



Large Picture: Interlink Academy is partner of the new CMR Journalism Academy in Kathmandu. Small Picture: Interlink Academy hosted the fome22 Symposium which was opened by Niels Annen, the Deputy Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development

Message from the Director



With the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th this year, much has changed in this world. For many years, the Interlink Academy and I personally have supported the independent Ukrainian media in their tireless efforts to inform the public without fear or favor. With our many colleagues in Dnipro, Sumy, Zaporizhzhya and many more places throughout Ukraine, we focused on training and capacity building projects. Our Ukrainian colleagues have also become close friends over the years. I feel anger, sadness and shock when I read the news about the terrible bombings of those cities.

Immediately after the Russian invasion, Interlink Academy started converting all our existing projects in Ukraine, rethinking the approaches we had taken before and adapting to the new circumstances. Together with our Ukrainian partners and with the support of the German federal government, we quickly created new support programs for the journalists and people in Ukraine.

Please find the reports from our Ukrainian colleagues in this newsletter on the pages 21-23 and 27-29.

This newsletter also informs you about our other projects worldwide. Many of them take place in a dangerous environment, too. For safety reasons, some of our activities are not even mentioned here.

Our work depends on all of you, on your support and your contributions. We would like to thank you all for your collaboration.

We wish you all a Happy New Year 2023!

Werner Eggert, Founder and Managing Director

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Strengthening Media and Information Literacy in Zimbabwe: CITE's and Interlink Academy's Cooperation

The Interlink Academy and its long-time local partner Centre for Innovation and Technology (CITE) are implementing a comprehensive Media and Information Literacy (MIL) project in Zimbabwe until 2024. The four-year project reaches out to numerous communities in Matabeleland with the help of trained Community Organizers.



The project aims to empower the people in Bulawayo and Matabeleland North and South with essential media and information literacy (MIL) skills. Fake news are an increasing problem in Zimbabwe, and with upcoming elections in 2023 misinformation and disinformation are likely to increase.

Thirty-six community organizers have been selected by CITE, our local partner in Zimbabwe, and trained to meet the challenge of passing MIL skills on to a diverse target group. Teachers, high school students, housewives, small business owners, professionals and many more attend the workshops in the 18 hubs all over Bulawayo and the regions of Matabeleland North and South. They learn how to identify and debunk fake news, access credible sources, protect their data and participate in opinion-making through social media.

On the following pages you will read in detail about the content, progress and challenges of this four year long project. Interlink Academy and CITE trainers, community managers and participants have taken the time to report on the project.



Impressions from our workshops in the regions of Zimbabwe

About Our Partner:

CITE is a Zimbabwean NGO that aims to create spaces for young people, journalists, creatives, and techies to interact with each other and most importantly new technology in the otherwise underdeveloped and repressed media environment of Zimbabwe. Through this, CITE aims to empower the citizens of Zimbabwe and teach them proper access to reliable information. Please visit their website for more information about CITE. You could also download the [project's brochure](#) or visit CITE's [local website](#).

The journal „D+C Development and Cooperation“ published an article about our MIL project in Zimbabwe. Please find the link to the report written by Zenzele Ndebele and Bhikizulu Tshuma [here](#).

Media and Information Literacy in Matabeleland: CITE's Community Organizers Now Perform Their Own Workshops

The project "Media and Information Literacy in Matabeleland" is in full swing. All 36 Community Organizers have been trained by Interlink Academy and are now performing workshops in the 18 hubs of the three target regions. Interlink Academy's Project Coach **Joachim Vögele** reports on the project's progress.



Joachim Vögele,
Interlink Academy

„Rolling out the project was not without challenges, but we are on schedule and our trainers are enthusiastic about their task,” says Zenzele Ndebele, project manager at Interlink Academy's partner organization Centre for Information and Technology CITE). All hubs in the target regions have commenced with their trainings after the Community Organizers underwent in-depth Training-of-Trainers (ToT) provided by Interlink Academy.

Finding and selecting them was not easy due to the high expectations that come with the task. They were identified through CITE's broad network and contacts with local leaders, civil society institutions and NGOs. Many of them are engaged in community work and already had training experience when they joined the project, and they are all highly motivated to achieve the project's goals. CITE in return is hoping to find future community leaders among them who will carry the message beyond the scope of the project.

Two chief trainers from CITE oversee the workshops, and travel to the hubs to attend workshops, and debrief with the local organisers and trainers. In this way, the quality of the workshops is ensured and the trainers receive feedback. Before this whole phase, the Chief Trainers themselves underwent in-depth training through Interlink to prepare them for the task of training others. They embraced the trainee-centered approach of Interlink's methods, which were new to them. The ToT and debriefing for the third cohort of Community Organizers were performed by them without any additional assistance from Interlink. In this way, a goal of the project has already been achieved: to fully hand over the capacity-building to the Zimbabwean partner.



CITE's local trainers bring our flexible media literacy training to their communities - anything can be a classroom

The broader aim of the project is to empower the people in Bulawayo and Matabeleland, North and South, with essential media and information literacy skills. These skills are essential to build an informed and reflective democracy. Fake news has become an increasing problem in Zimbabwe, and with the upcoming elections in 2023 misinformation and disinformation are likely to increase.

Cyber bullying and data security are other topics of which many participants have not been aware before and which are covered in the workshops. Last but not least the training aims at using the smartphone as a tool to participate in discussions on community issues, telling stories from the communities and take them to a broader audience. At the end of the four project, more than a thousand workshops will have been held in the three regions and the number of people reached will be considerable.

Against Cyber-bullying and Fake News: Community Trainers Fight for Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Zimbabwe

For many years, **Erik Albrecht** has been one of Interlink Academy's chief trainers for the Training-of-Trainers workshops in Zimbabwe. Down below, he reports on the local trainers' achievements while spreading MIL to the regions of Zimbabwe. Reading his text below gives you a detailed picture of the circumstances on site and the experiences of our local trainers due to Erik's vivid descriptions and many lifelike stories.



Erik Albrecht,
Interlink Academy

„Because we want to protect our mental health from what?“, Loctricia asks and turns her broad smile towards the crowd. „From cyber-bullying“, the group almost chants back. We are at Inyathi Youth Centre in the suburb of Pumula, a 30-minute drive from Bulawayo city center in the East of Zimbabwe. Outside,

kids are playing soccer, inside, 16 youths spend their Saturday morning learning about how to deal with cyber-bullying.

Loctricia and her co-trainer Vuyo are part of the first community trainers of „Media and Information Literacy in Matabeleland“, a joint project of Interlink Academy and CITE, the Centre of Innovation and Technology in Bulawayo. She is literally radiating with a trainer's self-confidence that she acquired in the three months since they started training youth. In the back, CITE's two chief trainers Clayton Moyo and Bhekizulu Tshuma are visibly proud of their mentees' performance.

„Media and Information Literacy in Matabeleland“ is a three-year project financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Loctricia and Vuyo started in November 2021 together with ten other community trainers to work all over Bulawayo, the main city of Matabeleland. In March and in May, two more cohorts took their work in Matabeleland South and Matabeleland North. Despite internet connectivity still being weak in many rural areas, Zimbabwe is ruled by WhatsApp and its many and diverse chat groups. According to studies, the messenger app contributes to over 44 percent of internet usage in Zimbabwe. As a result, what used to be called „pavement radio“ has gone online: information, anecdotes and hearsay spreads through WhatsApp groups. Telling fake from fact – the core of media and information literacy – is therefore more crucial than ever in nowadays Zimbabwe.

In the meantime, the plenary has split up into group work at Inyathi Youth Centre. Small groups discuss the question of how to act when they or someone else is being bullied online. When they present their results shortly afterwards, Loctricia holds every single moderation card up for everyone to see before she puts them on the wall. „Break the cycle by not forwarding horrible messages or awful images“, one card says. Then Vuyo comes in: „Make it rain, make it rain“, he demands from the crowd and suddenly the air is filled with the sounds of hands rubbing against each other. Then he exclaims: „Thunder!“, and all sixteen pairs of hands clap together at the same time in appreciation of the group work. And once again: „Thunder“.

Two days before at the CITE premises: the first cohort meets again for two days after their first quarter of training in their communities. The follow-up workshop was initially planned as a mix of experiences exchange and further training, but over the course of the project's first three months on the ground, it became clear that this time the roles had to be reversed. So, instead of turning the community trainers into participants again, we gave large chunks of the follow-up workshop to them. They trained peers on digital security, creating community stories through media and, of course, on cyber-bullying. In fact, the trainers had developed this module themselves because they had identified a huge need for it among the pupils they often work with. Reflections on the interactive training rounded the program up and made the Interlink Academy's approach of participant-centred learning even more engrained in the project.

A week later, CITE celebrates with a big braai as barbeques are called here. It is the first time the project's first and second cohorts meet. After six days of intense training, the second cohort of community trainers is ready to return to Matabeleland South to start working on their own media and information literacy workshops for their communities and social circles. Some part of bringing MIL into communities is always about the numbers. With 36 community trainers at the end of 2022, the movement is definitely gaining momentum.

Local Training Experience with Interlink Academy's Approach

Bhekizulu Tshuma and **Clayton Moyo** are CITE's Chief Trainers. They were the first to receive in-depth media and information literacy (MIL) training from Interlink and are now majorly responsible for the recruitment and training of local community leaders. Down below they discuss Interlink Academy's training approach and their own local work.



On-going training of our newest cohort in the regions of Zimbabwe



Bhekizulu Tshuma,
CITE Chief Trainer

I had knowledge about media and information literacy, but now I have a clear understanding of the different methods that are available to a trainer. Most important are the trainee-centered methods. Both of us, Clayton Mojo and me, come from an environment where we are used to lecturing, but with the training for this project this has changed. We understand that learning is not about us, it is about the students we teach.

Our work so far consists of visiting the hubs and attending each workshop to provide immediate feedback. It will be important to keep showing our presence from time to time in order to support the community trainers, but also to ensure the high standard we expect and which is necessary. In addition, we are planning to co-train workshops in order to take them to a new level.

We gained a lot of confidence in training and now understand the importance of structured training and visualization. I believe that I am now quite strong in terms of preparation and delivery of trainings, which helps me also in my professional work outside of this project - and the best thing is, we are able to pass it on to other trainers. The coaching through Interlink gave us the knowledge, the skill and the attitude.

The community trainers respond to the needs of their communities and there are new issues that come up. So they come up with new training elements that respond to what was brought up by their communities. We absorb it, structure it and include it in the trainings. For example, it turned out that there is a great demand for covering the topic of cyber-bullying. Now it is one of our most important training modules.



Clayton Moyo,
CITE Chief Trainer

Zimbabwean Community Organizers and Participants Contemplate the Media and Information Literacy Training

Giving a voice to the recipients of our trainings is an important part of developmental work. In our newsletter we attempt to do this yearly. Down below, you can find out how local community organizers and participants benefited from CITE's and Interlink Academy's cooperation to improve media and information literacy (MIL) in Zimbabwe.

"The problem is that other sources are more expensive and we don't have free WiFi."



Elder Dube, Student in Matobo:

„So far I have been relying mainly on WhatsApp. That is the cheapest and most common source of information. But the information is not always accurate. In the workshop I learned to consult other sources as well. The problem is that other sources are more expensive and we don't have free WiFi. This remains an open question here in Zimbabwe.“

"They believe such messages and keep forwarding them without considering whether they are accurate."

Bongami Heube, Teacher in Mpopoma:

„Fake news in WhatsApp is a big problem. For example, there was a water cut announced for 27 hours. In WhatsApp circulated messages that the cut will last one week. That puts people in panic. They believe such messages and keep forwarding them without considering whether they are accurate.“



"Parents also should know these things."



Ngwenya Mpumelelo, Teacher in Victoria Falls:

„The workshops perfectly augment what we are doing to teach students how to deal with media. They all use smartphones but nobody has told them about the risks that come with it, for example cyber bullying. This workshop has made them aware of the consequences of someone using private photos and videos against you. Parents also should know these things.“

"I will definitely change my behavior."

Tinevimbo, LPG Gas Dealer in Nkulumane:

„I was invited by the trainer Tairi. I came only out of curiosity, but then I realized that I learned something: the passport checker and e-mail checker. I did not really have knowledge before. I have an interest in media. I will definitely change my behavior. I will come to other workshops as well. I would be interested to learn more about ways how to be safe in the net.“



"I am eager to learn more and to collect more information that I can pass on."



Geraldine, Local Community Organizer in Matebo:

„When I started with sessions, I had doubts whether I am capable. But doing these trainings again and again, I have been gaining experience and confidence. And I get a feeling for the groups, being able to cater the workshops according to the knowledge and needs of the groups. I am eager to learn more and to collect more information that I can pass on.“

Media and Information Literacy: Training-of-Trainers Workshops Seen from a Participant's Perspective

Handsome Sibanda is one of CITE's Local Community Organizers. The following text is an outline of his experience with the Training-of-Trainers workshop in Bulawayo by Interlink Academy from 21 February to 26 February 2022.



Handsome Sibanda,
CITE Community Manager

I was fully satisfied with the areas we covered during the training programme as the topics were, I believe, in line with the training objectives of the programme. The environment where the training were held (CITE Offices) was friendly and welcoming and the place was fully equipped with training materials, including Wi-Fi and air conditioners which made our experience and training much more pleasant.

Time allotted to each session was adequate, for learning methods we used some engaging games, group discussions and mini lectures. Those were useful as they were mostly participatory in comparison to the one-sided lectures that I am used to.

Examples used during the training were very useful as well, because they were directly related to everyday issues we face in our communities. The trainers were fully prepared, and they happily engaged with our questions in a manner that helped us understand complex issues and also got us to learn new things at the same time. I am also satisfied with the way our sessions were organized and the time allocated per session (1 hour 30minutes) which is more than enough to get us to fully grasp the concepts we were being trained on.

The group discussions we held were also effective. Even more so because we kept rotating group partners so there was ample opportunity to learn new things with every group discussion we held. We were also given the opportunity to train other group members which was an effective strategy because it gave us an eye opener into what we would be facing back in our communities and also got experience in hosting trainings.

In conclusion, the trainings were a great use of my time. They were also important to my work that I do in my community, such as development projects and beyond that for my own personal self development and many others. What I liked the most about the training was the fact that our trainers were fully prepared and seemed well researched in their topics that they trained us on. They made sure that we were all in sync all the time, no one was left behind. I also liked the fact that we were equipped with the tools (iPhones and training materials) to help us deliver effective trainings back in our communities. What I liked least was the fact that the training ended so very soon but for good reason because the ToT was complete.



Training-of-Trainers workshop in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe coming to an end with all participants being awarded certificates and moderation boxes to ease their own upcoming work in their respective communities



Conference Steers Direction for Media Literacy in Zimbabwe

Dealing with information overload is at the core of media and information literacy, and the CITE and Interlink Academy partnership is on the right track with spreading awareness amongst civil society and the media. These sentiments were echoed by the Media and Information Literacy in Matabeleland Conference organized by CITE and Interlink Academy to bring together players from the different fields to understand the media and information literacy training work that is done in the Matabeleland provinces. Traditional leaders, society leaders and activists, journalists, students and community organisers acquainted themselves with media and information literacy work that is already being done in communities across the region. US-based media and information expert Dan Gillmor joined the conference and pointed out the scale of the disinformation and misinformation challenge. **Zenzele Ndebele** reports.

“We’ve had misinformation, public lying and propaganda for a long time,” Gillmor said from his home in the US through a virtual call, “What’s really new is this combination of factors where we pull together people who spread disinformation with techniques that are political and technical at an industrial scale.” Gillmor’s message resonated with the Zimbabwean audience that has gone through the election episodes plagued by a disinformation crisis with fake information being consumed and passed around without inhibition. The pandemic also triggered misinformation due to uncertainties in the communities that felt vulnerable with little quality information. Professional media practitioners were also equally ignorant about the virus and the disease.

“While it’s a good thing to have better journalism, we can’t rely solely on journalists to get things right, we also have to upgrade supply and also we have to upgrade ourselves,” Gillmor summed up the logic of media and information literacy for consumers, preparing them for handling the deluge of information streaming through their sources. Activist Effie Ncube said that the conference had become an opportunity for all to glean into possibilities in advancing media and information literacy as it was a platform for networking, collaboration, coalition building, and international cooperation. “It is important that civil society drives media literacy and raises

awareness and disseminates information, educates people to strengthen their critical thinking skills,” he said. Ncube’s sentiments were echoed by Chief Mathema from Matabeleland South, a region where the MIL project has set up several hubs. Rural areas in Zimbabwe are particularly vulnerable to misinformation due to the urban centric nature of mainstream media in the country. Rural villages in the province are remote in every way – no newspaper, no local radio and television reception, only scant mobile network reception and foreign radio services.

Interlink Academy Director Werner Eggert appealed to the delegates to identify people who are in need of media and information literacy and becoming a link between the public and CITE trainings. Eggert emphasized the importance of media literacy being an important factor of press freedom as people need to have knowledge on how to communicate well. The conference also simulated the training hub workshops as community trainers took the delegates through combating cyberbullying, digital security, and combating fake news sessions. Just like in the community hubs, the sessions created a buzz as delegates engaged with the trainers. Some were noting the vulnerability of their gadgets and their social media accounts. Others were reflecting on their encounters with cyberbullying and getting challenged on how to combat the problems associated with it.

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Interlink Academy Hosted fome22 Symposium in Hamburg

Interlink Academy hosted the fome22 Symposium from 13 - 14 September 2022 in Hamburg. Under the title "Dealing With The Past And Preparing For The Future - Media Assistance In Conflict Mitigation, Reconciliation And Peacebuilding", the symposium was a huge success with nearly 100 international guests. **Katharina Finke** reports.



Katharina Finke,
Interlink Academy

This year, the Interlink Academy for International Dialog and Journalism hosted the Forum for Media and Development Symposium. The topic was 'Dealing with the Past & Preparing for the Future – Media Assistance in Conflict Mitigation, Reconciliation and Peacebuilding' and it focused on the question 'whether or not media can

play a role in processing past injustices, creating inclusive, just societies and avoiding future atrocities'.

Over forty speakers from all around the globe came to share their insights on this. Each year the symposium of fome, a German network of institutions and individuals active in the field of media development cooperation, takes place at a different location in Germany. Each year the fome member organizations contribute to the program. This year, the event was opened by the Parliamentary State Secretary Niels Annen from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. After that Barbie Zelizer, director of the Center for Media at Risk at Annenberg School of Communication in the US, held an inspiring speech. It addressed how the past infiltrates news and how it impacts how media practitioners cover its issues and events. Using the Cold War as an example, she argued that the past is so deeply embedded in media practitioners' beliefs that it drives what they consider to be news. Media practitioners should take the past more seriously and understand more fully its effect on reporting the present.

The first session was organized by IDEM and Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, which was the main sponsor of the fome22 Symposium. Leila Bičakčić, the director of the Center for Investigative Reporting in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Aida Cerkez, a journalist from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, also from Bosnia and Herzegovina, authentically narrated their experiences during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and reported what lessons can be learned from it. The following session was held by Truth Commissions and how

their strategies helped to communicate the past. It was organized by the Catholic Media Council and Rousbeh Legatis, a peace and conflict researcher, managed to smartly connect the different experiences. Colombia was represented by the Truth Commission Communication Coordinator Ricardo Cooredor, Gambia by the Executive Secretary Baba Jallow, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina by Refik Hodzic, a strategic communications specialist.

Next up was the session by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences with inputs from Foundation Hirondelle and the researchers Gudio Keel, Emma Heywood and Jeff



Session by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and Foundation Hirondelle with the researches Gudio Keel (center left), Emma Heywood (center right) and Jeff Conroy-Krutz (left), moderated by Christoph Spurk (right)

Conroy-Krutz which gave a good theoretical background for all fome22 discussions. It was followed by the session 'Moving Justive Forward: Justice Forward: Ending Impunity for Crimes against Journalists' with Jaqueline Harrison and Andrea Cairola, both from UNESCO, organized by Reporters Without Borders. At the end of the day, most either visited DER SPIEGEL or DIE ZEIT for a discussion and later came together at the restaurant 'Thämers'.

The second day was kicked-off by Carsten Brosda, the senator and head of the Hamburg Authority for Culture and Media. He spoke about the role of media and their development cooperation for fostering social cohesion.

To be continued on the next page.



fome22's nearly 40 speakers and panellists covered a broad range of topics from academic perspectives on theoretical approaches to journalism to practical implementation examples of media development in Zimbabwe

The next session was organized by Interlink Academy for International Dialog and Journalism who invited four speakers from the Center of Technology and Information from Zimbabwe to report about their experience in Matabeleland and to let us know how 'Dealing with the Past and Preparing for the Future' can be practiced. After that, Kirill Artemenko, the co-founder and CEO of Paper Media gave a concise input on 'How to Survive in Exile? Six Learning From the Past Six Month of the Independent Russian Media'. This was followed by the session organized by DW Akademie with the speakers Yana Naralska from Ukraine, project manager at DW Akademie, Salam Omer, editor-in-chief at KirkukNow in Iraq and José Luis Sanz, Washington correspondent from El Faro in El Salvador. Virtually, Ann Hollifield, media analytics expert and former Professor at University of Georgia attended, as well as U Soe Myint, CEO & co-founder of Mizzima from Myanmar and Chay Hofileña, head of investigative desk at Rappler in the Philippines. They discussed 'How Today's Media Can Prepare For the Crisis of Tomorrow'.

After the lunchbreak, Kwabena Nketia Addae, executive director from Ghana YMCA and Rislán Ahamed, head of development services at Chrysalis in Sri Lanka reflected about ownership in media development cooperation. This was organized by Thomson Foundation and WELTFILME. Lastly, the session organized by n-ost, Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation and IDEM was dedicated to the war in Ukraine and what the state of Ukrainian journalism is six months after Russia's full-scale invasion. Oleg Khomenok exchanged his experiences with Crimea-

born journalist Anastasia Magazova, who is working for taz - die tageszeitung. Krystyna Havryliuk, news editor-in-Chief at the National Public Broadcasting Company Suspilne in



A final summary of this year's Symposium

Ukraine and connected via Zoom to the fome22 Symposium in Hamburg.

Not only the inspiring program in the Helmut-Schmidt-Auditorium on the two days in September (13-14), but also the discussions in between the sessions at the Bucerius Law School in Hamburg, where fome22 took place, contributed to the major success of the event. Interlink Academy for International Journalism and Dialogue is extremely thankful for all the support of the fome member organizations and thanks ZEIT Foundation, BMZ, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation for their support.

Fome22: Minister Brosda Urges to Listen to Each Other

What role media and truth-seeking can play in maintaining social cohesion is one the big question of our time. During the fome22 Symposium, **Dr Carsten Brosda**, Hamburg's Minister of Culture and Media, discussed the topic during his speech on the Symposium. Down below you can find an excerpt of his speech. The full text is available [here](#).



Dr Carsten Brosda,
Minister in the Hamburg
Senate, at fome22
Symposium

"[...] The joint search for the truth is not always deemed to be desirable. We are witnesses to the fact that presidents no longer feel a need to tell the truth. Moreover, they suppress it whenever they can, or they make it subservient to their personal requirements in a completely arbitrary way. Tackling challenges together with others becomes impossible when fakes start to replace facts. [...] A head of state is waging a war on a neighbouring country and is covering up the fact with all the means at his disposal. Here the issue is the rise of popular opportunism and the activities of purveyors of insincere applause, and not of the encouragement of citizens able and willing to think for themselves. We are all well aware of the global scale of such dangerous activities. And since no one is in the sole possession of the truth, it would be a good idea to look for it together and as a team.

[...] [T]here have been and continue to be heated discussions about freedom. However, people refuse to talk about the complexity of the world, and are openly in denial. The

central issue seems once again to be a rigid adherence to the notion that one's own views are an embodiment of the truth. This is characterized on the one hand by an insistence on the absolute veracity of one's own point of view which goes beyond the usual kind of opinionated self-righteousness and in certain cases verges on the fanatical, and on the other by social exchange delimitation. Both of these things – the notion of absolute veracity and the practice of delimitation – prevent the emergence of a constructive exchange of ideas. The high emotionality of the debates might be construed as an indication of the fact that far more fundamental values and convictions (doxa) meet head-on over and above the factual level. But these collisions are seldom discussed in public. Those involved try, for example, to demonstrate the incontrovertible truth of what they believe by adducing empirical "documentary evidence" or some kind of "scientification" (ref.: Alexander Bogner, 2021: Die Epistemisierung des Politischen.). The subject itself is hardly ever talked about, but if and when it is, the position adopted seems to be one of self-defence. The debate is often about the lack of XXX to participate which certain groups' experience. It has a kind of existential quality, and this means that there is hardly any room for understanding, ambivalence and compromise. Can the media mend these social mutual fractures? No, they cannot. Nor are they supposed to. They cannot protect people, and they cannot heal them.

Furthermore, we do not need a cuddly kind of society imbued with an exaggerated craving for social harmony in which everyone thinks that everyone else is very nice and very wonderful. We need a society in which people respect each other and which is open for things which it does not know. And that is what the media can promote. Here in Hamburg the "Leibniz Institute for Media Research" is doing systematic work on the question of the significance of the media for social cohesion. In this ongoing research process, which is based on expert interviews with journalists and members of civil society organizations, the team has described three categories which can help journalists to work in a "cohesion-sensitive" manner. These are: (1) attempting to reach all parts of society, (2) depicting society as it is, and (3) conducting a societal dialogue: What has led to a situation in which media no longer reach certain sections of the population? [...]"

To continue reading Dr Carsten Brosda's speech at fome22 Symposium, please follow this [link](#).



Niels Annen, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development opened the Symposium with a greeting message in which he stressed the importance of developmental work in the media sector

Voices From the Fome22 Symposium

"It was great to learn from other people's experiences."

Leila Bičakčić, Executive Director of Center for Investigative Reporting, Bosnia & Herzegovina: "fome22 brought back some old issues and memories, making me wonder would Bosnian post-war path have been different if we had someone's experience to draw from? I hope we all learned from one another, and that we were able to see other opportunities to collaborate beyond the conference topics. It was great to learn from other people's experiences."

"Left me with a deep impression beyond academic purposes."

Guido Keel, Zurich University of Applied Sciences: "The fact that journalists, media assistance practitioners and academics met at the conference made it especially valuable for me. The size of the conference allowed for meaningful exchanges with many people. And the contributions from Bosnia, Ukraine and Russia left me with a deep impression beyond academic purposes."

"[...] Very helpful to [...] to understand the real world challenges that media development organisations [...] face."

Jackie Harrison, UNESCO Chair & Centre for Freedom of the Media (CFOM): "Very well-organised event. Each session brought something new to the knowledge sharing experience and there were great opportunities to network and to hear different perspectives. As someone from an academic background, I found it very helpful to have the opportunity to understand the real world challenges that media development organisations and agencies face as well as the excellent work they do. Thank you - I really valued being a part of it."

"Fome22 Symposium offered an exciting insight into the role of the media before, during and after conflicts."

Melanie Gerster, Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation: "fome22 Symposium offered an exciting insight into the role of the media around conflicts which is becoming increasingly important in times of fake news and disinformation. The reports on the connection between the development on a global and local level were enriching and underline the importance of high-quality journalism. Freedom of the press, protection of journalists and the media's critical examination of their self-image and their own role remain topics to which we also dedicate ourselves in our work at home and abroad."



Interlink Academy's team and the organizers of the different panels at the fome22 Symposium

European Laboratory for Advanced Data Journalism: Taking It to the Next Level

The Interlink Academy for International Dialog (Germany) in cooperation with the Journalism Resource Center (Georgia) implemented a project within which twelve journalists from Armenia, Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine underwent a three-stage training and worked on joint cross-border projects. The training consisted of three phases: two one-week classroom learning sessions in Hamburg and one longer e-learning phase. Topics included a basic introduction to Python, extensive use of coding tools for collecting and refining data sources including APIs, data analysis with Pandas and data visualization with Datawrapper.

Claus Hesseling and **Mikhailo Koltsov** are the Chief Trainers for this program. Down below, they give a rundown of the program and discuss the value of coding and data visualization for journalists in the digital age. Noteworthy is that Mikhailo is one of Interlink Academy's trainers from Ukraine and, although the Russian invasion of his country, chose to remain deeply involved in this program and its objective. Due to the special circumstances, Mikhailo did his sessions online for the Fellows here in Hamburg, in parallel with Claus Hesseling's in-person teaching.

Datawrapper

pandas

python™



Claus Hesseling,
Interlink Academy

Today, being able to write code is one of the key abilities of a data journalist. The reason: many data sources and APIs are designed in such a way that you can only retrieve the data with a Python or R script. And there are other advantages. Unlike working for hours on an Excel file, scripts can also be understood by other colleagues in the editorial team. Internal control is improved.

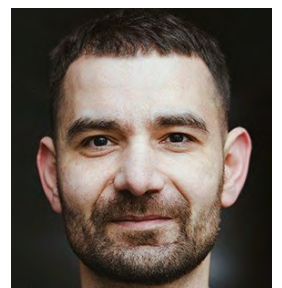
Scripts can be re-run daily, weekly, monthly - taking work off the journalists' hands. If you work with COVID data, or if you want to report on the flow of natural gas in pipelines or check the movements of airplanes, this is time consuming to do it manually. And last but not least: you can work with very big datasets, so big that Excel will fail to even open the file. That was the reason why the two trainers, Mykhailo and I, focused on bringing those new skills to the participants. As far as we know there are no other workshops where journalists in the region learn those crucial skills. Here, Interlink's blended learning approach really shows its strength.

"Data is becoming increasingly important, but it isn't always possible to get the right form, journalists have to adapt."

This was the second time I was working for Interlink Academy as a data journalism trainer. Like the first time, it was a great experience, although I made a few significant changes this time. First and foremost, this was an advanced data journalism course, so most of the training covered topics like writing Python scripts and using them for journalistic tasks. This includes data analysis, data sorting, data visualizing, and much more.

Now, when data is becoming more and more important, it is not always possible to get it in the right form, so journalists have to adapt. Secondly, since this was an advanced data journalism workshop, teamwork is indispensable here. Although data analysis can be a lonely task in front of your screen, the learning process doesn't have to be the same. In my opinion, group work enriches and eases the process.

It is guaranteed that you will be able to successfully go from hypothesis to visualization. As for the latter, at this training, we touched on the issue of data visualization tools, particularly those that can be used by small newsrooms.



Mikhailo Koltsov,
Interlink Academy

What Our Eurolab Fellows Think About Their Journey Into the World of Advanced Data Journalism



Happy smiles from our Eurolab Fellows over their successful graduation

"My articles will be even richer with nice visualizations and well-described data from now on."



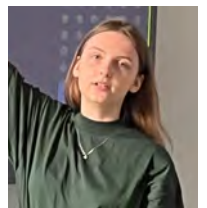
Rima Gregoryan, Hetq Investigative Journalists NGO, Armenia:

„The course was an amazing journey into the wonderful world of data. After the three phases of the training, I am going back with a lot of new skills and knowledge in my head. My articles will be even richer with nice visualizations and well-described data from now on.“

"The program by Interlink is really distinguishable from the other programs that I participated in."

Anastasiia Morozova, Reporters Foundation, Ukraine/Poland:

„Because of the skills I gained in this course, I was able to enter a university in Germany. It is a data management program, but my bachelor degree was only in journalism. The university asked whether I have enough skills to enter this program, and I answered yes because I visited the Data Lab by Interlink and learned how to use python and other programs. Good news: I've been accepted!“



"[...] One of most the outstanding experiences for me in terms of professional development."



Lika Eristavi, Data Journalist, Georgia

„This course was one of the most outstanding experiences for me in terms of professional development. Given that knowledge of programming and coding opens up endless possibilities in our profession, I believe that this course should be of interest to all enthusiastic professionals for whom learning new things, overcoming difficulties, and embracing innovations are top priorities.“



Our Fellows from Armenia receive their final certificates at the Open Channel Flensburg for the completion of the course. Just before the short ceremony, they finalized the shooting and editing of their own report for the channel

Armenia: Conflict Sensitive Reporting through Professionalisation in Yerevan, Hamburg and Flensburg

Young Armenian reporters continue to improve their mobile reporting skills with the Interlink Academy program “Conflict Sensitive Reporting through Professionalisation”. On the background of the Azerbaijani-Armenian war, the project’s content in Germany was laid out to familiarize the participants with the conflict of the German-Danish



Gayane Mirzoyan,
Armenian Trainer

The second phase of the Mobile Journalism course for young Armenian journalists was organized by Interlink Academy in Yerevan in August. It took place one year after the first part of the course.

The main trainer of the course was the German TV journalist Kai Rüsberg, who invented the #Oneshot reporting method which is

a fast way to produce news in one take with live reporting by the author. Twelve young Armenian female journalists wrapped up their knowledge gained from the previous part of the course. It was focused on developing practical skills: basic techniques for shooting and editing high-quality video on a smartphone.

Also, participants discussed differences of #Oneshot in comparison with the traditional “five shots” reporting techniques. Course participants also learned about solution-oriented (constructive) journalism from local co-trainer Gayane Mirzoyan and after that tried to add a solution part to their final video assignment.

“The main advantage of the training was the intense practical part: each filming rule we discussed later was subsequently applied in practice, which was very good”,

the course participant Anna Azumanyan said. She explained that she could use the gained skills in her daily job, especially for the composition of the shot while also paying attention to the quality of the recorded audio.

Ani Khachatryan, who is a reporter for the New Armenia news website, found it very useful to refresh the knowledge obtained during the last workshop. She also mentioned detailed discussion as a helpful part of the learning process of the assignments which open the opportunity to fix the mistakes in filming and editing.

“One of the most interesting parts was the filming process when we had a short time to decide on a topic and were limited in choosing a location for the filming process. I think even given these limited conditions we succeeded in producing interesting videos”, Ani said.

Participant Nazenik Saroyan explains that the majority of journalists in Armenia have to be multitasking and to work as a camera operator, journalist, photographer and editor at the same time. “In this regard, the training is quite productive, as it helps to increase the quality of the media product created by one person instead of a team in a short timeframe, Nazenik said. Participants will continue to master their skills in Mobile Reporting after the weeks of e-learning and the final part of the program in Germany, which convened in September of this year.

**Offener Kanal
Flensburg**



Armenian Fellows Report on the Workshop in Germany



Group photo at the „Start-up Labs Bahrenfeld“, a business incubator founded by DESY, University of Hamburg and the City of Hamburg which also holds the seminar room for our workshops in Hamburg

"So much practical knowledge and experience that this course gave me."



Anna Arzumanyan, Yerevan

„The program was overwhelming for me in a good way. So much practical knowledge and experience that this course gave me, it's hard to imagine how I could have learned that on my own. It was great that we were both technically equipped and had full lectures thanks to Kai and Gayane, and the opportunity to put every bit of theoretical knowledge into practice. Very impressed with Germany as well. The only thing I would like to change was the very tight schedule, because sometimes I was very stressed and it seemed to me that I would not achieve anything. However, I am very happy that everything went well and I am very pleased with our final product.“

"I couldn't imagine that although we only had a smartphone, we could have a such an amazing result."

Hrachuhi Almastyan, Yerevan:

„Mr Werner, Mr Kai, Mr Peter I would like to express my gratitude for the given opportunity. Thank you for the program which was organized with a high proficiency. The program was very comprehensive. We were able to improve skills in the mobile journalism. The courses which were held in Yerevan also were very effective for us. I couldn't imagine that although we only had a smartphone, we could have a such an amazing result. [...] The practice we had at Open Channel Flensburg was also very helpful. The staff was wonderful there. I would like to have more time to discover your amazing city as well. Everything was perfect, thank you. Hope to see you all again.“





“Azerbaijan goes Flensburg” was the title of the report our Azerbaijani fellows produced for the Open Channel Flensburg during their time here in Germany. In the picture you can see them on the shooting stage giving a final wave for the camera. Click [here](#) for more information on their program on the Open Channel

Azerbaijan: Conflict Sensitive Reporting through Professionalisation in Baku, Hamburg and Flensburg

As the counterpart to the former project for Armenian reporters, this is also being organized for the Azerbaijani side. Here in Germany, young journalists from Baku have the opportunity to learn about mobile journalism, the history of the German-Danish border and how civil society and media deal with the situation. An important part of both projects is the respective groups’ production of a broadcast for the Open Channel Flensburg which covers the insights they made during the numerous interview opportunities at the German-Danish border. For example, Councilor Stephan Kleinschmidt, Prof Dr Martin Klatt (European Center of Minority Issues), Ruth Maria Candussi (Slesviksk Parti) and Lars Harms (South Schleswig Voters Association), etc. Both were organized by **Peter Willers** with support from the Open Channel Flensburg. Below, **Emin Huseynzade** reports on the training in Azerbaijan.



Emin Huseynzade,
Azerbaijani Trainer

Interlink Academy has provided training on mobile reporting for journalists in Azerbaijan from the 18th to the 21st July 2022. Twelve journalists from Baku participated in the four-day training which covered issues, such as mobile video journalism, oneshot storytelling, basics of video production, and five shot techniques. During the workshop, participants trained shooting oneshot video, working on videos which acknowledge composition rules, line of action, journalistic standards, and sound. NLE Software of VN Editor was used widely for mobile video reporting as a tool for non-linear editing.

Kai Rüsberg and Emin Huseynzade, provided hands-on skills on best shooting practices, taking stories in short videos, solution journalism approaches, and developing individual topics. The journalists also got practice working with the e-learning platform of Moodle. They got introduced to the e-learning platform. During the four days of training all content was uploaded on this platform. But that was just the start of a long month. After finishing on-site training, they started e-learning via an online platform for more than one month and got engaged with various quizzes and video exercises which all built up to the final visit to Germany.

**Offener Kanal
Flensburg**



Azerbaijan: Impressions from the Workshop

"It gave me a new perspective as a party to the ongoing conflict and strengthened my faith in peace."



Nurlan Huseynov, Reporter, Baku:

„As a citizen of a country in which an ethno-territorial conflict continues, it was fascinating for me to be on the German-Danish border, to get acquainted with the history of the old European conflict, and to see today's peaceful coexistence between old foes. For me, the best part of the training was visiting both sides of the border, meeting representatives of both the Danish and German minorities, as well as the opportunity to interact personally with politicians and scientists. It gave me a new perspective as a party to the ongoing conflict and strengthened my faith in peace.“

"Working in real situations helps us to practice our skills."

Bongami Heube, Student-Journalist, Baku:



„It was very useful training for me. Working in real situations helps us to practice our skills. Experiencing a television channel was a great opportunity for a student-journalist. Thanks a lot for letting me participate in this. Many thanks to our organizers in Baku and Hamburg.“

Impressions from our Fellow's trip to Flensburg: receiving their certificates (top left), discovering the Open Channel Flensburg (top right), visiting the Danish Central Library in Southern Schleswig (bottom left), and trip administrator Peter Willers at the Open Channel Flensburg (bottom right)



**Offener Kanal
Flensburg**



Azerbaijan: Media and Information Literacy

The Media and Information Literacy Azerbaijan (MIL-Azerbaijan) project was organized by Interlink Academy with the technical support of the Eurasia Partnership Foundation-Azerbaijan and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The project aimed to raise awareness about Media and Information Literacy in Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan targeting 24 Azerbaijani youths which will share new gained knowledge and expertise with 420 youths in Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan. In this first stage of the project, 24 youths from Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan completed a comprehensive Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program about Media Information Literacy run by local and international experts in September 2022.

In the second stage of the project, the same youth from Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan conducted their own training about Media and Information Literacy reaching 420 youths in Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan in October.

Finally, the trainings were followed by debriefings and discussions to consider future prospective actions that strengthened the learned knowledge and experience in late October and early November.

"It makes me happy to share what I've learned with others."



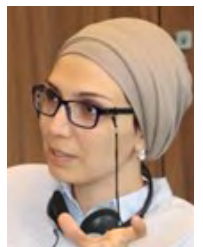
Samad Shikhi, Baku:

„Although I was hesitant to participate in the project at first, I thought that my participation could be useful for both me and someone else.

During the four days of training, I learned many ways and methods of proper media use. It makes me happy to share what I've learned with others and to know that more people will benefit from it.“

"[I]t provided [...] the confidence to alert [...] my network about photos in social media that violate children's rights."

Naile Hasanazade, Baku



„This training increased my awareness and provided me with simple instructions for identifying media manipulations. Additionally, it provided me with the confidence to alert individuals in my network about photos in social media that violate children's rights. For this, I've learned enough fundamental information. I wasn't fatigued even though the training was packed with lots of information. We appreciate the engaging format provided by Erik, Ilkin, and Ahad.“

"Throughout these four days I had the chance to meet new people and acquire new information."



Ilkin Guliyev, Baku:

„Throughout these four days I had the chance to meet new people and acquire new information. One of the training's most advanced benefits began on the first day: providing enough room for group tasks. This made it possible for me to interact with other participants and make the rest of the training more engaging. It is obvious that all three of the trainers have plenty of expertise and experience in the training session. Finally, it was wonderful to put what we had learnt in the practical sessions into practice. Thanks for everything.“

"The course was well-organized, and enough time and patience were provided."

Aybaniz Huseyn, Baku:



„The training was both interesting and learning-centered. It was very practical, which I appreciated. The course was well-organized, and enough time and patience were provided. Thanks a lot for this, I am sure I will use the content in my professional work and spread it with my peers.“



Azerbaijan: Media and Information Literacy

"[...] I will raise the awareness of the communities with which I work, and in this way, create a multiplier effect."

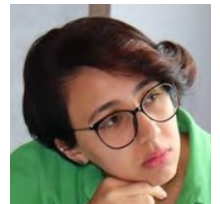


Aykhan Osmanli, Baku:

„My impressions of the program are favorable. Eric, Ilkin, and Ahad were all well-informed about the subject, both practically and theoretically. In addition to expanding my knowledge, I believe I will raise the awareness of the communities with which I work, and in this way, create a multiplier effect.“

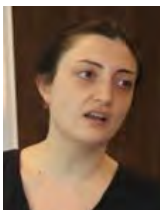
"People must understand how to interpret information they see."

Afag Agil, Baku:



„The project topic was fascinating. Because of these workshops, I discovered that media literacy is important for everyone, not just journalists. People must understand how to interpret information they see. Combating fake news should be everyone's social responsibility, in my opinion. Thank you for the informative training.“

"Persuasive strategies developed by Aristotle were particularly outstanding."

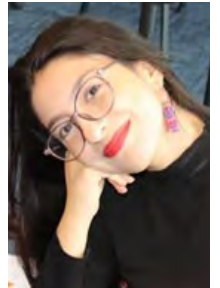


Aynur Kazimova, Baku

„In my perspective, the training was quite good. I believe that training methods used in this training will be useful. Persuasive strategies developed by Aristotle were particularly outstanding. At the same time, the tools for detecting fake news were really beneficial. However, I was curious more about the media literacy component, which in general, seemed not completely clear to me.“

"The four-day training program was extremely informative, productive, and accessible."

Sumiyya Guliyeva, Baku:



„As a young journalist and frequent social media user, I really enjoyed the "Media and Information Literacy" training. It was a fruitful experience for me. It is crucial to emphasize specifically the role of mentors and facilitators in both my development as a trainer and my familiarization with the Azerbaijani media environment. The four-day training program was extremely informative, productive, and accessible. It was a pleasure for me to establish a new network and meet experienced and fascinating people in the media area as part of this project.“

"The training was more fruitful since it was comprehensive, covering not one, but multiple themes."



Zarif Gurbanova, Baku:

„The training was more fruitful since it was comprehensive, covering not one, but multiple themes. Trainer communication comprised a genuine setting that aided learning through entraining. The training was more fruitful since it was comprehensive (extended), covering not one, but multiple themes. The participants were likewise chosen in a professional manner. Following the training, I believe it would be beneficial to educate those around us on how to approach the media appropriately, how to utilize it correctly, and how to identify fake and accurate news. Thank you to everyone who helped organize the training.“



Supporting Ukrainian and Russian Journalists in Exile

The Interlink Academy has awarded 24 Fellowships to Ukrainian and exiled Russian reporters. The Interlink Fellows have produced and published well-researched stories on the current developments. On the following pages you will read about their fates and stories from the past several months since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.



Claus Hesselting,
Interlink Academy

The Russian attack on Ukraine has negatively affected the situation of journalists in the two countries. Since then, journalists in Ukraine have not only been in constant danger of their lives, they have also often lost their economic livelihood.

Many Russian journalists who in the past have repeatedly spoken critically about the regime in Moscow or exposed corruption in the state authorities have come under pressure at the same time. Many of these voices critical of the regime have since had to leave the country and have taken shelter in countries in the EU, Georgia, Turkey or the USA. Almost all of them have lost their previous source of income and often had to leave part of their family behind.

Interlink Academy, with funding from the German Foreign Office, launched a project shortly after the war began to help journalists from both countries. Twelve journalists from Ukraine and twelve journalists from Russia who have fled the country were granted Fellowships, following an application process open for investigative journalists from both countries. They

receive a monthly allowance and support to cover production costs.

However, the focus is not only on financial support. Rather, the journalists - many of whom work in the investigative sector - should continue to work on stories and publish them. They are supported by tutors who give them advice on research, writing and journalistic skills. On the Ukrainian side, Oksana Bizenkova and Maxym Opanasenko were mainly responsible for this. Both have worked for the investigative journalistic platform Bihus.Info, among others.

Victor Yukechev supervised the Fellows of the Russian-speaking group. He is Director of the Tak-Tak-Tak Human Rights Foundation based in Novosibirsk, Siberia. He also had to flee the country after the regime increased pressure on journalists and human rights activists, and now he lives in Israel and Germany.



Testimonials from our Ukrainian Fellowship Program

Down below you can read about the experience of our Ukrainian and Russian Fellows. Between exile and the circumstances of a military invasion, the testimonials tell moving stories of people affected in this new reality.

"[...] it is an opportunity to do what you love [...]."



Pavlo Lisnychenko,
Fellow, Ukraine

„This year, joining the Interlink Academy Fellowship program, funded by the German government, was extremely important. First of all, it is financial stability and confidence that you have a job in this difficult time for the country. Secondly, it is an opportunity to do what you love, conduct investigations, identify Russian war criminals and companies with beneficiaries from Russia. It is not only about work, but also about the opportunity to help the country win this war. Contribute as a journalist.

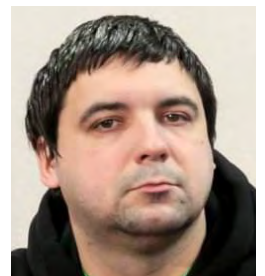
Thanks to the Interlink Academy Fellowship program, we are able to spread true, verified information not only to our domestic audience, but also internationally. To convey to foreigners an understanding of what is happening in Ukraine.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to freely choose a topic for the material. Different regions of Ukraine currently have different problems, except the war, of course, which is a common problem for all Ukrainians.“

"The timing and amount of funding allow me to explore my topics more thoroughly."

„The Interlink Academy program is important to me because I get opportunities that I don't have in my usual work. During the war, I can write socially important texts and it is not necessarily an investigation. So the program allows me to develop in other genres. As an example: the first text within the project was about the destruction of the ecopark in Kharkiv. In my usual work, I write on local topics for the regional organization - the Kharkiv Anti-Corruption Center.

The timing and amount of funding allow me to explore my topics more thoroughly. It's interesting, because in my normal work I have to make small materials all the time. I would like to note that the editors of the website bihus.info have given permission to publish my texts on their platform. This allows me to get more exposure than my usual materials on regional topics. The project allows me to develop professionally, write more influential texts and receive a good fee.“



Pavlo Novyk,
Fellow, Ukraine

"I was able to stay in Ukraine, continue to work in journalism and cover war crimes."



Ohla Ivlieva,
Fellow, Ukraine

„In June, when this project started, I lost my job because of the war. Before that, for six months I was a journalist of the national publication "Новое время" (New Time). Due to hostilities and the crisis in the economy, the management began to reduce the staff. Regional journalists from Odesa, Lviv, Dnipro and Kharkiv were among the first to be fired, and I was among them.

To be honest, the dismissal was a shock for me at first, because I was not ready for such events - to lose my job in the midst of the war. Interlink Academy, helped me to "stand on my feet" and continue working in journalism. I was able to stay in Ukraine, continue my work and cover war crimes. In addition, funding from the project helped me travel to front-line cities, such as Mykolaiv, and tell how the people experience daily shelling and destruction. In addition, the trials of collaborators and traitors from the de-occupied territories, which I also visited, actively began in Mykolaiv. Finally, this

project will allow me to cooperate with one of the best investigative teams in Ukraine. The Bihus.info team is currently doing very important work in the country - collecting evidence of war crimes, talking about the Russian military who participated in the attack on Ukraine and the abuse of civilians, and also does not leave the topic of corruption, even despite the war in the country. Therefore, it is a big bonus for a regional journalist to be part of such a powerful team.“



Testimonials from our Ukrainian Fellowship Program

"[...] Under the [...] military invasion, I, as a freelance journalist, was left without stable income and contracts."



Anastasia Zubova,
Fellow, Ukraine

„During the period of participation in the program, I worked on materials about Russia's armed aggression in my country. During the preparation of materials, I acquired new professional skills. In particular, those are obtaining information about the occupied territories, searching for heroes, verifying data, working with people who have experienced traumatic events.

I also worked out the recommendations and trainings of media organizations on how to interview people who have experienced trauma. Thanks to this work, I was able to contribute to the information struggle of my country, and to convey the truth about war crimes.

In my personal professional growth, participation in the program gave me the opportunity to significantly improve the quality of the texts and expand my professional contacts.

I met many colleagues from other regions, established cooperation with them. If necessary, I can ask for help from any of the participants or mentors. I would like to especially note the cooperation with the mentor. This work has always been productive, constructive, built on the principles of mutual respect and mutual assistance. I learned a lot thanks to the cooperation with the mentor and I am grateful for the help with editing and improving my texts. Thank you for that opportunity.

I also cannot fail to note that during this period of instability and confusion, under the large-scale military invasion, I, as a freelance journalist, was left without stable income and contracts. Work in journalism was in question. Thanks to my participation in this program, I was able to stay in the profession, apply previously acquired knowledge and experience.

I want to emphasize that I work on a freelance basis, because at the regional level, most local mass media belong to local politicians or businesses, and therefore do not always adhere to journalistic standards and ethics. Therefore, the opportunity provided by this program also ensured the preservation of independent journalism and the observance of journalistic standards. I am very grateful for the huge support and cooperation of Interlink Academy and Bihus.Info.“

"Participation in the project from Interlink Academy helped our editorial office to survive."

„At the beginning of the war, most of the projects implemented by the Center of Investigative Reporting „The Power of Truth“ in Lutsk were paused. The authorities restricted access to the registers. It has become difficult to produce quality investigations. Participation in the project from Interlink Academy helped our editorial office to survive.

Also, we had the opportunity to hire another employee and produce more content.

In addition to quantitative changes, there are also qualitative ones. Thanks to the additional funds, the Center of Investigative Reporting „The Power of Truth“ can afford research trips, video shooting and editing. This means that the materials produced within the project are of higher quality. Video content allows us to develop not only the site, but also other platforms. For example, Facebook and YouTube. The videos that we used to reinforce the text versions of the materials gained thousands of views on these platforms.

Mentoring support and communication with colleagues from different regions of Ukraine helps to exchange experience, find topics and stories, and improve texts. It has a psychological effect. Under the conditions of war, this is very important. After all, we all experience stress to one degree or another. We learn from colleagues, borrow topics, life hacks, and through the exchange of links we can expand the geography of our media audience. During online meetings, ideas for collaborations between different editorial offices arose.

Work within the framework of the project is interesting and is a new challenge for our Center.“



Oksana Petruck,
Fellow, Ukraine



Ekaterina Fomina interviews Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine

Russia: Overcoming Trauma and Professional Challenges

Ekaterina Fomina is one of the fellows who went into exile after the war started. Down below she reports about her mental and professional struggles and how the Fellowship program helps with that.



Ekaterina
Fomina,
Russia, iStories
Media

The program provided by Interlink was a tremendous support for me during a time of instability and forced emigration. I was not prepared for forced emigration, I did not have the savings to provide myself with the standard I had in my hometown.

I faced enormous psychological pressure because of the ongoing war, my personal responsibility for it, and repeated retraumatization in interviews with victims of the war crimes.

In the midst of 24-hour work, I could not find room for myself, for small pleasures nor happy moments. I could barely find time for meetings with friends and brief walks with the dog. I was obsessed with checking the news, finding victims, intervening and posting stories. It was obvious that I needed support of a competent person to help people achieve work-life balance. I could not overcome the trauma of forced emigration and loss of my own. I was replacing my real emotions with workaholism.

Thanks to the Interlink Fellowship, I got money to work with a therapist and psychiatrist. It became my life base. After seeing the specialists, I started to take care of myself more and let myself relax. I had really forgotten that

caring and paying attention to my inner needs was a direct path to psychological stability. Now I've finally found a balance between work and my personal life, I don't blame myself for "wasting time" when I'm resting. This balance really helps me become a more stable person in a professional sense. I am in daily contact with the victims of this war, I visited Ukraine for a month. Such intense events have had a big impact on me. But being able to pay for my professionals has really support me.

It has helped me become a more rational and stable person. I see a direct correlation with this and cold-bloodedly solving my everyday problems. I can now objectively assess my financial and my mental situation.

With this financial support, I believe it is crucial to allow independent and inspired journalists to do a better job. We are adults and we know the ways that help us stay afloat. Unfortunately, right now we don't have the material sources to do so. Forced emigration is not a cheap thing. I use my scholarship money to have regular psychological support. I pay for my personal time with a specialist who listens to me and supports me. At least once a week I take care of myself.

I can see how this helps me overcome trauma and professional challenges. I am so grateful to those who have believed in us and provided such support.



Russia: A Window Into the Habitual World

Sergei Markelov is one of the fellows who fled from Russia before and after the invasion of Ukraine started. Down below he reports about the cruel reality of exile in the US and how the fellowship program helps him stay afloat.

I left Russia on October 30, 2021. When the war started, I took my children to the USA. It is not easy to keep on working as a journalist under survival conditions in general: you have to drag your kids traumatized by the removal, take care of the future, look for housing and work, find whatever options and opportunities of help since it is quite difficult to earn money without a work permit in the United States — most of the times you have to wait for some ten months.

Under these conditions there is simply no time to think about writing texts. However, the opportunity to get at least some money for what you are keen doing and know how to do best, spurs you up. The very knowledge that there are certain obligations makes you write something monthly, and you no longer feel like the character of the second part of Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front" - abandoned, thrown out by the system, left without the usual work, colleagues and friends.

Even one text per month gives a sense of at least some of your involvement in what you lived with for many years. Publications royalties are usually small, so the fellowship support makes it possible to have at least some financial stability in the complex and not inexpensive New York. Paying for the amenities, buying something for the kids and taking them to damn McDonald's once a week, buying



Sergei Markelov at a rally in Petrozavodsk, Russia

socks and some clothes for yourself since everything has been left behind in Russia.

It is cool that the colleagues find and have time to do some serious work. My schedule so far does not enable me to get in the field fully but I am going in that direction. Looking at what your colleagues do, some ideas for future reports appear, although there are not so many topics here for a Russian emigrant — it is not easy to write about the war or Russia from a different continent.

To me, this project is like a small window into the habitual world with monetary support - as if I got to a new planet. In this changed reality, it helps you and gives strength.

I Was Not Going to Leave Russia

Oleg Tsiplakov, is another Russian fellow and reporter who had to flee Russia after the start of the war. Now he is based in Georgia and battling to make ends meet. In his text, he reports of his personal and professional struggles.

Hi! I'm Oleg Tsiplakov, a journalist from Siberia. I've been writing articles for Tayga.info, a media house from Novosibirsk but I had to leave the country after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Now I am based in Georgia.

Like many of my colleagues, I did not intend to leave Russia - I did not have experience of living in a different country or the funds sufficient for that. Moreover, I felt a crisis of professional identity: it was impossible to continue previous projects, and new ones would not arise.

The fellow program is important to me first of all as a professional frame. When I took up the commitment to

write journalistic articles every month, I started feeling useful again and regained my professional tone.

My main problem presently is that I'm a freelancer: I'm not affiliated with any particular media outlet, I don't have editorial plans, briefings, or discussions of stories topics with colleagues. I have to find stories on my own and then pitch them to different media outlets, which adds a lot of communication work for me.

Despite this, I am greatly aided by the publications that my colleagues in this program publish. It is a great inspiration to be among such brilliant professionals.



Gleb Yarovoi in the midst of his former work in Russia

Russia: Solidarity Is the Thing We Are Missing the Most

Gleb Yarovoi also fled Russia but was fortunate enough to do so before the war started. However, this does not ease his situation and he is fighting the same mental and professional problems as many of his Russian peers who had to flee abroad. Down below he reports about his circumstances in Joensuu, Finland.



Gleb Yarovoi,
Russia,
Freelancer

The last eight months were difficult for many Russian journalists. Fortunately, we managed to leave Russia before the outbreak of war, so by February 24 we had already established our life abroad somehow. But throughout the spring our condition was malfunctioning, with all the forces directed at stabilizing the mental and psychological state, along with conducting everyday life. To be earnest, my two small kids would not let me fall out of reality completely. I had to push on.

The Interlink project has become a real lifesaver for us. When life is rapidly becoming more expensive, and there is no opportunity to write a lot of texts, the project support helps out a lot. You can finally start planning and even making trips "to the fields" — real, not virtual ones.

Another point that I would like to mention separately is the sense of team that the fellowship manages to create. Yes, we are all located in different countries, we all have different situations, some of us never even met before, but with the outbreak of war we all found

ourselves in a similar situation - lost, scattered and confused. Our motherland has finally made it clear that it does not need honest, professional journalists. Interlink Academy though has shown the opposite: we are needed, we are important, and we will be supported in these and later difficult times.

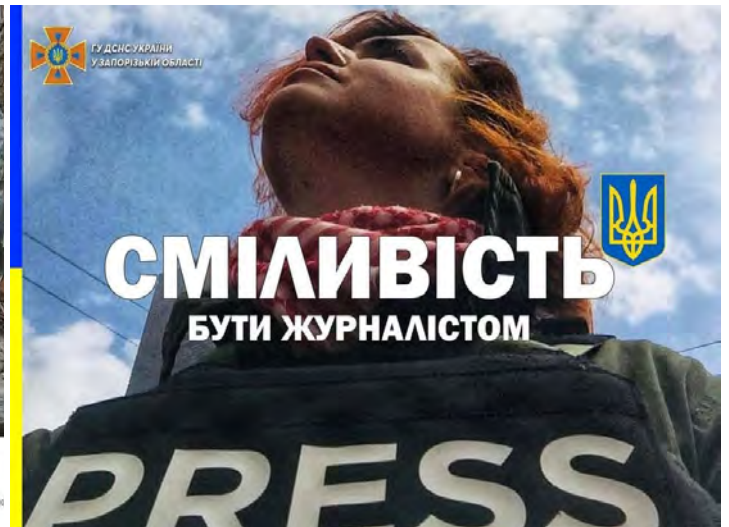
Solidarity is the thing we are missing the most right now. Solidarity between those who left and those who stayed, inside Russia and abroad, journalistic solidarity and solidarity between the journalist and the reader. Solidarity is never too much, but its lack is felt instantly and acutely.

The Interlink Fellowship program gives this sense of solidarity. Solidarity with colleagues by reading the texts unified by the coordinators in ["Near and Far" blog \(«Рядом и далеко»\)](#) and solidarity with readers and characters of publications, mainly people close in spirit who found themselves in a similarly difficult situation because of the war. It is more important than ever to maintain a sense of demand and solidarity, and there is a feeling that this objective will remain relevant for a long time, probably for years. It is very good that there are people and organizations ready to solve such a problem.



Ракетний терор Запоріжжя росією

За останній тиждень росіяни убили 50+ 40 мирних жителів, більше 100 людей поранені, з них третина у важкому стані. Сьогодні, 11 жовтня, напали атакували міста в 6-й разі ракетами c-300 які влучили в об'єкти інфраструктури, заклад освіти, амбулаторію, автоцентр. В автоцентрі загорівся вантажівка.



War zone reporting by our media and information literacy team in Ukraine. On the left, you can see an article on the [new MIL blog](#), reporting about an attack on civil buildings. On the right, you can see MIL project participant and professional journalist Eva Mironova in full protective gear reporting from near the war zone. Check out her contribution to the newsletter on page 31.

Ukraine: Media and Information Literacy during the War



Katerina Sirinyok-Dolgaryova,
Interlink Academy
Project
Coordinator

Media literacy has been among key issues for civil society development in Ukraine since the war started in 2014. For eight years the media workers, journalists, civic activists and educators have been working on enhancing people's level of understanding of how media system works, what fakes, disinformation, and propaganda are, and how they influence our actions and perception of reality.

Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 multiplied

the importance of media literacy skills worldwide, but especially in Ukraine itself, where the war is continuously in high gear.

It is the fourth year since the Media Literacy in Ukraine's Regions project was started by the Interlink Academy in cooperation with Ukrainian partners (several journalist NGOs and two journalism schools – Zaporizhzhia National University and Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University).

I feel privileged that I was with this incredible team since the beginning. Over the three previous years we prepared several cohorts of media literacy trainers (more than a hundred of people) in Zaporizhzhia, Sumy, Dnipro and

Chernivtsi. The eastern regions were the closest to the ongoing war zone of Donetsk and Luhansk. Two years ago the Western Ukraine's oblasts of Chernivtsi, Khmelnytskyi and Lutsk joined the project that ultimately proved the importance of MIL topics to the citizens everywhere.

When Russia invaded in Ukraine and martial law was introduced all over the country the team had to redesign the project to a fully online one. It was impossible to hold traditional media trainings neither in-person nor online because of the humanitarian crisis caused by the war. Millions of people had to flee their homes, becoming displaced persons within Ukraine or refugees to European countries. The eastern part of Ukraine experiences the terrible cruelties of war. Russian forces temporarily occupy major parts of the territories of Zaporizhzhia oblast, and Sumy oblast was a battleground for several month in spring.

Western Ukraine faced the challenge of hosting millions of fleeing people and transit them to Europe as well as provide and transport humanitarian aid to the frontline and civilians in the eastern regions. Everyday reality became constant air-raid attacks and direct life threats in every region of Ukraine.

All these challenges forced our MIL Ukraine team to rethink our approach to the project. Thus, we came up with the idea to realize it journalistically and academically.

To be continued on the next page.



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Chernivtsi National University



СПІЛЬНОТА
АКТИВНОЇ
МОЛОДІ



Ukraine: Media and Information Literacy during the War

The first pillar is running a professional blog which provide people with quality journalism about the events that happen in their regions. We describe it as “media and information literacy in practice” – truthful, reliable reporting, debunking fakes and rigorous analysis of media coverage and political claims in the regions we operate in. Twelve journalists – two in each of the six oblasts of Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, Sumy, Chernivtsi, Khmelnytskyi and Lutsk – produce two to four stories monthly, and deliver the audience in-depth reporting, fact-checking and analytical investigative pieces.

Another pillar of the project is developing a set of electronic self-study courses covering various topics of media literacy. There are five of them - Data Security & Privacy, Fact-checking, Research of Information Sources, Mobile Journalism, and Writing Short Texts for Social Media. The main specific point of our e-courses is that they are based on the regional examples and experience of the trainers, who are mainly also journalists engaged in running the professional blog.

The incorporation of journalistic practice into training materials is a core value for the audience of these e-courses, since people will learn media literacy following first-hand regional examples. The course’s materials and assignments reflect current Ukraine’s reality. Thus, the students are more interested to work with them and directly apply the gained skills to their lives.

For instance, the course Fact-checking prompts people to analyze the stories from the temporarily occupied

territories of Zaporizhzhia oblast; the course Research of Information Sources teaches how to write and hand-in an official information inquiry to the authorities by analyzing real inquiries from Khmelnytskyi region.

The project is not over yet, however I can already discuss some of its achievements and challenges. The advantages of the online format that we acquired this year are already growing the project’s audience. The blog has over 6.5 thousands of unique visitors monthly and this number is increasing steadily. However, there are also many challenges to overcome. Firstly, the daily stress of the war influences the working environment tremendously. In order to get a story some of the journalists go to severely dangerous places like frontline villages in Zaporizhzhia or Dnipro oblast. Secondly, the latest Russian massive missiles and drones attacks on Ukrainian electrical infrastructure causes systemic blackouts and internet disconnections.

Thirdly, over the past several months, some of the journalists and trainers were displaced from their homes or even had to leave the project. One of the team members was drafted into the military.

In spite of the obstacles, the MIL Ukraine project has proven its on-point topicality. Information is among the most important tools of fighting Russia in Ukraine. People look for information they can trust and want to acquire the skills to resist the disinformation and propaganda for the sake of their own safety and ultimately the end of the war, desperately awaited by the citizens in Ukraine.

Шлях додому: як повертають тіла загиблих на полі бою військових?



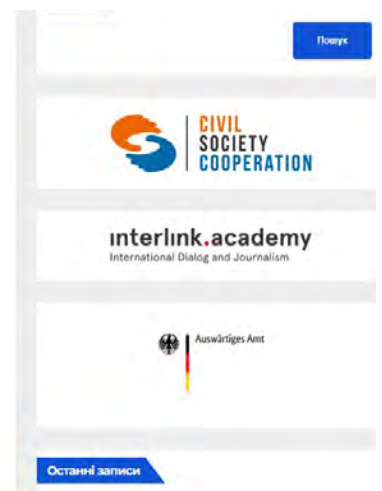
Руслана Салімова

• 22.02.2022 • війна, втрати, загиблі, поховання, Хмельницький



Чотири місяці Україна живе в новій реальності із постійними повідомленнями про руйнування й загибель людей. Війна перестала бути далекою, утїснюючи майже в кожну родину. Тонію клікати загиблих з Хмельниччини від 24 лютого не називає ніхто: бавато зниклих безвісти, в інформації щодо деяких підрозділів взагалі застерігана.

Медіаграмотність у регіонах України - Media literacy in the regions of Ukraine. Above you can see a screenshot of the blog created by the team in Ukraine to build a platform for citizens to access reliable and in-depth reports and news. With 3.500 unique visitors monthly, the platform is already getting traction within the civil society of Ukraine



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MIL Ukraine Journalists in the Spotlight: Reporting, Fact-checking and Telling Life Stories from behind the Frontlines in Zaporizhzhia Oblast

Katerina Sirinyok-Dolgaryova is Interlink Academy's Coordinator for the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) project in Ukraine and now part of the fellowship program. She reports on the fates and work of the project's participants during the war. Many have turned to war journalism and risk their lives reporting from close to the frontlines.



Katerina Sirinyok-Dolgaryova,
Interlink Academy
Project
Coordinator

Since the full-scale war started in February, Ukrainian journalists followed one of the most dangerous professions, along with military forces, police, medical and rescue workers. Covering the stories from the frontline, providing people first-hand reporting under constant threat to their lives became an every-day reality. The MIL Ukraine team has experienced different situations and published stories from very different places of Ukraine's regions. There were very optimistic and

inspiring ones like opening a new volunteer hub in Khmelnytskyi, a relocated business in Dnipro or an eco-initiative in Lutsk.

However, there were also devastating ones, like massive destructions due to shelling in Zaporizhzhia, destroyed infrastructure after Russian occupation in Sumy region or fact-checking stories revealing Russian propaganda narratives in occupied territories. Our journalists Eva Mironova from Zaporizhzhia, Tetiana Mostipan from Sumy and Sopia Bohutska from Dnipro delivered heart breaking stories from the warzones, where people live under daily air-ride shelling, and humanitarian catastrophies.

Those civilians have no gas, running water, nor electricity in their homes that are on top of that mostly destroyed or massively damaged by the enemy's weapons. However, those brave people keep living in that territory, run their agricultural businesses, harvest grain and support elderly and disabled people who could not or did not want to evacuate. Such reports were about Zaporizhzhia's Orikhiv, Komyshevakha, and Kushugum, Dnipro's Velyka Kostromka and Chapline, and Sumy's Boromlia. The project journalists interviewed extraordinary people, who try to make a difference in the life of Ukraine's people during these tough times of war and despair. There were stories about volunteers, civic activists, educators,

amateur and professional artists, journalists, scientists and medical doctors, psychologists, military people and bloggers. Our journalists Evhenia Haifer from Chernivtsi prepared a series of interviews about energy saving measures and safety tips for Ukrainians to survive the coming winter. Svitlana Rusina interviewed doctors, psychologists and even a priest in order to provide our audience with helpful tips how to keep-up psychological, physical and emotional health during the destructive period every Ukrainian citizen is going through right now.

Our authors Maya Holub and Anton Buhaichuk from Lutsk, Lyubov Vasylyk from Chernivtsi, Pavlo Lisnychenko from Dnipro, Kristina But from Zaporizhzhia drew attention to journalists' work and analyzed the media content of Ukrainian local media as well as those published at the temporarily occupied territories.

The investigative reporters keep their eyes on local authorities during the war in Ukraine.

Pavlo Lishnychenko from Dnipro

closely monitors the public procurement platforms and court cases where local people in power and business are involved – like drone procurement or court cases against volunteers buying cars for the Ukrainian army. Alona Bereza from Khmelnytskyi provided in-depth monitoring of how the right to information is kept up. Our team aims to inform our readers and support them with relevant and reliable analysis of events in our country. We follow our principles of media literacy: to provide the audience with quality content, debunk fakenews and disinformation, fact-check public information and make people think critically.



The [MIL Ukraine news page](#) is covered in the country's colors and maps of their territory. Continuing their work as journalists is part of the participants duty and national pride



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Chernivtsi, Ukraine: Adapting to the Reality of War and Moving Ahead With Media and Information Literacy

Evhenia Haifer is one of the trainers in Ukraine that work on the Media and Information Literacy project in Ukraine and now part of the fellowship program. Down below, she reports how her reality changed with the war, what changes had to be made to the project in Chernivtsi to keep it running and what is her view on how to effectively support the civil society of Ukraine by spreading Media and Information Literacy.



Evhenia Haifer,
Local Trainer in
Chernivtsi,
Ukraine

It is my second year since I have been working on the project "Media and Information Literacy in Ukraine's Regions" in cooperation with Interlink Academy.

Of course, the challenges at work are now significantly different from those in the pre-war period. The war and Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine affected many processes and changed the agenda of our activities.

Therefore, we had to reformat our work and adapt our goals to new conditions. Through the creation of a

news blog, we began to talk about everyday life in different regions of Ukraine.

We write about what is directly connected or somewhat related to the war: people, their stories, who survived and who are experiencing the consequences of the war. In addition to the journalistic component, we actually showed what MIL should be like in practice.

Therefore, in Chernivtsi we did stories about shelter centers for women fleeing the war, about the work of volunteers. We covered the life of refugees in Romania, their adaptation to new living conditions, the creation of Ukrainian-language schools on the territory of Romania.

We told the stories about displaced persons from big cities, about the consequences of the war for the energy system and preparations for the heating season, about doctors who save the lives of wounded soldiers on the front lines, and how to act in the event of a nuclear threat or better to say the imminence of a nuclear attack, etc.

During wartime, propaganda, the spread of fakes, the basics of media literacy are the basis for the analysis and understanding of social and political processes, as well as the adequate perception of the existing media product.

Therefore, the important component of our project is working on e-courses in media literacy.

The challenge was to redesign and adapt the already developed training mechanisms from offline to work in the online mode. As you may imagine, many problems can arise from this mode switch, but I must say we were most successful in this endeavor.



One of Evhenia's articles on the MIL Ukraine blog

For example, my colleagues and I worked on the "Mobile Journalism" course. I am sure that the course will be most useful for many participants who will have access and will be able to study with the help of e-courses.

This is especially relevant now, because knowledge of the basics of mobile journalism, practical skills of creating content in "field conditions", basic knowledge of conducting interviews, storytelling, standards of journalism, and editing and promoting one's material is a necessary skill for the work of journalists under the heavy and taxing conditions of war.

This will allow us to respond to new challenges and new events quickly and efficiently. Thanks to the project and the team, we can support Ukrainians with quality content.



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Ukraine: War Journalism in Zaporizhzhia

Eva Mironova is one of the participants in the Media and Information Literacy project in Ukraine. Since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, much has changed in her life and profession. She has become a war journalist and is now reporting from areas close to the frontline. Down below you can read about her experience.



Eva Mironova,
Participant
from Ukraine

Perhaps the most important thing in the work of a journalist is freedom. Freedom of choice, actions, emotions. During war, these conditions are not a luxury but the foundation of survival.

Over the past six months, all journalists in Ukraine have worked under the most extreme conditions. Everyone had to adopt to war journalism, given its strict rules and rigid boundaries. Here, the medical postulate of "do no harm"

comes into fore, compared to the life "before the war" - before the full-scale invasion of the Russian army.

This rule is both written and intuitive: show that what should be shown, be silent and speak at the same time, notice and record, but at the same time refrain from unnecessary details that can harm people's lives. War journalism is a difficult affair. However, it teaches you best to distinguish, analyze, and draw conclusions. Personally, at the beginning of the full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine I was struck by the stories of the people from Mariupol. Mariupol is a hero city, a city that the Russians turned into ruins, taking the lives of thousands of civilians.

I remember how Natalia from Mariupol spoke calmly about all the horrors she saw, as if she had already adapted to them. With tears in her eyes, she told me how she was looking for her son lost in Mariupol. I also deeply remember the story of a displaced woman from Mariupol, Yulia - how she saved her daughter with cystic fibrosis, looking for an oxygen cylinder for her in a ruined hospital,

overcoming yards with unexploded enemies' mines. Unforgettable is also a story of a Mariupol native, the volunteer Serhiy - how he was captured by the enemy because he tried to evacuate people from Zaporizhzhia. All these stories required maximum empathetic attention, immersion and a clear understanding of boundaries in communication with people.

A separate page for me is journeying to dangerous places, almost on the war line - Orihiv, Komyshevakh, Yuliivka. Today, the city of Orihiv is completely destroyed by Russians. However, there are still people in Orihiv. Mayor Anatoliy Khvorostyanov is still there and always helped to conduct reporting from there. Yes, it was dangerous: unexpected shellings and rockets flying overhead, and even pathing through the remains of the destroyed civilian buildings.

It is incredibly difficult to keep your sanity when the enemy's missiles are striking into the residential buildings of your city. When you see how the rescuers pull out the dead bodies of people who slept peacefully that night from under the rubble is the most difficult thing. Controlling yourself, calmly collecting information, and at the same time seeing wounded people, and the occurrence of rescue operations. War teaches us not only new rules of journalistic work, ethics, understanding, but also creates the necessity to consolidate our forces and motives - we are all in the same boat. We are all Ukrainians.

Thank you to the MIL Ukraine team for giving me the freedom to feel, reach out to the readers and speak about the reality of wartime in Zaporizhzhia.

Eva Mironova out in the field to report on the aftermath of Russian shelling



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Nepal: CMR Journalism Academy Officially Launched

Interlink Academy and the Center for Media Research Nepal (CMR-Nepal) officially launched the new CMR Journalism Academy in Kathmandu. In this four-year capacity building project, we will train educators and support the local management in developing a strategy to become the leading training institution in Nepal. **Ujjwal Acharya**, Managing Director, reports how our partnership came to be and the first days of the new Academy.



Ujjwal Acharya,
Managing Director
of CMR Journalism
Academy

I went to Hamburg in 2011 to attend the course 'Journalism in the Digital World' where I also met Werner Eggert, the Managing Director of Interlink Academy. Already into the first few days of the course, I realized that Nepali mid-career journalists are in a desperate need of a similar training program and facilities within Nepal if they were to keep pace with the technological advances brought about by the Internet.

Many people in Nepal had entered the profession of journalism without

prior academic background or professional training, and learned journalism through learning by doing. Despite this issue, along with an increasing shift to online journalism, mid-career and senior journalists do not get an opportunity to update their knowledge and improve their skills by periodic training opportunities in Nepal.

Thus, it is difficult for them to meet the needs of newsrooms which are rapidly undergoing digital transformation. CMR-Nepal, which was established in 2011 to conduct research and build up the capacity of journalists to support the quality of journalism, believed that a journalism training academy providing high-quality professional training courses will help solve these issues.

Therefore, we asked Interlink Academy for support. The new new CMR Journalism Academy is a joint initiative of the CMR-Nepal and Interlink Academy to provide state-of-the-art training with the objective of strengthening digital journalism capability of Nepali journalists.

The CMR Journalism Academy is a long-term initiative of CMR-Nepal and Interlink Academy partnership supported by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The Academy aims to train at least 180 journalists in several weeks long trainings by the end of 2025 and establish itself as a premier journalism training institute of Nepal.

The Opening of the Academy

The Academy was formally opened in Kathmandu on November 22, 2022, by Dr Thomas Prinz, Ambassador of Germany, the Director of Interlink Academy, Werner Eggert, Secretary of the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Pawan Acharya, other journalists and media academics from all over Nepal.

Opening the Academy, Ambassador Dr. Prinz said democracy thrives only when the press is free. Emphasizing that misinformation would be disastrous for society, he said the academy should work to minimize the dissemination of fake information.



Dr Thomas Prinz, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Nepal speaking at the opening ceremony

Interlink Academy's Eggert talked about the long and trust-based partnership with CMR-Nepal in conducting four trainings to Nepali journalists since 2018 and hoped that trainings imparted by the Academy would enhance the professionalism of Nepali journalists.

To be continued on the next page.

Nepali Media extensively covered the opening of CMR Journalism Academy. Check out their reports with the links below. Especially, the first link on Ambassador Prinz' speech about fake news at the opening ceremony is worth a read.

[Nepal Live Today](#), [Pahilopost](#), [Himal Press](#) & [Nepal Press](#)

Nepal: Training-of-Trainers and Strategy Workshops

Bipul Pokhrel, president of the umbrella union of Nepali journalists FNJ, sent a message in which he hoped that Journalism Academy would enhance the capacity of Nepali journalists by imparting necessary training. He further added, "I am confident that the professional and passionate team of experienced journalists at CMR-Nepal will ensure that Journalism Academy will succeed in its mission to establish itself as a trend-setting digital journalist training institute."

CMR chair women Trishna Acharya said the Academy would be crucial in enhancing the technical and practical skills of Nepali journalists and will start offering training programs for journalists on skills needed for digital transformation of journalism. Beginning in 2023, the Academy will start offering courses on mobile journalism, data journalism, specialized reporting in digital world, digital safety, verification and fact-checking, podcasting, and audience engagement. All courses of Journalism Academy will be blended learning courses with two face-to-face sessions connected via e-learning modules.

Training of Trainers

Interlink Academy also organized the first Training-of-Trainers for twelve journalism and media trainers from November 22-27 and December 2 and 3, 2022. This eight-day-long training of trainers program enabled journalists to conduct practical skill training for their peers.

The program comprised of basic principles of adult learning, training planning through needs assessment and the definition of learning outcomes as well as interactive training methodology. The participants practiced visualization techniques, analyzed trainer's roles and

group dynamics. As a final project, participants produced a training matrix and conducted the training accordingly.

The trainers were trained in technical content and methodological didactic for an initial six subject areas; at least two trainers will cover one subject area each. Interlink Academy systematically introduced the new trainers to the basics of adult education and worked with them on the fundamentals of curriculum building; and the requirements of hybrid learning formats (combination of face-to-face workshops with e-learning units). Participants of the training will develop training modules and matrix for various training topics in consultation with Journalism Academy and Interlink Academy, which will be used in further trainings. Interlink Academy's Erik Albrecht conducted the training together with Director Werner Eggert in a thought through and suitable manner.

Organizational Development and Strategic Workshop

Interlink Academy also conducted a four-day workshop for Journalism Academy staff, lead trainers and CMR-Nepal leadership. The workshop was oriented towards team building, mission, vision and strategic direction of the Academy, and duties and responsibilities of the Academy staff.

Interlink's Erik Albrecht conducted the workshop from November 28 to December 1, 2022. The participant group will meet at the beginning of each of the next three years for interim evaluations and annual planning. As the continuous output of the workshop, the team will develop and refine a comprehensive strategy. The goal of the strategy is to ensure the relevance and sustainability of the CMR Journalism Academy.

The combined team of Interlink Academy and the Center for Media Research – Nepal (CMR-Nepal) in the new seminar room of the CMR Journalism Academy in Kathmandu in November 2022



Nepal: Getting the Seminar Room Ready Just in Time

Bikash Karki is the Operations Director of the CMR Journalism Academy and responsible for much of what happens in the Academy. Preparing everything for a timely launch, however, isn't always what one plans it to be. Easily, one encounters one unforeseen trouble after another. Down below, Bikash reports about the struggle of only getting the seminar room prepared and renovated in time.



Bikash Karki,
Operations Director
of CMR Journalism
Academy

When Werner Eggert arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal on November 12, one of the first things he wanted to do was to visit CMR Journalism Academy. Since June 2022, we had only met online to talk about the Academy and all things related to it. With the core governance team, he conducted a three-day online workshop in August, and he found that we are passionate about this initiation.

We took him to the venue, which was still under construction with

much pending work. With a Training-of-Trainers planned to start ten days later, we could sense he didn't look confident it could happen in the seminar room at the CMR Journalism Academy. We were confident that we will get it ready. This was because the work being done was a culmination of months of our efforts.

It all began when Interlink Academy confirmed the funding for the CMR Journalism Academy in May, and I started working on it. The first challenge for us was to acquire a seminar room at a convenient location. We spent numerous days looking for it – within two months we probably visited more than 50 potential apartments and buildings but couldn't find a suitable match as per our criteria of size, price and location. Large commercial buildings were out of question because of their high price, so we focused on small commercial buildings.

We wanted a seminar room with good sunlight and ventilation, covering an area of 500 square feet at the least. Building regulations in Kathmandu state that when the pillars of a building are more than 15 feet apart, a detailed structural analysis is needed for the permit of construction. Since a structural analysis adds up to cost, the majority of landlords choose to place pillars 15 feet apart.

We finally found a flat that met all our criteria and rented it. The previous occupant had left his stuff in the flat which he refused to remove for a couple of weeks. For the forceful removal, the landlord had to file a police report and it took another couple of weeks before we entered the vacant apartment. By that time, contractors were already shying of new work due to the month-long Dashain and Tihar, the two biggest festivals in Nepal during which most of the workers return home.

Since we were not able to start work immediately, we asked contractors to provide us quotations and work cost and completed procurement processes. So, when the workers returned, we were ready to move forward. However, another hurdle remained. For the partition of the seminar hall, we chose glass which needed to be toughened according to our needs in India. It took another three weeks during which Werner visited us. We had everything planned and scheduled carefully so we were confident that things will be done on time, but there was a little risk of something going wrong. However, all things went ahead as planned and despite the hassle and hustle, we were able to get things up and ready – just in time for the training to happen in our new seminar room.

Our CMR Journalism Academy seminar room: a complete transformation in only ten days



Nepal: Impressions From the CMR Journalism Academy Opening Ceremony and the First Training-of-Trainers



Nepal: Feedback From the First Training-of-Trainers

"[...] this training will definitely help in the digital transformation of Nepali media and journalists."



Bhuwan KC, Kathmandu:

„The training was a new opportunity for me. I was most impressed with the simple methodology and procedure to practically present complex and theoretical topics. I not only learned new knowledge but also have confidence to utilize skills in future trainings focusing on trainees' expectations and experiences. I believe that this training will definitely help in the digital transformation of Nepali media and journalists.“

"The Training-of-Trainers is fruitful, productive, constructive, valuable and worthwhile."

Shruti Shrestha, Kathmandu:



„Being part of the Training-of-Trainers was not only a learning opportunity but a lifetime earnings. I was really impressed by the training and the trainer, who trained us in importance of learning outcomes, principles of adult-learning and training cycle. Moreover, the way to expose the theory in easy and practical applied skills is a reflection of myself. The Training-of-Trainers is fruitful, productive, constructive, valuable and worthwhile. Therefore, I am grateful to Interlink Academy, CMR Nepal Journalism Academy and trainer Erik Albrecht for this achievement and opportunity.“

"[...] the training [...] has helped me reposition myself to be a good trainer in the future."



Arun Karki, Kathmandu

„I believe that the training put me through a "reform and refine" process, which has helped me reposition myself to be a good trainer in the future. There was always something fresh to learn from the topics that were covered or the assignments that we completed in pairs or alone. All of these activities helped me comprehend, consider, and use the knowledge I had learned during the sessions. The mantra for me now is: Focus on what you want participants to learn or achieve from every training you lead.“

"[...] the training has explored the horizons of possibilities in the field of journalism education."

Rishikesh Dahal, Kathmandu:



„It was an opportunity to understand the importance of practical craftsmanship rather than theoretical knowledge. For academic strength, we have many universities and affiliated journalism schools in Nepal. I realize that those institutions have a long way to go to connect newsrooms with a practical approach based on digital transformation. From my perspective, this training has explored the horizons of possibilities in the field of journalism education with strong and convincing pedagogy. It has also provided unexplainable opportunities to fill the gaps in our weaknesses in academics and practice. Interlink Academy's training style has encouraged me to identify problems within myself and find ways to solve them. The Training-of-Trainers is just the beginning. We have more to learn and expand our knowledge from CMR Nepal Journalism Academy in the upcoming month and years.“

Publishing Credits

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