Women are often the first ones affected by armed conflict. It is, therefore, right and indeed necessary that women have full access to information and that they be there to cover the issues, with equal strength and in equal numbers.

Cross the globe, women journalists and media professionals work, often under difficult circumstances, to bring light to the issues that affect all women. Internews media projects open eyes to gender issues and give voice to women so that they can change their lives for the better.

Gender-focused media development directly supports the Millennium Development Goals and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. An increase in women’s participation in the media sector can lead to the improvement in healthcare awareness, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, an increase in job skills and in overall civil society engagement.

**Addressing Women’s Issues**

To ensure that the media meet the needs of all audiences, Internews works to foster women’s leadership in the media industry so that issues of vital concern to women and girls are integrated across all programming and not relegated to a niche market.

In communities where specific gender issues are under-reported, such as gender-based violence or women’s health, Internews has developed programs produced by and for women, and has worked to engage men in understanding and reporting on the issues as well. Internews’ work with women has involved training women media professionals, fostering their leadership skills, and supporting programming on women’s issues in Africa, Asia, Eurasia and the Middle East.

**Training Women Media Professionals**

Internews is one of the world’s leading trainers of female media professionals, with more than 25,000 women trained in media skills since 2003 alone. Internews helps women get on the air and in the newsrooms in societies where their participation has been marginalized, allowing for reporting on all issues, not just women’s issues, through the voices of women in their communities.

**Innovative Programming**

Internews projects around the world support the creation and production of programs that address issues of importance to women. These include:

- **Hawa (Eve)** is a weekly program about Afghan women and young girls, broadcast on Salem Watan (Melio Countryman), an Internews-supported local radio programming service in Afghanistan. Broadcast in two weekly editions, one in Pashto and one in Dari, Hawa episodes include interviews with successful women, reports from the provinces, tips on home economics, information about basic health care and advice on a range of gender issues, such as services for victims of domestic violence. It seeks to empower women through education and by promoting their inclusion in business and economic arenas.

- **Carrefour des Femmes (Women’s Crossroads)** is a groundbreaking program produced in Eastern Chad by Radio Sila, a locally-run station serving Darfur refugees and internally displaced Chadians. The program topics include domestic violence, early marriage, polygamy, gender discrimination in the home and workplace, rape, unwanted pregnancies, and family planning. It strives to demonstrate the strength and power of women, with shows on female role models succeeding in different walks of life, economic opportunities, education and more.

- **Salam Watandar** is a weekly program on home economics, information about basic health care and advice on a range of gender issues, such as services for victims of domestic violence. It seeks to empower women through education and by promoting their inclusion in business and economic arenas.

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**As a journalist I know that part of my job is to empower the community,** says Christine Akul, a reporter at Mayardit FM in Turalei, southern Sudan. Akul is part of a five-member team trained by Internews as community radio station reporters. Forced into marriage at age 16, Akul has a personal interest in covering issues of importance for women and girls. She was eventually able to leave the marriage, but not before becoming pregnant, and having to give up her dream of finishing school.

In 2010, the new community’s radio station in Turalei gave Akul, still hungry to learn and use her education, an opportunity.

“As after my experience I wanted to try to change a few things in my community. I got what I would call a second chance. I never ever dreamt of being a journalist after becoming a housewife but here I am,” says Akul.

Months after the station launched, Akul had recorded several half-hour programs that deal with women’s issues. “My best so far is one that I did on forced marriage. I had to do a program on that since it had happened to me.”
The Internet brings such benefits to people. As a Vietnamese, I really want to help in my country’s development. As an activist for women’s rights, I personally would like to see Vietnamese women improve their quality of life.

Nguyen Thu Hue, founder and executive director of Vietnet-ICT, a Vietnamese NGO nurtured by Internews, that works on technology for development, ICT in microfinance, women’s empowerment, media development support and ICT policy.

Radio stations across the country, and focused on politics, education and health. Most men and women reporters had little experience working in radio or journalism before the program, but are now leaders in the sector – the first woman in Pakistan to work as independent broadcast journalist, serving as role models for young women.

Internews’ extensive multi-country Local Voices program trained radio and television reporters to cover HIV/AIDS effectively and ensured that journalists pay particular attention to the ways that HIV/AIDS affects women. As a result, radio and television stations in Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Côte d’Ivoire, India and the Mekong region have covered under-reported stories like the plight of widows who have lost their land after losing their husbands to AIDS. Local Voices has also been instrumental in mentoring promising female radio journalists and helping them to advance professionally.

With support from Internews, 103 FM Radio Omira in Tajikistan produced Kharfi Khodisa (Another Word), a one-hour talk show exploring social issues such as HIV/AIDS, international labor migration and human trafficking. When the live show featured the issue of domestic violence, the Dushanbe-based station received more than forty calls from listeners. One woman stopped by the radio station and asked how to get in touch with a woman’s shelter so that she could help a relative who was being abused. The station provided phone numbers and even called the shelter to let the staff know the woman would be coming. Five more women stopped by the station throughout the following week, seeking similar assistance.

ABEE KILANEY, WEST BANK / GAZA

“Through the station’s programs I can hope that we can all continue learning something new every day,” says Abeer Kilaney, a television entrepreneur in the West Bank city of Nablus, who created Gama TV in her home during the First Intifada. Kilaney thought it was unfortunate that satellite television channels, primarily out of Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Operating out of their bedroom, Kilaney and her husband launched Gama TV, putting together programs that were made for and by the community of Nablus, freely discussing the most pertinent issues that affected them.

Now, Gama TV is an important part of the community, watched by roughly 20% of the television audience in Nablus, and a partner of Internews’ Aswatona project, which works to strengthen independent TV and radio stations in the West Bank and Gaza.

In addition to serving as station director for Gama, Kilaney, a mother of six, also serves as the president of the West Bank-wide Sada TV network and is a coordinator for Gama, Kilaney, a mother of six, also works to strengthen independent broadcast journalists, serving as role models for young women.

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Training and Leadership Development

Internews training activities include women at all stages of media production. The following are examples of projects that address women’s leadership and coverage of issues related to women.

WOMEN’S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Internews’ Global Human Rights Program has launched a series of human rights journalism training seminars to build journalists’ knowledge of human rights issues and to spur innovative coverage of those issues.

Given the critical importance of women’s issues as a human rights concern in many countries, the curriculum has a particular focus on women’s rights. Internews seeks to sensitize journalists, and through them the public, to women’s perspectives on a broad spectrum of issues, with special attention to violence against women and women’s economic empowerment.

The initial target countries for trainings are Chad, Kenya, Sudan, Thailand, Indonesia, Central African Republic and Egypt. Nearly 100 journalists will be trained in the project’s first year.

Richard Dimanche traveled 1,500 kilometers and five days on the top of a truck during the rainy season to attend the training in Central Africa Republic. Dimanche is director of Zerada, a community radio station in the middle of a rebel zone surrounded by the Lord’s Resistance Army. In CAR violence against women is a widespread phenomenon. “But nobody takes actions because it happens all the

For Truth,” says Natalia Ligacheva, editor-in-chief and founder of Telekritika, an online and print publication that provides analysis and critiques of news and political events.

The Ukrainian multi-platform media watchdog was launched as Ligacheva’s response to censorship by her editors at the Ukrainian newspaper Den. Telekritika, an Internews partner, is an open forum for critical media analysis where journalists, politicians, and the community can discuss pressing questions of ethics and reporting standards.

Ligacheva played a crucial role in Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, spearheading a journalists’ movement that publicly denounced censorship and political pressure and vowed to uphold professional principles.

“Media issues may change, but our goals remain the same,” says Ligacheva. “We see our mission as strengthening professional journalism in Ukraine by stimulating politicians, authorities, media owners, and journalists to realize the important public role of the media as the ‘watchdog of democracy.’”

Ligacheva was awarded the title of “Honorled Journalist of Ukraine” by President Viktor Yushchenko in 2007 for her tremendous personal contributions to the development of constitutional principles of the Ukrainian national state system, enduring and conscientious work, and high level of professionalism.
**Women's rights are human rights,**

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

“Women are now telling me, ‘I have listened to other women speaking on the program. Now I want to speak too!’ Before, it was difficult to get them to talk. Since we started airing Women’s Crossroads, they are the ones who call us.”

Sylvia Bowen, Internex reporter for gender issues in Eastern Chad

“Women’s Crossroads”

When women and girls earn income, they reinvest 90 percent of it into their families, as compared to only 30 to 40 percent for a man.


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“When I first joined, I thought I would not stay long because it is difficult for a woman to work as a reporter. Now I don’t want to do anything but journalism,” says Nighat Hunzai, whose first professional work as a journalist was covering the October 2005 earthquake centered in northern Pakistan.

At the time a new graduate of the Internex-run Peshawar University Broadcast Academy, Nighat volunteered to join the Pakistan Emergency Information Program (PEIP), a news service launched by Internex to report on the earthquake and its aftermath.

Nighat covered the much-neglected stories of women affected by the quake, reporting on a daily hour-long program, Jazba-e-Hunzai (Desire to rebuild). Her coverage highlighted problems faced by women, told in their own voices, and helped improve the disaster response of the humanitarian community. The stories were also an important part of her development as a journalist.

GLOBAL GIRL AND “MANUP”

In collaboration with GlobalGirl Media, an organization that empowers high school age girls from under-served communities through media, leadership, and journalism training, Internex Kenya Country Director Ida Jooste worked with girls in South Africa’s Soweto neighborhood.

“They’re still at school, but in just six weeks they discovered their voice. I’m very sure some of the girls will go on to choose journalism as a career, amplifying the voices of their generation,” said Jooste.

“In this six weeks I was able to encounter, to discover, some of the talents I had,” said Annah Tsako, who decided by the end of the course that she wanted to pursue a career in broadcast engineering.

The girls produced stories on a range of topics, from interviewing celebrities attending the 2010 World Cup to explorations of serious social topics, such as hostility and violence directed at lesbians in South African society.

GlobalGirl Media reports have aired on a variety of media outlets including ESPN, BBC, Unvision, Al Jazeera, Soweto TV, and internex.org.

Jooste said the responsibility for improving coverage of women’s issues does not only fall to female journalists. In partnership with the “ManUp” campaign, calling on young men and women to work to achieve a safer world for women worldwide, Internex led training sessions in South Africa for 90 young girls working the control boards while producing youth oriented television features in Armenia.

“I know I can do more to help others understand this very complex issue — and effectively communicate climate change to the public,” says Imelda Abano, a freelance journalist from the Philippines.

As Climate Change Media Fellow, Abano attended the Bali Climate Change Summit and received training and mentoring through the Climate Change Media Partnership (CCMP), a joint project of Internex, Panos, and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

She was the only Filipino journalist covering the Bali Climate Change Summit, and felt a responsibility to report on issues of critical importance to her country.

“Prior to writing about climate change issues, I wrote on women’s issues – health especially, HIV/AIDS, water and other development topics. Essentially, I realized that all these issues are intertwined in climate change. As a journalist, I wanted to do my part so people – especially the decision-makers – can make a global response.”

Abano worked to cover issues of sea-level rise that are critical to Filipinos, and passed on the education and mentoring she received as a CCMP Fellow, organizing a successful climate change workshop for journalists throughout Asia the following year.
The beginning of safety is the safety to speak out. It is up to all of us to make space and listen more closely to the voices not often heard.”

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights