

# Calling for Coalitions: Building Partnerships between Journalists and Advocates

## Final Report, Spring 2020

In collaboration with the Bill & Melinda  
Gates Foundation's Global Media  
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# Acknowledgements

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We would first like to thank **The Fuller Project, Africa Check, IDL Reporteros, Oxpeckers Centre for Investigative Environmental Journalism**, and all of the media and advocacy professionals, journalists, NGO leaders, and researchers who so generously provided the time to share their professional experiences and expert insight. Their participation in our project has enriched our research and directly informed our recommendations for developing fruitful partnerships between donors, journalists, and advocacy groups. Without our interviewees, we would have been unable to capture the nuances of what a successful media-advocacy relationship looks like and how they can be improved to further their impact.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## JOURNALISTS PARTNERING WITH ADVOCATES MAY EXPAND IN THE FUTURE

At a time when journalism is being hit hard globally and some are even predicting the end of independent journalism[1] in the global south and especially in Africa[2], it's time to take a look at what may survive. We predict that philanthropic funding will become even more important and donors will be eager to expand partnerships between journalism outlets and advocacy groups.[3]

Advocacy groups need to find ways to make themselves heard above the noise. Donors want to know that their funding has impact and that the ideas they believe in will be taken up and help

change narratives and policies. For this reason, we think the partnerships outlined in this report may turn out to be more common in the future. Indeed, as we began to research the four organizations profiled in this report; Fuller Project, Oxpeckers' #Minealert, IDL Reporteros and Africa Check; we realized we may be looking into the future of one part of non-profit journalism.

The partnerships in this report build on a long and storied history of journalists collaborating with advocacy groups.[4] Historian Michael Schudson has described three models of





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

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journalism in Democracies[5]: market (when journalists have to meet the demands of the market and give audiences the news they want to consume), advocacy (when journalists provide news from the perspective of a political party or other cause), and trustee (when journalists “exercising sound and critical judgement” provide society with the news they think citizens should know).

Theories about how journalism can have an effect include on individuals, on agenda setting and conversations, and changes to policy[6]. The organizations discussed in this report have had all of these effects. Some, like Oxpeckers, have succeeded in bringing about changes to environmental regulations. The IDL Reporteros in Peru was instrumental in exposing corruption through the Lava Jato corruption scandal in Latin America, while the Fuller Project seeks to raise awareness about gender in Kenyan media. Africa Check is actively fighting misinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

History shows us that Global Muckrakers and NGOs have often worked together. As well as a rich history of political pamphleteering in many countries, there are other examples of advocacy journalism. Churches and trade unions founded newspapers. Adam Hochschild's research has illuminated the links between the abolitionist movement and the publications they funded in order to document abuses and build support for their case while ***King Leopold's Ghost*** delves deeply into the Congo Reform Association and how E.D. Morel and other activists communicated their antislavery. ***Global Muckraking and African Muckraking*** (Schiffrin 2014 and 2018) documents dozens of other examples of investigative journalism collaborating with NGOs and civil society organizations in order to change the world.

1. [https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/06/coronavirus-could-trigger-media-extinction-event-in-developing-countries?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/06/coronavirus-could-trigger-media-extinction-event-in-developing-countries?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

2. <https://inkjournalism.org/2135/coronavirus-may-just-be-the-end-for-many-newspapers/>

3. or 'mission-driven' organizations, as Miguel Castro at Gates Foundation prefers to call them

4. *Journalism of Outrage*, Protess et al. 1991

5. Pp 119-120 "What Public Journalism Knows and Doesn't Know" by Michael Schudson in *The Idea of Public Journalism* edited by Theodore L. Glasser, The Guilford Press, 1999, New York City, NY

6. *Journalism of Outrage*, Protess et al. 1991

# FOCUS OF THIS PROJECT

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**This report** sets out research into the relationship between journalism and civil society organizations, and recommends best practices for partnerships between the two in order to maximize their collaborative impact, while respecting their differing roles in society.

We focus on the following four case studies:

**1. Tackling the rise of health misinformation:** Africa Check in Nigeria is pioneering new collaborative structures in Nigeria in order to scale-up their fact-checking work in the area of health misinformation.

**2. Highlighting gender in the media:** Fuller Project and Nation Media Group. This case study examines whether introducing a dedicated gender desk, with reporters seconded from partner organizations, can increase the representation of women both in media and in the newsroom.

**3. Advocating for better mining practices:** Oxpeckers in South Africa launched #MineAlert to create data-informed environmental journalism that could be used by activists and journalists fighting for better mining practices in the extractive industries in South Africa.

**4. Combating governmental corruption:** IDL Reporteros in Peru brought together journalists and civil society organizations to uncover the Lava Jato scandal in Peru and combat corruption. These partnerships resulted in significant political and judicial reform.

# SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS



01

**There is no one rule for how formal or informal a partnership has to be between media and advocacy groups.**

Whether loosely defined and ad-hoc partnerships, or more structured and formal agreements are appropriate depends on the context of the organizations and the work they do together.

02

**Partnerships are built on both trust and familiarity.**

Strong trust was present at the beginning of every successful partnership. The more formal partnerships relied on a mutual understanding and trust between advocacy organizations and the media, built on longer-standing relationships over time.

03

**Training and capacity building is a natural area for establishing more formal partnerships.**

Workshops and events create natural arenas in which organizations can establish the trust and familiarity that is required to begin to work together in these fields.

04

**Partnerships with a specific goal or focusing on one particular topic can be successful when the newsroom and outside organization's interests are well-aligned. If not, newsroom priorities may be disrupted.**

Donor-driven focus on specific areas of news coverage is successful with specialized news outlets who share the same focus.

05

**The most common area of informal collaboration is the sharing of information as well as amplification of media outlets' reach through cross-publishing of content.**

Advocacy and media organizations may have different audiences and can therefore amplify each others' reach by sharing content.

06

**Journalists' ideas of impact are hard to quantify, and sometimes at odds with those of donors and civil society organizations.**

Journalists and civil society organizations often define impact differently. Measuring the impact of these collaborations on wide-reaching societal or policy change is always difficult to quantify.

07

**The lack of capacity in newsrooms is most acutely felt in areas where technical expertise is required in reporting.**

Reliable reporting on technical areas requires a level of subject-matter expertise that many newsrooms in lower-income countries don't have the resources for.

08

**Access to and the quality of data can be a fundamental barrier to developing evidence-driven, data-heavy investigative reporting and research practices.**

Media and advocacy organizations in the global south face the additional barrier of working in data-sparse environments.

09

**Journalists must work to reach an audience where they are and not expect audiences to find a story on their own.**

Audiences are increasingly found on new platforms such as social media, but traditional platforms such as radio remain important in less-developed regions. Media outlets need to adapt their approach as the way people receive their information changes.

10

**Advocacy groups rely on journalists for the work they do. While journalists and their outlets work with advocacy groups, they are quick to make clear they are not advocates themselves.**

Advocacy and journalism each has a complementary but distinct role to play; the work of each can be enhanced by the other.

11

**Smaller, more focused media groups can be at an advantage over larger organizations.**

Lean organizational structures allows for greater dynamism and flexibility when responding to fast-moving events and can ensure efficient use of resources.



# Summary of Recommendations

## Creating effective partnerships:

- **In any partnership, no matter how informal, there should be a full understanding of roles and boundaries between all parties.** This ensures that each organization in the partnership understands each others' priorities, role in the partnership, and the impact that they are individually and collectively working towards.
- **Advocacy groups and donors can support journalists by campaigning for freedoms for media including improving access to information.** This applies particularly in countries where access to information is limited or for topics where reliable data is critical to reporting.
- **Emphasize training and capacity building as an area for more formal partnerships. These types of activities are not only the most sustainable investment but have a multiplier effect catalyzing further relationships.** Training not only increases the long-term capacity of media outlets and advocacy organizations, but also creates sites in which new collaborative relationships can flourish.

## For journalists and advocates:



- **When covering systemic and institutional topics like corruption, gender-bias, or the environment, do so in a way audiences can relate to or easily understand.** This is especially important for technical topics; audiences will engage more if stories have a human aspect to them.
- **Primary sources like data or audiovisuals are invaluable, particularly in unfriendly media environments or where misinformation is rampant.** Primary sources lend legitimacy to stories as they are very difficult to refute. This is especially important for investigative stories that expose public figures.

**Be proactive in getting your story to an audience. You cannot expect a story to catch traction on its own.**

In addition to including social media platforms as a means of disseminating content in order to broaden their reader base, organizations should consider using more interactive formats such as Q&As and live streaming discussions in order to engage their audiences.

**While the role of media and advocacy often overlap, advocacy groups should do what journalists cannot.**

A primary role of the media is to uncover issues facing society and inform the public. Advocacy's role should center on finding and arguing for solutions to these problems and mobilizing the public to take action.

## Obvious but important:

- **Understanding the local media environment and context surrounding any given issue is essential.** Local expertise will help organizations tailor their messaging to their audience and their context. Media outlets and advocacy groups should recruit local experts to their work.
- **Systemic change cannot happen through one media outlet or one advocacy group alone. It is not realistic or practical to approach any partnership with the specific goal of systemic change.** This is what makes effective partnerships so essential: it is by working together that organizations will be able to gradually chip away at systemic challenges and create long-lasting change.





# NEXT STEPS/ AREAS FOR MORE RESEARCH

The organizations and partnerships studied in this report provide blueprints for effective collaboration in a world that increasingly blurs the lines between advocacy and traditional journalism, and in which civil society and public interest journalism may rely on each other and on donors to support their work. The findings in this report provide a preliminary analysis of how these partnerships can work together to help in the world. The report builds on existing bodies of work that examine how advocates, journalists and philanthropists are often working in the same bed but with different dreams.[7] This bed will only become smaller as resources are further constrained, and the dreams will only become larger as organizations continue to respond to an increasingly complex world of social challenges.

[7]:[https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CIMA-Media-Philanthropy\\_Schiffrin.pdf](https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CIMA-Media-Philanthropy_Schiffrin.pdf)



# INTRODUCTION

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*"There's going to be overall more scarcity. In a world with more scarcity there is more conflict over the distribution of resources. Almost inevitably, donors will be more targeted--they will want to see results related to their objectives, and less willing to provide the underlying institutional infrastructure,"*

- Joseph E. Stiglitz, University Professor,  
Columbia University.

**This report** is the result of the Global Media Partnerships team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation asking students from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs in May 2020 to investigate the relationship between journalism and civil society organizations, and to recommend best practices so that partnerships between the two can maximize their collaborative impact while respecting their differing roles in society.

Each case study focuses on a different partnership between media and civil society, in four different countries:

- The Nigerian office of Africa Check, a South Africa based non-profit focused on fact-checking and its work fighting health misinformation;
- Oxpeckers, a South African environmental journalism outlet and its #MineAlert geo-mapping platform which utilizes data to track mining licenses and water-use permits;
- Kenya's Nation Media Group's partnership with the Fuller Project in establishing a Gender Desk in its newsroom to increase journalism on issues impacting women; and
- IDL Reporteros, a non-profit news outlet which is leading the coverage in Peru of Latin America's largest-ever corruption scandal.

These four cases cover a range of partnership models and reporting topics, and each comes with distinct findings and recommendations.

Despite the diversity of our research we found many areas of overlap, from which we derived a list of main findings and recommendations for others seeking to found partnerships.

All the organizations featured in this report are mission-driven and have a strong focus on the impact of their reporting. It is important to note, however, that while their outputs naturally lend themselves to advocacy, Africa Check, Oxpeckers and The Fuller Project are not themselves advocates and are careful to maintain journalistic independence. Within IDL, editorial independence is maintained between IDL and IDL-Reporteros for the same reason.

Africa Check, Oxpeckers, and The Fuller Project's investigative reportage are driven by journalistic skills, data analysis, and geo-mapping tools, where the published stories lends itself to advocacy. Here journalists are guided by their own reporting experiences; their work lends itself to advocacy, however they do not identify themselves as advocates.

## A NOTE ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**We began  
working on our  
report in  
January 2020,  
planning to  
publish in May.**

**Consequently,** our work was disrupted by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is ongoing at the time of writing, most notably forcing us to cancel our planned travel and to conduct all interviews remotely. While the pandemic is addressed to varying degrees in our case studies, we believe that the overall purpose and findings of our report are more relevant than ever. The pandemic devastates newsrooms that are already facing economic difficulties, while at the same time making quality journalism as important as ever in the face of an unprecedented global crisis. This report is being published in a time of great uncertainty. Still, it stands to reason that the kinds of partnerships between civil society and media organizations in our research will only become more commonplace in a post-COVID-19 economy, as civic-minded media outlets face further budgetary cuts.



# JOURNALISTS AS ADVOCATES

At a time when journalism is being hit hard globally and some are even predicting the end of independent journalism [8] in the global south and especially in Africa [9], it's time to take a look at what may survive. We predict that philanthropic funding will become even more important and donors will be eager to expand partnerships between journalism outlets and advocacy groups or 'mission-driven' organizations, as Miguel Castro at Gates Foundation prefers to call them.

As we began to research the four organizations profiled in this report, Fuller Project, Oxpeckers' #MineAlert, IDL Reporteros and Africa Check, we realized we may be looking into the future of one part of non-profit journalism.

Niche outlets may have a better chance of survival if they attach themselves to thriving institutions. Advocacy groups need to find ways to make themselves heard above the noise. Donors want to know that their funding has impact and that the ideas they believe in will be taken up and help change narratives and policies. For this reason, we think the partnerships outlined in this report may turn out to be more common in the future.

There is a long and storied history of journalists doing advocacy work. Historian Michael Schudson has described three models of journalism in *Democracies* [10]: market (when journalists have to meet the demands of the market and give audiences the news they want to consume), advocacy (when journalists provide news from the perspective of a political party or other cause), and trustee (when journalists "exercising sound and critical judgement" provide society with the news they think citizens should know). Historically, advocacy journalism often meant supporting one political party: abolitionists, labor unions, church groups and other civil society organizations worked with journalists to call attention to injustice, hold politicians accountable.

This report looks at some organizations which –while following journalistic principles of accuracy and fairness– try to help society through their reporting, whether it is by focusing on anti-corruption in Peru, gender representation at *The Nation* in Kenya, environmental reporting in Southern Africa or providing accurate health information in Nigeria.

[8] [https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/06/coronavirus-could-trigger-media-extinction-event-in-developing-countries?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/06/coronavirus-could-trigger-media-extinction-event-in-developing-countries?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

[9] <https://inkjournalism.org/2135/coronavirus-may-just-be-the-end-for-many-newspapers/>  
[10] pp 119-120 "What Public Journalism Knows and Doesn't Know" by Michael Schudson in *The Idea of Public Journalism* edited by Theodore L. Glasser, The Guilford Press, 1999, New York City, NY



# Journalists as Advocates (Continued)



Theories about how journalism can have an effect include on individuals, effects on agenda setting and conversations, and changes to policy [11]. The organizations discussed in this report have had all of these effects. Some, like Oxpeckers, have succeeded in bringing about changes to environmental regulations. The IDL Reporteros in Peru was instrumental in exposing corruption through the Lava Jato corruption scandal in Latin America, while the Fuller Project seeks to raise awareness about gender in Kenyan media. Africa Check is actively fighting misinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.

History shows us that Global Muckrakers and NGOs have often worked together. As well as a rich history of political pamphleteering in many countries, there are other examples of advocacy journalism. Churches and trade unions founded newspapers. Adam Hochschild's research has illuminated the links between the abolitionist movement and the publications they funded in order to document abuses and build support for their case while ***King Leopold's Ghost*** delves deeply into the Congo Reform Association and how E.D. Morel and other activists communicated their antislavery. ***Global Muckraking and African Muckraking*** (Schiffrin 2014 and 2018) documents dozens of other examples of investigative journalism collaborating with NGOs and civil society organizations in order to change the world.

[11] Journalism of Outrage, Protest et al. 1991

# METHODOLOGY

- Project Rationale
- Research Scope
- Research Approach
- Research Questions







# PROJECT RATIONALE

## **Understanding how partnerships are formed and how they function**

This project set out to investigate relationships between media and advocacy organizations. We wanted to know why they work together, how they work together, and why sometimes they don't work together. We wanted to know what it is that makes a partnership between an advocate and a journalist a good one, and how outcomes for society are improved.

Our research scope covers broad areas of social impact: our case studies cover partnerships that combat corruption, advocate for environmental protection, highlight gender issues in the media, and tackle the rise of health misinformation.

Our geographical scope is equally diverse: we cover Peru, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria. We believe that this diversity is a strength. There is important local context to the cases that we study, and there are points in common which we explain in our findings section.

Each case study focuses on an individual partnership between an advocacy organization and a media outlet. However, in our analysis we also examine the broader landscape of partnerships that our case studies are situated in: including with donors, government, academia, and other civil society organizations and media outlets.

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# RESEARCH SCOPE:

## four case studies in four countries

This report focuses on the following four case studies:

### 1. TACKLING THE RISE OF HEALTH MISINFORMATION: AFRICA CHECK IN NIGERIA

This case study looks at how Africa Check is pioneering new collaborative structures in Nigeria in order to scale-up their fact-checking work in the area of health misinformation.

### 2. HIGHLIGHTING GENDER IN THE MEDIA: FULLER PROJECT AND NATION MEDIA GROUP

This case study examines whether introducing a dedicated gender desk, with reporters seconded from partner organizations, can increase the representation of women both in media and in the newsroom.

### 3. ADVOCATING FOR BETTER MINING PRACTICES: OXPECKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This case studies how data-informed environmental journalism can inform activism for better mining practices in the extractive industries in South Africa.

### 4. COMBATING GOVERNMENTAL CORRUPTION: IDL REPORTEROS IN PERU

This case study analyses the success of the Lava Jato corruption scandal in Peru and how partnerships between investigative journalists and civil society organizations resulted in significant political and judicial reform.

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## RESEARCH APPROACH

Our research consisted of dozens of interviews with journalists, members of civil society organizations, donor organizations, academics, and government officials from around the world. These interviews were found through a combination of prior connections with the team and desk research. From there, new interviewees were found using

a snowballing technique, based on the networks of those we interviewed. Using this approach allowed us to examine the partnerships from each stakeholder from each of their points of view. While our initial plan was to conduct these interviews in the field, the COVID-19 pandemic required our interviews to be conducted remotely. In addition to interviews, we reviewed relevant literature, which is cited in our report and included in the appendix.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## LANDSCAPE & CONTEXT

- How does the organization fit into the broader landscape of the work they do?
- Who else do they collaborate with?

## IMPACT

- What impact has the partnership had/ does it plan to have?
- How does each organization define and measure its impact?

## PARTNERSHIPS

- How and why did the partnership start?
- What activities does the partnership work on together?
- How is the partnership organized and managed?
- What are some of the challenges of working together? What are the benefits?

## FUNDING

- How are the organizations funded?
- What relationship do they have with their donors?
- What is their funding outlook?



# MAIN FINDINGS

**There is no one rule for how formal or informal a partnership has to be between media and advocacy groups.**

The partnerships we studied in Nigeria tended to be loosely defined and lacking in any formal structure or governance, and established on an ad-hoc basis. In Kenya, on the other hand, the partnership was highly structured, with a set number of reporters assigned to a specific newsroom for a predetermined amount of time, with a defined goal. In Peru and South Africa, the partnerships were more formally structured. Still, they lacked any specific goals or pre-determined parameters for what the partnerships sought to achieve, working instead with general overlapping values between the media organizations, their funders and advocacy groups.

**Partnerships are built on both trust and familiarity.**

The informal, ad-hoc partnerships we encountered were mostly based on pre-existing relationships or familiarity between members of the media and donors or civil society organizations. This was the case in Nigeria, where donors and fact-checking organizations leverage their existing networks and knowledge of the landscape to build fact-checking partnerships. It was also true in Peru where personal relationships between journalists and civil society and the established credibility of particular journalists, created conditions for collaboration. More formal partnerships relied on mutual understanding and trust between advocacy organizations and the media, built on longer-standing relationships over time.



## **Training and capacity building is a natural area to establish more formal partnerships.**

All the media organizations that we studied, participated in and benefitted from some form of training. This is an easy to define and identifiable area for advocacy groups to partner with and establish relationships with journalists. The training can be something as technical as informational and personal security like the journalists in Peru engage in, to broad topics such as countering gender-bias in Kenyan newsrooms. Most importantly, this kind of capacity building is usually the most sustainable and long-lasting investment an organization can give any media outlet, as the tools provided by a training will likely last longer than any particular funding. Training and workshop-like events had the added benefit of bringing individuals from advocacy groups and media outlets together in person, which was the starting point for many relationships between the two in our case studies.

## **Partnerships with a specific goal or focusing on one particular topic can be successful when the newsroom and outside organization's interests are well-aligned but may disrupt newsroom priorities.**

When an outlet is already interested in a topic that a donor is also interested in funding, then that funding can help the outlet achieve its goals. In Kenya, for example, the purpose of improving women's representation in the media and gender reporting made for a logical partnership between the Fuller Project and Nation Media Group. This kind of subject-specific funding is rarely meant to be long-term, however, so a newsroom may orient itself around a particular topic to receive funding, only to be cut off from that funding and now focused on a subject to the detriment of its original coverage and core audience.

## **The most common areas of informal collaboration was the sharing of information and amplification of media outlets' reach through cross-publishing of content.**

**Journalists' ideas of impact are hard to quantify, and sometimes at odds with that of donors and civil society organizations.**

Outside of fundamental audience indicators like circulation or pageviews, journalist's definitions of impact tend to be amorphous or difficult to correlate directly to news coverage e.g., laws changed, public awareness of an issue. Sometimes this overlaps with the goals of a donor, who may be able to help measure something more qualitative, as is the case with the Open Society Foundation's narrative change program working in Nigeria: OSF monitors language changes in public rhetoric as a measure of broader cultural and attitudinal shifts. For example, adoption of the term 'sex work' rather than 'prostitution' in South African parliamentary debates on access to healthcare indicates a shift in the stance of policy makers and the public with respect to the right to health. Other times the desired outcomes of a donor are more at odds with what might be best for a journalist's aims. For example, the partnership in Kenya was successful in increasing the number of stories featuring women and women sources for the Daily Nation, but equality of representation is more than sheer numbers, and many of the Gender Desk stories still ignore women's points of view or other problems stemming from deeper gender bias problems.

**Lack of capacity in newsrooms is most acutely felt in areas where technical expertise is required in reporting.**

Newsrooms throughout the world suffer from understaffing, but this lack of capacity is especially problematic for journalistic reporting on scientific or legal topics requiring more specialized expertise than most news coverage. This is exacerbated in lower income countries where smaller proportions of the population have high levels of technical or legal literacy, making clear, jargon-free communication even more important. One of the most successful journalists in Peru, Rosa María Palacios, is a lawyer by training. This background has been invaluable in explaining and covering complicated legal proceedings for readers, but most journalists do not have this deep well of legal knowledge to aid their reporting. Likewise, for Africa Check, combatting health misinformation often requires fluency with science and medicine that few journalists in Nigeria have. Conversely, so much of what has helped Oxpeckers be successful in its mining reporting is the well of data-expertise its team has and its ability to pass that on to its readers.



## **Access to data can be a fundamental barrier to research and evidence-backed reporting**

It's no coincidence that our case study with the greatest utilization of data is in South Africa, the country with the best access to information [12]. For the Africa Check team, on the other hand, combating health misinformation is extremely difficult when a country like Nigeria lacks reliable data for basic metrics of development. Likewise, the bureaucratic hurdles to accessing legal or governmental documents in Peru, and the silo-ed or un-digitized nature of information, present significant obstacles for journalists to expose corruption.

## **Journalists must work to reach an audience where they are and not expect audiences to find a story on their own.**

No matter how good a story may be, journalists should not expect their audiences to find it on their own. People the world over are increasingly relying on social media as their main channel for receiving news, something especially relevant for a group like Africa Check that seeks to combat misinformation. It wouldn't make sense only to publish fact-checking content in a newspaper when most of the problem is spread online. But reaching out to an audience goes beyond posting a story on Twitter or Facebook. In Peru, for example, journalists host panels and Q&A sessions through live streams on Facebook and Instagram, creating a two-way interaction for reporters and the audience.

## **Advocacy groups rely on journalists for the work they do.**

Advocacy cannot happen in isolation. Acting as a bridge between the government and civil society, the media pressures the government to respond to queries raised by the public. Media coverage furthers advocacy by helping organizations build their credibility and connect them with their target audience. However, **while journalists and their outlets work with advocacy groups**, they are quick to make clear they are not advocates themselves. The line between journalism and advocacy is as blurry as ever, but journalists we spoke to say they should not be considered advocates themselves.

[12] <https://www.rti-rating.org/country-data/>  
As ranked by the Centre for Law and Democracy, a Canadian NGO.

# MAIN FINDINGS

***Smaller, more focused media groups can be at an advantage over larger organizations.***

Journalists we spoke to in Peru and South Africa have been reluctant to increase the size of their organizations for its own sake, recognizing some of the benefits of being small. The Oxpeckers team in South Africa knows that staying small keeps things under budget and makes it easy to innovate. The latter being evident in Peru, where small but focused news teams were leading the coverage of a national corruption scandal, partially due to the way they could pounce on a story before it could make it out of the bureaucratic wringer of the large, traditional news outlets.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

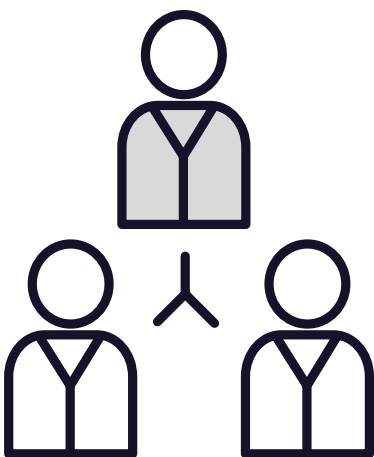
## For successful media and advocacy partnerships:

***In any partnership, no matter how informal, there should be a full understanding of roles and boundaries between all parties.***

Journalists are increasingly relying on the aid of outside groups for funding and operational support. Even in the most informal of partnerships, the roles of each party should be transparent and declared at the outset. Doing so allows journalists to feel more comfortable in preventing any infringements, on their editorial independence, and gives the outside group defined boundaries within which to work. A precise understanding of the other's role decreases operational friction in the partnership and can build an appreciation for the role both media and advocacy have in civil society.

***Emphasize training and capacity building as an area for more formal partnerships.***

Almost every media organization could benefit from additional training, from technical skills like data visualization to more amorphous things like teamwork exercises. Facilitating training or workshops is also one of the most reliable ways for advocacy groups and donors to establish formal partnerships with journalists. These types of activities are not only the most sustainable investment—a journalist doesn't magically forget the training after funding dries up—but have a multiplier effect, catalyzing further relationships as journalists and members of outside groups interact and get to know one another.



(CONTINUED)

A clear understanding of boundaries, as well as increased interaction through functions like training workshops, are effective means of building trust,

***Trust is the cornerstone of any successful partnership.***

There are also more **indirect ways for advocacy groups and donors to support journalists.** Fostering environments of collaboration between different media groups, NGOs, and other civil society organizations can have a multiplier effect.

This could take the form of hosted events or panels where groups can interact and meet (to form relationships of their own), and exchange information and ideas, or acting as a third party for bringing different media outlets together to develop relationships.

Another form of indirect support is working to improve access to information like technical data or public information like government or legal documents that are not easily accessible in a given country or region.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## For journalists and advocates:

***When reporting on systemic and institutional topics like corruption, gender-bias, or the environment, it's important to cover them in a way that audiences can relate to.***

It's a truism that incorporating the human element into coverage engages audiences. Doing so takes a big, faceless subject and by relating it to a particular person, provokes a much greater emotional connection and response.

In addition, primary sources like data or audiovisuals are invaluable. Particularly in unfriendly media environments or where misinformation is rampant, adding irrefutable components of information such as clear, visualized health or mining data, or an audio recording of a corrupt official, can be more powerful than anything a journalist or advocacy group could write.

***Be proactive in getting your story to an audience. Do not expect a story to catch traction on its own.***

This goes beyond just posting a story on social media channels to include formatting and packaging stories in new and different ways to reach audiences on their terms, in the ways that they consume content. Journalists and advocacy groups should also consider engaging with audiences through live discussions or Q&A sessions on live streaming services such as Facebook or Instagram Live. Doing so reaches audiences, allows for a two-way channel for dialogue with the public, and also establishes credibility and familiarity with journalists and advocacy groups: something that is particularly important for those working in hostile environments.

For advocacy groups, further engagement with the media helps create relationships with the potential for partnership, and also makes a subject, and the advocacy group, more visible and familiar.

While the role of media and advocacy often overlap, ***advocacy groups should do what journalists cannot.*** A primary role of the media is to uncover problems facing society and inform the public. Advocacy's role should center on finding and arguing for solutions to these problems and mobilizing the public to take action.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Obvious but important:

***Understanding the local media environment and context surrounding any given issue is essential.***

In Nigeria, understanding the public health context and the healthcare system is vital if the goal is eradicating health misinformation. Peru's unique political history has led to skepticism of progressive activism. The politicization and prominence of the extractive industry in South Africa are key when covering anything related to mining. And countering gender-bias in Kenyan news requires an understanding of gender politics in Kenya.

***Systemic change cannot happen through one media outlet or one advocacy group alone.***

Many of the problems that the journalists and advocacy groups in our case studies are trying to solve are the result of deep institutional and societal factors. It is not realistic or practical to approach any partnership with the specific goal of systemic change. However, understanding that an issue as deep-rooted as gender-bias can only be tackled with equally deep-rooted changes should provide for a more holistic approach in the specific goal of countering that bias in newsrooms.



# Africa Check

## COMBATING HEALTH MISINFORMATION IN NIGERIA

**Launched in 2012**, Africa Check is a foundation-funded organization aimed at promoting accuracy in public debate and the media in Africa. Africa Check publishes fact-checking reports on claims addressing a broad range of development issues for publication on its own channels. In addition, it provides its content to other news organizations to republish free of charge. The team also regularly discusses its findings on radio and television to reach offline audiences.

Headquartered in South Africa, the organization has now opened three offices elsewhere on the continent (Senegal, Nigeria and Kenya) and has 34 full-time and 4 part-time employees. This case study is focused on Africa Check's Nigeria Office, which sheds more light on health fact-checking compared to its counterparts.





# AFRICA CHECK AT A GLANCE

## DATE FOUNDED:

2012

## ANNUAL REVENUE:

\$1,840,038 (2019)

## LOCATION:

Headquartered in South Africa with regional offices in Nigeria, Senegal and Kenya.

## STAFF SIZE:

34 full time staff; 4 staff in the Nigerian country office

## WHO THEY ARE

A fact-checking organization that aims to increase the accuracy of media and public debate in Africa

## WHAT THEY DO

- Produce stories for their own platforms that fact-check claims made by public figures and institutions
- Provide fact-checking services to media outlets and train journalists and media on fact-checking
- Research and analysis on a wide range of public policy topics

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

- Facebook: 75,832 followers
- Twitter: 64,900 followers
- Instagram: 17,400 followers

## FUNDING SOURCES

- Philanthropy (58%), private sector (13%), earned income (28%), other income (1%).
- Biggest philanthropic funders are Luminate, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Open Society Foundations, with seed funding from the Shuttleworth Foundation.

# The Nigerian Health System

Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in poverty in the world [13]: the country currently has a total of 94.4 million people living in poverty, representing 44.7% of its 198 million population.[14]

Access and affordability of healthcare are both challenges faced by the health system in Nigeria. The majority of patients pay out-of-pocket for their healthcare, and as the cost of medicines is high, affordability is a huge problem [15]. In addition, equitable distribution of

drugs,[16] quality of medicines, unauthorized sales and production of counterfeit medicines[17] further complicate the delivery of reliable health services. Traditional medicines are widely used,[18] and efforts are being made to better integrate these practices into the health system.[19]

The primary healthcare system has severe shortages: there are 3.8 doctors[20] and 5 hospital beds per 10,000 of the population,[21] and these are concentrated in urban areas.



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*“If you don't have electricity, how do you store your drugs?”*

—Chikezie Omeje, Senior Investigative and Data Reporter with the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, Nigeria

A black and white photograph showing a hand sorting through a large pile of newspapers. The newspapers are crumpled and overlapping, with various headlines and images visible. The hand is positioned in the upper right corner, reaching into the pile.

# The media landscape in Nigeria

African journalism began in West Africa and the first newspaper in Nigeria was launched in 1859.

Nigeria has one of the most varied media landscapes on the continent with more than 100 national and local news outlets.

African journalism began in West Africa and the first newspaper in Nigeria was launched in 1859.[22] Nigeria has one of the most varied media landscapes on the continent with more than 100 national and local news outlets.[23] While the most influential of these are privately owned, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority are state-owned networks and broadcast their news nationally. Radio remains the main source of information but television penetration continues to grow, with over 40% of households having a television in 2010.[24] More significantly, internet penetration rates are some of the highest across Africa, estimated to be close to 50% in 2018.[25]

Freedom House, a US-backed, nonprofit NGO that researches and advocates for political freedom, rates the press in Nigeria as only partly free.[26] Freedom of the press and freedom of expression are both protected by the constitution. However, journalists frequently face interference or pressure from public officials or regulators[27] in response to coverage of sensitive topics or criticisms of government practice. Reporters Without Borders[28] and Amnesty

International[29] describe a climate of violence and risk in Nigeria that journalists face in their day to day activities. From 1992 to 2019, 11 journalists were killed in Nigeria.[30] In 2020, another two killings have been recorded. [31]

When it comes to the internet, the 2015 Cybercrimes Act[32] prohibits the online transmission of false information or material, and there is evidence that this law has been used to arrest and charge online bloggers and journalists who are particularly critical of the government. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least three bloggers were prosecuted under the Act in 2015. One of them was remanded in prison just because he commented on a charge on another reporter.[33] However, as of 2020, none have been convicted.



# Health misinformation in Nigeria

Health misinformation is a significant problem in Nigeria, which is becoming more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic.[34] From 2002 to 2009, for example, rumors about the polio vaccine led to widespread avoidance of it, and, for a short time, northern regions of the country banned the dissemination of the vaccine. This subsequently caused a surge in polio cases in northern Nigeria[35] and ultimately a delay in its eradication in the country.

Challenges to accurate reporting on health are compounded by the fact that, in some cases, reliable data is simply not collected. This lends an additional dimension of difficulty to fact-checking.

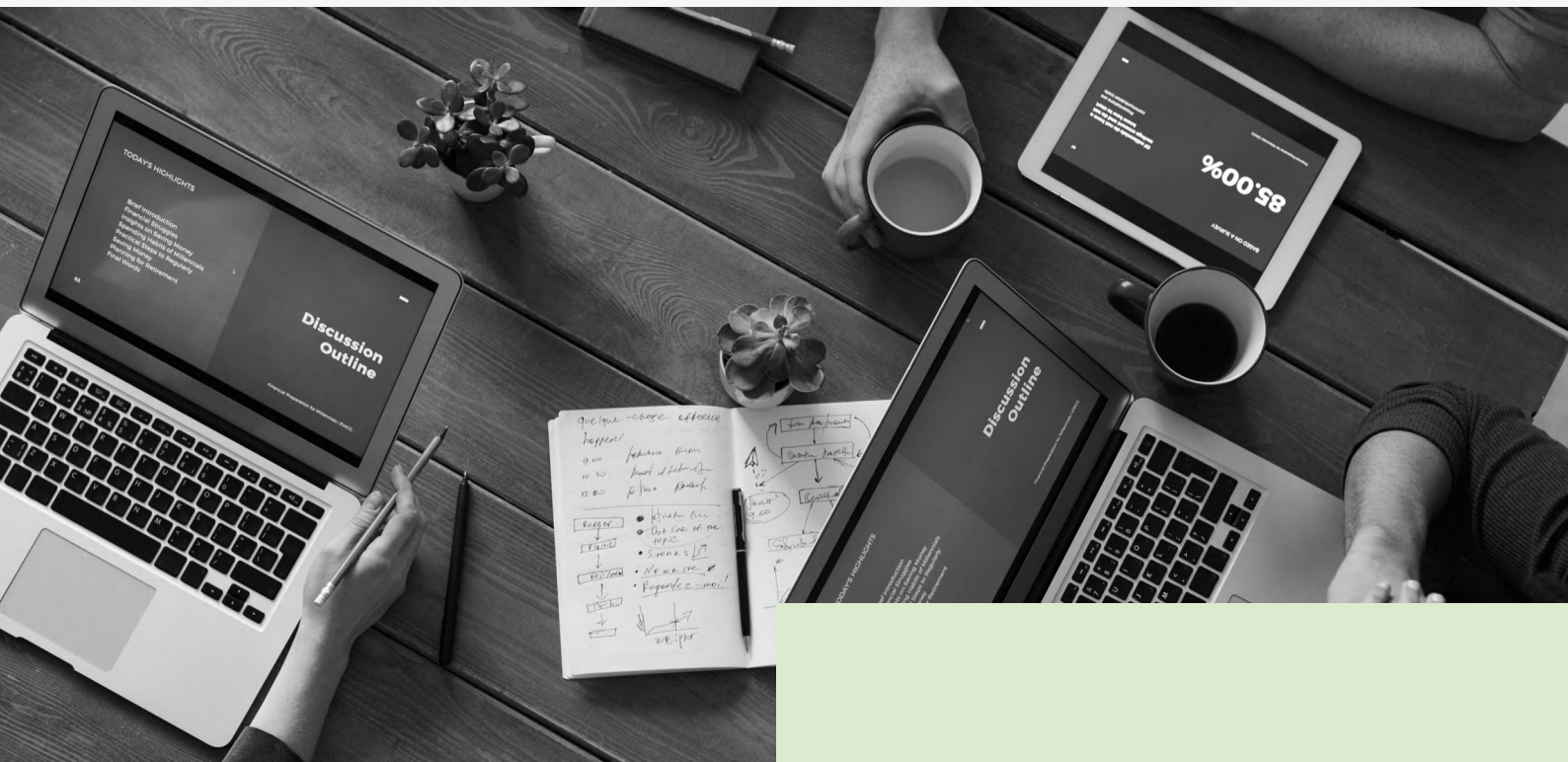
“Health misinformation flies when people have no access to timely and accurate information.”

—Oluwamayowa Tijani, Agence France-Presse.

The rise of social media use in Nigeria has created a breeding ground for health misinformation.[36] After the 2014 Ebola Outbreak, a study found that 95% of youths in southwest Nigeria use social media, but that only 7.3% of them attempted to verify the information they obtained online before sharing it.[37] Additionally, there is a financial incentive to create and spread misinformation.[38] Oluwamayowa Tijani, a fact-checking journalist for Agence France-Presse said in an interview,

**“High poverty rates lead to asymmetric incentives—people want to make money by any means.”**

Health misinformation is here to stay, both in Nigeria and worldwide. Demand for the work of organizations such as Africa Check will increase as the circulation of misinformation does: the COVID-19 pandemic has proven as much.



## FINDINGS

Africa Check partners across the whole of the fact-checking landscape, including with media, technology, government and civil society. In our case study, we examine the common characteristics of those partnerships in terms of how they came about, what they do, their successes and their challenges. We focus both on the overall landscape and on Africa Check specifically.



# Starting a partnership

## Motivations for starting a partnership:

We found three main reasons for starting a partnership: sharing expertise, exchanging information, and increasing the geographic or demographic reach of an organization's activities. The most common reason for starting a partnership is for the sharing of expertise: including starting joint projects and providing each other with each organization's services.

Advocacy organizations and media outlets often have different motivations for starting a partnership. For advocacy organizations, the media offer a platform for their cause to reach a wider audience. For the media, collaborating with civil society can provide access to a wealth of technical expertise. Partnering with established media outlets can also lend legitimacy to an organization and the veracity of its information.

For Africa Check, forging partnerships with a variety of organizations is needed to proactively challenge misinformation and prevent its spread. **“Fact-checking alone would not make it, as misinformation is coming up again and again.” says Allwell Okpi, Researcher and Community Manager at Africa Check.**

For Africa Check, this means reaching out to those that influence how information is spread in Nigeria. They provide training programs to journalists on fact-checking, and create forums for government officials to highlight the importance of addressing misinformation in their work. In addition, they provide their fact-checking services to media outlets, either by working with them on an article or by sharing their findings from their fact-checking work. More recently, Africa Check has begun working with social media technology companies, recognizing the role that this industry has to play in combating the spread of misinformation. For example, in 2019, the Nigeria Office began working with Facebook as part of its third-party fact-checking

program. Through this, the content that Africa Check rates as “false” is downgraded on Facebook and Instagram,[39] meaning that it will be seen by fewer people. Partnering with Facebook means that Africa Check’s work will reach far more people across the continent.

For donors, including those that work in Nigeria such as the MacArthur Foundation, Open Society Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, there is the opportunity to act as intermediaries between media and civil society organizations: either by bringing organizations together or by supporting the work of existing partnerships to ensure their sustainability. This can provide opportunities to reinforce how often certain social issues appear in the public narrative.

Funding from donors makes [stories] “live longer and stay in the headlines,” notes Christoph Plate, Director of Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa at Konrad Adenauer Foundation and with this, civil society groups are able to amplify the stories for advocacy purposes.

## **Structures of partnerships:**

**Collaborations tend to have loosely defined structures. More formalized networks are relatively rare.**

The most frequent type of collaboration did not have a formal structure or governance process but instead operated informally and on an ad-hoc basis. However, the Africa Check Nigeria Office has been planning to launch a formal network to fight health misinformation. The goal of this network is to increase the geographic spread and readership of fact-checked content in Nigeria. Okpi, of Africa Check, mentions that they’ve already signed memoranda of understanding with two newspaper publications and four radio stations across Nigeria. “The idea is that all of those radio stations and newspapers will cross-publish what the team fact-checked so that they could reach a wider audience.” This project was launched after a health misinformation workshop the Africa Check team held in September 2018 in Abuja. Participants included journalists, associations of doctors, Nigerian CDC officials, and government officials. The outbreak of COVID-19 has delayed the official launch of this network, but the appetite for a more formal network suggests demand for more than what the current, more casual collaborations can provide.

## Process of establishment:

Most collaborations are based on pre-established relationships of trust. Lack of trust is a significant barrier to the establishment of more formal, institutionalized networks. Donor-facilitated events, such as training and workshops, can be catalysts for longer-term partnerships to organically form.

For collaborations between media and advocacy organizations, most partnerships seemed to have been formed organically, and were based on previously established relationships. It follows that there is a relatively high barrier to partnership: organizations need to know that they can trust each other before forming longer term relationships. Opportunities to network across organizations, such as events, workshops and training events, can help these relationships form, as they provide a forum in which organizations can showcase and share their work.

These trust-based networks build up between individual journalists and advocates throughout the space over time. This means that individuals carry a lot of capital with them, and that in the initial stages of a partnership, the strength of a partnership can be dependent upon the individuals within them rather than the organizations themselves. These partnerships can then become institutionalized over time.

The relationship between donors and media or advocacy groups differed, in that donors are able to take a more overarching approach to partnerships, in that they are able to view the whole landscape and then decide where to intervene. However, these relationships were still very much based on trust in an organization's credibility: for example, international donors with knowledge of the landscape tend to approach organizations themselves rather than putting out a general request for proposals, as this means they are able to identify organizations to work with that have a strong track record and a credible reputation. For the three foundations we talked to, all grant decisions are more frequently made by invitation rather than by application, and to grantees familiar to the foundation. This requires donors to have an in-depth local understanding of the players in the landscape. Criteria used by donors includes being independent,

committed to upholding journalistic standards, taking the initiative, and maintaining a high quality of work.

The Sub-Saharan Media Programme of the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation (KAS Media Africa), one of Africa Check's major partners, takes this proactive style when deciding to fund new grantees. Their funding strategy prioritizes addressing what Director of KAS Media Africa, Christoph Plate, sees as an increasing conflict in journalism between profit and quality of content. This conflict has become more severe as traditional business models have become less viable for media, contributing to a rise in misinformation:


**“Many small media enterprises in Nigeria and Kenya are popping up, especially on radio and television, but also on social media, that don't really take journalistic standards very seriously”.**

Consequently, KAS Media Africa's funding strategy is to seek out and donate to media outlets that they see as upholding journalistic standards in order to break what they see as the direct link between the fragility of media outlets' business models and the rise of fake news.

Plate reflects on his own career in media, and how this has influenced KAS Media Africa's current approach to funding:

**“In 1994, I was one of the few reporters who reported on the genocide in Rwanda. Although we didn't have social media in those days, I saw with my own eyes what false information can cause. It fueled the genocide. We are aware that fake news can cause something very similar to what we witnessed in Rwanda. So when I took over the media program in sub-Saharan Africa three years ago, one focus was: how do we make journalism profitable? How do we instill the feeling that it's not a sin to make money with good journalism, but it's rather a sin to make money with bad journalism? And that's how we started discussing [a partnership] with Africa Check.”**

For collaborations between media and advocacy groups, partnerships often come from connections where trust has already been established. These first connections are often made at events such as conferences or workshops, or through individuals who have previously worked together.



Characteristics of partnerships vary in how they define impact but share common themes in the way impact is measured and in the activities that are shared across organizations

### Activities:

Collaborative activities fall into three main categories; training, content provision, and information sharing. Training or other workshop-style activities provide the catalyst from which broader and longer-lasting collaboration occurs.

Training is frequently the most formalized area of collaboration and something both advocacy and media organizations want more of. Media outlets value training that increases their staff's skills and advocacy organizations think of training as a way to highlight their cause and encourage its coverage.

Training is a core part of Africa Check's work. The Nigeria office has partnered with government, media and civil society for training. For example, using a curriculum developed by the South African headquarters, the Nigerian Africa Check office trains health journalists in conjunction with the Nigeria Center for Disease and Control. Motunrayo Joel, Africa Check Nigeria's Deputy Editor and health researcher, highlights the essential questions answered in the training sessions:



**“What is fact-checking? How can you fact check? What is Google reverse image search? Why should you fact check whatever statistics or data you're using?”.**

The Africa Check team now provides this type of training program every month.

Collaborating on training workshops allows Africa Check to reach wider audiences. For example, in late 2019, the US Embassy in Nigeria sponsored an Africa Check training. Through this, Africa Check adjusted their strategy in Nigeria to include outreach to rural and less developed regions in the north and west of the country. More recently, Deutsche Welle (DW) invited Africa Check to a radio debate about fact-checking, which helped the organization to raise the profile on its work.

As well as building skills and increasing the reach of the work that partners do together, training also provides a place for new connections to be made. For example, relationships made from training journalists at a variety of newspapers now provides Africa Check new platforms and audiences for its fact-checking reports.

Content provision is another area with more formalized partnership. These tend to be unilateral relationships with advocacy and fact-checking organizations providing media outlets with pre-written coverage. Africa Check, for example, routinely shares its content with media outlets to increase the coverage of its stories. These relationships are formed when the topical expertise provided by Africa Check supersedes the knowledge and capacity of media outlets.

Most informally, media and advocacy organizations share information on an ad-hoc basis.

**Referring to fact-checking organizations that the Nigeria office has developed a close partnership, Deputy Editor Joel, mentions, “We share claims and reach out to them whenever needs arise.”**

Sometimes, the sharing of information happens when co-organizing a specific event, such as a speech given at a university.

## Outcomes and impact:

The impact that fact- and claims- checking has is generally conceptualized differently by different groups. Journalists are more likely to focus on the quality of their coverage, while advocates will focus on the societal impact that coverage has. Both are difficult to measure quantitatively, so discussion about impact in the sector tends to focus on measures such as audience size and user feedback.

Metrics for impact in health communication focus on three areas: attitudes and public narratives, behaviors, and policy . From these metrics comes more effective health communication, improving public knowledge and awareness of health and ultimately health-related behavior over time[40]. Ideally, measuring impact would help fact-checking organizations, journalists, and foundations identify what messaging strategies and interventions really work.

From our research, impact measurement on health journalism has not been conducted in a deliberate manner in Nigeria. This is due in part to a lack of capacity, as it is inherently difficult to measure the relationship between reporting and something like behavioral change. It is also due to the way organizations differ in the type of impact that they prioritize. Journalistic outlets are more likely to define impact as the successful dissemination of reliable information. Advocacy organizations, however, are more likely to prioritize any form of change, be it behaviors, attitudes, or policies. Fact-checking organizations such as Africa Check sit somewhere in the middle [41]. These diverging priorities are another barrier to impact measurement: without a common agreement across partners of what impact they are working towards, and when individual organizations don't have the resources to devote to comprehensive impact measurement, a patchwork picture of overall impact is created.

Africa Check is a leading player in this area, having recruited a full-time Impact Manager, who sits in the headquarters office in South Africa.

“Whenever we get good feedback from the public or from journalists, we forward them to the staff and [the Impact Manager] will compile them. At the end of the year, she shares the document with our partners,” Joel has said.

The Nigeria office does not conduct its own analysis of its impact at the country-level. Their impact measurement focuses on monitoring readership numbers on its stories and on social media content, and on qualitative feedback such as the number of requests for fact-checking made by the public. Several of Africa Check’s staff mentioned that they use social media, especially WhatsApp, to get direct feedback from the public and to receive requests for information to be fact-checked. When public figures retract or amend false statements, this is also recorded.

While Africa Check works extensively to collect evidence of its impact, there are limitations to collecting quantitative data on impact. Often, qualitative feedback provides just as much information as quantitative feedback does but it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure media persuasion effects. To manage this, donors like the MacArthur Foundation and KAS solicit anecdotal data from their partners and grantees. For example, KAS tracks the future career trajectory of journalists they have trained; junior staff establishing themselves in reputable media outlets demonstrates significant impact but is difficult to measure.

As KAS’s Christoph Plate says, “It’s not something you can put into an Excel sheet, but more like a folder of observations of what happened to people we work together with.”

Open Society Foundation considers impact from the beginning of a funding cycle. According to Brett Davidson, Director of the Media and Narratives Division of the Open Society Public Health Program, they seek systemic change and not simply just individual behavior change, and therefore focus on shifting narratives. The Open Society Foundation’s Public Health Program is unique (among the three foundations) in its focus on narrative change.

“The program aims at preserving the public in public health, and preserving health as a public good. Policy change can’t happen in isolation,” Davidson said.

The Foundation's view is that substantial changes begin with a shift in the narrative. For example, changing the conversation about people's right to health can lead to greater demand for equitable health services, and eventually to policy change to increase health access. Ultimately, the Foundation is working to understand how the narrative can be shaped to influence, and ultimately improve, government performance.

**“Facts are not enough. Raising awareness is not enough—we need a story. If facts don’t fit people’s own narratives, then they will reject them. Narrative helps people make sense of the facts.” - Brett Davidson, Director of the Media and Narrative Division of Open Society Public Health Program.**

The below table collates all types of impact that were referenced as being used by organizations and their partners. It reflects the different types and definitions of impact that are used. As can be seen, anecdotal, qualitative and quantitative information is collected that together creates a picture of how organizations gather information on their impact across the health misinformation landscape.



The following types of impact data were collected by the organizations that we studied:

Impact data collected	Type of data	Collected by whom	Examples
Narrative changes			
Public figures admitting false statements [42]	Qualitative; anecdotal	Advocacy; fact-checking; media	In 2019, Oluwamayowa Tijani fact-checked a claim made by the Minister of Labor that Nigeria has a surplus of doctors.[43] The Minister later admitted that he was wrong.
Increasing presence and public interactions on social media	Quantitative; number of likes/shares/views of content across platforms	Media; fact-checking; advocacy	Isaiah Oluwatobi Owolabi mentioned that more people began to ask questions and comment on their posts. They also witnessed a substantial growth of direct messages, particularly when topics were sensitive or private.
Changes to language and metaphor used in public narratives on a topic	Quantitative; anecdotal	Advocacy	Open Society Foundation Narrative Change program collects information from social media on the language people use surrounding a topic: e.g. in South Africa, 'sex work' is increasingly used instead of 'prostitution', signalling an attitude shift.



## Behavioral changes

Increased demand for fact-checking and validated information sources	Quantitative; e.g. requests received on social media, site traffic levels	Media; fact-checking; advocacy	The Africa Check health misinformation WhatsApp group, is being used as a platform to provide quick access to public health experts who can confirm whether information is true.
Journalists incorporating findings from fact-checks into their coverage [44]	Qualitative; anecdotal	Media; fact-checking	Africa Check has been widely cited across policy papers, e.g. the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) cited Africa Check in their Country of Origin Information Report
Changes in health behavior	Quantitative	Advocacy	E.g. people are not drinking salt water to lower the risk of contracting COVID-19. This was widely reported during the 2014 Ebola Outbreak mentions Oluwamayowa Tijani.

## Policy changes

Increase in impact-driven reporting and fact-checking	Quantitative;	Fact-checking	Tijani's theory is that, "When people set out to make a story, they have policy change in mind".
Investigation on claimed policy issues	Qualitative; anecdotal	Media	Chikezie Omeje, Senior Investigative and Data Reporter with the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, Nigeria noted in an interview, "After I published an article about the embezzlement of government funds, relevant officials promised investigation to save face."
Changes in relevant national laws	Qualitative	Advocacy	Although the attribution problem is unavoidable, as AFP's Tijani mentioned, "the biggest impact has been the awareness of thought leaders that someone out there is watching".

# Landscape

## **Trends in the sector:**

Nigerians are increasingly using social media as their principal source of information.[45] As such, social media has the power to correct health misinformation or spread it, processes only exacerbated by emergent situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. This will continue to create both challenges and opportunities in countering health misinformation even after the pandemic is controlled.

## **Growth in social media platforms**

Social media penetration in Nigeria was 13% in January 2020.[46] On average, Nigerians spend 3 hours and 30 minutes on social media per day. WhatsApp is the most active social media platform in the country, with 85% of internet users on it. Facebook ranks second (78%) and Instagram is third at 57%, followed by Facebook Messenger(54%) and Youtube(53%). [47]

## **Donors:**

Donors have a substantial role in shaping the fact-checking landscape to address health misinformation in Nigeria and beyond. As media and non-profits increasingly rely on philanthropic funding, this role could become more pronounced over time.

As the financial sustainability of media outlets worldwide becomes increasingly precarious, the role of donors in shaping the media landscape is growing. In addition, Kole Shettima, Director of MacArthur Foundation's Africa office says that they've noticed an urgent problem in Nigeria and the rest of Africa: the lack of advertising coming in for many media projects and media enterprises. In Nigeria, a substantial number of investigative and fact-checking outlets are donor-supported, and the power that donors have to shape the landscape will only grow over time. Donors have taken different approaches to their roles in this landscape.

The MacArthur Foundation, for example, is focusing on media development and on training the next generation of journalists. They have developed three projects with this aim:

- an expanded mass communication program at Bayero University Kano, including a scholarship program for young women. This expanded program includes degree specializations in journalism, broadcasting, information and media studies, advertising, public relations, and development communication.
- an exchange program between their private media grantees and students and faculty members. Practitioners visit the campus as guest lecturers, and students and faculty visit their newsrooms. The aim of this project is to expose them to modern newsrooms and emerging online news platforms.
- increased support for investigative journalism in other languages, focusing in particular on radio and TV in order to reach more rural areas of Nigeria where the predominant language is not English.

KAS' sub-Saharan Media Programme views its role as that of a facilitator of media development. KAS sees health journalism as important, but notes that if all of the resources go into health reporting at the expense of political or business reporting, they don't see the media as being better off.

**"When donors come in with big money and with a lot of good intentions, many of them American, with little knowledge of Africa nor the media, it can help media organizations in financial trouble to survive the current period. However, one should not aim at creating the situation where the media is entirely dependent on donations from the outside." Christoph Plate said.**

Plate also worries about creating a "clash of personalities" if grantees believe that the donors don't know the local context enough, or about journalism, or do not understand the circumstances in which media outlets operate.

## Private sector:

Tech giants such as Facebook have an increasingly large role to play in setting the agenda for addressing health misinformation in Nigeria.

Media and advocacy organizations remain wary of the influence that these companies yield; while some have embraced partnerships with them, others are more reticent.

Partnerships with the private sector are varied in Nigeria, with some advocacy and media organizations embracing collaborative arrangements, and others choosing to remain independent of them. The success of these collaborations is mixed. In general, there is a sense that private companies only come into play when an interest of theirs could be served. Isaiah Oluwatobi Owolabi, an Obama Foundation Scholar from Nigeria, highlights that some companies simply avoid more sensitive challenges like sexual violence or reproductive health for fear of any risk incurred on their brand's reputation.

Africa Check would like to see tech giants like Facebook be more proactive in shaping the media landscape but have only been disappointed so far:

“We have tried different ways to share our work through Facebook and Instagram. We reach out to some influential people on these platforms. We tell them what we are doing and that they can feel free to repeat our work. However, we didn't witness as much attention to those stories as expected.” – Allwell Okpi



## Government:

Africa Check's relationship with the government has had varied results. Partnerships with the Bureau of National Statistics greatly enables the work of fact-checkers. Otherwise, media and fact-checking organizations worry about accountability, transparency, and conflicts of interest. In general, trust in the government remains low.

Partnerships between media, civil society and the government are largely informal, not only for Africa Check but across the sector.

For all organizations, access to high-quality data is a challenge, something further discussed in the next section. For Africa Check and similar organizations, partnerships with government agencies – specifically the Bureau of National Statistics and the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control – are driven by the need to access reliable data to fact-check and dispute health information claims. In 2018, the Nigeria Africa Check team invited members of the Bureau of National Statistics to lead a workshop informing journalists of available resources that the Bureau manages. Africa Check continues to use these resources and has benefited from its relationship with the Bureau ever since.

Beyond this, Africa Check is very careful in partnering with the government sector.

“We believe in being independent. The only reason why we decided to partner with NCDC is because this is a huge agency. Also, in the era of fighting fake news around COVID-19, we think this is a good strategy for us.” – Motunrayo Joel said.

The KAS Sub-Saharan Africa Media Programme, on the other hand, actively collaborates with a range of government departments. They use workshops to facilitate coordination between media and government departments, who are often at odds with one another. KAS finds that people often stay in touch with each other after these events, increasing trust and collaboration and an appreciation for the roles both parties play in civil society.



# Challenges

## Access to data:

Availability and quality of national and sub-national data in Nigeria is a long-term challenge. Without reliable data, journalists have a harder time refuting information.

Organizations like Africa Check experience difficulty in obtaining even basic information to conduct fact-checking, such as annual deaths caused by malaria, says Allwell Okpi, Africa Check's Community Manager. Many common health indicators have not been incorporated into the government's database, or the data is just outdated, wrong, or riddled with discontinuity. Africa Check prefers not to use secondary data sources and obtaining official data from the statistics bureau and relevant departments is a lengthy process. Misinformation spreads quickly and requires a rapid response from fact-checking organizations but this cannot be done when data is inaccessible.

## Access to experts:

Lack of trust in media and bureaucratic barriers create substantial delays for news outlets verifying information or consulting experts. This can lead to an over-reliance on a few sources or the reporting of inaccurate information in lieu of facts.

Consulting experts is an essential part of fact-checking, but a robust relationship between medical professionals and the media does not exist in Nigeria. Many are worried about being misquoted and therefore, do not talk to journalists. Journalist Chikezie Omeje, cited one example while reporting on COVID-19. "Let's assume that there is news on a possible cure for COVID-19 and I need to add local perspective rather than just 'copy' the report from The New York Times. If I turn to a local epidemiologist, their bosses might not allow them to speak to me and it will take a long time to get access to his points. This is very problematic when one is working on a breaking story."

## Lack of capacity:

Constraints on time and expertise affect media outlets in particular, which face an increase in demand for coverage while receiving cuts in funding.

Ideally, a journalist covering health would have a background in science or medicine. In Nigeria, however, journalists don't often specialize or build expertise in one field. This often results in journalists taking the opinions of medical professionals as fact, or reducing the accuracy of a story to maintain balance in its point of view.

## Misalignment of objectives:

Collaborations addressing health misinformation involve organizations with disparate priorities; these differences can endanger the success of a project if not faced upfront at the outset of a new partnership.

Coordinating organizations within a partnership is challenging when the involved parties have different agendas.


**Motunrayo Joel, Africa Check Nigeria's Deputy Editor says, "When you have a vision, there will always be some people who don't really buy into it."**

Civil society organizations working on health might be focused on changing health outcomes, whereas media reporting on health are interested in the dissemination of information. Countering this requires identifying the shared goals and aspects of each party's agenda at the outset of any partnership.

## Other challenges:

In Nigeria, many articles on health are republished from foreign publications, so the local audience does not identify with them.

**Omeje notes, "People see it as something that is far from them, they are not familiar with the sources. Therefore concludes that it doesn't apply to them. They don't think they have these conditions. Neither do researchers talk about these issues publicly".**



# Africa Check and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an exceptional opportunity for health fact-checking organizations like Africa Check. Demand for reliable health information sources has drastically risen since the start of the outbreak due to a concurrent rise in false claims and misinformation related to COVID-19.[48]

Consequently, these organizations are facing increased demand for their resources and services. Africa Check has seen an 8-fold increase in traffic on their website and social media channels in March and April 2020, when compared to 2019.

Big donors are fundraising in response to demand for reputable sourced information and fact-checking. For the MacArthur

Foundation's Africa team, they are supporting *Premium Times*, Dubawa, and the Centre for Democracy & Development to scale-up their fact-checking work. They also established a health sector reform coalition of 100+ NGOs across Nigeria via Zoom to facilitate information exchange between organizations. They have also begun supporting a radio program produced by the BBC that focuses on pandemic-related misinformation. The radio program allows listeners to call in and ask questions and debunks common myths and false stories about COVID-19. Additional resources like these will be vital in ensuring that the capacity of fact-checking organizations is scaled as demand for their services increases.





# Africa Check COVID-19

## Media and information regulation in the context of COVID-19

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Nigerian National Assembly had been debating proposed social media legislation which would introduce regulations on misinformation. However, the legislation faced a backlash from the public.

Motunrayo Joel says that COVID-19 has exposed the hazards of health misinformation to the government.

**“All of a sudden, the government has taken upon itself to fight fake news. They really came to realize that stopping fake health content could have ripple effects.”**

She believes that this is not just a short-term response, but will continue after the outbreak recedes.

## The future of media-advocacy partnerships in light of COVID-19

Partnerships in Nigeria, and more broadly, are rapidly being established to fight misinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the fact-checking industry will benefit from the increased prioritization of their work, many more partnerships are expected to be rapidly developed. Existing challenges still remain, including political pressure placed on reporters and concerns about the independence of the media.

Once the near-term pressure of responding to the pandemic has subsided, these partnerships will need to be examined to ensure that they are meeting best practice standards.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Donors can help organizations establish partnerships in two ways. First, by creating environments that foster trust and collaboration between organizations across the landscape. Actively bringing organizations together at events or through joint projects is one way to do this that simultaneously builds the fact-checking landscape. However, care should be taken to ensure the financial sustainability of these projects. Second, by widening the demographic and geographical reach of organizations' efforts to help them reach new partners and new target audiences.
- Training activities have a 'multiplier effect' on the impact of collaborative work across organizations and were often the catalyst in establishing relationships and trust between different groups. Training and capacity building should be incorporated into all projects where possible to ensure sustainability and enhance relationships between organizations.
- Collaborations built on an acknowledgment of each party's respective expertise and role in the partnership are more likely to be successful. Full disclosure and transparency is needed in a partnership. This fosters trust across sectors and ensures that partnerships are more dynamic and responsive to emerging trends and events.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Health misinformation is an entrenched problem, and require changes to broader aspects of the landscape—beyond the remit of media or civil society organizations—to be fully addressed. Partnerships in the short-term can provide means to overcome some challenges such as access to technical expertise, but they also need to work at the same time towards longer-term solutions to issues such as data accessibility and funding.
- Media and fact-checking organizations like Africa Check face increased attention to their work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this brings additional demand for their services and resources, organizations will need to consider the likely impact on their business models once the immediacy of the pandemic subsides. The spotlight on their work presents a huge opportunity to demonstrate the essential nature of fact-checking.

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# Nation Media Group collaboration with The Fuller Project–Kenya

## GROUNDBREAKING REPORTING ON WOMEN.

In 2019, the Gates Foundation funded a collaboration between two organizations: Nation Media Group, the largest independent media house in East and Central Africa; and The Fuller Project for International Reporting, a non-profit news organization that covers topics related to women. The collaboration was formulated as a three-year partnership, which brought three female reporters from Daily Nation and two from The Fuller Project. Daily Nation, owned by Nation Media Group, is the highest circulated newspaper in Kenya, with 170,000 daily copies. The partnership collectively produces articles focused on women and gender-related issues. The partnership aims to enhance gender equality and specifically the female representation in news coverage with the stories presented in a 'gender' section on the Daily Nation homepage.

The underrepresentation of women in the media has been a problem around the world for years. By interviewing journalists, media practitioners, and scholars, we studied how this partnership works to improve the status of women and to address problems faced by women in Kenyan society in general. We also studied how to improve donor relations and funding strategies for future projects with similar goals.



# Nation Media Group collaboration with The Fuller Project–Kenya

## BACKGROUND

Despite recent efforts in Kenya to improve the historical discrimination and under-representation of women in political and economic spheres, problems such as child marriage, political participation, and educational access are still rampant. For example, Kenya's 2010 constitutional reform required no more than two-thirds of any elected body to be of one gender, but women today make up 22% of seats in the lower house and 31% in the upper house, highlighting the ineffectiveness of some efforts to bolster women's political representation.[49]

Under-representation persists in the media as well. A vast number of studies have indicated that women are significantly underrepresented in the media industry in Kenya; marking a striking contrast with the fact that four out of every five graduates from journalism or media programs are women. The gender disparity is more evident at the senior management level: the two largest media houses in Kenya have never had a woman CEO in their history [50]. Content analysis of three major newspapers in Kenya- the Daily Nation, The Standard and Kenya Times- found that women and women's issues occupy less space and are portrayed more negatively compared to their male counterparts [51]. The problem of gender inequality ranges from a simple lack of representation in the newsroom and on the front page, to deeper issues of skewed reporting when covering women. Decades of advocacy and activist movements have made notable progress in enhancing women's presence and rights in Kenya, but there is still a long way to go.[52]

# THE FULLER PROJECT AT A GLANCE

## DATE FOUNDED:

2014

## ANNUAL REVENUE:

\$2,500,000 (2019)

## LOCATION:

Head Office - Washington DC.  
Reporting across 20 countries

## STAFF SIZE:

10

## WHO THEY ARE

Non-partisan, non-profit news organization reporting globally and in the US

## WHAT THEY DO

Publishes articles on the topics that most affect women. Publications include The New York Times to Foreign Policy to Marie Claire

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

- 6,700 Twitter followers
- 3600 Facebook followers

## FUNDING SOURCES

Foundations including the Compton Foundation and Gates Foundation

# Findings

*“To see Nation Media Group directly partnering with The Fuller Project is a great step in ensuring that media houses take initiative in addressing gender inequalities in their newsrooms, and also within content production... such a partnership shows that women journalists appear to be well established [in the newsroom] unlike before, and the news now includes issues associated with women’s quotidian concerns, and it takes women seriously.”*  
- Rosemary Okello-Orlale, a veteran Kenyan journalist

## Gender Desk’s Operations:

**The gender desk has increased the number of stories covering everyday concerns of women.**

Gender Editor, Dorcas Odumbe has successfully led the desk to produce more gender-focused content than had existed before at *The Nation*. In this partnership, veteran journalist Louise Donovan has reported on a variety of issues in gender violence such as stories about the underaged girls in child marriage on the Syrian border. [53]

This practice has been especially important amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kenyan government has implemented strict measures to contain the spread of the disease. Yet, according to Human Rights Watch, policies such as isolation and social distancing might give rise to unwanted impacts on women, such as an increase in gender-based violence.[54] According to the government, 45% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence. Unfortunately, many cases never get reported to authorities.[55].

Realities like this make gender reporting, and particularly the gender desk, very relevant to raising public awareness and to improving the condition and status of women in society.



# Findings

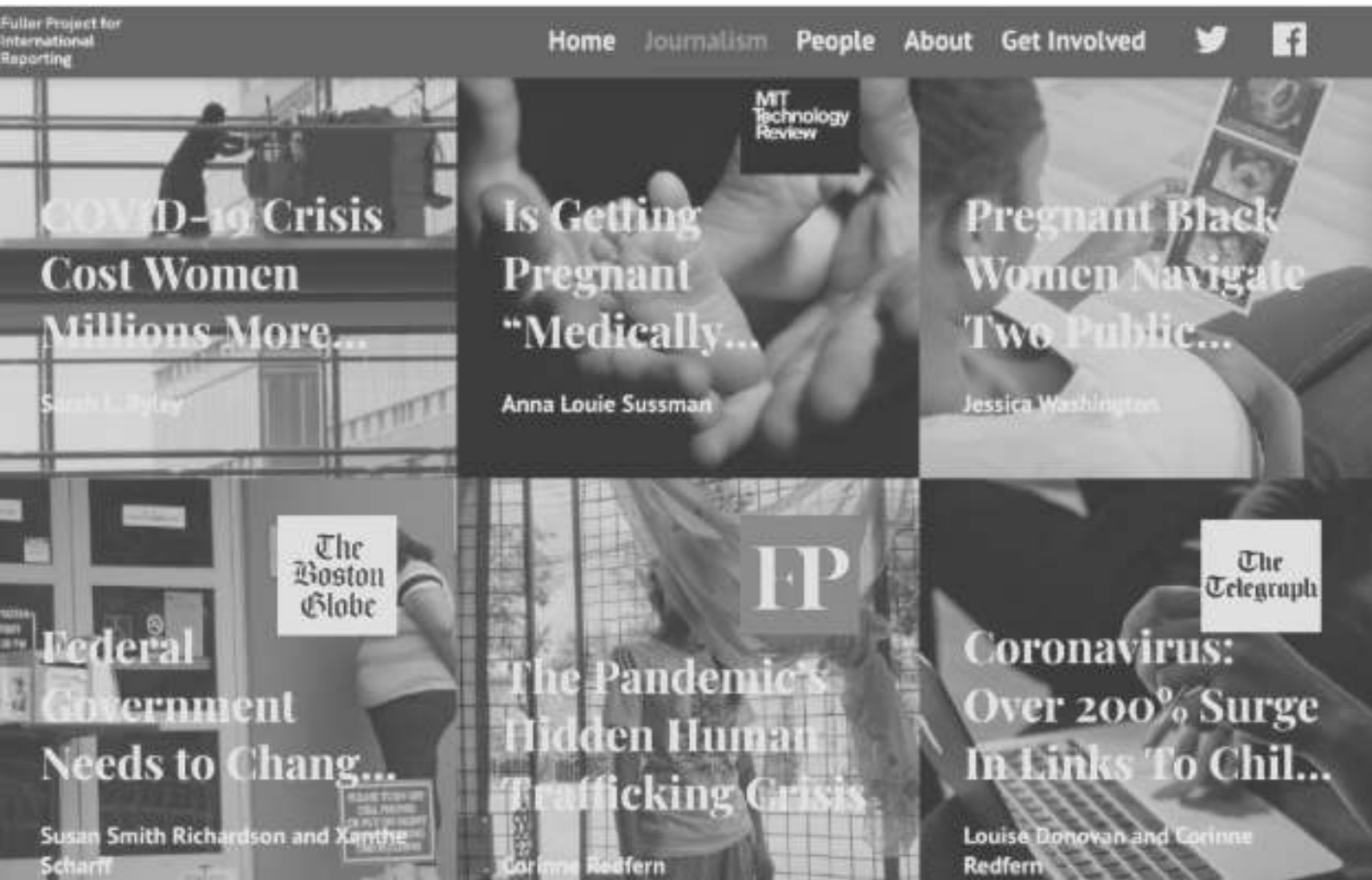
Joseph Odindo, the former editorial director of Nation Media Group, says that in journalism, uncertainty about how audiences will respond is a barrier to trying out new things.

**“There are certain areas of coverage that need to be brought to the forefront, and only when the audience is exposed to it, one will know whether it would succeed.”**

The establishment of the gender desk at Nation Media Group broke this barrier. Its coverage of the increase in domestic violence amidst the COVID-19 pandemic caught the attention of the health cabinet secretary in Kenya and forced a public response [56], while the subject went unreported in other mainstream outlets.

According to the article on domestic violence on Daily Nation, Chief Justice David Maraga noted the rise in sexual offences since March 13, when coronavirus was first confirmed in Kenya, and said sexual offences made up 35.8% of cases recorded since then [57].

(Source: The Fuller Project Website)



**The gender desk focuses on increasing the number of stories on women, but representation is more than just raw numbers.**

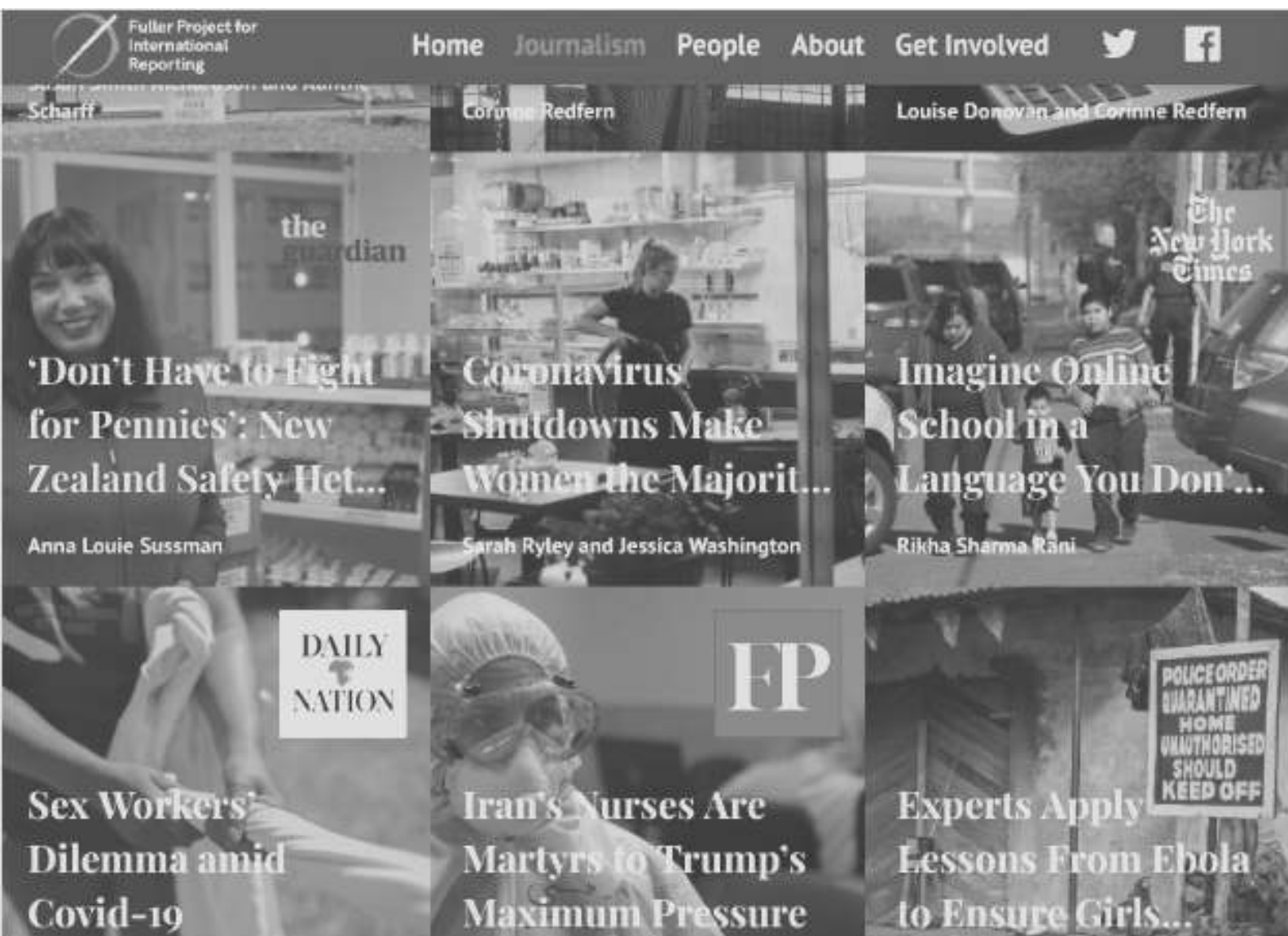
The gender desk has helped increase the number of stories involving women, but this coverage still does not sufficiently showcase women's points of view. Bridging the gender disparity in newsrooms requires more than just increasing the number of stories about women. It also means including their voices in other kinds of stories and seeking out and quoting women experts more generally.

Simply writing about notable women, without including them in general reporting, is not enough. These kinds of stories are not enough to achieve gender balance, and media houses need to dive deeper into the women in these stories:

**“Coverage of women currently is about their voices and faces and not about the impact of those voices,” Okello said.**

It is therefore not sufficient to only topics related to women, but also need to include their perspective in politics, economics, and across the entire news spectrum.

(Source: The Fuller Project Website)



## **One desk alone cannot change the culture of an entire newsroom.**

Kenya's first-ever public editor, Karen Rothmyer, suggests that all desks should do a better job of including female sources in their stories as well as women's perspectives. Additionally, most aspiring journalists want to cover political and economic news rather than gender as a separate topic.

Portraying women as victims, or unnecessary references to their family status or their appearance continue to show up in stories throughout the Daily Nation. says Catherine Gicheru, a former city editor for The Nation, thinks that a standalone desk is unlikely to change this culture anytime soon. She says female journalists in Kenya are relegated to covering 'soft' stories while their male counterparts are assigned political and business stories.

While the number of women in newsrooms has increased, the makeup of those in charge has not; if anything, gender equity in editorial meetings has declined. Gicheru says that Daily Nation editorial meetings used to include 4-5 female editors, but now just one. Accordingly, fewer women are assigned important stories.

***“A standalone desk can't cure, but ... it can help awaken the editors,”*** says Joseph Odindo.

He believes that the role of the gender desk is more than journalistic and can serve as a 'voice' during editorial discussions. In a sense, the gender desk functions as HR by highlighting gender issues on staff to management.

“Gender sensitivity in local mainstream journalism has only come to the fore in the last five-six years. A gender desk is needed to raise the underrepresentation issue with management and the editor,” Odindo said, adding that Nation Media Group has focused on bringing more women onto the editorial board.

## **The gender desk may not be able to solve women's underrepresentation in the news entirely, but it has a role to play.**

Women were represented in just 18% of the 162 stories published by Daily Nation across politics, business, and sports on the 17th, 18th, and 20th of April, 2020. According to Gakahu and Lynette, in 2007, when Kenya had the best women's volleyball team in Africa, the team barely made the news due to preconceived notions that sports are a man's domain. [58]

### **Funding Financial Outlook:**

#### **Subject-specific funding distorts editorial priorities, and can create financial uncertainty and unsustainability.**

While there isn't direct instruction to prioritize certain subjects, but for some outlets, specific funding for one area inevitably alters a newsroom's priorities, which has benefits and drawbacks. For example, Catherine Gicheru says that the Gates Foundation's grant for health reporting helped influence increased government funding to fight cancer, but doubts the sustainability of this kind of editorial focus when there is uncertainty surrounding the funding that spurred it.

Karen Rothmyer says journalists don't prefer subject-specific funding due to the way it shifts a newsroom's focus from the priorities of the readers to those of the donors.

Joseph Odindo believes that if a newsroom and donor's priorities align, this kind of funding is a boon. If an outlet would have been interested in the subject already, then this kind of funding can help that outlet reach goals it otherwise couldn't have due to a lack of resources.

#### **Capacity building outweighs concerns of financial sustainability.**

**"During the partnership, if Nation Media Group can nurture an editor and a couple of reporters, there is a lasting benefit of the partnership," Odindo says.** It allows the newsroom to continue the work in-house. The funded coverage may also increase readership and result in higher advertising revenue.



# Recommendations

## Training and Capacity Building

### **Incorporate a gender lens into media training in order to increase representation of gender across all media**

Incorporating gender in media training has shown to be effective in increasing female representation in the media. These courses should include broader frameworks to enhance gender awareness in the newsroom, training on subjects like gender stereotyping in language and headlines, and story design. For instance, according to Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Reporting, reporters are encouraged to replace gender-specific terms with gender-neutral words to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes in professions. Examples may include chairman/chairwoman vs. head or chairperson, and businessman/businesswoman vs. business executive or manager.[59] Reporters are also encouraged to avoid adding unnecessary gender components in a story such as “Woman driver crashes into fence”, as this also helps to narrow the gender disparity in coverage.[60]

In addition to training on ethics and writing techniques, programming such as the BBC 50:50 project [61] also mark an effective approach to enhancing gender balance in the media.

Operating on a voluntary mechanism of self-monitoring, the BBC 50:50 project hopes to “get the best contributor on air or online regardless of their gender, with no compromise on editorial quality.”[62] Instead of setting up quotas that might distort the intention of achieving gender equality, the project aims to diversify contributors, identify well qualified female and male voices, and throughout the process expand the pool of female experts that help to improve the quality of their content. According to its data for April 2019, 74% of teams following the guidelines for one year or more reached 50% women contributors, underscoring a notable growth compared with 27% of the group when the initiative began. [63]

Such a combination of training and practicum consolidates the concept of gender reporting in both theory and practice in the newsroom. First, this approach improves not only the overall quality, professionalism, and awareness of reporting through a gender lens in the media house. Secondly and more importantly, it empowers and equips reporters and editors with the necessary skills and understanding to enable them to continue the work in-house. This allows them to develop capacity to ensure the sustainability of gender reporting in the long run even in the absence of a partnership.



# Recommendations

## Practices in the Newsroom

### **Incorporate a gender advisory desk in the early stages of publishing and encourage more transparency in decision-making.**

Setting up an advisory desk with a gender lens could address female underrepresentation in an outlet's coverage. An advisory desk differs from a standalone gender desk. Unlike a standalone desk, an advisory desk allows input on the gender balance of a story at all stages of its development, rather than at the end. A gender editor should be a part of story planning and assignment decisions. They would also play a role in reminding reporters of the need to remain conscious of gender when brainstorming new stories across all desks. This would be especially important in stories related to science, technology, politics, and sports, where women are especially underrepresented.

Furthermore, the creation of a gender advisory desk offers equal opportunities for every member in the newsroom to practice using a gender lens in the process of interviewing, writing, editing, and supervising. This would be complementary to courses and training on subjects of gender reporting. Involving more staff will also bring more transparency to decision-making and help the gender desk to increase their colleagues'

understanding of the importance of gender reporting, thus creating a sense of ownership and accountability across the media house.

### **Assign editors to regions or subjects beyond just gender.**

Some of our interviewees discussed how journalists might be reluctant to be positioned as a 'gender editor', which is not a concrete subject in traditional newspapers. Just as racial issues are addressed in stories covered by political reporters rather than 'race' reporters, women's issues should similarly be addressed in broader topics like politics or health and not solely by a gender desk.

Instead of hiring a standalone editor to oversee gender issues, the topic of gender should be incorporated into every editor's role and responsibility which helps to nurture a culture in newsrooms that values gender balance as an integral part of reporting. As Karen Rothmyer says, creating a sense of belonging is the key to achieving this long-term impact in journalism. A gender advisory desk could help lend support to other editors with this, and doing so would greatly expand the role and influence of a gender desk and help it reach a wider range of audiences than it could as an isolated entity.

# Recommendations

## Working with External Partners

### **Increase female leadership and influence in all levels of an organization.**

The underrepresentation of women in media reflects the general lack of female power in all sectors of society. For donors, media outlets and journalists, a joint effort to enhance women's leadership and voices through civic engagement, collaborations with NGOs, and online movements will also increase the representation of women in the media.

Organizations and NGOs that target gender equality and women in journalism could help to promote female representation. For example, the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) is a professional association funded by international donors including the Ford Foundation, UN Women, Sida-UNESCO, and Radio Robinhood Finland.[64] This organization, which was established by a group of female journalists in the country in 1983, promotes gender equality and inclusiveness through communications and advocacy, capacity building and training, research, and rural outreach programs. Its projects include information and media campaigns against teenage pregnancies in Kampala, and public education programs on Uganda's referendum in 2005. The organization also initiated the first women radio station in Africa named MAMA FM (101.7) which broadcasts issues affecting the overlooked. These projects have addressed challenges of women in a variety of segments such as politics and reproductive health and rights and have accelerated the progress of gender equality in over 20 regions.[65]

Powerful and influential organizations like this contribute to a better representation of women in Ugandan media houses. According to Jackline Kemigisa, a former NTV Uganda reporter covering parliament and politics, journalists of NTV Uganda covering the 2016 Ugandan election would have to follow the NTV's editorial guideline that at least 33% of interviewees they find and quote need to be women. After six months following this practice, they observed a five percent increase in female readership, underscoring a significant growth of female audiences.

According to a study conducted in 2018, politics and election coverage occupies over half (61%) of NTV's news content. Therefore, the increase of female voices in such stories demonstrates the fact that more opinions by women are seen in NTV's frequently covered topics.[66] As the only outlet headed by a woman among five major media houses in Uganda, which are Monitor Publications Limited, NTV Uganda, Vision Group, NBS TV, and Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, NTV Uganda pioneers in developing gender balance and sensitivity in its stories by implementing the editorial guideline under the leadership and influence of its CEO Ms. Aggie Konde.[67]

Furthermore, online movements for gender equality can be powerful tools to both enhance female-driven narratives and drive 'real world' change. For example, in 2015 [68] women in East Africa began calling out political talk shows for their lack of female representation, evident in the form of all-male panels. Using the hashtag #NoMoreManel on Twitter, thousands of accounts worldwide began posting different examples criticizing the absence of women in academia, media, and other workplaces.



(Source: Twitter)

Fields such as science and research tried to improve and reduce the number of “Manels”. **According to Nature’s editor-in-chief Magdalena Skipper, Nature Conferences formulated a code of conduct “to foster diversity at our conferences and other events, focusing on gender diversity but also recognizing that there are many axes of diversity.”[69]**

In June 2019, the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Francis Collins said publicly that he will no longer speak on any scientific panel that does not include female guests in discussions [70].

Therefore, based on the influence and success of large organizations and civil society in advancing gender equality, we recommend that donors, owners of media outlets, as well as journalists could work with partners including NGOs such as the Uganda Media’s Women’s Association on effective messaging in order to foster female leadership in society and enhance outcomes on gender equality. This is in addition to investing in media training and repurposing the role of gender desks and editors in the newsroom. By increasing female representation in the media, such partnerships can help to reshape people’s perception and ideology, leading to concrete improvements in gender discrimination.

(Source: Twitter)



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# OXPECKERS AT A GLANCE

## DATE FOUNDED:

2013

## ANNUAL REVENUE:

\$105,000 (2018)

## LOCATION:

Mbombela, South Africa

## STAFF SIZE:

2-full time, 14 part-time, 1 founding staff (2018)

## WHO THEY ARE

The Oxpeckers Center for Investigative Environmental Journalism focuses on environmental topics in South Africa.

## WHAT THEY DO

The Center combines traditional investigative reporting with data analysis and geo-mapping tools to publish articles and news stories that expose eco-offences and tracks organised criminal syndicates in South Africa.

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

5014 likes on Facebook  
15 subscribers on YouTube  
2846 followers on Twitter  
508 followers on Instagram

## FUNDING SOURCES

85 percent donors. Their main donors are The Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA) and Code for Africa. The remaining finances are raised through the sales of investigations and geo-journalism platforms commissioned by third-party media outlets.

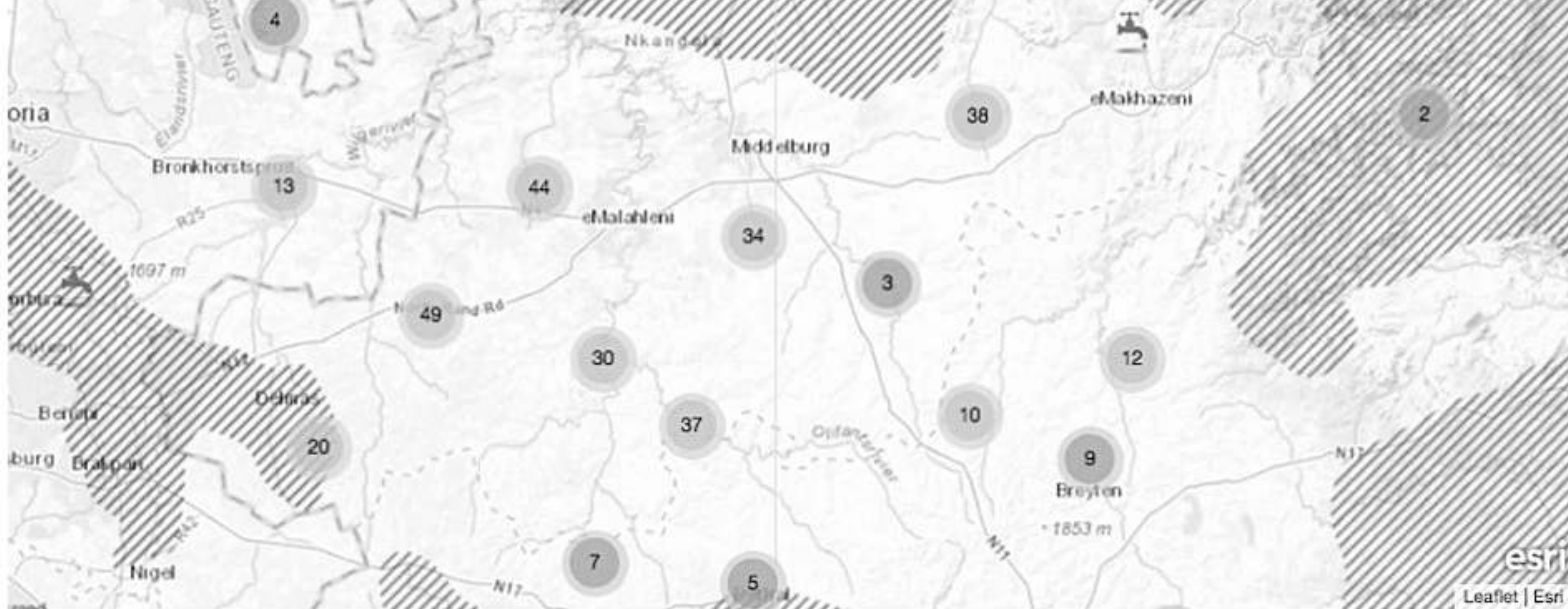
# Oxpeckers #MineAlert

DATA-DRIVEN JOURNALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Founded in 2013, Oxpeckers is a non-profit investigative journalism unit that combines traditional investigative reporting with data analytics. One of the leading investigative outlets on the niche environmental beat in South Africa, Oxpeckers exposes eco-offenses, holding criminals and corrupt organizations accountable. With a mission to improve the quality and impact of African environmental journalism, Oxpeckers has a team of two dozen journalists - a combination of full- and part-time reporters - environmental specialists, and advisors. At its helm is Fiona Macleod, a veteran investigative environmental journalist and advocate of cutting-edge media technology for more transparent reporting. Her vast experience including at the well-known *Mail & Guardian* and connections with coalitions like the Earth Journalism Network, has helped Oxpeckers to become a renowned investigative journalism outlet in South Africa.

In 2014, Oxpeckers began developing #MineAlert, a platform for users to access, track, and share information on mining applications and licenses, as well as water use permits. #MineAlert's website and mobile app uses a geo-mapping tool to promote accountability and transparency across the public and private spheres of the mining sector. #MineAlert's users include environmental activists, NGOs, legal advocacy organizations, wildlife activists, government leaders, and parliamentarians. With 45 investigative reports written since its launch in 2014, #MineAlert posts the latest investigative developments on the topic and alerts users of mining applications and licenses in their area. As it operates today, the #MineAlert tool is the direct product of years of strategic thinking by Oxpeckers, Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA), and their shared partners. Trust-building is essential to building the critical mass required to take on environmental journalism from all angles, as is evidenced in this case.





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Water Licences



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# SOUTH AFRICAN MINING IN CONTEXT

Since the pre-apartheid period, the extractive sector has been influential in shaping South Africa's socioeconomic history. The first mine began its operations in 1852 in Springbokfontein, and twelve years later commercial coal mining started in the Eastern Cape, in Molteno[71]. The discovery of diamond deposits and gold in the Greater Johannesburg Area attracted many labourers, shopkeepers, and mining companies[72]. As areas around mining operations urbanized rapidly, many slums sprang up which were inhabited primarily by people of color. This was looked down upon by Afrikaners - descendants of the 17th century Dutch settlers who believed in their white superiority -

as they thought that racial mixing would weaken their control of the migrant labour economy[73].

As the mining industry expanded through the late 19th century, mine owners continued to provide low wages to their laborers. The government offered substantial support to the sector throughout the process since the tax revenue from mining became a significant part of national revenue. At the insistence of the Chamber of Mines, the government created various policies enabling the mining companies to hire laborers at a cheap price, and at the same time they began to tax black communities who continued to work on farms rather than make the switch to mining[74].





Moreover, the black labourers had to sign a contract which stated that abandoning one's job was a criminal act. The Mines and Works Act (1911) and its amendments (1926) ensured that black workers did not receive any form of social security or skills training, ensuring that labourers had no other avenue for jobs or livelihood opportunities[75]. Further, the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act, which allowed trade unions to negotiate with industrial councils, excluded Africans from trade union membership, and thus from negotiations.

Despite the unjust circumstances, the black mine-workers remained resilient. In 1920, 70,000 African mine-workers downed their tools, leading to a clash between the union and the police, which left 35 workers injured[76]. Again in 1946, the union and 76,000 black miners protested against the inhumane conditions of their work. This time the conflict resulted in police killing 12 workers, while injuring 1,200 others. Moreover, 50 union leaders were charged with sedition[77]. This blatant suppression of rights eventually led to the Apartheid movement, and eventually by 1980, black miners were granted their rights to negotiate with the mine owners.

Coal mining continued to expand throughout the 20th century and the mining sector experienced a 60 percent growth, employing over 158,000 people after the Second World War[78]. The extractives industry in South Africa, particularly the mining sector, accounts for approximately 18 percent of the national GDP[79].

# FINDINGS

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## **Environmental journalism and coverage of the extractive sector has come a long way. With increased attention on the detrimental effects of mining from the public and policy makers, environmental journalism is commanding greater attention**

From the days of state-controlled media, journalism in South Africa has experienced rapid improvement in terms of quality of reportage and the freedom to access and publish information. In 'Power and Pressure: African Media and the Extractive Sector' Anya Schiffrin, Senior Lecturer at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, attributes the growth of the field to "shifts in political regimes, media ownership, investment in education, economic growth and the introduction of new technology".

As the extractive industry continued into the late 20th century, the mining beat was covered by financial reporters: these were correspondents working intimately with mining companies to cover news on stock portfolios and highlight perspectives on investment. Itumeleng Mahabane, a corporate public relations expert, recalls that these reporters were once the "rock stars" of journalism in South Africa, dominating the environmental media landscape and piggy-backing on the success of mining industry titans through the early 2000s. Across South Africa, both the public and private sectors focused more on the short-term benefits created by mining jobs, as opposed to any longer-term externalities. Mariette Liefferink, CEO of the Federation for a Sustainable Environment, reflects on the period, saying that there was a "psychological dependence on mining as the backbone of South Africa, particularly coal mining." It was only when the environmentally damaging impacts of mining began to exacerbate pre-existing poverty that the focus moved to investigative stories. This paradigm shift drew the attention of policy makers and political reporters, who began to cover regulation of mining companies and license procurement processes. "Mining is the most politicized sector in South Africa," says Mahabane. "Factual reporting on mining is more critical now than ever before."





#### Richtersveld diamond deal leaves locals with the dirt

Tensions mount in the diamond-rich Richtersveld after the sale of mines by Trans Hex left a multi-million-rand rehabilitation debt. Yolandi Groenewald investigates...

18 Mar, 2019



#### Here's how to heed those voices, Mr President

President Cyril Ramaphosa says SA mining wants to be more transparent and embracing. Andiswa Matikinca talks to organisations with advice...

08 Feb, 2019



#### What is free, prior & informed consent for mining?

The Western majoritarian view does not work when consulting mining-affected communities such as Xolobeni, reports Andiswa Matikinca...

24 Jan, 2019

# FINDINGS CONT.

## Without substantiated data, environmental journalism has no power to persuade

For Oxpeckers, anecdotal evidence and human-interest narratives alone are not enough. Reporting is supported by data analysis; ensuring that reporting can be relied upon to provide an unbiased and substantiated story.

For instance, journalist Mark Olalde's story on mine closures[80] exposed that since 2011, 124 mining companies awarded with federal mine-closing certificates failed to rehabilitate coal mines. According to law, companies are required to make financial provisions and set aside some financial aid for rehabilitation before obtaining mining licenses. After rehabilitation this money is returned. If not, the mining department has the right to take this money and rehabilitate those mines. The 19-month investigative story highlighted that these 124 companies abandoned the mines without rehabilitation, leaving the public to deal with problems such as pollution, exposure to toxic gases, depleted water resources amongst others.

However, storytelling through data must strike a balance of providing factual evidence that is interesting to the public while avoiding sensationalism. "To keep news relevant in the public eye," muses Liefferink, "means to tirelessly develop new angles to reach a wider audience." As important as data-journalism is, its production is mired in funding challenges, limiting the development of sustainable models. Anders Pedersen, Director of Resource Watch, a geo-data platform created by the World Resources Institute, is not surprised that the biggest challenge facing an organization like Oxpeckers is the constant threat of funding being halted. To prepare for this, Fiona Macleod of Oxpeckers highlights the importance of only spending what you have. In the 2015 report, *Publishing for Peanuts*, Robinson, Grennan, and Schiffrin write that "Staying lean means you can innovate quickly," and Macleod echoes the same sentiment today. "For me, what works is to keep it small, stay in budget, and not over-promise and then end up in trouble." Perhaps the moral here is to under-promise and over-deliver.



June 26, 2017 | IOL

## South Africa: A Minefield of Hope....and Violence

MARK OLALDE



June 15, 2017 | IOL

## South Africa: The Dust Mountain That's Just Always There

*Investigative journalism can be improved with relations cultivated with civil society groups.*

### **Long-term strategic thinking and trust-building with donors are crucial to develop lasting relationships**

Oxpeckers' #MineAlert continues to receive the bulk of its financial support from the Open Society Foundation for South Africa. As a hard-earned point of pride, Fiona Macleod, Founder of Oxpeckers, largely attributes the strong relationship with OSF-SA to the quality of Oxpeckers' work; since its launch in 2013, it has built up an established record of high-quality reporting. "Oxpeckers routinely delivers. Most donors and foundations are recurring ones, and there is no, nor should there ever be, editorial interference. They keep coming back to support our work because we deliver."

Beginning in 2014, OSF-SA began to develop a grantee portfolio devoted to the extractives sector, with a focus on mining. The portfolio has three aims: to promote transparency of information relating to mining licenses, operations, and commitments, to bolster inclusive participation of mining-affected communities, and to hold unchecked corruption to account. To achieve this aim, they realized that along with NGOs and advocacy groups, a dedicated media channel was essential to put pressure on both the mining corporations and the government.

Hence, OSF-SA decided to partner with Oxpeckers as they had an existing capacity for nurturing localized journalism and training programs. OSF-SA granted seed funding to develop and launch the geo-data analytics platform that would become #MineAlert.

“OSF-SA has always been drawn to beat reporting, niche journalism, and hot topic issues relating to economic crimes, land reform processes, and developments in political spaces,” says Nkateko Chauke, Program Manager of OSF-SA's Research and Advocacy Unit. Oxpeckers and OSF-SA made for a natural fit; each had their sights set upon improving human rights and preserving the right to access information.

Over two years, OSF-SA sought to fund other organizations such as the Social Audit Network (SAN), which would complement work already taken on by Oxpeckers in their development of #MineAlert. SAN is a collective of implementing civil society organizations[81] that work in harmony to recognize accountability methods, like social audits, as effective forms of community-based monitoring. As OSF-SA scaled the SAN to incorporate the mining sector, they observed rapid improvements in how the government was managing procurement processes for mining licenses. This prompted the SAN to audit Social and Labor Plans, which are negotiated and legally-binding contracts that set out how a company intends to share the benefits of mining fairly. According to the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, these benefits include “Initiatives for developing the skills of their employees; upgrading local schools and roads; as well as providing housing, water, and sanitation in the area”.[82]

Oxpeckers’ network of community journalists investigated the efforts of those facilitating social audits and subsequently released groundbreaking reports on contract discrepancies. Among the reports released was a 19-month data investigation of mine closures, published in 2017 by the Pulitzer Center under the title “Coal Mines Leave a Legacy of Ruin in South Africa”[83] and written by Mark Olalde, freelance journalist, and an Oxpeckers contributing writer. With an enormous potential for impact, OSF-SA and Oxpeckers continued to iterate upon #MineAlert, incorporating user feedback to enhance interactivity and eventually developing components to track water threats and water use licenses.





Photo credit: <https://pulitzercenter.org/projects/south-africas-toxic-legacy>

## **Advocacy groups, including nonprofits and foundations, depend on media to further their cause.**

Advocacy cannot happen in isolation. Activists, nonprofits and foundations work to improve accountability and transparency in government, providing support to communities who are affected by mining activities. Media assists these organizations by helping them access information that is not readily available in the public domain. Acting as a bridge between the government and civil society, the media pressures the government to respond to the queries raised by the public.

Media furthers advocacy by helping organizations build their credibility and connect them with their target audience.

For instance, Oxpeckers liaised with various government departments, including the Department of Environment Affairs, Mineral Resources, and Water Affairs, to acquire information about mining licenses and operations.

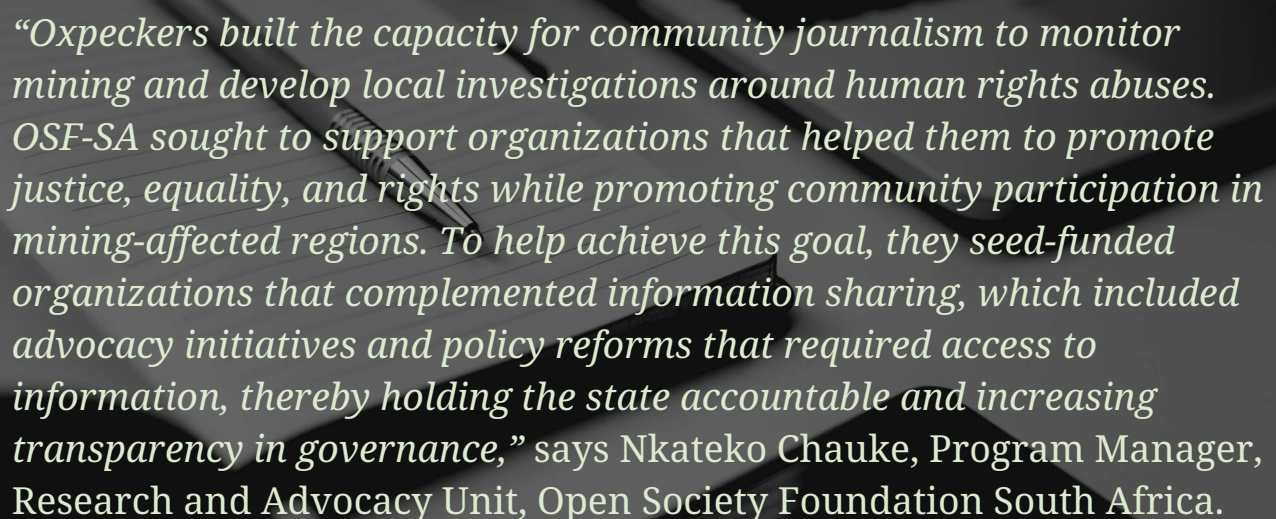
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Through the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000, they sought information about the socioeconomic commitments made by the mining companies for the welfare of the citizens.

Further, by partnering and fostering long term relations with several nonprofits and advocacy groups like the Centre for Environmental Rights, Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), Legal Resources Centre, Save Mpumalanga (Twitter), Batlhabine Foundation, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Richard Spoor Inc., and

Federation for a Sustainable Environment, Oxpeckers brings various civil society organizations into a single conversation. This enables various groups to act together as one unit, thereby filling gaps in knowledge which can be used for litigation and arbitration, and policy advocacy in Parliament.

By working with both public- and private-sector organizations, Oxpeckers aims to bring accountability in the mining sector, strengthen justice and equality.



*“Oxpeckers built the capacity for community journalism to monitor mining and develop local investigations around human rights abuses. OSF-SA sought to support organizations that helped them to promote justice, equality, and rights while promoting community participation in mining-affected regions. To help achieve this goal, they seed-funded organizations that complemented information sharing, which included advocacy initiatives and policy reforms that required access to information, thereby holding the state accountable and increasing transparency in governance,”* says Nkateko Chauke, Program Manager, Research and Advocacy Unit, Open Society Foundation South Africa.



“

*There is no potential of widespread advocacy without having media partners. Journalism gives agency and validation to communities' concerns about the human rights violations carried out by mining companies. Media helps us to establish causation and the information provided by them helps us in litigation. Hence, judiciary and media are two of the strong agencies of South Africa,”*

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Dr. Louis Snyman, Senior Attorney,  
Environmental Justice & Mining, University  
of Witwatersrand - Centre for Applied Legal  
Studies.

The CALS Environmental Justice Programme works to advocate for mining-affected communities by engaging with mining corporations and the state which regulates the sector. With a focus on mining, CALS works mainly on the social and labor plan system and other models for community benefit sharing, placing community voice and participation, and transparency at the center of their work. CALS independently conducts research and publishes reports which are shared with Oxpeckers. Simultaneously, Oxpeckers alerts CALS about possible new cases which concern the public. The data collected is also used for litigation in the court.

To mediate with the press, CALS developed an in-house media and communications team that routinely shares press releases with the media and provides training on how to package information and how to give interviews. CALS, also funded by OSF-SA, uses broadcast television news and radio to communicate with the public. Further, CALS started The Eye, a newspaper to discuss how mining activities affect land, traditional leadership and the socio-economic balance of communities.

## Media houses work with advocacy groups, but, are not advocates themselves

Oxpeckers works with governments, non-profits, advocacy groups, and whistleblowers to gather information and report news stories of crimes against the environment. They maintain close relationships with groups that provide them with data on water resources and help them investigate community rehabilitation in mining-affected areas. They also partner with the Earth Journalism Network to provide one-on-one mentorship to young investigative journalists. Advocacy groups and civil societies also help Oxpeckers to interact with communities, anti-mining groups, and campaigners, who do not necessarily have access to the internet and their virtual platform.

However, the non-profit media organization draws a firm line between journalism and advocacy.

"#MineAlert lends itself to activism," Macleod says. The organization does not participate in activism directly. Instead they have a call for action button called 'Act Now' on the MineAlert webpage, which provides the users with information about campaigners working on the ground. "We don't want to come across as activists, though there is an activist edge to what we do. We leave the campaigning to the 'experts'".

Mark Olalde, the freelance journalist who worked with Oxpeckers to investigate mining licenses, says "Journalists are not advocates. Environmental journalists have written about climate change, the save the rhinos campaign, and many more. This does not make them advocates for a cause. If something is right or wrong, it is not advocacy; it is journalism, as we report facts, and we allow the other side to speak as well."

*"We have spent years cultivating relationships with these organizations and we draw on them as needed, depending on the topic. We have also maintained relationships with the users, and have focused on training people to use #MineAlert, receive feedback, and use that information to build the app," Macleod explains.*

# Impact is most readily tracked through policy advocacy, parliamentary hearings, republishing and public response to news stories.

Unlike traditional media houses, nonprofit media organizations, often funded by foundations, are not driven by profit margins. Instead, they measure their impact by the reportage of issues, the quality of stories published, the sources they procure, and the readers they acquire. Oxpeckers' primary role, for instance, is to alert people about new stories and developments in the mining sector. They track the #MineAlert app through their in-house monitoring and evaluation analysis, and gauge the uptake of articles, monitor the readership, and interact with their users.

Mark Olalde explains, "Oxpeckers' readership might not be great in real numbers but it is read by the right movers and shakers, the work has been cited in Parliament, and all this is achieved without compromising ethics." Many news stories published by Oxpeckers have been picked up and republished by third party newspapers like Mail & Guardian. Their readers often respond with comments to their stories. "All these count as impact," Olalde said.

Sometimes the stories published in the news media provoke a large public response, putting pressure on the government to not only respond to the grievances raised, but also to amend laws.

***"News media has the power to make information available and make the government accountable..."***

Oxpeckers' reporting on corruption in the mining sector has led to the closure of some mines in water-scarce areas, forcing mining companies to become transparent about their financials. For example, Mark Olalde's investigative report on mining closure certificates and financial provisions for rehabilitation (funds set aside by a company to get a mining license and begin mining), has been used by advocacy groups for litigation and has been cited by parliamentarians to advocate for transparency in mining laws.

"News media has the power to make information available and make the government accountable and answerable to the public, enforce noncompliance, and assist activists. Investigative reporting takes quite a number of years, but we refer to it as a journey," says Mariette Liefferink, CEO of the Federation for a Sustainable Environment. Liefferink helped Olalde investigate the long-term impacts on water security due to mining activities in South Africa [84] and assisted him to film the damage done by acid rain in mining regions..

# Recommendations

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## Journalists:

- Maintain networks or collaborations and try to cultivate long-term relations with other organizations.
- To nurture long-term partnerships with donors, media organizations should provide quality coverage on their chosen topic and diversify ways of publishing and reader engagement.
- Multimedia elements have the power to influence storytelling, and create an effect on the reader; both the public and the government. They can also more easily become evidence that can be used for litigation.
- Environmental stories should have a human element to the coverage and showcase how the problem is affecting public life. This is important to create a strong reader base, as people will be able to relate to it. Once a reader engages with a story, they are more likely to follow up with the issue and support the cause.

## Donors:

- Engage with all channels able to serve your end goal: this includes legal advocacy, NGOs, communities, media and think tanks. They should be interconnected and well networked. The information collected should be shared across all groups to help achieve policy changes.





## *NGOs and Advocacy Groups:*

- Maintain a record of all your experiences and blog about critical issues in the media. This will help you to establish credibility and create a knowledge base. Having a media presence is very important for advocacy groups as it helps them to reach out to communities and create a dialogue.
- Advocacy groups should maintain a cordial relationship with the media, as they help to inform the public about their cause.
- NGOs shouldn't repeat the same information; they should provide new angles and ways to take action- this is very important to keep the issue relevant in the media and, in turn, the public.
- Advocacy should be backed by scientific evidence. This will also help to create credibility in the media and help to mobilize public opinion.

71. <https://www.mining-technology.com/features/history-of-mining-in-south-africa/>

72. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/book-3-migration-land-and-minerals-making-south-africa-chapter-3-socio-economic-impact>

73. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000012289>

74. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000012289>

75. [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cjpmefoundation/pages/38/attachments/original/1453674977/001\\_-\\_South\\_Africa\\_Mining\\_Industry\\_and\\_Apartheid\\_v1.pdf?1453674977](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cjpmefoundation/pages/38/attachments/original/1453674977/001_-_South_Africa_Mining_Industry_and_Apartheid_v1.pdf?1453674977)

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77. <https://www.mining-technology.com/features/history-of-mining-in-south-africa/>

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80. <https://oxpeckers.org/2017/04/coal-mines-legacy/>

81. <https://socialaudits.org.za/>

82. <https://www.wits.ac.za/cals/our-programmes/environmental-justice/social-and-labour-plans/>

83. <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/coal-mines-leave-legacy-ruin-south-africa>

84. <https://oxpeckers.org/2015/11/sas-water-bubble/>



# IDL-REPORTEROS AT A GLANCE

## DATE FOUNDED:

2009

## ANNUAL REVENUE:

N/A

## LOCATION:

Lima, Peru

## STAFF SIZE:

Six full-time journalists.

## WHO THEY ARE

Investigative journalism organization working independently within a human-rights focused NGO, IDL.

## WHAT THEY DO

IDL Reporteros is a non-profit investigative journalism website publishing stories about corruption, drug trafficking, domestic security, and corporate affairs.

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING

674,000 followers on Twitter  
242,000 followers on Facebook  
43,000 subscribers on YouTube  
9,000 followers on Instagram

## FUNDING SOURCES

The principal source for the last 10 years has been the Independent Journalism Program (IJP) of the Open Society Foundations (OSF), via grants awarded by competing for funding opportunities. Most recent additional funding sourced from Reva & David Logan Foundation. Smaller funds from Oxfam. The NGO IDL provides an additional annual fund to IDL-Reporteros.

# IDL Reporteros and the Lava Jato scandal in Peru

IDL Reporteros is a leading investigative media outlet in Peru working autonomously within the Institute of Legal Defense (IDL)[85], an NGO focused on protecting human rights and democracy in Peru. Founded in 2009 by veteran journalist Gustavo Gorriti, IDL Reporteros' six-person reporting team has been leading the Peruvian coverage of the Lava Jato scandal—a story of corruption first uncovered in Brazil in 2014 which has become the largest of its kind in Latin American history. Lava Jato, Portuguese for “Car Wash,” exposed a complex network of politicians and private companies—most notably Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht—across Latin America earning millions of dollars through inflated public works contracts.

Many Latin American politicians implicated in the investigation have gone unpunished. In Peru, however, the fallout from the scandal has been enormous, with four former presidents facing judicial charges and another committing suicide in the face of imprisonment.

In tandem with advocacy groups, a handful of members of the government, the judiciary, and independent media in Peru have worked to reverse a legacy of legal impunity for the country's most powerful political figures. While far from over, this case study seeks to understand the factors behind the unprecedented progress attained so far.





# UNCOVERING THE LAVA JATO STORY

IDL Reporteros first story on possible corruption related to Odebrecht was published in 2011, three years before the official criminal investigation would open in Brazil. It was evident that Odebrecht was involved in corrupt practices after repeatedly winning major public works contracts. “You didn’t need to be Sherlock Holmes to notice it,” Gorriti said.

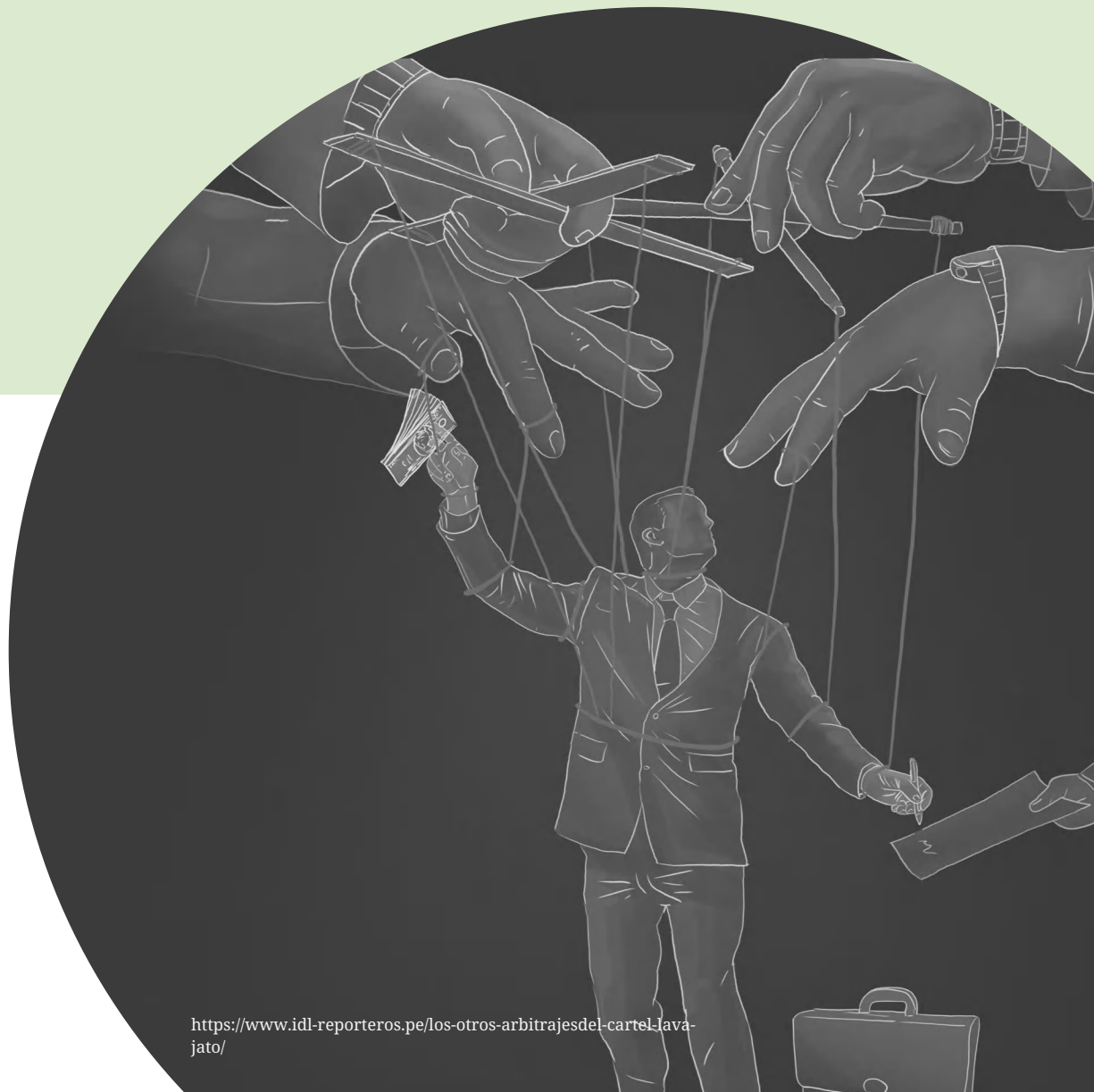
Gorriti’s first sources were local in the comptroller’s office who told him about the pressure from a consortium of companies, led by Odebrecht, to win public contracts. After visiting civic engineering schools to help estimate the true costs of these public projects, it was clear Odebrecht was receiving overvalued contracts. But beyond this, there was no clear path forward to prove something illegal was going on.

When an official investigation opened in Brazil in 2014, individual connections led Gustavo to his first sources in Brazil getting exclusive information on the confessions Odebrecht officials were giving Brazilian prosecutors which implicated Peruvian government officials. From here, Gustavo Gorriti and IDL Reporteros began to reach out to journalists in different countries as new information revealed Odebrecht’s franchises of corruption across the region and in Peru.

# Lava Jato's Unprecedented Political Fallout

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Revelations by IDL Reporteros, pressure from advocacy groups, and clear commitment from non-implicated government and judiciary officials have led to massive protests. This public response resulted in a national referendum on a structural, judicial and political reform, called for by the President. Additionally, members from the highest ranks of government, including presidents, the Attorney General, and the Supreme Court, have been indicted, imprisoned, or forced to resign.



# The Cost of Lava Jato's Corruption in Peru

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Lava Jato's overinflated public works projects in Peru alone cost over \$3.5 billion. In a budgetary comparison, this amount is equal to 51 times the government's 2019 investment to combat the sub-zero temperatures in rural areas and 20 times the amount given to the Ministry of Health in 2018 for cancer prevention.[86]

## Landscape of the media

Peruvian media is highly concentrated in its capital city Lima, and dominated by Grupo El Comercio, a conservative pro-establishment group which controls 80% of the news media in the country from newspapers to TV channels. With the rise of digital media and in response to a lack of independent outlets, citizen journalist units with progressive viewpoints like **La Mula** and **Utero** have emerged alongside investigative watchdogs such as IDL Reporteros and others. They share the same progressive agenda, covering issues commonly uncovered by traditional media including corruption, climate change, gender and health. In a highly concentrated ecosystem, these independent outlets often collaborate and republish one another's content. In terms of social media, Facebook is the most influential platform, with 86% out of the total interactions Peruvians have with social media on this network. The popularity of Facebook as a platform means it serves as a place for journalists to disseminate content, host livestream events like discussions on the progress of the Lava Jato investigations and provide updates on their reporting.



# La Mula & Utero

## FOUNDED

2009

## OFFICE

Lima, Peru

## TYPE

Digital Journalism / Citizen Journalism/Activist Media

## AUDIENCE

Youth and young adults

### EDITORIAL LINE

Citizen reporting with an ironic and critical angle. Progressive.

### CONTENTS

Do not produce their own content. They repackage and summarize other journalistic outlet's stories/investigations and present them with an irreverent and critical angle appealing to their audience. Local and global news, video columns, podcasts, memes.

### CURRENT STAFF

130 in the whole group/ 8-member staff in charge of the content

### OWNER

Scientific Network of Peru (small telecommunications company)- Rolando Toledo

### FUNDING MODEL

Funded entirely by the Scientific Network of Peru

### SOURCES

1. Scientific Network of Peru cross subsidies, 2. Topic based sponsor model ( i.e. sponsors funding gender content). 3. Online advertisement by Google.

### SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

*La Mula*: 457K on Facebook/1 million on Twitter/ 53.1K on Instagram.

*Utero*: 433K on Facebook/1.3 million on Twitter/ 21.4K on Instagram

OUTREACH: 12- 15 million



# FINDINGS

## PERU'S SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

Effectively countering Peru's systemic corruption cannot be done by independent media, or any other individual actor working alone.

The findings of investigative media covering Lava Jato required the advocacy of burgeoning civil society groups to galvanize public opinion, providing the mandate necessary for members at the highest levels of government to take action. The action of a handful of decent judges and prosecutors was also essential. There was a consensus among interviewees that no individual member of government, judiciary, civil society or the media could have made this kind of progress in fighting corruption without the help of all four.

***“The Lava Jato case generated a confluence of actors and wills. The key was that the press, prosecutors and the government supported in unison the investigations which led to the endorsement of civil society”*** - Samuel Rotta, Executive Director of Proetica (Transparency International's chapter in Peru)

The role of judiciary reform occurring alongside the Lava Jato scandal

Alongside IDL Reporteros' coverage of Lava Jato was the Lava Juez, or “Judge Wash,” scandal in which IDL Reporteros published audio of conversations revealing bribery schemes and influence peddling at the highest levels of the judiciary—the same judiciary adjudicating the Lava Jato investigations. One notable recording included a Supreme Court Justice asking for details of a sexual abuse case in order to determine the price for his final ruling. Massive protests resulted, President Martin Vizcarra created a commission for judiciary reform in July 2018, and the National Council of the Magistracy -the entity in charge of appointing judges- was reformed into an entirely new constitutional institution called the National Board of Justice. Journalist Juan Carlos Tafur calls Lava Juez a watershed moment for the Lava Jato case as it allowed the Public Ministry to get rid of a “corrupt crust” that would have sabotaged the process of Lava Jato, had it not been reformed. There were few major developments for the prosecution between January 2017–when the case broke open in Peru–until mid 2018, when the Lava Juez stories began publishing in July 2018. After this, changes were made in the Public Ministry and the cases prosecuting Lava Jato began to make progress.

# THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND POLITICS OF MOBILIZATION

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In Peru, there is an entrenched skepticism of progressive social movements due to the legacy of the Shining Path terrorist group, active throughout the 1980s and early 90s, and an effort by President Alberto Fujimori in the 90s to associate citizens' protest with terrorist insurgency. This has led to a lack of both political participation and a robust civil society sector. Former Minister of the Interior and National Ombudsman Walter Albán explains, "One of the evils in the aftermath of the Fujimori regime is that civil society demobilized, and that except for very specific situations there was no civil society pressure [on politics] whatsoever."

Today this is changing, something Albán credits to Lava Jato, but civil society organizations are nascent and missing institutional experience, often relying on young leaders to mobilize the public. These leaders are increasingly connected to influential journalists. However, without a robust civil society to act on the revelations of investigative journalism, even the most revealing stories can lose traction.





# FINDINGS - PART II



## STARTING A PARTNERSHIP

### Personal relations matter

Relationships are vital to the start of any collaboration. The personal connections IDL Reporteros Director and lead journalist Gustavo Corriti had with Brazilian journalists and prosecutors led to the initial reporting that broke the story within Peru. Similarly, familiarity between activists and journalists with strong digital presence like Rosa María Palacios (awarded as Peru's most influential journalist on the internet)[87] make it much easier for civil society groups to get coverage online and on the radio. With that increased following, activists can more effectively call for action and mobilize protests. For example, members of advocacy groups are invited on to radio, TV and social media programs by these journalists on the days of important demonstrations so that they can share event details, invite the audience to participate, and raise awareness.

Photo credit: <https://qz.com/africa/1662705/donor-funded-african-journalism-stuck-between-china-and-us-agenda/>

Within the media, collaborative agreements seem easier to kick start with small independent media outlets than with larger media groups

Massive conglomerates like Grupo El Comercio face bureaucratic and institutional inertia that smaller outlets do not. With fewer people to coordinate and a shared progressive editorial mission, citizen journalism outlets **La Mula and Utero** find it more convenient to collaborate with smaller investigative outlets like IDL Reporteros, Convoca or Ojo Público. “[Investigative outlets] have smaller teams, very good content and less bureaucracy to navigate”, said Rolando Toledo, owner of La Mula and Utero. In the case of IDL Reporteros, they collaborate in two ways: With established international networks and, more often, with reporters on an ad hoc basis where a particular investigation makes sense for partnering with other journalists to assemble a ‘best-of-the-best’ team.

A main incentive for investigative media to collaborate with citizen journalism outlets is their accessibility to their high traffic platforms



La Mula  
Instagram post  
promoting a  
Facebook live  
interview with  
IDL Reporteros  
lead journalist  
Gustavo Gorriti



Investigative outlets like IDL Reporteros, Ojo Público[88] and Convoca[89] don't rely on partnerships for content production because they are well-equipped to conduct in-depth investigative stories. However, because they are relatively young outlets they are more in need of wider platforms to disseminate their content to audiences not reached by their own platform. Here, while investigative outlets like IDL Reporteros have ~200,000 followers on their Facebook page, citizen journalism organizations like La Mula or Utero are able to combine the reach (~900,000 followers) of their Facebook pages (where their primary audience is) and republish investigative outlets' stories.



**This is a win-win situation:**

La Mula or Utero give investigative houses the credit, while presenting the story from an irreverent angle to appeal to their own young audience. The investigative stories also get promoted by Utero and La Mula in live interviews with the journalist who wrote the story broadcast on their Facebook page. These interviews are also announced on Instagram, where they have fewer followers (~50,000 for La Mula) than on their Facebook or Twitter accounts (~500,000 and 1 million for La Mula, respectively), but far better audience engagement in terms of 'screen time and traffic created.

# HOW PARTNERSHIPS WORK

**IDL Reporteros is embedded in an NGO focused on human rights, yet it maintains full autonomy as an independent journalistic organization.**

IDL Reporteros operates within the Legal Defense Institute, or Instituto de Defensa Legal (IDL), an NGO focused on defending human rights and promoting democracy. Their relationship is that of an editor and a publisher, respectful of editorial boundaries.

“

*No one in the NGO knows about our stories until we publish them. We are independent. We defend the same principles and values around the defense of democracy and Human Rights but we maintain absolute editorial independence.*

”

-- Romina Mella, IDL Reporteros journalist and co-founder.

There are many benefits of this relationship. For example, lawyer Cruz Silva, working for IDL's Justica Viva (Living Justice) project to monitor the judicial system and appointee process, was able to use her expertise to help IDL Reporteros understand who is who in the system and reconstruct links between corrupt officials operating inside the judiciary.

Another benefit of the IDL Reporteros- IDL NGO relationship is access to a different branch of the NGO: IDL Radio. IDL Radio is led by IDL's director and is used to broadcast investigations' findings in a primetime morning show. IDL Radio has partnerships with radio stations throughout Peru to offer their programming to an audience beyond Lima.

Thus, the effectiveness of the work of IDL as a whole relies on having an: i) independent investigative whistleblower (IDL Reporteros), a ii) legal whistleblower (Justicia Viva) and a iii) communications platform (IDL Radio) that delivers their investigations to the public.

Key to this organizational structure are clear boundaries between the IDL Reporteros team and other IDL employees. While IDL Reporteros falls under the same administrative authority as IDL and receives annual funding from the NGO, they operate with editorial independence and with additional externally sourced funding. This separation includes different security protocols, restricted access to different offices, etc.

## **Media, advocacy groups, and civil society engage more often in ad hoc, trust-based collaborations than institutional agreements**

The relationship between investigative media watchdogs like IDL Reporteros or Ojo Público and civic movements like No A Keiko[90] provide for ad hoc trust-based collaborations, most commonly when the integrity of the Lava Jato investigation is perceived to be at risk. For example, when the Special Prosecutor Team for Lava Jato was fired by the allegedly corrupt Attorney General on New Year's Eve in 2018, the combination of coverage by the media and rapid internal communications through WhatsApp channels of civil society organizations led to thousands of citizens taking to the streets for a protest that same day. As a result, the prosecuting team was reinstated several days later.

Journalists also engage with activists they trust by providing political insight or aiding strategic decisions for civil society organizations fighting corruption.

An example of this joint effort is the 'citizen assemblies' organized by the National Coordinator of Human Rights, a coalition of 70 human rights organizations, where influential and trusted journalists like Palacios are invited to discuss updates of the Lava Jato investigation with coalition members. If they identify something putting the integrity of the investigation at risk, members will then coordinate messaging and so-called 'thundercloud' Twitter campaigns where they all publish the same message and hashtag on social media platforms to put pressure on a specific decision maker and raise public awareness of what is happening. This happens in a time span of 1-3 hours.



*IDL Reporteros Director and journalist Gustavo Gorriti and guest journalist Rosa Maria Palacios on a joint Facebook live transmission on Lava Jato*

## **Using digital platforms, journalists have started to engage with audiences directly and conduct outreach themselves, where they once relied on civil society organizations.**

Independent journalists in Peru are increasingly using tools like Facebook Live to interact with audiences in the middle of ongoing investigations in ways not typical of investigative reporting within traditional media. This type of citizens' outreach used to be exclusive to civil society organizations to keep the public engaged with a story of public relevance and not the reporters.

IDL Reporteros launched a series of Facebook Live sessions [91] with lead journalists Gustavo Gorriti and Romina Mella, discussing the latest developments in their reporting on Lava Jato. In these sessions they also discuss progress made by Peruvian prosecutors on the investigation, and call attention to any political meddling in the case that can put the investigation at risk.

This engages and empowers the audience to be a part of the reporting process, helps reporters clarify complex topics, and lets them interact with the audience via live Q&A sessions. All of this serves to keep the audience informed, as well as building familiarity and credibility for the journalists.

Sometimes, lead journalist Gustavo Gorriti invites other independent journalists outside IDL Reporteros such as Rosa Maria Palacios. Having the two most influential journalists in Peru broadcast [92] on FacebookLive to discuss the latest developments of the Lavajato investigation in Peru draws high audiences, bringing in 75,000 viewers for this particular broadcast despite being a Saturday afternoon.

**Regional networks between individual reporters in different countries are used for information sharing. Within Peru, networks of radio stations are used for amplifying content.**

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The initial information revealing Odebrecht's corrupt operations within Peru did not come from Peruvian sources: it came from Brazil. As new reporting involved other countries including Panama and Argentina, Gorriti contacted former colleagues from his time at Panamanian newspaper *La Prensa* and Argentinian journalist Hugo Alconada, all of whom provided valuable information to move the story forward. As more journalists emerged covering Lava Jato in their own country, IDL Reporteros initiated the transnational network "Red Latinoamericana de Periodismo de Operación Estructurado" in 2015 to cover Lava Jato outside Brazil.

IDL Reporteros is also part of two other networks: the Center of Latin American Journalistic Investigation (CLIP) [93], which was established in 2019 to bring the most respected and experienced journalists in Latin America together to facilitate and promote collaborative investigations exposing corruption; and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalist network [94] (ICIJ). In the ICIJ, best-known for publishing the Panama Papers, journalists from different countries share sources and information through a virtual newsroom. When IDL Reporteros obtains information about a different country, they can share it with the journalist covering that country via the ICIJ and vice-versa. Being a part of the ICIJ allows for a story to get exposure on a global scale, as what happened with *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the German newspaper which published the Panama Papers with the ICIJ.

As part of its policy to encourage others to republish its content, IDL Reporteros also shares its story via IDL Radio and its 'Red Nacional' network [95] of dozens of other stations, and other outlets. This republishing policy has two conditions: the reproduction must be faithful to the original story and credit IDL Reporteros.

*"Working transnationally with other journalists on transnational problems like corruption allows you to go deeper and generate more impact."*

- Romina Mella



## The most common areas for collaboration between civil society organizations and media outlets are sharing, republishing or rebroadcasting content to expand their audience

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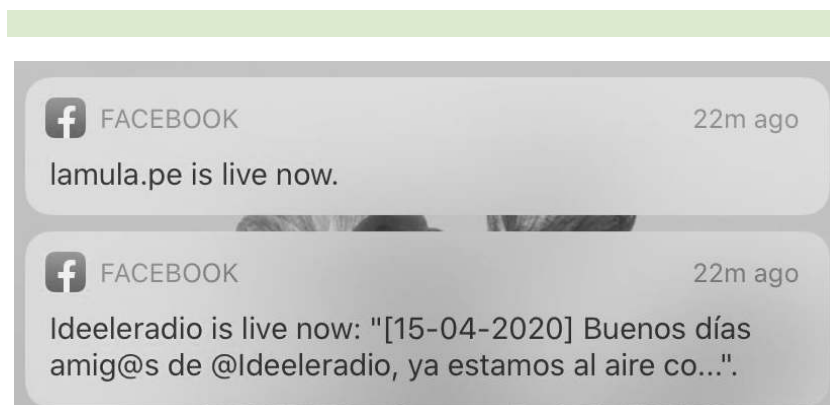
La Mula and Utero collaborate with IDL Radio by broadcasting the IDL Radio[96] morning show, 'No Hay Derecho'[97], on their Facebook pages. Before COVID-19, IDL Radio almost exclusively covered the daily developments of Lava Jato investigations. IDL Radio also works with the IDL Reporteros team by bringing on journalists like Gustavo Gorriti when IDL Reporteros publishes a major story. This benefits both parties: the radio program gets the 'first scoop' on a story while IDL Reporteros benefits from a radio platform to discuss and disseminate their story.

Investigative outlets like IDL Reporteros collaborate with citizen platforms like La Mula and Utero by allowing their investigative stories to be repackaged and tailored in more irreverent or satirical ways that are better tailored to their audiences. This gives a boost in traffic for the citizen platforms and promotes the work of investigative outlets to a wider range of audiences.

Meanwhile, activist groups such as the pro-democracy No A Keiko support investigative media outlets like Convoca, IDL Reporteros and Ojo Público by promoting their stories to the approximately 500 thousand followers on its Facebook page.



Jimena Sánchez, activist and founder of No A Keiko.



A smartphone screenshot showing notifications from both IDL Radio and La Mula on the start of the Facebook live transmission of "No Hay Derecho", IDL's radio program

## New forms of partnerships are increasingly centered around digital formats like video columns and podcasts

According to a 2017 report by comScore Peru, Peru is the highest consumer of digital videos in Latin America, spending 3.5 minutes on average per video. By the average number of videos per user, the news is one of the areas with highest growth in digital content consumption. This has opened a window for media such as video columns and podcasts to become an increasingly popular means for obtaining news. Therefore, new partnerships built around this content such as IDL Radio's collaboration with Wayka [98], a community non-profit media outlet committed to participatory democracy, have flourished. In this example, IDL Director and host of the radio's main program "No Hay Derecho", Glatzer Tuesta, produces a weekly video column for Wayka about different topics, chief among them the Lava Jato investigation.



*Collaboration between NGO IDL's Radio branch "Ideele Radio" and Wayka is centered on an opinion video column produced by Ideele Radio's Director Glatzer Tuesta and disseminated by Wayka*

## Radio still has more reach than social media in Peru.


While many collaborations in this report take place on social media, and programs like IDL Radio's are rebroadcast on Facebook and YouTube, radio still reaches more Peruvians than any medium other than television. IDL Radio producers have noted the importance of returning their main programming to a radio station. Since the radio in Peru has a more direct connection with their audience, it doesn't require the clicks needed to navigate social media. **"According to the state newspaper El Peruano, 83% of Peruvians listen to the radio an average time of 94 minutes during weekdays."**

# WHAT DO THE MOST POWERFUL STORIES LOOK LIKE?

**The most powerful, response-provoking stories go beyond raw figures to establish a connection in how corruption directly impacts ordinary citizens' lives**

Despite being aware of widespread corruption, citizens in Peru often view corrupt officials as distant actors enriching themselves from the state rather than from themselves. Additionally, the specific details of how corruption occurs and which businesses are involved is often unclear. Exposing Odebrecht, the Brazilian company at the center of Lava Jato, made these details evident to many for the first time.

Understanding how the inflated costs of public works projects directly affects an unfinished hospital or school budgets made something that was once distant suddenly more personal. Romina Mella, IDL-Reporteros journalist and co-founder, says that framing corruption to show how it affects citizens' lives is a key part of their reporting approach. IDL lawyer Cruz Silva cited IDL's work on the link between judicial corruption and female homicide perpetrators receiving less punishment as leading to feminist groups to become involved in protests around judicial corruption.



*“The Lava Jato case for the first time evidenced to citizens how corruption directly affected their lives through public services”*

- Rosa Maria Palacios, journalist

# Stories appealing to emotion provoke stronger public response than data-driven ones.

The quantitative cost of corruption in Peru is overwhelming and well documented, but it was the stories that put the cost of corruption in personal and relatable terms that generated the strongest public response. Stories exposing the frivolous luxuries of the ultra-wealthy, or the corrupt transactions between high-level politicians, ranging from the President to Vice Ministers and top executives of private companies, were what sparked the most anger and outcry amongst the Peruvian public. This may depend heavily on context (Peruvians may tend to respond more viscerally to these stories than other nations) and content (in dealing with corruption, the scale may be better presented in individual human terms than in raw figures).

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# OTHER FINDINGS

***There is a need for journalists who are well-versed in legal affairs.***

Rosa Maria Palacios has a background as a lawyer and professor, which has greatly benefited her ability to wade through the complex legal developments surrounding the Lava Jato investigation. However, in an interview with Rosa María, she explained that journalists in Peru, even those on the judicial and police beat, often make errors, confuse legal matters in their coverage, or simply fail to cover them in an engaging manner. Investigative outlets specialized in judicial news like JOTA in Brazil are also missing in the Peruvian media ecosystem.

***Demystifying the legal process is an important part of Lava Jato coverage in Peru.***

In addition to news coverage, the broadcasting of legal proceedings on Justicia TV (Justice TV, the public channel of the judiciary), has helped to familiarize the public with the legal process. Especially noteworthy was the pre-trial of Keiko Fujimori [99], which according to an article [100] by the nationwide outlet RPP (Radio Programs of Peru) “Dragged more audience than any series of Netflix.” In the words of the Justice TV director, “The channel was created in 2015 with the goal of bringing the judge closer to the citizens”.

This pulling back of the curtain broke the culture of secrecy that prevailed in the judiciary's management of the Lava Jato case and gave Peruvians a sense of belonging and participation in the judicial system. The public was able to see the action of decent prosecutors working effectively against a powerful political figure. Participatory media outlets like Wayka transmitted these audiences live. This broadcasting, in addition to an aggressive Public Relations strategy used by the prosecutors in the media, converted leading prosecutors Rafael Vela and José Domingo Perez into “pop heroes”.



Justicia TV - Poder Judicial del Perú



Michelle

Home

Create



Like

Following

Share



Use App



Justicia TV - Poder Judicial del Perú

@justiciatv

Home

#ENVIVO JUZGADO ANALIZA PEDIDO DE PRISIÓN...

44K views · January 14



#TRANSMISIÓN DIFERIDO AUDIENCIA DE CONTROL DE...

21K views · January 13

#ENVIVO JUZGADO ANALIZA PEDIDO DE PRISIÓN...

147K views · January 14



AUDIENCIA DE APELACIÓN DE PRISIÓN PREVENTIVA...

21K views · January 13

#TRANSMISIÓN DIFERIDO AUDIENCIA DE PRISIÓN...

16K views · January 13



#TRANSMISIÓN DIFERIDO AUDIENCIA DE...

12K views · January 10

#PROGRAMA ESTRENO LO QUE USTED DEBE SABER SOBRE...

11K views · January 13



#ENVIVO JUZGADO ANALIZA PEDIDO DE PRISIÓN...

109K views · January 10



### Accessibility, user-friendliness and transparency of information is crucial.

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A poorly designed website or news story that's difficult to access (either by having many clicks before getting to the information or by making it hard for users to find it on the main site) is just another barrier to getting information to the audience. These can be easily avoided with an emphasis on simple user-friendly website design and a clear story layout. This also applies when dealing with subjects like corruption, where information is often available in the public domain but difficult to access or poorly organized. The Brazilian independent agency specialized on judicial affairs JOTA [101] has proven invaluable for citizens, scholars, policy makers and journalists in countries affected by Lava Jato. At the click of a search button, users can process massive volumes of judicial information

gathered on Odebrecht and present it in a user-friendly format that is open-sourced and available in multiple languages.

Government documents and other primary sources like audio recordings are also highly important and virtually irrefutable. As evidenced by the success of the Lava Juez scandal with the audience able to listen to the audio recordings accompanying the story.

*"We always knew that to some degree they [Presidents] were corrupt but never saw it like this. When former President Humala went to prison, people started to think that this was something serious."*

- Denisse Rodriguez-Olivari  
(Scholar)

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### The IDL Reporteros staff is trained in various aspects of security.

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This ranges from cybersecurity and keeping information private prior to publication, to twice-weekly training in Krav Maga for self-defense and training on how to detect if you're being followed. This serves a practical function due to the dangers of reporting on corruption in Latin America, but also provides more intangible support to the staffers by providing a sense of confidence that they are equipped with the tools needed for the job.

**Umbrella organizations that coordinate and power the momentum of civic efforts need funding.**

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There is a need for a more professionalized activism which is not only able to mobilize citizens in critical moments, but also to access decision-makers and present them evidenced-based proposals built on other successful anti corruption reforms.

Established civil society organizations with international backing like Proetica [102] (Peruvian chapter of the global Transparency International) have the expertise in fighting corruption and have closely studied Lava Jato, producing a report that was shared with prosecutors in the case. However, lack of funding is a constraint and requires these organizations to overly rely on the work of volunteers. NGO members say it has been harder for Peruvian organizations to get international funding since Peru has gained the status of a middle-income nation. Proetica sought funds in the private sector but later found that many of the corporate groups they requested funding from were involved in Lava Jato.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## For Journalists and Advocates

### **Connect to your audience to have the biggest impact**

- Where possible, journalists should establish a connection with the audience beyond just a name next to a story. Interactive sessions on Facebook or Instagram Live and similar platforms engage the audience, encourage them to keep up with the story and ask the reporters questions they may have. At the same time, it establishes a relationship and credibility between the journalist and their audience. This not only helps journalists build trust in places where media trust is low, but also earns them social endorsement on the investigation and makes it more difficult for the journalist to be a target of threats or bad-faith attacks as their visibility increases.
- Similarly, civil society organizations should identify the activists driving public opinion and utilize their influence by having them engage with the media, via interviews or panels, to further mobilize public opinion. Causes need to be associated with human faces.
- Journalists need to identify their audiences and position their stories where those people are. The public cannot be expected to simply find the story on their own. Utilizing popular platforms with high traffic like Facebook and, increasingly, Instagram to promote stories will help important content reach its audience and potentially go viral.

### **Make content accessible and easy to understand**

- Place special emphasis on the accessibility of information. As important as the content itself is how it is presented. User-friendly interfaces and simple layouts of a publication makes it easy for anyone (scholars, policy makers, average citizens) to understand how to navigate a site and find relevant information.
- As audiences consume more digital content, translate key findings of your stories into pieces such as video columns, podcasts or short videos which are 'easy bites' for citizens to understand vital information in a simple manner. Even something as simple as an internet meme and a catchy phrase can effectively encapsulate one message with key points on something like making a corrupt politician known.



## FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- Fund local groups with expertise fighting corruption. This will allow them to assume a more formal role as an umbrella organization in order to strengthen nascent civil society movements, and grant agency to younger civic groups getting started.
- Understand that the fight against corruption is a process, not a goal and, as such, is a never-ending task. With this idea, approach the concept of success in anti-corruption efforts by relative goals set by stages, instead of ones based on absolute expectations of change.



## FOR THE MOST POWERFUL STORIES

- Outlets should have a balance in their stories by focusing on individual human stories. This provokes a better response when used with data than when using either alone.
- The press needs to make corruption stories relevant and down to earth to the public by making the public understand how corruption affects them directly.
- Use primary sources when possible. The IDL Reporteros publishing of recorded conversations among corrupt judges were so effective because of their unfiltered nature and because they left no room for deniability for those involved.

# FOR PARTNERSHIPS

- Explore the model of NGOs that host an independent investigative media outlet in its structure like IDL with IDL-Reporteros. A similar example of this model is “Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad”[103] (Mexicans against Corruption and Impunity).
  - Identify citizen journalism and community outlets sharing the same values or goals (like exposing corruption) and nurture collaborations among them to amplify one another’s work. In anti-corruption coverage of high-profiled characters, summon other influential journalists, investigative outlets and citizen journalism outlets committed to the pursuit of justice, agreeing to grant mutual recognition to each other’s publications. In order to position topics in public opinion, add your streaming audiences and amplify the individual reach each may have separately.
  - In the fight against corruption, build a network of small collaborations based on relationships of trust between journalists and civil society actors with proven commitment around the cause rather than having partnerships sealed by formal agreements.
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# FOR LEGAL SUPPORT

- Consider the need for legal support in the infrastructure of any newsroom. Watchdog media outlets in hostile press environments must be able to conduct their reporting with the assurance of any legal defense should the need arise.
  - Build and train critical masses of journalists well-versed in legal affairs. This is critical in the anti-corruption process. Knowledge of the legal procedures will aid both their reporting and knowledge of their subject as well as in their coverage and ability to clearly and effectively communicate to audiences who don't understand complex and jargon-heavy legal issues. Ensure that journalists are also trained to communicate complex legal jargon into easy-to-understand pieces to the public.
  - Promote the existence of more independent news agencies specialized on judicial affairs like JOTA [104] in Brazil. JOTA processed vast amounts of judicial archives on Lava Jato in an open-sourced portal with a search engine for anyone, from citizens, scholars, policy makers, journalists, to access and get first-hand information in an easy to consume format; open-sourced and available in multiple languages.
  - Bring citizens closer to the justice system through initiatives such as public channels for judicial processes like Justicia TV in Peru, which helps to familiarize and empower the public to be a part of the legal system.
- 



Photo credit: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2018/06/20/how-the-media-can-better-listen-to-refugees>

# FOR TOOLS AND TRAINING

- **For journalists working on subjects or environments where they are risking their personal safety,** provide resources that go beyond traditional newsroom requirements. This could include self-defense or other security measures. Doing so provides journalists with a greater sense of confidence as they do their work and is beneficial for their mental health in a job where they may have to work under duress.
- **Support existing regional infrastructure to collect information, and local infrastructure to disseminate it.**

Consider supporting regional networks of experienced journalists such as IDL Reporteros' "Red Latinoamericana de Periodismo de Operación Estructurado" or networks like CLIP, which work to explain the real dimensions of corruption to governments and citizens through collaborative use of experienced journalism and systematized data. This may be complemented locally by supporting existing regional networks like IDL Radio's alliance with 40 regional stations across the country in order to disseminate the findings of more experienced journalistic initiatives.

85. <https://idl.org.pe/>
  86. <https://www.idl-reporteros.pe/sobrecostos-lava-jato/>
  87. <https://www.facebook.com/rosamariapalacios.pe/>
  88. <https://ojo-publico.com/>
  89. <https://convoca.pe/>
  90. <https://www.facebook.com/noakeiko/>
  91. <https://www.facebook.com/IDLReporteros/videos/193743664888692/?v=193743664888692>
  92. <https://www.facebook.com/IDLReporteros/videos/1209972769143511/>
  93. <https://www.elclip.org/que-es-clip/>
  94. <https://www.icij.org/>
  95. <https://ideeleradio.pe/red-nacional/>
  96. <https://ideeleradio.pe/>
  97. <https://www.ideeleradio.org.pe/tag/no-hay-derecho/>
  98. <https://wayka.pe/>
  99. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuR66vGuqUI>
  100. <https://rpp.pe/cultura/mas-cultura/justicia-tv-asi-funciona-el-canal-mas-sintonizado-por-los-peruanos-en-los-ultimos-dias-noticia-1159291>
  101. <https://www.jota.info/about-us>
  102. <https://www.proetica.org.pe/quienes-somos/>
  103. <https://contralacorrupcion.mx/>
  104. <https://www.jota.info/about-ust>
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## Interviewee List

### Africa Check, Nigeria

- **Fatima Abubakar** - Hausa Facebook Research Assistant & Translator at Africa Check
- **David Ajikobi** - Nigeria Editor at Africa Check
- **Brett Davidson** - Director of the Media and Narratives Division of the Open Society Public Health Program
- **Motunrayo Joel** - Nigeria deputy editor/health researcher at Africa Check
- **Allwell Okpi** - Researcher and Community Manager at Africa Check
- **Isaiah Oluwatobi Owolabi** - Obama Foundation Scholar at Columbia University and Project Director at HACEY.org
- **Chikezie Omeje** - Senior Investigative and Data Reporter with the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, Nigeria; 2018 African Fact-Checking Award winner
- **Christoph Plate** - Director of Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa at Konrad Adenauer Foundation
- **Kole Shettima** - Director of MacArthur Foundation's Africa office
- **Oluwamayowa Tijani** - Fact-Checking Journalist at Agence France-Presse

### Oxpeckers #MineAlert, South Africa

- **Corey Filiault** - Communications Coordinator at World Resources Institute
- **Will Fitzgibbon** - Report and Coordinator of Partnerships in Africa and the Middle East at the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
- **Bradley Gibbons** - Highland Grassland Field Officer at Endangered Wildlife Trust
- **Rebecca Iwerks** - Director of Capacity Development at Natural Resource Governance Institute
- **Mariette Liefferink** - CEO at Federation for a Sustainable Environment
- **Johan Lorenzen** - Associate at Richard Spoor Inc. Attorneys
- **Fiona Macleod** - Founder and Head at Oxpeckers Investigative

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- **Itumeleng Mahabane** - Expert in corporate public relations in South Africa
- **Andiswa Matikinca** - Associate Journalist at Oxpeckers and Manager of #MineAlert
- **Mark Olalde** - Freelance journalist
- **Anders Pedersen** - Director of Resource Watch at World Resources Institute
- **Ryan Powell** - Independent Media Development Consultant
- **Dr. Louis Snyman** - Senior Attorney, Head: Environmental Justice and Mining at the University of Witwatersrand - Centre for Applied Legal Studies

## **Nation Media Group & The Fuller Project, Kenya**

- **Sarika Bansal** - Founder and editor-in-chief of BRIGHT Magazine
- **Catherine Gicheru** - CFJ Knight Fellow, Catherine currently works with Code for Africa's Academy and Communities Program
- **Jackline Kemigisa** - A feminist journalist and podcaster pursuing a Master's degree in Digital Journalism, a Studio 20 program under the Journalism program at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
- **Joseph Odindo** - Former editorial director of the Nation Media Group and its rival, The Standard Media Group PLC, and an adjunct lecturer at the Aga Khan University
- **Rosemary Okello-Orlale** - Director of Africa Media Hub at Strathmore University Business School
- **Joyce Omwoha** - Lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at The Technical University of Kenya
- **Karen Rothmyer** - A veteran journalist who served as the Managing Editor of The Nation magazine. Later she lived in Kenya where she taught at the University of Nairobi and served as the country's first public editor



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- **Denisse Rodriguez-Olivari** - Scholar and author of the chapter "Fighting Corruption in a Hostile Environment: Peru's Lava Jato Special Prosecution Team" in the book "Corruption and the Lava Jato Scandal in Latin America". Eds. Lagunes, Paul and Jan Svejnar
- **Samuel Rotta** - Executive Director of Transparency International's chapter in Peru Proética
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<https://fullerproject.org/story/is-getting-pregnant-medically-necessary-right-now/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/the-pandemics-hidden-human-trafficking-crisis/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/coronavirus-surge-child-abuse-material/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/dont-have-to-fight-for-pennies-new-zealand-safety-het-helps-sex-workers-in-lockdown/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/imagine-online-school-in-a-language-you-dont-understand/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/sex-workers-dilemma-amid-covid-19/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/the-overworked-underpaid-workers-fighting-the-pandemic/>

## ***Nation Media Group & The Fuller Project Social Media***

### **Fuller Project:**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

### **Nation Media Group:**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

## ***Other Organizations and Projects***

**BBC 50:50 Project:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2019/5050-student-journalism>

**Uganda Media Women's Association:** <http://www.umwamamafm.co.ug/>

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## Interviewee List

### Africa Check, Nigeria

- **Fatima Abubakar** - Hausa Facebook Research Assistant & Translator at Africa Check
- **David Ajikobi** - Nigeria Editor at Africa Check
- **Brett Davidson** - Director of the Media and Narratives Division of the Open Society Public Health Program
- **Motunrayo Joel** - Nigeria deputy editor/health researcher at Africa Check
- **Allwell Okpi** - Researcher and Community Manager at Africa Check
- **Isaiah Oluwatobi Owolabi** - Obama Foundation Scholar at Columbia University and Project Director at HACEY.org
- **Chikezie Omeje** - Senior Investigative and Data Reporter with the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, Nigeria; 2018 African Fact-Checking Award winner
- **Christoph Plate** - Director of Media Programme Sub-Saharan Africa at Konrad Adenauer Foundation
- **Kole Shettima** - Director of MacArthur Foundation's Africa office
- **Oluwamayowa Tijani** - Fact-Checking Journalist at Agence France-Presse

### Oxpeckers #MineAlert, South Africa

- **Corey Filiault** - Communications Coordinator at World Resources Institute
- **Will Fitzgibbon** - Report and Coordinator of Partnerships in Africa and the Middle East at the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
- **Bradley Gibbons** - Highland Grassland Field Officer at Endangered Wildlife Trust
- **Rebecca Iwerks** - Director of Capacity Development at Natural Resource Governance Institute
- **Mariette Liefferink** - CEO at Federation for a Sustainable Environment
- **Johan Lorenzen** - Associate at Richard Spoor Inc. Attorneys
- **Fiona Macleod** - Founder and Head at Oxpeckers Investigative

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- **Itumeleng Mahabane** - Expert in corporate public relations in South Africa
- **Andiswa Matikinca** - Associate Journalist at Oxpeckers and Manager of #MineAlert
- **Mark Olalde** - Freelance journalist
- **Anders Pedersen** - Director of Resource Watch at World Resources Institute
- **Ryan Powell** - Independent Media Development Consultant
- **Dr. Louis Snyman** - Senior Attorney, Head: Environmental Justice and Mining at the University of Witwatersrand - Centre for Applied Legal Studies

## **Nation Media Group & The Fuller Project, Kenya**

- **Sarika Bansal** - Founder and editor-in-chief of BRIGHT Magazine
- **Catherine Gicheru** - CFJ Knight Fellow, Catherine currently works with Code for Africa's Academy and Communities Program
- **Jackline Kemigisa** - A feminist journalist and podcaster pursuing a Master's degree in Digital Journalism, a Studio 20 program under the Journalism program at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
- **Joseph Odindo** - Former editorial director of the Nation Media Group and its rival, The Standard Media Group PLC, and an adjunct lecturer at the Aga Khan University
- **Rosemary Okello-Orlale** - Director of Africa Media Hub at Strathmore University Business School
- **Joyce Omwoha** - Lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at The Technical University of Kenya
- **Karen Rothmyer** - A veteran journalist who served as the Managing Editor of The Nation magazine. Later she lived in Kenya where she taught at the University of Nairobi and served as the country's first public editor



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<https://fullerproject.org/story/the-pandemics-hidden-human-trafficking-crisis/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/coronavirus-surge-child-abuse-material/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/dont-have-to-fight-for-pennies-new-zealand-safety-het-helps-sex-workers-in-lockdown/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/imagine-online-school-in-a-language-you-dont-understand/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/sex-workers-dilemma-amid-covid-19/>

<https://fullerproject.org/story/the-overworked-underpaid-workers-fighting-the-pandemic/>

## ***Nation Media Group & The Fuller Project Social Media***

### **Fuller Project:**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

### **Nation Media Group:**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

## ***Other Organizations and Projects***

**BBC 50:50 Project:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2019/5050-student-journalism>

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<https://www.idl-reporteros.pe/tag/lava-jato-latinoamerica/>

<https://www.idl-reporteros.pe/sobrecosto-y-corrupcion/>

<https://idl-reporteros.pe/una-nueva-generacion-de-jueces-y-fiscales/>

<https://www.idl-reporteros.pe/idl-reporteros-gana-premio-mundial/comment-page-1/>

<https://www.idl-reporteros.pe/las-cuentas-con-levadura-de-odebrecht/>

<https://www.idl-reporteros.pe/las-coimas-confesadas/>

## ***IDL Social media***

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

## ***IDL Facebook Live Broadcasts***

[Gustavo Gorriti and Romina Mella from November 2018](#)

[Gustavo Gorriti and Rosa María Palacios from December 2018](#)



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## ***Media landscape in Peru***

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