Amplifying Women’s Voice in Media

United for News is working to increase the extent to which newsrooms around the world source female experts. By amplifying women’s authoritative voice, United for News seeks to break down gender stereotypes, empower women and girls, and foster greater socio-economic inclusion.

Breaking Down Barriers

The Global Media Monitoring Project’s 2015 Who Makes the News study reveals that only 24% of people heard, seen or read about in the media are women and only 19% of experts sourced in news stories are women. These rates have changed little in two decades.

Media has the power to both reinforce and diminish traditional gender roles and stereotypes. News and stories that portray men as protagonists and women as peripheral characters, dependents, victims or simply leave them out, perpetuate social and economic inequalities. Alternatively, news and stories that position women as successful leaders, inspired thinkers and independent actors create a culture of empowerment for women and girls.

Amplifying women’s authoritative voice in media is a core strategy to ensure the socio-economic advancement of women and girls out of poverty, and towards gender equality. By bringing women leaders to the fore in finance, economics, politics and business news, we directly confront gender bias within the industries and circles where they are traditionally left out.

To foster equality, United for News will amplify women’s authoritative voices by increasing the number of female subject matter experts sourced in news reports around the world.
Our Approach

The factors working against women’s voices in media are complex and include local culture, newsroom intransigence, scarcity in access to experts, and women’s own discomfort with serving as experts in media. We propose a series of focused interventions and tools, combined with a global messaging campaign, to initiate a world-wide culture shift and transform newsrooms’ ability to source diverse subject matter experts in their stories.

Our strategy as a coalition is to bring together both the demand and supply side elements necessary for newsrooms to build a robust pipeline of highly qualified female subject matter experts. On the demand side we will help media analyze and adapt their processes for recruiting sources, build custom tools to track the gender split of sources, and set customized and achievable goals towards gender parity. On the supply side, we will develop locally relevant expert databases of women who are accomplished and knowledgeable across industries. On a very targeted basis, we will provide media training for women experts so that they are ready to be interviewed by local and national media.

There is no comprehensive solution encompassing all these elements today. Feedback from interviews with over a dozen organizations with specialized knowledge support the necessity for a holistic approach that incorporates both these demand and supply side components. While we focus on the inclusion of women’s voices, a group common to all countries, our approach and toolkit is such that it can be adapted to include other marginalized voices in subsequent campaigns, per local needs.

Like the movement against all male panels, a parallel communications campaign will help to create a culture where leaving women’s voices out of news media is unacceptable and diverse sources becomes the hallmark of good journalism. A leading global communications firm will assist in this campaign, helping to engage additional media, consumer brands, and technology platforms to serve as exemplars in their industries.

A special taskforce of United for News members will share industry resources to execute this work. The taskforce includes Bloomberg, Edelman, Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD), World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN IFRA), News Integrity Initiative, the World Economic Forum and the 50:50 Project.
**Pilot Program**

United for News will pilot the program in three countries over a twelve-month period to test the approach in local context before scaling globally. To reach the majority of audience and maximize impact, we seek to work with five of the most influential media organizations in each market. The pilot program includes three core elements:

**Call-to-action**: To encourage newsroom participation, United for News will build a country-by-country multimedia call-to-action that communicates the value of sourcing female experts, bolstered by the global messaging campaign. The call-to-action will emphasize the importance of benchmarking and tracking the gender split of sources as a key driver of change. A local multi-stakeholder advisory committee of leading professionals from media and private industry, with the passion to champion the program in their market, will help drive the program forward in local context.

United for News will host an initial industry-wide conference in each pilot market, inviting CEOs and editorial managers from a selection of influential media. The event will introduce the call-to-action, program objectives, and initial best practices, after which newsrooms will be invited to submit an application to participate in the pilot program. Through a series of workshops, each newsroom will set custom, multiyear goals that are fair and relevant to their specific communities and news content.

**Resource Toolkit**: A collection of tools will enable newsrooms to benchmark and track the gender of their sources, inspire managing editors and journalists towards change, and access talented, interview ready, experts.

**Impact Study**: A key goal of our pilot program is to contribute empirical evidence that informs the development of proven strategies for fostering diversity of sources in newsrooms, which can be scaled and adopted around the world. The coalition will run an independent study in parallel with the pilot program to assess the effectiveness of the approach and toolkit which will inform subsequent phases of the program.

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**Toolkit**

**Best Practices**
United for News will train with Bloomberg and the 50:50 Project to develop successful newsroom policies to effect change, instructions for conducting a source supply chain analysis, implementation guides, and strategies for managing editors to approach staff.

**Tracking Tools**
United for News will develop generic versions of Bloomberg and 50:50 Project’s source gender tracking tools and approaches that can be adapted for each newsroom in the selected pilot countries.

**Access to Experts**
Depending on the pilot country, this may involve aggregating existing expert lists, working with local partners to build-out an expert database, and setting up hotlines with organizations that can help journalists locate experts.

**Media Training**
Recognizing that women often decline invitations to be interviewed due to lack of experience with media, United for News will establish media training for women in each pilot market.
About United for News

United for News is a non-profit, mission-driven initiative founded by Internews in partnership with the World Economic Forum. We are a diverse coalition of stakeholders from across the media and advertising industries with a shared vision of a world where everyone, everywhere has access to the trusted information they need to make good decisions for themselves, hold their governments to account, and achieve their human potential. The charter partners selected to join the coalition bring the wide-ranging resources and capabilities required to help achieve this ambitious program.

The successful development of the United for News program to increase female subject matter expert sources in media around the world, requires a range of resources that very few other initiatives or projects can claim. The varied expertise of the coalition itself, from deep knowledge of local media markets to sophisticated engagement and content tracking methodologies is a unique and core strength. The coordination of the group’s disparate and complex contributions through effective coalition management is also key, and has already proved successful through the initiative design phase. Finally, our members’ global networks, particular that of the World Economic Forum, provide the opportunity to scale this program globally.