

## DECENTRALIZED FORMATIVE EVALUATION

# SAFETY OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS ONLINE (SOFJO-II)

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

*“Often, they write ‘I will kill you’, ‘I will slaughter you’ and other terrible words. And often such letters end up in messenger chats of social networking sites.”<sup>1</sup>*

Due to the increasing number of online attacks on journalists, especially women journalists, the OSCE, as the first organization, implemented a project ‘Safety of Women Journalists Online Phase I (SOFJO-I)’ from 2015-2020. Building upon phase I, this project, SOFJO Phase II commenced implementation in January 2021, covering all 57 participating States (pS), under OSCE Unified Budget Programme Objective No. 2 “Promote OSCE media freedom commitments and assist pS in their understanding and compliance, including strengthening of pluralism in the media.” The overall objective of the project SOFJO II is “to contribute to improving women journalist’s online safety.” The project has a remaining implementation duration up to December 2024. The project has received funding amounting to EUR 408,637 from 6 donor countries, namely, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Luxemburg, Sweden, Switzerland and The Netherlands. According to expenditure reports up to August 2023 received by the evaluation team (ET), project expenditure has been EUR 383,968.

### Project:

Coverage: Global

No. of participating States (pS): 57

Duration: 01 Jan. 2021 – 31 Dec. 2024

Donors: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Luxemburg, Sweden, Switzerland and The Netherlands

### Evaluation:

Time period: 04 Sept. – 04 Nov. 2023

Evaluation team: Ms. Suman Lederer  
evaluation expert, team lead

Ms. Monica Portillo, substantive expert

Protect plurality.

Protect female journalists online.

It’s our responsibility.



## MAIN FINDINGS

Findings reveal that the SOFJO Phase II project remains fully relevant in the context of enhancing pS’ knowledge on the implications of online harassment and attacks on women journalists. The project fully aligns with the OSCE RFoM’s mandate, as part of both the early-warning and rapid response function and to provide assistance to pS in fulfilling their

commitments. The project is solidly grounded on human rights and gender equality principles since its inception, and ranks 3 on the OSCE Gender Equality Marker.

Having commenced during COVID-19, the project has fared well in terms of activities carried out since 01 January 2021 to date, all within the budget available to the project each year. At the same time, it was noted that in order to do additional activities, an enhancement of both, financial and human resources, would be necessary. A results framework and a system for tracking progress towards achievement of activities and results, including their gender equality

<sup>1</sup> Testimony in unpublished research reports.

dimensions, is not in use. Nonetheless, the project has fared well by building upon the results achieved within Phase I, and additionally carrying out other activities successfully. The full potential remains to be utilized to achieve synergies in terms of collaboration with OSCE Field Operations (FOs) and other international/regional organizations for concrete activities. The difficulty to measure impact in this type of project emerged, as well as the lack of data on this issue. At the same time, all the interviewees mentioned that the project is definitely making impact on the long-term safety of female journalists online, including raising awareness and contributing to regional research.

It is a **good, valuable and crucial project and very much needed**, especially for (women) journalists targeted by online violence.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Project should **continue addressing the pS**.

- 1. Efficiency:** Management to consider upscaling the project or establishing an overarching umbrella programme, including safety of journalists, safety of women journalists online and gender-based violence.
- 2. Synergies, Partnerships, Collaboration:** Strengthen involvement of OSCE Field Operations in selected project activities.
- 3. Capacity-building:** Conduct joint capacity-building workshops, together with other organizations.
- 4. Awareness-raising:** Conduct a (hybrid) forum to present (again) the 'SOFJO Resource Guide', the 'Monitoring Guidelines', and the capacity-building programme.
- 5. Monitoring and Reporting:** Establish SMART indicators for each activity, result and objective.
- 6. Impact:** Communicate the need for pertinent data collection at national level, including via the implementation of the 'Monitoring Guidelines'.
- 7. Human Rights, Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion, Leaving No One Behind:** Consider taking into account 'Disability Inclusion' in future project activities, documents and implementation and document gender-disaggregated data.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Project has fared well with current financial and human resources; nevertheless, implementation of additional activities would only be possible with an enhancement of existing resources – both financial and human. A project manager, dedicated fully to the project, can focus completely on the project and contribute considerably to streamlining the project activities, thus also contributing to efficiency of the project.

It is highly likely that the most serious cases of (online) violence might not be surveyed or researched as women are reluctant to participate in any surveys and/or interviews.

## GOOD PRACTICES

Being written in English, the 'SOFJO Resource Guide' has been translated into altogether nine<sup>2</sup> languages, thus enabling several countries easy readability and usage of the Guide. 2 regional research reports have been prepared, providing information on existing situations on the ground in the regions South Caucasus and Central Asia. The 'Guidelines for Monitoring Online Violence against Female Journalists' have been prepared, with concrete indicators to monitor the situation of online violence. The direct and active participation of female journalists/victims of online violence contributed significantly to successful project implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> 8 within the framework of Phase II, and one within Phase I of the project.