



Our Strategic Framework

Internews 2025



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On the cover: Smirna Kulenović assisting photography student Daria Ćorluka on the first day of National Geographic Photo Camp Sarajevo, held in partnership with Internews in 2015. Twenty years after the Dayton peace accords, Bosnian teenagers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds collaborated on a joint project through Photo Camp to explore each other's lives, document shared values, and create meaningful visuals that inspire and build trust.

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Introduction

Information is as critical as the air we breathe.

Without information, people can neither understand nor effectively respond to the events that shape their world. With the right, trustworthy information, people can make better decisions about the health and welfare of their families, participate in their communities, and hold their governments to account.

Since our beginning, Internews has envisioned — and worked toward building — a world in which all people could seek, receive, and impart credible information that was important to them. Regardless of medium. Regardless of borders. Regardless of authorities.

Over the course of our 38-year history, we have witnessed — and participated in — the extraordinary advances that have defined the modern information age. People are more connected than ever across communities and continents. They have access to diverse, better, and more timely information. They have greater voice and agency as producers and sharers of that information. Breakthroughs in communications technologies have brought economic opportunity, supported improved health outcomes, expanded access to education, and enabled more people to participate in governance and respond more effectively to crisis.

And yet.

Our origins

1982 was a landmark year for the modern information age. That year, Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP) emerged as the standard for ARPANET, establishing the foundational structure of the internet.

That same year, a small NGO called **Internews was founded in Northern California**, committed to bridging an information abyss by deploying what was at the time cutting-edge satellite technology — the “Space Bridge” — to overcome the challenges of communicating across the Iron Curtain. Almost four decades later, Internews’ mission is more critical than ever.

We’ve also seen the dangerous rise of a disinformation age that is poisoning news and information channels with falsehoods and doctored information, exploiting and exacerbating humanity’s worst instincts. We’ve seen the rise of new, more invasive forms of government surveillance and censorship, malign actors intervening in the global information space, digital and physical insecurity of journalists and storytellers, and the disintegration of the market for local news.

While these negative trends are incredibly challenging, at Internews we have a saying: “We’ve got this.” And we do. With

our legacy of work and partners networked across more than 120 countries, we have been on the front lines of addressing complex information ecosystems for nearly four decades.

We know the challenges we face today are difficult, but looking ahead, we are setting out a simple vision for our world and for our work.

We seek to realize the potential of a digitally connected world: a world in which evidence-based information advances human progress, enables broad opportunity and accountability, and fuels vibrant civic debate.

“Internews 2025” is the new strategic framework that spells out how Internews intends to advance this vision over the next five years. What follows is a narrative summary of our ideas. We describe what it takes to build the healthy information environments that we believe are essential to solving the current information crisis — and building resilience for whatever comes next.

We also define where we need to excel as an organization to make a meaningful impact toward this vision, exemplified in our new Strategic Goal:

Over the next five years, as the next 3 billion people come online, we will join with allies who share our vision, including journalists and technologists, data scientists and legal specialists, as well as artists, advocates, and storytellers. Together, we will build healthy information environments in more than 100 countries across the globe.

Key to the advancement of our vision and goal are two new commitments we are making with this framework:

- **First**, we are committing to building a **Global Change Agenda** to complement our deep and long-standing in-country program expertise. This Global Change Agenda will elevate the insights and concerns of our partners to significantly influence the policies, norms, and practices of global players toward building healthier information environments around the world.

- **Second**, we are committing to studying and evaluating the actual changes that occur in a community when their information environment improves over time. We will deeply explore our impact around the world and learn which of our approaches are most effective and worth bringing to scale. We call this “**25 x 25**,” as we aim to focus research and external expertise on 25 diverse and representative communities around the world through the end of this strategy in 2025.

Finally, we recognize that resources are necessary to support this work, so we will evaluate the potential funding opportunities and steps we need to take to raise the diverse resources necessary to advance this framework — while also ensuring Internews remains financially and operationally resilient into the future.

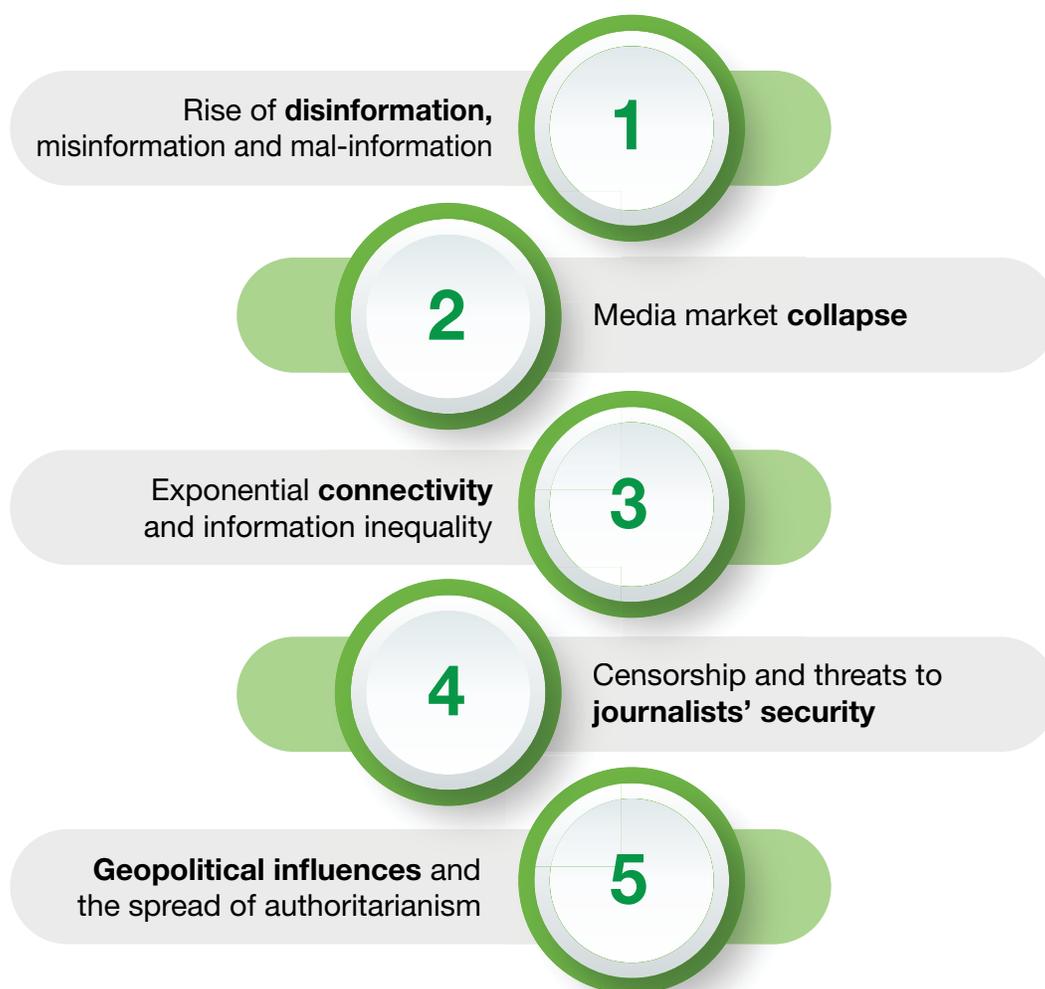
We are all very proud of the yearlong process behind this new framework, which emphasized listening and learning from the talent and experience of more than 700 staff around the world. This framework reflects the work of our full Internews Alliance and will guide the work of both Internews US and Internews EU in the coming years. We are excited to embark on our next phase and are truly optimistic that we can make a positive change in the world.

Global trends and challenges

Trust in institutions is collapsing. Populism and authoritarianism are on the rise. The climate crisis is producing global instability.

The very concept of “truth” is under attack in societies around the world. Emerging technologies are forcing a constant reexamination of the status quo.

Major trends and challenges affecting information environments:



These trends are real, increasing, and affecting our work and our partners' work at near existential levels. They also make our work more necessary than ever.

One reason? **Unprecedented shifts in human connectedness** are in store, as the internet continues to undergird all aspects of our lives. Ten years ago, less than a quarter of the world's population had internet access. In 2019, that rose to 4.3 billion people, or 56% of the world's population. And almost all of us — more than 90% — are living within reach of a mobile network with 3G or greater speeds. As connectivity expands to the next half of the world, it is likely to capture higher numbers of novice users and more people from ethnic, religious, and political minorities. The sudden inclusion of traditionally excluded voices will pose a political threat to incumbent powers and majority factions. This will incentivize laws and policies to repress and exclude potential challengers, stifling freedom of expression in many places.

Authoritarian powers have a strong incentive to drive public dialogue and frame issues in ways that serve their interests. Moreover, their ability to exert this influence appears to be growing. Russia wages overt information wars, particularly in countries it perceives as within its sphere of influence and that may be looking to the West for inspiration. Eighteen countries — including Germany, Kenya, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe — have acquired Chinese-made intelligent monitoring systems.¹ As these authoritarian powers engage with governments, local support for a free press cannot be assumed: In Cameroon and Senegal, less than a third of people surveyed support an uncensored media.²

Press freedom and the physical safety of journalists around the world is more fragile now than at any time since the end of the

Cold War. The growing lack of respect and distrust in media, often fanned by political leaders, has led to an increase in actual acts or threats of physical violence. The number of recorded threats against journalists, including death threats, doubled in Europe in 2018.³ In many places, few expect the police and judicial system to investigate and successfully prosecute crimes against journalists, including unlawful interference, arbitrary detention, and physical attacks. Repressive authorities demonstrate their hostility to journalism with ever more restrictive legislation and regulation. Their targets adopt self-censorship as a means to keep their jobs and avoid the worst attacks.

When people no longer have information sources they trust, they seek authenticity elsewhere

All this external pressure and influence on the information space often diverts attention and resources from local and independent sources. Combined with dramatic changes in technology, this pressure has hollowed out much of the news media industry. The fact is, **there is no reliable model for funding local journalism today.** Some of the most advanced, established newsrooms in the world's most developed economies are struggling to survive while their advertising revenues flock to Google and Facebook. In many developing countries, political actors and oligarchs undermine independent media through subsidies and unfair competition, or widespread poverty inhibits the market entirely.

When people no longer have information sources they trust, they seek authenticity elsewhere. This **erosion of trust**, no matter its cause, presents fundamental challenges to democracy, the media, and the very



concept of a shared consensus around reality. Research suggests that human psychology creates preferences for information that reinforces existing views and biases,⁴ plays to emotions, or demonizes “out-groups,” such as minorities, over more fact-based, balanced information.⁵

As connectivity and cloud storage expand, computer processing speeds up, and artificial intelligence matures, standards for verifying what is true will need to shift dramatically. Amidst deep fakes, doctored documents, voice alteration, and misinformation, we are quickly moving to a place where the technological limitations are virtually nil.

Such **disinformation, mal-information, and dangerous speech** campaigns are currently exploited by powerful interests to manipulate elections; target, harass, and discredit individual journalists and activists; defend corporate interests; and mobilize communities to support discrimination and violence.

Misinformation, which may or may not have malicious origins, can be equally

devastating: In Ebola-affected areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2018, more than 25% of people believed Ebola was a hoax.⁶ With disinformation, which is intentionally false information, democratic processes can come under direct attack. In Gabon, for example, a “deep-fake” video contributed to an attempted coup of President Ali Bongo in 2019. It is virtually impossible to imagine any major election in coming years being free of disinformation.

Our mission has never been more critical

We cannot predict the full scope of the change that will come to define the societal, technological, and information environment for the world over the next five years. We can predict that every human, in every country, will need access to — and the ability to discern — good, credible information to navigate the seismic shifts that are coming. Our mission has never been more critical. Our five-year strategy is designed to pursue it more aggressively than ever.

Our strategic planning process

The global trends described above are complex, vast, and evolving, but we are undeterred.

Internews, born in the midst of the Cold War and the formidable information challenges it wrought, has seen hope and progress thrive when people are able to share their own stories. From our early days of satellite Space Bridges connecting citizens of the Soviet Union with people in the United

States in live conversations, to the magic of the first locally produced radio broadcasts in communities across Afghanistan and South Sudan, to the mobilization on social media of millions of people around the world — we know the power of information to be a force for good.



This power is the core of **our vision:**

We seek to realize the potential of a **digitally connected world:** a world in which evidence-based information advances human progress, enables broad opportunity and accountability, and fuels vibrant civic debate.



Paired with this vision, **our Strategic Goal:**

Over the next five years, as the next 3 billion people come online, we will join with allies who share our vision, including journalists and technologists, data scientists and legal specialists, as well as artists, advocates, and storytellers. Together, we will build **healthy information environments** in more than 100 countries across the globe.



Which leads to **our impact statement:**

Healthy information environments enable everyone to make **better-informed decisions**, bridge divides, participate more fully in their communities, and hold power to account. Through our strategy, we commit to demonstrate, adapt, measure, and advocate for the positive transformation possible in building healthy information environments in 25 unique communities. Individually, these communities will improve the lives of many. Together, they will serve as inspirations for their neighbors and shape the future of our world.

This framework is designed to guide critical decisions, from annual planning and development to program design and resource investments. With this framework, we seek to create a clear, shared understanding of our vision for the future and our goal for the next five years; the programmatic elements we will pursue to advance that vision; a roadmap for where we need to excel as an organization to succeed, and a realistic picture of the resources we will be able to cultivate to achieve our goal.

This strategy reflects our intention to invest in the health of information environments around the world as a powerful counterforce to the challenges facing the world. While we are clear-eyed that the challenges are great, we reject the idea that progress and improvements are not possible.

Our process for this strategy:

As we set out to craft a new strategy, we first reflected on our core organizational values, which animate our efforts to achieve our vision:

- **Listen and learn continuously:** We are curious and responsive, driven by a spirit of creativity and innovation.
- **Build community:** We value open communication and dialogue. We treat each other kindly, collaborate, and support each other.
- **Act with integrity and persistence:** We build trust, hold ourselves to a high standard, and don't give up.
- **Commit to making a difference:** We are passionate about improving lives and creating positive change in the world.
- **Bring optimism and excitement:** We approach our work with enthusiasm and love what we do.

Building 'Internews 2025' together

407 Staff and partner participants

100 Staff survey responses

40 Countries represented

24 Global workshops

11 Working groups

50 External stakeholder consultations

These values led to a yearlong strategy process — one that emphasized listening and learning from the talent and experience of more than 700 staff around the world.

Our staff shared the very real and very tangible effects of the rise of authoritarianism, malign actors, misinformation, and the digital disruption they experience on the front lines of the global information wars every day.

They also mirrored our values, including deep optimism for the future. We share the belief that information can be a root solution to the full range of the world's most pressing problems. And we commit to a humbling persistence to do whatever it takes to innovate, design, reimagine, and reinvigorate our work.



Our solutions

Healthy information environments make the world a better place



Elements of a healthy information environment

The root of our strategy is to improve the health of information environments as a counterweight to the information dystopia that currently defines much of the world.



Healthy information environments make the world a better place. Research proves this. According to a 2016 survey by the Pew Research Center,⁷ the most engaged citizens in any community are those who consume the most local news and information. Without news, voting rates drop and fewer people join civic organizations or run for office. When a public forum for discussion and investigation into local issues disappears, disaffection, alienation, and anger rise.

Without healthy information environments, we also risk missing other important social signals.⁸ Recent research reveals the critical importance of news and information to public health. Health specialists rely on local news stories and coverage to map and track the spread of disease.⁹ Data supplied by news reports are used by scientists as an early indicator for identifying outbreaks. The social and economic costs of losing or not having reputable news and information, particularly at the local and community level, are significant and far-reaching.

Unfortunately, good, accurate information is increasingly hard to access, due to the global rise of disinformation, the continued systemic exclusion of large parts of the world's population from basic information access, the market collapse for news and information, and increasingly repressive regimes.

Our goal for this strategy is to change this dynamic in 100 countries around the world by improving the health of their information environments. Our approach breaks down these environments into five core “elements,” which then guide our program design and implementation.

Healthy information environments are defined by the presence of good, accurate, evidence-based information — information that everyone can access safely, that

What is an information ecosystem analysis?

It's critical to have a universal framework to truly understand a community's unique information obstacles, challenges, and needs. We call this framework an Information Ecosystem Analysis, which considers the context, production, sharing, and impact of information, as well as the social factors, such as trust and power dynamics, at play.

Information environments are multifaceted adaptive systems that include information infrastructure, tools, media, producers, consumers, curators, and sharers. They are complex systems of dynamic social relationships through which information moves and transforms. Through Information Ecosystem Analysis, we can see that information is a master resource, like energy, the lack of which makes everything more difficult.

consumers know how to critically assess, and that is valued by communities and sustained by business models that work. In healthy information environments, governments and businesses are accountable for keeping it that way.



Good, accurate, evidence-based information

Internews defines good information as anything that is firmly rooted in facts and evidence and is intended to enrich and improve lives. Recognizing that everyone has the potential to be producers and sharers of information, we still assert that good information is rooted in the fundamental principles and practices of independent journalism: truth, accuracy, fairness, inclusion, transparency, and accountability. This focus has guided our work since our beginning, and we are unwavering in supporting our partners to uphold these fundamentals

that guide the production, and the quality, of news and informational content.

We are committed to evolving the application of these classic principles and practices within a new information landscape. In support of this element, we will combine our vast journalism experience with a focus on the myriad content creators who can build “good information” in the digital age — whether they are traditional journalists, cultural producers, social media influencers, artists, civil society leaders, technologists, filmmakers, or other storytellers.

We have a mix of successful strategies to increase the quality and impact of good information, among them: hands-on skill building and technological support for information producers; techniques for engaging and growing audiences through storytelling; and guidance on how to create inclusive information that reflects the reality of the community it serves.

Trusted sources of information within a community are invaluable when communicating complex or technically challenging information. Therefore, in addition to building the storytelling skills of a wide array of content creators, we also help them deepen their capacity to use data-driven reporting to tell complex stories related to the climate crisis, science, economics, health epidemics, and technology.

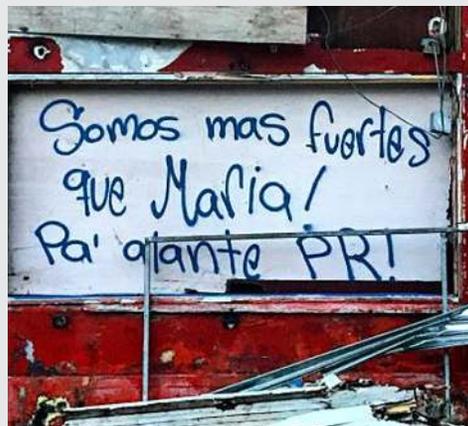


Information that everyone can access safely

True access means that **everyone, everywhere** can safely get the locally relevant information they need from diverse sources, in languages they understand. To reduce the access divide, Internews prioritizes information-vulnerable populations.

Access divides are varied. Where people are facing information deserts, or for those who are in the midst of humanitarian crises

Humanitarian information



When Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico in 2017, Internews and its partners immediately responded. Together, we created the Information as Aid Facebook-based news site to provide consistent, trusted, community-driven information that people needed to rebuild their lives after the storm.

Over a five-month period, Information as Aid reached nearly half the population on the island, refuting rumors, informing citizens, and connecting those in need of support.

Local language access

Apps such as Orbot bring the power of open source Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to mobile phones, but minority language speakers face barriers to access because the apps — and everything written about the apps, including help menus — exist only in majority languages. We work with partner organizations to run localization sprints that help contextualize and translate important tools into local language; that’s why Orbot is now available in Aymaran, a language spoken by more than 1 million people in Bolivia, Peru, and Chile.



or conflict, the best way to ensure access to information might be very basic: billboards or speakers on the back of motorbikes; listening groups or community radio stations. In our history, we have helped seed scores of community-owned, community-run radio stations in countries such as Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, filling very acute information needs.

While access has historically been measured through traditional media reach, the future is measured in internet access — specifically, mobile internet access. For the next 3 billion people to come online, “internet access” and “mobile connectivity” are likely to feel synonymous even as they offer vastly distinct experiences and information.

Major initiatives to expand access to the

mobile internet for the next 3 billion people are underway, but we see worrying trends away from meaningful inclusion. As information access spreads globally, the divide between information “haves” and “have nots” will grow, with the “have nots” being left further and further behind. Major investments in 5G architecture for the most connected people on the planet are likely to dwarf investments in 2G or 3G for the least connected. An example of what this divide means in real life is that a 1 GB video transfers in 11 seconds on 5G; it requires 66 hours over 2G. This is a breathtaking differential for hundreds of millions of people, contributing significantly to a system of digital elites.

Further, those who rely on minority languages will also struggle to find tools or websites that work for them, and the digital divide

they face will be exacerbated by technologies that do not account for their language or culture. The elderly may lose access to their traditional information channels as the information market shifts to mobile platforms and providers.

Access divides also come from censorship. State and societal forces often counter access with systemic exclusion in the form of overt censorship for entire communities — the purposeful exclusion of historically disadvantaged groups such as women, ethnic or religious minorities, or LGBTI people — or the specific censorship of “problematic” voices.

In these cases, we focus on helping people access tools and technologies that enable them to bypass censorship so they are able to experience the full benefits of the information revolution. The focus of this work is either on the most targeted users — civil society leaders, journalists, and human rights defenders — or the most marginalized populations, often women and ethnic or religious minorities. These more vulnerable groups face specific privacy and security concerns when they access the internet or use connected devices, so much of our work is aimed at building communities of support and expertise around the world to disseminate and improve safety and privacy awareness.



Information that consumers know how to critically assess.

Access to information is not a solution in and of itself. People need the skills to engage with and critically assess the information they are consuming. This is particularly important as more and more people receive their news through platforms in which content delivery is managed by algorithms rather than editors. Digital platforms that rank and recommend content algorithmically optimized for engagement create degenerate feedback loops, amplifying and compounding these effects. Research

Media literacy on the go!



Internews’ annual media survey in Moldova found that 85% of respondents believe that news in the Republic of Moldova is influenced “much” or “very much” by politics, and 61% believe that the Moldovan population can hardly differentiate false news from real stories. In response, Internews launched a six-month media literacy campaign targeted at underinformed rural communities.

The campaign provided on-the-go media literacy information by putting more than 10,000 posters on the backs of seats of 111 minibuses in Moldova, reaching thousands of passengers traveling between the capital and remote cities and villages.

has shown that online disinformation and misinformation reach audiences more quickly than accurate information on the same subjects; on Twitter, a false news story will reach an audience of 1,500 people six times faster, on average, than an accurate one.¹⁰

Internews strives to ensure that people are able to sift through the noise of disinformation and misinformation to find the good information they need to make informed choices. Like our access work, the emphasis of our programming to support critical assessment is on people — on the consumers of information. We strive to improve

media, information, and data literacy so that people are better able to discern the validity and integrity of the news and information they consume.

Given the lack of consensus surrounding what makes good digital and media literacy, our approach is to support the experimentation, research, and piloting of different methods by our partners around the world. We have seen success in countries such as Ukraine, where Ministries of Education endorse weaving media literacy into primary and secondary school curricula. We are also supporting pilot efforts to reach mass populations in such places as Moldova. Over the next few years, we plan to study the results of different pilots in different countries to refine our perspective and approaches to helping people build the critical thinking skills they need to navigate our current complex information environment.



Information that is valued by its community and sustained by business models that work.

The past decade has seen a precipitous drop in the viability of the news business in every corner of the world. The impact of this decline in local news has been devastating. In the United States — the largest and wealthiest media market in the world — 1 in 3 citizens now lives in a news desert, defined as a community without a daily newspaper.¹¹ Global data on the local news environment is hard to come by, but trends elsewhere look similar or worse. In Brazil, 30% of the population lives in a news desert.¹² In the U.K. market, 200 local papers have shuttered since 2005, prompting a government review¹³ to determine if state intervention is needed to save the free press.

This financial viability crisis owes to several factors, including the transition to digital advertising and the rise in bad actors flooding media markets in many parts of the world.

Montenegro

Independent Montenegrin media struggle with political and foreign influence and make up one of the smallest advertising markets in the region at an estimated \$11.5 million dollars. A lack of reliable audience measurement data makes it difficult for outlets to get a sense of their audience needs and demands, further hindering their ability to develop effective business strategies that can increase their revenue and ensure their sustainability.

Internews built up the skills of our partners in audience analytics and online media performance, by sharing applicable tools to refine content production to meet higher audience expectations.

One of the partners, Montenegrin news outlet Vijesti, immediately understood the need to implement these approaches for their online platform. With additional guidance, Vijesti was able to increase its online sales revenue by more than 400% in less than two months.

The ad tech supply chain, dominated by Google and Facebook, has disintermediated the traditional relationship between publisher and advertiser to the point where these global platforms now consume 90% of all new growth and 61 cents of every dollar spent on digital advertising worldwide. This translates to an incredible statistic: In 2019 alone, the Google/Facebook duopoly was projected to earn \$174 billion, compared to digital newspaper ad revenues worldwide, at \$9.95 billion.

Global politics also come into play. Bad faith actors are using their power to dominate a highly centralized market for news. While independent news outlets struggle to piece together revenue from advertising, subscriptions, services, and other sources, oligarchs,

government cronies, and even state media outlets face little competition and can flood markets with content created with little regard for production costs or journalism ethics. Buyouts of legitimate local news sources also weaken the market: In Russia, state-owned companies and state-friendly oligarchs have bought out nearly the entire independent news sector, from top channel NTV to top daily *Izvestiya*. In most of these cases, the owners choose to sell their valuable, independent properties rather than risk losing them outright after battles with biased courts and regulators.

There is no silver bullet for the sustainability of a healthy information environment. Information providers around the world depend on a mix of revenue streams, including advertising, philanthropy, subscriptions, membership models, and public support. In addition to providing resources, tools, and peer-to-peer mentoring to the business side of news, Internews is pioneering other approaches, including mentoring publishers' business teams, offering leadership training, developing strategies for audience-led content, nurturing startups, creating industrywide alliances, and providing technology upgrades to partners — all designed to create financially viable, resilient media. In the coming period, we plan to deepen our in-house expertise to support this work and better navigate the still-changing business environment for news.



Governments and businesses that are accountable for sustaining healthy information environments.

Healthy information environments require governmental and corporate structures to support them. Hostile governments and bad actors have watched the flowering of democratic ideals and activism on social media with alarm, and react by jamming signals, committing cyberattacks, blocking social

media sites, limiting access to certain apps, and distributing fake apps. This can be seen in such places as Venezuela, where curating and controlling information is a powerful way to alter a geopolitical situation.

In an annual analysis of 65 countries covering 87% of the world's internet users, Freedom House found that internet freedom declined globally in 2019¹⁴ for the ninth consecutive year, with 33 countries declining overall and only 16 registering net improvements. In 2018, there were nearly 200 instances of internet shutdowns around the world.

Regulatory capture may also be applied to eliminate information competition from small, upstart media outlets. In Tanzania, the government has sought to criminalize the publication — online or offline — of any statistic unless it has received prior governmental approval.

Laws proposed in countries with strong rule of law and human rights protections (such as the Right to be Forgotten law in the EU) are increasingly being adopted without local analysis and with little to no input from local civil society, citizens, or the technologists who can fully understand their ramifications. Policymakers around the world continue to lack technological insight, which increases the risks that they will propose or support cybercrime laws or other mechanisms that have a far deeper impact on free expression than they had intended.

Increasingly, a small number of private companies play a dominant role in global information ecosystems. In addition to large media companies with multinational footprints, technology and digital platform companies now influence what information people see to an unprecedented extent. Minor changes to the algorithms that platforms like Facebook use to recommend content to their billions of global users can have huge impacts on the quality and diversity of information to which

local communities are exposed. In 2019, more than 70% of the 5 billion hours of video watched on YouTube every single day were recommended to users by the company's much-criticized proprietary algorithm.¹⁵ The impacts of decisions taken by these companies on local information environments around the world remain poorly understood, and they operate with little transparency, oversight, or even consultation with their global user base.

Since our founding, Internews has worked to improve the environment for a free press and the free flow of information, working

with in-country attorneys, press unions, civil society, and media regulatory bodies to write or revise media and regulatory frameworks, strengthen freedom of information laws, and decriminalize draconian libel statutes. Internews supports multi-stakeholder approaches to building the laws, policies, systems, and structures necessary to create an enabling environment for freedom of expression and supporting their effective implementation.

Our accountability work supports or intersects with policy groups, legal and regulatory bodies, local governments, civil society organizations, and companies. We emphasize research, testing, and compiling and sharing global good practices for accountability around information ecosystems.

Recognizing that laws, existing and new, are actively being used to arrest or hinder journalists and other content creators, we work to address the ever-increasing physical and digital security threats facing the journalists, cultural producers, technologists, and others risking their lives to bring information to their communities.

Increasingly, we are also working to hold businesses and platforms accountable in recognizing and upholding their responsibilities to independent media and freedom of expression. In partnership with consortia of leading tech companies, networks, academics, and civil society organizations, we are increasing the level of protection of and respect for independent media and freedom of expression by technology companies globally.

We are also working on accountability individually with major platforms to ensure they understand the dynamics their products have in markets across the world, particularly those markets that are not traditionally on their radar.

Liberia media law



On Feb. 28, 2019, Liberian President George M. Weah signed into law the Kamara Abdullah Kamara (KAK) Act of Press Freedom. The act amends Chapter 11 of the penal law of Liberia aimed at decriminalizing defamation. This was a huge victory for Liberia and came about after significant support by international media law experts was provided to the parliamentary working groups through Internews programs in Liberia.

Gender within a healthy information environment

As an organization committed to being gender transformative, Internews believes that no information environment can be healthy without equal opportunity for women and all gender identities to express their voices, engage in public debates, and safely access information.



Inclusive, robust participation in this environment is critical to advancing social, economic, and political progress. Our programs advance women's leadership in the media by increasing women's engagement with information as journalists, experts, and sources, and by promoting more stories produced for, by, and about women. This both improves the quality of information we all consume and more accurately reflects reality.

Gender equality is a core tenet of Internews' program design and implementation and is reflected in our comprehensive Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy. Gender and inclusion are also integral to our new strategic framework, deeply infused into each element of a healthy information environment:

Good information: Women are severely underrepresented in media, particularly in news, and have been for decades. Underrepresentation and silencing of women's voices contribute to a culture that devalues women — a world where women's potential is perpetually limited by their lack of exposure to powerful role models, their limited opportunity to connect with a shared experience, and the reinforced notion of traditional gender roles. Supported by Internews in Ukraine, "Girl Power: Little Stories of Big Acts," is an inspirational children's book that tells the stories of successful Ukrainian women in non-stereotypical roles, such as IT entrepreneurs, mathematicians, doctors, and soldiers, and is designed to promote gender equality and inspire those who have suffered and been displaced due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Safe access: When women enter an online environment, they face a disproportionate risk of digital harassment, cyberstalking, doxing, and the nonconsensual distribution of images (e.g., "revenge porn"). Online violence has proved an especially powerful tool for undermining female and female-identifying human rights defenders and civil society leaders, because the brutal behavior they face online also serves to endanger, discredit, shame, or defame them offline. A vast majority of women, 73%, have been or will be exposed to some form of cyber violence in their lifetimes and 52% of women feel the internet is not a safe place to express their opinions. (Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls: A World-Wide Wake-Up Call, UN Broadband Commission, UNESCO, 2015, <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/genderreport2015final.pdf>) Internews empowers women to access information safely by training female human rights defenders, journalists, media workers, and activists to understand and respond to online and offline gender-based attacks. Internews and DefendDefenders founded "Safe Sisters" to train women in East Africa to safeguard their privacy, protect their data online, and become trainers for their own communities.

Critical assessment: We help women and girls better discern the validity and integrity of the news and information they consume. In Mali, Internews trains and supports Electe, a young female "Facebook star" who explains the elections on the leading commercial radio network, targeting youth and female audiences and reaching more than 1 million daily listeners.

Strong business models: We engage women-owned media outlets and women-led organizations to increase their capacity and help them build effective business models. Radio Saraish is one of 17 women-led radio stations in Afghanistan's Salam Watandar Radio Network, launched and supported by Internews. These stations have produced and broadcast more than 400 radio reports and feature stories, covering topics that relate to women in local communities.

Accountable institutions: We work with civil society representatives, media organizations, journalists, and activists to engender a culture of transparency, accountability, and respect for the rule of law by fostering collaboration on corruption and governance issues, understanding that women and other marginalized groups are the most affected by government policies. "Aswatouna" (Our Voices), Internews' project in Iraq, helps women participate equally as citizens and decision-makers, with an emphasis on the policy environment.

Advancing a Global Change Agenda

By elevating the experiences and insights of our partners, we will help shape the debate around news, media and technology, leading to healthier information environments.

We are acutely aware that global information players — social media platforms, search engines, digital advertising systems, global broadcasters, governments, and multinational corporations — wield unprecedented and largely unregulated influence on information environments at the local level. Local information players and citizens themselves have for the most part

not yet mobilized to question or push back against the predominance of these powerful interests in their information spaces. However, as the next 3 billion people come online, their rights and ability to access, understand, influence, and safely navigate their information ecosystems will be critical. This is why Internews is committed to building the skills to advance a Global Change Agenda to complement our deep and long-standing operational expertise.

Reflect Reality

Around the world, women represent only 24% of the people we see, hear, and write about in the news and only 19% of expert sources (Global Media Monitoring Project). This disparity is a massive barrier to fighting gender bias, as it perpetuates the perception of women as bystanders who lack valuable expertise.

Internews is building equality by ensuring that women are not only involved in every stage of news production but that the news content the world reads, views, and listens to includes women's authoritative and expert voices from all corners of industry.

Reflect Reality is a call-to-action and comprehensive digital resource for the news industry to reach gender parity in the sources it relies on for stories. Through diverse testimonials, practical guidance, pilot project case studies, sample activities, and templated resources, Reflect Reality is providing the tools newsrooms, journalists, and the business community need to make news that better reflects our whole society.

www.reflectreality.internews.org



Over the next five years, Internews will develop a highly focused Global Change Agenda that elevates the insights and concerns of our partners in our collective efforts to influence the policies, norms, and practices of global players toward building healthier information environments around the world.

Several issues that we have already begun to address are:

- **Misinformation/disinformation and tech platform accountability:** Our frontline partners experience daily the challenges and constraints of living in a Facebook and Google world. We have been working with partners in such places as Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, and Cameroon to ensure their experiences are understood at the HQ level of these industry giants, with some notable success.
- **Saving local news through global digital**

advertising: Through our coalition project United for News, we have made good progress in reaching global ad tech and brands to raise awareness of their role in the market collapse of local news, and in promoting more just and sustainable digital advertising models.

- **Women's access and inclusion in information environments:** The dramatic underrepresentation of women in informational content around the world, the devastating inequality of access to information between men and women, and the safety of women and girls online drive our focus on including women as part of our Global Change Agenda.

In the coming year, we will refine this list to prioritize issues where our partners' expertise and insights **uniquely** fuel global debate. While we will avoid advocacy that could potentially cause risk for our partners at the country level, Internews is well-positioned to take on a Global Change Agenda with proven expertise in local and regional policy influence. Our work on internet policy and digital advertising demonstrate the potential of our global impact. And we have established connections to global fora, such as the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, and the Global Network Initiative.

We are very excited to tackle this important work. Our unique voice on the global stage truly builds from our network of current and former allies, partners, and staff spanning more than 120 countries. Our network is positioned to deliver authentic, community-rooted insights from places that are vastly underrepresented in global understanding and policy.

Our tagline is "Local Voices, Global Change." Through our new Global Change Agenda, we strive to live up to that promise by effectively leveraging local insights to advance systemic change on a global scale.

Technology in our strategy

Our strategic framework does not include a specific technology rubric.

Technology is simply too central to our work. Technology rests at the core of how we perceive the world and how we plan to solve problems within it. Indeed, every element of a healthy information ecosystem in 2020 involves technology:

Good information: While our programs around the world help ensure that content creators have access to the technologies they need to effectively tell their stories — from mobile phones to digital recorders to data analytics tools — we also deploy specialized technical expertise to ensure the creative work is done safely. We provide **direct technological support to information providers** in the most embattled environments, helping them establish secure servers, archive and protect critical information, defend themselves from digital attacks, circumvent censorship, and develop new digital practices to improve their reach and efficiency. We **mitigate digital risks for those who create, produce, and provide credible information** — from journalists and advocates to technologists and community leaders.

Safe access: Access is built on technology, and our programs around the world expand access through low-tech solutions like billboards and community radio as well as high-tech solutions that allow for information to flow even in highly censored states. Internews is a leader in driving the development of cutting-edge, open source **anti-censorship technologies** that allow anyone to tunnel through information firewalls and protect their anonymity online.

Critical assessment: Through our anti-dis/misinformation programs, we work with the public to help them develop critical thinking skills and deploy those skills in **assessing the value of information encountered on social media** and in other formats. In addition, our **emerging research into hate speech online and platform accountability** is providing us with new insights into how violence travels from online spaces to the physical world, and we are working to translate that new understanding into stronger programs that can dam that flow.

Strong business models: Internews' mentoring of partners in their quest for sustainable operations reaches from newsrooms to advertising teams to IT departments. To make an impact and convert attention to revenue in the digital age requires **data-driven decision-making** on everything from finding an audience to monetizing their attention and support. And, of course, the decisions made by global regulators and tech companies have massive downstream impacts on the business plans of individual media and information firms, which we aim to move in a more equitable and sustainable direction.

Accountable institutions: We understand technology well enough to eschew techno-solutionism. That is why we support advocates and technologists to **pursue policies and laws that promote digital rights and protect information and information providers** in an age where the internet has pluralized the information space, threatened entrenched powers, and spurred an uptick in authoritarian practices. Through coalition work, coupled with direct engagement, we also hold platforms to account for their role in aiding or hindering healthy information environments.

Measuring our impact: 25 x 25

At the heart of Internews’ work is the idea that a healthy information environment is a root solution to furthering human progress.



For nearly 40 years, Internews has strengthened and supported local media and information providers with the belief that this support builds stronger communities. While we consistently see examples of increased accountability and real progress in changing lives and empowering people through information, we are rarely able to take a deep look at what **really changes** in

a community when an information environment improves. In the face of a growing surge of evidence around the negative societal impacts of corrupted information environments, it is more important than ever to demonstrate the value of this work.

Unfortunately, there is very little rigorous research in the media and information space that proves the core idea behind our work.

This gap in critical analysis hinders our ability — and the ability of other organizations like us — to do better work and refine our programs to be most effective. It also hinders our ability to advocate for the importance of information in solving the world's most pressing problems.

With this strategy, we commit to truly and transparently testing the mission of our organization. This deep dive into assessing the impact of healthy information environments is our **25 x 25 initiative**. The initiative aims to demonstrate, adapt, measure, and make public the positive changes (or setbacks) that happen when building healthy information environments in 25 unique communities by the year 2025.

To succeed, we will need to forge new alliances, develop practical and robust theories of change, create unique programming, strengthen effective data collection tools and data analysis capabilities, and determine how to share our learning with the world.

The design of this initiative will begin in earnest in the first quarter of 2020. Our goal is to **select 25 communities** that represent the diversity of our ambitions and overall approach. We will choose both physical locations and virtual communities, potentially ranging in size from a few dozen people to hundreds of thousands. They may be communities in which we are already engaged or new communities in which we will work several years down the road. They might include, for instance, a regional capital in the Philippines, a refugee population on the border of Uganda, or a virtual network that serves information needs within a heavily censored country.

Our work with all of our 25 x 25 communities will launch with an **Information Ecosystem Analysis**, Internews' unique methodology that examines all aspects of the needs, production, access, flow, trust, use, impact,

What do we mean by “community”?



We define a community as a group of people sharing the same information environment — whether virtual or geographical. They usually have shared interests, and some of the same beliefs and needs, and this shapes the identity of the group and the people in it.

With this strategy, we commit to truly and transparently testing the mission of our organization

and sharing of information in the target community. We will use this methodology continuously to adapt our interventions as these ecosystem conditions change, to ensure that our investments remain relevant and effective. And we'll **collaborate with partners from academia and other disciplines** to develop new and nuanced ways of understanding and measuring the social impact of information-based interventions in communities that share the same ecosystems.

It is intended that this more rigorous focus on evidence gathering and analysis in 25 x 25 communities will **enrich the global conversation** on information disruption and how to counter it.

Where we excel: our organizational strengths

Internews has a long history of innovation in building healthy information environments, from nurturing nascent media in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the 1980s to getting information into war-torn Sarajevo in the 1990s.

From helping partners provide accurate news coverage about AIDS in Kenya in the 2000s to pioneering information as a key humanitarian response during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. From supporting only traditional media partners to engaging with a full range of content providers and influencers over the past decade.

We are proud to be a high-performing organization with solid operations and programs. We have developed a decentralized and entrepreneurial model that supports deeply local approaches as the drivers for

the relevance, impact, and sustainability of our programs in the communities in which we work. Our entrepreneurial model also allows for, and encourages, innovation and the use of appropriate technologies by program staff and our local partners. It gives our organization the nimbleness required to work in rapidly changing, complex contexts.

We've been successful because of the strengths of our people and programs and because of our willingness to turn a critical eye inward. To remain agile and adaptive, we regularly assess what we are good at and what we need to improve, forging new paths if needed.

While we must and will continue to invest in and maintain our solid operations and trusted management systems, we believe the following organizational strengths are the unique value-add of Internews and central to delivering our vision for the world:



We are agile.
We are able to work where information is most under threat and where it is most urgently needed.



We bring information solutions to the world's most **pressing issues.**



We listen.
We design and implement our programs through deep engagement with local communities.



We build **lasting partnerships** and alliances that deliver results.



 **We are agile. We are able to work where information is most under threat and where it is most urgently needed.**

One of Internews’ greatest strengths is our ability to work where freedom of expression is most threatened and where information is most urgently needed. From remote regions across Afghanistan to communities devastated by earthquakes and tsunamis to some of the most heavily censored countries in the world, our agility is our strength.

This strength allows us to respond quickly to emerging opportunities and reach the most information-poor and vulnerable people in support of our mission. We have established core principles, approaches, and guardrails around how we operate and what activities will maximize impact and minimize risk. We have invested in digital security, physical security, rapid response and humanitarian systems, and lightweight logistical approaches to enable this work.

In many cases, we are one of the few media

and information organizations that can maintain operations in dangerous, challenging, or closing spaces. This builds our reputation as a trustworthy “get-it-done” partner. Although our systems are robust and compliant, they are also designed to be flexible and innovative in a way that facilitates continued, secure operation during times of flux and duress.

 **We bring information solutions to the world’s most pressing issues.**

In the coming five years, global populations will increasingly confront acute crises and complex, long-term development and humanitarian challenges related to critical issues such as **climate and environmental crises, conflicts, public health epidemics, natural disasters, forced migration, and severe economic inequality**. These issues are multilayered, increasingly interconnected, and often reach across borders, affecting neighboring and regional populations.

While each of these issues demands interventions that are tailored to the specific

development or humanitarian challenge, they share a common denominator: Accurate, evidence-based information empowers people to have a voice in the decisions that affect them. True two-way information helps them understand their rights, seek assistance and justice, and make informed decisions about their well-being.

This is especially critical in humanitarian contexts, where we work with the world's most vulnerable people to ensure they understand their rights to access and share information and are enabled to do so. We provide them with the skills and spaces to ensure their voices are heard by aid agencies and governments, their questions are answered, and their stories get told in their own communities and beyond.

Internews is one of the only global organizations specializing in information that spans the humanitarian-development spectrum, reaching people who are vulnerable to the compounding effects of a variety of global threats. This focus sets us apart and greatly expands the potential impact of our activities.



We listen. We design and implement our programs through deep engagement with local communities.

The fragmentation of traditional media structures, channels, and markets has rearranged the ways in which audiences seek information. That means all our work needs to **start with listening to the communities** we are trying to serve and designing projects that respond directly to their expressed needs and preferred delivery mechanisms.

We must ask: What do you value and what knowledge do you seek? Who are you most eager to communicate with and what do you wish to convey? What is your experience and what stories do you want to tell? Where

Accurate, evidence-based information empowers people to have a voice in the decisions that affect them

are you most comfortable sharing your stories and where do you seek insights on issues of importance to you?

This listening gives us a user-centered view of complex news and information ecosystems, where media outlets and civil society organizations are just a part of a bigger whole. A perspective informed by listening allows us to design projects that invest not just in media and information entities but in networks and relationships, in the diversity,

Human-Centered Design

Internews has developed human-centered research methodologies that examine dynamic aspects of community information flows. Our Information Ecosystem Analysis (IEA) allows us to understand not only the capacity and reach of supply-side media outlets and platforms, but also the demand-side of community information needs and access. The IEA pays special attention to informal, cultural, and social media factors that affect information sourcing, sharing, uptake, and trust, as well as those that can corrupt information flows with rumor, misinformation, and propaganda.

Analysis of local information ecosystems is an essential prerequisite to the design of projects. As a central feature of whole system project design, the IEA enables the establishment of feedback loops among beneficiaries, infomediaries, and service providers so that our work is consistently informed by community input and feedback throughout the project life cycle.

creativity, and entrepreneurial dynamics that are typical of new media and information landscapes.

As we listen, we help both media outlets and civil society organizations understand their strengths and weaknesses in the context of their own information ecosystems and, if necessary, how to reinvent themselves accordingly. We work together on strategies for listening in their communities, encouraging face-to-face interaction, events and social media relationships that spark and catalyze storytelling, and reportage sourced directly from their audiences. And we recognize civic trends, including the rise of social movements and influencers, that open up possibilities for collaborations between nontraditional partners to cocreate content that responds directly to the needs and preferences of media audiences.



We build lasting partnerships and alliances that deliver results.

Internews builds long-term partnerships that strengthen and promote local organizations. Our local partners lead and maintain ownership of the work we do together. In some places, we have grown these partnerships into country-based and regional networks for ongoing action on a wide range of issues and continue to drive information exchange and advance learning for these networks.

Over 38 years, we have cultivated and maintained partners, people, and offices in more than 120 countries. These relationships with thousands of experts, advocates, and leaders form a foundation for global reach, diverse expertise, real-time information, field insights, and alliances that we can tap creatively to advance our shared missions.

The strength of our partners is key to the long-term viability of our work and impact of our programs. In recognition of their

Unique organizational capacity assessment approach

Our Organizational Capacity Assessment tools help to gauge partners' capacity, prioritize organizational development needs, tailor capacity-building plans, and monitor progress toward greater sustainability. In addition to measuring change in standard institutional indexes such as governance, management, administration, and business systems, Internews' unique approach includes specific tools to measure progress in editorial standards, content production, and distribution, as well indexes on digital and physical security, self-censorship, and technological capacity.

The strength of our partners is key to the long-term viability of our work

importance to our mission, we prioritize building partners' sustainability and capacity to carry on independently without Internews. We offer our expertise in organizational assessment, strategic planning, financial management, monitoring and evaluation, IT support, and digital and physical security. And we always seek to ensure that our actions make our partners safer.

The thousands of experts, advocates, and leaders who trust Internews form a foundation for global reach, diverse expertise, real-time information, field insights, and alliances that we can tap creatively to advance our shared missions.

Investing in our mission and building organizational resilience

The final element of our strategy is a consideration of the resources needed to support our mission and how to strengthen relationships with key donors and partners. Several considerations are at play.

To meet our ambitious five-year goal — to meaningfully support healthy information environments in 100 countries, in complicated environments — we will have to continue to successfully raise diverse funding from core public-sector donors and strengthen our relationships with existing partners, while diversifying our funding base thematically and geographically and with new donors in both the public and private sectors.

To achieve success with our two new strategic initiatives, 25 x 25 and our Global Change Agenda, we will need to build strong partnerships with new private-sector donors as well as research institutions, corporate partners, and new advocacy partners.

Finally, in support of the new strategic framework and building on what we learned during our last five-year framework, Internews has developed a new suite of Key Financial Indicators (KFI) to benchmark and track our 2020-2025 fundraising performance. The KFIs enable Internews to conduct a detailed analysis of revenue streams across thematic, donor, and geographic diversification, as well as help us manage financial risk. In the aggregate, these indicators will be used to gauge whether Internews is maintaining a revenue base that ensures resiliency in a dynamic operating environment.

Key Financial Indicators

Internews will use the following set of KFIs to help us track fundamental financial priorities.

Scale

Net New Awards

Total awards in dollars (including cost-extensions) won per year, minus award reductions.

Diversification

Technical Diversification Net New Awards

Total awards in dollars (including cost-extensions) won per year, minus award reductions, from technical areas other than democracy, human rights, and governance.

Donor Diversification Net New Awards

Total awards won in dollars by donor type (USG Democracy, Rights, Governance (DRG), USG non-DRG, other public sector, private restricted, unrestricted, net earned income).

Resilience

Country Concentration

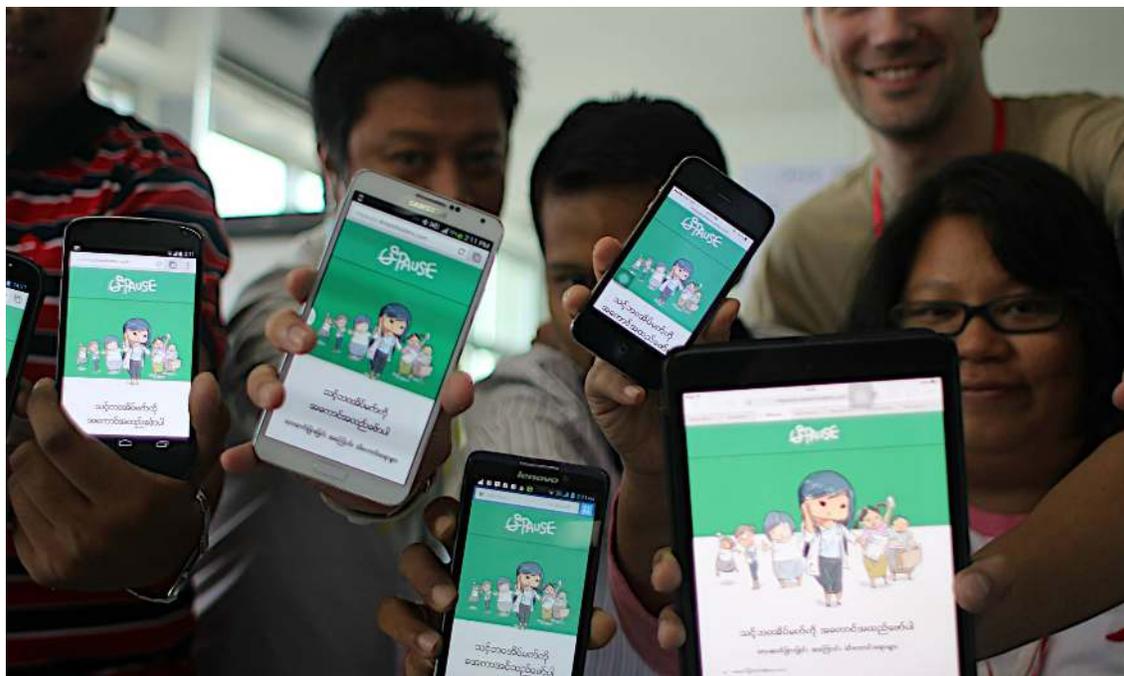
Percent of total revenue from top three countries is less than 30%.

Operating Reserves

Months of indirect operating expenses in reserves.

Conclusion

Our strategy framework began with a clear-eyed assessment of the forces shaping communications, media, and information around the world.



The challenges are real. “Information dystopia” may not be an overstatement of where we’re headed. But quite simply, we can’t and won’t back down from these challenges. We don’t have all the answers. Far from it. But we have a solid commitment and a belief that there are people, all around the world, who can make real, positive contributions that achieve our mission. Together with these people — our allies, our partners, our inspirations, and our own staff — we embrace our vision:

To realize the potential of a digitally connected world: a world in which evidence-based information advances human progress, enables broad opportunity and accountability, and fuels vibrant civic debate.

Solutions take time, iteration, and effort. With this new strategic framework, we’re ready to test our assumptions and share our learning.

As we move forward as an organization, we will continue to ask fundamental questions about our program model to challenge how we can best make the difference in the world that we want to make. We will continue to assess the opportunity, the complexity, and the imperative for change over time.

The ability to both plan and innovate through this framework is the cornerstone of the next chapter of Internews, and we are very excited to begin.

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Internews empowers people worldwide with the trustworthy, high-quality news and information they need to make informed decisions, participate in their communities, and hold power to account.

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