**UNESCO contribution to Report of the Secretary-General on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity – 3 Feb 2017**

**Q1.**

As women’s engagement in the public sphere has expanded, across all media platforms, intimidation and violence against women journalists are reported to have increased.[[1]](#footnote-1) The digital era has created new opportunities for female journalists, but it has also provided a platform for new forms of attacks against women – including online harassment, cyberstalking, invasion of privacy, defamation campaigns rape threats, trolling, hacking, viral videos of rape, sex and abuse through the use of email, websites and social media. A 2016 study commissioned by *the Guardian* newspaper to assess the global phenomenon of online harassment analyzed the 70m comments left on its site since 2006 and discovered that of the 10 most abused writers eight are women, while the two men are black.[[2]](#footnote-2) Meanwhile, the UNESCO 2015 *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* Report observed that women journalists covering topics that are typically dominated by men, such as sports or politics, are particularly likely to become the target of online violence.[[3]](#footnote-3)

According to UNESCO’s latest research on the protection of journalism sources in the digital age, female sources face increased risks when acting as whistleblowers or confidential informants. Additionally, the physical mobility of female journalists may in some cases be restricted due to overt threats to their safety or as a result of cultural prohibitions on women’s conduct, including meeting privately with male sources. For this reason, it is especially important for them to be able to communicate online using secure and encrypted digital communications.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The online sphere is often just a reflection of the realities and hierarchies that exist offline. Female journalists experience a range of threats – from intimidation, threats and abuse to sexual harassment. And in the most extreme cases, sexual assault and rape, which can occur “in reprisal for their work, during public events by mobs, or when journalists are in detention or captivity”.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In areas of armed conflict, female journalists are subject to the same dangers as their male colleagues, but perhaps more than men they also face additional threats of sexual violence, intimidation and gender discrimination.

Moreover, as noted in the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, of which UNESCO is the lead coordinator, many of these crimes are left unreported as a result of powerful cultural and professional stigmas.

As regards the ultimate from of censorship, namely the killing of journalists, UNESCO statistics show that women journalists have been the target of a far lower number of killings than their male counterparts. Of the 928 journalists and media workers whose killing was condemned by the UNESCO Director-General between 2006 and 2016, 60 were women. This represents just 7% of all cases. This difference goes beyond the imbalanced representation of women in news media organizations and may in part be explained by the fact that fewer women journalists cover conflict zones. The number of female casualties is however on the rise: while between 2006 and 2013, an average of four female journalists were killed per year, in the last three years this average has increased to over nine per year.

A 2014 survey titled ‘Violence and harassment against women in the news media: a global picture’, carried out by the International News Safety Institute (INSI) and the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) with support from UNESCO and the Austrian government, identified a number of priorities for action in this area. These include the need to increase the availability of safety information for women journalists, to improve hostile-environment trainings, to include chapters on sexual harassment and assault in safety handbooks, and for news organizations to improve their policies on sexual harassment.

**Q2.**

* Through the **UNESCO/IPDC monitoring mechanism on the safety of journalists**, the Organization collects gender-disaggregated data on the killings of journalists as well as on the judicial follow-up on each of these crimes. The data collected by UNESCO is also disaggregated by nationality, type of media, freelance/staff, conflict/non-conflict area, etc. A Decision by the Intergovernmental Council of the IPDC in November 2016 invited the Director-General to reinforce future Reports by “strengthening data disaggregation in order to highlight the specific risks faced by women journalists in the exercise of their work”.[[6]](#footnote-6)
* UNESCO developed in 2012 a set of **Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media** (GSIM), which have been applied by media organizations across the world to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content. The GSIM include several indicators that assess the level of safety of the working environment in which female and male journalists operate. These indicators look at aspects such as the existence of facilities taking into account the different needs of women and men – including safe transport and/or dormitory facilities after late night duty for women, separate toilets for women, and safety equipment for women covering war zones. They also evaluate the existence and implementation of a comprehensive prevention, complaints, support and redress system with regard to sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace.
* UNESCO has also developed **Journalists' Safety Indicators** (JSI) for assessing the state of journalists’ safety at national level as well as progress in the implementation of the UN Plan of Action of the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. To date, JSI assessments have been carried out in Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan, while others are ongoing in Afghanistan, Iraq, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda. The JSI assessment framework includes indicators on gender-specific aspects of safety, such as whether media organizations provide to female journalists on dangerous assignments equipment that is appropriate to women and whether they recognize that women employees face specific risks and undertake specific mitigation strategies.

**Q3.**

Training of the current generation of media workers, with an emphasis on women journalists and young media professionals, is actively supported by UNESCO and its partners and centers around both physical and digital safety.

In 2015, UNESCO supported the International News Safety Institute (INSI) and the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF) in carrying out a global survey among nearly 1,000 female journalists titled ‘Violence and harassment against women in the news media: a global picture’ .

The latest edition of the *Safety Guide for Journalists: A handbook for reporters in high-risk environments*, developed by Reporters without Borders (RSF) in concert with UNESCO, has been updated and revised with a specific focus on the safety of female journalists and gender-specific considerations. The new version will be launched on 8 March 2017, International Women’s Day.

UNESCO’s model syllabus on the safety of journalists, developed in collaboration with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) for universities in the Arab region, contains a module entirely dedicated to the issue of gender and safe reporting. Similarly, UNESCO’s reports on issues related to the safety of journalists, for eg. ‘*Building Digital Safety for Journalism – a survey of selected issues*’ (2015)and *‘Protection of Journalism Sources in the Digital Age’* (2017, unpublished), include a specific chapter focused on gender aspects, as does the series *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development*.

UNESCO is also encouraging new academic research on the issue of women journalists’ safety within the framework of its Research Agenda on the Safety of Journalists launched in 2015. This initiative has been strengthened in July 2016 by the creation of a Journalism Safety Research Network by the Centre for Freedom of the Media (CFOM) of the University of Sheffield to encourage the sharing of knowledge and research projects about the safety of journalists.

Alongside these efforts, UNESCO has implemented numerous activities aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the challenges faced by women and harmful gender stereotypes.

UNESCO played a lead role in the adoption, in December 2015, of the Geneva Framework on Gender and Media International Development Cooperation which calls for deepening partnerships to support, enable and finance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the media.

Every year, in collaboration with the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG), UNESCO launches Women Make the News, an advocacy initiative aimed at promoting gender equality in media operations, at all levels of their organizational structure; and to avoid unbalanced representation and gender stereotyping in news reporting on women and men.

In October 2016, UNESCO organized a regional training workshop for  25 francophone African broadcasters on the application of UNESCO’s Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media. Participants developed action plans for their organization covering working conditions, editorial policies and media content. A gender and media focal point was appointed in each of the organizations.

In May 2016, UNESCO supported a regional consultation in New Delhi on the theme ‘Developing Gender-Sensitive Guidelines for Women in Media in South Asia’. The three-day consultation culminated in the drafting of a comprehensive set of guidelines for achieving gender equality for women working in the media, and in the portrayal of women in media content.

In 2015, UNESCO supported two digital safety workshops in in Islamabad, Pakistan targeting 30 female journalists and bloggers. These workshops led to the creation of a digital safety help desk for women journalists seeking support online when dealing with issues of digital security or online harassment. It is hosted by the local media development organization, Media Matters for Democracy (MMfD, [www.mediamatters.pk](http://www.mediamatters.pk)).

On the global stage, UNESCO partnered in March 2016 with GAMAG in the organization of an international side-event, “Breaking persistent challenges for gender equality in media”, at the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN in New York. Speakers included Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. The event called for a movement beyond rhetoric to new and innovative actions, economic and political commitments, including specific and measurable targets in connection with indicators to monitor implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

These are just a few of the numerous capacity-building, advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives carried out by UNESCO at international, regional and national level to tackle the root causes of gender inequality in the media.

**Q4.**

Gender Equality is one of the two global priorities of UNESCO and the Organization seeks to ensure that a gender equality perspective is reflected in all its policies, programmes and processes. UNESCO sees gender awareness as comprising between one and three components: (i) a gender-sensitive approach (i.e. a project that registers basic gender differentials); (ii) a gender-responsive approach (i.e. goes further and sees how the differentials are significant, in how the project is designed); and (iii) a gender-transformative approach (i.e. a gender-specific project in that it aims to change gender inequalities).

In its activities aimed at addressing the issue of the safety of women journalists, UNESCO seeks to go beyond a simply gender-sensitive approach towards a gender-transformative one.

As regards gender-sensitivity, in line with a recommendation of UNESCO’s Report on *Building Digital Safety for Journalism,* UNESCO requires trainers to adjust their instruction to take into account gender-specific threats and ensure they teach with a gender-sensitive approach. This also applies to the logistical arrangements of training courses “as accessibility may vary for men and women depending on where the training is organized, how it is conducted and in some cases whether or not trainers of the same sex are available.”[[7]](#footnote-7) UNESCO’s International Programme for the Development of Communication allocates small grants to between 5 and 15 grassroots media projects dealing with journalistic safety each year, and has begun taking account of the projected breakdown of beneficiaries in terms of men and women, as part of its assessment process.

**Q5. /**

**Q6. /** In UNESCO’s Journalism Safety Indicator studies, ithas emerged thatthere is generally an absence of specific policy recognizing the situation of women journalists’ safety.

**Q7.** A noteworthy development in terms of information sharing on the safety of women journalists is the Women's Reporting Point, a new online platform launched in March 2016 by the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom. Women journalists can report threats and attacks on this platform, and seek help or advice via encrypted messages. The messages will then be collected in a database to analyze the scale of the problem across Europe.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Q8. /**

**Q9.** UNESCO is a contributing agency for the monitoring of indicator SDG 16.10.1 on the ‘number of verified cases of killings, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists and associated media personnel’, for which it will collect gender-disaggregated data.

For specific UNESCO initiatives on the safety of women journalists, please see Q3.

1. UNESCO *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* Report, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [*The*](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments) *Guardian*, April 2016: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/how-we-analysed-70m-comments-guardian-website> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UNESCO *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* Report, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. UNESCO, *Protection of Journalism Sources in the Digital Age*, 2017 (unpublished) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. UNESCO, *Building Digital Safety for Journalism – a survey of selected issues*, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_welcomes_report_on_safety_of_journalists_and_the_dang/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. UNESCO, *Building Digital Safety for Journalism*, [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2016/03/08/new-platform-to-monitor-threats-against-women-journalists/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)