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# The safety of women journalists: Breaking the cycle of silence and violence

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*An overview of nine countries*

*IMS Defending Journalism book series*  
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**IMS**  
Nørregade 18  
1165 Copenhagen K  
Denmark  
+45 88327000  
info@mediasupport.org

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Author: Silvia Chocarro  
Editor: Robert Shaw  
Layout: Nanette Vabø

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# List of acronyms

ACHPR	African Commission for Human and People's Rights	JSAG	Journalists Safety Advisory Group
ACOS Alliance	A Culture of Safety Alliance	KMWG	Kenya Media Working Group
AJJC	Asian Institute for Journalism and Communication	LGBTQI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex
AJF	Afghan Journalists' Federation	MAP	Media Association of Puntland
AJI	Aliansi Jurnalis Independen	MCK	Media Council of Kenya
AJSC	Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee	MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
AMWIK	Association of Media Women in Kenya	NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
APC	Association for Progressive Communication	NPC	National Press Council
CCJD	Center for Community Journalism and Development	NPU	Nepal Press Union
CEDAW	Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women	NUJP	National Union of Journalists of the Philippines
CERRUM	Committee for Risk Evaluation and Measure Recommendations	OAS	Organization of American States
CMFR	Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility	OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
CoE	Council of Europe	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
CPAWJ	Centre for the Protection of Afghan Women Journalists	PJSF	Pakistan Journalism Safety Fund
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists	PCIJ	Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism
DRF	Digital Rights Foundation	PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	PPI	Philippine Press Institute
FESOJ	Federation of Somali Journalists	PSSC	Philippine Social Science Council
FLIP	Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa	PTFoMS	Presidential Task Force on Media Security
FNJ	Federation of Nepali Journalists	RSF	Reporters without Borders
FPU	Free Press Unlimited	SAMSN	South Asia Media Solidarity Network
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project	SAS	Sancharika Samuha
HRC	Human Rights Council	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
IAWRT	International Association of Women in Radio and Television	SMSG	Somalia Media Support Group
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists	SOWRJA	Somali Women Journalist Rights Association
IJRDA	Iraqi Journalists' Rights Defense Association	SWJ	Somali Women Journalists Organisation
IMS	International Media Support	UN	United Nations
INSI	International News Safety Institute	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IPI	the International Press Institute	UNESCO	United National Education Science and Culture Organisation
IREX SAFE		UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
IWJF	Iraqi Women Journalists Forum	UNP	National Protection Unit
IWMF	International Women's Media Foundation	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
JCSSJ	Joint Committee for the Safety and Security of Journalists	WAN-IFRA	World Association of Newspapers
		WWJ	Working Women Journalists

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# Introduction:

## A global view

Within the last decade, awareness that women in media are subject to gender-based attacks has grown, along with a greater understanding that this poses a serious challenge to media freedom and development. In 2012, the United Nations (UN) Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity was adopted, calling for a gender-based approach. This kicked off a growing demand for initiatives that address the safety needs of women journalists. But what does this mean, exactly? This working document begins to address this question.

As more and more women speak out on the issue, it has become clear that the threat is multi-faceted. It includes not just violence, often in the form of sexual assault, but a larger array of attacks and entrenched behaviours that severely challenge women's ability to practice and advance in the profession. These take many forms: sexual harassment, unequal working conditions and relentless online abuse. The prevailing culture in newsrooms can be marginalising or even hostile toward women or simply unprepared when it comes to addressing gender specific safety concerns. Women journalists in many countries also face enormous social and family pressures that may hinder or discourage their work. When women journalists are restricted or hounded out of the profession, society is denied access to a diverse range of information and perspectives.

International Media Support (IMS) commissioned this report to further assess the question of how women in media are being targeted and how journalism is impacted by gender specific harassment and violence. Seven years on from the launch of the UN Plan of Action, it also looks at to what extent this issue is being effectively addressed on a national level and supported by the international community. The study is intended to inform debate and actions by media owners and editors, policy makers, press freedom organisations and journalists.

The report was undertaken as part of IMS' longstanding commitment and programmatic work to promote a comprehensive and holistic approach to safety of journalists. Working with other international and national partners, IMS has sought to develop and strengthen programmes aimed at preventing and responding to threats against journalists by developing locally anchored mechanisms to offer journalists physical protection, including specific safety and protection measures for female media workers, as well as advocate against impunity and for the rights of journalists to perform their duty. Among IMS' aims with this work is to actively support the implementation of the UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Building a contextual understanding of threats to journalism and sharing emerging good practices are fundamental steps to improving responses and mobilising stakeholders to do more. With this in mind, IMS published a global study in 2017; "Defending Journalism: How national mechanisms can protect journalists and address the issue of impunity". The publication analysed ongoing efforts to address safety of journalists in seven countries where conflict, instability and unchecked violence against the media

challenge the security of journalists, impeding their ability to produce quality journalism. Building on the 2017 publication, IMS commissioned consultant Silvia Chocarro to compile this report focused on the gender aspects of safety.

In Part I of the report, Chocarro gives a global perspective on the nature of threats women journalists face, observing that they are targeted as journalists and again as women. She also looks at steps international organisations, including NGOs, the UN and regional bodies, have taken. While a normative base has been established through multiple international documents recognising the need for a gender based approach and a number of organisations have initiated important research on the issue as well as some concrete programmes to address problems like online harassment and tailored security training, more needs to be done to see gender-based concerns integrated throughout the safety work of stakeholders.

Part II of the report looks at the situation in nine countries—Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Somalia—seven of which were featured in the 2017 publication. These countries were selected to bring together diverse country experiences from different environments known to be dangerous to journalists. Based on this preliminary analysis, the report identifies key work areas to focus on moving forward in Part III.

This document is focused on women journalists and uses terms such as 'gender' to refer to socially constructed attributes associated with being male or female, including roles, responsibilities, opportunities, needs and constraints that are used to justify inequality and unequal power relations. It does not include specific analysis or data on other gender variables such as identity and sexuality, or how these intersect with other variables such as ethnicity, culture, age or social class. Research for this document reveals that international and regional standards refer to women when calling for a gender-based approach to the safety of journalists. Institutions and other bodies protecting media workers also tend to address the situation of women journalists when incorporating a gender-based approach to their programming. We found almost no research on the safety of LGBTQI journalists.

The report's content is drawn primarily from desk research bolstered by informal consultations with a selected number of local experts. In some cases, information was drawn from consultations, focus groups and other country research conducted by IMS or its partners under its safety programmes. The projects and the range of case studies are meant to be illustrative rather than be comprehensive. As a working document, the report is intended to provide a launchpad for ongoing discussion and solution-building rather than an exhaustive analysis. As stated by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, in her 2017 report on a gender-sensitive approach to arbitrary killings:

"A gender-sensitive approach is an evolving approach. One has to learn how to do it, practice doing it, be candidly reflective about one's shortcomings, try again. It keeps evolving, demanding more refined intellectual nuance, greater methodological subtlety. It requires openness of the mind, clarity of objectives, and the recognition that others are likely to strengthen the approach in the months or years ahead".

# Executive Summary

There is growing international consensus that women journalists face specific threats to their safety and professional development and that integration of a gender sensitive approach is essential to promoting the safety of journalists worldwide and ensuring there is diversity among not just media actors but content that sheds light on all aspects of society.

A number of UN documents articulate this, starting with the 2012 UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, followed by resolutions from the Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly and Security Council and declarations, guidelines and statements from regional forums. A variety of research has been produced by freedom of expression groups, UNESCO, the OSCE and others giving a clearer picture to the scope and nature of attacks against women journalists. National and international initiatives by stakeholders around the world – including some three-dozen cited in this report – have taken measures to counter violence, harassment, and other challenges impeding advancement of women in media and coverage of women's issues.

On many fronts this escalation in dialogue and awareness of what traditionally has been a sensitive, and often taboo, aspect of media safety, as well as growing efforts and coordination around how to address it, is encouraging but they are early steps in a large and complex problem, one deeply rooted in society and in turn the media industry. IMS has produced this report to assess where we stand on mainstreaming gender into journalist safety, look at examples of emerging good practices, and identify priority areas for future work. It looks at some of the global work that has been done to further understand and respond to threats to women journalists as well as the specific circumstances and initiatives in nine countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia and The Philippines. The report includes a final chapter on the way forward.

## Core challenges, prevention and response

Based on research conducted by various freedom of expression groups around the world, and consultations with individual experts, the report's author, Silvia Chocarro concludes globally, the threats women journalists face are two-fold. As journalists they are victims to the dangers all journalists work under but are also targeted for the simple fact they are women taking on a public role. Current worrying trends such as high imprisonment, murders, widespread impunity and attacks in digital spaces, affect women journalists as they do male journalists, but attacks against women journalists often take on a specific gender dimension. Sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace are additional stresses women must contend with to do their jobs as journalists.

The impact of gendered harassment, she notes, is that women are abandoning or choosing not to pursue a career in journalism, self-censoring and experiencing psychological and physical harm. This contributes to a lack of, or insufficient, coverage of women's voices and perspectives. These outcomes have been made worse by the lack of gender tailored support and protocols in place at media outlets, for freelancers, within national mechanisms and civil society safety programmes. In addition, underreporting of attacks

by women for fear of losing their jobs, not being assigned to cover certain issues considered dangerous or not appropriate for women and being shamed by colleagues, family and society at large, minimises the issue.

The report identifies several core challenges that repeatedly came up in the nine countries, most of which fall within the following three categories:

- *Physical security*—Women journalists are more often targets of sexual violence than male journalists. There is a need for more gender specific preventative resources, such as training and risk assessments.
- *Verbal threats and abuse, particularly online*: Women journalists are subject to a particularly damaging brand of vitriol that includes, in high volume, explicit threats of sexual violence, personal insults and circulation of private information or demeaning images.
- *Sexual harassment, workplace and social inequality*: Gender inequality is entrenched within the media sector and societies, manifested in unequal pay, low numbers of women able to advance to the decision-making levels and a tolerance or lack of protocols when it comes to sexual harassment by colleagues, sources or interviewees. Social pressure against women joining professional ranks or family obligations also disadvantage women in the field.

At the same time, the report identifies a number of projects, campaigns and other measures introduced, primarily by civil society groups, to address these core challenges.

Establishing dedicated pathways to protection or assistance for women is one of the concrete needs identified by the report. For women, there is a need for additional elements when it comes to prevention and response such as training by women available to women, risks assessments, protocols and security guides that include gender considerations, emergency response programmes with resources dedicated to women and that take into account the social context women in different countries are operating in and psychological care that addresses sexual assault.

One model is the emergency support programme established by International Media Support (IMS) and Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) which provides an educational, physical, psychological and legal support programme for women journalists. AJSC appointed female coordinators in various provinces and Kabul. In Nepal, NGOs with international support have organised security training workshops exclusively for women. There, and in Iraq and Kenya, freedom of expression groups produced security guides for journalists that are in part wholly dedicated to women journalists.

This should extend to national mechanisms as well. One good example is Colombia's state protection programme, which has special tracks for reviewing threats against women, including a case assessment panel with representatives from women's rights organisations and customised responses. Burgeoning mechanisms still under development in Somalia and Nepal are structured to include female representatives on the committees overseeing them, though neither is yet functioning.

Cyber abuse has been a growing concern worldwide. Countries analysed for this report saw women journalists subjected to extreme online harassment to the point that many women are driven to leave the profession or to self-censor.

Civil society groups and media support organisations have launched several

projects, such as the Byte Back campaign throughout South Asia and the work of the Digital Rights Foundation in Pakistan, aimed at countering online abuse with messages of solidarity, guidance on documenting and reporting instances and public awareness campaigns aimed at acknowledging and denouncing the problem. Another track that has been introduced in some countries is working with media outlets to improve how they respond to these attacks to ensure journalists have pathways in place to report abuse and are offered support.

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## “Sexual harassment particularly in the workplace was cited as a safety threat to women in nearly all nine countries”

Sexual harassment particularly in the workplace was cited as a safety threat to women in nearly all nine countries and in global research reviewed for this report. Several approaches for how to improve behaviour within newsrooms have been developed in recent years. In Afghanistan, groups launched a set of anti-sexual harassment guidelines for media outlets and set up a committee to hear complaints by women journalists. One group in Colombia is working with media outlets on a certification programme for security protocols and risk prevention, which includes implementing non-discrimination and sexual harassment policies. In Pakistan, a gender-sensitive code of ethics for print media has been introduced to media groups. In Kenya, a media working group brought journalist safety protocols into newsrooms that includes some gender specific points. Monitoring and ensuring these are being implemented is a pressing concern.

Creating forums to bring women together can lead to steps to promote security and identify issues that commonly impact women journalists in a given country. In Somalia women journalists came together and successfully advocated for paid maternity leave at ten media houses and also formed an action plan intended for newsrooms to adopt to end sexual harassment. In Colombia women journalists are increasingly sharing their stories of sexual harassment publicly as well as working to improve coverage of gender-based violence and other gender specific issues.

To gain an accurate understanding of threats to women journalists and in turn appropriate response mechanisms, disaggregated data on attacks against journalists is needed. Increasingly groups that do monitoring in Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia among others are doing this, some more systematically than others, but few if any governments do. A lack of common standards around monitoring of this data globally is one area the report identified as a priority.



In this photo taken on 16 April 2018 people leave the church after the Archbishop of Malta celebrated mass in memory of murdered journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. Three men have been arrested over the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia, 53, who died in her home country Malta in a car bomb on 16 October 2017. The men have pleaded not guilty but are suspected of carrying out the attack on behalf of someone else. Photo: Matthew Mirabelli/ AFP/Ritzau Scanpix

# Women journalists: Facing a two-fold risk

Violence against journalists is a worrying global trend. Both male and female media professionals, bloggers and other media players are increasingly targeted for their reporting. Yet women face increased risk due to their specific vulnerabilities entailed by gender. They are subject to the same types of attacks as their male counterparts – killings, imprisonment, physical and psychological attacks, acts of intimidation, harassment, threats, surveillance, etc – but violence against them is very often manifested in the form of sexual attacks. They also face risks in traditionally “safe” environments, such as their own newsrooms.<sup>2</sup> They are vulnerable to attacks not only from those attempting to silence their coverage, but also from sources and colleagues<sup>3</sup>, and even family members. Cultural norms and stigmas coupled with a lack of faith in their supervisors and the authorities to act upon their complaints discourage reporting of gender-based violence. In this context, silence prevails<sup>4</sup>.

The number of women journalists killed is steadily increasing. According to UNESCO, in 2012, women accounted for 4% of the 119 media workers killed; by 2017, this had increased to 14% of the 80 victims recorded that year. In 2018, the percentage was 7%. Furthermore, women account for most cases of sexual violence and online harassment. According to a global study by the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) and Troll-Busters, nearly two-thirds<sup>5</sup> of women journalists have been threatened or harassed online and offline, while 26% have been physically attacked<sup>6</sup>. The study, entitled “Attacks and Harassment – The Impact on women journalists and their reporting,” reveals that close to 70% of respondents indicated that being a woman was a contributing factor in the attacks.

As well as physical consequences, these attacks have major psychological impact. In fact, one-third of interviewees reported experiencing physical, mental and emotional trauma following harassment. For freelancers, the situation is even more difficult. Surveys show these women feel even less safe. Consequently, one-third of respondents said they had considered leaving the profession, while more than one-third avoids reporting stories that could put them at risk. Despite these worrying statistics, the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma reports that only 26% of the safety training for journalists includes gender specific considerations, while only 8% of women journalists have been subjected to sexual violence. Just 3% had participated in online harassment training<sup>7</sup>.

The situation is little better in the digital sphere. The Association for Progressive Communication (APC) identified women, and in particular women journalists, as one of the most frequently targeted groups when it comes to online violence<sup>8</sup>. Online attacks against female media workers are often sexualised. According to the Karisma Foundation, these attacks tend to make frequent references to personal and family relationships and use insults involving physical appearance and intellectual capability. Intimidation rarely comes as a direct consequence of the women’s ideas or arguments, but rather her identity as a woman who thinks for herself and speaks out accordingly<sup>9</sup>.

Online risks range from pernicious, gendered online harassment to overt, targeted attacks that frequently involve threats of sexual violence. Increasingly, they also include digital security breaches<sup>10</sup>. In certain cases, the harassment may be perpetrated by an individual as a means of expressing personal animosity. Yet, as stated by the International Press Institute (IPI)<sup>11</sup>, it has become increasingly clear that in many political environments online harassment is also the result of concerted, organised campaigns to silence and neutralise information and critical voices.

The culture of silence and resulting lack of accountability compounds the damage. According to the IWMF and TrollBusters study cited above, only 4 in 10 women journalists reported abuse to a supervisor, and more than half felt nothing would be done to address the issue. One of the conclusions of this study is that both online and offline abuse tends to be underestimated by media management and minimised by authorities and others who are best positioned to provide support. The Karisma Foundation’s research also found that one of the biggest disappointments expressed by women journalists was the lack of proper support in the event of humiliating messages. Close personal and professional contacts – albeit with the best of intentions – usually advise them to ignore the comments, creating a feeling of helplessness<sup>12</sup>. APC research also exposes poor responses to online gender-based violence from Internet intermediaries. This can contribute to the chilling effect on freedom of expression. In addition, Terms of Service may lead to censorship by platforms, other users (through reporting), or to self-censorship without actually providing the targets of harassment with redress or recourse<sup>13</sup>.

A research report by Amnesty International entitled “Toxic Twitter: A toxic place for women” highlights the particular experiences of violence and abuse on Twitter against women of colour, women from ethnic or religious minorities, lesbian, bisexual or transgender women – as well as non-binary individuals – and women with disabilities. The research exposes the intersectional nature of abuse on the platform, arguing “Twitter can be a powerful tool for women to make connections and express themselves. But for many women, Twitter is a platform where violence and abuse against them flourishes, often with little accountability<sup>14</sup>.”

In most countries, deeply rooted societal norms and harmful gender stereotypes present an enormous barrier to a woman’s ability to begin and pursue a career in journalism on an equal footing with a man<sup>15</sup>. In many contexts the perception that journalism is not an “appropriate” profession for women persists. This can result in significant social pressure to refrain from entering the profession, or to leave it<sup>16</sup>.

Equality of access and opportunity for women journalists remain a challenge. In 2011, the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media conducted by IWMF showed that despite growing numbers of women journalists, the glass ceiling still prevents women from accessing positions of responsibility<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, a study conducted by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Wage Indicator highlighted wage gaps in journalism, with men earning more in 14 of the 16 countries investigated and an average differential of 16% in European Union countries.

Another study by IFJ in cooperation with South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) concluded that the main challenges faced by women in the region are: (1) discrimination in the types of work they are assigned to, with men being assigned more frequently to stories on politics or economics; (2) unequal opportunities for promotion and; (3) lack of maternity benefits and poor support for working mothers. All of these factors





An Afghan journalist wearing safety equipment whilst covering elections, October 2018. Photo: AJSC/IMS

put women journalists in a much more precarious position than their male colleagues<sup>18</sup>. These findings can be extrapolated to most regions worldwide. Another survey among women journalists in South Asia and the Pacific by IFJ, UNESCO and UN Women showed that sexual harassment is a key issue. Nearly 35% of professionals stated having witnessed sexual harassment at work<sup>19</sup>. 'Shame', 'embarrassment', and 'fear of repercussions' were the most common reasons for victims not reporting the incidents.

Being a woman journalist entails specific challenges, as does reporting on women's issues. In 2016 and 2017, Reporters without Borders (RSF) registered more than 60 cases in more than 20 countries of journalists' rights being violated in connection with their reporting on the issues faced by women<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, media content also discriminates against women, who account for only 24% of the people heard, read about or seen across print, television and radio news, and just 19% of experts consulted. This is close to the proportion of women interviewed as spokespersons (20%), according to the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project<sup>21</sup>. While not directly related to violence against women journalists, an environment in which women are stereotyped, and in many cases highly sexualised, creates an enabling environment for violence against women. Women journalists who have greater public exposure are particularly vulnerable in this regard.

As asserted by the UN Secretary General, "at the broader societal level, this violence and consequent exclusion further entrenches discrimination and inequality, affects the right of everyone to freedom of expression and opinion, including the right to information, and undermines democracy". Therefore, it is time to adopt a gender approach to ensure that women journalists' concerns are effectively addressed<sup>22</sup>.

## Are intergovernmental organisations committed to the safety of women journalists ?

The first ever United Nations (UN) strategy on the safety of journalists, the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity (2012), declares that it is based on the principle of a gender-sensitive approach and calls for ensuring a gender approach in promoting the safety of journalists and the fight against impunity<sup>23</sup>. In the same year, the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue, highlighted the need for a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures to address the issue of violence against journalists<sup>24</sup>.

Also in 2012, the first Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution on the safety of journalists acknowledged "the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work, and underlining, in this context, the importance of taking a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures to address the safety of journalists"<sup>25</sup>. Subsequent resolutions by the HRC and by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on the safety of journalists mentioned the importance of a gender-sensitive approach. In its resolution 2222 (2015), the UN Security Council also acknowledged the specific risks faced by women journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in conducting their work and underlined the importance of considering the gender dimension of measures to address their safety in situations of armed conflict<sup>26</sup>.

In 2017, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity with a strong focus on gender. It emphasised the need to take measures to effectively "tackle gender-based discrimination, including intimidation, harassment and violence offline and online, incitement to hatred, inequality and gender-based stereotypes; to enable women to enter and remain in journalism on equal terms with men while ensuring their greatest possible safety; and to ensure that the experiences and concerns of women journalists are effectively addressed and gender stereotypes in the media are adequately tackled"<sup>27</sup>.

However, it was not until 2017 that the multilateral system attempted to examine the practical requirements and implications of a gender-sensitive approach. A report by the UN Secretary General (UNSG) on the safety of women journalists includes an overview of their situation. It makes a series of recommendations to improve the situation, such as drawing attention to the urgent need for systematic monitoring of violations against journalists; collection of concrete data disaggregated by factors including gender;



demonstrated political will to address the issue; development and implementation of legislation and policy, and accountability<sup>28</sup>. The latest document related to the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity in 2017 includes several references to the need to mainstream gender into initiatives to tackle violence against journalists<sup>29</sup>.

In 2018, the HRC passed a resolution on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital contexts; the resolution condemned acts of violence against women in political and public life, including journalists<sup>30</sup>. Later that year, the HRC passed a resolution on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet which “condemns online attacks against women, including sexual and gender-based violence and abuse of women, in particular where women journalists, media workers, public officials or others engaging in public debate are targeted for their expression, and calls for gender-sensitive responses that take into account the particular forms of online discrimination”<sup>31</sup>.

In 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee, mandated to monitor compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), issued a landmark decision recognising multiple rights violations by Mexico after the arbitrary detention of female journalist Lydia Cacho in 2005<sup>32</sup>. The resolution found that Cacho had been arbitrarily detained, subjected to torture and gender-based violence, and that her right to freedom of expression had been violated<sup>33</sup>.

International standards in this regard are shaped by the overall human rights framework. Key among these are the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which the right to freedom of expression is enshrined within Article 19<sup>34</sup>, and the 1979 the Convention for Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recognising women's rights and specifically requiring states to take appropriate measures “to ensure full development and advancement of women”<sup>35</sup>. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) also identifies media as a critical area of concern, and points to the need to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media, and to support women's increased participation and access to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new communications technologies<sup>36</sup>. Also relevant is UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which affirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peace building.

Regionally, various organisations have addressed the issue of violence against women journalists. In 2013, the Council of Europe (CoE) passed a recommendation on gender equality and media<sup>37</sup> and prepared an implementation handbook<sup>38</sup>. In 2016, CoE recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors noted the gender-specific threats that many journalists face and called for “urgent, resolute and systematic responses”<sup>39</sup>. In 2018, the European Parliament issued a report on gender and media equality, condemning attacks against women journalists and calling for States and other actors to take responsibility for promoting gender equality in media<sup>40</sup>. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council's Decision 3/18 on the safety of journalists condemns attacks against women journalists, including “sexual harassment, abuse, intimidation, threats and violence, including through digital technologies”. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has been particularly vocal regarding online violence against women journalists<sup>41</sup>.

The Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression within the Organization of American States' (OAS) has also prepared a report on freedom of expression and women that includes the issue of violence and impunity<sup>42</sup>. Moreover, in its 2013 report devoted to violence against journalists, the Special Rapporteur's office underlines that “when designing and implementing protection plans including prevention and access to justice, States must attend to gender specific needs and risks”<sup>43</sup>. In 2016, the Special Rapporteur's Office published a report titled “Silenced Zones: Highly Dangerous Areas for the Exercise of Freedom Expression”, which also addresses the silence around violence against female media workers<sup>44</sup>. The same year, it published a study on incitement to violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex persons in the Americas<sup>45</sup>.

Turning to Africa, the African Union launched a Network of Reporters on Women, Peace and Security in 2016<sup>46</sup>. In 2017, the Nairobi Declaration expressed concern over increasing abuse of women on social media<sup>47</sup>. While it does not make a specific reference to women, the 2017 Addis Ababa resolution on the safety of journalists called for the creation of working group on the safety of journalists within the African Union. In 2018, UN, OAS, OSCE and the African Commission for Human and People's Rights' (ACHPR) Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression spoke out against the particular challenges faced by women journalists, including gender-specific attacks, online harassment, inequality within the media, and general societal discrimination against women, all of which pose barriers to working as a journalist<sup>48</sup>.

But despite this demonstrable advance in international standards, commitments and recommendations have not been acted upon by governments<sup>49</sup>. The lack of impact of these documents and mechanisms “raises legitimate questions” about their efficacy and the potential for meaningful implementation by states<sup>50</sup>.

## International civil society actions to promote the safety of women journalists

Media development organisations, press freedom groups, international professional associations, unions, editors and publishers' networks have developed a range of initiatives for monitoring, analysing and reporting attacks against women journalists. Most of the work by international NGOs involves conducting studies and surveys on specific issues and/or specific countries, organising safety training for women journalists and awareness-raising.

The following list provides an illustrative but non-exhaustive list of these initiatives.

The **ACOS Alliance**, a network focused on the safety of freelance journalists, identified gender as a gap to be addressed in safety training for journalists.

**ARTICLE 19** has published a number of studies on violence against women, including research on violence against women journalists in Brazil in 2018<sup>51</sup>. Article 19 also applied the UNESCO's Gender Sensitive Indicators for media in Brazil and found that Brazilian media outlets lack proper mechanisms for women to denounce sexual harassment<sup>52</sup> in the workplace. In 2016, in cooperation with the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), Article 19 conducted a survey on the dangers and threats faced by women jour-

nalists when using the Internet in Kenya<sup>53</sup>. In Bangladesh, Article 19 Bangladesh and Free Press Unlimited launched a campaign calling for institutional changes in media outlets to ensure that women's rights are protected<sup>54</sup>.

The **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)** monitors attacks against journalists and includes data disaggregated by gender. Back in 2011, it published one of the first reports among international NGOs on this issue: "The silencing crime: sexual violence and journalists"<sup>55</sup>. In 2016, its annual "Attacks on the Press" publication focused on gender and media freedom worldwide<sup>56</sup>. In 2017, when the UN Commission on the Status of Women spotlighted the issue of gender and media at its annual conference, the CPJ organised a panel to raise awareness of the attacks faced by women journalists on a day-to-day basis when simply trying to do their jobs.

The **Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma**, dedicated to improving media knowledge of trauma, conflict, tragedy and psychological well-being of journalists, looked at how gender is approached in safety training. In a 2017 survey on the approaches to and effectiveness of safety training for journalists, it found a dearth of tools provided to women journalists to address gender specific threats, and a lack of gender balance among trainers<sup>57</sup>.

**Free Press Unlimited (FPU)** has supported training for women journalists to bolster both their journalistic skills and their safety in countries such as Zambia, Indonesia, Nepal, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**IFEX**, a freedom of expression global network encompassing 119 civil society groups in 65 countries, undertook a gender audit resulting, for instance, in a website publishing gender and freedom of expression-related news. It has also committed to gender mainstreaming in the information it provides via its website and social media. IFEX also supports its members in projects involving the safety of women journalists.

The **International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)** does significant work to promote gender equality in the workplace, a task that is supervised by its Gender Council. Recently, the organisation conducted research in Asia. It has also published "Byte Back", a journalist's guide to combating digital harassment. It has promoted gender equality and gender anti-harassment policies in newsrooms, and has run awareness-raising campaigns<sup>58</sup>.

**International Media Support** works extensively in the promotion of the safety of journalists. It has developed several reports and projects focused on raising awareness and addressing violence against women journalists, in countries like Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Somalia. Strengthening women's voices in the media in conflict and post-conflict regions is important in supporting the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In 2018, IMS began a three-year programme on the media's role in implementing UNSCR 1325 in Colombia, Myanmar and Syria. This strategic work targets both SDGs 5 as well as SDGs 16.10.1 and 16.10.2.

The **International News Safety Institute (INSI)** is dedicated to journalists' safety. In 2014, together with the IWMF, it published a global survey on violence and harassment

against women in the news media<sup>59</sup>. Through the publication of "No woman's land"<sup>60</sup>, it raised awareness of the situation of women journalists.

The **International Press Institute (IPI)** launched the "Ontheline" project to monitor and raise awareness of online harassment of women journalists. The project encompasses country-specific studies, including of Poland, Spain and Finland, and an online harassment database for Turkey and Austria with gender disaggregated data. It also produces videos to raise awareness.

The **International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF)** has conducted two significant global studies aimed at deepening understanding of the safety of women journalists around the world. One, published in 2011, covers the status of women in the news media<sup>61</sup>. The other, published in 2018 (following a previous version in 2014) focused on violence against women journalists<sup>62</sup>. The IWMF also provides safety training for women journalists as well as other types of support, such as an emergency fund for women under attack.

**Internews** published Safe Sister, a digital guide to digital safety for women in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**IREX** has a programme called SAFE focused on the safety of journalists. The organisation also works with some gender exclusive groups in certain environments with the aim of including more female media practitioners and social communicators in the training sessions<sup>63</sup>.

**PEN International's** work included the launch of a Women's Manifesto in 2018 calling for the protection women journalists and speaking out against impunity for violent acts and harassment<sup>64</sup>.

**Reporters Without Borders** monitors press freedom around the world. In 2018, it published a report on online harassment of journalists. The report recognises that women are the major targets in the digital world<sup>65</sup>. RSF also conducted a study on violence against journalists covering women's rights<sup>66</sup>.

The **Rory Peck Foundation** provides support to freelance journalists, including women, to promote their welfare and safety.

The **WAN-IFRA Women in News programme** aims to increase women's leadership and their voices in the news. It also works to reduce violence against women journalists. For instance, in 2018 it published a handbook for media companies to address sexual harassment. The handbook includes sexual harassment surveys and policies.

Among the other international and regional organisations and initiatives are the Marie Colvin Journalists Network, created by friends of the American Sunday Times journalist who was murdered in 2012. The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom has established a Women's Reporting Point and the International Association for Women on Radio and Television (IAWRT) has published a safety manual for women journalists<sup>67</sup>.

# Toward a gender-sensitive approach to journalists' safety

While many recent standards and publications are calling for a gender-sensitive approach to the safety of journalists, there is scope for further debate, analysis and research on what this actually means, and what it entails in practice. A gender-sensitive approach requires understanding and consideration of the different experiences, views and needs of women and men and those with other gender identities.

Based on the limited research conducted for this working document, we can offer a preliminary and general picture of the security challenges specific to female media workers. They range from more structural challenges to those specifically related to their daily work.

This list seeks to define the core safety CHALLENGES present across all analysed countries, in order to develop universal gender guidelines to promote the safety of journalists. It is important to note that all solutions must be tailored to the national and local context.

- Societal norms, gender-based inequality and discrimination;
- Gender-based and sexualised attacks by state and non-state actors;
- Gender-based physical and psychological violence perpetrated by colleagues and sources;
- Discriminatory working conditions such as lower wages, lack of benefits such as maternity leave, lack of opportunities for promotion, lack of safety training and inappropriate safety equipment;
- Gender-based violence and harassment online;
- Lack of (or insufficient) gender policies and anti-harassment measures in newsrooms;
- Lack of (or insufficient) gender sensitivity in safety mechanisms;
- Lack of (or insufficient) gender-sensitivity by law enforcement personnel and the judiciary;
- Lack of (or insufficient) gender-sensitive monitoring including disaggregated data by gender, type of attacks, and lack of data on perpetrators of sexual attacks including those that are instigated by colleagues, professional superiors and sources;
- Lack of (or insufficient) country-specific field research to identify and respond to the specific needs of women journalists with regard to the violence they face;
- Lack of gender mainstreaming in journalism education and training, including in safety workshops and materials.



Indian journalist Kavitha Jakkal gestures as she walks with police wearing protective gear near the Lord Ayyappa temple complex in India's southern Kerala state on 19 October 2018, as they were denied entry to the temple grounds by Hindu hardliners.  
AFP/Ritzau Scanpix

The consequences of these challenges are numerous and varied. They include:

- Abandoning or choosing not to pursue a career in journalism;
- Not reporting attacks for fear of losing their jobs;
- Not being assigned to cover certain issues considered dangerous or not appropriate for women and being shamed by colleagues, family and society at large;
- Self-censorship inside and outside the newsroom, offline and online;
- Physical, psychological and emotional harm and trauma;
- A lack or insufficient coverage of women's voices and perspectives.

# A global snapshot: Gender-specific threats, challenges & responses in nine countries

## Afghanistan: When violence starts at home<sup>68</sup>



Targeted killings, terrorist attacks and conflicts with authorities have occurred routinely alongside the rapid expansion of Afghanistan's media sector over the past two decades. As a consequence, Afghanistan is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist, according to international rankings<sup>1</sup>. Unlike their male counterparts, women journalists in Afghanistan face a range of additional threats: domestic violence

and intimidation by family members, as well social censure and unequal treatment in the workplace. Recent years have seen growing recognition of these additional hurdles, and the limited access to resources for safety. In response, civil society groups have launched dedicated programmes or incorporated gender-specific components in their work.

Journalism is perceived by some in Afghanistan as an "immoral" profession for women<sup>69</sup>. In this context, the threat of physical or psychological violence can be pervasive, affecting interactions at all levels with family, relatives, co-workers, sources, authorities, law enforcement agents, religious groups, and society at large. "Traditional families, particularly men, including fathers, brothers and husbands, are often ardently opposed to the women of their families working in the media", according to a study by the Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee (AJSC)<sup>70</sup>.

Despite significant steps forward in terms of their status, women journalists continue to face multiple challenges, due not only to deep-rooted conservative social norms and cultural practices, but also to the insecurity and violence of their operating environment. This places significant limitations on freedom of movement, as highlighted by the former UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, in 2015<sup>1</sup>.

Afghanistan ranked 153 out of the 189 countries analysed for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index.

While most of the fatal attacks against journalists target men, women account for approximately 17% of media workers. Although in most cases they are not assigned to cover dangerous contexts, women are subject to physical and psychological violence which is often sexual in nature. Most women journalists (69%) have experienced sexual harassment, according to a 2016 study by the AJSC. In 59% of the cases, violence was perpetrated by a colleague and took place in a professional context. Attacks also happen online. According to a report by Internews<sup>72</sup>, social media users in Afghanistan frequently question the integrity and respectability of women. Even when reported, the lack of effective complaint mechanisms and the government's failure to investigate or prosecute when journalist attacks take place – regardless of gender – means that most cases remain unresolved. For ten years, Afghanistan has been among the top 10 ranking countries of the Committee to Protect Journalists' annual Global Impunity Index.<sup>73</sup> In CPJ's most recent edition, published in 2018, Afghanistan ranked number six in the world.

In practice, this means that many women remain silent while others simply quit journalism. According to the Centre for the Protection of Afghan Women Journalists (CPAWJ), roughly 100 women have abandoned their careers as journalists, also because of mounting Islamist pressure, particularly in rural areas<sup>74</sup>. Fewer women journalists reporting, or at least reporting freely and safely, translates into limited representation of women in media content. Often, it is only female media workers who have access to female sources and interviewees<sup>75</sup>. Acknowledging that gender has major implications for access to essential and comprehensive news in a complex country context such as this, several initiatives have been launched seeking to improve the safety of women journalists.

In 2009, the AJSC established a comprehensive educational, physical, psychological and legal support programme for women journalists. One of their initiatives was to appoint female coordinators in various Afghan provinces and Kabul, tasked with monitoring, supporting and advocating for the safety of women journalists. This has ensured greater access to support for women journalists, who otherwise might not have sought assistance. The programme has also established specific safety and security responses for female media workers. These coordinators also provide gender-sensitive safety training for journalists and ensure that female media workers have specific tools to address gender-based violence. The programme has also developed gender-sensitive training for female and male law enforcement agents, which is fundamental to ensuring that women feeling safe when seeking protection. In addition, the AJSC has committed to tackling one of the key modes of violence against women journalists: online harassment. *Stop harassing me!* is a media campaign designed to raise public awareness of the problem. The AJSC cooperates with international and national women's organisations to amplify the impact of their work with women journalists<sup>76</sup>.

The main perpetrators of violence against women in Afghanistan are their own colleagues. In response to this, in 2018 the Afghan Journalists' Federation (AJF), an informal network of active journalist organisations in the country worked with AJSC to launch a set of anti-sexual harassment guidelines for media outlets following a law passed by the Afghan parliament in 2016 to protect women and children against harassment. The guidelines include concrete measures on how to act in case of verbal or indirect abuse, inappropriate behaviour and intentional physical abuse. They also include criteria for when and how to refer an offender to the High Council of Anti-Harassment at the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) for prosecution. AJSC and AJF are advocating for media outlets to

1 CPJ 2018b and RSF 2019





Afghan news anchor,  
Kabul, Afghanistan,  
May 2016.  
Photo: Reza Mohabbati/  
AJSC/IMS

incorporate this policy, and while it will take time to become the norm, a comprehensive policy model marks an important first step<sup>77</sup>. The AJSC has since put recommendations in place and created a complaints committee led by a female coordinator. The AJSC also has a Facebook page for women journalists providing key information about their safety and rights.

Among AFJ's 13 members, at least five groups have activities dedicated to improving the situation of women journalists. One is the CPAWJ, which has joined other groups in campaigning for a law banning violence against women<sup>78</sup>.

Several organisations have incorporated a gender-sensitive approach to monitoring the safety situation. One of AJSC's main activities is to monitor attacks against journalists. Biannually it publishes data disaggregated by gender. The media training organisation NAI maintains a user-friendly monitoring website, known as NAI Media Watch, on violence against journalists in Afghanistan. Its data is disaggregated by type of violation and gender<sup>79</sup>.

A significant step towards improving journalists' safety in Afghanistan was the establishment of the Joint Committee for the Safety and Security of Journalists (JCSSJ). Its aim is to institutionalise state protection of journalists. Chaired by a member of the government, this 30-member committee includes representatives of security institutions, members of the judiciary and representatives from media support organisations. Currently, it includes three women: two from AFJ and one deputy governor of Kabul<sup>80</sup>. However, the JCSSJ by-laws do not include any particular reference to gender or women, and there is no enshrined quota for female representatives.

Promoting the safety of Afghan women journalists is not only a question of security, but also one of equality of representation in the public sphere. Without women journalists, many women's stories would remain unheard. More work to bolster protections and solidarity for women in the media in Afghanistan will help ensure that women's voices are heard in the public sphere. In the midst of the #MeToo movement denouncing sexual harassment against women, a group of local female TV reporters in Northern Afghanistan committed to "leave no sister behind", and to report more stories about gender-based violence<sup>81</sup>.

## Colombia: Moving from protection to prevention



Despite the peace agreement signed in 2016, journalists in Colombia still work in unsafe conditions, according to FECOLPER.

In 2017, the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP) documented 310 attacks against journalists, the highest number since 2006<sup>82</sup>.

According to FLIP, the increasing numbers of women journalists speaking out in 2017 was in part sparked by the global #MeToo campaign against sexual harassment and similar local initiatives such as #NoEsHoraDeCallar. Well-known journalists Claudia Morales and Claudia Julieta Duque, for example, told their stories for the first time. Even so, silence continues to prevail around gender-based violence against women journalists and media workers. As Jineth Bedoya, an award-winning investigative journalist and advocate for the rights of female victims of violence in Colombia explains, this is because "denouncing comes at a high price for the victims". Bedoya speaks from experience; she herself was a victim of sexual assault in 2000 while reporting for *El Espectador*. Since then, she has been seeking justice. In May 2019, two ex-paramilitary fighters were sentenced for the crime, but several other suspects, including the intellectual authors of the crime have yet to be prosecuted. Colombia ranks 87<sup>th</sup> in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index.

Internationally, Colombia is well-known for its protection of journalists. It developed the first state-led safety framework. Despite a certain amount of criticism, this has long been seen as a model by the international community. Established in 2000 and modified on several occasions since, it entails the strongest gender approach among initiatives of its kind worldwide. Since its creation, some 100 journalists per year have received protection. In its current form, the National Protection Unit (UNP) leads and implements the programme. A dedicated Women's Protection Path has also been created within the UNP. Activated when a woman is targeted for her professional activity, this protection path entails not only the standard protection mechanisms, but also a set of additional features such as an evaluation committee including representatives from women's rights organisations, the government, and international organisations such as UN Women. It is called the Committee for Risk Evaluation and Measure Recommendations for Women (CERREM). Each case is analysed from a gender perspective, which has enabled customised responses to cases of violence against female media workers, primarily through psychological and financial support. To develop this pioneering work, FLIP is calling for preventive measures as well as assistance, which it sees as the only way to address the structural causes of violence against female media workers.

Civil society has also developed specific initiatives for women. For example, FLIP has incorporated gender disaggregated data in its monitoring as well as legal and psychological support for women journalists. Jineth Bedoya, the journalist mentioned above, was one recipient. They have also published reports such as the recent "gender polygraph" study, which analysed political discourse during the 2018 elections from a gender perspective. FLIP is also developing a certification on security protocols and risk prevention together with nearly 20 media outlets with the aim of supporting them to reduce violence

against journalists<sup>83</sup>. This initiative includes gender components such as non-discrimination against women when distributing assignments, and development of policies against sexual harassment.

Meanwhile, FECOLPER has a gender coordinator among its governing bodies. It has also created a gender network among its members, and launched a manifesto in 2018 calling for action to combat intimidation, sexual abuse and gender-based threats against woman journalists<sup>84</sup>.

Consejo de Redaccion (CdR), an organisation promoting investigative journalism, has trained more than 100 journalists on safety measures, and has ensured women's participation in their training programmes. It has also published a guide for journalists on how to ensure their writing incorporates a gender perspective. There is also the Colombian Network of Journalists with Gender Perspective (Red Colombiana de Periodistas con Visión de Género), which since 2017 has worked to promote gender equality in the media by conducting research, preparing guides, offering training and launching campaigns to raise awareness of sexual harassment in media sector.

While the Internet has helped strengthen citizens' participation in matters of public interest, social networks have also become platforms for aggression, particularly towards women. According to FLIP, online harassment against journalists increased in 2017, and disproportionately affected women journalists.

Online attacks against women often refer to personal and family relationships, deploying insults based on physical appearance and intellectual capability. These attacks are often sexualised, with the body used as a weapon and a battlefield, says the Karisma Foundation, a civil society group advocating for human rights and gender-based technologies and policies. Intimidation is based not on substantive ideas or arguments, but rather on the fact that a woman is thinking and speaking for herself. The misapprehension that what happens online has no consequences in the offline world has also led to a degree of apathy in society. One of the biggest disappointments expressed by journalists interviewed by Karisma is that they are usually advised by their inner social circle – both personal and professional – to ignore humiliating messages. Although this advice is given with good intentions, it creates a feeling of powerlessness.

To address the specific problem of online harassment, Karisma launched Alerta Machitroll, a campaign to raise awareness and denounce online attacks against women journalists, bloggers, communicators, activists and human rights defenders<sup>85</sup>. As Amalia Toledo, Karisma programme coordinator explains, naming what was a frequently ignored or unacknowledged problem is in itself a step forward. In 2017, Karisma launched the Spanish version of a guide developed by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) with support from Twitter, providing Twitter users with digital privacy information and tools, and advising on how to report online abuses. Aimed at victims of abuse and harassment, the project is an interesting example of how civil society can cooperate with private companies on the issue of online gender-based violence<sup>86</sup>. "Dominemos las tecnologías" is a campaign run by APC to address digital violence against women by documenting the problem, training women to influence communication and information technology, digital public and private policies, safety training and women's support organisations<sup>87</sup>.

In Colombia, there are several women's organisations promoting gender equality in the media, such as the Escuela de Estudios de Género in the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Fundación Mujer es Audiovisual, Sisma Mujer and Red Nacional de Mujeres.

## Indonesia: Tackling sexual harassment



Indonesian media workers continue to face violence and abuse. According to Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI), there were more than 60 cases recorded from 2017 to March 2018, with at least 20 percent of the cases involving women journalists<sup>88</sup>. More and more cases of attacks

and harassment of women journalists are being recorded, however many still remain silent<sup>89</sup>.

In addition, women journalists are victims of sexual attacks, a problem that "has been ignored for a long time, considered unimportant and normalized as part of common interactions between journalists and their sources", according to AJI<sup>90</sup>. The reality, according to Mariana Amiruddin, a commissioner of Indonesia's National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan), is that women are more vulnerable to gender-based violence in a patriarchal society such as Indonesia, where men dominate nearly all aspects of life and women are expected to be subservient<sup>91</sup>. As AJI's Head of Gender, Endah Lismartini, stated, many victims of sexual attacks do not speak out, and this is also true within the media sector.

A report published by AJI Indonesia mentioned that in the television industry, in order to improve access to male sources, many women are recruited as journalists based on their physical appearance. For example, sources prefer women to male professionals as they are seen as being "passive and less aggressive". Additionally, many women journalists earn lower salaries and sometimes do not receive health insurance.

To combat these challenges, several initiatives have been put in place. Forum Jurnalis Perempuan Indonesia (FJPI, Indonesian Women Journalists Forum), for example, has aided women journalists who have experienced sexual harassment. In 2018, it celebrated the first Indonesian Women's Journalists Forum.

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“... many women are recruited  
as journalists based on  
their physical appearance”

The AJI has a gender advisor to promote gender equality within the media sector. While AJI monitors attacks against journalists, they still do not have specific data on sexual attacks, although they have registered at least seven cases of sexual harassment in the last four years. AJI organises safety training for male and women journalists.

## Iraq: Making the invisible visible



Its political turmoil has made Iraq one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. With this backdrop, say researchers, "it is not surprising that the circumstances Iraqi women journalists face are probably some of the worst in the world"<sup>92</sup>. In recent years, increasing numbers of women have entered the profession of journalism, but they remain a minority. Even so, between 2003 and 2013, 28 Iraqi women journalists were killed<sup>93</sup>. Moreover, a 2016 study conducted by the organisation Burj Babel confirms that women face more attacks than men online.

The context in which Iraqi women journalists work is challenging for various reasons. According to a study by the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum (IWJF)<sup>94</sup>, discrimination on the basis of gender, harassment, quotas, and a general lack of fairness and equality are the major issues<sup>95</sup>. They are targeted as journalists working in a very dangerous context, but also as women in a male dominated society. Iraq scores 123<sup>rd</sup> on the UNDP Gender Inequality Index.

A 2017 report by the Iraqi Journalists' Rights Association (IJRDA)<sup>96</sup> states:

"Although the statistics collected from opinion surveys and media reports confirm that more than 65% of women journalists are subjected to harassment on a regular basis, they often refrain from reporting such abuses due to the nature of social conditions, customs and traditions prevailing in Iraqi society".

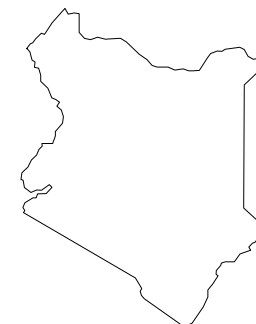
However, widespread failure to report these incidents demonstrates that this kind of violence is largely hidden, seen as taboo due to customs and traditions<sup>97</sup>. In most cases, women reported that they fear losing their jobs and being blamed for assaults. Interviewees said they do trust the judicial system, according to the organisation Burj Babel<sup>98</sup>. Another study conducted by the Iraqi Women in Media Forum (IWJF) adds that most of these attacks were perpetrated by politicians, followed by media organisation managers, and then colleagues<sup>99</sup>. Attacks start in the workplace. According to Burj Babel, one of the main challenges is the lack of legislation safeguarding women's rights, compounded by the absence of anti-harassment policies in media outlets. Strengthening legislation protecting against gender-based violence remains a priority, according to a report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2015<sup>100</sup>.

Analysing the problem of violence against women in reports is the first step in formulating a practical response. Women are also taking the lead in addressing the situation. Organisations such as the IWJF, the Organisation of Women Journalists without Borders, and Burj Babel are all working on this issue. The latter has been monitoring attacks against journalists, providing gender disaggregated data to raise awareness of the number of attacks, and has established a programme to improve relations between journalists and security forces. It has produced a training guide highlighting the need to raise awareness among all journalists, male and female, of the risk of sexual assault, advocating for increased female representation in the security forces as a significant way to improve public relations.

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**"Attacks start in the workplace."**

## Kenya: Raising awareness



Attacks against journalists in Kenya have increased during recent years, particularly during the 2017 election period. A total of 94 violent incidents against journalists, including bloggers and media outlets, were documented by Article 19 from April 2017 to May 2018<sup>101</sup>. The report reveals that during this period, physical attacks and threats increased in number, intensity and brutality. Some of the attacks resulted in serious injuries and damage to equipment, particularly during the election period. The report, however, does not include gender disaggregated data on

gender-based violence against female media workers. This gap in documenting specific threats and violence against women journalists is common in this field, as noted by the Kenya Media Working Group (KMWG)<sup>102</sup>. "This is a sensitive issue and most people don't want to speak about it even though they acknowledge that it exists. Most of them fear sharing it because they fear losing their jobs or being intimidated," says Helen Obande, Director of the Association of Media Women in Kenya<sup>103</sup>.

One of the very few studies on women journalists in Kenya was prepared by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) in 2015 with the support of UNESCO. "The gender agenda: Assessing gender issues in the Kenyan media" is a good example of the type of report that could help improve the situation for women journalists, but it lacks specific analysis of security threats<sup>104</sup>. The report finds that media organisations in Kenya operate without proper guidelines and policies on gender. It therefore recommends that these documents and policies are developed and disseminated among media outlets, and that awareness of their importance is ensured. The Kenya Media Council has been working on this issue since 2015, advocating for gender policies that ensure a non-discriminatory environment for women, from unequal work assignments to sexual harassment<sup>105</sup>. The data also shows that few women in media hold leadership positions, and that they are further disadvantaged by a failure to consider special gender-based needs during field assignments. "It is only by putting in place a strong legal and policy framework that issues affecting women in the media can be addressed", states the study. These findings are confirmed by the 2016 African Media Barometer for Kenya, which reveals huge gaps not only in appointing women to senior positions, but also in creating policies and work environments that foster gender equality in order to promote women<sup>106</sup>. This reflects Kenya's 137<sup>th</sup> position in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index.

Online attacks against women journalists are better documented than offline ones. A 2017 report by the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and Article 19 detailed an increase in online attacks against female media workers, encompassing cyber stalking, sexual harassment, surveillance and unauthorized use and manipulation of personal information, including images and videos. 75% of women journalists have experienced online harassment during the course of their work. Survey responses have also shown that a significant number have experienced 'dual-faceted attacks', where they were harassed as a result of the content of their reporting, and at the same time targeted for being women, or even attacked due to their gender and/or ethnic background. While these numbers are worrying, even more concerning is the fact that 43% of the victims did

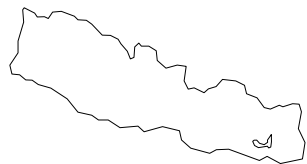


not take any action, and less than 10% reported the attacks to their employers. Another report by AMWIK offers a good example of effective awareness-raising, putting faces to the stories of online harassment faced by women journalists<sup>107</sup>.

One of the safety initiatives aimed at tackling violence against journalists is training, including female-specific capacity building. The Kenyan chapter of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT), for instance, has delivered capacity building for women in cooperation with AMWIK and MCK. The Kenya Media Working Group (KMWG) published a safety manual for journalists called “Staying safe: a protection guide for journalists in Kenya”<sup>108</sup> which, although focused only on dress and behaviour, devotes a chapter to women journalists. In an attempt to identify long-term structural solutions, the KMWG has also developed a protocol on the safety and protection of journalists to be adopted by media outlets. It acknowledges sexual harassment as a challenge for women journalists and proposes awareness-raising activities along with specific protection measures to address gender and cultural-sensitive issues such as sexual harassment, though it does not provide detailed guidance in this regard<sup>109</sup>. MCK developed election reporting guidelines including gender-sensitive reporting and protection.

The KMWG is also part of an effort promoted by UNESCO to generate a national safety mechanism. While coordination among various actors has improved, there are still challenges. In particular there is a need for greater harmonisation across the key areas of journalists’ safety, security and welfare, legislative and policy reforms, human and technical capacity-building for journalists, journalists’ associations, freedom of expression, press freedom, access to information, and media and gender.

## Nepal: Inequality in the workplace



Nepal ranks 118<sup>th</sup> in the United Nations Development Program’s Gender Inequality Index. While there remains room for improvement, the situation for women in Nepal has advanced in the past decade, particularly in the public sphere. Women still account for only about a quarter of the media professionals, and continue to face discrimination in the workplace, frequently reflected in the nature of their assignments<sup>110</sup>.

According to Mohna Ansari, Commissioner of the National Commission for Human Rights in Nepal, women journalists must be empowered, and this begins with steps such as assignments to cover politics and economics<sup>111</sup>. Although a Mass Communication Policy passed in 2016 called for media to increase women’s representation<sup>112</sup>, Amika Rajthala, President of Working Women Journalists reports that media outlets have not been able to implement this<sup>113</sup>.

According to a study by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)<sup>114</sup>, women’s lack of security in employment and poor working conditions have generated a sense of fear and instability. This, combined with irregular working hours, stark gender inequality in the media outlets, a lack of transportation, opposition from family members and their own inevitable household responsibilities remain major challenges to female Nepali journalists, who feel that their credibility and trust is limited both inside and outside the newsroom. This is reflected, for example, in their limited or reduced access to

sources compared with their male counterparts<sup>115</sup>. Even within media organisations, they are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, shrouded by a culture of impunity<sup>116</sup>. Nevertheless, women are forging ahead, and some media unions have taken affirmative action in appointing women as decision-makers. To promote their careers in journalism, some organisations such as the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the Federation of National Indigenous Journalists (FONIJ), the Nepal Press Union (NPU) and Working Women Journalists (WWJ) have been providing training for women. In cooperation with the Forum for Women, Law and Development, WWJ has also provided legal assistance to female victims of sexual harassment and cyberbullying.

While the safety of journalists has improved since the period of the conflict, between mid-2017 and mid-2018 the Nepali NGO Freedom Forum (FF) recorded 66 violent incidents against media personnel<sup>117</sup>, ranging from arbitrary arrests and detentions to threats including sexual harassment. For example, it was reported that a female media worker was circled and harassed by a group of male traders and investors “for not writing in favor of them”<sup>118</sup>. While sexual harassment in the workplace is reported as one of the main threats faced by women journalists, underreporting means there is no data on this.

Various initiatives have been undertaken in recent years to tackle violence against journalists<sup>119</sup> mostly by the FNJ and FF. In combatting violence against women journalists, Sancharika Samuha (SAS), the largest organisation of women media workers in Nepal, has played a significant role. SAS has published a dozen reports on the situation of women journalists in the country, deepening understanding of the challenges faced by women journalists. Their latest report, published in 2016, found that very few women occupy managerial posts and most cover what are considered “soft social beats” rather than politics or economics<sup>120</sup>. The report also indicated that more than 40% were not earning minimum wage, which significantly contributes to feelings of professional insecurity. The same report also revealed that media outlets of all sizes lack gender policies and programmes, including anti-harassment tools, which has stopped women from speaking out about gender-based harassment.

Freedom Forum monitors attacks against journalists, including women journalists, in Nepal, and conducts extensive media content monitoring with a gender perspective. Its 2018 report reveals that only 11% of a total 623 known by-lines are by women. Similarly, just 10 % of people quoted as news sources are women<sup>121</sup>. Nanu Maiya Khadka, gender monitoring officer at FF, explains that this type of report – with such damning statistics – has an important role in raising awareness about gender inequality in the media and in sparking debate in some media houses<sup>122</sup>. One of the report’s main recommendations is for the development of gender policies in media houses, in order to address both gender harassment and facilitate gender-sensitive reporting.

One example of the emerging debate on gender equality is the 2018 campaign run by Nepali journalists’ unions and associations in cooperation with media outlets. The campaign publishes and broadcasts stories exposing violence against women<sup>123</sup>. In addition, in 2017, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)-Asia Pacific and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) launched the Byte Back campaign to end cyber-bullying and online harassment of women journalists, sharing innovative ways to combat harassment online, promote positive stories, and highlight the gaps in policies countering online harassment<sup>124</sup>. The stories demonstrated that in addition to legislation, solidarity among journalists is crucial to providing support and ending abuse<sup>125</sup>.

Safety training for journalists, including women, is also offered by some organi-

sations. Media Action Nepal (MAN) and Article 19 have organised training seminars for women journalists. Self-censorship was one of the key issues raised. Professional insecurity, inadequate law enforcement and the absence of the rule of law, and widespread impunity are all drivers of self-censorship<sup>126</sup>.

More than a decade ago, a group of national and international organisations working in the media in Nepal established an umbrella group, now called Nepal International Media Partnership (NIMP) and composed of 14 members. Since then, they have been conducting visits on a regular basis. The latest visit in 2015 focused on contributing to the establishment of national safety mechanisms at the National Human Rights Commission (NCHR). This had its roots in the 2012 UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. The Partnership's mission report does not mention any particular gender approach for inclusion in the mechanism. Numerous efforts have been made to establish the national safety mechanism, but it has not yet been launched. According to Commissioner Mohna Ansari<sup>127</sup>, the draft mechanism does not include specific measures for women journalists. However, it does request at least one female representative in the main governing body responsible for the oversight of the mechanism.

The NCHR has taken steps to address violence against women, some of which have relevance for women journalists. Firstly, it is responsible for monitoring the implementation of 2015 Sexual Harassment at Workplace Prevention Act. Among the duties and responsibilities it imposes upon public institutions and private companies including media outlets, the Act requires that certain provisions on prevention of sexual harassment are incorporated into employment rules. There is no data available, however, on which media companies in Nepal have implemented these provisions, and, as the IFJ country report affirmed, "where such mechanisms are in place, women find it difficult to report harassment for fear of how such a step will affect their image and career"<sup>128</sup>. The report reveals that 81% of the perpetrators are colleagues or superiors in the office.

The NCHR is also responsible for receiving complaints, monitoring and conducting investigations on human rights violations. In 2018, it received information about the case of a female journalist who was sexually harassed in the newsroom. However, the victim decided not to pursue any action for fear of losing her job and jeopardising her security, not to mention its impact on her family, as sexual harassment is seen as a shameful taboo, explains Ansari. In her view, the most important thing is for society to understand the seriousness of sexual attacks and to listen to women when designing solutions. The Nepali Police has Women Cells that could make a significant impact in this regard. The National Women Commission also could be helpful in some cases. However, there are no specialised units to deal specifically with cases brought by women journalists<sup>129</sup>.

In addition to recommendations to improve freedom of expression and media freedom in Nepal, improving the safety of women journalists requires increasing public awareness of the specific attacks against women journalists. Media houses also need to adopt more specific policies, based on input from women, as well as mainstreaming gender and diversity in any future mechanism for the safety of journalists<sup>130</sup>.

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**“the victim decided  
not to pursue  
any action for fear  
of losing her job”**

## Pakistan: Breaking the silence



Pakistan is among the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. It also ranks near the top in terms of impunity for crimes against journalists, standing in 7<sup>th</sup> place according to the Committee to Protect Journalists' Impunity index<sup>131</sup>. Their vulnerability may depend on the geographical area they cover, the subject on which they are reporting, and their gender. In 2010, Pakistan passed the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, which can potentially be invoked to protect women journalists. Although it does not specifically mention women, it does oblige companies, including

media houses, to have gender policies.

Attacks against women do not dominate the list of attacks against journalists in Pakistan, but women journalists constitute only 5% of media workers in Pakistan – and safety may be one of the reasons for this. According to testimonies collected by Freedom Network, working conditions for women media practitioners are more challenging than those faced by their male peers. "This includes threats and warnings from a wide variety of sources for their journalism work as well as sexual harassment at the workplace and engendered misogyny preventing women journalists from taking a linear ladder up the career path"<sup>132</sup>. Pakistan ranks 133<sup>rd</sup> in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index.

Women journalists face hostile attitudes not only for doing their jobs, but also simply for being female in the public eye. This also applies online, as documented by organisations such as the Digital Rights Foundation (DRF)<sup>133</sup>. Name-calling, insults and innuendos top the list, followed by attempts to damage their reputation and honour. Other major threats include insults or criticism published online, trolling on social media, public humiliation, threats to humiliate and threats of violence<sup>134</sup>. Activist Nighat Dad is one of the leading campaigners against online harassment. "I have seen blackmail, photo-shopped pictures, hacking of personal accounts and rape threats," she told RSF<sup>135</sup>. In 2012, she created the Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) to help Pakistani women to cope with online harassment. Its report "Surveillance of Women journalists in Pakistan" found that the abuse faced by women is of a different nature than that faced by men. Gender abuse directed at women takes on a more psychological character than that directed at men<sup>136</sup>. Moreover, while men and women might be subject to state surveillance, women feel more scrutinised by their audience, fellow reporters, and even personal contacts. The entire society is watching them.

The DRF project is helping to combat the reality of hostility towards women in Pakistan. When a female media worker is attacked, there is very little support available. Even where there are support mechanisms, "social taboos, segregation and stigmas keep [women] from speaking openly about it and seeking support"<sup>137</sup>. As a consequence, many – more than 20% according to DRF – simply stop using Internet<sup>138</sup>. Bytes for All is a group promoting digital rights, including for women. It has provided digital safety training for women journalists and university students studying mass communications.

Journalists' safety initiatives in Pakistan have examined women's cases with uneven results. For example, the Steering Committee of Pakistan Journalism Safety Fund



In this photograph taken on 30 August 2016, Shazia Bhatti, a Pakistani 38-year old journalist shoots video footage during an assignment in Islamabad. Photo: Aamir Qureshi/ AFP/Ritzau Scanpix

(PJFS), established in 2012, aids journalists receiving threats. This assistance includes short-term relocation, medical and legal aid and financial assistance for their families. According to Iqbal Khattak, Executive Director of Freedom Network and member of the Steering Committee of Pakistan Journalists Safety Fund, however, women have found it difficult to make use of the assistance due to social pressure. Since 2012, says Khattak, no woman has received support and the only woman who approached the fund ultimately decided not to accept it due to familial/social pressure. According to Khattak, more analysis and research needs to be done to ensure that women seek support, and more work must be done to ensure media houses have gender policies.

Following the approval of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, the Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety (PCOMS) was established in 2013 as a multi-stakeholder coalition to address journalists' safety. According to Khattak, this was a turning point in terms of putting this issue on the agenda in Pakistan. There is no record, however, of any specific measure taken with the specific aim of promoting the safety of women journalists. Editors for Safety is an unprecedented initiative that has come out of the drive to combat violence against journalists in Pakistan. It includes a WhatsApp group where attacks against journalists can be reported, and which can facilitate collective decision-making on how to respond.

Launched in 2015, Pakistan Press Club's Journalist Safety Hubs Network has brought together six of Pakistan's main press clubs and the Freedom Network to improve reporting, documentation and analysis of threats and attacks against journalists. The hubs have worked towards having more women hub coordinators, but it has been challenging. "They just do not apply [for the roles]," Khattak says.

National Press Clubs have also, in some cases, started to include a gender approach

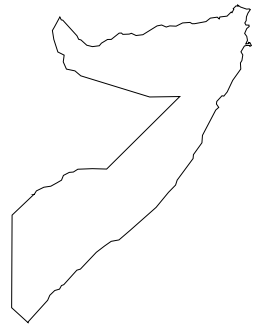
in their work. For instance, the National Press Club in Islamabad changed its constitution to include at least two seats for women in its 17-member government body. This was the result of demands made at a 2014 national conference on women and media organised by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and the National Press Club with funding and technical support from the Aurat Foundation. "This initiative led to increased participation of women in [the] politics of media entities. More women journalists came to vote and ran campaigns. More women ran for main general seats," explains Myra Imram, Vice President of the National Press Council<sup>139</sup>. Another interesting initiative by the National Press Club (NPC) in Islamabad is the establishment of a committee to address sexual harassment cases against women journalists. Moreover, research has been conducted to analyse the impact of the killing or displacement of journalists on their families in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) conflict zones. The study "Surviving the Story" quoted Mira Imran, Vice President of the National Press Club, as stating that, "no one reaches the wives of journalists killed in such areas". Therefore, she says, we are advocating for the government to establish measures to take care of them.

Another example of change in Pakistan is that in 2014, the News Employees Union (in-house Union of The News' employees), had a female president for the first time in its 23-year history. Two other women, a Vice President and a managing committee member, also hold decision-making positions. "After my election as union president, I made it mandatory for all union officers to contact women and start enlisting them and highlighting their concerns," says Sheher Baho, supplements editor at The News<sup>140</sup>. "I have also set up a women's committee which will look into issues such as equal pay, performance evaluations, promotions, medical insurance, maternity leave, separate washrooms, transport, working hours, safety on the job, harassment in the workplace, and gender discrimination in assignments (beats)," she adds.

In 2005, the research group Uks presented the first-ever Gender-Sensitive Code of Ethics for the Print Media in Pakistan. It was revised in 2013. The code, intended for voluntary adoption by the media, clearly defines the standards, attitudes and behaviour expected from presenters, anchors, researchers, producers, scriptwriters, camera persons, policy-making editorial staff, and the senior management of media houses. However, although it was disseminated and all the significant stakeholders were involved in its drafting, it has not been properly implemented (data from 2015)<sup>141</sup>.

All these measures are helping to address the violence against women journalists both online and offline, but more remains to be done. As the Pakistani journalist Asma Shirazi has stated, "there is a need to create a national committee to support women journalists from harassment whether it is in social media or in their newsroom"<sup>142</sup>.

## Somalia: Advancing gender equality in media



Somalia remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, and a culture of impunity prevails. It had the highest number of unsolved murders of journalists between 2015 and 2017<sup>143</sup>. Journalists face numerous risks, including death, arrest and assault. Despite the high levels of risk, a study by Somali Women Journalists (SWJ) in co-operation with IMS-Fojo Media<sup>144</sup> found that the country has essentially no security and protection mechanisms in place, let alone gender-specific mechanisms.

Accounting for 23% of employees, women journalists are significantly underrepresented in Somali media houses, and they have limited roles in decision making within the organisational structures<sup>145</sup>. The reasons for this vary, including lower levels of education compared with male colleagues, a failure to conduct gender-sensitive recruitment, a lack of contracting policies and procedures to promote women in newsrooms, and cultural barriers. More women than men say they are not content in their roles, mainly because of 'unfair' treatment by management<sup>146</sup>.

In addition to the risks of the job women journalists in Somalia share with their male colleagues, they are also the target of sexual harassment and gender-based violence inside and outside the workplace. One of the challenges in addressing this problem is the lack of data, as the issue remains taboo. According to the survey by SWJ, which was able to gather a limited dataset, 13% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment in either their current or previous jobs. The study also notes that there is evidence the number may be higher. Statistically speaking, most of these attacks were perpetrated by a superior, followed by co-workers, and then to lesser degree, state or government agents. Critically, 36% of women journalists did not respond and 28%, fearing for their safety as well as their jobs, said they would do nothing in the event of harassment.

The study concluded that "there are no robust mechanisms in place to respond to sexual harassment in media houses". Therefore, in line with conclusions of both this study and another 2015 paper on gender and the Somali media<sup>147</sup>, there is a clear need for initiatives such as gender policies, gender mainstreaming into all journalism training programmes, including safety training, and to promote gender sensitivity among law enforcement agents and the judiciary. Some of these initiatives have since been launched.

Two of the main professional associations in Somalia, the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESIJ), based in Mogadishu, and Media Association of Puntland (MAP), located in Garowe and representing the interests of journalists in Puntland, include women's groups focusing on gender issues. They have conducted training seminars for women journalists and made efforts to recruit additional women to join the media sector<sup>148</sup>. There are also women journalists' associations, such as the Somaliland Women in Journalism Association (WIJA), Somali Women Journalists (SWJ), the Somali Media Women Association (SOMWA) and the Somali Women Journalist Rights Association (SOWRIA).

Media development organisations such as International Media Support and Fojo Media Institute have worked together to support a safer environment for male and women

journalists in the country. For instance, they provided safety training that had "a noticeable impact" on participants<sup>149</sup>. SWJ, for example, has focused on advocacy campaigns to improve working conditions for women journalists. As a result, 10 media houses have agreed to provide three months paid maternity leave, an unprecedented move by the media industry. As an outcome of the Women in News programme, WIN participants launched the Media Women Network (MWN), which is supported by IMS and Fojo. The launch brought together journalists, including women journalist and media managers to identify gender challenges in the media industry. For many of these professionals, this was the first time they had discussed these issues and potential solutions. As a result, in 2018, a group of female journalists and male media managers agreed on an action plan to tackle sexual harassment in newsrooms.

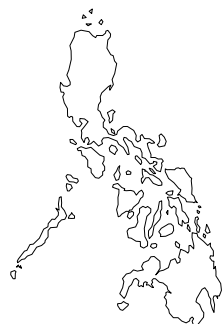
In 2018, with the aim of promoting gender equality by providing media management training for women, the World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA) together with IMS and Fojo brought their global Women in the News (WIN) programme to Somalia. UNESCO and Vikes, for example, have also organised training workshops for Somali security forces on how to promote journalists' safety and how to address specific cases. The workshops are based on a training manual that makes significant references to the specific needs of women journalists.

One promising initiative on the protection of journalists in Somalia is the Somali Media Safety Initiative, launched in May 2018. It is mandated to coordinate prevention and protection of journalists under threat, and to prosecute perpetrators of crimes against journalists<sup>150</sup>. This mechanism 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 are women drawn from each of the representative groups. This is considered to be an important step towards "ensuring that safety and security issues affecting women are taken into account as part of the committee's work in developing a national safety system<sup>151</sup>".

According to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, which chairs the Committee, the mechanism's goals include monitoring journalists' security situation and safety, advocating journalists' safety, establishing a hotline for journalists in danger, starting a fund, establishing legislation for journalists' safety and providing capacity building for journalists. The initiative is still relatively new, and results are yet to be seen. The Ministry press release defining these goals makes no mention of a gender approach or of specific measures for women journalists.

This mechanism has been supported by UNESCO and other international media actors, coordinated by the Somalia Media Support Group (MSG). The MSG, established in 2014 and chaired by UNESCO, involves a group of donors, UN agencies and implementing partners. It was established to support and develop the Somali media. IMS and Fojo have lent their support to many initiatives in the country, most recently the training of trainers workshops on safety. IMS and Fojo has also supported safety trainings through a number of media associations such as Somali Independent Media Houses Association (SIMHA), who represents 22 media houses and Somalia Media Association (SOMA), who represent 36 media houses in Somalia<sup>152</sup>.

## The Philippines: Developing new safety initiatives



The Philippines is known for the deadliest attack against journalists in the last decade. 32 media workers in 2009 were killed in Ampatuan. The case remains unsolved, placing the Philippines fifth in the ranking of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) Global Impunity Index 2018<sup>153</sup>.

Violence against journalists in the country continues to rise, and from July 2016 to October 2018 at least 85 attacks and threats were recorded, 23 of them targeting women. This data was gathered by the Freedom for Media, Freedom for All Network, an umbrella organisation for the Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility (CMFR), the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), MindaNews, and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ)<sup>154</sup>. Despite constitutional protections, according to CMFR “the freedom of journalists and media organisations to report the truth and serve the public has been even more endangered in the current political environment”<sup>155</sup>.

The Philippines has several laws that deal with violence against women, but this has not solved the issue of gender-based violence, even when it comes to women journalists who are more publicly exposed because of their jobs. Social institutions such as the family, the Church, schools, the legal system, and others tend to promote traditional gender relations, which in general favour men while discriminating against women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, according to a report on gender and media by Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC)<sup>156</sup>.

In the Philippines, far more women graduate from media schools than men. However, male journalists tend to be better represented in senior posts<sup>157</sup>. “Sexual harassment is a common experience, particularly when one is starting out”, shows the PSSC study. The research also shows that while women journalists have attempted to organise responses to this problem, efforts have been short-lived.

It is increasingly common for women journalists – particularly those exposing government corruption – to receive online threats of sexual assault and attacks against their families. One of the targets of a massive campaign of gender online harassment has been the Executive Director of Rappler, Maria Ressa<sup>158</sup>. “It began a spiral of silence. Anyone who was critical or asked questions about extrajudicial killings was attacked, brutally attacked. The women got it worst,” Ressa said in an article published by UNESCO<sup>159</sup>.

Various initiatives have been put in place to address the issue of journalists’ safety, but few have focused on women. CMFR, for example, monitors attacks against journalists, and has disaggregated data by gender for the targets of the attacks. It has published several reports on violence against women journalists, as well as articles to raise awareness about gender-based online attacks. The Filipino Fund for Filipino Journalists, whose members include the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), the Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD), Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), the CMFR and the PCIJ, provides support to journalists under threat and their families.

The Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS) is a governmental body created in 2016 (its operational guidelines were ratified in January 2018). Its purpose is to

provide assistance when journalists are threatened or killed in their professional capacity. As its protocols explain, “it provides media workers as well as their families with the proper action to take when confronted with any of five different situations considered as acts of violence: (a) personal threats; (b) online threats; (c) actual physical attack, torture, etc.; (d) surveillance; and (e) killing”<sup>160</sup>. While the PTFoMS is following cases of women journalists, it does not include specific measures for women, although 2018 saw a series of seminars on gender sensitivity awareness for PTFoMS staff.

More recently, in November 2018 a multi-stakeholder process was launched to draw up a national plan for the safety of journalists. While it is too early to detail the plan’s gender approach, the first consultation included a session on the specific risks faced by women journalists<sup>161</sup>.

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“It is increasingly common for women journalists – particularly those exposing government corruption – to receive online threats of sexual assault ...”

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The Philippines national plan is led by a core coalition, the Journalists Safety Advisory Group (JSAG), including the Asian Institute for Journalism and Communication (AIJC), the Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), the Philippines Press Institute (PPI), and the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP) with support from the International Media Support (IMS). UNESCO is providing technical advice to the coalition. The Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD) is also a member of the JSAG; it integrates gender in the rights-based hostile environment and first aid training activities it conducts for community journalists working in various Philippine provinces.

The Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication has developed a curriculum on the safety of journalists. One of the key components is “knowledge and skills in detecting and reporting sexual harassment and other gender-based safety issues”. In 2013, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) published a gender equality media toolkit, including a code of ethics for the media<sup>162</sup>. It also published guidelines to protect women from discrimination in both the media and the film industries. In 2018, the Union of Journalists of the Philippines developed a safety guide for journalists, recognising that “women journalists have been harassed and threatened with sexual abuse online, while killings have become more blatant, with assassins murdering their victims in broad daylight”<sup>163</sup>.

# Looking ahead: Closing the gaps in gender mainstreaming

This report has presented a wide spectrum of issues relating to gender and media around the world and how these impact not only the work of women journalists but journalism as a whole. It has also taken stock of some of the measures being taken at both national and international levels identifying stand-out gaps in how stakeholders are integrating gender-specific risks and concerns into their work on safety of journalists. Based on inputs collected, there are several key areas that the freedom of expression community, policy-makers and media should focus on to evaluate how threats against women journalists, based on their gender, are addressed at multiple levels within the work of promoting the safety of journalists. They include: further research and dissemination of standards and good practices; advocating for a gender sensitive approach in state mechanisms, legislation and training of law and order personnel; developing safety resources that are accessible to women journalists; supporting campaigns and forums that promote solidarity and dialogue; and finally, overhauling industry practices.

Work areas to focus on:

- Research and knowledge sharing;
- Advocating for safety of journalist mechanisms to integrate gender specificity; for legislation that can improve protection and responses for women; and for training of security services and other agencies on gender specific threats and responses;
- Gender dedicated safety resources and responses.

In recent years, CSOs and INGOs have with ground-breaking quantitative and qualitative research shed considerable light and understanding on how journalists are impacted by threats based on their gender. However, there is still a need to bring more information to light and collect relevant data in a systematic way. This work includes strong monitoring mechanisms at global, national and local levels that provide gender disaggregated data on attacks (violent assaults and imprisonment for example), but also defines acts of sexual harassment as a media freedom violation.

This data could be used to further mainstream a gender sensitive approach in international and regional bodies, for example by urging member states to take action on the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity with a focus on tackling attacks that target or disproportionately affect women journalists. Other ways to use the data also includes using it to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicator 16.10.1 on attacks against journalists and media workers or

SDG 5.2 on violence against women – and when engaging with UN mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review.

At the same time, there is a growing body of international standards and recommendations on addressing and calling for gender-specific approaches to safety, which recognises threats against women based on their gender. Greater dissemination of this information among civil society groups, media organisations, journalists' associations and union and media workers, would facilitate advocacy by and for female practitioners. Mainstreaming of gender in journalism education and training institutions can also contribute to this awareness building.

The experiences of several countries looked at for this publication show the importance of engaging the State in promoting and understanding how men and women are affected differently by different threats and ultimately use a gender-sensitive approach. Advocacy waged on a national level should push for legislation, policies and regulations on the safety of journalists that includes a recognition of the specific threats that women journalists face. Additional work strengthening legislation authorising prosecution for online harassment is also needed. States should also look to mainstream gender in training courses and materials for law enforcement personnel and the judiciary, specifically. Evaluating to what extent state mechanisms for protection of journalists incorporate gender-specific measures in their risk assessment and implementation of measures will also shed light on how women journalists can access protection.

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“Some of the good practices in this report underscore the importance of dedicated protection and prevention paths for women journalists that provide safe, accessible avenues for women to receive support.”

Whether state-led or CSO-led, prevention and protection mechanisms need a gender perspective in their design. Some of the good practices in this report underscore the importance of dedicated protection and prevention paths for women journalists that provide safe, accessible avenues for women to receive support. That may mean working with women's rights organisations and female and/or gender-sensitive journalists' networks or installing female representatives to serve as the points of contact. Likewise, more opportunities for security and other training for women journalists for and by women are needed.



Training guides and manuals should mainstream gender and address the specificities of violence against women journalists, as well as recognising other aspects that intersect and affect the threats they face such as sexuality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age etc. The way donors and other stakeholders can encourage that these steps are taken is by incorporating a comprehensive gender analysis into the cycles of journalists' safety projects. Input from women journalists and women's rights organisations should be included from the needs assessment to the evaluation report.

In several countries, support for the capacity for women journalists to organise, network, share experiences and support each other in formal or informal campaigns is making a difference. One particular safety aspect where support networks are active is working to offset the damaging impact of cyber abuse by online campaigns against female media workers.

Based on existing research it is also clear that male-dominated practices and culture of the media industry undermines the security of women journalists. Projects to promote the development of standards and gender policies in media outlets, including anti-harassment measures and gender-specific security protocols, are underway in some areas and should be replicated with measures in place to monitor their implementation. Media outlets can also share and develop comprehensive strategies to tackle online harassment, including opening channels with authorities to record and respond to serious threats.

Ultimately, the full scope and specific impacts of human rights violations experienced by women journalists must be addressed in the broader context and structures of discrimination against women. This requires substantive shifts in deeply entrenched social and cultural norms. By strengthening the safety mechanisms and challenging the patriarchal structure which hinders women journalists' ability to report freely and advance in their profession, the role of women will be strengthened in all societies and bring a full spectrum of coverage, skills and perspectives to the media.



In December 2018 the Gender Respect declaration developed by Somali Women Journalists network (SWJ) was signed by 30 media houses across Somalia and four media organisations, as well as the Ministry of Information. The declaration is advocating the need to respect the rights of women in media. In the photo, left to right: Mohamed Adan Seed, Fu'ad Mohamud Mohamed and Bile Mire Mohamed. Photo: Farhia Kheyre/SWJ



# Contributors

**Report compiled and written by:** Silvia Chocarro, Consultant on Freedom of Expression.  
**Copy Editor:** Elisabeth Witchel, Consultant on Human Rights & Freedom of Expression and Helle Wahlberg, IMS Head of Communications  
**Editor-in-chief:** Robert Shaw, IMS Adviser

In addition, the following individuals contributed:

COUNTRY	NAME AND AFFILIATION
Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Susanna Inkinen <i>International Media Support (IMS)</i> <i>Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC)</i></li></ul>
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Jonathan Bock and Julian David García <i>Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP)</i></li><li>– Amalia Toledo <i>Fundación Karisma</i></li><li>– Johana Moreno <i>Consejo de Redacción</i></li></ul>
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Endah Lismartini <i>Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI)</i></li></ul>
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Dhikra Sarsam <i>Burj Babel for Media Development</i> <i>National Press Council (NPC)</i></li></ul>
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Victor Bwire <i>Media Council of Kenya (MCK)</i></li><li>– Lydia Gachungi <i>UNESCO</i></li></ul>
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Binod Bhattari <i>Independent consultant</i></li><li>– Mona Ansari <i>National Human Rights Commission</i></li><li>– Amika Rajthala <i>Working Women Journalists (WWJ)</i></li></ul>

COUNTRY	NAME AND AFFILIATION
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Adnan Rehmat <i>International Media Support (IMS)</i></li><li>– Iqbal Khattak <i>Freedom Network</i></li><li>– Owais Aslam <i>Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF)</i></li><li>– Myra Imran <i>Journalist – National Press Club</i></li><li>– Asma Shirazi <i>Journalist</i></li></ul>
The Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Therese San Diego <i>Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC)</i></li><li>– Jeraldine Pascual <i>Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR)</i></li><li>– Abraham Agamata <i>Presidential Task Force on Media Security</i></li><li>– Red Batario <i>Center for Community Journalism and Development.</i></li></ul>
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Manja Kamwi <i>International Media Support (IMS)</i></li></ul>
Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Robert Shaw and Malin Palm <i>International Media Support (IMS)</i></li></ul>

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This report commissioned by International Media Support assesses the question of how women in media are being targeted and how journalism is impacted by gender specific harassment and violence. It also looks at to what extent this issue is being effectively addressed on a national level and supported by the international community since the launch in 2012 of the UN Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

The study discusses the challenges and existing efforts to improve the safety and protection of women journalists in nine countries with a view to informing debate and actions by media owners and editors, policy makers, press freedom organisations and journalists.



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