



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists



# Africa

## *Ensuring a safe and conducive environment for freedom of expression*

### Background

In the last 10 years, the African region has seen some improvement with countries opening up their media landscape and creating a slightly safer environment for journalists and media workers. However, the region is still confronted with high levels of impunity rates, with only 12,5% of cases being judicially resolved between 2006 and 2018 according to UNESCO's Report "Intensified Attacks, New Defences". The region has seen positive trends regarding better legal frameworks on access to information and transparency. However, implementation of these new laws needs to be improved. Many African judicial operators remain unaware of regional and international standards on freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists. More work needs to be done to enhance the involvement of high-level judges, lawyers, and prosecutors in order to ensure the exchange of best practices in freedom of expression and the safety of journalists in the African continent.

### What we are doing

Advancing the knowledge of members of the judiciary on freedom of expression and safety of journalists in Africa.

[Learn more about our work](#) (Story on the back page)

### What we could further do with your support

- Further increase the number of judicial operators trained, by reaching as many high-level participants as possible, particularly judges, prosecutors and lawyers.
- Reinforce the capacities of judicial training institutes in Africa to support freedom of expression and safety of journalists.
- Help strengthen and support national and regional associations of journalists in Africa, and civil society in general.

### Key Achievements

- Over **1,800 judicial officers and civil society representatives** were trained and sensitized on freedom of expression and safety of journalists through a series of trainings and online courses.
- **Institutional links** between UNESCO, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the ECOWAS Court of Justice have been reinforced, through Memoranda of Understanding respectively signed in August 2018, and in May 2019.
- The **publication and dissemination of a toolkit** on the legal standards on freedom of expression for the judiciary in Africa, in English and French.
- **Synergies and dialogue were fostered with over 400 stakeholders** from all over Africa through different occasions, including the meeting "Free Independent and Pluralistic Media to Foster Peace and Development in Africa", organized by UNESCO during the Biennale of Luanda in September 2019.

Actions in Africa fall under the following output of the Multi-Donor Programme (MPD):

- Output 1:**  
Awareness-raising and advocacy
- Output 3:**  
Enhancing journalists' safety
- Output 4:**  
Reinforcing the capacities of duty-bearers



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Your contribution helps UNESCO continue its support to policies and actions to promote freedom of expression globally.

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**“Freedom of expression has benefitted us  
and enabled organizations to thrive. This  
seminar gives us a chance to deepen these  
synergies and continue with the defense of  
freedom of expression.”**

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**Hon. Bart Magunda Katureebe**

*Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Uganda*

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### **Guaranteeing the implementation of freedom of expression in Africa**

Since 2017, in the framework on the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, UNESCO has been developing a comprehensive programme to raise capacities of judges and judicial actors, such as prosecutors, lawyers and civil society on international and regional standards on freedom of expression and safety of journalists in Africa. To date, more than 1,800 judicial operators and representatives of civil society from Africa have been trained on these issues, notably through a series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), on-the-ground training and workshops, as well as a Toolkit on the legal standards on freedom of expression for the judiciary in Africa (in English and French).

Judges in many countries often enjoy a much higher degree of independence than other officials and their decisions can be an important factor to guarantee the implementation of freedom of expression, privacy standards and safety of journalists. This specialized training of judicial officials is thus a strong way to support and protect freedom of expression and access to information, and effectively contributes to the safety of journalists on the continent.

The latest examples of workshops and training have included two regional seminars (Dakar, September 2019; and Kampala, October 2019) which gathered judges from supreme courts and judiciary actors. The training seminar in Dakar was organized in cooperation with the Supreme Court of Senegal and gathered 16 supreme court judges from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries and led to the adoption of 12 recommendations of concrete measures to strengthen freedom of expression standards. The seminar in Kampala took place prior to the 4th African Judicial Dialogue, and gathered judges and Chief Justices from supreme courts from 13 countries in Africa, and 27 high-level

judges from Uganda. Both seminars were organized in cooperation with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and included the participation and active exchange with representatives of civil society and the media.

In addition, UNESCO has been fostering South-South and North-South cooperation by organizing international meetings involving African judiciary actors and judicial operators from around the world. This included a training on the rule of law in the digital ecosystem, which took place during the 2019 Internet Governance Forum in Berlin, Germany, and notably gathered high-level judges from the ECOWAS Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Appeals Court of Rio de Janeiro.

Throughout these activities, awareness was thus raised on South-South and North-South experiences in the field of freedom of expression between judges and members of the judiciary from various regions, including regarding the achievement of the SDG Goal 16 on ensuring “peace, justice and strong institutions”.

**Read more about our work, visit:**

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-freedom-expression/mdp>



#### **CONTACT**

**Mehdi Benchelah**

Senior Project Officer

Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section

[m.benchelah@unesco.org](mailto:m.benchelah@unesco.org)

UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector

Website: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

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