Internews

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FYI: Internews Strategy 2024-2026

FOR YOUR INFORMATION is not just a blueprint to guide our work. It is a *statement of purpose*, so that *your* information – the information shaping the choices and aspirations of communities in 100+ countries where we work – can be independent, fair and fact-based.

Internews

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INTERNEWS WAS FOUNDED TO **BRIDGE INFORMATION DIVIDES**

Forty years ago, the divides were primarily about physical distance and access to information. Internews' first major initiative – "space bridges" connecting American citizens with their Soviet counterparts – created an unprecedented exchange of ideas and information. In one small way, these space bridges seeded new connections, helping to usher in an extraordinary era of dialogue and opportunity.

TODAY, THE WORLD OFTEN SEEMS DIVIDED BY INFORMATION.

With a dizzying number of sources and bad actors deliberately sowing chaos with disinformation, trust in traditional media has plummeted. People retreat to the isolation of their filtered realities. Information is polarized and can be weaponized, and the resulting gridlock prevents constructive conversation to address pressing global issues, from the climate crisis to effective governance to health epidemics to humanitarian disasters.

The enormous changes in our information ecosystem can feel overwhelming. For our organization, they fuel a sense of urgency. How can we, Internews, build towards a better future – one in which information divides become information bridges?

IN THIS TIME OF DRAMATIC DISRUPTION, BUILDING THESE INFORMATION BRIDGES DEMANDS A NEW STRATEGY –
ONE THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE MYRIAD NEW WAYS IN WHICH INFORMATION IS CREATED, ACCESSED AND SHARED.

The explosion of information sources means our work must expand to meet the moment – and to meet people where they are. Unprecedented technological accelerations – such as generative AI – raise fears about its impact on the news industry, but also open a world of opportunity for low-resourced media. The collapse of traditional news business models is spurring innovation at the community level, where new forms of civic media are emerging to serve local needs. And with the world on edge as an estimated 4 billion people go to the polls in 2024, there is an increasing recognition of the critical role that public-interest media plays in protecting and preserving democracy.

Several themes animate what we must do differently or with increased vigor:

* **Cultivate the promise of technology (while mitigating the peril).** Generative AI, ever-evolving social media platforms, and other digital innovations hold promise and peril for news outlets and information consumers. We choose to focus first on realizing the promise. We will support our media partners to leverage AI and other technologies to produce quality information more efficiently, democratize information dissemination, and drive revenue back into the hands of media outlets.

* **Center our work on local communities, which hold the greatest hope for rebuilding trusted information ecosystems.** People might not trust "the media" but they do trust "their media" – sources that speak their language, are produced by members of their community, and deliver timely and culturally relevant information. Community-based media initiatives offer the opportunity for citizens to ask questions, discuss their fears and the rumors they hear, voice their opinions and demand action from government officials and other service providers. We will center our local partners in everything we do, with an eye toward building capacity so that their communities flourish and, ultimately, our support is no longer needed.

✳ **Embrace new voices and new sources.** Legacy television, radio, and newspapers remain important, but people increasingly rely on less formal information sources, including social media creators, community-based information producers, filmmakers, and a host of other media. Our goal is to help these non-traditional content producers embrace journalistic standards of quality and thrive financially.

✳ **Promote information integrity.** Dis-, mis-, and mal-information undermine trust and pose an existential threat to human progress. We will work to mitigate these threats by embedding Internews' new Information Integrity Framework across our programs, research agenda and learning practices. This approach seeks to increase the production of quality information and community demand for it, while reducing the reach of disinformation and community vulnerability to it.

✳ **Inform the global conversation about the climate crisis.** The climate crisis threatens everyone, especially many of the vulnerable groups we serve. Building on the 20-year legacy of Internews' Earth Journalism Network, we will intensify support for high-quality, actionable reporting on the environment that engages with communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis. We also commit to taking a hard look at our own operations to minimize our environmental impact.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST CONTINUE TO FOCUS HARD ON OUR CORE MISSION.

Historically, we are at a precipice: democracy, basic rights, and freedoms – and those who defend and uphold them – are under threat in ways not seen since the Cold War. This moment requires that we intensify our focus and our efforts to bolster independent, public-interest media and support journalists under attack and in exile; increase ethical, non-partisan reporting that enables inclusive and safe participation in elections; and tackle the corrosive effects of corruption on democracy through quality investigative journalism.

In order to advance this work, we must build our organizational capacity to operate at scale and manage risk. In the last five years, Internews has grown significantly. This presents both unprecedented opportunities to increase our impact in more than 140 countries and increased risk as we operate in conflict zones and places where freedom of expression is under threat. To take advantage of the opportunity and mitigate the risks, we will diversify revenue sources, streamline operations, build synergy between technical and country teams, and raise $10 million in flexible risk and response funding, including a $4-million dedicated Emergency Fund to respond nimbly in crises and keep operating in the places that need quality information most.

OUR APPROACH WITH THIS STRATEGY WILL BE DYNAMIC AND ADAPTABLE BECAUSE COMPLEXITY REQUIRES IT.

Internews pioneered the model of building healthy information ecosystems – carefully studying how a community interacts with information and tackling problems at their root. Like biological ecosystems, information ecosystems are vulnerable to a range of threats and imbalances, but they also contain within them enormous human and technological potential for resilience and adaptation. This approach remains our animating theory of change and underpins the work we do in more than 140 countries and upwards of 160 languages.

At the time of our founding, our mission was important. Today, it is essential – to the survival of democracy, the defense of human rights, the protection of the Earth's most fragile environments, and just about any major challenge faced by humanity.

AT INTERNEWS, WE ARE DETERMINED TO MEET THIS MOMENT WITH A DEGREE OF INNOVATION AND TENACITY THAT MATCHES ITS URGENCY.

OUR
WORLD

THE WORLD WE IMAGINE...

Internews has always believed in a world where people can speak to each other freely and share news and information that is meaningful and true. Regardless of medium. Regardless of borders. Regardless of who is in charge. We have seen communities thrive when people can share their own stories and have the information they need to actively participate in public life. At a time when information comes at us ever faster and ever louder, our mission is ever more important.

MISSION

WE HELP QUALITY NEWS AND INFORMATION THRIVE SO THAT PEOPLE EVERYWHERE CAN MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS, PARTICIPATE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, BRIDGE DIVIDES, AND HOLD POWER TO ACCOUNT.

As an organization, we emerged from the global pandemic changed in many ways. We pivoted to remote operations and grew. We experienced the outrage and organizational reckoning of the racial justice movement. We innovated to bring life-saving information about COVID-19 to local communities all around the world. And we responded to rapidly spiraling and tragic crises in Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Ukraine. In the midst of these changes, we knew it was time to craft a new strategy to best position Internews over the next three years to pursue our vision for the future.

VISION

WE ENVISION A JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD IN WHICH HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS ADVANCE HUMAN DIGNITY, ENABLE BROAD OPPORTUNITY, AND SPARK MEANINGFUL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

We are motivated by the aspirations and lived experiences of our local partners, our staff, and the communities in which we work. We all rely on news and information to make informed decisions for ourselves, our families, and our communities – on issues such as health, safety, infrastructure, and livelihoods. We all also rely on news and information to hold the powerful to account, both at the ballot box and through journalism's ability to expose corruption. We come to this strategy with the unwavering conviction that quality news and information can be a root solution to humanity's most pressing problems.

...AND THE WORLD WE FACE

We live in a world where the pace of change is both exciting and, often, overwhelming. While we do not presume to predict all the ways in which society, technology, politics, and information will change over the next three years, we are confident that everyone – no matter where they live – will need access to accurate, relevant and verifiable information to navigate them. To advance our work, we must have a clear view of the challenges facing our world and mission.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: PROMISE *AND* PERIL

Much of the change we see is propelled by the proliferation, rapid iteration, and ever-increasing bandwidth of digital technologies. As of 2024, the Internet connects 5.3 billion people, two-thirds of the world's population. Social media accounted for 38% of the world's online time in 2023 and continues to expand.[1] Generative artificial intelligence is now accessible to anyone with an Internet connection.[2]

This digital transformation holds enormous potential to improve our quality of life. It allows us to communicate at speed and across borders, places evidence-based information and critical services at our fingertips, and multiplies public conversations of the best kind. For all its benefits, the threats posed by digital technologies at this scale are also inescapable. Extraordinary advancements in deep fakes and disinformation empower those pursuing malicious goals. Foreign influence campaigns have hired digital marketing firms to manipulate elections in the Philippines and Venezuela, undermined judicial reforms in Kenya, and circumvented political advertising laws in India.[3] All of these campaigns made use of fake accounts, astroturfing, and algorithmic amplification in addition to paid advertising and content boosting.

DARE WE ASK ... DOES JOURNALISM EVEN MATTER?

Platforms, social media, and user-generated content have exponentially expanded and democratized information production, sharing, and access. Evergrowing and increasingly diverse sources inundate us with enormous volumes of content of variable quality. Many audiences, particularly young people, have disengaged from traditional media sources altogether, increasingly turning to social media as their primary source of information. Every day, users watch more than 1 billion TikTok videos; each hour, 30,000 hours of content are uploaded to YouTube. Meanwhile, news avoidance remains close to all-time highs, at 36% across global markets.[4]

In the past, public-interest media served as a crucial gatekeeper for trustworthy news and information, applying professional journalistic standards and helping people make sense of their circumstances and the wider world. Those gates have been dismantled while people's trust in media has plummeted. Ultimately, the onus now falls on individuals to decide what information is relevant and to discern the truth.

THE EXTINCTION ERA OF TRADITIONAL NEWS MEDIA

The collapse of the traditional advertising-based revenue model for media is one of the greatest challenges to the global supply of public-interest news and information. At the start of 2024, global digital advertising revenues – the vast majority of which circumvent news sites – accounted for 73% of total advertising revenues across all media and channels. Amid this explosive market change, traditional media are struggling to find workable business models. Additionally, in many countries where civic space is closed or closing, governments weaponize advertising revenue, directing public advertising to pliable media outlets and keeping it away from critical and/or independent outlets. Sustainability is too often achieved at the cost of independence, whether through a concentration of ownership or capture.

And then there's AI. News organizations are exploring how

generative AI technologies can be deployed to enhance their entire production process, influencing news gathering, content creation, business models, audience engagement, and distribution methods.[5] At the same time, there is a critical need to evaluate the long-term economic implications of AI adoption in news and media, considering the potential for business sustainability, the risk of job loss, and the prospect of deepening the news industry's dependence on tech giants and their opaque machine learning models.[6] There will also be implications for intellectual property rights, originality, authenticity, bias, digital rights, privacy, and the ethical use of technology, to name only a few.

Fragmentation of the market, technological change, government intervention, declining trust in media, and news avoidance have contributed to a perfect storm that threatens the very existence of public-interest news.

DROWNING OUT TRUTH

The digital spaces on which we depend – and the physical worlds they intersect – are becoming more hostile and susceptible to manipulation. Malign actors mislead audiences by pushing dishonest, divisive, and dangerous narratives that fuel polarization, erode trust, trigger restrictions on civic space, and make it more difficult for people to experience a shared reality. Leveraging social media platforms and technology, malign actors work across national borders, at extremely low cost and high anonymity, and with almost zero consequences. And a vast amount of the Internet – accounts, engagement, content – is fake. Since 2017, a staggering 27 billion fake accounts, the equivalent of nearly 3.5 times the global population, have been deleted from Facebook.[7] Yet, as the world grapples with all this fake content, platforms are retreating from initiatives to mitigate disinformation.

UNDER ASSAULT: JOURNALISM, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Freedom of expression and access to information continue to decline as journalists, information producers, their sources, and the subjects of their stories face intimidation and attacks unseen since the end of the Cold War.[8] In 2023, 779 members of the media were imprisoned because of their work,[9] while 120 journalists were killed.[10] At the start of this strategy, the war in Gaza has claimed the lives of at least 94 journalists and media workers, making it the deadliest conflict for journalists since 1990.[11] Today, journalists confront an evolving threat landscape ranging from digital attacks and physical harm to surveillance and transnational repression, from cyberattacks and account takedowns to intentionally vague and opaque legal frameworks, threats of legal action, and imprisonment. In the worst cases, journalists must navigate direct threats to their lives, including operating in forced exile or while internally displaced. Authoritarians harness digital technologies to surveil, silence, and subvert critical voices regardless of their location, intensifying real-world threats and creating a playbook for their peers to iterate.

A WORLD OF HURT: NAVIGATING POLYCRISES AMID DECLINING DEMOCRACY

As authoritarians and other malign actors seek to limit freedom of expression, public-interest media, and professional journalism, the need for high-quality information is greater than ever. Our world is beset by crises that are not only concurrent but protracted. Amid nearly two decades of democratic backsliding,[12] with two-thirds of the world's population now living in autocracies,[13] the convergence of the climate crisis, humanitarian emergencies, health pandemics, violent conflict, and other stressors is weakening society's resilience.[14] Decades of progress are now at risk, particularly in marginalized communities.

These *polycrises* test the ability of journalism to cover complex and interrelated stories over time, in crowded and noisy information ecosystems plagued by disinformation. They also test the public's ability to make sense of the world and to understand the information they need to navigate everything happening, everywhere, all at once. Malign narratives appeal to audiences precisely because they provide simple explanations of complex problems even as they disorient the public and weaken democracy. With almost half the world's population set to vote in national elections in 2024, public confidence in electoral outcomes, the legitimacy of governing institutions, and peaceful transfers of power are at stake, with stark implications for societies' ability to cope with polycrises in the years ahead.
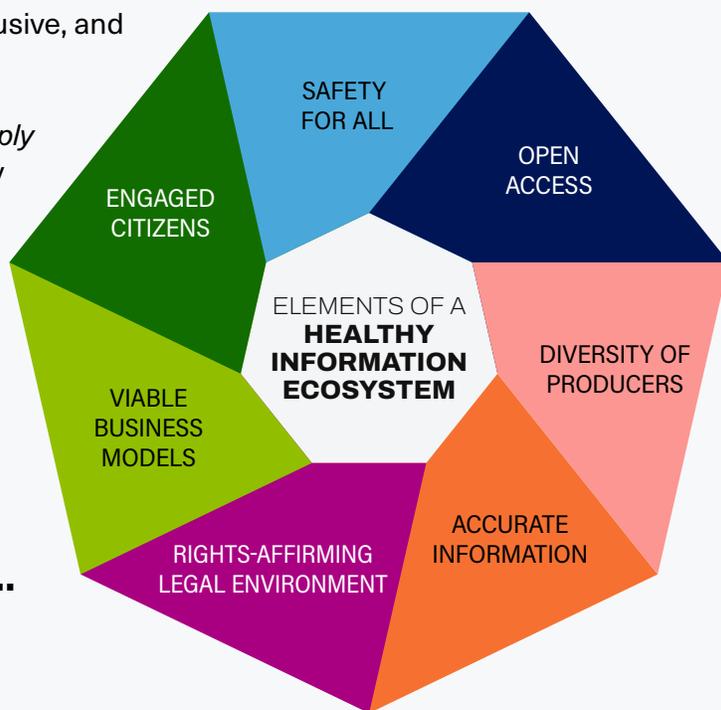
OUR
APPROACH

Our Approach

HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS

At the core of Internews' strategy is the drive to improve the health of information ecosystems. Wherever societies are plagued by complex issues, healthy information ecosystems are essential for citizens to navigate and respond to those issues. People everywhere need to be able to access trustworthy news and information to make informed decisions about their lives, freely advocate for themselves, solve problems in their communities and countries, and hold power to account. The ability of societies to thrive and find solutions to their challenges is underpinned by robust, inclusive, and unimpeded information ecosystems.

In the simplest terms, information ecosystems include the *supply side* of a media landscape, such as infrastructure, the regulatory environment, production and dissemination tools, content, producers, and consumer data. Information ecosystems also recognize the demand side, or human behavior side, of the ecosystem: how people access, trust, source, share, and value information. In our new strategy, we identify **seven key elements** that together define the health of any information ecosystem. These elements underpin our theory of change, program design, and thought leadership.
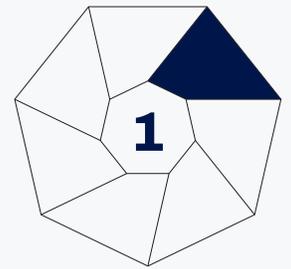

ELEMENTS OF A **HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM**

SAFETY FOR ALL · OPEN ACCESS · DIVERSITY OF PRODUCERS · ACCURATE INFORMATION · RIGHTS-AFFIRMING LEGAL ENVIRONMENT · VIABLE BUSINESS MODELS · ENGAGED CITIZENS

A HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM ...

1 Begins with open, affordable **access**;

2 Includes a **diversity and plurality** of information producers;

3 Supports the creation of **accurate**, locally relevant news and information;

4 Requires a **rights-affirming** legal and regulatory environment;

5 Needs **viable business models**;

6 Is enriched by **engaged citizens**; and

7 Prioritizes **safety for all** who produce and engage with information.

Open, Affordable
ACCESS

We work to ensure that everyone, everywhere is able to access the news and information they need online or offline. We support an Internet that is open, reliable, accessible, and affordable to everyone.

In a healthy information ecosystem, everyone, everywhere can find the news and information they need. Efforts to produce quality content matter only if that content reaches people. Despite technological progress, income disparities, lagging digital infrastructure, gender, and other inequalities coalesce to limit access to the Internet, especially on mobile, in many countries around the world. Censorship also exacerbates access divides. States, technology platforms, and other societal forces often limit access with systemic exclusion and overt censorship, affecting entire populations, marginalized groups, or 'problematic voices' whose activism threatens those in power. Internet shutdowns, often during intense protests or critical political events, are a growing tactic to impede citizens' ability to connect with each other and the outside world. In Senegal, for example, authorities disrupted access to the Internet and social media platforms three times in 2023. In February 2024, amid protests and other press freedom violations, authorities blocked it yet again.

Digital access is not the only access divide. Millions of people live in information ecosystems consisting of informal, personal, civic, and community information flows unrelated to news media or information platforms. Others may live in the news deserts of rural, remote, or under-resourced communities, or they may have been displaced by war or other humanitarian crises. For those who rely on minority languages, or for those with disabilities, finding technologies, platforms, tools, and applications that accommodate their access needs remains a struggle.

To reduce the global access divide, Internews always prioritizes information-vulnerable populations. Under our new strategy, we will redouble our efforts to increase access to uncensored news and information by investing in open-source censorship circumvention technologies and by partnering to track, respond, and raise awareness of Internet shutdowns and other blocking and censorship events. Outside the digital realm, we will continue to facilitate access to information for remote, displaced, or marginalized communities through means such as standing up community radio stations in rural Afghanistan or supporting AI-powered speech-reading software in news production for the visually impaired in North Macedonia.

We will also expand information access by evolving our *community engagement* strategies that involve physical outreach tactics: listening groups, mobile information access points, film screenings, town hall style discussions, even traditional songs, poetry, and drama.
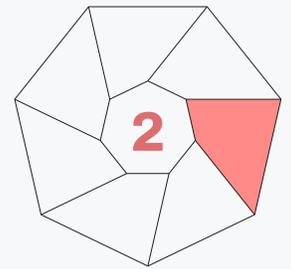
News and information is useless if people cannot access it. Internews commits to building access – online and off – in ways that reach everyone, everywhere.

FYI

01 Virtual Private Networks, or VPNs, are powerful tools to enable information access to vulnerable communities. While apps such as *Orbot* bring the power of open-source VPNs to mobile phones, minority language speakers face barriers, as the app – and everything written about it, including help menus – exists only in majority languages. Through our localization sprints with partners, *Orbot* is now available in Aymaran, a language spoken by more than one million people in Bolivia, Peru, and Chile, who are now able to rely on a usable, accessible VPN to access critical information.

02 When civil war erupted in Sudan in April 2023, more than 4 million people were displaced internally or became refugees in neighboring countries. Struggling to find life-saving information on border crossings, transportation, or medical care, many were forced to rely on hearsay from social media. As rumors ran rampant and connectivity became scarce in Sudan, we worked to provide a lifeline of fact-checked information to impacted communities. Our humanitarian team rapidly set up in Renk, the main border crossing between Sudan and South Sudan. Working with our partner, the Community Engagement Network, we engaged local, trusted correspondents who understood cultural dynamics, spoke the local language, and were most readily able to establish relationships of trust. In neighboring Chad, we provided emergency funds to support Association La Voix Du Ouaddai, a community radio station we established 20 years ago during the Darfur crisis, to serve the information needs of Sudanese refugees there.

DIVERSITY & PLURALITY
of Information Producers

2

In addition to journalists and the news media, we work with the full spectrum of content creators producing inclusive, high-quality information that meets the needs of diverse audiences and fosters open dialogue among different communities.

In a healthy information ecosystem, the widest possible diversity of perspectives from a variety of sources is available to facilitate constructive and informed public discourse. As information ecosystems everywhere expand to accommodate millions of new content creators, the supply side of the global information ecosystem is growing exponentially. But quantity of content doesn't mean that all citizens can find quality information that reflects their needs. This requires both media plurality and information diversity.

Plurality in the traditional news media requires a mix of ownerships models (public, private, and community media), a strong commitment to the public interest and the technical architecture for multiplatform and multichannel distribution.[15] Without it, media concentration can limit access to the diversity of voices and perspectives needed for people to constructively engage in public discourse.

Beyond legacy media, plurality also requires support for the full spectrum of content producers – from social media creators to community-based information producers to filmmakers – who are committed to shining light on neglected issues, raising voices from marginalized communities, and speaking truth to power. This support ensures that all sectors of society contribute to a diverse information landscape: young people, women, indigenous people, LGBTQ communities, and others whose voices are often excluded from mainstream media.

Our new strategy will maintain robust, multi-faceted support to independent media outlets and professional journalists while bringing renewed energy and focus to helping them engage new audiences across new platforms. We will also seek to work with new cohorts of effective and principled content creators, storytellers, and influencers capable of bringing a wide diversity of voices, issues, and perspectives into the public sphere.
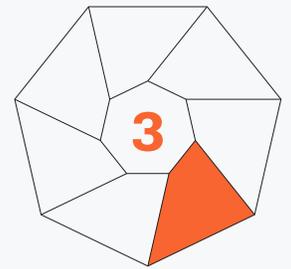
IN FOCUS: DISABILITY

Accurate, comprehensive coverage of disability issues and increased participation of people with disabilities in the production of news and information can help alleviate stigma and discrimination, as well as lead to better government policy. We have authored a *Disability Reporting in the Media* manual, and our work has supported leadership, communications, video, and social media skills for women with disabilities in Mali; mentored journalists to win national awards for stories on people with disabilities fighting for their rights through the courts in Tanzania; and supported a citizen journalism group in Indonesia that sparked local action to regulate accessibility to public services for persons with disabilities.

FYI

01 When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it became the one story every journalist in the world had to cover. Reporters on every beat – from business to sports –all needed to convey the implications of the pandemic to diverse audiences, including many communities without access to mainstream media. Within the first month, we assembled a group of 16 Internews Pandemic Mentors – media professionals with expertise in health, science, humanitarian crises, data journalism and community engagement. With experience in more than 20 countries across five regions and collectively speaking 20 languages, they provided mentoring and training to Internews partners across the globe, including hundreds of journalists, storytellers and other content creators who were grappling with the sheer volume of COVID-19 information and the parallel track of misinformation. This work seeded our Health Journalism Network (HJN), which now has more than 2,000 members from 86 countries, covering critical public health stories for their communities.

ACCURATE &
Locally Relevant News and Information

3

We invest in partners to produce accurate and locally relevant news that people need and value, in the languages they understand. Our support is rooted in the time-tested principles and practices of independent journalism: accuracy, fairness, inclusion, transparency, and accountability.

A healthy information ecosystem offers an abundance of locally relevant news of a standard that aligns with the principles and practices of independent public-interest journalism. In the past, public-interest media served as a crucial gatekeeper for trustworthy news and information, applying professional journalistic standards and helping people make sense of their circumstances and the wider world. Today, everyone has the potential to produce and share content, and we need to be clear about what constitutes "integrity" of information. Internews asserts that quality information is rooted in the fundamental principles and practices of independent journalism: accuracy, fairness, inclusion, transparency, and accountability. We remain unwavering in our belief that ethics, protection of sources, a balance of voices, and speaking truth to power are the hallmarks of integrity for public-interest information.

This element is about powerful storytelling that makes important content relevant and actionable. Under this element sits our foundational work in mentoring and hands-on skill building: journalistic and technological support for information producers; techniques for engaging audiences through storytelling; and guidance on how to create inclusive information that reflects the reality of the community it serves.

We also support content creators to do specialized reporting on and analysis of the sources and impacts of disinformation narratives; to deepen their capacity in investigative and data-driven reporting; and to consider the evolving use of AI and other technologies to produce more rich and relevant content. We build capacity to tell complex stories related to the climate crisis, corruption, elections, conflict, economics, public health, mass migration, and the complicated nexus of these challenges.

IN FOCUS: **ELECTIONS**

We have a long history of working with public-interest media and other content producers committed to professional standards of journalism to build skills and produce ethical, non-partisan reporting that enables inclusive and safe participation in elections. We have mentored partners on how to structure fair public debates and helped journalists to understand election laws, including those surrounding political advertising. As journalists covering elections increasingly come under attack, we also work to enhance their physical safety and digital security. In recent years we've undertaken this work in countries as diverse as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Liberia, Haiti, Brazil, and Tunisia.

As almost half the world's population is set to vote in national elections in 2024, the importance of information integrity surrounding elections – and support to journalists covering elections and their aftermaths – will be a key feature of work under our new strategy. To deepen this experience, we have an internal Elections Community of Practice to share understanding and analysis of high-level themes including mis- and disinformation, AI, voter engagement, electronic voting, and suppression of opposition. We're continually iterating our elections-related resources, methodologies, and tools and envision research and insights from our country programs where elections are happening, including Bangladesh, El Salvador, Moldova, Sri Lanka, and more.

FYI

01 An investigative report produced by the media outlet *Bulak* in Kyrgyzstan with support from Internews prompted the long-awaited arrest of corrupt local officials. "Making Money on Land: "Smart" Schemes of Officials" exposed the sale of land for the construction of housing despite being zoned for agricultural purposes. The report found that officials had transferred money from these illegal sales to a private charitable foundation owned by participants in the scheme. The story generated considerable "buzz" within the community given its novel investigative format, comprehensive evidence base, and the use of computer visualization and compelling storytelling. The implicated officials were arrested three days after the story aired.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY

Our vision is that technological advances are rights-respecting and shaped by the communities who use them. We believe that technology should support freedom of expression, protect human rights, strengthen democratic engagement, and increase public and private sector accountability. This vision reflects the following principles:

PEOPLE BEFORE TECH

We believe that technology's primary role is to serve the needs of the community using it. To ensure that the tools we need are built to serve the world we want to live in, we support open-source development and user communities from across the globe, so that solutions are usable, accessible, rights-respecting, tool-agnostic, and based on real needs.

LOCAL EXPERTISE DRIVES GLOBAL PROGRESS

Local expertise is key to ensuring that all technologies are developed and useable by the people who need them. We meet this need by working closely with our global network of partners and immersing ourselves in how technology is developed, adapted, and used. We have achieved remarkable results over the years by building and nurturing deep relationships with local and international civil society and technical experts in over 90 countries, who collectively work to promote an open, interoperable, reliable, and secure Internet. With this approach, we have been successful in building longstanding digital security methodologies to keep people safer online, funded the development of key open-source security tools for safe communication in challenging environments, and helped organizations secure advocacy wins to counter restrictive Internet freedom laws in their countries.
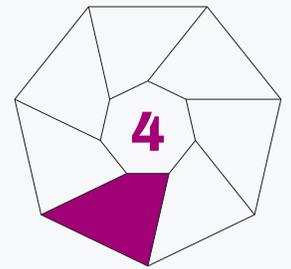
INNOVATION IN SERVICE OF OUR VISION

We support our partners to embrace technological shifts – from building radio towers in remote locations, to training machine learning that identifies early signs of shifts in civic space, to developing solutions that increase advertising revenue for news outlets. We have also watched some technological advancements lead to the closing of civic space – including Internet shutdowns that imperil fundamental human rights – and the rise of disinformation. In these instances, our Internet Freedom initiatives enable our collaboration with partners around the world to develop tailored, sustainable, and locally relevant technological solutions that push back against information restrictions, support creative solutions that circumvent censorship, combat disinformation, and shed light on harmful government practices.

As part of our new organizational strategy, we are developing an accompanying Technology and Internet Freedom Strategy to support our vision that the Internet, and the use of technology in general, should enable the free flow of information.

RIGHTS-AFFIRMING
Legal & Regulatory Environment

We work with policy groups, legal and regulatory bodies, governments, civil society organizations, platforms, and technology companies to foster the transparency, accountability, legal protections, and healthy market conditions needed for independent media, an open Internet, and freedom of expression to thrive.

A healthy information ecosystem enjoys a legal and regulatory environment that protects freedom of expression and access to information while also enabling a robust and independent news media. Legal and regulatory frameworks have long governed media infrastructure, broadcasting and frequency allocation, licensing and taxation, technical standards, media markets and ownership, libel and copyright laws, and advertising. Today, they extend to the Internet, data privacy, and cyber security. If rights-affirming, these frameworks protect free speech, access to information, digital rights, a free Internet, and the independence, diversity, and plurality of media. Too often, however, laws and regulations are drafted and passed with repressive intent, resulting in self-censorship or direct persecution of journalists, information producers, and human rights defenders. Data protection laws in particular are critical bulwarks in keeping personal information from falling into the wrong hands or being used for undisclosed purposes.

Social media platforms play an outsized role in the global information ecosystem and have profound impacts on the quality and diversity of information in national and community ecosystems. Due in part to their operating structures and lack of legal regulatory frameworks in the US, where many are based, these companies are rarely held accountable for human rights violations that occur on their platforms or for information spread through their systems.

As authoritarianism rises and social media platforms retreat from their global civic responsibilities, Internews reaffirms a commitment to providing technical support and training to regional and in-country partners engaging in rights-based advocacy and regulatory work: regulation and policies for data privacy and data protection; laws around AI governance, cyber-security, and surveillance technology; and provisions that regulate online speech and online platforms along with users' rights on those platforms.

Our support ensures local civil society partners serve as key players in the policy process, drafting and reviewing text, conducting research, educating lawmakers, and establishing meaningful and non-partisan connections between relevant stakeholders. We also engage with duty bearers including governments, international bodies, and private sector technology and social media companies to ensure that their decisions meet international human rights standards through legislation, policies, and practices. Our partners bring technical insight to policymakers to better understand the far-reaching and unintended impacts of the laws and regulations they are proposing. We leverage the experience of our partners to press companies and platforms to uphold their responsibilities to independent public-interest media and freedom of expression and to help them better understand the impact of their products in markets around the world, particularly those not traditionally on their radar.

FYI ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

01 25 years after its introduction, Zambia's long-awaited Access to Information Bill was signed into law in December 2023. In the process, Internews provided two years of technical support to the Ministries of Information and Justice. We trained 21 government ministries to understand the law and allay fears about how it would be used. We facilitated dialogue between Zambian government officials and information regulators from Kenya and South Africa to discuss the impact of access to information laws in the latter two countries. We also supported significant civil society initiatives engaging thousands of Zambians to facilitate stakeholder inputs through press briefings, nationwide roundtables for media and civil society, and townhall discussions and information sessions educating citizens and local government officials on the Bill.

VIABLE BUSINESS MODELS

5

We support producers of trusted, relevant news and information to expand and deepen their relationships with their audiences, make data-driven decisions, develop business capacity, and attract revenue so they can thrive and serve their communities.

In a healthy information ecosystem, media outlets and other providers of information can generate sustainable income from their work. Amid an abundance of options, consumer habits are changing in ways that scatter audiences, diluting the revenues that once covered the cost of providing quality journalism. At Internews, we firmly believe that a mixed portfolio of revenue options is the only near-term solution to today's "media extinction event." We work directly with information producers to improve their business management, leverage performance data, and activate new revenue streams from advertising, donations, subscriptions, and more. Leveraging our in-country presence, we hire and promote local and regional media business experts and change managers and foster a growing community of practice focused on sharing knowledge and tools for improved media viability.
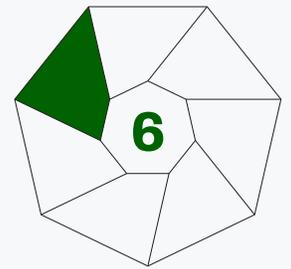
We also see great promise in the opportunities afforded by AI, particularly to low-resourced news and information providers. Internews is committed to supporting our media partners in the constructive and creative deployment of AI initiatives that improve newsroom and business practices, while remaining vigilant of the risks. For example, in the Philippines, we supported leading national media entities, small local news agencies, and civil society groups to convene under a single umbrella to collectively craft an ethical AI framework that ensures every stakeholder – from editors to reporters – has an influential voice in AI's future in Philippine newsrooms. Many voices in these conversations came from representatives of rival organizations; this unprecedented cooperation speaks to the ubiquity of AI's challenge and its impact on media's sustainability.

While we offer a full suite of business mentoring approaches – everything from audience development, branding, and marketing to revenue generation and digital transformation – our new strategy takes us further. We are advancing cutting-edge work that helps our media partners evolve new data-driven business models and deepens our participation in global efforts to better understand what drives media and public information viability in our digital age. At the outset of this strategy, we are leading two global media viability initiatives – Ads for News and the Media Viability Accelerator. Both leverage AI to create large datasets and put them at the disposal of independent media, advertisers, and technologists with the aim of fostering new relationships between creators, consumers, and advertisers.

FYI

01 Through Internews mentorship in analytics, digital strategy, and programmatic advertising, *Oslobođenje*, a news outlet based in Bosnia, and *Vijesti*, in neighboring Montenegro, grew their monthly user bases from 630,000 to 1.8 million and from 2.4 to 4.3 million respectively. Not surprisingly, bigger audiences contributed to greater advertising revenue for both partners, doubling at Oslobođenje and increasing by 10 times at Vijesti.

02 *Back to News* supports the re-investment of media budgets in credible news publishers and responsible fact-based journalism. Launched in February 2023, this initiative is made possible by a partnership between Internews and Group M, a global leader in advertising responsible for more than $60 billion in annual media investments. Ads seen on high-quality news sites are perceived as 74% more likable and receive 20% higher engagement than the same ads on lower-quality sites. *Back to News* is underpinned by our *Ads for News* program, which helps brands and agencies reach audiences on more than 10,000 vetted local news websites from more than 50 countries. Initial mapping in the Asia Pacific region shows it increased advertising investment in 2023 in more than 350 trusted local news websites compared to 2022.

Informed &
ENGAGED CITIZENS

6

We prioritize community-engagement approaches which focus on listening, rooted in a deep understanding of how people access, trust, value, need, share, seek out, and add their voice to the news and information that is relevant to them. We also strive to improve media, information, and data literacy so people are better able to discern the validity and integrity of the news and information they consume.

In a healthy information ecosystem, people actively engage with their information environments without fear of being misled or endangered; as a result, they are also able to actively engage in civic life.

This element reminds us that the health of any information ecosystem is not defined purely by factors on the information supply side. Human perceptions and behaviors around information are critical to a full understanding of any information ecosystem. As important as it is to shore up the quantity and quality of news and information available, it is equally important to understand what drives people to engage with and trust the sources they rely on. The only supply that really matters is the one that matters to the people we seek to serve.

Mis-, dis-, and mal-information deprive people of the ability to reach a common understanding of shared realities on issues of critical importance, from local elections to climate change. They disable democratic engagement, confuse, paralyze, or provoke polarization and conflict. This unprecedented information trauma is extraordinarily difficult to heal. But we at Internews also know that healing is possible. Our programming has long prioritized information localization as a key component of resilience against disinformation.

Community-based media initiatives improve access to information and ensure people have a voice in demanding and shaping the content they receive. Our new strategy commits to furthering our unique experience over two

IN FOCUS: **BY & FOR YOUTH**

The uptake of smartphones, social media dominance, and demand for more relevant and entertaining content are upending the ways young audiences are creating, sharing, and engaging with information. Youth are skeptical of the news they find online and, because of platform algorithms, more likely to encounter news than look for it.[16] We recognize youth as changemakers and as key to the sustainability of healthy information ecosystems. We work to support their equal rights to access news and freely express themselves. We also strive to expand the supply of, and demand for, quality information prepared by and for youth, on all sides of the digital divide.

For example, In the Coreguaje indigenous communities in Caquetá, Colombia, young people were seeking a role in communications and decision-making processes traditionally dominated by their elders. In response, we worked with local partner Sinergias to launch a communications incubator where youth learned how to use their smartphones to share information through videos, podcasts, and radio capsules and to debunk rumors and disinformation identified by offline listening groups. The project broadened communication channels, fostered meaningful dialogue, and enabled better informed decisions about their health and other issues vital to the community.

As part of our new strategy, Internews will continue to elevate youth voices and stories by better understanding the preferences and behaviors of young audiences, supporting more relevant and engaging storytelling, and embracing emerging channels, platforms, and content creators.

Informed &
ENGAGED CITIZENS

decades of work in humanitarian scenarios where we focus on listening to foster "feedback loops" between people who need information and information providers, civil society organizations, development agencies, and other local stakeholders. Community-based initiatives offer the opportunity for citizens to ask questions, discuss their fears and the rumors they hear, voice their opinions, and demand action from government officials and other service providers.

Under our new strategy, we will couple our innovations in community engagement approaches in the humanitarian and health sectors with our groundbreaking work with civic media in the US, and bring civic media and information networks to marginalized and media-underserved communities globally.
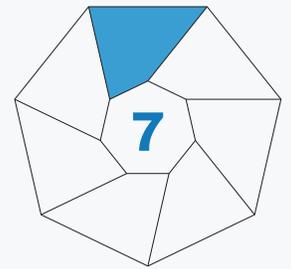
For example, during the civil war in South Sudan, in addition to standing up community radio stations, we mobilized teams on motorbikes (called "boda-bodas") to deliver news and information to people in public gathering places and map which questions they wanted answered on the next visit. In Zimbabwe, where most community radio initiatives are still not licensed, reporters regularly organize townhall style events where local officials are called on to engage directly with citizens. Some of these meetings are recorded and passed to minibus taxi drivers who play them in the taxi and encourage lively discussion among the passengers. In Bangladesh, Internews-trained humanitarian liaison officers offered thousands of Rohingya refugees daily opportunities to talk about their experiences, ask questions, and demand accountability for humanitarian services.

Getting close to information-poor and marginalized communities and asking them which information providers they trust is often the only way to design programs that make meaningful change in local information environments.

FYI ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

01 FilmAid, our initiative using storytelling and film to produce local impact, worked with Humans of Taiz, a local Yemeni media group, to produce a short documentary that sheds light on the impact of climate change on marginalized communities in Yemen. The film takes place in a camp for internally displaced people, highlighting how heat waves, droughts, and a decade of war have forced more than 4 million Yemenis away from their homes. In addition to helping produce the documentary, we co-developed its distribution strategy, carrying out 12 screenings and engagement events in three Yemeni cities that reached more than 4,000 people and earned the film multiple regional prizes.

02 Our global multi-year initiative *Rooted in Trust* tackled the unprecedented wave of rumors and misinformation that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. We tracked over 55,000 rumors, questions, and concerns from local communities in 15 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, disseminating 750 bulletins tailored to media professionals, humanitarian actors, and healthcare workers so that they could better respond to local information needs. Based on this data and our Information Ecosystem methodology, partners created 6,400 pieces of lifesaving health-related content in 60 languages and distributed them through radio, TV, social media, and in person.

03 Conecta Arizona's founder had a vision to provide the Spanish-speaking community in her area with verified information about topics they cared about. With funding and mentorship from Internews' Listening Post Collective, what started as a WhatsApp group for 12 people turned into a full-fledged information hub for the community as a whole. Today, Conecta Arizona has a website, an award-winning podcast, and an audience of more than 100,000 people. It also now covers all kinds of issues, including public health, immigration, state and local politics, education, arts, and culture. Recently, Conecta Arizona reached a new milestone of $500k of funding from multiple donors to continue its work.

SAFETY FOR ALL
Who Produce & Engage With Information

We work to address the physical, psycho-social, legal, and digital security threats facing all those who take great personal risk to bring information to their communities: technologists, journalists, content producers, filmmakers, and their subjects and sources. We prioritize online and offline security, safety, and privacy for everyone who engages with the information they need and value.

In a healthy information ecosystem, journalists and other content creators can do their work without harassment, threats, or violence – online and offline.

In the digital realm, we know that malign actors are increasing the volume and sophistication of threats[17] against those who produce, share, and engage with information – even as these threats are underreported.[18] Malicious actors increasingly exploit sensitive and personal information online to target or monitor individuals and communities. The fear of being subjected to surveillance[19] – when combined with limits on identifying surveillance attacks – creates a chilling effect[20] that stifles free speech, free association, and democratic participation.[21] Women face disproportional risks of digital harassment, cyberstalking, doxing, and the non-consensual distribution of images.

Independent media actors, human rights defenders, and the digital rights community continue to show remarkable resilience and agility in this increasingly sophisticated

IN FOCUS: **MEDIA-IN-EXILE**

The number of media-in-exile is growing, fueled by high profile events in Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, or driven out with less visible waves of exodus as civic space shrinks globally. Internews works with these exiled outlets to establish alternative operations, enhance digital security, migrate archival data to safe locations, and scrub websites of information that endangers people. We work with partners to call diplomatic attention to press freedom issues and advocate with technology companies whose actions can help ensure these outlets remain visible and viable in digital information ecosystems. We seek to amplify the voices of exiled media through research highlighting their innovative strategies to evade transnational repression, manage distributed newsrooms, reach and protect sources and audiences, and engineer new, viable business models.

SAFETY FOR ALL

Who Produce & Engage With Information

digital threat landscape. Internews has provided direct mentoring and tailored support to our partners to navigate these digital threats, harden their online defenses and deploy new media technologies – often during conflicts, coups, or other crises. Over the past decade, we have shifted our approach from tool and software development to mainstreaming safety and strengthening the baseline protections for users. Our projects bridge the gap between developers and users, yielding truly localized protection tools and software that reflect the needs of unique at-risk user groups.

Our new strategy anticipates the enormous impact that generative AI tools are likely to have in the digital threat landscape for better and for worse. In preparation, we and our partners in the digital rights and civic tech communities are taking stock not only of the potential threats but also the rich possibilities these tools may offer to increase efficiencies in threat identification, digital forensic analysis, and digital safety.

Our new strategy also commits us to expanding and honing work that helps our partners cope with physical and mental risk. We assist in conflict scenarios that no longer recognize traditional press neutrality, and in which journalists are increasingly likely to be deliberately targeted. We support the safety of journalists covering the environment, as climate reporting is becoming one of the world's most dangerous professions. This includes deploying sophisticated readiness training and equipment to individuals and organizations – including exiled journalists.

We also continue to explore new ways of providing appropriate psycho-social support, especially for women, on issues such as sexual harassment prevention in the media industry, the protection of online content moderators' mental well-being, and the provision of healthy coping strategies for women recovering from technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

FYI ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

01 Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and alongside brave Ukrainian partner organizations, we have provided material, logistical, and technical support to local media outlets. We facilitated access to safety equipment and first aid kits, including beyond enemy lines and into occupied territories: according to our partner Oksana Romaniuk, the Director of Ukraine's Institute of Mass Information, flak jackets provided by Internews were the first to arrive in occupied Kherson in March 2022. We are procuring secure technology and VPNs and providing cybersecurity training to local reporters – all of which are difficult to obtain and do during the fighting.

02 Our signature professional audit framework SAFETAG adapts traditional penetration testing and risk assessment methodologies to be relevant to small, non-profit human rights organizations that have strong digital security concerns but do not have the funds to afford a traditional digital security audit. Internews released the *SAFETAG* audit framework publicly, has trained hundreds of auditors all over the world, and funded hundreds more civil society groups and media houses to receive audits and make changes to their operations to mitigate their highest risks.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
GENDER

Societal norms around gender touch every aspect of human experience, including how we all seek, value, and share information. At Internews, we focus on tangible disparities, gaps, and challenges confronted by women and girls in all their diversity, while tackling the unique information needs and pervasive discrimination faced by gender-diverse individuals. We are committed to breaking systemic barriers, amplifying underrepresented voices, and building information ecosystems that work for everyone. In the news and information space, we work to ensure that women are:

EQUAL:
ADDRESSING GAPS IN NEWS LEADERSHIP AND COVERAGE

Women continue to be on the margins of leadership and editorial decision-making in the news industry. They are least likely to be found in the highest-profile news beats – business, politics, and foreign affairs[22] – resulting in major gaps in coverage. Evidence shows that only 0.02% of news coverage addresses gender inequalities in key areas such as pay, power, safety, and more. Largely ignored, harmful social practices and inequalities are normalized across societies.[23]

Internews works with partners in the industry to address these organizational challenges. For example, in cooperation with the Female Journalists Association of Liberia, we worked with an editorial leadership forum to sensitize editors and journalists about gender and inclusion issues in the industry and in content. As a result, 20 media outlets developed gender ethics policies for their newsrooms, and as of January 2024, 33 media outlets had signed on to this initiative.

VISIBLE:
ELEVATING WOMEN'S EXPERT VOICES

Women make up just 25% of the subjects and sources of news stories.[24] Every day, most stories worldwide primarily express men's perspectives, priorities and achievements. Women are unseen and unquoted – even in reporting on issues that affect them most.[25] Content also suffers from an immense authority gap: on average, the expert voices that help explain issues and shape audience knowledge, public debate, and policymaking are 76% male.[26] As a result, political problems and proposed solutions consistently miss women's inputs. When women are presented in the news, stereotypes and offensive language and images suggest there is no place for them in politics or public life.[27]

Internews works to ensure women are involved in every stage of news production and that the content the world reads, views, and listens to includes women's expert voices. Using our Reflect Reality methodology, we partnered with the Media Council of Mongolia and the News for Equality Coalition on an initiative to track and increase the sourcing of women in news. A hackathon-generated database of women available for interviews subsequently grew to include more than 500 experts in politics, economics, technology, mining, and agriculture. To date, the Council has tracked hundreds of evidence-based stories on women in politics and robust coverage of women's political participation due to this initiative.

FYI: GENDER

SAFE:
MITIGATING THE THREATS
WOMEN FACE ONLINE

In many low- and middle-income countries, women are 20% less likely to access the Internet on a mobile device. This translates into 390 million fewer women online than men.[28] As women and identity-diverse individuals become more visible and vocal online, they often face a barrage of threats. Nearly three quarters (73%) of women journalists surveyed by UNESCO said they had experienced online violence.[29] *The Guardian* found that women writers were four times more likely to be abused with online comments compared to their male counterparts.[30] For those in public-facing roles, whether journalists, rights advocates, or anti-corruption campaigners, online gender-based violence, gendered disinformation, and dangerous speech increase offline physical attacks. The rapid rise of generative AI, built on biased training models, further iterates tech-facilitated gender-based violence on an unprecedented scale and the capacity for AI to create abusive content that amplifies gender-based harms is alarming.

Internews and our partners shed light on dangerous speech in local contexts, equip women and gender-diverse individuals to defend themselves on- and offline, and foster collaboration through advocacy and support networks. Together with our partner Defend Defenders, we developed Safe Sisters – a fellowship program providing women journalists and human rights defenders from 17 countries with the techniques and tools they need to take control of their lives in an increasingly digital world. Five years after the pilot, 80% of the participants in *Safe Sisters* are actively involved in digital safety – including some who have changed careers to pursue it professionally.

VALUED:
BUILDING WOMEN AUDIENCES
AND REVENUE

Globally, there is a 16% gap in news consumption between women and men.[31] As an audience segment, women feel underserved and unfairly treated in content[32] and are less willing to pay for news.[33] Exploring how to cater to women, in all their diversity, as news consumers can attract new readers, draw in subscribers, and increase audience engagement.[34] According to research supported by the Gates Foundation and hosted by Internews, even at an incremental pace of 1% per year, global revenues in the news industry would increase by a cumulative $38 billion by 2032.[35]

To build gender diverse audiences, we provide a full spectrum of tailored business training for our partners. Our Ukrainian partner Rubryka received expert advice on social media distribution, outreach, native advertising, audience engagement, community building, and business management. Rubryka's launch of *Despite Everything, She's Got It*, a series about successful women, was paired with improvements in content production and distribution, tailored landing pages for advertising, and increased sales capacity. The outcome? Rubryka more than doubled its online reach, brought in 70+ new advertisers, and nearly quadrupled its revenue.

OUR
COMMITMENTS

OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Investing in Our Mission and Building Organizational Resilience

The following five strategic priorities will drive our work over the next three years. These pillars represent critical areas to make further investments of will, time, people, and resources in order to supercharge our programs, spark innovation, and provide the agility required to advance our mission in any environment. As a first step in our accountability under this new strategy, we are pleased to publicly present our strategic framework.

PILLAR 1

DYNAMIC & ADAPTABLE PROGRAMMING

Outcome:

Communities engage with inclusive, dynamic, and resilient information ecosystems to meet their needs and advance a just and peaceful world.

In the preceding section, we elaborated the seven key elements that together define the health of any information ecosystem. These elements are the basis for our theory of change, guide us in our program design, and help shape our thought leadership. Commitments in this first pillar focus not on the "what" of the work we do; rather, they focus on the "how." These commitments specifically target areas where we need investment or intention to develop the internal skills necessary to advance our program work and maximize our mission impact. We anticipate that this will involve a mix of building in-house expertise, diversifying partnerships, integrating new technologies, and developing, testing, and deploying new conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and tools.

Under this pillar, we will operationalize our new global Information Integrity Framework and advance an AI framework supported by guidelines, principles and resources. We'll bring our deep experience in the environment, health, and humanitarian sectors to innovate information solutions to the complex and interconnected impacts of the climate crises. This pillar also recommits us to some of our most essential work: ensuring women, girls, and other identities are visible, safe, and valued in their information ecosystems.

OBJECTIVES UNDER PILLAR 1_

Innovate to best support freedom of information and expression in the face of increasing threats, from democratic backsliding and rising authoritarianism to attacks on journalists and information producers.

Grow our expertise and partnerships to fortify accurate, relevant, and verifiable information in an era of rapidly changing technologies.

Adapt business models and viability strategies to sustain a plurality of media and information producers amid shifting social, economic, and political realities.

Elevate information solutions to complex crises – at the nexus of climate and the environment, health, humanitarian disaster, and violent conflict – to address significant impacts on people, especially marginalized communities.

Expand openings for women, girls, and other identities to safely and meaningfully produce, share, and consume news and information that reflects their diverse experiences and perspectives.

EXPERIENCE & EVIDENCE-BASED THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Outcome:
Understanding of, and support to, healthy information ecosystems reflects insights from our work and that of our local partners.

At Internews, we aspire to push the frontiers of innovation and impact in our sector through sharing our learnings and insights. As an organization, our sweet spot is the learning we draw from the lived experiences of our partners and our community-centric approach to healthy information ecosystems. Amassed over the course of 40+ years and more than 140 countries, this experience has allowed Internews to gather insights at scale. Internally, it informs everything we do – from the development of strategies, conceptual frameworks, and tools to program design and implementation, partner engagement, and advocacy. Externally, our experience is valued by academia, the aid and humanitarian sectors, and those developing and upholding standards around independent public-interest media, freedom of expression, access to information, digital rights, and a free and safe Internet.

Under this strategy, we will provide sharper focus to our thought leadership. We will adopt a learning agenda that prioritizes our research investments and links them to strategic communications and organizational advocacy in pursuit of greater impact, broad uptake, and persuasive thought leadership. During the next three years, we will prioritize research that firmly establishes the impact of information solutions on people's efforts to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis, tests assumptions around information integrity, and captures best practices and results on the ethical use of AI to strengthen media viability. Ever mindful of rapidly emerging and advancing technologies and black swan events, our learning agenda will leave room for new and compelling areas of research.

As part of our strategy, we intend to be increasingly visible and vocal in sharing our insights at global forums like the Climate COP, the UN General Assembly, UNESCO, the World Economic Forum, RightsCon, the World Association of News Publishers, and the Perugia Journalism Festival to name only a few. As part of this effort, we will expand opportunities for our partners to have a seat at the table and engage in discussions and decision-making that affect them.

OBJECTIVES UNDER PILLAR 2 _

Invest in strategic research and project evaluations based on a learning agenda to capture proof of concept and robust evidence of effectiveness and impact.

Raise our profile and influence in addressing pressing global issues through external communications and outreach.

Build paths for local partners to influence regional and global conversations around pressing issues they care about.

Drive thought leadership on information solutions to the climate crisis and its significant impacts on people, particularly marginalized communities.

IN FOCUS: **URGENT RESEARCH**

The Internews-supported research report *URGENT: Understanding and Responding to Global News Threats* calls for bold strategies, more money, and a collective infrastructure to support independent public service media and its role in democratic governance worldwide. It sets out a series of recommendations about how donors, implementers, and diplomatic actors must reassess their approaches if they are to effectively support public-interest media and address the increased precarity for media globally. The recommendations are based on 75 interviews and more than 175 surveys with journalists working in contexts where pressure is building, where a recent crisis has upended the media sector, and where many have been forced into exile.

GENUINE **LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS** BASED ON MUTUAL TRUST

Outcome:
Information ecosystems are strengthened by partnerships that build on deep respect for local agency and local solutions.

We know very well that the strength of our local partners is key to the long-term viability of our impact. We are determined to deepen this commitment to local agency and local solutions even further. Within the context of our new strategy and through an inclusive and participatory process, we intend to update our partnership principles and develop a partnership strategy that clearly articulates our organizational approach to localization. As part of that effort, we will develop a localization toolkit to provide guidance and resources for all of our teams who interact with our local partners. We will proactively communicate the new principles, strategy, and resources across the organization; embed them within our programs, research, and operations; and undertake training to enable their broad and consistent use.

Beyond individual projects and service lines, we plan to hold ourselves accountable for localization at an organizational level. While funding to local partners is a key marker of localization, we plan to apply additional meaningful indicators of success and will continue to press our funders and peers to do the same. We'll reflect our local partners' knowledge and knowhow, their desire for greater autonomy, and their aspiration for greater agency in decision-making throughout the program cycle and on our own practices and procedures that impact them. We are also committed to sustaining meaningful partner engagement outside of and beyond the life of our projects. In support of this strategy, we anticipate diversifying our partnerships to accommodate emerging and expanding areas of work, such as those related to climate change and the ethical adoption of AI.

OBJECTIVES UNDER PILLAR 3_

Actively seek out engagement opportunities in industry and issue-based networks where local partners can impart knowledge, learn, and collaborate over time.

Strengthen practices to safeguard the privacy, security, and rights of our local partners.

Deepen our investments in local partners and commitment to co-creation, local ownership, and graduated leadership.

Amplify local partner voices within our organization when developing and adapting strategies, processes, and procedures that affect them.

IN FOCUS: **OUR PARTNERS**

When we talk about our **local partners**, we mean entities working at a country level and, particularly, in local communities and remote areas. They include public-interest and community media outlets (radio, television, print, and web-based); technology firms; advertising agencies; polling and audience research firms; digital rights, human rights, and other civil society organizations; investigative journalism groups; training institutes, schools, and universities; professional associations; policy and watchdog groups; and regulatory and oversight bodies. Our thematic work also involves partnerships with organizations working on health, environmental, and climate issues within the scientific, humanitarian, and psycho-social support communities. Over the past three years, we have supported roughly 2,700 media outlets and 1,500 civil society organizations annually in 125 countries. During that time, we have awarded nearly 2,000 sub-grants worth more than $105 million.

Our new strategy also prioritizes the creation of pathways for our local partners to participate in **regional and global forums** where they can engage with – and hold to account – higher-level decision-makers and duty bearers in international organizations, standard-setting and governing bodies, technology companies, and online platforms. In past years, this has included sponsoring partners to join the Global Network Initiative and to attend global conferences such as the Summit for Democracy, RightsCon, SXSW, the COP, and many more. We also bring to our local partnerships deep connections within the international development and philanthropic communities and academia. All of these partnerships are governed by a set of organizational principles around inclusion, participation, equity, transparency, accountability, sustainability, and a commitment to do no harm.

PILLAR 4

PEOPLE-CENTERED
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Outcome:
Organizational progress happens when our people thrive.

We are deeply proud of our people and culture, and particularly of the ways in which we interact and collaborate. We strive to be a workplace that celebrates diversity and cultivates a sense of belonging for everyone, where all Internewsers can contribute their unique ideas, experiences, and talents – efforts which we call our **Belonging Initiatives**. We try to ensure that our respective responsibilities and expectations are clear, that everyone has the tools they need to work effectively, and that staff are afforded opportunities to learn and grow.

Under our new strategy, we affirm the link between our success as an organization and the ability of our people to thrive. Over the next three years, we will build upon the foundation already laid as part of our **Belonging Initiatives**, living our core values without exception and working purposefully to root belonging principles and practices across our organization in meaningful ways across the cultures and environments where we work.

Among our top priorities is investment in a new Human Resources Information System software that will allow us to streamline and build transparency into our recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and performance management. Standardized processes and criteria will allow Internewsers to make data-informed decisions that mitigate the risks of bias and discrimination. This change will simplify the experiences of all staff and provide an entirely new level of support to our country offices. Additionally, we will conduct staff engagement surveys to enable our accountability, measure our progress and develop and execute an internal communications strategy, modeled after Internews' best practices in community engagement.

OBJECTIVES UNDER PILLAR 4_

Build a values-driven organizational culture founded on inclusion and belonging for everyone.

Bolster staff success through more effective on-boarding and expanded learning opportunities.

Improve cross-team information-sharing and collaboration.

IN FOCUS: **OUR VALUES**

We are deeply committed to creating positive change within our organization and the communities we serve. We initiated our strategy process by reflecting on and updating our core organizational values, which underpin our outlook, our interactions with each other and with our partners, and how we go about our work. Our affirmed values commit us to:

✳ **LISTEN AND LEARN CONTINUOUSLY**: We are curious and open to diverse voices, recognizing that everyone, everywhere, can contribute to our mission.

✳ **BUILD COMMUNITY**: We value open communication and dialogue. We treat each other kindly, collaborate, support each other, and foster belonging for all people.

✳ **ACT WITH INTEGRITY**: We build and maintain trust by holding ourselves to a high standard, taking responsibility, and working to deliver on our commitments.

✳ **MAKE A DIFFERENCE**: We are passionate about improving lives and creating impact through the work we do.

✳ **BRING HOPE**: We believe that positive change is always possible and strive to see opportunities in every challenge.

True to these values, we strive to expand inclusive access and elevate the voices of women and girls and other diverse identities within our organization and in the communities where we work.

PILLAR 5

SCALABLE OPERATIONS IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

Outcome:
We are able to work wherever information solutions are needed most amid escalating, concurrent, and protracted crises.

Known for our agility to respond wherever information solutions are needed most, Internews enters this strategy period facing an increasingly challenging operating environment. Beyond needing to pivot or scale up in the face of a crisis, we must increasingly respond to polycrises that are happening simultaneously in multiple places – or everywhere all at once, as the pandemic and the climate crisis have made clear – over an extended period. A state of readiness in this dynamic environment requires that our structures, systems, technologies, and processes are as simple, integrated, and efficient as possible.

We also need to mitigate and manage a variety of risks, whether to our people, partners, infrastructure, reputation, financial health, or ability to work compliantly with different donors and within a labyrinth of legal and regulatory jurisdictions around the world. Toward this end, we remain firmly committed to our partnership between Internews US and Internews Europe, which we call the Internews Alliance. And we recognize the need to integrate our deep regional expertise with global thematic best practices to work as seamlessly, cooperatively, and impactfully as possible.

Among our major investments under this new strategy is upgrading our enterprise technology for accounting, finance, grants, and contracts to provide for modernized, web-based workflow processes and automations on an integrated, flexible, and user-friendly platform. We'll also continue to build on our deep investments in enterprise-level digital security.

During this strategy period, we will confront a foreign aid environment that is uncertain, pressured by competing priorities and budget-busting humanitarian disasters. As the world around us grows more challenging, our need for more flexible resources to respond to crises, provide surge support to our partners, and drive innovation has grown dramatically. As part of this strategy, our revenue

goals will seek to build significant flexible unrestricted mission support, including an ambitious target of raising $10 million in flexible risk and response funding. This is inclusive of a $4 million dedicated Emergency Fund, designed to respond nimbly to crises and keep operating in the places that need quality information most. Finally, we will expand our Internews Europe and maintain our Internews US publicly funded, core democracy programs and increase both public and private technical diversification around our climate, environmental, health, and humanitarian programming.

OBJECTIVES UNDER PILLAR 5_

Optimize structures and harmonize and simplify policies and procedures across the Alliance to build efficiency and agility and mitigate risks.

Optimize program delivery for regional, global, and thematic programs to increase collaboration and efficiency.

Invest in and implement enterprise technology solutions that are secure, fit for purpose, and that can carry us into the future.

"Walk our Talk" by developing an enterprise approach to the climate crisis that models good practice.

Grow and diversify funding based on a bold revenue strategy that fortifies our financial health and provides for flexibility.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
CLIMATE

The climate crisis is a driver of systemic change across all areas of human and planetary life. With our new strategy, we are approaching the climate crisis and its impact on people as a cross-cutting issue – one that spans our programs, thought leadership, and operations.

OUR PROGRAMS

The climate crisis is not just the biggest *crisis* of the 21st century, it is also the most important *story* of the century. In many ways, every story – from politics to business, conflict, or health – is a climate story.

But actors across the information ecosystem – from news organizations and journalists to other content creators – often lack the resources, knowledge, or capacity to effectively cover the complexity, nuance, and polarizing nature of the climate story.

Internews is uniquely positioned to change this and change it at scale. Our Earth Journalism Network (EJN) is the most established environmental reporting network of its kind, with over 25,000 members from more than 180 countries around the world. Through EJN, we improve the quantity and quality of environmental and climate reporting globally by developing innovative environmental news sites and tools, offering fellowships to major environmental convenings, establishing and expanding networks of environmental journalists, conducting workshops and trainings, and supporting local news production – including groundbreaking investigative, collaborative, and data-based reports. The members of this network produce high-quality, actionable reporting on the environment that serves communities and policymakers on the frontlines of climate and environmental crises, enabling them to shape solutions, hold power to account, and demand urgent action.

During this strategy period, we plan to build on two decades of success and innovation at EJN to scale our environmental programs globally, by:

✳ Increasing the engagement of members of EJN in terms of both quantity – increasing the number of journalists, media outlets, and communicators that we support – and quality, for instance through our new year-long EJN Reporting Fellowships;

✳ Innovating the types of partners we support to include the full information ecosystem, bringing in more researchers, scientists, meteorologists, NGOs, and communities and citizens at the center of collecting, producing, and sharing environmental information;

✳ Engaging more with diverse content creators who want to provide useful and accurate climate information;

✳ Expanding the lens of the impact of the climate crisis on people and the planet to reflect its full scale. This includes a focus on biodiversity, the ocean, and crucial ecosystems like the Amazon. It also includes focus on the health and humanitarian impacts globally, in particular through our combined *One Health* program that provides actionable news and information on the links between human health, animal health, and ecosystem health;

✳ Providing innovative new tools and resources, like the AI-based *EarthCheckr* we are developing to help editors and reporters fact-check their stories;

✳ More aggressively addressing misinformation in the climate space, which has polarized narratives and spurred practices that increase fossil fuel use, exacerbate deforestation, and impede the development of renewable energy.

OUR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

We will amplify our climate programs by building out the **evidence base** for engaging news and information as a core strategy to mitigating the climate crisis and its impact on people everywhere. We have made great progress demonstrating the impact individual news articles can have on awareness and action at the local level. We will maintain this local lens, while also turning our attention to understanding the cumulative effect of networked reporting across, and on behalf of, multiple communities and regions on decision-making mechanisms at the global level. We hypothesize, and aim to test, that our international reach and highly diverse, broad-based community of information providers can be leveraged to drive the coordinated, global transformation that is needed.

OUR OPERATIONS

We will craft a doable plan that demonstrates our intent to "walk our climate talk" and ensure our operations are as climate friendly as possible for a global organization. We will continue to seek out ways to reduce our emissions, review procurement processes, minimize waste production, ensure our investment assets and banking partnerships are climate-friendly, and make our activities as resource-efficient as possible. And while we recognize the current flaws and limitations of voluntary carbon markets, we will continue our long-standing policy of offsetting greenhouse gas emissions emanating from our international travel. To advance this work, we intend to conduct our first organization-wide climate audit to inform our organizational goals and mitigation efforts around climate under this strategy.

FYI ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

01 Our commitment to build paths for our local partners to engage in global conversations is never more evident than at the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP). For the past 16 years, we have worked to bring and support hundreds of journalists from countries most affected by climate change to this critically important gathering. They report on the outcomes of negotiations and contextualize momentous decisions for home audiences who face both the brunt of climate impacts and the fallout of inaction. Beyond witnessing negotiations and discussions firsthand, fellows can interview high-level officials who are often impossible to pin down at home and cover side events on crucial climate-related issues. Collaborating with organizations such as the Stanley Center for Peace and Security, IIED and Panos, our Climate Change Media Partnership has supported more than 400 fellows over the years producing thousands of stories in hundreds of media outlets and dozens of languages. Many former fellows call this initiative the defining moment of their careers.

Holding Ourselves
ACCOUNTABLE

TRUE TO OUR VALUES, OUR STRATEGY PROCESS EMPHASIZED LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM INTERNEWS STAFF, PARTNERS, AND SUPPORTERS AROUND THE WORLD. IN CREATION OF THIS NEW STRATEGY:

700+
Internews staff, board members, and partners from

50+
Countries actively participated in virtual and in-person workshops involving a SWOT analysis, brainstorming around our Elements of a Healthy Information Ecosystem, and forward planning.

320
Internewsers provided input on the strategy via an in-depth survey.

13
Deep-dive research papers captured the nuanced thinking and innovative ideas of experts within Internews and externally, informing the substance of our strategy and decisions around our priorities.

47
People representing

41
Organizations, including governments, private donors, academics, peers, and partners provided valuable feedback on the draft strategic framework.

ACCOUNTABLE

All of this input produced thousands of data-points. We analyzed them all and developed the strategy based on this collective wisdom. The dedication, enthusiasm, creativity, and time that our staff gave to this effort have been *immeasurable*. Our people are passionate, talented, and devoted to their work. Our collaborative process has been intense, but we own this strategy *together* and are all the better for it.

To achieve the priorities laid out here, we'll share our progress and our results publicly. Our strategic framework described above, and the strategic action plan that supports it, is designed to facilitate effective management, including the establishment and monitoring of key performance indicators and targets. Each of our strategic pillars will be co-championed by staff across the Internews Alliance. Scenario planning will help us to anticipate trajectories and mitigate risks that could derail our strategic ambitions – or at least make them more difficult to manage.
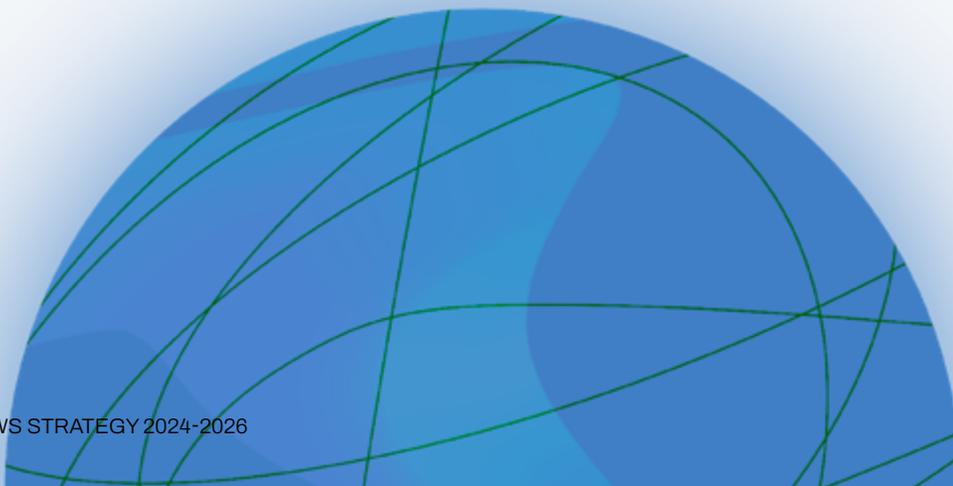
To strategically support our mission, we'll need to further expand our in-house capacity in emerging areas of work, deepen our relationships with existing partners and find new ones, and further diversify our funding base in both the public and the private sectors in support of our core work and our thematic portfolios. We'll need to maintain the health of our reserves to provide the flexible funding required to respond to crises, enable innovation, seed major new initiatives, and build our organizational capacity.

We know that solutions take time, iteration, and effort. With our new strategy, we're ready to test the assumptions that underpin our theory of change and share our learning. As we move forward, we'll continue to ask fundamental questions about our approach to healthy information ecosystems and assess whether that approach, our thought leadership, and our operational capacities – along with our mix of partnerships – are working to deliver our mission.

The ability to plan, innovate, and adapt through this new strategy is the cornerstone of the next chapter of Internews.

WE CAN'T WAIT TO GET STARTED.

ETC...

FUNDERS & DONORS

Internews would like to thank all of our donors and partners for their support. Without them, our reach and impact would simply not be possible. In addition to the institutional supporters listed below,* we are grateful to the nearly 300 individuals who sponsor our work, including our [board of directors](#).

Foundations and Corporations: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; Adessium Foundation; Airbnb; Currie; Arcadia Fund; Asahi; AT&T; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; Center for Disaster Philanthropy; Circle of Service (COS) Foundation; Cisco Systems Foundation; Clara Lionel Foundation; Climate Justice Resilience Fund; Common Counsel Foundation; Commonwealth Foundation; Covington & Burling LLP; Democracy Fund; European Climate Foundation; Facebook/Meta; Flora Family Foundation; Fondation Hans Wilsdorf; Ford Foundation; Fundacion de Antropologia Forense de Guatemala; Global Strategic Communications Council (GSCC); GlobalGiving; GoFundMe.org; Google Inc.; HBO; HealthSpark Foundation; Hollywood Foreign Press Association; Howard Hughes Medical Institute; James Irvine Foundation; Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust; Kingfisher Foundation; Lenfest Institute for Journalism; Loud Hound Foundation; Luminate; Marisla Foundation; Mercury Phoenix Trust; Microsoft Corporation; National Postcode Lottery; News UK; Nia Tero; Oak Foundation; Omega; Open Society Foundations; Osprey Foundation; Paul Angell Family Foundation; PepsiCo, Inc.; Pew Charitable Trusts; Robert Bosch Stiftung; Rockefeller Family Fund; Rockefeller Foundation; Ropes & Gray LLP; Seedlings Foundation; Sigrid Rausing Trust; Sky; Slaughter & May; Smart Family Foundation; Sony Pictures Action Fund; Start Small Foundation; Summit Foundation; Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation; Tara Climate Foundation; Tides Foundation; Twilio; Twitter Inc.; United Nations Foundation; W.K. Kellogg Foundation; Waitt Foundation; Walton Family Foundation; Wellcome Trust; Wellspring Philanthropic Fund; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; WoodNext Foundation.

Public Sector Donors: Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFAT), Australia; Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFAT), Canada; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); European Commission (EC); European Endowment for Democracy; Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO); Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA); Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP); United States Agency for International Development (USAID); United States Department of Interior (DOI); US Department of State (DOS).

International Partners: Abt Associates, AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC); BBC Media Action; Corus International; Doha Center for Media Freedom; European Endowment for Democracy; Family Health International (FHI 360); Global Call for Climate Action; Freedom House; International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES); International Partnership for Human Rights; International Republican Institute (IRI); International Rescue Committee (IRC); Jhpiego; JSI Research and Training Institute; Mercy Corps; National Democratic Institute (NDI); National Endowment for Democracy (NED); NetHope; OXFAM Novib (Netherlands); Sabin Vaccine Institute; Search for Common Ground; Wildlife Conservation Society; World Resources Institute (WRI).

*Donors and partners who supported Internews between 2020 and 2024.

NETWORKS & COALITIONS

Internews is proud to engage in scores of networks, coalitions, and conferences to build common cause among media actors, businesses, and civil society advocates. Some recent highlights include:

ACOS Alliance; African Investigative Journalism Network; Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA); CiviCERT; Climate Action Against Disinformation; Clinton Global Initiative; Coalition Against Online Violence; Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (Founding member); Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN CoP); Consultative Network of the Media Freedom Coalition; Covering Climate Now; DocSociety; Earth Decides; Emergency Telecommunications Cluster; FAIRSHARE of Women Leaders; FilmIndependent; FOME Symposium; Global Forum for Media Development (Founding partner); Global Investigative Journalism Network; Global Media Forum; Global Networks Initiative (Founding member and board member); H2H Network (Humanitarian to Humanitarian Network); Human Rights Centered Design Community (co-founder); INMA's Media Innovation Week; InterAction; Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Accountability to Affected Population Task Force; International Aids Society;International Documentary Association; Ji.hlava Film Festival; Journalism in Distress (JiD) Network; KeepItOn Network; Mobile World Conference; Movies That Matter; NetMundial +10; NGO ISAC; Open Government Partnership; Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC); Pandemic Action Network; Paris Peace Forum; Perugia Journalism Festival; RightsCon; Signpost Network; Skoll World Forum; Society of Environmental Journalists; Summit for Democracy's Media Freedom Cohort (Civil Society co-lead); Sustainable Journalism Partnership; UN Convention on Biological Diversity; UNESCO (associate status and consultative status within the framework of the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with NGOs (36C / Res. 108); UN Internet Governance Forum; ; US Global Leadership Coalition; WaterBear Network; WHO Infodemic Network; Who Makes the News in the Global Media Monitoring Project; World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA); World Conference of Science Journalists; and the World Economic Forum.

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ABOUT INTERNEWS

Internews is a nonprofit that supports independent media in 100+ countries — from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyper-local news outlets, to filmmakers and technologists. Internews trains journalists and digital rights activists, tackles disinformation, and offers business expertise to help media outlets thrive financially. For over 40 years, it has helped partners reach millions of people with trustworthy information that saves lives, improves livelihoods, and holds institutions accountable.

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