



Internews

Gender Equality and Inclusion Strategy

2022-2024

February 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Our Strategy: Process and Principles	5
Key Challenges for Gender Equality:	9
The Internews Framework:	11
Cross-Cutting Priorities	17
Conclusion	19
Annex 1: Glossary	20
Annex 2: Gender Equality Criteria	23
Annex 3: Commitment to the International Gender and Development Agenda.....	24
Acknowledgements	25
Endnotes	26



Residents of Jammu and Kashmir villages in India attend a FactShala training on detecting misinformation. Credit: Internews / FactShala

Introduction

Internews is pleased to present our new gender equality and inclusion strategy reasserting and expanding our commitment to challenge discriminatory gender norms and advance equality across gender identities. We believe that access to information is a root solution that enables people to make informed decisions, participate in dialogue, stand up for their rights, influence public policy and social norms, and hold governments and other institutions to account. The inclusion and empowerment of women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities within the media and information sector is a prerequisite for the recognition and integral enjoyment of rights by all.

Context

Information poverty and inequality — when citizens have limited or no access to factual, high-quality, local information, or platforms for communication — limits freedom of expression and reduces informed choices.

Our goal is to enable everyone to participate meaningfully and freely in society to achieve their full potential, and that requires an inclusive and intersectional gender lens: women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities are disproportionately affected by information inequality as critical audiences, content producers, and leaders in the media and information sector. These inequalities preclude societies from achieving gender equality and individuals from achieving their full potential.

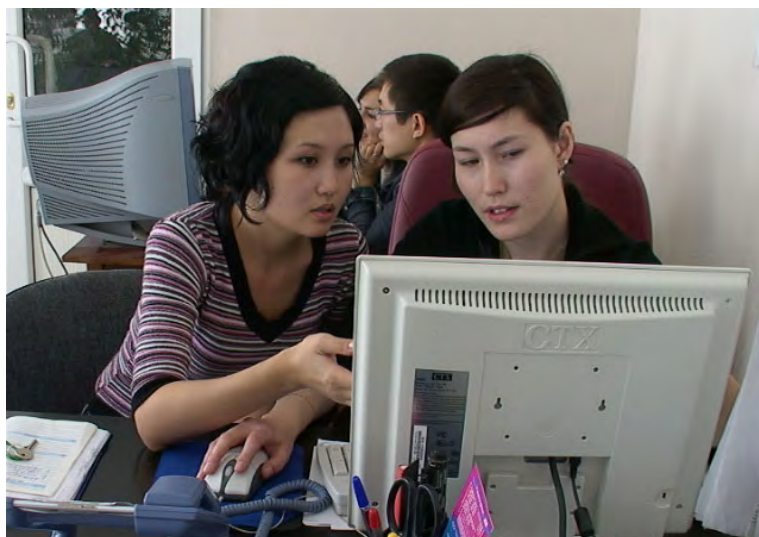
Women are severely underrepresented and frequently misrepresented in media and have been so for decades. Their perspectives are often rendered invisible, with far less content featuring women's voices. Globally, women represent 25% of those seen, heard and read about in news stories, and 24% of the expert sources quoted by the news media.¹ The silencing of women's voices contributes to a culture that devalues women and girls, reinforcing traditional and harmful gender norms. While in many regions women are increasingly entering the field of journalism and forging their own paths to media ownership in digital spaces, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions, particularly in traditional media, and face a multitude of safety threats online and offline.²

Gender and sexual minorities around the world confront unique challenges and barriers to information equality, accurate media representation, and participation in the media industry.



Regional journalists interview LGBTQIA+ activists during a reporting workshop on Covering Gender and Sexual Minorities in Southern Africa. Credit: Brian Pellot.

These obstacles include legal restrictions and social hostilities that diminish access to fair media coverage and encourage sources, subjects, and media producers to hide their identities. In societies that are particularly hostile to gender and sexual minorities, these communities are either ignored due to censorship and self-censorship or exposed in ways that perpetuate harmful myths and stereotypes or stoke fear and hatred against them. Such unethical media coverage puts already at-risk individuals in even greater danger and has been linked to further politicization and legislative backlash against gender and sexual minorities.



Journalists attend a seminar as part of the News Factory project in Kazakhstan. Credit: Internews

Men are also subjected to stereotyping in media content, with little room for alternative visions of masculinity. Oftentimes, media depictions reinforce harmful stereotypes associating masculinity with power and aggressive behaviours, and portray men as uncaring, emotionally stunted, and as hands-off parents. Many men are faced with unrealistic and aspirational images of masculinity that emphasize physical strength, power, independence, and dominant roles in relationships, all of which can reinforce aspects of toxic masculinity. Such portrayals influence societal expectations from men as well as what they may expect from themselves and others.³

With this strategy, we lay out our expected outcomes for consistent improvements for the next three years. Built on [Internews 2025 Strategic Framework](#) and the insights of over 300 staff and partners from around the world, this document provides a framework to support gender equality and inclusion across all Internews' programming. Further, this strategy is designed to:

- Build a common understanding of the fundamental role that gender plays in hindering or fostering progress across all of Internews' technical domains and practices, recognizing the need to be flexible and responsive to local contexts;
- Define clear actions for gender sensitive and gender transformative programming (see definitions in [Annex 2: Gender Equality Criteria](#)), considering each element of information environments to reduce gender disparities in access to, participation in, control over, and benefit from media and information for people of all genders and in all their diversity; and
- Set cross-cutting priorities with actionable points under each to further enable staff and partners to build a coordinated effort toward gender equality in the programs we deliver.

In the following pages, we describe the key principles that guide our work focused on gender equality, the process of updating this strategy from its previous iteration, key challenges to gender equality in the media and information spaces, the Internews framework for addressing these challenges, and the detailed outcomes under the different elements and cross-cutting priorities.

Our Strategy: Process and Principles

This strategy builds on our *2018 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*, which was designed to improve our internal operations and program approaches and expand our 2015 Women's Initiative. In this new strategy, we reassert and further our commitment to challenging discriminatory gender norms and advancing equality across gender identities. The development of this strategy is deeply rooted in the knowledge and experience of more than 300 of our staff and partners from more than 60 countries where we work. At the time the assessment was conducted between August and September 2021, Internews had about 1,000 staff working in over 90 countries. Their rich and unique perspectives were captured through an assessment in 2021, reflecting the insights, challenges, and wisdom of implementing gender equality work in markedly different contexts.

The assessment conducted in 2021 included:

- In-depth interviews and discussions conducted by independent external evaluators with expertise in Gender and Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expressions (SSOGIE) with 28 staff representing all regions and areas of Internews' expertise;
- In-depth survey responses from nearly 260 Internews staff and 35 partners from over 60 countries in all regions where we work;
- Three webinars conducted for all Internews staff with external gender experts to discuss our approaches to gender sensitive and transformative programming, and safety considerations for inclusion of gender and sexual minorities in activities;
- Desk research and review of dozens of policies from like-minded organizations and donors; and
- Participation in drafting and reviewing of the strategy by gender equality experts.

Although this strategy focuses solely on our programmatic work, Internews continues to emphasize inclusion, equity, and justice in our operations. In 2020, we partnered with the consultancy firm Decolonize Design to implement the Belonging, Dignity and Justice framework throughout our organizational functions. These principles are fundamental to us at Internews, and here is how they are applied in our work:



- **Belonging:** Internews staff, partners, and the communities we serve all over the world should be treated as kindred members of our global, multicultural community. To do this, we place understanding, rapport-building, and connection first to ensure that our people feel in communion with each other.

- **Dignity:** Internews works in partnership with the communities we serve, the people best placed to know what works. To do this, we respect and honour their lived experiences and perspectives and elevate their voices.

- **Justice:** The media and information sector can be distorted by elite gatekeepers, captured media, dis- and misinformation, or by political conflicts and natural disasters. We wish to repair it. To do this, we work to transform the sector to be more inclusive and representative of the communities it serves.

Meaningfully transforming the relationships of power that create and sustain gender inequality is an ongoing journey, not an overnight switch. Our staff and partners working across the world remind us that the pace of change should be locally driven to ensure genuine engagement and the safety of all staff, partners, program participants, and the communities involved. We also understand the need for continuous adaptation and iteration of our approaches.

Overarching Principles

Guiding our commitment to gender equality in information environments and the operationalization of that commitment is a set of overarching principles described below:

- **Do No Harm** — The safety and well-being of our staff, partners, and project participants are always our top priority. Recognizing the different realities and cultures in which we work, we aim to conduct gender transformative work as possible within each context without putting anyone at additional risk. Without carefully analyzing how interventions and activities affect people differently based on gender, well-intentioned projects can cause serious harm to communities and participants, especially women, girls, gender and sexual minorities, and other marginalized groups. We conduct robust risk assessments, devise alternative strategies in collaboration with local to mitigate risk while including at-risk populations in our work, and work hard to achieve impact while being responsive to local environments.

- **Dignity and rights-based lenses** — At the heart of our programming is the unequivocal understanding that gender equality is a human right (see Annex 3 for the international instruments and commitments on gender equality and rights). Our work elevates the lived experiences and perspectives of our partners and upholds the dignity of all of those who are affected by our efforts. Internews develops and continually iterates guidelines and approaches for ethical and sensitive reporting on migration, elections, conflict, human rights emergencies, and disability reporting, among other areas.

- **Multi-pronged approach** — Internews understands that effective gender transformative approaches need to seek changes at individual, community, institutional, and policy levels. We approach information environments holistically, seeking to impart gender sensitivity and transformative perspectives in news and information production and dissemination; support gender sensitive policies for our partner organizations and the media outlets with which we engage; and strengthen those at the frontlines of activism and advocacy for gender equality in policies and practices at the global, regional, country, and community levels.

- **Intersectionality and Inclusion** — Our lives are multi-dimensional and complex, and lived realities are shaped by different intersecting social dynamics operating together. Gender discrimination, caste systems, racism, classism, ableism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia create unique challenges and require an inclusive and intersectional perspective for how we understand, design, implement, and evaluate the impact of our work. Our programming recognizes these interlocking systems of oppression, seeking to elevate marginalized stories and experiences and uplift social justice solutions and alternatives conceived by community leaders, activists, and human rights defenders locally. We strive to meet partners and communities where they are by promoting feedback spaces and information resources on platforms that they trust, in their own language, and on self-identified issues.

- **Local expertise and contextually-relevant perspectives** — In pursuing gender responsive and transformative approaches to our work, we listen to and follow the expertise of our local partners and leading gender equality organizations in each context. Whenever possible we foster connections and promote ongoing collaboration between media and human rights defenders, women’s groups, and LGBTQIA+ rights organizations.

- **Men are key accountable partners** — While focusing on the needs, voices, and experiences of those who bear the brunt of gender discrimination and violence, we recognize that toxic masculinity and patriarchal gender norms also affect men negatively as members of unequal and violent societies. We understand that without men’s involvement and action gender equality will be impossible to reach. In our programs, we see men as stakeholders and accountable partners with a crucial role in creating positive change. We train editors, media managers, and journalists on gender-sensitive reporting, and engage men in various capacities as role models and mentors to infuse gender equality principles across all the spheres of our work.



Internews is committed to ensuring that our new programs are gender sensitive at minimum and gender transformative whenever possible. We will strive to integrate the overarching principles of this strategy into every aspect of our programmatic work — how we plan, design, implement, monitor, document, communicate about, and learn from our work and from our partners.

We remain ambitious, yet honest with ourselves and realistic about what we can achieve. We recognize that anyone involved in this work can benefit from a better understanding of the sensitive and complex issues involved in shifting power across society, as well as from additional guidance to achieve our vision. As such, this strategy is complemented by a living and evolving Gender Equality and Inclusion Toolkit to provide staff with reflections, resources, and tools to operationalize the strategy across programs and regions as well as the continuing development of learning resources to meaningfully inform this work.



Participants in the Georgia / GIPA FilmAid pilot camp in Sabatlo film a scene for a documentary. Credit: Internews

Key Challenges for Gender Equality:

Global Trends

Despite significant progress in recent decades, both longstanding and emerging challenges continue to preclude the achievement of gender equality globally. At Internews, we are acutely aware that many of these challenges are intimately related to how information is produced, disseminated, and consumed: whose views, solutions, needs, and priorities shape the news; who counts as experts and newsworthy subjects; who can advocate for and influence public policy; and who can safely and critically access relevant information. Internews will focus heavily on strengthening our own and our partners' capacity to further integrate gender considerations in our work and create transformative change toward gender equality in face of the challenges described below:

Gender-based violence: Hate speech, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence — online and offline — targeting women and gender and sexual minorities, especially journalists and those conducting public-facing work or rights-based activism, pose existential threats to freedom of expression, peacebuilding efforts, and the advancement of gender equality worldwide. Online gender-based violence incentivizes self-censorship among journalists, disempowers leaders and activists, and can lead to increased offline threats and physical attacks.⁴ Globally, almost three quarters (73%) of women have endured some form of online violence, and women ages 18-24 years are particularly vulnerable to severe forms of online harassment.⁵ Gender and sexual minorities also face extreme levels of hate speech and harassment online, particularly on social media platforms.⁶ Transgender activists, for example, have experienced increased violence in digital spaces, especially as they have become more visible and vocal.⁷

Gendered disinformation and weaponization of anti-feminist rhetoric: An increasing body of research emphasizes the growth of gendered disinformation, which is defined as “false, misleading, or harmful content that exploits gender inequalities or invokes gender stereotypes and norms, including to target specific individuals or groups.”⁸ Although not new, the phenomenon has become more evident in connection to the rise of authoritarian and populist governments, which often mobilize misogyny and homophobic sentiments for political gains and to silence opponents.⁹

Systematic exclusion of women and gender and sexual minorities in the media and information sector: Women and gender and sexual minorities are systematically underrepresented in content production, in leadership roles, as expert sources in news, and as consumers of information.¹⁰ Additionally, the often patriarchal culture of many newsrooms as institutions, coupled with reported sexual harassment from supervisors and powerful sources, as well as the lack of family-friendly work policies, help perpetuate this systematic exclusion.¹¹

Gender Digital Divide: Gender is a significant factor in access and ability to benefit from the Internet. Globally, women are still 17% less likely to use the internet compared to men; a gap that is widening in many low- and middle-income countries. Women are also 8% less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 20% less likely to access the internet on a mobile device.¹² Without access to the

internet, women and other marginalized groups, including gender and sexual minorities, cannot fully participate in different aspects of the economy, join educational opportunities, and fully utilize legal systems. The digital gender divide also impacts how people use the internet once they get online. Even when women own mobile phones, they tend to use them less frequently for services such as searching for information, looking for jobs, or engaging in civic and political spaces.¹³

Shrinking civic space: Growing numbers of people are living in countries with significant restrictions to fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression. Groups advocating for women's rights and women human rights defenders appear at the top of the list of most affected groups facing restrictions in such environments, along with LGBTQIA+, labour rights, environmental rights groups, and young people.¹⁴

Climate Crisis: Gender inequalities have negative impacts on access, use and control of natural resources, as well as the right to a clean, safe, and healthy environment for all. Displacement, forced migration, poverty, and insecurity disproportionately impact women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities, especially those from Indigenous backgrounds, the elderly, or disabled, including through greater exposure to abuse and violence.¹⁵ Across the different regions, women and indigenous peoples are at the forefront of environmental protection efforts and climate justice movements, yet their perspectives are often ignored as sources of knowledge and expertise in environmental reporting, as subjects of stories or as content producers.¹⁶

COVID-19 and the reversal in gender equality gains worldwide:

The impact of crises and emergencies are always gendered, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made this even more evident. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities in every realm of our lives and further exposing severe discrepancies in social, political, and economic systems. In the long-term, the pandemic threatens to roll back decades of hard-won progress towards gender equality.¹⁷ Women represent 70% of the global health workforce but are severely underrepresented in COVID-19 policy leadership, and in media debates related to the pandemic, further marginalizing the perspectives and specific needs of a large swath of the population.¹⁸



The Internews Framework:

Towards Gender Inclusive and Transformative Information Environments

Internews strategic framework for gender equality is based on Internews' five elements of a Healthy Information Environment. Healthy information environments are defined by the presence of **good, accurate, factual information** — information that **everyone can access safely**, that **audiences can access and engage with critically**, and that is valued by communities and **sustained by business models that work**. In healthy information environments, **governments and other institutions are held accountable** for protecting human rights and freedom of expression. We work towards healthy, gender inclusive and transformative information environments through implementation of donor-funded projects in nearly 100 countries around the world.

This strategy applies to all of Internews' work implemented through our country, regional, and global offices and programs. To ensure accountability, this strategy is accompanied by an internal gender action plan defining specific targets under each element and cross-cutting priority that will be reviewed and reported against to all staff annually.



Internews' Earth Journalism Network (EJN) grantee Gaea Cabico interviews an Indigenous elder in the Philippines. Credit: EJN

Good Information

Internews defines good information as firmly rooted in facts and evidence, that is relevant to communities' needs, and intended to enrich people's lives. In our approach to gender equality, Internews strengthens the capacity of media outlets and partner organizations, so they have the resources, skills, and commitment to produce gender-sensitive editorial content, improve their portrayal of traditionally marginalized groups, including women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities, and provide democratic space for discussion about non-violence, justice, respect, and equality.

Our programmatic approach under this element seeks to:

- Increase the voices and perspectives of women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities in central issues such as climate change, health (including COVID-19 and sexual and reproductive health and rights), elections, conflict resolution, and other core civic and policy topics ensuring balanced representation on air, online and in print of women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities;
- Safely elevate their voices, perspectives, and expertise in programming;
- Provide gender equality training for partners, journalists, editors and media managers of all genders;
- Identify and build relationships with gender champions in newsrooms; and
- Regularly review editorial content to assess how well gender equality issues are being integrated and responded to by audiences.



EXAMPLE: Good Information

In 2020, Internews launched [Reflect Reality](#), a holistic methodology to increase women as expert sources in the news designed in partnership with a wide variety of stakeholders from across the media industry and the private sector. Reflect Reality includes content and strategies relevant to newsrooms, journalists, and journalism trainers, and it is also a resource for private and public industries that interact with the media. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2020, 24% of expert voices in the news are women, “a dramatic rise from 19% five years ago.”¹⁹ The report attributes the improvement to initiatives to source women for expert opinion from around the globe, such as Reflect Reality. Core components of Reflect Reality are being implemented across the world in countries such as Ukraine, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and by the Earth Journalism Network (EJN) in the Asia-Pacific region.

Safe Access

Everyone, everywhere, should be able to safely access information. We seek to ensure safe and robust access to information for traditionally marginalized groups, including women, girls and gender and sexual minorities, and to reduce systemic information exclusion and the gender digital divide. We champion capacity sharing efforts to help staff, partners, and project participants understand gender equality and its importance and to mainstream a gender perspective in ways that are relevant to their contexts. We understand that those at higher risk of violence and harassment are also in most need of psychosocial support, networking opportunities and safe spaces for connection. Internews involves traditionally privileged groups, including men and boys, as active participants in challenging gender inequality and ensuring that programs meaningfully engage them.

Our programmatic approach under this element seeks to:

- Design solutions that address the ever-increasing physical, psychological, and digital forms of gender-based violence targeting women and gender and sexual minorities — journalists, cultural producers, technologists, and others from marginalized groups through tailored and relevant actions for each context;
- Improve the ease of participation for members of traditionally marginalized groups, including women, girls and gender and sexual minorities in trainings and other activities. Specific actions should be informed by gender analyses and risk assessments conducted at project level in collaboration with local partners and relevant key informants;
- Address the access gaps they face globally, including access to mobile, Internet, and traditional forms of media.

EXAMPLE: Safe Access

[Safe Sisters](#) is Internews' fellowship program that empowers women community leaders to understand digital safety threats, keep themselves safe online, and transfer that knowledge back to their own communities through hands-on trainings. Through the program, fellows spend a lot of time learning, training and developing a project together, so that when the program is over Safe Sisters alumni will have their own regional networks of women digital security trainers. Since 2017, Safe Sisters has trained more than 40 women from over 10 countries in East Africa and South Asia. Evidence supports Safe Sisters' immediate and lasting impact; six months after the first fellowship ended, 75% of Safe Sisters reported that they had earned new professional opportunities because of their participation in the program and four had changed careers to pursue digital security professionally, indicating a market demand and sustainability model we had not even envisioned at the program's outset. Since then, Internews has expanded regional focus to South Asia where most recently, 11 women leaders in Sri Lanka completed their three-month grant projects with a focus on raising awareness of digital security concerns among vulnerable girls and women. Internews is currently working to raise awareness of this threats that women face online and expand this program and others like it across the globe.

Critical Assessment

Empowered individuals demand higher-quality news and information, creating a virtuous circle between producers and audiences. Critical thinking skills help audiences to understand the media they consume and to choose media that reflects and promotes a fair and equal society. Under this element, Internews focuses on the challenges posed by the torrent of gendered mis- and disinformation flooding every information environment around the world. We support the ability of traditionally marginalized groups, including women, girls and gender and sexual minorities, to critically engage with news and information, and work with people of different genders together and separately to build spaces for dialogue about broad public policy issues, including sexual and gender-based violence and other human rights issues.

Our programmatic approach under this element seeks to:

- Continue developing tools and methodologies to monitor and document patterns of gendered disinformation and train journalists to ethically report on them;
- Conduct media literacy activities for community members with robust gender equality components;
- Provide responsive training and support for critical use of technology and new media tools by traditionally marginalized groups, including women and girls and gender and sexual minorities; and
- Lead initiatives for safe dialogue in person, online, or via platforms such as community radio.

EXAMPLE: Critical Assessment

In India — where millions of users come online each year from smaller cities and rural areas — Internews launched news and information literacy program [Factshala](#). In collaboration with Data Leads, a group of 253 journalists, fact-checkers, media educators, non-profit workers, and community radio representatives came together to ensure people have the opportunity to learn how to assess the online information they access in their daily lives. Despite the pandemic, the project organized over 900 sessions and reached more than 35,000 people from non-metro cities and remote areas in rural India. Trainees included women's self-help groups, *anganwadi* (childcare) workers, community reporters, medical workers, farmers, refugees, LGBTQIA+ community members, pensioners, housewives, environmental activists, tea garden workers, religious leaders, rural school and college teachers and college students. They were trained on how to identify and resist misinformation via sessions held both online and in-person, in sessions conducted in over 15 languages and dialects. Over 50% of the trainees were women and represented 150 cities across India.

Strong Business Models

Internews engages media outlets that are led by and champion the rights of traditionally marginalized groups, including women, gender and sexual minorities, and youth to build effective business models. In addition to providing resources, tools, and peer-to-peer mentoring on the business side of news, Internews advances strategies designed to create financially viable, resilient media, including mentoring publishers' business teams, offering leadership training, developing strategies for audience-led content, nurturing start-ups, and creating industrywide alliances. We work with media outlets to increase their audiences by producing content that is relevant for women and other undervalued audiences.

Our programmatic approach under this element seeks to:

- Provide resources, tools, and peer-to-peer mentoring to women, gender and sexual minority-led and focused media outlets;
- Offer business leadership training for women and gender and sexual minorities;
- Help develop business models and strategies for audience-led content;
- Help grow women and gender and sexual minority audiences;
- Foster the creation of industry-wide alliances;
- Provide technology upgrades to partners.

EXAMPLE: Strong Business Models

In Ukraine, Kyiv-based *Rubryka* newsroom increased online reach and revenues from sales severalfold with grant support from Internews within the Audience Understanding and Digital Support project (2018-2021). The newsroom received expert support on social media distribution, management and outreach, native advertising, audience engagement and community building, and business management. The launch of a series about successful women entitled “*Despite Everything, She’s Got It*” and other improvements in content production and distribution led *Rubryka*’s online reach to grow by more than 2.5 times. “*Despite Everything, She’s Got It*” was a *Rubryka* initiative aimed at reaching and encouraging advertisers to better target women audiences. New technical capabilities for tailored advertising landing pages and a new sales manager helped the newsroom to attract over 70 new advertisers and nearly quadruple its revenue.

Accountable Institutions

Internews supports efforts to hold governments, media platforms, and other institutions such as multinational tech companies, accountable in recognizing their responsibility in establishing and upholding commitments to gender equality. We strengthen networks of activists around the world advocating for laws that protect women and gender and sexual minorities and uphold freedom of the press. We work with civil society representatives, media organizations, journalists, and activists to investigate and document platform operations and their subsequent impacts on underrepresented communities. We also work with leading global technology companies to make their products safer and more responsive to the specific needs and challenges faced by women and minority journalists and human rights defenders. And we partner with platforms to promote high quality, credible information, improved fact checking tools for information providers, and stronger mechanisms for removing gendered disinformation and harmful speech.

Our programmatic approach under this element seeks to:

- Provide mentorship and training to journalists and advocates already documenting platform harms for underrepresented communities for effective engagements with companies and governments;
- Support local advocacy efforts against discriminatory laws and toward gender equality and legislation that supports freedom of expression for women and gender and sexual minorities;
- Support and help foster networks of civil society organizations and journalists to amplify advocacy efforts and improve reporting on key policy issues.

EXAMPLE: Accountable Institutions

Internews' UMBER project monitors, contextualizes, and documents the on-the-ground implications of online harmful speech (i.e., hate speech, misinformation, harassment, coordinated inauthentic behaviour, criminal activities, graphic content etc.) with gender disinformation as a key focus area. Findings and recommendations are shared directly with Meta teams allowing partners and Internews staff to provide context and feedback on the platforms products and policies. The team works in collaboration with local partners 10 countries it covers (Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Philippines, Honduras, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and Thailand). Internews' Agora project brings together civil society and media representatives in more than 16 countries through convenings and key informant interviews to understand and document the impacts of different global technology platforms in specific contexts. From targeted harassment of women journalists or political candidates to language barriers in platform products and policy enforcement, these discussions identify both global trends and localized manifestations of harms. This feedback is provided to relevant companies, along with specific recommendations for products, policy and industry practice.

Cross-Cutting Priorities

In addition to the core framework highlighted above, Internews has the following cross-cutting priorities:

Leadership and Accountability

Internews will continue strengthening our commitment to gender equality and advancing the rights and dignity of traditionally marginalized groups, including women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities, as fundamental to the achievement of freedom of expression and access to information in all our global work, and ensure that said commitment is actionable. We will continue integrating gender considerations at all levels of the organization and our programming.

Action points under this priority include:

- Conduct an annual internal gender review against internal targets on staff and partners trained on gender equality principles and programmatic integration;
- Continue to build engagement of staff in gender equality issues through the Gender Working Group;
- Continue strengthening our knowledge and capacity to advance gender equality, including onboarding training for new staff on gender sensitivity and continued expansion of resources available to staff in our internal Gender Knowledge Hub and other learning platforms, and in focused projects;
- Expand our bench of regional and local experts, focal points, and champions.

Internews is also held accountable to targets and mechanisms established under the global Belonging, Dignity and Justice (BDJ) work.

Communications

In our communication efforts, we will continue to ensure the visibility and accurate representation of women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities, especially those from the most marginalized communities, as drivers of change, and will continue to challenge gender stereotypes and discriminatory gender norms in our project documents, in internal and external communications, and in the images we use.



Action points under this priority include:

- Produce evidence-based stories that actively promote our work on the impact of gender equality and ensuring communication materials do not promote gender stereotypes or reinforce discriminatory gender norms, ensuring documentation at all levels uses inclusive, respectful, and sensitive language based on clear, established guidelines;
- Disseminate and continually update Internews' inclusive language guidelines developed by the Belonging, Dignity and Justice Communications Working Group and the communications module of the gender equality and inclusion toolkit;
- Improve the accessibility of Internews communication materials and platforms.

Business Development

In the next three years, Internews will continue to proactively seek funding and resources to ensure that our programs are gender sensitive at minimum and that an increasing proportion of programs are gender transformative across Internews' distinct but overlapping areas of thematic expertise, such as Digital Democracy, Environment, Health, Humanitarian Response, and Media Sustainability. We will continue building a portfolio of experiences with gender programming that demonstrates an organizational track record in this work.

Action points under this priority include:

- Further diversify funding sources to develop and implement gender transformative programs;
- Secure funding to develop pilot programs and research that provides evidence of the impact of these initiatives;
- Continue to identify and partner with donors that share our commitment to gender transformative approaches and meaningfully engage in discussions with donors that have yet to adopt this approach;
- Communicate Internews' gender equality strategy to new and potential donors.

Partnerships

Our partners are at the heart of our work. Our approach to [accountable partnerships](#) recognizes that our partners are in the best position to understand community-level nuances. Internews support local partnerships and alliances on their commitments to — or willingness to commit to — gender equality and inclusion within the information space, encompassing both programmatic work and organisational policy and practice. As part of this work, we support gender audits and encourage partners to adopt codes of ethics and anti-harassment policies. We also seek to continually learn from our partners' expertise.

Action points under this priority include:

- Identify additional opportunities for collaboration with organizations that are led by and champion the rights of women, girls and gender and sexual minorities;
- Work with partners to develop feasible strategies and policies appropriate for their local contexts;
- Support partners to address gender equality within journalism vis-à-vis covering sensitive issues like gender-based violence and challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes;
- Sensitize partners who may be reluctant or resistant to working towards gender equality;
- Establish and/or strengthen partnerships with local organizations and individuals with demonstrated expertise on gender transformative programming;
- Establish mechanisms for further knowledge exchange between Internews, partners and program participants.

Conclusion

Challenging discriminatory gender norms in everything we do requires an adaptive, iterative approach. This strategy lays out our expected outcomes for continuous improvements over time, and as such needs to be revisited on a regular basis and revised as appropriate to stay aligned to the ever-evolving understanding of norms as related to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

This strategy is accompanied by an internal action plan and a gender equality and inclusion toolkit. The action plan will serve as the basis for annual reviews of the implementation of this strategy. The toolkit is comprised of seven modules and addresses different components of the project life cycle with practical steps and strategies to integrate intersectional gender perspectives across different areas of expertise and programs, while remaining deeply rooted in local approaches. The toolkit is a work in progress and will remain a live resource, regularly updated and adjusted as the needs of the teams evolve and local contexts change.



An Internews workshop on safety for women journalists is held during elections in El Salvador. Credit: Internews

Annex 1: Glossary

Gender: Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, attributes, opportunities, and expectations that a society typically associates with an individual or group based on assigned sex at birth (female, male, intersex) or gender identity (cis/trans, men, women, and other diversities). Gender norms and expectations often influence relations among women, men, girls, boys, and people who identify beyond the gender binary. Gender norms are learned through socialization processes. They are context-specific and change over time. Gender norms often determines what societies value, expect, and allow of individuals. In most societies, people of different genders face inequalities in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.²⁰

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and/or expressions mostly align with societal expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expressions differ from societal expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. Non-cisgender identities include genderqueer, gender diverse, gender nonconforming, gender non-binary, pangender, third gender, gender free, gender-fluid, and gender variant. These and countless other local language terms emphasize that gender can be non-binary or non-fixed.

Gender Analysis: A critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, boys, girls, and people who identify beyond the gender binary in certain situations or contexts. Gender analysis examines the relationships among people of different genders and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated into all sector assessments or situational analyses to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by interventions, and that where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

Gender and Sexual Minorities (GSM): Sometimes written as Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGM), is an umbrella term for people whose identities or lived experiences transcend cisgender and/or heteronormative expectations. The GSM umbrella includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people (LGBTQIA+), among other identities and realities.

Gender Equality: When people of all genders (including women, men, girls, boys, and people who identify beyond the gender binary) enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. It does not mean that people of different genders are the same. When there is gender inequality, women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities are more likely to be disadvantaged and marginalised; but we should not ignore the negative impact that gender inequality can have on men.

Gender Equity: The process of allocating resources, programs and decision-making fairly to people of all genders (including women, men, girls, boys, and people who identify beyond the gender binary). This requires ensuring that everyone has access to a full range of opportunities to achieve the social, psychological and physical benefits that come from participating and leading in activities. It does not necessarily mean making the same programs and facilities available to people of different genders. Gender equity may require implementing specific activities targeted at certain groups or making special adaptations to ensure their full and meaningful engagement. Gender equity recognizes that given gender inequality, and the differentiated challenges, marginalization and vulnerabilities experienced by women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities, equal opportunities for all may in fact reinforce gender inequality and thus considers the differentiated approach and measures required to ensure equal participation or benefit by all.

Gender Expression: How individuals externally present their gender identity, often through behaviour, dress, mannerisms, grooming, speech patterns, and social interactions, among many other expressions. A person's gender expression may or may not conform to societal expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth or their gender identity.

Gender Identity: Refers to a person's innate self-perception and identification as man, woman, or somewhere beyond the gender binary. Gender identity may or may not align with societal expectations associated with sex assigned at birth.

Gender Mainstreaming: The process of assessing the implications for people of all genders (including women, men, girls, boys, and people who identify beyond the gender binary) of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's, men's, and gender minorities' concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that people of all genders benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. In theory, gender integration, as a strategy and methodology, should not mean an emphasis on women's experiences. In practice the implementation of gender integration — given the socially constructed differences and relations between males and females in most of the world's binary-focused societies — often results in a specific focus on women because they are more adversely affected by existing gender inequalities than men. In such societies, the needs of gender and sexual minorities are often ignored.



Radio journalist in Gaza reads her script in Braille. Credit: Internews

Gender Transformative: Approaches which actively strive to examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalances of power. Gender transformative approaches encourage critical awareness of gender roles and norms; promote the position of women and gender and sexual minorities; challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties among people of different genders; and/or address the power relationships among women, gender and sexual minorities, and others in the community. These approaches aim to go beyond individual self-improvement among women and gender and sexual minorities toward transforming power dynamics and structures that act to reinforce gendered inequalities.²¹

Sex: The biological categorization of a person as male, female, or intersex. Sex is assigned at birth based on biological indicators, including hormones, sex chromosomes, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.²²

Sexual Orientation: An individual’s innate romantic, sexual, and/or emotional attraction to other people, with regards to sex and/or gender. “Heterosexual,” “bisexual,” “pansexual,” “asexual,” and “homosexual” are all examples of sexual orientations. A person’s sexual orientation is distinct from a person’s gender identity and expressions.

Women’s Empowerment: Empowerment is the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability has previously been denied. Women’s empowerment has five components, including both civil and political as well as cultural, economic and social dimensions: (i) women’s sense of self-worth; (ii) their right to have and to determine choices; (iii) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (iv) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; (v) and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.²³



Internews photo camp in Moldova teaches a group of youth to tell visual stories. Credit: Internews

Annex 2: Gender Equality Criteria

Internews has committed to becoming a gender transformative organization. The following criteria can be used as a guide to determine the extent to which a program, project, initiative, policy or approach is mainstreaming and prioritizing gender equality. The criteria should not be used as in a prescriptive way but, instead, provide a reference for analysis of how projects mobilize gender considerations, recognizing that gender is relational and directly shaped by unequal power relations between people of all genders. We aim to positively change the status quo and subordination women, girls, and gender and sexual minorities in society — and ideally this should be informed by their own sense of change rather than perceived notions by Internews or partner staff.

Gender Equality Criteria

Gender Exploitative — This work intentionally or unintentionally reinforces or exploits gender inequalities, harmful norms, and stereotypes in pursuit of desired outcomes.

Gender Blind — The specific issues and challenges affecting people of different genders (including women, men, and people who identify beyond the gender binary) are not identified by project documents or stakeholders. “Gender Blind” programming often references “people,” “communities,” “youth,” “audiences,” etc., rather than breaking these groups down by gender. Gender blind documents, projects or project activities would have no clear gender analysis of the wider context for the work, nor of the challenges for women, men, girls, boys and people who identify beyond the gender binary to access information and participate in media and information activities and of the wider context.

Gender Neutral — The differential needs of people of different genders (including women, men, and people who identify beyond the gender binary) are acknowledged by project documents, and in the project design and/or by stakeholders, but these are not being addressed in the project activities.

Gender Sensitive — Sex- and/or gender-disaggregated data has been collected as part of a gender analysis to understand the different barriers facing people of different genders (including women, men, and people who identify beyond the gender binary). Specific solutions to address the needs and concerns of these groups are included in the project activities and outcomes. Activities are more likely to focus on practical needs to improve the daily conditions of traditionally marginalized groups, including women and girls and gender and sexual minorities.

Gender Transformative — Actively strives to examine, question, and change rigid gender norms and imbalances of power. Gender-transformative approaches encourage critical awareness of gender roles and norms; promote the position of women and gender and sexual minorities; challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties among people of different genders; and/or address the power relationships among women, gender and sexual minorities, and others in the community. These approaches aim to go beyond individual self-improvement among women and gender and sexual minorities toward transforming power dynamics and structures that act to reinforce gendered inequalities.²⁴

Annex 3: Commitment to the International Gender and Development Agenda

Internews' Gender Equality and Inclusion Strategy also serves to reassert Internews' support of international instruments and commitments on gender equality and rights, which include:

- The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979);
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and outcome documents associated with follow up meetings Beijing+5 (2000), Beijing +10 (2005) and Beijing +15 (2010);
- The United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on Women, Peace and Security (2000);
- The Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Law in Relation to Issues of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (2007), and the “Yogyakarta Principles plus 10” (2017);
- The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 17/19 (2011) on sexual orientation and gender identity;
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (2015);
- The United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 32/2 in June 2016, which established the post of Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity;
- The 2008 Accra Agenda for Action;
- The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and ICPD25 Programme of Action; and
- The 2019 Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and the Gender Action Plan (GAP) of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy in any shape or form: by participating in the gender assessment, during discussion and workshops, by providing feedback, reviewing drafts and/or supplying programmatic information. This strategy was produced in collaboration with a team of external gender experts: Luciana Bollati, Brian Pellot, and Maria Fernanda Salazar Rodriguez. Internews would also like to thank the members of the Gender Working Group and the following individuals in particular (last name alphabetical order): Hannah Bernstein, Deborah Ensor, Valentyna Kuzyk, Menatalla Mohamed, Mohamad Mowakket, Amir Nili, Paula Orlando, Natalie Rowthorn, Haley Slafer, Beatrice Spadacini, Achini Wijesinghe and Em Winters.

Illustrations created for Internews by Peta Brookes.



Endnotes

- 1 Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020. [Who Makes the News?](#)
- 2 Luba Kassova, 2020. [The Missing Perspectives of Women in News.](#); Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020. [Who Makes the News?](#) UNESCO, 2020. [Online Violence against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot and Impacts](#); Sembramedia, 2021. [Inflection Point International](#).
- 3 Promundo, 2020. [Breaking Free From Boyhood Stereotypes: Action Steps for Parents & Content Creators](#) and [If He Can See It, Will He Be It? Representations of Masculinity in Boys' Television](#).
- 4 UNESCO, 2020. [Online Violence against Women Journalists: A Global Snapshot and Impacts](#); UN Broadband Commission, 2015. [Cyber violence against Women and Girls](#); Pew Research Center, 2014. [Online Harassment](#).
- 5 [International Center for Research on Women \(ICRW\), n/d. Technology-facilitated violence](#).
- 6 GLAAD, 2021. [Social Media Safety Index](#).
- 7 Access Now, 2018. [A double-edged sword: the internet as a tool for trans activism](#).
- 8 Countering Disinformation, [Understanding the Gendered Dimensions of Disinformation](#).
- 9 EU Disinfo Lab, 2021. [Misogyny and Misinformation: An analysis of gendered disinformation tactics during the COVID-19 pandemic](#); The Brookings Institution, 2021. [Gendered disinformation is a national security problem](#); She Persisted, 2020. [Why Gendered Disinformation](#).
- 10 Luba Kassova, 2020. [The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News](#) and [The Missing Perspectives of Women in News](#); Global Media Monitoring Project 2020, [Who Makes the News?](#)
- 11 Luba Kassova, 2020. [The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News](#) and [The Missing Perspectives of Women in News](#); Global Media Monitoring Project 2020, [Who Makes the News?](#)
- 12 SMA, 2020. [Connected Women: The Mobile Gender Gap Report](#).
- 13 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018. [Bridging the Digital Gender Divide: Include, Upskill, Innovate](#).
- 14 Civicus, 2021. [People Power under Attack. A report based on data from the CIVICUS Monitor](#).
- 15 UN Women, 2020. [Gender equality: Women's rights in review 25 years after Beijing](#); UNEP, 2020. [Global Gender and Environment Outlook](#).
- 16 Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020. [Who Makes the News? and Earth Journalism Network \(EJN\) / Internews, 2021. Where are the women? Insights from across Asia on the barriers to including women as sources and journalists in environmental reporting](#).
- 17 World Economic Forum, 2021. [Pandemic Pushes Back Gender Parity by a Generation, Report Finds](#).
- 18 Luba Kassova, 2020. [The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News](#) and Global Media Monitoring Project 2020, [Who Makes the News?](#)
- 19 Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020. [Who Makes the News?](#)
- 20 UN Women, n/d. [Concepts and definitions](#).
- 21 The Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), 2017. [The Gender Integration Continuum](#).
- 22 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2021. [Gender Equality Lexicon](#).
- 23 United Nations Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011. 25G Guidelines on Women's Empowerment.
- 24 The Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), 2017. [The Gender Integration Continuum](#).



Gender Equality and Inclusion Strategy

2022-2024