WORLD PRESS FREEDOM SURVEY
PRELIMINARY RESULTS

MAY 2021

RNW media | digital communities for social change

Unesco
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Nederlandse Commissie

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Nederlandse Jongerencommissie

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of the preliminary results of the World Press Freedom Survey run by RNW Media, together with the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO and the Netherlands UNESCO Youth Commission.

The survey targets young media-makers with first-hand experience of producing content in restrictive settings. Namely, setting out to explore what challenges they face when producing their content and what solutions they see for the international community to contribute to improving their freedom of expression. Please note that the survey is still open and that the preliminary results in this overview are based on the initial 63 respondents.

2. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

The survey has reached marginalized young media-makers around the world, which can be detected in the wide-variety of nationalities. Most respondents are from African nations, which is due to RNW Media's strong presence in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. There are also many respondents from the MENA region as well as from Asian countries such as Pakistan, India and China. The respondents until now are predominantly male, with a majority of 65%. The survey successfully managed to put the spotlight on marginalized voices of young media-makers, with most respondents falling in either the 25-30 (30%) or 31-40 (38%) age categories.

2.1 FEARS AND CONSEQUENCES FOR MEDIA-MAKERS

When asked about examples of feeling restricted to publish, answers for example include: concerns about the military, government censoring by freezing funds, fear of government corruption and more concretely, arrest, intimidation and harassment. Other examples hint at, for example, knowing that censorship on SRHR is likely (with similar answers about LGBTQI+ and gender issues), but there are also very different answers such as not publishing for the sake of national security.

When asked what consequences media-makers fear most, both categories of physical attacks and being arrested score an astounding 62%. Similarly, 51% of the respondents state that they are more careful in some periods, with examples hinting at moments such as: _during or nearing national elections, when there are extra judicial killings, when there are interethnic clashes and generally during political crises, insecurity and protests._ Again, being arrested (72%) or physically attacked (53%) are the greatest concerns of respondents during these periods.

2.2 SUPPORT FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A big part of the survey concerns questions on the support for freedom of expression and more specifically, who the respondents would turn to for support. The answers vary greatly, but there are clear clusters. Namely, national non-governmental actors such as: national media councils, independent media platforms and union of journalists. International non-governmental organizations such as: Amnesty International, Internews, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other human rights organizations. There is also much mentioning of the UN in general and more specifically, UNESCO (multiple times).

But also, governmental actors such as: national governments, parliament, specific ministries and foreign governments (i.e. the Netherlands and the United States).

Yet, it is undeniable that a huge majority of the actors that are mentioned are international organizations. This leads us to the following point on the support of the international community (an important part of the survey).

The survey question concerning the international community is formulated as follows:

In your opinion, HOW can the international community contribute to your freedom to publish on issues that you consider important?
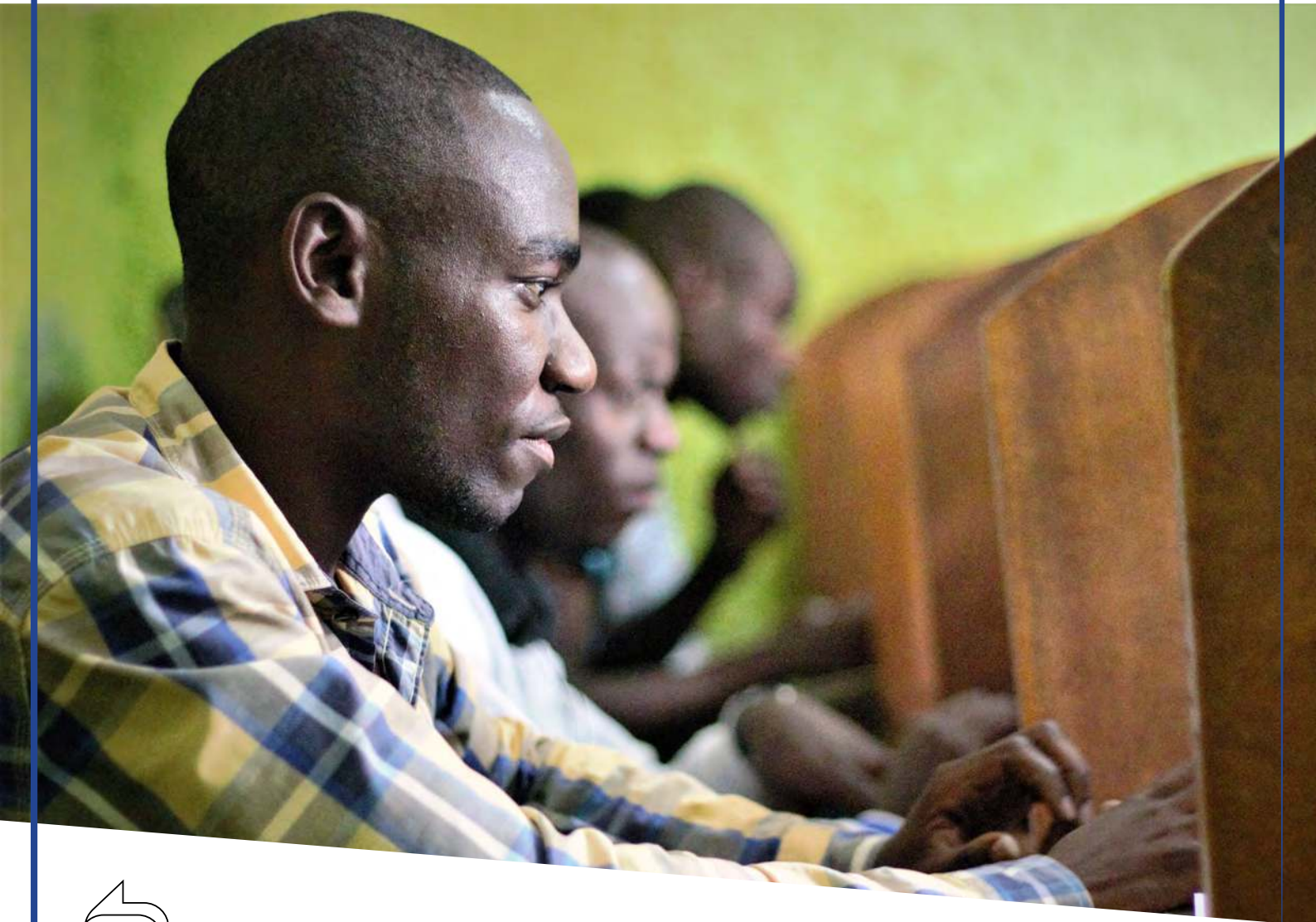
The qualitative and example-based answers to this question can be grouped into the following 3 main themes:

1. Advocacy & Diplomacy:

Answers in this category hint at the need for the international community to pressure governments through advocacy, for example, by *"prioritizing and engaging governments to respect media rights and freedom of expression"*, as well as diplomacy by, for example, *"pressuring governments to stop intimidating journalists by threatening with sanctions (travel ban, account freezing) of political leaders who attack the free press."* The examples within this category thus hint at either advocacy measures such as prioritizing press freedom on the advocacy agenda and pushing for policy change or even, diplomatic measures such as imposed sanctions on governments and political figures that do not respect press freedom.

2. Facilitation & Mediation:

The second category encompasses answers that s
on a role of knowledge facilitators, by enabling m
partner with. This can be detected in the following
platforms to publish. They can also pressure gov
media outlets. This creates an easier environmen
communities." The general wish here is to enable a
in order to contribute to freedom of expression
governments. These answers are very much about
multiple answers stress the need of the internati
platforms, but also to use this themselves in o
understood in light of the following answer: *"the*
politics and context. They can then help by followi
on the regulators in different countries."

3. Capacity Strengthening:

Examples in this category, for example, hint at the need of support for women journalists or support to *"educate the youth about the role media and information play in society."* The answers in this category thus stress the need for training as well as funding, believing that the international community should, for example: *"financially, morally and materially support stakeholders such as the media, civil society organisations, international organizations to directly and indirectly compel the government to restore the rule of law."*

The answers on capacity strengthening are not only aimed at capacitating local organizations, journalists, media-makers, activists and other marginalized groups (such as women and youth), but also to train governments on *"publishing accurate uncensored and unharmful information"* and, for example: *"by improving journalism rights among government and security departments."*

It has been our aim to provide these meaningful insights and results to give a sneak preview of the survey for the upcoming World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2021. We hope these insights will contribute to global understanding of alternative media communities and help create safe, enabling and inclusive online spaces for everyone.

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