Toolbox VI:
Doing your part: Monitor, defend and promote freedom of expression

Why should we do our part? Apathy, which is the state of being indifferent or simply not caring about what goes on around you, is a dangerous thing. Everyone has a part and every contribution helps. Many changes in the world were sparked by efforts of individuals.

Key Lessons:
- Start Publishing
- Start Monitoring
- Start Celebrating
- Start Networking
**Freedom of Expression Toolkit: A Guide for Students**

**Everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom.**

Albert Einstein  
(1879-1955)  
Physicist,  
1921 Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics

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**What can we do?**

There is actually plenty we can do. There are various activities we can do to help monitor, defend, and promote freedom of expression. They can be done on a small scale community level or on a national level. Some require a little technological know-how, some do not. Most of the activities require getting to know the people involved in the promotion and protection of freedom of expression. Most importantly, they require being aware and being sensitive to what is happening around us.

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**How to get started?**

Find out what kind of resources are at your disposal, the kinds of resources you could access differ from person-to-person, from community-to-community, and from country-to-country, but you have resources. Experiment with what you have, find out the limitations and build on your strengths.

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**1. Put Your Thoughts Down: Publish your own newsletter**

The invention of the printing press was a significant development in the history of freedom of expression. The very notion of press freedom would not exist without the invention of the printing press machine in the first place. Prior to mass-printing, ideas and knowledge could only be shared verbally or through painstakingly hand-copied manuscripts.

Even after the printing technology became more widely available, the authorities attempted to control the flow of information by issuing printing licenses. In other words, only certain materials could be printed by certain people who were able to obtain a printing licence. The right to print and to distribute information is at the heart of the fight for freedom of expression. You can be part of this long tradition by publishing your own newsletter, simple pamphlet, or brochure to be distributed.

Find a niche. You may wish to consider specializing in certain topics that interest you and your group. Perhaps you are more interested in promoting access of information about the environment, or perhaps the level of doping in sports, or the development of educational facilities in your city. The topic you choose could be varied but the underlying philosophy is unchanging, that is, you can exercise the right to publish your thoughts.

Remember:  
It is okay to experiment. There is no right or wrong way of producing your publication. Every environment presents its own challenges and opportunities. Find out what works best for you and your team.

**Share:**  
It helps to share your ideas and innovations, as well as your frustrations in the process of producing your own publication. Share with others around the world.

**Checklist for Setting Up a Monitoring Blog:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have internet access?</td>
<td>Read the section on setting up a monitoring blog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will this be a multi-platform project?</td>
<td>Using not just this blog but social networking sites, micro-blogging, video-sharing site, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have access to a computer, type writer, or some kind of word processor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have access to printing equipment and supplies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have someone to help you with the writing and editing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many people are willing to work on the project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will you divide the responsibilities?</td>
<td>Do you want to follow the standard journalistic format with an editor-in-chief, followed by editors, and journalists, or a more horizontal model? There is no right or wrong with any one type, both styles have been employed successfully in different parts of the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**2. Monitor Freedom of Expression in Your Country**

Setting up a freedom of expression monitoring blog

If you have access to the Internet, try to create a blog which monitors the development of freedom of expression in your country. A blog is the shortened form of the words, "web" and "log" (weblog) which allows the user to upload text, photos, and videos to their own blog site through the Internet. Unlike traditional media, the user (or blogger) has a high control over the content that appears on his or her blog. The blogger is in fact the writer, the editor, and the owner of the publication. A blog is usually available free-of-charge on blog hosting sites such as www.Blogger.com, www.Wordpress.com or any other blog hosting sites you are familiar with or have access to.

Why should we monitor freedom of expression?

Documenting one’s surrounding is as old as humankind. Cave paintings are a form of documentation in certain topics that interest you and your group. Perhaps you are more interested in promoting access of information about the environment, or perhaps the level of doping in sports, or the development of educational facilities in your city. The topic you choose could be varied but the underlying philosophy is unchanging, that is, you can exercise the right to publish your thoughts.

Remember:  
It is okay to experiment. There is no right or wrong way of producing your publication. Every environment presents its own challenges and opportunities. Find out what works best for you and your team.

**What to Monitor:**

- Incidences of freedom of expression being suppressed. For example, the closing down of TV and radio stations, newspapers, or the arrests of street protestors or people who expressed certain views.
- The enactment of media-related laws.
- The establishment of new local agencies or organizations related to freedom of expression.
- Freedom of expression events, conferences, activities which took place in your country.
Questions to Ask Yourself: A Basic Checklist:

- What was the information/event/issue/etc?
- Who said it/? who was involved?
- When was it said/ when did it happen?
- How was the information obtained/ what is the source? (you have to decide if it is alright to reveal the source)
- What triggered the issue/ How did it happen/ How was it resolved (if there was a resolution)?

You can find out about these developments by reading the newspapers, searching the Internet, listening to the radio, watching the news on television, or by the word of mouth. Remember to note down where you obtain the information. Write down the name of the websites, radio, TV station or the name of the newspaper. This is a part of the practice of good reporting.

We also suggest that you include details such as the date of the event, location, maybe a map of the place, the number of people participating, who was involved in the incident, the reason the incident happened, etc. You could also add your own assessment of the incident such as the significance of the incident to you and your peers.

Remember:

One of the strengths of local reporting or citizen journalism is the first-person account of a particular incident. Being physically close to the incident gives power to the reporting. Include the tangibles (facts such as how many people, where did the incident take place, when, who, etc) and also the intangibles (what was the atmosphere like, how did it make you feel, etc).

Challenge!

Can you identify the freedom of expression hotspots around the world map? Hotspots are places where freedom of expression is under threat whether because of direct oppression from the ruling class, war and conflict, lack of access to resources and skills or some other reasons.

Did You Know?

Many important incidents where freedom of expression was suppressed became known to the entire world through local reporting by individuals using nothing more than blogs or SMS (short messaging system) through mobile phones.

You could also monitor the state of freedom of expression in your neighbouring country, your surrounding region, all the entire world if you so choose to. Perhaps you could monitor the development of freedom of expression over a longer period. There are organizations such as Freedom House (since 1941), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ; since 1981), Reporters without Borders (since 1985), and the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX; since 1981) which have been monitoring the global state of freedom of expression for decades!

Celebrate World Press Freedom Day!

The United Nations General Assembly declared 3 May to be World Press Freedom Day (WPFD) in 1993 and UNESCO has taken the lead in celebrating the event every year on 3 May¹. In addition, UNESCO created the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano Press Freedom Prize in 1997, to honour the work of an individual or an organization defending or promoting freedom of expression anywhere in the world, especially if this action puts the individual’s life at risk. Every year hundreds of events take place around the world to commemorate and to create awareness about the importance of press freedom which is a cornerstone of freedom of expression. Indeed, more and more individuals, schools, and organizations are celebrating and becoming aware of the significance of the World Press Freedom Day. Use this event as an occasion to start advocacy work with your peers and within your community!

What can you do?

Start your own World Press Freedom Day celebration at your school!

Plan Ahead:

- WPFD always takes place on 3 May of each year. UNESCO always has a main global event and a theme for the year’s celebration.
- Find out what is the year’s WPFD theme and develop a list of activities related to the theme.
- Contact your teacher or your school administration to express your desire to plan an event/ activity in conjunction with WPFD.
- You could also contact one of the 53 UNESCO offices¹ around the world for more ideas and support.
- Or you could contact an organization that is working on freedom of expression as listed in the previous section for guidance.
Did You Know?

There are many agencies and organizations that monitor, defend, and promote freedom of expression. They offer support and advice in matters related to freedom of expression. You can often subscribe to their publications, join their workshops or even apply for internships. Is there one in your country?

4. Start networking

Do you know if independent media outlets exist in your neighbourhood, town, city or country? Independent media outlets could be a regular newsletter, community radio, TV, blogs, online podcast or video-cast, etc. They could be working on any number of issues from promotion of press freedom to promotion of a traditional art form. Linking up with them helps you familiarize with the work of the direct stakeholders in press freedom.

How to get started?

• Identify as many as you can of the independent media outlets working in your country. List them down, including the contact information and the type of messages there are trying to spread.

• Once you have identified the outlets, try to get in touch with them, create for yourself a network of independent media outlets in your area. Make a collection of their publications available in your school library.

• Create a contact list, put the list online or in your newsletter, and initiate a gathering, a workshop, or a seminar with them!

Freedom of Expression Agencies and Organizations around the World

(* this is not an exhaustive list, indeed there are many more organizations out there working on similar issues)

- Accuracy in Media (http://www.aim.org)
- Adil Soz (http://www.adilsoz.kz)
- Afrobameter (http://www.afrobameter.org)
- Arab Archives Institute (http://www.alarchief.com)
- Arab Barometer (http://arabbarometer.org)
- Article 19 (http://www.article19.org)
- Asian Barometer (http://www.asianbarometer.org)
- Association of Independent Electronic Media (http://www.aie.net)
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (http://www.chrs.org)
- Canadian Committee for World Press Freedom (http://www.ccpf-cclpm.ca)
- Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (http://www.cjfe.org)
- Cartoonists Rights Network International (http://cartoonistsrights.com)
- Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (http://www.cdfj.org)
- Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations (http://www.cjes.ru)
- Center for Social Communication (http://cencos.org)
- Committee to Protect Bloggers (http://committeetopробlagers.org)
- Committee to Protect Journalists (http://www.cpj.org)
- Common Dreams (http://www.commondreams.org)
- Doha Centre for Media Freedom (http://www.dohacentre.org)
- Economic Freedom Network Asia (http://www.efnasia.org)
- Economic Intelligence Unit (http://www.eiu.com)
- Federation Professionnelle des Journalistes du Quebec (http://www.fpjq.org)
- Electronic Frontier Foundation (http://www.eff.org)
- First Amendment Center (http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org)
- Fraser Institute (http://www.fraserinstitute.org)
- Freedom House (http://www.freedomhouse.org)
- Freedom of Expression Institute (http://http://freedomofexpression.org)
- Frontline (http://frontlinedefenders.org)
- Global Journalist (http://www.globaljournalist.org)
- Global Voices (http://globalvoicesonline.org)
- Greek Helsinki Monitor (http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr)
- Honest Reporting (http://honestreporting.com)
- Index of Economic Freedom (http://www.heritage.org/index)
- Index on Censorship for Free Expression (http://www.index-on-censorship.org)
- Information Warfare Monitor (http://infowar-monitor.net)
- Institute for Press and Society (http://www.ipsys.org)
- International Federation of Journalists (http://www.ifj.org)
- International Freedom of Expression Exchange, IFEX (http://www.ifex.org)
- International Pen (http://www.internationalpen.org.uk)
- International Press Institute (http://www.freemedia.ai)
- International Research and Exchanges Board (http://www.irex.org)
- Journaliste en danger (http://www.jed-afrique.org/en)
- Latinobarómetro (http://www.latinobarometro.org)
- Media 21 (http://www.media21geneva.org)
- New Europe Barometer (http://www.abdi.ac.uk)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (http://www.ohchr.org)
- OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (http://www.osce.org/fom)
- PEN Canada for Freedom of expression (http://www.pencanada.ca)
- Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (http://www.journalism.org)
- Privacy International (http://www.privacyinternational.org)
- Project Censored (http://www.projectcensored.org)
- Reporters Committee for the Freedom of the Press (http://www.rcpf.org)
- Reporters without Borders (http://www.rsf.org)
- SOJRA (http://www.sojra.org)
- Southeast Asian Press Alliance (http://www.seapabdk.org)
- The Alliance of Independent Journalists (http://ajiindonesia.org)
- The Freedom Forum (http://www.freedomforum.org)
- The International Free Press Soc. (http://www.internationalfreepress.org)
- The Media Diversity Institute (http://www.mediadiversity.org)
- The Media Institute of Southern Africa (http://www.misa.org)
- The Open Rights Group (http://www.openrightsgroup.org)
- The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (http://www.rcfp.org)
- Transparency International (http://www.transparency.org)
- West African Journalists Association (http://www.ujaowaja.org)
- World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters AMARC (http://www.amarc.org)
- World Audit Publisher (http://www.worldaudit.org/publisher.htm)
- World Press Freedom Committee (http://www.wpfc.org)
Identify your sources of information

To know what you can express, sometimes it is necessary to know where your information comes from as well. Knowing your information and where they are from will help you make better judgment. Where are you getting your information from? Also, where are your parents or friends getting their information?

Who’s Your Source?

- Family
- Friends
- Teachers
- The Internet
- Books and Magazines
- Newspapers
- Television
- Movies
- Music
- Radio
- Advertisements in the streets
- Theatres, plays, other performances
- Your own observations and your thoughts?

Information permeates our everyday life in increasing amount. There are terms that describe this increase of the quantity of information such as “information overload”, “information super-highway”, or staying connected everyday any-time”. All these mean that we have more information than we can process.

Tracing your “Information Tree”

One of the ways you could visualize your sources of information is by creating an “information tree”. Imagine the information you have or know are the leaves on a tree. The leaves (or information) come from the branches, and the branches grew from the trunk and the trunk from the roots of the tree. Similarly, information must have come from somewhere. Use an “information tree” to trace the information you have been receiving. How did you get your information? Was it from a friend? How did he or she get that information? Was it from his or her parents or from another friend? But where did the parent get their information? Was it from the newspapers? But where did the newspapers get their information? Was it from their own reporters who were on the scene, from government officials, from public data published? What is the “root” of the information? You will decide how far back you wish to trace the information.

Figure 2: “The Information Tree”

The Information Tree represents the way your information is formed or has flowed. The leaves represent the most obvious part of the information flow including the TV programs you watch, the newspapers you read, etc. The branches represent the most immediate source of the information such as the news agencies, your parents, and friends. The trunk of the tree represents the more legalistic aspect of the information because governmental policies practises and national laws greatly influence what kind of information you can or cannot receive.
Toolbox VI

What is your plan of action? What will you do to monitor, defend, or promote freedom of expression?

Monitoring...

Defending...

Promoting...

Toolbox VI Activity

What can you do?

Monitor the state of freedom of expression in your country

Celebrate World Press Freedom Day each year

Start networking with local organizations

Learn to identify your sources of information

Trace your “Information Tree”

Toolbox VI Summary

Apathy is a dangerous thing.

Everyone has a part and every contribution helps.