

## NOTED:

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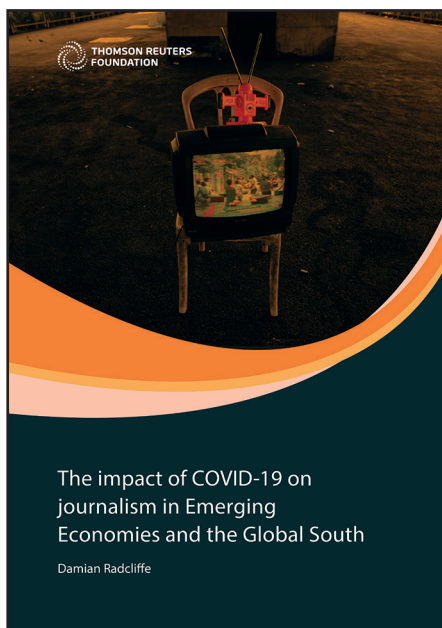
# Destructive pandemic impact on Global South media

*The Impact of COVID-19 on Journalism in Emerging Economies and the Global South*, by Damian Radcliffe. London: Thomson Reuters Foundation. 2021. 142 pages.

A NEW publication from the Thomson Reuters Foundation reviews the impacts of COVID-19 on journalism in Emerging Economies and the ‘Global South’. Working on the premise that media and journalism in these regions already face even greater challenges than in the ‘West’, this report describes a worsening of the situation through effects of the pandemic.

It shows that factors external to media practice and media organisations are having destructive impacts, but proposes remedies which draw on internal strengths and professionalism in journalistic practice. The work is a qualitative research project obtaining analysis from 56 journalists from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, out of 15,000 journalists who have done courses offered by the foundation, as a backer of innovation and media freedom.

Eight ‘expert commentators’, most



also from journalism, supplement the analysis. It is partly anecdotal, but done systematically by the writer of the report, journalist and professor Damian Radcliffe.

One of several non-governmental organisations that support journalism, and have contributed to the report, is quoted on the dilemma of failing media economics, a ‘great recession’ for media that has not eased since 2007:

It is a paradox that, as more people realise, they need high quality factual information to navigate the crisis, the business models that sustain that information are collapsing.

COVID-19 is linked to factors such as a one-year fall of 11.8 percent in global advertising revenue.

Several other ‘challenges’ listed are familiar but well detailed, all

contributing to a general ‘unease and uncertainty’: journalists caught up in general economic failure with breakdowns of transport, energy and government services; the grapple with misinformation and fake news; other problems with dependency on digital resources, not least staggering infrastructure—undependable internet in many regions; governments imposing new controls, curfews and the like, to try and run the narrative on the pandemic, and cope with stresses and destabilisation it is causing in society.

The impacts are especially harmful to media freedoms; health and safety crises for journalists whose work exposes them to the dangerous disease, in a climate of wholesale job losses and inadequate access to protective equipment or work practices.

Altogether 462 journalists are reported dead from the virus in the year under review, mostly in the developing regions.

What to do? This report backs innovation, listing options for new media products on digital platforms. It proposes more alliances and collaboration on investigative journalism and research, data and content sharing, and extension of creative commons.

To support such change, it suggests specialised training. It hails with a sense of relief new funding of media from foundations, advanced subscription schemes, and also the social media platforms coming across to paying for the base product. Adequate financing of journalists is listed as essential with special attention in certain areas such as freelancing.

This publication underscores the seriousness of the current word situation, with a ‘generation defining pandemic’, where ordinary journalistic work, while the pandemic rages, is today most akin to ‘war reporting’.

## Entire region ignored by UNESCO manual

*Reporting on Migrants and Refugees: Handbook for Journalism Educators.* Paris: UNESCO, 2019. 304 pages. ISBN 9789231004568

WHILE this book will be of immense benefit to anybody teaching about the broader issues of immigration and trying to train journalists and journalism students to write on the topic with more understanding, it is a pity that it so effectively ignores the Pacific.

This book has some excellent ideas and some really useful guidelines on how to report on migrants more sympathetically and with more understanding, but it is very heavily focussed on Africa and Europe—and Europe to a large extent means Germany.

This handbook repeats the prediction that hundreds of millions of people will be forced to seek refuge as a result of climate change. It is undeniable that the numbers of climate change refugees in the Pacific so far are miniscule compared to the horrendous numbers of people, even now, who are fleeing drought and war in Africa and the Middle East and hoping to find sanctuary in Europe.

However, the Pacific has its own