

# Press Start

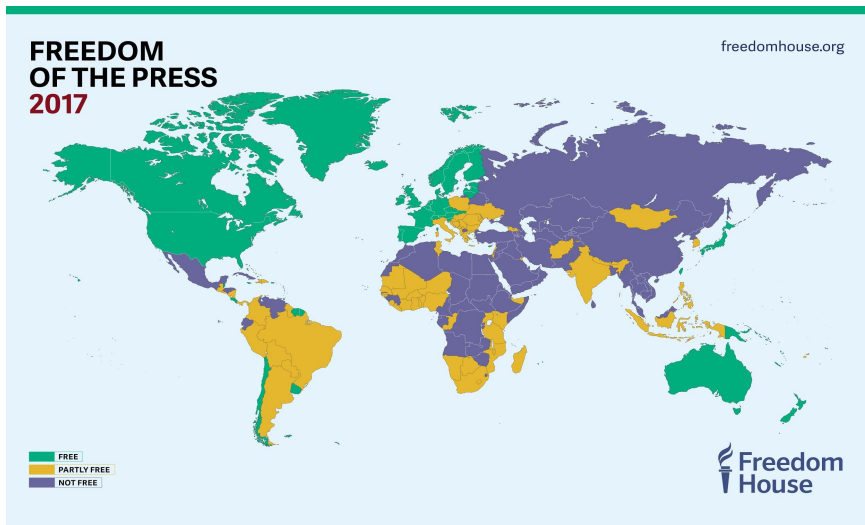
Crowdfunding Stories That Matter



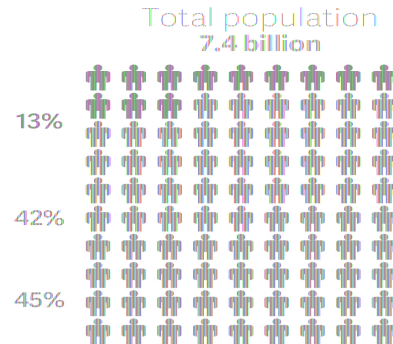


# The Problem

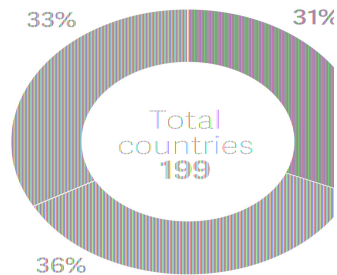
More than six billion people worldwide live in countries with media that are partly free or not free, while courageous, independent media and journalists struggle to make a living under debilitating political and financial pressures. The lack of strong, vibrant independent journalism removes a key watchdog.



GLOBAL: STATUS BY POPULATION



GLOBAL: STATUS BY COUNTRY



Graphs by Freedom House





# Media Under Threat

---

**Direct pressure:** prison sentences on fabricated charges, threats of criminal charges for libel, political control of "public"/state broadcasting, violence against journalists.

**Indirect pressure:** removal of government advertising, lack of access to officials, oligarch ownership, special taxes, journalists are being discredited intentionally and have to compete with the flood of misinformation and lies.

**Result:** Self-censorship, few media performing watchdog journalism, little money for truly independent journalism and investigative reporting.



# The Organization

- [Transitions](#) (TOL) is one of Central Europe's leading journalism trainers and a Czech-registered, nonprofit organization.
- Founded in 1999, TOL has implemented dozens of journalism training and freedom of expression projects in Eastern Europe and Eurasia.
- The organization also operates a popular news site on the post-communist region, [Transitions Online](#), which was a founding member of the Guardian's [New East Network](#).
- TOL has long-running relationships with many free press and media development organizations, investigative journalism groups, and donors who care about these issues.



# The Solution

Press Start is the **first global crowdfunding platform for reporters** in countries where the press cannot report freely, revolutionizing the way independent journalism is funded in the developing world and countries in transition.

The site **connects journalists** seeking to report the stories important to their communities with people around the world who believe in a free press and appreciate its importance to democracy.

Press Start is a **lifeline** for journalists working under difficult circumstances to finance their stories, keeping them on the job for sustained periods and practicing watchdog journalism.

# Crowdfunding Stories That Matter

Meet the first crowdfunding platform designed specifically to support journalists where the press cannot report freely.

We are aiming to revolutionize the way independent journalism is funded in the developing world and countries in transition (no small goal, we know!).

EXPLORE

## Multiple Ways to Give

SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL  
JOURNALISTS

SUPPORT

CONTRIBUTE TO THE MUTUAL  
FUND

CONTRIBUTE

TAKE OUT A MONTHLY  
SUBSCRIPTION

SUBSCRIBE

INSTITUTIONAL DONORS

CONTRIBUTE



# How Press Start Stands Apart

- ▶ The site targets **a specific niche** of reporters working in **emerging democracies** and the **developing world** who will produce articles in **local languages for local impact**.
- ▶ We seek out reporters who **would not have the capacity** (international contacts, language skills, promotional experience) to crowdfund on their own.
- ▶ We work with only those journalists who have been **vetted for their independence** and the quality of their reporting.
- ▶ We create **evocative profiles of journalists**, with extensive information on them and their commitment to report despite obstacles, in order to better resonate with potential donors.



# Our Journalists



## The science behind the search for Latin America's disappeared

Chantal Flores

Chantal Flores has walked the desert with desperate Mexican families searching for clues to the fates of their missing loved ones. Now as Colombia's civil war nears an end, she asks what lessons that country's long, grim experience with disappearances can offer the legions of bereaved in Mexico, and how forensic science is advancing the search for unmarked graves.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$950	\$950



## Uncovering the Facts Behind Hong Kong Gang Rapes

Wendy Funes

A seasoned investigator recognized by the country's EU delegation and others for her human rights reporting, Funes aims to look into the alleged cover-up of the links between a local official and a series of gang rapes of young women.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$1,120	\$1,120



## In Congo, Millions for Water Projects, but not a Drop to Drink

Douce Namwezi N'bamba

Editor in Chief of Mama Voice magazine. Recognized for her writing on conflict and women's empowerment, Namwezi N'bamba proposes to report on why her eastern Congolese province lacks potable water even after donors have poured millions of dollars into local water projects.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$790	\$780



## Preventing another "frozen conflict" in Ukraine

Tatiana Kozak

Tatiana Kozak has covered Ukraine's pivotal protest movement, the fall of a president, a secessionist war, and the seizure of Crimea. Now she plans to seek clues to the fate of war-torn eastern Ukraine in the experience of other post-Soviet countries that have endured decades of secessionist hostilities. Press Start will match all contributions made to Kozak's campaign.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$1,804	\$1,725



## Putting Macedonia's Hospitals Under a Microscope

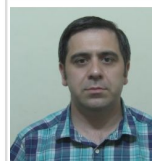
Zaklina Hadzi-Zafirova

Founder of SCOOP Macedonia, an independent investigative reporting network whose work has been recognized repeatedly and has resulted in reforms championed at the highest level of government. Hadzi-Zafirova proposes to undertake an ambitious assessment of the state of Macedonia's hospitals.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$560	\$560



## Listening to Those With HIV/AIDS in Armenia

Armen Melikbekyan

Co-founder of the Independent Journalists' Network as a vehicle to circumvent the pervasive influence of political and business figures on Armenia's media. Melikbekyan is working on a documentary about the stigma and discrimination suffered by the rising number of HIV-positive people in his socially conservative country.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$450	\$450



## Why are Lebanon's Ancient Sites Disappearing?

Habib Battah

A two-time recipient of the Samir Kassir Award for Freedom of the Press whose work has helped save artifacts of Beirut's Roman past. Battah proposes to investigate why efforts to preserve his country's archeological record so often give way to development projects backed by well-connected business people or even government officials.

[Learn more](#)

### FUNDED

raised	goal
\$1,730	\$1,680



# Wendy Funes from Honduras

- ▶ A journalist since 2001, Funes has worked in print, radio, and television, covering human rights and security issues.
- ▶ For the last four years she has led the investigative unit at [Conexihon.hn](http://Conexihon.hn).
- ▶ Funes received the European Journalism Prize in Human Rights awarded by the European Union delegation to Honduras in 2015.
- ▶ She was also awarded first place for print investigative reporting by the Tribunal of Women Against Femicide (Honduras) in 2014.

# Wendy Funes

## Uncovering the Facts Behind Honduran Gang Rapes

In 2013 a young woman in the La Paz province of central Honduras was charged with killing her baby after police found a fetus in a garbage bin. Abortion is illegal in Honduras.

The case was largely forgotten until this year, when a leader of the indigenous community, the Lenca, alleged that the woman had been raped by a gang of men led by a former mayor of the Santa Elena district in La Paz.

His allegations dovetail with a scandal that erupted three years ago, when there were reports that several young women in the province had been sexually assaulted by the gang. Shocked by the violence, local men organized patrols and allegedly recognized the mayor in a confrontation with the gang. That the mayor was never charged many believe is thanks to his political ties.

La Paz is a poor province of Honduras with a predominantly Lenca population, who often suffer violence, discrimination, and ostracism.

This case has been largely ignored by domestic media and I want to investigate the story because it sheds light on two grave problems plaguing Honduran society – widespread gender violence and persistent corruption in the judiciary.



raised \$ 120 out of \$1,120

**KICKSTARTER**





# The Challenges for Wendy

1

She doesn't speak English.

2

She doesn't come from an eligible country for some sites, including the biggest one: Kickstarter.

3

She doesn't have a bank account in an eligible country.

4

She doesn't have multimedia skills.

# Wendy Funes

## Uncovering the Facts Behind Honduran Gang Rapes

In 2013 a young woman in the La Paz province of central Honduras was charged with killing her baby after police found a fetus in a garbage bin. Abortion is illegal in Honduras.

The case was largely forgotten until this year, when a leader of the indigenous community, the Lenca, alleged that the woman had been raped by a gang of men led by a former mayor of the Santa Elena district in La Paz.

His allegations dovetail with a scandal that erupted three years ago, when there were reports that several young women in the province had been sexually assaulted by the gang. Shocked by the violence, local men organized patrols and allegedly recognized the mayor in a confrontation with the gang. That the mayor was never charged many believe is thanks to his political ties.

La Paz is a poor province of Honduras with a predominantly Lenca population, who often suffer violence, discrimination, and ostracism.

This case has been largely ignored by domestic media and I want to investigate the story because it sheds light on two grave problems plaguing Honduran society – widespread gender violence and persistent corruption in the judiciary.

raised \$1,120 out of \$1,120





# Google News Innovation Award

- Press Start was among the first grantees of the **Google Digital News Initiative's Innovation Fund**, designed to spur and support innovation in digital journalism.
- The fund received **more than 1,200 applications** from 30 countries.
- Press Start was one of **only 128** to receive support.

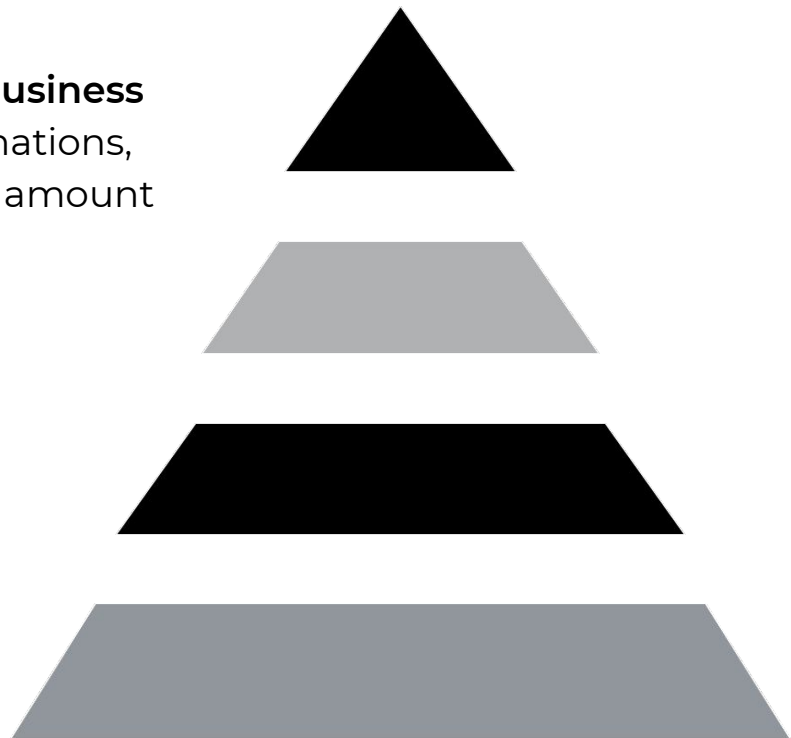


**DIGITAL  
NEWS  
INITIATIVE**



# Business Model

- ▶ We plan to make Press Start **a sustainable social business** within three years, financed from 10 percent of donations, advertisements, article syndication, and a minimal amount of grants.
- ▶ We are creating a **“smart” network** of partner organizations that identify and screen journalists.
- ▶ As we scale up, these partners will assume an increased role, and some will be chosen to head **regional hubs** of local partner organizations on each continent.





# Beyond Traditional Crowdfunding

- A social network, crowdfunding site, and publishing outlet **all rolled into one.**
- Multiple ways for visitors to donate:
  - a. **By sponsoring journalists:** Classic crowdfunding, in which individual donors decide to sponsor a specific, profiled journalist.
  - b. **By contributing to a mutual fund:** Donors contribute to a fund that will "top up" what has been donated to individual journalists and help them reach their goals.
  - c. **By subscribing:** Visitors contribute a flat amount to be renewed monthly or yearly that will be used to fund journalists and operating costs.
- Our goal is **longer-term support**, not one-off articles or investigations, and we plan to launch multiple campaigns for funded journalists.



# Tracking Impact

- ▶ Articles are mainly published in local languages for local impact.
- ▶ Selected articles will be translated and hosted on Press Start.
- ▶ We produce blog posts to describe what happened because that particular article was published.



# Tracking Impact

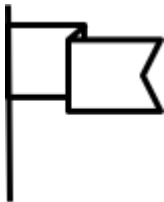
---

- Articles are mainly published in local languages for local impact.
- Selected articles will be translated and hosted on Press Start.
- We will produce impact reports to describe what happened because that particular article was published.



# Success So Far

- ▶ A total of 14 out of 20 campaigns funding so far, meaning a success rate of around 72%
- ▶ We have raised \$27,494 for \$22,979 in combined campaign goals, so around 120% of the total amount needed.





# Lessons Learned

---

- ▶ Crowdfunding takes a lot of work!
- ▶ Family and friends not enough
- ▶ Journalists need to do their part (help line up early donors)
- ▶ Difficult to get reach (at least for an international project)
- ▶ Best to diversify funding sources (matching funds, memberships, etc.)



# Collective Impact

We have a close partnership with like-minded organizations around the world that are committed to the same goals, and together can have a **collective impact**.



THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION



**Where HIV Is  
Still Spread Via  
a Handshake**



pressstart.org/tania

# TATIANA KOZAK

Preventing another  
“Frozen conflict” in Ukraine



pressstart.org/chantal

# CHANTAL FLORES

From Mexico to Colombia:  
Discovering the Disappeared



pressstart.org/ray

# RAY MWAREYA

The stateless children of  
southern Africa's female  
subsistence gold miners



# JOSE ACHO

Northern Argentina's land war  
imperils its native peoples

pressstart.org/jose



# Partnership with KickStarter

- ▶ One of the biggest crowdfunding sites in the world
- ▶ Since its launch in 2009, 16 million people have backed a project, \$4.3 billion has been pledged, and 163,169 projects have been successfully funded.
- ▶ Seven of the 10 most-funded journalism projects in Kickstarter's history have taken place in the last year.

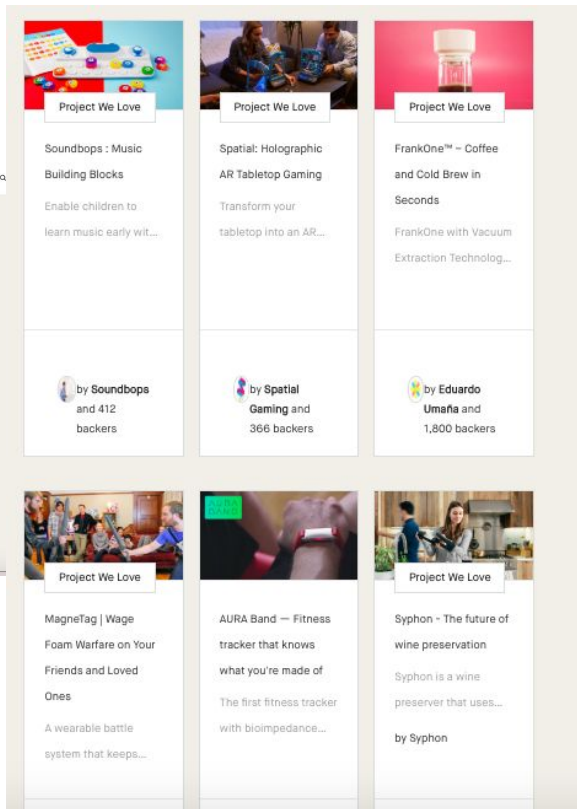
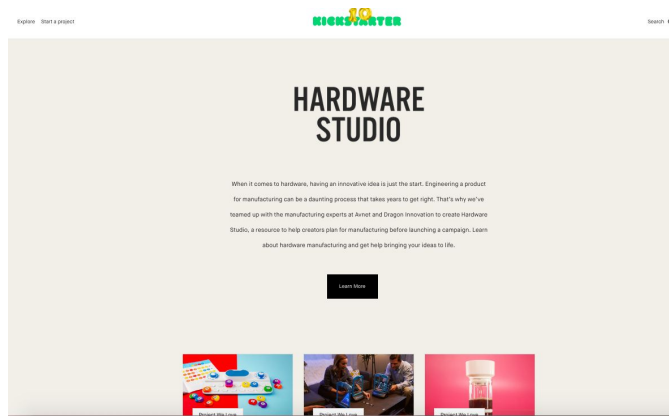


**KICKSTARTER**



# A Curated Press Start Page

The page will be part of the journalism section within the “publishing” tab of their menu





# Hands On Involvement

---

## **Kickstarter will provide:**

- ▶ advice on setting up the curated page, guiding us to produce appealing campaign pages
- ▶ promotion through social media, their newsletters, and potentially their magazine/podcast
- ▶ a campaign by their PR team to generate media interest.



**We need your help!**

**BECOME A PARTNER**

**FOLLOW US**

**NOMINATE**

**SUBSCRIBE**





**Let's change together the way  
independent journalism is funded.**