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**AGILE**  
advancing media resilience

## AGILE: 2025 in Review

### *Strengthening Media Resilience against Democratic Decline*

Across many regions of the world, the space for independent media is contracting. Journalists face rising levels of repression, technological developments are reshaping information flows, and economic pressures are threatening the sustainability of public-interest journalism. Against this backdrop, the first year of the **Advancing Global Innovation and Learning Effectively to Build Resilience in Independent Media (AGILE)** project focused on a core challenge: *strengthening media resilience so that journalists and outlets can continue to serve their audiences while operating under conditions of hostility, precarity, and rapid technological change.*

In its first year, AGILE implemented research, experimentation, capacity building, and policy engagement across five interconnected workstreams, supporting independent newsrooms build sustainability in the Americas, piloting AI-enabled inclusion tools in Central Asia, and equipping future women media leaders in Africa and Asia.

What follows highlights selected impacts and learnings from AGILE's first year.

#### Workstream 1: Good Information

##### Journalism in Exile – Understanding Risk, Precarity, and Survival (Latin America)

*“Exile is not measured in kilometres, but in nights without sleep, wondering whether you made the right decision.”*

— Journalist interviewed for AGILE research

As democratic backsliding accelerates globally, journalists are increasingly forced to flee their home countries for safety. Yet exile often comes at a steep professional cost. According to **data compiled by Red Latinoamericana de Periodismo en el Exilio (RELPEX) from a sample of 242 journalists from 14 countries forced into exile, only 30 percent continue working permanently for a media outlet**. This loss severely weakens the information environment, creating news deserts where authoritarians face little scrutiny, and pathways back to democracy are eroded.

Under AGILE, regional partner *Fundación para la Libertad de Expresión y Democracia (FLED)* produced the **Assessment Report on the Current Situation of Exiled Media in Latin America**, based on 18 in-depth interviews and extensive desk research. The study asked a central question:

*How is journalism practised and sustained in exile in Latin America under conditions of repression and precarity, and what is needed for it to endure?*

The findings point to shared structural challenges. Journalism in exile is **more expensive, more demanding, and more complex** than operating at home. Reporting on events in the country of origin

often requires elaborate verification processes that place sources, fixers, and journalists themselves at risk. Economic sustainability emerged as the most pressing issue: exile media outlets struggle to attract advertisers, navigate unfamiliar legal and tax frameworks, and secure funding when legal status prevents funds from reaching them. Funding fatigue—driven by donors wishing to see media in exile self-sustain—was a recurring theme, particularly following [cuts to international cooperation funding in early 2025](#).

Yet one of the report's most important conclusions is that **media sustainability begins with individual well-being**. Journalists face the dual burden of adapting to life as refugees while continuing to work under dangerous and resource-poor conditions. Without a minimum level of personal stability, sustainable outlets cannot exist.

The report highlights the importance of **formal support structures**, welcoming host country environments, and recognition of exiled journalists as legitimate actors within regional media ecosystems. In countries such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela, the closure of exiled outlets would result in near-total information blackouts. Supporting journalism in exile, the research concludes, is not a marginal concern—it is **central to preserving democratic space where it has all but disappeared**. The report is the starting point for programming in Latin America, Asia and Africa in support of journalists and media in exile.

## Workstream 2: Inclusive Access

### AI for Inclusion – Pilot Hackathon in Central Asia



*Participants of AGILE's AI4Good Hackathon work together to prototype an AI-based solution.*

Dilnoza Karimova\*, a journalist living near the borders of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, sees every day how language barriers inhibit cross-border understanding and cooperation. *“We want to strengthen cross-border engagement,”* she explains, *“but audiences need to be able to understand the content first.”*

*\*Alias*

For vulnerable communities across Central Asia, the obstacles to accessing and understanding diverse and reliable information are substantial and systemic. [A 2025 regional Information Environment Mapping, published by CFI under AGILE](#), identified barriers including ‘state media control, restrictive laws, internet censorship, and digital divides, exacerbated by ethnicity, language, gender, and sexual orientation’. Internet restrictions, media suppression, and targeted harassment of independent journalists and activists are common across the region, undermining minority participation and trust. These challenges fuel the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech, which threaten social cohesion and democratic processes.

In this landscape, where there is a critical need to strengthen resilience against shrinking civic space, the ability to bypass traditional barriers — whether linguistic, economic, or political — is not just a technical convenience, but a democratic necessity. [AGILE's AI4Good Hackathon](#), organised by CFI in Astana in November 2025, directly addressed these barriers. The initiative was set up to promote innovations from media practitioners in the region, to address the problems which they themselves identified and prioritised, and to prototype an AI-based solution that enhances access to, sharing of, and protection of information for low-income and marginalised groups in the region.

The hackathon brought together 23 participants—**95% of them women**—from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Journalists, civil society actors, students, and technologists collaborated across four thematic tracks: news verification, linguistic inclusion, disability inclusion, and access to employment.

The team led by Karimova developed an **AI-powered translation tool for Telegram**—the region’s most widely used platform among minority communities—to make minority language content accessible across linguistic divides. The prototype aims not only to improve access to information but to enable dialogue between communities that are otherwise isolated by language and politics.

Beyond the prototype itself, the hackathon demonstrated the value of **locally driven, problem-led innovation**. Participants identified problems they understood firsthand and worked collaboratively to develop practical responses. Learnings from the pilot will shape future AGILE hackathons and ongoing development of regionally adapted solutions, with several participants seeking further support to operationalise their tools in 2026.

### Workstream 3: Sustainable Business Models

#### Financial Resilience – Media Resilience Incubator in Latin America

*“We believe in journalism—but it is becoming harder and harder to survive doing it.”*  
— Ana Carolina, Director, Ojo Con Mi Pisto (Guatemala)

With journalists and media facing extreme levels of risk around Latin America, the need for financial sustainability can often be overlooked. However, financial viability is a key element of media resilience and is essential for media to operate safely and continue to serve their audience. Recent cuts to international assistance to media organisations have further destabilised already fragile media business models.

Implemented by Thomson Media, the **AGILE Resilience Incubator** supports independent outlets to develop **tailored financial strategies** rather than one size fits all solutions. In 2025, eight media organisations from Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala and other countries in Central America (including exiled outlets) joined the incubator, working with business mentors to explore new revenue streams.



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For Ojo Con Mi Pisto (OCMP), a participatory journalism outlet focused on accountability and civic education, sustainability efforts are built on existing community trust. Through the incubator, OCMP began developing a **fee-based training model**, offering paid workshops on topics such as freedom of information laws and monitoring public spending. While not a standalone solution, the model strengthens the outlet's brand and mission while diversifying income.

Like many media outlets around the globe, OCMP noticed a significant decline in web traffic last year, attributed to the rise of generative AI news summaries on Google and other search platforms and chatbots, which limit click-throughs and the resulting ad revenue, often by cannibalising the work of independent journalists. In this context, Resilience Incubator mentors must help identify ways to generate traffic to revenue-generating platforms, as well as potential brand partnerships which suit the values and niche audiences of specific news outlets and may offer high levels of mutual value even with comparatively limited engagement. For OCMP, advertising is a new approach, and it is important to bring their existing community along. "We have explained to our audience why we are taking advertising for the first time," says Carolina, "and have been transparent about the ways in which we are ensuring that advertising will never interfere with our journalism."

The incubator underscored a crucial point: **financial sustainability is a core component of safety and resilience**. Without viable business models, media outlets cannot protect their staff, maintain independence, or continue serving their communities—especially in high-risk environments.

## Workstream 4: Accountable Institutions

### Safeguarding Freedom of Expression in the Age of Generative AI

As generative AI tools rapidly reshape information production and distribution, AGILE contributed to ensuring that **freedom of expression and media pluralism remain central to emerging governance frameworks**.

In 2025, the [Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts on the Impacts of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Freedom of Expression \(MSIAI\)](#) published its [Guidance Note on the Implications of Generative AI for Freedom of Expression](#)—the first standard-setting document to focus explicitly on this right in the context of generative AI.

ARTICLE 19 played an active role throughout the drafting process, providing expert input on risks to media plurality, biased datasets, AI-driven search and summarisation tools, and the growing power of new digital intermediaries. The Guidance Note analyses risks across three layers of the AI “stack”: model training (foundation), functional adaptation (tools), and user-facing applications (products).



*MSI-AI members during the 4th meeting at Palais de l’Europe, Strasbourg (October 2025)*

Key recommendations include protecting human-generated information sources, ensuring meaningful human oversight in editorial processes, and supporting independent and pluralistic media ecosystems—potentially through public service digital infrastructure. While nonbinding, the guidance represents an influential piece of international soft law and a reference point for future regulation well beyond Europe.

Under AGILE, this work strengthens institutional resilience by helping ensure that AI adoption does not further erode the economic viability or democratic role of journalism.

## Workstream 5: Learning and the Future of Journalism

### Women Media Leaders of Tomorrow – Building Confidence and Futures

Given the many challenges facing the media industry today, the idea of being a journalist can be a daunting prospect. “All what we knew about journalism was gloomy, and the future seemed bad”, says Shalome Chiware, a journalism student from Zimbabwe, “I was regretting for joining journalism at school.” These challenges are multiplied for women journalists, who face discrimination and harassment both in the workplace and in response to their work. In 2025, 75% of women journalists had experienced online violence, while 42% linked online abuse to offline harm, including harassment and assault.

In a bid to better prepare women for a career in journalism, Fojo piloted the **Women Media Leaders of Tomorrow (WMLT)** course for women journalism students, focusing on women media leadership, resilience and the importance of building networks. The course was launched in Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka in 2025. The in-person extracurricular course focuses on leadership, resilience, ethics, and peer support, combining practical exercises with dialogue between students and experienced women journalists and editors.

While the issues facing women journalists are unique, specialised training and support are still not widely available in many contexts. For the Department of Communication and Journalism at Chittagong University, which hosted the Bangladesh event, this is the first time a training and dialogue has been arranged exclusively for female students.

Participants consistently reported transformative impacts. For some, the course rekindled confidence in journalism itself. Others highlighted the importance of understanding that the challenges they face are structural rather than personal. Many gained practical tools for navigating harassment, newsroom dynamics, and ethical decision-making.



*WMLT course participants and trainers in Harare, Zimbabwe*

To date, **63 female students from eight universities** across three countries have taken the course. In several partner institutions, the programme catalysed wider change, including commitments to gender sensitivity training for male students. Further cohorts are planned for 2026 across Africa and South Asia, expanding reach and embedding sustainability.

## Building Resilience, Together

AGILE's first year demonstrates that media resilience cannot be reduced to a single intervention. It demands **research grounded in lived experience, innovation driven by local need, business models adapted to reality, policy frameworks that protect rights, and sustained investment in people.**

Across exile journalism, AI innovation, business sustainability, policy engagement, and leadership development, a common thread emerges: resilience is relational. It depends on networks, solidarity, and systems that allow journalists not just to survive, but to continue matters of public interest.

As AGILE moves into its next phase, it will continue to surface best practices and lessons learned to ensure that implementers and donors continue to serve and support journalists and media on the frontline of protecting democracy.

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