

NO NEWS IS **BAD NEWS**

People deserve to know



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Iraqi photographer Bnar Sardar takes photos in one of the IDP camps in Northern Iraq

Kids **fight** ancient taboo

The ancient Hindu custom of chhaupadi - the belief that women and girls who are having their period are unclean and can cause illness - still costs lives. In some areas young people are taking the initiative to challenge the tradition. In one school in Kathmandu Valley, boys are raising money for their female classmates so they can attend school during their period.

page 4



Victims of **intimidation**

In the Central African Republic two radio journalists were severely intimidated. On two occasions, Ngombou and Matongo's reports on the civil war in their country proved nearly fatal to them. The Reporters Respond fund, run by Free Press Unlimited, provided them with much needed assistance.

page 8

Trump tweets vs. **struggling Sudan**

Free Press Unlimited director Leon Willems is infuriated that Western news desks hardly show any interest in Sudan. Millions of Sudanese are adrift, on the run, exploited, starving or dead. "The heart of this country can only continue to beat if the truth is being told, but Western media is fixated on the tweets of Trump."

page 12



People deserve to know

Everyone has the right to reliable and unbiased information. Information that you can use to make decisions and which enables you to assess your own living conditions and influence them. Working with media organizations and local journalists has taught us that access to independent news can really make a difference. We would like to share some of these remarkable stories with you.

These stories give a fantastic insight into what we are actually doing and why it matters. Stories from the lives of people who have contributed to social change, small or big. That is why we do the work we do; for the people, the public and their freedom of choice, expression and information.

If one thing became clear over the past year, it is that a lot remains to be done: fake news dominated the elections and not only those in the United States; hate speech and contempt are epidemic on social media and the power of facts and good journalism are being undermined by this. We live in perilous times, with many attacks on the bodies and soul of journalists.

The stories in this newspaper inspire us to work even harder, to fight for the safety of journalists all over the world. Because an attack on journalists is an attack on press freedom and we have to stand up to put an end to violence against journalists. After all, that is needed to realise our vision: people deserve to know. And that also pertains to you, the reader of this newspaper. You deserve to read about what we have accomplished thanks to the support from our donors.

The resilience of our partners and the journalists we assist is unimaginable and extremely inspiring. We have respect and awe for everyone who continues to provide the information that people need and are entitled to. They are our heroes, and they deserve our respect and support every day of the year.

Ruth Kronenburg & Leon Willems
Directors of Free Press Unlimited



Better news coverage in Eastern Europe

Teije Brandsma

It was a casual remark made by a retired Georgian woman that started it all. “I always buy Whiskas for my cat,” she told a local journalist, “But I hardly ever buy meat for myself – I can’t afford it.” The remark sparked the first article on the Russian-Language News Exchange, a multimedia platform set up by Free Press Unlimited with a new, coordinated approach to news stories. One of its first projects was an investigative report on poverty among pensioners in former Soviet states.

“Life is easier in the summer, with fruit in abundance,” says Shogik Alikyan (66), from Yerevan, Armenia. Interviewed as part of the report, Alikyan, who worked in a post office for 48 years, has been a pensioner for one year. For her, life has not improved since retirement. Her monthly pension is € 96. After other expenses, she has € 22,50 a week left to spend on food.

Shogik is not the only pensioner on such a meagre budget. In Russia alone there are 42 million retirees, people who expected they would enjoy a comfortable old age during the Soviet years. They have an average of € 179 to spend each month. Some of them forage for mushrooms and berries; partly to maintain a custom, but also to supplement their meals.

Russian Language News Exchange set up

13 journalists from seven countries worked for six weeks on the pension stories. It was one of the first big projects by the newly established Russian Language News Exchange. The results were broadcasted via radio, internet, social media, and TV, reaching an audience of hundreds of thousands. As a result, the media in Moldova began reporting on the nation’s pension reform and its consequences.

13 journalists from 7 countries reported on pensioners’ poverty

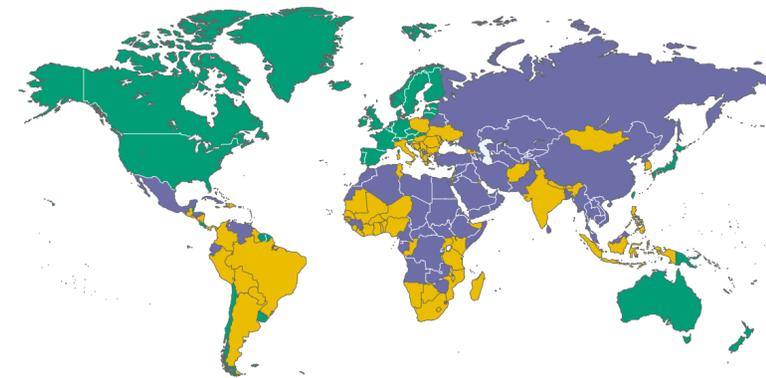
“This story would not have been told without the Exchange,” explains its manager, Maryia Sadouskaya-Komlach. “Before we set up the Exchange, there was no other network that coordinated the work of independent media outlets across all countries in the former Soviet states. This initiative allows us to present a broad picture of current events in the region.” News outlets in the former Soviet states report mainly on

local issues. Some of them are independent and highly respected by locals. However, even among these news outlets there is no regional coverage. This vacuum has been filled by the Exchange.

There is another reason why the new network is important. Before 2010, Russia-based state news outlets used to be fairly reliable when it came to regional news, but they have become increasingly biased, especially in times of crisis. “We do not oppose Russian state media,” explains Sadouskaya-Komlach. According to her, it is all about strengthening independent fact-based journalism. “If that means we have to report on pensioners going into the forest to find food, then we will tell that story. We are not going to sugarcoat anything.”

Free Press Unlimited and the Exchange

Free Press Unlimited has worked with independent media outlets in the countries of the Eastern Bloc for more than ten years, and realized it could help them increase their potential by setting up a cooperation network. The result is the Russian Language News Exchange, established in 2016. With a central newsroom, it coordinates independent media organizations working for more than 20 million people in seven countries, ranging from Armenia to Moldova, employing more than 200 journalists in total. Together, they employ 200 journalists and reach an audience of 20 million.



Freedom of the press 2017



Freedom House

Press freedom under threat worldwide

Teije Brandsma

Press freedom worldwide declined to its lowest level in 13 years in 2016. This was mainly due to new threats to journalists in major democracies, and to further crackdowns on independent media in authoritarian countries like Russia and China.

A joint report by Washington-based research institute Freedom House and Free Press Unlimited, based in Amsterdam, underlines the US’s part in suppressing press freedom. “Never in the 38 years that Freedom House has been monitoring global press freedom, has the United States figured as much in the public debate as in 2016 and the first months of 2017,” writes Freedom House president, Michael J. Abramowitz.

Enemies of the people?

No US president in recent memory has shown greater contempt for the press than Trump in his first months in office. He ridiculed reporters as dishonest purveyors of “fake news” and corrupt betrayers of the national interest. Borrowing a term popularized by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, Trump labeled the news media, “enemies of the people”. Freedom House predicts that more attacks on the press by the president could further erode public confidence in the media and set the stage for legal or legislative measures that would set back freedom.

The United States is still one of the most press-friendly countries in the world. It has lively, aggressive and diverse media, and some of the strongest legal protection for reporters anywhere in the world. However, the report

cautions that the derogatory remarks by Trump and his staff may erode the country’s status as role model and aspirational standard for other countries. “When political leaders in the United States lambast the media, it encourages their counterparts abroad to do the same.”

Canadian police monitored journalists

Press freedom is not just under attack in the US. Other countries with a reputation for upholding press freedom are actually undermining it, warns the report. In the most surprising case of 2016, media outlets and watchdogs in Canada published evidence stretching back to 2007, that Quebec police monitored journalists—in one case investigating sources of negative information about the police themselves. The revelations raise concerns about a country that is often considered a leading example for the protection of civil liberties.

Israel, scoring relatively high in a region where most nations are near the bottom of the media independence index, has also seen a decline in press freedom. This is mainly due to personal attacks by the prime minister on leading investigative journalists, which contributed to a hostile environment for the press.

“When political leaders in the United States lambast the media, it encourages their counterparts abroad to do the same”

Press freedom declines in Turkey, Thailand and Egypt

The report’s researchers assess press freedom in 199 nations. Turkey, Libya, Thailand and Egypt are the countries where press freedom was most in decline in 2016, according to the team. The nations at the very bottom of the list are North Korea, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

There is reason for optimism in other countries. Changes in government in Afghanistan, Argentina, Panama, Sri Lanka and Fiji over the past three years have led to more favorable policies toward the media, with reduced government interference in the editorial line of media outlets.

According to the report, the best country to be based in as a journalist is Norway, followed by the Netherlands and Sweden.

Children's news program helps fight ancient taboo

Gordon Darroch

Fifteen-year-old Roshina Tiruwa suffocated to death in a shed in Western Nepal one night in December 2016. She died as a result of an ancient Hindu custom, despite repeated warnings in the Nepalese media against it. One of the most vocal opponents of the practice is Naya Pusta, part of WADADA News for Kids, Free Press Unlimited's network of news program for children in 20 countries.

Roshina's father found her body when she failed to come out of the shed for breakfast one morning; police believe she choked on smoke from a fire she had lit to try to keep warm. Roshina had been banished from the house under the rules of chhaupadi, an ancient Hindu custom still practiced in rural regions of Nepal that ostracizes women and girls during their monthly period. Locals believe menstruating women are unclean, and can cause illness, crop failure and even the death of livestock.

95% of women observe the taboo

Chhaupadi was banned by Nepal's supreme court in 2005, but the government has struggled to eradicate it, particularly in the Far-Western region. In 2011, a UN report estimated that 95 percent of women in the Achham district observe the custom.

For five days around the time of their period, women are expected to confine themselves to cramped outhouses known as goths, made of mud and straw and often with no door. They have to drink water from segregated wells and are restricted to a diet of flatbread and salt.

At risk of disease, animal attack and rape

The experience leaves many women feeling ashamed, humiliated and depressed, while the cold and unsanitary conditions leave them vulnerable to diseases including diarrhea and pneumonia. Snakes, scorpions and other wild animals are another hazard. Three to four girls a year are known to die from poisonous bites, animal attacks, disease or accidents connected to chhaupadi every year, but the true figure may be even higher. Sometimes men steal in at night and rape the women, but these incidents usually go unreported because of the stigma attached.

Chhaupadi also disrupts girls' progress at school. In some areas people believe Sarswati, the goddess of education, is angered if a girl handles books during her period. Roshina was reportedly a ninth grade pupil at Rastara Bhasah Secondary School when she died.

"In remote and rural areas, girls are kept out of school when they are menstruating at the request of their families, which definitely affects their education," says Ashok Dahal, a journalist based in Kathmandu. "They also participate less in social and other activities, either because they are not allowed to join in or because they're reluctant."

Youth club raises money for sanitary pads

In some areas, young people have taken the initiative in challenging the tradition. At one school in Kathmandu Valley, boys in the youth club raise money to buy sanitary pads for their female classmates so they can attend school during their period. Under the scheme, known as the Khutruke



© Annelies Langelaar

Initiative, all children in grades 1 through to 10 pay one rupee a week (roughly equivalent to 1 US cent) towards the cost of the sanitary pads.

The effects were already visible when the initiative was featured on the Naya Pusta children's news program just two weeks after launch. "Before, we had no option other than to go home if we were menstruating in school, but this initiative solves the problem," said pupil Srijana Magar. Another, Kabita Awale, added: "Now that the school provides sanitary pads my studies are not being hampered, which is very good for me."

At one school, boys raised money to buy sanitary pads for their female classmates so they can attend school during their period

More confident

The scheme also makes girls feel more confident about raising issues related to their menstrual cycle. "Girls are reluctant to share their problems with us, so we chose one of our female teachers as their mentor to help them feel more comfortable," explained one of the boys, Rajkumar Pulami Magar.

Ashok Dahal says young people have a crucial role to play in changing the social attitudes that have thwarted official efforts to outlaw chhaupadi. "Attitudes are changing due to education and as people gain mobility," he says. "When people from remote areas in the west come to Kathmandu and other cities to study, they see that many people there don't practise chhaupadi."

Bringing about change from within

Even in the regions where chhaupadi persists, the practice is becoming less stringent, with menstruating women staying in a separate room in the house, rather than an outbuilding or cattle shed. Nepal's parliament is expected to pass a bill later this year that would make it illegal to force women into chhaupadi, but schemes like the Khutruke Initiative are essential for bringing about cultural change within communities.

WADADA News for Kids?

Since its launch in 2004, WADADA News for Kids has expanded to 20 countries, reaching an audience of 100 million people. Free Press Unlimited began the project with the aim of informing young people about news stories that are relevant to them.

Sharing stories

Over the last few years WADADA News for Kids has become a platform to connect children around the world by sharing their stories in different countries. "I'm constantly in touch with the producers and editors of the programs and we have an online newsroom where we discuss news, opinions and stories, as well as an online library," says chief editor Jan-Willem Bult, based in Amsterdam. "A story like this one in Nepal can be an item for the show, but it can easily be transported to Nicaragua or South Africa or wherever the show is aired."

Sometimes the programs focus on challenging topics such as the civil war in Syria. "We know children will pick up these images from other news programs that are not suitable for them, so we have to act," says Bult. "It's not about what we want, it's about what's healthy for the kids."

Children's voices

After Nelson Mandela died, the network interviewed more than 100 children around the world in 24 hours to gauge their reaction. "So immediately, we had the voices of kids connected to this global news," explains Bult. "That's another strength of the network: it means children's voices can really travel far."

How to fight disease with news reports

Margriet Wesselink

This is the story of how a Pakistani father saved the lives of hundreds of sick children, while losing his own 10-year old son. News reports from the Pakistani Tribal News Network (TNN) played a crucial part in raising the alarm to local authorities about a measles outbreak.

After reaching out to a local journalist about an outbreak of measles in the remote Khyber tribal district near the Afghan border, Umar Din and his community members finally gained national attention. Their distress call became loud enough to reach the Pakistani government, which responded by sending the urgently needed help.

"Reporting in the conflict-affected tribal areas can be a matter of life and death," managing editor of Tribal News Network (TNN), Said Nazir, confirms. TNN is a partner of Free Press Unlimited and helps ensure the dissemination of local stories in this part of northwestern Pakistan, a region plagued by terrorism and conflict, where mainstream media are not present.

Gathering news here is not an easy task. For most journalists the region is virtually inaccessible. The outside world hears little reliable news about the region and people living here have few trustworthy sources of information, the mainstream media usually overlook issues in the tribal territories.

Fighting the news blackout

The reporters of local radio- and online news outlet TNN, however, know their way around. This means they can stay safe while fighting the news blackout. Said Nazir: "Our reporters are well-known in their communities and whenever something happens, they are approached by the inhabitants."

August 5, 2016. The cry of a devastated father reaches a TNN reporter in the Bar Gamber Khail area of Bara sub-division in Khyber Agency. The disease has just taken the life of Umar Din's little boy, Mubashir (10). Din's alert led TNN to the infected area. There, parents told the journalist the

many other children in the district were suffering from measles, but the FATA Secretariat (Federally Administered Tribal Areas, a semi-autonomous tribal region in northwestern Pakistan, governed by Pakistan's federal government -ed.) was not taking steps to stop the spread of the illness.

Health authorities prodded into action

The community needed a louder voice to get the attention of the authorities. "We broadcasted the parents urgent plea to the government to send a special health team. The report was taken up by eleven partner stations and appeared on our website in three languages: Pashtu, Urdu and English," Nazir says. "As a result, FATA's Directorate of Health took action."

A mass measles campaign followed in ten villages in Bar Gamber Khail, with a total population of approximately 6,000 people. Around 1,400 children have since been vaccinated and according to health officials the outbreak is now under control.

What is Tribal News Network?

Tribal News Network (TNN) is a local news service for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Tribal Areas of Pakistan. It covers issues that affect local people, such as health and education. Since it began broadcasting in 2013, TNN has built a sound reputation, bridging the gap between the government and local communities by producing reliable news for a region where journalists often work at risk to their lives. Free Press Unlimited supports TNN in the production of news bulletins (radio and online) and provides training to improve the skills of editors and reporters.



"Our reporters are well-known in their communities and whenever something happens, they are approached by the inhabitants"

Not just a radio station, a **social institution**

Ruth Kronenburg

Free Press Unlimited director Ruth Kronenburg recently travelled to Indonesia to attend an international conference in Jakarta. Below she describes a detour she took to a community radio partner of her organization there, a talk station that operates in a unique way.

"When you're in Indonesia, go visit Suara Surabaya," suggested my colleague Dessi Damianova, our program director South and Southeast Asia. "It has a strong vision and inspiring leadership." This I wanted to see for myself, so after the conference was finished I headed to Surabaya, 750 kilometers east of Jakarta.

A city of 6 million people

Radio Suara Surabaya, 'Voice of Surabaya', has a reputation for exploring solutions to the issues the community faces. And Surabaya has big issues, especially related to infrastructure. The city has three million inhabitants, but during the day this number doubles. It's a crazy place.

I go to see Errol Jonathans, CEO of the radio station and he shows me around the station's spacious offices. What a difference compared to the hustle and bustle outside! It operates like a well-oiled machine, with everyone knowing exactly what to do.

Bringing people together

Jonathans has a modest demeanor, but he is eloquent and even passionate about the radio station's objective: to bring people together and offer them a better life.

According to a recent audience survey, Suara Surabaya reaches over 600,000 people every day. When it started in 1983, most radio stations targeted young people with pop music and games. There was hardly any airtime for in-depth reporting. Suara Surabaya filled that gap and gradually evolved into the city's talk station.

Looking for solutions

It is now so popular that even the mayor and the police commander call in to comment. And that is exactly what Jonathans envisioned when he started the station. He wants to listen to people and their problems, but he also wants to find solutions. This has become Suara Surabaya's



defining trait. Listeners who call in do not get airtime if they do nothing but complain, they need to come up with ideas to solve the city's problems as well.

Jonathans gives an example of how the station's approach works: "A couple of years ago, the city faced a garbage crisis. The government simply couldn't handle the immense growth of the city." The station asked local people what problems they were facing and how they thought the situation might be solved, and then asked officials to respond to these ideas.

Callers from the US and Australia

"We even got callers from Sydney and California," Jonathans remembers "It showed how far our broadcasts reach and how involved the public is." In the end, garbage management was improved. Surabaya is now one of the cleanest cities in Indonesia. While talking, we stroll into the studios. I realise they look different from any I have seen before. There is a window in every studio cabin, with a view on to the street, as if to be part of the everyday life of the community. The station helps locals with 'small' problems such as finding a stolen car, or returning an elderly person suffering from dementia to their home, small things that show how effective it is as community station. Jonathans gives another example of inspiring reporting by his colleagues. In the past, the streets of Surabaya flooded during the monsoon. Diseases spread, animals sought shelter in houses and traffic jams were even bigger than usual, simply because the sewers couldn't handle the rain. Thanks to Suara Surabaya's broadcasts, the

The station helps locals with 'little' problems such as finding a stolen car, or returning an elderly person with dementia to their home

city council could identify where the problems were the biggest, so that these could be addressed first.

Live speech by mayor

The mayor spoke live on the radio to explain why it took time to deal with the flooding, creating a better understanding among listeners. Jonathans: "Nowadays during the monsoon, the streets are flooded, but for a maximum of two hours instead of for days on end."

"Suara Surabaya is about helping people to talk freely, to give their opinion," explains Jonathans. "So not just to criticize, but to go a step further. In the end it improves the lives of everyone involved. Actually, we are not just a radio station - we are a social institution."

Nigerian **undercover journalist** wins Newcomer of the Year award

Anne Koemans

Free Press Unlimited speaks with 'Fisayo Soyombo (31), a Nigerian investigative journalist and former editor of online newspaper The Cable. In 2016, Soyombo won the Newcomer of the Year- Hans Verploeg Award, handed out by Free Press Unlimited during Free Press Live - Stand up for Journalists and Justice. The award recognizes Soyombo's brave undercover reporting and innovative approach in a country where corruption is the rule rather than the exception.

What is the current state of press freedom in Nigeria?

"Journalists are still at risk if they write about certain topics. Corruption in the

What did the Newcomer of the Year award make possible for you?

"Winning the award gave me a truly special feeling. I had come agonizingly close to winning a few international journalism awards, but always fell short of the top prize. This award enhanced my reputation, at home and abroad, as an investigative journalist. A lot of people started to notice my work. It raised my social media following by hundreds and it encouraged dozens of up-and-coming journalists in Nigeria to start aspiring to the loftiest heights of the profession.

With support from Free Press Unlimited, I travelled to Borno State, in Nigeria's North East, to investigate reports of child malnutrition and mortality, and of corruption in the feeding of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). During my ten days undercover, I found evidence of mismanagement and stealing of IDP foodstuffs.



oil and gas industry is a no-go area. Terrorism: another taboo. So journalists are forced to back off from certain stories. I think that this is an even bigger threat than a direct clampdown on journalism by the government or military.

When I wrote Forgotten Soldiers, a five-part series of articles on the plight of soldiers injured fighting Boko Haram, the Nigerian army accused me of committing subversion. A treasonable offence, punishable by death. It is risky, people warn me... but I can't afford to back off."

How would you describe yourself?

"I am a journalist on a mission. For me, journalism is a tool that one can use to advance society. When I was in the North East of Nigeria for example, to report on the soldiers, I spoke with dozens of them. Only one had the confidence to reveal his real identity. I met him on crutches, but when I went back six months later, the Nigerian army had given him a prosthetic. I made a video of him: he was walking. I was fulfilled. And that fulfillment is not negotiable for me."

The story was published in December 2016. In his 2017 New Year's message, President Muhammadu Buhari admitted that he was "aware of some mistakes and wrongdoings in handling the affairs of IDPs". He said the federal government was "taking measures to correct those mistakes and punish the culprits."

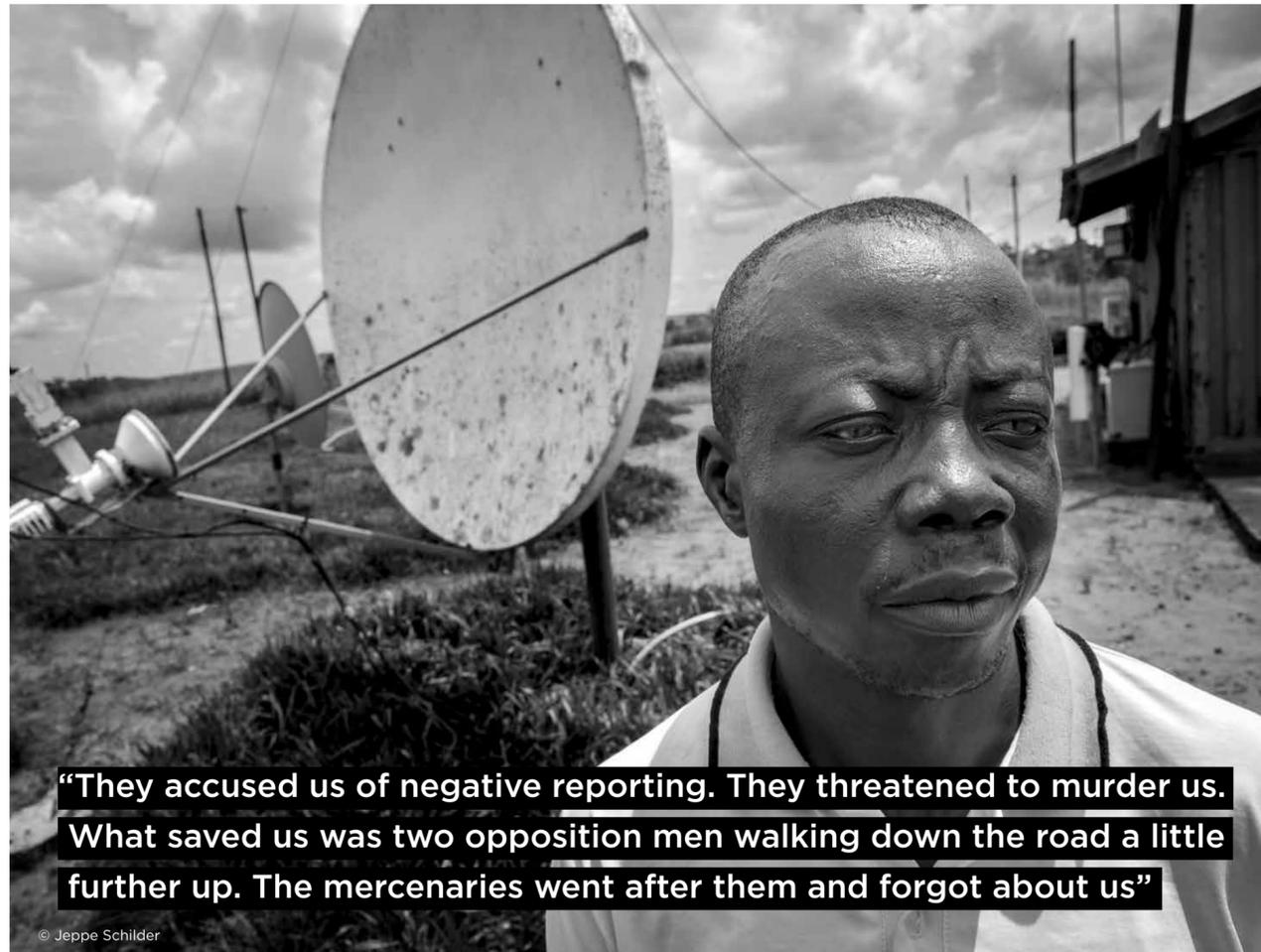
How do you see the future of journalism in Nigeria?

"Bright. Exceedingly bright. There are a couple of young guys coming through the ranks who are especially passionate about investigative journalism. And that's the kind of reporting so badly needed in a country with a huge shortage of courageous journalists who dare to hold the leaders to account and speak for the voiceless."

Where do you see yourself in five years?

"In five years, I hope to have done more in using my work to advance society and speak for the weak and defenseless. Anything else is bonus."

Soyombo is currently writing a book based on his Forgotten Soldiers report.



“They accused us of negative reporting. They threatened to murder us. What saved us was two opposition men walking down the road a little further up. The mercenaries went after them and forgot about us”

© Jeppe Schilder

CAR reporters flee for their lives

Jeppe Schilder

Two radio journalists in the Central African Republic were severely intimidated by opposing factions during the civil war in their country. The Reporters Respond fund, which is run by Free Press Unlimited, provided them with much-needed assistance.

Until a year ago, Fidel Ngombou and Bienvenue Matongo were colleagues at Radio ICDI in Bouali, a two-hour drive from Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic (CAR). Radio ICDI is the only short-wave radio station in the country. However, though the studio and the radio antenna are still there, broadcasts have ceased.

On two occasions, Ngombou and Matongo's reports on the civil war in CAR proved nearly fatal to them. In 2013, Séléka forces targeted them. In 2015, they barely escaped from a local Anti-Balaka militia. Now they both live in Bangui.

A highly volatile situation

Ngombou recalls: “I still remember it clearly. Séléka was in power. On December 16, 2013, mercenaries from Chad and Sudan rode in on motorbikes and surrounded our radio station. They hardly spoke French, let alone our local language, Sango, and they were drunk, which made the situation even more volatile.”

“They accused us of negative reporting and of cooperating with an Anti-Balaka militia. They threatened to murder us. What saved us was two Anti-Balaka men who were walking down the road a little further up. The mercenaries went after them and forgot about us,” Matongo explain.

Fleeing into the jungle

The journalists fled and camped in the jungle for two nights. They eventually reached Bangui via a long detour, and hid there for four months. When Séléka was driven out of Bouali and the area came under the control of an Anti-Balaka militia, they resumed their work. Gradually, as the Anti-Balaka appeared guilty of increasing levels of murder and theft, Ngombou and Matongo began reporting on their crimes.

“We are journalists and we do our work professionally and independently,” Ngombou explains. It was not appreciated. One day, on his way to church, Matongo discovered he was being shadowed. “They wanted to kill me, I was told later by others. But there were too many people around.”

Terrorized

Ngombou was not so lucky when he returned to Bouali from the capital one day. “I was captured by the Anti-Balaka. They were not pleased with what we reported in our radio broadcasts.” The Anti-Balaka took him into the jungle and terrorized him by shooting in the ground between his legs. Thanks to safety training courses he had followed, Ngombou knew how to respond. He stayed calm. “I was not afraid. I had the courage to speak out and knew how to act. I had done nothing wrong.”

However, the local Anti-Balaka leader remained unconvinced. The guerilla rolled a joint and said he would kill Ngombou once he had finished smoking it. He never got to that point. The fighter's telephone rang and he was called away.

Meanwhile, the shots fired between Ngombou's feet drew the attention of one of the sons of the village elder, who was also Anti-Balaka. He rushed to the village, assuming it was under attack. Once there, he heard that the militia had captured a journalist and taken him into the jungle to be executed. He called on a young fighter to take him to where Ngombou, who was his friend, was being held.

Finally freed

After hours of kneeling on the ground with weapons pointed at him, Ngombou was freed, thanks to the intervention of the village elder's son. “Immediately after I was freed I called Matongo to warn him. He had to flee for his life.”

When Ngombou himself returns to Bouali a year later, the tension is written all over his face. This is where guerillas shot between his legs. He is safe now, but it is clear he does not feel comfortable here. The Anti-Balaka leader is in prison, other rebels have resumed their normal daily life and peace seems to have returned. But it is a fragile peace. There are still plenty of weapons around, even though they are out of sight for now.

No after care

What bothers the radio reporters is that they feel abandoned. “Afterwards, no one asked what happened; it was as if no one cared what we went through,” says Ngombou. Matongo adds: “ICDI called me after they heard about it. They didn't ask how I was, they only asked if the equipment was still intact.”

It was only after Jean Ignace Manengou, director of the Association of Central African Community Radio Stations (ARC) and the main partner of Free Press Unlimited in CAR, broadcast the story that attention was given to the reporters' experiences. Free Press Unlimited came to their aid financially. Each of them received \$ 2,000 from the emergency fund for journalists, Reporters Respond. “Since we were no longer working, we were no longer being paid.”

Ngombou does not want to go back to Bouali to work for Radio ICDI. The events have left a lasting impression on him.

Help within 48 hours

Members of the press worldwide face increasing repression, violence and intimidation by governments, militias and other parties. Unfortunately for many journalists working in troubled areas, such threats are a daily reality. Many lose their equipment, their workspace and sometimes their lives.

Direct assistance

To help reporters continue their vital work, Free Press Unlimited launched Reporters Respond. This international emergency fund provides direct assistance to journalists in danger or distress, enabling them to resume work as quickly as possible when faced with obstruction, legal action, vandalism or intimidation. Support is provided irrespective of the medium or the area covered by the journalist.

The assistance is mainly financial in nature, but Free Press Unlimited also has a database of professionals who can assist with things like legal advice, trauma support and cross-border evacuation. “Even if we ourselves do not have local contacts, we always manage to find an organization in our network that has,” says Leon Willems, director of Free Press Unlimited.

The fund cooperates with other national and international organizations, including the Journalists in Distress (JID) network which is mainly used for the (secure) exchange of information on cases during the initial vetting stage.

Helping injured, threatened and fleeing journalists

Reporters Respond receives a growing number of requests for assistance. Several years ago the emphasis was on confiscated, broken or stolen equipment. Now, the number of journalists who are injured, threatened or on the run has risen notably.

That is why Free Press Unlimited is currently drafting a new safety policy and is developing training programs, including material for digital security trainers. Free Press Unlimited already offers tools which make communication safer, like the NetAidKit for secure use of the internet. It is a main contributor to the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and aims to redouble its activities to advocate safer conditions for journalists worldwide.



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Community radio stops child marriage

Teije Brandsma

Sukhi Akhtar is a 13-year-old girl from Baliatali village in South Bangladesh. She would have been someone's wife by now if local station Lokobetar Radio hadn't warned against the practice of child marriage. BNNRC, Free Press Unlimited's partner in Bangladesh, supports 16 community radio stations including Lokotebar.

Sukhi Akhtar is a student in class nine at Babuganj Junior School. Her father, Dulal Sarkar, had decided to marry her off. Bangladesh has one of the highest child marriage rates worldwide, and the highest rate of all for girls under 15. Child marriage is most prevalent in rural areas, where 71 percent of girls are married before the legal age of 18, compared to 54 percent in cities.

Sukhi refused to marry, as she wanted to continue her education. She needed a way out, and thought of the program on early marriage she had recently heard on Lokobetar Radio, her local community station.

Local radio station intervenes

Sukhi discussed the matter with one of her teachers, who had taken part in a discussion panel about child marriage on the radio. The teacher informed Lokobetar's station manager about Sukhi's situation. She in turn warned the local police and through their interference the marriage was prevented.

Lokobetar produces programs aimed at preventing child marriage. It promotes and encourages early intervention, which is supported by the police. Lokobetar thwarted 55 child marriages in 2016 alone. On International Women's Day in March 2017, the station received an award from the local administration for their contribution.

100s more prevented across Bangladesh
"We have had remarkable success in preventing child marriages via community radio stations," says Mohammad Kamaruzzaman, program coordinator for Bangladeshi NGO Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC). "They have been blocked on hundreds of occasions in different districts."

BNNRC

Through its local partner, the Bangladeshi NGO Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), Free Press Unlimited links community radio stations and supports them with knowledge and training, including sessions on fund-raising, management and the production of radio programs.

Training new reporters

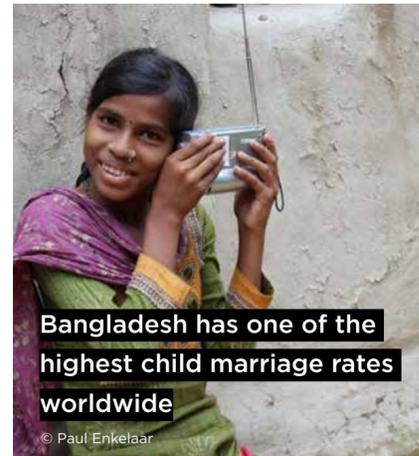
The BNNRC also trains and mentors new reporters. In a country where few women get the chance to work outside the home, BNNRC encourages women and girls, including those from lower castes, to apply for the training program. At the end of their program they receive a press card, which gives the women proof of their occupation as well as recognition of their abilities.

Serving communities through radio

The BNNRC helps organise talk shows and live debates on the radio between citizens, local

authorities and NGOs on child marriage, local budgets, land rights and other topics. And it connects stations with local law enforcement and executive authorities during cyclones and other emergencies.

As an umbrella organization, BNNRC has helped organize the regulation of community radio stations, connects the stations with local governments and civil society organizations, and actively lobbies for legislation that supports community media.



Fighting for press freedom in Bolivia

European Journalism Centre

When Bolivian President Evo Morales lost a referendum in 2016 on whether he could run for a fourth term, he blamed neo-conservative journalists. Calling them a cartel of liars, he accused them of running a disinformation campaign and used the debacle as a reason to try to 'update' the Print Law of 1929, which guarantees freedom of the press.

The beleaguered Print Law

The Print Law regulates and protects print media journalism in Bolivia. It states that journalists accused of libel may be heard by a jury designated by the mayor instead of in a criminal court. There have been unsuccessful attempts by government leaders to modify the law for the last three decades.

Governments have tried to modify the Print Law for the last 30 years

In August 2016, the National Press Association of La Paz (APLP) organized a meeting of six of Bolivia's nine journalists' unions and other defenders of

press freedom from across the country. Under the banner, 'A universal right in constant danger', they drafted a Press Freedom Declaration defending the Print Law. It was ratified by leaders of the six journalists' unions.

Zero tolerance

One of the key elements of the declaration states that "...any violation of the rights and liberties expressed in the permanently threatened Print Law will not be tolerated". The declaration serves as a road map for the defense of press freedom in Bolivia.

After the emergency meeting, a press conference was held to announce the declaration, which was subsequently signed by journalists across the country to support the validity of the Print Law and to publicly denounce continued government attempts to try to modify it.

What is the APLP?

The Asociación de Periodistas de La Paz (APLP) is Bolivia's most influential independent institution. Since it was founded in 1929, its primary mission has been defending freedom of expression. The APLP has 1,100 members and works in coordination with more than 20 journalists' associations and unions across the country. APLP's current focus is advocating defense of the original Press Law that governs the country.

The APLP is supported by the No News is Bad News program, a partnership of the European Journalism Centre, Free Press Unlimited and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A strategic partnership

In 2016, Free Press Unlimited and The European Journalism Centre (EJC) launched 'No News is Bad News', our Strategic Partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Over a period of five years, we will implement this program in 17 countries – from Bangladesh to Somalia.

The objective: to promote societies where independent media organizations and journalists form a diverse and professional information landscape and serve as drivers and catalysts for change. We want to help media organizations and individual journalists to fulfill their vital role in society. The unbiased, reliable information they provide to the public is of crucial importance for citizens and civil society organizations who wish to influence the development of their communities.

The European Journalism Centre is an independent, international, non-profit foundation dedicated to maintaining the highest standards in journalism in particular and the media in general, primarily through the further training of journalists and media professionals, and through the development of impartial communication tools. Founded in 1992 in Maastricht, the Netherlands, the EJC hosts some 1,000 journalists in seminars and briefings on European affairs each year. It also engages in a wide variety of journalistic training and capacity-building projects.



Exposing corruption in Zimbabwe

European Journalism Centre

The Zimbabwean government awarded contracts worth \$600 million for the construction of new electricity plants to a contractor with no previous experience in the sector. The shady tender was discovered by The Source, Zimbabwe's first independent financial news agency.

Electricity blackouts are a regular phenomenon in Zimbabwe. Households, mines and factories go for hours every day without power, further dragging down the economy of the already battered African country.

Journalists at The Source decided to investigate. "We simply had to probe the deals in and around the energy sector," says Nelson Banya, editor in chief at The Source. "The blackouts affect every citizen in this country, not to mention their impact on economic development and potential foreign investment."

Influential friends

The Source staff narrowed their focus on Intratrek, a company fronted by a politically connected Zimbabwean businessman, Wicknell Chivayo. A flamboyant personality, Chivayo often posts images on social media platforms showing him in the company of influential politicians, including President Robert Mugabe.

The state power utility has signaled it will probe the award of the electricity plant tenders

While Chivayo's Zimbabwean political network is well established, The Source's story sought to expose the real face behind Intratrek, Ibrahim Yusuf. South Africa-based Yusuf is originally from Zambia and he returned there in the early 1990s after facing drug trafficking charges. More importantly, the journalists discovered Intratrek was awarded contracts worth millions of dollars to construct electricity plants, even though the company had never built these before.

Criminal records

The government argues that local contractors are not required to demonstrate technical capacity as long as they have international partners who can carry out the projects. The Source's work shows that not only do Intratrek's international partners lack the required experience, they have criminal records for drug trafficking, money laundering, fraud and bribery.

The Minister of Energy, a key voice in the story, refused to answer The Source's questions about it. Intratrek's managing director, Wicknell Chivayo, also refused to comment. Instead, he threatened to sue the news agency.

Minister admits to 'some' wrongdoing

The Source's coverage continued unabated. After the story was picked up by other publications and a wealth of comments appeared in the social media, the Energy Minister put out a statement admitting to 'some' wrongdoing. The state power utility has now signaled it will probe the award of the tenders.

What is The Source?

The Source is Zimbabwe's first fully-digital independent national financial news agency, providing reliable, relevant coverage of Zimbabwe's economic development. Whereas mainstream Zimbabwean media tends to be dominated by news from Harare, the capital, and to a lesser extent Bulawayo, the second city, The Source has a countrywide footprint provided by a network of stringers operating from the country's key economic zones.

The Source was launched in 2013 with the technical assistance of the European Journalism Centre (EJC) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. EJC is a partner of Free Press Unlimited within its No News Is Bad News program.

Changing Sudan by **telling the truth**

By Gerhard Wilts, Nederlands Dagblad

Atrocities in Sudan do not cause uproar in the world. The media ignores this immense country. That infuriates Free Press Unlimited director Leon Willems, who fights for freedom of expression in Sudan: "The heart of this African country can only continue to beat if the truth is being told." One of the few places where the truth about Sudanese current affairs is being told is from a studio in the Dutch capital Amsterdam.



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"Since its independence in 1956 Sudan has been worn down by a grinding power struggle," says Willems. For a large part of his working life Willems traveled as a journalist in Africa and the Middle East. He spent several years living in Khartoum, where he fell in love with Sudan. "I still feel homesick almost every day. The country is so fascinating! And the hospitality of the Sudanese is unimaginable."

Despite that welcoming spirit from the Sudanese, reports from Sudan continue to be depressing: revolts, violence, murder, ethnic struggle and a seemingly endless stream of refugees. From Darfur in the West to the Nuba mountains in the South, from the oil rich and therefore most contested border region of Abyei to the capital Khartoum, unrest is brewing. Millions of Sudanese are adrift, on

the run, exploited, starving or dead. The regime rules with an iron fist and has perfected a sophisticated divide and rule policy. Those in power do not successfully subdue the rebels - but the question is whether they truly aim for that. Western news desks show hardly any interest in Sudan. "Nobody is interested and that has a lot to do with bias from Western journalists. I personally think there is a demand in the Western world for news from Sudan that is done properly and of high standards," says Willems. According to Willems, Sudan is not an interesting story because of the 'self-centeredness' of some Western media and because of fixation on hype, such as the daily tweets of President Trump. According to him, the focus in Europe is too much on immigration, on safety and on terrorism. There is hardly any attention for Latin America or Africa,

let alone Sudan. "The reality is: the beating heart of Sub Saharan Africa is Sudan."

To understand this one simply needs to look at a map, explains Willems. Until 2011, Sudan had nine neighboring countries and it is a giant among nations. It has become linked with armed conflicts in the region and is a hide-away for militias, nomads and terrorists. Bin Laden chose to live in Juba, in South Sudan.

The impact of Sudan on the region has been underestimated by the West, which views the country as poor and believes the African desert nation is backward, hopeless and in need of aid. "They do not see the influence Sudan has. They forget that the Sudanese are proud people and aware of their crucial role in this part of the world", according

to Willems. This misunderstanding plays directly into the hands of the ruling elite in Khartoum; its dictator Omar al-Bashir has made use of it for decades.

Despite sanctions and the occasional political condemnation from abroad, the brutal and corrupt regime in Sudan is firmly in power. "Punishing Sudan is a senseless strategy," wrote American diplomat Zach Vertin at the end of January 2017, in the authoritative magazine Foreign Affairs. He stressed that cooperation with a such a regime could have more positive effects. "Punishing a terrible regime may appeal to our morals, but we should be aware of the consequences. Support for the Sudanese population should be the most important goal."

The one-sided American sanctions against Sudan at the end of the

nineties sent Khartoum into the arms of the Chinese and mainly affected the already plagued impoverished population. Bashir in the meantime manages to stay out of the International Criminal Court, which issued a warrant for his arrest. For a quarter of a century he has effectively manipulated his way through politics; he meddles in tribal relations and moves armies and militias as though on a chessboard. He continuously changes individuals in his government. In the meantime in Khartoum wealth is divided among Bashir's loyal National Congress Party members.

Sudan Democracy First Group, an organization striving for democracy in the country, has investigated Bashir's 'proxy wars: a tactic of waging war without being directly involved. Towards this end Bashir used the Rapid Support Forces - a militia from Darfur - in May last year to fight against tribes in the Blue Nile province. It was an attempt to repeat the Darfur model of genocide and mass murder in this part of the country - and it partly succeeded.

Similarly the governing NCP assisted the infamous Maban Heroes Militia and the so-called South Sudanese White Army in

terrorizing the Sudanese fleeing to refugee camps in South Sudan. These militias, trained by the Sudanese army, cause insecurity and instability in the now independent country South Sudan. "Militarily, this serves two purposes: creating a general environment of confusion and uncertainty within the refugee camps, and distracting the Northern rebel army, the SPLA-N," concludes Sudan Democracy First.

"The lack of respect for human lives is without limits," adds Willems. "The political elite sacrifices civilians as though they mean nothing; it sends children to war just to stay in power themselves. All power is concentrated in Khartoum, the population of the countryside is not valued, and nobody is interested in the potential of the country. To reach their goals those in power patiently and consistently obstruct foreign missions. The frustration at the United Nations about the level of this obstruction is sky-high."

That Bashir is still in power after all these years surprises Willems. "Finally the Sudanese themselves will put an end to it", he predicts. But he admits that prospects for short term change are far off. The Sudanese president is 73 years

old. But on the African continent ageing dictators written off long ago are still in power, such as Robert Mugabe (93) in Zimbabwe or Jose Eduardo Dos Santos (74) from Angola. According to Willems, military intervention is not the answer. Instead he prefers to focus on independent and reliable news that will open the eyes of the Sudanese. The road ahead will be difficult, as Sudanese press is consistently under pressure. "They are threatened or imprisoned for a while, but there are no executions. The media is like a pressure valve that helps the population to let off steam."

The independent news station Radio Dabanga is a jewel in the crown of Free Press Unlimited's projects. The short-wave radio station is a thorn in the side of the Sudanese regime. The Amsterdam-based channel has a daily following of around two million Sudanese. It also has a satellite channel which continuously shows a news ticker and informative slides and which is still being watched on a daily basis by a million loyal 'viewers'. "The daily reports of Radio Dabanga have so much influence on the opinion of the people that the regime considers it subversive and dangerous to the state. But since

Radio Dabanga broadcasts from abroad, the Sudanese government cannot control it."

Radio Dabanga, with a staff of fifteen, does not receive much national or international acclaim. "Many press agencies use Radio Dabanga for their coverage on Sudan, because it is a reliable news source, but it hardly gets the credits for it. Moreover, due to the insecurity in the country there is a serious lack of footage available. This is, however, changing - due to the influence of social media and smartphones. Despite that, hardly anybody in the Western world is interested in news from Sudan. And in the meantime the injustice continues."

This article has been taken from an interview published in the 'Nederlands Dagblad'.

www.dabangasudan.org



Whatsapp journalism

It was early in the morning when hundreds of WhatsApp-messages began pouring in. Just after newsreader Ahmed from Radio Dabanga had announced a WhatsApp number to Sudanese listeners it started. The response was overwhelming. A new type of interactive Sudanese journalism emerged.

"Before we started using WhatsApp our audience would call the central desk in The Netherlands. Now they can just send us a message or a picture", reporter Mustafa explains. Mustafa is scanning the app at the start of his working day, both in individual chats as in various groups, such as doctors, lawyers, journalists, and human rights activists. From all over Sudan people send feedback.

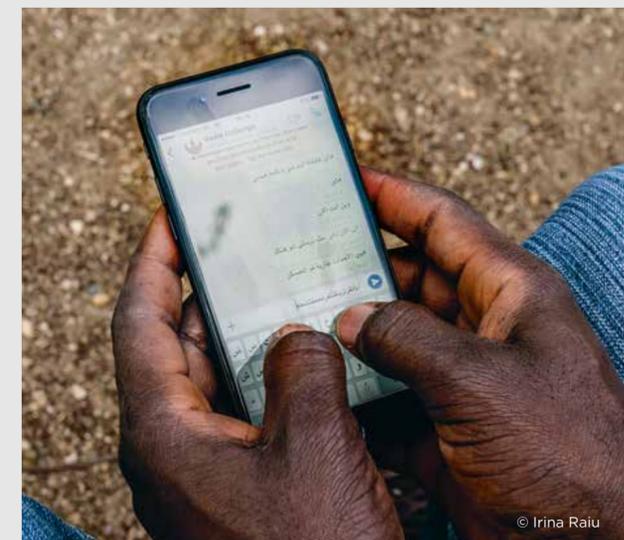
Newsworthy information is discussed and assigned to the reporters for fact checking and reporting. "We received pictures of an enormous fire in South Darfur. Based on this report we called the people in the area to verify the story and we discovered that 50 houses were fully destroyed, leaving 30 families without shelter. We reported this news in our bulletin the same evening", Mustafa remembers.

After discovering the popularity of the WhatsApp number and the increased engagement, the Dabanga team decided to use the app for news distribution as well. "Each day, after we finish our news bulletin, we make a summary we share via WhatsApp", says Mustafa. The news is being shared in the morning and has big red bullets to make it more recognisable.

"When we don't send it we get questions. People count on us for independent information," Mustafa explains. On a daily basis Radio Dabanga reaches about 120 groups. An average group has 150 to a maximum of 250 members, which equals approximately 25,000 people. "I often see our news being reposted in other WhatsApp groups or on Facebook."

Using the WhatsApp number for news gathering and news distribution is time consuming. "Every morning there are a lot of messages and I try to answer as many as possible. In the afternoon we get even more of them with lots of valuable news tips and photos. Even at night people are still sending news in. It never stops and I want to be on top of it so we can give people the information they deserve to know", says Mustafa.

To be more effective, Radio Dabanga is considering using a chatbot, a device that filters out the most crucial information and allows the team to swiftly respond to listeners when needed.



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War of words: are Syrian journalists being 'killed' or 'martyred'?

Teije Brandsma

In 2014, opposition reporters in Syria wanted to compile a document setting out professional standards for all Syrian media outlets. Free Press Unlimited organized a series of roundtables to facilitate its compilation. The resulting document, the Ethical Charter for Syrian Media, has since led to dialogue between opposition and loyalist media.

"When journalists from our side are killed while on duty, we call them 'martyrs,'" said one of the participants during the first meeting in 2014 as he looked around the table. Apart from the pro-government media, they were all there: left-

wingers and conservatives, Kurds and Arabs, Sunni Muslims, Christians and seculars – all in the same room, though they had often been adversaries in the past. And not everyone agreed with the remark.

"And when a journalist from the regime dies on duty, we just write 'killed'. Because he is not a martyr," the first speaker continued. Some participants nodded, while others stayed silent. In times of war, there are often fights about words. In fact, fights about words become one of the major contributors to the war. And here was a fight about to start. Is 'martyr' a neutral word for a journalist?

Sharing the same vision for Syria

"During the first roundtables, the participants used to argue and didn't accept each other at all," says Wihad Wiess, one of the project's secretaries. "But two years and eight roundtables on, they accepted each other's characters and ideas. They realized they are not alone with their challenges and that they share the same vision for the future of Syria."

The Ethical Charter for Syrian Media, as the document is known, has been signed by 43 organizations to date. "It was the first time that different media organizations were brought together to work on a common project and signed one document," says Wiess.

Activist Zedoun Al Zoubi facilitated the charter's creation. Recently, he met someone working with journalists in government-controlled areas of the country. "I discovered that 'our' charter was read by fifteen journalists on the other side and they praised it," he said. "They had wanted to produce an agreement of their own, but then they found this one. They liked it because it is professional and apolitical."

Talking to each other

"These journalists showed an interest in signing the charter, and, more importantly, they showed a willingness to meet. This is an extremely important

thing for my country and for my own agenda. My agenda that says: I want Syrians to talk to each other."

"It could be one of the few occasions when the professional environment counters hatred, anger, hate speech, and above all, war," Al Zoubi says, concluding, "The charter has become a vehicle for peace."

"This could be one of the few occasions when the professional environment counters anger, hate speech, war"

What is the Ethical Charter?

Most reporters in Syria today were not journalists when the war began. During a series of meetings in Turkey, representatives of Syrian media institutions met to discuss the first Ethical Charter for Syrian Media, intended to serve as a vocational and ethical reference. These meetings were facilitated, organized and moderated by Free Press Unlimited as part of a project to enhance ethical journalism on Syria and by Syrian media professionals. The Swedish International Development Agency is the back donor of the project.

In September 2015, 20 participants signed the charter. This means they commit themselves to acting according to the principles it sets out, including objectivity and integrity, independence in coverage and respect for the truth. A year later, the total number of Syrian media that signed the charter had risen to 43.



The police chief who apologized live on air

Teije Brandsma

How often does a police chief apologize during a live news show because his officers have misbehaved? Only to share his cell phone number so that further misbehavior can be reported to him? It happened at a radio station in DR Congo, a local partner of Free Press Unlimited. What a difference one news report can make.

Hundreds of female merchants in the city of Bukavu, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, arrive at the Nyawera market every morning. Each one chooses a spot for her mat and displays her fruit and vegetables on it, hoping to earn a few francs.

Unofficial and unregulated

To officially run a business in Congo you need to buy a permit and pay taxes to the municipality. And of course you need a building to run your office from. But the vegetable sellers are part of the unofficial, unregulated economy. They simply lay down their mats and start selling tomatoes, cassava, yam, or whatever they grow on the outskirts of Bukavu and bring into town.

The police are a nuisance at the Nyawera market. According to the law, every street seller is illegal and should be chased away. But there are hundreds of them and only the most eager policeman will give an unlucky seller trouble. Still, they can harass the women at will. Those most likely to draw the attention of the police are sellers whose goods hamper traffic.

A violent incident at the market

In November 2016, an incident took place at Nyawera. A police officer beat up a woman selling tomatoes. Was she too far out in the street, obstructing traffic? Or did the officer just want to levy an unofficial 'tax' on her? Whatever the reason, the officer stomped her violently,

her vegetables rolling out onto the street.

This started a commotion, as curious bystanders gathered. Sometimes police officers can be heavy-handed, but this man was particularly brutal. The bystanders started calling Mama Radio, a newly established radio station focused on women's rights, to report what they witnessed.

Undercover reporting

A journalist from Mama Radio was sent to the location undercover. The police are regularly aggressive towards journalists, afraid of how they will be portrayed in the media. The victim and the officer had gone, but the witnesses had a story to tell.

The chief of police heard the resulting report when it aired. He contacted Mama Radio to find out more and he apologized for the incident live on air. Several days later, he took part in a roundtable discussion broadcast by the radio station and gave his personal phone number, urging listeners to contact him if they witnessed police officers brutalizing women.

Already making a difference

"That was a beautiful moment in the young life of our radio station, to have such a positive influence on local society with just a single news item," says program director Julienne Baseke. "It was rather a small news item, but it had a big impact. This story made a difference."

A new radio station

Founded in February 2016, Mama Radio has rapidly become a popular radio station in and around Bukavu, the largest city in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Free Press Unlimited supports local partner AFEM with the production of media content.

Specializing in gender-sensitive reporting

Free Press Unlimited was especially involved in the design of the station's *Témoin Spécial* investigative journalism show. In 2014, specialist consultants trained staff on investigative techniques, online journalism, and using new technologies and audio-visuals in their productions. 11 of the participants were women, paving the way for more gender-sensitive reporting. This is a part of Africa that has seen suffering on a large scale in recent years, especially among women.

A highly engaged audience

Two years on, the bi-monthly show is going strong, reaching approximately 3,750,000 people. Many listeners contact the radio station to share their experiences, ask questions, or propose new topics for investigation. Free Press Unlimited has helped refine the style and format of the show, and gives advice on how to improve content to further enhance audience engagement. *Témoin Spécial*'s reporters cover both rural and urban areas and deal with topics like domestic violence, the stigma around people living with HIV and high poverty rates.

How to attract younger listeners

Free Press Unlimited project coordinator visits yearly to monitor the project and provide hands-on support. The next steps are improving the radio's online presence and visibility, and the development of a cross-media platform, to help attract a younger audience. AFEM is particularly pleased about its collaboration with Free Press Unlimited, as we are one of the only implementers to encourage the development of social media and online strategies.

Free Press Unlimited

People deserve to know

Our vision is: People deserve to know. If you don't know what's going on around you, how can you make the right decisions? It is tragic then, that only one in seven people lives in a country with a free press. In 2016, press freedom globally declined to its lowest levels in 13 years. According to UNESCO, 102 journalists were killed while doing their job. The perpetrators often go unpunished. We believe journalists should report the news and not be the news.

It is our mission to ensure that impartial information is available to people everywhere, today and in the future. The programs run by Free Press Unlimited and its partners help journalists report and broadcast their stories, even in countries with little or no press freedom. If they are imprisoned or sabotaged, we help them get back to their vital work as soon as possible.

We also fund local media outlets and train new journalists in countries where there is a dearth of (local) reporting.

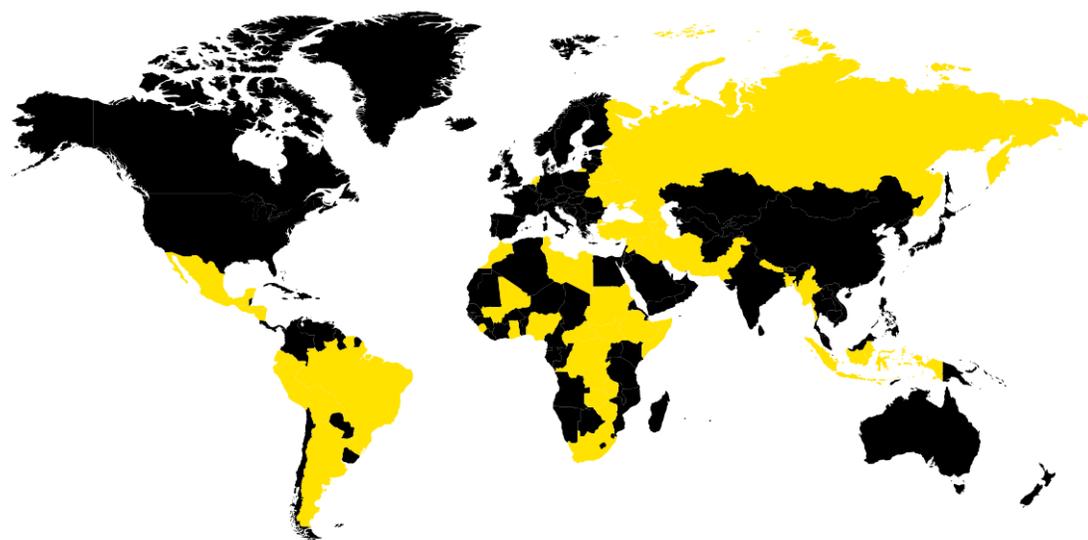
In war zones and conflict areas, reliable news can be a matter of life and death. That is why we helped create a media charter to ensure fair journalism in Syria, and why the Free Press Unlimited offices in Amsterdam host Radio Dabanga, which broadcasts to 2 million listeners in Sudan.

To help local media fulfill their vital role in society, Free Press Unlimited vigorously promotes three key goals:

1. An enabling environment for the media, conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity.
2. Media that serve the interests of the public - both men and women - and act as a watchdog on their behalf.
3. Media professionals who work to the highest standards, are effective and sustainable.

These are the objectives we put our heart and soul into - every day. People deserve to know.

To read more about our vision and mission, go to <http://bit.ly/FPUvision>



97 partners

66 projects

46 countries

Free Press Unlimited operates in these countries

Column

More than seventeen years ago, I was working at the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta, when I received a call from my friend Sander, who worked as a journalist in Indonesia. We had planned to go for dinner together, but Sander had to cancel because he wanted to go to East Timor to report the news on the turmoil following the outcome of the referendum on independence. Instead of reporting the news, he became the news himself: he was brutally killed.

This horrific murder of Sander was an act of intimidation to other journalists, who had just entered the country. The killing was more than a human personal tragedy: it was a tragedy for journalism and for society. Unfortunately Sander's case is not unique: in the last ten years 827 journalists were killed and even more were threatened and intimidated. This is a threat to a well-functioning democracy. A free media environment enables people to raise their voice and hold their leaders accountable.

That is why the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs works together with Free Press Unlimited to fight impunity worldwide. We are bringing together different stakeholders and working with the

United Nations to strengthen mechanisms to make a difference on the ground. Preventing violence against journalists by actively promoting a culture in which free speech can flourish; protecting journalists against violence with (digital) security training and sound legislation, and prosecuting perpetrators who intimidate or commit violence against journalists. The future of a society is not secure if journalists are not safe. That is why the Netherlands stands up for the safety of journalists.

Kees van Baar
Human Rights Ambassador
of the Kingdom of
the Netherlands



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Colophon

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