', in which the managers recalled the principles agreed on in the Madrid Declaration, and outlined actions to be taken to determine clear editorial and right-to-reply policies, improve contractual arrangements for journalists and strengthen professional standards within their outlets.

“Libyan media managers and journalists hereby declare and vow that:

They abide by the values of the right to freedom of expression and responsible opinion. They consider mutual accusations among parties to the Libyan conflict through the media without providing tangible evidence or proof, an act that goes against freedom of expression.”

Madrid Declaration
The Role of Libyan Media and its Responsibility in times of Crises
30 July, 2015
Madrid, Spain

First Madrid declaration signatories

Hassan Mohamed El-Ameen	Libya AL-Mostakbal Newspaper
Khaled Masood Al-Bahloul	Toobaktoos Radio and Television Network
Salma Al-Sha'aab	Journalists Syndicate
Fatma Ghandoor	Meyadeen Newspaper
Fathi Mokhtar Ben-Isa	Media Consultant
Mahmoud Al-Mahdi Al-Mesraati	Akhbaar Al-Hadath Newspaper
Magdi Ali Al-Shaa'eri	Libya TV FM Channel
Mostafa Mohamed Al-Barooni	Al-Zentaan Satellite Channel
Nabeel Yosef Al-Shibaani	Libya Channel

NABEEL AL-SHIBANI, GENERAL MANAGER OF LYBIA CHANNEL

Interview

“I think that we’ll see freedom of expression in the future, and this is what we touched on in the Madrid Declaration. It noticeably impacted the media and their attitude in the following weeks.”



Q. Did the work in Madrid for Libyan media managers meet the needs of the media sector in Libya?

Nabeel Al-Shibani: Meetings in Madrid achieved an important milestone as they set a foundation from which we can build a professional media that is far-removed from violence and hate speech; however, this is just the beginning and the full spectrum of needs has yet to be fulfilled.

Q. And what are the steps that would make it a holistic agreement?

There are many, the most important one is securing journalists’ buy-in to the agreement so that they promote it, comply with it and see it as a protective shield for them from blackmail. It also needs to satisfy their ambitions, and this is what has in fact been mentioned in the Statement of Principles.

Q. How do you assess freedom of expression in media outlets today? Is there a real need for a code of ethics for the profession among journalists?

In my opinion, there is no freedom of expression in any media outlet inside Libya, regardless of whether it is in the East, West or South. There is more room to maneuver for media outlets abroad, but it is also limited given the political divisions and difficult circumstances - it is like walking on

a tightrope. However, there is no doubt that there is a very urgent need for a code of ethics, and for professionals to comply with it. I think that we’ll see freedom of expression in the future, and this is what we touched on in the Madrid Declaration. It noticeably impacted the media and their attitude in the following weeks. As a consequence, some outlets lessened their use of clichéd methods to create discord. By continuously supporting this effort on a wider scale, and with the participation of those who uphold it through legal processes, it will have a big influence on healing rifts in Libya.

Q. Based on your experience with UNESCO and its project in Libya, how can the media and journalists benefit from these initiatives? Do you believe that quantity or quality is more important at this stage?

UNESCO’s role is very important; UNESCO has a unique perspective and position as a UN agency. It can reach out and interact with all the different factions in Libya. No other party or state, no matter how much of an ally it is, could achieve that, as Libyans are very sensitive in that sense. As for quantity vs. quality, both of them are important at this stage: they complement one another. At the beginning, a focus on quality is important, but later more quantity would be needed with a special attention paid to the speed of dissemination.

Q. If you could evaluate the Libyan media scene in the past year, what do you think has not been done that could have been?

This question can have several answers depending on your perspective, whether you’re talking about the official state media, private media, or social media sites; and depending on whom you are referring to when you say that something could have been done: the government, media people, reporters, etc. Each would require a different answer. In general, the way news is disseminated depends on its type; what is missing from websites and television channels is usually circulated on social media, where rumors thrive due to the marked absence of professional journalists as a result of the security situation. Another issue is the lack of coverage for topics such as arts, culture and sports. These issues do not interest the people in charge, neither politicians nor other decision-makers with an agenda. We have noticed that international organizations do not focus on these issues, but instead would rather focus their efforts on reinforcing and supporting political journalism.

Q. Do journalists who work for you receive training? Are they taking part in training programmes by other organizations that work on media development?

They receive training internally whenever it is possible and the opportunity comes up. There has, however, been work with BBC Media Action in transmitting a special dialogue programme intended to reinforce the media production of Libyan youth, because we believe in their abilities and want to motivate them. While the programme was deemed to be good, it did not receive the opportunity to be seen by Libyans on the state-run Al Kul channel, which does not cater to the same audience as our channel. That is what enabled us to present it to the youth programme team.

LEBANON/SYRIA

Youth centres: a chance for better integration of Syrian refugees

The five-year long Syrian crisis had a dramatic and traumatic impact on young people, depriving too many of them of their basic right to freedom of expression. Syrian refugees fled to neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon where UNESCO supported the creation and development of Youth Information Centres. These structures aim to give youths an opportunity to overcome their dramatic situation, and start rethinking their future through access to knowledge and information.



washing my clothes anymore. I felt cornered and asked myself how can I rebuild myself at fourteen in a new place with no foundations?’, confided the teenage refugee. After months of struggle, he heard about a youth centre in town where he could enroll for free and reconnect with others his age.

Within a year, Oday learned essential social skills that eased his integration into the town’s fabric. By attending training courses held at the Centre, he also had the opportunity to exchange and share ideas with peers like Wassim (who later became his best friend) and to socialize with other town residents. He became a strong self-reliant person who could provide other youths the same support he had so desperately needed when he first arrived in Lebanon. As a bonus, he also managed to become one of the town’s barbers. Despite it all, Oday still misses his home country,

his mother and his brothers, though he admits that his situation is ‘much better’ today.

In addition to Khiyam-South and Qobayat-North, the Kfarzabad Centre in the Bekaa region is a perfect embodiment of the UNESCO project’s objectives. These centres have been conceived to provide a convenient environment for group work and cooperation between the Lebanese and Syrian young people. . A similar Youth Information center was also established in Jordan with the same goals; targeting Syrian Refugee youth and providing them with a platform for free expression and building their computer skills and media and information literacy. These initiatives help to develop the skills of these refugees through cultural, environmental, social and other activities and allow a better integration in their new countries.

Sixteen-year-old Oday has a special experience with the Kfarzabad Centre, in the Zahleh district of Lebanon, just across the Syrian border. He is the eldest of three children who lost their father. Oday had to leave Syria and take refuge in Lebanon where he could work to support his mother and brothers. When Oday arrived in town, he did not know anyone but his aunt and grandmother, who were already living there in hardship conditions.

After crossing the border two years ago, Oday tried to work as a barber because he loved the profession. He chose a corner of the house where walls were thin and doors wide open and waited, but no clients ever came, mainly because Oday did not know anyone in that town. He also tried to work the land with his aunt’s husband but could not earn enough to support himself and his family. ‘I became so lonely, frustrated and depressed that I was not even interested in preparing food or



Over 3,000 benefited from the center’s library & computer lab with around 55% Syrians and 50% were women.

1445 community members benefited from training activities with an equal representation for women, among them 60% were Syrians.



TUNISIA

NOURI LAJMI

HAICA, an authority to accompany Tunisia's independent media development



UNESCO has been an active partner of the High Independent Authority of Audio-visual Communication (HAICA) from the early days of its creation, a milestone in the Tunisian democratic transition. Long before becoming the President of HAICA, Nouri Lajmi was a journalist himself.

In 1975, Nouri Lajmi started as a freelance journalist for several newspapers including *Le dialogue* and *la Presse* where he wrote on art and literature. In 1990, he felt the professional practice of journalism was being suffocated by the oppressive measures of the regime; he decided to leave both his passion and profession behind, and opted to be a university professor at the Press and Information Sciences Institute (IPSI).

Despite this career shift, Nouri Lajmi felt severely limited by the lack of freedom of expression even in the academic world. After a few years, he decided to leave his home country for Canada, where he worked at Laval University in Quebec and at Montreal University. He also collaborated with some Canadian NGOs in the field of media and human rights.

In 2000, he returned to Tunisia and began once again to teach at IPSI. He has now devoted more than ten years of his life to this institution and invested time and energy to help students sharpen their sense of ethics while improving their journalistic and research skills. Mr Lajmi's long and distinguished career in journalism, teaching and research, made him the suitable candidate for the HAICA presidency.

Despite the challenging, post-revolutionary context, the HAICA was set in stone by the Decree/Law 116 of 2 November 2012. Six months later, the regulatory body was established symbolically on May 3rd, World Press Freedom Day. Together with the other members of HAICA, Nouri Lajmi has been deeply committed to ensuring the progress of the Autho-

riety's missions, including reforming the audiovisual landscape, developing media and supporting their role in this transitional democratic phase. In a political context weakened by terrorist attacks, HAICA has been safeguarding the independence of Tunisia's audiovisual media.

Nouri Lajmi's daily challenges remain both varied and overarching for Tunisia's media landscape: HAICA legal reinforcement, legitimisation of its role amongst the local media, development of international partnerships for future endeavors, and granting of TV and radio broadcast licenses.

UNESCO has been an active partner of HAICA's since the beginning. They have been working together on a wide variety of projects, such as en-

sureing the guarantee of freedom of expression and press freedom; increasing representation of women in the media; and supporting community radios. According to Nouri Lajmi, this partnership with UNESCO is vital. It allows the exchange of skills and experiences with international and local experts in dealing with sensitive issues such as ethics and regulation of the media. HAICA's time is limited, since by the end of the democratic transition it will have been replaced by another regulatory body. Until then, Nouri Lajmi will continue his mission of shaping a media landscape that is constantly evolving, for he believes that media diversity is key to consolidating the country's democratic achievements.

TUNISIA



SALAM MLIK

Young people on the air

Salam Mlik was a young computer science graduate in 2007 when he decided to launch a web radio in his hometown of Tozeur, an oasis in South-West Tunisia. He brought together talented young people passionate about the development of their communities, and ready to give a voice to their region. However, owing to the strong restrictions on freedom of expression during the Ben Ali regime, this promising effort did not flourish and wilted soon after.



After the revolution in 2011, Salem Mlik wanted once again to rally young volunteers around his initiative and relaunch the radio project: it would be online at first, using social media networks to inform the public about events in the Tozeur and Jérid regions of Southern Tunisia. In order to make local voices heard better and allow them to reach more people, Salem founded an association to help gain permission for FM broadcasting.

Throughout that long process, Salem did not rest. Curious and yearning to learn, he embarked on several training sessions in management and media to improve his skills not only in journalism but also in the management of the radio.

In September 2014, Radio Djerid FM was finally authorized by HAICA (the Tunisian High Independent Authority of the Audio-visual Commission) to broadcast on an FM frequency as a community radio station.

Thanks to UNESCO and other organizations, Djerid FM managed to upgrade its studios, the production conditions and the journalists' competencies. According to Salem Mlik, UNESCO's training opportunities for journalists and the support they received in the development of programme content have helped the radio immensely to improve quality and extend its reach. In addition, UNESCO's network has allowed Djerid FM members to exchange best practices advice with local and international experts.

Through all this Salem has been fully engaged in advancing the radio's development, even though financial conditions have not always been favourable. He even decided to convert what had been a volunteer activity into a full-time commitment, quitting the comfort of a paid job for this adventure.

Pursuing his vision, Salam Mlik networked with several community radios and in July 2015 created the Tunisian Union of Associative Media (UTMA), which aimed to democratise the media landscape in Tunisia, increase support to associative media, promote freedom of expression, foster a culture of debate and facilitate the exchange of experience and expertise among Tunisian community radio stations.

Currently president of UTMA and director of Djerid FM Radio, Salem Mlik continues to follow his dream of building a local media network that gives a voice to Tunisia's communities even in the most remote regions.

SOUTH SUDAN

Voicing the voiceless in one of the world's newest countries

South Sudan is one of the five pilot countries the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the issue of Impunity, implemented with the lead of UNESCO and encompassing a wide range of activities to promote the safety of journalists amidst the 2013-2015 civil war that displaced more than two million people.

One Media Observatory Committee established in each of the former ten states of South Sudan.

In 2015, an average of 5 to 10 cases reported and documented monthly.

Average audience of 1.8 million for Good News Community Radio, Rumbek.



The media development stakeholders in South Sudan have been essential partners in implementing the Action Plan that led to the prioritisation of media sector needs, the elimination of duplication of efforts, and donors' coordination for more cost efficiency. It has also ensured that activities within this framework have a higher impact and are sustainable. An increased awareness of the issue of safety and impunity for crimes against journalists is also being achieved in the country not only among media partners, the general public, civil society, academics, media professionals, NGOs, and relevant government organs such as police and the national security service, but also internationally with UN Agencies and IGOs.

Thanks to funding from the Government of Sweden, UNESCO was able to play a key role in improving the standards for journalists' safety and professionalism and enhancing freedom of the press by revamping the human and technical capacity of journalists, media train-

ing institutions, media houses, associations and other relevant stakeholders of the media industry having an impact on the community at state and national levels.

Among the many beneficiaries of these interventions is the Union of Journalists in South Sudan (UJOSS). The UJOSS was accompanied in establishing a national mechanism to monitor and report media violations. This activity aimed at equipping the UJOSS' Media Observatory Committees (MOCs) with skills needed to monitor and report incidents related to impunity for crimes against journalists and other violations against media personnel, including citizen journalists. To that end, several training sessions were organized, and seven Media Observatory Committees in seven South Sudan states were provided with monitoring and reporting equipment. Three extra MOCs were also set up in Northern Bahr El Ghazal, Warrap and Western Bahr El Ghazal, and ten Media Observatory Committees in all the former 10 states have been established and operationalized.

With these mechanisms now in place, there has been a great improvement in the monitoring and the reporting of violent occurrences against journalists, especially in terms of verification and timely reporting. There has also been a better availability and accessibility to safety mechanisms and resources for journalists, and an increased attention and support for journalists in danger evacuation programme by the South Sudan media development partners.

The establishment of pilot women and youth listeners' clubs in Wau and Rumbek counties was another crucial project funded by the Government of Sweden. This initiative provided local women and young people with better access to information, promoted a community-based communication platform that allows dialogue on issues such as peaceful co-existence, triggers of conflict, promotion of girls' education, the risks of child marriages, and participation of their communities in political, social and economic platforms.

The women and youth Radio Listener Clubs have become an effective communication tool within the communities, and provided women and youth in these remote areas with access to more information and a better representation in and through the media. They have also helped accelerate gender equality through and in the media while providing a platform for addressing youth and women's issues. These clubs also offer an opportunity for the marginalized groups and communities to be heard. Finally, they play a crucial role in mitigating sensitive issues and diffusing conflicts within the communities. Given the positive impact of the pilots, the model is to be replicated in twenty community radio stations across the country.

YEMEN



Supporting Yemeni media in promoting peace and dialogue

In response to the current emergency situation in Yemen, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), and BBC Media Action, held a five-day media coordination event in Amman, Jordan, on 21-25 January 2016.

According to Shadha Hattam, investigative journalist, radio presenter and producer 'The level of awareness amongst Yemeni journalists regarding freedom of expression has developed tremendously since 2011. However, the year 2015 has been the bloodiest in the history of media in Yemen, due to the closure of the majority of media outlets in the country and the pressures experienced by most journalists,' she added.

Information is quintessential for any society, and particularly when it is confronted with conflict and war. Access to information ensures that local communities are provided with life-saving knowledge that helps them withstand the effects of the conflicts. Lack of information, especially of the humanitarian kind, at any stage of a conflict, can make people desperate, restless and easy to manipulate and it may also significantly weaken people's ability to make informed decisions.

As a response to these needs, UNESCO, in cooperation with BBC Media Action, held a three-day workshop on 'Lifeline programming' for 25 journalists and media experts from a variety of media organizations and outlets in Yemen.

'Lifeline programming is special media programming for communities affected by humanitarian crises, including man-made ones such as conflict,' said Jackie Dalton, Humanitarian Communication Specialist with BBC Media Action. Lifeline programming aims to provide people with timely, relevant and practical information to alleviate their suffering and assist with their recovery. It also aims at giving affected people the opportunity to voice their concerns, express their needs, share their stories and solutions to problems, and hold humanitarian aid providers to account.

In light of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, it is important that the UN act together and join forces in responding to community needs. 'The level of commitment we have seen for this event by the UN acting as one team is a step in the right direction,' said Ma'aly Hazzaz, Project Manager for extra-budgetary support to enhance freedom of expression in the Arab region.

'We have invited both Yemeni journalists and UN humanitarian agencies working in Yemen to participate because, as the title of the training indicates, communication is a form of aid. In the context of a conflict, information should primarily serve to ensure that people can make informed decisions to protect their life and their safety,' she added.

For the first time since the beginning of the conflict in March 2015, 55 Yemeni media representatives met to discuss 'Supporting Yemeni Media in Promoting Peace and Dialogue' together with over twenty international and regional media support groups. It was also the occasion to identify the priority areas and emerging needs of the media sector in Yemen and discuss a common strategy to address them.

According to Ayman Mhanna, Executive Director of the Global Forum for Media Development, 'Among the major results of the meeting was the identification of priorities

and the development of draft action plans to support Yemeni media, and with a possible timeline for action.' In addition, a network of international experts was established to provide all possible forms of assistance.

'We are committed to do our best to cooperate with all parties to support the rights of Yemeni journalists to have secure and safe working conditions,' added Monir Zaarour, IFJ Coordinator in the Arab World and the Middle East.

The action plan developed by the Yemeni journalists with the support of international media support groups focuses on four priorities: reinforcing the safety of journalists and supporting journalists in need, creating alternative platforms of communication, respecting ethical and professional standards, and strengthening the capacities of the trade unions and media groups in supporting journalists in Yemen.

'The fact that journalists from different backgrounds and media outlets were able to find common grounds on issues such as safety, professionalism and advocacy is a positive development which we hope will also help the media in promoting peace and dialogue in Yemen,' said Marion Desmurger, Senior Programme Assistant for Communication and Information at the UNESCO Office for the GCC Gulf Coordination Council and Yemen.

SHADHA HOTTAM, YEMENI JOURNALIST

Interview

“Journalists become the story when they are abducted, tortured and murdered.”

Shadha Hottam is a freelance journalist based in Sana’a. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in broadcast journalism from Sana’a University. She was a presenter for the radio station Yemen Shabab where she worked on youth programmes until the privately-run radio station was taken over by rebel groups in October 2014. Since May 2015, Shadha has worked as a freelance investigative journalist and has written for several outlets including with the Amman-based Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ). Shadha, a strong advocate for women’s rights and gender equality in and through the media, tells us more about her experience as a young journalist in the war-torn Yemen.



Q. Why did you choose to become a journalist?

My first job in the media was at a radio station in Sana’a. I got interested in investigative journalism. When I started working in the field, conducting interviews and reporting news and information, I truly felt that a journalist is the person with the strongest capacity and power to really change society. As radio presenter you also have the capacity to change society but not as much as a journalist does, because journalists cover and investigate a whole story based on what they experience, feel and see in the field. They are also able to voice the concerns and opinions of the people they meet.

Q. How would you describe the media in Yemen during the past five years?

In the aftermath of the Arab spring in 2011, the situation did not evolve as positively as we thought it would.

There was a lot of hope but unfortunately, in 2012 and 2013, the situation worsened for the press though there were fewer violations against journalists and media workers. It got even worse in 2014. In 2015, obviously the whole media landscape in Yemen was completely destroyed and there were only a few journalists left to continue to report.

Q. Can you describe what the situation is like now during the conflict?

Sadly, we no longer have [free] media in Yemen. Any type of journalism at the moment, be it reporting the news for a TV or radio station or writing for a newspaper, is very difficult. Currently, there are two different parties in Yemen, and each broadcasts content that is in line with its policy and direction. When citizens watch local and international TV channels, they find that each channel

has a certain policy, political message and propaganda. Right now, we definitely lack free media that represents citizens and provide fair and impartial information.

Q. What kind of support do journalists need in Yemen?

Yemeni journalists lack awareness and information on safety procedures, they should learn how to protect themselves before going out in the field.

Generally, journalists go to the field to report a story, but in Yemen, they end up becoming the story as they might be abducted, tortured or even killed. So journalists in Yemen definitely need support to reinforce their knowledge of safety measures and learn how to better protect themselves before going out in the field.

Q. What do you think is the role of journalists in humanitarian crises? How did you manage to continue reporting news under the conflict in Yemen?

During wars and disasters, journalists are caught up in the events like everyone else. They need to be creative when it comes to informing citizens how they can access aid such as food, water or shelter; but they also need to be creative in liaising with local or international relief organizations to share with them information about how to deliver aid to people and respond to their needs, based on their interviews with people affected by the crisis. Yemen is going through a very hard time right now, but despite being subject to very high risks, journalists continue to perform their duties. In such a context, their work depends on their decisions to take risks and their individual efforts most of the time.

Q. Can you tell us more about the training you recently participated in about Lifeline programming and reporting humanitarian information? Why is it important in the Yemeni context?

This type of training is very important for Yemeni journalists. I am not exaggerating when I say that our understanding of the media in the Arab world is only news and politics. Any other content is not considered to be journalism. But that's what the training was about: showing us that journalists also play a key role in helping people, by catering to the information needs of war victims. We learned how to best send our message to ensure it is helpful to people, providing people in Yemen with solutions to help them survive and stay safe. I really hope that media outlets in Yemen stop being so politicized and start paying more attention to humans and to the suffering of the population during the conflict.

The training also highlighted the importance of freelance journalists. It taught us that, in the context of a crisis, we don't necessarily have to work for a specific media outlet to continue to be a journalist and report information. Since in Yemen many different independent media outlets that represent ordinary citizens have closed down, it is even more fundamental for freelance journalists to continue to play a that role and deliver objective and crucial information to help the affected communities.

Q. How do you think humanitarian organizations and journalists can work together?

The humanitarian organizations here in Yemen are quite weak, not because of the organization itself but because

of the situation. No one can fully understand the situation in Yemen, only the people who are living it. It is very important for a Yemeni journalist or citizen to acknowledge and share information about their difficult environment. As there aren't many relief organizations working in Yemen, especially in certain remote areas due to the deteriorating situation, Yemeni journalists have a central role to play in connecting the victims of war and the communities affected by the crisis with the humanitarian organizations which do not necessarily have direct access to people. It's crucial that a close relationship exist between journalists and relief organizations for the situation to improve and change

Q. What are the difficulties that journalists face in Yemen?

First of all, when people see a journalist holding a camera, they get frightened. This is mainly due to media outlets in the past which promoted sensationalism or 'yellow journalism' as it is often called. We really need to strengthen the relationship and rebuild trust between society and the media, especially journalists.

The second challenge that we face is the cultural one, mostly regarding the representation of women in the media and covering women's issues. Because of culture, it is hard for journalists who are men to interview women. Another challenge we face in Yemen is the lack of women journalists reporting on the situation and the suffering of Yemeni women all across the country. We definitely need more women journalists in the media sector because it is important to show both sides.



CREDITS

Under the supervision of the Freedom of Expression Section of the Communication and Information Sector at UNESCO, UNESCO Cluster office in Rabat and the cooperation of the UNESCO offices in Beirut, Doha, Juba, Libya/Tunis.

Editorial Team

Khalid Aoutail, Rim Baji, Andrea Cairola, Maryem Chlal, Ma'aly Hazzaz and Tarja Turtia.

Design and Layout

Hamid Boubghy

Printing

AZ Editions - Rabat



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Communication
and Information sector

7, Place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP
France
www.unesco.org