



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Communication and  
Information Sector

# Under the Spotlight

*Promoting Freedom of Expression and Media Development*







## UNESCO-NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL (NRC):

A partnership that promotes freedom of expression and enhances the safety of journalists

Since 2010, cooperation between UNESCO and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has served to advance freedom of expression and foster a safe environment for journalists to undertake their work, particularly in countries undergoing conflict, post-conflict and post-disaster situations. This partnership materialized through NORCAP, NRC's expert deployment capacity, which is funded by the Norwegian Government.

NORCAP collaborates with international organizations and national stakeholders to find common solutions and improve coordination, rapidly deploying experienced personnel in support of partners' capacities and effectiveness in the humanitarian, development and peace-building sectors. It is a facilitator of key support to UN Agencies, including UNESCO. Since 2019, the deployments focused on the safety of journalists have been placed under the portfolio of the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights (NORDEM), hosted by NORCAP and supported by the Government of Norway through the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Norwegian Refugee Council has deployed communication and information experts to UNESCO in countries such as Ethiopia (Liaison Office to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa), Pakistan, Haiti, Kenya (Regional Office for Eastern Africa), Lebanon (for work focused in Syria), Liberia, Libya, Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan.

Below are the testimonies of three of these NORCAP/NORDEM secondees, who have made important contributions to UNESCO's mandate in the field of freedom of expression and media development, including by advancing the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.



### Lydia Gachungi

Currently on a NORDEM Secondment as Regional Adviser on Safety of Journalists based at the UNESCO Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Lydia has played a key role in the coordination of impactful actions. Among them was the main celebration of World Press Freedom Day in early May 2019, co-hosted by UNESCO, the Ethiopian Government and the African Union and bringing together close to 2,000 participants from countries across the globe, representing CSOs, the media community, and public entities.

Her current deployment aims to support African Union Member States in integrating and implementing a freedom of expression programme with a special focus on the safety of journalists in the context of democracy, good governance and as human right. The position entails an advisory role, coordination and provision of technical/expertise to advance UNESCO's safety of journalists work in African Union Member States and within the framework of the African Union - UN Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM-Africa), particularly Cluster 8 (Advocacy, Communication and information) and Cluster 9 (Governance, Peace and Security).

Lydia has worked in countries in conflict and relatively at peace, having previously been seconded to the UNESCO Office for Eastern Africa, in Nairobi, Kenya – as Regional Communications Expert on Safety of Journalists and Media Development – as well as to the UNESCO Office in Juba, South Sudan, where she managed the UNESCO Communication and Information Programme. In doing so, she supported the enactment media laws and the coordination of media sector in the country.

Before being deployed under NORCAP, she had been based in the Southern Africa Region, where she coordinated UNESCO's Communication and Information Programme in Angola, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland.

### **Q: Do you find that your Secondment to UNESCO Offices in different countries in Africa has made a difference?**

Yes. The overall goal of my deployment to UNESCO has been to contribute to the creation of a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, by supporting the Organization's programme aimed at promoting an enabling environment for freedom of expression, press freedom and journalistic safety in the region. There is no doubt that my deployment has helped UNESCO take the lead in significantly putting press freedom and the safety of journalists on the national, regional and international agenda, through a multistakeholder approach and the establishment of frameworks for coordination and collaboration at different levels. This has also been reflected at national levels through mechanisms to address the related issues based on the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

My deployment has also succeeded in contributing to create national and regional awareness about issues pertaining to media legislation and, more directly, regarding the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity in Eastern Africa – for example through the support lent to the review of the 2016 Somalia Media Law.

### **Q: How do partnerships like the one with the Norwegian Refugee Council support UNESCO, and what impact do they have, on the host countries and on UNESCO?**

Even though the state has the prime responsibility of guaranteeing the safety of journalists, and despite the fact that the media are key and important partners in building an inclusive society, in many African countries there is no national mechanism nor coordination platforms within governmental structures to comprehensively address concerns regarding violations of media freedoms.

At continental level, my deployment has strengthened UNESCO's working relationship with the African Union and media development partners, ensuring that the safety of journalists' agenda is prioritized within the AU's human rights mechanisms and in the framework of UN joint programming cycles. UNESCO's objective to promote freedom of expression in Member States has therefore been advanced by supporting the establishment of regional frameworks and approaches that later cascaded at national level.

In addition, crimes against journalists are multifaceted and cannot be addressed by a single institution. My deployment has served to raise awareness, among UNESCO Members States in Africa, about the need to address concerns pertaining to the safety of journalists comprehensively, through the creation of coordination platforms that identify all relevant needs and mobilize partners.

At continental level, it was through my deployment that, for example, the participation of the Head of the African Governance Architecture Secretariat and Senior Expert on

Human Rights at the African Union was facilitated at the UNESCO global conference to mark World Press Freedom Day in 2018. In this context, and during a parallel session on national mechanisms for safety of journalists in Africa, the AU Representative announced that an AU Safety of Journalists Working Group had been approved by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Furthermore, he stated that the African Union's Peace and Security Council would also provide a platform for key media bodies in Africa and partners like UNESCO to address safety of journalists concerns. He also explained that the AU Annual Governance Report would address the issue of safety of journalists, and that a new section on safety of journalists was proposed for inclusion in the Africa Peer Review Mechanisms.

All this goes to show that, under these platforms that are being established by the AU, and leveraging on UNESCO's comparative advantage as the UN lead agency for freedom of expression, UNESCO has played a critical role in mobilizing African media stakeholders and facilitating coordinated efforts to promote the safety of journalists in the continent.

**Q: What challenges are more prevalent in your work, and how can they be overcome?**

One major challenge is the fact that most Member States have not prioritized the safety of journalists as a key concern that should be addressed comprehensively, in spite of the increased cases of media rights' violations that affect the capacity of the media to promote good governance and address developmental and humanitarian challenges. These challenges also include the lack of timely and free flowing information that can save lives and can help tackle corruption in public and private institutions. Addressing these matters entails ensuring that governments are fully involved in designing, planning and implementing programmes that address issues related to the safety of journalists at the national regional and global level.

Secondly, national stakeholders are often competing for limited funding. This hinders their will to coordinate and create synergies in addressing safety of journalists' concerns. This also means that a significant amount of time has to be dedicated to networking and contributing to proposals and concept notes for resource mobilization, to ensure that partners' programmes on the safety of journalists are supported and that the relevant needs are tackled comprehensively. UNESCO can help address this by leveraging its convening power, to support media stakeholders at national and regional levels in establishing coordination mechanisms such as clusters or sectoral working groups that can carry out joint interventions.

Thirdly, UNESCO's mandate is very wide but the Organization has relatively few staff. In this regard, development partners' support materializing through the deployment of experts to UNESCO, for instance through NORCAP, is very important. In relation to this challenge, UNESCO's Communication

and Information Programme could explore the possibility of furthering its existing relationship with NORCAP to benefit from the Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap) and the Norwegian Resource Bank for Human Rights and Democratisation (NORDEM), among other programmes.

**Q: Which would you count among the major accomplishments of your work?**

Among the accomplishments, I would count my on the ground coordination that contributed to the great success of co-hosting with the African Union and UNECA the 2019 World Press Freedom Day Global conference, the November 2018 Interregional Forum on Safety of Journalists focusing on duty bearers, and the establishment of the Kenya Media Sector Working Group. There is also the organization of the Eastern Africa Conference that led to the Nairobi Declaration, which set up the framework for the establishment of national coordination mechanisms for safety of journalists in Eastern Africa. There was also my support to the Uganda National Coordination Committee for Safety of Journalists that was rolled-out in April 2018, paving the way for multiple local and UN agencies to discuss the pertinent related issues. Also during my deployment, the Somalia Media Law was reviewed and the framework for setting-up the Somalia Media Dialogue forum was launched in March 2018. Moreover, the Rwanda Police curriculum was reviewed to incorporate units on freedom of expression, access to information and the safety of journalists.

As previously mentioned, it was also under an effort that I contributed to coordinate that it was announced that a safety of journalists section would be included in the African Peer Review Mechanisms (APRM). This has further been reaffirmed during the APRM Secretariat's meeting held in Pretoria on 20-21 May 2019, which I took part in. Furthermore, I also helped national media partners from Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland and Ethiopia to prepare proposals that received support from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

**Q: How does the UNESCO mandate under which you have been seconded tally with your previous work?**

I have worked with UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector (CI) for 20 years, and the secondments to UNESCO's Juba Office, the Regional Office for Eastern Africa (in Nairobi) and the UNESCO Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA (in Addis Ababa) supported the continuity of my work and its special focus on the safety of journalists. In turn, the work I carried-out during my deployment under NORCAP/NORDEM also benefitted from my previous experience, having had coordinated UNESCO's CI Programme in Southern Africa.



### John Bosco Mayiga

From January 2018 to August 2018, John Bosco Mayiga was seconded by NORCAP to UNESCO's Regional Office for Eastern Africa, in Nairobi, to facilitate the provision of strategic leadership to UNESCO's communication and information work in Somalia. He played an instrumental role in the planning, coordination and implementation of initiatives, and helped increase UNESCO's visibility in UN and development partners' platforms – thus strengthening the Organization's position as the UN lead agency on freedom of expression, access to information and media development.

#### **Q: When did you start your work with UNESCO and what did you do before that?**

I started working for UNESCO's Regional Office in Eastern Africa as Communication and Information Programme Co-coordinator in January 2018. Before that, I worked as Media Advisor with UNDP in Rwanda, providing technical support to the media sector reform initiatives that were spearheaded by this UN Agency. In between, I have also been pursuing doctoral studies and doing graduate teaching assistantships in the field of media, information and communications at the University of Western Ontario in Canada. My formative years in media development were in Uganda, where I launched and implemented media policy and media development projects at the Uganda Media Development Foundation.

#### **Q: What has been the contribution of the UNESCO-NRC partnership in Somalia?**

The UNESCO-NRC partnership focused on supporting the Federal Government of Somalia and other key media stakeholders, such as media associations, to enhance an enabling environment for the promotion of freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. This focus was based on Somalia's unique circumstances, as a country ravaged by cycles of conflict but at the same time with a strong resilient

spirit for recovery. In this context, journalism has become one of the single most affected occupations, with Somalia recording one of the highest numbers of journalists killed in the course of performing their duty. The UNESCO-NRC partnership therefore provided strategic resources – in terms of ideas, competencies, and approaches – to support Somalia's recovery processes, particularly in the area of media and communications.

#### **Q: What did your deployment focus on?**

My deployment focused on providing the necessary technical support to communication and information initiatives that contribute to upholding and promoting freedom of expression, media freedom and the safety of journalists, within the mandate of UNESCO's Regional Office for Eastern Africa, which is based in Nairobi. This entailed initiating appropriate programmes and, more importantly, creating strategic partnerships involving multiple stakeholders in order to create a broader coalition for freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. We therefore engaged such significant actors as judges, prosecutors, security forces and lawyers, sensitizing them about the value of freedom of expression and safety of journalists, and mobilizing them to be part of a wider advocacy effort in support of a freer and safer environment for journalists in Somalia. One of the key outcomes was the establishment of the National Mechanism for Safety of Journalists in Somalia, which is a multistakeholder platform to address the security and safety of journalists within the spirit of the UN Plan of Action for Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Another outcome was the successful engagement of Somali judicial actors to promote freedom of expression and safety of journalists, when I organized the very first training of Somali judges and prosecutors on freedom of expression. It was a well-received intervention that was endorsed by the Chief Justice of Somalia.

#### **Q: What has been an important lesson emerging from this partnership?**

An important lesson of the UNESCO-NRC partnership is that global challenges, both humanitarian and developmental, are getting more and more complex for any single actor to be able to contend with alone. Partnership arrangements that mobilize comparative competencies of various stakeholders, to provide common solutions to global challenges, seem to be the most effective response to the complexity of said challenges. Various skills, approaches, financial abilities, and experiences are all meaningful only if they are jointly mobilized and leveraged to support common responses to the challenges we face at a global scale.

#### **Q: How would you qualify your experience? Would you call it fruitful?**

My experience was enriching, but also challenging. Given the operating conditions in Somalia, one has to lower the level of expectations in terms of outcomes and the pace of doing things. But I am very satisfied with the fact we made significant progress under these circumstances. In summary,

my experience has been fruitful and I am looking forward to further my engagement in contributing to greater freedom of expression, and in supporting a freer and safer environment for journalists in Somalia.



## Yara Sharif

Yara Sharif has 19 years of experience in the field of communications, having served different UN agencies. She was previously the Spokesperson at the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria in Geneva, and has been working on the Syrian conflict since the war first erupted in 2011- out of regional hubs like Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon – focusing on issues related to refugees’ human rights and women’s participation in peace-building and peace negotiations. She is currently based at the UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut, deployed by NRC to implement the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity with a focus on Syria.

### **Q: What mechanisms do you deploy to help implement the UN plan of Action in regards to Syria, considering the conflict situation in the country?**

We are constantly monitoring what is happening in Syria and evaluating how it affects our efforts. Our work plans are always flexible in order to accommodate any sudden changes, and if it is not possible to implement an activity due to the difficulties imposed by the context, we come up with alternative plans or remedial measures.

### **Q: Who are the stakeholders that UNESCO’s Communication and Information Sector reaches out to, in regards to its work focused on Syria?**

Media organizations, universities (media and journalism faculties), journalists and other media actors, policy makers, law enforcement officials and other governmental stakeholders.

### **Q: What are the biggest challenges and how do you surmount them?**

The conflict in itself is a major challenge while developing work plans, because constant adjustments are a must, based on what is happening at the conflict front.

### **Q: Have there been accomplishments since you have been seconded to help Syrian journalists?**

A major achievement was the development of the Safety of Journalists curriculum with the Media faculty at the University of Damascus, to be taught starting the fall semester of 2019. Another accomplishment was facilitating the participation of three media students from the University of Damascus at the international celebration of World Press Freedom Day at the African Union in Addis Ababa in 2019. Conceived as part of UNESCO’s broader advocacy efforts, this participation in an international forum on freedom of expression was the first of its kind for these faculty students. In parallel, work is underway to develop a strategy for the safety of journalists strategy, based on UNESCO’s Journalist Safety Indicators (JSI). To this effect, focus group meetings were organized with diverse media actors to explore the safety challenges that they are facing.



## COUNTERING HATE SPEECH and incitement to conflict and violence

### LIBYA

UNESCO's role is very important; it 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."

This assessment of UNESCO, made by General Manager of Libya Channel Nabeel Al-Shibani, explains why UNESCO has been successfully exerting efforts to raise awareness about the role and responsibilities of media, in Libya and elsewhere, particularly in times of conflict, when challenges and shortcomings are often difficult to surmount and media professionals' capacity needs to be enhanced to enable them to report in a proficient, conflict-sensitive manner that contributes to reconciliation and peace building.

Soon after militias seized control of Tripoli in July 2014, conflict, and general instability spread throughout the country and deeply affected the ability of Libyan journalists to carry out their work on the ground inside and outside Libya. That started with limitations in terms of event coverage, but later severely lowered the quality of news coverage and access to information, as well as the level of freedom of expression within the Libyan community.

An internal reprogramming exercise in August 2014 made necessary by the changing context of the country indicated that Libyan media were likely to succumb to rapid polarization and become a major source of hate speech/incitement to violence.

In reorienting the programme to a changed reality in-country, and one that saw the international community now operating from neighboring Tunisia, UNESCO utilized the Media Development Indicator (MDI) Survey that was carried out in late 2013-early 2014 with support from Sweden, and the Finnish-funded journalism curricula review (undertaken during the same period), which found that Libyan journalists as a whole lacked any grounding in basic professional and ethical standards, were not getting this in "pre-service" training in university and in-service trainings, including those delivered by international partners, were almost completely technically ori-



ented, and that management was no better, with most Libya media managers and editors lacking any prior background in journalism.

The implication was clear: Libyan media would be ripe for polarization and hate speech. Thus, while the trend among international partners was to switch to journalism safety, UNESCO made the strategic decision to tackle what it determined would be the greater danger -- hate speech --for, in addition to the political and security challenges facing Libyan journalists, the lack of a common understanding of basic journalistic principles and the lack of a code of ethics would act as a brake on any reconciliation effort, and actively deepen social fragmentation.

As a result, by September 2014, UNESCO had recalibrated its media development programming in the country to introduce basic ethical and professional journalism standards, seeking to identify and then target a core group of practitioners who could function as role models for their peers. The group would include owners and senior managers of media outlets, in addition to practicing journalists. The soundness of this stance was confirmed when the first reconciliation meetings, convened by then Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya Bernardino Leon in early 2015, identified efforts to combat hate speech as crucial to confidence-building measures.

In its endeavor to counter hate speech, often visible in countries in conflict, UNESCO realizes that there is a very thin line to be treaded, one that media and governments could make elastic to suit their purpose. In Libya, taking the lead, while the civil conflict was raging, UNESCO reached out to influential media managers and owners of media outlets, providing them the opportunity to discuss the role and responsibilities of media during times of conflict.

The first key meeting took place in Madrid in July 2015, creating a platform where influential executives and owners of media outlets could discuss in depth the role and responsibilities of media during times of conflict.

The participants acknowledged the diversity of political viewpoints among them, yet were able to frankly acknowledge, and assert, their political differences, reached the realization that they faced common challenges, identified key shortcomings and gaps in capacity and, more importantly, agreed on essential ethical principles and standards to incorporate in their respective outlets and ended up signing 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 international standards of professional and ethical reporting at all times in their work.

That was followed by a second meeting, in October 2015, attended by operations-level management, which 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 outlined actions



to be taken to determine clear editorial and right-to-reply policies.

Finally, in June 2016 at Madrid III, UNESCO’s efforts with both managers and journalists were effectively merged. Taking into account the continued insecurity on the ground and the need to reinforce social cohesion, participating Libyan managers and journalists elaborated an Action Plan which listed priorities for media reform in Libya until early 2017.

Once work had begun in earnest to create space through the engagement with media owners, supporting activities for journalists and media professionals began. Activities conducted under the SIDA funds specifically engaged the journalists at three different levels. First, they were introduced to international frameworks and measures against impunity in early May 2015. Then, UNESCO convened a number of influential journalists working in outlets inside the country as well as in the region for practical training on basic standards of reporting, a course conducted in a Tunisian media training centre, which improved the participants’ professional competencies and lessened the incitement to violence issue by exposing them to best practices. Finally, in June 2015, UNESCO brought together key members of the Libya Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) looking at placing human rights within the draft constitution with media professionals to engage in constructive discussions while receiving training on human rights and freedom of expression, and best practices to incorporate such rights into the constitution.

**SYRIA** While political and security conflicts make work difficult or sometimes even impossible, the need for support becomes more imperative. In its endeavors to counter hate speech in media, UNESCO has identified another country with an urgent need for support, Syria.

Syria remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to practice journalism. In Syria, the three main newspapers are state run, yet a number of newspapers and magazines were also launched by independent media or opposition activists. The same

applies to satellite TV, radio, and online media. Within this wide media landscape, and due to the various powers controlling the country, media content has reflected various degrees of hate speech and incitement to violence.

UNESCO, believing in the role media can play in building peace and democracy, rather than inciting to violence and extremism, launched in 2017, in partnership with the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), a project supporting the creation of a Hate Speech Observatory that aims at monitoring hate speech in Syrian media, and influencing Syrian media owners and journalists to reduce their use of hate speech and consequently diminish its destructive impact on the Syrian society.

“SCM believes in the major role of Syrian media in providing first-hand information on Syria and its ability to influence local and international views and prejudices, and this is where the importance of this project comes from. Providing a context where both technical support and accountability criteria and measures are provided can bring us one step closer to limiting hate speech and incitement to violence,” said head of Media and Freedoms Unit at SCM, Hunadah Al Hariri.

The three-phase project came a long way in 2017 with the creation of the first ever pool of Syrian media monitors. Intensive training, based on UNESCO’s existing tools and technical expertise, and using current examples of Syrian media content as case studies equipped the new monitoring team for the following phase; a first-of-its-kind monitoring of hate speech in Syrian media.

A carefully tailored monitoring methodology was completed in 2017, and a regional technical committee was established to oversee the project implementation and provide guidance along the way.

Phase two of the project, took place in 2018, with the launch of an intensive monitoring covering both state and independent media. Just like the project in Libya, this will be followed by a national dialogue bringing together media representatives from different sides to discuss the monitoring results and the best way forward.

While the impact of the project cannot be assessed at this

early stage, the aspired change it aims at effecting, whether in the short or long term, will have a significant influence on the role of media in peace building in the country.

In the meantime, further actions in 2018 will reinforce UNESCO’s work in Syria towards supporting independent media and freedom of expression for a democratic transition.

## SOUTH SUDAN

Another country in turmoil, South Sudan poses numerous challenges to media practitioners. Although the legal framework is in place, current practices and the media environment are still challenging and thus create many limitations. The country’s failing economy and the current conflict and dire humanitarian situation renders the government incapable, or unwilling, to fund media development initiatives.

UNESCO identified hate speech, as one of the areas that need immediate support. With funding from Sweden/Sida, UNESCO office in Juba initiated a national dialogue with different stakeholders in 2017, identifying a role for each partner, looking into different aspects of this phenomenon and how it can be stopped from spreading and inciting further violence in the country.

Media should provide information, promote peace, and not resort to hate speech. They should report facts impartially to avoid being wrongly labeled -- especially now when “fake news” is the buzz word even in advanced democracies to discredit news -- or being censored, as is often the case. So far, throughout the past year, and during the first phase of the project, media and civil society organizations have showed utmost commitment to play a central role in peacebuilding by remaining independent, objective, and neutral in order to help defuse tension, promote dialogue and counter hate speech. The second phase, to be funded by the new Sida funding, will further involve local and national partners, through a number of approaches tailored specifically to the context of the country and using UNESCO’s guidelines and expertise to reinforce media’s role as a catalyst of peace and mutual understanding.





## From international to national: UNESCO's grassroots approach to promoting safety of journalists

“To ensure the safety of journalists and protect freedom of expression, we need to guarantee the “3 Ps” at the local level through joint efforts by civil society, police and the judicial system,” affirmed the Chief of Freedom of Expression Section at UNESCO, Sylvie Coudray. The “3 Ps” refer to the Prevention (of attacks against journalists), Protection (of threatened media workers), and Prosecution (of those that are responsible for crimes against journalist).

But how can this general principle be put in practice and eventually impact at local level? UNESCO, as a specialized intergovernmental organization, is leading the way towards a world where media professionals could carry out their job without fear of intimidation or death. It does that side by side with specialized NGOs and media organizations. This challenge implies advocating for a strong normative framework on the safety of journalists, working to enhance awareness of journalists' safety and the issue of impunity, reinforcing the monitoring role within the framework of the SDGs, empowering key institutions in society on the safety of journalists through capacity building, helping academic research on the safety of journalists and creating new coalitions to promote journalists' safety.

Still, since 2008, when UNESCO's Director General started presenting a biennial report on "The Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity" to the Intergovernmental

Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the numbers have given reason for serious worry.

In 2015 alone, 115 journalists were killed, almost twice as many as in previous years. More recently, according to the UNESCO DG report, in 2016-2017, UNESCO recorded the killings of 182 journalists.

To address this alarming trend, UNESCO adopted a number of measures to strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms designed to ensure the safety of journalists in both conflict and non-conflict areas. As the United Nations specialized agency with a mandate to 'promote the free flow of ideas by word and image', UNESCO has been an important player in the defence of freedom of expression through the promotion of the safety of journalists and the fight against impunity. However, creating a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers needs extensive efforts by a variety of national, regional and international actors. This posed a pressing need for the various UN agencies, funds and programmes to develop a single, strategic and harmonized approach to the issue of the safety of journalists and the impunity of perpetrators of crimes against them, thus triggering the development of a “UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity”; a worldwide framework that aims to



coordinate and upscale the actions of international, regional and national stakeholders to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers, both in conflict and non-conflict situations.

The plan seeks to assist countries to develop legislations and mechanisms favourable to freedom of expression and information, and supports their efforts to implement existing international rules and principles. Underlying it is the recognition that ensuring safety is not something that any single actor working alone can secure – not an individual journalist, not the media as a whole, not even governments. A joint effort is needed to raise the political will across all sectors of society to deter attacks and end impunity, and to raise the capacity of all to translate the will into practical impact.

Journalists and media professionals perform a critical role, reporting news and information to the public that can bring misdeeds to light, make public institutions accountable and contribute to the creation of more just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

The extent of the risks faced by journalists is demonstrated by the 827 killings recorded by UNESCO over the course of 10 years. Added to these deaths are countless other violations endured by journalists, which include kidnappings, arbitrary detention, torture, intimidation and harassment, both offline and online, and seizure or destruction of material.

UNESCO cooperates with governments, media houses, professional associations and NGOs in conducting awareness-raising campaigns on a wide range of issues, such as existing international instruments and conventions, the growing dangers posed by emerging threats to media professionals, including by non-state actors, and the various existing practical guides on the safety of journalists.

One such guide published by UNESCO is the "Model Course on Safety of Journalists - A Guide for Journalism Teachers in the Arab States". Developed in partnership with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the

publication responds in particular to the difficult situation of many media professionals working in the Arab region, which registered the highest number of journalists' killings according to the DG report – 78 deaths – in 2014-2015. The numbers went down to 24 in 2017, but media professionals are still far from safe when carrying out their duties.

This resource publication encourages journalism education institutions to integrate into their curricula courses relevant to the safety of journalists and impunity. It builds upon the UNESCO Model Curricula for Journalism Education developed in 2007, as well as on subsequent updates in 2013 and 2015 that respond to particular emerging issues, including those relating to digital safety for journalists, gender and human trafficking.

The course can make a difference between life and death, by instilling in young future journalists the capacity to better assess risks and to protect themselves. It also creates the possibility of turning potential victims into frontline actors, and advocates to end to impunity for crimes committed against media workers.

Sixteen universities in the region expressed readiness to

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*Managing Director of Women in the Media Platform in Rwanda Regine Akalikumathua*

be part of the project and after two years of meetings and consultations, the model course was validated, printed and distributed. Different universities already introduced the course into their curricula (Jordan, Palestine, Tunis and Lebanon) and now the UNESCO Beirut office is in discussion with the Damascus University for the same purpose.

An example of cooperation such as suggested in the UNESCO Plan of Action is a project supported by The Netherlands, aiming at Building and Strengthening National Mechanisms for the Safety of Journalists. Launched in 2017, the project has seen national initiatives in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and regional ones in Latin America and East Africa grow and engage governments and local authorities, journalists and media houses, as well as civil

society, to devise local actions to protect journalists.

In Iraq, UNESCO together with the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate (IJS), and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), have been advocating for the establishment of a national mechanism in support of freedom of expression. Such a mechanism would, according to the Director of the UNESCO Iraq Office, Louise Haxthausen "enable more swift and effective investigations of crimes against journalists".

The existing law in Iraq is perceived by independent observers and media professionals' representatives as curtailing freedom of expression, under one guise or another. Civil society activists then advocate for a law which, while contributing to the stability of the country, guarantees the public's constitutional rights for the long-term.

The current unstable security situation should not be used to justify a "bad law" (i.e. non-compliant with international standards) that Iraqis would have to live under for many years, civil society activist Yasser al-Salem says.

"The government -he added- are keen to move forward towards stable security. But, security precautions are not a reason to undermine the values of democracy."

A grassroots approach to promote safety of journalist, requires us to shed light on all these stories of journalists who have been silenced. For this purpose, in Latin America, an online platform on the stories of the crimes against journalists was launched in April 2018 in partnership with the Press and Society Institute (IPYS), presenting an investigative series on crimes against journalists in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala and Peru.

Communication and Information Adviser at UNESCO/Montevideo Guilherme Canela elucidated: "Telling these stories is essential for the authorities to be accountable for what is being done to prevent, protect and seek justice, but the very fact of telling the stories is in itself a contribution in the fight against impunity."

In East Africa advocating for the promotion of safety of journalists required triggering national dialogues among State-actors and CSO in a number of countries and a commitment to the Plan of Action. The process resulted in the production and endorsement of the "Nairobi Declaration" in a conference held in November 2017, which called on governments to establish national mechanisms for the safety of journalists in Eastern Africa countries.

Managing Director of Women in the Media Platform in Rwanda Regine Akalikumathua said: "The fact that we had government representatives, journalists and NGOs from Rwanda in attendance [at the Nairobi conference] meant that we can now work together to make policies that protect journalists in our home country."

Since the 2017 conference in Nairobi, on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI), Rwanda has committed to the process



Director of the UNESCO Iraq Office, Louise Haxthausen

by nominating a government focal point on the safety of journalists.

In another positive step towards the implementation of the Plan of Action, the African Union, UNESCO and the Federation of African Journalists proposed, in May 2018, an African Union Working Group for Safety of Journalists to better coordinate support and monitor the progress of member states in implementing the action plan through national mechanisms.

One of the most dangerous countries for journalists is Afghanistan, which has seen a number of setbacks regarding journalists' safety - 10 journalists were killed almost simultaneously on April 30, 2018. The UNESCO Kabul Office and local partners such as the Afghanistan Journalists Safety Committee have been working, through a UNESCO-supported project, with the Afghan authorities who agreed to tackle the issue through a national monitoring and reporting mechanism.

## Digital security

"Telling these stories is essential for the authorities to be accountable for what is being done to prevent, protect and seek justice, but the very fact of telling the stories is in itself a contribution in the fight against impunity."

*Communication and Information  
Adviser at UNESCO/Montevideo  
Guilherme Canela*

Safety of journalists is a fundamental component of an enabling environment for media freedom. UNESCO has over two decades of experience in providing technical advice on legal, regulatory, policy and other key issues related to promoting an independent, pluralist, professional and diverse media sector. Yet, another development emerges as risk prone, and UNESCO has to act in that direction as well.

The advent of the digital sphere has brought unprecedented opportunities for freedom of expression and the practice of journalism more broadly, but the digital sphere is evolving and surveillance, data storage capabilities and digital attack technologies are becoming more sophisticated, less expensive and more pervasive, making journalists increasingly vulnerable to digital attacks from both state and non-state actors.

Supporting journalists in integrating digital security measures is essential for their own safety and for safeguarding freedom of expression. Across all regions, the trend that grants security forces greater powers of surveillance and tracking appears to be strengthening, raising questions of independent oversight and proportionate actions vis-à-vis the surveillance of journalists and their sources.

Digital security is imperative not only for individual journalists, but also for the protection of their sources and their colleagues in the field. This is particularly critical for investigative reporters, citizen-journalists, journalists in distress, freelancers and those less aware of the digital threats to privacy and source protection, especially in view of the fact that there have been numerous cases across all regions, and throughout democratic and other societies, of both state and non-state actors using malware to spy on journalists and activists.

In a number of countries across several regions, broadly defined legislative acts have been seen by some as working to silence digital dissent, prosecute whistle blowers and expand arbitrary surveillance across multiple digital platforms. Across all regions, this trend that grants security

forces greater powers of surveillance and tracking appears to be strengthening, raising questions of independent oversight and proportionate actions vis-à-vis the surveillance of journalists and their sources.

To tackle this challenge UNESCO has among else developed specific tools such as the publication “Building digital safety for journalism,” already available in three languages.

There will be no safety for journalists till when the perpetrators of attacks against them remain unpursued. Impunity for crimes against journalists prevails, with justice meted out in only one in 10 cases of killing of journalists around the world. To advocate for not dropping these cases, monitor the status of these investigations UNESCO director-general request to its member states for information on the status of judicial inquiries into killings of journalists. In 2017 there was the peek in responsiveness with 74 per cent of member states asked which responded — in varying degrees of detail, compared to 30 per cent in 2013.

These are some examples of progresses in the implementation at national and grassroots level of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists but obviously they are not enough. Journalism remains, an unacceptably dangerous profession across the world. Speaking truth to power, investigating crime and corruption, holding governments to account and reporting from conflict zones often carries the risk of violent retaliation, harassment, arbitrary detention or even death.

This being the case, it will take the political will of all stakeholders, countries, civil society organizations, media employers, journalists and individuals, to ensure that the 3 Ps -- protection, prevention and prosecution -- are guaranteed and that journalists can perform everywhere and any time their duty free of threat.





# UNESCO accompanying democratic reforms in Tunisia

## AN EXCEPTIONAL TRANSITION

The “Arab spring” led to a wave of reforms related to the media sector, both in terms of constitutions and legislations, in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa. For example, guarantees on freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information have been added or strengthened in the constitutions of, inter alia, Morocco and Tunisia.

Often these reforms related to freedom of expression went hand in hand with those concerning elections and the opening of the democratic space. Tunisia is not only the initial trigger of the “Arab Spring” but also one of the most known cases of substantial democratic transition. The process led among else to the creation of an independent electoral authority (Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections –ISIE), along with an independent regulatory system for the media (Haute autorité indépendante de la communication audiovisuelle – HAICA), an independent Access to information authority (Instance Nationale d'accès à l'information - INAI), as well as –very recently- an independent national human rights institution (Instance constitutionnelle des droits de l'homme IDH) complying with international principles.

UNESCO adopts a human rights-based approach in its support and initiatives. It provides a series of linked interventions through its projects, from legal, technical assis-

tance and practical support, which lead to lasting positive change, enabling transparency and accountability reforms.

### NEW CHALLENGES AND RISK OF DILUTING THE ACHIEVEMENTS

However, despite the additional guarantees, press freedom still appears to be at risk in most of the MENA region. While even in countries like Tunisia where advancements were made in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring, setbacks are possible. In fact, seven years after the 2011 revolution, Tunisia continues to face challenges linked to the consolidation of democratic reforms in a climate of economic hardship and lack of safety.

The achievements of the transition include reforms ensuring the enshrinement of universal principles like freedom of expression, gender equality, and the right to access information. Despite these advances, the SNJT reports increasing intimidation and attacks against journalists' right to freedom of expression and information and threats to their safety.

As Neji Bghouri, president of the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) said in April 2017, expressing concern over the decline in media freedom in preceding months, “despite the remarkable progress on the legal guarantees of freedom of expression and media in Tunisia since 2011, we acknowledge more and more deterioration

in practice. There is a real fear of undermining this freedom, and the need for supporting our efforts is now more necessary than before”.

UNESCO's actions, along with those of the rest of the UN family and of national stakeholders, are to strengthen the hard-gained freedoms. Thanks to the project funded by Sweden, UNESCO's promotion of freedom of expression worked on three levels: 1) accompanying the development of a strong legal framework to protect rights and freedoms; 2) empowering independent constitutional bodies (f.e. HAICA, INAI) as well as media self-regulation mechanism; 3) raising public awareness and building capacities of CSOs and journalists.

For example, UNESCO recently contributed to a dialogue among all relevant stakeholders around the reform of the media legislative framework. The stake is high, as constitutional procedures require the country to move from a transitional authority such as the HAICA to a permanent Audio-Visual Communication body (ICA). While national debate is then lively, intersecting with a reform of the audio-visual sector in general, UNESCO's contribution has been in terms of a constant reminder of international standards, including on the pivotal role of an independent, credible and accountable media regulator.

#### ADVOCACY ON INTERNATIONAL DAYS AND PROMOTING THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

On top of technical assistance, UNESCO engages in advocacy on principles at the heart of its mandate on freedom of expression, including commemorations on World Press Freedom Day, the International Day for Universal Access to Information, and the International Day to end Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.

On the occasion of the 2017 IDEI commemoration, the head of Government Mr Youssef Chahed announced that the Tunisian government “will continue to consult with all the professional bodies to develop together, and at best, the media sector in Tunisia” reassuring that “the protection of freedoms is indeed the responsibility of the government and parliament.” The participation of the Head of Government to an activity promoting safety of journalists was also an important political sign in a country in which UNESCO, thanks to funds from Sweden and together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), had also been supporting a safety monitoring mechanism within Tunisian journalists union.

Coordinator of the monitoring unit Khawla Chabbeh says: “UNESCO's support for the work of the monitoring unit enabled us to coach 15 journalists who have been intimidated, prosecuted and harassed professionally. Now they have become able to deal with it, and are more informed and involved in the fight against impunity.”

From March to December 2017, the monitoring unit had systematically recorded, categorized, and analyzed more

than a hundred attacks of different forms (verbal and physical assault, material seizure, harassment). While the collected information is used to put pressure on authorities, it is also utilized by SNJT and press freedom partners for advocacy and issuing press releases regarding some cases. But most importantly, it serves as a basis to conceive and conduct appropriate security training for journalists and bloggers, and more broadly, for security forces and judges.

The momentum of international days, especially the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI), in addition to other advocacy initiatives in the country, showed a clear correlation with the number of attacks recorded by the unit. While 50 attacks were recorded in October 2017, the number went down to 10 in the following month, after the annual celebration of IDEI on November 2.

“Despite the remarkable progress on the legal guarantees of freedom of expression and media in Tunisia since 2011, we acknowledge more and more deterioration in practice. There is a real fear of undermining this freedom, and the need for supporting our efforts is now more necessary than before”

*Neji Bghouri, president of the National Union of Tunisian Journalists*

Further achievements toward a safer media environment in Tunisia include the development of a National Action Plan on Journalists Safety by key national stakeholders, including the SNJT and the President's office, set to include the creation of a specialized national mechanism on safety of journalists.

#### PROMOTING RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Since the beginning of the transition, UNESCO has constantly lent support to the promotion of freedom of information, including the recognition of the Right to Information (RTI) first in a decree, then as a constitutional right (Art. 32 of the new constitution of 2014) and later the adoption of a very progressive RTI law (March 2016).

When the challenge moved from the law-making to its actual implementation, UNESCO accompanied the operationalization of the new RTI law through:

- Supporting the set-up, the start-up and then the reinforcement of the new RTI Authority (Instance nationale d'accès à l'information - INAI).





- Building capacities of officials, CSOs and journalists on how to use the new ATI law.
- Working with the CSOs in raising their awareness and developing coordinated strategies on the use of RTI for achieving their goals.
- Reinforcing coordination between authorities (mainly INAI) and CSOs in identifying priorities and needs and conceiving a participative roadmap for proper implementation of the new law and in setting up a regular mechanism of dialogue and exchange around RTI (still ongoing).
- Fostering national and regional multi-stakeholders dialogues on RTI on the commemoration of the International Day for Universal Access to Information.
- Putting particular focus on youth by supporting the development of an online youth platform and trainings on proactive information disclosure for concerned civil servants (ongoing).
- Supporting the elaboration of the 3rd Open Government Partnership (OGP) national action plan in Tunisia, particularly commitments to build capacities, raise awareness and strengthen coordination among all concerned actors.

In September 2017, on the national celebration of the International Day for the Universal Access to Information, the government took a major step in the implementation of RTI with the public introduction of the recently nine members of the council of the RTI Authority “Instance nationale d'accès à l'information” (INAI).

Also, as a result of UNESCO's work, national stakeholders have agreed to start a participative process to coordinate actions on RTI and identify needs and challenges for the implementation of the new RTI law of 2016. These initiatives raised awareness and, under UNESCO's leadership, increased civil society's engagement with the government.

UNESCO's intervention is complementary to the role of other international and national partners. As President of the parliament's Rights and Freedom Commission Naoufel Jammali stressed, “reliable partners such as UNESCO could assist [improve] the new legal framework governing freedom of expression and media in Tunisia ... be in line with international standards and meet professionals' and citizens' expectations”.

#### GENDER AND MEDIA

Furthermore, UNESCO, with Swedish funding, supported the development of a multi-stakeholder Media and Gender Charter which was elaborated by the HAICA and the SNJT, based on UNESCO's Gender-Sensitive Indications for Media (GSIM) and aimed at promoting equal representation of women in the media and fighting stereotypes.

With co-financing from the EU-funded NET-MED Youth project, UNESCO supported another national initiative aimed at developing the capacities of young journalists on gender-sensitive reporting.

Organized by the Permanent Conference of the Mediterranean Audio-visual Operators (COPEAM) in collaboration with the Arab States Broadcasting Union, the workshops resulted in gender-sensitive media content, including reportages and interviews which serve as good practice for future media coverage focused on women entrepreneurs as a case study.

#### TOWARDS A MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERATE TUNISIAN CITIZENRY

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) was increasingly identified as a set of fundamental skills for youth in the Arab world that enables them to foster equitable access to information and knowledge and promote free, independent and pluralistic media and information systems. Tunisia was no exception of this process, with the proliferation of a wide variety of MIL project support by the INGOs as well as local CSO.

UNESCO then promoted a coordination mechanism on MIL, in order to assure synergies among national and international stakeholders, including CSOs, the ministry of youth, and the Ministry of Education, with the aim of a long-term impact.

By end 2017, these efforts led to the creation of an MIL National Coordination Group for Tunisia that has, so far, produced a mapping report to understand weaknesses and target future actions in the country, while also serving as a model for a regional MIL mapping that is now being pursued in the framework of the NET-MED Youth project.

In parallel, and also jointly with EU-funded NET-MED Youth in Tunisia, the project supported the production of a practical and end-user oriented toolkit on MIL (in French and Arabic), targeting students, youth associations and the young public at large. The toolkit that includes a section for facilitators/trainers, and an accompanying audio-visual material, is set to be piloted through the Ministry of Youth's infrastructure at more than 400 youth centers and clubs.

In Tunisia, so far the multilateral, collective and multi-stakeholder work towards promoting freedom of expression, human rights and more inclusive societies has been relentless and bore fruit. It is when the post-revolutionary energy is extinguished that probably the momentum has to be maintained for hard-earned freedoms not to be lost.



Mr Mohammed Benabdelkader and UNESCO signed a three-year collaboration agreement on joint cooperation for the implementation of the constitutional right of access to information in Morocco

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## UNESCO accompanies Morocco's reform agenda towards a freer media and an increased access to public information

**I**n the wake of the Arab spring, in 2011, Morocco underwent constitutional reforms that enshrined universal principles such as freedom of expression, gender equality, and the right to access information. The constitutional reform was followed by years of national debate culminated with a reform of the media law framework, approved in late 2016, and the introduction of a statutory self-regulatory body for media; the National Press Council (NPC) (Conseil National de la Presse). The reform also includes a commitment to decriminalize press offences, which to be fully met, requires to be reflected also in the Criminal Code.

In addition to the reform of the media legislative framework, another national debate culminated with the approv-

al of a law. In fact, it took more than four years to have the new constitutional principles of the Right to Information (RTI) transformed into a law, in January 2018.

Throughout this reform process, UNESCO's actions, mostly thanks to funding from Sweden/Sida, supported relevant Moroccan stakeholders (government, CSO, legislators) in the implementation of these new constitutional principles, with international standards as a reference.

Attesting to the impact that UNESCO's work has had and its commitment and support to implementing access to information in the country and the region, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government for the Reform of Administration and Public Service Mohamed Ben Abdelkader said: "UNESCO is the only UN organization specialized

in this field, which will enable the Kingdom (of Morocco) to benefit from the expertise of this body in the training of administrative staff, who will work to make information available to citizens."

In parallel, UNESCO has supported a national civil society organization (CSO) network, "Le Réseau Marocain pour le Droit d'Accès à l'Information" (REMDI), in its advocacy efforts.

#### SUPPORTING MEDIA SELF-REGULATION AND DIALOGUE WITH THE JUDICIARY

Having laws in media self-regulation and RTI was a great achievement per se, for instance allowing Morocco to complete its accession to the Open Government Partnership. However the situation is nuanced: major legislative steps have been accomplished, yet the implementation of these laws, the strengthening of the values of freedom of expression, gender and protection of journalists still need to be acted upon at various levels of the society.

UNESCO has since then focused on consolidating the reform process by reinforcing universal standards, developing the capacities of local press freedom stakeholders, and adapting and decentralizing activities within the country.

Since the new media law (90-13) was approved in 2016, it took more than a year for the National Press Council (NPC) to be created. In June 2018, the NPC's 14 members were elected, seven journalists and seven publishers. This represents a significant step forward for the independence of the press as it serves as a self-regulatory body independent from the executive power, with the Ministry of Communication participating only as an observer.

The NPC's elected representatives have the task to issue the press cards, with a process no longer subject to administrative and governmental involvement. Furthermore, they are required to uphold the rules of ethics, to defend the freedom of the press, to contribute to the production of laws related to the sector, to conduct arbitration and mediation missions between press organizations and third parties (testimony of one publishing company against another or claims against media organizations, for example).

The NPC will have a power of sanction; it will be able to impose fines on a press organization it considers to have been in breach of the Press Code and has the right to temporarily withdraw the press card.

"This will guarantee the right to access information, ensure respect for the freedom of the press and the pluralistic expression of opinions, strengthen the independence of the press, but also scrupulously ensure the respect of democratic principles," said an NPC member, publisher Fatima Ouriaghli.

The NPC will ideally serve as a mediator in cases involving the press before resorting to the judiciary. As the realization of press freedom requires a judiciary sector aware of

"This will guarantee the right to access information, ensure respect for the freedom of the press and the pluralistic expression of opinions, strengthen the independence of the press, but also scrupulously ensure the respect of democratic principles"

*NPC member, publisher  
Fatima Ouriaghli*

the importance of freedom of expression, UNESCO triggered a national dialogue among judges, lawyers and media representatives to create a better, and common, understanding of the new legal and judicial framework as well as of international standards.

#### MEDIA AND GENDER EQUALITY

On top of its actions in promoting international standards in relation to press freedom and RTI, UNESCO office in Rabat conducted several actions to promote gender equality in and through media in Morocco, mostly funded by Sweden. A set of conferences, debates, advocacy actions culminated in March 2017, with UNESCO signing an MOU with the constitutional regulatory body for communication, the High Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HACA), as well as with UN Women to "enhance the image of women in the audio-visual sector".

HACA President Amina Lemrini Ouahabi stressed that UNESCO's work has been instrumental in regards to gender and media especially due to the commitment of its specialists in the field, but also because of its resources and publications, such as UNESCO's Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM), which the HACA used, along with the Global Media Monitoring Project indicators, as a base to develop a special media observatory tool in the country.

The initial results of the monitoring showed gross misrepresentation of women in media and advertisement. As a response, UNESCO intensified its work in this area, involving national and regional media partners. One major result was the establishment of a Parity Committee by the national broadcaster, Société Nationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision (SNRT), and the development of an Equality Charter. This makes SNRT the first public broadcaster in the MENA region to ever implement a holistic action plan related to gender. The transmission of a gender action Plan has since been streamlined throughout all the SNRT's outlets: six TV channels and eight radio stations. As part of

SNRT's gender-transformative process, for the first time, two women were elected for its Board of directors.

Moreover, in line with the implementation of UNESCO's Priority Gender Equality Action Plan, and its supports to freedom of expression and the diversity of cultural expressions throughout the MENA region, UNESCO has recently initiated a regional project titled "Enhancing a gender responsive film sector in the Maghreb-Mashreq region." Funded by the European Union with co-funding from Sweden, this project aims to promote freedom of expression by encouraging film makers from the region to address gender equality and empower women. Furthermore, the project aims at promoting the role of female film professionals in the region by creating an enabling environment where they can formulate and express their concerns; tackle gender-related stereotypes.

One of the first actions under the project concerns the observing of gender equality in the film industry in the Arabic region. This monitoring allows for better documentation of gender bias production and provides a crosscutting analysis, with a common methodology, and representative sampling. Such a research serves as the basis both for advocacy and capacity building actions.

#### A MEDIA-FREEDOM AWARE CITIZENRY

A holistic action supporting reform towards a freer media sector cannot only target legislators, decision makers, the media sector and the judiciary. In fact, it is necessary to involve the final right-holders: the citizens.

Empowerment of people through Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is an important prerequisite for fostering equitable access to information and knowledge and promoting free, independent and pluralistic media and information systems.

Therefore, and in parallel with the above-mentioned actions, UNESCO supported the development of MIL competencies in the Moroccan society. Thanks to the Swedish project, advocacy and capacity building activities focused

on MIL were undertaken, while specific MIL resources were developed specifically for the Moroccan context. UNESCO's multi-level support to MIL gained momentum, resulting in the promotion of MIL through a law amendment defining the mandate of audio-visual regulator HACA.

In 2017, UNESCO coordinated a large-scale MIL advocacy week including six national activities. This succeeded in making MIL "the" trendy topic of the week on social media and on the airwaves, as well as through features and articles in 53 different media, each contributing to raising awareness on the importance of media and information literacy.

#### COMMUNITY MEDIA: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PLURALISM IN THE MEDIA

Despite the partial opening of the media sector that Morocco has witnessed in the last decade, community/associative media are still not legally recognized in the country and cannot broadcast on the FM frequency band. To bypass this situation, the community media operator decided to launch web radios and reach the public through the internet. At the same time, UNESCO supported two pioneer temporary initiatives showing to national decision makers the benefit of community broadcasting on FM.

In fact, UNESCO, in its constant support for a broader, more pluralistic and inclusive media landscape, backed "Climate radio", a temporary FM frequency granted to a community media portal (Ejousour) to operate a radio during the COP22, the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Marrakech in 2017. With the participation of 18 community journalists from the MENA region and Africa, this temporary radio reported live the events of the COP22, rebroadcasting also around the African continent. Young journalists received training to strengthen their operational and theoretical capabilities. They were able, during their time on "Climate Radio", to interview guests, broadcast reports and draft articles.

UNESCO also backed MIL Radio, through which another temporary FM frequency was sought to ensure the coverage of the national MIL in November. This temporary station was the first one created for a national event, broadcasting from the capital Rabat.

These initiatives strongly impacted the national debate on the relevance of community and not-for-profit broadcasters. Authorities are now open to discussing the role and importance of the community/associative broadcasting sector.

Both pilot temporary radio stations were monitored very scrupulously by the regulator HACA to assess the professionalism of community journalists. And operators that are neither from the private nor from the public sector joined the debate, eager to claim the legal recognition of all non-profit media entities (universities, correctional facilities, etc), as it provides them with reach to the public that is not targeted by the traditional media and which could have specific information needs.





## Toward a safer environment for Journalists and media workers in Somalia

**D**ecades of civil war, extremism and weak governance have made Somalia one of the worst countries for journalists to carry out their work. According to UN-ESCO, 63 journalists were killed in Somalia between 2005 and 2018; most of the murderers have not been brought to justice, confirming that impunity still prevails in the country.

As part of the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and following up on the East African Conference on establishing National Mechanisms for Safety of Journalists, a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Forum for Safety of Journalists in Somalia was launched on 21 April 2018 with a mandate to coordinate prevention of attacks against journalists, protection of journalists under threat from various forces, and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes against journalists. The launch came after two days of deliberation on the need for a national mechanism to deal with the numerous cases of attacks, by various forces, against journalists in Somalia,

in which many have been killed, harassed, intimidated, or arbitrarily arrested and detained, resulting in a chilling effect on freedom of expression and press freedom in the country.

Given the complex nature of the political and security context in Somalia, it was deemed that in order to ensure the safety of journalists and deal with the issue of impunity, there was a need for a multi-stakeholder approach that could collectively mobilize the competencies of the media, the government, and the civil society towards a safer environment for journalists.

Representatives of various media associations and civil society organizations participated in the deliberations. These included Human Rights Journalists (HRJ), the Media Association of Puntland (MAP), the Somalia Media Association (SOMA), Somali Women Journalists Rights Association (SOWJRA), Somali Women Journalists (SWJ) the National University of Somalia, Civil society Galmuduug, and the Wardi Organization.

“Today is the beginning of the creation of a safer environment for journalists in Somalia. The committee you have created will help in restoring confidence in the capacity of Somalia to deal with the safety of journalists.”

*Acting Federal Minister of Information,  
Culture and Tourism  
Abdirahman Idan Yonos*

The mechanism, whose launching was referred to by the participants in the deliberations as a "milestone" and a "historic event" in the struggle for press freedom and safety of journalists in Somalia, is led by an 11-person National Coordination Committee consisting of four representatives from media associations, four from the government and three from civil society. At least three of them are women drawn from the three representative groups.

At the two-day meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia Mahdi Mohammed Gu-laid underscored the political will of the federal government to deal with the issue of impunity, and called for concerted efforts to protect journalists.

“As a government, we are committed to deal with the problem of impunity for crimes against journalists, but we need the cooperation of all stakeholders in dealing with this issue,” he said.

On his part, the Acting Federal Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Abdirahman Idan Yonos reiterated how the event marked a milestone in the struggle to ensure the safety of journalists: “Today is the beginning of the creation of a safer environment for journalists in Somalia. The committee you have created will help in restoring con-

fidence in the capacity of Somalia to deal with the safety of journalists.”

The launch of the multi-stakeholder platform in Somalia was a follow up to the November 2017 Nairobi Declaration which, among others, called for developing national multi-stakeholder coordination systems bringing on board the three arms of the government (executive, legislature and judiciary) and all other media stakeholders with a mandate to promote and defend freedom of expression, press freedom, access to information and safety of journalists, comprehensively addressing the safety of journalists in the respective countries and in line with the national, regional and global resolutions. Previously, UNESCO had engaged Somali judges and prosecutors, as well as security forces under the National Intelligence Services Agency (NISA) to sensitize them about the importance of freedom of expression and solicit their buy-in in support of safety of journalists. These engagements were in form of trainings that focused on sensitizing these key target groups on international and national provisions on freedom of expression and safety of journalists, and defining the place of journalists in the overall political and security context of Somalia. It is such engagements that have culminated in the national mechanism for safety of journalists.

In regard to the establishment of this mechanism, UNESCO provided technical support and guidance to the process leading to the multi-stakeholders forum which was organized by the Federal Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and in which representatives of the Ministries of Information, Justice, Interior, and of Women and Human Rights took part, together with the Public Prosecutor's Office and nearly 40 representatives from private media organizations and the civil society, and Somalia Media Support Group (SMSG).

John Bosco Mayiga, the Communication and Information Program Coordinator for Somalia at the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, commended the efforts and commitment of the Somali stakeholders in rolling out the mechanism and said that Somalia became the first East African Country to launch the National Mechanism for Safety of Journalism as part of the UN Action Plan to safeguard journalists worldwide.



The launching of the dialogue Forum for Safety of Journalists is also part of the Federal Government's media strategy, known as the Somali Federal Media Strategy 2016-2020, which articulates four priority areas of action for the media sector in Somalia. Among these four priorities is improving media security as a means of creating an environment where the media can operate free from physical, political, economic and professional encumbrances. The other priorities of the Media Strategy, according to the Director General of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Abdirahman Yusuf Al-Adala, are: supporting the further development and implementation of the media legal framework; strengthening the capacity of media operators, workers, institutions and stakeholders; and developing a public service ethos in the media.

The launch of the Dialogue Forum on Safety of Journalists, however, was only part of the solutions to a number of challenges facing the media sector in Somalia, which include lack of professionalism and opportunities for academic training, low levels of skills and understanding of journalism, poor business models, lack of coordination among media stakeholders, lack of editorial policies, self-censorship, and lack of proper strategies and mechanisms to cater for the security of media workers.



Prior to the launch of the Dialogue Forum on Safety of Journalists, there have been various initiatives to deal with the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity. For example, the private media produced a 12-point protocol as part of a civil society response to issues of media security, mainly focusing on monitoring, reporting, and provision of legal, psychosocial and physical protection to journalists.

According to Ahmed Gutale from Somali Media Association (SOMA), forms of support under this protocol involve: assessing the types of risks journalists face in order to inform the media and form a response mechanism; making media houses take responsibility in ensuring the safety of journalists on dangerous assignments, by giving

“As a government, we are committed to deal with the problem of impunity for crimes against journalists, but we need the cooperation of all stakeholders in dealing with this issue”

*Deputy Prime Minister of the  
Federal Government of Somalia  
Mahdi Mohammed Gulaid*

them the necessary equipment, including First Aid, and security escort where possible; offering regular safety advice and training; holding editors accountable for negligence when journalists are at risk for not following safety procedures; providing legal protection and litigation support to fight impunity; pressuring the government to take action and lobby for international support; and denouncing all acts of violence. Other forms of support include: providing resources, such as transport, protective gear and finances to journalists on dangerous or risky assignments; offering media professionals competitive salaries to avoid attempts to influence them; offering counseling services; putting in place a media policy and plan on security of journalists; establishing a joint fund to cater for the safety of journalists; establishing specific protection measures to address gender and cultural sensitive issues; ensuring that all media houses have editorial guidelines, and judicial application of the code of conduct for the practice of journalism and management of editorial decisions.

Media form an important pillar of any country's governance, and as such, Somalia is no exception. According to the UN Plan for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, countries are responsible for creating a safe environment in which media professionals are able to carry out their work unimpeded and in safety. The Dialogue Forum on the Safety of Journalists launched with support from UNESCO and funding from Sweden/Sida therefore represents a positive step in mobilizing and coordinating national efforts toward creating such an environment.





## Free media: critical in peace building and democratic transition in Myanmar

Six years after Myanmar's political opening, and despite the efforts to bring to an end the war with armed groups that operate in border areas, the ethnic states still continue to battle historic injustices, including suppression of minority rights, socio-economic exclusion, land and resource grabbing and exploitation, widespread poverty, fragile communal relations and statelessness.

There has been some meaningful progress in recent years: multi-stakeholder dialogues that brought together the military, ethnic armed organizations, political parties, and CSOs, the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conferences, and a national agreement that reform is needed to address calls for federalism. Yet, dominated by the military, the peace process has been criticized for its lack of inclusivity, and the government continues to pressure ethnic armed organizations to sign the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

In this context, and noting the critical role that the media can play in supporting peace-building efforts and strengthening democratic institutions, UNESCO, with the support

of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), has embarked on building trust among stakeholders and promoting free press, which is a prerequisite for democracy and peace.

In partnership with the Ministry of Information and the ethnic media organization Burma News International (BNI), UNESCO conducted a series of multi-stakeholder dialogues and roundtables on the role of media in peacebuilding from April through August 2017 in Yangon and seven other locations in ethnic states in Myanmar. Journalists, ethnic leaders, armed groups representatives, government and civil society organizations discussed ways to facilitate access to information in conflict-affected areas, and improve the reporting on the conflict and peace process with a conflict-sensitive approach.

The conclusions and recommendations from those dialogues were compiled in the UNESCO report "The Role of Media in Peacebuilding in Myanmar a Multi-Stakeholder Reflection 2016-2017". The report seeks to inspire, and guide, the design and programming of future media and peacebuilding activities.



Collaboration with UNESCO is important for ethnic media, said the BNI director, Nai Kasauh Mon: "State governments and parliamentarians often don't want to deal with ethnic media. They think we are too small and unimportant. But seeing us working with UNESCO captured their attention and interest in who we are and what we do. This is important because ethnic media ensure ethnic voices are heard and, without that, peace is impossible."

Inspired by the media and peacebuilding dialogues, BNI will organize a new round of stakeholder dialogues to gather input into its draft Ethnic Media Policy Framework that is being developed, in order to capture the role that media plays in peacebuilding.

This trust-building exercise between the media, government and other stakeholders is crucial, particularly in a country like Myanmar, where media have been subjected to strict censorship for over 50 years and the authorities are not used to been scrutinized.

The Yangon Journalism School's founding director, trainer and 7Day columnist Ye Naing Moe says journalists can contribute to peacebuilding by uncovering the underlying causes of conflict, highlighting the ways trust can be built, and providing a platform where different stakeholders can meet and talk, but he also points out the importance of continuing to develop the capacities of reporters.

"There are still many stories in which leaders of different groups roar their agendas. Instead, media should amplify the voices of the voiceless and those that are affected on the ground. That is the most important task for us. Some watchdogs try to do this but we need to do more. Journalists have to push the limits more -- especially journalists in

**"UNESCO has been working on these issues with a range of local stakeholders since 2012.**

**Raising awareness about international standards is a core area of engagement for UNESCO, and we will be doing more of this in future, in addition to providing direct technical support in the development of media related legislation and policies"**

*Min Jeong Kim, Head of Office,  
UNESCO Myanmar*

Nay Pyi Daw [the capital of Myanmar]. They have to link what they hear in conference rooms of the capital to what is going on in ethnic areas," he said.

In order for the media to contribute effectively to the peace-building process, a framework that guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press is essential. Since the beginning of Myanmar's democratic transition, March 2011, when U Thein Sein was elected president, a series of politically liberalizing measures have been introduced in social and economic fields, including in the media sector. These include the adoption in 2014 of the Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law (PPEL), which officially abolished prior censorship and allowed newspapers to become editorially independent from the state; the Broadcasting Law of 2015, which enables private, public and community media to flourish; and the establishment of the Myanmar News Media Council in October 2015 to act as a media self-regulatory body.

These reforms, that have been supported by UNESCO with funding from SIDA, represent significant progress towards Myanmar's media serving as a platform for democratic discourse as well as a means to strengthen good governance and human development.

In this regard, UNESCO has not only provided direct assistance in drafting legislation, but has also facilitated dialogue among the government, civil society and the parliament to build common understanding of the principles of access to information and freedom of expression.

In February 2017, UNESCO held one of these dialogues in a workshop format in collaboration with the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD). The meeting was held in Naypyitaw, the capital of Myanmar, for officials from the government, military and both Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, as well as the parliamentary support body, the Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues. The focus of the workshop was on international standards relating to the right to information and broadcasting.

"UNESCO has been working on these issues with a range of local stakeholders since 2012. Raising awareness about international standards in these areas is a core area of engagement for UNESCO, and we will be doing more of this in future, in addition to providing direct technical support in the development of media related legislation and policies," said Min Jeong Kim, Head of Office, UNESCO Myanmar.

Discussions about a Right to Information (RTI) Law have been ongoing in Myanmar for some time now, including debates on the matter during the 5th and 6th Media Development Conferences held in Yangon in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

"It is important that key official stakeholders, and especially parliamentary bodies, have a good understanding of human rights standards in these areas," said CLD Executive

“It is important that key official stakeholders, and especially parliamentary bodies, have a good understanding of human rights standards in these areas. We are hopeful that a draft right to information law will come before Parliament soon”

*CLD Executive Director Toby Mendel*



Director Toby Mendel. He added “we are hopeful that a draft right to information law will come before Parliament soon.”

The government has taken progressive steps within a large media legal reform process, but still, freedom of expression is not adequately safeguarded in the constitution or domestic law and Myanmar has neither signed nor ratified many of the international treaties that pertain to freedom of expression, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. An RTI Law does not exist and access to government information remains limited.

The study “Assessment of Media in Myanmar- Based on UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators”, conducted by UNESCO and International Media Support (IMS), released on June 1, 2016, issued a first in-depth assessment of Myanmar’s media landscape and made a set of recommendations at a pivotal time in the country where the first civilian government in decades took up the challenges of a democratic transition. They are, inter alia: legal reforms to promote freedom of expression and information, developing a public service broadcasting system and community media, strengthening media self-regulatory frameworks, fostering journalism education, particularly outside of Yangon, and introducing media and information literacy programs.

Minister of Information Dr Pe Myint participated in the launching of the report and welcomed the recommendations. However, the escalation of the tensions in some of the conflict affected areas during 2017 have hampered not only the peace process, but also the democratic reforms, including access to information and the advancement of freedom of expression.

In recent months, fighting between the Tatmadaw (military) and various ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) has escalated in northern Kachin and Shan States, as is the resulting humanitarian crisis. More than 100,000 civilians have been displaced and the fact that security forces are regularly blocking humanitarian assistance is only worsening their plight.

Poverty, lawlessness and drug production are on the rise, and illegal economic activities, including drug trafficking, are helping to finance the conflicts.

With the exception of Rakhine, the fighting is along the Chinese border; China is playing a leading role in talks between the government, the military, and ethnic armed groups. The escalating Rakhine crisis is multiplying fears and uncertainty, deepening divisions, and further hampering efforts to achieve peace. More than half a million people – the majority Rohingya Muslims – have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh.

In this context, it is crucial that the Myanmar government promote a vibrant and pluralistic media to effectively contribute to and benefit from good governance, peace and democratic development. With the objective of supporting the authorities and media stakeholders in these efforts, UNESCO is reviewing the progress achieved with the recommendations in the report “Assessment of Media Development in Myanmar” and conducting multi-stakeholder dialogues to build common strategies to address the most pressing challenges that Myanmar media and freedom of expression are facing.





## UNESCO works with judicial operators in two continents to ensure freedom of expression for media professionals

**F**reedom of expression and information are the mainstay of healthy, democratic societies and of social and economic growth; they enable the free flow of ideas needed for innovation and bolster accountability and transparency.

Media can serve as a watchdog, and civil society can engage with authorities and decision-makers, with information flowing through and between communities.

While advocating for the safety of journalists, who, it believes, have the right to work free from the threat of violence, UNESCO has championed the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, a global reference point that has been highlighted in UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, and European Union's resolutions and policy.

In a fast-changing world that has witnessed many countries engaging in a process of democratic reform in line

with international standards, there are still some conflict and post-conflict nations where ensuring security for people expressing their opinions, particularly journalists and media workers, is still a matter of grave concern. Under this context the lack of policies to enhance the capacities of the judicial operators in understanding their right and duty to protect freedom of expression, could spell grave danger or even death for media professionals.

That is where UNESCO steps in, using a comprehensive approach incorporating coalition building, advocacy, capacity development, technical support and policy advice to ensure, among others, that journalists and media workers can express themselves freely.

That may not be enough in countries where legal codes and constitutions include archaic laws, ranging from censorship on media and art to restrictions on access to information and on the disclosure of government documents, including investigations on corruption.

In the absence of independent judiciaries versed in legal precedents and treaty obligations, of judges and prosecutors who understand, and have knowledge and sensitivity regarding international law and standards on press freedom and access to public information, the right to free expression can be stifled.

Key to achieving a competent and independent judiciary that can defend the right to free expression has been an innovative approach developed by UNESCO in 21 countries in Latin America to train judges, public prosecutors and lawyers in best practice in international media legislation and provide an international database of court cases related to Freedom of Expression and Access to Information. More than 7,500 individuals participated in the training; either on-line through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) created by UNESCO Office in Montevideo, or in person, through seminars tailored to a specific national group of judges and legal professionals, using a training of trainers methodology.

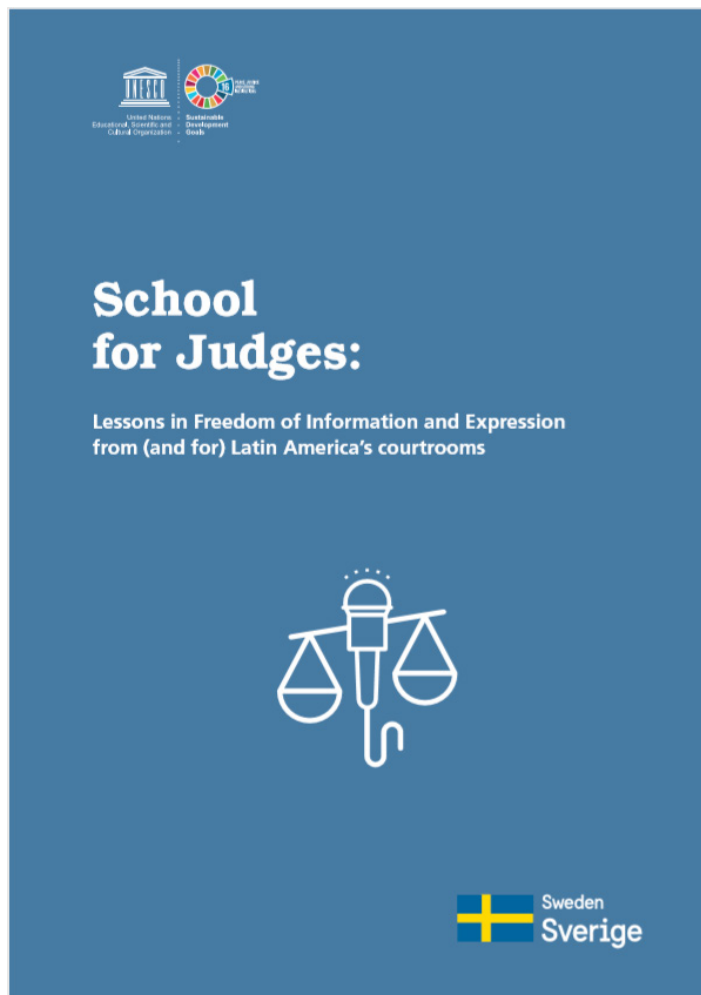
The extensive training, which sometimes included both aforementioned approaches, resulted in several examples of courts issuing sentences based directly on the UNESCO training materials.

UNESCO's project "Judges Initiative in Latin America" grew in just a few years into the most ambitious judicial training program ever undertaken in Latin America, with thousands of judges and other government legal professionals participating since the first program, in Rio in 2014, to the November 2017 course in Asuncion.

Following the success of a pilot phase in Mexico, the first MOOC for judges across Latin America was introduced in the fall of 2015 with support from the government of Sweden, the Ibero American Network of Judicial Schools

**"These UNESCO courses are a great help to us, without any doubt. We have to overcome what we inherited from a system that was completely autocratic, with everything decided and ordered from above. We are in a new era now, where we have to learn how to become a democracy.... Everything has to change – it requires a completely new mentality,**

*Paraguayan judge Carlos Ortíz*



and the Ibero American Judicial Summit; it attracted more than 1,200 participants.

A second MOOC was launched the following year, with a more rigorous selection process giving preference to judges.

Some 3,000 judges and judicial-sector operators in Latin America benefited from the MOOCs that were offered four times between 2014 and 2016 under the title "The International Legal Framework of Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Protection of Journalists".

As a result of collaboration between UNESCO, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Knight Center, the course reached judges from all Latin American countries.

In all, the Knight Center, UNESCO and the Office of the Special Rapporteur offered the international version of the course five times. The most recent edition ended in May 2018 and reached a record number of 2,418 accepted participants.

Though there are many distinct national variants of civil and criminal codes and judicial structures within the broadly shared Latin American legal culture, the similarities are more significant than the differences, judges in the region say. This is especially true as national jurisprudence on matters of basic human rights and democratic practices is increasingly influenced by the Organization of American States (OAS) treaty obligations and decisions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, based in Costa Rica.

More and more, national rulings constraining freedom of expression and public access to information have been successfully appealed in the

Inter-American Court, creating new legal precedents which are then cited by attorneys and judges elsewhere in the region, and studied as case histories in UNESCO's judicial training courses.

"These UNESCO courses are a great help to us, without any doubt. We have to overcome what we inherited from a system that was completely autocratic, with everything decided and ordered from above. We are in a new era now, where we have to learn how to become a democracy.... Everything has to change – it requires a completely new mentality," said Paraguayan judge Carlos Ortíz who took the course in November 2017.

Specialized instruction of this kind is essential for judges who had no legal training or courtroom experience in cases involving freedom of information and expression.

To help judges, prosecutors or attorneys in Latin America, UNESCO created its own textbook, a 300-page course manual with detailed explanations of key legal principles and case-law histories in three interconnected areas: freedom of expression, access to information, and the protection of journalists. It published it in 2017, after a validation process, which included all the schools of judges of Latin America.

#### DOES IT HELP?

Very much so, according to another Paraguayan judge, Pedro Mayor. "Some judges here haven't yet internalized the reality that it is the citizens for whom we work, whose rights it is our job to defend. It's difficult, because we are the children of that old autocratic system. Now we have to change the chip in our heads to think differently, to act democratically, and UNESCO is giving us tools to do this."

One such tool, the MOOC, is an example of concrete actions that can contribute to a better understanding of freedom of expression issues, not only in Latin America but also an ocean apart, in Africa.

"I don't think we can even begin to speak about development without the inclusion of these concepts because that kind of development would not be sustainable."

*Justice Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza  
from Uganda*

Building on the success of the courses launched in Latin America, UNESCO and the Centre for Human Rights from the University of Pretoria launched the first MOOC on freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists in Africa in November 2017, giving judicial officials, journalists, academics, and civil society members the opportunity to learn about and discuss these issues.

The MOOC attracted a rich and diverse audience from a variety of backgrounds and of different nationalities. Participants from 42 African countries enrolled in the course, with Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe the most represented. Participants from 45 other nations also joined, bringing the number of people participating in the MOOC to close to 900; of these, around 620 completed all five modules and received certificates delivered by the Centre for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria and UNESCO.

The content of the course was tailored to the African context and the needs of the specific target audience, which counted judges and other members of the judiciary in Africa: 29% of participants were judges, lawyers and other legal professions; 5% government officials, including law enforcement officers; 7% journalists and media workers; 13% activists and NGO workers; 11% from academia; and 15% students.

UNESCO's work with judges in this African project, like in the one in South America, was implemented within the framework of the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journal-



“the course broadened my scope of knowledge on the work of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in particular about decisions that the Court had taken and that had not come to my knowledge. I also realized that other African countries are making strides in human rights too”

*Magistrate Bertha Akua Aniagyei  
from Ghana*

ists and the Issue of Impunity, which aims to create a free and safe environment for journalists and media workers. An evaluation showed high student satisfaction with the MOOC: with the use of the platform, of instructors and of monitors.

One participant wrote on the evaluation that the MOOC “changed my way of thinking about the need to preserve and protect the right to freedom of expression”.

A judge from a court of appeals who took the MOOC in 2016 said the course gave her “a wider perspective of the topic [freedom of expression]” and was an opportunity “to learn in more detail the importance of it at the international level, as it effectively is a pillar to strengthen the Rule of Law in a democratic society.... I will take it into consideration in my decisions as magistrate in an appeals court”. The MOOC in Pretoria was yet another example of south-south cooperation; it succeeded in fostering a dialogue between the judiciary and media professionals.

A firm believer in the fact that freedom of expression is important for democracy, good governance and the rule of law, the bedrock of development, Justice Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirkubinza from Uganda, a participant in a recent judicial training workshop who also contributed to a MOOC, said: “I don’t think we can even begin to speak about development without the inclusion of these concepts because that kind of development would not be sustainable.”

Continued efforts in the sphere of judicial trainings and MOOCs for members of the judiciary will positively affect the African human rights framework, especially concerning freedom of expression issues, Justice Tibatemwa-Ekirkubinza believes.

“The more judges you train, the more the chances are that when the rights of journalists are violated, somebody who is in charge of the specific case will do the right thing as a judicial agent. ... as long as we train more and the trained ones train others, we can be surer that the rights of journalists will be protected at the court level, as long as judges across the board know what to do.”

Magistrate Bertha Akua Aniagyei, a participant from Ghana in the African MOOC on freedom of expression, said the course “broadened my scope of knowledge on the work of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in particular about decisions that the Court had taken and that had not come to my knowledge. I also realized that other African countries are making strides in human rights too. We do not necessarily have to resort to the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights: I found interesting that some states’ courts are taking steps to ensure that Africa is not known as a continent where human rights are not respected.”

UNESCO’s comprehensive approach, coalition building, advocacy, capacity development, technical support and policy advice can only ensure that the rights of citizens the world over get enshrined in the law and are thoroughly respected. That, however, may still be a distant goal. To attain it, UNESCO will have to continue its worthy endeavors and will need all the help countries of good will can extend.





## Making Waves: Local radio promoting gender equality in Africa

**L**ocal radio is raising awareness for gender violence across many hard-to-reach regions in Africa through dedicated gender-sensitive programming. Training in gender-sensitivity is assisting radio staff in the identification and removal of harmful biases and stereotypes from broadcasts and encouraging positive change in the communal perception of gender equality. UNESCO's "Empowering Local Radio with ICTs" project is helping radio stations to inspire intolerance for gender-based violence and hold perpetrators and duty-bearers responsible.

### LOCAL RADIO IN THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST FGM AND FORCED MARRIAGE

Local radio is at the forefront of the fight to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage in Tanzania. Loliondo FM, one of the radio stations benefiting from UNESCO's "Empowering Local Radio with ICTs" project, supported by Sweden, is proving to be indispensable in raising awareness for the issue and educating girls on the

action to take in avoiding FGM – especially when there seems to be no way out.

Such is the case with Loliondo FM where they have provided information on FGM and a campaigner against it, Suzan Koila, through their broadcasts. Girls have reportedly avoided FGM and forced marriage by making contact with Suzan, thanks to the local radio programs.

"Radio is often the only way to reach many of the communities where FGM and forced marriage continue to prevail" said Mirta Lourenço, Chief of Media Development at UNESCO. "Radio campaigns can reach the women and girls at risk. It can change the perceptions of women and men and inform women on their basic human rights."

In the past, Suzan has provided girls with shelter and coordinated with EMBUWAN, an NGO dealing with education, health and income-generating activities, to offer long-term support.

“The NGO has been able to identify donors to support the girls. There, they can then receive vocational training,” reported Suzan at an anti-FGM meeting in December 2017. Local radio proved essential in distributing the proper information among the at-risk girls of the region and in linking girls to the people able to help.

Thanks to UNESCO’s “Empowering Local Radio with ICTs” project, Loliondo FM benefitted from training and an extensive baseline study, which surveyed listeners to identify the local issues most important to them. Training increases their ability to effectively cover these stories, such as this one on FGM. By connecting the programs to pressing issues, radio stations are more capable of addressing the primary concerns of the community to bring about positive action.

Loliondo FM received a great response from their listeners, particularly young girls, in their radio campaign to end FGM in the Ngorongoro District. Girls were eager to edu-

“The project was successful in Tanzania and has a positive outcome as it shows how radio stations are raising awareness in the communities and consequently aiding government efforts in enforcing laws and regulations. It also plays a significant role at the grassroots level for community development to have equal access to information and knowledge as a means towards sustainable development”

*Christina Musaroche  
UNESCO National Commission of the  
United Republic of Tanzania*

cate themselves regarding who and where to turn to should they be pressured into a forced marriage or undergoing FGM – vital information that the radio delivered.

“UNESCO works to support community radios to ensure that people in Tanzania, especially the poor, women and



girls, have the capacity to make informed decisions on issues that affect their daily lives based on access to relevant, culturally appropriate, gender responsive and accurate information and knowledge,” said Christina Musaroche of the UNESCO National Commission of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The area represents one of the most prevalent areas for FGM practice with Arusha ranking third nationally at 41% according to the 2015/2016 Tanzanian Demographic and Health Survey. June and July present a peak in the prevalence of FGM in the Ngorongoro District as students are on break from school. In an effort to further curb this trend, UNESCO Dar es Salaam is preparing to work alongside Loliondo FM again for a repeat of the campaign in 2018.

This experience has shown that local radio stations supported through UNESCO’s “Empowering Local Radio with ICTs” project can exponentialize campaigns on important issues, such as the fight against FGM, and forward the UN’s goal to empower women and girls, as in line with SDG 5.



## LOCAL RADIO CONFRONTING PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In one reported case from Tanzania, a woman attempting to press an identified suspect with allegations of rape faced only indifference among municipal authorities. When local leaders demanded a bribe in exchange for the arrest of the suspect, Dodoma FM, one of the stations involved in UNESCO's project, took up the story. They publicized the woman's ongoing struggle until the district commissioner was stirred into action. Dodoma's coverage of the scandal resulted in the arrest of the perpetrator of the crime, as well as punitive measures taken against the three local leaders accused of blackmail.

Gender-sensitive training helps radio staff identify and cover relevant stories, but the interest to remove harmful stereotypes in pursuing these issues is coming from local reporters. "I'm interested in gender-sensitive reporting because gender equality levels are low and more knowledge is needed. Training helped me to report on stories dealing with gender violence and child marriages in ways that can improve the situation in the community," said Ayo Rebecca, a reporter from Radio Apac FM in Uganda, during a workshop organised by UNESCO.

Even in hard-to-reach areas, local radio stations are creating awareness and broadcasts are sounding out favourable responses in the community. At the gateway to Virunga National Park, Dorika FM in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is receiving strong local support for its programs dedicated to positive action that can contribute to greater social independence and empowerment among women. The broadcasts have been so well-received as to result in the creation of a listener's club and NGO that in turn supports and promotes the topics of the program.

Social perceptions and tolerance for gender-based violence, especially that occurring domestically, are significant obstacles faced in tackling this problem. Gender issues and their solutions require action that targets both men and women in order to change the social landscape that facilitates such behaviour. "Targeted radio programs have the capacity to challenge masculinity norms and the unfortunate tolerance for gender violence, as shown by Radio Ijwi ry'Umukenyenzi (RIU) in Burundi," said Mirta Lourenço, UNESCO's Chief for Media Development. RIU created a dedicated gender unit in their station to monitor the content of broadcasts and host awareness programs. They advocate positive behaviour amongst men and women that promotes intolerance for gender violence and disrepute for perpetrators. The program has been popular enough in the community that listeners' groups have been formed and grateful residents have even begun to support the station by supplying RIU with water free of charge.

Aside from evoking support from the community, local radio stations are targeting duty-bearers and holding them accountable to the responsibilities of their office. Tumbatu FM in Zanzibar, Tanzania is bringing gender-based violence and the role of authorities to the forefront of social discussion through their programs. Broadcasts stressed the importance of intolerance and the necessity for reporting incidents to the local authorities rather than resolving the issue within the household. As a direct result of the awareness spread, the police have established gender desks at local stations where residents can receive information and report gender-based crimes.

To confront the issue of gender violence further, national policy can contribute in several ways through the creation and development of media regulatory bodies, as well as the promotion of media literacy amongst boys and girls to understand gender equality challenges and stereotypes. UNESCO's "Empowering Local Radio with ICTs" project (<https://en.unesco.org/radioict/>), supported by Sweden, is one such international initiative that is giving priority to gender in media, improving media access and control and supplying the tools to radio staff to make positive change in their communities.

The importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women have increased to become leading priorities in both developed and developing countries as nations strive to remove the social and economic disparities between men and women. To combat the cycle caused by gender misrepresentation in media, UNESCO has also created Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (GSIM) to promote gender parity and women empowerment in all forms of media, as in line with the UN's SDG 5. By addressing the significance of this issue, countries can help advocate for autonomy and the fair treatment of women, such as reducing the social tolerance for gender-based violence.

One of the many initiatives implemented by UNESCO that contributes to confronting corruption and promoting the necessity of accountable institutions, as in line with the UN's SDG 16. By providing training and building the capacities of local radio stations, the project helps to foster public debate at the local level and to promote lasting positive change in the community.



## On Air with Rural Women: an exhibition from UNESCO celebrating women in media

**W**omen are twice as likely as men to be illiterate, and rural women are especially at risk. Globally, only 39% of rural girls attend secondary school, and they often suffer from lower levels of civic integration and access to information, as well as exclusion from decision-making circles. These conditions can create a cycle that compromises their ability to participate in public life and raise their concerns in democratic debate.

The inclusion of women's voices and gender-related issues in the media has the power to promote women's empowerment by breaking the circle of inequality and dependence.

On the 8th of March, for International Women's Day 2018, UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector presented "On Air with Rural Women", an exhibition built around radio broadcasts gathered from local stations in 10 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. The exhibition was displayed in Salle Miró at UNESCO Headquarters until the 16th of March. On the 5th and 6th of June, the exhibition was also displayed at the 2018 European Development Days in Brussels, alongside other leaders in development and gender.

Through audio, video and creative installations, the exhibition showcases how the inclusion of women's voices



in radio can contribute to progress on gender issues in some of the most isolated African communities.

The exhibition features the testimonies of Catherine, a radio manager from a station dedicated to women, Theresia, a midwife who founded her own radio to help the community, and Busisiwe, a young radio host from an historical South African community radio station. Discover how gender is addressed on air in Rwanda, how singledom is perceived in Kenya and how Zambia is dealing with youth sexuality, all through authentic radio programmes from local stations.



## Local radio answers the needs of its community and promotes good governance

**T**wo Tanzanian reporters from a local radio station led an investigation into the exploitative regional market for cashew nuts. The case resulted in the exposure of corrupt trade practices and the arrest of leaders from the identified cooperative union. This investigation was possible thanks to a training program conducted by UNESCO under the “Empowering Local Radio with ICTs” project.

Fatuma Kazuvi and Godbless Lucius, reporters from Fadhila radio station, instigated an inquiry into the local market for cashew nuts in the Mtwara region of Tanzania after prompting by numerous complaints from local producers. Their investigation examined the questionable trade practices of market intermediaries and their effects on farmers.

“Good investigative journalism can be carried out whether your radio station is big or small, provided that the capacities of staff are well-built,” remarked Mirta Lourenço, UNESCO’s Chief for Media Development. “It roots out facts. It holds individuals and institutions accountable. It is essential to any democracy.”

Cashews are a principle food crop in the area and producers depend heavily on their sales as the primary income for their household. Due to limited access to markets, most farmers are obliged to sell their crops to an intermediate, or a cooperative union, through a notorious and exploitative exchange called Kangomba. This custom requires producers to sell their cashews at a discounted rate in addition to the low sale price already paid by middlemen. The radio coverage explained how the union had also failed to remunerate many farmers for

their purchased crops and misplaced some 2000 tons of cashews for which they held themselves unaccountable.

Fadhila broadcasted a number of stories related to the unfair trade practices of the cooperative union, providing a platform for local residents to participate in the issue and express their opinions. The radio station went so far as to organize a forum for cashew producers during which they could voice their experiences and grievances as a community. Legal exchange practices and the rights of the producer in the market were additionally discussed as a part of a campaign to end Kangomba throughout the main cashew growing districts.

Following the public exposure of the cooperative union on Fadhila broadcasts, the Prime Minister of Tanzania ordered a formal investigation that resulted in the arrest of many of the firm’s leaders. The missing product was successfully recovered and a special task force, inclusive of Fadhila reporters, was created to curb the prevalence of Kangomba. This investigation followed a UNESCO mentorship program aimed at training local radio station staff on a broad range of topics, including local issue focus and investigative journalism. The “Empowering Local Radio with ICTs” project, supported by Sweden, is fighting the social tolerance for gender-based violence.

One of the many initiatives implemented by UNESCO that contributes to confronting corruption and promoting the necessity of accountable institutions, as in line with the UN’s SDG 16. By providing training and building the capacities of local radio stations, the project helps to foster public debate at the local level and to promote lasting positive change in the community.



## RAISING AWARENESS FOR THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Thanks to a broadcast in January 2013 by Moanda Community Radio, the lack of modern mortuary services in the community of Moanda, DRC was addressed.

The lack of a mortuary in the town of Moanda, a coastal city on the Atlantic coast of the DRC, was a pressing social problem and a contrast with the well-known image of this city as the home of an internationally renowned oil exploration company.

“The dead were buried the same day, and for deaths after 3pm or at night, we would use traditional practices to preserve the corpses before burial,” says a listener of Moanda Community Radio. These practices consisted mostly inserting papaya sap in the nostrils of the deceased and to coating their skin with liquid drawn from the leaves of trees.

Hearing this broadcast from the nearby city of Boma, a prominent opinion leader in the business sector named Makaya Lezi. He led a successful campaign to raise funds for the construction of a new morgue in the city, securing donations from French and American businesses in the area.

## PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND FOSTERING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Community radio in Uganda is encouraging creativity amongst its listeners to initiate different income-generating projects. Programming dedicated to entrepreneurship and business management in the wake of UNESCO training of radio staff is being indicated as the impetus for the burgeoning small business environment. Beneficiaries of these broadcasts are able to improve their own conditions and raise the prospects of their children using the information they receive.

Low levels of economic activity plague many developing nations stuck in perceived poverty traps, especially many sub-Saharan countries. Increased levels of entrepreneurship have been indicated as a possible vehicle to escape the economic woes faced in these countries. Radio Nakaseke FM broadcasting from Nakaseke, Uganda is one community radio station operating as part of UNESCO’s “Empower-

ing Local Radio with ICTs” project, supported by Sweden.

Radio Nakaseke broadcasts dedicated entrepreneurial and financial informational programs that are changing the perspectives of local listeners.

19-year old Kajimu Mahmood is a local chapatti vendor and one of the beneficiaries who attributes her recent success to Radio Nakaseke’s business programs. “I never used to save money,” she said. “Instead, I would spend my earnings gambling or on clothes and other luxuries.”

However, since beginning to listen to the local entrepreneurial broadcasts, she began to utilize the community radio station to advertise and develop a savings behaviour. She was able to use her savings to buy a plot of land in the town with the increasing success of her chapatti stand. “I am now the best chapatti vendor in town and I’m proud of my job. I felt empowered by Radio Nakaseke’s programs, and my new target is to save enough to build my own house.”

In addition to encouraging saving and entrepreneurship, Radio Nakaseke is also providing a platform for farmers to share knowledge and information. Ruth Seruwu is a married woman with four children, and she works primarily as a farmer growing specialty crops. She belongs to the dedicated listeners’ club “Mifunya Women’s Group” that works to empower other women in the community.

“We use the radio to mobilize our fellow women into groups and to start small projects to generate income, which can help to support their families and stop over-dependency,” she said.

Besides her activity in the listeners’ club, Ruth uses community radio to advertise her own side-project – the rental of tents, decorations and outdoor catering services. With the extra income accumulated by this venture, she has been able to pay for her children’s school fees, including the tuition for her two eldest daughters to attend university.

The impact of Radio Nakaseke on the local community in terms of entrepreneurship and financial knowledge is one of the key expected outcomes of UNESCO’s “Empowering Local Radio with ICTs” project. By training radio staff to cover such topics of local interest, community radio stations are able to promote economic development in their area of coverage. These two individual cases represent only some of the many ways in which UNESCO is bridging the gap between poor people and the information they need to escape poverty.

