



# Free Press Unlimited annual report **2016**

**FREE  
FREE  
FREE  
PRESS  
UNLIMITED**

People deserve to know

**People deserve to know** Everyone is entitled to unbiased and factual information, so that they are able to make a realistic appraisal of their situation and take control of their lives.

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# Summary

In 2016, Free Press Unlimited's existence was once again – unfortunately – legitimised by recent developments. In many parts of the world, the state of press freedom is still a tragic farce. Journalists are threatened and murdered without any punishment for the perpetrators. Millions of people the world over are denied the objective and reliable information they need for their personal development and to build their community.

## People deserve to know

Our vision is crystal-clear: People deserve to know. Free Press Unlimited helps local media partners to provide their audiences with the information they are entitled to. We are mainly active in areas where this right to information is under – often severe – pressure. This isn't always easy. For example, in 2016, we had to temporarily put our projects in South Sudan on hold in response to a new upsurge of violence in the country. But in many cases, we have been able to provide independent media and journalists with effective support – even under exceptionally challenging circumstances.

## Our results in ten stories

In this annual report, we will be presenting the results of our efforts through ten stories. These stories relate to the key themes focussed on by Free Press Unlimited:

- Gender and Media
- Accountability and Media
- Journalism in conflict areas
- Safety for Journalists
- Children, Youth and Media

We believe that two of the abovementioned themes are so important that they play a major role in each of our projects: gender equality and safety. This focus applies both to the activities that we undertake together with our partners and to our own organisation. In 2016,

we presented a dedicated gender equality policy and improved our security arrangements for our activities in the online and physical domains.

## A year full of changes

2016 was a very eventful year for Free Press Unlimited. We not only saw rapid growth, but also implemented a new organisational structure and welcomed a large number of new colleagues. On top of this, we set up a number of major new programmes and platforms. One example is the programme 'No News is Bad News', which we execute together with the European Journalism Centre in a strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## What's the best way to achieve our objectives?

2016 is also the year in which we first set to work with our new Theory of Change. Put simply, this theory posits that if Free Press Unlimited wants to help local media fulfil their vital role in society, we need to vigorously promote three key goals:

1. An enabling environment for the media is established, conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity.
2. Media serve the interest of the public, and act as a watchdog on their behalf.
3. Journalists and media-actors work professionally, and are effective and sustainable.

These are the objectives we put our heart and soul into – every day – together with our partners. And thanks to the fact that by now, Free Press Unlimited is widely recognised as a source of expertise in the field of media and information, we also have a growing influence on the policies of government organisations and private institutions.

## They support our work

At Free Press Unlimited, we are only able to do our work thanks to the valued support of our loyal Friends, supporters and donors. The long-term funding provided by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Dutch Postcode Lottery is of crucial importance to our activities. After all, it takes more than one or two years to set up a solid independent information service.

## **Solid foundations for a bright future**

In 2016, we saw an increase in our total income to almost 16.5 million euros. According to our budget for 2017, we expect an income of 15 million euros. However, this is a cautious estimation, which does not include the increase of the structural support from the Dutch Postcode Lottery from 500,000 to 900,000 euros per year. We are increasingly opting to focus on larger-scale programmes – and to attract the associated funding. In 2017, we will need to elaborate this further in our new long-term strategy. In the year under review, we focused on laying the groundwork for a number of new programmes, introducing a new method of working and effectively aligning our organisation with the rapid growth of recent years. In 2017, we and our partners will be reaping the benefits of these activities. Together, we can work even more efficiently towards promoting the freedom of the press and people's right to information.

## **Mission and vision**

Our mission is clear. Free Press Unlimited works to ensure that impartial news and information are and remain available to people all over the world. Particularly in countries where there is little to no press freedom. By supporting local media professionals and journalists, we help people gain and keep access to the information they need to survive and develop.

This mission follows from our vision, which can be summed up with the statement: People deserve to know. Every individual has the right to objective, unbiased information. Without timely access to relevant and reliable information, it becomes difficult for people to clearly assess their situation – which means that they cannot make an informed decision. This gives them less influence over the course of their own lives.

Only when journalists are able to do their job safely, without being obstructed or intimidated, can they collect and share reliable and unbiased information. The media consequently play a crucial role when it comes to providing free and unrestricted access to information – information that people can use to develop as a human being, or to hold those in power accountable.

### **Our core values are:**

- Independent
- Inspirational
- Inventive
- Dedicated
- Tailored approach



# Key figures 2016

## Highlights

Total income

€ 16,498,196

Spent on the organisation's objective

€ 14,993,126

Operating expenses

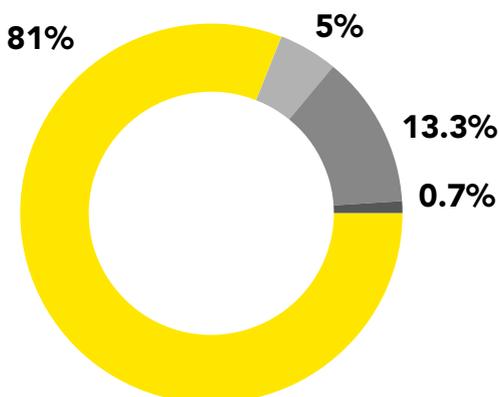
€ 741,679

Number of employees

60.9 FTE

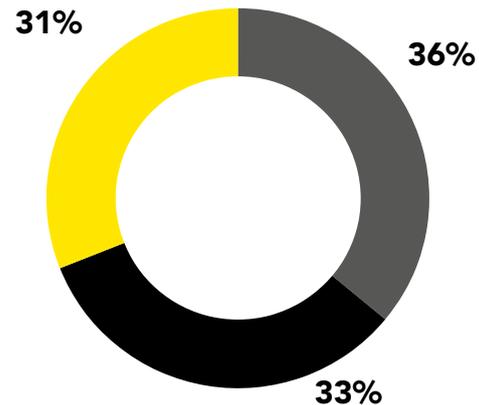
👤 50% 👤 50%

## Our income



Government grants € 13,370,935  
Own fundraising activities € 817,935  
Third-party activities € 2,199,035  
Other € 110,292

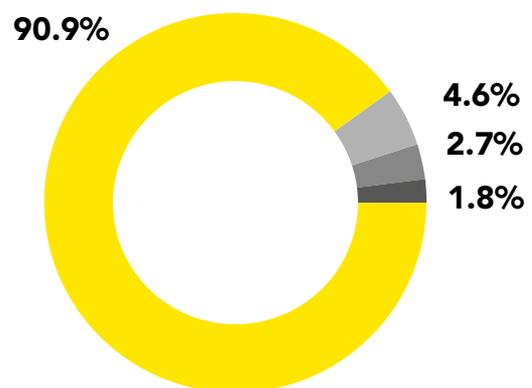
## Press freedom monitor



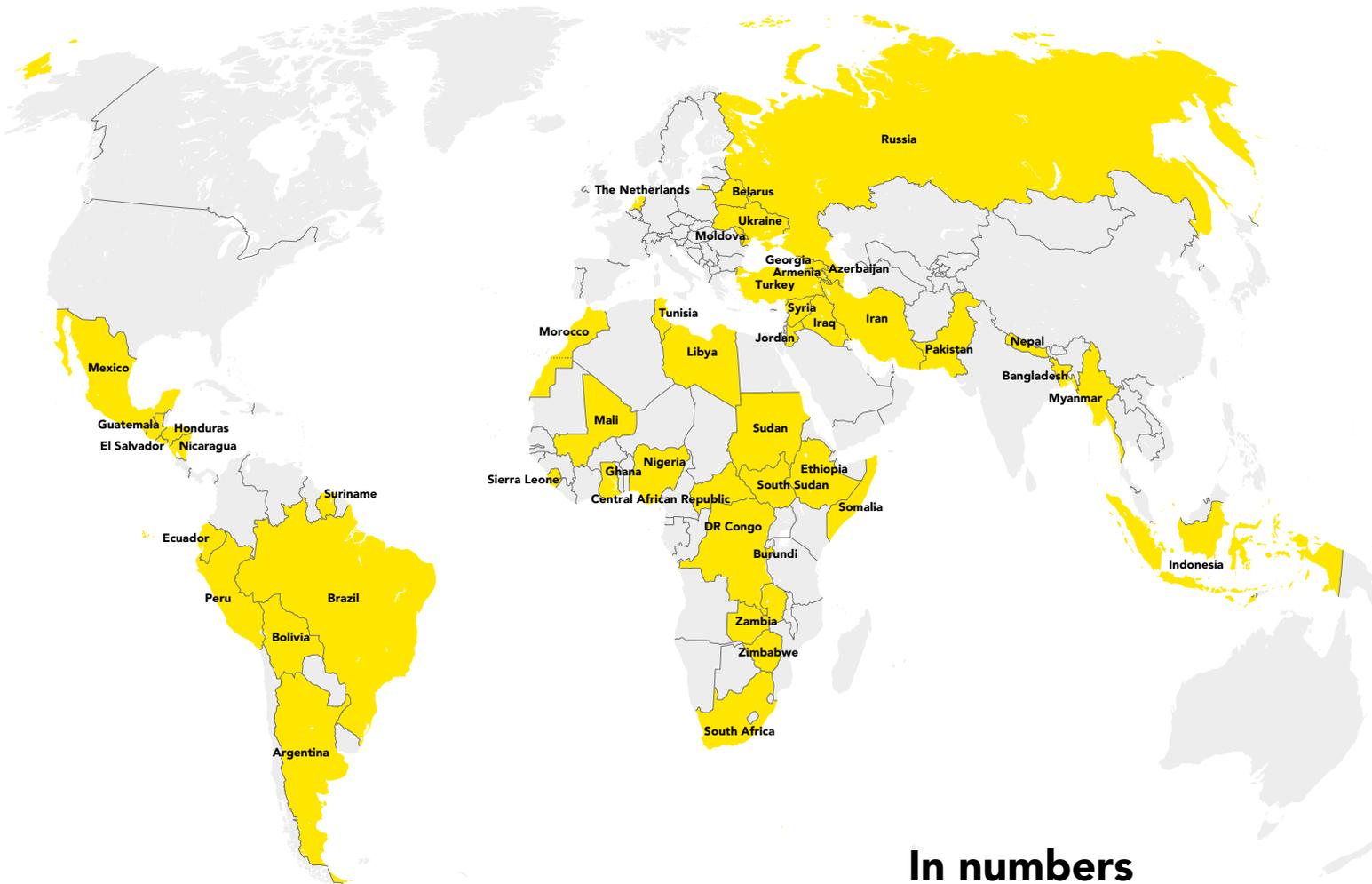
- Free / 61 countries
- Partly free / 72 countries
- Not free / 66 countries

Bron: Freedom House 2016 (of total 199 countries)

## Our expenses



Organisation's objective € 14,993,126  
Acquisition costs funding € 303,814  
Management & Accounting € 437,864  
Reserve € 763,392



## In numbers

Number of projects 66  
 Number of partners 97  
 Number of countries 46  
 Number of friends 2,770

## Online

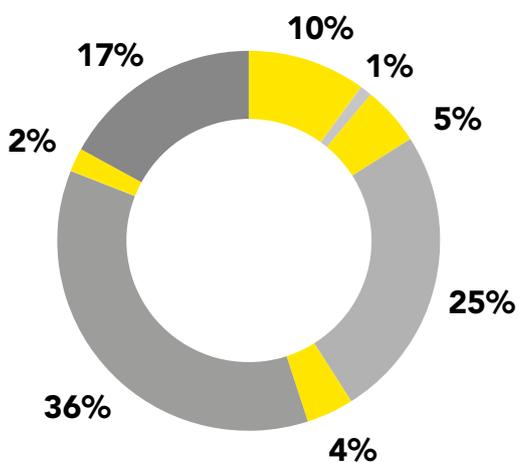
**Twitter**  
 5,762 followers  
 1,649,100 reached

**Facebook**  
 15,204 likes  
 891,299 reached

**Website visitors**  
 133,153

**Newsletters subscribers**  
 (NL) 4032 / (ENG) 516  
 Total: 4,548

## Geographic distribution of grants



Asia 10%  
 Central America 1%  
 Eastern Europe 5%  
 Middle East and North Africa 25%  
 Latin America 4%  
 Sub-Saharan Africa 36%  
 The Netherlands 2%  
 Worldwide 17%



# Management Report

Free Press Unlimited can look back on a challenging and intense year. In 2016, we grew at an amazing pace, launched our Strategic Partnership 'No News is Bad News' and secured follow-up funding for our programme in Syria. But 2016 was also the year in which we were forced to put our successful programme in South Sudan on hold after violence once again flared up in this region.

And in 2016, hundreds of journalists were once again murdered, physically assaulted or threatened – simply for doing their job. Free Press Unlimited has helped journalists all over the world to protect themselves and their sources. But of course, such protection measures are merely stop-gaps. The real solution lies in governments actually taking responsibility for the protection of the local press.

### **Which role does the media play?**

Over the past year, the media's role in public life was debated all over the world. And not just by the public, but also by media professionals themselves. For example, after Donald Trump won the US presidential elections, the media subjected its own conduct to intense scrutiny: What did we do wrong? Which task have we been assigned, and how can we handle it as effectively as possible?

During discussions of this kind, Free Press Unlimited likes to present local partners such as Suara Surabaya Radio. This unbelievably popular radio station, which serves the metropolis of Surabaya, Indonesia, calls itself a 'social institution'. They take their audience's problems seriously and involve them in the development of possible solutions. By now, Suara Surabaya has become so influential in Surabaya's public life that authorities regularly join the discussion during broadcasts. Among other things, this has allowed the station to play a role in solving the metropolis's gigantic waste problem.

### **Reliable and close to people's lives**

We believe that Suara Surabaya's activities are what good journalism is all about: ethical, reliable and close to its audience – people who need the provided information to survive and develop. And the great thing is, with over 600,000 listeners in 2016, the radio station has no difficulty staying afloat. And we can see a similar story in other parts of the world: local partners who are explicitly working in the interest of their citizens, and have earned – or won back – their trust in the process.

In 2016, journalism as a sector proved more innovative and multifaceted than ever. In addition, journalists are initiating more and more joint projects. Free Press Unlimited warmly supports developments of this kind. A fantastic example of cross-border collaboration in journalism is the Russian-Language News Exchange that we launched in 2016. For the first time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, local media organisations from Ukraine to Belarus are working together to offer independent news coverage in the vast Russian-speaking region.

### **The organisation: new, newer, newest**

If we had to sum up Free Press Unlimited's organisational development in 2016 with a single word, it would be 'new'. In 2016, we began to work in a new organisational structure, with a large number of new colleagues (from 46 to 61 fte). We also started implementing our new Theory of Change and our new monitoring and evaluation system, as well as making a start on various new, large-scale programmes and platforms.

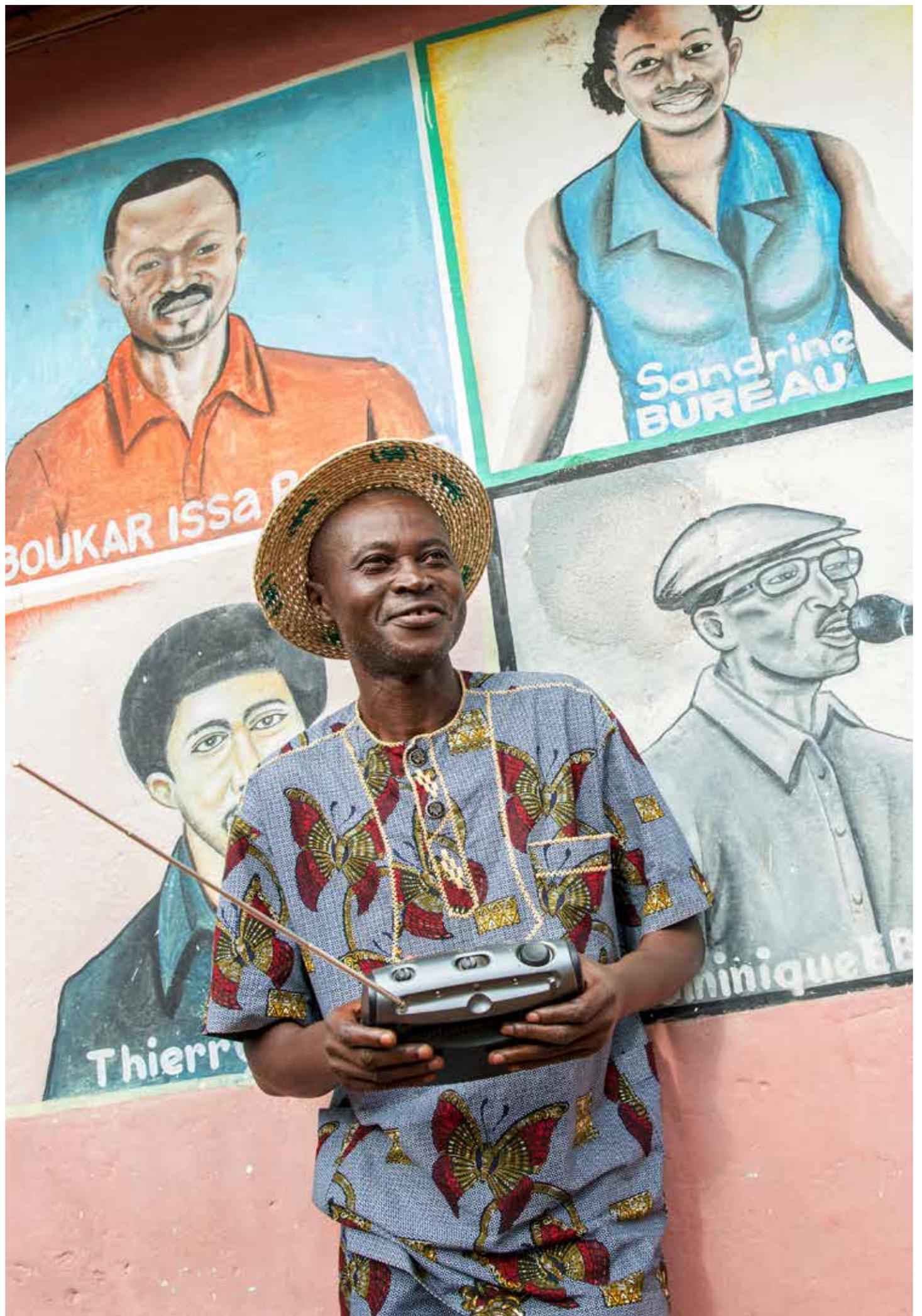
For example, working in partnership with the European Journalism Centre, we laid solid foundations for the execution of 'No News is Bad News', a five-year programme undertaken as a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Through this programme, we will work to professionalise and support journalists and media organisations in 17 countries, equipping them to serve as drivers of change – social and otherwise – within their communities.

### **Friends and donors**

In 2016, we enjoyed an increase in our total income. We received pledges from a number of new funds and donors. But we also see existing donors supporting us again. We are delighted that the Swedish organisation Sida will be supporting our programme in Syria over the next five years, after the successful completion of a previous 3-year project. And in 2016, we could once again count on the invaluable support of our loyal Friends of Free Press Unlimited – and of one of our very closest friends, the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

And finally, we would like to put the spotlight on our own staff, here at Free Press Unlimited. We are more than aware that 2016 was a very challenging and intense year for them too. Without their expertise, dedication and patience, we could never have hoped to realise all our ambitions. That is why we would like to close off with a heartfelt 'Thank you all!'

Leon Willems, *Director of Policy & Programmes*  
Ruth Kronenburg, *Director of Operations*



BOUKAR ISSA B.

Sandrine  
BUREAU

Thierry

minique B.

# Our work in 10 stories

Which results did we achieve in 2016? We would like to give you a look behind the scenes through the following ten stories.

## **It may not sound exciting, but it's important nonetheless**

Besides working on these concrete projects, Free Press Unlimited hopes to change legislation and regulations relating to press freedom through patient lobbying and by encouraging resistance against restrictions on freedom of the press and other basic rights. So that journalists around the world can do their work freely and safely. Doesn't sound very exciting? Maybe. But still, this kind of work is crucial when it comes to providing objective, unbiased information to people all over the world – from Syria to South Sudan.

In the Netherlands, we opposed the plan to set up a broad data trawl within the new Intelligence and Security Services Act (Wet op de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten, Wiv). And together with 170 other organisations and companies around the world, we called on government leaders to support the encryption of digital data transfers. Without this encryption, journalists won't be able to do their job and whistle-blowers will be very wary about posting their information on platforms such as GlobaLeaks.

One of the things that strengthened our recent influencing efforts was the fact that for the past two years, Free Press Unlimited supplied the Chair for the inter-organisational consultation platform Breed Mensenrechten Overleg. Likewise, we also supplied the Chair of the Global Forum for Media Development and the Chair of the UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

# Our themes

## Gender and media

On 8 March 2016, Free Press Unlimited presented its new gender equality policy. Unfortunately, the intimidation and discrimination of women is just as much a problem in the media sector as it is in other industries. Furthermore, in many of the countries that we are active in, most of the local media portray women as either housewives or victims. That is why in 2016, we worked together with our partners to examine the state of gender equality in their organisation and media channels.

*Our long-term objective is to ensure that local media actively promote gender equality. And that they invest in the increased participation of women and a greater decision-making role for this group both in and via the media.*

## Accountability and media

Journalists play a key role in holding major players in the political and private sector accountable. Media organisations serve as watchdogs, put important issues on the agenda and provide citizens with a platform for debate. Free Press Unlimited trains investigative reporters and other journalists and helps the media to raise their level of professionalism. We introduce them to civil society organisations. And we lobby for better legislation that safeguards journalists' right to information and helps to create safer working conditions for them.

*Our long-term objective is to ensure that the media organisations are accountable to their audience and take on the role of watchdog vis-à-vis those in power – protecting the rights of citizens and consumers in the process.*

## Journalism in conflict areas

Reliable and timely news coverage can save lives in conflict areas. In addition, non-partisan media can initiate and encourage dialogue, which in turn can contribute to solutions for communities torn apart by war or violence. Free Press Unlimited trains journalists and media organisations to provide professional and impartial news coverage.

We stimulate collaboration with civil society organisations and promote solidarity among members of the press when one of their colleagues is intimidated or arrested.

*Our long-term objective is to ensure that media organisations in conflict areas provide their audiences with balanced and relevant information, allowing people to make well-considered decisions regarding their own future and the development of their community.*

## Safety for journalists

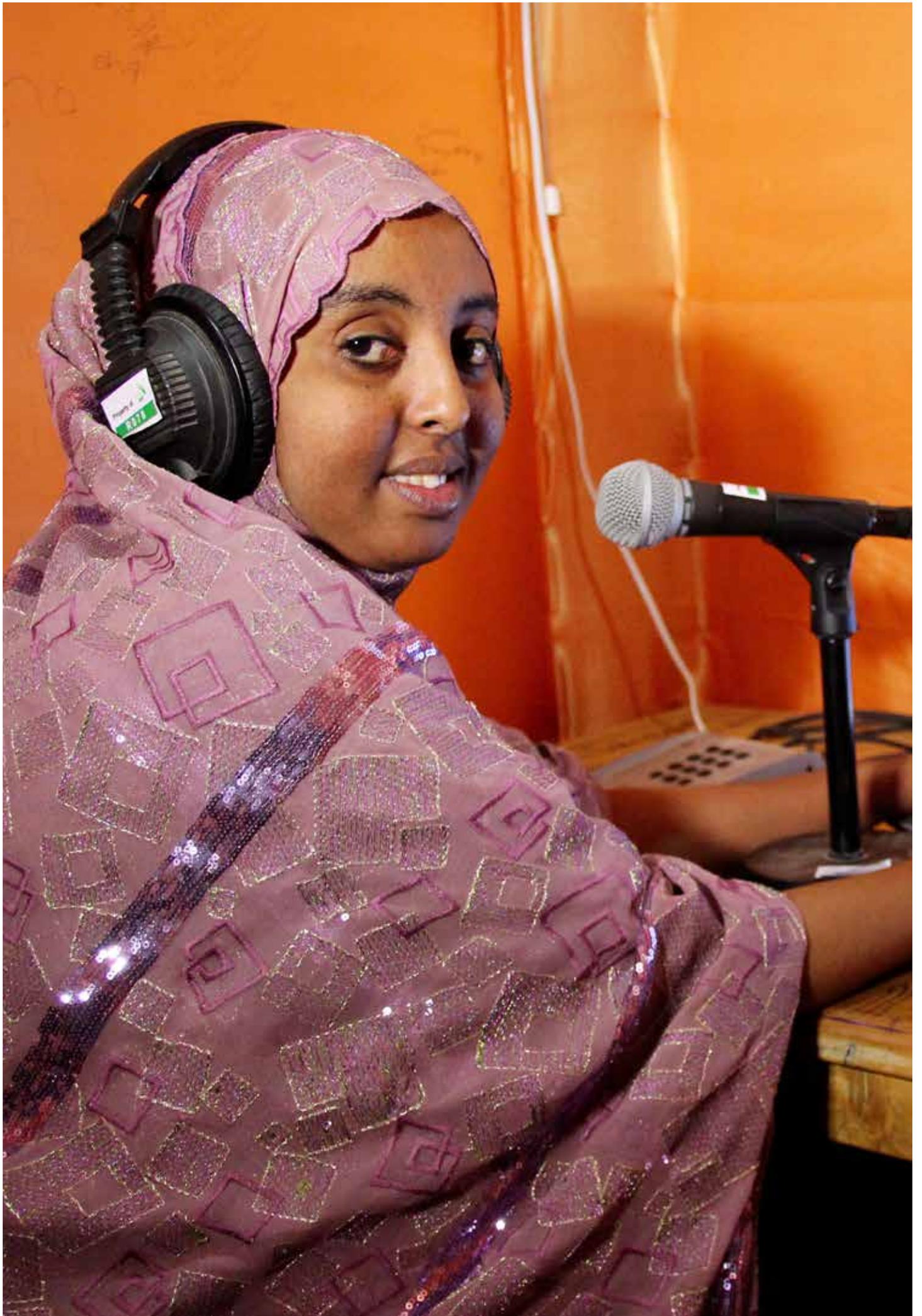
Safety is a basic need for independent media. Journalists who are subjected to personal threats or obstructed by laws or censorship cannot effectively fulfil their crucial role as a source of objective, unbiased information. That is why Free Press Unlimited assigns top priority to creating safe working conditions for journalists. Around the world, we lobby to improve protection for journalists and their sources. Free Press Unlimited helps journalists and media organisations to arm themselves against violence, and to communicate without being tapped – both in the physical world and in the digital world.

*Our long-term objective is to ensure that journalists know how to circumvent monitoring and surveillance (by governments and other parties) and effectively protect themselves against physical, digital, legal and psycho-social violence.*

## Children, Youth and Media

When it comes to effecting real change in a society, children and young people have an amazing potential. Nevertheless, in many countries, little to no attention is given to their perspectives and views. Free Press Unlimited believes governments and media organisations have a responsibility to also help the youngest generation to better understand the world around them. They need to put work into reaching their youth – and know how to effectively communicate with them. That is why we are working together with broadcasters and producers all over the world to set up local youth news bulletins under the name 'WADADA News for kids'.

*Our ultimate objective is to ensure that local media organisations take children and adolescents seriously as an audience group and give them the attention they deserve – both in terms of content and policies.*





Bushra Al-Ameen, Director of Bo Peshewa

## Iraqi women present **dissenting views** online

Most news coverage in the Iraqi media is focused on men. Subjects that are of specific interest to women are barely given attention. Working together with the Iraqi organisation Bo Peshewa, Free Press Unlimited has set up the first online platform by and for women: Takalami, which means 'share your view'. Here, the women of Iraq can find information relevant to them and talk about their problems and their rights.

Takalami offers a female perspective in a male-dominated society. The website offers ample opportunity for discussion, in the hope of creating favourable conditions for social change. Developments such as in in South Iraq, where eight families decided they wouldn't arrange a child marriage for their daughters. What had brought them to this? A feature article published on Takalami, about a young girl who had been married off. After deciding to divorce her husband, she had been prevented from seeing her children for many years. Her moving story accelerated the public debate about the marrying off of young girls.

### **Articles about women's issues**

Bushra Al-Ameen, Director of Bo Peshewa, is proud of results like this: "Maybe we don't always make a difference in the affairs of the entire nation, but we do make a difference in women's lives. And that in itself is of invaluable importance."

Women who visit Takalami find hundreds of articles about issues that affect them – from female refugees and domestic violence to women's rights under the Iraqi constitution. But the platform also offers medical advice, and does many girls a great service: in their often conservative home environment, they are hesitant to talk about health problems. In addition, the website offers a lot of room for positive articles and success stories that may serve as a source of inspiration for other women in Iraq.

### **Impressive visitor numbers**

Everyone is free to write articles for Takalami, but not every Iraqi citizen feels comfortable doing so: people are afraid of the social repercussions if they come out in support of women's rights. As a result, the platform leans heavily on the contributions of journalists who have already made a name for themselves. That is why working in partnership with Free Press Unlimited, Bo Peshewa has trained 32 citizen and professional journalists in the use of the Takalami platform. While the citizen journalists wrote about women's issues during the course itself, unfortunately most of them stopped after rounding off the training: they continued to feel uneasy writing about these subjects. We are presently considering a different approach.

Takalami clearly satisfies a need in Iraq: a year after its launch in late 2016, the platform already had 4,400 accounts. And the readership for its online publications is a multiple of this number – some articles have even been viewed close to 350,000 times. Takalami has nearly 9,000 followers on Facebook, most of them women. And visitors from neighbouring countries have also found their way to the Iraqi website.

### **Partner since: 2015**

**Donor: Human Rights Small Activities Fund of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Contribution: € 68,525**



*Doutzen Kroes makes a guest appearance on Mitini during a visit to the Save the Date project*

# Radio soap opera challenges child marriages in Nepal

Do you have a 12-year-old cousin who will be marrying shortly? This is unthinkable in the West, but in Nepal, two out of three girls are married off before the age of 18. A radio soap opera broadcast by 56 local stations is intended to change this situation.

An arranged marriage can have huge consequences for a young girl's future. Many girls are subjected to sexual violence, and there is a high risk of damage to their health as a result of pregnancy. And even as they see other girls their age going to school, the girls who have been married off see their dreams for their own life slip away, as well as their hopes of employment or personal development.

## **Sabita, a girl in Nepal**

While Nepalese law prohibits child marriages, this legislation isn't strictly enforced. Moreover, many citizens are actually unaware of this prohibition, and cultural conventions are very persistent: girls are seen as 'chattel' that can be traded and negotiated with. In Nepal, radio is a very popular and influential medium. That is why we strive to raise people's awareness of the detrimental

effects of child marriages via the radio soap opera Mitini. So that millions of young Nepalese girls gain the prospect of a better future.

Mitini's protagonist is the Nepalese girl Sabita. Listeners are given a glimpse of her life, the problems she faces every day and possible solutions. Mitini focuses on child marriages and the benefits of education. As well as subjects like: how can young people and their parents or in-laws talk to each other? Each episode of the soap opera provides young people and their parents with handles for discussing potentially sensitive topics. Issues like inequality between men and women and sexual health.

## **Millions of listeners**

Our Nepalese partner NEFEJ, an association of over 100 local radio stations in the country, is responsible for Mitini's production. Thanks to this extensive network, the soap opera is able to reach no fewer than 6 million young people and 15 million adults – including many listeners in remote rural areas. Every Saturday evening at 7 p.m., the audience can listen to a new 15-minute episode that recounts Sabita's latest experiences. This episode is broadcast a second time later on in the week.

Does the soap opera actually have an effect? According to its listeners it does. "We often listen to Mitini", says one mother, who lives in a slum. "We never used to give that much thought to child marriages – we have other things on our mind. But now, women here are openly opposing the marrying off of children." One girl called us in early December: "I would like to thank you. Thanks to Mitini, we decided to intervene when a young girl in our village was forced to marry. We were unable to persuade the village elders and the parents, which is why we got the police involved. The marriage was called off."

## **Telephone hotline**

Mitini will be broadcast throughout Nepal for a total of three years. The soap opera is part of the programme 'Save the Date', through which Free Press Unlimited, dance4life and Child Helpline International work to improve the position of girls in Nepal. This includes an information programme for young people at school and they can call a free telephone hotline, which is also referred to in the broadcasts. Many children and adolescents have already made grateful use of this facility in 2016.

**Partner since: 2006**

**Start of project: 2016**

**Donor: Dutch Postcode Lottery**

**Contribution: € 150,000**



## Russian-language news platform for independent media

An elderly Georgian woman told a journalist that while she could hardly ever afford meat, she continued to buy Whiskas for her cat. This was the direct occasion for the first article published on the brand-new Russian-Language News Exchange. Because the platform's editors wondered about the actual situation regarding pensions in the region. The results were read by people in seven Russian-language countries.

News coverage in many former republics of the Soviet Union are either controlled by the state or oligarchs, which leads to disbalanced news coverage. Organisations that hope to survive in this media landscape are dependent on major funders, who strive to have a finger in every pie. Independent and non-partisan media remain rare in these countries. In addition, collaborations are few and far between – even though they all speak the same language: Russian.

### Local information in Russian for millions of readers

The Russian-Language News Exchange is bringing a change to this. Established in late 2015 by Free Press

Unlimited, this platform started gaining momentum over the course of 2016. Its objective: to provide large sections of the region's population with local information in their mother tongue. Its audience may be united by a common language, Russian, but they actually live across a range of countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia itself. They are offered reliable and fact-based news coverage through a number of online and offline channels. And there has proven to be a real demand for this information: together, the collaborating media organisations reach millions of readers.

Marya Sadouskaya-Komlach works as the Programme Coordinator of the Russian-Language News Exchange. She emphasises that the platform's objective is not to challenge the local state-owned media. "We want to strengthen independent media in the region. The platform brings together independent and professional media partners – some of whom Free Press Unlimited has known for many years. Here, journalists can exchange knowledge, work together and trust each other." They report on political developments, the economy and international affairs, but there is also room for human interest stories, culture and sports.

### Journalists working in partnership

In 2016, the collaborating journalists exchanged over 200 articles via the platform, as well as producing 25 new ones. The story about the Georgian pensioner and her peers in the region was the first joint production of the Exchange. Eleven journalists and editors worked together for weeks on the report. They produced a variety of articles, videos and infographics, which were published in Russian on six different media outlets catering to audiences in seven countries.

Coordinating all these contributions can be quite a challenge, says one of the editors who works at the central newsroom: "Acting as a liaison between all these journalists from different countries, with their different areas of expertise and working conditions – and all from our virtual newsroom – was no simple matter. But together, the partners involved have produced a wonderful result. This is also borne out by the positive reactions from our audience – particularly via social media."

The pension report was translated into Armenian, Georgian and English. In Moldova, the investigative reports actually led to an inquiry into pension reforms. People are given the opportunity to read about life in neighbouring countries, which leads to greater understanding. Thanks to the Russian-Language News Exchange, people are united by more than just a common language.



# Hromadske.tv: Non-partisan television channel in Ukraine

In 2013, a team of Ukrainian journalists tendered their resignation. The TV station that they worked for would fall under state control, meaning that they could no longer guarantee objective and unbiased news coverage. The journalists decide to realise their dream: a public broadcaster in Ukraine. This leads to the birth of the online TV channel Hromadske ('Public').

Hromadske had just launched when the Euromaidan demonstrations broke out in November 2013. These protests led to the resignation of President Yanukovich and his government. The channel quickly became extremely popular thanks to its live broadcasts from the streets of Kiev. In 2016, Hromadske was also the first NGO in Ukraine to be issued a broadcasting licence for cable and satellite networks. In addition, the channel increasingly took on the role of non-partisan public broadcaster – an institution that up to that point did not exist in the former Soviet republic.

## Rapid growth

For the people of Ukraine, Hromadske, which broadcasts in Ukrainian, English and Russian, serves as the

premier platform for discovering and understanding new developments in their country. Both during the annexation of Crimea and when unrest broke out in Eastern Ukraine. Even though Hromadske still works from a single studio and operates on a non-commercial basis, over the last three years, it has developed into a professional television broadcaster that serves an audience of almost 1 million people. The channel can be viewed throughout the country via YouTube – except for Crimea, formally. Here, Hromadske's signal is blocked by the Russian government, although many viewers are able to bypass this restriction.

## Internet trolls

Hromadske's non-partisan position isn't universally appreciated, however. In July 2016, the channel was targeted by an organised pro-government online trolling campaign. On its Facebook page, the Ukrainian army's press service accused Hromadske's reporters of smuggling a Russian journalist to the frontline. In addition, it claimed they had revealed Ukrainian troop positions, which had allegedly exposed the soldiers to enemy fire.

"As soon as this message was posted on Facebook, something strange happened," recalls Hromadske's Director Katya Gorchinskaya. "Within five minutes, it had been shared over 360 times. Usually, a message like that has a few dozen shares at most. We received angry calls from soldiers and furious messages via social media." Technical research by the channel proved it was a case of click fraud, a type of fraud that artificially boosts the number of likes for a post. Online trolls are increasingly being used to make it difficult for critical media organisations. "Our journalists see too much. We were the first people to report on the illegal prisons operated by the Ukrainian secret service. We were subjected to heavy criticism – and even attacks. But we won't let ourselves be silenced."

## Big plans

Hromadske is one of the partners contributing to the new Russian-Language News Exchange. The channel has big plans: in 2017, it wants to expand its audience to 7 million people via Ukraine's cable networks.



## Local radio stations in the Central African Republic

In the war-torn Central African Republic, radio broadcasts can be of life-or-death importance. People fleeing rebel troops hear where they should head from the radio – which way is safe. But radio can also help resolve conflicts, by offering new scope for discussion.

Free Press Unlimited supports efforts to restore radio stations that have been burnt to the ground or fallen in disrepair during the recent resurgence of violence in the Central African Republic. We work to train local reporters and help journalists who are threatened or physically attacked via our emergency assistance fund Reporters Respond.

### Talking and listening via the radio

“My mother is illiterate. The radio is her sole source of information.” Reading a newspaper is out of the question for someone like the mother of Jean Ignace Manengou, Director of the Association of Central African Community Radio Stations (ARC). Indeed, independent local radio stations play a crucial role in the public life of Manengou’s home country. Particularly after the armed conflict between Muslim and Christian militias flared up again in March 2013.

Today, the violence has left thousands dead, and a quarter of the country’s population was forced to flee their homes.

The radio stations want to give everyone the opportunity to share their perspective. A sizeable share of the estimated 1 million listeners participates in the broadcasted discussion programmes. The radio stations ensure that everyone in the community has access to information and updates and is able to share his or her views. Particularly in a country that is ravaged by war, it is important that people continue to talk to each other and listen to each other’s arguments. “Communities often ask us: “Help us set up a radio station!” says Manengou. “People are becoming more and more aware that to stay safe and keep developing yourself, you need information.”

### A new lease on life for eleven community radio stations

In 2016, Free Press Unlimited worked together with ARC to breathe new life into eleven local radio stations that had been looted and destroyed. “In many cases, the stations lack the necessary resources, technical know-how and journalism expertise,” according to Manengou. Which is why we provided the local teams with new equipment, including mixing desks, microphones, computers and transmitter masts. ARC’s trainers school local journalists in interviewing techniques, teach them the fundamental rules of journalism and how to produce an effective radio programme. And we have taught the management teams of the radio stations how to maintain and improve their self-sufficiency – including in financial terms. Our aim is to enable them to continue operating as independent organisations – without the intervention of government bodies or other parties.

In the near future, we will also be training journalists to remain safe in the physical and digital worlds, as well as offering them psycho-social support. Many journalists in the Central African Republic are heavily affected by the violence in their country and it is important that they remain able to provide unbiased information to their audience. This way, they can help the people of their country to join together and move towards a brighter and more peaceful future.

### Partner since: 2014

**Donors: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union**

**Contribution: € 768,000**



## Radio Dabanga: reliable coverage of news in Darfur

You may not hear a lot about it, but in Sudan, the army has been engaged in a devastating struggle with rebel forces in Darfur since 2003. And as always, most of the victims of the conflict are civilians: the death toll has presently risen to some 300,000. Over 2.5 million people have fled their villages. Their sole source of reliable information is Radio Dabanga, which is supported by Free Press Unlimited. Radio Dabanga broadcasts from Amsterdam.

Radio Dabanga plays a crucial role in the Darfuris' efforts to survive. The station tells them where there is fighting going on, and which way they can flee. And for the refugees in the camps outside of Darfur, Dabanga is a source of hope. "Radio Dabanga helps break taboos, gives victims a voice and brings the actual facts to light," says Editor Sadig Musa. But the international media and aid organisations also depend on the station for news about the latest developments in the region. "People tell us who are destroying the villages, who are killing ordinary civilians, who are entering the camps for pillage and who are using rape as a weapon."

### Network of reporters

There is no way Radio Dabanga could broadcast from Sudan: the station would be censored or shut down altogether. So how does it get its information? An extensive network of reporters and citizen journalists work every day to collect the latest news, eyewitness reports and background information. They report from Darfur itself and from neighbouring country Chad, where many of the Darfuri refugee camps can be found. Every day, after the provided information has been thoroughly verified, the Sudanese editorial team in Amsterdam compiles a new 2.5-hour programme in Arabic and five local languages. This is broadcast in Sudan via short-wave radio and satellite television. Over 2 million people listen to Radio Dabanga every day. And over 1.5 million people in the Sudanese capital watch Dabanga TV, which offers a mix of teletext news and discussion programmes.

### Listeners send in news via app

In early 2016, there was a resurgence of violence in Darfur – another reason for Radio Dabanga to expand its range of news services. In the course of one year, Dabanga's new social media editor was able to triple the number of Facebook fans, to a total of 130,000. But the biggest success in 2016 has to be Radio Dabanga's sourcing of news via WhatsApp. Every day, some 4,000 messages are sent to the station's editors by no fewer than 250 different people. To filter these valuable updates, Radio Dabanga plans to work with a so-called chatbot. Online, this automated chat partner can hold a more or less natural 'conversation' with the website's visitors.

### Live TV on its way

Dabanga's audience has also called on the station to offer a live television programme. In 2016, the editorial team laid the groundwork for this expansion. This is how this independent radio station founded in 2008 by a small group of Sudanese journalists has grown to become a powerful information platform for the people of Darfur. By offering them reliable news and background information, Radio Dabanga can help its audience make well-considered decisions – both when it comes to their own lives and to the development of their war-torn region.

### Partner since: 2008

### Donors: Wish to remain anonymous in view of safety risks

- Radio listeners per day (13 programs): 2,300,000
- TV viewers per day: 1,500,000
- Facebook followers: 138,330
- Facebook reached: 60,249,492
- Twitter followers: 12,900
- Twitter reached (Arabic + English): 3,900,700
- WhatsApp: 133,450 user per day



## NetAidKit offers first-line support for **online safety**

Repressive governments have been tapping local journalists for many years. This surveillance is increasingly also extended to their online activities. In response, Free Press Unlimited has developed the NetAidKit, a small device that provides the user with a secure internet connection. We launched the kit in the spring of 2016, and by the end of the year, some 700 NetAidKits had already been taken into use.

Authoritarian regimes have an irrepressible need to obstruct independent journalists in their work and nip critical perspectives in the bud. And this game of cat and mouse – between journalists and their sources on the one hand, and those in power on the other – can also be observed online. With the development of the NetAidKit, Free Press Unlimited has made it easier for journalists all over the world to make secure use of the internet while working to inform the public. The NetAidKit cocks a snook at the ‘total control’ pursued by authoritarians worldwide.

### **Unhindered by online censorship**

Journalists need to be able to investigate a story, talk with their sources and colleagues and publish their findings without the fear of being tapped or endangering themselves and those around them.

The NetAidKit is a portable router that connects your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone to the internet. But this is no ordinary router: the kit sends all your data in a single transmission via a VPN connection or the Tor network. This allows you to surf safely and anonymously – wherever you are. When you use a NetAidKit, the provider can neither determine your location nor which websites you are visiting. Nor are third parties able to access your data. This allows journalists to circumvent censorship and protect themselves – and their sources – against unwanted eavesdropping.

### **Award-winning tool**

Security trainer Sergio Araiza from Mexico has been using the NetAidKit for almost a year now. During his trainings, he presents the device as a shining example of effective digital security. “The NetAidKit is a wonderful tool. It’s easy to use and ‘does what it says on the tin’: data and navigation details remain completely secure.”

The NetAidKit is a user-friendly solution for a virtually untapped market. Indeed, in March 2016, the tool won first prize in two categories at the very well-attended Internet Freedom Festival in Valencia. Free Press Unlimited sells the NetAidKit and uses the revenues to provide free devices to endangered journalists.

NetAidKit is based on proven open-source technology. Free Press Unlimited calls on experienced tool developers to contribute to the further elaboration of this sophisticated security device. So that in the years ahead, journalists can continue to provide their readers, listeners and viewers with reliable information – without putting themselves in danger.

### **Developed in: 2016**

#### **Donors:**

#### **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Contribution: € 150,000**

#### **SIDN Fund**

**Contribution: € 25,000**



# Reporters Respond, emergency assistance for journalists

Every year, thousands of journalists, photographers and camera-people run into serious trouble in the course of their work. Standing up for people's right to information, they often pay a heavy personal price: their cameras and computers are destroyed, they receive anonymous threats over the phone, the police raid their home or they are physically assaulted or arrested. Free Press Unlimited works to help these journalists via the Reporters Respond emergency assistance fund.

Journalists can submit a request for assistance from Reporters Respond via Free Press Unlimited's website, where individual applications are reviewed by our team members. In principle, they strive to respond to journalists' requests within 24 hours. To this end, Reporters Respond works with a worldwide network of organisations that support media initiatives, "If we don't have any local contacts of our own, one of the

other organisations in our network will," says Free Press Unlimited Director Leon Willems.

The purpose of the emergency assistance fund is to get journalists back to work as soon as possible. In 2016, we provided direct support to 50 journalists and referred 11 applicants to other organisations. Most of this assistance was provided to reporters in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. In 13 cases, we replaced equipment that had been destroyed, and we helped a total of 20 journalists to get out of their country.

## **Threatened, assaulted, forced to flee**

Freelance investigative reporter Ray Mwareya from Zimbabwe knows first-hand how the fund can make a difference. In June 2016, he contacted Reporters Respond and requested the fund's assistance. After publishing a number of investigative reports – including articles about the role of corrupt politicians in the Zimbabwean coffee industry – Mwareya was subjected to long-term surveillance, threats and physical attacks. Ultimately, he saw no other option but to flee to South Africa. "There was no way I could go back home. Either I would disappear at the airport, or I would be arrested at home and probably tortured," says Mwareya. Reporters Respond decided to help Mwareya directly. "Thanks to your support, I was able to continue working as an investigative reporter. The result: four award-winning stories," he says with pride. Mwareya is once again publishing a variety of articles in the local and international media about subjects like human trafficking, land grabbing, genital mutilation and violence against lesbians.

## **Safety in Iraq**

Free Press Unlimited offers other forms of emergency assistance too. For example, in 2016, it offered Iraqi journalists and fixers (local contacts who help foreign journalists in their work) a medical safety training. In addition, the participants were taught how to assess risks in their work environment more effectively. These journalists – many of whom had enjoyed no prior training – were involved in very dangerous work in the frontlines of the Mosul offensive against ISIS. The trainings helped them to prepare more effectively for the associated dangers.

Through our emergency assistance fund and safety trainings, we aim to help journalists in conflict areas to – as much as possible – 'simply' do their job: provide the public with reliable, unbiased information.

## **Established in: 2011**

**Donor: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**Contribution: € 150,000**



## Training helps Ecuadorian children's television to flourish

The media can play a key role in expanding children and adolescents' mental horizons. Can – because programme makers need to learn how to reach their young audience first. In Ecuador, television for younger viewers is still in its infancy, and the journalists involved are still relatively inexperienced. That is why in March 2016, Free Press Unlimited organised a five-day training that dealt with 'child-friendly' programming in the Ecuadorian capital Quito.

The training started with a master class, followed by 180 participants at various Ecuadorian universities via a live stream. The remaining days of the training were organised for 25 media professionals from the Ecuadorian youth television programme Hagamos Click. They were instructed in journalism basics like hearing both sides of a case, camera techniques and editing. But most of the training focused on a more specialist subject: producing television programmes geared towards children and adolescents.

### **Making children's television is an art in itself**

Because there's a big difference between talking about children and talking with them. And producing a news item so that it grabs and holds children's attention is no easy matter. The participants learned how to interview children without scaring them, and how to make them feel more at ease by choosing the right location. Participant Lucia Real: "We changed our approach immediately after completing the training. We went to locations where children feel free – places like dance schools and craft workshops. From now on, we always lower the camera to their height, we avoid busy areas and we take our time. We don't ask them to repeat their answers until they're 'TV-proof'. After all, there are no 'wrong' answers, and children have a different perspective on things than adults."

Free Press Unlimited believes it is important to encourage children via programmes like Hagamos Click to speak up, and that their contributions are taken seriously. This way, the young viewers and their parents become aware that children are a valuable part of society and that their views count too. The media can help them to understand the world around them, make their own decisions and actively participate. In Hagamos Click, the children themselves present the news items: they talk about, and show, what touches them personally. This can range from a 'first aid club' at school to a passion for painting, swimming or puppet theatre.

### **Worldwide partnership**

Hagamos Click has been broadcasting weekly since September 2015. The Ecuadorian children's programme is part of WADADA News for Kids, a global network of youth news bulletins set up by Free Press Unlimited. Its members around the world all use the same formats and exchange items and footage. Now that the journalists in Quito have practiced working with these formats, they will soon be producing reports that can be used by programmes in other countries. So that the voices of Ecuador's children can be heard across the globe.

### **Partner since: 2015**

**Donor: Dutch Postcode Lottery**

**Contribution: € 2,500,000 for the project**

**Our future is now**

**1200** News programs  
**18** Countries  
**4** Continents



## News for children (and adults) in Zambia

The youth news bulletin Z Kids News is the only news programme in Zambia that is geared towards young viewers. Established in 2006 as a member of the WADADA News for Kids network, today, Z Kids News offers around 500,000 children a daily mix of news items, opinion features and stories that are attuned to a younger audience.

Nearly half the population of Zambia is under the age of 15. "Particularly in a country like ours, which is home to so many young people and where access to education is far from universal, youth news programming can help children to learn new things," says Costa Mwansa, General Director of Muvi TV, the Zambian station responsible for broadcasting the programme. "And not just children," he adds. "This also includes adults who have never been to school."

### Taken off the air

Z Kids News wants to offer children professional and reliable tailor-made news. This isn't always easy. In August 2016, it became clear that press freedom is under considerable pressure in Zambia when Z Kids News was suddenly taken off the air. The Zambia Ministry of Information revoked the broadcasting licence of Muvi TV and two radio stations. The entire staff was suspended. This measure was taken in response to Muvi TV's allegedly 'unprofessional' conduct before

and during the Zambian presidential elections that month. According to Muvi TV, while their coverage of the elections was balanced, it didn't always show the incumbent government in the best possible light. According to the opposition, the licences were revoked to stifle independent media reporting.

In September 2016, this lockdown was lifted again, and Z Kids News was able to celebrate its 10-year anniversary. It can also look back on quite a few years of financial self-sufficiency – although the youth news bulletin will continue to make use of the facilities of the WADADA network. According to presenter Sipiwe Mphanza, the programme has also led to positive government actions. "We made a number of items about the lack of playgrounds in Zambia. Children are angry about this. Ultimately, the government responded by building a couple of new playgrounds."

### News for young viewers is being taken more seriously

Z Kids News also has an impact on regular media channels – as became clear in 2012, when the Media Institute of Southern Africa called the programme a 'shining example'. According to the Institute, Z Kids News clearly shows why news is important for children. The makers of Z Kids News are proud of this acknowledgement: "Since then, we have also seen that journalists in other media are taking youth-oriented news coverage more seriously."

In the years ahead, Z Kids News intends to convince an even larger audience of its importance. Particularly in rural areas, where children are difficult to reach because they don't have access to television or the internet. But Z Kids News may have a solution: use solar panels to broadcast its youth news bulletins.

### Partner since: 2006

### Donor: Dutch Postcode Lottery

### Contribution: € 2,500,000 for Our future is now



# Our stakeholders

Financial independence is a prerequisite for impartial news coverage. That is why Free Press Unlimited continued to broaden its financial basis in 2016. Since March, we are supported in these efforts by a fundraiser for private donors (our Friends). Our fundraising success rate among international private funds has proven relatively high: 26 per cent of proposals submitted to these parties were approved for funding.

## Partners, donors, friends and supporters

### Our partners

Our key stakeholders are local media organisations like Hromadske.tv and Bo Peshewa. It is only through partners like these that we can achieve solid, long-term results. That is why we structurally involve them in the development of our strategy and method of working. In September and October 2016, Free Press Unlimited carried out its first large-scale partner satisfaction survey. At 40 percent, our response rate was relatively high. Our partners are generally satisfied about their relationship with Free Press Unlimited, and our communication. They would generally like to achieve more support in the management of their organisation, monitoring and evaluation and securing funding. Free Press Unlimited has drawn up a plan of action on the basis of this feedback, and will be repeating this partner satisfaction survey every year to assess the progress made in this area.

### Our donors

We are tremendously grateful for the confidence and long-term support shown by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in our strategic partnership 'No News is Bad News') and the Swedish organisation Sida (in our programme in Syria). In 2016, another highly valued donor, the Dutch Postcode Lottery, once again

pledged its support to our work for another five years, increasing their structural contribution. This kind of long-term funding is of vital importance for the success of Free Press Unlimited's mission. After all, it takes more than a few years to set up a sustainable independent information service and build trust in the media among local audiences.

By buying a lottery ticket, 2.7 million participants in the **Dutch Postcode Lottery** help give people in countries such as Bangladesh and Sudan access to reliable, unbiased information. In 2016, the Postcode Lottery awarded Free Press Unlimited an un-earmarked contribution of € 900,000. In addition, National Postcode Loterij has supported the Dutch Postcode Lottery Fund for Journalists since 2009. This fund has enabled journalists to make a range of unique international reports. In 2016, Dutch Postcode Lottery decided to continue to support this important programme for another two years with a contribution of € 250,000 per year. The ongoing need for this funding is once again illustrated by the increased number of applications in the year under review: from 57 in 2015 to 72 in 2016. We awarded funding to a total of 27 reports abroad, which yielded 25 publications in 2016 alone.

In 2016, we launched 'No News is Bad News', our new Strategic Partnership with the **Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, together with the European Journalism Centre (EJC). Over the next five years, we will be implementing a joint programme in 17 countries. Our objective: to promote societies where independent media organisations and journalists form a diverse and professional information landscape and serve as drivers and catalysts for change. We also worked together with existing and prospective partners in 13 countries to organise so-called baseline workshops. In these workshops, we analysed the country's existing media environment, examined which support these partners required in the context of their influencing activities and determined whether their organisations were ready to set to work on the new programme.

For the past four years, Free Press Unlimited has been working together with people from Syria's media sector on the professionalisation of Syrian journalists and media

organisations. This has considerably raised the level of their reporting in terms of reliability, impartiality and critical analysis – which is crucial for winning the trust of the Syrian population. We can now substantially expand this programme thanks to a five-year funding pledge from Sida. We will be using these funds to support and train more media organisations and media institutes: offering programmes that educate them in journalism skills and how to manage a professional media enterprise. This will help ensure that Syrian journalists and media organisations can continue to provide Syrian audiences with the unbiased, reliable and balanced information they so desperately require.

Other governments in Europe and further afield also support Free Press Unlimited's work. In addition to Sida, our key foreign donors are the **European Union** and the **United States Department of State**. Of all the project proposals that we submitted to institutional donors in 2016, over 41 percent was approved for funding. In concrete terms, Free Press Unlimited raised over € 18,5 million in funds in the year under review.

### **Friends and other supporters**

We are fortunate to have 2,770 Friends of Free Press Unlimited, who help make our work possible. They are dedicated and critical individuals, and are not afraid to share their thoughts and occasionally help us hold a mirror to ourselves. In 2016, we organised the first edition of the Friends Live event, which was filled to capacity. During this event, a number of our staff members shed light on programmes like Radio Dabanga and the Russian-Language News Exchange. Their stories met with a heart-warming reception. And other Dutch citizens also find our work deserving of their support. In 2016, we received a total of € 54,000 in donations from private citizens – a 8,000 euros less than in 2015. This can be explained by the fact that in 2015, after the Charlie Hebdo attack, we received a number of extra donations.

### **Communication with our audience**

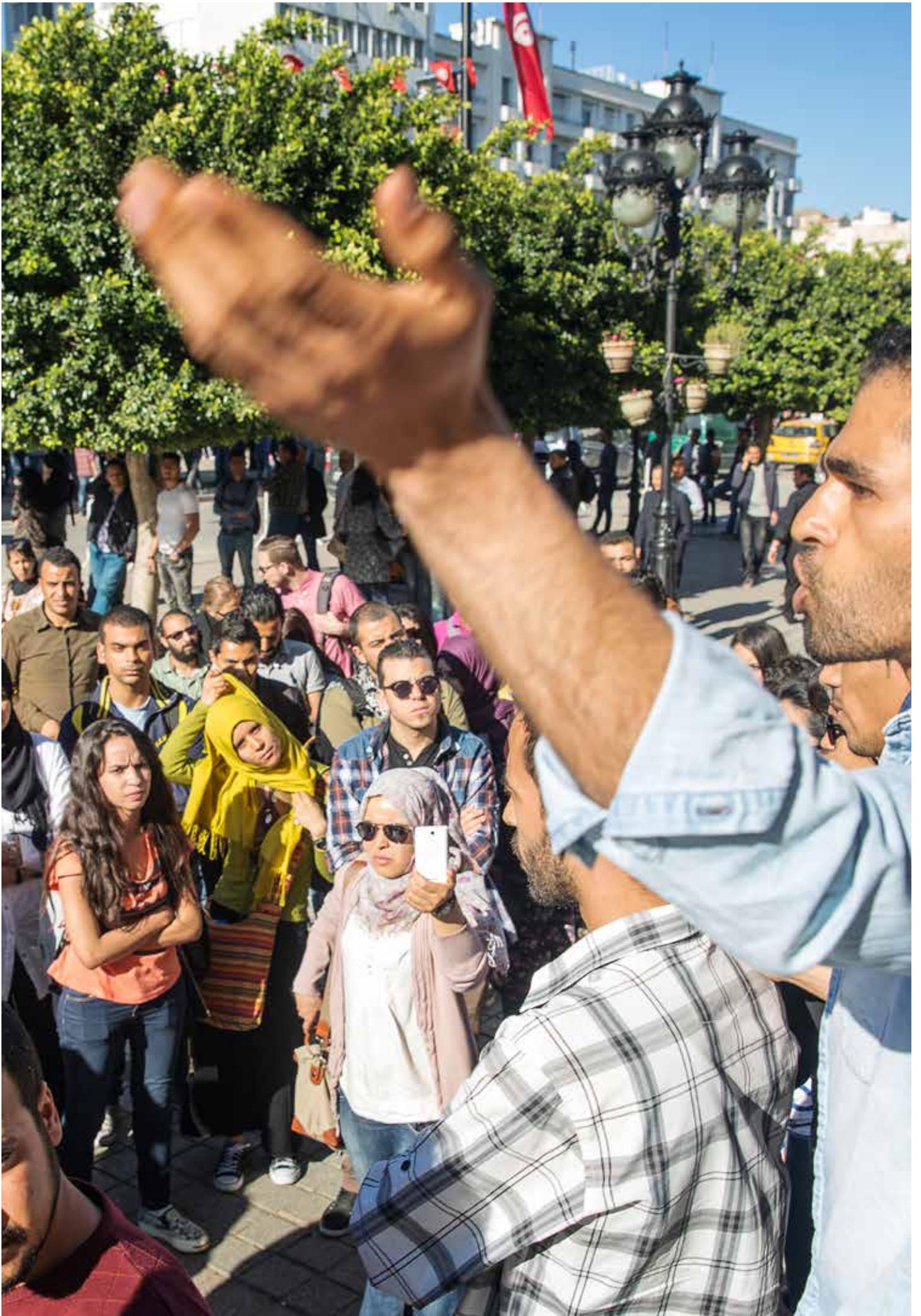
In 2016, we reorganised and expanded our communications and fundraising department. A number of new people joined the team: a marketing and fundraising specialist, a press officer and a colleague who will be handling online communications. In anticipation of Free Press Unlimited's new long-term strategy, we have also further developed the organisation's corporate communications and positioning so that the public has a clear idea of Free Press Unlimited's ambitions and activities.

In 2016, Free Press Unlimited drew public attention to press freedom and how it regularly comes under fire – sometimes in the most literal sense – through two large-scale events. On 3 May (World Press Freedom Day), we took part in the sold-out Festival of Free

Speech in De Balie in Amsterdam, where we launched the annual Press Freedom Monitor. On 2 November, some 230 journalists, legislators and policy-makers witnessed compelling stories about impunity and growing violence against journalists during the event Free Press Live 2016. Three journalists were honoured with an award: the Best Report Award, the Most Resilient Journalist Award and the Newcomer of the Year- Hans Verploeg Award.

Our monthly Dutch-language email newsletter is sent out to 4,032 subscribers, while its English-language version has 516 subscribers. In 2016, we saw a substantial increase in our number of followers on various social media platforms. On Twitter, our followers increased by 820 to a total of 5,762; while on LinkedIn, we presently have 840 followers – an increase of 260. Free Press Unlimited has 15,204 Facebook friends – 3,000 more than last year. In 2016, our YouTube videos were watched 9,870 times – a substantially lower number than in 2015 (14,330 times). In contrast, our website recorded a strong increase in visits – from 77,360 in 2015 to 133,153 in 2016.

If someone lodges a complaint about Free Press Unlimited, we work to settle this complaint within no more than 14 days. Our complaints mechanism (which complies with ISO 9001 certification requirements) includes a procedure of how to submit a complaint.





# Our approach

What is the best way to achieve our objectives? And what is the best way to contribute to independent, professional local media that can help realise positive social change? In 2015, after extensive research, careful thought and close consultation with our partners, we put our principles to paper. 2016 was the first year that we worked on the basis of this new Theory of Change.

## Three preconditions for change

Put simply, this Theory states that if Free Press Unlimited wants to help local media fulfil their vital social role, it needs to focus its efforts on three objectives. These objectives are expressed in our medium-term goals.

1. An enabling environment for the media is established, conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity.
2. Media serve the interest of the public, and act as a watchdog on their behalf.
3. Journalists and media-actors work professionally, and are effective and sustainable.

## What do we need to do to achieve this?

And of course, this raises the question: What should we do to achieve these objectives? Here are some examples:

- Together with our partners, we advocate the adoption – and enforcement – of legislation that protects journalists and guarantees the public's right to information.
- We bring media organisations and civil society organisations together and help them to restore public trust in the media. The media fulfils an important role as watchdog. Civil society organisations help make citizens 'media-savvy'.
- We help media professionals and organisations to professionalise their operations through a variety of programmes, including courses in the ethics of journalism, management trainings and modern technology.
- We support media partners in their efforts to honestly represent their society – particularly when it comes to making women's voices heard.
- We teach journalists and media companies how to protect themselves, their sources and their audience as effectively as possible.

## Measuring results and new insights

How do we determine whether we have actually achieved our objectives? Since 2016, we have been assessing our progress through two different methods. We measure within our PME mechanism, called the MEAL (Monitoring and Evaluation for Accountability & Learning) framework, and by 'scoring' to which extent our projects have contributed to, for example, the level of professionalism of local media organisations. This is done every year on the basis of standard 'indicators'. A second, new approach to assessing our results is the collection and analysis of reports by people who are directly involved in our projects. We ask them: "What was the most significant change that you experienced as a result of this project?" This generates surprisingly illuminating insights that couldn't be recorded through regular 'tallying'. Together, these two methods yield important learning points, which over time allow us to do our work even more efficiently and effectively.

## Our indicators

We have drawn up three indicators for each of the three interim goals set out in our Theory of Change (see above).

### Condition 1:

- Are civil society organisations able and willing to defend journalists and media organisations?
- How safe are journalists?
- How effectively are the media and the right to information protected by law?

### Condition 2:

- Do the media hold those in power accountable for their actions?
- Are women and men given an equal amount of attention in the media?
- Are the media there for every section of the population and do they enjoy the public's trust?

### Condition 3:

- Are the media able to effectively introduce innovations in their professional operations?
- Are the media able to engage in effective policy influencing?
- Are the media financially self-sufficient?

## Most significant change

In 2016, we organised three pilot programmes for local partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe and Iraq that trained them how to obtain 'most significant change' stories from participants in their projects. Our partners proved as enthusiastic about this method of collecting information as we are: our joint impact is suddenly given a face and a context. In addition – and this is also quite important – the stories shed light on both the intended and unintended results.

## This is what we learned from Press Freedom 2.0

In 2016, we took stock of our results in Press Freedom 2.0: the alliance within the Dutch government's second co-financing scheme (MFS II) in which we served as the main applicant. One particularly valuable outcome of this partnership were the close ties that were forged between the media, education programmes, local NGOs and base organisations. We learned how to get a wide range of different parties to sit down together and agree on a common objective. But we also experienced just how indispensable solid risk analyses and scenario planning are in countries where the freedom of the press regularly comes under pressure.



# Our organisation

Free Press Unlimited is growing and professionalising at a rapid pace. This required us to make sizeable investments in 2016 – both in terms of policy and adding new members of staff. The work pressure was relatively high in 2016 – a year in which we both wrapped up our existing co-financing programme and launched a number of major new programmes.

## Organisational structure

Free Press Unlimited has a network structure that allows our six project teams and eight supporting departments to efficiently exchange their knowledge and information.

In 2016, two of our programmes in the MENA-Eurasia region – the Syria programme and the Russian-Language News Exchange – expanded so quickly that we decided to merge them into a new team. Our teams range in size from 3.9 fte in Youth & Media to 13.6 fte in the large

Sudan & South Sudan team, which also comprises the team members of Radio Dabanga. Of the three local production offices (that handle very large productions on location), the office in Somaliland has since become independent as planned for 2016.

## Governance

Free Press Unlimited is a foundation with a governance model based on a division of roles between a supervisory and an executive body. The Board of Directors is made up of two directors: Leon Willems (Director of Policy & Programmes) and Ruth Kronenburg (Director of Operations). The Directors account to the Supervisory Board and are advised by the management team. Free Press Unlimited refers to the Dutch charity sector organisation VFI's Recommended Remuneration Scheme for Directors of Charitable Organisations (Adviesregeling Beloning Directeuren van Goede Doelen) and Code Wijffels. Leon Willems is paid a gross salary of € 87,570 per year and Ruth Kronenburg is paid a gross salary of € 78,649 per year. The Directors held a number of unsalaried ancillary positions in 2016, namely Chair of the Global Forum for Media Development (Leon Willems, until September) and Member of the Advisory Council of Pro Bono Connect (Ruth Kronenburg).

## Supervisory Board

Free Press Unlimited's Supervisory Board is the official employer of the Board of Directors. It monitors the organisation's results and is free to intervene whenever it deems this necessary. The Supervisory Board bears responsibility for the organisation's overall strategy and reaches its decisions on the basis of annual budgets and reports. The Supervisory Board convened four times in 2016. Every year, the Supervisory Board makes an official assessment of the Board of Directors's performance. It also evaluates its own actions once a year.

The members of the Supervisory Board are appointed for a term of four years. In principle, this term can be extended a maximum of three times. In 2016, the Supervisory Board was made up of the following members:



- **Joop Daalmeijer** (Chair), second term. Ancillary positions: Media adviser to the Council for Culture/ chairman of the Dutch press award 'De Tegel', Member of the Executive Board of De Buren in Brussels.
- **Marietje Schaake** (Vice Chair), second term, no ancillary positions.
- **Teus Eenkhoorn** (Member, Chair of the Financial Audit Committee), second term, no ancillary positions.
- **Corine de Vries** (Member), second term, no ancillary positions.
- **Henk Boer** (Member, member of the Financial Audit Committee), first term, no ancillary positions.
- **Ronald Gijsbertsen** (Member), first term, no ancillary positions.
- **Mark Fuller** (Member), first term, no ancillary positions.

In 2016, the Supervisory Board evaluated the performance of the Board of Directors as 'excellent': the Directors have a clear view of how Free Press Unlimited should function and are strongly focussed in making the organisation future-proof in financial terms. The Supervisory Board acted as mediator after a labour dispute had created some turmoil within the organisation, and wishes to compliment both the staff members and the Board of Directors on the solution that was jointly arrived at. After working for over seven years with the same audit firm, the Supervisory Board made a thorough inventory of other firms that Free Press Unlimited could work with. It was ultimately decided to continue the collaboration with our existing auditor.

### Knowledge, quality and continuity

Free Press Unlimited is a knowledge and project organisation. In 2015, we expanded our Knowledge and Quality team to a total of five members. This step started bearing fruit in 2016 with the introduction of the new MEAL framework and the Theory of Change. In the past year, we have worked on new scenarios for the local media landscape in Nigeria. Scenario planning also plays a role in the initiative, taken by eight organisations, to increase the scope for civil society. Free Press Unlimited and Hivos are taking the lead in this project, in which the sharing of knowledge and information plays a crucial role.

A good project information system is indispensable when it comes to effectively monitoring our projects.



After a lengthy and thorough study of our options, we started piloting an open source software system in late 2016. If tested successfully, we will implement this system organisation-wide over the course of 2017.

### Quality management

How are we doing as an organisation? To assess our performance, we have adopted a number of widely-recognised quality standards

- ISO 9001: Our existing certification is valid until the end of February 2018.
- Erkend Goed Doel (Recognised Charity): This new certification mark has replaced the former CBF certification.
- IATI: Our step-by-step reports – on 17 projects by now – conform to the IATI Standard.
- We also adhere to our own Code of Conduct, which all members of our staff comply with, as well as the codes adopted by Partos and the charity sector organisation Goede Doelen Nederland.
- The external audit conducted by the Dutch Postcode Lottery which is done every five year. The outcome was a renewal of a five year contract.
- The annual external (financial) audit.

### Risk analysis

In 2016, Free Press Unlimited included risk analyses in each of its country year plans. In addition, we made a start on developing a risk analysis for our organisation in the fields of strategy, implementation, people and finances. We have already taken a solid first step en route to the formulation of a complete risk analysis over the course of 2017.

### Social Corporate Responsibility

We strive to minimise our CO<sup>2</sup> emissions by encouraging staff to work from home and to travel by means of public transport. We use truly green electricity and book climate-neutral flights. Over the past few years, we have managed to considerably reduce the volume of paper used by our organisation. And when sourcing products

or services, wherever possible we select the most sustainable option.

### Human resource management

In 2016, our new HR officer set up a solid new human resource management policy in consultation with the staff and the Board of Directors. This policy will be implemented in the course of 2017. The three main features of this policy are:

1. Our employees form the main pillar of our organisation.
2. Free Press Unlimited aims to be an attractive employer.
3. Our human resources management needs to be professionalised further.

By the end of 2016, Free Press Unlimited employed 68 people, 34 men and 34 women. On average throughout the year our staff consisted of 60.9 fte – 10 fte more than in 2015. A total of 27 employees left the organisation in the year under review (compared to 15 in 2015). Seven of them left to pursue new growth opportunities elsewhere or for personal reasons. In the case of five staff members, their contract was not renewed because the project they were working on had been rounded off. We parted ways with two employees in mutual consultation. Three employees left because they were here temporarily for replacement during (maternity) leave. One employee passed away.

In 2016, we welcomed no fewer than 27 new colleagues (2015: 12). Of this number, six employees (representing 6.2 fte) worked abroad – within our Syria programme and the new Russian-Language News Exchange, among other projects. In addition, our organisation was strengthened by 12 interns and 11 volunteers in 2016. In 2016, our absence due to illness rates fell quite spectacularly from 4.4% to 1.7%.

### Employee satisfaction

When an organisation is going through rapid expansion, you occasionally need to pause for a moment to determine whether people, regulations, structures and lines of communication are still effectively aligned.

In 2016, we held an employee satisfaction survey among our staff that went into subjects like the current workload, our organisation, collaboration with other staff members and direction by the management team. The decision to do so was itself already well received.

A number of things came out of this survey, including:

- As of 2017, the two-weekly meeting of the management team will be replaced by a strategic management meeting once every quarter. This meeting will be attended by the team leaders and the Communications and Knowledge & Quality Coordinators. The team leaders and the coordinators will meet once a month for consultation.



Threat	Probability	Impact	Risk level
1 Changes in the political landscape make it difficult to secure funding for media projects.	Average	Strong	High
2 Free Press Unlimited risks damage to its reputation as a result of negative reporting on our projects or a crisis situation.	Average	Limited	Average
3 Projects are not executed, or executed poorly, resulting in damage to the reputation of Free Press Unlimited, its local partner and /or the donor.	Low	Minor	Low
4 A country where we are executing one or more projects has become too unstable, necessitating the suspension or cancellation of our activities.	High	Minor	Average
5 Hacks, phishing, espionage or unsecure digital communications result in a leak of privacy-sensitive information that could potentially endanger people's lives.	High	Strong	High
6 A local partner or Free Press Unlimited itself does not honour agreements made with a donor during a project's execution, resulting in damage to Free Press Unlimited's reputation.	Average	Limited	Average



- Another conclusion is that while we may learn a lot at the individual level, we are not learning enough as an organisation. We will be immediately setting to work on this issue in 2017. In January, we will come together for one week to reflect on our activities and draw collective lessons from our insights.

### **Trust Committee**

Thanks in part to the aforementioned employee satisfaction survey, the independent external Trust Committee reported that except for a number of informal complaints in early 2016, it had not received any further informal complaints over the course of that year. The Trust Committee, which is made up of a male and a female member, is jointly nominated by the Board of Directors and the staff representative body (personeelsvertegenwoordiging). The members completed their second term in October 2016. Free Press Unlimited is currently in the process of forming a new Trust Committee.

### **Staff representative body**

Free Press Unlimited's staff representative body (personeelsvertegenwoordiging) convened on some 20 occasions in 2016, of which seven meetings were also attended by the Board of Directors and four meetings by the organisation's entire staff. Important topics of discussion during these meetings included the new salary scheme, the employee satisfaction survey and the representative body's transition towards a full-fledged works council in the course of 2017.

### **Diversity**

Free Press Unlimited employs 34 women and 34 men. The ratio is less balanced at the management level. The management team is made up of 3 women and 6 men; the Board of Directors consists of one man and one woman. Free Press Unlimited strives to fill more managerial vacancies with female candidates. The average age of our employees is 42, with a relatively even distribution of age groups: under 35: 25 employees; 35-50: 23 employees; 50-65: 16 employees.

### **Training and education**

Our staff members all have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills within the Continuous Professional Development Plan (CPDP). This programme focuses both on their personal development contributions to their team and the wider organisation. In 2016, we offered our employees trainings in a number of areas, including working with wiki websites, data management, encryption, physical safety and crisis management. Staff members are also encouraged to develop according to their personal needs.

### **Safety policy**

Free Press Unlimited has adopted an active safety policy that all employees are required to adhere to. Another key area of attention is digital security. As early as 2014, we appointed a security coordinator, developed an information security policy and trained our staff in a variety of safety measures, including the encryption of their emails. In 2016, we also engaged a white hat hacker to test the security of our systems.

# Financial information

2016 marked the start of our new Strategic Partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of our Syria programme with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). To top it all off, 2016 ended with the announcement by the Dutch Postcode Lottery that it would substantially increase its structural funding for our work.

The latter event in particular is clearly reflected in our operating surplus for 2016. The funding increase was only announced late in the year, and Free Press Unlimited enters this income on the balance for the year in which the associated lottery tickets were sold. As a result, 2016 ended with an exceptionally high positive balance: totalling over € 760,000. We have added this surplus to our continuity reserve, which presently stands at close to € 2.3 million euro. This addition couldn't have been timelier, since due to the recent growth of our organisation, Free Press Unlimited's operating costs have increased to € 3 million per year. Our policy is to ensure that the continuity reserve covers 70 to 150 percent of our annual operating costs. The addition in the present financial year once again puts the continuity reserve at 75% of our operating costs, which is well within the established margin.

In addition to strengthening our continuity in 2016, we are pleased to say that over the past year, we also successfully rounded off a number of large-scale, long-term projects without having to record any losses or uncovered costs. For example, in June of 2016, we saw the final acceptance and approval of our report on the StoryMaker project, which started in 2012 and represented a total programme investment of € 2.2 million. And this list also includes the i-Stream project with Internews (USD 1.1 million), our project in Somalia, which was supported by the EU (with a budget of over € 1.1 million) and a project in Syria with a budget of € 3 million, which could also count on financial contributions from Sida.

We are able to continue our activities in Somalia with funding allocated within the new Strategic Partnership, and Sida has once again pledged its support to our projects in Syria. Through these and other programmes, we work to make a lasting difference in the areas that we are active in. We are still examining our options to follow up the aforementioned StoryMaker project.

We are not only extremely grateful to the Dutch Postcode Lottery for their decision to increase their structural support to Free Press Unlimited. We also sincerely thank them for their contributions to three specific projects: 'The Future is Now' (a programme within which we set up news bulletins for children all over the world), Nepal Save the Date (in partnership with dance4life) and the the Dutch Postcode Lottery Fund for Journalists. In 2016, we once again received an extra contribution for the latter project. This project contribution has allowed us to expand the funding programme, so that journalists can now apply for up to € 16,500 in funding for in-depth investigative reports that could not have been realised without the fund's support.

And finally, 2016 was the year in which we really starting building the new Russian-language news platform Russian-Language News Exchange. After the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs pledged its support to this project in late 2015 – in the shape of a contribution of € 1.3 million – the European organisation European Endowment for Democracy joined as a donor in 2016. The European Union has also contributed € 1 million to the project. This means that we have presently achieved our target: the greater part of the project is presently covered in financial terms. Naturally, we will work to ensure that the Russian-Language News Exchange can continue its activities in the years ahead.

And of course, the same applies to all our activities in which we work to promote independent journalism and to achieve our mission: provide people all over the world with access to independent information. We are extremely grateful to our private and institutional donors for supporting us in this endeavour, because... People deserve to know!

Ruth Kronenburg  
April 2017

# Balance sheet as at 31 December 2016

All amounts in euro

<b>Assets</b>	<b>31-12-2016</b>	<b>31-12-2015</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
<b>Intangible fixed assets</b>		
Website	20,727	38,553
<b>Tangible fixed assets</b>		
Renovation	69,836	90,430
Office supplies	26,565	27,514
Hardware and software	55,088	37,598
Total tangible fixed assets	151,489	155,542
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<b>172,216</b>	<b>194,095</b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Accruals	509,356	450,967
Accounts receivable and advances	108,141	92,716
Grants to be received	2,588,014	2,442,257
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>3,205,510</b>	<b>2,985,941</b>
<b>Liquid assets</b>		
The Netherlands	5,808,664	4,031,054
Abroad	99,892	65,590
<b>Total liquid assets</b>	<b>5,908,556</b>	<b>4,096,643</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>9,286,282</b>	<b>7,276,679</b>

# Balance sheet as at 31 December 2016

All amounts in euro

<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>31-12-2016</b>	<b>31-12-2015</b>
<b>Reserves and funds</b>		
Continuity reserve	2,264,712	1,500,581
Reporters Respond Security Fund	27,490	27,490
<b>Total reserves and funds</b>	<b>2,292,202</b>	<b>1,528,071</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Payable to staff	304,454	339,118
Payable to suppliers	263,441	220,298
Other short-term liabilities	219,708	254,967
Obligations in connection with current projects	2,145,053	1,410,981
Grants received in advance	4,061,425	3,523,244
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>6,994,080</b>	<b>5,748,608</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>9,286,282</b>	<b>7,276,679</b>

# Statement of income and expenses

All amounts in euro

<b>Income</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>budget</b>	<b>2015</b>
Income from own fundraising activities	817,935	1,445,000	1,058,694
Income from third-party activities	2,199,035	1,580,000	1,305,461
Government grants	13,370,935	13,565,000	12,613,457
Other income	110,292	25,000	75,477
<b>Total income</b>	<b>16,498,196</b>	<b>16,615,000</b>	<b>15,053,090</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Spent on the organisation's objective</b>			
Media support programme	14,993,126	15,719,199	14,675,453
<b>Spent on the acquisition of new funds</b>			
Costs of own fundraising activities	60,763	182,731	45,901
Acquisition costs for government grants	243,052	310,100	183,605
	<b>303,814</b>	<b>492,831</b>	<b>229,506</b>
<b>Spent on management and accounting</b>			
Management and accounting costs	437,864	398,294	249,352
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>15,734,804</b>	<b>16,610,325</b>	<b>15,154,312</b>
<b>Balance of income and expenses</b>	<b>763,392</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>-101,222</b>
<b>Appropriation of the balance</b>			
Additions to/withdrawals from:			
Continuity reserve	764,131	4,675	-92,660
Withdrawal Security Fund	0	0	-8,562
<b>Total</b>	<b>764,131</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>-101,222</b>
<b>Financial ratios</b>			
	<b>2015</b>	<b>budget</b>	<b>2014</b>
Spent on the organisation's objective/Total income	90.88%	94.61%	97.49%
Spent on organisation's objective/Total expenses	95.29%	94.64%	96.84%
Costs of own fundraising activities/Income from own fundraising activities	7.43%	12.65%	4.34%
Management and accounting costs/Total expenses	2.78%	2.40%	1.65%

**Free Press Unlimited** works to ensure that impartial news and information are and remain available to people across the globe. Particularly in countries where there is little to no press freedom.

#### Colophon

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Design and production: Tangerine

Cartography: BosmaGrafiek.nl, made with Natural Earth

Print: Quantes Grafimedia



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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