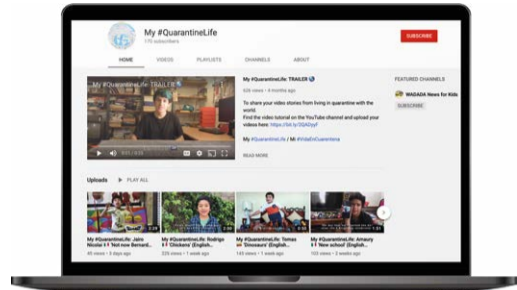




UNMASK THE TRUTH!

All over the world, journalists are being silenced and opposed in their efforts to report the truth and hold those in power accountable for their actions. Their equipment is stolen and destroyed; they are attacked or prosecuted. [Read more on page 11](#)



SOCIAL MEDIA

My #QUARANTINELIFE
Sharing stories of the youth

P8



INTERVIEW

“At first I felt depressed because of the amount of backlash I was receiving.”

- Mamarha Afridi
P6



Psychological support for journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Free Press Unlimited partner BH Novinari protects the rights of journalists and the freedom of media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, supporting its 750 members with legal assistance, education and advocacy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, its work is more important than ever.

[Read more on page 9](#)

REPORT

“Misinformation and fact are getting mixed up, making it increasingly complex to deliver reliable news”

- Tidiani Togola

[Read more on page 2](#)

WHY PRESS FREEDOM MATTERS

If there's one thing the COVID-19 crisis has shown us, it is that reliable information is just as life-saving as a well-functioning health care system. During the pandemic, governments in particular spread disinformation or kept information from their citizens. The result: all over the world people turned to the scarce, trustworthy independent media in their country. These independent media often took over where governments were lacking. For instance in Nicaragua, where the government still denies the existence of the pandemic.

The Dutch media has constantly reported on COVID-19 since the start of the lockdown. Everything that could be read, heard and seen was related to COVID-19, to fulfill people's need to stay informed. People were hungry for information.

We saw this happening all over the world. Some independent media experienced an increase of 150% in readers, listeners, and viewers. At the same time, many companies and governments cancelled their advertisements, which resulted in huge financial losses for these media organisations. How ironic that on the one hand these media have a huge public to serve, but on the other hand are forced to let staff go in order to survive.

Journalism is all about reporting on issues that are relevant to the public, providing reliable information, holding those in power to account and asking the right questions. In order to inform the public, journalists need access to institutions, to those in key positions, and to the government. Their reporting enables people to make decisions for themselves, their families, and even their communities based on reliable information. This is what makes their work so important, especially during a crisis. It is crucial that they are able to do their work unobstructed and free from violence.

Sadly, an increasing number of governments is using the current pandemic as the perfect excuse to silence journalists and restrict human rights, including press freedom. They are misusing the crisis to continue spreading lies and disinformation. I learned these wise words as a young girl: the pen is mightier than the sword. I'm so glad that there are still brave journalists around the world who continue to do this important work. We owe them our gratitude and support. We at Free Press Unlimited will continue to support them and I hope you will join us.



RUTH KRONENBURG
Director of Free Press Unlimited

Fostering collaboration to **combat impunity** in Iraq

It is extremely difficult for Iraqi journalists to do their work free from violence. Free Press Unlimited collaborates with UNESCO Iraq to increase the safety of Iraqi journalists and combat impunity.

LOES WITSCHGE

Free Press Unlimited partnered with UNESCO Iraq four years ago in supporting the Iraqi National Committee of Safety and Impunity, tasked with journalist safety. Iraq has since started fulfilling its international obligation to report journalist killings in the country to UNESCO. In 2018, a special investigative unit dealing with crimes committed against journalists was established to solve these criminal cases.

Free Press Unlimited provides training, advice, and access to international

expertise to members of the committee and the Special Investigation Unit (SIU). In November 2019 Free Press Unlimited hosted a meeting between members of the National Committee for Safety and Impunity and the SIU with the Dutch PersVeilig (press freedom) initiative. The two delegations discussed a standardized protocol for dealing with threats to journalists.

Persveilig also shared expertise about its online portal to report safety incidents. "In Iraq, many incidents go unreported. There's a lack of trust in the authorities and in some cases, it can be physically dangerous to go to the police station. An online portal for reporting incidents can make a difference," says Free Press Unlimited's Boris van Westering.

It is very important that this collaboration to combat impunity will continue, and even intensify, as six media professionals were killed in Iraq in the first four months of 2020 alone. ■

Challenging COVID-19 by **debunking fake news**

Mali is a fertile breeding ground for fake news due to low literacy rates, lack of trust in the government, and a young population sensitive to sensational news. To fight this, Free Press Unlimited partner Tuwindi launched Wuya, an app to verify and debunk fake news.

MYRTHE NAUTA

In Mali, there is a sense of disbelief about the threat the virus poses. "Many people still believe that the corona virus is fake news," says Tidiani Togola, CEO of media development organisation Tuwindi. "Misinformation and fact are getting mixed up, making it increasingly complex to deliver reliable news."

With support from Free Press Unlimited, Tuwindi developed Wuya (meaning 'lie' in Bambara), an interactive platform where people can see what news is fake and what is not, and can submit news themselves to have it checked. The fact-checking team consists of a group of 25 journalists trained to detect fake news and with the technical skills to verify whether or not a picture or video is real.

"We use several reliable sources to check news items. We don't regard the government as a reliable source. When it comes to medical

information, they do make an effort to provide correct information, but when politics are involved, anything they say may be unreliable," Togola says.

Young people are key players

"Young people are key players in the spreading of fake news; they will share something even if they don't believe it," Togola states. Examples of topics the Wuya app has debunked so far: reports claiming that black people are more resistant to the virus than white people, that face masks can cause a lack of oxygen, and that there is a traditional medicine that can cure you.

"In addition to the app, we do what we can to positively influence our media partners. We remind them of the critical role they play. We tell them: sensitize your audience, try to turn every user, every reader, into a key actor who can alert others. This is how we stop the spread of fake news, and the virus," says Togola. ■



© Paul Enkelaar



© Bashir Ahmed Sujan

Bangladeshi **community radio** brings reliable information to remote areas

In Bangladesh, many people live in communities in remote and rural areas, where there is little access to information. Our partner, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), mobilises community radio to reach the most remote audiences with information about COVID-19.

MYRTHE NAUTA

“We thought an informative campaign focused on prevention was the best way to fight the spread of the virus,” says Mark Manash Saha, programme coordinator at BNNRC. He continues: “Most of the people in rural areas are not well informed about the virus and don’t take precautionary measures. This forms a high infection risk.”

Collaboration is key

On 1 March, BNNRC started mobilising community radio stations to produce awareness building programmes about the corona crisis. BNNRC follows and collects information from the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research

(IEDCR), the Government of Bangladesh, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO), and shares this information with the radio stations.

“Because of this campaign, the panic among the community has reduced.”

In total 18 radio stations, reaching 6.8 million people, broadcast these awareness programmes daily, distributing information about the symptoms of the virus, precautionary steps for preventing contamination, and how to access health service providers.

Manash Saha: “Because of this campaign, the panic among the community has reduced gradually and precautionary measures to prevent spreading of the virus have increased. For example, people stopped going to religious gatherings, but use the microphone of the mosque to share information.”

Free Press Unlimited has supported BNNRC since its foundation in 2007. For this project, Free Press Unlimited made an emergency budget available to cover internet costs, protective equipment, and to pay for the consultant who collects all the reliable information. ▀



© Mehrab Afridi

First female journalist in Pakistan's Khyber District

The passionate 20-year Mamarha Afridi has already found her purpose in life. She is the first female journalist in the Khyber District, situated in Pakistan's Tribal Areas. She reports for, among others, Free Press Unlimited partner TNN (Tribal News Network). Although she has encountered a lot of resistance, she does not allow it to slow her down: "Being a female journalist is a strength, not a weakness."

MYRTHE NAUTA

Mamarha Afridi was still a student when she started practising journalism in 2018. In her opinion, national media coverage of the Tribal Areas was narrow, and she felt the need to change that. "I wanted journalists to come here and write truthful stories about my area. Then I thought, instead of asking others, why not become a journalist and write them myself."

Working during COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak has made life in the area more difficult and it amplified existing problems, like the lack of internet access. "There is little to no internet access in the Tribal Areas, which makes it more difficult for me to do my work as a journalist. I travel back and forth to Peshawar, a two-hour trip, to get internet access and transmit my stories," says Mamarha.

Despite this, she is more productive than ever: "Before the pandemic I produced one story a month, now I produce five or six. There are a

lot of topics I feel the need to write about, for example the increase in domestic violence and honour killings during the lockdown."

There is a significant information gap between the cities and Tribal Areas. Many people in the Tribal Areas are not aware of the existence of COVID-19. Mamarha says: "People don't even know what corona is. They have mobile phones, but no internet. The pandemic has shaken the whole world, but they are sleeping."

Resist the resistance

Before the pandemic, Mamarha's family had plans for her to marry, which she wasn't looking forward to. "Fortunately, the corona crisis has delayed the wedding. Right now, I am more and more involved with my work; I think about stories all the time. My work is a blessing to me."

Being the first female journalist in a very traditional and conservative culture was not



© Mehrab Afridi

easy. "At first I felt depressed because of the amount of backlash I was receiving. The people in my village cursed my father and brothers for letting me go out unaccompanied to do my work. They said that it was against our religion and culture."

Despite the resistance she has faced, Mamarha persevered and continued to write stories. Eventually, the people became more open-minded. They learned that her stories were giving them a voice. Mamarha explains: "Once my people saw that I was doing something for them, for their rights, for solving their issues, I gained their respect. For example, I came across a boy selling stuff on the street. He was crying. When I asked him why, he said that it was because he had to work while the other boys could play. The story I wrote about him went viral. Many organisations helped that child because of it. These are the things that make people feel that their voice is heard." ■

Reliable information about COVID-19 saves lives

The outbreak of COVID-19 has once again shown the importance of access to reliable information. However, the pressure on the media and journalists worldwide is increasing dramatically. We are doing everything we can to support them at this difficult time.

MYRTHE NAUTA

All over the world, people are relying on journalists and media professionals to give them the latest updates on the corona virus. Even though this means an enormous increase in audience numbers, many media outlets are also on the verge of bankruptcy because a large part of their income from advertisement has been lost. Especially local journalists and freelancers are struggling to find work, which threatens the media landscape in many countries.

Journalists are increasingly confronted with physical threats and violence. Police and security forces attacked journalists in Uganda, Kenya and India, among others. In several countries, laws are being amended or tightened giving governments even more power to prosecute journalists. A common practice is the implementation of fake news laws that criminalize the distribution of “false information” about COVID-19. More than 130 journalists have already been arrested or otherwise engaged in legal proceedings due to their reporting on COVID-19.

Free Press Unlimited works hard to support journalists and the media worldwide. Through our emergency funds Reporters Respond and Legal Defense Fund, we have distributed protective materials to over 2,400 journalists, provided digital protection such as VPNs and webcam covers against monitoring by repressive regimes, and given legal support to prosecuted and detained journalists.

We are tremendously impressed with the way our partners all over the world have risen to the task of informing the public about the pandemic. Some of their inspiring stories are featured in our campaign: Together for Reliable Information, in which we highlight the importance of reliable information in a time of crisis. You can read some examples in this newspaper. ■



Emergency assistance for the media in the wake of the Sulawesi tsunami

NITA ROSHITA

Supporting journalists and the media during crises of all kinds is crucial to ensure that reliable (local) reporting can continue with as little interruption as possible. On September 28, 2018, a powerful earthquake and tsunami struck the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. The disaster killed more than 4,000 people, injured more than 10,000, and left tens of thousands homeless. Through emergency assistance, Free Press Unlimited and partner organisation PPMN helped journalists and the media to continue their important work.

Indonesian journalist Andi Besse was hit by the tsunami in the provincial capital Palu. She was overwhelmed by the water and held under for several minutes. After Andi recovered from her injuries, she came back to Palu to resume her reporting. But she had no equipment: her camera, two phones, and her money had been swept away by the tsunami.

It did not stop her from working. She knew that local residents were in dire need of information in the aftermath of the disaster, for example on how to obtain food, clean water, and temporary housing from the government. Newsrooms as well as radio and television studios were badly damaged or destroyed.

“It was key to help journalists and the media.”

Emergency assistance

“Access to information is very important during an emergency situation,” says Eni Mulia, the director of PPMN, an Indonesian media development organisation and partner of Free Press Unlimited. “It was key to help journalists and the media with equipment and technical assistance to keep up the flow of information.” With support from Free Press Unlimited, PPMN provided

emergency assistance to five radio stations, five journalists, and one media centre, where journalists and residents could go for information. Andi was among the five journalists who received equipment. She got a new camera.

Radio Ramayana

The earthquake and tsunami also destroyed Zulkarnain Razak’s radio station Ramayana, which he had built on his own. When Zulkarnain came back to the radio station ten days after the tsunami, he found that much of his equipment had been stolen and the radio tower had broken. Through the emergency assistance programme, Radio Ramayana received a new tower, antenna, and computer as well as manpower to install the kit. “It was a gift!” exclaims Zulkarnain. “We are now broadcasting with better quality and I feel safer. I no longer have to worry about the transmitting tower collapsing.” ■

In DR Congo, Free Press Unlimited helps counter misinformation about Ebola



© AFEM

Before COVID-19, there was the Ebola virus. Free Press Unlimited supports journalists in the Democratic Republic of Congo in their mission to inform communities about Ebola – and put a stop to false information that can kill.

LOES WITSCHGE

The North Kivu region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been in the grip of an Ebola epidemic since 1 August 2018. On 26 June 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak, that took 2,287 lives, to be over.

Free Press Unlimited supports community radio stations and local health journalists who have been debunking the potentially deadly rumours that frustrated efforts to stop the disease from spreading.

“People said, for example, that Ebola is an invention of white people to exterminate black people. Others say Ebola was created by political agents who want to punish voters in Beni and Butembo [two cities in North Kivu] for their opposition to [former president Joseph] Kabila,” says Jacques Vagheni, coordinator at the Collective of Community Radio and Television of North Kivu (CORACON). If people don’t know what’s causing Ebola, they will not take the necessary steps to prevent further infections – like washing their hands and using safe burial practices.

Sharing reliable information

Free Press Unlimited has been working with CORACON to inform communities in North Kivu about Ebola. We supported a series of programmes about Ebola that were distributed among 33 community radio stations in the affected area. The programmes address questions local residents might have. For example, if it’s dangerous to consume wild animals, Vagheni explains.

Journalist training

Free Press Unlimited also supported the training of 33 local journalists and sponsored equipment they used to make factual programmes about Ebola. Luckson Mubake, who works for Radio Muungano in Beni, participated in the training in early September. “The training reminded us that of all the people we can use as resources for our reporting, we should start by talking to locals,” he said. “In the programme I present, I have already begun giving space to citizens to make their voices heard and give them information from experts.” ■



© Franklin Rivera, Imágenes Libres

1

ALEX CRUZ

Photography coordinator, El Periódico, Guatemala

“I work on investigations and political stories a lot. Guatemalan politics are very corrupt. There are links with drug trafficking and money laundering. It’s dangerous to cover such topics.

Several months ago, I survived an attack. I was driving home with my family after going out for dinner when another car appeared. It tried to slow us down. Then someone inside fired a weapon and hit my son in the leg. My nine-year-old daughter was in the back of the car as well. It really affected me psychologically because this time, my family was in danger. My son is still recovering from the bullet wound.

Every time I go to a Riesgo Cruzado course, I take home new, practical tools. The course has made me aware of how my work affects me physically, both the long days and the stress I experience. Simple things like going for a 30-minute walk every day can have a positive impact on my health. This is not something I gave much thought to before Riesgo Cruzado.”

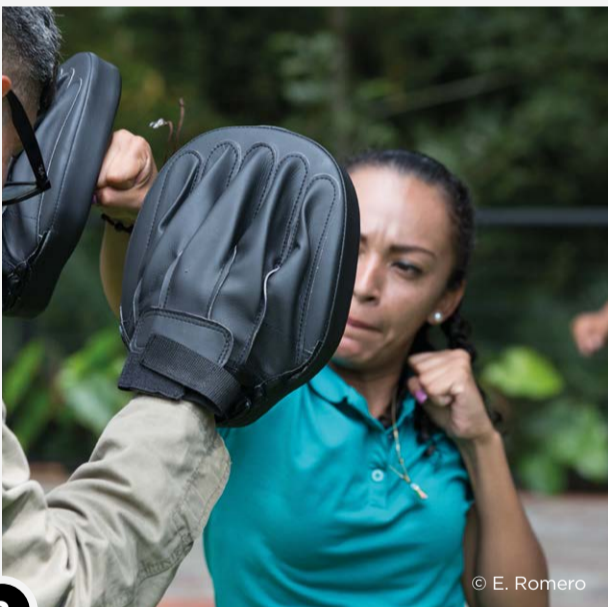
“I was being targeted”

**IN CENTRAL AMERICA,
JOURNALISTS RISK IT ALL**

Central America is a dangerous region for journalists. Violent gangs and government censorship are among the reasons why countries such as El Salvador and Honduras slipped even further in the latest World Press Freedom Index, to 81th and 146th place respectively.

Behind such rankings are the personal stories of journalists risking everything to uncover the facts. Four journalists from the region told us about the challenges they face on the job. They all participated in the Riesgo Cruzado safety programme, supported by Free Press Unlimited.

LOES WITSCHGE



2

BRENDA ARÉVALO
local reporter, Izcanal, El Salvador

“The biggest challenge for local reporters in El Salvador are criminal groups. When we enter a neighbourhood, we have to ask permission. If they say no, we leave. Otherwise, we would be risking our lives.

Covering politics can also pose a risk. During local elections last year, I published a critical report about a politician. He told me, you will pay for this report. He said he knew how many sisters I had and where my father worked. I was afraid that because of me, he would hurt my family.

Participating in the Riesgo Cruzado safety training is one of the best experiences I've ever had. It can save our lives. I am much more vigilant now. I also got to know other journalists from the same region of El Salvador and I feel that they are looking out for me. Journalists want to create change by informing society. Safety is essential to be able to do this.”



3

EMILIO FLORES
Photographer, El Herald, Honduras

“I was just finishing up a job when a young man came running and fell close to where I was standing. He looked like he just came from work and had nothing to do with the demonstration I was photographing, but the police followed him anyhow. When he fell, they started beating him and sprayed him with teargas.

I started taking pictures. A police officer approached and asked me why I was taking photos. I told him, it's my job. Then he started beating me on the chest with his baton, while others beat me on my back. Fortunately I could get away and run to safety, but they kept assaulting other journalists and photographers. If we don't have safety, we cannot do our jobs. Without journalists' photos, videos and articles, people remain blind and deaf.

Riesgo Cruzado has helped me so much. Now when I cover a high-risk story I don't just show up and start taking photos. I stop for a moment to observe the situation and figure out where I can run to if something dangerous starts happening.”



4

INTI OCÓN
Photographer, Nicaragua

“Back when I was covering the protests [which took place across Nicaragua in 2018 and during which hundreds of people were killed] there were many dangerous situations. People were shooting and there was a lot of violence. Once, I was beaten and my camera was robbed at gunpoint.

Since the outbreak of the sociopolitical crisis in Nicaragua, we have not been allowed to do our work as we need to. How the government is represented in the media is very selective. They decide what we can and cannot report on. When I go out and cover something, I run the risk of being detained and taken to prison. There's a lot of self-censorship.

The Riesgo Cruzado course taught me to make different choices, for example not to expose myself to danger by walking in the middle of the street. I learned that when there are shots fired I need to put my chest to the ground immediately.”

Sharing young people's stories in

MY #QUARANTINELIFE

COVID-19 is forcing millions of young people worldwide to stay at home. Yet their voices are hardly heard in news bulletins. What are their experiences? And what could the world learn from them? Together with international partners, Free Press Unlimited created a platform for young people to help them share their stories with the world.

STAY AT HOME, TRAVEL WITH YOUR STORIES

My #QuarantineLife is a global platform that produces, collects and shares stories from young people about their life in quarantine. These stories are shared on YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, making it possible for youth to connect with others like them all over the world and find each other in their shared experience.

YOU CAN BE ISOLATED, BUT NOT ALONE

Since the start of the project in March, 100 videos have been uploaded from 23 countries. From Ukraine to Argentina, Italy to Zambia, everywhere young people have shared short videos about their life in quarantine. The videos have been watched over 25,000 times. Here we highlight a few videos that were shared on the platform. Visit YouTube channel 'My #QuarantineLife' to watch them all!

SANTIAGO (13), MEXICO



Santiago from Veracruz, Mexico, gathered family members to perform a song typical of local music genre 'Sones Jarochos'.

ITZEL (17), SPAIN



Itzel from Galicia, Spain, is in quarantine at her grandparents' house. She shares her experiences under the strict lockdown, and how she learned to treasure the opportunity to be close to the people she loves.

MYINTH MYINTH MOE (15), MYANMAR



Myinth Myinth Moe (15) from Pindaya, Myanmar, shows her daily routine. She starts the day with a prayer, dances to pop music, waters the plants in her garden, and makes her own face mask.

ABHISHREE (12) AND ABHISHEK (10), NEPAL



Brother and sister Abhishree and Abhishek from Kathmandu, Nepal, share some yoga exercises from their garden, and explain how yoga can help you protect yourself during the pandemic.

Reinforcing **women's independence** in the wake of conflict in Borno



In 2018, Nigerian NGO PAGED Initiatives, a partner of Free Press Unlimited, released 'Uprooted'. In this documentary, women and girls from Borno State, northeastern Nigeria, tell how they kept themselves and their family safe from armed group Boko Haram. Now the organisation is screening the documentary for local communities and taking the film as a starting point for more gender-balanced reporting from the region.

LISA LOUDON

Resourceful

Starting in 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency threw Borno State in northeastern Nigeria into chaos. Traditional societal structures were disrupted. Local women and girls showed exceptional resourcefulness and courage in keeping their heads above water. As harrowing as their experiences often were, women did gain access to activities and decision-making powers that were previously beyond their reach.

After Borno State returns to normality, what will happen to this new-found independence? Will women step back into their traditional roles, or can they seize the opportunity to review these patterns? Free Press Unlimited believes the media has a role to play in asking these questions. By supporting the Reporting Gender for Inclusive Development (RGID) project we're helping Nigerian journalists tell stories about gender roles in Borno and beyond.

Fellowship for better gender reporting

With support from Free Press Unlimited, PAGED Initiatives organises screenings of the documentary 'Uprooted' for communities across Borno. In many

cases, the personal accounts shared by the women in the film spark an open and critical public debate about changing gender norms.

Ten senior journalists from other parts of Nigeria attend the screenings. They have been trained in gender-sensitive reporting and the impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency. By writing about the screenings, they improve coverage of the conflict throughout Nigeria and bring a gender lens to the stories. These ten journalists have gone on to train and mentor another ten from Borno State.

New perspectives

The fellowship has already resulted in new kinds of stories in Nigeria's national media. For example, one reporter wrote a profile of a woman who protected other women living in camps for internally displaced people from rape.

The RGID project in Nigeria sensitises media professionals and local audiences to gender issues and draws attention to women's rights. In doing so, the project shines a light on the untapped potential of women as catalysts for development in Borno State and other parts of Nigeria. ■

→ Continued from page 1

Psychological support for journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina

MYRTHE NAUTA

Since the start of the pandemic, journalists in Bosnia and Herzegovina have faced many challenges. It has become increasingly hard for them to do their job because of assaults by the police and the fact that they were turned away from press conferences. On top of that, many journalists risk losing their jobs. Fortunately, they have a strong ally in the journalists' association, BH Novinari.

Struggling to survive

Even though there is a great appreciation for media professionals in this time of crisis, they face a huge financial hit. Borka Rudic, Secretary

General of BH Novinari: "This is the paradox for all media in the country, in the world even. There is no income from advertising, and funds from international donors have stopped. A number of journalists have lost their jobs, which is a serious threat to the media landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

Practical and emotional support

The current circumstances put a lot of pressure on journalists. Rudic: "Journalists experience a combination of professional and personal stress. They are caught between two kinds of pressure, their fear of the pandemic, and their professional obligation."

To help journalists cope during these hard times, BH Novinari has set up a psychological support programme with funding from Free Press Unlimited. Journalists are offered free therapy sessions with certified psychologists and are invited to take part in group sessions to share experiences. There is access to online education tools about the different types of stress they might experience, and to infographics about different types of psychological support and tactics to help handle these problems.

Currently 12 journalists make use of psychological support, with a total of 48 treatments. ■



- Dr. Elvira Durakovic - Belko, psychologist within the programma:

"I encourage managers of newsrooms to investigate psychological support as a new way to help deal with the challenges that journalists face. Taking care of overall health involves taking care of the soul."



Global campaign for **gender equality** in the media

For the fourth year in a row, Free Press Unlimited and its partners organised the global Media4Women campaign. From 1 to 15 March, 50 organisations and individuals in 35 countries joined the campaign in highlighting the theme: **Inclusive and Equal Portrayal in and through the Media.**

MYRTHE NAUTA, MALIDA HARRY, AND LOES WITSCHGE

The Media4Women campaign reached almost 4 million people worldwide, including media outlets, policymakers, and politicians. The aim for the 2020 campaign was to challenge gender stereotypes in the media. Free Press Unlimited interviewed six Gender Equality Champions, people who are already working towards an inclusive and equal portrayal of women by the media.

1 NANU KHADKA

Nanu Khadka leads the gender media monitoring project by Nepalese organisation Freedom Forum.

“Women are very much under-represented in the media sector in Nepal. Only 15% of all articles in print and online media includes a woman. We see

a very important role for media organisations in promoting gender equality.

I tell government officials, journalists, and editors we talk to, please try to seek information from female voices. This will be an important step in breaking with stereotypes, because more female voices will emerge and show that women are not just housewives, they also work at the top in decision-making roles.”

2 WILTON CASTILLO

Wilton Castillo is a photojournalist from El Salvador.

“Unfortunately violence against women is a big issue in El Salvador. When a woman is murdered, it is often framed as being her fault, because she dressed in a certain way, or was out by herself late at night.

It’s not just up to women to break gender stereotypes and improve gender equality. Women and men both need to be included in trying to change the situation for our partners, children, and sisters. I try to make a difference through a project called Ciudad Mujer (Female City). I documented

female entrepreneurs and women who are training for professions in which they are under-represented, aiming to empower girls.”

3 YEMISI AKINBOBOLA

Yemisi Akinbobola is co-founder of the African Women in the Media network.

“In Nigeria, we often see a representation of women in the media as victims of domestic violence and subordinates to men. It’s important to demonstrate that we are a lot more than that, because the way in which media content represents society, dictates the roles that women will have in that society.

I have three young daughters, for whom I find it so important that they see themselves represented in the media in a variety of roles. I want them to know they can be a politician, they can be a scientist, they can be an artist, anything they want.”

4 ANGELA HENSHALL

Angela Henshall is one of the producers on the BBC’s 50:50 Project, a system for tracking gender balance in media.

“I think an equal representation of women is crucial to your understanding of the world. Addressing this is long overdue from my perspective.

I certainly felt men were over-represented in the content. Women are half of society, why are things skewed so much in one direction? The BBC’s 50:50 Project sensitises people to what they’re already doing. A lot of reporters wouldn’t necessarily have

Support for Venezuelan journalists covering COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on Venezuela. Shortages in food and medicines are a daily reality. The country's government is cracking down on journalists who report on the virus. Our partner Redes Ayuda offers emergency and legal assistance to journalists across the country.

LOES WITSCHGE

Venezuela has been in lockdown since 17 March. The government has reported 96 deaths from COVID-19, and has 10,010 confirmed cases at the time of writing. The increasing number of infections is overwhelming the country's health care system. Many hospitals lack regular access to electricity or water. Free Press Unlimited is financially supporting Redes Ayuda's assistance of three journalists, who received threats or were detained following their coverage of the outbreak.

"In Venezuela, the government controls all traditional media outlets. So, the only 'truth' out there is made by the government and they're hiding information," said Redes Ayuda founder Melanio Escobar. "People need to be aware of what's really happening to keep safe and know the real risk of going outside during this outbreak."

Threatened or detained

Reporters covering the country's COVID-19 outbreak have met with repression. The Committee to Protect

Journalists reported multiple instances where journalists were threatened or arrested because of their reporting on the virus. In one case, a governor reportedly demanded that a local police chief detain a journalist and "teach him a lesson" after he questioned whether a hospital would be able to cope with COVID-19 patients on his Facebook page.

Escobar: "The government doesn't want people to know the real situation. They are saying they have a great, robust health system, which is not true. At the same time, they are using this pandemic to reinforce social control. This includes cracking down on the media."

Journalists in the country are also at risk of contracting the disease themselves. Media organisations and independent reporters lack the resources to obtain protective gear. With support from Free Press Unlimited, Redes Ayuda distributed a three-month supply of surgical gloves, protective masks, antibacterial gel, and more to 30 journalists from all over the country. ▀

Free Press Unlimited campaigns



To support journalists under pressure and the free flow of reliable information, Free Press Unlimited has started two campaigns.

Together for Reliable Information

Access to reliable information is crucial, now more than ever. However, in some countries, it can be hard to get. Journalists are obstructed from reporting freely and many media organisations and journalists are struggling to survive financially. Together with our partner (media) organisations worldwide, Free Press Unlimited launched the 'Together for Reliable Information' campaign on 3 May, World Press Freedom Day.

The campaign highlights positive and inspiring stories on how our partner (media) organisations provide their audiences with reliable information on COVID-19, despite the many challenges they face. With frontline videos, podcasts, and weekly live streams from Amsterdam venue, Pakhuis de Zwijger, we raise awareness and show what journalism is like in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

freepressunlimited.org/covid19

understood that their content was featuring more men than women, until they counted. This mindset shift brings cultural change."

5 ISABELLE DIKS

Isabelle Diks is a former member of the Dutch parliament for the GroenLinks political party.

"Not just women, but men too can contribute to more female insight in the media. You always rationalise from your own frame of reference. I think that men could think much more about how they can ensure that not only their own point of view is presented, but that the female perspective is also properly addressed. Through Media4Women, I hope we can show that women and girls can stand up for their own rights. And that we need to think much more about how we can further implement the rights of women and girls, for example by promoting positive role models in the media."

6 BAHIA TAHZIB-LIE

Bahia Tahzib-Lie is the Dutch Human Rights Ambassador.

"Due to stereotyping and lack of diversity and gender equality, we run the risk of one-sided reporting. There is work to be done to make gender equality the norm in and through the media. A more inclusive, gender-balanced representation will have a stimulating effect. On girls and young women, and also on boys and men. We all need role models, also in the media, to inspire and encourage us in our personal and professional development. Everyone can be a Gender Equality Champion." ▀

GENDER EQUALITY CHAMPIONS



→ Continued from page 1

UNMASK THE TRUTH

Like the Filipino journalist Maria Ressa, who risks a prison sentence of six years as a result of her critical reporting and revelations about impunity and corruption. Journalism is not a crime.

That's why, on 4 August, Free Press Unlimited launched solidarity campaign, #UnmaskTheTruth. By wearing special face masks we show our solidarity with journalists under pressure. Photos with these masks are shared online and added to our Solidarity Wall. Together, we stand up for Maria Ressa and every other journalist in the field; the silencing of journalists must end.

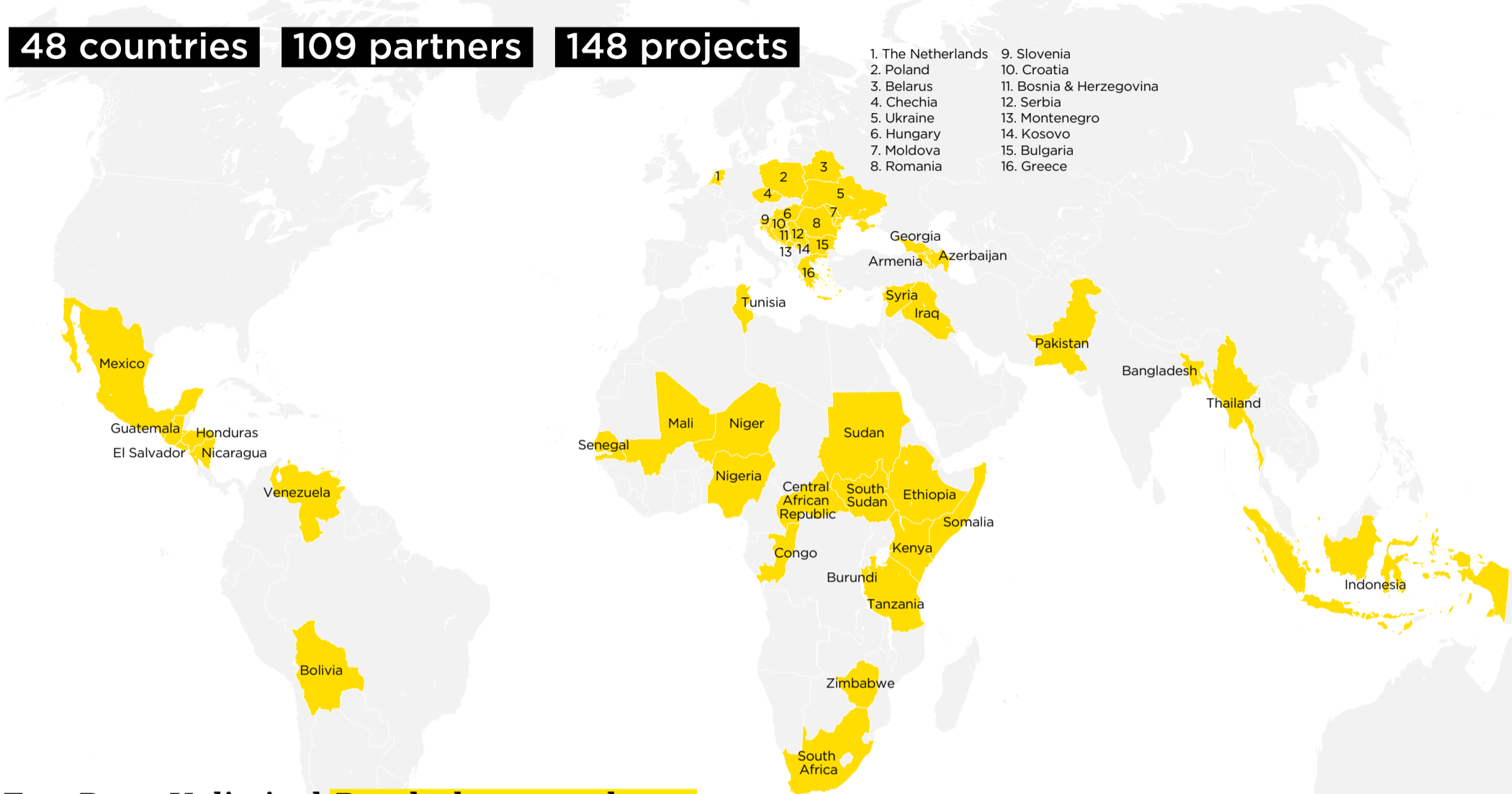
Join the campaign! Show your solidarity and express your support by taking a photo of yourself with the #UnmaskTheTruth mask and sharing it online. Request your free face mask on our website.

freepressunlimited.org

Free Press Unlimited 2020

48 countries **109 partners** **148 projects**

1. The Netherlands
2. Poland
3. Belarus
4. Chechia
5. Ukraine
6. Hungary
7. Moldova
8. Romania
9. Slovenia
10. Croatia
11. Bosnia & Herzegovina
12. Serbia
13. Montenegro
14. Kosovo
15. Bulgaria
16. Greece



Free Press Unlimited operates in these countries

Free Press Unlimited **People deserve to know**

Our vision is, 'People deserve to know'. If you don't know what's going on around you, how can you make the right decisions? Reporters Without Borders' annual Freedom of the Press Index shows that the number of countries regarded as safe, in which journalists can work in complete safety, continues to decline, while authoritarian regimes are tightening their grip on the media. Just one in seven people around the world has access to independent journalism. The other six are at the mercy of lies, half-truths or silence.

It is our mission to ensure that impartial information is available to people everywhere, today and in the future. The programmes run by Free Press Unlimited and its partners help journalists report and broadcast their stories, even in countries with little or no press freedom. If they are imprisoned or sabotaged, we help them get back to their vital work as soon as possible. We also fund local media outlets and train new journalists in countries in which there is a dearth of (local) reporting.

In war zones and conflict areas, reliable news can be a matter of life and death. That is why we helped create a media charter to ensure fair journalism in Syria, and why the Free Press Unlimited offices in Amsterdam host Radio Dabanga, which broadcasts to 3.3 million listeners in Sudan.

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

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

We put our heart and soul into these objectives every day. People deserve to know.

To read more about our work, vision, and mission, visit our website: freepressunlimited.org

Safety

Safety is a basic need for independent media. Journalists can only do their work if they are free from the risk of violence, censorship, and obstruction.

Our safety programme has four pillars:

- Emergency support for journalists and media organisations in distress
- Legal support for journalists or media professionals who are being prosecuted because of their work
- Training for journalists in physical, digital, psychosocial, and legal safety
- Active lobbying for a safe work environment for journalists

Gender

Women and girls continue to have unequal access to resources, including information. The media play an important role in addressing and changing this inequality.

We promote gender equality in all of our work. We focus on three pillars:

- Lobbying and advocacy for the interests of women in the media, in partnership with media outlets and media development organisations
- Demanding inclusive, gender-sensitive content that departs from existing gender stereotypes and empowers women and girls
- Promoting equal participation and decision-making in the media by helping women bolster their leadership skills, expand their professional networks, and claim leadership roles in the media



Colophon

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