World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development Series Publications

The World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development series analyses trends in media freedom, pluralism, independence, and the safety of journalists. The Global Report, published every four years since 2014, provides a macro-level perspective on the changing global media landscape. Other publications in the series offer additional insights into new and evolving challenges in the field.


The latest Global Report, covering trends since 2016, includes special chapters on “journalism as a public good” and better data for better understanding, in addition to the four pillars of press freedom: media freedom, pluralism, independence, and journalist safety. Available in all six UN languages and Portuguese.

A 22-page Highlights brochure summarizes key trends and findings of the report, with full page spreads of key data visualizations and infographics.

Journalism and Whistleblowing

The relationship between journalism and whistleblowers has been generally beneficial for both. This brief analyzes key issues in ensuring that whistleblowers can approach journalists safely and without fear of reprisals, as an exercise of freedom of expression.

Safety of Journalists Covering Trauma and Distress “Do no harm”

Journalists worldwide can regularly find themselves covering stories of trauma and distress. This brief recommends trauma aware training and support, both in journalists’ work with survivors and in self-care as they are exposed to difficult emotional contexts.

Freedom of Expression and the Safety of Foreign Correspondents: Trends, Challenges and Responses

The brief analyses increasing pressures on foreign correspondents, which especially impede reporting from conflict areas. It offers recommendations to UN Member States and others in order to protect journalists and uphold commitments made in UN Resolutions and in national and international law.

Finding the Funds for Journalism to Thrive: Policy Options to Support Media Viability

Severe financial crisis now threatens the supply of independent journalism and compounds the erosion of press freedom globally. This brief provides a typology of global responses for supporting media viability, assesses their pros and cons, and makes 22 actionable recommendations.

Letting the Sun Shine In: Transparency and Accountability in the Digital Age

Transparency in the operations of internet companies is integral to strengthening freedom of expression. This brief sets out 26 high-level principles that can serve as a basis for future discussions and as a framework to guide companies, policymakers, and regulators.

Safety of Journalists Covering Protests: Preserving Freedom of the Press during Times of Turmoil

This brief records and analyses rising incidents of harassment, attacks, and physical violence against journalists, covering protests from January 2015 through June 2020. A second edition of the brief covers regional trends from June through December 2020.

The Right to Information in Times of Crisis: Access to Information – Saving Lives, Building Trust, Bringing Hope!

The right to information must be seen as part of a response to a crisis, not an external burden. This brief addresses emerging standards developed and measures taken by states during the pandemic, and offers a brief assessment in light of human rights law.

Reporting Facts: Free from Fear or Favour

This publication outlines the threat of media capture, a form of media control achieved through the pressure and actions of governments and powerful interest groups. It then offers a series of recommendations to various stakeholders to prevent and combat media capture.

Elections and Media in Digital Times

Digital communications have enabled unprecedented ways of communication between politicians, political parties, and the electorate. This report analyses three trends: the rise of disinformation, intensifying attacks on journalists, and disruptions linked to the use of ICT in electoral arrangements.

Journalism, Press Freedom and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on journalism and press freedom. This brief highlights key trends, ranging from the soaring demand for verified information and the rise of the “disinfodemic” to economic impacts and new restrictions of human rights.

Intensified Attacks, New Defences: Developments in the Fight to Protect Journalists and End Impunity

This report, covering the period 2014–2018, provides a holistic assessment of the safety of journalists. This includes trends related to impunity for attacks against journalists and the growth of digital threats and harassment.

Access to Information: A New Promise for Sustainable Development

This report explores recent developments in access to information laws and their implementation, covering evolving international standards, models for implementation bodies, and new digital challenges and opportunities.