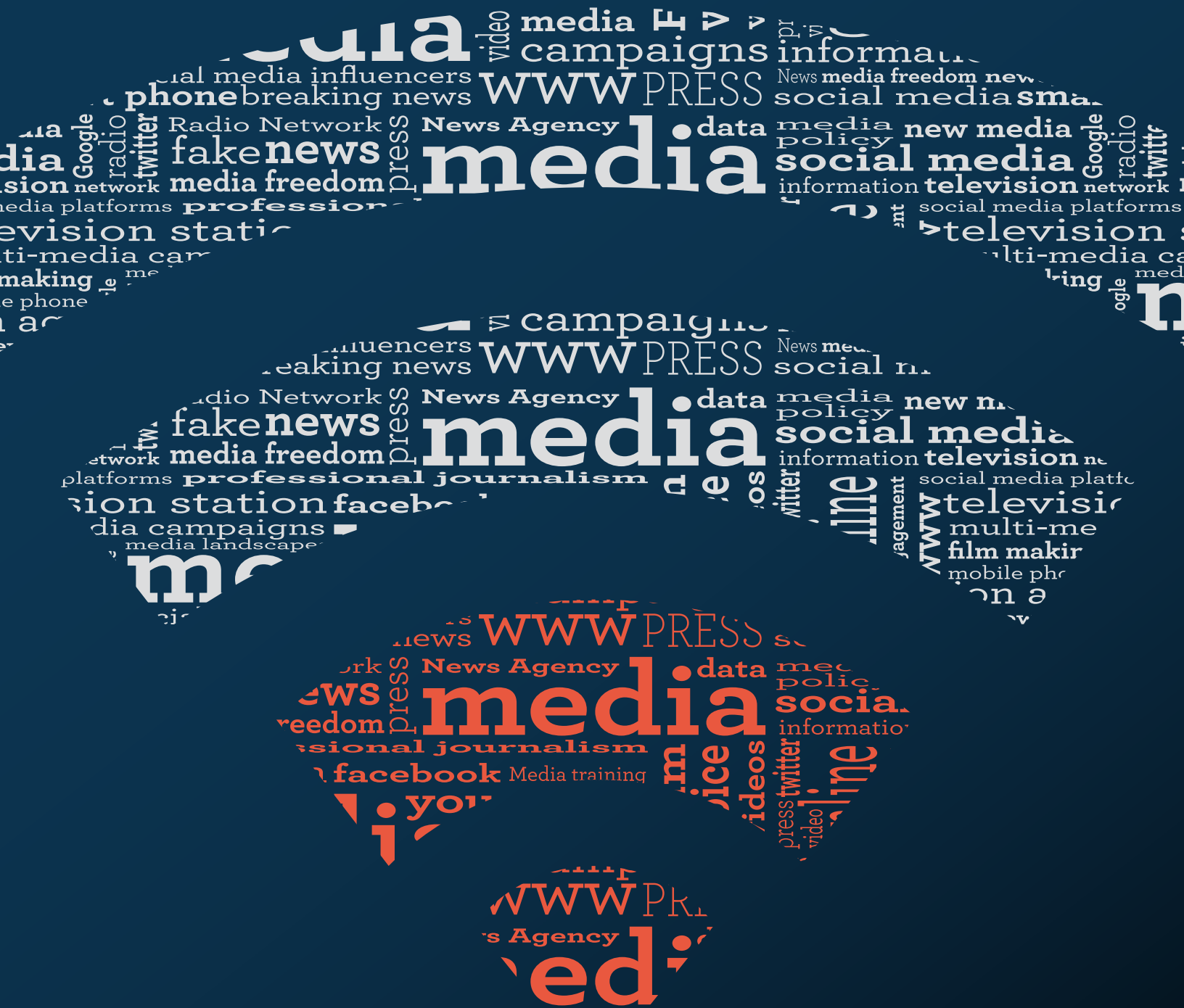


# UNDP's Engagement with the Media for Governance, Sustainable Development and Peace



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Resilient nations.





*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

**United Nations Development Programme**

Oslo Governance Centre

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*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

# UNDP's Engagement with the Media for Governance, Sustainable Development and Peace



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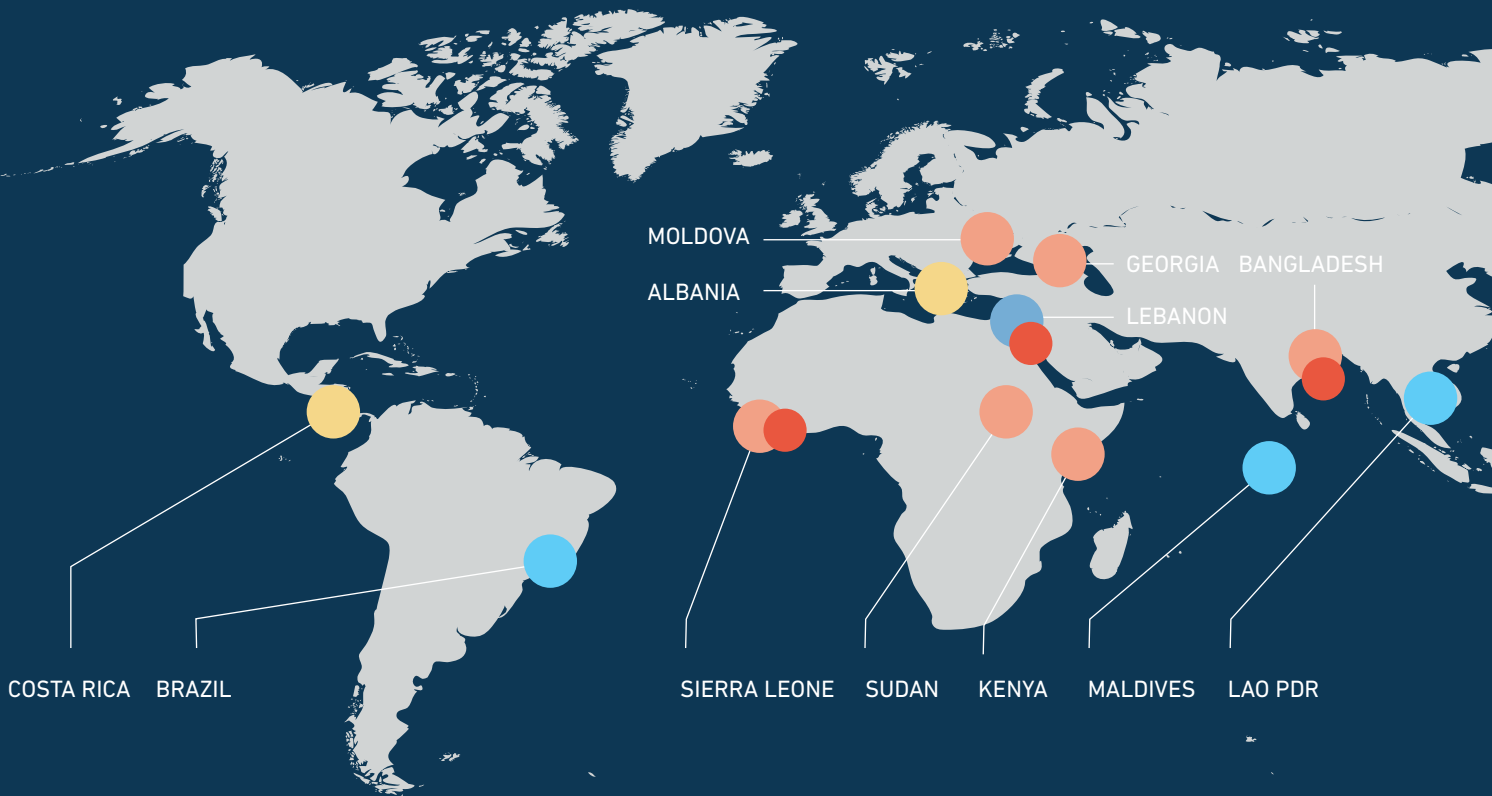
# Methodology

This report was based on several sources. First, an extensive mapping was conducted to identify promising practices and broader trends in UNDP's work with the media. It identified more than 200 UNDP media-related activities, most of which were undertaken in the years 2016–2018. Following the selection of potential case studies, a thorough desk review of internal and externally available documentation and materials took place. Key informant interviews conducted with UNDP staff and project partners for each of the initiatives provided vital details and insights on their implementation, including the challenges faced, as well as their results and lessons learned. The data collection, analysis and drafting of the report spanned the period between July 2018 and October 2018.

# Abbreviations

CSO	civil society organization
EMB	electoral management body
EU	European Union
GBV	gender-based violence
IT	information technologies
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
NGO	non-governmental organization
PVE	prevention of violent extremism
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## UNDP'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MEDIA – CASE STUDIES BY THEME



**FREE,  
DIVERSE AND  
PROFESSIONAL  
MEDIA  
REPORTING  
IS A  
FOUNDATIONAL  
ELEMENT OF  
ELECTORAL  
DEMOCRACY**

**Novel media  
challenges now  
coexist alongside  
long-standing  
challenges  
to media  
freedom and  
independence**

### **FAKE NEWS**

THE VIRAL SPREAD OF "FAKE NEWS", WHETHER THE ACCIDENTAL OR DELIBERATE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION, HAS FREQUENTLY HEIGHTENED SOCIAL TENSIONS AND POSES A THREAT TO THE ABILITY OF CITIZENS TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES BASED ON UNBIASED AND CREDIBLE INFORMATION



-  Promoting governance and accountability
-  Engaging on conflict prevention and peacebuilding
-  Fostering participation and localizing the SDGs
-  Supporting gender equality, inclusion and human rights
-  Responding to "fake news"



ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**MORE THAN 200 UNDP MEDIA PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES OF VARYING SIZE AND SCOPE WERE BEING IMPLEMENTED BETWEEN 2016 AND 2018**



**THE INTERNET IS NOW WITHIN REACH OF MORE THAN 4 BILLION PEOPLE**



**THE EXPLOSION OF WEBSITES AND BLOGS AND THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED THE RANGE OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS**



**FOR MANY OF THE WORLD'S NON-LITERATE, RURAL AND MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS RADIO CONTINUES TO BE A LIFELINE** CONNECTING THEM MORE BROADLY TO THEIR SOCIETIES

# Introduction

## Purpose of this report

This report features 13 case studies that together highlight the range and impact of UNDP's engagement with the media for the purpose of achieving development outcomes.<sup>1</sup> These examples vary widely in scope and aim: from an election media monitoring initiative in Georgia to an initiative promoting local empowerment through community radio in remote areas of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR); from engagement with media for peacebuilding in Lebanon to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) awareness campaigns implemented in partnership with the private sector in Brazil.

By showcasing successful examples of UNDP's latest media initiatives, this report is meant to serve several purposes. First, it seeks to demonstrate that, across development contexts, UNDP has increasingly identified media engagement as a priority for its policy and programmes. Indeed, the case studies show that there is growing recognition that engaging the media has become indispensable for making progress on inclusive governance, peace and development outcomes and ultimately for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Second, the report seeks to outline UNDP's comparative advantage and unique role in this area of work as well as to spark new approaches on media engagement and build new partnerships with media actors, the private sector, civil society and governments. This report therefore builds on broader UNDP efforts at promoting the media's role in development, including an [expert roundtable](#) hosted by the Oslo Governance Centre in November 2017 on the role of media in promoting peace in conflict-prone settings.<sup>2</sup> It will serve therefore as a contribution to a new UNDP workstream aimed at promoting more informed societies and to help guide UNDP's ongoing commitments to support the role of free and independent media globally, including as a member of the United Nations (UN) Focal Point Network for the Implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Finally, by delving into the challenges and lessons learned across UNDP's initiatives, the report seeks to contribute to broader debates among a range of stakeholders on how to design more effective and sustainable policies and programmes to support the roles of the media, which can better meet the needs and challenges of today's complex media ecosystems.

There are many more UNDP media initiatives than those that could be featured in this report. In order to showcase more of this variety, interspersed throughout the report are "glimpses from elsewhere" sections, which offer snapshot summaries of additional UNDP media initiatives being implemented worldwide.

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1 To illustrate "media engagement," this report includes a variety of interventions that are meant to promote both free and independent media and the capacity of social and state actors to use the media to advance inclusive governance, development and peace.

2 See "[How media can be an instrument of peace in conflict-prone settings](#)".

## The transformation of the 21st-century media landscape

The past few decades have seen a revolution in the ways in which people access, consume and share information. The Internet is now within the reach of more than 4 billion people,<sup>3</sup> and an increasing number of them are now turning to social media platforms as a key source for the latest news and information. The proliferation of information technologies (IT) has multiplied available sources of information and created new spaces for dialogue and exchange. The explosion of websites and blogs and the emergence of social media platforms have significantly expanded the range of information available to individuals.

At the same time, around the world, legacy media—such as television (TV), radio and print—persist as lynchpins of media ecosystems, providing news, information and entertainment for billions of people. For many of the world's non-literate, rural and marginalized populations, radio continues to be a lifeline connecting them more broadly to their societies. However, the liberalization of media markets and technological improvements have significantly altered national media landscapes. For example, many places have seen rapid growth in the number of new TV stations, which now expose viewers to an ever-growing diversity of news and programming.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the benefits of what has been called “the Information Age” have also come with new, more complex challenges. In many places, the fragmentation of the media landscape has enabled people to rely predominantly on news sources that more narrowly cater to their tastes, preferences and partisan persuasions. By selectively promoting content popular in an individual's network, social media platforms have also helped trap their users in information bubbles and ideological “echo chambers”. The viral spread of “fake news”, whether it be the accidental or deliberate spread of misinformation, has frequently heightened social tensions and poses a threat to the ability of citizens to make informed choices based on unbiased and credible information.

In addition to this, in many places these challenges are compounded by yet other difficulties. Several of the case studies in this report, for example, show that the emergence of new media actors has increased competition in the sector. Faced with increasing competition, journalists, often poorly paid, have struggled to adopt or sustain standards of professional journalism—especially when sensationalist coverage sells better, or when powerful actors can afford to pay for positive coverage. Media outlets operating in this new environment struggle with financial sustainability and have found it hard to rebuff external pressures on their editorial independence.

Around the world, these new issues now coexist alongside longer-standing challenges to media freedom and independence. These include the persistence of restrictive legislation and regulation, as well as the exercise of pressure or intimidation aimed at restricting press freedoms and curbing journalistic independence. Alarming, in many places there has been a retreat from basic democratic norms, which has included a denigration of the public value of free and independent media.<sup>5</sup> Journalists increasingly face serious risks to their safety, and an increasing number of governments, sometimes under the guise of responding to fake news, have demonized professional news outlets or sought to limit freedom of expression and restrict access

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3 Phillippa Biggs and Youlia Lozanova, [The State of Broadband 2017: Broadband Catalyzing Sustainable Development](#) (Geneva, Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, 2017).

4 In 2002 there was only one TV station in Rwanda; by 2016 that number had risen to 12; see [Rwanda Media Barometer 2016](#). India's first private TV news broadcast aired in 1995; today, there are approximately 400 licensed news-based outlets airing in the country; see BBC News, “[India profile – Media](#)”, 9 May 2017. For some aspects of the broader significance of these trends, see also Harvey B. Feigenbaum, “[The paradox of television privatization: When more is less](#)”, *Policy and Society*, vol. 27, No. 3 (2009).

5 Freedom House, “[Freedom in the world 2018: democracy in crisis](#)”.

to social media platforms.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the primary role the media plays in keeping citizens informed and holding those in power accountable has come under attack.

Despite these challenges, media systems are playing a greater and greater role in the lives of an ever-larger number of people, shaping their perspectives and outlook on matters both private and public. This reach and impact offer an unprecedented opportunity to bring about positive social change, but they also come with significant risks to social cohesion and the quality of public decision-making, among other things. It is critical therefore that all relevant stakeholders—media actors themselves, policymakers, the international community, etc.—work to ensure that the media’s enormous potential is harnessed to promote democratic governance, sustainable development and peace.

## UNDP’s approach to media engagement

UNDP has for a long time played a central role in engaging the media to support governance, sustainable development and peace. A global mapping undertaken as part of this report revealed that more than 200 UNDP media projects and activities of varying size and scope were being implemented between 2016 and 2018, some of which have been in operation for over a decade. The challenges these actions have sought to address have also varied across contexts, whether responding to discrimination of minorities or supporting credible and inclusive elections, and in the first instance have been driven by UNDP’s country offices, which have found that media engagement offers effective pathways for advancing UNDP’s core mandate.

In general, however, UNDP’s media-related initiatives can be classed under three broad and interconnected areas of engagement, exemplified by the 13 case studies in this report: (i) promoting enabling environments—normative, legal and regulatory—conducive to free and professional media; (ii) leveraging the potential of media outlets to be actors for peace and development; and (iii) developing the capacities of social actors and governments to use media channels to achieve specific development aims.

Taken together, these three areas of engagement encompass UNDP’s ability and potential to work holistically with a range of actors and institutions in support of the media’s role in governance, sustainable development and peace. These areas of work therefore help outline a framework for UNDP’s overall approach to media engagement.

***Supporting an enabling environment for free and independent media.*** An enabling environment conducive to the operation of free and independent media helps ensure the existence of a space in which free and independent media can thrive and citizens can voice and exchange their opinions. UNDP has helped foster such enabling environments by: (i) supporting legal and regulatory reforms on issues such as freedom of expression, access to information and protection of journalists; and (ii) raising awareness of the importance of free and independent media. In Sierra Leone, for example, UNDP is currently supporting efforts to strengthen the country’s legal framework around press freedom, including by supporting policy dialogue around relevant constitutional amendments. An enabling environment for free and independent media therefore underpins the media’s potential role in promoting democratic governance, sustainable development and peace.

***Strengthening the capacities of media actors.*** UNDP also works closely with a range of media actors—whether

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<sup>6</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, [“Joint declaration on freedom of expression and ‘fake news’, disinformation and propaganda”](#), 3 March 2017.

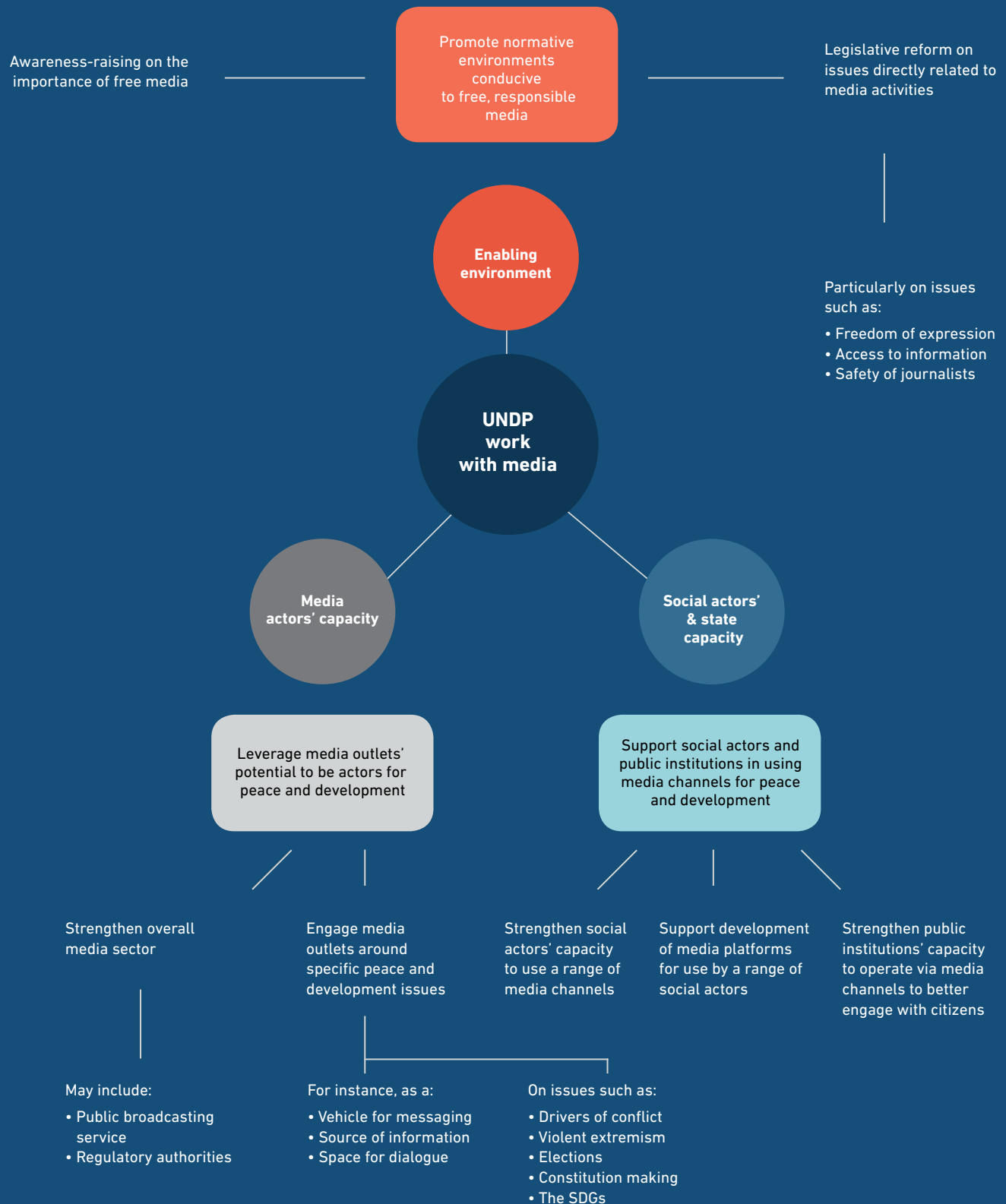
newspapers and other print media, radio and TV networks or new media actors—to develop their capacities in support of inclusive governance, sustainable development and peace. This work has included initiatives aimed at strengthening professionalism in the media sector, supporting the media’s ability to foster accountability and an informed citizenry (including through investigative reporting) and enhancing media actors’ capacities to report effectively on a range of urgent development issues. In Kenya, for instance, UNDP has helped journalists and social media actors better inform citizens on developments in the country’s extractives industry. In an effort to “leave no one behind”, UNDP Albania has been working for more than eight years with news outlets and journalists to combat discriminatory coverage of the country’s Roma and Egyptian communities. UNDP has also been piloting new initiatives to help media actors respond to rapidly transforming media ecosystems. In Sierra Leone, for instance, UNDP has helped promote digital media literacy among journalists and is exploring ways to support sustainable financial models for local media outlets—a key challenge for ensuring media pluralism and independence in the country.

***Developing the capacities of social actors and governments.*** Both old and new media can be powerful tools for advocacy and promoting inclusive participation in development and decision-making. Implementing programmes that enable social actors to use the media has been a long-standing part of UNDP’s continuing efforts to amplify voice and ensure inclusion and participation. An initiative in Lao DPR—which has now been operating for more than 11 years—illustrates the way UNDP has developed the capacities of local communities to use radio to address local challenges and help localize the SDGs. Similarly, in the Maldives, UNDP has amplified the voices of young people by teaching them filmmaking to shed light on the sustainable development challenges most relevant to them. UNDP has also been active in building the capacities of state institutions to better engage citizens through the media. Working with the Government of Sudan, for example, UNDP is now piloting the use of call-in radio shows and short message servicing (SMS) to encourage citizen feedback, to improve vital service delivery in underserved areas. UNDP also regularly works with different types of media regulatory bodies, as is the case in Sierra Leone, to monitor and improve professional reporting standards in the media sector.

The case studies in this report also exemplify the fact that UNDP’s initiatives are often implemented through a combination of these approaches. This is also one of UNDP’s key strengths. For instance, while working to strengthen the capacities of news outlets to cover issues surrounding the extractives industry in Kenya, UNDP also supported nationally televised shows to facilitate dialogue among affected local communities, government actors and representatives of the extractives industry. Similarly, in Georgia, UNDP has been working on building the media-monitoring capacities of civil society, to promote media professionalism and a normative environment conducive to free and independent media.

Increasingly, UNDP is also working with non-traditional media actors who are engaged in different forms of journalism or otherwise active in the dissemination of information, such as citizen journalists, bloggers, vloggers and social media influencers, many of them young people. A strong focus of these efforts has been on enhancing the capacities of new media actors to engage in ethical, accurate and credible reporting and analysis—ultimately supporting their role as agents of change. Three new UNDP initiatives in Sierra Leone, Bangladesh and Lebanon, explored in the final case study of this report, are pioneering ways to cultivate media literacy among social media actors, young people, professional journalists and other key actors to combat the disruptive and damaging effects of fake news.

# FRAMING UNDP'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MEDIA FOR GOVERNANCE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE



## Thematic scope of UNDP's media engagement

UNDP media-related activities span a very broad range of programmatic areas, covering themes as diverse as the accountability and responsiveness of state institutions, environmental issues, climate change and gender equality, to mention only a few. The case studies highlighted in this report specifically showcase some of the sweep and diversity of UNDP's media initiatives within four core issue areas:

**Promoting inclusive governance and accountability.** Promoting inclusive governance and accountability is one of the most common goals of UNDP's media-focused initiatives. This work includes initiatives supporting the media's role in promoting credible and inclusive elections, strengthening anti-corruption initiatives and accountability, enhancing citizen participation and improving government service delivery. In particular, supporting the media's role in free and fair elections represents a major area of work for UNDP, with initiatives implemented in places as diverse as Timor-Leste, Georgia, Nepal and Iraq. Similarly, fostering the media's capacities to promote accountability and anti-corruption initiatives, including by supporting investigative journalism, has been another core area of engagement. To foster greater public sector accountability in Moldova, for instance, UNDP implemented an "Open Data Media Camp" with journalists, IT professionals and other social stakeholders, aimed at fostering greater public use of open data, including in investigative reporting.

**Engaging with the media for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.** Engaging with the media and media actors for conflict prevention and peacebuilding is another significant area of programming. For example, UNDP Lebanon facilitated the establishment of a Journalists' Pact aimed at promoting an enabling environment for conflict-sensitive reporting across news outlets and supported the production of a unique Peacebuilding News Supplement, which enables journalists and authors from diverse backgrounds to reach audiences across the country's divides. To help prevent the spread of violent extremism, UNDP Asia and the Pacific has been producing a massively popular online live video series featuring conversations on violent extremism, which has been viewed by more than 3.6 million people.

**Fostering participation and localizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** UNDP's media initiatives have increasingly been aimed at promoting inclusive national-level SDG implementation. The UNDP-supported network of community radio stations in Lao PDR, for instance, has played an important role in raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda and helped the country collect data from its most remote areas for the 2018 SDGs Voluntary National Review. In Brazil, through a partnership with the country's largest privately owned TV station, UNDP is supporting a mass national SDGs advocacy campaign that is promoting awareness of key environmental issues and has now reached almost half the country's population.

**Supporting gender equality, inclusion and human rights.** Gender equality, inclusion and human rights have also been key areas of UNDP's media engagement. For example, a recent project implemented in Palestine supported women-run radio programmes hosting inspiring dialogues about women's political participation and role in national reconciliation. And in Costa Rica, in 2018, when gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community was on the rise, a timely social media initiative—designed and implemented together with the broader UN system and a coalition of civil society actors—was able to quickly spread awareness of GBV, LGBTI rights and gender equality.

## UNDP's strengths

Indeed, one of UNDP's clear strengths and comparative advantages in working with the media is its ability to engage on a broad range of key development challenges aligned with its expertise and mandate, whether on issues of good governance, peacebuilding, SDGs implementation or equality and inclusion. UNDP's wide geographical reach and field presence also mean that it has the potential to be an influential global actor in supporting the role of the media in promoting sustainable development and peace.

The case studies in this report also showcase other unique strengths that UNDP consistently brings to the design and implementation of initiatives in support of the media's role in promoting good governance, sustainable development and peace. These include:

**Ability to work holistically across media ecosystems.** UNDP has the proven ability to design and implement multipronged media initiatives to harness the media's role in support of sustainable development and peace. As shown on p. 14, this includes working across the media ecosystem through capacity-development initiatives for key actors—whether journalists, citizens or governments—and by implementing initiatives in support of enabling environments for free and independent media. This approach has helped ensure that UNDP's media engagement is both effective and well tailored to the complexity of specific local development challenges.

**Long-standing relations and convening power.** UNDP has also been able to play a key convening role in the collaboration of a wide variety of stakeholders to promote media engagement for sustainable development and peace. In many contexts, UNDP's extensive in-country networks and long-standing relationships at different levels have enabled it to strategically facilitate collaboration among global, regional, national and local media partners, civil society actors, citizens and governments.

**Impartiality and credibility.** Working with the media in support of development and operating in what can often be a politically sensitive environment requires a great deal of care. As the case studies show, an important reason why UNDP can play a convening role is its ability to act as an impartial facilitator and honest broker in bringing together a range of actors across divides, whether to amplify the voice of social actors, strengthen journalistic standards or cultivate enabling normative environments.

**Innovative practice.** Because of its attunement to emergent opportunities within national media landscapes and focus on flexibility and experimentation, UNDP has been able to design innovative media initiatives—often combining new and old technologies—that have had a catalytic impact.

## Looking ahead—challenges and opportunities for UNDP's engagement with the media

At a time when media landscapes are rapidly evolving and pressures on a free and independent press have increased, UNDP can play an important role in strengthening the media's contributions to democratic governance, sustainable development and peace. As its approach continues to evolve, a key task ahead is for UNDP to consolidate its strategy for engaging with the media to build on its existing strengths and prioritize those areas where the organization is best placed to make a difference. Both the global mapping and lessons learned that were gathered for this report point to several possible entry points and opportunities to do so:



- Mobilizing UNDP's capacities to strengthen its expertise on media engagement policy and programming.* A central finding of this report is that UNDP already has a deep pool of knowledge and practical experience in designing and implementing a wide range of media initiatives. Therefore, there is a significant opportunity to build on its strengths by better mobilizing the expertise existing across the organization and boosting investment in media engagement in support of good governance, sustainable development and peace. First, this requires promoting more dialogue and awareness throughout the organization of the value and impact of using media work to support wider development outcomes. Second, it requires investing in capacity development and organizational learning, including further research (including on monitoring and evaluation of media work), training and tools to codify and promote innovative and best practices that capitalize on UNDP's strengths.
- Encouraging the implementation of new media projects and initiatives across key areas of work.* Both the case studies and the mapping exercise undertaken for this report indicate that there is scope for scaling up UNDP's media engagement in support of peacebuilding and fostering participation in SDG implementation and crisis response outcomes. These represent thematic areas in which UNDP has significant policy, technical and programmatic expertise, but it appears that specific media-relevant programming is still lagging. Many of the initiatives featured in this report, including those in Lebanon, Sudan and Lao PDR, demonstrate both the feasibility and potential impact of integrating a substantive media focus under programmes engaging on these and other key UNDP thematic areas of work.
- Sharpening UNDP's focus on supporting enabling environments for free and independent media.* Enabling environments for free and independent media, which have recently come under increasing pressure, underpins a large part of UNDP's broader engagement with the media. The global mapping, however, reveals that there is still significant scope to increase UNDP's support to enabling environments, including by supporting stronger legal and regulatory frameworks, enhancing the autonomy of independent media commissions and self-regulatory bodies, and, more broadly, supporting media ecosystems that encourage media pluralism and professionalism. At a time when journalists are increasingly coming under threat, UNDP also has a role to play in raising awareness of the importance of free and independent media for democratic governance and accountability, and in supporting the safety and protection of journalists.
- Growing UNDP's partnerships on media engagement for sustainable development and peace.* A cross-cutting lesson of this report is the indispensable role that multi-stakeholder partnerships play in ensuring that media initiatives are effective and sustainable. A number of the case studies demonstrate the way in which UNDP can use its convening power to bring together global, regional and local actors to find solutions to a variety of media challenges. Yet, even as UNDP has a unique role to play in promoting the role of media for sustainable development and peace, like other actors, it faces limitations. Therefore, UNDP would benefit from systematically adopting an ecosystem approach to identify and partner with actors who are better positioned to work with the media in those areas in which UNDP faces constraints or has limited expertise. UNDP should more proactively explore opportunities to partner across contexts with actors both inside and outside the UN system who have a strong record of actively engaging with the media sector, especially when these actors can complement UNDP's existing strengths.
- Adopting a more coherent multilevel (global, regional and national) approach to media engagement for sustainable development and peace.* While the case studies focus mainly on country-level action, many

of today's critical media challenges require multilevel responses—whether around issues of Internet governance, global advocacy on the value of free and independent media or the online recruitment efforts of transnational violent extremist groups. It is therefore important that, as UNDP continues to articulate its media approach, it also outlines multilevel approaches to engaging on priority issue areas in ways that address their often global, regional and national dimensions. UNDP's involvement as a member of the UN Focal Point Network for the Implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is a good example of the type of global engagement and partnerships it can continue to cultivate. Through its extensive field presence and experience implementing a variety of media projects, UNDP can bring unique insights to global policy debates. At the same time, sustained engagement at the global and regional levels can help inform and sharpen UNDP's policy and programmatic support to national partners.

- *Scaling up UNDP's use and adoption of inclusive media technologies to ensure that no one is left behind.* UNDP's ability to pilot and scale innovative media practices is one of its important strengths. Several of the case studies showcase the way in which new and old media technologies have been used in an innovative way to promote greater inclusion and participation in development. As noted above, the growing rate of social media use represents a significant entry point for promoting the participation of typically excluded groups, including young people. UNDP can therefore continue to experiment with ways of leveraging digital technologies to promote the meaningful participation of new groups of stakeholders on substantive development issues. For instance, UNDP might look to expand its partnerships with young people to pioneer new media solutions to key development challenges affecting them (as it is doing in Bangladesh). UNDP can also invest in scaling up initiatives, such as community radio networks that offer relatively cheap and effective ways of overcoming "last mile" challenges, reaching out to the most remote and marginalized communities and amplifying their voice in decision-making.
- *Addressing fake news and the challenges of a changing media landscape.* The rise of misinformation and fake news are likely to continue to pose significant challenges. UNDP country offices have increasingly identified this as an area for future policy and programmatic engagement. Promoting media literacy, by helping people develop critical skills to detect and stop the spread of fake news, is one promising response to this challenge. In addition to raising awareness of the value of free and independent media as a credible source of information, working with new media actors to strengthen their ethical and professional standards is another potential area for greater investment. Finally, Internet companies and social media and messaging platforms, recognizing the growing problem of fake news, have now begun experimenting with forms of self-regulation. Yet, even as they engage in these efforts, there have been growing calls by the international community<sup>7</sup> for these companies to align their efforts with UN standards on the right to impart, seek and receive information. Given its experience in strengthening self-regulation with traditional media actors, as well as its convening power and impartiality, UNDP can support these companies to localize new media self-regulation standards across development contexts.
- *Collaborating with partners to promote the financial sustainability of news outlets.* As several of the case studies in the report indicate, many media outlets are struggling to maintain financial sustainability. This has often resulted in lower wages and precarious employment conditions for journalists. In addition, the financial precariousness of news outlets can make it harder for them to withstand external pressures on their independence. Recognizing this as a critical issue, some UNDP country offices have

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<sup>7</sup> Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Encryption and anonymity follow-up report](#), June 2018 (G18/096/72).

already started work in this area and are now exploring initiatives to bolster the financial viability of media actors, including by improving their business plans and strategies as a means of supporting media professionalism and independence. Yet this is an area in which UNDP has limited experience and expertise; it is therefore an important area in which UNDP can expand its collaboration and partnerships with specialist agencies that have dedicated capacity, expertise and experience working on the financial sustainability of media actors.

- *Including voices and experiences from the Global South in wider policy discussions.* As media ecosystems worldwide undergo rapid transformation, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure that representatives from the Global South can contribute to broader policy discussions on the issue. Their experiences are vital for understanding the ramifications these transformations are having on the ability of governments and other stakeholders to foster inclusion, stability and peace. In many places, governments, already under strain, are struggling to craft effective policies and regulatory frameworks around the operations of global technology firms. Their voices are critical if policy responses and frameworks are to be developed that can address these novel challenges while at the same time protecting freedom of expression and respecting the role of free and independent media. UNDP could therefore increase its support to the inclusion of representatives from the Global South in existing dialogues, as well as promoting more new avenues for discussion and dialogue around the specific challenges faced within these contexts.

Photo Credit: UNDP Bangladesh



# Promoting inclusive governance and accountability

## SIERRA LEONE

### A HOLISTIC APPROACH IN SUPPORT OF FREE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

#### OVERVIEW

A free and pluralistic press is an indispensable element of a vibrant democracy. When upholding professional standards and when protected by legal guarantees, media outlets can expose citizens to a variety of views, enabling them to formulate and act on informed opinions and hold governments accountable on issues that hinge on their socio-economic situation and livelihoods. Since 2013, UNDP has been supporting the development of a free, pluralistic and professional media sector to strengthen democratic governance in Sierra Leone.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Strengthening an enabling legislative and regulatory environment
- Developing stronger professional journalism standards
- Promoting democratic dialogue and alternative media systems

#### IMPACT



The need for media reform has gained greater visibility as an item on the national agenda



A stronger media sector played a key role in disseminating prevention messages during the 2014 Ebola crisis



Sierra Leone has seen a rise in professional standards for journalists, with accreditation increasingly becoming a standard requirement in the field





Photo Credit: UNDP Sierra Leone

*There has been an improvement in the media reportage on elections. Hate messages, inflammatory speeches, incitement, intimidation, intolerance and personality attacks have dropped significantly in these elections compared to the 2012 elections.*

Francis Sowa, member of the MRCG (during media monitoring for the 2018 elections)

information and promoting dialogue.<sup>9</sup> There are now more than 40 radio stations—which continue to be the country’s most popular media source—and more than 20 regularly published newspapers and four TV stations in the country.<sup>10</sup> Social media and social messaging platforms have also come to represent a small but increasingly influential phenomenon, especially in the capital and district headquarters towns.<sup>11</sup>

## CONTEXT

Sierra Leone has made significant strides to consolidate peace, democracy and development since the end of its civil war in 2002. Despite serious development challenges (with 60 percent of its population living in poverty and a 41 percent adult literacy rate), in 2018, Sierra Leone successfully held its fourth national elections of the post-conflict period, which resulted in the back-to-back peaceful transfer of power.<sup>8</sup>

The country’s decentralized and diversifying media sector has played an important role in the country’s democratic and development trajectory by increasing the flow of

8 UNDP, Support to Media Development in Sierra Leone, Prodoc (2019).

9 Annabelle Wittels and Nick Maybanks, [Communication in Sierra Leone: An Analysis of Media and Mobile Audiences](#) (London, BBC Media Action, 2016).

10 Freedom House, [“Sierra Leone: Freedom of the press 2016”](#).

11 Annabelle Wittels and Nick Maybanks, [Communication in Sierra Leone: An Analysis of Media and Mobile Audiences](#) (London, BBC Media Action, 2016).

Sierra Leone's news outlets, however, have struggled to gain independence and develop professional journalism standards, despite the proliferation of new media houses since 2000. The Committee to Protect Journalists considers Sierra Leone's media landscape to be partially free. Limited constitutional and legislative protections, weak regulatory institutions and the continued invocation of the 1965 Public Order Act, which is frequently used to threaten journalists with arrest, are seen as serious impediments to press freedom.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in what is now a competitive and fragmented sector, financial insecurity for media outlets, low capacity and low wages for journalists have contributed to a media sector that promotes sensationalism, relies on "brown envelope journalism" (payment for favourable coverage) and is susceptible to pressures from political parties and other actors.<sup>13</sup>

## UNDP'S APPROACH

For more than five years, UNDP Sierra Leone has been implementing a series of complementary initiatives aimed at strengthening the democratic role of Sierra Leone's media ecosystem. UNDP has specifically worked to support an enabling legislative and regulatory environment for a free press, develop the professional capacities of the media sector and support media actors to promote dialogue on democracy and development. As of 2019, UNDP is planning to follow up activities to address existing gaps by supporting the financial independence of media actors and expand the reach and quality of reporting.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

Identifying the media as a strategic actor in Sierra Leone's successful post-conflict transition, UNDP's engagement with the media sector began following the departure of the UN peacekeeping mission in 2013. Since then, UNDP has supported the Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG), a platform that brings together a number of major media and academic groups advocating for legislative reform and [working to strengthen the media sector's capacities](#).<sup>14</sup> UNDP has also worked to secure greater autonomy for the Independent Media Commission (IMC), Sierra Leone's national media regulator.

So far, UNDP has focused on three key areas of support:

***Strengthening an enabling legislative and regulatory environment for free, diverse media:*** Capping several years of advocacy efforts, UNDP and the MRCG developed a draft media bill to amend the 1965 Public Order Act to remove the libel provision and drafted amended provisions on press freedom for the country's national constitution—both currently under consideration by the government. If implemented, both actions would represent landmark steps in the reform of the country's media environment.

***Developing stronger professional journalism standards:*** Collaborating with nine major educational institutions in Sierra Leone, UNDP has helped support the establishment of a national curriculum for professional journalism. This support included the development of syllabi for more than 100 journalism courses, the creation of opportunities for journalism students to gain practical experience, and the development of postgraduate certificate, masters and doctoral programmes in journalism. In addition, professional standards and capacity development for journalists have been strengthened through training and mentoring initiatives,

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<sup>12</sup> UNDP, Support to Media Development in Sierra Leone, Prodoc (2019); UNDP and UNESCO, Draft Report on Media Development Strategy (2013), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Freedom House, "[Sierra Leone: Freedom of the press 2015](#)".

<sup>14</sup> See UNDP Sierra Leone, "[A day in the media situation room](#)", 14 March 2018.

an Association of Communications, Journalism and Media Educators has been launched and, with support from the MRCG, 500 journalists have been trained on conflict-sensitive election reporting ahead of the March 2018 elections.

*Promoting democratic dialogue and alternative media systems:* Through the MRCG, UNDP has also been supporting a network of community radio stations that use creative and innovative programming formats to capture the knowledge and narratives of the rural and urban poor and engage them on local development issues. In its second phase, focusing on underserved areas outside the capital, the project will set up mentoring and small grants schemes to encourage increased programming on key development issues in Sierra Leone, including on gender, young people, climate change, peacebuilding and democratic governance.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

While the country's media environment continues to be hampered by serious challenges, including worries about the autonomy of the IMC and continued intimidation of journalists,<sup>15</sup> there have been important achievements. Sierra Leone has seen a notable rise in professional standards for journalists, with accreditation increasingly becoming a standard requirement in the field.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, during the Ebola outbreak in 2014, a stronger media sector was able to play a key role in broadcasting prevention messages.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, during the 2018 elections, the media supported voter education campaigns and published high-quality information on the electoral process—with 83 percent of media institutions complying with IMC guidelines for reporting on elections.<sup>18</sup>

15 The Carter Center, [March 7, 2018 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone: Final Report](#) (Atlanta, GA, 2018).

16 UNDP, [Independent Project Evaluation](#) (2018), pp. 18, 33.

17 See Karen O'Connor and Josephus Kongo, [Strengthening Accountability Through Media in Sierra Leone: Final Evaluation](#) (London, BBC Media Action, 2017).

18 UNDP Sierra Leone, ["A day in the media situation room"](#), 14 March 2018.



Photo Credit: UNDP Sierra Leone

With UNDP's support, the MRCG has become a recognized platform for strengthening the capacities of media actors, sustaining community radio stations and coordinating advocacy efforts. Its persistent efforts have been pivotal in putting media reform on the national agenda. Recent elections have brought a change in administration and growing political will to reform the legal framework around the media. As a consequence of this momentum, the draft media bill has been submitted to the Attorney-General's Office and the proposed chapter on press freedom in the national constitution is now under review.

The economic viability of media outlets and low wages for journalists are still major obstacles to the independence of the country's media sector. Starting in 2019 and expanding its core areas of support, UNDP will introduce a new initiative to develop the financial sustainability of media outlets and launch an advocacy campaign aimed at improving pay and working conditions for journalists.

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## LESSONS

- The case study demonstrates the way in which supporting free and independent media often requires a multipronged approach. Even as Sierra Leone's context remains quite complex, UNDP's successes there have stemmed from its pursuit of multiple complementary actions in support of the media's role in promoting democratic governance and peacebuilding. Indeed, these actions each represent a core area of a holistic approach to media engagement, which here includes regulatory reform (enabling environment), developing professional journalistic standards (media capacity development) and encouraging the use of the media for the inclusion of democratic dialogue (social actor capacity development).
- Additionally, the case study shows that working with national media structures and institutions can be critical for ensuring the sustainability of results. For example, UNDP's support to the MRCG has been pivotal to the project's success. Through the MRCG, UNDP has been able to facilitate coordinated action by a diversity of national stakeholders who have now taken ownership of the media reform agenda.

## PARTNERS

Media Reform Coordinating Group Sierra Leone; Independent Media Commission; Ministry of Information and Communications; Guild of Editors; Women in Media Sierra Leone; Sierra Leone Association of Journalists; Sierra Leone Reporters Union; Independent Radio Network; Cotton Tree News; Mass Communications/Fourah Bay College



# GEORGIA

## STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY'S ROLE IN MONITORING THE MEDIA FOR CREDIBLE AND INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS

### OVERVIEW

Free, diverse and professional media reporting is a foundational element of electoral democracy. Unbiased media enable voters to hold informed judgements on candidates and key political issues, and thus act as one of the principal guarantees of a transparent and fair electoral process. For eight years, UNDP has been supporting Georgia's civil society in monitoring the media sector to advance professional and impartial election coverage.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Developing CSO capacities for media monitoring
- Engaging the public on monitoring results and findings
- Supporting media actors to improve media standards

### IMPACT



Since 2010, the media monitoring reports have shown increased adoption of professional media standards in pre-election reporting



Enhanced transparency in reporting standards has helped shield journalists from unnecessary internal and external editorial influence



Media monitoring is now recognized as an independent area of expertise in Georgia



Photo Credit: UNDP Georgia

*Media monitoring is an effective tool to hold those who are supposed to be the controllers and watchdogs to account. This function is vital even in those countries where a long-term tradition of freedom of speech, press, and information provides self-controls and codes of conduct that reduce the possibility of bias.*

Rasto Kuzel, Memo '98

advocacy campaign advanced by the Media Advocacy Coalition and supported by UNDP and the European Union (EU) in concert with others. This campaign culminated in the adoption of landmark amendments to the Law on Broadcasting, strengthening transparency around TV station ownership (2011) and expanding “must carry” obligations (2013), which require that cable operators carry all TV stations. The effect of these reforms has been an increase in the plurality of news and editorial content available in Georgia.<sup>19</sup>

## CONTEXT

Georgia has made impressive development strides since its independence from the collapsing Soviet Union in 1991. Over the past three decades, the country has also accelerated democratic reforms in the public service and local governance. The changing media environment has played an important part in this political evolution.

The Georgian media, especially TV, enjoys broad reach and social influence and, in the last decade, though progress has been uneven, the country has seen improvements in the transparency and plurality of its media sector. These recent changes were, to a large extent, the result of an

<sup>19</sup> Freedom House, [Georgia: Freedom of the press 2015](#).

Despite this progress, however, Georgia's media landscape continues to face critical challenges to a free and professional media sector, due to continuing formal and informal influence by political parties and heightened political polarization.<sup>20</sup> These challenges are exacerbated during election periods as political actors seek to exert greater pressure on media outlets to engage in partisan coverage.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

Identifying the critical need to support media independence, professionalism and plurality around elections, in 2010, UNDP and the EU launched a Media Monitoring Project in the country. UNDP has been providing electoral assistance in Georgia for more than a decade. The project has aimed to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to monitor the quality of Georgia's media environment ahead of elections. The goal is to use the research findings in public advocacy as a counterweight to political pressures by sensitizing and incentivizing the media to uphold professional, unbiased and critical election coverage.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

Since its launch, the Media Monitoring Project has analysed media trends during six elections in Georgia, from 2010 to 2017, including parliamentary, presidential and local government elections. [These assessments](#) are now conducted on TV and radio and in print and online coverage. Each media monitoring cycle revolves around three key actions:

**Training, data collection and analysis:** Since the project's inception, Memo '98, a Slovak media monitoring organization, has provided training in an internationally recognized media monitoring methodology to representatives of CSOs engaged in the project. The monitors use quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in the pre-election period to track indicators such as air time allocated to subjects or candidates, tone, accuracy, diversity of opinions presented and other factors that might indicate bias.

**Publication and communication:** Following the data collection and analysis, the findings are disseminated publicly and made available on the project's website ([mediamonitor.ge](http://mediamonitor.ge)). The results are broadcast by almost all the major TV channels and reported by online news outlets, which have become increasingly influential.

**Engaging media actors:** The initiative also seeks to engage media outlets constructively. At several points in the project, cycle workshops and training courses are held with journalists on media standards. Similarly, the project holds information sessions with media outlets, discusses findings and offers advice on reporting standards.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

With its relatively long history of operation, the Media Monitoring Project has managed to build public credibility in and visibility for the CSOs involved and their monitoring work. The publication of the monitoring results has now become a well-established and publicized event. As a sign of its influence, many media outlets have increasingly sought to be included as subjects of the monitoring, proactively requested guidance on media standards and increased their involvement in self-monitoring. The enhanced transparency in reporting standards has also helped shield journalists from unnecessary internal and external editorial influence.

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<sup>20</sup> Freedom House, [Georgia: Freedom of the press 2018](#).

Though polarization and bias in coverage remain ongoing challenges, the Media Monitoring Project's reports have shown a trend since 2010 towards increased adoption of professional media standards in the pre-election period—a decrease in the use of hate speech and discriminatory language and fairer distribution of time allotted to competing parties and candidates.<sup>21</sup>

The project has also succeeded in improving the capacity of Georgian CSOs to monitor the media. Media monitoring is now recognized as an independent area of expertise in Georgia. Over the years and through continuous adaptation, the project has steadily improved its methodology and operations, becoming more sophisticated at detecting coverage bias. Digital systems were also adopted for data entry and analysis, which will improve the project's work from now on.

## LESSONS

- When they have sufficient capacity, CSOs can make a critical contribution to strengthening the democratic role of the media. The project demonstrates, in particular, UNDP's ability to partner with social actors in the service of this goal.
- Building credibility as a source of accurate information takes time. Thanks to the project's continued engagement over many years on media monitoring, its reports are now recognized as being both rigorous and credible, and have, in turn, had an influence on the behaviour of media actors.

## PARTNERS

EU; Georgian Charter for Journalistic Ethics; Internews-Georgia; Civic Development Institute (CDI); Memo '98; Agence France-Presse (AFP); Mediacentar Sarajevo

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21 UNDP, Media Coverage of the 2018 Presidential Elections in Georgia, Prodoc (2018).



Photo Credit: UNDP Georgia

# A glimpse from elsewhere

## Rwanda: Supporting national institutions to strengthen the media sector

Rwanda's media sector has had a complex but significant history. In 1994, during the country's genocide, Rwanda's media played a notorious role in inciting hatred. Over the past two decades, however, it has experienced dramatic change. From having just a few media houses in the 1990s, today the country has more than 200 in operation across radio, TV, online and print media. The growth of the sector has presented an opportunity to enhance the media's role in improving citizens' access to accurate information and in promoting accountability. Yet many of the country's news outlets have struggled to adopt professional reporting standards. In 2012, UNDP began supporting the [Rwanda Media Barometer](#),<sup>22</sup> which regularly tracks the performance of the country's media sector as well as its independence, pluralism and professionalism.

In 2013, UNDP supported the establishment of the country's first self-regulatory body, the Rwanda Media Commission (RMC). The RMC, composed of media sector representatives, is charged with building media professionalism among practitioners, building a responsible media and upholding high-quality media standards in the country. Working alongside the RMC and the Media High Council (MHC), a constitutionally established body responsible for initiating and implementing media policy and capacity-building in the country, UNDP has also helped train journalists on fact-based reporting on a variety of governance and development issues, such as elections, health, gender equality and climate change. The MHC has also encouraged the use of statistics in reporting, and, along with the Rwanda Journalists Association, has held annual dialogues on emerging issues for the media sector, including on how to strengthen the financial sustainability of media houses and the investigative capacities of reporters.

## PARTNERS

Rwanda Media Commission, Media High Council

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<sup>22</sup> [http://rgb.rw/fileadmin/Publications/Rwanda\\_Media\\_Barometer\\_2016\\_Final\\_.pdf](http://rgb.rw/fileadmin/Publications/Rwanda_Media_Barometer_2016_Final_.pdf)

# KENYA

## ENGAGING MEDIA ACTORS ON THE EXTRACTIVES INDUSTRY

### OVERVIEW

The discovery of natural resources can be either a blessing or a curse for many developing countries. If managed in an inclusive and transparent fashion, the extractives industry can transform a country's human development outcomes. Yet it also comes with risks of exacerbating corruption, inequality, pollution and violent conflict. The media has an important role to play in promoting a more responsive and accountable extractives sector. In Kenya, UNDP has strengthened the capacities of news outlets to better inform and educate the public, increase transparency and strengthen local participation on issues related to the extractives industry.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Training media actors on the extractives industry
- Establishing community dialogue forums
- Promoting the engagement of social media influencers

### IMPACT



Continuous rounds of training and forums contributed to improved reporting on the extractives industry



By 2014, UNDP had trained 90 journalists as well as 30 editors and information officers in 4 counties



In 2014, 40% of tracked articles were strengthened by a social, environmental and political impact analysis of the oil industry, and 93% of stories relied on identifiable source attributions





Photo Credit: UNDP Kenya

*To report fairly, accurately and comprehensively on the extractives [industries], journalists need a sound knowledge of the sector and the ability to analyze and report on its complexities. The observance of ethical and professional principles in covering the extractive industry is very important because of the nature of the industry itself. The stakes are always high because of the stakeholders involved, the amount of revenue involved and also the possible short-term and long-term effects on the country's economic, political and social aspects.*

Haron Mwangi, CEO and Secretary to the Media Council of Kenya

## CONTEXT

In April 2013, large oil reserves were discovered in Kenya. It has also been found recently that the country has an abundance of other natural resources, including rare earth metals, gas, coal and gold, which are spread across the country's rural areas.<sup>23</sup> These findings could have a transformative impact on economic growth and human development in a country where, despite recent development gains, around 47 percent of the population still live in poverty.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, even as these resources represent a potential windfall for Kenya, their extraction could come at significant cost—what is commonly referred to as the “resource curse”, where the discovery of natural resources can lead to the concentration of wealth and power, corruption, exacerbation of poverty and inequalities, environmental degradation and pollution. Heightened expectations and conflicting interests can also

23 UNDP, Kenya Extractives, Prodoc (2019).

24 Ibid.

fuel cycles of violence. In Kenya, uncertainty and confusion over the recent discoveries have raised tensions over issues such as land allocation and forced evictions and displacement among local communities living in resource-rich areas.<sup>25</sup>

In 2014, in response to these discoveries, the Government of Kenya began a process of reforming the legal framework around the country's mining sector, including through a Natural Resources Bill aimed at settling disagreement over revenue-sharing among different stakeholders. But, given the complexity of the issue, significant challenges still exist to ensuring that the extraction process in the country is both sustainable and equitable.

The media can play an important role in reducing tensions and maximizing the positive impact of the recent discoveries by educating the public on developments in the extractives industry (including around the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern it), bringing greater transparency to the sector, managing expectations and fostering dialogue among citizens and government and industry representatives. However, Kenyan journalists and news outlets—who generally work with limited resources and, in part due to high professional turnover, lack substantial expertise on extractives issues—[have had difficulty reporting accurately on this topic](#).<sup>26</sup> The sector's technical complexities, including its legal and regulatory frameworks, its economic ramifications and the challenges of accessing information on mining contracts, has taxed their capacities and resources.<sup>27</sup>

## UNDP'S APPROACH

In response to these challenges, between 2013 and 2016, UNDP, in partnership with the Media Council of Kenya, organized a training programme for journalists focused on the various facets of the extractives industry and staged a series of nationally broadcast local community forums on the sector. The initiative aimed to support accurate, fact-based reporting and informed dialogue in order to reduce tensions, increase transparency and foster greater local and national participation in decision-making on key questions around the extractives industry.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

**Media training:** For more than two years, UNDP organized a running series of week-long intensive training sessions on specific areas of the extractives industry, led by experts and covering a range of issues, from the new legal and regulatory framework and its implications to professional and ethical reporting standards. The training also included field visits, enabling reporters to familiarize themselves with mining site operations as well as host communities and the challenges they face.

Upper management and senior reporters were the first to be sensitized on critical issues around the extractives sector. After gaining their buy-in, a broad swathe of journalists working in TV, print and radio were engaged to leverage each medium's unique reach and audience. Radio journalists were particularly important to involve, since radio is the favoured medium of people living in rural communities.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Media Council of Kenya, [Lenses on the Mines: Media Coverage of the Extractive Industry in Kenya: Exploring the Coverage, Challenges, Effects and Lessons for Newsroom Reflection](#) (Nairobi, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



**Community forums:** Following the training sessions, UNDP staged several forums across the country involving local community leaders and government and industry representatives, with the dialogues broadcast widely to national audiences. The forums gave community members their first opportunity to publicly voice their concerns around the extractive work conducted in their localities.

**Engaging social media actors:** Social media have been of growing importance in Kenya. In 2014, following a rising number of misleading and inflammatory posts related to Kenya's natural resource finds, UNDP decided to implement a workshop for social media influencers. This engagement, which hosted people with large social media followings on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, focused on the importance of conflict-sensitive reporting and the need to enhance transparency and accountability.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

Through continuous rounds of training and forums, the project made a significant contribution towards improving reporting and dialogue on the extractives industry in the country. By 2014, UNDP had trained 90 journalists as well as 30 editors and information officers in four counties, many of whom created dedicated sections of their coverage for fact-based discussions on developments in the extractives sector.

A 2015 UNDP study tracking media coverage of the sector indicated that media outlets were better integrating professional reporting practices into their reporting. In 2014, 40 percent of tracked articles were strengthened by a social, environmental and political impact analysis of the oil industry, and 93 percent of stories relied on identifiable source attributions.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, media outlets now more regularly rely on experts to contribute to informed discussions on the issue.

The initiative also had catalytic effects. It encouraged sustained engagement with local communities on the issue, with many news outlets continuing to set up local and national radio and TV forums covering the extractives industry and its impacts. In addition, the social media influencers who participated in the workshop became anti-corruption champions by raising awareness of the issue among their followers.

## LESSONS

- The case study shows that UNDP's engagement in building the capacities of media actors on specific development issues can yield significant dividends. It demonstrates the impact that these efforts can have for promoting public awareness of often highly complex development issues, resulting in greater citizen participation and stronger government accountability.
- UNDP's convening and facilitating role is a key asset. The success of the initiative was owed, to a large extent, to UNDP's impartiality and accompanying role, which brought together key stakeholders, including media outlets, local communities and government and industry representatives. Similarly, UNDP's relationship with the Media Council helped ensure buy-in from all the major media houses in the country.

## PARTNERS

Media Council of Kenya, Ministry of Mining

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## MOLDOVA

### TRAINING JOURNALISTS TO ENGAGE WITH OPEN DATA FOR TRANSPARENCY

#### OVERVIEW

Open data has become recognized as a powerful tool for increasing government transparency and fighting corruption. However, for this tool to be effective, media actors, researchers and citizens need to know where to find and how to use publicly available data to hold governments and private entities accountable. As part of UNDP's broader efforts to address corruption in Moldova, UNDP's Social Innovation Lab (MiLab<sup>29</sup>) and its partners hosted an Open Data Media Camp to strengthen the capacities of media and civil society actors to access and use open data in reporting and advocacy.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Organized an open data camp for Moldavian journalists
- Partnered with regional and local open data experts
- Established an open data exchange fellowship programme for alumni

#### IMPACT



The Open Data Media Camp successfully strengthened the skills of its participants to work with open data



The initiative produced 12 investigative articles, 6 using data-driven techniques, on issues ranging from public procurement, financial fraud and money laundering to integrity issues and abuse of power in the public sector



Fostering a network of open data practitioners has helped ensure sustainability

29 <http://milab.md/>



Photo Credit: UNDP Moldova

*Open data is at the crux of the new 2030 development agenda and will be key to all the [Sustainable Development] Goals. It offers a new start for inclusive economic growth and productivity, based on a sustainable foundation and with transparency and accountability at its core.*

Rastislav Vrbensky, Deputy Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

to information and increased data transparency, especially in the area of public procurement. The push to expand open data in Moldova resulted in notable progress, and by 2015, Moldova had risen to be ranked 22nd of 122 countries in the Global Open Data Index.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these positive developments, institutional enthusiasm for publishing data has waned and, due to a lack of technical expertise, journalists, think tanks and other civil society actors still find it difficult to access and use existing public datasets. At the same time, the need for continued and sustained investment in transparency

## CONTEXT

Corruption has been a major systemic issue facing Moldova and its institutions, and has been especially widespread in its procurement, education and social service sectors. In 2011, as part of a larger institutional push to fight corruption, the Government of Moldova came together with other stakeholders to explore the use of open governmental data as a tool to increase transparency. That year, Moldova joined the Open Government Partnership and, in 2012, it became one of the first countries in the region to launch an open data platform ([date.gov.md](http://date.gov.md)). Since then, civil society in Moldova has continued to advocate for better access

<sup>30</sup> <http://2015.index.okfn.org/place/>

*Although there is a tendency to close down the access of journalists and of civil society representatives to public information, and not just in the justice field, there are still enough tools and open databases to discover the irregularities committed by authorities. It takes a lot of vigilance, analytical spirit and, last but not least, courage. I am very happy that the Camp's participants are aware of the importance of keeping this public information open—a right for which journalists have been fighting for many years.*

Mariana Rata, Open Data Media Camp mentor and coordinator of the Journalism Investigation Center

an Open Data Media Camp for journalists and other national actors to support the use of open data.<sup>33</sup> The project aimed to improve the capacity of think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and media outlets to access and use open data. By supporting the creation of a community of open data practitioners, the project sought to promote greater transparency and accountability.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

The Open Data Media Camp, held from September to December 2017, consisted of a one-week training course for 25 Moldovan journalists, civil society activists, researchers and IT developers interested in open data. This exposed participants to the concepts of open data and provided training on how to work with open datasets as a public good.

A key component of the project's innovation was aimed at fostering regional peer-to-peer learning and exchange by the involvement of Slovak open data experts, recognizing Slovak civil society's pioneering work in the use of open data. UNDP also partnered with the Investigative Journalism Center of Moldova, a local NGO, to ensure local ownership and that the training was tailored to the realities of the local context.

To ensure follow-up, a fellowship programme was established. Six training participants were selected for a three-month fellowship to conduct a series of data-driven investigations on issues such as contracting, financial fraud and money laundering. This programme was supported by the Pontis Foundation, which included a four-day visit

has been underlined by recent trends. In 2017, Moldova ranked 122nd of 180 countries according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index,<sup>31</sup> and a 2018 study by UNDP Moldova on integrity and anti-corruption revealed that perception of corruption has risen considerably among citizens and businesses.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, a key component of efforts to revitalize the open data movement in Moldova has been to address knowledge and capacity gaps among journalists and other stakeholders trying to access and work with open data to improve transparency and reduce corruption.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

As part of UNDP's broader efforts to strengthen national capacities to fight corruption, in 2017, UNDP Moldova's Social Innovation Lab (MiLab) organized

31 <https://www.transparency.org/country/MDA>

32 Centre of Sociological, Political and Psychological Analysis and Investigations CIVIS, [National Integrity and Anti-corruption Strategy Impact Monitoring Survey—Moldova 2017](#) (Chisinau, 2018).

33 The project aligned with the agenda of the Government of Moldova, in particular the national strategy to develop information society, Moldova Digitala 2020, Civil Society Development Strategy 2012–2015 and Open Data Initiative. Since 2015, UNDP has also been supporting the National Anticorruption Center in Moldova; see the [Prodoc](#) (2015).

to Slovakia to meet other open data practitioners, enable experience-sharing and expand professional contacts among open data practitioners.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The Open Data Media Camp successfully strengthened the skills of its participants to work with open data, and, although relatively small, the intervention was catalytic:

- The initiative produced 12 investigative articles, six using data-driven techniques, on issues ranging from public procurement, financial fraud and money laundering to integrity issues and abuse of power in the public sector.
- Leveraging the training participants' pool of IT expertise, the Camp also stimulated the creation of two [new open databases](#)<sup>34</sup> on government projects, including on projects funded from the National Ecological Fund and on local election results data.
- The project ensured sustainability by creating and fostering a network of open data practitioners: project alumni and fellows can now regularly communicate and exchange their experiences through an active Facebook page.
- Continuing its work to strengthen data for accountability in the country, MiLab is now supporting the development of a crowd-sourced platform ([imipasa.md](#)) that allows citizens to report on fiscal fraud.

Despite positive results from the project, outdated public databases, unfriendly data formats and fee-based access, as well as increasingly stringent regulations on data protection,<sup>35</sup> remain significant challenges for open data transparency in Moldova, demonstrating the need for continued engagement.

## LESSONS

- This case study shows the impact that UNDP work with journalists can have on strengthening good governance and accountability. This is especially so when the capacity-development initiatives for journalists—in this case, relating to the use of open data—are directly relevant to emerging opportunities in a given context.
- The case study also demonstrates the way in which UNDP can facilitate innovative collaborations on media issues such as open data, whether by encouraging regional collaboration and exchange of expertise, supporting the participation and capacity development of local media actors or engaging “unusual suspects”, such as IT experts, who made key contributions to the initiative’s success.
- In particular, UNDP’s decision to engage local media organizations in the design and implementation of the training proved to be essential for adapting the knowledge of the Slovak open data experts to the realities and emerging needs of the Moldovan context.

## PARTNERS

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SlovakAid; Pontis Foundation

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<sup>34</sup> <http://moldova.digital/en/>

<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.legislationline.org/topics/country/14/topic/3>

# SUDAN

## USING THE MEDIA FOR CITIZEN FEEDBACK TO SUPPORT BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY

### OVERVIEW

Ensuring adequate provision of basic services is fundamental to improving the lives of people and communities and is a key part of the 2030 Agenda's SDG 16. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, however, information gaps can pose significant challenges for governments seeking to improve service delivery in areas such as water, health and education. To address this, UNDP and its partners are currently piloting the use of innovative radio and SMS technologies to track community needs and improve basic service delivery in Sudan.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Airing interactive radio shows on service delivery
- Using citizen phone calls to the radio shows to track service delivery
- Expanding reach by using SMS/USDD surveys (planned second phase)

### IMPACT



Demonstrated the feasibility of community radio systems to track service delivery in Sudan



380 phone calls generated valuable data on existing service delivery gaps



For many citizens, the radio shows were an opportunity to voice their priorities on service delivery for the first time





Photo Credit: UNDP Sudan

*The Kassala community radio citizen feedback system pilot has allowed us to hear many voices of our people in hard-to-reach areas on our basic services provision condition. We hope that its next phase, using SMS and the combination of the two approaches, will obtain results that will concretely inform us to better target our state resource planning in coming years. In addition, we are preparing to include the community radio citizen feedback pilot as a case study in our Master's journalism course curriculum at Kassala State University.*

Gamal Mohamed Alhassan, Director General, General Directorate of Economic Planning and Development, State Ministry of Finance, Economy and Labour Force, Kassala

## CONTEXT

Decades of conflict and recurring natural disasters have posed severe development challenges for Sudan. Around 36 percent of the country's population live in poverty, and many areas still lack adequate access to basic services such as water, health, sanitation and education.<sup>36</sup> The economic decline following South Sudan's secession and the loss of 75 percent of oil resources, together with growing pressure on the country's fragile infrastructure, pose a significant risk of potential instability,<sup>37</sup> especially since many regions have experienced an influx of migrants and refugees fleeing the conflict in South Sudan.<sup>38</sup>

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and a national dialogue, the Government of Sudan identified SDG 16, which calls on Member States to promote peaceful, just and inclusive institutions, as an accelerator for the country's development.

36 UNDP Sudan, "[Sudan: the land and the people](#)".

37 U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Country Analysis Brief: Sudan and South Sudan](#), 5 March 2018.

38 Anisha Tharpa and Gamal Mohammed Alhassan, "[Voicing through airwaves—Engaging citizens to improve public service delivery in East Sudan](#)".

Target 16, “Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”, is a particularly important pillar of Sudan’s strategy.

But strengthening systems for service delivery requires knowing where to target resources. And this, in turn, depends on the ability to regularly gather data and track the changing situation on the ground. Indicator 16.6.2, “Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services”, is one of two key internationally recognized SDG 16 indicators on service delivery, and the only one that seeks to capture the perceptions of beneficiaries. Yet, in Sudan’s underserved regions, limited resources and poor infrastructure make regular deployment of traditional data collection methods, such as household surveys, unfeasible or prohibitively costly.

Combining old and new media technologies, however, could offer a solution. Radio is one of the most important sources of news and information in Sudan’s most remote and rural regions. At the same time, the country has seen astounding growth in the use of mobile technology use, with an estimated penetration rate above 70 percent.<sup>39</sup> If harnessed effectively, these technologies could offer Sudan, and other countries experiencing similar challenges, a cost-effective and participatory way to obtain feedback to improve basic service delivery.

## UNDP’S APPROACH

In February 2018, UNDP and its partners launched a [pilot initiative](#)<sup>40</sup> using radio programmes and SMS/USSD<sup>41</sup> messaging as a low-cost approach to get community feedback to track the quality of service delivery in inaccessible and remote areas in Kassala state, east Sudan. The ambition of this ongoing initiative is to test the feasibility of the system and to scale it up as a way of tracking service delivery for the region.

## UNDP’S KEY ACTIONS

*Citizen feedback on service delivery through community radio (Phase 1):* For three weeks in May 2018, Kassala State Radio aired nine one-hour live programmes on service delivery. Each live broadcast was organized as an interactive discussion with service provision experts and encouraged local communities to call in and share their experience of local service delivery. Each week, the programme focused on a single service sector, starting with health, followed by education and water supply.

The community radio presenters were involved in tailoring the programme to reach their audiences as best they could. The programmes were conducted in four of the state’s local languages and, to standardize feedback, callers answered a six-point questionnaire on their experiences with service delivery, which covered issues ranging from access and proximity to affordability, responsiveness of the service provider and level of satisfaction. In collaboration with Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), the initiative is testing an innovative approach to automatically translate the audio feedback from the calls into indicator data.

*SMS/USSD survey (Phase 2):* The second phase, to be implemented in 2019 in partnership with Zain telecommunications company in Sudan, will build on the results of the first phase to create a questionnaire on service delivery that will be disseminated using telecom SMS/USSD technology. The survey is intended to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Unstructured Supplementary Service Data, which enables text to be sent between a mobile phone and an application programme in the network.





Photo Credit: UNDP Sudan

*I'm very pleased with the initiative launched by UNDP—the first of its kind in Sudan. We have come to identify where the imbalances are and that will help us a lot in replanning and reprogramming the needs of the communities. The survey revealed that pastoral and agricultural sectors need to be incorporated also focusing on Goal 17 and bring in other sectors apart from basic services, like water, education and health. Government counterparts should rally behind this strategic approach so that we can work in unison to achieve the goals we are seeking.*

Osman Mohammed, General Director, Kassala State Broadcasting Corporation

reach approximately 5000 people and will be used to complement existing data on citizen satisfaction with basic service delivery captured in the calls to the radio programmes.

At the very early stages, the initiative was centred on creating citizen feedback using SMS/USDD technology. The state government of Kassala, joining as a partner at the pilot's inception phase, first recommended using the state's radio system to collect feedback to better match local media consumption patterns. The project will now seek to combine results from both data sources into one composite indicator that can more accurately track the proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public service delivery.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The completion of the pilot's first phase successfully demonstrated the feasibility of using community radio feedback systems to track service delivery in Sudan and showed that demand was high among local communities. In total, 380 phone calls were received over the course of the nine radio shows. Not only did the radio programmes

generate valuable data on existing service delivery gaps but they also helped spark dialogue on local service delivery needs and, for the first time, offered many citizens—especially those living in rural areas of Kassala state—a chance to voice their needs and priorities. The success of the radio programme is particularly significant since it enabled the participation of non-literate citizens (roughly 46 percent of the state’s population).<sup>42</sup>

Once the SMS/USSD survey is complete, it will help generate a significantly more accurate picture of participants’ perception of service delivery. The composite indicator incorporating inputs from both community radio and mobile phones will be a powerful tool, not only for the state government in helping to clarify priority areas for financial planning but also for other development partners in better coordinating and targeting their actions and investments.

The pilot also has wider implications. Currently, no standard international methodology exists for measuring SDG indicator 16.6.2. This means that it has been a challenge for many developing countries to incorporate this indicator into their national statistics systems. A proven, cost-effective and participatory system for capturing citizen perceptions in Sudan could therefore serve as a model for other countries seeking to strengthen service delivery, encourage accountability and measure progress on SDG 16.

## LESSONS

- The case study showcases the way in which UNDP can promote the use of popular media systems, such as local radio networks and mobile phone systems, to encourage community participation and feedback to directly improve service delivery on the ground.
- UNDP’s convening role was an important factor in the pilot’s initial success. UNDP’s early engagement with the state government helped to both foster local ownership and promote sustainability, by linking it to Kassala’s state radio system. Similarly, UNDP’s pro bono partnerships with the private sector enabled the automation of the call-in feedback system (QCRI) as well as the development and deployment of the SMS survey (Zain).

## PARTNERS

Ministry of Finance, Economy and Labour Force (MoFELF); line ministries providing basic services (Health, Education, Water Supply), Kassala state; Kassala Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Division; Zain Sudan; QCRI

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<sup>42</sup> UNDP, Human Development Reports: [Sudan: Human Development Indicators](#).

# Engaging with the media for conflict prevention and peacebuilding

## LEBANON

### SUPPORTING THE MEDIA TO STRENGTHEN PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

#### OVERVIEW

In many polarized societies, a fragmented media sector can be a driver of social conflict and social tension by reinforcing lines of division between communities through partisan and inflammatory reportage. Over the past 11 years, UNDP Lebanon has been persistently working with media actors to strengthen the role of the media sector in promoting a culture of respect and peace.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Promoting intercommunal exchanges through a Peacbuilding News Supplement inserted into leading newspapers
- Supporting a nationally owned Journalists' Pact to promote objective and conflict-sensitive reporting
- Implementing a national media monitoring initiative

#### IMPACT



The Pact is now an established normative framework guiding the media sector in promoting conflict-sensitive reporting



With a circulation of 750,000 copies between 2012 and 2016, the Supplement has become a recognized space for legitimate and constructive intercommunity dialogue



Since 2015, the media monitoring initiative has produced 10 reports, which cumulatively indicate improving standards in Lebanon's media sector



Photo Credit: UNDP Lebanon

*This Supplement is almost the only publication in the Lebanese media that initiates a positive discourse.*

Mohammad Chebaro, Lebanese journalist

polarized media landscape has exacerbated social tensions and accentuated sectarian divides, especially in times of crisis. There are more than 40 national media outlets broadcasting on TV and radio or publishing in print and online. Many of these are affiliated with political or sectarian groups, who tend to use these outlets to convey messages to their constituencies and position themselves vis-à-vis other political actors in the country.<sup>44</sup> There are few outlets where citizens can access neutral and fact-based news that reflects diverse perspectives on current affairs.

The large inflow of Syrian refugees since 2011 has heightened existing social tensions and added a new dimension to the country's fragile political situation. Lebanon is now hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees per capita in the world, and this has also strained the already weak infrastructure, especially in the country's poorest areas. Coverage of the Syrian crisis has tended to focus on its negative impacts on Lebanon and has increased bias and discrimination against refugees. Few positive stories are produced on Syrian refugees, and few platforms exist that promote a dialogue between Lebanese and Syrian communities.

## CONTEXT

The challenges to peace in Lebanon reach back to the country's civil war; though the war ended in 1990, its effects continue today. Since 2008, political tension and outbreaks of violence continue to threaten national stability and mistrust of "the other" continues to plague the country's intercommunal relations. While freedom of expression and media diversity in Lebanon are among the strongest in the region,<sup>43</sup> the

<sup>43</sup> Freedom House, [Lebanon: Freedom of the press 2015](#).

<sup>44</sup> Anthony Mills, ["PI completes press freedom mission to Lebanon, urges respect for editorial independence and credibility"](#), 23 October 2009.

*I am so happy that this kind of discussion is taking place in Zouk Mikael, and not only in Beirut, because I believe that we need to talk more about refugees from a human rights perspective and overcome stigmatizing representations of the refugees.*

Maha, participant in a local discussion session on the Peacebuilding News Supplement held in Zouk Mikael

## UNDP'S APPROACH

Since 2007, UNDP has been working to support “safe spaces” for dialogue and expression among Lebanon’s different communities. Since 2012, UNDP’s Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project has scaled up its work to strengthen peace and social cohesion by supporting common media platforms that foster respect for diversity and contribute to fact-based and conflict-sensitive reporting.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

Since its implementation, the media components of the Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project have grown to encompass three complementary initiatives, each building on past successes:

**Peacebuilding News Supplement:** Since 2012, UNDP has been producing Peacebuilding News Supplements, which are distributed as an insert in leading newspapers in the country, targeting the country’s various political and sectarian groups. Acting as a platform for peaceful dialogue, the Supplement contains articles and opinion pieces on current affairs in Lebanon written by journalists and others representing Lebanon’s many groups and communities. Written in a constructive tone and relying on fact-based analyses, these articles, appearing side by side, expose Lebanon’s citizens to a range of perspectives to which they might otherwise not have access. Following publication of the Supplements, public discussions are hosted on their topics. The Supplement’s contributors now include some of Lebanon’s most well-known journalists.

With a growing number of refugees from Syria flowing into Lebanon, the Supplement has begun focusing its issues on the situation of Syrian refugees. As a result, it has also become a platform for Syrian journalists, activists and artists to tell stories about their experiences and engage in dialogue with their Lebanese counterparts, promoting respect between their communities and combating discrimination. It has also focused on the positive contribution of Syrian refugees to Lebanese music, cuisine, culture and the economy. Between 2012 and 2016, 750,000 copies of the Supplement were distributed.<sup>45</sup>

**Journalists’ Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon:** In addition to its work on the Supplement, since 2013, UNDP has been working on transforming the institutional norms of the media sector by promoting a national pact on media standards for peace. UNDP supported the collaboration of 34 senior editors from a diversity of media outlets—many of whom had never sat together—who crafted the agreement over six months. [The Pact](#), signed by the 34 media institutions and launched formally in partnership with and under the patronage of the Ministry of Information in March 2013, sets out guidelines for the role of journalists in promoting objective and conflict-sensitive reporting.

**NGO media monitoring:** Building on the successful adoption of the Pact, UNDP next sought to advance its implementation. UNDP engaged the Maharat Foundation, a national NGO, to monitor the way in which media outlets were integrating the Pact and its principles into their coverage. Since its inception in 2015, this [monitoring initiative](#)<sup>46</sup> has produced 10 reports on 10 topics, such as media representation of refugee communities and coverage of positive local initiatives. Increasingly, media outlets have proactively engaged with the initiative to

45 UNDP, Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project: A Review and Recommendations for the Future (2017), p. 26.

46 UNDP Lebanon, “[Media monitoring studies](#)”.



prepare for the next monitoring cycle. UNDP and Maharat have also encouraged their involvement by hosting round tables where media professionals can discuss the results of the studies.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

Although Lebanon's media sector continues to face challenges, the media monitoring reports cumulatively show positive signs of evolution. The Supplement has now become a recognized space for intercommunity dialogue, especially through its association with well-known journalists. Both Lebanese and Syrian contributors to the Supplement have described it as one of the few spaces where they feel fully free to express their views.<sup>47</sup>

The Pact, which was drafted and is owned by the media outlets themselves, now serves as a recognized normative framework for the media sector and provides a strong basis for scaling up advocacy and training. Looking ahead, UNDP will partner with Thomson Reuters to develop a practical toolkit for media outlets on how to use the Pact and focus on guidance to build journalists' skills in key areas. UNDP is also looking to adapt to the changing media landscape by addressing the challenges and opportunities social media represent for peacebuilding in the country. (See case study on fake news, p. 74).

## LESSONS

- The case study showcases UNDP's ability to act as a credible and impartial convener supporting the engagement of media actors on peacebuilding. In a polarized society such as Lebanon, UNDP managed to leverage this reputation to create a neutral space for constructive intercommunal dialogue through its Peacebuilding News Supplement.
- Similarly, as demonstrated by the Journalists' Pact, UNDP was trusted as a broker in a transparent process of which media outlets themselves could take ownership—an important reason for the Pact's legitimacy and success.

## PARTNERS

EU; Maharat Foundation; Japan; Germany; the United States; Ministry of Information; National News Agency; Annahar, Assafir, The Daily Star and L'Orient le Jour newspapers; other media outlets

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47 UNDP, *Peacebuilding in Lebanon Project: A Review and Recommendations for the Future* (2017), pp. 26-27.



Photo Credit: UNDP Lebanon

## ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA STORYTELLING TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

#### OVERVIEW

Violent extremist groups have increasingly been relying on social media to spread their messages and ideologies across the globe. In response, members of the international community—including governments and civil society—have sought ways to leverage the power of social media to help in the prevention of violent extremism (PVE). Since 2017, UNDP Asia and the Pacific has created a popular online live video series focusing on the human impact of violent extremism for a wide and diverse audience in the region.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Hosting a live online series featuring interviews with people whose lives have been affected by violent extremism
- Fostering discussions on a range of topics, from the causes of radicalization to the gendered impact of violent extremism
- Encouraging interactive discussions among wide and diverse audiences

#### IMPACT



Through its wide reach, the series has brought attention to how ordinary people can counter extremist narratives



12 million facebook users were reached in the series' first season, with over 3.6 million views



The initiative's interviews have helped start online conversations on issues such as radicalization, extremist recruitment methods, gender and extremism, and how ordinary people can counter extremist narratives





Photo Credit: UNDP Asia and the Pacific

*ISIS knew that the media war is more important than the real war on the ground. Tech companies are playing a main role in [the fight against violent extremism]—especially social media ... Starting with countering propaganda ... they can do this by promoting photos, videos and campaigns from local sources who are fighting against this ideology and the groups online.*

Aziz Alhamza, citizen journalist, co-founder of Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently and #ExtremeLives interviewee

## CONTEXT

In recent years, the Asia-Pacific region has seen an expansion of activity by violent extremist groups. Places such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand have faced increased risks of violent action perpetrated by these organizations.<sup>48</sup> For some time, these groups have been turning to social media to disseminate their messages, glamourizing their cause and attracting new recruits. Complementing their face-to-face recruitment networks, groups such as Islamic State and Al-Qaida publicize their cause online, using media content to compress real or imagined grievances into reductive black-and-white narratives and flashy images of violent “heroism”, to win over potential recruits.

This has only underlined the importance of promoting better understanding of the realities of violent extremism

across the region. Yet holding informed and critical discussions can itself be a challenge. On the one hand, public discussions on violent extremism—in many places, a controversial and sensitive topic—can be driven by

48 Simon Alexis Finley and Robert Templer, “A geographic and temporal overview of violent extremism in Southeast Asia”, in *Contemporary C/PVE Research and Practice*, Lilah El Sayed and Dr Jamal Barnes, eds. (Abu Dhabi, Hedayah; Perth, Edith Cowan University, 2017), pp. 76-88

misinformation, anger and/or panic. On the other, serious discussions on the root causes of radicalization and the drivers of violent extremism tend to be confined to small groups of academics and policymakers and can fail to attract wide public interest or attention.

Asia has an estimated 1.7 billion active Facebook users. And while many worry about the potential negative effects of the proliferation of digital technologies and platforms, at the same time, these new technologies offer a unique opportunity to engage directly with the region's increasingly interconnected populations on key development issues, such as PVE, on an unprecedented scale.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

Leveraging the power of social media for PVE, UNDP Asia and the Pacific has been producing an online live video series called [#ExtremeLives](#).<sup>49</sup> Launched in 2017 and now in its second season, the series focuses on the stories of individual people impacted by violent extremism, to demystify both the ideologies and allure of extremist groups while creating awareness around regional conflict-related issues and sparking critical dialogues among regional audiences.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

Each [#ExtremeLives](#) episode is around 30 minutes long and centres on an interview with someone who has been impacted by violent extremism. The series uses live storytelling to shed light on the impact that violent extremism has had on individuals and communities in the region. Speakers have included former fighters, victims, activists and wives and mothers of recruits—many of whom are now working on the frontlines of PVE—as well as conflict-prevention experts.

The episodes, broadcast live on Facebook, intend to stimulate discussions among a wide and diverse audience. Many of the show's episodes are intentionally filmed using "pared down" formats such as interviews to create a sense of intimacy between the storyteller and the audience, and viewers are encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback online.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/programmes-and-initiatives/extremelives.html>



Photo Credit: UNDP Asia and the Pacific

*In the era of technology, information cannot be stopped ... young people should clarify the things they are exposed to—the things they listen to, the things they watch ... they should ask what information sources are they getting? Do you really understand the conflict?*

Nasir Abas, former Jihadi Commander and #ExtremeLives interviewee

The intent of the show, as one project member describes it, is for it to be “like a conversation you would have with a friend”. The first episode of the campaign aired on 8 September 2017; 10 episodes will have been aired by the end of the current season.

“The war online”,<sup>50</sup> an episode from the show’s first season, has been among the series’ most popular broadcasts, with more than 1 million views. It features a conversation with the co-founder of Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently, a group of citizen journalists risking their lives to uncover Islamic State atrocities in their home city in Syria.

Another popular episode from the first season, “Why I turned from terrorism”,<sup>51</sup> features a conversation with a former Islamist commander who talks about the reasons he left his former life and his work to prevent others from taking the same path.

The show’s second season has so far featured stories from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Thailand. The first episode in the new season featured a youth activist taking a stand against hate speech and ethnic violence against minority groups, including Rohingya Muslims.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The web series has proven to be very popular. The first season reached 12 million Facebook users and garnered more than 3.6 million views. The second season’s first episode, “Do violent words lead to violent actions?”,<sup>52</sup> alone reached approximately 1.36 million people with more than half a million views. So far, the interviews have helped start online conversations on issues such as radicalization, extremist recruitment methods, gender and extremism, and how ordinary people can counter extremist narratives.

Following the successful launch of #ExtremeLives, UNDP Asia and the Pacific has continued to emphasize the value of using social media to disseminate counter-narratives to prevent violent extremism, in the framework of other projects. This year, UNDP partnered with Google and YouTube to launch the “Creators for Change”<sup>53</sup> initiative in Asia, which engages local CSOs and media experts to work with a group of online influencers or “fellows” to come up with inventive videos to combat online hate and extremism.

## LESSONS

- The initiative demonstrates the way in which development actors can successfully leverage social media’s wide reach to promote greater understanding of complex peace and security challenges. By tapping into its own expertise and engaging various partners within its wide networks, UNDP has been able to create and disseminate impactful social media content to mass audiences with the aim of reducing the influence of violent extremism.
- While many might lament social media’s negative effects on public discourse, the initiative also shows that UNDP has the ability to use social media platforms as invaluable tools for advancing informed critical discussions on sensitive issues.

50 [www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/programmes-and-initiatives/extremelives/eps2.html](http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/programmes-and-initiatives/extremelives/eps2.html)

51 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3lj8vaYV3o>

52 <https://youtu.be/JiGG70LXVml>

53 [www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/operations/projects/overview/creators-for-change0.html](http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/operations/projects/overview/creators-for-change0.html)

# Fostering participation and localizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

## LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

### EMPOWERING RURAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH RADIO

#### OVERVIEW

Community radio stations, which allow local communities to operate and broadcast their own programmes, have helped harness the power of radio to allow people in remote regions to access information in their ethnic languages and engage on key issues affecting their lives. Since 2007, UNDP, in collaboration with government partners in Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), has been supporting and expanding a network of community radio stations across the country's rural areas.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Supporting a network of 8 community radio stations
- Providing technical expertise and capacity development to more than 100 local volunteers
- Fostering dialogues on key community issues, such as safe migration, gender equality, education and sustainable farming

#### IMPACT



The stations now reach approximately 300,000 rural people around the country



The project has helped provide access to news and information to some of the poorest and most remote communities in Lao PDR



Through their programming, the radio stations have been helping address gender stereotypes





Photo Credit: UNDP Lao PDR

*I am delighted that I can be this link, helping my community to access important information, as well as to be heard by people who do not speak Lao language, who too often stay invisible and unheard. Katang people tend to trust the information coming from their Katang representative, otherwise it is difficult to persuade them to do anything. I want my people to attend schools and visit doctors regularly. That's why I come here every day from a village that is 60 km away from the station. If I don't do it, who will?*

Thognmy Keothongdam, Village Chief of Vangkhaed and volunteer radio broadcaster

## CONTEXT

Lao PDR is a country with one of the world's lowest population densities. In this largely mountainous country of 6.5 million people, 68 percent of the population live in 18 provinces. The country is also characterized by a rich cultural and ethnic diversity, with 49 officially recognized ethnic groups.<sup>54</sup>

In 2018, the country's economic progress enabled it to be eligible in the near future to graduate from least developed country (LDC) status. However, as it continues to grow, Lao PDR will face challenges in ensuring that its development gains are evenly and inclusively distributed to all its residents, including by reducing widening gaps between rich and poor, women and men, ethnic groups and different regions.<sup>55</sup> Poverty and illiteracy remain concentrated in remote and rural areas of the country where social infrastructure is still inaccessible and limited.<sup>56</sup>

54 UNDP Lao PDR, "About Lao PDR".

55 UNDP Lao PDR, "Riding the airwaves to reach the unreachable", 25 April 2018.

56 UNDP, Enhancing People's Participation through Community Radio, *Prodoc* (2017).

Recently, the Government of Lao PDR has invested in expanding its broadcast, print and Internet networks.<sup>57</sup> Yet infrastructure challenges have continued to limit media reach in many parts of the country—particularly in the most remote rural areas—and few media options exist in many of the local ethnic languages. The result has been that many rural communities have struggled to access news and information and engage with urgent development issues facing their communities.

At the same time, radio is a low-cost and effective way for communities, especially those with illiterate populations, to access information. Furthermore, studies conducted in recent years show that radio is still the preferred and most trusted source of information in Lao PDR and is present in almost half the country's households. There is significant potential to use this medium to address inequalities in access to information in the country.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

UNDP Lao PDR has been advancing the participation of rural populations in development by supporting a network of community radio stations throughout the country, with a focus on poor, underserved and ethnic minority communities. The establishment of these radio stations, operated by local volunteers, including women and young people, has enabled diverse rural populations to access information in their own languages and engage with local development issues, and to foster gender equality as well as local cultures and traditions.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

UNDP support to community radio in Lao PDR began with a pilot project, Khoun Community Radio for Development, which established the district's first local radio station in 2007. Subsequently, the Community Participation and Support Programme (2011–2017), and the current [Enhancing People's Participation through Community Radio](#)<sup>58</sup> (2017–2021) have enabled a growing network of community radio stations in the country. UNDP supports community radio stations in three ways: it supplies the radio equipment for the stations, trains volunteers in the operation of this equipment and offers ongoing advice and expertise on broadcast programmes and technical issues.

There are now eight community radio stations broadcasting on short-wave frequencies in five provinces and in 11 ethnic languages and dialects. Together, these radio stations are run by more than 100 community volunteers from different ethnic groups, and can count women, young people and civil servants among their staff. Audience participation has been encouraged through call-ins during shows, the content of which is created by the volunteers and which covers a range of issues from sustainable farming and health to education and the dangers of unexploded ordnance (UXO). The stations have also been important vehicles to promote national and local outreach and advocacy on key issues such as immunization, water and sanitation, human trafficking and safe migration.

Women's empowerment has been a specific focus of many of the programmes, with female radio volunteers hosting programmes on women rights, gender equality and equal opportunities. These programmes have also contributed to encouraging women to attend public meetings and participate in community activities.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.; see also UNDP, [Communication for Empowerment in Lao PDR: An Assessment of Information and Communication Needs among Ethnic Peoples](#) (Bangkok, 2010).

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, UNDP Lao PDR, ["Riding the airwaves to reach the unreachable"](#), 25 April 2018.



*We enable our villagers to share their concerns. Villagers also call us very often to propose topics that they want to hear from us, or if they have problems that they cannot solve. The most popular questions are about legal issues, citizen rights on land, government subsidies, family code, and others. The community feels closer to the local administration now that their opinions are counted and that they can ask any question they want.*

Bounthanh Phannola, community radio volunteer from Lakhongsy village.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The stations now reach approximately 300,000 rural people around the country. The project has helped provide access to news and information to some of the poorest and most remote communities in Lao PDR and has created a space for dialogue as well as links between communities and local policymakers and government. Community engagement on key local development issues, such as maternal and child health, sustainable farming, local culture, environment and gender equality, has grown. As a consequence, the rural communities have been able to make more informed decisions on the issues affecting them.

Agricultural programmes have been among the most popular shows and, following discussions on farming techniques on community radio stations, local farmers have started to shift towards using organic fertilizers and other sustainable farming techniques, which has also contributed to higher yields. The community radio



Photo Credit: UNDP Lao PDR

stations have also played an instrumental role in slowly changing perceptions and cultural norms on the role of women in society by addressing gender stereotypes.

More recently, the community radio stations have brought the voices of these rural communities to national policymakers through data collection for the 2018 SDGs Voluntary National Review. To gather this feedback, station volunteers selected questions most relevant to their communities, developed their own broadcasting plan and collected feedback through calls to the daily radio broadcasts. The programmes received 103 calls from all five provinces where the stations are operating, which provided feedback on all 17 SDGs.

Now in its third phase, the project aims to continue to strengthen the capacity of its radio volunteers, support greater sustainability and local ownership of existing radio stations and expand into more remote, high-risk border areas.

## LESSONS

- The case study shows that community radio offers UNDP and other actors a powerful and relatively cost-effective way to amplify the voice of marginalized and remote communities and to promote their participation in key development issues.
- The success of the projects' community radio stations has hinged on UNDP's ability to foster local ownership and support volunteers to create engaging programmes on issues relevant to the distinct communities.

## PARTNERS

Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism; International Organization for Migration; UN Office on Drugs and Crime; UN-Women; World Food Programme; UNICEF; World Health Organization; UN Population Fund; RHB Bank; Oxfam; UN Volunteers programme; Canada Fund for Local Initiatives



Photo Credit: UNDP Lao PDR

# BRAZIL

## PARTNERING WITH BRAZIL'S LARGEST TV STATION TO REACH MILLIONS ON THE SDGs

### OVERVIEW

Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires strong commitments from governments and citizens, making SDG advocacy and awareness-raising indispensable tools for advancing national progress towards sustainable development. The UNDP country office in Brazil, in partnership with other UN entities, has been supporting the country's largest private TV network in a mass SDG advocacy campaign that has now reached almost half the country's population.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Collaborating with a private media outlet to promote awareness of the SDGs
- Leveraging UNDP's technical expertise to shape messaging
- Using short clips and longer format programmes to spark public interest and raise awareness on sustainable development

### IMPACT



The SDG campaign has so far reached more than 100 million viewers—almost half Brazil's population



The campaign has helped increase media sector ownership of the 2030 Agenda



UNDP Brazil is now exploring ways to partner with digital content producers to support SDG advocacy online

*Working to achieve the Global Goals will make the world better for future generations. We should take this opportunity to change our world for the better ... We can build a global community that provides all its citizens with the equal right to live their lives to the fullest—all without damaging the planet.*

Globo TV

## CONTEXT

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, agreed to in 2015, represents a universal commitment by all nations to promote sustainable development and address the world's most pressing development challenges. With its implementation now entering its third year, making early progress is crucial for achieving the SDGs and their targets by 2030. Localizing the SDGs—raising public awareness around them and connecting them to the most urgent national issues—is a key condition for progress and critical to generating demands for the public investments required to achieve the SDGs.

Brazil has taken steps to align the SDGs to its national context, with key SDG priorities for the country including poverty reduction and education.<sup>59</sup> An extensive official public media campaign began in earnest in 2015. Yet, raising widespread awareness among a population of 208.9 million people remains a large challenge for SDG localization.

In Brazil, private media companies represent one of the few actors in the country with the capacity to reach a majority of the Brazilian population and are therefore potentially important partners in advancing SDG awareness and implementation nationally.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

Since 2017, UNDP has partnered with Globo TV, Brazil's largest private TV broadcaster, on an SDG messaging campaign. TV enjoys wide popularity in Brazil and partnering with Globo TV was an ideal way to quickly reach a mass audience using easily understood and catchy messaging. TV's ability to create a visual identity for the SDGs, through arresting symbols and logos, makes it an ideal medium for communicating the 2030 Agenda, raising public awareness of its importance and catalysing action.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

Globo TV's SDG advocacy campaign, supported by UNDP, has centred on broadcasting a series of brief, easily understood video clips repeatedly throughout the day, including during prime time, over the course of a month, as well as longer format TV programmes that delve deeper into issues of sustainable development. The clips and programmes explain the basic points of the 2030 Agenda, discuss SDG priorities in Brazil and encourage the public to become more informed and take action locally.

From September 2017 until September 2018, the partnership produced three mass-audience SDG TV campaigns, including "Tomorrow's Generation", which aims to introduce audiences to the ideas behind the SDGs, and "Less is More", which highlights the [importance of conservation](#)<sup>60</sup> and addressing environmental challenges facing the country.

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<sup>59</sup> See [Brazil's Voluntary National Review 2019](#).

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, <https://redeglobo.globo.com/Responsabilidade-Social/noticia/chega-de-desculpas-conheca-atitudes-simples-que-criam-habitos-sustentaveis.ghtml>.

*Through advertising campaigns, news stories and entertainment programmes, the Less is More platform encourages reflection and dialogue on how to consume and produce so that natural resources are preserved for the next generations.*

Globo TV

regional affiliates. Some time after this collaboration, UNDP, along with other UN agencies, was invited to lead a series of SDG seminars for senior staff and journalists at Globo TV's headquarters. Training courses were held with UNDP senior advisors on the impact of sanitation, human development and the 2030 Agenda, as well as the responsibilities of the private sector in implementing the SDGs. Following this training, which helped Globo TV recognize the importance of its engagement on the SDGs, UNDP and Globo TV decided to partner on a nationwide SDG advocacy campaign. Since the campaign's inception, UNDP has been playing a key support role by providing technical assistance on the concept and substance of the campaigns, providing advice and information on the 2030 Agenda and supplying data on the development situation in Brazil and the rest of the world.

The clips, which are broadcast both on TV and online, publicize Globo's [resource webpage](#)<sup>61</sup> which has further information, videos, articles and resources on SDG implementation in Brazil. The longer format TV programming on SDG issues has contributed to discussions on key SDG issues affecting Brazil, including education, sustainability and civil society, as well as Brazil's progress on SDG implementation.

This partnership began after a successful regional collaboration between UNDP and one of Globo TV's

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The SDG campaign has so far reached more than 100 million viewers—almost half Brazil's population. While the campaign is only an initial step in addressing the larger advocacy needs over the lifetime of the Agenda and securing Globo TV's interest, it represents a critical effort in generating sustained advocacy through private sector engagement.

The collaboration with Globo TV came at a critical juncture. Despite the recent political dynamics in Brazil and slowing down of official messaging on the SDGs, the partnership has proven to be a powerful complement to earlier public media campaigns and has enabled UNDP to increase national ownership of the 2030 Agenda among the Brazilian public at large. UNDP Brazil is now exploring ways to further promote awareness of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil by leveraging its Human Development Index data, reports and expertise to partner with digital content producers and platforms to support SDG advocacy online.

## LESSONS

- This case study demonstrates the way in which UNDP has been able to partner with large private sector media outlets to generate engaging SDG advocacy campaigns with mass reach. On the one hand, private media organizations can benefit from UNDP's policy and development expertise. On the other, these organizations, often strategic actors within a media ecosystem, have expertise in creating entertaining content as well as the capacity to multiply impact by reaching large audiences.
- Finding advocates within private media organizations was an important factor in the initiative's success. UNDP's initial relationship with Globo TV's corporate social responsibility division served as an entry point to sensitize and engage the broader organization and its leadership on the SDGs.

## PARTNERS

Globo TV, UN Environment Programme

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61 <https://redeglobo.globo.com/Responsabilidade-Social/eu-sou-geracao-do-amanha/>

## THE MALDIVES

### USING FILMMAKING TO AMPLIFY YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE ON THE SDGs

#### OVERVIEW

There are an estimated 1.6 billion young people in the world and the 2030 Agenda recognizes them as "agents of change" and pivotal drivers of national development, peace and prosperity. Yet, in many places, young people still experience exclusion from decision-making on issues that affect their lives and the future of their communities. In the Maldives, UNDP has launched an innovative youth filmmaking initiative that relies on young people's creativity to amplify their voice and spark dialogues on local sustainable development challenges.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Teaching young people how to make their own films based on the SDGs
- Organizing high-visibility premieres and local interactive screenings to foster dialogue
- Disseminating the films online to engage more of the country's increasingly interconnected young people

#### IMPACT



The initiative has provided a space for young people to engage on key SDG issues



The films have reached more than 44,600 people online and received coverage from national news outlets



UNDP Maldives is looking to use the successful media engagement methods to bring attention to the country's gender equality challenges





Photo Credit: UNDP Maldives

*If I were to make more films in the future, I wouldn't be interested in making films for entertainment but rather in the range of awareness and social causes. Perhaps, then, films about issues that need to be brought into light and discussed.*

Nadha, film producer and Film for Change participant

and connected than previous generations, continue to experience the effects of political disenfranchisement, social exclusion and limited opportunities.<sup>63</sup> For instance, a survey conducted by Transparency Maldives in 2015 indicated that 66 percent of Maldivians between the ages of 18 and 34 felt that the country was headed in the wrong direction (compared with 55 percent of adults).<sup>64</sup> Young people played a key role in advancing the country's transition to democracy but, more recently, growing frustration has led to increasing scepticism and a decline in participation in formal politics.<sup>65</sup>

Young people in the Maldives remain keen to find pathways to enable their priorities to be heard and advance their country's development.<sup>66</sup> Yet part of the challenge is that few avenues exist to encourage and sustain their participation in dialogues and decision-making over the country's future.<sup>67</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that many of the country's young people are dispersed over the country's many islands, limiting their ability to collectively discuss their development priorities.<sup>68</sup>

## CONTEXT

The Maldives is small island State with a population of 338,434 spread over 188 inhabited islands located in the Indian Ocean.<sup>62</sup> Since the adoption in 2008 of its new constitution, the Maldives has steadily been making progress in consolidating its young democracy but continues to face challenges to inclusive governance and development.

The Maldives is an overwhelmingly young country. Over 47 percent of the country's population consists of young people who, despite being better educated

62 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2010/04/06/climate-change-in-the-maldives>

63 Transparency Maldives, [A Troubled Future for Democracy: The Results of the 2015 Maldives Democracy Survey](#) (Malé, 2015).

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 World Bank, [Youth in the Maldives: Shaping a New Future for Young Women and Men Through Engagement and Empowerment](#) (2014).

68 Ibid.

*I feel like I have achieved something great. My entire life I have always wanted to act in and produce a film ... but I never had the right encouragement before. Film for Change has given me a chance to truly explore my talents and push me to follow my all-time dream.*

Lugman, film director and Film for Change participant

issues affecting their lives and communities, through the lens of the SDGs. Harnessing young people's perspectives and creativity, the films are meant to raise awareness and spark community dialogues around sustainable development in the Maldives.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

**Teaching young people the basics of filmmaking and the SDGs:** For each of its training cycles, the initiative brings together a cohort of 15–20 participants who are 18–28 years old, who learn how to make films focused on SDGs and linked to their everyday challenges. Each cohort undergoes a seven-day intensive training course, on which they learn about filmmaking, film theory and sustainable development. UNDP provides training on the 2030 Agenda, and industry experts and local filmmakers equip the participants with technical filmmaking skills, provide mentoring and offer them the use of professional production facilities.

Following the intensive week-long training and with storyboards in hand, the teams of young people go into their communities to shoot their films. These are either scripted stories or issue-based documentaries, based on specific development issues that the young filmmakers are particularly passionate about.

**Launches, premieres and interactive screenings:** All the films are premiered at an official launch at Schwack Cinema, a venue popular among young people in the country. Youth-led NGOs and movements, traditional media outlets, government representatives and other stakeholders are invited to the premiere to expose decision-makers to young people's perspectives and increase the coverage and impact of the films. To present the films directly to young people, the initiative also organizes numerous café screenings in various locations around the capital (where more than one third of the population resides), giving the young filmmakers a chance to directly engage diverse groups of their peers in conversations on their films and topics of interest.

**Online dissemination:** Over half the country's population is now connected to the Internet and young people across the country are increasingly interconnected and active on social media.<sup>69</sup> To capitalize on this trend and to reach larger audiences, the films are also uploaded and shared through YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. These online videos have helped spark discussions on young people's priorities and the 2030 Agenda in a way that has reached across the country's geographical divides.

"Film for Change" has so far completed two training cycles—in autumn 2017 and spring 2018. The films showcase the remarkable creativity of young people and the diversity of local development issues that matter

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<sup>69</sup> [www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/maldives/](http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/maldives/)

## UNDP'S APPROACH

Identifying young people's key role as agents of change in the Maldives, UNDP, in partnership with Dhiraagu, the country's largest telecommunications and digital service provider, launched a pilot initiative called "Film for Change" in August 2017.

The initiative, which aims to amplify the voices of young people in development, teaches young people filmmaking and digital media skills as a means of telling compelling narratives about development

to them, including [education](#),<sup>70</sup> [gender equality](#),<sup>71</sup> [climate change](#),<sup>72</sup> [inequality](#),<sup>73</sup> [protection of the oceans](#)<sup>74</sup> and [mental health](#).<sup>75</sup>

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

The initiative was recognized as having provided an important common space for young people to discuss issues of concern to them and to bring the conversation around the SDGs to the local level. To date, the films have reached more than 44,600 people through YouTube and other social media. Along with the high-level attention the films received during their premiere, in 2018, the initiative also received a boost when a major online news outlet in the Maldives, Mihaaru, began to run [stories](#)<sup>76</sup> on both the initiative and the SDGs. Moreover, learning filmmaking provided many of the participants with marketable skills, and some have found work with media companies following their participation in the project.



Photo Credit: UNDP Maldives

“Film for Change” was initially launched as a pilot initiative under UNDP Maldives’ Integrated Governance Programme (2016–2020), which seeks to expand citizen participation in decision-making. While it started as a relatively small initiative, the overwhelming, positive feedback from participants and the public, both online and offline, is one of the reasons the programme has been continued and is now being scaled up.

UNDP Maldives is now looking to expand the initiative by replicating its citizen filmmaking methodology to help bring attention to the country’s gender equality challenges and the growing threat of violent extremism. Options are also being explored to increase the diversity of participants and use this methodology to amplify the visibility and voice of marginalized communities around the country. UNDP is also looking to ensure the sustainability of the initiative in the long run, by engaging and partnering with the government line ministries and strengthening the role of the private sector in the project.

## LESSONS

- The project demonstrates the potential of creative media to act as an effective entry point for promoting the engagement of young people, as well as other marginalized groups, on key development issues. Through this initiative, UNDP was able to use the films and the screenings as platforms to amplify the voices of the Maldives’ young people and address the challenges of youth exclusion.
- By employing film to harness young people’s creativity, UNDP helped engage a large number of the Maldives’ young people on urgent local sustainable development challenges that mattered to them.

## PARTNER

Dhiraagu

<sup>70</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A\\_K78PAhQXE&t=181s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_K78PAhQXE&t=181s)

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lcW0DFTCRU>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7ioULH42Zw&t=10s>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0dFZpcNlwQ&t=21s>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ojuc0KbAmD8>

<sup>75</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgnXV1\\_zEzs&t=43s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgnXV1_zEzs&t=43s)

<sup>76</sup> The Edition, “UNDP and Dhiraagu’s ‘Film for Change’ launches four short films: ‘Bilal’, ‘Vilunoo’, ‘Nama’ and ‘Kuda.’”

# A glimpse from elsewhere

## Cambodia: Using a multimedia approach to promote decent jobs for young people

Over 50 percent of Cambodia's population is made up of young people, many of whom face a highly competitive job market and high levels of unemployment. In this context, since 2011, UNDP, BBC Media Action and partners have been implementing innovative multimedia campaigns to promote young people's empowerment in Cambodia. *Klahan9*,<sup>77</sup> (Klahan means "brave"), launched in 2014, has focused on building young people's soft skills and confidence, promoting better communication, problem-solving and adaptability, to increase their access to opportunities and their chances of finding decent employment. To this end, the project has produced and disseminated a wide range of multimedia content generated by young people, which is aimed at informing, engaging and inspiring young jobseekers; this ranges from guidance videos and Facebook posts teaching young people how to write CVs and prepare for interviews to TV shows featuring successful entrepreneurs and young people embarking on their careers.

The initiative has proven to be widely popular—a sign that many of the country's young people have found it to be an important resource for boosting skills and confidence during their search for greater economic opportunities. *Klahan9*'s TV programmes have reached more than 1.5 million people, its Facebook page has almost 640,000 followers and more than 2575 subscribers regularly tune into its YouTube page.

### PARTNERS

BBC Media Action (Implementing Partner); National Employment Agency; Cambodian Broadcasting Service (CBS)  
Donors: Embassy of Sweden/Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)

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77 UNDP Cambodia, "[Multimedia Initiative for Youth \(MIY/KLAHAN9\) Phase II: Project summary](#)."

# Supporting gender equality, inclusion and human rights

## COSTA RICA

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND LGBTI RIGHTS

#### OVERVIEW

Promoting gender equality and protecting people from discrimination due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity continue to be challenges worldwide. Elections can be important moments for dialogue and discussion around how to advance human rights and address these key development issues. Yet they can also bring to the fore existing tensions and resentments, heightening intolerance and increasing the risk of violence. UNDP, as part of the UN system in Costa Rica, supported an online campaign to promote gender equality and combat discrimination against the LGBTI community during Costa Rica's heated 2018 presidential election.

#### KEY ACTIONS

- Supporting a diverse multi-stakeholder advisory group including media and civil society to create high-impact and tailored messaging
- Producing and disseminating digital video clips featuring artists and decision-makers promoting human rights issues
- Launching an online banner campaign promoted widely through partner networks for maximum reach

#### IMPACT



The campaign helped promote awareness of gender equality, human rights and LGBTI discrimination at a key moment



The online campaign reached more than 30,000 people and gained wide TV coverage



The campaign fostered unexpected alliances between LGBTI groups and faith-based organizations





Photo Credit: UNDP Costa Rica

*In this country—that we imagine as a happy and tranquil country— there is an often-unseen violence experienced by people because of sexual orientation and gender identity. If we have the capacity to understand this and to educate to change this, then we can live in a country that is more hospitable, friendly—we will live in a better country.*

Jurgen Ureña, filmmaker and participant in the #NoDejarNadieAtras campaign

## CONTEXT

Costa Rica has made important advances in promoting gender equality. According to the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, the country ranked 42nd of 144 on gender parity—notably due to its long-standing achievements in promoting women’s educational attainment and political participation. Although representing a decline from previous years, over 45 percent of parliamentarians in 2018 were women.<sup>78</sup> Costa Rica has also officially committed to policies protecting the rights of its LGBTI minority communities, including prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity.<sup>79</sup> In 2015, a ruling by the Family Court granted common-law status to same-sex couples for the first time.<sup>80</sup>

Despite this progress, however, in other spheres, achieving gender equality and overcoming entrenched discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation have continued to pose significant challenges.

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.elmundo.cr/historico-mujeres-representan-456-curules-proxima-asamblea-legislativa/>

<sup>79</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2018: Costa Rica: Profile](#).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



Women, for instance, have faced widening gaps in economic participation and opportunity, especially around labour force participation and wages, in part as a result of persistent gender stereotyping and rooted norms around masculinity.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the country has faced a challenge in stemming the growing incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) and the ongoing public and private discrimination and violence experienced by the LGBTI community.<sup>82</sup>

In particular, in the run-up to the heated and polarized 2018 elections, the country saw a rise in inflammatory public discourse against groups advocating gender equality and the human rights of LGBTI persons, including same-sex marriage, which became a charged issue during the elections. The intolerant rhetoric that emerged at that time also coincided with an increase in reported incidents of intimidation and violence targeting these groups.<sup>83</sup>

Costa Rica is a highly interconnected country, with 4.2 million Internet users reported in 2017—over 67 percent of its population,<sup>84</sup> and much of the intolerant discourse was being disseminated online. Therefore, the need was identified for action targeting online media.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

In response to the heated climate surrounding the 2018 elections, UNDP, its partners and the wider UN system launched an online campaign to promote gender equality and address the rise of GBV and discriminatory discourse against the LGBTI community in Costa Rica. The goal of the campaign was to use easily shareable online content and simple, constructive messaging to challenge and defuse emerging hate discourse and raise awareness around the country of the challenges facing women and the LGBTI community.

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

The advocacy campaign, implemented in the run-up to the 2018 elections, had two components: a series of [digital video clips](#)<sup>85</sup> and an online banner campaign.

*Digital video clips:* The first phase of the campaign, airing over a period of two months during the election period, centred around the promotion of five digital videos that featured celebrities, including writers, singers, filmmakers, actors and politicians, who discussed the importance of gender equality, fighting GBV and combating discrimination against the LGBTI community.

To create the campaign, UNDP worked in close partnership with other UN agencies' print and digital news outlets, as well as civil society, including prominent feminist, LGBTI and faith-based organizations, who together formed an advisory group for the campaign. This group played a key role in crafting the initial messages and promoting the videos throughout its networks. The videos, each less than two minutes long, were deliberately framed using a constructive, informative and personal tone that tied gender equality and the fight against LGBTI discrimination to the 2030 Agenda's principle of "leaving no one behind".

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81 <https://semanariouniversidad.com/ultima-hora/dos-tercios-los-ticos-repudian-fallo-la-corte-idh-matrimonio-igualitario/>

82 Telesur, "Gender violence causes Costa Rica to declare state of emergency", 3 May 2018.

83 Tico Times, "Increased violence against LGBTI community reported in Costa Rica", 14 February 2018.

84 BBC News, [Costa Rica Profile – Media](#).

85 See, for example, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5wyEnVbwvs&feature=youtu.be> (in Spanish).

*Violence against women doesn't just affect women. It affects boys, girls, the country and the planet. We must promote equality between men and women and the participation of women in decision-making. We must eradicate violence against women.*

Adriana Álvarez, actor and participant in the #NoDejarNadieAtras campaign

questions and other feedback UNDP received on key issues during the first phase of the campaign.

"Human rights do not damage families—they make them happy and strong" and "One in three women experiences some form of violence. What will you do about it?" were among the 36 banner messages widely disseminated by all the initiative's partners under the hashtag "#NoDejarNadieAtras," or "leave no one behind".

**Online banners:** During the last three weeks of the election period, UNDP and its partners, identifying the need for continued engagement on the issue, decided to implement a second phase of the campaign focused on human rights. Online banners were created as a rapid, targeted and cost-effective way to continue to raise awareness of gender equality, combat LGBTI discrimination and promote human rights in Costa Rica. The design of the messages was deliberately informed by careful analysis of the most successful videos, which were crafted as responses to the most frequently asked

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

At a critical juncture for the country, the digital campaign was able to reach a wide audience, helping to spread awareness of gender equality and human rights and against discrimination against LGBTI persons. Both the videos and the banners were shared widely through social media networks, including those of NGO partners and digital news outlets, reaching more than 30,000 people. The campaigns were also picked up and amplified through coverage in traditional media, including newspapers and TV outlets, such as Sinart, one of the country's national TV stations, which aired all five campaign videos.



Photo Credit: UNDP Costa Rica



The campaign not only helped spread awareness but also established dialogues and fostered unexpected alliances between LGBTI groups and faith-based organizations. The campaign also complemented UNDP's new programmes in advancing gender equality in Costa Rica, including the introduction of a Gender Seal to advance gender equality in the private sector, in partnership with the National Institute of Women (INAU), and the launch of an Observatory for Women in National Elections to promote women's political participation and to monitor sexism and political violence against women during elections.<sup>86</sup>

As a follow-up to the successful campaign, UNDP is now analysing the broader patterns and root causes of discrimination and GBV in the country and will expand its partnership with faith-based, LGBTI and feminist organizations to launch a new campaign against GBV, which will feature female parliamentarians. UNDP is also supporting a multi-stakeholder platform aiming to end discrimination in public institutions on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity. To date, the platform has trained 91 officials representing 90 percent of Costa Rica's public institutions.<sup>87</sup>

## LESSONS

- The case study shows that timely online advocacy campaigns, backed by multi-stakeholder partnerships between civil society and media outlets, can help promote timely awareness of key issues and open up new avenues for programmatic intervention.
- The success of the online campaign was due, in part, to UNDP's role in facilitating the involvement of stakeholders representing key target audiences in the campaign's advisory group, which included feminist, faith-based and LGBTI organizations. The work of the advisory group enabled the campaign to create and disseminate informative, relevant and resonant messaging to wide and diverse audiences in a way that effectively responded to the evolving dynamics of a controversial public debate.

## PARTNERS

UN system "Delivering as One"; Sinart, Channel 13; Crhoy.com; La Nación newspaper; Ombudsman's Office; Civil Society Advisory Group for the United Nations; LGBTI NGOs Asociación Ciudadana Acceder, Siwo Alar, Front for Equal Rights, Nosotras en la Política; Semanario Universidad, Grupo Religioso por los Derechos Humanos

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<sup>86</sup> UNDP Costa Rica, "[21 nuevas organizaciones se comprometen con la igualdad de género](#)", 13 July 2017; UNDP Costa Rica, "[Observatorio de las mujeres buscar garantizar igualdad de género](#)", 21 November 2017.

<sup>87</sup> Costa Rica, Gobierno del Bicentenario, "[Gobierno lidera alianza público privada para capacitar a instituciones públicas en derechos humanos de personas LGBTI](#)", 23 June 2017.

# A glimpse from elsewhere

## Viet Nam: Producing documentary films to bring greater visibility to persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Viet Nam face significant challenges, including issues of accessibility, social stigma and [discrimination](#).<sup>88</sup> Around 10 percent of Viet Nam's population have some type of disability and the lack of positive visibility of persons with disabilities has contributed to prevalent stereotypes and misunderstandings.<sup>89</sup> In May 2017, UNDP and the Will to Live Center launched a documentary filmmaking initiative called "[Communication—Narrow the Gap](#)"<sup>90</sup> to use the power of visual storytelling to bring greater visibility for persons with disabilities in Viet Nam. Over the course of three months, 15 persons with disabilities were trained in communications, IT and human rights reporting skills to produce short documentary films based on their unique perspectives.

The documentaries they produced showcased the resilience and challenges faced by persons with disabilities, including navigating [personal relationships](#),<sup>91</sup> [mobility](#)<sup>92</sup> and [social isolation](#).<sup>93</sup> In October 2017, four of the initiative's documentaries were screened at a special event with local disabled persons' organizations, development partners and UN colleagues. Thanks to coverage by the country's [largest TV stations](#),<sup>94</sup> the documentaries brought the voices of persons with disabilities to national audiences.

### PARTNER

Will to Live Center

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88 DTI News, "[Survey reveals disabled people still feel discriminated](#)", 24 April 2018.

89 [Ending Stigma: Assessment from the Perspectives of People with Disabilities](#) (Hanoi, Knowledge Publishing House, 2017).

90 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LchQLEAU4dE&feature=youtu.be> (in Vietnamese)

91 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W32X7qcwW8&feature=youtu.be> (in Vietnamese)

92 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiPT5WiWNlU&feature=youtu.be> (in Vietnamese)

93 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFaf0UNDPc&feature=youtu.be> (in Vietnamese)

94 See, for example, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzsAHW34XGY&feature=youtu.be> (in Vietnamese)

# ALBANIA

## ENGAGING MEDIA TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA AND EGYPTIAN PEOPLE

### OVERVIEW

The media can play an influential role in shaping public perceptions of minority communities. It can reinforce the dynamics of marginalization and social and political disenfranchisement or serve as an agent to increase acceptance, visibility and empowerment. In Albania, as part of its broader efforts to support the empowerment of Roma and Egyptian people, UNDP has been working for eight years to improve positive media coverage of these communities, reduce discrimination and promote social inclusion.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Organizing training for media actors to strengthen ethical reporting standards
- Working with local and national reporters on employing non-derogatory terminology, avoiding stereotypes and using reliable sources
- Promoting more positive coverage and narratives around the Roma and Egyptian communities

### IMPACT



The project has trained more than 200 reporters on ethical and non-discriminatory reporting



Project monitoring shows an improvement in the quality of media coverage on the Roma and Egyptian communities



The project is now looking to strengthen advocacy by linking issues of equality and inclusion to the 2030 Agenda's call to "leave no one behind"





Photo Credit: UNDP Albania

*Many Roma are now attending school. But by the time they are old enough to join the workforce, many are already excluded. With only 12 years left to complete Agenda 2030, it's time to double efforts to leave no one behind.*

Rastislav Urbensky, Deputy Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

## CONTEXT

Roma and Egyptian minority communities in Albania, who make up over 5 percent of the country's population of 3.2 million people, have historically faced high poverty rates, unemployment, housing insecurity and a lack of voice in decision-making around issues affecting their lives. Almost 90 percent of families belonging to these communities live in absolute poverty and without adequate access to social services.<sup>95</sup> A 2017 survey undertaken by the EU, UNDP and World Bank notes that, while in recent years there has been some improvement in the situation of these communities, the Roma community in particular remains one of the

most excluded groups in the Western Balkans.<sup>96</sup> Widespread public prejudice and discrimination against these communities has only reinforced their marginalization.

News outlets have typically played a part in contributing to discriminatory attitudes against Roma and Egyptian communities, furthering misunderstandings around them and generating disabling stereotypes.<sup>97</sup> Historically, Albanian news outlets have relied on derogatory terms when referencing Roma and Egyptian minorities and have frequently used Roma and Egyptians as symbols and would-be exemplars of broader social problems. Few

<sup>95</sup> World Bank Group, [Albania: Policy Briefs. Macroeconomics policies](#) (2013); ARSIS and others, [National Study on Children in Street Situation in Albania](#) (Tirana, UNICEF and Save the Children, 2014).

<sup>96</sup> See World Bank and UNDP, [Roma at a Glance: Albania](#) (April 2018), UNDP Europe and Central Asia, Regional Roma Survey 2017, Country Fact Sheets.

<sup>97</sup> See Karmen Erjavec, "Media representation of the discrimination against the Roma in Eastern Europe: the case of Slovenia", *Discourse and Society*, vol. 12, No. 6 (2001), pp. 699-727; Project on Ethnic Relations, "The Media and the Roma in Contemporary Europe: Facts and Fictions", Prague, 18-21 September 1996.



positive stories are produced on Roma and Egyptian people's contributions to Albanian society and of role models within these communities.

Even though the media sector in Albania is relatively free, it has struggled with clientelism and to achieve professional independence and adopt ethical reporting standards. Journalists in Albania are typically not well paid and lack the capacity to engage in investigative reporting.<sup>98</sup> These dynamics have contributed to a media culture that tends to rely on sensationalist news coverage and produces little critical coverage of structural issues that lie behind the challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian communities.

## UNDP'S APPROACH

Since 2010, UNDP Albania has worked in partnership with the EU, journalists and Roma and Egyptian CSOs to strengthen ethical reporting standards, develop investigative reporting capacity in the media sector and increase the number of positive stories about these communities, to transform public attitudes, advance human rights and promote their recognition as part of Albanian society. Engaging the media has been a pivotal component of a series of multisectoral projects<sup>99</sup> promoting Roma and Egyptian empowerment through community participation in local planning, infrastructure upgrades, employment and data collection.<sup>100</sup>

## UNDP'S KEY ACTIONS

*Training media outlets to strengthen reporting standards:* Support to the media sector for the empowerment of Roma and Egyptian communities began in 2010. Addressing negative media representations and lack of voice were priorities first raised by community members themselves as part of consultations during the design of the project. Acting on this need, UNDP partnered with the Albanian Media Institute to produce a manual and support training for local and national TV and print journalists on the use of professional standards and to increase the number of ethical, accurate and investigative reports on these communities.

The initial set of training courses brought together 25 reporters and 53 young journalists at the national level. As each region in Albania has a local TV station, and people often prefer to watch these regional stations,<sup>101</sup> the project subsequently organized training courses for local reporters working across different regions.<sup>102</sup> These focused on encouraging non-derogatory terminology, avoiding stereotyping in coverage and using reliable data sources and facts. They also aimed at promoting better investigative reporting on the underlying causes of the challenges faced by the Roma and Egyptian communities. By looking at the way in which policy decisions have contributed to marginalization, such reporting can help generate greater accountability.

*Promoting positive and empowering narratives:* Over successive projects, UNDP has placed greater focus on not only reducing discrimination but also fostering better understanding of the Roma and Egyptian communities and promoting community role models. The training courses now also encourage journalists to write more positive stories about successful Roma people and their contributions to their communities and Albania at large. UNDP now supports biannual media visits to these communities to generate more positive coverage and

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98 Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2018: [Albania: Country Profile](#).

99 See UNDP Albania, Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians – ESERE-[Prodoc](#) (2016–2018).

100 UNDP, Empowering Vulnerable Communities – ELVC-[Prodoc](#) (2010–2013); UNDP, Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities – SSIREC-[Prodoc](#) (2012–2015); UNDP Albania, Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians – ESERE-[Prodoc](#) (2016–2018).

101 UNDP Albania, [Final Report SSIREC Project](#) (2015), p. 15.

102 Ibid.

organizes competitions for journalists to produce the best stories on these communities. Similarly, UNDP has launched public awareness campaigns, which have included the production of documentaries and TV shows.<sup>103</sup> To support greater Roma inclusion in Albania's public media, in 2013, Albania's national TV station (TVSH), with support from UNDP, teamed up with Disutni Albania (a Roma CSO) to broadcast its first biweekly programme in Romani language with Albanian subtitles.

## OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

To date, more than 200 reporters have been trained under the project and training is ongoing. UNDP's long-term engagement with the media sector has already paid off, with the trained reporters increasingly contributing to a more professional and inclusive media sector in Albania. Project monitoring shows a trend towards better overall coverage of Roma and Egyptian communities and the challenges they face, as well as an increase in the number of positive stories about these communities.<sup>104</sup>

The project is now looking to link issues related to the inclusion of minorities to the 2030 Agenda by making it clear that reducing inequality and "leaving no one behind" require addressing the ongoing development and human rights issues affecting Roma and Egyptian communities.

## LESSONS

- This project showcases the way in which UNDP is able to work with a variety of media actors to help deconstruct disempowering stereotypes about marginalized communities.
- As a result of its engagement with Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania, UNDP was one of the first organizations to identify the issue of media representation as a key factor in their marginalization and therefore concentrated on capacity development of the media.
- UNDP specifically chose to engage with TV and print outlets in Albania because they were identified as the most influential actors in shaping public perceptions of Roma and Egyptian communities.

## PARTNERS

EU; Albanian Media Institute



Photo Credit: UNDP Albania

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, "[Roma and Egyptians towards social inclusion in Albania](#)".

<sup>104</sup> UNDP Albania, [Final Report SSIREC Project](#) (2015), p. 55.

# Digital frontiers: promoting media literacy and awareness in the age of “fake news”

## SIERRA LEONE, BANGLADESH AND LEBANON



In 2018, more than 4 billion people—over half the world’s population—are connected to the Internet



For many people, social media and messaging platforms have increasingly come to supplant traditional media outlets



The proliferation of potential sources of information online has also made it increasingly difficult for many to distinguish what is credible from what is not

*Well, I have been able to apply these skills in the different WhatsApp groups that I belong to. Before now, I was not verifying information. I just forwarded posts received blindly without knowing that I might get into trouble for sharing wrong information. Now I don’t just post things, I am very conscious of how I post on social media.*

EMB trainee, Sierra Leone

## OVERVIEW

The unprecedented adoption of social media and messaging platforms across developed and developing countries has connected people and communities to each other and the rest of the world as never before. Internet penetration is far from universal but, in 2018, more than 4 billion people—over half the world’s population—are connected to the Internet.<sup>105</sup> The number of social media users rose by 13 percent between 2017 and 2018, and now stands at 3 billion people.<sup>106</sup> And for many, social media and messaging platforms have increasingly come to supplant traditional media outlets as the most up-to-date sources of news and information on current affairs.

105 Phillippa Biggs and Youlia Lozanova, [The State of Broadband 2017: Broadband Catalyzing Sustainable Development](#) (Geneva, Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, 2017); see also Simon Kemp, [“Digital in 2018: world’s internet users pass the 4 billion mark”](#), We Are Social, 30 January 2018.

106 Ibid.

As is often noted, these dramatic transformations in communications technologies and the proliferation of social media platforms hold tremendous power and promise. Many of the case studies above have demonstrated that new media can democratize access to information and knowledge, establish new spaces and practices of dialogue and discussion and enable the rapid mobilization of public forces for social change.

The same systems, however, have also given rise to serious social challenges, foremost among which is the phenomenon of fake news—the accidental or deliberate spread of misinformation.<sup>107</sup> Rumours and deception campaigns are not necessarily new, but what is new is the speed at which this information can circulate online and across social networks and the damaging impact it can have. The proliferation of potential sources of information online has also made it increasingly difficult for many people to distinguish between what is credible and what is not. Deliberate disinformation campaigns have been used to stoke hatred and manipulate citizens for political gain. Moreover, the phenomenon itself has more recently been instrumentalized by some politicians to sow confusion by using the label “fake news” to attack professional and independent news outlets that produce critical or negative coverage.<sup>108</sup>

UNDP has increasingly been using a media literacy approach to develop the capacity of the public and key stakeholders to seek credible news sources and detect and stop the spread of fake news. This thematic case study looks at three UNDP initiatives in Sierra Leone, Bangladesh and Lebanon that aim to promote media literacy as a way of tackling the disruptive and damaging influence of fake news on democracy, development and peace.

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107 UNESCO, Journalism, ‘Fake News’ & Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism Education and Training (Paris, 2018), p. 8.

108 Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, [Encryption and anonymity follow-up report](#), June 2018 (G18/096/72).

*As a journalist, I am now aware of many things, like how to detect fake news on social media ... Actually, it is not everything that you see on WhatsApp that is authentic—even if it has a logo or photos. Through the training we learnt how to detect fake news. This is the part that has helped me to do things differently. Now, let us say someone posts a message to you claiming that he got it from BBC Media Action. To cross-check this information, I will first go to BBC Media Action's Facebook page ... to see if the same information is there. If it is not there, then I will begin to suspect that the information is false.*

Journalism trainee

which misinformation could spread around the country online, as well as the extent of the damage it could do. Sierra Leone has also seen a rise in fake news stories on politically sensitive matters<sup>112</sup> and, given the country's history of conflict, there were worries that misinformation could be used—especially around the upcoming 2018 elections—to disrupt the country's political processes and incite hatred or even violence.

**The approach:** In response to the growing threat presented by fake news, UNDP, under its Conflict Mitigation Programme and with funding from UK Aid, partnered with BBC Media Action on an initiative to encourage responsible social media use ahead of the 2018 elections. The project used online and offline methods to promote media literacy to help individuals and key national stakeholders to identify trusted and accurate sources of online news and related media content.

**Key actions:** Two key actions were undertaken to foster media literacy in the country. First, training on responsible social media use was provided to key influencers and stakeholders, including journalists, election management bodies (EMBs) and young people. The training was delivered by both skilled journalist trainers and social media producers. It focused on promoting awareness of social media as a shared space carrying both risks and responsibilities and covered issues such as how to spot fake news, best practices for social media use and moderating Facebook and WhatsApp groups. The training was also complemented by existing professional ethics codes for journalists.

## SIERRA LEONE

### Part 1 – Partnering with BBC Media Action to promote media literacy to respond to fake news

**Context:** Access to social media has been growing rapidly in Sierra Leone. In the seven years between 2009 and 2016, Internet access among 15- to 30-year-olds jumped from 2 percent to 16 percent. While radio continues to be by far the most popular source of news and entertainment in the country (favoured by 81 percent of adults), an increasingly significant part of the population has been turning to social media and online platforms for information. Among the country's urban population, Internet penetration has now reached over 48 percent.<sup>109</sup>

However, like several other countries, Sierra Leone is struggling to address the growing phenomenon of fake news in the already fragmented media landscape (see Sierra Leone case study, p. 20 ). The spread of fake news stories during recent events such as the 2014–2015 Ebola crisis<sup>110</sup> and the 2017 mudslide<sup>111</sup> has demonstrated the speed at

109 Annabelle Wittels and Nick Maybanks, [Communication in Sierra Leone: An Analysis of Media and Mobile Audiences](#) (London, BBC Media Action, 2016).

110 Danielle K. Kilgo, Joseph Yoo and Thomas J. Johnson, "Spreading Ebola panic: newspaper and social media coverage of the 2014 Ebola health crisis", *Journal of Health Communication*, February 2018, pp. 1-7; Ogala Emmanuel, Nenna Ibeh and Ola' Adu, "Ebola sparks panic across Nigeria as citizens scramble for salt-water bath remedy", *Premium Times*, 25 January 2019.

111 Damolo Durosomo, "A report that claimed Rihanna donated \$2 million to Sierra Leone is fake news", *OkayAfrica*, 21 August 2017.

112 Jamie Hitcher, "The WhatsApp rumours that infused Sierra Leone's tight election", *African Arguments*, 10 April 2018.



Photo Credit: BBC Media Action Sierra Leone



Second, under the hashtag #ResponsibleUse, the initiative launched an online campaign on responsible social media use. The campaign was designed around a series of video clips and infographics with simple and catchy messages on how to avoid spreading fake news, staying safe online and the legal responsibilities that come with social media use. The videos and posts were featured on [BBC Media Action's Facebook page](#),<sup>113</sup> which is one of the most popular Facebook pages in the country, with more than half a million followers. One of the [most widely viewed videos](#)<sup>114</sup> featured a local comedian explaining simple techniques that people could use to spot fake stories or misleading content, such as identifying credible sources and cross-checking information.

**Impact:** The campaign succeeded in widely promoting responsible social media use in Sierra Leone, reaching a wide audience while gaining additional visibility and impact by being broadcast on four partner TV stations and shared on other popular social media platforms. The most popular infographic on how to spot fake news reached more than 145,000 people and received more than 4000 reactions.<sup>115</sup>

The training also proved to be successful. The project trained 344 young people, 234 journalists and 202 representatives from EMBs through 19 workshops delivered around the country. The training helped strengthen awareness among key actors about the importance of online media literacy and has generated continued interest. An analysis conducted following the training demonstrated a marked increase (25 percent) in the number of participants who reported their confidence in being able to identify fake news stories and providing advice to others on the risks of social media. The training also had a catalytic effect, with many trainees requesting training materials to support similar training among their peers.

Starting in 2019, through the second phase of its Support to Media Development project in Sierra Leone, UNDP will strengthen the integration of social media components in its existing programming, including by supporting Sierra Leone's self-regulatory bodies in monitoring emerging trends on social media, expanding media literacy training for journalists and other actors and incorporating social media certificates into journalism educational curricula.

**Partner:** BBC Media Action

113 <https://www.facebook.com/bbcmmediaactionSL/>

114 <https://www.facebook.com/bbcmmediaactionSL/videos/1900109926687699/>

115 BBC Media Action, *Lessons Learned: Improving Responsible Use of Social Media and Participation of Women and People with Disabilities in the 2018 Sierra Leone Elections* (London, 2018), p. 8.



*I am excited to see the enthusiasm and creativity of young people and the potentials of the [DKC] winning project to bring positive change in the society. We need such a digital literacy initiative for a progressive and tolerant Bangladesh.*

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Minister of Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology, Government of Bangladesh

## BANGLADESH

### Part 2 – Crowd-sourcing solutions with young people against fake news and intolerance

**Context:** Bangladesh, a country of around 165 million people, one third of whom are young people, has been growing increasingly interconnected. Around half the population now uses the Internet and the country's active social media user base, which stands at 28 million people, has been rapidly expanding as millions of Bangladeshis gain access to the Internet for the first time each year.<sup>116</sup>

While the Internet has opened many new opportunities in Bangladesh, especially for its young people, it has also brought new challenges and risks. In recent years, the country has seen the rise of fake news stories circulating online, spreading misinformation and inciting religious hatred and intolerance. Over the years, some of these fake news stories have sparked violent incidents against the country's minorities.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, extremist groups have become more adept at promoting their ideology through digital platforms in order to target the country's young people.<sup>118</sup>

**The approach:** Recognizing young people's creativity and capacity for innovation, in 2016, UNDP and its partners piloted a social hackathon, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, to address the emerging challenges of fake news and online intolerance.

The [Digital Khichuri Challenge](#) (DKC)<sup>119</sup> (named after a popular Bengali dish with a rich mix of ingredients), brings together a diverse group of young participants, including students, artists, writers, graphic designers, social entrepreneurs and programmers, to compete by creating innovative online solutions and campaigns to promote media literacy, diversity and peace in the country.

**Key actions:** During the hackathon, intensive workshops are organized by the initiative's media partners and team mentors are on hand to provide on-the-spot technical advice. In previous years, representatives from Facebook, Google, Twitter, Al Jazeera and UNDP have organized workshops to highlight cutting-edge practices and strategies for creating engaging and informative online content. The winning teams receive funding and mentoring from UNDP and its partners to refine and implement their idea. Past winners have created an online platform for graphic novels and comic books promoting tolerance and an online automated chat platform that helps young people manage stress and anger.

116 Sorav Jain, "30 Bangladesh's digital marketing and social media marketing stats and facts", Social Media & Digital Marketing Blog, 16 May 2018.

117 See, for example, Abdul Aziz, "Four years on, Ramu victims yet to get justice", *Dhaka Tribune*, 9 November 2016; Matiur Rahman Minar and Jibon Naher, "Violence originated from Facebook: a case study in Bangladesh", arXiv, 31 March 2018.

118 Iffat Indris, "Youth vulnerability to violent extremist groups in the Indo-Pacific", GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report, No. 1438 (Birmingham, UK, GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2018); Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, [Local Drivers and Dynamics of Youth Radicalisation in Bangladesh](#) (Dhaka, 2017).

119 <http://khichurichallenge.com/?l=en>. DKC is one component of the "Partnership for a Tolerant, Inclusive Bangladesh (PTIB)", a multi-year project that aims to promote positive alternatives to the exclusionary appeals and the spread of misinformation that have underpinned violence and extremism.

Thinkerfort, one of the winning teams from the 2017 hackathon, with support from UNDP and its partners, is finalizing the design of an online platform aimed at tackling the spread of fake news online. The platform will host “fake news spotters” who will monitor social media platforms to flag viral fake news and hate content. It will then publish fact-based and well-researched reports to demystify the misleading content. To further encourage digital literacy, the platform will also feature a compilation of digital videos showcasing examples that encourage people to adopt appropriate responses when potentially encountering fake news.

**Impact:** Since 2016, DKC has successfully implemented three hackathons, hosting many young participants, which have steadily received growing recognition and media attention. The initiative has acted as a catalyst for promoting young people’s engagement in generating innovative solutions to the challenges of social media in Bangladesh. The initiative’s success in crowd-sourcing new solutions owes a great deal to the strong relationships forged among its key partners, which include Facebook, Microsoft Bangladesh and the ICT Division of the Ministry of Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology of the Government of Bangladesh.

Looking ahead, UNDP Bangladesh is building on the success and insights gained through the DKC to launch digital literacy and digital citizenship campaigns to promote social harmony, tolerance and resilience to violent extremist doctrines. It also looks forward to engaging in programming with Bangladeshi migrant workers, who are said to be two to four times more likely to engage with hate content online while abroad.

**Partners:** Facebook; Microsoft Bangladesh; Google; Affinis Labs; Dhaka Tribune; Ministry of Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology; and others



Photo Credit: UNDP Bangladesh

## LEBANON

### Part 3 - Seeking to tackle the growing influence of fake news

**Context:** Over the past few years, Lebanon has seen the rapid growth and spread of fake news and online hate speech, which have heightened social tensions and raised fears of violence in a polarized country with an already fragile social situation.<sup>120</sup> This is of particular concern as the country's population is highly active on social media (77 percent are active on Facebook) and an increasing number of people have turned to these platforms as a source of news and information on current events.<sup>121</sup>

Since 2007, UNDP's Peacebuilding in Lebanon project has been working to promote mutual understanding and social cohesion by addressing the root causes of social tensions in the country. Engaging the country's media actors and influencers has been a key component of the project (see Lebanon case study, p. 43). Yet, given the growing influence of social media on the country's dynamics, UNDP has now identified the need to respond to online fake news as a priority area for its media engagement work.

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120 Bethan McKernan, "[How fake news in the Middle East is a powder keg waiting to blow](#)", *The Independent*, 10 September 2017.

121 Northwestern University in Qatar, Media use in the Middle East 2017: [Social Media](#).



Photo Credit: UNDP Lebanon

**The approach:** UNDP is currently preparing a pilot initiative with local NGO partners to tackle these urgent new challenges to the country's peacebuilding efforts. The new initiative, to be launched in 2019 (and extend over a period of 12 months), is designed with three core aims: countering disinformation campaigns on social media platforms; creating digital content that raises awareness of fake news; and improving media literacy and public education on the issue.

**Key actions:** The initiative will begin by analysing and identifying key drivers and impacts of online misinformation in the country. The analysis will specifically identify topics that have persistently been the subject of misinformation campaigns in the country, including issues related to Syrian refugees. Short, impactful and informative videos on these topics will then be created, using positive messages in support of diversity, human rights and peacebuilding.

The initiative will create a large-scale online and offline social media campaign to generate interest ahead of the launch of each video and ultimately reach mass audiences. Capitalizing on UNDP's existing relationships and strong reputation for impartiality among key media actors, the initiative will also strategically partner with national TV broadcasters to boost the videos' visibility among Lebanon's diverse viewership. The campaign will be followed by a conference to explore the impact of the campaign, stimulate dialogue on the growing threat of misinformation with key national stakeholders and catalyse new action.

## IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The three sections of this case study, focusing on countries in three different regions, demonstrate the way in which fake news is a challenge that now affects most parts of the globe. They also show that finding innovative ways of promoting media literacy should be a key pillar of responses to this challenge.

*The importance of media literacy:* Many of the case studies explored in other sections of this report have highlighted the way in which strengthening professional journalism standards, including through source verification, fact-checking and better investigative reporting, can improve the quality of available news and information in a given context. Yet this case study shows how the media literacy approach adopted by UNDP can serve as an invaluable counterpart to these efforts by working on the "demand" side of the equation. Even when quality information is available, it might easily be drowned in an oversaturated media environment. It is imperative, therefore, to support the public's short- and long-term ability to spot untrustworthy news sources and information.

*Engaging key actors in media literacy training:* As UNDP's Sierra Leone initiative with BBC Media Action demonstrates, public awareness campaigns on the dangers of social media are important. But so is targeting actors who act as nodes in amplifying and disseminating information in a given media ecosystem. Therefore, it is important to understand the information flows in given contexts and to build the media literacy of key actors, including new media workers, young social media influencers, professional journalists, government institutions (such as EMBs) and politicians.

*Strengthening ethical standards among new media actors:* Today's media ecosystem is populated by a new set of actors—citizen journalists, bloggers, vloggers and other online media workers—who produce information and analysis for public interest and engage in journalism without necessarily being recognized as journalists by occupation.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, it has also become vital to promote stronger ethical standards among these new media actors in ways adapted to their unique roles and positions. As the case studies of initiatives in Kenya (p. 30) and Georgia (p. 25) also demonstrate, UNDP has been active in working to deepen the understanding of development issues among social media influencers and has incorporated social media as part of its media monitoring work.

*Advocacy on the importance of free and independent media:* The spread of fake news cannot be prevented without promoting greater public recognition of the value of professional, free and independent media—regardless of whether the media operates online or offline. Supporting the continued existence of media outlets capable of investigative reporting, critical coverage and high-quality analysis remains one of the best ways to counter misinformation. But citizens must actively choose to support and advocate for the work of professional news outlets. Therefore, raising awareness of this need is an important element to integrate into public media literacy campaigns.

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122 The safety of journalists and the issue of impunity: Report of the Secretary-General, 4 August 2017 (A/72/290).



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