



## INTERNEWS IN THE PHILIPPINES

**Internews** is a nonprofit that supports independent media and information actors in 100 countries — from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyper-local news outlets, to filmmakers and technologists. Internews trains journalists and digital rights activists, tackles disinformation, and offers business expertise to help media outlets thrive financially. We believe everyone deserves trustworthy news and information to make informed decisions about their lives and hold power to account.

In the **Philippines**, we work to protect and promote a healthy information ecosystem responding to challenges like journalist safety, information disorder, closing civic space, climate crisis, and public health.

We partner with the media, academia, civil society, and business to help Filipinos safely receive quality, local information that saves lives, improves livelihoods, and holds institutions accountable.

### INITIATIVE FOR MEDIA FREEDOM (IMF)

This five-year USAID-funded project supports and advances media capacity and independence to enhance democratic governance that provides economic and political inclusion and promotes social stability. Internews is implementing the Initiative for Media Freedom (IMF) in partnership with key media, civil society, private sector, and academic organizations: Asian Center for Journalism (ACFJ), EngageMedia, Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA), Lyf Solutions Inc., Makati Business Club (MBC), Mindanao State University-Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (MSU-LAHC), National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), PECOJON – The Peace and Conflict Journalism Network, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), Rappler, RIWI Corp., University of Philippines College of Mass Communication Foundation, Inc. (UPCMCFI) through the Department of Journalism, and VERA Files. The consortium of thirteen partners collectively designs and implements innovative, evidenced-based activities to support a healthy information ecosystem in the Philippines. The coalition promotes free press and journalist safety. It uses a diverse toolbox of activities to tackle disinformation, both from the supply side – by tracking malign actors and influence operations and supporting fact-checkers and investigative journalism – and the demand side, by promoting media literacy and critical thinking. The program also supports media self-regulation to consolidate trust in independent journalism and promote ethical standards. This project prioritizes making sustainable changes by empowering Philippine organizations and individuals including the marginalized and youth to seek, receive, and impart quality information and ideas.

- **Almost 6,000** citizens participated in freedom of expression, freedom of information, and digital rights activities.
- **8,300** Facebook likes and followers of [#BarangayHub](#) online community.
- **18** mentors trained to support peers on physical safety, digital security, and overall well-being.
- **291** journalists trained on physical, digital, legal, and psychosocial safety.
- **13** monthly briefs disseminated on **8,105** disinformation pieces reported to [TotooBa.info](#) from December 2021 to December 2022.
- **5,300** individuals trained on media literacy and fact-checking.
- **19,000** Filipinos surveyed on media consumption, habits, and perceptions.
- **7** community media outlets trained on social media use to improve reach and engagement.
- **19** story grant fellows produced **182** election stories.
- **1** media-citizen council formed to increase the level of trust between the community and the media at the local level.
- **7,400,000** Filipinos reached by and **680,000** people engaged in social media posts on critical thinking and responsible social media use.
- Research, development, and release of six major publications, downloaded over **4,600** times in total: [Information Dystopia and Philippine Democracy](#), [Patient Zero: A study on the Philippine Information Ecosystem](#), [Journalist Safety Guide](#), [Ethical Journalism Guide](#), and [Digital Rights Reports](#).
- **PHP6M** (~USD100K) worth of new programmatic/direct advertising spend committed by three companies on media listed in the Internews' Trustworthy News Site Index in the Philippines to improve access to information and prevent advertising budgets from inadvertently fueling disinformation.



**1,154 journalists and media workers trained**  
**540 news organizations and media CSOs assisted**  
**as of December 2022**

## PHILIPPINE FACT-CHECKER INCUBATOR (PFCI)

Internews, with support from Facebook, implemented PFCI in 2021-2022 to incubate new fact-checking organizations ahead of the 2022 Philippine general elections. Selected organizations received a comprehensive support package including training, technical and financial support, mentorship, and guidance following global fact-checking organization standards like those of the [International Fact-Checking Network \(IFCN\) Code of Principles](#). This assistance package was provided to selected organizations by Internews in partnership with VERA Files and Rappler. PFCI also established a coordination mechanism to enable fact-checking organizations to collaborate.

- *Five news organizations received intensive fact-check training and mentorship to create fact-checking units.*
- *Five news organizations supported to apply as a verified signatory of the International Fact-Checking Network Code of Principles, with [MindaNews](#) and [PressOne.PH](#) being accepted as a signatory in March 2023.*
- *374 fact-checking pieces produced from October 2021 to September 2022.*

## SIX-TRACK ENGAGEMENT AGAINST DISINFORMATION INITIATIVE (STEAD-i)

The Six-Track Engagement Against Disinformation Initiative (STEAD-i) aims to mobilize a diverse coalition of Filipino stakeholders, including civil society organizations, media, and academics, to identify solutions to the disinformation phenomenon and conduct strategic interventions to effectively respond to the information disorder issue. The six core activity clusters include the development of disinformation inoculation videos, [Media Civics Lab: Fact-Checking Academy for Influencers](#) in partnership with Break the Fake Movement, [ThinkTalk Series](#) in partnership with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP), [Catch Me if You Can Season 2](#) in partnership with PumaPodcast, and two research initiatives: a study on disinformation trends and influence operations in the Philippines led by Dr. Jonathan Corpus Ong and Dr. Nicole Curato, and a study on social media influencers and the political economy of manipulation in the Philippines led by Fatima Gaw in partnership with AI4Gov.

## MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE ON DISINFORMATION (MDED)

In 2021, the MDED project set the ground for collaborative work to strengthen the information environment and mitigate the impact of disinformation on the May 2022 elections. Internews worked with two Filipino researchers Dr. Jonathan Corpus Ong (University of Massachusetts, USA) and Dr. Nicole Curato (University of Canberra, Australia) to conduct innovative and action-oriented research methods and network-building activities including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and a deliberative forum.

- *[Multistakeholder Dialogue on Electoral Disinformation Report](#) published in December 2021.*
- *72 representatives from civil society, media, government, public relations, and the academe engaged in a series of key informant interviews, focused group discussions, and a deliberative forum.*
- *Strategic tracks and recommendations from the report set the ground for Internews' new project—the Six-Track Engagement Against Disinformation Initiative.*

## UNDERSTUDIED DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN THE PHILIPPINES (UDPP)

In 2021, the UDPP project sought to understand the role of lesser-known digital platforms, such as TikTok and WeChat, in the Philippine information environment, and drew out strategies to mitigate disinformation in these platforms. Internews worked with three Filipino researchers Jose Mari Hall Lanuza, Rossine Fallorina, and Samuel Cabbuag to conduct an Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) to get a deeper understanding of why and how these platforms are used, whether they are being used to spread disinformation and identify their impact and contribution to the information environment. The IEA framework seeks to capture all dimensions of the relationship between information supply and information demand. The IEA process includes key informant interviews, focused group discussions, and digital ethnography.

*The pioneering [Understudied Digital Platforms in the Philippines Report](#) published in December 2021 provided an in-depth dive into these platforms, examining their affordances, information flows, user demographics, and disinformative potential. The report informed the flourishing of a meaningful dialogue and coordination on disinformation issues between Internews and TikTok in the Philippines.*



## ROOTED IN TRUST (RiT)

In 2020, USAID-funded RiT program raised to the challenge in countering the rampant spread of misinformation about COVID-19 and its consequences, particularly where reliable sources of information were scarce such as in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). In addition to tracking 200+ rumors, Internews supported the creation of information-exchange loops, encouraging better collaboration between public health agencies, humanitarian organizations, local media, and community leaders on live-saving health information. Internews also partnered with the Coalition for Moro Youth Movement to empower 100+ local youth ambassadors to lead initiatives against COVID-19 misinformation in their communities.

## RiT IMPACT

- Reached **~800,000** people through social media engagements, and almost **700** people through community listening and learning sessions.
- More than **100** stories were produced which are composed of social media content from our field implementing partners, radio segments, and features from media outlets in the region highlighting the rumors surrounding COVID-19.
- **494** rumors collected both online and offline, and seven rumor bulletins published in **three local languages (Tagalog, Maranao, and Maguindanaoan)** and shared through various platforms catering to the needs of the communities, media organizations, and humanitarian agencies.
- An information ecosystem assessment report entitled *Disconnected*, which highlights the many disconnects in the information ecosystem in the Bangsamoro region, was published and shared with key actors in the humanitarian and media sectors.



## EARTH JOURNALISM NETWORK (EJN)

EJN works to strengthen the quality and increase the quantity of environmental reporting worldwide. In the Philippines, EJN launched the Philippine Network of Environmental Journalists (PNEJ) in 2010 to strengthen the capacity of journalists and media organizations on environmental reporting. EJN builds the knowledge and skills of journalists to provide factual and engaging environmental information to policy makers and amplify the voices of the most vulnerable communities by providing training and workshops, story grants for journalists, year-long media grants for news and media organizations, webinar, podcasts and resources for reporting and fellowships to report from local and global conferences. In 2019, EJN helped establish the conservation news and information website, Mongabay Environews Philippines. The first-ever Certificate Course on Climate Change Reporting in the Philippines was launched in 2021 with the Asian Center for Journalism-Ateneo De Manila University. EJN launched in 2022 the pilot Master Class on Water and Climate Change Reporting with Climate Tracker Philippines. In 2023, EJN supports PumaPodcast in producing a series of podcasts exploring environmental health issues, and the collaboration of Lyf Solutions Inc. and the PNEJ. in strengthening local and national reporting on pressing environmental issues in the country. In 2023, EJN introduced the [Environmental Data Journalism Academy](#) which aims to develop data journalism skills and support data-driven investigations for environmental journalists in the Philippines.



## EJN IMPACT

- Provided training and capacity building activities for over **1,000** national and local journalists on environmental reporting and the use of innovative reporting tools like data journalism, fact-checking, geojournalism, mapping, among others.
- Produced **hundreds** of news and feature stories and investigative reports with national and community journalists and media organizations. Mongabay Environews Philippines alone has published over **200** stories since 2019.
- Assisted more than **300** journalists, through small grants, to produce local environment-related stories.
- Produced and distributed journalists' reporting resources such as **Tipsheets on Climate Change Reporting**, the **SMS Mobile Reporting Manual for Philippine Journalists**; the **Championing Climate Change Adaptation Resource Book**; **Reporting Environmental Issues through Gender Lens**; a **Training Module on Gender Sensitivity and Safety** focusing on the environment; and the **Klima 101: A Climate Change Guidebook for Philippine Journalists**.

## GREATER INTERNET FREEDOM (GIF)

The GIF project uses a two-pronged approach to advance digital rights and help realize other fundamental freedoms: Enhance digital safety for civil society and media and increase citizen engagement in internet governance. With the support of USAID, GIF works with EngageMedia in the Philippines to improve organizational security, technical support, and incident response, while training experts. Leveraging Internews IMF networks, Internews raises awareness of the public on digital rights and cyber laws that could undermine them.

## HEALTH JOURNALISM NETWORK (HJN)

In the wake of COVID-19, Internews established the HJN to empower journalists everywhere to report on a range of health issues including emerging pathogen threats. This network provides an opportunity to collaborate, including rapidly mobilizing shared vital health information during an emergency, accessing resources, and finding opportunities on health reporting. HJN recently launched Let's Talk COVID-19 and Vaccine courses as well as Vaccine Story Production. With an in-house health reporting expert for Asia, Internews plans to expand support on health journalism in the Philippines as well.

## 2021 INTERNEWS FELLOWS PROGRAM

In alignment with Internews' foundational approach to partner with and support local communities, Internews had in 2021 a year-long fellowship program with 11 organizations representing the best in their communities. One of them was the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, an independent nonprofit media agency that specializes in investigative reporting from the Philippines. Fellow recipients received technical assistance beyond what is afforded through a typical grant project that will enhance their organizations' exposure, competitiveness, and sustainability, as well as support to collaborate with Internews in joint initiatives and events.

