



2015 Annual Program Report

A Note from the Executive Director

For IWPR 2015 was indelibly marked by the loss in service of Ammar al-Shahbender, our dear colleague and friend, and long-standing chief of party of our substantial programming in Iraq. This was followed five months later by the death in different circumstances of Jacqueline Sutton, his acting replacement. This twin blow shook the organization deeply, and we miss them on both personal and professional levels.

Within IWPR and around the world, these tragedies were met with a profound rallying of support for which we will always be grateful. This solidarity has inspired us, in their memory, to re-commit to the work of strengthening local voices in areas of crisis and conflict, even in the world's most challenging environments. The continuing open conflict and growing extremism in Syria, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere, and the massive migration into Europe from Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa, have driven home the imperative of building independent media, civil society and voices of moderation. The two major attacks by extremists in Paris – first on an independent satirical magazine, and then on public life itself – targeted precisely those sectors of free media and open civil society to which IWPR is committed and demonstrated the urgency of our efforts, both for development and stability abroad and for security and confidence at home.

A year of continuing bloodshed and loss made the reliance and successes of independent voices around the world only more apparent. While repressive governments across the world deployed various legal and extralegal means to reduce the space for civil society and open journalism, local voices demonstrated extraordinary courage to speak out – bearing human witness and holding authorities to account, while establishing skills and structures, instincts and institutions for long-term change. IWPR worked in more than 30 countries and territories around the world, supporting fragile networks in closed and war-torn areas, and strengthening free voices and independent institutions in developing and transitional societies. In a number of regions, IWPR engaged directly with local authorities to strengthen transparency and build networks for enhanced governance through open information, public engagement and accountability.

Global Impact

In 2015, with an improved structure for management and day-to-day oversight of programs, IWPR's priority was to refine and focus our projects to increase impact, and monitor and evaluate our efforts to document and demonstrate strong results across regional divisions for the Middle East and North Africa, Africa, Asia, Eurasia and Latin America.

Middle East & North Africa

Iraq

The dedicated teams in Erbil and Baghdad came together to continue their efforts on behalf of freedom of expression and better representation of youth, women and minorities in Iraq's public life. This included launching our largest project to date, *Baladna Tariqna* ("Our Country, Our Path"), which works with Iraqi social media activists to generate factual information and responsible content, as a counter to extremist media and violent concepts. The articles, cartoons and videos commissioned by IWPR captured an impressive audience almost immediately - in only six months, the project's , participating Facebook pages were attracting an average of 2.1 million active users per month, representing almost 20% of all Facebook traffic in Iraq.

Libya

IWPR continued implementing activities under distinct but interrelated projects that strengthen the capacity of local Libyan media to produce civic debate programs related to the country's democratic transition, provide hands-on training for young journalists at the universities of Tripoli and Zawiya, and enhance the quality of journalistic content produced in country.

- The first series of the regional radio program "Reporting the Transition" was completed, bringing the total number of programs produced with partner Libya radio stations to more than 80. New funding allowed for a further 100 editions, as well as additional journalist training and support for the Media Labs established at the universities of Tripoli and Zawiya. Safety and security training is also being increased to extend to more Libya media professionals, civil society activists and other free speech advocates. Under a new initiative, IWPR will create a digital archive of its transition radio program so that this vital record of Libya's recent history will be widely available to Libya media, students and the public at large.
- In partnership with BBC Media Action, IWPR provided internships and placements within working newsrooms for 22 student journalists, and also supported the Media Labs to extend their course offerings and cooperating with other universities.
- IWPR's Libyan Content Development Fund provided grants to five media outlets for improved journalistic content, including reports, new websites and other platforms.

Syria

IWPR continued to provide journalism training to citizen journalists and activists inside Syria.

- Launched in early 2015, the Damascus Bureau women's blog, shared stories from women around the country. By the end of the year, the blog had 83 writers with an average of two new writers joining every month.
- Our primary project focused on supporting Syrian civil society organizations (CSOs), through trainings to build institutional capacity, small grants and networking opportunities to strengthen collaboration and coordination among Syrian CSOs and international partners and funders. Under this project, IWPR also helped to start up unique initiative to map Syrian grassroots organizations.

This will provide a comprehensive understanding of Syrian civil society, transparently share information on CSOs' areas of activity and fields of work, and encourage networking, collaboration and exchanges of experiences among the groups.

- Five documentary short films that showcase female activists living in rebel-held areas of northeast Syria, were produced by IWPR's Syria Coordinator, award-winning journalist Zaina Erhaim. IWPR organized a tour to the Netherlands, UK and US. to screen the films, which highlight the human challenges faced by women living and working in rebel-held parts of Syria and the leadership roles these women play in their own communities.

Asia

Afghanistan

Building on our long-standing work to strengthen independent media, IWPR programming focused on supporting public discussion to challenge officials and connect them to the public, and provide a public forum for the discussion around peace efforts.

IWPR's Open Minds Afghanistan and Afghan Reconciliation projects reached more than 25,000 Afghans (40% of them women) in 2015 through public debates and online inter-provincial forums.

"The IWPR debates gave people the ability, for the first time, to discuss issues directly with officials. They found this incredible. A kind of trust in the democratic process was created."

- Muqim Adil, project participant and presenter on Voice of Nejrab radio in Kapisa province

Burma/Myanmar

Launched in September, IWPR's project to combat hate speech hired staff, secured an office in Yangon and undertook a baseline assessment. While local media coverage of Buddhist-Rohingya/Muslim relations improved to some degree as a result of extensive ethical and professional training, hate speech migrated over to social media where it is increasingly dividing and inflaming society. In October 2015 after national elections, IWPR recruited and held initial trainings for 20 local journalists from the majority ethnic Bamar (Buddhist) community. Trainings focused on teaching them how to identify, analyse and deconstruct hate speech for public audiences in an effort to improve public information and education. Given the pitiful tradition and level of analytical skills in Burma, this has been a challenge from the outset: So too the fact that the majority of hate speech present has been targeting Muslim communities and our attempts to focus on the issue and danger of hate speech have themselves been the focus of condemnation and attack from nationalist religious groups. Despite this, our initial trainings and course for monitors left them very well prepared for the live launch of the monitoring and the project in March 2016.

Philippines

IWPR's project in the Philippines, the *Citizen Action Network for Accountability (CANA)*, has connected Filipino citizen action groups with local media to facilitate advocacy networks between communities and their local governments. These networks have proven to be remarkably successful in amplifying the voices of Filipino citizens to hold local government accountable and ensure that they are more responsive to their needs.

The networks enable community organizations and citizens in eight of the poorest provinces of the Philippines to function as watchdog groups led by media organizations equipped with easy-to-use technology.

The groups engage in public outreach and dialogue with local government through local media to raise accountability for how public funds are spent. Local media also works to expand public information and education, complemented by advocacy, networking and alliance-building skills within communities.

- Since 2012 IWPR has helped set up 24 citizen action groups serving as anti-corruption monitors and accountability campaigners in their local communities.
- In 2015, IWPR trained 1,000 people – media professionals, civil society staff, government officials, students, teachers, and farmers – on basic knowledge and tools to understand, monitor and report on public finance issues, including in areas in central Philippines severely hit by disasters in the past years.
- Issues tackled by the citizen action groups include accountability for welfare aid, community projects and road construction contracts. The founder of our first ever citizen action group, Abner Francisco, a local radio presenter, was presented with a national award for his anti-corruption work.

Sri Lanka

IWPR's Sri Lanka project worked with media, civil society groups, government officials and the public to increase accountability and transparency and strengthen fundamental human rights. With the change of government in January 2015, IWPR operated publically and worked with the country's major ethnic groups in seven out of the country's nine provinces.

- Four major thematic areas of the project were: good governance; accountability; women and sexual and gender-based violence; and the rights of the marginalized, including migrant workers and persons internally displaced during the long-standing civil war.
 - The project worked with local media to help journalists better understand and cover issues that concern the population.
 - IWPR training and mentoring helped civic groups and advocates organize public debates, work constructively with the media and enhance their leadership skills – with a special focus on increasing women's participation in civic issues and political life.
 - Partner groups focused on a wide range of issues, from micro-credit legislation and a forthcoming freedom of information bill to a campaign called "We Change" to end violence against women.
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Central Asia

Regional

In 2014, IWPR launched the Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting (CABAR, www.cabar.asia), a digital space for local politicians, experts, academics and other key groups to share their visions of regional and local problems, exchange ideas and offer ways to overcome the barriers to intergovernmental and regional cooperation. The site serves as an online think tank, giving voice to representatives of all sectors of Central Asian society. CABAR remained a key platform for reporting and analysis throughout the region in 2015.

Kyrgyzstan

- IWPR successfully assisted civil society respond to threats from the state, including a draft law on foreign agents before the Kyrgyz Parliament, and the government denouncement of a cooperation treaty with the United States.
- IWPR provided media organizations and human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan with the skills and knowledge to cooperate effectively. To support these linkages, a network of media and NGO representatives, Karek, was established by IWPR in cooperation with Internews, to build trust and communication between the two sectors.
- Through a core group of journalists, IWPR kick-started the production of investigative journalism in Kyrgyzstan. Through expert training, mentoring and legal advice – four investigative reports were published during the year, with many more in the development stage.
- IWPR publicized and addressed the increasing threat of radicalization in Kyrgyzstan among young people through roundtable events at which state representatives, NGO representatives, journalists and experts discussed the threat; conducted a series of lectures for Kyrgyz students on tolerance and diversity; and trained 20 journalists in reporting specifically upon issues of radicalization, extremism and terrorism.

Kazakhstan

IWPR achieved important milestones in its civil society and media work in Kazakhstan.

- Supported by UN Women, IWPR strengthened the capacity of women's networks to lead evidence-based advocacy efforts to the Kazakh state, with the goal of integrating gender and HIV issues into gender strategies on the national level.
- IWPR strengthened the information exchange between the population and local authorities of the Mangystau region, by supporting the creation of press agencies in 8 public authorities. It also encouraged the development of strong links between NGOs and the media, through dedicated training workshops.



Tajikistan

IWPR took strides towards to improve standards of journalism in the country, through training and mentoring in international standards as well as investigative reporting.

- Well-received investigative reports were published in local media and on the CABAR portal.
 - A 10-member Coalition of Independent Mass Media and Human Rights Activists was established in Tajikistan, to encourage collaboration between the media and NGOs on investigating and promoting human rights issues.
 - IWPR also addressed the issue of youth radicalization, to counter misinformation and establish a cross-sector understanding among the Tajik government, civil society, media and the general public.
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Eastern Europe

Bosnia

IWPR continued its Challenges of Transition project, to promote community-level efforts at peacebuilding and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As part of this small project funded by the Norwegian Embassy in Sarajevo, a series of IWPR-produced films were screened in public cinemas and high schools throughout the country, with the objective to challenge inaccurate and biased narratives of recent wars in the region and countering widespread misconceptions about their consequences.

Ukraine

IWPR launched its first programming in-country in 2014, training an initial cohort of 24 journalists in hostile environment, safety and security and conflict reporting. Building on that initial programming, In 2015 IWPR launched a larger project to extend the hostile environment and conflict reporting training, and to improve media and civil society oversight of the Ukraine government's reform agenda, address corruption.

Caucasus

Regional

IWPR remains a key provider of quality training for journalists and civil society organizations and is a major hub for cross-border communication across the conflict divides across the South Caucasus.

Throughout 2015 IWPR worked intensively on related to conflicts in Georgia to foster greater understanding and more conciliatory attitudes between the parties to the conflict.

- In regard to the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, IWPR held video bridge sessions linking experts from both countries, providing local media with access to first hand analysis on complex issues of conflict and cross-border relations with neighboring Iran, Russia, Georgia and Turkey.
- Public debates held with conflict-affected community representatives in Georgia, as well as governmental and non-state actors in Armenia, provided unique platforms for networking, awareness raising and reporting.
- Despite the crackdown on independent media and international organizations in Azerbaijan, IWPR ensured continuing reporting on human rights abuses and the state of media in the country.

Armenia

- In 2015 IWPR trained and provided an international reporting platform for 50 local journalists through IWPR's flagship weekly Caucasus Reporting Service electronic publication. Armenian journalists covered issues ranging from conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh, ethnic minorities, rights of people with disabilities, key legislative changes to governance and environmental issues.
- IWPR-Yerevan held training-workshops in communication and public outreach for local civil society organizations to help strengthen their public outreach, improve visibility and enhance the impact of their work. The key activity remains the debate and discussions platform implemented in partnership with the Armenian Public Journalism Club.
- Seven high profile press briefings were arranged with the participation of experts, government officials and the representatives of intentional and local civil society organizations. The discussions provided alternative perspectives on issues regarded of high importance and aimed to go beyond the agenda set by the mainstream media.

Azerbaijan

The media environment and civil liberties continued to deteriorate in 2015. Despite this, IWPR contributors from Azerbaijan continued to report on persecutions of human rights activists, independent journalists, and opposition figures.

- 50 reports and three in-depth articles were produced in partnership with Armenian colleagues. Joint journalism projects like these facilitated professional relationships and fostered more active regional interaction/cooperation between the hostile countries.
- IWPR's Tbilisi office worked with local human rights partner organizations provided training and support for Azerbaijani journalists in exile, who had found shelter in Georgia.

Georgia

IWPR's Tbilisi South Caucasus office is a regional hub with projects that range from journalism training and reporting, to public discussions and peace-building.

- IWPR organized four cross-sector meetings where sixty civil society activists and journalists received training in mediation,

"I will never forget my fellowship in London. It was significant for me to meet colleagues at BBC and IWPR as both establish and follow the highest standards in journalism."

- Gogita Aptsiauri, the first winner of the EUMM Special Prize.



advocacy, online media tools and conflict-sensitive reporting.

- In partnership with local leading women's organizations IWPR expanded a dedicated web resource entitled Women Connecting for Peace, which provides a reporting platform for leading women activists in the region.
 - More than 80 reports were produced on issues of gender equality and women's role in economic, political life as well peacebuilding and reconciliation.
 - More than 70 young journalists from various universities attended training sessions organized in the capital and the towns adjacent to conflict zones.
 - Local media attended IWPR-organized study-trips to remote areas of the country, where young people had been recruited to join insurgents in Syria.
 - IWPR also ran the Special Prize for Peace Journalism project, which included a cash prize and a one-month fellowship at IWPR-London.
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Africa

Nigeria

In 2015, IWPR opened an office in Abuja, recruited a core team of staff including a dedicated project manager, IWPR's investigative journalism project, operated in collaboration with US-based Partners for Democratic Change and a host of local partners, focused on in-depth reporting on corruption in the security sector, by strengthening the capacity of 22 journalists in the principles and techniques of investigative journalism as well as the safety measures required to report in hostile environments. Ten of the journalists received small grants to pursue investigative articles, with mentoring support provided by one of the most influential and recognized investigative reporters in Nigeria.

The project aimed to strengthen relationships between the media and participating civil society organizations through roundtable events, creating opportunities for collaboration on initiatives that address issues of corruption, human rights and accountable governance.

Rwanda

In collaboration with the Netherlands and Sweden embassies, IWPR support enabled policymakers to pass six media laws including an ambitious Access to Information law; encouraged the development of independent media outlets; transformed the status of the public broadcaster; established media regulatory bodies; and seeded dozens of new creative initiatives through our small grants business incubator.

IWPR trained more than 224 Rwandan journalists, and enhanced the professional capacity of over 63 media outlets.

Sierra Leone

As a parallel to IWPR's Nigeria project, IWPR established an office in Sierra Leone, secured a locally based project team, and began a new project, The Law School for Journalists, in collaboration with Partners for



Democratic Change, with the overall goal to empower independent media and civil society groups to operate more effectively as anti-corruption watchdogs.

- Local journalists were trained in investigative reporting so that they could hold the government accountable and provide proper coverage of court cases and other legal matters.
- The Law School culminated in the award of a number of grants in support of investigations, along with mentoring and editorial support from a senior trainer.
- IWPR also operated a series of workshops between members of the judiciary and those from the media sector to improve relationships and encourage better collaboration.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, IWPR expanded discussion of the rule of law and issues faced by women through a series of radio programs produced by women journalists as part of the 'Nadhrat al-Shafafa' or 'Transparent View' project and its accompanying radio series. In partnership with the Catholic Radio Network, the radio series gave women a stronger voice and provided an alternative to Sudanese government radio in a region starved of media and information sources.

- The project recruited and trained sixteen women journalists to produce 60 weekly radio magazine programs on women's rights, broadcasted across seven stations in South Sudan and Sudan.
- Broadcasts of the magazine program began in March 2015, accompanied by a live radio debate on the topics discussed. The programs reached an estimated 5 million listeners.

Latin America

Cuba

IWPR implemented three projects in Cuba: Open Voices, to build journalism capacity and enhance protection for at-risk journalists; Independent News Providers, to build the capacity of three news agencies and improve journalistic output and reach; and Democracy, Leadership and Communications, to help Cuban civil society groups clarify and focus their objectives and messaging.

The work had a profound impact, "changing the face of independent journalism in Cuba" according to a leading writer and former political prisoner, "creating a new generation of journalism" focusing on fact-based reporting rather than politicized opinion.

In 2015, Open Voices trained 46 journalists, with a dozen learning skills of investigative reporting and producing high-impact reports on subjects ranging from sex-trafficking to corruption and profiteering by Mexican and Cuban officials.

Also, six journalists spent a month at prestigious media outlets in Mexico, allowing them to expand their



networks and gain an unprecedented opportunity to understand the workings of the media under “conditions of greater freedom of expression.”

IWPR also helped the Cuban Press Freedom Association develop a Center for Attention to Journalists, to provide digital, psychological and legal support to journalists targeted by the government.

Independent News Providers assisted in the consolidation of two media groups in the central and eastern parts of the country; through IWPR’s support – including training, financial assistance and business and strategic mentoring – each are now producing and publishing news on events in their regions.

IWPR helped six Cuban civil society group focus their approaches, extend their partnerships, and develop advocacy campaigns around electoral reform, gay rights, violence against women, electoral reform and other issues.

Regional

IWPR’s digital security program, which was developed in the Middle East and North Africa, for the first time incorporated a Latin American component, to provide online safety awareness for human rights defenders working in Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Honduras. These programs play a vital role in enabling journalists and human rights activists, who are often vulnerable to serious digital and physical threats, to continue to communicate and network safely and securely online. IWPR also became a sub-partner on an initiative of Partners for Democratic Change in Ecuador and Nicaragua, providing communications training to 10 non-profit organizations and helping them develop practical communications campaigns on a wide variety of issues. IWPR was asked to provide continued mentoring to the 10 groups as they implemented the campaigns expected to run into 2016.

In 2015 IWPR cooperated with many international partners to inform and enrich our work, increase our effectiveness and efficiency, and extend our outreach and impact. Partners included major broadcasters and publications, leading international human rights groups, media support and training institutes, universities and research groups/think tanks.

Special thanks to the following:

Adroit	National Endowment for Democracy
BBC Media Action	Netherlands Embassy in Rwanda
Deutsche Welle Akademie	Sigrid Rausing Trust
European Commission	Swedish Embassy in Rwanda
Foreign Commonwealth Office	UN Women
Hivos	USAID
International Alert	US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
International Media Support	US Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Partners for Democratic Change	The US-Middle East Partnership Initiative
Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs	