



# Multi-Annual Strategic Plan 2013-2017

**FREE  
FREE  
PRESS  
UNLIMITED**

People deserve to know

# Index

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# Summary

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Free Press Unlimited strives to flourish as an independent international player in media development. In order to strengthen its position in the financially unstable development sector, the organisation needs to expand the number of signature projects under the motto bigger projects in less countries.

In terms of geographical context a focus on less of countries is proposed based on the added value and knowledge Free Press Unlimited can bring to the table. In terms of thematic approaches Free Press Unlimited proposes multi country thematic programmes. To achieve that, the organisation needs to modernise its participative empowerment strategies, develop new gender strategies, build up youth media programmes for fragile states and invest in investigative journalism. Education through media support organisations is no longer priority. Digital open accessible learning tools are preferred under the umbrella of democratising journalism. The field of safety and security becomes

a mainstream priority of Free Press Unlimited. New priorities are protection of investigative journalists from libel, development of integrated physical, digital and psycho-social security in fragile and repressive countries and special modules aimed to enhance the safety of female journalists.

Staff skills development will become a continuous effort focused on understanding media production and management as well as internal knowledge capacity. Drastic improvement of the ability to monitor and evaluate result and impact will require investment in the coming years.

Free Press Unlimited has a reputation to be specialised in pragmatic partnership development and on the ground assessment. That reputation has led to several signature projects. We should be confident in the future and build on that.

# Foreword

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In September 2012, the Board of Directors of Free Press Unlimited (FPU) suggested to the Supervisory Board that a strategic investigation should be carried out with the aim of formulating a long-term strategy for the organisation. The aftermath of the merger was over, and there was now time and room to formulate a long-term strategy; during the merger there was too little time for this. The aim of this strategy is to ready the organisation for a future in which financing for the work of Free Press Unlimited has become less certain.

Important steps were taken in 2013. We organised internal brainstorming sessions in the spring, and tested our policy against the needs of our partners during the Partners' Meeting in Istanbul. Dialogue with dozens of external experts and partners – both within the Netherlands and in target countries – as well as studying evaluations, allowed the Board of Directors to map the external fields of influence to which the organisation is exposed. This was thinking from the outside in. At the end of the summer, the Board of Directors shared their interim findings with the Supervisory Board.

Next, we looked at things from the inside out. The findings were distributed internally among the staff of Free Press Unlimited, and explained during a plenary meeting. We agreed that a number of topics would be discussed substantively within workgroups. These sessions were all facilitated according to the same methodology. Each topic was subjected to a SWOT-analysis which clarified the Strengths and Weaknesses of Free Press Unlimited, as well as where the Opportunities lie, and what the Threats might be.

Two-and-a-half years after the launch of Free Press Unlimited, we are taking stock of our initial strategic choices, and we review our priorities; all with the idea of mapping out a strategy for the future in a comprehensive long-term policy plan. This plan includes the further process of strategic refinement towards the future. This plan was approved by the Supervisory Board of Free Press Unlimited in a meeting on 13 December 2013.

Ruth Kronenburg & Leon Willems  
16 January 2014

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

Free Press Unlimited was formed in the spring of 2011 by a merger between Free Voice, Press Now and the international project component of the RNTC. Free Voice was founded in 1986. Its aim was to support the media in developing countries. Press Now was set-up in 1993, mainly to support the independent media in the former Yugoslavia (Balkan countries). The RNTC was founded as early as 1968 as a training centre for Radio Netherlands Worldwide.

The merger had a strategic function. Each of these organisations had its own original vision and mission. RNTC sprung from the need for an international training centre for emerging media in developing countries. Free Voice was established to meet a need for a donor apparatus for developing professional media in poor countries. Press Now was a solidarity and knowledge centre for independent journalists from regions threatened by the Balkan war. Over the course of time, the organisations expanded their tasks and target groups, and would often come into contact with one another. Ultimately, it became apparent that their objectives and activities had a similar character and/or overlapped each other. A logical result of this was to join forces, rather than compete with one another. This would form a new, stronger organisation that could make an even greater contribution to media development in developing countries, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech. It was already predicted that funding for development projects and human rights would dry up.

The objective the new organisation had in mind (at the end of 2010) was to strengthen and expand press freedom and freedom of speech for the individual as well as media organisations. This would be done by:

1. Strengthening capacity at individual level
2. Durable media development aimed at independent partner organisations and media, as well as those that could be made independent.

3. Journalistic initiatives in repressive countries and fragile states aimed at a professional, independent flow of information.

These core activities of the new organisation would be supplemented with small-scale emergency aid for journalists in crisis situations, as well as the sharing of knowledge between individual journalists and/or journalism students in the Netherlands and target countries. After the merger, the core activities converged between two teams within Free Press Unlimited, namely:

1. Journalistic initiatives
2. Participative media

## 1.2 Vision and Mission

Free Press Unlimited has a clear vision and mission. Our vision is:

**Everyone deserves access to independent information**

This vision can be seen in all of our communications, both internal and external, ever since the merger. Consider the website, the annual plan, the annual report, and the statutes of Free Press Unlimited. The idea behind this vision is formed by article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights 4 :

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

For most people in the world, access to reliable information is far from a matter of course. However, every person needs independent information to be able

to assess and influence their own situation. If you do not know what is going on around you, how can you make the right decisions?

### **The mission**

It is the mission of Free Press Unlimited to make and keep independent news and information available to everyone, especially in countries where there is no or limited press freedom. By supporting local media professionals and journalists, Free Press Unlimited desires to contribute towards giving everyone sustained access to the information they need to survive and develop. Free Press Unlimited strives to create and expand freedom of speech by promoting press freedom and media diversity. The focus falls on developing countries as well as fragile and repressive states.

Free Press Unlimited maintains the following core values:

- Independent
- Inspiring
- Inventive
- Dedicated
- Custom solutions

### **1.3 Objectives**

To succeed in its mission, Free Press Unlimited has formulated four objectives:

1. The media enjoys recognition and respect in countries where Free Press Unlimited operates.
2. Debate, dialogue and interaction occurs between various actors in society that was previously not the case.
3. Citizens, policy makers and politicians make daily use of media products of improved-quality because they have become accessible.
4. Media organisations are enhanced and professional.

Free Press Unlimited works with local media partners – individuals and organisations – that can make a difference in focus countries. What we call ‘change agents’. They are in the front line, and serve as a catalyst for change. Free Press Unlimited supports these ‘change agents’ by developing their knowledge and skills in various ways:

Strengthening the capacity of journalists and media professionals at an individual level.

- Working on sustainable media development aimed at partner organisations in the media sector that are independent, or can be made independent.

- Where independent media is absent, Free Press Unlimited develops journalistic initiatives aimed at the provision of professional, independent information.
- In certain circumstances, Free Press Unlimited carries out small-scale temporary assistance in acute crisis situations so that a journalist can continue their work and provide citizens with information. The stress is on safety and access to free Internet.
- In addition, Free Press Unlimited facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experience between journalists in the Netherlands and developing countries.
- Free Press Unlimited can do its work thanks to subsidies and donations from governments, private donors, funds, and institutional financiers. Since the merger, Free Press Unlimited is active in more than 40 countries, and operates in five alliances within the Dutch MFS II subsidy framework 7 – one of which as lead party.

### **1.4 Challenges and Method of Working**

Looking back, Free Press Unlimited can be proud of what has been achieved so far. Substantial effort saw to it that the merger in 2011 occurred seamlessly, and the internal systems were put in place; to the immense credit of the organisation and its staff. The image of Free Press Unlimited has been improved through a clear and engaging communications strategy. This has established us as a group of media professionals with a mission: To assist people to access essential information to give them the means to make their own decisions. This clearly recognisable branding positions Free Press Unlimited as a press freedom organisation that deploys effective developmental tools. The organisation also consciously chose to participate in international networks and conferences with other media development organisations. This further contributed to the branding of ‘Free Press Unlimited’.

But more is necessary to prepare Free Press Unlimited for a future in which the organisation may or may not be able to rely on strategic funding from the government of the Netherlands after 2015. Media development budgets are falling internationally owing to the scepticism of some donors, unrealistic expectations of results, and administrative obligations that are hard to fulfil. For this reason, the Board of Directors examined both internal and external arenas. We held dozens of consultations with partners and experts, both nationally and internationally, to reach the strategic choices suggested in this document.

Free Press Unlimited also subjected itself to external evaluation. A broad survey of the quality of Dutch development organisations indicates that Free Press Unlimited has substantial power to enter into egalitarian partnerships with organisations in developing countries. It also resulted in the comment that the consistency of the expertise provided could be improved.

These results were explored further. During a broad consultation organised by Free Press Unlimited, partners and staff discussed areas in which innovation, development of expertise, and intensification of relationships on the level of organisational development, digital knowledge-sharing, investigative journalism, and digital security.

Finally, important insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation emerged from internal brainstorming sessions. Several sessions further defined our unique qualities, but also those projects that need to be improved, and how. Over the past few years, large

and small experiments were carried out in the sphere of multimedia modernisation, and the approach to the problems of security and protection for journalists. These experiments were not only useful when establishing internal capacity and areas for modernisation. They also assist in refining the strategic choices that lie before us.

### **1.5 Weaknesses and Strengths**

This Multi-Annual Strategic Plan sets out the principle arena's in which Free Press Unlimited needs to invest in order to develop similar quality signature projects leading to a more precise focus and prioritisation for the future:

- A. Country choices
- B. Thematic approaches
- C. Protection and safety
- D. Professionalisation

**Free Press Unlimited has identified the following weaknesses and strengths:**

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Strengths</b>
adapting to changing needs	basic capacity for fund-raising
results-oriented working	alliances and public-private partnerships
relationship management experience	external communication
internal communications and knowledge transfer	basic innovative ability
alignment of competencies to change	internal system and infrastructure
visibility to private donors	contact with journalists
advocacy and lobbying	medium-sized yet flexible organization

# 2. Country Choices

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## **2.1 Internal priorities**

During all meetings and sessions that were devoted to the regional priorities it became very clear that both internally and externally Free Press Unlimited is perceived as an organisation specialised in media work in countries of conflict and extreme repression of press freedom. Free Press Unlimited is known for its successful projects in this field including Radio Zamaneh and Radio Dabanga. It should be noted that Free Press Unlimited has most impact when it has chosen one distinct focus in such projects. A key characteristic of Free Press Unlimited is the focus on media dark areas where little to no reliable information is available to the population. Its core values in these projects are based on the ethics of independent journalism. That was the inspiration behind projects in Iran, Uzbekistan, Congo and Sudan but is also the inspiration behind our work in Somalia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Syria. Efforts in other areas (Myanmar, Eritrea) failed to get recognised by funders but still show the inspiration in the organisation. These characteristics and core values are something in which all staff in Free Press Unlimited recognise themselves and the organisation in. It is a unique selling point.

## **2.2 External environment**

The externally available funds shows that there is future for the Free Press Unlimited focus of media dark areas and its approach. Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon donors as well as the EU and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focus on fragile states and post conflict reconstruction in their now known *Development Priorities*. The Dutch Foreign Ministry for example focuses on 15 countries, most of which are fragile states and a small number of upcoming economies.

It is fair to say that the definition of fragile states differs from one donor to another. And the availability of funding has a somewhat opportunistic character depending on where the political hype of the moment is centered.

Free Press Unlimited has always chosen for long-lasting engagement in a country creating impact over a considerable number of years. Projects in fragile states depend on the availability of donor funding, not on 'media market'. Setting up long lasting impact based media therefore requires an extremely high quality of donor relations and political sensitivity, something Free Press Unlimited can certainly improve in according to external sources. 'Vision' and 'mission' are required but *communication and relationship building* are key assets increasingly in demand.

Likewise the investment in independent media in extremely repressive states can count on support from a similar list of funders labeled as *Human Rights work*, not development work. The arena of repressive countries has many media-dark areas where simply no political interest or money is available. Free Press Unlimited as a mission based organisation has not hesitated to engage in countries where people are under-served with reliable information but it has been extremely difficult to keep up the delivery of real work and impact with the intentions and mission of Free Press Unlimited.

In addition the field of Human Rights Priorities is developing in the countries that are most likely to support media development efforts. Whereas for the Dutch Government maintains a wider culture where freedom of expression and the media remains a goal in and of itself, discussions have also started where human rights priorities do not always include independent journalism or embrace the instrumental usage of media towards priorities in the field of gender, sexual and reproductive rights, political inclusion.

We will address such challenges pragmatically rather than principally. Within the objectives and priorities of donors there is more than enough space to develop programmes and meaningful work to match with the Free Press Unlimited goals and objectives, provided we deliver and demonstrate outstanding expert knowledge.

### **2.3 Focus and scrutiny needed**

More *staff professionalism* and systematic knowledge is needed to make the right choices and develop result based approaches and determine timely exit strategies. The holistic knowledge of the countries we engage in not always outstanding. Nurturing donor relations on the ground and knowing where donor priorities are shifting in countries of engagement, is underdeveloped in Free Press Unlimited and can be improved.

If Free Press Unlimited continues to prioritise media development work in repressive and fragile countries, which is a company broad desire, those insufficiencies need to be addressed. Free Press Unlimited should decide to be present where it can make a difference and refrain from being present in countries for the sake of being present. It has to make that case successfully every time it engages and it should be the basis of staff deployment.

### **2.4 Continuation**

Therefore, strategically it seems wise to continue to work in:

- DR Congo
- Iran
- Pakistan
- Sudan
- South Sudan
- Somalia
- Syria

The key factor behind this selection of countries of continuation is that we make a difference in these countries either in approach, focus, result or knowledge. Without questioning our intentions and the many worthwhile efforts and investments, we should reassess the focus of our work in Afghanistan (lack of added value), Tajikistan (weak results of operations) Turkey (lack of focus and funds) and Zimbabwe (insufficient added value).

### **2.5 Exit and new**

Under the current MFS-2 framework, Free Press Unlimited has decided to end operations in Kosovo (2014), Moldova (2013), Tajikistan (2014). Successful operations in Kosovo and Moldova have resulted in a network of competent partners who know their business. Tajikistan does not qualify for further support. The

programmes executed by Free Press Unlimited shall be externally evaluated in order to capture success, failure and lessons learned.

The Directors propose to withdraw also from Armenia, Burundi, Georgia, Uganda, Zambia as core engagement countries. Although Free Press Unlimited has not defined an organisational policy on exit strategies, in these countries competent local media developers and media do not require us to stay longer. Even though press freedom and freedom of expression may be still fragile, it seems wiser to engage in these countries only when asked by local partners or when specific thematic approaches seem relevant and require expert knowledge not available locally (See chapter 3).

Thoughts around new engagements have not been at the forefront of development in recent years with the exception of Syria. Countries that fit in the fragile and repressive countries category are the Central African Republic, Yemen, and Libya. But engaging in these countries has proven difficult. Decisions on these countries should be made before mid 2014.

Based on the criteria of media dark areas that negatively impact freedom of expression and the press and run significant risks to develop conflict and become humanitarian and human rights disasters are most notably the *Sahel region (fragile) and Central Asia (repressive)*. Specific targeted brainstorm is needed to specify and detail what added value Free Press Unlimited can have and how we can approach those areas. In those brainstorm sessions it would be advisable to discuss the *toolbox for repressive and fragile states*.

# 3. Thematic approaches

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As described earlier, international donors demand more and more targeted thematic approaches. In the international field of implementing organisations there is a growing sense of urgency to develop specific expertise around organisations. Good examples are Fojo from Sweden that focuses entirely on training of journalists, Internews Network has developed a name and specialised in humanitarian disaster interventions, Hivos is well-known for its ability to set up and manage Media Development Grant mechanisms. Most implementing organisations are less specific and to a certain extent follow donor priorities whilst trying to hang on to their own intervention logic or alternatively do both, develop original approaches and follow donor priorities.

The scope of this strategy does not suffice to discuss the intrinsic merit of the approaches chosen by competitors and their choices are also not always known to us. But the advantage of creating signature projects and being recognised as a force in an area of engagement are very clear. The investments of time and energy in the field of I-Freedom in recent years has led to recognition of Free Press Unlimited as an innovative force in the implementation of digital media projects by governments, civil society organisations and donors.

The Board of Directors of Free Press Unlimited has decided to develop and specify its unique selling points and strategies in thematic approaches in which the organisation wishes to excel. Apart from its tailor made approaches in countries where press freedom is most at risk. Similar to that, the Directors propose to define a number of thematic approaches that form the core of Free Press Unlimited work in other areas of engagement, especially poor developing countries and countries in transition towards democracy.

## **3.1 Participative empowerment**

The objectives of many programmes and operations of Free Press Unlimited is to advance *participation of underprivileged groups in media*. In our day-to-day work-practice much of the work is carried out through networks of regional media outlets, either community radio or regional papers, television or radio. Most of this work is carried out in countries where economic outlook is not extremely negative, where stability is not the biggest problem and where a home-grown media landscape is, albeit slowly, developing. The choice for participation based media is a deliberate choice and is the right choice. Nevertheless the toolbox of approaches need urgent and drastic modernisation.

Digital access is coming and people in the world want to talk back and have a voice in the media, something that is lacking in most community radio approaches, where popular participation is limited and institutional ownership is dominant. Free Press Unlimited should aspire to bring the grass root participation ideology to the 21<sup>st</sup> century by including in its engagement model the option to talk back (expression), co-create (empower) and collaborate (engagement) thus *increasing the ability of community media to have an effective influence and increase accountability*.

Also the rural focus of most community media can be challenged now that 50% of Africa's population is residing in cities. Countries where such modernisation is dearly needed are Bangladesh, Burundi, Colombia, DR Congo, Ghana, Zambia. Free Press Unlimited has little added value in Indonesia but could consider new work under this approach in Mozambique and Myanmar.

But the quest for better participation does not end with technical tools. It is also increasingly important that the journalist elite opens up and becomes more representative. The all important factor here is *gender main-streaming* and female leadership development.

In most countries of operation of Free Press Unlimited, discrimination of women is rampant both inside the media and in society. The *media workforce lacks female leadership and lacks serious engagement with women-centered topics. It is a long desire of Free Press Unlimited to develop effective programming on this topic.* Experiments have started in Bangladesh but more thinking is needed.

### **3.2 Youth and Media**

Free Press Unlimited has successfully developed thematic work in non-conflict poor countries with emerging economies. The Kids News Network is well on its way to become an international renowned network of media professionals that make a growing impact in their countries. Kids News Network is a signature project that should be cherished and nurtured, hopefully to become worldwide visible. Current efforts to *increase knowledge sharing, collaborative production and audience participation* are the way ahead. The objective is to build robust and sustainable children's programming in emerging economies and poor developing countries.

The approach to children and youth in more conflict prone and fragile states, currently focused exclusively on radio programming, requires modernisation. Preferably in cooperation with specialised partners who have access to children at risk and or refugee populations. Free Press Unlimited can develop the impact and scale of its work to give voice to children. Currently the work in South Sudan, Uganda, Colombia and Burundi stands a bit isolated from the other projects and approaches in Free Press Unlimited.

The importance of engagement with children and youth in terms of stability, trauma prevention, education and even job creation is evident. Programme development is needed to build more robust systematic approaches engaging not just with radio but including digital and television approaches. Free Press Unlimited should engage with *children as creative minds in child reporters networks* that enable to effect change in the self esteem of children. Soap production involving child soldiers in Colombia is an example of programming that could be considered for this specific target group.

### **3.3 Investigative Journalism**

The current buzzword in development strategies is *creating accountability*. The buzz around this stems from the (negative) assessment of development efforts where financial support was given to sectoral development by bilateral, multilateral or Civil Society support. The rationale was to give developing countries and their proponents in the target countries the chance to develop their own priorities and management of funds. The result of such financial support is under hefty debate. Paul Collier for example maintains that budget support has had favourable effects. Others claim it has led to widespread abuse, corruption and lack of accountability of governments towards their population. The current thinking is that downward accountability leads to good governance and social development and that is where investigative journalism comes in. It is difficult to think of accountability without independent investigative reporters. The development community focuses on transparency as the principle driver of accountability. But the accountability relationship between governments & corporations at one side and the general public on the other side whereby the latter is supposed to hold the former power brokers to account is not immediate nor obvious.

It is one thing to publish the national budget on the internet. That does not mean that automatically a disenfranchised local community in a remote area of Africa can access this data and determine whether or not the disclosed financial investments of the state have taken place. The accountability relations become even more complicated when transnational conglomerate business is involved. The extractive industries but also building and construction and manufacturing are more and more organised in global corporate businesses. The factual chain of extraction, production and manufacturing as well as distribution is still connected with abuse, exploitation and Human Rights violations in many countries. But this goes largely unnoticed in the tax havens where the corporate global head quarters of corporations reside. Investigative Journalists and trusted Media are needed to make this accountability relation a reality. That makes journalism more than ever a prime objective of development investment strategies, at least, that is what we think.

Free Press Unlimited has developed basic modules for investigative journalism in its work in Morocco, Moldova and South Africa. With limited resources good journalistic work has developed. For example Moldova based Ziarul de Garda reporting led to the downfall of a minister. 'Fair' came out with a report trashing the outcomes of well intentioned sustainable coco production practices. The role of Free Press Unlimited is locally recognised but we are not known for this work. Recent developments drives us to think more deeply about the theme.

Government operations as well as transnational corporate conglomerates have transcended the scrutiny of local or national press. Particularly knowledge and awareness of abuse of human rights by governments and corporations has transcended the national organisation of news media. Some good examples of innovative transnational journalism have shown that it is possible to change the dynamic of corporate and government behaviour. On the good side of things, more and more information has become open and accessible. That means there is a clear opportunity for more investment in investigative journalism.

Investigative journalism has been the first and foremost victim of the worldwide financial crisis of the media. Investigative reporting costs time and effort, something which media cannot afford to invest in when they are challenged by lack of income and revenue. Currently, the best investigative journalists work in the developed world. To increase their ability to work transnationally it is important to develop abilities and skills of local reporters in developing countries where most of the abuse, exploitation and human rights violations take place. *Data journalism, financial reporting skills and research ability need to be improved.*

Free Press Unlimited has understood this and wants to develop more effective strategies to mainstream investigative journalism as a priority for media development, create investigative journalism grant mechanisms and devise tactics to *increase cooperation and coordination between networks of investigative journalists*. That would add the effective tool of investigative journalism to the transparency and accountability movement.

### **3.4 Education efforts**

The efforts of Free Press Unlimited to set up sustainable training centers have proven to be less successful than anticipated. Whereas setting up sustainable media support organisations (training centres, J-schools, syndicates, trade unions) has been a success formula in the past in Eastern Europe, these successes have not replicated in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Within the context of the Multi-Annual Plan, Free Press Unlimited plans to stop investing in the set up of Media Support Organisations that do not directly contribute to media production of and by media professionals. Over the years it has proven to be very difficult to set up sustainable journalism schools. The financial and organisational sustainability of such institutions is a task for which the ministries of education, universities and high schools are better suited. Therefore Free Press Unlimited should discontinue its support for setting up Civil Society and Educational organisations that deliver curriculum classroom education.

Free Press Unlimited will continue to invest in partner organisations where experiential learning while producing content (learning by doing) is the key objective. In other words, Free Press Unlimited strongly believes in the need for professionalisation and skills development of media professionals at the workplace and will use its experiential learning methods to support and develop skills in innovative ways through partner media-organisations.

Moreover, innovative thinking and brainstorming is required to develop *more digital available open accessible education modules* developed in the course of our work. An example of such an integrated approach tool is StoryMaker which has developed into a signature project for Free Press Unlimited. The key question is how to multiply and open up access to skills training in more areas of our work. Massive Open Accessible Education in the areas in which Free Press Unlimited is specialising would be a welcome addition to the goals of spreading and popularising or in other words *Democratising Journalism* as a tool for participation, empowerment and freedom.

# 4. Safety and Security

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In the past years Free Press Unlimited realised that safety and security of journalists has become a problem that requires adequate and integrated action. The deliberate targeting of journalists in order to prevent information from going out, specific threats to female journalists as well as the proliferation of data surveillance constitutes threats to human rights defenders including our primary target group, journalists and their sources.

Increasingly we see a combination of 'classical' *physical abuse, psychological intimidation and digital paranoia* taking its toll amongst journalists, whistle blowers, investigating reporters and citizen journalists. Free Press Unlimited prides itself to enable people to keep doing their courageous and powerful work to disclose information. Its work to protect these very people is in need of more attention and focus in our work as these *threats to information givers are happening across the board* of our areas of operation, not just in repressive countries.

Classical physical threats to independent journalists and their media have been the focus of Reporters Respond, distributing quick impact grants to journalists and independent media suffering from physical attack. In recent years security of digital activists became a priority area of Free Press Unlimited's Internet Protection Lab following the Arab Spring where a combination of physical threats and digital persecution by authorities surfaced. In 2012 Free Press Unlimited organised a conference to better understand the threats that lead to self censorship and corrupt practices of journalists in Central America. We found several journalists in Central America to be seriously traumatised. Many journalists known for their courageous work decided to leave the profession due to pressure put on children, family members and loved ones. The traumatic effects of working under threat are underestimated.

The situation in Somalia and Syria show us that direct intimidation and targeted harm to journalists is an effective strategy put in place by irregular armed groups, organised crime gangs and government representatives

to prevent unwanted information from coming out. One of the problems of security training for journalists is the lack of an *integrated approach, combining physical, digital and psycho-social security*.

In spite of the UN action plan for journalist safety the situation is not addressed adequately in the international arena. Threats to journalists remain unanswered creating widespread impunity. Security awareness is not integrated in journalism school curricula, press associations and media owners do not take prevention serious enough and local psychiatric professionals are unfamiliar with *stress prevention techniques and post traumatic stress mitigation*.

Sexual assault of female journalists is a relatively new phenomenon that surfaced, including rape on Tahir square during mass demonstrations. The International News Safety Institute developed a female journalist security guide and Free Press Unlimited tries to find resources to establish a *peer network for security of female journalists* in the MENA region.

In the digital field we see that more and more investigative journalism is based on disclosed information from whistle blowers and informants from civil society. Whereas the legacy media have resources to counter libel charges and defamation trials, individuals publishing on the internet have not and are increasingly facing litigation. In cooperation with media legal defence specialists, Free Press Unlimited is debating an adequate strategy with international partners which could include a *legal defence fund combined with a help desk for pre-publicity screening* hoping to prevent unnecessary litigation.

*Safety and security is becoming a mainstream priority* for Free Press Unlimited in all its work and will require the organisation to strengthen its ties to monitoring organisations such as Freedom House and other networks working on emergency assistance to journalists. Free Press Unlimited will remain focused on practical assistance to local journalists in need on the ground.

# 5. Professionalisation

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The ambitions described above will require professionalisation of the core staff of Free Press Unlimited. Skills include better communication and network skills to better assess situations and develop unique projects that will gain support. Given the rapid changing media environment more intrinsic knowledge is required about how media run their business and professional tasks in the digital era. The core themes of intervention as described above requires expert knowledge inside the organisation and schooled, adequate and up to date experts who work for us as trainers. *The Continuous Professional Development Plan* that started in 2013 will need to be indeed continuous and become a company trademark.

As an organization Free Press Unlimited needs to embrace and develop Monitoring and Evaluation. This is currently according to external assessors the Achilles heel of Free Press Unlimited. Donors increasingly require organisations to be able to capture results, be aware of flaws in programming timely and adapt programmes systematically. Free Press Unlimited will need to develop not only its monitoring protocol but also develop a culture of result orientation and promote constant scrutiny of effect and impact of programmes. According to external analysis the organisation will need outside input to achieve that.

Needless to say that Free Press Unlimited does not necessarily need to know and execute everything themselves. Strategic collaboration as developed in the Internet Protection Lab and StoryMaker where different organisations deliver and develop their specific knowledge are examples of how successful strategic partnerships can work. Knowledge is also to know what you don't know or where you have no added value. Selection of strategic partners around the themes mentioned in this paper will require some further discussion this year.

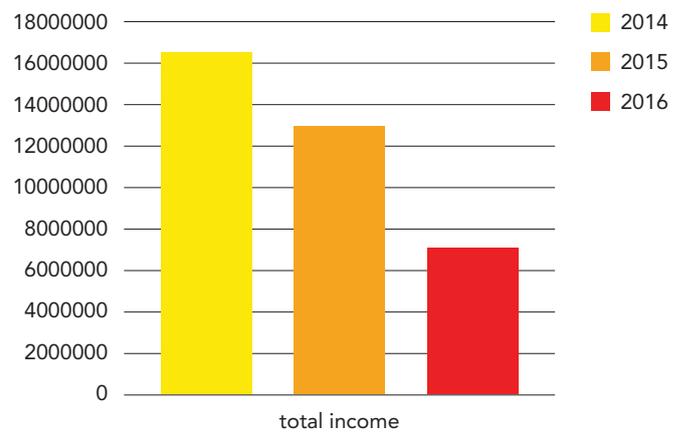
To achieve the ambitions described above, Free Press Unlimited needs to *strengthen and develop its knowledge position in key areas of intervention*, strategic analysis and cherish its liaisons with knowledge based projects and operations. Learning and research has to become an intrinsic element of all proposal development. Knowledge that is currently in the head of individual staff needs to become available and practically implementable for the organisation. A concrete strategy for this should be the focus of strategic development in 2014.

# Proposed interventions

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The strengths and weaknesses of Free Press Unlimited have been mapped, and show that Free Press Unlimited must continue to utilise its strong points to maintain its market position. Its weaknesses have also become clear. This will require substantial investment for us to be ready for the future. Balanced-out, we must conclude that Free Press Unlimited must invest in a well-equipped fundraising department, as well as a continuous professional development plan, should it wish to be prepared for the future. Part of the associated plan of action has already been implemented in 2013. The next step is to make strategic choices for the organisation in the spheres of topics, partners, and core programmes. The proposed interventions show also that the focus for the coming years lies on investment in the professionalisation of the organisation which is visible in the multi-annual budget.

**Multi-Annual Budget**



## **Colophon**

### **Text**

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### **DTP and design**

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