



Session Report

Please know you may design the structure of this report to better suit the session. It's important to capture the key outcomes and solutions proposed for the future.

Session Title: Rethinking Safety and Security for Investigative Journalists

Date & Time: Wednesday, 07.12.2022, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm GMT -5

Report prepared by: Jennifer Nikolaeff, DRG Officer, USAID

Moderated by: Roserie Tucci, Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID

Panellists:

- Pavla Holcová - Regional Editor for Central Europe for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project
- Carlos Eduardo Huerta - Director of CONNECTAS
- Brittany, or Bee, Piovesan - Chief of Party for USAID's Global Internet Freedom activity
- Alexander Papachristou - Executive Director of the Vance Center
- Jodie Ginsberg - President of the Committee to Protect Journalists

Share the thematic focus of the session, it's purpose and corruption risks?

Purpose: to discuss the supporting role investigative journalists (IJs) have in democracy and to dive into the daunting set of challenges... legal, psychosocial, financial, etc. that face IJs.

Summary of panellists' contributions & discussion points (please be as detailed as possible)

Every 5 days one IJ is killed, with the worst year being in 2021. Those deaths are not necessarily in conflict situations, but more increasingly in investigating corruption.

What are some of the biggest challenges that IJs face in reporting on corruption?

Pavla Holcová - Regional Editor for Central Europe for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: Experiences showed that there are Slovak government ties to Italian mafia. The investigation into the murder of Yan Kuchiak. The case started as a murder investigation and ended with arrest of 21 judges. A massive number of people marched demanding police bring the killers to justice, which was the only reason the case moved at all. Investigators were able to get 71 GB of data, which was later made public. This case was the blueprint that started to come clear on how corruption works. "Slovakia is a case study more than a state." The old system under which the murder happened is regaining power now with more than 40% of political polling. For me, watch "The Killing of a Journalist"

Carlos Eduardo Huerta - Director of CONNECTAS: Latin America where it is most dangerous, give us the background. The safety of IJs has gone from critical to catastrophe. 2022 has been most dangerous in Mexico. 19 killed, many disappeared. Latin America also has the highest number of journalists in exile. Many had passports confiscated. Journalists are being spied on like never before. Cell phones for more than 30 journalists were surveilled. 20 Cuban journalists were forced to resign and threatened with passport confiscation. There are many cases where officials have persecuted journalists for "bad journalism". More governments in the region are looking to attack rather than protect. At least 7 countries have announced some kind of protection system, which is a positive development. Columbia has a mixed history. The common factor is that the system is inefficient. Lack a resources and reactive thinking is also detrimental. There is impunity when journalists are attacked.

Brittany, or Bee, Piovesan - Chief of Party for USAID's Global Internet Freedom activity: to expand on vulnerabilities. The USAID funded Global Internet Freedom (GIF) activity works with 70 organizations in over 39 countries. Digital security challenges abound for journalists, especially in digital surveillance included phishing and spyware. Websites being taking down, there are data breeches, social media harassment against women. Nation states or organized crime are the biggest perpetrators.

1. Many journalists are well versed in understanding their threats and the capabilities of advisories. When journalists cannot respond, it slows them down.
2. Journalists don't fit in traditional digital security practices. Because they have to go where the sources are so protecting their identity doesn't always work.
3. There is very little local capacity to provide security to journalists.

Specific vulnerable groups: journalists don't often get the protection that others do. They need to use their true identities to build trust with their sources. They experience more blurring of lines between professional and personal lives, such as family names, etc. Targeted attacks against female journalists- 37% identified political actor as the #1 attacker. Attacks against journalists are an attack against journalism itself because it cuts out one side of the story.

Alexander Papachristou - Executive Director of the Vance Center, legal challenges: Vance (??) centre provides pro bono advice for human rights, journalists, and environmentalists. OCCRP has given us a real world education on the litigation of investigative journalists. People or companies suing journalists are ironic because they break the law and then want to use it against the media. Journalists are random actors in the system. They go after stories that meet their interest and then come up against abuse by the system. Significant increase in frivolous lawsuits, primarily because journalism is starting to work. Pandora and Panama papers led to real results. The world has also gotten worse with the increase of authoritarianism. Reporters Shield will start protecting IJs for all reporting organizations who publish in the public interest. Looking to philanthropy to help pay. People will get trained on how not to get sued. If there is a suit, RS will find a lawyer and pay for defence. "Want to turn slap suits into slap you back suits".

Pavla: Has been through 8-9 lawsuits and won each. Threats about suits come in 1-2 times per week. This is the new normal. Getting to the point where journalists aren't even phased by it.

Jodie Ginsberg - President of the Committee to Protect Journalists: Impact of stress is leading to burn-out. Psychological effect. All journalists received the basic training. No real training then about how to interview trauma victims nor how to id trauma that journalists suffer and the effects. Now journalists are becoming targets and that really made impacts much worse. Totally normal for a local journalist to get abuse. In countries where carrying guns is the norm, it is even worse. The impact translates to the information reaching the audience is greatly reduced. Newsrooms are starting to get a bit better at identifying the problems and trying to respond to trauma.

Gaps in resources:

Pavla: Financing investigative centers- have trainings on digital security every few months. The grants focus on research and training. But no resources on the reporting itself. Stop making us do so much other admin for grants.

Carlos: This is a paradox. Quality increased in Latin America, but many sectors are becoming more extreme. Sustainability is a big challenge. Platforms for training, consolidating efforts. Helps to avoid censorship. More sectors are needed to be included. Corruption in justice in Guatemala is an example. Need to point out governance problems. Journalism is the best investment for democracy.

Alex: A fresh perspective and stronger political will is more important than money. One of the greatest exports is independent journalism. We need to insist that EU and UK pass anti-slap legislation and beneficial ownership is reported on. EU passed legislation that owning a company is a private matter. US is going to negotiate a new trade agreement so add that in.

Bee: If GIF could be redesigned... the things that should be double-down on, locally relevant trainings on security would be crucial. Understand how IT tools are used locally. Journalists don't do their work in a vacuum. Try to find the focal points that

can also be assisted. Addressing advanced threats is also critical but the organizations that do that are western focused. Example is mobile forensics. Need to be able to do front-line defence on digital security. There are lots of policies that could be in place such as putting policies in local languages and pushing security threats up quickly.

Jody: Reality check. The group we are talking about are not homogenous. Whatever is done, there is no one size fits all solution. Locally led needs to be locally relevant. Takes an approach that sees journalists being seen as individuals and provide solutions at that level.

Q&A:

1. Eka, ED of TI Georgia, many of these attacks are happening in Georgia. 53 were attacked at once from far right. Women being threatened as well as owners of media outlets. Government representatives are attacking journalists just for asking questions and then asking judges to freeze assets. Approx 200 journalists coming under legislation now. Some donors have stated that journalists have some issues with their reporting biases so they don't get the help they need. For Georgian journalists, they should go international and ask EU colleagues to ask the questions and break on the stories. Spread the risk. Another thing is to raise the diplomatic status. Freedom coalitions are one example. Expect that the uncertainties are sending journalists into exile.
2. Question of a participant from Nigeria: Issue of states that are most effective. Where is the protection for journalists in Africa? A. Many of the issues on inclusion just get lost with stories in the West. Trying to keep the Africa stories in people's minds is critical. We must continue to make the connections and put pressure on diplomatic as well there. Need to think of human rights as a service to the community. Framing is important. Trade is at the top, so how can we use that?
3. Sean also from Nigeria: When we do reporting on corruption, officials froze their accounts. He likes the idea of Reporters Shield, but are there other resources to support?
4. Tom from Chemonics: If journalists don't have a place to work, they lose their function. What does that mean to have sustainability? A. Journalism is educating people and it's a public good so it should be resourced. Law enforcement is seizing assets so there is a cash benefit for governments. There should be a % of that that goes back to the journalists. Business mindset needs to shift.
5. Biadou from Mali: Even when a situation looks like it is failing, journalists should not give up. They are a type of fighter. What is your advice to journalists? A. Make sure accounts are secure. Report to tech companies. Take screen shots, document. Support the victim.

Rapporteur's name and date submitted

Jennifer Nikolaeff, 07.12.2022