Information MATTERS

2024 INTERNEWS IMPACT UPDATE

Internews

Access to trusted information is *essential* for survival, progress, and *peace*.

CRISES, *Resilience,* *and a* PATH FORWARD

Dear reader,

As our 1,100+ global community of Internewsers reflects on a year of profound challenges and transformative achievements, one truth remains constant: **access to trusted and trustworthy information is essential for survival, progress, and peace**.

Across the globe, from Ukraine and the Philippines to Gaza and the Congo, people face rising authoritarianism, economic instability, climate disasters, and humanitarian crises — all deeply linked to the world's information systems. We work on the frontlines of these struggles, directly experiencing the victories and the setbacks.

However, the work we do can look very different depending on the context around it. To convey its breadth, we have divided this Impact Update into three sections — each covering a vital aspect of our mission.
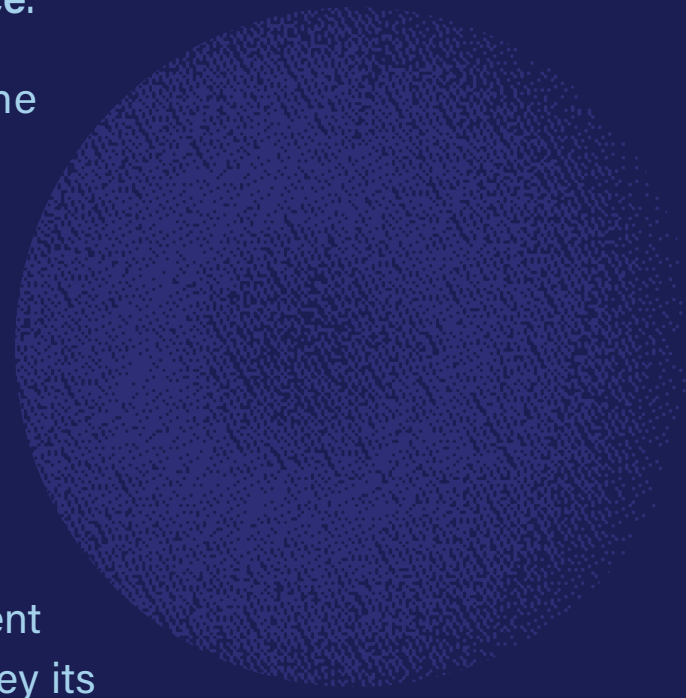
01 The first portion of the report focuses on the most urgent initiatives we run: those in the midst of crises, war, mass displacement, and violence. Our brave colleagues and partners are often the first line of defense for reporters on the ground, protecting communities' access to good-quality information even as infrastructures collapse and lives are lost. Our gratitude for their commitment to our vision and ideals is immense.

02 The second portion introduces a core tenet of our work — building healthy and resilient information ecosystems — and illustrates creative, often unexpected ways in which we do it. From Bolivia to the United States, we run programs that intervene on an information ecosystem holistically or bolster a specific element. Our four decades of expertise in this work allow us to tailor interventions to be as effective as possible.

03 The third and final section of the report delves into how we think about the future — the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging dynamics in the world of information. From evolving media business models to the disruptions brought by generative AI, we are leading the thinking on how to maximize the promise and minimize the peril of new technologies and trends.

Our 2024 Impact Update underscores the urgency of this work — saving lives, preserving democratic values, and fostering dialogue in a starkly divided world. We hope that you will see yourself in this mission — both because, wherever you are, you play a role in the health of your information ecosystem and because, as an Internews supporter, you are directly making a difference in everyone else's.

Thank you for standing with us in realizing the vision of a world where everyone, everywhere, has the information they need to make informed choices and build a safe, just tomorrow.

Jeanne Bourgault
President and CEO, Internews

Meera Selva
CEO, Internews Europe

How do we *respond* to the world's *toughest* CRISES?

In conflict zones and humanitarian disasters, reliable information is more than a luxury — it's a lifeline. As bombs fall and borders shift, journalists risk everything to bring truth to light, often becoming targets themselves.

In these moments of crisis, Internews stands with brave, independent information providers and the communities they serve. Whether it's rushing flak jackets to reporters in Ukraine or delivering life-saving news to refugees from Sudan, we respond swiftly, ensuring that independent media doesn't fall silent and that the most impacted people have a voice.

We will continue to ensure the voices of independent media are not silenced.

HOLDING THE LINE:
The Fight to Defend *Media* in Ukraine

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukrainian media have been fighting to keep people informed and resilient. Across the country — on the frontlines of the war as in the areas farther from battle — our Media Program in Ukraine, supported by USAID, has become an indispensable source of support for local journalists and citizens alike. We are there to keep the flow of reliable, life-saving information alive amidst the chaos of war, providing crucial support to the media and empowering citizens to navigate their new dangerous reality.

STANDING STRONG IN THE FACE OF WAR

One of the most significant accomplishments of our staff and partners on the ground has been the comprehensive support for 536 media outlets, both regional and national, to ensure they can continue to provide vital reporting despite the relentless challenges. Many of these media outlets are the heart of local communities, providing critical updates on missile and drone attacks, humanitarian aid services, and how to most safely carry on with work and school. Some of these outlets operate under the strain of temporary occupation — their resilience a testament to the program's impact.

We have also provided a lifeline for 449 journalists through individual stipends, 92 media outlets have received grants to keep going during the economic crisis the war has created, and over 5,000 journalists have received training and skills to provide a better service to their communities. In a war where reliable information can mean the difference between life and death, the program's reach has been truly staggering: content produced with Internews' support has garnered a total of 293.8 million views across various platforms.

PROTECTING REPORTERS

Journalists have become targets in this war — but they're not standing alone. Through our Media Program, we provided funds for psychological support for 372 journalists, helping them cope with the mental and emotional toll of reporting in an active warzone. In addition, we helped relocate 205 journalists and extended legal assistance to 1,829 others to monitor violations of their rights.

Equipment support has also been essential. To date, the program has delivered 222 medical kits, 520 pieces of personal protective equipment, and hundreds of pieces of electronic equipment — from generators to laptops and power banks — to help media organizations continue their work during outages caused by Russian missile attacks. This need remains urgent, as after a grueling 2 ½ years of the full-scale war, this equipment needs updating or replacement. These interventions ensure that local journalists have the tools they need to stay safe while keeping the public informed.

A NATIONAL EFFORT WITH GLOBAL REACH

Our program has strengthened Ukrainian media to better hold power to account. Investigative journalism supported by this work has uncovered instances of corruption, leading to the resignation or dismissal of officials, and gathered evidence of Russian war crimes for human rights organizations and law enforcement agencies, shining a light on underreported atrocities committed by the Russian army.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The ultimate goal of our Media Program in Ukraine is not just to ensure the survival of the country's media environment, but to help it thrive in the face of unimaginable hardship. This means pushing forward critical reforms, such as the newly adopted Law on Media and Law on Advertising, and to strengthen Ukraine's democracy and support its integration into the European Union.

More than two years of unrelenting full-scale war have wreaked unspeakable damage on Ukraine and Ukrainians — but the country continues to fight for its future. Our Ukrainian staff and partners — and our global Internews community — remain steadfast in our commitment to Ukraine's freedom. We will continue to work to ensure that the voices of independent media are not silenced, and that citizens receive the vital information they need to survive — until the days in which a free media sector will be a cornerstone of the nation's post-war recovery.

Safety and SURVIVAL *in Sudan's* HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Since the start of the civil war in Sudan, millions of people have been displaced by relentless waves of conflict, food insecurity, and disease. Amid the violence, while the fighting continues to separate families and make the delivery of aid challenging, access to reliable information can be the difference between life and death. In this chaotic environment, we strive to preserve people's access to information they can trust.

Launched in July 2024, our *Kade Nafham* platform — Arabic for "Let's Understand" — serves as a beacon in the dark landscape of misinformation and confusion that clouds the world's largest humanitarian crisis. *Kade Nafham* is one of several projects Internews runs in Sudan to support humanitarian communication, media, and other information providers in response to the war.

The country's information ecosystem is fragile, plagued by rumors, misinformation, and disrupted networks. People are often left to rely on unverified social media posts and hearsay for critical updates, and misinformation spreads rapidly, undermining the efforts of humanitarian organizations on the ground. In this challenging environment, *Kade Nafham* offers up-to-date, reliable information on the most pressing issues affecting people's lives including health risks, access to essential aid services, compiling legal documentation for mobility, nutrition, and much more.

Through their website and social media channels like Facebook, X, and WhatsApp — and partnering with already popular social media groups that reach hundreds of thousands of people — *Kade Nafham* provides answers.

One example came from a woman in Omdurman, asking for mental health support. In response, *Kade Nafham* published guidance on supporting children's mental health and an illustrated map of mental health services in the region. For individuals whose lives and livelihoods have been completely upended by the crisis, a service like this is a real lifeline: it connects people with the resources they need when they need them most, helps humanitarian agencies improve how they

EPA Images

"Internews' Social Media Listening initiative has acted as a conduit, providing a real-time pulse of on-the-ground situations, public sentiment, and community perceptions. This invaluable feedback has augmented our accountability, ensuring our strategies and actions align with communities' expectations."

— National Shelter Coordinator

deliver their services, and — most importantly — it improves the overall flow of information, creating a healthier information ecosystem for everyone involved.

Kade Nafham is a project led by Internews and the Norwegian Refugee Council, part of the global Signpost network and supported by the International Rescue Committee.

Our work in Sudan is not just about making accurate information available to people — it provides a platform for two-way communication between actors who can improve the conditions on the ground and the people they serve. We actively engage with communities, gathering their feedback and questions, which we publish in regular humanitarian flash updates. These timely digests map the population's rising concerns and help ensure that humanitarian organizations can respond to the most urgent needs. For instance, when misinformation spread about Sudanese asylum seekers being required to remove their hijabs for refugee ID photos in Uganda, we escalated the issue to the UN, who quickly clarified the situation and corrected the false information.

Our social media listening initiatives collect and analyze hundreds of social media posts across Sudan every month, highlighting the key concerns of displaced communities. Internews' in-country partner, Y-Peer, strengthens this work by gathering insights directly from communities on the ground through discussions in hard-to-reach areas.

In-person listening groups offer another layer of insight, helping to bridge the gap between humanitarian organizations and the people they aim to serve and ensuring those who cannot connect to digital platforms have the chance to ask questions, raise concerns and access the information they need. Feedback from these sessions helps ensure humanitarian interventions are informed by the lived realities of the communities they support. This work provides humanitarian actors with a clear understanding of what information people urgently need — whether it's guidance on where to find safe shelter, how to reunite with missing family members, or where to access clean water and medical care.

While the situation in Sudan remains extremely difficult, our work through *Kade Nafham*, community listening, and other initiatives is helping ensure that even in the most remote and hard-hit areas of Sudan, people can make informed decisions about their lives.

Safety and SURVIVAL *in Sudan's* **HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

The INTERNEWS
EMERGENCY FUND

Over the past 40+ years, we have worked in more than 100 countries — often in the world's most dangerous regions. Still today, we continue to support people to safely access and share life-saving information in extremely challenging environments — under Taliban rule in Afghanistan or on the frontlines of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This information goes beyond 'the news' — it's actionable information that is indispensable to people's survival.

In times of crisis, independent media often becomes the first target. Broadcast towers are destroyed and journalists are harassed or killed. This is why people need multiple safe channels to access and share information, and why media outlets need fast, flexible funding to stay safe and keep their work going when it matters most.

Recognizing this need, in 2022 we launched the Internews Emergency Fund, an initiative designed to support staff, journalists, and news outlets under immediate threat and to provide Internews with flexible funds to help communities and other trusted information providers. Unlike traditional grants, which often come with restrictions or long application processes, the Emergency Fund is designed to be quick and adaptable. It provides critical support in moments of danger — whether that means getting protective gear to reporters on the frontlines, providing emergency stipends, helping relocate individuals at risk, or covering operational costs that enable us to work in the places that need information most.

Since its inception, the Emergency Fund has already made an impact. Since the Taliban retook control in Afghanistan, we continue to deploy resources from the Fund to evacuate journalists, provide stipends, and cover essential living expenses. In the Donbass, we have been able to procure flak jackets for Ukrainian journalists. In Sudan, at the outset of the conflict, an initial investment of $25k allowed us to quickly establish a presence in the most vulnerable communities in the country and in neighboring South Sudan, ensuring that displaced people could access vital information to make decisions to protect themselves and their families; that initial sum led to the securing of more than $2.9 million in government, UN, and bilateral funding from other NGOs to continue our work — a testament to how small donations can often pay themselves over exponentially.
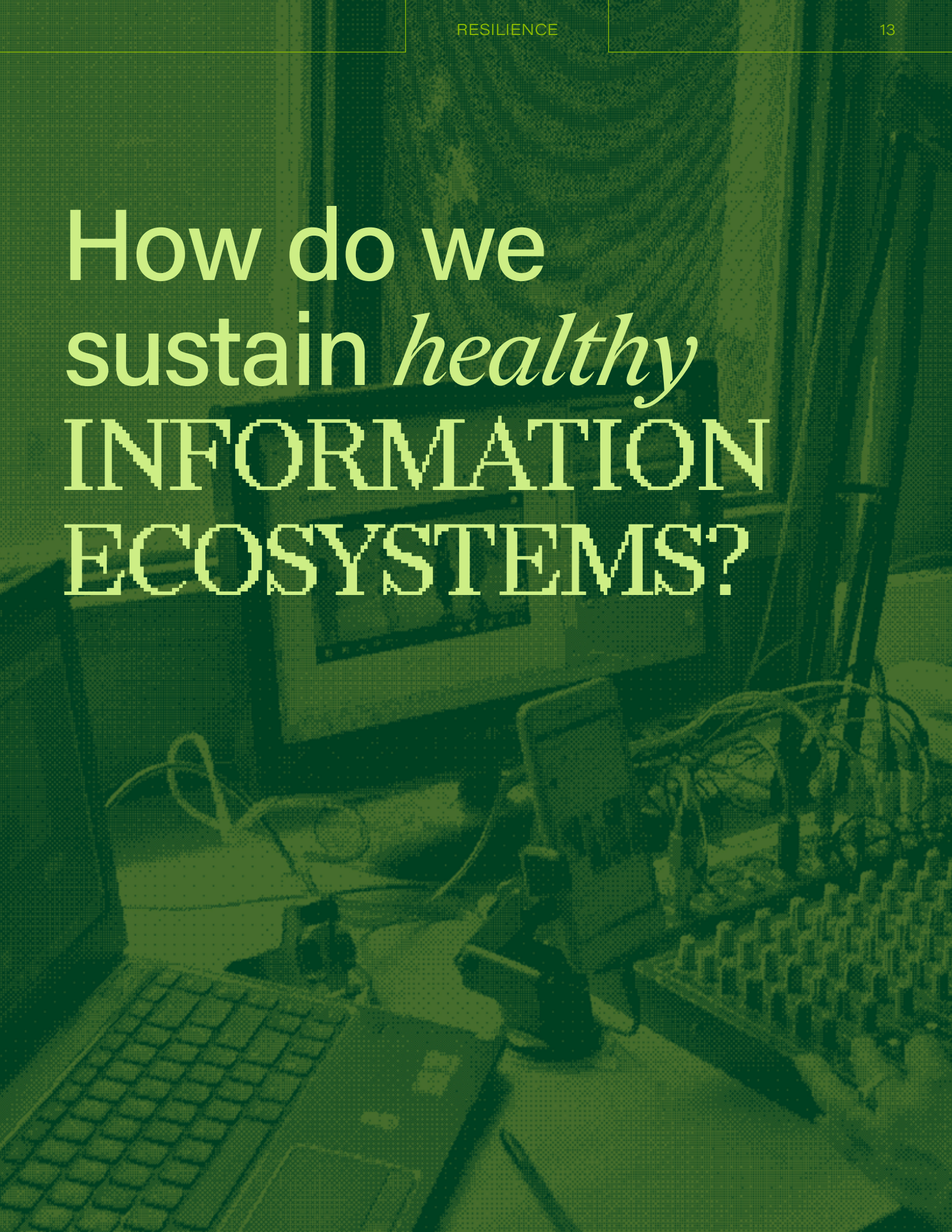
In keeping with the principle of using the Fund where the need is most urgent, as soon as the conflict ends, we have set our sights on helping rebuild a media sector devastated by the war in Gaza and Lebanon.

To contribute to the Emergency Fund, please scan the QR code or visit internews.org/donate.

Internews' equipment was **THE FIRST THAT CROSSED THE UKRAINIAN BORDER** and arrived in occupied Kherson.

— Oksana Romaniuk
Director of the Institute of Mass Information, Ukraine

How do we sustain *healthy* INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS?

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:
Internews' 2024–2026 Strategy

Scan to read
or visit inter.news.org/fyi

This year, Internews published a new strategy, called *For Your Information*. Within it, we redefined the core of our work as being about **building healthy information ecosystems**.

The term might sound complex or technical, but it affects each of us in profound ways. We experience a world where access to reliable information can vary greatly — and so, understanding how information flows within communities is essential. But what does it take to create an ecosystem that supports informed, connected, and resilient communities?

This section of our Impact Update presents some examples of this work.

The **SEVEN ELEMENTS** *of a* Healthy Information Ecosystem

Informed & ENGAGED CITIZENS

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

SAFETY FOR ALL Who Produce & Engage With Information

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

Diagram labels:
SAFETY FOR ALL · ENGAGED CITIZENS · OPEN ACCESS · ELEMENTS OF A **HEALTHY INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM** · DIVERSITY OF PRODUCERS · VIABLE BUSINESS MODELS · ACCURATE INFORMATION · RIGHTS-AFFIRMING LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

Open, Affordable ACCESS

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

VIABLE BUSINESS MODELS

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

DIVERSITY & PLURALITY of Information Producers

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

RIGHTS-AFFIRMING Legal & Regulatory Environment

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

ACCURATE & Locally Relevant News and Information

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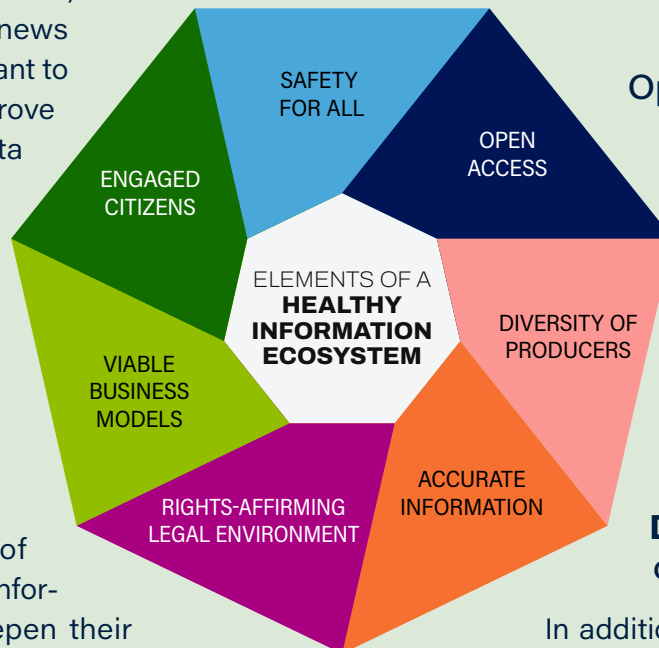
The Case of the PHILIPPINES

In today's Philippines, where information ecosystems face relentless pressures, safeguarding free and independent journalism — as well as the public's ability to access quality information — has never been more critical.

Our *Initiative for Media Freedom (IMF)*, funded by USAID, stands at the forefront of this challenge with an urgent, all-encompassing approach. Working in a consortium of 21 partners, IMF promotes a resilient, inclusive information ecosystem that empowers journalists, improves public access to information, and enhances democratic governance.

A critical piece of IMF's work is training for Filipino reporters. To date, 2,036 journalists and media workers have undergone IMF-supported training in critical aspects of the profession — including hundreds who went through modules on physical, digital, and psychosocial safety, gaining the tools to protect themselves while reporting on the ground and online. Capacity building initiatives like these can be lifesaving. Teresa, a journalist from news portal *New Tide Media* who was arrested while covering a land protest, cited these drills as essential: "The safety training drills prepared me to act quickly in the moment, and to instinctively know to drop to the ground and cover my head." She noted that our psychosocial safety training helped her manage the stress she experienced in jail — a powerful testimony of how IMF's support improves journalists' resilience in the toughest circumstances.

IMF also helps citizens and local groups improve their ability to advocate for information access, press freedom, and digital rights. In Liloy, a town on the island of Mindanao, the city council approved a new local ordinance on freedom of information in record time, thanks to advocacy by civil society groups involved in IMF workshops. This landmark ordinance institutionalizes transparency in local government transactions and allows residents to demand accountability in public service.

Information integrity is at the core of some of IMF's most effective initiatives. IMF addresses this issue both on the supply side, by tracking malicious actors and supporting fact-checking, and the demand side, by promoting media literacy. Through, *Digital Insights and Literacy*, a monitoring mechanism and database on information integrity, IMF has tracked and addressed over 23,442 suspicious online posts, while over 5,300 citizens received

extensive media literacy and fact-checking training. An additional 11.4 million Filipinos have been reached and almost 900,000 engaged through IMF's media literacy campaigns on social media, which promote critical thinking and responsible social media use — a vital defense against the manipulation of public opinion. IMF has also partnered with local organizations to investigate and expose coordinated influence operations that spread harmful narratives, often to manipulate public opinion — as evidenced in our new report Nexus of Manipulation.

As this 5-year initiative wraps up at the end of 2024, over 1,010 news organizations and media-focused CSOs have received IMF assistance and hundreds of stories have been produced by IMF-supported journalists. The holistic approach of IMF shows how supporting a healthy information ecosystem goes beyond defending reporters; it's about empowering each actor within the ecosystem with the tools to protect and improve it.

IMF *in numbers*

2,036	journalists and media workers trained
1,010	news organizations and media CSOs assisted
9,100	citizens participated in freedom of expression, freedom of information, and digital rights activities
5,300+	people trained on media literacy and fact-checking
23,442	posts of suspected disinformation and influence operations reported
11.4 million	people reached and almost 900,000 engaged with social media campaigns

The Case of PERU *and* BOLIVIA

Peru and Bolivia present complex information landscapes, where traditional communication practices coexist with Western ones, and misinformation threatens Indigenous groups. Our work in these countries puts them at the forefront of our programs and initiatives.

EPA-EFE/Paolo Aguilar

Working closely with **over 40 Indigenous communities, 75 media outlets, and 41 local organizations**, we bring vital, culturally relevant information to traditionally underrepresented groups.

Thanks to unmatched depth of access and expertise, Internews is paving the way for a more inclusive and resilient information ecosystem in Peru and Bolivia, where Indigenous perspectives are integral to the shared narrative.

THE STARTING POINT: INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM FRAMEWORKS

Our method begins with listening. We use Information Ecosystem Frameworks — a strategy to determine how to include the most relevant actors in project implementation. We analyze information supply and demand, identifying needs within Indigenous and rural communities, often isolated by language, geography, and infrastructure. Through co-designed projects and linguistically adapted content, we bridge the gap between Indigenous cultural practices and contemporary communication tools, ensuring that information is both accessible and relevant.

MITIGATING MISINFORMATION AND HATE SPEECH

As misinformation threatens them directly, we equip Indigenous and rural communities to produce verified and relevant news. By establishing networks between local media outlets, fact-checkers, local organizations, and influencers, we help create an ecosystem of trust and collaboration. We also train community members to recognize and counter misinformation, both online and in physical spaces.

FILLING INFORMATION DESERTS

For Indigenous communities lacking internet access or reliable media, we support alternative communication methods. By collaborating with local partners, we establish communications channels that enable accurate information to reach even the most remote communities.

ONE HEALTH: A HOLISTIC LENS ON HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Our work embraces the One Health approach — the idea that the well-being of humans is inextricably linked to the health of wildlife and the environment. We offer training, co-designed with our Health Journalism Network, to journalists who report on crises that disproportionately impact Indigenous populations, bringing global health expertise to local contexts.

BUILDING SECURITY AND DIGITAL RESILIENCE

In regions where journalists and communicators face digital and physical threats, we work to identify the source of these threats, minimize risks for information producers, and set up routine check-in channels to verify their safety. We also offer resources for digital security through tools such as LevelUp! and SaferJourno. These initiatives ensure that voices critical to public accountability and truth-telling are protected.

The Case of **PERU** *and* **BOLIVIA**

The Case of the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC *of the* CONGO

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), ongoing insurgencies undermine political stability, while corruption and slow infrastructure hinder economic prosperity. As internet access is limited and many rural areas lack reliable electricity, radio remains the primary and most trusted medium for millions of people to stay informed about the challenges affecting their community.

Recognizing the unique role of this particular medium in the DRC's information ecosystem, Internews is supporting Congolese radio stations with vital resources and training through the Media Sector Development Activity (MSDA), an ongoing USAID-funded initiative that has been improving the entire media sector in the DRC since 2019.

Several challenges affect the radio sector in the DRC. Politicians and their proxies own most commercial media outlets, raising concerns about their independence. Community radios, which often rely on fragile business models, struggle to compete for listenership.

But even prior to editorial and financial concerns, a basic, crippling problem facing radio stations in the DRC is access to electricity. Today, many broadcasters operate on minimal budgets and are powered by costly and unreliable fuel generators. To address these issues, we have provided solar power kits to several local stations, reducing their dependence on expensive fuel sources and allowing them to extend broadcast hours — and continue working even during frequent power outages.

Thanks to solar energy, Radio Mwana in the western Équateur province has grown its audience engagement by roughly 20% because of increased broadcast hours and more regular programming. Radio Télé Uélé in the remote Bas-Uélé province has saved an estimated $5,230 annually on fuel costs alone. Reductions in expenses allow stations to allocate more of their limited resources to improving content and expanding their reach, ultimately providing more consistent service to their communities.

Powering the stations isn't the only challenge — strong infrastructure is important too. A damaged transmitter somewhere means that entire towns can be suddenly deprived of quality information. That's why, through MSDA, we are providing stations with transmitter upgrades. Thanks to the equipment we procured, Radio Bandundu FM in Kwilu province has improved its broadcast area to reach a 50-km radius — growing its estimated audience from approximately 650,000 to 1 million people.

In addition to filling these gaps in logistics, we are building the capacity of radio staff through comprehensive training in content creation, fact-checking, business management, broadcast techniques, and much more. These sessions cover everything from ethics and investigative reporting to financial sustainability.

Axel Fassio/CIFOR-ICRAF

civic projects, while citizens are empowered to voice their concerns and keep authorities accountable for making progress on issues they care about. In Boya, in the province of Kasaï Oriental, Canal Mont Sion launched a broadcast campaign urging the community to help repair the deteriorating main road — and in turn, improve food supply chains. Citizens answered the call en masse, preventing disruptions to people's ability to put a meal on the table.

The work we do to support these radio stations is a key component of a broader effort to foster a resilient information ecosystem in the DRC. Each station is a small success story, improving lives in a discrete town or region. Together, these local changes contribute to building a nationwide web of informed citizens who are better equipped to participate in public discourse, hold local leaders accountable, and engage with the democratic process.

The trainings have practical results. On the content side, they are equipping local journalists to report on critical local issues that may otherwise go unheard. For example, Radio Bandundu FM has been able to produce content about measles outbreaks that led to discussions between formerly estranged communities. On the financial side, MSDA's training and coaching have led to new advertising opportunities, urging local businesses to establish relationships with the broadcasters, and paved the path for exploring alternative revenue streams. Radio le Messager du Peuple (Uvira, South Kivu) and Radio Bondeko (Isangi, Tshopo) launched a recharge service for smartphones, while Radio Rwanzururu (Beni, North Kivu) started a cyber café and Radio Lobiko (Mbandaka, Équateur) launched a restaurant; these "side gigs" are helping generate more income that the radio stations can re-invest in producing better reporting.

Another important component of MSDA is exploring how radio can be used for improved civic participation. Local authorities are encouraged to share information about opportunities to get involved in

MSDA *in numbers*

77	community radio stations involved
670	media outlets supported
3,346	journalists trained
2,133	high-quality radio programs produced on local governance, health, and more
23.1 million	listeners above the age of 15 reached by Vox Congo, a media literacy radio program, via 44 partner community radios
74%	of female and young respondents in DRC reported feeling that MSDA partner community radios helped include their voices and their needs in the public debate compared to 48% at baseline in 2020

The Case of the **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** *of the* **CONGO**

How do we *future-proof* the WORLD OF INFORMATION?

Perhaps like never before in history, information ecosystems around the world are experiencing extremely rapid disruptions — some brought about by sudden technological advances, others generated by authoritarian crackdowns and new economic forces.

Internews is at the cutting edge of finding solutions — and preparing independent media for the crises and opportunities of tomorrow.

Through innovative tools to improve media financial sustainability and forward-looking initiatives in AI ethics and literacy, we empower newsrooms to withstand existential threats and build the resilient, informed societies of the future.

As local news faces *EXTINCTION,* the **MEDIA VIABILITY ACCELERATOR** *offers a BREAKTHROUGH*

THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE HAS TRANSFORMED RADICALLY IN RECENT DECADES.

Traditional business models, which once sustained local journalism, are crumbling. Digital platforms now capture the lion's share of advertising and subscription revenue, leaving independent media outlets starved of funds. Simultaneously, shrinking democratic spaces and rising authoritarianism, legal harassment, and disinformation campaigns have intensified, making it even harder for media organizations to operate freely.

REVERSING THE MEDIA EXTINCTION EVENT IS URGENT.

Hundreds of outlets have already disappeared, and without reliable sources of funding, many more are at risk of collapsing. This is not just an economic failure, but a political one — a blow to democracy and civic health everywhere.

At Internews, we are developing solutions to this existential challenge. Joining forces with Microsoft's Democracy Forward initiative, which provided invaluable technical expertise, and USAID, which financially supported the project, we have developed the Media Viability Accelerator (MVA) — a new digital platform designed to boost the financial sustainability of independent media worldwide.

In a nutshell, the MVA provides under-resourced news organizations around the world with the type of business intelligence at the depth and scale normally only available to larger, global media players.

THE PLATFORM IS BUILT AROUND TWO CORE OFFERINGS:

01   **MVA INSIGHTS**:
This feature allows media organizations to track their performance and anonymously compare it with similar outlets around the world. By benchmarking key data like content output, audience engagement, and revenue trends, media professionals can better understand what works and where they need to improve. With real-time insights, outlets can make informed decisions to grow their audience and seek more sustainable revenue streams.

02   **MVA SOLUTIONS**:
The MVA also functions as a marketplace, connecting media outlets with solutions specifically tailored to their business challenges. Whether it's tools for improving digital subscriptions, advertising strategies, or audience analytics, any user can leverage the platform to offer and receive a wide array of services to meet diverse needs. Media organizations can select the solutions that work best for their market and implement strategies proven to enhance financial sustainability.

At its core, the Media Viability Accelerator is a new critical infrastructure towards a brighter financial future for local media. By providing actionable data and connecting them with resources, the MVA helps independent outlets adapt to the new realities of the media market.

The platform's potential reach is vast. More than 260 news organizations participated in the pilot phase of the project, with almost 50% crediting the initiative for new opportunities to advance their financial viability. Over the next two years, the MVA aims to involve 2,000 media outlets worldwide, providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to sustain their operations. In turn, these efforts will benefit vast communities of citizens everywhere, ensuring that reliable, fact-based information continues to reach them.

Beyond being a platform, the MVA is a global movement to protect and sustain the free press.

In September 2024, the MVA opened its doors for any media outlet to apply to get on the platform, and Internews is calling on technology providers, advertisers, and investors to join this effort. By partnering with the MVA, stakeholders can play a vital role in saving independent journalism and, by extension, the democracies that rely on it.

If you're part of an independent media organization or a potential partner, please scan the QR code or visit mva.net to learn about ways to get involved.

The **MEDIA VIABILITY ACCELERATOR** *offers a BREAKTHROUGH*

AI: *Realizing the* **PROMISE,** *countering the PERIL*

Over the last few years, as AI tools have become much more widespread, the debate on their impact has broken the confines of academia to enter many different fields of human activity. The media sector is perhaps one of the most affected. As AI technologies enter global information ecosystems, we at Internews are evolving our thinking and programs to ensure that these tools are used responsibly, safely, and equitably.

In our new strategy, *For Your Information*, we committed to "cultivate the promise of technology while mitigating its peril." This dual approach reflects our longstanding tradition of working at the cutting edge of new information technologies.

This section of our Impact Update is an overview of our thinking on this issue: more information can be found by scanning the QR code on page 27.

THE PROMISE

Since at least 2018, we have supported the use of AI and machine learning for data journalism, including investigations on topics such as domestic violence and propaganda, and piloting the large-scale analysis of civic spaces for the use of predictive measures around closing environments. We are also using AI in projects like the Media Viability Accelerator to help researchers assess news quality at scale.

More recently, the proliferation of generative AI has opened opportunities to improve media production and efficiency. Increasingly Internews is supporting our partners to utilize AI technologies for frequent and time-consuming tasks like transcription, translation, and summarization, helping journalists focus their resources on higher-skill endeavors. Some

media outlets are using AI to assist with fact-checking, to analyze large volumes of data more quickly than human reporters could manage alone, or to make information more accessible with AI-powered audio captioning or text-to-speech services.

These efficiencies are unlikely to be as revolutionary as the AI industry has promised, but they are meaningful enough to disadvantage those without equal access. Many small news outlets lack access to AI tools that are tailored to their languages or regional contexts, and they often lack the expertise to safely integrate AI into their workflows. This is where we see Internews contributing decisively to an equitable adoption of the technology through direct support and capacity building.

THE PERIL

As much as AI promises efficiency and innovation, it also poses significant risks to information integrity. Some risks derive directly from the use of generative AI in the production of information. AI tools can produce "hallucinations" — content that is misleading or outright false. They can replicate harmful biases and amplify inequalities that are present in their training sets, particularly in the context of languages or regions with less available data. Their unchecked use by media outlets can undermine the overall quality of news and increase the spread of misinformation, while malicious actors can purposely leverage them to spread disinformation with political, financial, or other motives at unprecedented speed

At a societal level, the unregulated use of generative AI can cause loss of revenue for quality media outlets due to decreased search engine traffic; reduce the utility of news aggregators and other platforms flooded by high volumes of AI "slop" content; erode public trust in reputable media; and even increase polarization or bolster authoritarian governments.

THE FUTURE

To counter these risks, we believe that AI oversight must be central to the development of the technology, its adoption by information producers, and further debate around it.

Our position is that a basic level of AI literacy should be a requirement for all journalists and media practitioners, and that in-depth knowledge is essential for many information professionals. That's why we are integrating AI literacy into our training programs for journalists and media actors — helping them mitigate some of the harms associated with the technology while empowering them to use it safely and effectively.

We also believe that stronger AI policy and governance guidelines should be put in place. As with any new technology, regulation of AI is lagging the pace of innovation and adoption. We are leveraging our strong history of Internet and technology governance work to engage our networks in AI governance, facilitating global discussions that involve media actors, governments, and technical experts. Rather than advocate for specific measures, we help global civil society partners with training and other support, enabling them to develop their own positions and advocate with policy makers. At the newsroom level, we are supporting our partners to develop AI principles and policies to guide their own use of AI.

Finally, we believe in stronger AI accountability, both from technology itself and the companies behind it. We are working to develop an AI Accountability research agenda documenting the impact of AI on information ecosystems and developing an AI Accountability Journalism program to support media as they endeavor to do the same.

Providing this level of support, training, and resources for media actors worldwide — and especially in low-resource and non-English speaking newsrooms — is a huge undertaking. Because of our history and global networks, we at Internews are uniquely poised to do so. With thoughtful guidance rooted in our decades of expertise, we are working to ensure that AI tools serve the public's information needs, upholding the values of free expression, human rights, and democratic participation.

AI: *Realizing the* **PROMISE***, countering the PERIL*

HOW OUR PARTNERS ARE USING AI

ALICE

In May of last year, Zimbabwe's Centre for Innovation and Technology introduced Alice, an AI-generated newsreader and avatar. During election season, Alice hosted online episodes of a program called Meet Your Candidate and provided daily news briefs.

Alice narrates news updates solicited from Google's Bard (now Gemini) and refined by humans. Each AI-generated piece of content is marked as such, underscoring a commitment to transparency. At the same time, Alice gives CITE's staff members more time to focus on content curation and editing. Alice is also improving accessibility: the technology can tailor its word pronunciation to local accents and dialects, bringing vital information to historically overlooked communities.

ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR AI

In the Philippines, leading national media entities, small local news agencies, and NGOs convened under a single umbrella to collectively craft an ethical AI framework that ensures every stakeholder — from editors to reporters — has an influential voice in AI's future in Philippine newsrooms. Many voices in these conversations came from representatives of rival organizations; this unprecedented cooperation speaks to the ubiquity of AI's challenge.

The ethical AI framework was exceptionally well-received. Internews presented it to the National Conference of the Journalism Studies Association of the Philippines. In a first, participating organizations all committed to using the framework as a starting point for more comprehensive discussions with academia and the wider news community.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:
Internews' 2024–2026 Strategy

Scan to read or visit
inter.news.org/fyi

Internews is working to ensure that AI tools serve the public's information needs, upholding the values of free expression, human rights, and democratic participation.

A truly *GLOBAL INVESTIGATION of* CLIMATE JOURNALISM

In an era of escalating climate and environmental crises, the role of journalists has become both indispensable and more challenging than ever. In an effort to better understand the struggles they face and strengthen environmental journalism in the 21st century, our Earth Journalism Network collaborated with Deakin University on a research project of unprecedented global scale. The report, *Covering the Planet: Assessing the State of Climate and Environmental Journalism Globally,* is the result of that collaboration.

Covering the Planet is the first truly global, and potentially largest, investigation of the global state of climate and environmental journalism.

It surveyed 700+ journalists from 102 countries and interviewed 74 journalists from 31 countries to reveal the unique pressures, threats, and resource gaps climate and environmental journalists face.

Unlike previous research focused on high-income regions, this report captured perspectives from countries of all income levels, revealing localized, often-overlooked insights. It shed light on the nuanced realities that journalists navigate, from limited training opportunities to censorship and harassment, making this study a crucial benchmark for understanding the state of climate and environmental journalism worldwide.

In revealing several troubling trends, *Covering the Planet* is an urgent call to action for deepening support for climate journalism.

39% of climate journalists surveyed reported experiencing threats as a result of their reporting, and 39% cited feeling the need to self-censor in their work. Respondents said that these threats come primarily from entities involved in illegal environmental activities and, in some cases, from governments themselves. These pressures are particularly intense in countries with limited press freedom, creating a climate of fear that hinders honest reporting.

Another salient issue uncovered by this research is how narratives around climate change can get diluted. Despite the scientific consensus on human-driven climate change, 62% of surveyed journalists reported that they include "skeptical" sources in their reporting to maintain "balance," potentially detracting from the urgency of climate issues.

Climate journalists expressed an overwhelming need for resources. The top priorities included funding for in-depth investigations, access to specialized training, and opportunities to collaborate with climate experts.

The surveyed reporters highlighted the value of media support NGOs in empowering journalists with the skills and resources they need to tell impactful climate and environmental stories that drive change. Numerous professionals noted that without NGO support and philanthropic funding, many climate stories would simply go unreported.

Building on its findings, *Covering the Planet* offers several actionable recommendations for journalists, newsrooms, and funders. For instance, funders must respect editorial independence and avoid imposing donor agendas when providing resources, ensuring that newsrooms can prioritize stories that resonate most with their audiences.

The case for supporting climate and environmental journalism around the globe is clear. Despite the precarity and constraints they face, surveyed journalists believe that their work is making a difference: 29% of journalists perceive their coverage has led to shifts in government policy.

To read Covering the Planet *in full — and join the call to action to back frontline climate and environmental journalists — scan the QR code or visit* inter.news.org/climate

Covering the Planet is the first truly global, and potentially largest, investigation of the global state of climate and environmental journalism.

A truly GLOBAL INVESTIGATION of **CLIMATE JOURNALISM**

Our PEOPLE

1,180+ *staff working in...*

159 *active projects in 2024*

138 *countries*

107 *languages*

3 *HQ locations (Washington DC, London, Paris)*

77% *of staff work in their home country*

Internews