

# TV INDUSTRY HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM



## Respecting human rights in the use of media support workers for documentary making, news and sports



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v.FINAL

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### Disclaimer

This report should be taken only as a source of information and analysis. It is not given, and should not be taken, as legal advice and the provider of the information will not be held liable for any direct or consequential loss arising from reliance on the information contained herein.

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# Introduction

## About the research

### Purpose of the research

This research aims to explore the human rights risks to media support workers used by broadcasters for documentary making, news and sports broadcasting and to identify good practices to adopt in order to mitigate the risks.

The TV Industry and Human Rights Forum's 2020 research found that support workers in UK TV production were frequently overlooked by those they worked alongside and many experienced poor labour practices and undignified working conditions as a result. This enquiry seeks to understand whether such issues are replicated in documentary making, news and sports broadcasting. The research covers use of such media support workers in the UK, as well as how broadcast teams travel internationally and depend on local support to do so. The human rights risks are different but exist in all contexts.

### A Human Rights lens

Using a human rights lens to look at the use of media support workers enables us to rely on an international framework, including:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The ILO Fundamental Conventions
- The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The framework helps us to identify issues that are risks to people and locate them in international standards. It also enables a framing which shows that broadcasters have a responsibility towards all those individuals impacted by the making of their news, sports, and documentary productions, regardless of whether they are directly employed or not, or whether a specific legal liability exists.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are explicit in identifying a separate corporate responsibility to respect human rights and this responsibility does not stop at a legal agreement or by being outsourced to another provider.

Importantly, the human rights framework enables an understanding of how a broadcaster should take steps to mitigate risks and remediate human rights it has caused or contributed to, or to which it is directly linked.

This research focuses on labour rights and the safety of media support workers, which cover the human rights to dignity and equality, life, health, non-discrimination and just and favourable conditions of work, among others. Other relevant human rights themes include freedom of expression, which includes media freedom, and the rule of law.

### Scope of the research

The footprints for documentary making, news and sports broadcasting have considerable overlap. Documentary teams often have journalist visas and the boundaries between them, and investigative news teams may be relatively blurred. In terms of third parties, all such teams tend to use similar support – a combination of fixers, drivers, translators, and

security, whether working domestically or overseas. Together, these roles can be described as 'media support workers', although the role of fixer, in particular, requires further elaboration.

A fixer is a term that has multiple meanings in different contexts. World Fixer describes a fixer as "your temporary local knowledge when working overseas or at home. They are your ears on the ground before you arrive, your overseas bureau, your airport pickup, your staffer, your security advisor, your translator, local producer or first aider. They are the guide by your side that knows where everything is and how to get it."<sup>1</sup> There have been attempts to move to other terms in recognition of the essential roles they play, but the term 'fixer' refuses to go away.

Fixers can be individuals, or they can be companies (sometimes called a 'Location Services Provider'), helping to organise the logistics of TV production, including visas, permits, local subcontractors and connections to local communities. They may themselves be trained journalists or media workers. They may also perform the role of driver and translator. They are invaluable to international sports, news and documentary teams for their ability to navigate local conditions, access, languages and politics.

Fixers may also support film crews and advertisers. These tend to involve much larger teams with different logistical challenges and are consequently outside the scope of this research.

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<sup>1</sup> World Fixer. Available at <https://worldfixer.com/>

# Methodology

This report was developed in parallel with a second report entitled “[Respecting human rights in the security practices of broadcasters for documentary making, news and sports](#)”. It draws on the same interviews, deep-dive assessments, and other sources.

The research involved desk reviews of articles, blogs, reports, news items and parliamentary submissions. A full bibliography of references is provided in Appendix B.

To supplement the available literature, the researcher conducted 25 interviews with 26 key stakeholders between May and August 2021, including 17 men and 9 women. She also built on previous research conducted for the TV Industry Human Rights Forum, including interviews that took place in 2019 and 2020. The interviews included:

- 7 representatives from broadcaster security teams
- 1 sports producer
- 2 heads of production operations
- 2 documentary makers
- 3 academics who were formerly investigative journalists
- 1 regional news journalist
- 3 organisations concerned with journalist safety (Committee to Project Journalists; National Union of Journalists; ACOS Alliance)
- 8 suppliers, including 3 security companies and 2 insurance providers

As well as stakeholder interviews, the researcher conducted deep-dive assessments into the work of two broadcasters in specific areas: outside broadcasts in the UK and preparations for covering the Euro 2020 football tournament.

Finally, to reach more media support workers directly, the researcher also sent a short survey out which was completed by six fixers who are members of the World Fixer database. This included 2 women and 4 men, with a range of experience in news, sports and documentaries.

## Executive Summary

News, sports and documentaries cannot happen without a range of third-party support, including fixers, local crew, drivers, translators, security personnel and hotel and venue staff. In supporting the work of international news, sports and documentary crews, many of these individuals take on risks to their personal safety and privacy, as well as their physical and mental health. Those working in hotels and at venues may be at particular risk of extreme exploitation, sometimes amounting to modern slavery. Such human rights risks are often not sufficiently addressed by broadcaster practices and can also increase risks to their own teams.

Media support workers are often freelancers, meaning they have limited employment rights and little recourse if clients refuse to pay. Unless the broadcaster provides it, they may have no access to training, insurance, and safety equipment, or any of the other usual mitigations broadcasters put in place for their own employees. Among stakeholders interviewed for this report, there was strong support for broadcasters to improve their duty of care to all media support workers, both during and after assignments.

The research found that media support workers are sometimes mistreated by the teams they work with, experiencing a hierarchical 'us' and 'them' mentality, which can progress to bullying. In the worst cases, their lives are seen as less valuable than the international crew or in some way expendable. Media support workers also reported problems of cultural insensitivity on behalf of international teams, which can lead to misrepresentation of people and stories and increased safety risks to themselves or others. The uneven power relationships mean that media support workers can feel under pressure to take risks that they may not be comfortable with and fear speaking out or raising concerns.

Finally, cash is sometimes used to pay media support workers or to fund their activities on behalf of news, sports, or documentary teams. While necessary in some circumstances, the use of cash increases the risk of bribery and unethical practices, including breaking international sanctions. It can set precedents that then negatively affect teams that follow. Carrying cash also puts those that carry it at risk of robbery.

There are good practices suggested throughout this report to address different risks and a full checklist in Appendix A. The main improvements for broadcasters to consider are:

- how to ensure adequate vetting and due diligence of third-party suppliers and individuals to reduce the risks of poor labour or ethical practices;
- how to provide media support workers with training, equipment, insurance, safety, and post-assignment support;
- how to prepare teams that travel in terms of cultural awareness, risk awareness and consideration towards the media support workers they encounter; and
- how to ensure all those involved in assignments know how to raise concerns and feel comfortable and confident in doing so.

## Summary of Human Rights Risks

Potentially affected group	Nature of potential risk	Human rights at risk of violation	Potential causes
(Inexperienced) Journalists, crew, talent	Incorrect advice or support provided by in-country fixer, e.g. on visas	Right to life Right to health	Budgetary pressures Inadequate vetting of media support workers
Talent, crew, drivers, local freelancers	Poor, ineffective, or inappropriate safety and security practices	Right to life Right to health	Lack of training Low wages, poor-quality staff Inadequate vetting of security
Journalists, crews, media support workers and their families	Surveillance and harassment from states	Right to privacy Right to health Freedom of expression Right to family life	Lack of press freedom Limits to the rule of law
Media support workers	Culturally insensitive behaviour can put lives, families, and livelihoods in danger	Right to life Right to health Right to family life Right to work	Lack of cultural awareness
Contributors/ participants, local communities	Local people may not want information broadcast or may object to portrayal	Right to privacy	Lack of duty of care to contributors Lack of cultural awareness
Media support workers	Safety and security of media support workers	Right to life Right to just and favourable conditions of work	Lack of policies and resources within news organisations Closing of foreign news bureaux – increased reliance on freelancers Lack of preparation and safety training Lack of safety mindset
Media support workers	Pressure to act unethically, illegally, or unsafely	Rule of law	Lack of safety mindset Power imbalance
Media support workers	Long missions can impact on family relationships	Right to a family life	Lack of duty of care to media support workers
Media support workers	Enduring safety risks, trauma or illness after foreign team has left	Right to life Right to health	Seen as part of the security apparatus rather than also in need of security support Lack of duty of care to media support workers
Media support workers	Poor working conditions and unreasonable expectations	Right to health Right to just and favourable conditions of work	Power imbalance Lack of policies and resources within news organisations Lack of cultural awareness
Drivers	Last minute requests from broadcasters lead to unvetted drivers or excessive working hours	Right to just and favorable conditions of work Right to rest and leisure	Budgetary pressures Inadequate preparation
Hotel workers	Workers within hotels used by crews may be subject to hidden labour exploitation or other poor working conditions	Right not to be held in slavery or servitude Right to just and favorable conditions of work Right to health	Inadequate due diligence Lack of policies and resources within news organisations
All third parties	Mistreatment of third-party workers by others	Right to dignity Right to non-discrimination Right to health Right to just and favorable conditions of work	Hierarchical cultures Seen as the responsibility of a third-party vendor and therefore not taken into consideration

# Findings

## Third party requirements and vetting

There are a range of third parties that broadcasters work with on documentaries, news and sports broadcasting, including fixers, local crew, drivers, translators, security, hotel staff and, for larger broadcasts, outside broadcast (OB) companies and other high-skilled technical services.

The focus of this research is predominantly on fixers, local crew, drivers, translators, and hotel staff, with a particular focus on fixers, who sometimes provide all those roles themselves, or who may be responsible for finding people to fill them. As Dr Colleen Murrell writes, “fixers are crucial players in the pursuit of international news gathering”<sup>2</sup>. For a more in-depth look at security practices, including security providers, see the Forum’s parallel research on security practices in documentary making, news and sports.

### Fixers and local crew

The term ‘fixer’ is sometimes considered pejorative. It can underplay the role of fixers and imply that they are simply fixing issues rather than a core part of preparation and delivery – what would be deemed a ‘producer’ or a ‘journalist’ in other situations. However, given its continued widespread use in the sector and the lack of alternative suitable terms that convey the full range of fixers’ work, it is the term used in this research.

Fixers are most used in international contexts when visiting international broadcast teams need to navigate a new environment, find a compelling story to tell and/or move broadcast equipment across borders. As one interviewee put it, “Every country has its own bureaucracy... You understand the characteristics of a nation when you try to film there... As soon as you have a language or cultural barrier, you need a fixer.”<sup>3</sup> (Documentary maker)

However, the role of a fixer is significantly more complex than managing logistics. As Ilene Prusher puts it, “Fixers are the bridge-builders between nations, the intermediaries between countries and cultures that are otherwise failing to understand each other.”<sup>4</sup> Their role becomes that of supporting in terms of both content and context, with Murrell explaining that, “fixers’ roles are best described as a mixture of logistical and editorial functions”<sup>5</sup>. Lindsey Palmer describes five key tasks of fixers:

- 1) conceptualizing the story
- 2) navigating the logistics
- 3) networking with sources
- 4) interpreting unfamiliar languages
- 5) safeguarding the journalist [and crew]<sup>6</sup>

Understanding what fixers do is complex because much of what they do is intangible and invisible – certainly from the perspective of those who consume the content fixers help to

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<sup>2</sup> Murrell, C (2019) *Fixers as entrepreneurs*

<sup>3</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>4</sup> Prusher, I. (2014) *Dirty Little Secrets*

<sup>5</sup> Murrell, C (2009) *Fixers and foreign correspondents: news production and autonomy*

<sup>6</sup> Palmer, L. (2019) *The Fixers: Local News Workers and the Underground Labour of International Reporting*

produce. As Murrell writes, “being largely ‘back room’ people, assisting out-front reporters, their work remains largely hidden from view and is thereby little understood”<sup>7</sup>. Fixers are behind-the-scenes, negotiating the access that news, sports, and documentary teams need, building relationships, reading the cultural nuances of a situation, and evaluating and managing risks.

As well as being invisible to the consumers of content, fixers are often invisible within the structures and policies that broadcasters have in place to support and protect their teams. This puts their safety, mental health and labour rights at risk. Fixers are usually freelancers based in another country and therefore may not be entitled to the training, equipment, insurance and welfare support that broadcasters have put in place for their own employees. This is not universally the case and there are some good practices identified in this research.

Finding and vetting fixers is generally done informally, through word-of-mouth recommendations or consulting with contacts at other news organisations. There are also databases of fixers, such as World Fixer, Paydesk and Hack Pack, which carry out some checks on their roster, such as checking references<sup>8</sup>. There is a private Facebook group called Vulture Club with more than 10,000 members but no due diligence is done on those who are recommended. Broadcasters often have their own lists of trusted fixers, although these are not necessarily maintained and kept up to date. One interviewee said that the names of the best fixers are often *not* passed on as journalists want to keep them to themselves<sup>9</sup>.

Some organisations have a process whereby fixers must confirm certain details but there does not seem to be a standard approach to vetting. For news teams, fixers are often local journalists and where a role has a clear journalistic element, there may be checks on writing style or on their understanding of editorial standards and rights issues. Often the selection approach is location specific. One organisation gave an example of a particular country where there was an interview process to identify the right people. In most cases, it seems that fixers are identified through existing networks such as recommendations from peers, news bureaux in country or other broadcasters.

Fixers in turn are often responsible for providing other third parties to support international teams, such as drivers, local crew and security personnel. Broadcasters may outsource any vetting of such third parties and their employment and working conditions to the fixers. Several fixers explained that they found others to employ via LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, requests through friends and company websites. Only one reported checking references<sup>10</sup>.

The importance of getting a ‘good’ fixer is universally agreed upon by all those interviewed for this research and by the existing literature. As presenter Dan Snow wrote, “It’s probably the most important decision you will make before arriving in the country and certainly the difference between success or failure.”<sup>11</sup> However, what people define as ‘good’ can vary significantly and have human rights implications. For example, a fixer willing to take greater

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<sup>7</sup> Murrell, C (2019) *Fixers and Entrepreneurs*

<sup>8</sup> Paydesk (2021) *FAQs*

<sup>9</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>10</sup> Survey of Fixers, July 2021

<sup>11</sup> Snow, D. (14 January 2015) *On “...The most important member of the team”*

risks in pursuit of a story might be the perfect partner for some journalists but is potentially putting themselves, their family and the international team under threat.

Those interviewed highlighted a range of 'soft' skills that they look for in a fixer, requiring them to:

- Understand how things work
- Have good government contacts
- Have the ability to work patiently with a foreign team
- Have integrity and respect for accuracy
- Pay attention to detail
- Listen and follow through, having understood what they have been asked for
- Be honest
- Be a good judge of character and be able to read people
- Stay cool under pressure
- Be both tough and full of empathy

*"Being a good fixer is a difficult job. It requires a lot of patience, knowledge of the situation, and social skills. You need to be able to gain people's trust, and to read their emotions while you are interviewing them."*<sup>12</sup>

Jonathan Miller identified the relationship aspect as the most important characteristic of a good fixer: "A good fixer must, over and above all else, be easy to work with; sometimes they are fun, or funny, sometimes they're serious – but they must always have an easy way about them and get on well with me and my crew."<sup>13</sup>

A good fixer should also be effective at challenging a news, sports or documentary team if they believe that they are making missteps, such as wanting to film somewhere or something in a culturally insensitive way. However, a fixer who challenges may be seen as a blocker and not used again or recommended to others. This can put fixers in a difficult and conflicted position, sometimes unable to raise concerns.

World Fixer identifies the reasons that the wrong person is sometimes selected as down to cost, inadequate planning and "over keenness to get into an environment"<sup>14</sup>. These can undermine any process of selection and vetting of fixers and mean that international teams may be entering situations they do not fully understand. In some cases, cost barriers prevent the use of fixers at all: "When I was working...as a researcher, it was on low-budget things, so I wasn't allowed a fixer."<sup>15</sup> (Documentary-maker)

#### **Good practice for broadcasters**

- When finding new fixers, gather as many references as possible
- When using a new fixer for the first time, build a relationship in advance to align expectations and iron out any issues pre-emptively
- Document who the fixer is within the system in advance of hiring them so that they can be paid properly
- Build long-term relationships with a small number of fixers and invest in them

<sup>12</sup> Lloyd-George, W. (15 January 2016) *Fixing Beyond media: Leading Human Rights Defender*

<sup>13</sup> Miller, J. (16 March 2015) *Foreign Correspondents and Fixers*

<sup>14</sup> Cook, S. (6 February 2015) *Preparing for Work in Hostile Environments*

<sup>15</sup> Interviews 2021

## Translators

Translation is often provided to teams by fixers, rather than being a separate person whose sole responsibility is translation. For example, 5 out of 6 fixers responding to a short survey said that they provided translation services and none reported being responsible for finding additional translators<sup>16</sup>. In much of the literature, the terms ‘fixer’ and ‘translator’ are used interchangeably.

However, the role of translation itself merits highlighting because it is one of the channels through which fixers mediate cultural differences. Good translation in the context of news gathering and documentary making is not simply about verbatim reports back and forth. It requires journalistic processes and ethics, as well as a good understanding of objectives and a recognition of the cultural nuances required.

*“When being asked about how much they thought that the translations provided by the ‘fixer’ actually affect the news. Not that big a deal, according to foreign correspondents, while ‘their fixers’ saw it as fundamental in the creation of news content. Also, the Indian ‘fixers’ I talked to frequently did emphasize the importance of translation. For them it included construing a whole baggage of cultural characteristics and sensitivities. Translation in that sense also means moderating because apparently quite frequently the Western journalist steps in it and risks the most important interview of the day.”<sup>17</sup>*

An article explaining the role of Afghan interpreters to both journalists and the military ended up describing them as fixers, saying, “They are not only the mouthpiece for their clients, they are also their ears and must report what the other side are saying. They aren’t neutral; their loyalty is to their clients, some of whose lives they saved.”<sup>18</sup>

## Drivers

Drivers were described by interviewees as being at the bottom of the hierarchy within a documentary, news or sports team. As one said, “Often you have less of a relationship with the drivers and there tends to be a language barrier. I don’t remember their names like I remember those of fixers.”<sup>19</sup> (Documentary maker)

However, drivers are a critical part of the team, without whom others would not be able to do their job. For example, one broadcaster does not let any of their employees self-drive due to unfamiliarity with local legislation and geography<sup>20</sup>. The ability of local drivers to navigate challenging terrain or hostile environments may be crucial to the whole team’s safety and security. The Committee to Protect Journalists emphasised that drivers should be considered as media support workers as they also face many of the same risks that local crews, fixers and other support staff experience<sup>21</sup>.

There are different ways that drivers are employed. For a major sports event, the broadcaster may use a company that specialises in providing drivers, either sending them out to locations, recruiting locally or working with a local service provider. These drivers

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<sup>16</sup> Survey of fixers, July 2021

<sup>17</sup> World Fixer Community (2014) “Fixing” Amongst Argonauts

<sup>18</sup> Unprofessional Translation (2021) *The Fate of Afghan Fixers*

<sup>19</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>20</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>21</sup> Interviews 2021

tend to be well vetted and monitored as the reputation of the company responsible for them is on the line<sup>22</sup>.

*“We’ve got a very strict driver recruitment procedure in place which has evolved over the years...We invite them to come to our offices and do a complete background check and a role play situation with them, interviews, practical driving tests and so on, before we decide if people are going to join our pool or become frequent drivers. That’s quite a procedure.”<sup>23</sup>  
(Supplier of drivers to sports broadcasting)*

Despite having time to plan for large sporting events, there can still be last minute changes and requirements, especially when logistics are linked to sporting results. For example, if there are UK broadcasters covering the Football World Cup and England do well in the knockout stages, this is likely to increase last minute demands. A supplier said that to manage the risk of late changes, they always accredit a buffer of drivers. For example, if 20 drivers are needed, the company will accredit up to 30 in order to manage changes<sup>24</sup>.

For news and documentary teams, it appears common to rely on fixers to find drivers, meaning that any vetting takes place through a third party and may not take place at all. One broadcaster admitted, “we don’t vet the drivers”<sup>25</sup>. News and documentary genres also seem much less likely to work through companies that approve rosters of drivers and to work instead with individuals. There may also be less opportunity or fewer resources to plan carefully and both drivers and crew may therefore face increased risks to their safety.

#### **Good practices for broadcasters**

- Remind teams that drivers are colleagues and essential to assignments
- Ensure vetted suppliers are in place – avoid the temptation to go with the cheapest option
- Budget for a buffer of support to cover last-minute changes to requirements

#### **Hotel or venue staff**

International teams use hotels and venues where they may come into contact with workers who are experiencing poor labour practices or exploitation, in some cases amounting to modern slavery. The hospitality industry is high risk for modern slavery worldwide<sup>26</sup> and interviewees for this research have said that they have encountered individuals that they were concerned about in these environments in the course of their work.

Where broadcasters are selecting hotels directly, they may be able to carry out due diligence prior to arrival to ensure that the hotel treats its staff well. Often though they rely on third party support (such as a company or fixer) or have limited choice, because a sports federation requires a particular venue is used or because there are no other options in the area. There may, however, still be opportunities to reinforce standards. In 2018, Liverpool FC turned down a five-star hotel in Qatar because of concerns about labour rights<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Interviews 2021; Interviews 2019

<sup>23</sup> Interview 2019

<sup>24</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>25</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>26</sup> Lea, S. (2018) *Tackling modern slavery in the hotel sector*

<sup>27</sup> Cole, J. (2019) *The reason Liverpool have rejected five-star hotel in Qatar as base for FIFA Club World Cup*

When an intermediary is involved, there may be opportunities to require checks on working practices. For example, one supplier working for a broadcaster to source accommodation for large sporting events explained that having additional requirements for due diligence in contracts would give them greater leverage with the hotels.

However, broadcast teams may still encounter poor practices. While there is unlikely to be any legal liability for broadcasters in relation to worker exploitation in hotels, there may be reputational concerns in terms of association and teams themselves may also want to take action to address situations they come across. Broadcasters can ensure teams know how to respond and feel able to raise concerns in the knowledge they will be acted upon appropriately.

If teams spot potential poor working practices in hotels or venues, they should:

- Make sure they do not put themselves in danger
- Understand whether law enforcement is likely to be helpful or complicit
- Notify local law enforcement or trafficking helplines if appropriate and not likely to further imperil potential victims
- Notify a local not-for-profit organisation that works on these issues if law enforcement is not reliable
- Notify the broadcaster team that leads on human rights for support and advice

#### **Good practices for broadcasters**

- Require any intermediary to conduct due diligence on working conditions at hotels that will be used
- Ensure preparation to travel includes reviewing destinations to understand whether trafficking and exploitation issues can be raised with the authorities without putting victims at further risk; if not, identify other routes to raise concerns, such as local NGOs
- Prepare teams that travel with a briefing on how to spot the signs of exploitation and how to respond to them

## Working conditions

### Wages

Media support workers are generally paid well in comparison to local salaries, especially fixers. However, sometimes this seems to come with a tacit understanding that if something were to happen to the fixer, their generous wages should be enough to outweigh the issue.

Despite good salaries, media support workers have little recourse if their clients refuse to pay after work is completed. Examples included a fixer who did three weeks of preparation before being told that the international team were going with a cheaper alternative.

Another fixer said, “Some people are bad at paying. Others book crew or fixers and cancel at the last minute - sometimes without informing us.”<sup>28</sup> In such circumstances, there is little that media support workers can do beyond warning others not to work with the bad payers.

“Currently, most of our work is done without contracts and just by verbal agreement – and so it’s very possible that in the future I’ll again waste my time working for a company like that famous magazine, and end up not getting paid. But if a third party was there to safeguard the deal between us, I’d feel a lot safer.”<sup>29</sup> Organisations like Paydesk and World Fixer are platforms that offer that safeguarding, acting as a payment intermediary between broadcasters and freelancers and, in the case of Paydesk, insuring the freelancers as well.

#### Good practice for broadcasters

- Establish a clear contract with all third parties in advance of work being undertaken
- Pay for any work completed even if the relationship is discontinued
- Consider using reputable intermediary platforms to manage relationships with freelancers if the broadcaster’s own systems are too clunky to set up contracts at the speed required

### Working hours

Working hours are long in TV – whether that’s news, sports or documentaries. For fixers it is seen as part of the role and compensated accordingly. One broadcaster mentioned providing double pay or bonuses for those having to work particularly long hours, especially at short notice<sup>30</sup>. That said, Murrell points out that fixers, “often lack power and agency in their media work and are forced to accept sub-standard employment conditions”<sup>31</sup>.

For sporting events, hours can be particularly long around the events themselves, but the requirements should be known well in advance to enable sufficient planning. One supplier of drivers to such events uses coordinators to review schedules and flag situations where drivers may be under pressure to drive too fast or take risks. “If you prepare drivers well and instruct them on what to expect and how to work with the crew, it could be an easy job for them. If you don’t, the pressure can build up. Experienced ones know how to take rest opportunities when they get them.”<sup>32</sup> (Supplier of drivers to sports broadcasting)

One interviewee mentioned that they believed the number of hours that freelancers, journalists and media support workers are working is a safety risk and that the ratio of salary to hours is exploitative.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Survey of fixers, July 2021

<sup>29</sup> Abdo, M. (8 November 2014) *When the shooting Starts, who has your back?*

<sup>30</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>31</sup> Murrell, C (2019) *Fixers as entrepreneurs*

<sup>32</sup> Interview 2019

<sup>33</sup> Interviews 2021

### Hierarchies and a culture of 'us' and 'them'

Fixers reported that there is sometimes or usually a culture of 'us' and 'them' with international teams that they work with<sup>34</sup>. This can contribute to the sense that they are somehow invisible, with local journalists not acknowledged as such by their international peers. Fixers' comments on how this made them feel included:

- "It makes it harder to integrate the broadcast team into the subject. It sometimes causes distrust or inefficiency"
- "Feeling not included and making it difficult getting to know the people you are working for more informally. It can lead to a somewhat uncomfortable working environment."<sup>35</sup>

Hierarchies can lead to mistreatment of media support workers. For example, one supplier of drivers said that he "had complaints from drivers not being treated well and being spoken to rudely"<sup>36</sup>. Such mistreatment can progress to bullying and harassment, impacting on a person's physical and mental wellbeing. It can also be the result of discrimination.

Furthermore, a hierarchical approach can and does have significant consequences if fixers and other media support workers are seen as having less value. It may mean that they are not included in conversations and risk assessments, their views and perspectives are discounted, they are not given the same training and support, and, in the worst cases, their lives may be sacrificed for the sake of the international teams they are working with.

*"I do feel strongly that local freelancers should be treated like our employees and I've always been appalled at how easily people make the distinction in their own heads between them [local staff] and us...it's very easy to see that kind of treatment happen – you can see they won't acknowledge someone else...it's shocking because it comes from colleagues who are totally nice but it's a perfect example of unconscious bias [when they] don't acknowledge people."<sup>37</sup> (Broadcaster, Production Operations)*

One interviewee said that the hierarchy was usually the international correspondent(s) who parachuted in, then the fixer, then everyone else (camera operator, driver etc)<sup>38</sup>. Another interviewee who confirmed that there is always a hierarchy of some sort also explained that the dynamics on the team reflect their composition. She said that she has found, "crews like it when there's a woman on the team because it is less macho"<sup>39</sup> (Documentary maker). Organisations that seem to be more aware of this particular issue are those with women and minorities in senior roles responsible for security and production operations.

George Packer describes an imbalance of power in relation to fixers, including an imbalance in money, infrastructure, and a dependence on references to get the next job. In addition, the international correspondent or team can leave if a situation gets too difficult, but the local fixer cannot. "The relationship between fixers and foreign correspondents can be very close. Shared dangers and successes will do that, especially when the work done together,

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<sup>34</sup> Survey of fixers, July 2021

<sup>35</sup> Survey of fixers, July 2021

<sup>36</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>37</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>38</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>39</sup> Interviews 2021

the tie between you, is what puts you at risk... For the most part, the risk strengthens the bond. It becomes a cause of tension only when it's borne by just one side."<sup>40</sup>

As a result of the imbalance of power, it is challenging for fixers and other media support workers to raise concerns. One interviewee said that there is a "culture of keeping quiet among fixers"<sup>41</sup>.

#### **Good practice for broadcasters:**

- Reinforce principles of diversity, equity and inclusion among teams travelling internationally – sensitise people to be respectful and sanction those who are not
- Recognise the contribution of fixers and other media support workers to ensure that they are seen as full team members
- Include references to fixers and other media support workers in policies and supporting infrastructure where possible
- Consider how to increase the diversity of production operations teams such that this issue is regularly considered and prioritised
- Have a complaints process where fixers and other media support workers can raise concerns anonymously or provide feedback about specific productions

### **Cultural insensitivity**

Cultural insensitivity is an issue raised by a range of interviewees and in the literature, in terms of both a lack of sensitivity towards cultural practices and a lack of knowledge about the historical context and current issues of the countries visited. This can underpin several human rights risks.

Firstly, there is a danger of misrepresentation, where contributors participate in a documentary or news piece in good faith but find their story has been unfairly or inaccurately portrayed due to a lack of cultural awareness. For example, in 2017 the BBC apologised for a documentary it had commissioned that was filmed in Australia by an independent production company and was described as 'misleading' after community members complained.<sup>42</sup> Such approaches can also impact media support workers, whether they have been able to influence the international team's approach or not. As Palmer writes, "the 'nonfiction', 'realistic' nature of documentary production can, like that of news production, place fixers in tension with locally based people who may not want certain information to emerge."<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, a lack of cultural sensitivity can put the lives of media support workers and their families at risk, particularly in areas with a history of tension or conflict.<sup>44</sup> This can range from causing offence to a powerful actor, to upsetting members of a local community.

A lack of cultural awareness can also lead to misunderstandings or expectations that are borderline discriminatory. One fixer described a "journalists' dismay that he (the fixer) was not personally acquainted with the city's local drug cartels."<sup>45</sup> Such misunderstandings also prevent trust being built, which can be essential to the safety of everyone in the team.

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<sup>40</sup> Packer, G (2009), "It's always the fixer who dies", *The New Yorker*

<sup>41</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>42</sup> Wainwright, S (2017), "BBC suspends relationship with producers of controversial Wilcannia documentary" *ABC News*

<sup>43</sup> Palmer (2019), *The Fixers*

<sup>44</sup> Palmer, L. (2016), *Being the bridge: News fixers perspectives on cultural difference in reporting the 'war on terror'*

<sup>45</sup> The World Fixer Community (2018), *Behind the Cameras: A View from Mexico's Fixers*

Related to this, international teams who have not done their own preparation or research will be wholly reliant on their fixer and may not be able to identify risks in particular situations, understand potential issues or know what could be dangerous. One interviewee provided an example, “You go to the DRC and your fixer looks for a local guide. It might be that there is local conflict between two communities and by picking a guide from one, it creates tensions. Or a guide agrees but says it will be dangerous but the fixer may not inform the production team.”<sup>46</sup> (Documentary maker)

In part, it may be the role of the fixer to help international teams navigate sensitive local context. However, teams need to be prepared to listen, be challenged on their approach and to take on board feedback.

#### **Good practice for broadcasters**

- Ensure teams travelling have done adequate preparation on the countries they are visiting
- Invite fixers or others with local knowledge and experience to provide pre-travel briefings on cultural sensitivities or relevant issues to the news, sports or documentary assignment
- Encourage teams to have a continuous dialogue with their fixer and other media support workers to check their approach and understanding and to be active in seeking feedback

#### **Pressure to take risks**

Because working with international news, sports and documentary teams can be relatively lucrative, fixers, drivers and other third parties may feel unable to resist pressure to take risks. Western media outlets may pay significantly more than average local salaries, which can encourage moonlighting by public sector employees, such as police officers offering themselves as security personnel. As one interviewee said, the financial rewards mean that “they will roll over for you so if you’re asking things that are a breach of human rights, they might say yes”<sup>47</sup>, whether that’s an 18-hour working day, travelling to a dangerous location, or paying a bribe in exchange for information. This is a particular issue if international journalists and crews are not sensitive to the pressures.

*“The pressure to take extra risks is something I really worry about. Journalists sometimes accept risks way more and drive everyone before them regardless of whether it’s a good idea or not. If you’re a fixer, you’re not going to say no.”<sup>48</sup> (Broadcaster security team)*

What international crews should look for in third party support is a willingness to challenge back, rather than always saying that something is not a problem. However, that is not easy given the power imbalances. As one broadcaster noted, “It’s hard to get people to give positive feedback on a fixer who says ‘no’ occasionally”<sup>49</sup>.

#### **Good practice for broadcasters**

- Remind travelling teams that media support workers may feel obliged to say yes to things they are not comfortable with and reinforce the need for challenge and dialogue
- Encourage media support workers to report centrally any undue pressure they may face

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<sup>46</sup> Interviews 2020

<sup>47</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>48</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>49</sup> Interviews 2021

## Duty of care

### Mental health / Psychosocial safety

There is increasing recognition of the mental health challenges associated with journalism and the need for a broadcaster's duty of care to extend to mental health. "As journalism gets riskier and the dangers become more visible, experts warn that the mental health of journalists is increasingly at risk."<sup>50</sup> Hannah Storm, chief executive of the Ethical Journalism Network, raised the need for an "emotional flak jacket"<sup>51</sup> for those covering stories where their mental health could be at risk, and building such issues into risk assessments and mitigation plans. In addition, one interviewee said, "Trauma literacy should be on a par with hostile environment training"<sup>52</sup>.

Mental health challenges are also faced by fixers and other media support workers but usually with no infrastructure or support in place for them. They can experience trauma, family breakdown and other issues because of the stories they have helped to cover for news and documentaries. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can manifest as symptoms that, "are often severe and persistent enough to have a significant impact on the person's day-to-day life"<sup>53</sup> (NHS). For example, in the course of their work with international crews, they may witness major accidents or natural disasters, be required to watch raw footage of horrific incidents, come across individuals experiencing extreme suffering or translate harrowing stories.

*"All too often, we also don't think about the psychological impact of our work on our fixers and translators: what we are investigating is happening to their people, and it is a very different experience to interview a torture or rape victim as a foreign journalist versus interviewing that same victim when they come from your community."*<sup>54</sup>

Currently, there is no standard practice for supporting the mental health of media workers supporting news, sports and documentary teams.

### Safety during assignment

Media support workers can risk injury, death, arrest, detention, or illness in the course of their assignments with international clients but are far less likely to have training, safety equipment, insurance or other forms of support. Journalist George Packer put it starkly in an article entitled, "It's always the fixer who dies".<sup>55</sup>

Many media support workers are 'local' so their situation is often viewed by international teams as part of their general existence, even if the very fact that they are working with foreign media increases their personal risk. For example, they may be at risk from the nature of the assignment, whether it involves travelling somewhere with poor roads and increased chances of traffic accidents, covering a controversial topic, or seeking interviews with individuals to whom risks are attached. They may also be at risk from their association with international teams, making them more of a target within their own communities who

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<sup>50</sup> Clifford, L. et al. (2015), *Under Threat: The Changing State of Media Safety*

<sup>51</sup> Tobitt, C. (2021) "Call for journalists to receive 'emotional flak jackets' against worsening online abuse", *Press Gazette*

<sup>52</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>53</sup> National Health Service (NHS), *Overview: Post traumatic stress disorder*

<sup>54</sup> World Fixer Community (2016) *Fixing beyond media: Leading Human Rights Defender*

<sup>55</sup> Packer, G (2009), *It's Always the Fixer who Dies*

may be hostile. Despite this, there is a sense among some broadcasters that this is simply a risk to be borne by the fixer who would experience such risks anyway as a consequence of living where they do.

#### **Case study: Getting shot in Egypt**

*“Sheshtawy told me about a time when one of his foreign journalists got into an argument with the Egyptian police, leading Sheshtawy to get shot in the leg. The journalist’s news organization did not pay his medical bills because, in Sheshtawy’s words, ‘it happened this way, in Egypt’. Thus, rather than taking responsibility for the fixers’ safety in Cairo, the editors decided that because Egyptians inhabited a different and ostensibly more turbulent culture, Sheshtawy’s injury was not the news outlets’ concern. No one seemed interested in the fact that the foreign reporter had failed to listen to Sheshtawy’s advice to stand down, directly causing his injury.”<sup>56</sup>*

Local media support workers are also often seen as ‘informal’, perhaps drivers and translators even more so than fixers, and particularly if they are paid in cash. Where there is a lack of a formal relationship, there may also be a lack of any sense of responsibility towards such individuals. One fixer explained how he suffered a head injury from a road traffic accident and ended up in hospital with no means to pay for scans or treatment. Luckily the journalist he was with offered to pay but there was no guarantee that this would have happened: “As is often the case in the world of fixers, I was at the mercy of a visiting journalist’s generosity.”<sup>57</sup>

A duty of care to media support workers and other third parties is not simply a moral issue; it is about considering the safety of everyone on the team. As one interviewee put it, “You don’t take a combat-level first aid course to apply a tourniquet to yourself when you step on a landmine: you take the course so you can help out a colleague when something like that happens. So, what happens if you are the one who steps on the mine, and your fixer hasn’t had any security or first aid training? You’ll pay the price.”<sup>58</sup>

Important in mitigating safety risks is ensuring that media support workers have access to training, however, it appears that few broadcasters invest in training their local freelancers. Of six fixers surveyed for this research, four reported never receiving training. One exception among the broadcasters is NBC Universal which reported providing hostile environment first aid training (HEFAT) for fixers it works with regularly.

*“Whereas western media outlets often give their crews proper training to deal with whatever situation they find themselves in, no one gives the same training to the local fixers who are theoretically responsible for the foreign crews’ safety. Too often, we are on our own.”<sup>59</sup>*

The six fixers engaged for this research also reported limited security support, safety equipment and insurance. Three said they never received security support or safety equipment when needed, one sometimes received it and one always received it. For insurance, two sometimes received insurance, one always and two never. For all these questions, one fixer said these requirements were not applicable<sup>60</sup>. Whilst this was a small sample, it confirmed the findings from wider literature and other stakeholder interviews.

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<sup>56</sup> Palmer, L. (2016) *Being the Bridge: News Fixers’ Perspectives on Cultural Difference in Reporting the ‘War on Terror’*

<sup>57</sup> Abdo (2014), *When the Shooting Starts*

<sup>58</sup> Lloyd-George (2016), *Fixing Beyond Media*

<sup>59</sup> Abdo (2014), *When the Shooting Starts*

<sup>60</sup> Survey of fixers, July 2021

This is despite a significant number of outlets having signed up to the Freelance Journalist Safety Principles, which include a commitment that, “News organizations and editors should endeavour to treat journalists and freelancers they use on a regular basis in a similar manner to the way they treat staffers when it comes to issues of safety training, first aid and other safety equipment, and responsibility in the event of injury or kidnap”<sup>61</sup>.

Until recently, it had been very difficult to provide insurance to local media support workers but since 2020, there has been a product available to broadcasters called Insurance for Local Media<sup>62</sup>. The product enables companies to set up an account, pay a deposit upfront, and retrospectively send in details of who was employed on which day. The system recognises that news reporting has to respond to changes at short notice, and that a driver booked for two days might suddenly be required for four. This enables local media support workers to have insurance that covers them in the event of injury or death. It means that if there is a road accident, the insurance company will arrange for everyone in the vehicle to be taken to hospital, not only the international team.

There is, however, still a gap in insurance that covers illness, arrest, detention, and kidnap. One way to address this is to agree at the outset with media support workers what the policy and approach will be. As Lloyd-George writes, “Fixers do a job that is of fundamental importance to the success of our work. They deserve to be treated with respect and care for their safety, and to receive fair compensation for their work. It’s important to agree on all of that up front—the salary, but also what happens if the fixer gets hurt, arrested, or the car ends in an accident. Those issues need to be discussed up front, or you can end up in a very unpleasant situation”<sup>63</sup>.

Broadcasters’ duty of care needs to extend to contributors as well. In documentary making and news broadcasting in particular, although also in some sports broadcasting, teams may depend on information or insights from contributors. This may involve someone admitting something or speaking out in a way that puts them or the crew at risk. Broadcasters should ensure that contributors are as safe as possible and incorporated into security planning.

#### **Good practice for broadcasters**

- When commissioning work, formalise an agreement for duty of care towards local media support workers and provide risk assessment and resources
- Aim to establish long-term relationships with media support workers and invest in them with training, equipment and ongoing support, including for mental health
- Provide insurance for all media support workers on assignments and establish policies and protocols in the event of uninsurable situations occurring
- Incorporate duty of care to contributors into security planning

#### **Safety post assignment**

The behaviour of international journalists and crew, as well as the stories they cover, can have significant consequences for fixers and other local workers supporting international teams, long after that international team has left. As well as being targets in their own right, Palmer also explains how fixers can be targeted “*in place of* foreign journalists who have already left the field”<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> ACOS Alliance, Freelance Journalist Safety Principles, <https://www.acosalliance.org/the-principles>

<sup>62</sup> Insurance for Local Media. Available at <https://insuranceforlocalmedia.com/>

<sup>63</sup> Lloyd-George (2016), *Fixing Beyond*

<sup>64</sup> Palmer, L (2019), *The Fixers*, p.155

*“After we leave, the fixers and translators continue to live in their societies, and that groundbreaking exposé the journalist wrote on the abusive security services may end up with a knock on the door of the fixer by those same security services”<sup>65</sup>.*

*“It serves as a chilling reminder for a foreign correspondent that while you can waltz into a country and then disappear back where you came from, your local journalist colleague – and for that matter, your driver cannot. They sometimes have to pay a very high price for doing what they do”<sup>66</sup>.*

Not only are the media support workers at risk, but sometimes their families are targeted too, including by hostile state actors affecting their rights to work and a family life. For example, families of Iranian staff working for BBC Persian Service experienced harassment from state actors. The NUJ reported that, “At least 44 BBC Persian staff members have said their family members have lost their jobs or businesses as a result of the intimidation carried out by the Iranian authorities... sometimes the explicit reason that has been stated has been their connection with a BBC journalist”<sup>67</sup>.

As well as presenting physical security risks, local media support workers may experience significant impacts to their long-term wellbeing as a result of their work with international broadcasters, including illness, trauma and damaged reputations<sup>68</sup>. In addition, long missions can be draining and impact on family relationships.

#### **Case study: Afghanistan**

The risks taken by media support workers and the lack of formal methods to support them have been highlighted by the fall of Afghanistan, with journalists, fixers and individuals who had supported international news teams pleading for help to escape. Various news outlets lobbied governments to provide routes out for those who had worked with them and many succeeded in escaping<sup>69</sup>. However, journalist Azmat Khan has pointed to a “failure of policies and procedures”, where those Afghan media workers with the right personal connections to international journalists were getting prioritised and helped, while those without such connections had no mechanisms to rely on.<sup>70</sup>

The situation has brought into mainstream discussion the risks that local workers take in supporting international media teams. “Television networks, newspapers, and magazines that brought Americans coverage of their government’s two-decade involvement in Afghanistan relied on scores of local reporters, photographers, interpreters, and drivers to get the story — a job that came with far greater risks to the locals than to their American counterparts. At least 53 journalists have been killed in Afghanistan since 2001, according to a tally by CPJ, most of them Afghan nationals.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Lloyd-George (2016), *Fixing Beyond*

<sup>66</sup> Miller (2015), *Foreign Correspondents and Fixers*

<sup>67</sup> National Union of Journalists (NUJ) (June 2018), *Submission to the foreign affairs parliamentary committee inquiry into the FCO’s human rights work: Iran’s harassment and persecution of BBC Persian Service journalists in London and their families in Iran*

<sup>68</sup> Palmer, L (2019), *The Fixers*

<sup>69</sup> Savage, M (2021), “Afghan journalists win right to come to Britain after media appeal”, *The Guardian*; O’Connor, M (2021), “At risk Afghan journalists to be offered UK relocation”, *BBC*; Speri, A (2021) “US media organizations scramble to get hundreds of Afghan colleagues to safety”, *The Intercept*

<sup>70</sup> Speri, A (2021) *US media organizations scramble to get hundreds of Afghan colleagues to safety*

<sup>71</sup> Speri, A (2021) *US media organizations scramble to get hundreds of Afghan colleagues to safety*

Afghanistan stands out because the situation has been acute and extreme, making the risks faced by local journalists and support workers very clear. However, these risks exist in many other situations that are not acknowledged in the same way, and there is a continued tendency to view local media support workers as providing invisible labour. This is reflected in two other post-assignment issues flagged during the research.

The first is lack of consent around the inclusion of media support workers in footage. For example, one fixer said, “a UK production company used footage that has my voice and small bits of my back in an investigative documentary without my consent and a heads-up”.<sup>72</sup> This not only risks the right to privacy and the right to just and favourable conditions of work but may also lead to safety and security risks if the person is identifiable and the topic controversial.

The second is a lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the role media support workers play, which may impact their earning ability and their mental health. In one article, a fixer remarked, “It would be good to be recognised for our efforts because...I almost died so many times”.<sup>73</sup>

Resolving these issues involves broadcasters recognising the risks that local media support workers take on their behalf and respecting their human rights. One fixer identified another solution: “There is a real need for an organisation to stand up for fixers’ rights. We are an important and unsung part of foreign journalism – and we need better representation. To work in safety, we need a legal status that would show the authorities – or even angry street mobs – that we have a right to work as we do. I need to feel like someone has my back”.<sup>74</sup>

#### **Good practice for broadcasters**

- Factor mental health, safety, and security of all media support workers post-assignment into risk assessments
- Provide a mechanism that enables media support workers to access support and assistance after the completion of their assignment if it has an adverse impact on their safety or wellbeing or that of their families, especially around the time of transmission
- Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of media support workers, crediting them where possible
- Ensure consent of media support workers if they are used in footage

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<sup>72</sup> Survey of Fixers, July 2021

<sup>73</sup> Jessica Gutch (2014), *Facing the Fixer*

<sup>74</sup> Abdo (2014), *When the Shooting Starts*

## Use of cash

For news, sports and documentary teams working overseas, it appears to be common to carry cash to pay for subsistence and incidentals. In some cases, it is used to pay the salaries of media support workers or to make donations to local contributors or host communities. As one interviewee said, “There are times when you hire a local fixer or driver and it’s easiest to pay in cash”<sup>75</sup> (Broadcaster). In these cases, there are human rights risks to consider.

### Bribery and ethical practices

In different countries, different approaches are the norm in relation to cash payments. Sometimes it is difficult to know where a line is crossed between legitimate compensation and problematic payments, sometimes referred to as ‘facility payments’ or ‘disruption payments’, but which could be considered bribery. For example, a payment to a village head as thanks for permitting filming could be construed as a bribe. Bribery is considered a human rights risk because it tends to corrupt due processes and means that decisions may not be made in the best interests of the people impacted.

The major broadcasters have strict anti-bribery policies and protocols in place but sometimes payments still have to be made in order to ensure people’s safety or because there is no other form of acceptable monetary exchange. However, it was clear from the research that there are considerable grey areas, often obscured by the use of media support workers from which the international team can distance themselves.

*“Sometimes a situation is resolved [such as equipment being held up at customs] and it’s unclear how and whether it involved payments paid by the fixer.”<sup>76</sup> (Documentary maker)*

*“If someone’s on the ground and in a sticky situation and they pay someone off to get a story, would they even report it?”<sup>77</sup> (Broadcaster security lead)*

Specific problems occur when precedents are set. If a broadcast or documentary team ends up agreeing to pay a bribe, it can make it less safe for those who come after. One broadcaster that routinely runs into this situation relies on the fixer to tell them what is customary, who will get paid and what they will get. They will then try to corroborate the information by asking other news organisations known to have visited previously with the goal of neither breaking nor setting precedents. If it is required or a custom, then the broadcaster aims to be creative, avoiding cash if possible or offering donations to local churches or schools.

#### Good practices for broadcasters

- Ensure teams ask their fixers and other media support workers questions in order to understand what any cash is being used for
- Corroborate what a fixer says about the need for bribes and facilitation payments and make it a last, not a first resort
- Document all payments made and get receipts wherever possible

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<sup>75</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>76</sup> Interviews 2021

<sup>77</sup> Interviews 2021

- Require an explanation from international teams to internal compliance for any facilitation payments made
- Issue contracts to fixers and require an invoice in order to pay
- Pay salaries into bank accounts rather than in cash wherever possible and require some sort of receipt or invoice if cash is the only option
- Avoid using cash to pay for security, especially public security
- Avoid setting precedents in terms of cash payments and bribes

## Sanctions

When filming in countries with sanctions against them, there is a risk that broadcast teams will end up paying money to sanctioned individuals or companies. For example, in order to get a permit to film, payments may be required to political figures subject to one of a range of international sanctions. It is not a defence to make such payments through intermediaries such as media support workers. The UK's Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation explains that, "When a person or organisation is subject to an asset freeze, any funds or economic resources belonging to them, must be frozen. You must not deal with these assets, or make them available to, or for the benefit of, a designated person unless there is an exception in the legislation you can rely on, or you have a valid licence."<sup>78</sup>

Media organisations can apply for licences but there are no sanctions regimes that explicitly name exceptions for media. A representative from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) provided another example as to how media can operate within sanctioned environments. "In trade sanctions, for example, there is an arms embargo and transit control on the Central African Republic. It prohibits the export of military goods or military technology to CAR. However, a licence is available for the *export..... of non-lethal military goods or military technology intended solely for humanitarian or protective use*. The exception - the licence - allows the media to export *non-lethal military goods or military technology* to CAR. Usually, this kind of licence is used to allow the media to export protective clothing or armoured vehicles to a sanctioned country."<sup>79</sup>

One broadcaster said that for countries like Syria and North Korea, they make it clear to the fixer what company policies and legal or regulatory requirements are, although with varying success: "We'll say we can't do this; if they are insistent then we'll push back and ask who else has done this. Sometimes that works and sometimes it doesn't."<sup>80</sup> (Broadcaster)

In some cases, payments to sanctioned individuals may be unavoidable but that does not mean that it is acceptable to look the other way. Individuals who are subject to sanctions have often committed serious human rights abuses or crimes against humanity. Any project must take into consideration how such payments prop up serial human rights abusers.

## Safety risks in carrying cash

Finally, there may be considerable safety risks to anyone carrying cash or being paid in cash as they become a target for (possibly violent) thieves and fraudsters. Furthermore, if those being paid are unable to deposit their cash in a bank or store it safely, the risks to their physical safety and those they live with may continue.

<sup>78</sup> Email from Office for Financial Sanctions Implementation, received May 2021

<sup>79</sup> Email from FCDO, received May 2021

<sup>80</sup> Interviews 2021

## Conclusion

There are a range of human rights risks involved in working with media support workers on news, sports and documentaries, mostly impacting the media support workers themselves, but also risking the safety and security of broadcasters' own teams. Broadcasters have a responsibility under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to identify, assess, address and remediate the human rights risks and impacts that arise as a result of their activities and relationships, not simply those that affect their direct employees.

There are good practices suggested throughout this report to address different risks. The main improvements for broadcasters to consider are how to:

- Ensure adequate vetting and due diligence of third-party suppliers and individuals, to reduce the risks of poor labour or ethical practices
- Provide media support workers with training, equipment, insurance, safety, and post-assignment support
- Prepare teams that travel in terms of cultural awareness, risk awareness and consideration towards the media support workers they encounter
- Ensure all those involved in assignments know how to raise concerns and feel comfortable and confident in doing so

## Appendix A: Good practice checklist for broadcasters

RECOMMENDATION	In place? Yes, partially, no
<b>Third Party Requirements &amp; Vetting</b>	
When finding new fixers, gather as many references as possible	
When using a new fixer for the first time, build a relationship in advance to align expectations and iron out any issues pre-emptively	
Document who the fixer is within the system, in advance of hiring them, so that they can be paid properly	
Build long-term relationships with a small number of fixers and invest in them	
Remind teams that drivers are colleagues and essential to assignments	
Ensure vetted suppliers are in place – avoid the temptation to go with the cheapest option	
Budget for a buffer of support to cover last-minute changes to requirements	
Require any intermediary to conduct due diligence on working conditions at hotels that will be used	
Ensure preparation to travel includes reviewing destinations to understand whether trafficking and exploitation issues can be raised with the authorities without putting victims at further risk; if not, identify other routes to raise concerns, such as local NGOs	
<b>Working Conditions</b>	
Prepare teams that travel with a briefing on how to spot the signs of exploitation and how to respond	
Establish a clear contract with all third parties in advance of work being undertaken	
Pay for any work completed even if the relationship is discontinued	
Consider using reputable intermediary platforms to manage relationships with freelancers if the broadcaster’s own systems are too clunky to set up contracts at the speed required	
Reinforce principles of diversity, equity and inclusion among teams travelling internationally – sensitise people to be respectful and sanction those who are not	
Recognise the contribution of fixers and other media support workers to ensure that they are seen as full team members	
Include reference to fixers and other media support workers in policies and supporting infrastructure where possible	
Consider how to increase the diversity of production operations teams such that this issue is regularly considered and prioritised	
Have a complaints process where fixers and other media support workers can raise concerns anonymously or provide feedback about specific productions	
Ensure teams travelling have done adequate preparation on the countries they are visiting	
Invite fixers or others with local knowledge and experience to provide pre-travel briefings on cultural sensitivities or relevant issues to the news, sports, or documentary assignment	
Encourage teams to have a continuous dialogue with their fixer and other media support workers to check their approach and understanding and to be active in seeking feedback	
Remind travelling teams that media support workers may feel obliged to say yes to things they are not comfortable with and reinforce the need for challenge and dialogue	

<b>Duty of Care</b>	
Encourage media support workers to report centrally any undue pressure they may face	
When commissioning work, formalise an agreement for duty of care towards local media support workers and provide risk assessment and resources	
Aim to establish long-term relationships with media support workers and invest in them with training, equipment and ongoing support, including for mental health	
Provide insurance for all media support workers on assignments and establish policies and protocols in the event of uninsurable situations occurring	
Incorporate duty of care to contributors into security planning	
Factor mental health, safety and security of all media support workers post-assignment into risk assessments	
Provide a mechanism that enables media support workers to access support and assistance after the completion of their assignment if it has an adverse impact on their safety or wellbeing or that of their families, especially around the time of transmission	
Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of media support workers, crediting them where possible	
Ensure consent of media support workers if they are used in footage	
<b>Use of Cash</b>	
Ensure teams ask their fixers and other media support workers questions in order to understand what any cash is being used for	
Corroborate what a fixer says about the need for bribes and facilitation payments and make it a last not a first resort	
Document all payments made and get receipts wherever possible	
Require an explanation from international teams to internal compliance for any facilitation payments made	
Issue contracts to fixers and require an invoice in order to pay	
Pay salaries into bank accounts rather than in cash wherever possible, and require some sort of receipt or invoice if cash is the only option	
Avoid using cash to pay for security, especially public security	
Avoid setting precedents in terms of cash payments and bribes	

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