



International
Network of
Street Papers

Annual Report 2020-21



A year like no other

INSP supports the global street paper network to alleviate poverty and homelessness and promotes social enterprise and innovative solutions to social problems.

Over the past year our network has faced unprecedented challenges, with the COVID-19 pandemic having a huge impact on the work of our street papers.

Impact on street papers:

Lockdown measures prevented street selling for most street papers – some for several weeks and others for many months. Most street papers have struggled with reduced income as a result of COVID lockdowns, and even once restrictions lifted most have dealt with reduced sales because of quieter streets and customers not carrying cash.

In order to continue supporting vendors, many street papers launched fundraising campaigns to raise funds, which they then distributed to vendors who had no other source of income during the restrictions.

However, with street paper offices closed and many staff working from home, many street papers have found it difficult to reach their vendors during lockdown periods and many have reported concern for their vendors' health and welfare, through the combination of loss of income, loss of social interaction and support, and being unable to isolate and stay safe.

Throughout the pandemic, our street papers have worked to find ways to support and reach vendors, providing things like protective equipment, care packages, food vouchers, mobile phones and credit, and support to access other services.

Despite the challenges of the past year and a half, our network has continued to adapt and innovate in order to provide a much-needed lifeline to their vendors. Many street papers have adapted their content to reach readers online, developed systems to accept cashless payments, and innovated with social media and digital campaigns in order to continue to get their content out and reach new readers.

Impact on INSP:

Like many organisations, the pandemic has been challenging for INSP. The cancellation of our annual Summit for two years running has had a big impact on the way we support and communicate with members. Because of this, we have developed a new member strategy which embraces remote communication, increased peer-to-peer support and increased regional work.



"In times of closed borders and physical distancing, street papers found other communication channels and ways to stay in touch and be socially closer than ever. We are all superheroes and will get out of this much stronger. That's something I am sure of. Solidarity and unity will win. Street papers found their way to survive and support those in need as we have managed for decades already."

"A different world is possible. And the network of street papers have the capacity, energy and honest motivation to be the carrier of this change." – LiceUlice, Serbia

Early in the crisis we had a significant loss of funding, leading to a difficult restructure decision and the loss of a staff role. More recently, we said farewell to our former Operations Manager who moved on from INSP to another organisation.

Our reduced staff team worked from home for 15 months during the crisis and have worked incredibly hard to continue to support members, run our News Service, and develop new strategies and ways of working. We are also very grateful to our [board of directors](#) who have been a great support to INSP staff and members throughout the crisis.

Our team has also had to focus on fundraising and rethinking our future funding strategy, and we are very grateful to our [funders and supporters](#) – including some new grant funders – for their support during this challenging time.

August 2021 has seen our staff return to our office and reconnect face-to-face with vendors and street paper staff (we share a building with The Big Issue UK). In the same month, we have welcomed Colleen Tait to our team, in our newly created role of Membership & Communications Manager. Our current staff can be viewed [here](#).

Throughout the crisis, we have been inspired by the dedication and resilience of our street papers and we cannot thank our members enough for the incredible work they do to support their vendors. We are hopeful that we can bring our network together face-to-face in 2022 for our postponed Milan Summit.



Image courtesy of Hus Forbi

Our support to members:

Over the past year, we have developed new ways of working with our members and we look forward to working more closely with our street papers as we begin to deliver our new member strategy. Key highlights of our member support work from the past year include:

- **COVID resources for members:** As part of our interim COVID strategy, we developed tailored resources for members, including business continuity resources; fundraising support, and cashless payment resources. Our COVID-focused resources have been widely used by members – the business continuity resources that we compiled at the start of the pandemic were downloaded by more than 90% of the network.
- **COVID impact survey:** Between October and November 2020, we surveyed our members on the impact of the pandemic. The survey was completed by around half of our network and gave us much needed insight into the challenges that street papers have faced, but also the

“For us it was very important to have the INSP network as a partner to talk to. We found ourselves rather stuck when we had to shut down. Being a street magazine is something different from anything else - especially for the vendors.

“Being able to hear from other street magazines around the world, through INSP, was vital to our decision to do what we did: Shut down for 6 weeks, and coping with the situation.

“Knowing that we were not alone, was a great help for us. – Oslo, Norway.

incredible resilience and innovation of our network and the impact that street papers have continued to have in their communities.

- **INSP Hub:** The INSP Hub (including both the Guides & Resources section and the INSP News Service) has been used by around 82% of the network, and a total of 3,299 resources (articles, images and resources) were used by members over the course of the past 12 months.
- **Guides & resources:** Over the past few months, we have worked on a redesign of the Guides & Resources available on the INSP Hub, to give street papers the resources they need more directly by collating specific resources, guides and examples from our members around the world. We have created new thematic sections (including one specifically for COVID support), which act as a one-stop shop for the resources required to develop a street paper. As part of this work, we have also updated our existing resources to bring them up to date.
- **Zoom calls:** In April 2020, we began hosting Zoom calls with members and since then we have held more than 40 calls, engaging over 80 attendees from 46 street papers in 21 countries.
- **New member support strategy:** The pandemic has changed the way individuals and organisations communicate and it offers our network a new way to work together. With the absence of our Summit in 2020 and again in 2021, we have recognised the importance of finding new ways to bring our network together and provide better support to more of our members. For the past few months, we have been developing new strategies for member support and engagement, as well as for our network and external communications.



Image courtesy of Zebra

INSP News Service:

Our online editorial service is delivered through the INSP Hub, providing editorial support and resources to street papers to build their capacity and quality, and increase vendors' sales.

Despite the huge disruption the pandemic caused to street papers' publishing schedules and their ability to sell in traditional ways, our editorial support remained constant throughout the crisis. Content from our News Service has ensured that our members were able to get stories out – in print, online, and on social media – and that editorial support was available from us to help them do that in the best possible way.

Over the past year, our News Service has achieved the following:

- **Content:** Collated, edited, and uploaded original stories at its usual publishing frequency of at least ten per week. Indeed, despite shutdowns of varying lengths across the street paper network, more than 520 stories have appeared on the News Service in that period.

- Member usage: 80% of our members published nearly 2 million words of content, including 1,677 stories.
- Translation: Our team of over 100 translators volunteered their time to more than 140 translations for the network, in INSP's 25 languages. Alongside our network of volunteer translators, we continue to work closely with non-profit organisation Translators Without Borders who provide us with high-quality translations across various language combinations.
- Media partnerships: We continue to work with Reuters News, Inter Press Service (IPS), and The Conversation, who all provide editorial resource to us free-of-charge. We also now have a partnership with non-profit publication Next City to provide reporting on how modern metropolises are changing and impacting people.

"The information shared by INSP helped us secure a major emergency grant and keep our operation running through the pandemic. We would have not heard of this opportunity without INSP's help.

"The support we get from INSP is always invaluable, but this was particularly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. We saved countless hours of research and innovation by adopting ideas and best practices shared by INSP from other street papers around the world. This meant that we could focus on making sure that our vendors stayed healthy and safe." – Iso Numero, Finland

As well as our usual socially focussed editorial coverage, our street papers have also been exchanging in-depth reporting on the crisis from the perspective of its impact on homelessness, poverty and vulnerable and marginalised people. Examples of our news coverage of the crisis can be found [here](#).

Thanks to our regional member support work (see more below), editorial partnerships with like-minded organisations such as the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#) and [Community Change](#) have led to op-eds and columns written by people with lived experience of poverty. Fostering relationships and cooperation on a geographic basis between street paper members has also led to fruitful collaboration, such as the interview series profiling German political leaders ahead of the September 2021 elections by our cohort of Germany-based members, who also [banded together to campaign for homeless accommodation](#) at the height of the lockdown.

INSP has also shifted its output to fully explore the issues important to our members, and advocate for change and action when required, and this was in no small part down to the impact of the pandemic. This has resulted in stories which sharply focus on how social, cultural and political circumstances affects people who are homeless, living in poverty, or otherwise socially marginalised. These articles cover a range of characters and subject matter, including but not limited to: interviews with high profile [politicians](#), [sports stars](#) and [musicians](#) on racial justice; how [large scale sporting events affect](#) marginalised people; [trans rights](#); [COVID vaccine uptake](#); [public perception and media portrayal](#) of those on the streets; [college debt](#) and [food insecurity](#); and women's right to [bodily autonomy](#).



Image courtesy of The Contributor

Regional support:

In 2020, we began developing a new membership support strategy with a focus on increasing regional member engagement and mutual support within our network. With the absence of our annual Summit in 2020 and 2021, and in light of new ways of working as a result of the pandemic, it is becoming increasingly useful and important for street papers to connect and support each other in geographic groups.

Over the past year, we have talked to groups of street papers including our German-language group, Asia-Pacific street papers, and our Latin American group, to look at how we can use the experience of our work in North America to provide better support to our members.

INSP North America

Over the past year, INSP North America acted as a facilitator for street papers to share ideas and information, troubleshoot and respond to emergency crises, facilitate peer-to-peer support and worked to build relationships among one another.

COVID-19, political unrest in the U.S. and the climate crisis have all had major impacts on street papers in 2020. These realities have brought both major challenges but also opportunities for both individual street papers and the network as a whole. While individual papers have experienced numerous challenges — they have also remained resilient.

Of the 31 street papers in North America, all but one street paper stopped publishing for a certain time-period (between one and six months) due to the pandemic.

In the past 12 months, highlights of our work with the North American network have included:

- Developing, sharing and implementing ongoing emergency safety plans and measures for organisations to remain operational during the pandemic.
- Developing, sharing and implementing special appeals for street papers to approach the public, foundations and investors to support street papers during COVID. Collectively, street papers in North America raised more than \$3 million to support supplementing vendors with lost income, helping provide rent and food assistance and more.
- Identifying and distributing PPE to street papers to support their ongoing work.
- Facilitated monthly meetings and provided one-on-one support for street papers to support and share ideas, resources and troubleshoot ongoing problems during the pandemic, wildfires, and political unrest.
- Support for street papers to maintain their editorial schedules and increase their output on issues ranging from COVID, Black Lives Matter, the climate crisis, housing justice, immigrant rights and highlighting the voices of indigenous peoples.

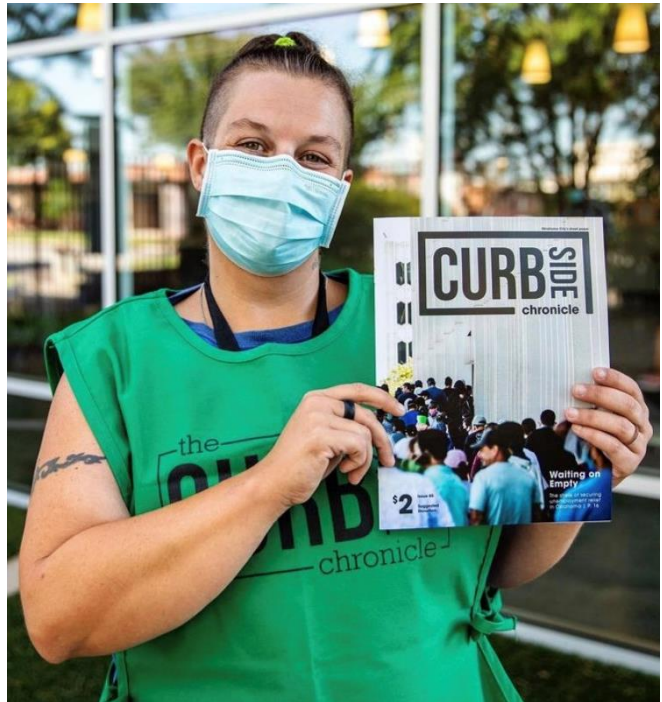


Image courtesy of The Curbside Chronicle

"INSP connected Toledo Streets to other street papers nationally and globally while we all scrambled to react to an unexpected and unprecedented time. They have invited us to conversations about contingency plans, safe reopenings and supported us in our own decision-making processes. INSP continues to show up with their guidance and resources. They've sent us masks to distribute and they check in with us frequently. We are beyond thankful for the services they've provided even before, during and surely after this challenging time." – Toledo Streets, Toledo Ohio