

Annual Report
2021

Journalism against the odds



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Journalist wearing face mask with "Free Press" slogans during a rally of journalists against a new media bill, in front of the Parliament building on December 28, 2021 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Protesters say the Draft Media Bill will restrict freedom of speech and the rights of the press. (Photo by Aziz Karimov)

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IMS (International Media Support) is a non-profit organisation supporting local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition. We push for quality journalism, challenge repressive laws and keep media workers of all genders safe so they can do their jobs. Peaceful, stable societies based on democratic values rely on ethical and critical journalism that aims to include, not divide.

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GOOD JOURNALISM | BETTER SOCIETIES



Page 12

Throughout the report, journalists who stand up for freedom of expression, against the odds, tell their stories, including Editor-in-chief of Mizzima Group, Soe Myint.



Page 28

Even mentioning names when quoting Afghan journalists on their situation can endanger the individual. Therefore, some of those who have shared their stories have been anonymised.



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The office of the Palestinian media outlet where Mara Elwadiya works was bombed: "I was just completely in shock", she says in this interview.

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“The Norwegian Nobel Committee is convinced that freedom of expression and freedom of information help to ensure an informed public. These rights are crucial prerequisites for democracy and protect against war and conflict.”



In 2021 The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel peace prize to Maria Ressa, CEO, Rappler, the Philippines, and Dmitry Muratov editor-in-chief, Novaya Gazeta, Russia:

“Ms Ressa and Mr Muratov are awarded the Nobel peace prize for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace. They are receiving the peace

prize for their courageous fight for freedom of expression in the Philippines and Russia. At the same time, they are representatives of all journalists who stand up for this ideal in a world in which democracy and freedom of the press face increasingly adverse conditions.

“Free, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda.”



Throughout the annual report, you can find QR codes leading to videos or IMS-related background materials.

PHOTO: PALLAVA BAGLA/COMBIS/GETTY IMAGES

Journalism against the odds

In 2021, public interest media around the world continued to face deep structural challenges, and in Myanmar and Afghanistan whole media sectors were forced to flee. It was also a year of remarkable bravery, of more international attention to the importance of free media in promoting more secure and democratic societies and of relentless efforts among our partners to reach new and bigger audience.

“Free, independent and fact-based journalism serves to protect against abuse of power, lies and war propaganda.” Those were the words the Nobel Committee used in October 2021 when it awarded the Nobel peace prize to Maria Ressa and Dmitri Muratov for “their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace.”

As public interest media, quality journalism and indeed journalists themselves continue to face dire and even existential challenges, the Nobel Committee sent a clear signal to the world in 2021: journalists are instrumental for peace and democracy. Not only the two winners, but “all journalists who stand up for the ideal of freedom of expression.”

In these pages, you will meet some of those who are striving to continuously produce and promote good journalism. They do so against the odds. My admiration to them – and a thank you to all who stand with us to even the odds.

The Nobel Prize is a timely reminder to the world that we need a free press. It is dawning on global decision makers that public interest media is part of the solution if we want to counter democratic backsliding, repression and even war. The

current crisis in Ukraine, where IMS has engaged with prompt support, has been a stark reminder of how fake news, social media and tight control of the information flow is an essential part of modern warfare and in destabilising societies, mobilising hatred and keeping populations in the dark.

In these times we live in, the world order is being redefined. In simple terms, our defining values of democracy, human rights and peace are confronting darkness, repression and brutality. In 2021, we saw an unimaginable human tragedy unfold in Afghanistan, a return to dictatorship in Myanmar and, this year, brutal Russian military aggression in Europe. On a wider scale, the notion of liberal democracy itself is at stake as vulnerable democracies are divided by populists and autocrats and a dwindling trust in government, public institutions and media. Trust is essential for peace and democracy. Therefore, any crisis of quality journalism and public interest media is also at the core of the crisis around the world, including in Western societies. Simply put, good journalism is part of the solution.

At IMS, we were on high alert during

2021 in response to the unfolding emergencies, to assist media facing brutal repression and persecution and to help partners sustain a flow of information under extreme circumstances in Afghanistan and Myanmar. It is encouraging to learn that – despite harsh circumstances – Myanmar outlet Mizzima, led by publisher Soe Myint, has been able to increase their audience by 400 percent and that young professionals are eager to join their team. Journalists insist on doing their work and people across Myanmar insist on their right to reliable news. That is a success against the odds.

The wider media development community and governments, however, must also take a long view on how to provide the right conditions for journalists and public interest journalism.

As media are extinguished by economic hardship, journalists are targeted and killed for doing their duty and freedom of expression is suppressed by autocrats, global decision makers in democratic societies must take extraordinary measures to support and protect public interest media. While most conflicts are local, the global trends of repression and democratic backsliding need carefully tailored strategies and a strong global coalition to protect public interest media. It has been encouraging to see democratic nations step up to that responsibility by

Global decision makers in democratic societies must take extraordinary measures to support and protect public interest media

establishing and engaging in the Media Freedom Coalition, and IMS has taken on a keen role in engaging with member states. Now is the time for action. Civil society organisations and governments as well as Big Tech must provide more than rhetorical support for human rights and democratic values. They must act and push for long-term solutions to ensure viable public interest media and infrastructure.

We are currently working with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Tech for Democracy initiative to bring together leaders from Big Tech companies and the Ukrainian media community to tackle disinformation and explore how Big Tech can help promote independent journalism in the context of war. On a wider scale, IMS has launched the Public Interest Infrastructure project. Acknowledging the gravity and complexity of the challenges ahead, the initiative sets out a long-term vision for digital infrastructures that better serve the public interest.

Building collaborative approaches across local media actors and civil society, public institutions and the freedom of expression community will always be at the centre of IMS’ credo. We continue to support efforts to align, coordinate and advocate in partnership with other key actors to build viable and enabling media ecosystems, including through the Global Forum for Media Development.

While celebrating our 20th anniversary, 2021 was a year that called for deep reflections and discussions with global and local partners. Over time, IMS has developed solid partnerships with a vast and diverse group of media and civil society partners. Our work is anchored in our partners’ experiences, and we continuously



Jesper Højberg reflects the continued need to support journalists and media in the face of democratic backsliding.



While celebrating our 20th anniversary, it was a year that testified to the continued relevance of IMS’ key mandate and DNA to support media during crises.

extract our knowledge from conflicts and repressive environments across the globe and make that expertise available to our partners. As we have continued to grow in 2021, IMS has made internal adjustments to improve our ability to add value to our partners around our key areas of expertise in professional journalism and business viability; safety and protection of media workers; and promoting a better ecosystem for media in the challenging contexts we work in. We continue to develop our local presence and proximity to partners and strive to localise and contextualise our approaches.

The unambiguous IMS mandate of helping our partners provide quality journalism has never been more important than today. We are keenly aware of this responsibility as we keep developing our tools and approaches along with civil society

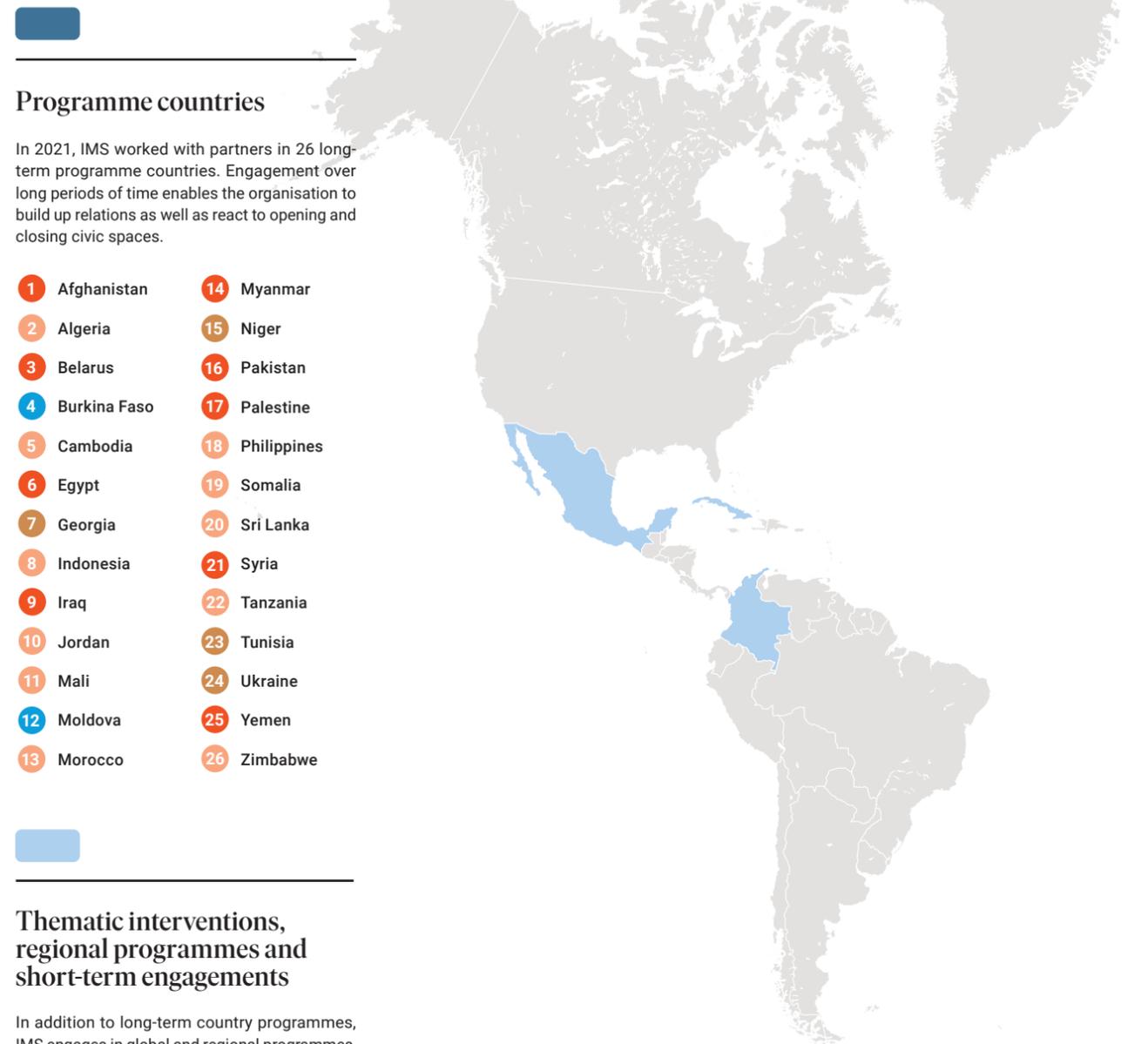
and media partners.

Covid-19 took a big toll on media outlets, yet Covid-19 also showed a remarkable increase in audiences demanding trustworthy news as governments failed to provide it. We need to think of media sustainability in different and innovative ways. In 2021, IMS continued to strengthen our work with local partners to develop new business models and reach larger audiences. Our brave and entrepreneurial partners – many in exile – continued to offer trustworthy journalism. Is that sustainable? As a global society, we need to rethink what sustainability means and start investing in media as a public good. We cannot afford to let the light of information be extinguished.

Jesper Højberg
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Where we work

IMS works where the need for reliable, fact-based information is greatest and the risks to independent media are most perilous: in countries experiencing armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, rapid political change or authoritarian rule



Thematic interventions, regional programmes and short-term engagements

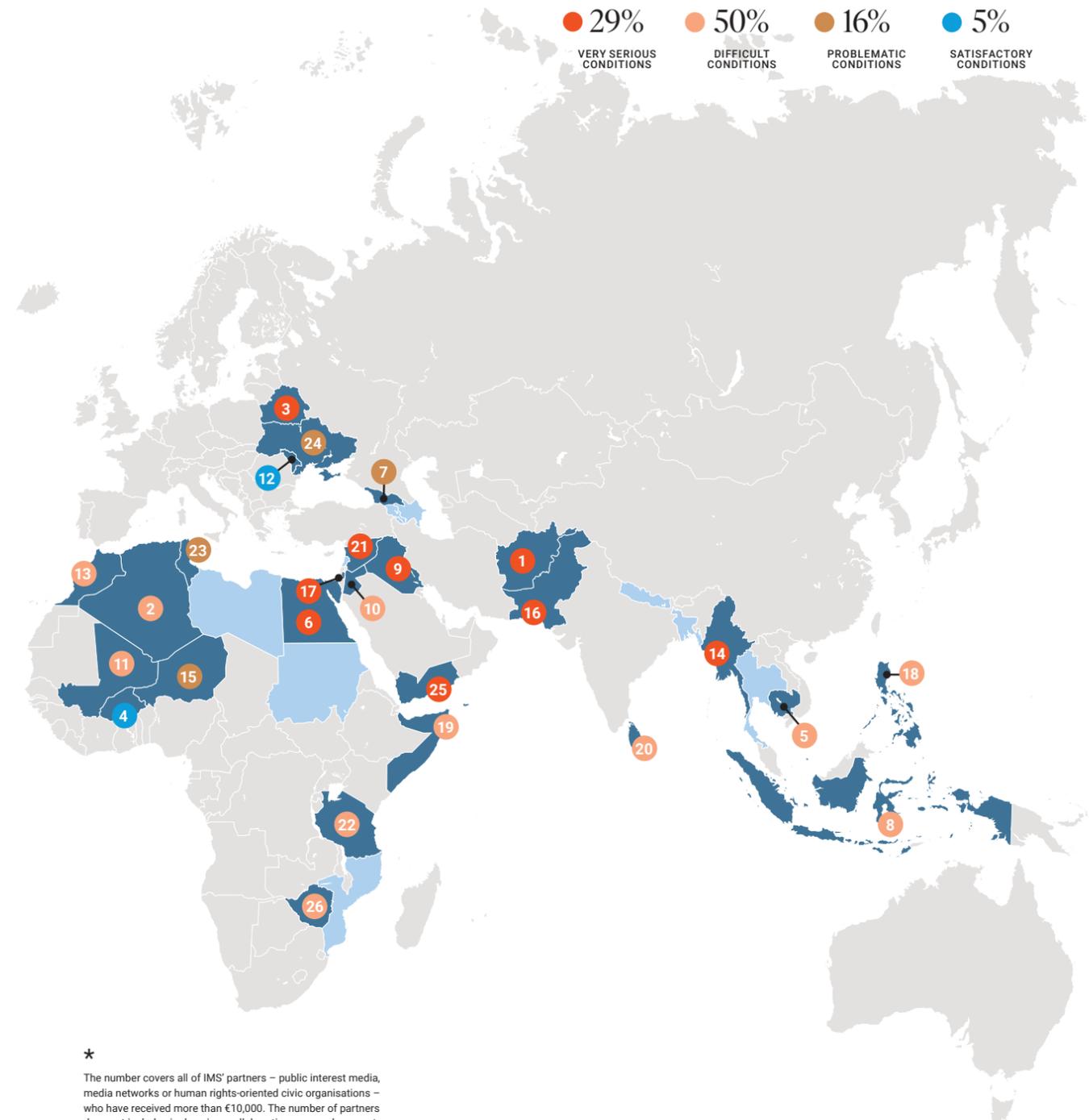
In addition to long-term country programmes, IMS engages in global and regional programmes, thematic interventions and short-term projects, and also responds to crises through IMS' rapid response mechanism.

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PARTNERS RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM IMS IN 2021*

79%

OF THE COUNTRIES WHERE IMS WORKS ARE CATEGORISED AS "VERY SERIOUS" OR "DIFFICULT" ON THE WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX. GLOBALLY, 52% OF ALL COUNTRIES EXPERIENCED A FALL IN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN 2021.



How we work

IMS works with partners to build strong, inclusive and sustainable media sectors that ensure access to reliable information and hold powerholders to account by covering issues of public importance. We push for quality journalism, challenge repressive laws and keep media workers of all genders safe, so that they can do their jobs. Through alliances and innovation, we help free, independent media contribute to positive change and better societies



Push for quality journalism

IMS supports media, organisations, journalists and documentary film makers who tell compelling, fact-based stories about topics of public importance in ethical and professional ways: stories that stimulate debate and hold those with power to account; stories that challenge discriminatory stereotypes and norms; stories that deepen understanding; and stories that articulate the views and perspectives of those under-represented in the media or with limited access to it. To contribute to the viability and sustainability of media, IMS also advises on the use of the technologies that have transformed the ways in which stories can be told, engaged with and used in revenue streams, as well as enable quality journalism.



Keep media workers safe

Producing quality journalism can be dangerous, and IMS strives to provide media workers and organisations with the means to do their work without having to self-censor out of fear. Our approach deploys “the three P’s” – prevention, protection and prosecution – through initiatives anchored in programme countries that provide media workers and organisations with knowledge and skills to avoid being harassed and attacked, help when they are, and which push for attackers to be brought to justice. This approach caters to the different safety and protection needs of media workers of different genders.



Challenge repressive laws

Laws ultimately define the environment in which the media operates, and therefore IMS supports partners looking to navigate and challenge laws that restrict media freedom, as well as partners pushing for reforms that uphold international human rights standards of free expression. This may entail defending media workers and contesting unjust laws in court, as well as identifying laws that need to be changed, working for their reform and, once passed, making sure they are applied. IMS works with collaborations and coalitions on local, national and international levels to help achieve these results. IMS pays particular attention to finding balanced solutions to disinformation and hate speech and the regulation of online content.

PHOTO: PIERRE CROM/GETTY



IMS bridges the development of independent media with aid in crisis and conflict. In Ukraine, where the above local journalist is reporting from the main station in Kyiv, existing networks helped in the quick turn-around to keep media workers safe and provide good journalism under war conditions.

How autocrats use the media to keep control

A trend of democratic backsliding throughout 2020 escalated in an extreme way in 2021. From Myanmar to Belarus, powerholders have unravelled years of human rights achievements with dramatic arrests of journalists, destroyed infrastructure and regime changes – and people’s access to information and their right to freedom of expression have been among the casualties

When the military took power in Myanmar in the early hours of 1 February, 10 years of democratic progress evaporated in a matter of days. With previous experience ruling the country with an iron fist, the military junta knew that the success of the coup depended on more than just their mere presence in the streets. As stated on page one of *the autocrat’s playbook*, retaining control of a country depends on control of news and information streams. The playbook covers a spectrum of tactics, from legal manoeuvres to coups, but there is a consistent theme throughout: to suppress resistance, freedom of expression must be quelled.

Taking control of the media

One of the Burmese military’s first actions was to seize control of national TV and radio channels and cut access to the internet, social media and mobile phone networks. This left people in the dark, giving the military the element of surprise to take power and announce their move on national television. Although access to the internet, social media and mobile networks was later restored, the junta has continued to limit and influence people’s

access to information.

What has happened in Myanmar is far from unique. Autocrats learn from each other, copying tactics to choke the free press. Their aim is to control the narrative and silence critical voices in order to retain power.

Dictating the narrative

In Afghanistan, independent media has been severely limited since the Taliban’s takeover in August. While nominally operational, media houses are required to get approval from the Taliban to be allowed to publish. As the Taliban does not allow the media to criticise it, outlets must choose between self-censoring and their ability to operate. This, combined with impunity for those who attack journalists, has led to nearly half of media houses closing.

This tight control over language is one way for regimes to direct a narrative in their favour. The Taliban’s prohibition of criticism closely aligns with Myanmar military’s ban on the word “coup” or Russia’s insistence that the invasion of Ukraine must be referred to as a “special military operation”. Criminalising language is just one aspect of criminalising freedom of expression.

Weaponizing the law

“Lawfare” uses laws and legislation to limit the press, whether that means bureaucratic licencing requirements for journalists and media houses or using defamation laws to intimidate critical voices. Defamation laws have manifested as anti-blasphemy laws in Pakistan; national security laws in Hong Kong; and through “fake news” laws with broad phrasing such as those that gained steam under the pretext of Covid-19 safety but have been used to control populations.

Even Nobel laureate Maria Ressa has been the target of multiple cyber libel charges, in addition to the harassment and threats incited towards her. The charges against her under these laws were also used as a threat to prevent her from traveling to Oslo to receive her Nobel peace prize before the courts eventually relented. Similarly, an increasing number of strategic lawsuits against public participation – known as SLAPPS – have been used

DEMOCRATIC DECLINE

- The level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen in 2021 is down to 1989 levels. The last 30 years of democratic advances have now been eradicated.
- Dictatorships are on the rise and harbour 70 percent of the world population – 5.4 billion people.
- There are signals that the nature of autocratisation is changing; a record of 33 countries are becoming autocratic.
- The two main declining indicators in the period 2011–2021 are civil society repression and government censorship efforts against the media.

Source: *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) 2021 report, representing the largest global dataset on democracy with over 30 million data points for 202 countries.*



In 2021, 293 journalists were imprisoned. China had the highest number of jailed journalists, Myanmar the second highest. According to CPJ, 28 journalists were killed due to their work, the vast majority of which were locals covering the news in their home countries.

by powerful figures around the world to intimidate critics who may not be able to withstand the financial or psychological toll of court cases.

Controlling the means

Mass communication relies on complex networks: from the initial report until the audience receives the final story, access to information requires different physical and digital infrastructures.

It comes as no surprise, then, that autocrats would seek to control infrastructure as a way of repressing freedom of expression. It is easy to point to the extreme, physical destruction of infrastructure, such as the Israeli airstrikes hitting multiple Palestinian media houses – including IMS partner Filastinyat – or in 2022 the Russian bombing of the Kyiv TV Tower. But control of infrastructure is often more insidious.

There is a power play between governments and tech companies over who owns and controls our means of communication – and who has access to people’s data. It

is not uncommon for telecoms companies to be owned by oligarchs who are friendly towards a regime. Even in cases such as the Norwegian mobile network Telenor, which left Myanmar rather than cooperating with the military, the infrastructure was sold to a company that was willing to cooperate with the military.

Big Tech allows much to happen on its watch. While social media platforms have been used to spark revolution, they have also been sources of hate speech and disinformation, leading to polarisation and violence. A lack of knowledge of the local contexts in which they operate allows mis- and disinformation to spread from government and unofficial sources. Without consistent policies on what they are willing to tolerate, Big Tech seems most motivated by protecting profits, leaving countries with oppressive governments only once they are forced to and not because of ethical considerations for populations.

Autocrats have a variety of tools at their disposal to suppress and intimidate critical

voices. The above four steps create fear or lead journalists to lose or leave their jobs, or – in extreme cases – costs journalists’ lives.

Subsequently, defending press freedom and freedom of expression cannot be managed by fighting on only one front. This has always been clear, and strongly underlined by events in 2021 (and the beginning of 2022). Interventions must come from legislative angles and from lobbying international tech companies that profit while looking away from undemocratic policies. And the international community needs to hold their focus on the struggles of journalists and populations under autocracies, not just when dramatic events grab the headlines, but in the day-to-day battle for people’s rights.

This piece builds on an op-ed in the *Diplomat* by Emilie Lehmann-Jacobsen, IMS Programme Development Adviser, Asia, titled, *How to control the masses by silencing the press.*



“The young people are what keep me going”

Soe Myint is the managing director and editor-in-chief of Mizzima Group, an independent multi-media organisation in Myanmar that he co-founded 24 years ago. Since the military coup in 2021, Mizzima continues to produce independent, critical journalism and fight for democracy under tough conditions

Myanmar

It wasn't always in the cards for Soe Myint to become a journalist; he went to university with a dream of becoming a military attaché. However, after witnessing the military's brutality during the student uprisings in 1988, he joined the country's resistance movement.

In 1990, Soe Myint went into exile in India, and in 1998, he and his co-founder, Thin Thin Aung, created Mizzima, which was run from New Delhi until 2012 when democratic progress in Myanmar finally allowed them to return to their home country.

His life experiences have prepared him for the situation that Myanmar sees today: “It is not the first time I and the older generations of Myanmar faced these challenges. I've been in exile for more than two decades, and I've witnessed my mother becoming paralysed while serving a three-year prison sentence. I've seen the extreme brutality of the military regime. I always expect that things can turn very bad and very difficult.”

Striving for safety

Since the military coup, safety has been a constant challenge.

“We have to be always ready for security checks and to delete all traces of our work on phones and computers in an instant. VPNs, emails, texts, everything,”

he explains. If one location becomes too risky, they move employees to new areas. According to Soe Myint, everybody is ready to relocate within five to ten minutes with their current setup. However, mental as well as practical precautions must be taken.

“We cannot ensure total safety for anyone. But we try to be ready, mentally and physically, to move quick and face any challenges,” he says. “For example, I personally have to be ready for my parents, who are in their 80s, to be arrested and their house to be seized by the regime at any time. I have to be aware that anything can happen because I can't afford to be surprised, sad and heartbroken when I get the news.”

Everyday life in an emergency

In Soe Myint's everyday life at Mizzima, some of his first priorities are to ensure that all the platforms as well as the electricity and internet are functioning, which is a challenge due to frequent power and internet cuts. Another priority is the health and wellbeing of staff.

Mizzima has teams across various locations inside and outside of Myanmar. A part of Soe Myint's job is to make sure they have access to food and health services and that staff located outside the country get the right documents to allow them to stay and work. They also look after staff members in prison. Since the coup, six

Mizzima journalists have been arrested, among them Thin Thin Aung, who was tortured. Two remain in jail, serving years-long sentences, and the team looks after them as best they can with monetary support and encouragement.

Soe Myint describes the challenge of ensuring high-quality journalism in a dangerous and chaotic situation. With the large-scale, countrywide conflict constantly evolving, it is difficult to find time and resources to prioritise in-depth journalism. However, Mizzima continues to produce investigative journalism focusing specifically on marginalised groups, like internally displaced people and refugees. They have also done a series highlighting women's voices and experiences in the conflict, profiling a teacher, a journalist and women in the armed groups.

Time of opportunities

The coup has also provided new opportunities, according to Soe Myint. Mizzima has the potential to reach up to 30 million people across all of its platforms. In the wake of the coup, the media outlet experienced audience increases up to 400 percent. The coup has also been a push to pursue goals that were not possible during the democratisation process. For years, the Mizzima team wanted to set up FM radio stations in different ethnic communities to connect with a broader part of Myanmar's diverse population, but the military held a

tight monopoly. Now they have radio stations in several languages.

“The political developments have been an opportunity for us to develop and decentralise efforts, and we see that more and more people trust and rely on us. We feel a lot of support from many sides. The fact that we have been able to continue our work is what makes me the most proud,” he says.

Contributing to the feeling of support, Soe Myint adds, is also the fact that Mizzima now receives significantly more applications whenever they put out a job posting, even though anyone associated with Mizzima can be sentenced to life in prison.

The next generation and the future

Soe Myint also appreciates having the chance to support younger generations that have played a significant role in the resistance movement. To him, it is a privilege to

share his personal and professional experiences with them: “Many young people had not fathomed how long and hard this struggle would be because they've never tried it before. But they are not giving up, and I'm so proud of them. The future of Myanmar rests on their shoulders. They are what keeps me going every day.”

However, though the journalists in Myanmar are fighting bravely, they cannot do it alone.

Soe Myint is very clear on what type of support he wishes for his country: “To be very frank and short: the kind of support we need is the kind of support Ukraine is receiving. We are thrilled that Ukrainians are fighting for human rights and democracy. We are fighting the same fight – and we too need equipment, financial support and solidarity, so we can continue our efforts and deepen our alliances with democracy fighters all over the world.”

In the wake of the coup, Mizzima experienced audience increases of up to 400 percent

Learn more about how Mizzima operates since the coup.



“We see that more and more people trust and rely on us. We feel a lot of support from many sides,” says Soe Myint, editor-in-chief of Mizzima Group.

Giving reliable information a head start



The internet, and social media in particular, provide fertile ground for mis- and disinformation to spread like weeds. Initiatives in IMS programmes seek to tackle this from different angles: looking to cut them off before they can spread through factchecking training; improving digital literacy to help the public protect themselves; and by questioning the very infrastructure our technology relies on and how it can better serve the public

Seventy-five new factcheckers in the Sahel

In times of crisis, access to reliable information is crucial. In Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, local journalists are trained to improve their factchecking and other important skills to provide quality online journalism and investigative reporting.

With increasing conflict, closing of borders and challenges and restrictions due to Covid-19, local media in the Sahel region have been forced to rely largely on online tools and information in 2021. With an increasing global level of disinformation, it has become imperative for journalists here to learn new methods, ensuring that they maintain high journalistic standards.

IMS partner CENOZO is a pan-African organisation promoting investigative journalism through training, knowledge exchange and support for journalists' safety and publication. In 2021, CENOZO conducted four training sessions for 75 African journalists of all genders who were introduced to new techniques to factcheck online information. For several of the participants,

these trainings have significantly improved their work: "I now know how to do in-depth research on verifying information before confirming or denying information," one of the participants states.

Another states: "I now have the reflex to always check the videos and photos I receive to do quality work. My research is becoming more and more precise, and I save a lot of time."

CENOZO's work resulted in 19 investigations in 2021. Among these, contributions were made to the global Pandora Papers investigations which uncovered fraud, tax evasion and money laundering in several African countries. Others focused, for example, on refugees and internally displaced people who have been forced into sex work and on people who are illegally kept in detention without trials. Not only did these investigations reveal critical issues to the public, but several of them also led to constructive roundtable meetings with local CSOs and authorities in Mali, Niger

and Burkina Faso, to discuss possible solutions to the issues uncovered by the journalists' investigations.

The IMS Sahel Programme (2018-2021) is funded by Danida.

"I now have the reflex to always check the videos and photos I receive to do quality work."

Combatting disinformation in Ethiopia through media literacy



Like many other countries in the world, digital skills are essential to Ethiopia. Despite limited internet penetration, millions of users are actively engaged on social media, and misinformation, disinformation and hate speech thrive in Ethiopia, strongly correlating with offline conflicts. IMS believes media literacy education can help the public become more critical and help them find reliable information.

Says Sören Östergaard Sørensen, Programme Adviser for the IMS media reform programme in Ethiopia, which is run jointly with Swedish media development organisation Fojo: "The need for enhanced media literacy is a global issue and not isolated to Ethiopia, but it is of critical importance here because of the context of growing conflicts around the country and growing polarisation of people with different political views, ethnicity and sociodemographic groups. Both the traditional and the new social media platforms are increasingly contributing to creating an 'us and them' narrative."

IMS supported Bahirdar University's proposal on training high school and university students in select regional cities of

Ethiopia on media literacy to combat mis- and disinformation.

The media literacy training programme initiated by Bahirdar University reached more than 400 trainees at eight high schools and eight universities across Amhara, Oromia, Sidama and SNNPR, including the cities of Ambo, Jimma, Dire Dawa, Haromya, Adama, Debre Markos, Dilla, and Hawassa over a 12-month period from May 2021 to March 2022. In addition to providing training to enhance youth awareness of mis- and disinformation, the programme also developed a media literacy training manual, detailed materials from which have been shared on the group Telegram channel.

"When they said 'media literacy', I never thought it would be about social media at first," said participant Nardos Shitaye. "I thought it is about the traditional media, and am happy to be part of the digital communication literacy." She said that she found it timely, with a direct connection to her and her peers who actively engage on social media with their smartphones.

Another participant, a journalism student named Kidist, said she already knew

"When they said 'media literacy', I never thought it would be about social media."

the theory of media literacy, but taking part in the course has given her the practical skills needed to follow and contribute to social and political debates online.

Bahirdar University is currently replicating the training programme with support from IMS. In this continued session, half of the 200 participants are women and girls. Ethiopia is one of the lowest-ranked countries in Africa for women's digital literacy in terms of "equitable access to information technology", according to The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). This new round of the training programme aims to help close the gendered digital divide. In addition to teaching how to evaluate content critically, the programme is also focusing on online safety.

Why we need public interest alternatives to Big Tech

Changes in our digital environments have had detrimental effects on public interest media and journalists' ability to work. The monopolisation and privatisation of data, knowledge and moderation in the hands of a few American and Chinese companies have been a major enabling factor in the exponential growth in polarisation, disinformation and online hate speech

Limiting the damage of existing and new crises online remains a significant part of IMS' and our partners' work, sometimes in collaboration with Big Tech. However, reactive efforts like factchecking the avalanche of disinformation affecting local communities will not solve underlying structural problems. This is why IMS launched the Public Interest Infrastructure initiative.

The initiative looks to move beyond fixing existing digital infrastructures – like Facebook and Google – and instead asks: what local alternatives already exist? What solutions can we build? What coalitions can journalists be part of to help create digital infrastructure that serves the public interest instead?

The initiative builds on IMS' and our partners' experiences operating over the past 20 years in some of the world's most challenging conditions for media. IMS

is inspired by existing digital communities where people don't have to pay with their personal data to be part of the public debate; open-source software enables federated social media networks; and platform design tweaks calm the hateful, misogynist tone that can arise online.

Acknowledging the gravity and complexity of the challenges ahead, the initiative sets out a long-term vision for digital infrastructures – search engines, internet cables, social media platforms, app stores and more – that better serve the public interest. To get there, IMS will, in collaboration with existing and new partners – including from the tech sector – develop, test and adapt new approaches and solutions to produce and distribute content, counter disinformation and hate speech and transform unconvincing digital infrastructures in programme countries and regions.

“Reactive efforts like factchecking the avalanche of disinformation will not solve underlying structural problems.”

Finding solutions for digital infrastructure

For 20 years, IMS' local media partners have been on the digital frontlines. IMS is connecting partners to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring their knowledge and visionary solutions to new initiatives aimed at tackling local and global digital challenges.

In November 2021, leading up to the Tech for Democracy conference, IMS hosted an international webinar focused on solutions for digital infrastructure that serves the public interest.

IMS partners Nadim Nashif, Director of 7amleh, Palestine; Rishad Patel, Co-founder of Spline Media, Singapore; and Dr. Theresa Züger, Head of the Public Interest AI research group at the Humboldt Institute for Internet & Society, Germany, were invited to discuss challenges and solutions.

Dr. Theresa Züger highlighted a crucial point: “More and more governments are waking up and realising something must be done, but they don't know how to support

or build alternatives to Big Tech. I think that civil society and human rights advocates are still very underrepresented in presenting their vision, and they should be empowered to a much higher degree than they are today.”

The initiative is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The full webinar is available on IMS' YouTube channel.

Watch IMS' webinar on public interest infrastructure as part of the Tech for Democracy conference.



PIERRE GROM



IMS' Public Interest Infrastructure initiative is looking beyond fixing existing infrastructures like Facebook and Google and instead imagining new alternatives that counter the privatisation of data and knowledge.

Infographics, investigations and mixtapes



Despite overwhelming obstacles during the Covid-19 pandemic, independent media across Africa rose to the occasion and provided life-saving information about health safety to their rapidly growing audiences. With support from IMS, local media managed to expand their coverage even further and reach marginalised groups through new, creative approaches

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa, local journalists have worked overtime to counter harmful dis- and misinformation and hold powerholders to account. Simultaneously, many countries imposed new restrictive laws on press freedom, and struggling economies made income streams for media even more unstable. With a global health emergency, floods of false information and numerous new threats to journalists' safety and livelihoods, many local media houses on the continent found themselves in need of a boost.

Coming together to support local media
Enter the Africa regional programme, aptly named "Covid-19 Response in Africa:

together for reliable information", which aimed to support local independent media in exceptionally trying times. The programme was initiated by an emergency consortium, a partnership between IMS, a handful of other international media development organisations and UNESCO.

Over 2020-2021, the consortium provided grants and emergency support to selected media partners in 17 countries across Africa. Some were long-term IMS partners while others were new. In parallel, IMS provided training in community engagement to encourage the development of new strategies to connect with even more and bigger audiences. The results of the programme are significant. More than 50

million people were reached by their content across Africa. Programme partners' online traffic increased considerably, some by up to 80 percent.

Special efforts for the most vulnerable

Many in the audiences belong to marginalised groups, which was a special focus of the programme. For example, some partners interviewed and produced content specifically aimed at women, people working in mines and deaf people, others at sex workers, homeless and people living with HIV/AIDS. Similarly, a special focus on gender ensured support for women journalists and coverage of gendered challenges and dangers, like an increase in child pregnancies in Zimbabwe and the difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in Tanzania.

The audience-focused approach resulted in a wider understanding of self and community protection. In Mozambique, an external evaluation estimated that 67 percent of listeners of the country's community radio stations changed their behaviours due to the information they heard. In some districts, a direct correlation between the recommendations shared by programme partners and drops in Covid-19 infections was later documented and acknowledged by the Ministry of Health. A listener of the Furancungo community radio station in the country confirms: "I started educating my family first about prevention and then



PHOTO: TAPAZNYA UNHCR/GETTY IMAGES

A man receives a dose of the vaccine against Covid-19 in Zimbabwe. Partner-produced programmes on the Covid-19 pandemic reached that were played on Zimbabwe's national radio station reached 90 percent of the country's population.

REACH

- In Mozambique, 6 million listeners were reached through 15 community radio stations, and in Somalia 6 million listened to shortwave broadcasts by Radio Ergo, a long-time IMS partner.
- In Zimbabwe, partner-produced programmes were played on the national radio station, reaching 90 percent of the country's population.
- More than 10 million watched and heard material produced by partners on large radio and TV stations, for example, the 28 radio stations in Madagascar who broadcasted radio programmes by one partner, reaching up to 50 percent of the country's population.

Programme facts

The consortium was funded by EC/DEVCO Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance with co-funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The consortium was led by Free Press Unlimited and partners were Article 19, Deutsche Welle Akademie (DWA), IMS, Fondation Hironnelle (FH), Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and affiliated partner UNESCO.

I talked to three family friends who didn't wear masks and walked in a lot of markets where there are many people. Now these families have changed their behaviour."

Ingenuity paved the way

The impressive reach was a result of not only good journalism, but also creative and strategic thinking. This materialised in a plethora of media products and communication formats: infographics, call-in radio sessions, explainer videos, social media campaigns and investigative journalism digging into, for example, the disbursement of funds to businesses by the Uganda Development Bank and the lack of testing facilities in Lichinga, Mozambique. During the programme, more than 1,000 radio programmes, 5,000 spots and jingles, 230 articles including instigative pieces, 60 videos and over 500 news updates and infographics were produced by the partners.

However, there were also numerous examples of partners' employing untraditional methods to reach new audiences with important information about health and safety, vaccines and public decisions. Partners produced satirical skits, radio dramas, poems, quizzes and murals. Bustop TV, a partner in Zimbabwe, distributed 1,000 USB sticks with mixtapes

More than 50 million people were reached by partner content across Africa. Programme partners' online traffic increased considerably, some by up to 80 percent.

of Covid-19 and vaccine information to be played on public transportation and at markets. Bustop TV also performed street plays from the back of a truck in remote, rural areas that were very popular among the local population, health experts and authorities. These plays and mixtapes reached more than 8 million people.

How radio changes lives

Rural citizens in conflict-torn Western Niger get their news and information – including on gender and climate issues – from local community radio stations. Running one of them was a childhood dream for 51-year-old Tahirou Boukari

Sahel

For more than a decade, the population of the border zone between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, known as the Liptako-Gourma region, has been affected by conflicts. Armed groups fight for the scarce arable land, water and resources, and many have lost their lives at the hand of jihadists and other armed groups, causing the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. In this environment, a number of local community radio stations have managed to reach large audiences with vital news.

“Working in the radio is a dream come true for me,” says Tahirou Boukari, who has spent almost two decades as the director of Radio Kourmey, which broadcasts a mix of practical news to rural citizens, farmers and pastoralists.

When Tahirou Boukari was a child, his

The IMS network of community radio stations and women’s clubs in the Liptako-Gourma have produced more than 800 radio programmes reaching up to 2 million people.

family gathered around the radio, which broadcasted on shortwave and ran sports and news.

“The programme broadcasts were like magic for the children of my village. We didn’t know the names of the journalists, but we imagined their faces and they were heroes to us,” he says. “So, when I had the chance to join the team of the Kourmey radio station in Kokorou, which is also my native village, it was like a dream come true.”

Improved skills, improved programming
Today the radio station has a much broader reach and covers themes related to rural development, environmental and health issues, as well as the inclusion of women.

“For years, we successfully reached some people and performed a much-needed community service, but our lack of training and knowledge of radio production meant that we were limited. The quality of our programmes was not as good as it is today. This has changed since 2018, thanks to the Sahel programme implemented by IMS. We benefit from support in training, materials and financial support,” he says.

Two men and five women volunteer at the radio station. The staff who have learned the basic principles of radio production, including the design and structure of various genres and programmes, how to conduct interviews and editing, mixing and broadcasting. Moreover, the radio station is now equipped with computers, software and other equipment, including microphones, headsets, digital recorders, USBs

and listening devices, which represent a golden opportunity to learn how to develop and edit professional radio programmes.

“We have experienced a revolution of high-quality content that has had a strong impact on listeners through formats such as debates, women’s listening club programmes and youth debates. All of this has been a great advancement for us because at the start we ran a lot of pre-packaged programmes produced by third parties,” Tahirou Boukari says.

“All these radio programmes [produced with IMS support] relate to various subjects with a strong impact on the daily life of the whole community. We can cite, for example, themes on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), social cohesion, peacebuilding, human rights, rural development, the environment, community resilience in the face of development challenges, the inclusion of women and young people, etc.”

Tahirou Boukari’s colleague, Maka Doudou, the programme leader of the women’s listening club, adds:

“Our voices are being heard thanks to the training and support we have received. Women have traditionally been marginalised within our communities but, thanks to the various forms of capacity building, we have become key actors of inclusion within our communities,” she says. “Beyond learning about production, we have managed to produce programmes that really help women, their health and their families. For instance, we have created shows related to prenatal care and women’s health,” she said, referring to one of the strategies of the IMS programme, namely to have the radio stations propose topics and have IMS provide professional and technical advice and financial support.

Promoting change

According to Maka Doudou, attendance at the health centre by women was very

“The security situation is now so bad we cannot move, and the radio is more important than ever. If the radio stops broadcasting, life in the village stops.”

Radio journalist, Niger.

low before the IMS Sahel programme partnered with the radio station and the women’s clubs. But after the broadcast of the programme, everyone understood the importance of pregnant women going to and consulting with a healthcare worker before her delivery.

“Childbirth is just one example among many. That radio show has really shaped and changed the mentality of women and men in our region,” she says of a region with high rates of infant and maternal mortality.

The security crisis is very serious in Liptako-Gourma and thousands of people have been displaced from their villages, fleeing to safer places or camps for displaced people. The humanitarian situation is extremely critical. But Tahirou Boukari and Maka Doudou continue their work.

“Even with all these difficulties, we broadcast. And we use the techniques of conflict sensitive reporting and broadcasting of crucial information in the community that IMS taught us,” says Maka Doudou. It is part of the training and support from IMS to assess possible threats for both the individual and the radio station.

“Today our radio station participates in the enlargement of the public space of freedom of expression and all kinds of professional experts participate in the public

debates which engage the life of the entire community. While we have worked with IMS, we have been able to develop more than 90 high quality programmes, of which we still broadcast some of them,” adds Tahirou Boukari.

Mobilising community for the environment

Environmental programmes have also been key. “Once we featured the case of the local pond [water reserve] of our community, which is drying up because of global warming. This was a problem because the residents had not developed agricultural activities to deal with this [some plants protect the water from fast evaporation]. The objective of choosing this theme was to mobilise the community to save the water reserve and promote agricultural activities on the banks,” he says.

The programme was widely listened to, and the plan worked, according to Tahirou Boukari.

“When we produced the programme on the diagnosis of the pond [water reserve], we proposed solutions to stop it drying up and we invited the population to practice agricultural activities to improve food and nutritional security. Especially with the interventions of locally elected officials, community leaders, representatives of women and young people, as well as rural development agents in the programme, a community synergy has been created around the problem. There are now local solutions to save the pond, and the town hall has supported women and young people with seeds and other gardening equipment to exploit the banks of the pond. This means that the local population has been able to set up agricultural perimeters for the cultivation of lettuce and other sorts [of vegetables]. Today, thanks to this programme, several members of our community are sheltered from poverty with the practice of agricultural activities around the pond,” he says.



Radio Kourmey programmes cover themes related to rural development, environmental and health issues and the inclusion of women.



Working together

Collaborating and creating alliances have been at the heart of IMS' approach since its foundation. This method of working has laid the ground for important partnerships, projects and coalitions that have brought about systemic changes in countries and regions around the world



Bridging journalism over borders

The world is increasingly interlinked, creating journalistic opportunities and challenges

In response, IMS and the investigative news outlet Danwatch have created the editorial exchange service MediaBridge which brokers stories between trusted media partners in hard-to-reach places with mid-sized media outlets in the West.

When Denmark in the spring of 2021 became the first European nation to deny the renewal of refugee residency permits for Syrians from Damascus, European media dug into the story.

The Netherlands-based Lighthouse Reports, specialising in transnational investigations, set resources aside to find out if it was safe for refugees to return. But they quickly realised that sending one of their journalists to an area where they had no on-the-ground experience was not a workable option.

Through MediaBridge, Lighthouse Reports were introduced to and developed a working relationship with the Syrian investigative journalist team SIRAJ and IMS partner Rozana, an FM and online radio station. They teamed up with UK's

the Guardian newspaper as well as with other leading European media outlets.

This is the spirit of MediaBridge: to foster global-local connections and to tell untold stories for better public interest journalism. The idea is to broaden news access by enabling locally-based media in the Global South to set news agendas for diverse, global audiences based on in-depth local knowledge. MediaBridge is an opportunity to build the investigative journalism capacity of independent public interest media partners while producing investigations that meet international standards.

In 2021, MediaBridge established links between media that led to 21 investigations in SubSahara Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. The initiatives have come from outlets both in the Global North and the Global South who have found each other through the platform mediabridge.org

The partnership between Lighthouse Reports, SIRAJ and Rozana led to a series

of strong stories, examining what kind of Syria the refugees would return to. By combining satellite imagery with on-the-ground interviews, the outlets were able to prove, among others, that many of the houses of those facing deportation from Denmark had been demolished. This story was one of the media reports that lawyers for the Syrian refugees have since used in the special court, and in several cases the media coverage has led to refugees being allowed to stay in Denmark.

Staff from IMS and Danwatch and regional coordinators have been funded by a grant from Google News Initiative.

“MediaBridge is an opportunity to build the investigative journalism capacity of independent public interest media partners while producing investigations.”



The reasons behind the arrests of journalists vary from country to country, but an intolerance of independent journalism is the common denominator in each case.

PHOTO: MO MINIK/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

Securing the release of imprisoned journalists

Global collaboration can create important changes. In 2021, the Media Freedom Coalition, which IMS supports with expertise and partner collaborations, secured the freedom of journalists jailed for doing their jobs

One key result of IMS' international coalition work in 2021 was helping to secure the releases of imprisoned journalists from several countries as part of the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) Consultative Network. MFC is a group of over 50 governments that have pledged to promote press freedom at home and abroad, and its Consultative Network consists of 22 civil society organisations that raise cases for international attention and hold the MFC members to their international commitments.

The number of imprisoned journalists in

2021 reached a bleak record: 293 compared to 280 the previous year. China remains the country with the highest number of jailed journalists, followed by Myanmar, Egypt, Vietnam and Belarus. Though the argumentation behind the imprisonments varies from country to country, the intolerance of independent journalism is a common denominator.

To counter this development, IMS has brought the first-hand experience of its programme teams and partners to inform the MFC's decisions and strategies. Though

The number of imprisoned journalists in 2021 reached a bleak record: 293 compared to 280 the previous year.

civil society and inter-governmental bodies have long supported press freedom, this is the first time that states are directly leading consultative initiatives from their consular missions in the sector.

In this way, the MFC is the missing link – states can open diplomatic doors that individual organisations simply cannot. Civil society, inter-governmental and state prioritisation of press freedom are a promising trifecta, and the results from the cases that have been raised are underscoring the coalition's potential.

Digital Safe House supports women journalists

Women journalists in the Philippines face violence both online and offline, from targeted troll armies to being maltreated by government officials to harassment in their workplaces

Philippines

In December 2021, the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT), with support from IMS, launched the Digital Safe House, an online tool to centralise resources for the help and protection of Filipino women journalists being attacked and harassed.

The platform, digitalsafehouseph.net, serves as a first stop for women journalists at risk and those who are seeking support in the face of various attacks, abuse and violence. It was built by IAWRT and funded by IMS to support the implementation of the Philippine Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists coalition. The platform was also developed with advice from trusted digital experts working with human rights and freedom of expression organisations around the world as well as local partners.

IAWRT's work on the Digital Safe House and knowledge of organisations working on the safety of journalists has also led to them being chosen as an anchor organisation for the flagship area of safety

as part of the Philippines Plan of Action.

"It's something that we're really happy about because we would like to contribute as much as we can to the implementation and realisation of the Philippine Plan of Action. It should be something that really works for Filipino journalists", says Lady Ann Salem, Communication Officer at IAWRT and Project Manager of the Digital Safe House.

The initiative was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark through the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Including women and minorities in all stages of the work results in outcomes that reflect the needs and experiences of all groups in society.

A SUM GREATER THAN ITS PARTS

Another way that collaboration is reflected in IMS' work is through coalitions, on local, national, regional and international levels. A coalition is a temporary alliance of different actors with a variety of interests and affiliations looking to achieve common goals through collective action and advocacy. It will often consist of media houses, journalists' unions, publishers' associations and civil society organisations. Inclusion and diversity are key to a successful coalition; including women and minorities in all stages of the work results in outcomes that reflect the needs and experiences of all groups in society.

IMS aligns with coalitions because they are capable of creating results that no single actor is able to achieve alone. By speaking with one unified voice, coalitions can hold powerholders to account, raise awareness and generate new alliances across sectors and industries – alliances that seldom come naturally in the fraught, under-resourced and highly competitive environments that IMS works in. Throughout the years, IMS' coalition work has contributed to changing the Constitution of Zimbabwe to include media freedom, challenging repressive laws in Pakistan, implementing a national safety mechanism in the Philippines, releasing numerous imprisoned journalists and paving the way for good journalism in more than 40 countries.

Visit the Digital Safe House website.



PHOTO: IANA FORBES/GETTY



The Digital Safe House provides women journalists subject to online and offline harassment and violence with resources and support.

Collaborating on safety



A journalist gives masks and vitamins to motorists in Palu, Indonesia.

In December 2021, IMS hosted the first workshop in a series that will support national human rights institutions in promoting the safety of journalists, a first step towards increased collaboration across borders and sectors

Asia

IMS' convening of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to promote the safety of journalists builds on the realisation that short-term, reactive responses are not enough to tackle safety challenges faced by journalists in post-conflict countries. Instead, IMS believes that NHRIs can support efficient, long-term solutions. NHRIs have the mandate to protect freedom of expression and human rights defenders – and by extension, journalists – and are capable of bringing stakeholders together to advocate against restrictive laws, monitor media freedoms and support independent mechanisms for protecting freedom of expression. The project scales on IMS' and other national and international press freedom support organisations' seven-year lobbying efforts to push

the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal to endorse a plan for a national safety mechanism in 2019.

In a series of peer-to-peer workshops, IMS will continue to bring together NHRI decision-makers and civil society leaders to explore possible collaborations on journalist safety mechanisms anchored in individual institutes. The workshops take the knowledge gained through practice in Nepal forward to inspire neighbouring countries in the region to build safety mechanisms.

IMS hosted the first workshop with participants from Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines, the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UNESCO. The workshop was guided by new IMS research that analyses the status of respective NHRI relationships with journalist safety mechanisms

to discern what is needed for NHRIs to further develop gender-sensitive national safety mechanisms.

“When we collaborate across borders in carrying out this project, then we can strengthen each other and learn from the conditions and situations that occur in other countries in Asia. Providing mutual reinforcement while minimising existing deficiencies is one of the values in this collaborative method,” says Dr. Lestari Nurhajati, who participated in the workshop as a researcher and country expert in Indonesia for journalist safety research. “Especially last December, when the results of this research were presented and discussed and involved NHRI commissioners and members of journalist associations from various project-participating countries, we can feel the benefits for the stakeholders who were involved in this issue.”

New laws improve journalists' safety



In 2021, two progressive bills were passed in Pakistan to improve the safety of media workers of all genders and fight impunity, an important victory in a country that since the turn of the century has ranked as one of the most dangerous places on earth for journalists

Programme facts

PROGRAMME PERIOD
2018-2025

DONORS
Danida, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- FOCUS AREAS**
- Media safety support for journalists and legislation.
 - Promoting diversity and pluralism in media.
 - Strengthening online civic activism by women.
 - Supporting innovative digital journalism.
 - Advocacy for public interest journalism for marginalised communities.



Since 2000, more than 140 journalists have been killed for doing their job.

Pakistan

Pakistan was rated 145 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Border's World Press Freedom Index in 2021. Since 2000, more than 140 journalists have been killed for doing their jobs. Additionally, impunity is rife; not a single killer has been convicted or punished for their crimes. The country witnessed an increasingly tight grip on media and internet freedoms, particularly during the tenure of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Ground-breaking progress

However, in 2021, local actors achieved major goals in their fight for press freedom. In July, the Sindh province passed a local law aimed at keeping journalists in its jurisdiction safe. This was followed by another milestone national law on the safety of media practitioners by the federal government that also seeks to combat impunity for crimes against journalists.

The two laws are significant as they both acknowledge the responsibilities of the state and the needs of the country's journalists. Muhammad Aftab Alam, Executive Director of the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA) and member of Pakistan Journalists Safety Coalition (PJSC), describes the passing in parliament as a landmark achievement as these laws promise to promote, protect and effectively ensure the independence, impartiality, safety and freedom of expression of media professionals.

“In a nutshell, these laws cover various aspects of the ‘three P’ mechanisms recommended by the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity: prevention, protection and prosecution,” he says. Today, Pakistan is the only country in Asia with such legislation.

Inclusion and collaboration at the centre
The bills are also quite progressive in the sense that they provide further safety guarantees against the harassment of women media workers and have adopted a quite progressive interpretation of who as journalists can benefit from the legislation.

“Any journalist, irrespective of their religious background, gender, ethnicity and affiliation, will be protected under the law,” Muhammed Aftab Alam states. Furthermore, the laws provide for the establishment of independent Commissions for the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals, and the federal act requires three of its members to be women.

This legislation is the result of sustained advocacy efforts by the PJSC, a cross-sectional coalition which was established with support from IMS in 2019. The PJSC brings together media associations, civil society, human and digital rights campaigners, academia and political parties to advocate for the safety of journalists through the lens of freedom of expression. In parallel, the PJSC managed to put enough pressure on the country's governments to get the bills passed. Now the PJSC, with IMS' support, is advocating for similar local laws in the remaining three provinces of Pakistan.

With the fall of Kabul – the fall of Afghan independent press

In the beginning of 2021, the Afghan independent media scene was one of the most vibrant in the region. By December, hundreds of journalists had fled, even more were in distress within the country and media outlets closed

Afghanistan

Since the fall of the Republic, nearly half of Afghanistan's media outlets have closed and thousands of Afghan journalists have either left the country, lost their jobs or are in hiding, with local media outlets and women journalists bearing the brunt of this downturn. Meet some of those whose lives were changed but who still hope they can provide vital information to the Afghan people.

IMS' mandate covers providing safety, supporting the production of journalism and pushing for legal frameworks in support of

free press. Due to the seriousness of the situation, however, in 2021 IMS worked with the World Food Programme to distribute humanitarian aid. After the fall of Kabul, IMS supported Scandinavian governments in their efforts to evacuate staff and partners with Danish, Swedish or Norwegian backgrounds or relations. Since then, efforts have focused on keeping safety mechanisms running for journalists in the country, with a special focus on women journalists, while working with partners to find new ways of providing Afghan society with reliable information.

THREATS TO AFGHANISTAN'S MEDIA WORKERS

- By December, only 17 percent of women journalists returned to work.
- In 17 of the country's 34 provinces there are no women working in the media.
- There were 227 documented cases of violence against media workers.
- Eight journalists were murdered, six of which happened in the first half of 2021.
- AJSC's registered violation cases increased by almost 100 percent compared to 2020.

Finding footing as a journalist abroad

Wahida Faizi used to work as a gender coordinator for AJSC (Afghan Journalists Safety Committee). She has a background as a prize-winning journalist and has lived for many years with threats to her life. Immediately after the fall of Kabul, she fled Afghanistan, evacuated by a Scandinavian government.

"I made evacuation lists for others but neither I nor my husband wanted to leave," she recalls. But she knew she was a target and had seen how the Taliban had purposefully started going after women journalists earlier in the year. It only took a few days before Wahida Faizi packed the awards she had won for her journalism alongside two sets of clothes and headed for the airport.

Now she is living in safety and continues to work to keep Afghanistan on the agenda in Western media by giving interviews and taking part in events. Danish newspaper Politiken has employed Wahida Faizi in an internship scheme and she is also advising IMS' advocacy and programme work in Afghanistan, with a special focus on initiatives with and for Afghan woman journalists.

"I am pleased that I can continue my journalism in a new setting as many other fleeing Afghan journalists have not been that fortunate. I feel an obligation to continue this course and to be vocal about the situation of Afghanistan's journalists," she says.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KHAJIA ASHRAFI



Khadija Ashrafi worked as a local reporter and general manager of a news agency before fleeing Afghanistan for Paris.



Navigating TV broadcasting in a new reality

Tolo News continues to broadcast from Kabul. A woman news anchor explains the changes she has seen in Afghan media since the Taliban came to power:

"This regime has brought about several changes to the media industry. A ban on foreign soap operas and broadcasting foreign news channels, as well as strong regulations on female media anchors' appearance to name but a few. I must wear a hijab and fear that the Taliban may impose wearing a mask or a type of abaya where only the eyes are visible [editor's note: a law requiring women to cover their faces on television came into effect in May 2022, after this interview]. It is also possible that they do not allow women journalists to appear on TV at all.

"I have to be careful of using words such as 'Taliban'. Previously, I and other journalists used this word freely, but now we have to use terms like 'the Islamic Emirate' or 'acting government'. The wording in general is different from what we used in the past. To be honest, the content of our programmes is mostly in favour of the current ruling government.

"Another change is that very few government officials now meet with the media and give interviews. They do not share information with female journalists and don't allow female media workers to interview and film ordinary people.

"Although my family has concerns, I do want to continue working in media. Women have protested in the streets. Even though we are all suppressed by the Taliban, we still get to appear in the media, which is good for keeping the hopes of the women in our country alive."

From the Ghazni province to Paris

Khadija Ashrafi is 27 years old and used to work as the general manager of Bakhtar News Agency and as a local reporter in Ghazni province. Ghazni is very traditional: even before Taliban came to power, only a few women worked in the media.

"I had to wear a burka and would only take it off during the recording of television reports, then put it back on. It was normal that sources did not want to be interviewed by me because I am a woman," she explains.

Her husband was also a journalist, and both were threatened by the Taliban because of their work. In January 2021, these threats became very serious. AJSC helped them transfer to Kabul.

"They helped us with a hotel for 20

days, then I was in a shelter for four months, together with other women. Then they rented a house for me and my children, and I lived in this house until September 2021 – even after the fall of Kabul. If we had not come to Kabul, we might not be alive today. Several journalists were killed in Ghazni and other provinces when we received threats.

"I am now in France with my husband and three children. We live in a temporary house and being a refugee is difficult, but at least we are safe – that makes me happy. My education and my job from before have zero value here. I must start all over and it's really hard. I do not think I can be a journalist again and I know I will miss the good days we no longer have."

PHOTO: MARCUS YAM



The staff of the newspaper Etilaat Roz, pack up copies of their newspaper archives to be moved to a safe location for storage, as they move office locations in Kabul, Afghanistan. Sixty percent of Afghan media has closed since the Taliban's takeover in August 2021.

Using digital evidence in pursuit of justice



Digital documentation of the Syrian regime's violence is now being used as evidence in criminal complaints filed in Europe.

PHOTO: HASAN BELAL/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES



Since it was established in 2014, Syrian Archive has been working on gathering materials from journalists, citizen journalists and other civilians inside Syria. Syrian Archive filed a criminal complaint in Sweden against the use of chemical weapons in the war in Syria and recently presented a second batch of digital evidence to accompany the complaint

“At Syrian Archive, we were able to be the link between the photographers who risked their lives to produce this footage and the prosecution authorities in European countries. We are grateful to be able to provide such an opportunity for witnesses to be heard and for their documentation to be seen in Europe, while they are physically still living inside Syria,” says Hadi Al-Khatib, co-founder of Syrian Archive.

Through the principle of universal jurisdiction, authorities in some European countries can investigate and prosecute international crimes committed on foreign soil. Syrian Archives prepares open-source materials for the criminal complaints including video documentation of attacks, video interviews with victims of attacks and analysis of the visual material.

Material includes photos and videos of

smoke rising from explosion sites in residential areas and Syrian citizens struggling to breathe, foaming at the mouth, muscles spasming uncontrollably from the sarin gas attacks on the Damascus suburb of al-Ghouta in 2018 and on the northwest village of Khan Sheikhun in 2017.

Such data has played crucial roles as evidence in filing a criminal complaint in Sweden in 2021, in collaboration with the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) and the Open Society Justice Initiative. This approach proved its significance in the so-called Koblenz cases, where a German court handed prison sentences to former Syrian officials, now living in Germany, for crimes against humanity due to their involvement in torture of Syrian protesters in a notorious Damascus prison in 2011.

Documenting war crimes outside Syria

Syrian Archive identifies and collects visual materials through social media platforms and websites, verifies the sources, exact locations and times of the attacks and analyses the material, eventually putting all the evidence together to reconstruct the narrative of what happened. Most importantly, the organisation archives these materials to make sure that history is preserved and cannot be deleted or forgotten.

In 2018, Hadi Al-Khatib and his team founded Yemeni Archive, and the year after Sudanese Archive was established, collecting the three archives under the umbrella organisation Mnemonic.

“We created Mnemonic with the mission of spreading our methods, tools and knowledge to other countries and to add value to videos and photos published online, transforming them into digital evidence that can help citizens pursue justice and accountability,” Hadi Al-Khatib says.

Rune Friberg Lyme, Programme Manager and Team Leader of IMS Syria, has followed the development of Mnemonic with support from IMS since 2018.

“Mnemonic grew out of the Syrian context and experience, but its innovative methodology and approach have allowed Mnemonic to be an extremely valuable contributor in advocacy and legal efforts addressing accountability and impunity in Syria as well as in repressive and conflict contexts globally,” Rune Friberg Lyme says.

Long-term support turned into quick aid



In 2021, IMS laid the foundation of a comprehensive programme under the New Democracy Fund (NDF) in support of civil society in Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova. Timing was of the essence; contacts and partners have been important in aiding media workers and documentarists since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine

Eastern Europe

Within a matter of days of the Russian invasion, the work of Ukrainian journalists and documentarists changed. Independent journalism was in need before, though. IMS began working in 2021 with the Danish-supported consortium New Democracy Fund (NDF) along with Danish Cultural Institute, 3F (United Federation of Workers in Denmark), the Confederation of Danish Industry and the Danish Youth Council.

“IMS was the first organisation to support us with what we really needed, namely flexible funding to cover immediate needs as well as salaries,” explains Mariia Leonova from Ukraine, who works at The Fix and who coordinated immediate help for the media when the war broke out in February 2022.

The backbone of the immediate assistance was the relationships built in 2021 and the support of the NDF under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. NDF focuses not only on Ukraine, but five other neighbouring countries. Immediately after the invasion, funds and activities were adjusted to the new situation.

Network and safety support

A signature activity in 2021 for IMS was working with local partners to establish the

Women Investigative Journalists Network. WIJN is a response to the many challenges that feasibility study showed that women investigative journalists experience in the region when it comes to physical and digital safety, as well as to support the promotion of women's voices in general.

Through creation of the network, IMS worked within all the themes of the NDF – youth, media, culture, labour market organisation, climate and gender – supporting the production of investigative journalism and building up a database of women experts. Together with partners such as RPDJ and Media Initiative Center (MIC), IMS developed gender policy templates, made available in Armenian, Georgian, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian.

The focus on gender has continued since the war began, including by securing high quality safety equipment in sizes that also fit women.

Bringing documentaries to a global audience

Additionally in 2021, as part of the NDF, IMS worked with the documentary festival CPH:DOX and EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs) on a training course for production teams to help them refine existing documentary film concepts. The aims of the programme are to stimulate

and qualify inter-regional co-production and connect the Eastern European documentary projects to international markets. The first workshop was held in Kyiv, Ukraine, in October. Seven documentary projects were presented at CPH:DOX in Copenhagen in March 2022 in a separate window made for the international market; all projects and entrepreneurs managed to attract substantial interest in terms of distribution and funding.

The formal and informal network has since led to new connections and production support in order to document war crimes and the state of civil society in the region following Russian's war in Ukraine.

Combatting misinformation

Another aspect of IMS' work in the region is to combat misinformation. As part of this effort, IMS established a programme in Moldova focusing on promoting media pluralism and fighting disinformation. The programme is being implemented by IMS and local partners, with activities aiming to improve the legal framework and internet governance to be in compliance with the Council of Europe standards.

“Media in Moldova can act as a watchdog by exposing corruption and help to promote good governance and accountability by providing accurate, balanced and timely information that is of interest and relevance to the public. For this to happen, support for media reform and public interest media will be essential” said Gulnara Akhundova, IMS Head of Global Response Department, when the programme was announced in October, adding how pleased she was to see media reforms being prioritised in Moldova.

When RSF announced the 2021 Press Freedom Index, Moldova climbed up no less than 49 spots; the rest of the countries showed a declining tendency, with Belarus as the most serious case.

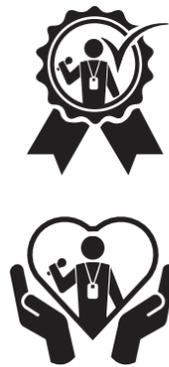
PHOTO: SOPHIA SOLUAR



Journalist Yulia Abibok, with a bulletproof vest and helmet. IMS purchased and coordinated delivery of the equipment for journalists in Ukraine.

New gender strategy

For almost a decade, IMS has worked to address issues related to gender inequality in and through media. In 2021, IMS updated its strategy to further strengthen and expand its commitment to gender equality



Since 2012, IMS has worked with partners across regions and countries to ensure equal participation at media workplaces and in media coverage; to highlight women’s experiences, perspectives and voices in media without stereotyping; and to nurture safe and fair work environments for women journalists. The extensive work has only confirmed the need for an inclusive gendered lens in media development and has laid the groundwork for IMS’ gender equality strategy 2021-2023 which states: “Societies are not peaceful and democratic without gender equality, and public interest media cannot contribute to a vibrant and inclusive civic space if they perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities.”

This belief in media’s crucial role in achieving gender equality, and thus better societies for all, has not changed since IMS’ gender approach was first formulated. And with almost a decade’s experience and expertise-building within the field of gender and media development, IMS was ready to further its dedication. IMS partners were invited to provide inputs and share experiences, and their participation played a key role in the process.

One of the fundamental aspects of the 2021-2023 strategy is to move from a *gender-sensitive* approach to a *gender-transformative* approach. This entails a move from only acknowledging and accommodating projects to the existing inequalities between genders to challenging the root causes of inequality. Another important aspect is acknowledging a broader, more inclusive understanding of gender as more complex and fluid than the traditional

binary categories of “women” and “men”. In connection to this, the new strategy also underlines that patriarchal, heteronormative stereotypes can be harmful to all genders: men, women, non-binary, cisgender and transgender people.

These changes, drawing inspiration from intersectional feminism, make gender an even more central aspect of IMS’ work on equity, diversity and inclusion. Moreover, they seek to recognise how all forms of societal oppression are interlinked; discrimination may be additionally deepened by a person’s ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, class, ability, language and age – dimensions that are crucial to consider in the contexts where IMS works where marginalised groups might experience exclusion and even hate for their identities in and through media.

With this new strategy, IMS continues the work to fulfil the potential of media as a tool for cultural transformation, setting the political agenda, creating awareness of social injustices, breaking taboos and

“Societies are not peaceful and democratic without gender equality, and public interest media cannot contribute to a vibrant and inclusive civic space if they perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities.”

demanding accountability from decision makers. It cements IMS’ decision to put gender equality at the forefront of media development in order to promote peaceful, stable and democratic societies.

Gender Sensitivity Criteria

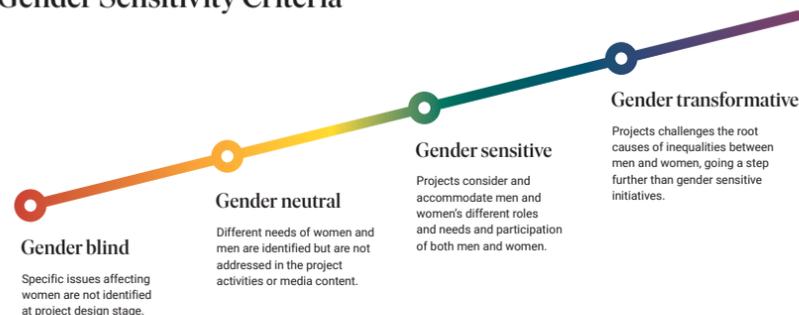
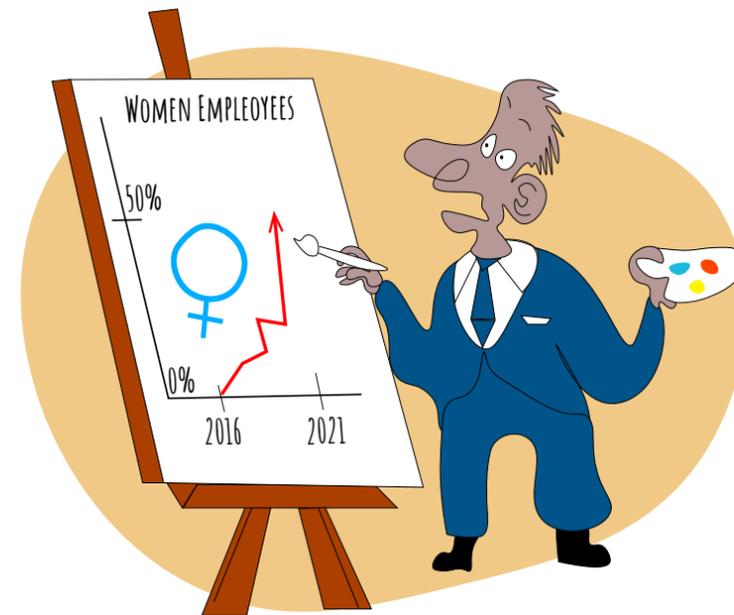


ILLUSTRATION BY ANDRES BERNADO



AlHudood achieved a gender balance in its staff within five years.

and just noticeably better team,” says Isam Uraiqat, Founder and Director of AlHudood. “Editorially, we not only cover women-related issues better, but we cover all issues taking into account additional perspectives and angles on stories which we couldn’t have come up with before, producing work that is both more powerful and entertaining. As for the wider organisation, our more intensive search to locate more women led to better candidates from both genders.”

Another element has been to highlight gender-related topics and issues that are often overlooked in traditional media. With an improved, gender transformative editorial policy, the team remained focused on promoting women’s voices and perspectives; creating debate about patriarchal structures and inequalities; and challenging stereotypes about women and marginalised groups. They also started monitoring their use of sources and gender related coverage. The result was impressive: their audience share in 2021 had grown to 31 percent women.

A third initiative has been to include a special award for exceptional media excesses in their award show, highlighting especially offensive journalistic violations in local and international Arabic-language media outlets. In 2021, the award went to a large news outlet in Jordan which wrote an article that gave readers advice on how to deal with their “grumpy wife”.

Inclusion spurs quality

IMS partner AlHudood uses satire to cover important news and reach audiences that do not keep up with traditional media. In 2021, the outlet could document several significant developments related to gender equality and women’s participation in content and organisational development

IMS partner AlHudood is an Arabic satirical news outlet founded in 2013. AlHudood uses satire to entertain as well as inform and challenge their readers on a range of issues, including politics, economic affairs, social behaviours and the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens of the Arab world. The team believes that traditional media formats risk preaching to the converted or falling on closed ears, so instead they aim to reach a much more diverse audience with humour. Through this approach, they are able to supplement independent media in news coverage while keeping powerholders accountable. Today, AlHudood has more than half a million followers across their social media platforms and their posts reach hundreds of thousands, sometimes up to a

million people.

Back when AlHudood was founded, all staff members were male. However, as inclusion has always been one of the organisation’s core values, it increased its focus on gender equality. The number of women staff member has gone from zero in 2016 to seven. In 2021, 50 percent of the total organisation were women, including three members of the editorial staff. To get to this point, AlHudood put a special focus on their job advertisements and hiring process, making sure they were equity and equality conscious.

“A lazy hiring process can easily lead to a male majority team, but with a bit of intentionality we managed to create a more diverse, more creative, more representative

“A lazy hiring process can easily lead to a male majority team, but with a bit of intentionality we managed to create a more diverse, more creative, more representative and just noticeably better team.”

A wave of advancement for women journalists

Somali women journalists have long been challenged by gender inequality in the media sector. An IMS supported initiative is paving the way for more diversity and inclusion

Somalia

Journalists in Somalia face arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions and, worse still, they risk being assaulted, killed or forced to flee for their lives. On top of that, women journalists face additional challenges in terms of limited advancement opportunities, prejudice and opposition from within the industry as well as in society in general.

Farhiya Mohamed Kheyre is one of the founders of SWJO and the current chair. Early in her career, she experienced unjust terms like not being paid. “And it was not only me. There were a lot of women journalists working under the same conditions as I was, deprived of their rights and nobody was speaking for us,” she says.

To counter the challenges and further gender equality for women journalists, SWJO, with support from IMS and Swedish media development organisation Fojo, developed the Somali Gender Declaration, which to date has been signed by 47 media outlets across the country. With their signatures, the managements of the media outlets agreed on taking steps to protect the safety and wellbeing of women journalists as well as improving their working conditions, for example, by ensuring three months paid maternity leave.

The gender declaration has created a foundation for the sustained advocacy efforts of SWJO and continues to cause ripple effects in the media sector.

“Thanks to IMS-Fojo’s efforts to empower us, our confidence level has now skyrocketed. Women journalists are happy that [SWJO] are always there, and ... women journalists will not keep silent about abuse

anymore,” Farhiya Mohamed Kheyre says.

As an example of the prompted results of the advocacy work, Farhiya Mohamed Kheyre mentions the gender desks that Goobjoob Media Group, the largest privately-owned media house in Somalia, and Kalsan, a UK-based popular Somali TV broadcaster, implemented in 2021.

“The gender desks were established to monitor and offer support for gender-related issues, particularly for women employees. Not only do they provide an easy and safe way to report abuse, but also send a strong signal about the importance of women journalists’ safety and gender equality in the workplace,” she explains.

Another significant step towards more gender equality in the media sector is the promotion of women to decision-making positions. In 2021, six media houses in Somalia promoted women employees. These promotions also provide new role models and aspirations for the next generations of journalists.

Furthering gender equality in the media enables progress in other groups of society as well. In December 2021, a group of women electoral candidates organised a first-of-its-kind, women-led press conference where even camera operators, traditionally considered a male profession in Somalia, were women. The conference allowed for new voices and perspectives to be heard as well as new relationships to be built between women across media, politics and civil society.

Programme facts

PROGRAMME PERIOD
2019-2022

DONORS
Sida, EU, Danida

FOCUS AREAS

- Safety and protection of journalists.
- Media reform and media freedom.
- High-quality public interest content and access to information through shortwave radio, social media and community radio.
- Gender equality within the media sector and media content.
- Humanitarian information.
- Media business development.

In 2021, two privately owned media outlets implemented gender desks and six media houses promoted women employees.



PHOTO: SOMALI WOMEN JOURNALISTS ORGANIZATION

Addressing a lack of sex education with constructive journalism

In conservative Indonesian society, a stigma attached to sex education means high schools focus mostly on reproductive health as part of biology classes. But comprehensive sex education is said to be the solution to a number of adolescent sexuality problems. Gender-focused media outlet Magdalene has worked to address the lack of sex education in Indonesia

education clearly showed that they had struck a chord. Launched in December 2021, within months the project had 1.3 million page views and nearly 500,000 visitors. Their microsite, Sex Education, and articles have garnered over 16,000 visits since the launch, and there were over 500 downloads of the podcast. Partially as a result of the campaign, website views rose from 4.3 million views in 2020 to 6.6 million views in 2021.

This level of engagement in such a sensitive issue is unique and the team plans

Indonesia

Together with the Danish Constructive Institute, IMS piloted the introduction of Constructive Journalism – solution-driven journalism – with Magdalene in Indonesia. Combining the constructive journalism approach with data journalism, Magdalene created a journalistic series on sex education, focused on alternatives and solutions to the limited way sexual health and behaviour are currently taught.

The constructive journalism approach aims to provide audiences with a more balanced and contextualised picture of the world, without over-emphasising the negative. The Magdalene team of women editors conducted an online survey of adolescents between 15–19 years old across Indonesia on social media to find out about their knowledge of sexuality and what they were curious about. More than 500 people answered the survey, with 97.53 percent agreeing that sex education was important, although they had yet to be sexually active. More than 96 percent also agreed that sex education was important for building healthy relationships with partners and could prevent sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

As a high school student in Makassar explained: “We don’t get sex education at school, just the stuff about the reproductive



ILLUSTRATION VIA MAGDALENE

system in biology class, starting from the reproductive system, fertilisation, menstruation, sexually transmitted diseases, and so on. Teenagers need to learn about the sexuality part in addition to the reproductive part.”

To build the constructive journalism component into the project, as well as address the findings of the online survey, Magdalene conducted a roundtable talk that included parents, teachers, religious figures, medical experts and teenagers. This discussion was recorded and produced as two episodes of podcast. In addition, Magdalene also created a variety of social media content to engage audiences and drive conversations on the issue.

Magdalene’s multimedia series on sex

to continue repackaging content and monitoring conversations. Magdalene are also now equipped to train other media outlets interested in Constructive Journalism.

Says editor Devi Asmarani: “Had we not learned about Constructive Journalism, we would probably have conducted the project without such a holistic approach. Constructive Journalism reminded us to take a bird’s eye view on a journalistic project beyond the content, and to take into consideration how to create a bigger impact by offering solutions, exploring nuances, listening to our audience while facilitating dialogues among all the stakeholders.”

Magdalene’s microsite, Sex Education, garnered over 16,000 visits in the first few months following its launch.

“Journalism is my life”

Despite overwhelming obstacles, independent journalists in Palestine continue to provide critical information to the public and the world about the conditions in the country. Marah Elwadiya from Gaza is one of them

Palestine

Marah Elwadiya has been employed by NAWA, a feminist online media outlet run by IMS' partner Filastiniyat, for the past seven years. From a very young age, she knew that she wanted to fight for a better future for Palestinians. “I have never felt like I've had a normal childhood; instead, I grew up witnessing intrusions and attacks, killings and violence. It has made me feel like I have a duty to act,” she explains. As she grew older, her method of choice became journalism: “The conditions of my country made me want to have a voice, to share it widely and make the world aware of what is being done to Palestinians.”

A challenging track

Becoming a journalist in Palestine is not straight forward. Due to the Israeli occupation and its restrictions, local journalists don't have access to the same resources, training and knowledge exchanges as the rest of the world.

“You can receive some theoretical

education in Palestine, but not much practical. My colleagues and I have all relied heavily on a learning-by-doing approach, by simply going out there and reporting.”

This is, however, not an approach without challenges, especially in a country where safety is often an issue and a wrong

choice can have dire consequences. Marah Elwadiya had to learn difficult aspects of the work through practice: for example, how to improve your safety as a reporter when facing military aggression and how to navigate an interview with parents who have just found their child dead after a missile attack.

“I've had to figure out a lot of the ethical and practical aspects of working as a journalist on my own. I've had to consider whether including a picture of this child in the ruins covered in blood is the right thing to do – and if so, what kind of permission would I need to get from the parents?” she says. She was later introduced to Filastiniyat after discovering that the organisation offered relevant training activities.



“For the first time ever in my life, I left the 365 square kilometres that make up the Gaza Strip. I've never been in a car or bus for more than two hours because that is how long it takes to go from one end to the other,” says Marah Elwadiya.

PHOTO: FATIMA SHAHREGETTY IMAGES



Filastiniyat's office following an Israeli airstrike. Israel's disproportionate airstrike response resulted in the deaths of more than 245 Palestinians, including 66 children, and almost 2,000 injured. In Israel, 13 people were killed, including two children, and around 300 had been directly or indirectly injured by the rocket attacks.

Programme facts

Filastiniyat is a proactive, independent media advocacy organisation. NAWA was launched in 2012 as an online platform that supports freelance women journalists in their work and highlight women's perspectives, focusing not only on women's issues and stories but creating a space for all marginalised voices.

The emergency efforts were funded by SIDA and UNESCO.

Attacks against independent media

In May 2021, Israel's decades-long illegal occupation turned increasingly hostile and resulted in a two-week violent conflict. Marah Elwadiya's husband is a news photographer, and he was out in the streets covering the developments while she cared for their small child in their apartment. She covered the developments in Gaza from their home, conducting interviews over the phone and gathering information available online. Simultaneously, Israeli missiles were dropping around her.

“I was very scared during those days for our safety. Filastiniyat was very understanding. If our situation allowed us to work, then that was okay with them. If not, then that was just as okay,” she says.

Shortly after the Israeli military

aggressions started, Marah Elwadiya received a message that she, at first, refused to believe. She trawled the internet for information until she found photos of a destroyed, smoking building that she recognised: Filastiniyat's office. Several media outlets had had their premises bombed by Israeli missiles. Now Filastiniyat had been hit, too.

“I was just completely in shock. I couldn't pick up my phone or talk to anyone about it. This office was not just a workspace – it was my second home. It was a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment. And now it had been destroyed,” she recalls.

Much-needed support in trying times

Filastiniyat responded to the situation with care for Marah Elwadiya and her colleagues. Following the Israeli attacks on Palestine, they provided psychosocial support for their staff and other journalists. They organised recreational activities centred on stress relief as well as 12 group therapy sessions for 190 journalists.

A special initiative was to bring the staff to Egypt to process the traumas from a distance. To Marah Elwadiya, this was the experience of a lifetime: “I'm 31 years old, and for the first time ever in my life, I left the 365 square kilometres that make up the Gaza Strip. I've never been in a car or bus for more than two hours because that is how long it takes to go from one end to the other. I've never seen airplanes that were not the occupation's bomb flights. But now I'm accessing a whole different world from Gaza.”

Going forward

Today, Filastiniyat has a new office and Marah Elwadiya is as motivated as ever. When asked what keeps her going, she has a clear answer: “Journalism is my life, not just my profession. It is the path that I've chosen and love. I dream of becoming a conflict reporter. And I dream of more investments and capacity building of Palestinians as a way to support us to one day break the siege.”

“The conditions of my country made me want to have a voice.”

PHOTO PROVIDED BY MARAH ELWADIYA

Director Nicolas Khoury at the Cairo International Film Festival. Despite challenging the concept of conventional family life, his film, *Fiasco*, won the Special Jury Award for Best Arab Film at the festival.

PHOTO: CAIRO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

A tool for change



IMS' work with documentary film was further expanded in 2021, now covering full programmes in the Arab world and Eastern Europe as well as smaller efforts in Asia and Africa

Working with documentary filmmakers has proved to be an efficient way to bring taboo-breaking stories to ever-increasing audiences. The documentary film industry is growing worldwide and is increasingly more inclusive, showcased by the number of projects involving women filmmakers, the number of requests for support from filmmakers and film organisations and the attention films are receiving both regionally and internationally.

Supporting women in film

Building on previous years' work, IMS' documentary programme maintained its strong focus on increasing the number and representation of women in film, working to strengthen opportunities for women filmmakers and women filmmaker associations and collectives. Initiatives focused on building working structures between women filmmakers are prioritised. An example of this is the continued support of the Egyptian film organisation Between Women Filmmakers Caravan, a project that seeks to strengthen an international network of women filmmakers and curators from various regions, especially in the Arab

world, and which contributes to advancing gender equality. Similarly, support of the pan-Arab association Rawiyat – Sisters in Film and the Moroccan International Women's Film Festival of Salé continued in 2021. Training courses emphasising the importance of enabling women filmmakers at the Tunisian film collective, Doc House, were also supported. In 2021, IMS gave financial support to 30 documentary films, 75 percent of which explicitly focused on topics related to women's lives and rights and/or were directed by women filmmakers.

An award-winning *Fiasco*

Fiasco is the story of 30-year-old Lebanese director Nicolas Khoury. For most of his life, he has been carrying a secret that only his sister knows about. His camera is his confidant as he tries to avoid his mother's insistence that he find a girlfriend. This film shows the strong, at times dysfunctional, relationship that binds Nicolas to his mother. "Why don't you get married, Nicolas?" she asks him. "I don't want your life to be a fiasco." But there is something his mother does not know.

The film premiered at the 2021 CPH:DOX festival. Despite addressing the controversial topic of not wanting a conventional family life in an Arab context, *Fiasco* was unexpectedly selected for Cairo International Film Festival, where it won two awards for Best Artistic Contribution and the Special Jury Award for Best Arab Film.

Midwives in Myanmar

The Burmese film director, Snow Hnin Ei Hlaing, produced the documentary film *Midwives* – a tale of the conflicted relationship between the Rohingya minority community and the Buddhists majority in Myanmar. The film is told over five years through the eyes of two midwives from either side of the divide, working together against all odds. Their relationship is that of mother and daughter, teacher and pupil, with all that entails: love, worries and quarrels.

Midwives is an intimate documentary about the collaboration and resilience of two women living within a country torn apart by conflict. The film won a Special Jury Prize for Excellence in Vérité Filmmaking at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival.

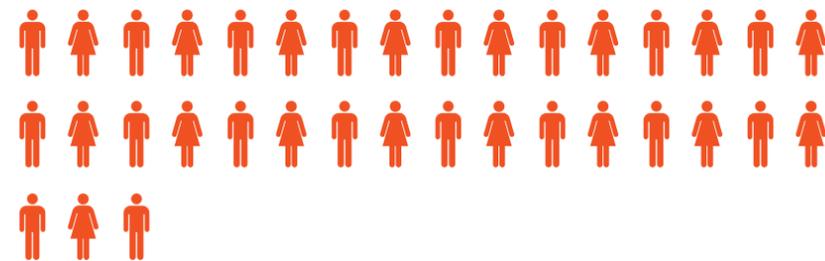
43RD CAIRO
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL

26TH NOV - 5TH DEC 2021

The Safety Fund

The DJ Safety Fund supports journalists who are victimised as a direct result of their journalistic work. The support is made possible through donations made by members of the Danish Union of Journalists (DJ) and is used in cases where a journalist needs immediate protection as a result of a direct threat. Funds may cover urgent relocation, basic needs and legal or medical assistance.

All cases are carefully vetted. Support is coordinated with other members of the Journalists in Distress (JID) Network, a group of international organisations assisting journalists and media workers whose lives or careers are threatened because of their work.



In 2021-22, a total of 35 media workers from 10 countries received individual support from the DJ Safety Fund. The list includes freelancers, staff journalists, photographers and editors.

In addition, a total of three media safety organisations and one media outlet received funds to meet the needs of larger groups of media workers. This type of support includes funds to rebuild a bombed office.

Thirty-seven percent of all beneficiaries are women.



NICARAGUA

Illegal spying on a journalist

Wilmer Benavides is a freelance journalist in Nicaragua. He was covering the presidential election in November 2021 and had gone to a voting site in the city of Managua. Security staff ignored his press credentials, overpowered him, kicked him and held him up against a shield. He was then expelled. In the following weeks, he received several anonymous calls and unknown cars followed him. Most alarming was a WhatsApp message showing upcoming detentions and his name listed. Earlier reporting of his had also caused frequent visits and calls from the National Police and sympathisers of the dictatorship in Nicaragua. He reached out to seek support to leave his home country for a period of three months following the information about his imminent arrest.

"This funding was timely and helped me to seek safety outside of my home country. Now my situation is okay. I have returned and continue to work."

In Nicaragua, independent media have endured censorship, intimidation and threats. Journalists are constantly stigmatised and subjected to harassment campaigns, arbitrary arrests and death threats. At demonstrations, reporters are treated as participants and are often intimidated and physically attacked. Many journalists have had to flee abroad while others have been jailed on terrorism charges.

Wilmer Benavides received a total of €3,050 to cover flight costs and basic needs.

Countries where journalists received assistance

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Belarus | Zimbabwe | Palestine | Jordan |
| Afghanistan | Uganda | Ukraine | |
| Pakistan | Nicaragua | Russia | |

Responding to crises and opportunities

Radical changes to a society can happen overnight, not least in 2021 when the world saw a pandemic, governments overthrown and armed conflicts. Developments like these present new challenges for local journalists, who, from one day to the next, might face new restrictions, lack essential safety equipment or have difficulty accessing sources

Independent journalists and media organisations around the world are often in critical situations. IMS' rapid response mechanism is part of an organisational toolbox that makes it possible to react to changing situations quickly.



PHOTO: NURPHOTO

Rapid Response

IMS' Rapid Response programme was created for the types of situations in which urgent and agile support is needed.

IMS' rapid response mechanism helps journalists to operate safely while producing reliable, conflict-sensitive information for the public, which can be of vital importance in challenging situations. The type of emergency varies from conflict and humanitarian disasters to political coups and turmoil. But the programme also responds to

new opportunities, such as a peace agreement or the end of a dictatorship. The form of support, however, depends solely on the context and needs of the local media. Safety seminars, training sessions in investigative journalism, initiating dialogues between the media and local authorities and replacing broken equipment are a few examples of what the programme has provided in emergency situations.

Lebanon in crisis

Responding to multiple crises – the explosion in the Port of Beirut, the Covid-19

pandemic and the Lebanese economy's turn from bad to worse – IMS' Rapid Response team started several initiatives to support local journalism. The efforts brought together a host of media and civil society actors, leading to several interesting and fruitful collaborations. One was a series of investigative reports on socio-economic issues by the think tank Triangle, condensed into popular videos by IMS partners Megaphone and Daraj. The videos focused, for example, on the abuse of foreign workers in Lebanon and corruption in the cement industry. All shed light on the root causes

of the discontent in the country as well as proposed solutions to prevent malpractice and nepotism. The videos on these important topics reached more than 40,000 people on social media. Furthermore, IMS' Rapid Response programme, in close collaboration with IMS' MENA department, funded local content production, organised psycho-social support for journalists, provided advice and ideas for media partners and participated in international partner coordination efforts.

Covid-19 and disinformation in Armenia

Before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country, Armenia was going through a delicate time of political reform, complicated by increasing disinformation and a low level of media literacy in the population. As Covid-19 started to spread, it became critical to spread awareness about both the circulation of false information as well as health and safety measures. Different groups were spreading disinformation and denying the existence of the coronavirus as an attack on the government's Covid-19 restrictions and

to further their own political interests. The IMS Rapid Response programme supported local partner MediaLab's creative campaign of satirical cartoons to improve media literacy and protect public health. With animation, humour and journalistic standards, MediaLab's campaign ended up with more than one million views on social media, quite remarkable in a country of just under three million inhabitants. The Armenian Ministry of Health later expressed its gratitude for MediaLab's efforts in the fight against disinformation on Covid-19.

New approaches to story-telling and business



IMS works with independent media partners to leverage technological advances and find innovative approaches to ensure that media can be viable even in the most fragile environments. The approach is to harness the experience and expertise of existing digital frontrunners for the benefit of other public interest media partners to advance people’s access to quality public interest journalism

Repackaging content formats doubled audience reach

Audience media habits in the Asia region have largely migrated online to social media. Two media outlets in Nepal and Cambodia are engaging them by repackaging their content to shorter video formats, animations and explainers, and have doubled their audience reach in a year

Nepalese Tana Bana Pvt Ltd released 52 short video stories in 2021. Some focused on how nurses were attacked by family members of dying Covid-19 patients, others on how women were forced into sex work in impoverished villages; all of the videos told the stories of people living in marginalised communities, including rural and migrant populations, many of them hard hit by Covid-19 both health-wise and economically.

“Before working for Tana Bana, I had worked for the BBC – but I realised that we needed something different in Nepal. We needed something that told the stories of ordinary people and their struggles,” says Bidhya Chapagain, a founder of Tana Bana. Through a partnership with IMS, the

editorial team at Tana Bana trained seven freelance journalists in Nepalese provinces to help deliver shorter story formats from rural and border areas, a change from their popular long-form video series, Herne Katha. “The editing and the final production have mostly been done by the Tana Bana team members because the staff understands the issue and has a vision of how to discuss various topics ranging from politics to developmental and social issues,” Bidhya Chapagain explains.

The shift in story formats immediately grew the audience and has, in the course of 2021, more than doubled their audience reach and engagement: On YouTube, their viewers increased from 326,000 to 643,000.

Facebook followers increased from 100,000 to 201,000. Twitter followers more than doubled from 6,800 to 14,400, and Instagram followers increased from 15,700 to 33,000.

In Cambodia, Wapatoa, a youth-oriented media outlet, had similar success in growing their viewership by converting short articles into animated videos with cartoons and infographics following a first-ever audience study of young people’s access to news in Cambodia, support by IMS.

The study found that Cambodian youths overwhelmingly prefer short social media updates and YouTube videos. With 95 percent of Wapatoa’s users aged between 16–25 years and 90 percent accessing the platform via a smartphone, Wapatoa refocused its content to formats they would readily access.

In 2021, animated videos on topics such as Khmer heritage and identity, climate change and physical and mental health were the most successful content ever published by Wapatoa in their four-year history, with one video on mental health reaching more than a million viewers. With IMS support, Wapatoa was able to grow their reach from 6.7 million views in 2020 to 11.2 million views in 2021.

Reaching youth audiences through innovative social media production

“Our generation doesn’t really check their emails too much and does not get their news from the traditional media’s websites,” says Yusuf Omar of Hashtag Our Stories (HOS) – who will change their name to Seen in 2022 – of creating an openly searchable database on how serious, robust journalism can be done in ways that resonate with young audiences.

Reaching a younger demographic is a known challenge for our media partners. In response, IMS and HOS (hashtagourstories.com) partnered to explore what opportunities arise at the intersection of social media and good journalism, sharing the findings and building a database of innovative content formats on social media aimed at inspiring best practice.

HOS is an organisation operating in 140 countries that promotes sharing videos

made with phones and wearable cameras. They’ve reached millions of young people with content that gets around taboo and challenging topics by encouraging alternative voices to tell public interest stories through interactive videos and by using, for example, comic book drawings for community storytelling.

“There are so many interesting examples outside of Europe and the United States,” explains Yusuf Omar, whose team, together with IMS, gathered the first 42 examples in the database that can engage young people while displaying cultural sensitivity.

IMS and HOS created the database of best practices with examples from Rozana FM, Inkyfada, Al Hudood and other practitioners, some in hard to reach or marginalised communities. Solutions range from gamification, explainer videos or new

formats in TikTok, Instagram or Snapchat.

The database is meant to be an inspiration tool for journalists and media outlets who want to explore examples of best practices by format, platform, language or country, and IMS openly encourages a local custodian approach to populating the database and to challenging the criteria for inclusion. There is also an online course through Fabo.org to guide outlets and individuals on how to use the database and explore opportunities through new technology.

[View the database.](#)

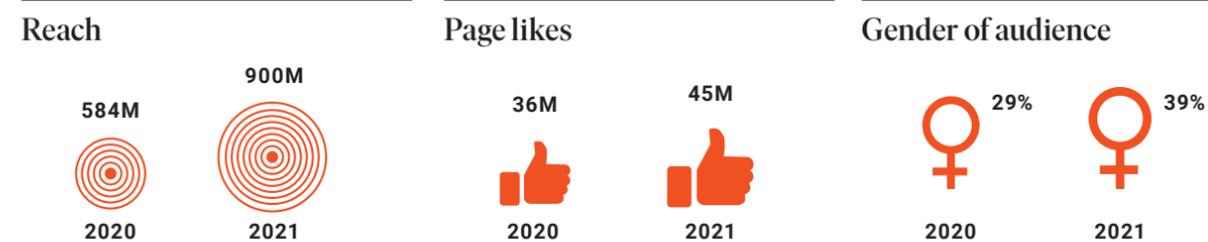


Facts and figures

IMS partners around the world saw significant audience reach and growth in 2021, a key step forward in media viability. Highlights include:

- In Somalia, radio programmes reached an estimated audience of approximately 6 million people.
- Sahelien.com reached approximately 250,000 people via their website and social media platforms. Sahelien.com readership is made up of journalists, researchers, embassies, governments, international institutions, and other key decision makers.
- In Philippines, PumaPodcast’s annual listenership in 2019 totalled 50,000. PumaPodcast now regularly tallies 40,000 to 60,000 listens per month – just under 700,000 for the entirety of 2021 – representing more than 11x growth in its audience in two years.
- The Pakistan programme reached an estimated 1.3 million followers on social media for the 13 members of the Digital Media Alliance. Three members of the Digital Media Alliance of Pakistan were able to increase their number of followers on Facebook by more than 10 percent during 2021.
- In Tunisia, Nawaat journalist Hammadi Lassoued won the Samir Kassir Award (2021) for his feature on one of the country’s fiercest feminist activists “Asrar Ben Jouira”. Nawaat’s YouTube channel was watched more than 976,000 times with more than 10 million impressions, increasing its followers to 72,500.
- Wattan TV in Palestine had 89 million audience views of their videos on YouTube.

An overview and comparison of a sample of indicators of Middle East and North Africa partners’ digital data in 2020 and 2021:



New ways of creating revenue

Generating income is crucial to the viability of any news media, whether they are non-profit or for-profit organisations. Quality journalism costs money to produce. But finding diversified revenue sources to pay for it is a fundamental challenge

IMS is committed to strengthening media partners as organisations and businesses so that they can assert their editorial independence. Finding workable revenues is a key component of this work – revenues plural, because research and experience indicate that in most media ecosystems today, media need to draw on a variety of income streams in order to survive.

In 2021, IMS started a series of Revenue Playbooks with the aim of presenting more unconventional revenue streams for media to take inspiration from while still producing good journalism. The first edition, *The Native Advertising Playbook*, spotlights successful native advertising models employed by dynamic independent outlets in countries with serious and varied political, economic and media challenges.

“We are not going to sell your products, but we will help you to create meaningful content and build relationships with your customers,” Iryna Vidanava, co-founder of the Belarusian magazine *CityDog*, told the companies the magazine partnered with.

As described in the Playbook, *CityDog*’s native advertising embraces three key principles: 1. advertisers and the magazine must share the same appreciation for the featured topics and heroes, 2. advertisers and the magazine must act as partners and most importantly 3. the magazine must preserve its full editorial independence regarding all content it produces.



L-R: Lara Ayoub, co-founder of Jordanian *Sadaqa*, Clare Cook, IMS Head of Journalism and Media Viability, Alia Ibrahim, co-founder and CEO of Lebanese *Daraj.com* and Iryna Vidanava, co-founder of Belarusian *CityDog*, met at the International Journalism Festival in an all-female panel to share their experiences and frontline victories not just for journalism but for a resilient business model against the odds.

By the end of 2021, native advertising projects generated 85 percent of the magazine’s revenue, however, in deteriorating environments for freedom of expression such as Belarus, sustainable revenue is a constant challenge.

Says Clare Cook, IMS Head of Journalism and Media Viability: “The IMS approach to business viability is to ignite

interest and enable capabilities in local contexts for future-oriented responses, so that our media partners can harness their entrepreneurial spirit and feel more confident in the business side of their operations. The support is tailored to each media partner’s needs and where they are in their development. Sharing examples across markets is part of our approach.”



By the end of the 2021, Sowt Plus’ subscribers had tripled from the previous year.

Sowt has taken advantage of the growing interest in podcasts in the Arab region. Downloads on Sowt’s podcasts increased by 35 percent in 2021.

Making business and ideals go hand in hand

Sowt is an independent podcasting platform that produces high-quality audio programmes in Arabic. In 2021, they launched a promising membership programme that has opened up new opportunities

When Sowt was founded in 2016, podcast as a medium had not yet had its breakthrough in the Arab region, but throughout the years, audiences and interest have broadened significantly. In 2021, Sowt increased downloads of their podcasts by over 35 percent and an average episode was downloaded more than 12,000 times. To further explore audio media’s business potential in the region and build closer relationships with their audience, in June the team launched Sowt Plus, a new membership programme.

The membership offers early access to ad-free stories and exclusive content, and the monthly price is less than a cup of coffee. By the end of the 2021, Sowt Plus’ subscribers had tripled from the previous year.

“It is quite an achievement for us,”

says Basim Dawood, Sowt’s Business Development Manager. “We definitely see potential and an increased demand for podcasts. The growth we’re experiencing allows us to produce podcasts that are of even higher quality and relevance to our varied audiences that include Arabic speakers from many parts of the world.”

However, the commercial efforts are not without challenges. Basim Dawood describes the membership programme as a tool to ensure the sustained production of Sowt’s independent journalism and offer alternative stories to the coverage of mainstream media, which in many countries in the Arab region avoids topics that are considered taboo, controversial or critical of the local authorities.

“We believe that we have an obligation to make important, reliable information available to the public and that audio is a powerful tool for creating positive change, something that is at the core of Sowt’s mission. But we also need a sustainable business model to do so, so it is a constant balancing act between being true to our vision while also becoming profitable and continuing to grow – and it’s not always easy to make the two sides go together, but we are learning all the time,” Basim Dawood explains.

The programme has underlined the Sowt team’s awareness of the importance of offering country-specific content and subscriptions that match the local situation. Says Basim Dawood: “We can’t ask for the same membership price in Egypt as in Saudi Arabia because the average citizen will not be able to pay the same amount, so we customise our prices as well as our content. We are not only targeting the rich countries in the region but also those that few media outlets see potential in. Based on our current results, we believe that we’ll see many more members from countries with unstable economies as well.”

Accountability and transparency

As an international media development organisation, IMS is committed to a number of important principles in how we do our work.

Having trusted partners in the countries we work in is the fundamental precondition for doing our work. Having access to funds and trusted dialogue with donors enables us to deliver on our commitments towards partners.

To ensure we can deliver on the promise of accountability, that both our partners and our donors have ways of holding us to account, requires a multi-pronged system:

Partnership approach

At the heart of IMS' work is our partnership approach. It details how we engage in partnerships with independent media, journalists and rights-based organisations in the countries we work in. It defines the parameters for our partnerships and guides our staff in how to go about a relationship with partners.

Partnership survey

As of 2020, IMS conducts an annual partnership survey which asks our global portfolio of partners to share anonymously with us how satisfied they are with the partnership we have. This includes questions related to the quality of our capacity development, our financial and administrative procedures, as well as a section that seeks to get a better sense of emerging priorities of partners. See the following page for highlights from the 2021 survey.

Code of ethics

IMS' code of ethics is one of the foundational documents of the organisation which

outlines how we expect IMS colleagues, consultants, partners and anyone else we work with to undertake their work. The code of ethics is available in English, French and Arabic on the IMS website.

Conflict of interest and procurement

With the financial resources and power IMS has comes a critical responsibility to ensure that decisions on things like funding and procurement are made with sufficient due diligence and transparency in the process. This is what our procurement guidelines seek to ensure. Our conflict of interest policy is also an important document which works to ensure that IMS colleagues and our Board are aware of how to spot potential conflicts and how to mitigate them. Both documents are available to read on the IMS website.

Reporting misconduct

IMS has a hotline that is open to anyone who would like to make a complaint or report misconduct: www.mediasupport.org/about/report-misconduct/

It is possible to report matters anonymously by setting up an anonymous account with a service like ProtonMail, for example. Reports are received by IMS' HR Department and processed in accordance with a standard procedure.

In addition to the above, IMS' work is guided by our financial management handbook and a number of other policies and procedures. They are available upon request from info@mediasupport.org.

From our partners

“The communication with IMS is based on relevant professional principles and mutual understanding.”

“We have received excellent capacity development support in terms of strategy development and organisational development.”

“IMS has allowed us to continue our creative work, network and re-main relevant in our sector.”

“Thanks to IMS, we were able to put in place a strategy for gender equality within our organisation.”

“We are so proud of our IMS partnership because the organisation treats us as a true and equal partner rather than just a grantee. This is what makes IMS partnership special and appreciative.”

What do IMS' partners say?

IMS surveys all partners annually to get feedback on partnership relations and to document the effect of the support provided to partners. These are some of the results from the 2021 survey, conducted in July

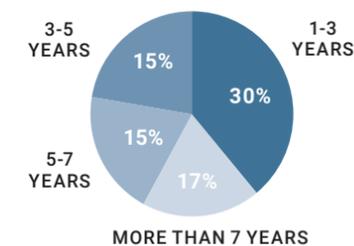
At a general level, partners have been very satisfied with the IMS partnership, with an average rating on 4.53 out of 5.

4.53 AVERAGE RATING

The IMS partners surveyed are a combination of new partners and partners IMS has engaged with for a more than seven years. The partners are distributed across many regions and represent different types of organisations.

Length of partnership

How long has your organisation worked with IMS (both contractually and non-contractually)?



Gender

Gender equality is at the core of IMS' strategy and has, with the approval and roll-out of the Strategy on Gender Equality 2020-2023, been further reinforced.

- 93 percent of partners have a gender strategy or an equivalent document or other processes/procedures that outline the work to ensure gender equality.
- Media content partners saw audience growth particularly among women and youth.

- 94 percent of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that IMS in words and actions is committed to non-discrimination and anti-harassment.

Media viability

Media content producers constitute the largest number of partners. Media and business viability are key to development and sustainability for them.

- 72 percent found capacity development in the area of business viability has had a big or very big effect.
- For most partner respondents, the majority of their income came from international organisations and donors. However, 38 percent of media content partners witnessed income growth related to product and content sales, consultancies, training and from staging events.

Capacity development

IMS has a broad approach to capacity development support, where the needs are defined in close dialogue with the partners. Capacity development is any non-financial support that partners have received from IMS advisers, IMS staff, consultants or by peer-to-peer learning between partners, access to knowledge products, linkages to international networks, training, workshops, etc.

- 74 percent of the partners found the capacity development on content to have a significant positive or very significant positive effect.

- 72 percent of surveyed partners found that their content improved as a result of IMS capacity development.
- More than 75 percent of IMS' partners feel involved in the design and implementation of the capacity development and that capacity development corresponded to their needs and their capacities.

New priorities

Partners were asked if they have new priorities; no one issue stands out as the key priority, which seems to be linked to the disruption that Covid-19 has caused. As one partner put it, the priority is "figuring out emerging trends for the industry post-Covid, and our place in that."

In addition to Covid-19 and how this has influenced the media sector, two other priority topics were named by several partners: media viability/sustainability and safety. Safety was linked to Covid-19 by one partner, who wrote that: "at the moment safety of journalists especially in community radio [stations] in Covid-19 presence is a main priority."

Climate and environmental issues were also seen by partners as a priority. One quote clearly illustrates this: "remember that even in a situation of Covid-19, climate change remains at the top of the most urgent issues."

PARTNERS IN FOCUS

Working in partnerships has been central to IMS' approach from the outset. Our mission and vision can only be achieved through the collective engagement of IMS and our partners.

IMS quick facts

IMS continues to expand our diverse staff of dedicated, creative and highly motivated professionals based in our country offices as well as our Copenhagen headquarters

36

NEW STAFF MEMBERS
IN 2021

161

STAFF
MEMBERS

57%

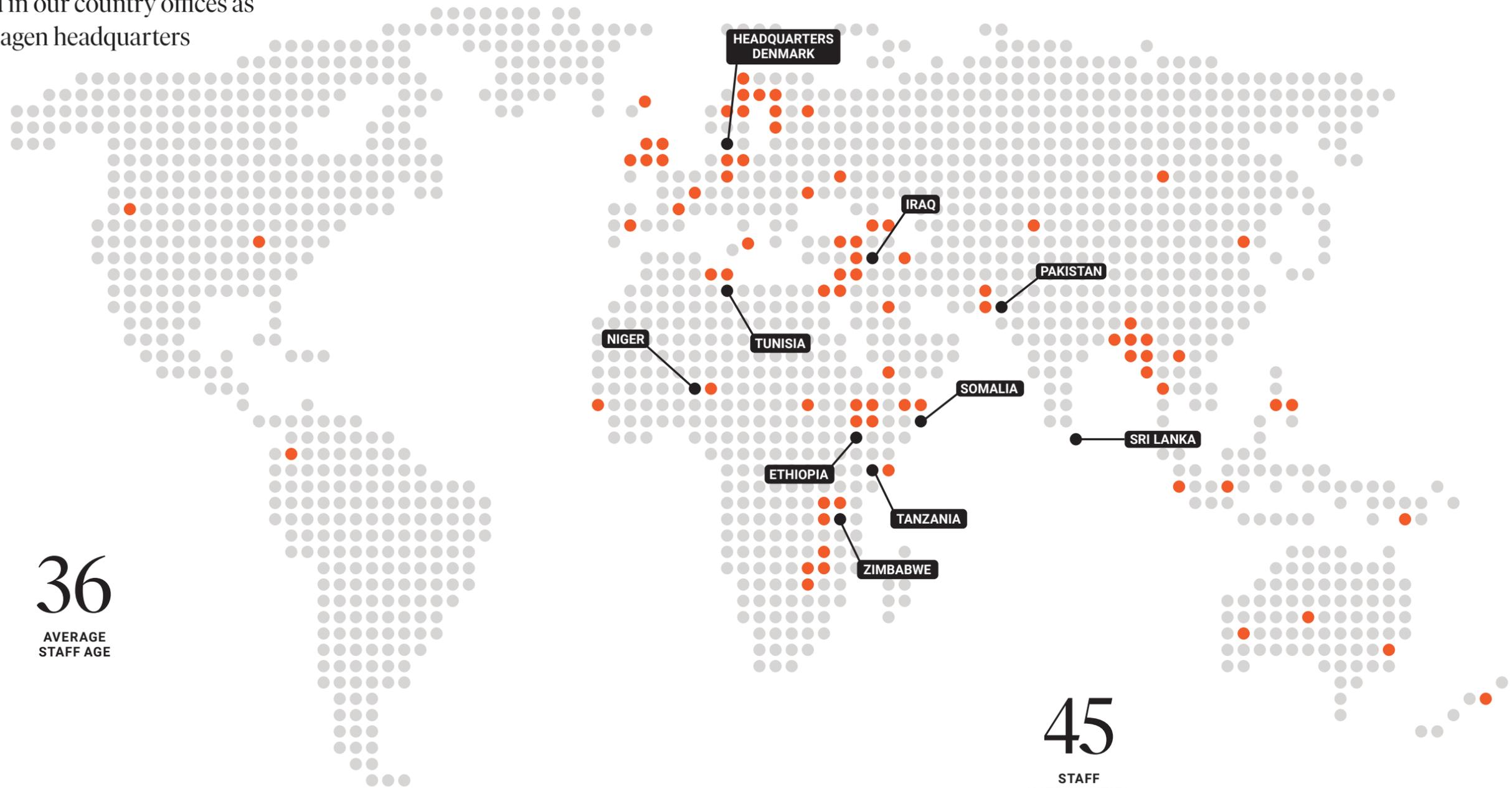
WOMEN

36

AVERAGE
STAFF AGE

45

STAFF
NATIONALITIES



- IMS OFFICES
 - STAFF MEMBER NATIONALITY
- Dots are meant for broadly representation purposes within each country.

A rise in support for free press

IMS is grateful for the increasing number of people and institutions that are committed to support the work – both by engaging and donating

It is part of IMS' strategy to be an expert organisation in the contexts we work in and in Scandinavia, among peers and donors. We bring local solutions to global challenges and advocate for media and journalists in conflict countries or working under extremely challenging circumstances. IMS wishes to ensure that the need for good journalism in society is known, recognised and supported. This is reflected in IMS' new tagline, GOOD JOURNALISM. BETTER SOCIETIES, implemented in 2021.

Around the world, with a Danish starting point, IMS is engaging the broader public in the cause as members and as possible private donors. It is part of our strategy to diversify our funding, including private donations.

A new audience is children and youth, since the topic of media literacy is becoming more and more crucial in society. In 2021, IMS did an analysis of the need, which led to the strategic decision to engage in educational material for school children in Denmark and subsequently being elected to work with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Danish Broadcasting on the Children's Christmas Calendar.



Public engagement 2021



Twitter: We **doubled** our total impressions in 2021 compared to 2020



Facebook: The page reach increased **43%** in 2021 compared to 2020



Instagram: Profile visits increased **201%** in 2021 compared to 2020



Instagram: The page reach increased **770%** in 2021 compared to 2020

Online reach



Twitter
7,936 Followers



Newsletter
1,868 Subscribers



LinkedIn
3,553 Followers

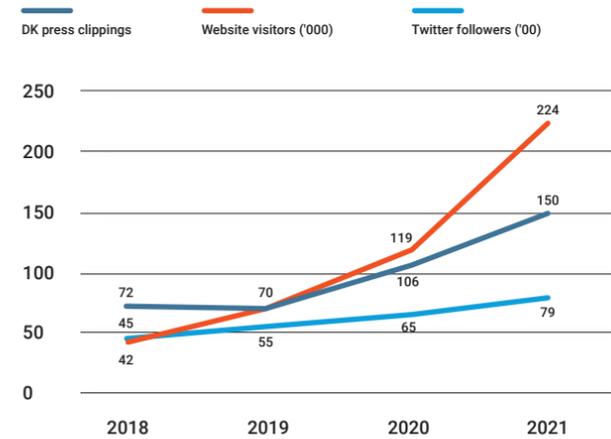


Instagram
1,305 Followers

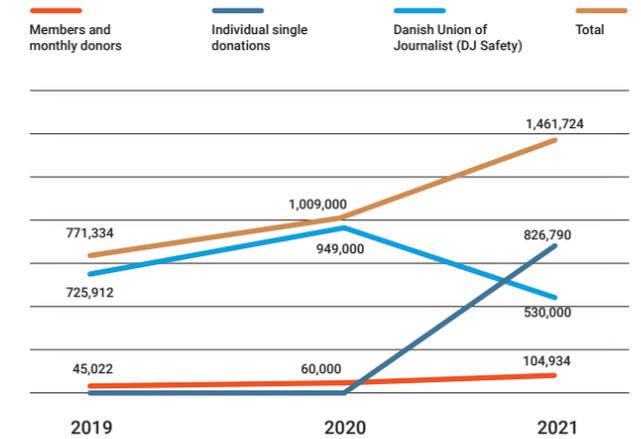


Facebook
32,701 Followers

More people are reached and engaged



Rising support from individuals



In 2021, IMS reached a growing number of audiences through creating engaging content over many channels. The target group is diverse, and IMS' newsletters in two languages reach readers on five continents: some are journalists, others media development professionals and others still are part of an interested public, as a 2021 survey showed.

IMS' website also saw a growing number of visits. In 2021, a Danish language website was launched. Some of the most engaging messages cover a broad field of topics, from the importance of support to Afghan journalists to giving background on the crucial role of media in achieving gender equality.

IMS efforts to also offer a platform for individuals who wish to support our work as members or with donations have led to a growth in private sector income.

2,167 ONE-TIME DONORS

807 REGULAR DONORS AND MEMBERS

Thank you to our donors

IMS' biggest institutional donors are:



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
Danida



Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



In 2021, our work was also possible due to support from

UK Department for International Development (DFID)

Open Society Foundations

Carsten Thomassens Minnefond

Swiss Foreign Ministry

Ford Foundation

Danish Union of Journalists

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

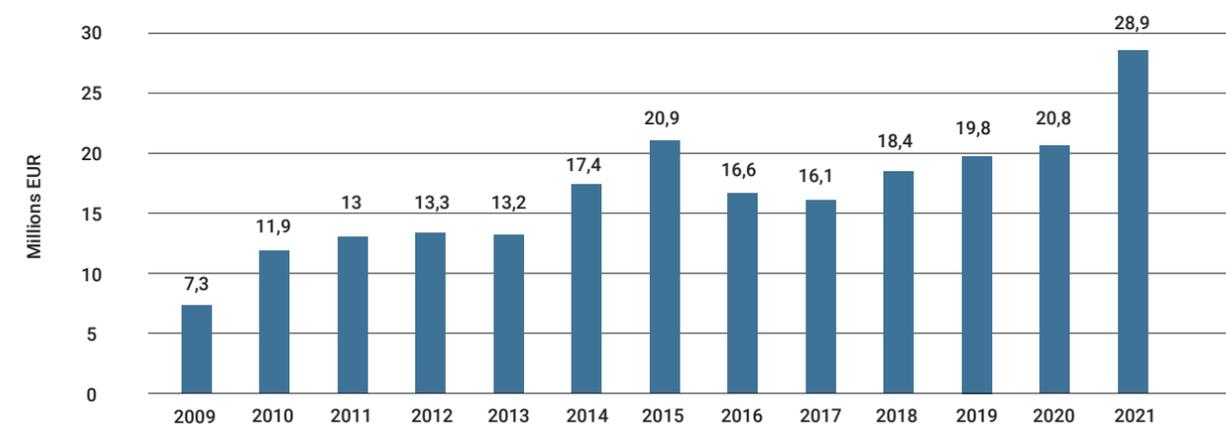
Google News Initiative

Norwegian Union of Journalists

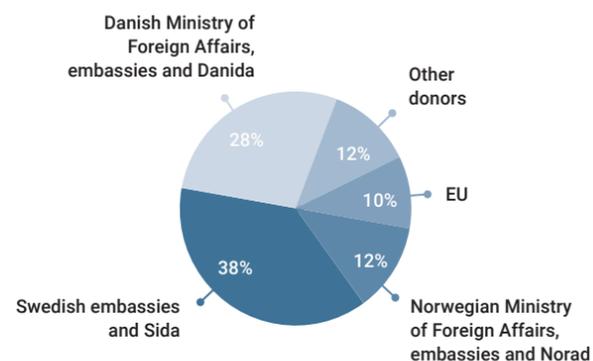
Financial overview 2021

Support from donors and the general public in 2021 enabled IMS to reach those who need it more than ever. Despite the continuing global challenges with Covid-19, IMS saw a 37 percent growth in funding and activities, while still retaining the same level of administrative costs. Continuous flexible core funding for strategic and operational development enables IMS to improve and adapt in a rapidly changing world.

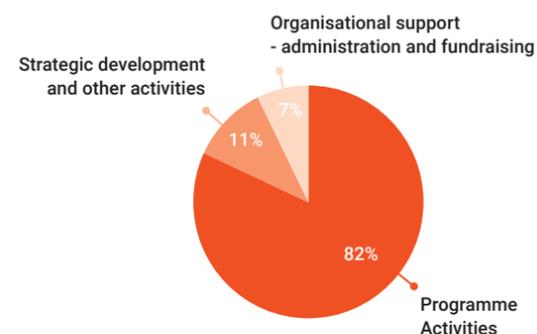
Turnover 2009–2021



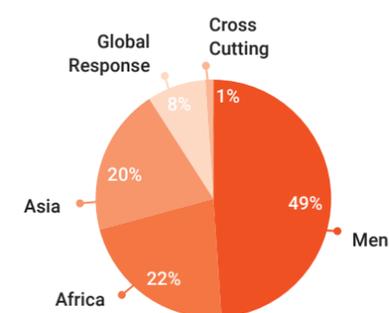
Funding



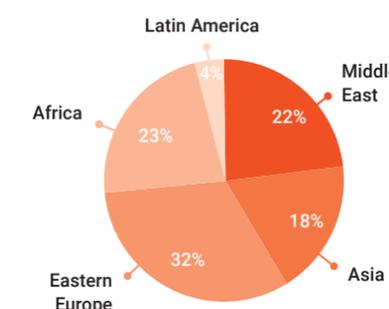
Expenditures



Regional expenditures

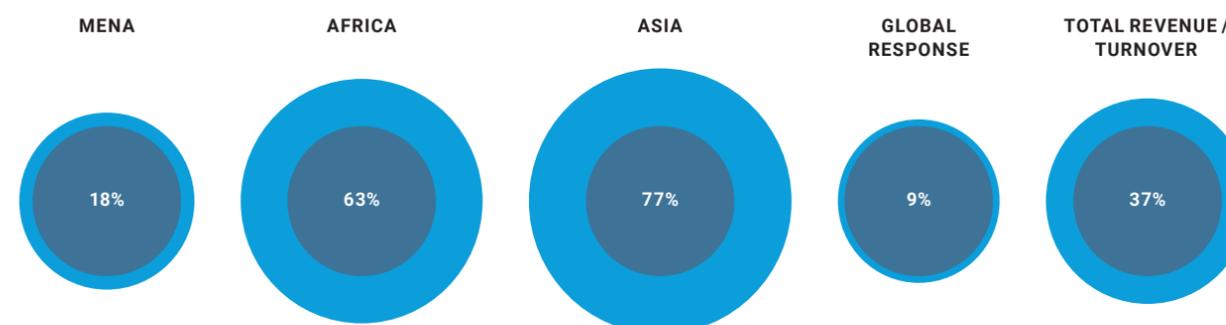


Rapid response expenditures



	EUR	%		EUR	%
Swedish embassies and Sida	10,795,193	38%	Programme Activities	23,259,293	82%
Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Danish embassies	7,803,430	28%	Strategic development and other activities	3,217,310	11%
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and Norad	3,510,288	12%	Organisational support - administration and fundraising	1,912,976	7%
EU	2,976,724	10%			
Other donors	3,303,944	12%			
Total funding	28,389,579	100%	Total expenditures	28,389,579	100%

Regional growth 2020–2021



IMS Board 2021

Andrew Puddephatt

Chairman of the Board, International Media Support,
Board member, Global Partners Digital, UNITED KINGDOM

Lars Møller

Journalist and media consultant
DENMARK

Eva Grambye

Deputy Director, The Danish Institute for Human Rights

Ann-Magrit Austenå

Leadership development, Oslo Diocese
CHURCH OF NORWAY

Edetaen Ojo

Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda
NIGERIA

Mads Brandstrup

CEO, Association of Danish Media

Tine Johansen

President, The Danish Union of Journalists
DENMARK

Annika Palo

Development professional
SWEDEN

Jens Grund Pedersen

Acting Principal, Danish School of Media and Journalism

Gene Kimmelman

Former President of Public Knowledge,
Georgetown University, UNITED STATES

Moukhtar Kocache

Independent adviser and consultant
LEBANON/UNITED STATES

IMS board members are volunteers and receive no salary for their work, except for the chairperson, who receives a nominal fee.

At the end of 2021, Annika Palo and Lars Møller stepped down after years of valuable support as part of an ongoing renewal process.

“The need for IMS’ work has developed at a rapid pace in the last five years, during which 85 percent of the world’s population experienced a decline in press freedom. Global developments have forced the organisation to change just as rapidly, which has been and is a tremendous effort that the staff and management can be proud of.”

Andrew Puddephatt

Chairman of the Board, International Media Support,
Board member, Global Partners Digital
UNITED KINGDOM

“IMS has integrated human rights and gender equality into its strategy in a way that creates results and makes it clear that IMS is a global organisation with Scandinavian roots that is very capable of understanding the context of the countries where it operates.”

Annika Palo

Development professional
SWEDEN

Support independent media

Media workers around the world, especially in conflict areas, are under enormous strain. You can help independent media continue to report on crucial information and combat fake news.

Your donation will go to keeping journalists safe and ensuring that independent media continue to operate under the most difficult conditions.

Support our work

International donations:
mediasupport.org/donate

Donations from within Denmark:
mobile pay: 98209
dk.mediasupport.org/stot/donation/

Be part of the IMS network

Sign up to receive news from IMS:
mediasupport.org/newsletter

Follow us on social media

 [forfreemedia](https://twitter.com/forfreemedia)

 [forfreemedia](https://www.instagram.com/forfreemedia)

 [InternationalMediaSupport](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalMediaSupport)

 [international-media-support](https://www.linkedin.com/company/international-media-support)

Contact us with questions on how to support our work at info@mediasupport.org

For 20 years, IMS has focused our work in countries experiencing armed conflict, humanitarian crisis or authoritarian rule to support independent media and defend press freedom.

mediasupport.org

 [forfreedia](https://twitter.com/forfreedia)

 [forfreedia](https://www.instagram.com/forfreedia)

 [InternationalMediaSupport](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalMediaSupport)

 [international-media-support](https://www.linkedin.com/company/international-media-support)



GOOD JOURNALISM | BETTER SOCIETIES