

Part 3

Progress – Existing initiatives aiming to reduce gender inequality in news



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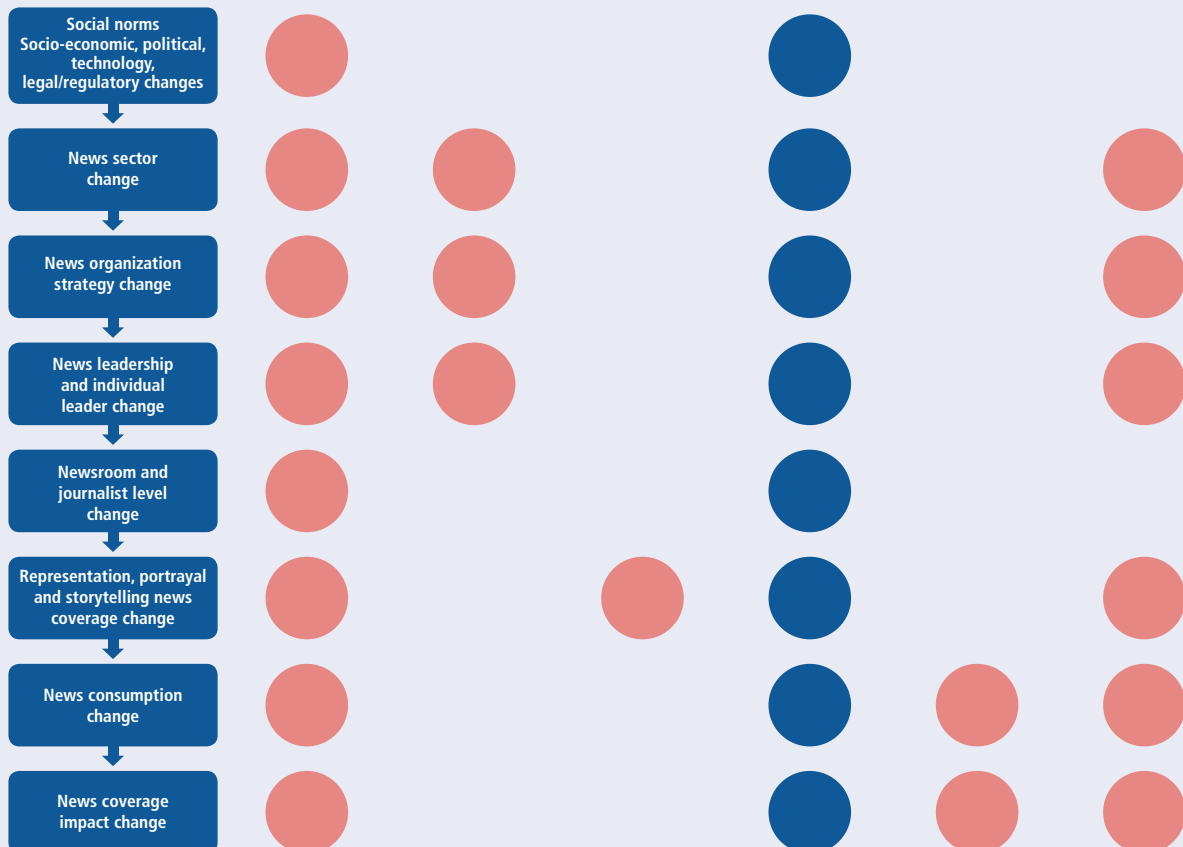
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Part 3 at a glance

This part of the report focuses on all parts of the news value chain: resources, newsgathering, news outputs, news consumption, and impact. It analyzes 168 existing initiatives around the globe which aim to improve women's representation or inclusion along any element of the news value chain, with a view to understanding what the existing solutions to gender inequity in news are and what other opportunities are available to make progress towards closing the gender gap in news.



AKAS' analysis has revealed that the global north is leading the efforts in redressing gender balance in news. For positive change to take place, efforts must be directed at societal, organizational/industry and individual levels. Worryingly, only a tenth of the analyzed initiatives aim to target change at the societal level. The majority of initiatives aim to assist individuals rather than change news organizations or the industry, which poses a question about the sustainability of any change that these initiatives instigate. A significant proportion of initiatives in news have been dedicated to improving women's visibility as news experts, which may have contributed to the growth in the proportion of women news experts globally in the last five years. To achieve sustainable progress in the areas that matter most for improving gender equity in news, organizational initiatives must tackle structural change, as well as change at an individual level; focus on targeting every element of the news value chain rather than just one; and build in collaboration, moving away from the hyper-competitiveness that defines journalism culture.

Introduction

We read many reports, narratives, and articles that focus exclusively on the problem of gender inequity in different sectors. Much less is written about the solutions available to redress gender inequity in media in different societies, let alone along the news value chain. The AKAS team dedicated some months to researching existing initiatives that aim to improve women’s (including women of color’s) representation and inclusion in news leadership and news coverage, as well as those aiming to improve women’s engagement with the news. Although not claiming to be exhaustive, this unique project led to the unearthing of 168 initiatives from 118 news, non-profit, international, and governmental organizations operating in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, or globally.

The global north is leading the efforts to redress gender imbalance in news. Approximately 64% of all the recorded initiatives and 69% of the organizations behind them are based in the global north (North America and Europe). As shown in Figure 40, North America hosts the largest proportion of these initiatives (38%), followed by Europe (26%). Only 8% of the initiatives AKAS identified are based in Africa, despite gender inequality in news representing a significant barrier to women’s participation, visibility in news, and involvement in decision-making on the continent. There is no positive correlation between the extent of the problem and the initiatives developed in different regions globally.

Figure 40: Number and location of initiatives

Region	No. of initiatives	% of initiatives	No. orgs.	% of orgs.
North America	63	38%	44	37%
Europe	44	26%	38	32%
Asia (unc Australia)	25	15%	14	12%
Global	21	13%	11	9%
Africa	14	8%	10	8%
Unclear	1	1%	1	1%
Number of entries	168	100%	118	100%

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Where are the news initiatives aimed at bringing about change at systemic level?

The Missing Perspectives of Women in News established that given how deeply entrenched the problem of gender inequity in news is across the whole news value chain, for positive change to take place, efforts need to be directed concurrently at three areas: the individual, the news organization/industry and societal systems/norms. If change is blocked or not tackled at one of these three levels, progress cannot be sustained. Much has been written recently in the UK and US about the failure to tackle racial and gender inequality at a societal/system level, which is the root cause of the problem and its persistence. This prompted us to ask ourselves which level(s) of the problem the existing news initiatives aim to tackle. Analysis of the 168 initiatives revealed that all of them are aimed, directly or indirectly, at impacting individuals, be they journalists or leaders, women journalists, women as members of society, or news audience members. Only 10% of the ongoing initiatives (16) aim to tackle change at a societal level (see Figure 41). This is a matter of concern, given the criticality of changing the system to ensure lasting progress.

The 16 initiatives we identified that aim to tackle change at a systemic level include intergovernmental (G7) and governmental gender-based initiatives (in Japan, the UK, and the US) and gender-focused reports that include a news media component; a broadcaster (NPO in the Netherlands) that has entered into an agreement with national government about the gender balance

of its output; campaigns driven by non-profits targeting change at a societal level (Association of Media Women in Kenya, We Will Stop Femicide platform in Turkey and TIME'S UP); journalism non-profits challenging gender stereotypes in Iraq and Ukraine (Internews), and addressing gender-based violence (Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence); a news provider (South China Morning Post) organizing a conference aimed at tackling systemic gender inequality in Asia; an international news channel (France 24) broadcasting a weekly program about reshaping the world; and an Oscar-nominated documentary about the only all-women news outlet in India, Khabar Lahariya, which gives voice to the voiceless in rural India.²⁴⁵ Finally, the Global Media Monitoring Project is also a system-level change-targeting initiative – the only global longitudinal study of the representation and portrayal of women in news media.

What part of the news value chain do initiatives cluster around? Change at an individual level prevails

Perhaps unsurprisingly, research into the existing gender-based initiatives found that the majority (115 or 68%) target people within news organizations, either as journalists or leaders (see Figure 42). The elements in this category include: developing women as leaders (51), training (37), safety/anti-sexual harassment initiatives (25), DE&I initiatives

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Figure 41: 16 news-related initiatives which aim to tackle a systemic element of gender inequality in society (arranged in alphabetical order)

No.	Organization	Name of initiative	Initiative description
1	Association of Media Women in Kenya	n/a	AMWIK seeks to use the media to promote an informed and gender responsive society in Kenya and Africa.
2	Bureau of International Information Programs, US Department of State	Global Women's Issues: Women in the World Today, Extended Version, Chapter 10, Women and the Media	Provides history of exclusion and stereotypes, as well as a narrative about the new era of women's rights.
3	Center for Women's Global Leadership	Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence	The Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence (JiG) of the Center for Women's Global Leadership works to shift the global narrative toward better reporting on violence against women. The work has four thematic objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the global standard of reporting on gender-based violence to reduce its prevalence globally • Advocate for a survivor-centered and survivor-led approach to reporting on gender-based violence • Highlight and assist women journalists at risk because of their reporting on gender-based violence • Facilitate connections and the sharing of best practices between journalists reporting on gender-based violence globally
4	France 24	'The 51%	The 51% is a weekly program about women who are reshaping our world, broadcast by the international TV news channel France 24 and hosted by Annette Young
5	G7	Report of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council 2021	This report, which includes a media section, is the result of the individual insights and collaborative judgment of the members of the 2021 G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council. Its first imperative was to ensure that women, and particularly women of color, were not overlooked in the recovery, as they so often were during the pandemic.
6	Internews	Iraq – Women's Voices	Internews' "Women's Voices" is working to challenge societal attitudes that stigmatize survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Iraq. Women's rights activists and journalists in Iraq rarely work together. Internews is connecting these groups for the first time, to learn from each other and help shed light on sensitive issues with reporting and advocacy.
7	Internews	Ukraine – Girl Power	"Girl Power: Little Stories of Big Acts," is an inspirational children's book which tells the stories of successful Ukrainian women who overcame hardships, including those caused by conflict and displacement, to make their communities healthier, safer and stronger. The book shows 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.
8	Japan Cabinet Office	Diversity in News Coverage	30 women journalists from 12 countries and regions throughout Asia gathered in Tokyo for an event sponsored by Japan's Cabinet Office to discuss diversity in news coverage.
9	Khabar Lahariya	<i>Writing with Fire</i>	<i>Writing with Fire</i> is a 2021 Indian documentary film directed by filmmakers Sushmit Ghosh and Rintu Thomas about three of the journalists running the all-women-led news provider in India, Khabar Lahariya, as they shift from 14-years of print to digital journalism using smartphones. It is the first Indian feature documentary to be shortlisted for an Academy Award.
10	NPO	Regulatory agreement with Dutch Government	The Dutch broadcaster NPO signed a performance agreement with the Dutch Government which includes a balanced presence of women on and off screen and which has an annual reporting obligation.

No.	Organization	Name of initiative	Initiative description
11	South China Morning Post	Women of our Time conference	The South China Morning Post's Women of our Time conference aims to deal with wider societal issues. It puts the spotlight on the myriad achievements of female trailblazers and pioneers in Asia who have been influential in tackling the many challenges posed by an ongoing pandemic and a depressed economy, against a backdrop of ever-changing global diplomacy. As efforts toward diversity and inclusion become less of a novel concept, and rather an ingrained facet of global business and politics, the conference will look beyond ideas of empowerment and equality to examine how today's women in power and tomorrow's emerging female leaders are sparking new ideas that spur generations of followers and collaborators in building a new world for a more sustainable future.
12	TIME'S UP	Campaigns	TIME'S UP Now aims to create a society free of gender-based discrimination in the workplace and beyond. Its "Say no to sexist media attacks" campaign is dedicated to media
13	UK Government	Gender Pay Gap	Focus: news organizations. Gender pay gap at UK agencies widens as industry progress stalls. New data on the gender pay gap that exists in British companies shines fresh light on the scale of gender discrimination at businesses across the country (including news).
14	UN Women	<i>The Levers of Change: Gender Equality Attitudes Study 2022</i> , UN Women	UN Women and the Unstereotype Alliance, an industry-led coalition convened by UN Women to eradicate harmful stereotypes in advertising, launched " <i>The Levers of Change: Gender Equality Attitudes Study 2022</i> , the latest iteration of a bi-annual global study that tracks attitudes towards gender. The 20-country-wide survey shows that some antiquated views of gender have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study, developed under the leadership of UN Women in partnership with Johnson & Johnson, Kantar, Procter & Gamble and Unilever, examines perceptions across a multitude of areas including leadership and political participation, education, healthcare, the workplace, media representation, marriage and family life, safety and violence, and control over personal decisions.
15	WACC (World Association of Christian Communication)	GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project)	The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), WACC's flagship activity, is the largest and longest-running research on gender in the world's news media. Every five years since 1995, GMMP research has taken the pulse of selected indicators of gender in the news media, including women's presence in relation to men, gender bias and stereotypes in news stories and other content. The sixth research in the series took place in 2020-21. The GMMP is also the largest advocacy initiative on changing the representation of women in the world's news media.
16	We Will Stop Femicide platform	We Will Stop Femicide platform	The platform strives to stop femicide and ensure women's protection from violence through branches across Turkey. It fights against all types of women's rights violations, starting with the violation of the right to life. The activity fields of the platform branches include law, the press, social media, graphic design, donations and financial support. Specific activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revealing the truth about the "doubtful death" cases treated as "suicides" and closed, by encouraging local courts and The Court of Appeals to make precedential decisions in the cases regarding women's protection, sexual assault and femicide. • Keeping records to elucidate femicide facts in Turkey, collecting data on femicide and sharing it with the public on a monthly basis.

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Figure 42: Gender news initiatives categorized in terms of where they sit in the news value chain²⁴⁶

News value chain element	No. of entries	% of all entries
External context	62	37%
Organizational resources: strategic	50	30%
Organizational resources: people	115	68%
Organizational resources: analytical	40	24%
Newsgathering	61	36%
Content and outputs	78	46%
Audiences	30	18%
Communities/networks	40	24%
Number of entries	168	100%

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Figure 43: Organizational resources (people) initiatives

Detailed initiatives	No. of entries	% of all entries
Women as leaders	49	29%
Training/development	37	22%
Safety/sexual harassment	25	15%
DEI initiatives	24	14%
Analysis of diversity stats	18	11%
Guides/resources/kits	17	10%
Mentoring/coaching	15	9%
Employee-led	7	4%
External speakers	7	4%
Leadership development initiatives	6	4%
Career management	5	3%
Voluntary in nature	5	3%
Self-reflection tools	4	2%
Fellowship	4	2%
DEI part of performance assessments	3	2%
Explicit confidence support	3	2%
Quota system	2	1%
Pay gap	1	1%
Financial incentives	1	1%
Checklist	1	1%
Number or org. resources: people entries	115	68%
Number of total entries	168	100%

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

246. Please note that the number of initiatives shown in tables total more than 168, due to some being categorized across two or more elements.

(24), guides/resource kits (17), mentoring/coaching (15), external speaker initiatives (7), career management (5), self-reflection tools (4), fellowships (4), and quota systems (2) – see Figure 43 for the full list.

The second, third and fourth most common areas of the news value chain for initiatives to cover are news content and outputs, external context, and newsgathering (see Figure 42). Initiatives that include news content and coverage elements include improving women’s representation or helping them to develop as reporters (50), improving women’s role as protagonists (42), seeking gender balance in image portrayal in the news (23) and increasing the number of women on air, including helping them become more media-ready (21). The 37% of initiatives that examine the external context encompass research, reports and story coverage (42), advocacy campaigns (17), governmental/regulatory initiatives (5), tackling social norms (5), education (5) and tech platforms (1). Initiatives that target newsgathering elements focus on improving women’s representation as experts and sources (61), including in some cases developing

databases/directories of women experts for journalists to draw upon (16).

Less than a third of the initiatives are dedicated to using strategic organizational resources to tackle gender equality in news (30%). These initiatives which contain a strategic element include public pledges and commitments to improve gender or racial equity (23), culture change (11), marketing or increased communication (11), gender goals (8), best practice case studies (7), and changes in leadership or the approach of leaders (5).

Approximately a quarter of the initiatives include an analytical element (24%), a network/community aspect (24%), or an audience engagement element (18%). The analytical elements entail counting/tracking women (30), data analysis (14), technology tools (8) and regular feedback (8) while the community-based initiatives include support networks (26), conferences/summits (14), and awards (8). 19 of the 30 audience engagement initiatives contain an audience performance measurement element.

Figure 44: Gender news initiatives categorized by key areas of focus and whether they aim to tackle representation or inclusion

Key element of the news value chain	No. of entries	% of all entries
Representation in leadership	51	30%
Representation in newsroom	44	26%
Inclusion for women in the newsroom	21	13%
Women as news sources (inc. experts)	61	36%
Women as protagonists	42	25%
Women’s audience performance	22	13%
None of these	39	23%
Number of entries	168	100%

Source: AKAS news initiatives database (2022)

Gender initiatives do not focus sufficiently on inclusion of women in the news culture

Approximately a third (30%) of all initiatives have a component which aims to improve women's representation in news leadership while a further 26% contain elements which aim to improve women's representation in newsrooms (see Figure 44). Only an eighth of all initiatives (13%) contain an explicit mention of improving women's inclusion in news culture. Separately, only 11 (7% of all initiatives) have a clearly articulated culture change element within them.

Almost 4 in 10 initiatives in news have been dedicated to improving women's visibility in news as experts. It may be working...

36% of the 168 gender initiatives in news unearthed by AKAS were dedicated to or contained a component aiming to improve the traditionally low proportion of women experts or sources in the news (see Figure 44). Of the 61 initiatives devoted specifically to improving women's presence as sources and experts, more than a quarter (16) mentioned building databases of women experts whose expertise journalists could access at short notice. This is a significant effort, which has been undertaken by news organizations and journalism non-profits around the world. In Part 2 of this report I aired a perspective from Sarah Macharia, the GMMP reports' lead writer and a leading gender and international consultant. She suggested that the unique uplift from 19% to 24% recorded in the proportion of women experts globally between 2015 and 2021 – notwithstanding its low base – may have been aided by these numerous databases.

What are the observable gaps in gender initiatives in news?

To sustain change there is a need for more news initiatives targeting change at societal level

Unless the news sector, including news organizations and the non-profit organizations dedicated to journalism, focus part of their initiatives on targeting change at a societal level and monitoring their impact, there is a risk that those initiatives that have achieved change at an organizational and individual level will struggle to sustain this change. Given that so few of the initiatives include a systemic element, this risk is substantive. To achieve change at system level, the news sector should consider sector-wide initiatives that aim to improve women and women of color's representation and inclusion in news leadership and in leadership roles in society at large (through coverage). Despite the general reported reluctance of journalists to tie themselves to targets, initiatives should have targets attached to them. News organizations should aspire to holding themselves accountable, just as journalism holds people in power accountable for their actions.

There is a real opportunity to tackle issues that are easy to monitor, such as the gender pay gap in society and in the news industry. The interviews undertaken with senior editors for this project not only highlighted how deeply relevant this issue is to news leaders and newsrooms across the global south and north, but also how straightforward it would be to monitor progress if only the industry committed to change. Instead, only one of the 168 initiatives we uncovered has been focusing on the gender pay gap. The industry can draw some inspiration from the increase in the proportion of women experts featuring in news (albeit from a low baseline) which is



potentially linked to a multi-organizational effort to raise women's visibility and profile as experts in the news.

The sector would benefit significantly from a greater number of initiatives that examine the impact of news on breaking or solidifying gender stereotypes in society. Considerable scope exists to do so in collaboration with governments, international organizations, and philanthropic organizations.

Initiatives focusing on inclusive cultures, increasing a sense of belonging

Part 1 of this report exposed the substantive problem that non-inclusive, male-dominated (white male-dominated in multi-racial societies) cultures present for recruiting and retaining diverse teams in newsrooms, and for ensuring that decision-making is driven by all leaders, rather than just a sub-set of them. For change to happen, initiatives that focus on improving the representation of women of all colors in news need to also include a component that focuses on improving the inclusivity of the news culture. The consequence of not doing so would be increased attrition within newsrooms and news leadership teams, as well as frustrated leaders whose editorial perspectives are repressed for fear of not fitting in with the dominant culture. Only when women and women of color feel a sense of belonging within the organizations where they work, will they be able to contribute their own editorial and reporting blueprint for stories that reflect the missing perspectives of different audiences in the news.

More initiatives aimed at understanding women audiences as news consumers and revenue generators

The interviews with senior news leaders from the global south and north, conducted for this report, brought to the fore the significant

appetite for understanding the added revenue that growing women audiences contributes to the bottom line of the news industry. However, our research into the existing initiatives exposed that only a handful of initiatives (13%) focus on measuring the performance of women audiences in news consumption. We can only change what we can see, and we can only see what we can tangibly measure. To grow female audiences, the sector needs to understand this group's performance, coverage needs, and the issues of relevance to it (and key subgroups within it).

In an industry notorious for its competitiveness, there is a sector-wide deficit of collaborative initiatives

Someone recently asked me whether there were any cross-sectoral initiatives that aimed to track women's representation, inclusion, and portrayal in the news - by news provider - thus holding news organizations to account. The answer to that question is "no". Moreover, our research of different initiatives has shown that only 1 in 4 of the news initiatives (24%) aims to engage journalistic communities, a peer group or indeed the industry (via awards). Given how entrenched the problem of gender inequity in news is, there is significant room for collaboration between players in the industry, including news organizations, non-profit organizations, and international organizations.

In the next part of this report, we will be examining, among other things, the business benefits of producing more women-centric content that features and targets more women.