



Interlink Academy and its founder, Werner Eggert, celebrate the organization's 10th anniversary in Hamburg in October 2024. Keynote speaker Prof. Bernhard Pörksen (small picture) outlines his vision for quality journalism in the digital age



Message from the Director



Werner Eggert

A little over ten years ago, I walked into a notary's office in Hamburg-Altona with a charter for a new organization in my briefcase and countless ideas for an international school of journalism in my mind. Having already spent two decades in international media development, I was ready to register and start an organization of my own — one that was small, agile, and tailored to the needs of journalists working in countries with restricted press freedom and limited media diversity.

The name *Interlink Academy for International Dialog and Journalism* was, and remains, a reflection of our mission — just as the motto of our 10th-anniversary celebration last October aptly captured our purpose: *Journalism instead of activism, facts instead of fake.*

To date, more than 4,000 media professionals have participated in our events. This milestone was only achievable thanks to the dedication of my colleagues, the collaboration of our partners around the world, and the unwavering support of our private and public sponsors. I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this journey. Your trust, partnership, and shared moments of inspiration have made all the difference.

Here's to a happy and prosperous New Year 2025 for all of us!

Contents

- 2 Nepal: Journalism Academy Advances With New Courses
- 3 Digital Security, Fact-Checking and Data-Driven Journalism Courses in Nepal
- 5 Nepal: Participant From Remotest Region Recalls Three-Day Journey
- 10 Nepali Minister of Communication Lauds Efforts of CMR Journalism Academy
- 11 Official Partner of the 9th Global Voices Summit in Kathmandu
- 12 Interlink Academy Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary
- 14 Russian Journalists in Exile (1): Our Fellows Achieve Awards
- 15 Russian Journalists in Exile (2–5): Experiences and Remarks
- 20 Zambia: First Media Literacy Training of Trainers
- 22 Zambia: A Community Organizer Reports on Her Experience
- 23 Thailand: Alumna Mutita Chuachang Promoted to Executive Editor of Prachatai
- 23 India: Building a Project for Climate Change Journalism
- 23 Legal Notice



A collage of the 148 Nepali journalists who completed courses at CMR Nepal Journalism Academy in 2023 and 2024

Nepal: Journalism Academy Advances With New Courses

Our partner organization, the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy in Kathmandu, has established itself as a trailblazing media training institute, providing world-class courses to mid-career journalists in Nepal. **Bikash Karki**, the Director of Operations, shares key statistics that underscore the success of the Academy's programs. Here are his insights:



Bikash Karki
CMR Journalism Academy

As the Director of Operations at the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy, I am proud to share that our dedication to empowering Nepali journalists with cutting-edge digital skills reached new heights in 2024. Since our inception just two years ago, we have trained 148 journalists and 26 trainers, successfully delivering 13 courses to date.

In 2024, we introduced two groundbreaking courses—Digital Security for Journalists and Fact-Checking—to complement our existing offerings in data-driven journalism, multimedia storytelling, and podcasting. This milestone is particularly significant as both new courses were designed by our local trainers under the supervision of the Interlink Academy, showcasing our growing capacity to develop courses that meet international standards. Our partnership with the Interlink Academy has been invaluable. Their approach of enabling local trainers to design, implement, and

supervise world-class courses is transforming journalism training in Nepal. The Training of Trainers (ToT) program, which has trained 26 trainers, including 12 in 2024, has played a key role in this process.

These trainers are now applying their pedagogical skills not only in the courses they facilitate at the Academy but also in their newsrooms and in training sessions organized by other institutions.

The CMR Nepal Journalism Academy has firmly established itself as Nepal's leading media training institution. The increasing number of applications we receive for each course demonstrates the demand for our programs. Furthermore, our trainees are applying the skills they learn in their newsrooms, producing impactful journalism. We continue to receive positive feedback from their colleagues, as well as heartfelt testimonials from participants, often shared on social media (p. 9).

Our courses are designed not only to impart knowledge but also to equip mid-career journalists with practical skills, enabling them to adapt to the ever-evolving digital media landscape. As we move forward, we remain dedicated to supporting journalists and advancing journalism across Nepal, empowering the next generation of media professionals with the skills they need to thrive.

Nepal: Digital Security, Fact-checking Courses Developed

CMR Nepal Journalism Academy developed and implemented two courses in 2024 with support from Interlink Academy's trainers.

The course on Digital Security for Journalists is the first course developed by our partner in Nepal. This blended-learning course consisted of 6 days of in-person sessions, followed by six weeks of e-learning. It was implemented in August-September 2024 under Interlink Academy's supervision and completed by twelve journalists.

The Digital Security for Journalists course included modules on threat analysis, computer and mobile device security, internet security, secure communication, privacy and data security, personal and newsroom safety planning, as well as understanding and dealing with online harassment. The course was facilitated by Ujjwal Acharya, Umesh Shrestha, and Nasana Bajracharya.

This is the first multi-day digital security course for journalists in Nepal, where digital attacks on journalists and media houses, as well as online harassment, have increased exponentially in recent years.



Participants of the *Digital Security for Journalists* course 2024

CMR Academy also developed and implemented the Fact-Checking Course, which featured two six-day in-person phases surrounding a six-week e-learning period. Fourteen journalists and fact-checkers attended and completed the course in September-October 2024.

The Fact-Checking Course included modules on monitoring and identifying misinformation, conducting fact-checking using tools such as reverse image search, metadata viewers, forensics, archiving, advanced internet

search, writing fact-checks, and understanding the principles set out by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). The training was facilitated by Umesh Shrestha, Chetana Kunwar, Tilak Pathak, and Ujjwal Acharya. During the training, participants worked in pairs to conduct seven practical fact-checks, which were published by NepalFactCheck.org — an IFCN-certified fact-checking initiative by our partner aimed at debunking viral misinformation spreading across media and social media. U.A.



Fourteen journalists and fact-checkers complete the fact-checking course in 2024

Nepal: Impactful Data-Driven Journalism Courses



Third course in data-driven journalism: March 17 – May 10, 2024

Twenty-six journalists completed the Data-Driven Journalism courses at the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy in 2024. The course, first introduced by Interlink Academy in 2020, remains the most demanded course at the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy. In 2024, two courses were conducted, which also aimed at providing teaching experience to data journalism trainers. Experienced trainers Umesh Shrestha and Arun Karki worked alongside new trainers Chetana Kunwar, Ramesh Kumar, and Krishna Gyawali to deliver the courses.

The topics covered included tools and techniques for data acquisition through freedom of information applications,

advanced internet search, and web scraping; data sources and types; data cleaning, arrangement, and analysis; presenting data through appropriate visualizations; and data-driven storytelling.

There has been a significant increase in data-driven stories in the media where the trainees are employed following their training.

For example, Mohan Mainali produced a four-part data-driven series on how climate change-induced drought and high rainfall have impacted lives and natural resources in Nepal. Read [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#) and [Part 4](#). Read another impactful story by Dinesh Gautam [here](#). U.A.



Fourth course in data-driven journalism: March 31—May 24, 2024



Nepal: Participant From Remotest Region Recalls Journey

Bhim Bahadur Pariyar travelled three days—on foot or on the back of jeeps on a rough road—to reach nearest airport to fly to attend mobile journalism training at CMR Journalism Academy in 2023/24. Down below he recalls his journey.

On the airplane *en route* to Kathmandu, a journalist who coincidentally sat behind me asked, after learning I was attending CMR Nepal Journalism Academy’s training: “How? Do you know someone there?”

I knew no one—and I had not told anyone that I had applied for the course because I thought no one would select a journalist from the remotest district in Nepal. My district, Humla, is not connected to the national road network, and for us, reaching the capital city of Kathmandu is a four to six day journey one-way.

The place I live, Adanchuli Rural Municipality, does not have internet facilities except at the municipal office. I always use the internet at the municipal office for my work. It was there that I saw the call for applications and applied, even though I thought I wouldn’t be selected without someone in Kathmandu backing me. A few days later, I received a call from the CMR Academy, and I was told I had been shortlisted. They asked about my work, my motivation for the training, and my plans to use the skills if selected.

A few days later, for the first time in my life, a trip from Humla to Kathmandu for the training was scheduled, and I was very excited. I left home three days before my flight because I had to walk or get lucky to find a ride on the back of a jeep. Over the next two days, I walked for hours,

got into 3 jeeps, and finally a bus—traveling 12-16 hours a day to reach Surkhet, from where I could fly.

At the training, I was told that upon reviewing my work on Facebook, it was clear that I could benefit a lot from the training. And I fully agree with that—the training was excellent. I learned a lot of new skills, met journalists from all over the country and I believe that the multimedia/mobile journalism training will be useful for a lifetime. It was very fruitful learning. A heartfelt thank you to Journalism Academy and Interlink Academy!



Bhim Bahadur Pariyar trains mobile journalism at the workshop



Podcasting course: June - July, 2024



Podcasting and Multimedia Storytelling Courses Continue

In 2024, eleven journalists and communicators successfully completed a course in podcasting, while twelve journalists graduated from the Multimedia Storytelling / Mobile Journalism courses at the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy. The podcasting course marked a significant milestone for the Academy as it was the first course conducted entirely by local trainers, without direct supervision from an expert trainer from the Interlink Academy. The three new local trainers — Sabita Acharya, Laxman Karki, and Pawan Acharya — had themselves completed podcasting courses in 2023, which were facilitated and supervised by Interlink Academy.

This achievement highlights Interlink Academy's approach to developing local trainers in regions where specialised expertise is limited, such as Nepal.

The podcasting course covered essential skills, including the fundamentals of podcasting, audio recording and editing using open-source software, and the use of podcasting tools. Participants learned interview techniques, storytelling, podcast publication, and promotion strategies. Many participants have since begun recording their own podcasts, either independently or as part of media

outlets. In August 2024, twelve journalists completed the Multimedia Storytelling course, an updated version of the mobile journalism course. This revised course emphasized storytelling techniques using mobile phones. Topics included recording and editing photos, videos, and sound, crafting compelling narratives, creating multimedia stories, and publishing and promoting them on digital platforms. These courses underscore the Academy's commitment to empowering journalists with practical, cutting-edge skills and fostering innovation. U.A.



Multimedia Storytelling / Mobile Journalism course: July - August, 2024. Thereafter, this group participated in our Train-the-Trainer program

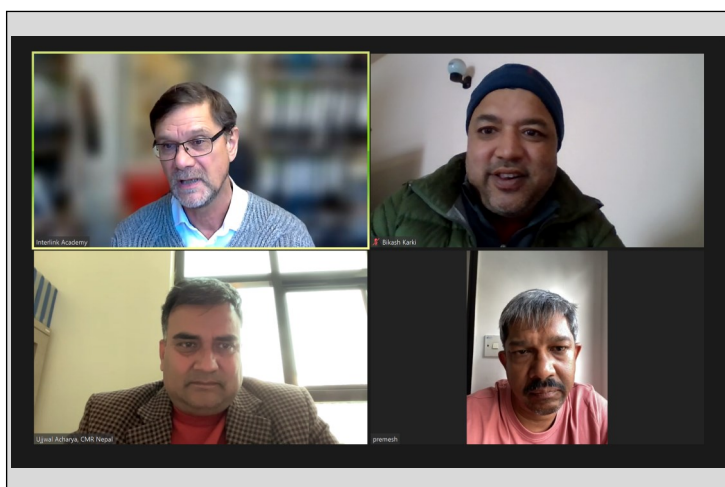
Bringing Global Resources to Nepal: ‘Podcasting - A Short Introduction’ Translated and Published in Nepali



Brigitte Hagedorn (left), Benjamin Seidel from the German Embassy (second from the right) and our CMR team at the book launch

The CMR Nepal Journalism Academy officially launched the Nepali translation of *Podcasting – A Short Introduction*, originally published in German. The book was unveiled by Benjamin Seidel, Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Development Cooperation and Economics at the German Embassy in Kathmandu, alongside the book's author, Brigitte Hagedorn. At the launch event, Hagedorn delivered a lecture titled *News and Podcasting in the Contemporary World*, highlighting the growing

significance of podcasting. She explored topics such as the technologies used in podcast production, ensuring reliability and empathy in podcasts, and effective strategies for podcast marketing. Seidel underscored the vital role journalism plays in the development of democracy and emphasized the importance of building journalists' capacities. He praised the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy for its dedication to enhancing the skills and capabilities of journalists in Nepal. U.A.



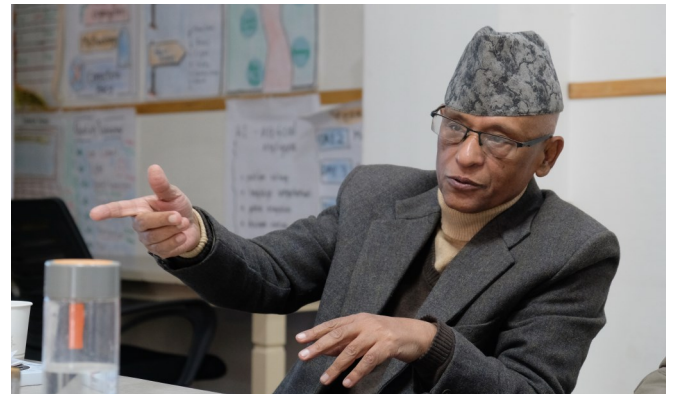
Fostering Asian Partnership for Increased Viability

To foster South-South partnerships and enhance the viability of initiatives in Nepal, the Interlink Academy engaged with Mr Premesh Chandran, co-founder and former CEO of Malaysiakini.com, a prominent news outlet in Malaysia. Mr Chandran conducted an evaluation of the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy's activities and provided a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at increasing the Academy's sustainability and impact. U.A.

Nepal: Strengthening CMR Journalism Academy

Advisory Committee Meetings in March and November

The Advisory Committee of CMR Nepal Journalism Academy met twice in 2024 to review our activities and plans. The Committee comprises of Dharma Raj Bhusal, chairperson of OnlineKhabar.com and Himalaya TV, Prof. P. Kharel, Nepal’s first journalism professor, Prateek Pradhan, editor-in-chief of Baarhakhari, Upasana Ghimire, editor of Nari magazine, Tilak Pathak, Executive Director of CMR-Nepal and Interlink’s Werner Eggert. In addition to regular business, the committee discussed the Academy’s training principles, courses and pedagogy during the March meeting as well as preliminary findings of a training needs survey of Nepali journalists commissioned by CMR-Nepal. The Advisory Committee discussed viability and self-sustainability of the Academy. U.A.



Prof. Prateek Pradhan at the Advisory Committee



Impressions from our Advisory Committee Meetings. To the left a group photo with Interlink Academy’s Werner Eggert

Annual Strategic Review Meeting and Staff Retreat in February



Interlink Academy’s Director, Werner Eggert, actively participated in and facilitated the Annual Strategic Review Meeting and Staff Retreat of the CMR Academy, held in Chitwan in February 2024. During the retreat, the team reviewed activities from 2022 and 2023, evaluated staff roles and responsibilities, identified areas for improvement, and realigned team roles for effectiveness. The retreat also included brainstorming sessions to generate ideas for smoother and more efficient operations. In November 2024, Werner rejoined the Academy team to assess the implementation of outcomes from the earlier meeting, finances and training plans for 2025. U.A.

Nepal: Social Media Posts by Participants of Our Trainings



Prashant Aryal

“

Unprecedented experience: After many years, I sat in a classroom as a trainee... This two-month multimedia/mobile journalism training was fruitful in terms of learning.



Amita Thakuri

“

Fact Check Training ! Thank you for this opportunity to grow, connect, and enhance our skills. Excited to put this knowledge into practice and make a difference.

I have been trained a lot... but what I learned and how I learned in this two months, this experience was very different, very effective and useful.



Thank you to CMR and Interlink Academy for investing in teaching the skills of data journalism.

Basant Pratap Singh

Yes, I Got It!! Through podcast training, I also learned the importance of determination and passion in achieving goals. Despite my health challenges, CMR encouraged me to continue my learning journey... filled with learning and gratitude



Sushila Dhama

Excited to apply these new skills in audio storytelling and production. Ready to take on new podcasting opportunities and share compelling stories.

“



Daya Dudraj

Another step in the search for Truth! 🎉 I have successfully completed 'Fact Checking Course 2024' and received Certificate of Excellence. This achievement has strengthened my resolve for transparency and credibility in journalism. 🙏

“



Riya Basnet

Nepal: Making a Lasting Impact on Journalism Training

The Interlink Academy conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) program for 12 new trainers at the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy from February 25 to March 9, 2024. This marked the second ToT held in Nepal and was facilitated by Erik Albrecht and Werner Eggert. The program aimed to develop journalism trainers skilled in modern pedagogical techniques, enhancing their ability to train the next generation of journalists effectively.

Building on the success of the Training of Trainers (ToT) program in 2022, where participants not only facilitated courses at the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy but also conducted training sessions across the country, the Interlink Academy remains committed to strengthening its partner's capacity. The second ToT, held in early 2024, is expected to further enhance journalism training in Nepal, creating a lasting and positive impact on the field. As part

of their preparation, the trainers also participated in a three-day flipchart visualization training to enhance their teaching methods. Among the newly trained trainers, nine have already co-facilitated courses in 2024, while the remaining trainers are set to lead courses in 2025. This initiative underscores the Academy's dedication to fostering high-quality journalism training throughout Nepal. U.A.



Impressions from our the ToT. To the left, enthusiastic participants create a vibrant flipchart

Nepali Federal Minister of Communication Lauds Efforts of CMR Academy in Promoting Quality Journalism

Nepal's Federal Minister for Communication and Information Technology, Rekha Sharma, commended the efforts of the CMR Nepal Journalism Academy in promoting quality journalism during a meeting in February 2024. The Academy's Director Ujjwal Acharya, Director of Operations Bikash Karki, and trainer Chetana Kunwar met with Minister Sharma at her office to brief her on the Academy's objectives and activities. Minister Sharma highlighted the limited opportunities available for journalists in Nepal, particularly those in regional areas, to enhance their skills. She encouraged the Academy to expand its courses to reach these underserved regions. The Academy expressed gratitude for her support and is committed to this goal, with plans to extend its programs to benefit journalists across the country. U.A.



Minister Rekha Sharma (right) and Ujjwal Acharya



Nepal: Official Partner of the 9th Global Voices Summit

CMR Nepal Journalism Academy served as one of the local partners for the ninth Global Voices Summit 2024, held in Kathmandu from December 6–7, 2024. The summit brought together over 300 participants from 40 countries, including writers, translators, human rights advocates, and technologists. The Global Voices Summit is a global community dedicated to exploring and discussing issues surrounding digital media, knowledge sharing, and activism.



The Summit's opening plenary session, titled "Digital Conversations in Nepal: Past, Present, and Future," was moderated by Ujjwal Acharya, Managing Director of CMR Nepal Journalism Academy. The panel featured prominent speakers, including Kunda Dixit, founder and former editor of Nepali Times; Sabita Acharya, podcaster of Gulabi Sambad; and Sudip Bhai Subedi, YouTuber of In-Depth Story.

Trainers from the Journalism Academy also actively participated in the conference. The Global Voices Summit is a renowned international gathering focusing on digital media, knowledge sharing, and activism from a Global Majority perspective. Over the course of two days, participants delved into critical topics such as free expression, artificial intelligence, language diversity, and the enabling and hindering factors impacting these areas. Key issues explored included threats like transnational repression and digital authoritarianism, as well as the challenges of maintaining open knowledge initiatives in an increasingly fragmented internet. Attendees also shared valuable insights and lessons learned in media creation, political activism, and environmental justice, contributing to a rich exchange of ideas. U.A.

CMR Nepal Journalism Academy signs MoU with NSJF during AIPS Asia Congress in Kathmandu



The CMR Nepal Journalism Academy and the Nepal Sports Journalists Forum (NSJF) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaboratively strengthen sports journalism in Nepal. The MoU was signed by Director Ujjwal Acharya and NSJF President Durga Nath Subedi in the presence of AIPS Asia President Hee Dong Jung during the 25th AIPS Asia Congress in Kathmandu. AIPS Asia, the continental chapter of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS), is actively involved in this partnership. The Academy will support NSJF and AIPS Asia in advancing journalism training programs in Asia. U.A.



Interlink Academy Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary

In 2014, journalist and educator Werner Eggert founded the *Interlink Academy for International Dialog and Journalism*, a private nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering media professionals across the globe. Over the past ten years, Interlink has trained more than 4,000 journalists and media workers from developing countries and crisis regions, fostering professional standards, building capacity, and strengthening media independence worldwide. To mark this extraordinary milestone, Interlink Academy celebrated its 10th anniversary on October 14, 2024, at the HÖB Hühnerposten in Hamburg. The event, held as part of the *Hamburger Woche der Pressefreiheit* (Hamburg Week of Press Freedom), brought together journalists, media experts, and supporters to reflect on Interlink Academy’s achievements and discuss pressing challenges for journalism around the globe today.

The anniversary carried the theme: *“Journalism instead of activism, facts instead of fakes.”* The program emphasized the essential role of journalism in promoting truth, transparency, and democracy—values that have guided Interlink’s mission since its founding.

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Bernhard Pörksen, renowned media researcher from the University of Tübingen, whose speech titled *“Fact & Fake: The New Power of Disinformation – What We Need to Know and What We Should Do”* captivated the audience. Pörksen explored the growing influence of disinformation campaigns on public discourse, highlighting the need for critical media literacy and resilient journalism in an era of “fake news.”

Pörksen's insights underscored the vulnerability of free societies to targeted misinformation, noting that journalists face a dual challenge: countering false narratives while upholding the core principles of press freedom and independent reporting.

Representing the City of Hamburg, Dr. Dirk Burmester addressed the audience on behalf of Jana Schiedek, Deputy Minister for Culture and Media, who was unable to attend due to illness. Burmester praised Interlink’s invaluable contributions to global media development,



Prof. Bernhard Pörksen at the ten-year anniversary event

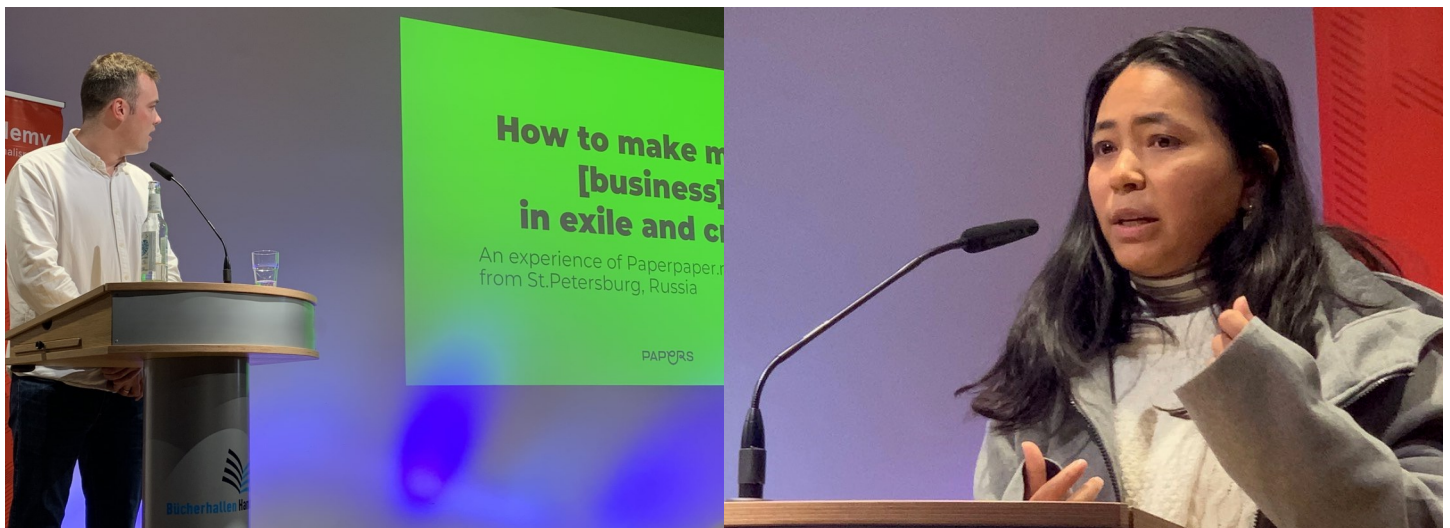
particularly its focus on journalists operating under difficult circumstances. Schiedek's message, as prepared for the occasion, highlighted the enduring relevance of Interlink's mission. She underscored the Academy's success in equipping journalists with modern tools and skills, fostering networks for cross-border collaboration, and helping media professionals combat the rising tide of authoritarianism and disinformation.

A key highlight of the evening was the participation of journalists from Russia and Myanmar, who shared their experiences of working abroad. They provided poignant examples of how they continue to support their audiences back home through *constructive journalism* — offering hope, reliable information, and alternative perspectives in countries where press freedom is under

attack. These testimonies illustrated the critical role of organizations like Interlink in strengthening free media, even in the most challenging environments. By creating safe spaces for learning and collaboration, Interlink enables journalists to continue their vital work — Informing the public, holding power to account, and resisting propaganda.

As Interlink Academy embarks on its second decade, its impact continues to grow. There is hope that the Academy will extend its work further, fostering closer cooperation between international journalists and media professionals in Germany. The event concluded with a shared sense of commitment to safeguarding independent journalism as a pillar of democracy.

For more impressions, please visit our [website](#). L.E.



Our colleagues from Russia, Kirill Artemenko (left), and from Myanmar, Wai Sander Kyaw (right), present at the anniversary event

Werner Eggert Was Interviewed by *Nordspitze* About Ten Years of Interlink Academy and His Vision of Journalism

Nordspitze is the official magazine of the Northern Chapter of the German Journalists' Association (DJV) – Germany's largest organization representing journalists. The DJV advocates for journalists' interests in politics, media, and the public sphere, while also working to protect copyright and promote high-quality journalism. As a politically and financially independent body, the DJV operates without external influence.

To mark the ten-year anniversary of Interlink Academy for International Dialog and Journalism, *Nordspitze* conducted an in-depth interview with Werner Eggert, founder and director of Interlink. The discussion highlights Interlink's mission to enhance journalism through international collaboration, capacity-building, and professional development. Werner Eggert shares insights into Interlink's goals, its most significant achievements over the past decade, and his vision for the future of journalism in a rapidly changing global media environment. For readers interested in exploring the full article and gaining deeper insights into Interlink's impact and vision, the interview is available in German. To access it, please follow this [link](#). L.E.





A workshop in Hamburg is part of our Reporting Well and Safely About Russia in Exile. Here a group photo at the seminar hall

Russian Journalists in Exile (1): Our Fellows Receive Awards

Interlink Academy is committed to supporting journalists in exile through grants, consulting, and technical assistance. In recent years, this support has been particularly focused on journalists fleeing Russia. Some of the journalists we assist have established their own news initiative, Paper Media Company (Bumaga), while others collaborate with various media organizations across Europe and even Israel. Below, you will find insights from one of the project coordinators, **Victor Yukechev**, who shares what he is most proud of about this initiative. The following pages contain touching reports from Russian journalists in exile who are part of the program.



Victor Yukechev
Tak-Tak-Tak Foundation

I am immensely proud that several publications by our fellows have been nominated for prestigious national awards. Notably, Ekaterina Fomina's video report, *"When They Will Return"* (Dozhd TV channel), and Olga Romashova's article, *"A 15-Year-Old Political Prisoner Whom the FSB Considered a Member of the Russian Legion of Freedom"* (Mediazona media project), were

shortlisted for the esteemed Redkollegiya Award. A series of articles published by the online platform Important Stories, with contributions from Sonya Savina, also garnered significant attention. These investigative pieces—*"The Eye of Sovereign Censorship"* and *"Inside the*

Censorship Machine"—expose how Roskomnadzor plans to implement global surveillance of the Russian-language Internet using artificial intelligence. The series sparked widespread resonance and received extensive citations in both Russian and international media.

Another accomplishment I am particularly pleased to highlight is Ekaterina Fomina, a correspondent for Dozhd, receiving the prestigious Galina Starovoitova Scholarship. In March 2025, she will begin an internship at the Kennan Institute in Washington. Galina Starovoitova, a legendary Russian Duma deputy, was known for her efforts to draft legislation aimed at lustrating "conductors of totalitarian regime policies" before her tragic assassination in 1998. Reflecting on this opportunity, Ekaterina remarked, *"This is very interesting and important in light of the trends that await Russia."*

This milestone was made possible in large part due to Interlink's financial and moral support, as well as its efforts to foster meaningful connections.



Russian Journalists in Exile (2): Experiences and Remarks

Below, **Tatiana Ivanova**, co-founder of Paper Media, shares her reflections on the 2024 content creation and AI workshop organized by Interlink Academy. She emphasizes how the workshop provided her with invaluable tools to enhance productivity, optimize workflows, and elevate the quality of her content.



Tatiana Ivanova
Paper Media

Participating in a program that combined the creation of socially significant textual content with a hands-on workshop on neural networks has been an enriching and multifaceted experience. [...] The journey provided a comprehensive immersion into the practical applications of AI technologies in content creation. This has been, without a doubt, the most in-depth experience I've had with neural networks to date, and it has significantly expanded my professional skill set.

The first phase of the program focused on developing socially significant content. This component not only strengthened my ability to craft meaningful and impactful messages but also emphasized the importance of tailoring content to diverse audiences and contexts. Creating materials with a broader social focus challenged me to think critically about how language can influence and inspire. This skill transcends specific industries or professional roles, highlighting the balance between creativity and responsibility.

The second phase, the hands-on workshop, concentrated on the use of AI in content creation and beyond. This segment stood out for its practical engagement, allowing me to interact directly with AI tools and models. From testing various systems to understanding their strengths and limitations, the workshop bridged theoretical knowledge with practical application in a meaningful way. What I found particularly striking was the opportunity to explore the vast capabilities of AI, from natural language processing to content generation. While some tools proved to be intuitive and aligned with my professional needs, others required deeper exploration and critical reflection. This diversity in experiences underscored the importance of adaptability and analytical thinking when integrating emerging technologies into workflows.

From a professional standpoint, this program has been

pivotal in broadening my understanding of AI and its implications for content creation. I now feel more confident not only as a user of AI tools but also as someone who can critically evaluate their impact and potential. For instance, I am better equipped to assess which tools can enhance productivity, streamline workflows, or elevate the quality of content. Moreover, the program emphasized the importance of ethical considerations in working with AI. As these technologies continue to evolve, understanding their biases, limitations, and societal implications will be crucial for their responsible application.



Part of the workshop was also to visit the *Hamburger Senat*

Additionally, this program reinforced the value of continuous learning. Technology evolves rapidly, and staying informed about the latest advancements is essential to maintaining a competitive edge. The workshop reminded me that tools that initially seem unfamiliar or complex can present significant options when approached with curiosity and persistence.

In summary, this program has been a significant step forward in my professional development. By combining content creation with hands-on experience using large language models, I've gained practical skills and a deeper understanding of how AI can be harnessed responsibly and effectively. Although the journey was not without its challenges, it has prepared me to navigate the dynamic intersection of creativity and technology with greater confidence and capability in the future.



Russian Journalists in Exile (3): Experiences and Remarks

Timur Khairutdinov, another member of Paper Media, shares his reflections on the tools introduced during the workshop in Hamburg. As a data journalist, he is especially intrigued by how AI can enhance data analysis and streamline programming tasks in his everyday work and tasks.



Timur Khairutdinov
Paper Media

During my time as a journalist for Bumaga, a publication renowned for its coverage of social and political events in Saint Petersburg, I faced an unexpected challenge: programming. Specifically, I needed to create parsers to automate data collection for my journalistic investigations. The issue? I had no formal training in programming.

As a data journalist, my role often required gathering and analyzing large datasets. Whether scraping websites for public records or monitoring social media activity, it quickly became clear that manual methods were inefficient. Automation was the solution, but without knowledge of programming languages like Python, I felt stuck. Each attempt to write even basic scripts was met with endless bugs and errors. As deadlines loomed and pressure mounted, the frustration only grew. I often wondered if a simpler solution existed. That's when I learned about a project run by Interlink Academy, known for its practical workshops tailored to journalists. I joined the program hoping it would offer a way to tackle my technical challenges. Little did I know it would not only address my immediate concerns but also revolutionize how I approached data journalism.

One of the most impactful sessions in the program was a workshop on using large language models (LLMs) in journalism. Until then, I had viewed artificial intelligence

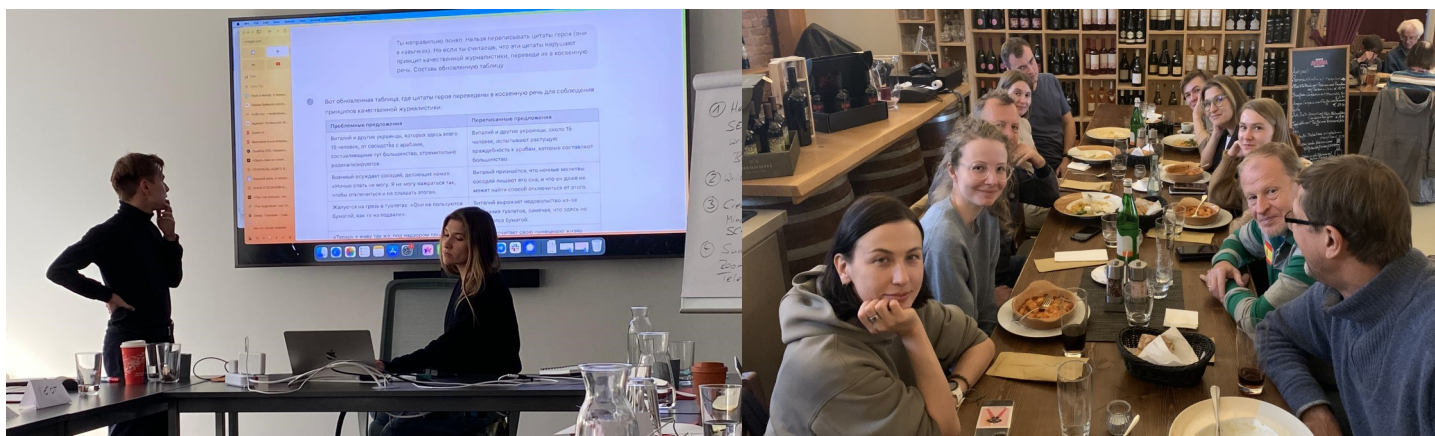
as something distant from my daily work. However, this workshop opened my eyes to its practical applications. The trainers introduced several LLMs and demonstrated their utility for tasks like writing, research, and — most importantly for me — coding.

This was where I was introduced to Claude, an advanced LLM designed to assist with tasks such as coding in Python. Initially skeptical, I wondered if an AI could truly help me overcome my programming struggles. However, after just a few demonstrations, I was amazed. Claude not only generated functional Python code but also explained it in simple terms, enabling me to understand and adapt it to my needs.

I began using Claude to write parsers for my projects. It felt like having a personal tutor — always patient and never fatigued. Over time, what had once seemed like an insurmountable obstacle became a manageable part of my workflow. I was now able to automate the collection of data from websites, transforming how I approached stories that required large-scale data analysis.

This experience with Claude and the broader introduction to LLMs has been transformative for my work as a data journalist. Not only can I now create parsers with ease, but I also have a greater appreciation for how AI can support various aspects of journalism.

Thanks to Interlink Academy, I've successfully bridged the gap between journalism and technology. I'm excited to continue exploring how tools like Claude can push the boundaries of what's possible in my field, empowering journalists to work smarter and more effectively.



Timur presents at the workshop (left), and the group enjoys a meal together (right)

Russian Journalists in Exile (4): Experiences and Remarks

"To live in exile is difficult, but the work I am used to helps me to keep depression at bay and move forward."



Andrey Filimonov, Radio Liberty:

„In February 2022, I fled Russia, leaving behind all my hopes for a better future of the country, my family and friends, my apartment, and my literary career. The only thing that stayed with me was my profession as a journalist and how to make words in the best order. For almost three years already, this has been what keeps me on my feet, while I move from country to country. When the Russian Ministry of Justice designated me a “foreign agent,” I realised that, in the foreseeable future, going back to my homeland was unlikely. To live in exile is difficult, but the work I am used to helps me to keep depression at bay and move forward. I just need to find new stimuli. Meeting the Interlink Academy team in 2024 became just such an incentive.

It was an honor and a privilege to get to know Werner Eggert, who envisioned the support project for exiled journalists, Klaus, a brilliant lecturer and polymath, and Lukas, the indispensable co-trainer of our group at the Hamburg conference. [..]

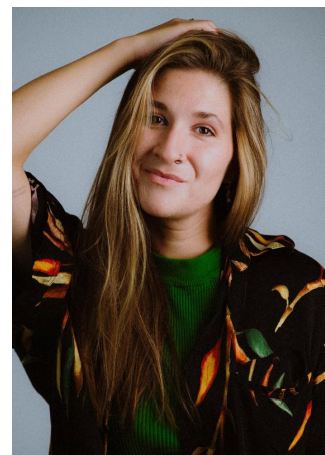
The Interlink Academy gave me the renewed confidence to approach my work and further broadened my perspective. This experience underlined the transformational power of education and collaboration in surmounting most of the hurdles of my current situation and maintaining professional level.“

"The program has [...] reaffirmed my belief in the power of journalism."

Ekaterina Fomina, Dozhd TV:

„I have been living in forced exile for almost three years, having left Russia immediately after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This upheaval has drastically changed both my personal and professional life. In Russia, I worked as a reporter, covering complex social issues in various regions. [..] In exile, however, my work has become incredibly challenging. What was once deeply immersive, in-person journalism has turned into "phone-based" reporting. Adapting to these limitations has been a continuous struggle, making it critically important for me to seek new methods and tools to expand my professional opportunities. The Interlink Fellowship Program has been a transformative experience in this regard. It provided me with the chance to develop my skills and acquire new knowledge. [..] The workshop in Hamburg was particularly meaningful, not only for the knowledge it offered but also for the connections it fostered. Meeting colleagues in exile was a source of immense joy and inspiration. In exile, live interactions, discussions about pressing issues, and simple human support are sorely missed. The Hamburg meeting gave me renewed energy and motivation to keep going. [..] Over the past six months of participation in the Fellowship, I have focused on creating impactful investigative journalism, leveraging OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) techniques, producing documentaries, and reporting on pressing human rights issues. [..] I published numerous investigations, analyses, and opinion columns on my personal Telegram-channel, including a personal account linking witnesses in my criminal case to broader systemic injustices and reports on hate crimes in Russia, such as the assault on an elderly man in Moscow by pro-governmental supporters, reflective columns on memory and state control, including a piece on the Beslan terror attack anniversary. As a documentary filmmaker I produced reportages on war-related topics, such as the recruitment of Indians to fight for Russia and the experiences of Russian-occupied territories. My last piece under this Fellowship is titled "When They Return", focusing on the victims of Russian soldiers, set to premiere in December 2024. [..]

I am deeply grateful to Interlink for this opportunity to grow professionally and personally [..].“

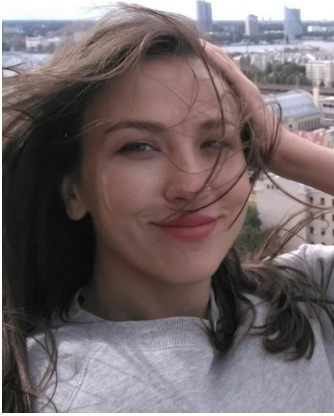


Бумага



Russian Journalists in Exile (5): Experiences and Remarks

"Every year of the war in Ukraine, Russian media in exile find it increasingly difficult to receive support."



Alla Konstantinova, Mediazone:

„My name is Alla Konstantinova, I am a correspondent of Russian small media outlet Mediazona focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, human rights affairs and police brutality. Mediazona was officially declared a «foreign agent» in Russia in September 2021. In March 2024, due to the threat of criminal prosecution, journalists from Mediazona were compelled to leave Russia — me too.

A month later I was included on the «foreign agents» list compiled by Russia's Justice Ministry. In Russia, the term «foreign agent» is tantamount «traitor» or «spy». I refuse to comply with the requirements of the Ministry of Justice and keep writing about the war in Ukraine. Every year of the war in Ukraine, Russian media in exile find it increasingly difficult to receive support. Apart from the difficulties of emigration, this uncertainty is

very worrying. We as a team and I personally try to do our work efficiently, with each of our texts, perhaps, to be a little closer to the end of the tragedy in Ukraine. I am grateful to the Interlink team for organizing such an interesting program. I've not only gained new knowledge during our exciting workshops in Hamburg, but also improved my network of professional contacts. It was incredibly important to spend time with colleagues, communicate, share experience and support. Thank you for support!“

"[F]inding myself in an unfamiliar place [..], I began to acutely feel loneliness and a certain helplessness [..]."

Anastasiia Lukina, Radio Liberty:

„The work of a journalist is undoubtedly quite autonomous, but in exile, this is often more of a disadvantage (unlike at home) than an advantage. Once, during a seminar at the "School of Civic Education," I participated in a training session where I had to identify the basic values important to a person. Among the key points, alongside freedom and security, I identified a person's belonging to a social group—be it a family, company, or professional community. At home, I felt this sense of belonging by default. However, finding myself in an unfamiliar place, surrounded by a foreign language, without friends or family, I began to acutely feel loneliness and a certain helplessness in everyday matters. I remember how, during my first days in Georgia, I literally couldn't buy regular butter—simply because I couldn't read what was written on the label in Georgian. Most importantly, I had no idea how to handle such challenges.

In a science fiction book I read as a child, there was a story about an artificial planet. Its inhabitants were forced to relocate there after their homeworld was destroyed in a catastrophe. One of the characters remarked, "You can live there, sure, but you can't develop there." When I had the opportunity to participate in the Interlink project, my first thought was that it would finally allow me to feel part of a professional journalistic community. Since we can't work directly on-site, all of us have had to radically restructure our workflows: finding new contacts, learning new tools, including technical ones.

In this, the Interlink project turned out to be incredibly valuable. The new connections brought invaluable exchanges of both professional and practical experience. The training in Hamburg deserves special mention. Honestly, before it, I thought of AI as somewhat of a toy and didn't consider it a serious tool that could (and should) be used in work. But seeing AI's real capabilities left me deeply impressed [..].“



Russian Journalists in Exile (6): Experiences and Remarks

"[I]f others have managed to endure, so will we."



Sofia Savina, Important Stories:

„In a few months, it will be three years since my colleagues and I from the publication *Important Stories* have been living and working as journalists in exile. The initial period of adapting to exile while covering Russia’s invasion of Ukraine around the clock was extremely challenging. But finally, this year, I found the strength to learn new skills, and I traveled to Hamburg to participate in the Interlink Academy program for journalists in exile. For several days, surrounded by other independent Russian journalists, we learned how to use artificial intelligence technologies in our journalistic work.

Today, however, I want to share why the trip to Hamburg, organized by Interlink, was also valuable to me as a source of moral support. It was incredibly meaningful to meet and connect with journalists from other editorial teams who, like *Important Stories*, were forced to relocate their newsrooms from Russia to other countries as soon as the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. I realized that we are not alone.

So many of my colleagues from Russia are now going through the same process of adapting to a new place, worrying about visas and rent, missing home, and believing that one day they will return. Later, together with Interlink Academy, I attended the *Exile Media Forum*, where speakers included not only journalists from Russia but also from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Eritrea, Iran, and Nicaragua. I was particularly struck by the speech of Aye Chan Naing, cofounder and Chief Editor of the *Democratic Voice of Burma*, who shared that he has been working in exile for 40 years and that, even after returning to his home country once, his newsroom was forced to emigrate again. All of this helped me realize that the challenges my newsroom is facing due to the impossibility of working in our home country have already been experienced — and are still being experienced — by countless journalists from around the world. And if others have managed to endure, so will we.“

"The three-day workshop on artificial intelligence was amazing [..]"

Olga Romashova, Mediazone:

„Participating in the scholarship from Interlink Academy has been a wonderful experience for me. [...] During the fellowship, I published twelve articles and three videos on topics related to war and repression (six of these are listed in the final list of publications). The requirements of Interlink kept me energized and motivated to work actively and diligently. The financial reward allowed me to worry less about the unavoidable problems of exile and to be more involved in my work.

I would like to make a special mention of the trip to Hamburg. The three-day workshop on artificial intelligence was amazing; it’s the best workshop on AI and LLMs I’ve ever attended. After it, I really started using AI tools like ChatGPT and NotebookLM in my daily work routine. I was excited to meet the Interlink Academy team, as well as to spend time in the company of my colleagues and share our experiences of working in exile. Attending the Exile Media Forum was also extremely valuable and interesting, and I particularly enjoyed the presentation by Aye Chan Naing, the co-founder of Democratic Voice of Burma.

Thanks to cooperation with Interlink Academy, I realized that there are many educational opportunities for journalists in exile and became more active in various educational programs. Participating in this project improved my professional performance and strengthened my ties to the professional community.“



Бумага





Media Literacy in Zambia: Our First Training of Trainers

In August, the first Training of Trainers for the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) project was held in Lusaka, organized by the Interlink Academy in collaboration with its Zambian partner, the Free Press Initiative (FPI). Interlink coach **Joachim Voegele** shares his reflections on the 6-day workshop and its impact.



Joachim Voegele
Interlink Academy

The twelve men and women sit expectantly in the seminar room at Chita Lodge in the Zambian capital, Lusaka. They are part of the first cohort of 24 prospective 'community organisers' who will spend the next two and a half years in different regions of Zambia sensitising their fellow citizens to the responsible use of news and social media. They come

from a variety of professional backgrounds and FPI was keen to ensure that they were well networked and able to mobilise people in their communities. As multipliers, they should be able to reach the widest possible audience and connect with non governmental organisations such as youth groups and churches as well as media.

The atmosphere is a bit tense on this first morning of training. Everyone is aware that expectations are high - as well as the stakes. Successful participation in this project is an opportunity for everyone to take an important career step. But it requires a 30-month commitment. The two Interlink trainers, Bhekizulu Tshuma and Nonhlanhla Mabhikwa, break the ice with a surprising 'energiser' exercise. The introduction is successful, there is laughter and the atmosphere lightens. The future trainers have been given their first tool for successful workshops. The training programme focuses on practising methods suitable for a target group that has little use for academic

presentations: Group work, card questions, role plays and more. At the same time, participants will be taught the content for their workshops in the communities. In so-called 'hubs', they will offer several workshops per month in teams of two on the various MIL topics. Those are introduction into the idea of media and information literacy, debunking fake news and manipulated content, handling cyber bullying, safe use of the internet, interpreting and posting content in social media and others. The participants are not used to 'learner-centred' methods from school and university. Bhekizulu and Nonhlanhla were at this point four years ago when they started their roles in the Interlink Academy's predecessor project in Zimbabwe. Today, they exude confidence and are an example of the opportunities for professional growth this project holds for everyone present. Spirits are high throughout the six intensive days. At the end, each team presents an example of its own training.

Part of the concept is that Joan Chirwa and Chishaba Masengu from FPI take on the role of chief trainers, with the two Zimbabwean colleagues increasingly taking a back seat. Together they have developed the content, tailored to the situation in Zambia. Joan, who is also the founder and executive director of the Zambia Free Press Initiative, is convinced of the project's impact:

„This ambitious project, the first of its kind to be implemented by the FPI with financial and technical support from Interlink Academy, will transform communities' news consumption patterns and impart critical skills for navigating news platforms online and offline.“



Zambia: Training of Trainers - A Fulfilling Experience

The project "Media and Information Literacy in Zambia" is in full swing. **Bhekizulu Tshuma** reports on his experience leading the Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops and why he is passionate about teaching and media literacy.



Bhekizulu Tshuma
Chief Trainer

During the last week of August 2024, I had a fulfilling experience and privilege of training first group of twelve community trainers in Zambia how to conduct trainings on media and information literacy. This training of trainers' workshop was jointly organized by Free Press Initiative of Zambia (FPI) and its partner Interlink Academy of

Germany in their two-and-half year Media and Information Literacy in Zambia project.

For me, the journey and experience of delivering media and information literacy trainings started sometime in 2021 in a similar project in Zimbabwe, jointly done by CITE-Centre for Innovation and Technology (Zimbabwe) and Interlink Academy. As the Chief Training Coordinator for the Zimbabwean project, I was able to understand and deepen my interest on media and information literacy topics, and also gain knowledge and skills to deliver interactive trainings.

Armed with passion for transferring my experience, I enjoyed my role the chief trainer in the Zambian Project.

I also facilitated the training together with Zambian trainers from FPI. We had a very complimentary working relation with FPI team — in a way it felt like we had been working together for some time. I was able to share my

experience of implementing the Media and Information Literacy project in Zimbabwe, which enabled them to adapt for their context.

The experience not only increased my interest in media, it highlighted the importance of media and information literacy trainings in today's information world dominated by digital technologies.

In my capacity as the lead trainer, I was in charge of and able to help the participants on training methodology. Specifically, I trained them on trainee-centered approaches that emphasize the participants' prior experiences while also fostering an engaging and lively training environment.

The six-day training also focused on equipping participants with knowledge and skills to deliver media and information literacy topics on digital security, fact-checking and content creation.

Reflecting on the training, the rewarding part of my experience was witnessing the level of participation, interest and comprehension by the participants.

I remember during the mock trainings conducted by participants, they were able to use different trainee-centred methods to demonstrate that they were ready to deliver their own trainings.

As an experienced trainer, helping others become knowledgeable and responsible media consumers is something I am very passionate about.



Bhaki, one of our most dynamic and experienced trainers, brought his energy and expertise to the workshop in Zambia, delivering an engaging presentation without the use of digital tools—energy outages are still common in the region

Zambia: A Community Organizer Reports on Her Experience

One of our Media and Information Literacy workshop participants, **Beatrice Chabaya**, shares her journey of becoming a Community Organizer and how the ToT workshop played a pivotal role in equipping her for this role.



Beatrice Chabaya
FPI Community Organizer

My name is Beatrice Chabaya, and I am one of the 12 Community Organizers selected by the Zambia Free Press Initiative (FPI) and Interlink Academy to implement a project aimed at promoting Media and Information Literacy (MIL) across Zambia. I was thrilled when I received the news of my selection to be part of this.

Community mobilization has always been one of my passions as a young journalist. Being part of this project will allow me to deepen my engagement with communities on critical issues that affect their lives and the governance of our country.

To prepare us for this important work, FPI and Interlink Academy organized a training program for the Community Organizers. This training equipped me with the knowledge and skills to make a meaningful impact and help bridge the existing MIL gap in my community and beyond. The experience also allowed me to connect with a diverse group of individuals, exchange ideas, and build friendships that extend beyond the scope of the MIL

project. Being part of a team of 12 dedicated Community Organizers has been both inspiring and life-changing. For me, as a journalist, the workshop was an eye-opener. It shed light on pressing issues such as cyberbullying and misinformation, which require urgent attention to ensure citizens use media responsibly.

Real-life examples shared during the training helped me understand the severity of the information gap in Zambia and motivated me to take action. Hearing the experiences of my colleagues further strengthened my resolve to help my community gain the critical knowledge they need in media and information literacy.

A standout moment during the training was the visit by the German Ambassador to Zambia, Her Excellency Ms Anne Wagner-Mitchell. She commended the Zambia Free Press Initiative and Interlink Academy for implementing the MIL project and emphasized the importance of such initiatives, noting that media literacy is a fundamental skill for everyone, everywhere. I was deeply honored that Ambassador Wagner-Mitchell took the time to interact with us and even granted me the opportunity to interview her on a range of issues affecting our country.

Moving forward, I am excited to empower my community with the skills to navigate the digital landscape responsibly, think critically, and make informed decisions. This project is not just an opportunity — it is a mission to drive positive change and ensure an informed society.



The German Ambassador to Zambia, Ms Anne Wagner-Mitchell (left photo, center), visits the event, creating exciting opportunities for interviews and meaningful engagement. Group work in action (right)

Thailand: Alumna Mutita “Pla” Chuachang Promoted to Executive Editor of Alternative Media House Prachatai



Mutita Chuachang
Prachatai, Thailand

I have been working in the media industry since graduating from university nearly 20 years ago. Over 70 percent of my career have been dedicated to alternative media in Thailand, with the remaining years spent in mainstream media. In September 2024, I returned to my former workplace — a small Thai alternative media outlet called *Prachatai*, an online news platform based in Bangkok. I am honored to now serve as the publication's Executive Editor. *Prachatai* is a non-profit organization focused on human rights and democratic development. Many of the skills I rely on in my current role were acquired through an intensive training program led by

Werner Eggert. The training was a pivotal moment in my career, organized as a hybrid learning course that included on-site workshops in Germany, complemented by additional online sessions. It was meticulously designed, blending intellectual rigor with practical application. I gained valuable insights into the process of conducting investigative reporting by learning from both organizations focused on specific issues and media outlets with expertise in this field. Another significant takeaway was the opportunity to connect with journalists from around the world. These interactions allowed us to share and exchange stories about pressing issues in different countries with people who had firsthand experience. The camaraderie we developed has endured, and when we visit each other's countries, we continue to support and assist one another — a truly invaluable aspect of the experience.



Starting in 2025: Building a Project for Climate Change Journalism in India

We are excited to announce the plan for a comprehensive capacity building program for journalists in India, focusing on climate change journalism. This initiative aims to enhance the quality and sustainability of climate change reporting in the country. Interlink Academy will partner in this project with the Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) in Chennai, a renowned journalism school. The Founder of the ACJ, Sashi Kumar, and Interlink's Werner Eggert have been working together again and again over the last 20 years. The new project will equip participants with in-depth knowledge about climate science, policies, and impacts, while also developing practical skills to report accurately and effectively on this critical issue. The program will feature expert-led workshops, hands-on

training, mentoring and opportunities for networking with leading professionals in the field. Join us in building a stronger, more informed media landscape that empowers the public with reliable information on climate change. Stay tuned for more details on how to apply!



ACJ's Sashi Kumar (right), and Interlink's Werner Eggert

Legal Notice

Interlink Academy for International Dialog and Journalism gUG, Achtern Styg 22, D-22549 Hamburg

Responsible (ViSdPG): Werner Eggert

Editorial Staff: Simon Eggert, Lukas Eggert

E-mail: administration@interlink.academy

www.interlink.academy | www.facebook.com/interlink.academy | www.twitter.com/InterlinkAca | [Instagram.com/interlink_academy/](https://www.instagram.com/interlink_academy/) | www.tiktok.com/@interlink_academy

All pictures in this newsletter are copyrighted. Unless otherwise indicated, Interlink Academy holds the copyright.

Maps and photos are used under Creative Commons license.