



Reflect
REALITY

JOIN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT
TO SOURCE WOMEN IN NEWS
#ReflectReality

REFLECT REALITY

Handbook



Reflect Reality is a resource and toolkit for newsrooms, journalists and business professionals to increase women as sources in the news media. It includes strategies and best practices from more than two dozen individuals and organizations working around the world to amplify women’s expert and authoritative voice.

Reflect Reality was compiled and edited by Natalie White and Deborah Ensor, with help from Jennifer Cobb, Paula Orlando and Genevieve DiVito. It is a product of Internews and the United for News coalition. United for News and the production of Reflect Reality are supported with funding from the News Integrity Initiative at the City University of New York, Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism.

CUNY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
**NEWS INTEGRITY
INITIATIVE**

**UNITED
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Internews in collaboration with
the World Economic Forum



ABOUT REFLECT REALITY

Origins of the project



By Jennifer Cobb

Director of United for News

Around the world women represent one of the largest groups left out of the news media. According to the [Global Media Monitoring Project \(GMMP\)](#), only 19% of experts cited in news stories globally are women. This devastating statistic has barely changed in decades.

We can and must do better.

Imagine for a moment that women experts were fully represented in all media. Women and girls would be empowered and emboldened to fully participate in society, adding untold talent, skills and wisdom to a world that desperately needs them. Culture would shift and adapt as stereotypes are smashed. And the news and information we all consume would be inclusive of diverse voices, rebuilding trust in the critical resource of reputable media.



United for News' 2018 coalition retreat at the Carey Institute for Global Good, New York. Members gather to outline their plan to address the disparity of women's voices in the news.

[United for News](#) is a multi-stakeholder coalition of private sector, media and NGOs committed to supporting and sustaining media around the world. A joint venture between Internews and the World Economic Forum, our focus is in on leveraging the expertise of all our members and their communities to strengthen reputable media.



ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

One of our key concerns is rebuilding trust in media around the world. According to the [Edelman Trust Barometer](#), media is currently the least trusted institution in the world, and skepticism surrounding news organizations and news reporting is widespread. While there are many factors needed to restore trust, one key, addressable element is ensuring that news and information reflect the communities they serve.

Reflect Reality is our contribution to this challenge. On these pages, you will find a rich and deep set of resources to advance the voices of women in the news. These resources are drawn from the leading experts in the field – individuals and organizations working on the front lines in countries around the world to build greater representation for women’s voices.

United for News is deeply grateful to our members for making this work possible. Bloomberg, Edelman, the World Association of Newspapers, the 50:50 Project, Newsgain, the Global Forum for Media Development and Internews bring tremendous insight and wisdom to these pages. We are also grateful to the contributors from around the world, whose insights offer nuance and depth to the work.

We are deeply grateful to our funder, the News Integrity Initiative at the Craig Newmark School of Journalism at the City University of New York, for making this work possible.

It is our deepest hope that by collecting this wisdom in a single, easy to access resource, journalists, newsrooms, organizations and individuals around the world will be inspired to do their part to normalize the expert voices of women, so that media does fully reflect the reality we all inhabit every day.



United for News coalition members share strategies for how news producers can source more women in their stories at the International Journalism Festival in Perugia Italy. From left: Ros Atkins, Founder of the BBC’s 50:50 Project; Jenny Holm, Program Manager at Internews; Laura Zelenko, Senior Executive Editor at Bloomberg; and Melanie Walker, Director of Women in News at WAN IFRA. photo credit: IFJ



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In addition to the United for News coalition, stakeholders around the world are engaged in the global movement to increase the voice of women in the news. We are immensely grateful for the contributions and testimonials of the following individuals.

Michelle Foster, Newsgain –
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Leah Mushi, Internews –
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Christine Dobby, The Globe and Mail –
Toronto, Canada

Sarah Holmes, BBC –
London, England

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Julie Carl, Toronto Star –
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Sara Schonhardt, Earth Journalism Network –
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We also would like to thank the following individuals for their guidance : Nathan Matias, Stephen Grove, Lisa Kassenaar, Sophie Nadeau, Jenny Holm, Steve Rubel, Mira Milosevic, Nina Goswami, Ros Atkins, Zofeen Ebrahim, Davinder Kumar, Stephanie Phang, Jodi Schneider, Gabriela Christie.



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THE PROBLEM

Women represent just one quarter of people featured in our news — with little change in two decades



By Sarah Macharia

Global Coordinator,
Global Media Monitoring Project

Every five years the [Global Media Monitoring Project \(GMMP\)](#), a volunteer network of activists, researchers, students, and media professionals, takes the pulse of gender in news, measuring women’s presence, portrayal, and representation on a global scale.

The GMMP is the largest and longest-running research and advocacy initiative for gender equality in and through the news media. The focus is on the news rather than other media genres in view that news should be factual and bound by agreed standards of professionalism, such as accuracy, balance, truthfulness, and objectivity.

In 1995, GMMP research in print and broadcast news media in 71 countries found that only 17% of news subjects — that is, people seen, heard or read about — were female. **Twenty years later that figure showed little improvement, at only 24%.**



The findings were disheartening yet remarkable in their consistency across the 20 years from 1995 to 2015. The findings were disheartening yet remarkable in their consistency across the 20 years from 1995 to 2015. In 2015, the year of the most recent [study](#), GMMP monitored more than 22,000 stories in print, radio, television, Internet and Twitter news in 114 countries. The stories were reported or presented by 26,010 journalists, containing 45,402 people interviewed or as subjects. It found that women were only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, the same rate as 2010.

The needle towards parity has moved by only 7 percentage points in 20 years and increased only 3 percentage points since 2005. (Figure 1.) If the news were truly a mirror of the world, we would expect to see at least an equal gender share of voices in content. Yet, at this rate, it will take at least three-quarters of a century to reach numerical gender parity.

Who are the 24%?

For the women that make up the 24% of people heard, read about or seen in the news media, how are they portrayed and what type of news are they associated with?

When you dig deeper into the data, disaggregated not just by gender but by news topic, and the roles (typologies) of the persons speaking, the disparity in women's representation becomes even more problematic. When women are present in the news they appear primarily as sources based on their personal experience or as popular opinion providers and eyewitnesses to events. (Table 1.) When you consider **subject matter experts as sources**, as of 2015, women represent just 19% and this proportion has remained relatively unchanged across 10 years of media monitoring.

TYOLOGY OF PERSONS FEATURED IN THE NEWS:

Personal experience: The person provides opinion or comment based on individual personal experience; the opinion is not necessarily meant to reflect the views of a wider group.

Popular opinion: The person's opinion is assumed to reflect that of the 'ordinary citizen' (e.g., in a street interview, vox populi, etc.); it is implied that the person's point of view is shared by a wider group of people.

Eyewitness: The person gives testimony or comment, based on direct observation (e.g. being present at an event).

Subject of the story: The story is about this person, or about something the person has done or said.

Spokesperson: The person represents or speaks on behalf of another person, a group or an organisation.

Expert or commentator: The person provides additional information, opinion or comment, based on specialist knowledge or expertise.



THE PROBLEM

When you measure women’s representation by major news topics, you find that the news topics in which they are reported most frequently are the topics that have the lowest levels of female representation.

The news topics where women are most visible are the topics where there is the least coverage. For example, as Figure 2 shows, across the 10 years from 2005 to 2015, the gender gap was narrowest in stories on science and health, yet this topic occupied only 8% of the overall news space. The gender gap was widest in news about politics and government, a topic that occupies the largest share of news space at just over 25%.

Function in the news	Female	Male
Personal Experience	38%	62%
Popular Opinion	37%	63%
Eyewitness	30%	70%
Subject of the story	26%	74%
Spokesperson	20%	80%
Expert or commentator	19%	81%

Table 1. GMMP 2015. Typology of news subjects and sources by sex

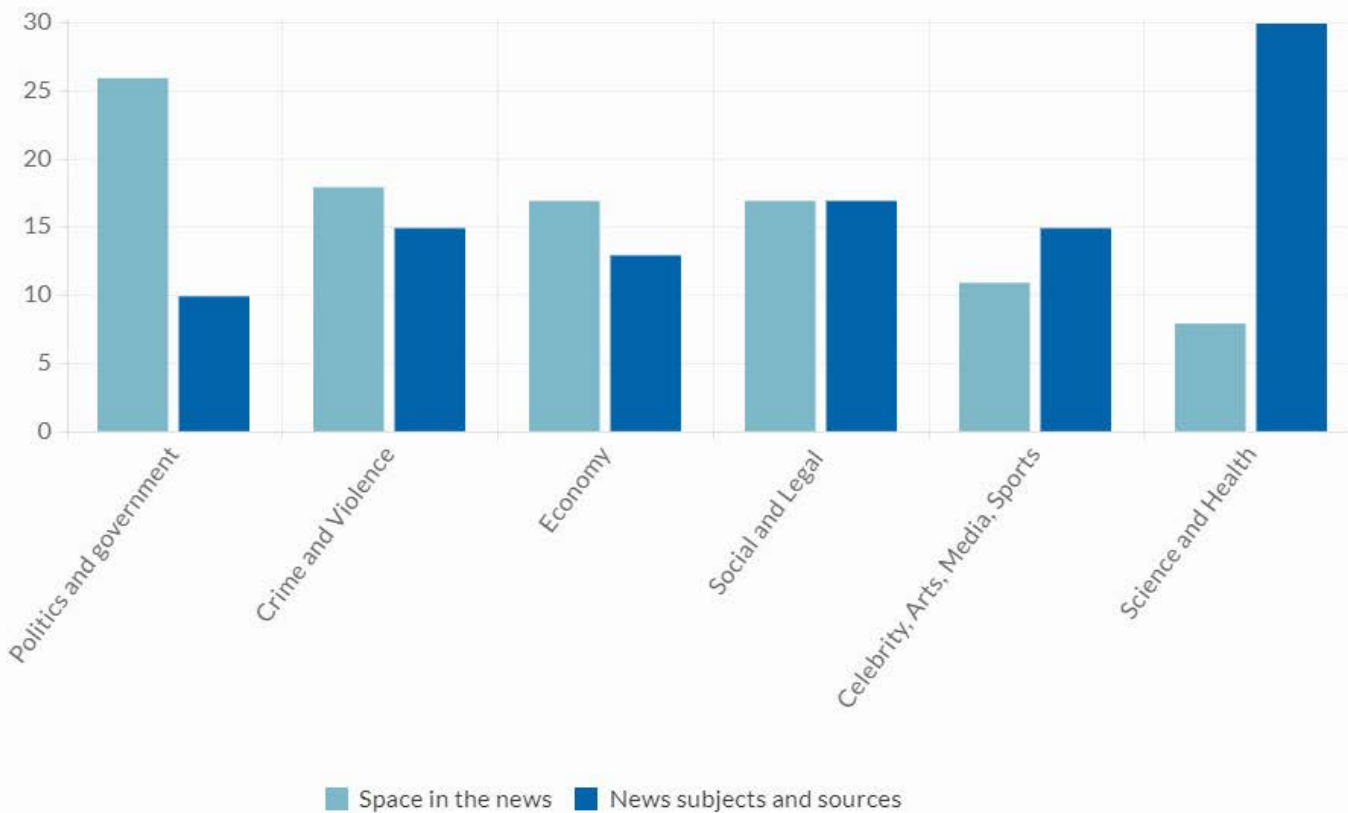


Figure 2: GMMP 2005-2015. Major topics (% space in the news as compared with women’s representation)

In 2015, women were most visible in news on science and health, and least present in political and economic news, topics that command greater broadcast airtime and print news space. (Table 2.)

Major topic	Female	Male
Politics and Government	16%	84%
Economy	21%	79%
Science and Health	35%	65%
Social and Legal	28%	72%
Crime and Violence	28%	72%
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	23%	77%

Table 2. GMMP 2015. Ratio of women to men featured in the news by major news topic.

Gender inequality in news media content appears in various other ways:

- The 2015 GMMP detected a possible global glass ceiling for female news reporters as far as they are visible in newspaper bylines and newscast reports. Only 37% of stories in newspapers, television, and radio newscasts were reported by women, a statistic that has not changed in 10 years.
- Only 4% of stories challenged gender stereotypes, a single point change since 2005. Media gender stereotypes are caricatures of femininity and masculinity in portrayals of women and men respectively, for instance, depictions of hypersexualized women and macho masculine men. Within the major topics, the largest change was in science and health news where 5% of stories challenged gender stereotypes compared to only 1% in 2005. In 10 years, there had been no progress in the proportion of political news stories that challenge gender stereotypes, **while stereotypes appeared to have increased in social and legal news.**
- Women’s relative invisibility in traditional news media had crossed over into digital news delivery platforms: Only 26% of the people in Internet news stories and media news tweets combined are women.



Regional Statistics

North American news has the highest percentage of experts who are women (32%) followed by the Caribbean (29%) and Latin America (27%). (Table 3.) Only one in 10 experts in Asian news is a woman. In Latin America and the Pacific regions, women are almost equally as likely as men to be interviewed based on personal experience. In North America, more than 3 out of 4 popular opinion providers in the news are women (78%).

Looking again at the news by topic, the 2015 GMMP found the gender gap in political stories to be narrowest in Latin America and widest in Asia followed by the Middle East. (Table 3.) Women’s visibility in economic news stories was greatest in North America, at 41% of people in the stories, and least in Asia, at 15%. For both science/health and crime/violence major topics, the highest gender gap was recorded in Middle Eastern news. The Caribbean and North America tied concerning women’s presence in celebrity news, at 29%.

Typology	Africa		Asia		Caribbean		Europe		Latin America		Middle East		North America		Pacific	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Subject of story	24%	76%	25%	75%	24%	76%	25%	75%	29%	71%	17%	83%	39%	61%	26%	74%
Spokesperson	19%	81%	11%	89%	27%	73%	23%	77%	22%	78%	16%	84%	31%	69%	24%	76%
Expert or commentator	19%	81%	10%	90%	29%	71%	18%	82%	27%	73%	26%	74%	32%	68%	14%	86%
Personal Experience	29%	71%	31%	69%	44%	56%	38%	62%	47%	53%	30%	70%	40%	60%	48%	52%
Eye Witness	20%	80%	34%	66%	33%	67%	28%	72%	37%	63%	26%	74%	20%	80%	21%	79%
Popular Opinion	25%	75%	31%	69%	41%	59%	42%	58%	42%	58%	32%	68%	78%	22%	25%	75%

Table 3. GMMP 2015. Ratio of women to men by source typology, by region.

Typology	Africa		Asia		Caribbean		Europe		Latin America		Middle East		North America		Pacific	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Politics and Governm	16%	81%	7%	93%	19%	81%	19%	81%	25%	75%	9%	91%	23%	77%	22%	78%
Economy	19%	63%	15%	85%	26%	74%	21%	79%	24%	76%	18%	82%	41%	59%	29%	71%
Science and Health	37%	74%	28%	72%	33%	67%	37%	63%	34%	66%	21%	79%	43%	57%	54%	46%
Social and Legal	26%	72%	27%	73%	32%	68%	27%	73%	34%	66%	25%	75%	39%	61%	31%	69%
Crime and Violence	28%	85%	27%	73%	39%	61%	27%	73%	31%	69%	18%	82%	38%	62%	24%	76%
Celebrity, Arts and Me	15%	85%	20%	80%	29%	71%	26%	74%	23%	77%	22%	78%	29%	71%	21%	79%

Table 4. GMMP 2015. Ratio of women to men featured in the news by major topic, by region

Arguments for gender equality in the news media



2015 GMMP monitoring activities in Vietnam,
photo credit: GMMP

1. EQUAL REPRESENTATION IS A MATTER OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM

While structural forces within and outside the newsroom contribute to how women and men are represented in content, ultimately the journalists, reporters, and editors choose who to interview and how to portray them as well as the tone and angle of the narrative. Media sexism – inaccurate reporting of issues that more often affect women such as violence against women and reproductive rights, denial of voice, and the proliferation of sexualized images – harms women and gender minorities, complicates their struggles and constrains efforts to correct gender inequalities in economic, political, social and cultural life.

Media organisations the world over have established ethics codes and standards for the conduct of journalists containing at least one prescription not to discriminate based on gender. For instance, the [Principles on Conduct of Journalists](#) adopted by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) more than four decades ago states:

“The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.”
(IFJ, 1954)

The reality, however, has been far from exemplary as the GMMP has discovered through its systematic watch of the news media in more than 100 countries since 1995.



2. GENDER PARITY IN THE NEWS IS IMPORTANT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The marginalization of women’s voices in the news denies women the right to freedom of expression enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articulated as the right to “hold opinion without interference, to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media.” ([OAS, Joint Declaration, 2010](#)). Almost one decade ago, the UN special rapporteurs on freedom of expression underscored discrimination as one of the ten key challenges to freedom of expression, citing women’s and other historically marginalized groups’ “struggle to have their voices heard and to access information of relevance to them” (La Rue, F., M. Haraszti, C. Botero and F. Tlakula, 2010). Yet, debates on freedom of expression today remain limited to media freedom and fail to consider how this concept applies to broader media audiences.

3. GENDER PARITY IS IMPORTANT TO THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF OUR NEWS MEDIA

Gender discriminatory media practice narrows the participation space available for women and gender minorities whose issues and voices have systemically been excluded from the conversations. Public engagement in these communities with serious stories is happening increasingly outside mainstream news media, in alternative and new media spaces that respond to their news needs. These are spaces in which audiences can hear others like them, see their perspectives validated and issues important to them discussed.

To quote Divina Frau-Meigs, “*Journalism as a profession runs the risk of being cut out of the media value chain if public interest and freedom of expression are not brought into the equation.*” ([UNESCO/WSIS Report 2013](#))

4. THE NEWS MEDIA PLAY A ROLE IN ACHIEVING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Media are implicated in the achievement of the gender equality aspirations in the post-2015 development agenda in as far as their role in maintaining the social and cultural norms underpinning discrimination and inequality is concerned. For instance, removal of social barriers to the empowerment of girls and women ([Agenda 2030 Declaration, para 8](#)), or elimination of gender violence (para 20) would be constrained by media content that channels negative gender stereotypes, belittles, degrades and sexualizes women, and normalizes gender violence and gender power inequalities.

GMMP findings across the period between 1995 and 2015 indicate that the slow progress being made to advance women’s communication rights, encompassing the right to fair and balanced portrayal, to voice in and access to media, is in danger of coming to a halt, or even reversal, if remedial actions are not taken.



2015 GMMP monitoring activities in Vietnam, photo credit: GMMP

MAKING THE CASE

Why is it important to increase women as sources in the news?

When women's authoritative voices are represented in the news, there's a positive impact on society and newsrooms alike. Understanding and articulating the reasons why, is an important first step for any newsroom or organization seeking to make gender parity in sourcing a priority. Presented here are four key arguments for the greater inclusion of women's voices in the news, and specifically the voice of women experts, leaders and spokespersons.



2015 GMMP monitoring activities in Serbia.
photo credit: GMMP



It's Good Journalism

When an entire group of people is underrepresented in the daily narratives that describe our world, we come away with an incomplete or inaccurate depiction of our reality. Uncovering rich and powerful stories that inform people's lives requires reporters to speak with a variety of sources who share different experiences. When reporters fail to speak to women experts and leaders, they risk leaving out perspectives relevant to a huge portion of society and miss out on new and interesting stories that otherwise may not surface.

ANATOMY OF AN EXPERT



[Informed Opinions](#)

Senior Executive Editor, Laura Zelenko, leads [Bloomberg's New Voices](#) initiative, a global program to increase the extent that Bloomberg newsrooms around the world source female experts in finance and business. She explains how this specific focus has allowed Bloomberg reporters to break stories they otherwise may not have:

"An editor shared with me a story that we produced after interviewing one of the few female construction managers in the renewable energy business. That interview ended up inspiring a story with the headline ["Women are missing out on the biggest job boom in America."](#)

I also know from our London office that we had finally, after a year, landed an exclusive interview with one of the few female CEOs in Italy. That interview led to six headlines. The determination of the reporters to land this interview led to quality content, both on the Bloomberg terminal and on TV. As we bring in more women experts as commentators on TV, the discussions are getting better, are more varied, and it makes better TV on all fronts."

"Let's create a culture where leaving women's voices out of the news media is unacceptable and diverse sourcing practices become the hallmark of good journalism."

— JEANNE BOURGAULT,
PRESIDENT OF INTERNEWS

It Builds Trust

Audience trust has become a critical concern of the news industry, with media now considered the least trusted institution globally ([Trust Barometer, Edelman](#)). Distrust is a symptom of interrelated trends including the rise of disinformation, misinformation and fake news, closing space for independent media, political and economic polarization, and the loss of local media due to collapsing business models. Another trend breeding distrust is an enduring lack of diversity and representation in media.

Around the world, media are continually shown to exclude or misrepresent marginalized and minority groups in the news. This means that many people do not receive information relevant to their experience and circumstances – causing them to disengage and distrust the media.

There is growing evidence of the connection between inclusion and trust:

A [study](#) of three social media communities – Asian-American Twitter, Black Twitter, and Feminist Twitter – reveals how “marginalized communities have many broadly shared concerns that are not always accurately or adequately portrayed in mainstream news stories,” and such groups share news relevant to their communities that are not covered by mainstream media. The study also highlights how they each share a lack of trust in mainstream news coverage. Additionally, a

“ **You can’t have Trust**
IF YOU DON’T HAVE
Representation. ”

— ED WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT AND CEO, EMEA, EDELMAN

[media coalition in Minnesota](#) found that the disengagement of indigenous communities and people of color with the news can be attributed to journalists’ tendency to inaccurately portray these groups and propagate harmful racial narratives. Around the world [Internews](#) continually observes that the inclusion of citizen voice and diverse sources is key to trustworthy news.

Lack of trust in media is not just a concern for news organizations: it concerns societies and democracies at large, which depend on an informed citizenry. Several initiatives have launched that address building trust through inclusion in the media. Incorporating diverse voices and sources is recommended by the [Trust Project](#); practicing radical transparency is advised by the Trusting News project; and ‘[focused listening](#)’ is suggested by the [Listening Post Collective](#).

Reflecting on the results of the 2019 Trust Barometer, Lisa Kimmel, CEO of Edelman Canada, reveals an opportunity to build greater trust in media and in our institutions more generally by increasing women’s engagement in the media as spokespersons for their companies. She highlights that a critical part of this is employer-led inclusion.



Employers must champion equity to build trust in media



By Lisa Kimmel

Chair & CEO, Canada and Latin America, Edelman

The past year was one of profound change in trust around the globe. Ongoing skepticism and confusion over what may or may not be “fake” news and a loss of confidence in the social platforms that once fostered peer-to-peer trust have helped contribute to growing pessimism and worry – which has left almost half of the mass population believing that the system is failing them, according to the global findings from the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer.

As a result, people have shifted their trust to relationships within their control – most notably, their employers (75 percent). This is significantly higher than NGOs, who are trusted to do what is right 57 percent of the time, businesses (56 percent), and the media – which sit dead last at 47 percent. In fact, in our quest for the truth, 73 percent of us are worrying about information or fake news being used as a weapon.

Amid this upheaval, it’s important to better understand the state of trust for women specifically. For the first time in the [Trust Barometer’s](#) 19-year history, Edelman did just that, exploring the connection between [gender and trust](#), and how it factors into women’s engagement with business and the media.

In nearly every market surveyed, from the U.S. to the UAE, women trust less than men. This is perhaps no surprise given the daily headlines about high-profile cases of sexual harassment, pay equity concerns and bias against women and mothers. There’s no question that as much as 2018 was a catalyst for real change, it also highlighted just how much gender inequity still requires our time and attention. If we look at the institution of media specifically, [women continue to be severely underrepresented](#), with a [2015 report](#) finding they represent only 19 percent of experts featured in news stories and 37 percent of reporters telling stories globally. We’re seeing the repercussions of this inequity play out in the significant impact on trust in our institutions and, in turn, on progress in our society.

Data gives us an opportunity to understand what the path forward looks like – where and how can trust be built with women, how we can ensure their voices are being heard, and what business’ mandate is for doing so.

An Important Opportunity to Promote Change

Given that more than seven in 10 women say they trust their employer, companies have an important opportunity to affect change far beyond their internal walls. It starts with taking a leadership position on issues that matter to women. In fact, 74 percent of women say that CEOs should take the lead on change, rather than waiting for governments to impose it – a 10-point increase in the last year. There is also a continued call for equality; both men and women say that the number one issue for CEOs to address is equal pay.

Another key area where employers can help foster equality while building trust is the media.

There are numerous opportunities for companies to engage women in the news they disseminate, as this year's data revealed a profound 22-point jump in news engagement among women. We now consider more

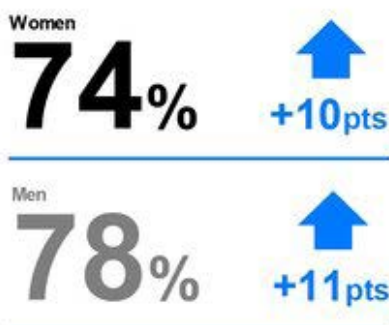
than one-in-three women as amplifiers of the media (those who share and consume news weekly and share and post content at least once per month) – a lift of 15 points. This means they aren't just consuming the news but are actively adding to the conversation in ever-greater numbers. As women across the globe drive change in their workplaces, governments and communities, they're sharing stories, debating topics and spotlighting issues that matter to them. With more women viewing owned media as a trusted source – up eight points from 2018 – companies have an opportunity to disseminate meaningful content that inspires women to engage.

With women increasingly becoming amplifiers it's important for organizations to encourage and actively put women forward as spokespersons for media opportunities. Politics often play a role when it comes to who's offered up as a company representative, particularly in male-dominated industries. Companies must foster environments where women are empowered to put themselves out there as go-to contacts for media interviews, panel discussions, and more.

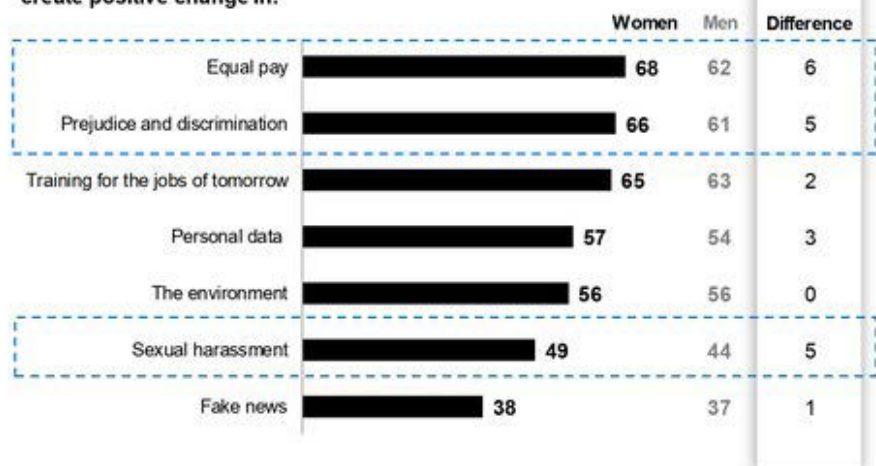
Many in the business world understand the imperative for change and have formal initiatives in place to tackle

LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP FROM CEOS

Percent who say that CEOs should take the lead on change rather than waiting for government to impose it



Percent who agree CEOs can create positive change in:



2019 Edelman Trust Barometer. Thinking about CEOs, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? In which of the following areas do you think CEOs can have a significant impact or create the most positive change? (Global, excluding the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia, by gender).



important issues that help champion women’s advancement. Yet, while many of these initiatives start with the best intentions, it’s easy for them to fall flat – or worse – if an honest look internally doesn’t happen first.

How Do Employers Take the Lead on Gender Equality?

Organizations must start by understanding where they are in the journey to gender equity and build from there. Ask your teams: is our own house in order? Are we doing the hard work to get the basics – policies, processes, and communication – right? How can we create behavioral change and build a culture of inclusivity that transcends any one policy?

Edelman has championed this effort through its [Global Women’s Equality Network \(GWEN\)](#), which aims to foster an environment that is both safe and conducive for women of all backgrounds to enjoy equal opportunity to grow, lead and succeed in and beyond Edelman.

Employers have a license to lead when it comes to fostering environments that lead to true gender equity. This, in turn, will impact trust in the media and other institutions and shift our current landscape into a new era of trust and certainty – a change that’s desperately needed.

THE STEPS WE HAVE TAKEN INCLUDE:

Ensuring women professionals are visible in the media:

The firm is committed to gender balance across the board – including in the spokespeople it nominates to speak on behalf of the business. This includes media opportunities, speaking engagements, written thought leadership, and internal meetings. Edelman also encourages its female clients to be public facing through media interviews, speaking opportunities and thought leadership activities to build equity, trust, and familiarity.

Mentorship programs:

Creation of an online platform that facilitates connections with people across the network to share advice, experiences, etc.

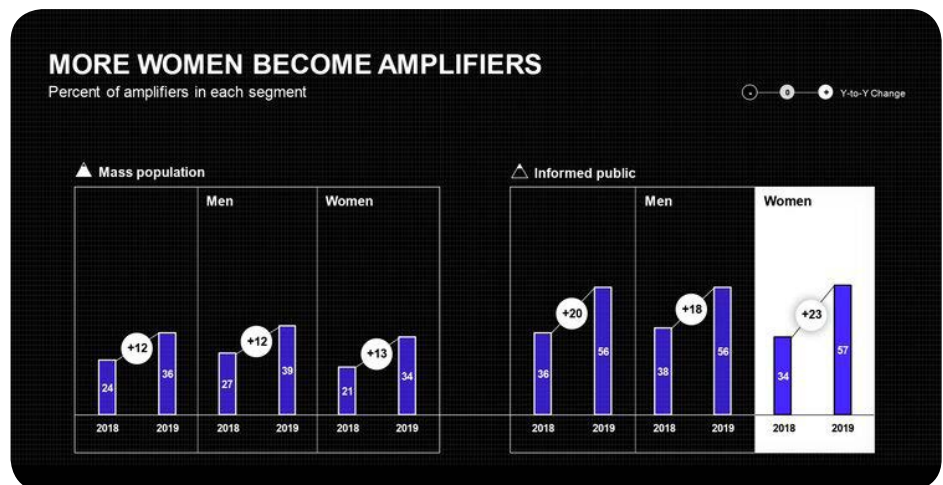
Bi-annual pay analyses:

To ensure equal pay for equal work.

Strategic collaborations:

External partnerships with the International Women’s Forum, G(irls)20, and United for News aim to make an even broader impact on the issue of gender disparity. The firm also recently signed on to the United Nations We Empowerment Principles to promote the economic empowerment of women at work through responsible business conduct in G7 countries.

2019 Edelman Trust Barometer. News Engagement Scale. How often do you engage in the following activities related to news and information?



Building trust through transparency



By Lynn Walsh

Assistant Director at Trusting News

News consumers trust journalism they find to be balanced, in-depth, honest and reputable. These qualities appear over and over [in an analysis](#) of 81 in-depth interviews between working journalists and members of their communities.

But how do newsrooms show our readers and viewers that we are balanced, honest and reputable? One way is to build transparency into our process as journalists, including showing how diverse voices and perspectives are sourced in our stories.

As journalists, we think our audiences are aware of all the fact-checking, research, phone calls and work that goes into identifying sources and producing a news story. But they often aren't. Research shows that people often assume media outlets publish what we hear without fact-checking. They may assume we cover a story because a business or the organization that owns the paper told us to. Or that the people we're interviewing have been paid to say what they are saying.

To change this, we need to be more transparent about how we do our work, and we need to involve our community in our reporting process by asking for feedback. Generally, newsrooms are not as diverse as the communities we serve. We need to invite our readers and viewers in, so we have their perspectives, experiences, and voices at the table.

[A recent study](#) found adding a box explaining your story process can improve a user's perceptions of a news organization. Some newsrooms have used the box to highlight information about why they chose to cover a particular story or to provide insight into their information gathering and fact-checking process. Others have used the box to show how they approached finding sources or asked for audience feedback if they have left important voices out.



Example approaches:

1. INVITE INPUT FROM READERS

Online news site [WITF](#) highlighted their push for including multiple perspectives in stories by adding the following to the top of some web stories: “WITF strives to provide nuanced perspectives from the most authoritative sources. We are on the lookout for biases or assumptions in our own work, and we invite you to point out any we may have missed. Contact us on our [Trusting News](#) page.”

2. EXPLAIN INCLUSION EFFORTS

The Jefferson City News Tribune [used a pull-out box](#) to highlight the different perspectives included in a series of stories about a local trail. They explained what the current article was going to highlight and then linked to stories that provided a different perspective. They also linked to opinion pieces about the topic. This is one approach to show the effort that has been made to include diverse voices and perspectives.

3. ADD A REMINDER ABOUT RELATED STORIES

[Community Impact](#) created story pages. Balanced reporting can happen over time, but readers don't always see the full breadth of your coverage. [By adding an editor's note](#) linking to a page where multiple stories on a given issue live in one place, you can highlight the wide variety of sources you've interviewed. You can remind users you are striving for diverse perspectives and opinions and welcome theirs.

4. ASK READERS FOR HELP

Engaging with your audience and asking for feedback is going to help your reporting be the best it can be. [To help get more ideas](#) on who they should talk to in their community, the Iowa Gazette decided to ask their users for help. In a web story they asked for ideas identifying possible sources and general feedback on the story. The Iowa Gazette asked their users for feedback in a simple, yet effective way, by posing two questions at the end of stories on its website: “Have a question about this story? Do you see something we missed? Send an email to...”

If we ask for feedback, we often don't focus on what we may have missed. [By doing so](#), you are letting users see you want to know how the story could have been better and are willing to make stories the best they can be. Feedback also can help journalists welcome new voices and highlight all communities inside our readership.

[Trusting News](#), staffed by Joy Mayer and [Lynn Walsh](#), is designed to demystify the issue of trust in journalism. They research how people decide what news is credible, then turn that knowledge into actionable strategies for journalists. [Get one-on-one, personalized help](#) from the [Trusting News](#) team for FREE.



A reporter interviews women in Ethiopia for a radio program about HIV/AIDS. Internews

It's Good Business

Increasingly media managers see gender equality as key, not only to the quality of their work but, by extension, to the financial viability of their business. Increasing the voice of women leaders and experts in the news can build [greater trust](#) among the audience and improve the [quality of journalism](#). It can also increase a newsroom's audience engagement, subscription base, and value among advertisers ([Shari Graydon, 2019](#)).

In the business world, there is mounting research showing a correlation between gender equality and diversity, and a company's financial performance ([see this compilation](#)). In their 2018 report, [Delivering on Diversity](#), McKinsey found that companies with greater gender diversity on executive teams were 21% more likely to outperform companies that had not made gender diversity a priority. Boston Consulting Group found similarly that companies with above-average diversity on their management teams (including gender diversity) reported 19% more innovation revenue than companies with a below-average diversity score ([BCG Study, 2018](#)).

“If you want people to pay you, they need to trust you, and they won't trust you if they can't see themselves in you.”

— KATHY ENGLISH,
PUBLIC EDITOR AT THE TORONTO STAR

“Given that half the potential audience is female, and another half is not white, the question of diverse sources is existential. You will not exist if you cannot reflect the audience.”

— IRENE GENTLE,
EDITOR OF THE TORONTO STAR

Research correlating gender-parity to business performance has now extended to the media industry, and specifically to media content. Given that women control up to 80% of consumer purchasing globally ([Harvard Business Review, 2009](#)), advertisers have taken a close look at the impact of gender diversity in their content. With their [Gender Equality Measure \(GEM\)](#), the Association of National Advertisers shows a correlation between ads that exhibit greater gender equality and a rise in consumer purchase intent, particularly among women, and a positive impact on brand reputation.

Entertainment media has also registered the connection between gender equality in film and TV, and viewer engagement. Two-thirds of women in the US and UK have stopped watching films or TV they felt were negatively stereotyping female characters according to research from the Geena Davis Institute and J. Walter Thompson. Furthermore, between 2014 and 2017, movies with female leads that pass the [Bechdel test](#) (1. It has to have at least two [named] women in it 2. Who talk to each other 3. About something besides a man) had greater box office returns than films with male leads or that did not pass the test ([Shift7, 2018](#)).



Finally, evidence has just started to emerge associating gender equality in news production and content with greater news consumption. Research from the [Media Impact Project](#) has drawn a relationship between news organizations that have a higher share of women writing the news with higher shares of female audiences.

When the Financial Times sought to rebalance their largely male subscriber base (80%), they learned from women in focus groups that the content of the paper was masculine in tone and voice, reducing their engagement. The FT produced a newsletter designed to correct this, which has outperformed other newsletters in terms of open rate, particularly with women. It has also succeeded in engaging more disengaged male readers ([NiemanLab, 2018](#)).

“Any news organization that wants to stay relevant needs to understand and act on the impact it’s having among female audiences. Women are often at the heart of decision making in all levels of society, be it as politicians, as entrepreneurs, scientists, educators, at their households, etc. Representing their choices, challenges, dilemmas, passions, and journeys is what journalism is about. And if you are looking to grow your reach, it’s where you should start.”

— JULIANA IOOTTY,
HEAD OF ASIAN REGION
AT BBC WORLD SERVICE GROUP



It's Good for Society

Stereotyping in the Media Limits Girls' Leadership Potential



By Jacqueline Gallinetti

Director of Research, Plan International

When women's expert and authoritative voices are accurately reflected in the media, and harmful gender stereotypes are left behind, we all benefit. Girls – and boys – grow up in a world where they learn they can participate equally. It is normalized for women to pursue careers, interests and ambitions. Gender bias in schools, workplaces and communities are diminished.

Recent research from Plan International, in partnership with the Geena Davis Institute, investigated the impact that healthy role models, or lack thereof, have on girls. Jacqueline Gallinetti, Director of Research at Plan International, shares some of the results.

“It’s a rarity to find a movie where it’s an all-female cast or mostly female cast, usually the women are just additions and for the most part as a romantic interest. They can easily be taken out of the movie and the movie will do just fine.”

— GIRL, 17, CANADA

Young women around the world are eager to play a leadership role in their lives – but the stereotypes and lack of role models they see in the media greatly discourage their ambitions.

Two major studies across 19 countries, involving more than 10,000 girls, were undertaken in 2019 by Plan International to better understand what barriers are limiting girl's empowerment. Through two phases of research, conducted in partnership with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDIGM), we asked girls around the world about their perceptions of and ambition towards leadership, and what obstacles they were facing. They had two key things



KEY FACTS

- ▶ 59.3% of girls and young women want to be a leader in the workplace.
- ▶ 22.5% want to be a leader at home, rising to 28.9% of young married women.
- ▶ 20.6% aspire to national leadership.
- ▶ 19.3% want to be a community leader.
- ▶ Young women from low income countries are more likely to want to be leaders of their country, community or family than those from higher income countries.
- ▶ 62% are confident or very confident in their ability to lead, should they choose to do so.

Report, *Taking the Lead*, Plan International

to tell us. First, the majority of the girls indicated they wanted to be a leader in their life. Second, they told us that they felt restrictive gender stereotypes and a lack of role models, in society and in the media, discouraged their ambitions.

The first study, *Taking the Lead* (June 2019), aimed at understanding and uncovering girls’ and young women’s perspectives on what leadership means to them; whether they aspire to be leaders and, if so, the enablers and barriers they face in realizing their potential as leaders. The mixed methods research was conducted across 19 countries, involving over 10,000 girls and young women.

One of the methods used was a survey that measured girls and young women’s aspirations for leadership in their careers, in politics, and in the household. Overall, a large majority of respondents (59.3%) say they would like to be a leader in their career or job. This high rate of career leadership aspiration is encouraging for moving more women into leadership positions in the workplace. In contrast, girls and young women have a steep drop-off when it comes to aspiration for political leadership on a national or local level. Only one-in-five girls and young women say they would like to be a leader in their country (20.6%) or their community (19.3%). This means that a major barrier to advancing women’s political leadership is that girls’ and young women are not seeking leadership positions. When it comes to leadership within their family, only 22.5% of girls and young women aspire to this.

“If the leader has a strong vision it’s a good thing to pursue it. But if you go headlong into it without listening to others, no one could follow such a leader. If a leader wants to get the members to cooperate, she needs to care for and listen to others and take their opinions into consideration before taking action.”

– GIRL, AGED 15-17, JAPAN

To complement the survey, we spoke to girls and young women in five countries in depth (India, South Sudan, Japan, Senegal and Dominican Republic) to understand a bit more about their aspirations. They revealed that they most want to be a particular type of leader – compassionate, dedicated to their community, and listening to the needs of others – but they are not encouraged in their ambitions. They are held back by society’s limited expectations of what is “appropriate” for them as young women and by a leadership model of authority and hierarchy, with which they cannot identify. They feel they are denied the places, spaces, and the role models that would enable them to realize their dreams.

“Nothing can change the fact of being a leader, and we can become one in several areas; [one] can be a worldwide leader, while a community or family leader leads very few people but they both have the same role and that is to be promoted.”

– YOUNG WOMAN,
AGED 18-20, SENEGAL

The girls and young women said that they are influenced most by their immediate environment, and look to their family members and others, such as the media, as role models and supporters can release them from restrictive stereotyping.

A large majority of girls and young women who were surveyed across the 19 countries (82.9%) say they have women leaders they admire as role models in media. This prompted the second study, [Rewrite Her Story](#) (October 2019), which focused on examining this one particular influence that girls and young women are exposed to in their daily lives – the influence of the media in relation to female leadership. There are certainly a multitude of media forms and it would be impossible to examine them all, so this study looked at the top grossing films across 20 countries.

The findings are shocking: overall, the top-grossing films of 2018 reflect the same gender biases that researchers have documented for decades. **Male characters in the top-grossing films outnumber female characters two-to-one (67.1% compared to 32.9%).** When it comes to speaking time, male characters speak twice as often as female characters in the top-grossing films (66.6% compared to 33.3%). In terms of screen time, male characters appear twice as often as female characters (64.2% compared to 35.7%). Overall, 37.1% of characters in the top-grossing films are portrayed as leaders in their workplace, community, or country



*Internews' Central Asia program, Kids Crossroads.
Photo credit: Internews*

and, of these, **male characters are more likely to be shown as leaders than female characters (42.1% compared to 26.9%).** Finally, unsurprisingly, female leaders are far more likely than male leaders to be shown wearing revealing clothing (30.0% compared to 7.3%), and they are nearly twice as likely to be shown as partially nude than male leaders (15.0% compared to 8.4%).

The study also involved speaking with girls (through a survey, focus group discussions and interviews) about how their aspirations are shaped by the media and whether there are role models in the media who inspire them to be leaders in various aspects of their lives. Most of the girls and young women interviewed recognized that women are underrepresented in entertainment media, across the world and in their context.

“Yeah! Men are in more leadership posts than women. Let me say, even other movies that I watch, it's very hard to watch a movie saying that the president... is a woman, he's a man! So, I think men are taking charge.”

– YOUNG WOMAN, 19, UGANDA



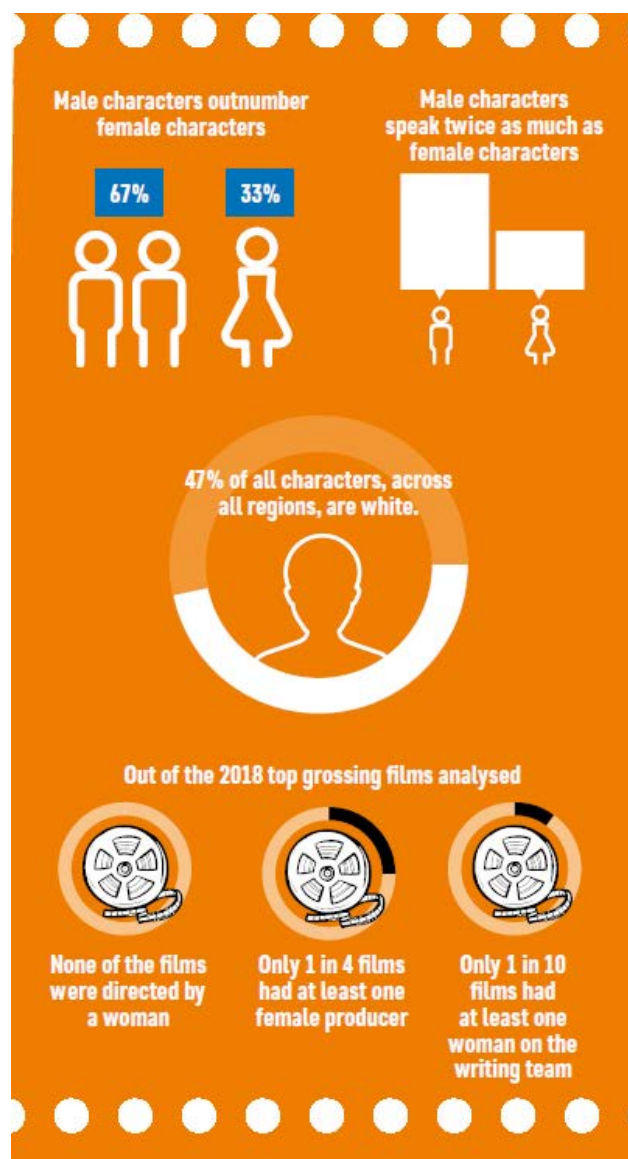
Importantly, they also called out the lack of diversity on their screens, even when women are included in prominent roles. This particularly centered around ethnicity, with some girls and young women referring to predominantly white casts in leading roles. Others referred to the lack of diversity in terms of social standing and background, with most characters they saw on screens coming from middle-class or privileged backgrounds.

There are some simple, yet urgent, things to be done. Make stories about female leaders, from diverse backgrounds, visible and normal in the media to encourage young women’s aspirations and ambitions, not undermine them. Stop the sexualization and the objectification of women and girls on screen and ensure that content doesn’t discriminate or reinforce negative stereotypes and behavior. Outside the entertainment industry, too, make sure women leaders who can serve as powerful role models for millions of young women and girls are visible and have a voice in the media.

THERE ARE THREE BIG TAKEAWAYS FROM BOTH STUDIES:

- 1.** Girls and young women want to be leaders. While there are variations across regional and income groupings and individual characteristics, overall girls and young women aspire to lead and are confident in their ability to do so. However, girls are also acutely aware of the difficulties that lie in wait for them should they choose to pursue their ambitions, and that these difficulties are rooted in gender stereotypes and discrimination.
- 2.** One of the domains where these gender stereotypes play out is in the media industry, despite many efforts from governments, the industry and activists. And not only is media gendered, it is also lacking in diversity and failing to represent the intersectional and layered aspects of what it is to be a girl or young woman: race, ethnicity, wealth or poverty, LGBTQ, disability and so forth.

- 3.** In order to put their ideals into practice, in every sphere, girls need encouragement, education, role models and opportunities. Everyone has a role to play in supporting them. Families, the media, those in positions of power and wider society can all help in challenging negative gender norms and promoting more positive portrayals of girls and young women in leadership. It is necessary to show girls that they belong and are equal in the places and spaces where they can drive change – from the household and the workplace, to their communities and countries.



CHALLENGES

Obstacles limiting the inclusion of women as sources

There are a variety of reasons why female experts aren't sourced in news stories as often as men. Both journalists and the women experts themselves face challenges. For **journalists**, unconscious bias, tight deadlines, industries with a lack of women in leadership to serve as sources, and cultural challenges affect their ability to identify women experts. **For women**, corporate policies that determine who speaks to the media, lack of media training for women, and a higher probability of online harassment limit their opportunities to speak with journalists.

Reflect Reality gathered insights from around the world highlighting some of these challenges. See the following pages for Q&As with experts working on these challenges everyday.





'People say women are not ready to talk'



Q&A with Leah Mushi

Journalist and Senior Program Officer at Internews in Tanzania

Leah has held numerous roles at community and national broadcasting newsrooms across Tanzania and is a co-founder of African Women's Media Network. As the host for a popular television program, My Vote, she continually sought out interviews with women experts. Leah shared her experiences and some strategies with Reflect Reality.

Reflect Reality: What obstacles limit women's voices from appearing in media in Tanzania?

Mushi: People say women are not ready to talk. In Tanzanian culture, women should be behind. Men are out front and should do the talking. In our culture, we believe the ones with the opinions are men. Of course, we have more than 120 tribes and most of the people live in rural areas where the [traditional] ideas are still there. Things are changing, but even in Dar es Salaam you find it. Even today if you go to the university to find young [women] scholars' perspective on a topic, they will shy away and let the men talk. Even if there is an accident on the road and men and women see it, females will shy away and let the men talk.

If you are too vocal [as a woman] people will start to wonder 'Why, why are you so vocal? Something is wrong with you.' Even women working in media are often considered too vocal. They will shame you – this is why lots of women are not comfortable and worried about being vocal.

Many women who have the chance [to be interviewed], don't know how to communicate their topic well. They do not know how to communicate with media. Even women politicians, they often just copy everything from men or from other persons. They don't know how to talk about themselves.

RR: What obstacles do journalists face when they seek out women's voices?

Mushi: Journalists have few resources. I'll give you a scenario. Journalists from a media house, two to three crews go in one car to cover a story. The driver will drop group one here, group two there, and group three over there. Soon, they all move on to cover another story. You find yourself having to collect your story very quickly before the car comes back for you. You don't have the luxury or time to look for and start convincing women [to speak up] or explain the importance of speaking up. The environment itself does not allow it.

Nowadays lots of women and men are trained that they should have both male and female voices, so they are cautious when they are trying to get the story. The

thing is, they are not getting experts. They speak to people on the street just to fill the gap of having female voices. They are not trying to find female experts in a specific area.

I have a vivid example from when I had a civil education television program called, *My Vote*, on Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation. I needed political scientists to explain some issues. At university they train women political scientists. But try to get them to speak on air about an idea or explain it, it is totally difficult. It was a hassle. Men would call me and asked to be invited to speak. I had this huge list of men. I needed someone with the same knowledge, but different gender. Not getting a woman was an insult to me.

I would go to their offices to record women because they didn't want to be on TV at the studio. I would record them and play it on air. Sometimes, I would have to resort to getting two women for general opinions on the street, and then I could get one expert who is a man.

RR: What other strategies are there to source expert women?

Mushi: If you want to get a [woman] expert comfortable you will have to coach her before the interview. Tell her about the topic and ask what she knows about it. She will ask you, 'What should I say? How should I talk about it? Am I doing this right?' This doesn't happen with male experts. If you are not passionate, and if you are not motivated enough to convince women to speak out, you will find you are missing their voices.

Finding women politicians is not as hard. They will speak up, and there are more than 300 in Tanzania. IT, finance, infrastructure, those are difficult areas. You can get women [in these industries] at the grassroots level, but not the top, expert level.

In Tanzania we have women chambers of commerce. You find women experts in various topics, in top career levels. All these women are dealing with lots of things that affect the daily lives of Tanzanians. They have opinions, but they shy away to speak with the media. Their chairwoman, she is the one who is talking every day, she will speak with the media. Instead of just getting her, all these women should be trained to speak with the media.

It's a well-known issue that women's representation is low in media, electronic, print, and broadcast. Apart from being sensitized that you need to present women, I [don't] think there is a deliberate effort by most of the media houses. There are no [newsroom] policies to remove the gap. If there is not a policy instructing them, you find [journalists] coming from a tribe where they don't respect women and they will say, 'Do you have to speak about it [sourcing women] in everything, is it really necessary?' It is important [policies] are written.



'It's related to our customs'



Q&A with Daniel Nkashama

Radio Host at Radio Okapi, Democratic Republic of the Congo

At [Radio Okapi](#), Daniel Nkashama hosts a live talk show in which he invites guests to share their ideas, expertise and opinions on a variety of topics. He has been working to include more women guests in his program.

Reflect Reality: Can you tell us about your radio program and effort to include more women?

Nkashama: The aim of the program is to give useful information to listeners to help them improve their daily lives. We are talking about health and education, and about the environment and so on. I've been running this program for more than 10 years.

It's not easy to get women involved. Most of the people who are calling in are men and there are a few women. We may have just 1 or 2 women calling. It's related to our customs, in which women are not allowed to speak whereas men are. We are working hard to convince them that you can also come and share your experience or knowledge.

I think that if we can include more women's voices, it will obviously increase our radio audience.

[In one case] we had a woman working for an environmental NGO. She came on to explain how you can run an NGO; how to prepare your budget or to prepare your activities for a year. After the program she started receiving a lot of phone calls from around the country. People wanted to know more.

RR: What strategies have worked to incorporate more women into the show?

Nkashama: I think that the best way is to go and meet them where they are, in their offices or their homes, to talk with them to put them in your confidence. With men it is easy, you can just call two or three days before and ask them to be a guest. It can all be arranged by phone. But for women it's different. There are some women who will agree to participate just after we call, but most hesitate, so you must go meet them and explain what you want from them. I think they are a little bit afraid of media. You need to explain what you want to do, your motivation, and that you are promoting them and promoting what they are doing. Let them know they are doing well, so you want to share their experience and knowledge with other people.

Another piece of advice I have is to create a kind of diary of phone numbers for female experts in different areas that you can call on frequently to ask them to come to the program to be a guest.

'I started to realize it was the same voices in every story'



Q&A with Christine Dobby

Reporter, The Globe and Mail

Christine Dobby reports on corporate law for The Globe and Mail and continually endeavors to reflect women's voices in her stories. Reflect Reality spoke with Dobby about her experience finding female sources. Her comments below relate to her previous work, reporting on the telecommunications sector in Canada.

Dobby tweeted on International Women's Day about a lack of diverse voices in her industry. The tweet got a lot of engagement, with people reaching out to her directly with ideas.

Reflect Reality: How have you been working to include women sources in the telecom sector?

Dobby: Almost every person who I speak to is a man. Not the public relations people, but almost all my sources. Most of the upper management at the companies I write about are men. It is starting to change as more women come through engineering roles and move up the ranks, but if you want to talk to the guys at the top – they are guys.

I have been covering the same beat for six years. I was getting really bored with the same voices and sources in all the stories and twitter commentary.

It would be great to see someone more like myself commenting in the national media. I think they can bring a different perspective. The men who are running those companies are all smart and capable, but they are very similar to each other. They share the same experiences. It is interesting to hear the perspective from someone who is not from that exact same mold.

Christine Dobby   
@christinedobby

I've been thinking a lot lately about the sources I speak with and quote and wanting to expand the diversity of those voices. Almost all of the executives, analysts and consultants I speak with are men, which is partly a reality of the telecom industry...

10:26 AM - 8 Mar 2019

15 Retweets 54 Likes



 12  15  54 

 Tweet your reply

Christine Dobby  @christinedobby · Mar 8 

... but I know there are lots of smart/powerful women in the business. I'd love to hear more from them. I'm trying to seek them out and also asking PR people to pitch some different names to me for interviews, esp. when it's organic and those people really know their stuff

 2  5  21 



RR: How are you addressing this challenge?

Dobby: I started reaching out to the companies' communications departments. I was hoping to be put in touch with professional women in organic ways when the story called for it or when that person was the best person to comment, rather than having them put forward a woman just because she is a woman. I was trying to get the PR people to think about that.

I can find women sources in the academic and consumer advocacy side of companies. But even from that perspective, it helps if I give them notice a day ahead of time, rather than try to get them to comment on the day of. I think they are not as accustomed to commenting [in the media] as their male colleagues. A lot of the men I deal with are more willing to assume that they know the topic and are well positioned to comment. Even top academic [women] in Canada have said to me, 'I am

really not the exact expert on this, this guy would be better.' I try to give them a day and do a few follow ups. It's hard when you are on a daily story. It's easy to go to the people that will be reliable and answer the phone and give you that quippy statement.

I know there are a lot of women and non-white men who are at the Director and VP levels. You don't have to only quote the CEO. Maybe there is a woman or a non-white man who is running a key division that has better information.

“It's continually thinking about it.

It's continuing to try.”

— CHRISTINE DOBBY,
THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Global Trends Preventing Women's Involvement in Media



By Michelle J. Foster

Partner at Newsgain

Women journalists face unique pressures throughout the world, leading to their under-representation in newsrooms. Yet diverse newsrooms are more likely to cultivate diverse news content, and in many countries, the lack of female reporters leads directly to a lack of female sources.

The International Women's Media Foundation's (IWMF) 2017 [global report](#) found that across more than 500 companies in nearly 60 countries, 73% of top management jobs in news organizations were occupied by men compared to 27% occupied by women. Among reporters, 64% were male and only 36% female. The same IWMF study also observed that men are far more likely to hold full-time jobs in news media (66.7%) versus women (33.3%), and are more likely to be in senior roles. This, of course, has implications for women reporters' job security and overall earnings. It also undermines their ability to cover stories, cultivate sources, and develop professional skills as they work fewer hours, in lesser roles.

A significant obstacle to both the presence of women's voices in news media and bylines by female reporters is the perception in many places that women's work has less value than that of men. In many places in the world, men are viewed as the ones who do the "real" reporting while women are asked to perform clerical functions or only cover "women's topics." For those that break free of these stereotypes, their work is often patronized.

News of and by women are largely an afterthought, despite the reality that female audiences are highly valued by advertisers as key decision-makers in consumer spending.



These and other reasons help explain women's absence in news across the globe:

Institutional Forces

These take many forms. Few newsrooms achieve gender parity in hiring. Some of it is neglect: hiring women is not a priority. Some of it is by design: companies prefer not to hire women. Yet in too many places, there is no legal recourse against discrimination and women are unable to seek redress for this lack of opportunity. For example, in Myanmar, the 2008 Constitution "provides a loophole for discrimination which states, 'nothing in this section shall prevent the appointment of men to positions that are naturally suitable for men only.'" ([Gender in Myanmar News, 2017](#))

Thus, there are seldom pipelines of qualified women ready to advance in the workforce and openings are easily filled with male journalists. Where training programs exist to advance women in management roles, they are frequently unsophisticated, filled with more "touchy-feely" topics such as self-confidence, and less focus on topics like business management, audience research, or finance.

Deeply entrenched bias about what is newsworthy

Editors frequently fail to find news about women as interesting or prestigious to cover as news about men. "Male" news is perceived to be investigative, hard-hitting. News organizations fail to cultivate expert women sources, so women are portrayed mainly in their roles as homemakers, mothers, sex objects, or victims. Female reporters are balkanized into soft beats such as health, education, culture, and entertainment.

Dr. Xanthe Scharff, founder of the [Fuller Project for International Reporting](#) and an expert on gender, noted "this bias among editors affects so much. They place much less relative value on women's contributions in many areas ... Journalism's role in writing history is outsized and it is vital that we get it right at the outset. When women and their contributions are ignored or discounted in original reporting, it has long term effects on the overall picture of that period of time or series of events."

Violence, threats of violence, and legal persecution

There is a full range of gendered attacks that are used against women in media. Khadija Ismayilova, an Azerbaijani investigative reporter who published details of the corrupt business activities of the president and his family, was blackmailed and threatened that sexual images of her would be released publicly if she did not 'behave.' She didn't, and the images were shared online. She was later imprisoned for 537 days on fabricated charges to silence her reporting, and Azerbaijan's Supreme Court has continued its harassment by upholding trumped-up charges of tax evasion against her. ([Washington Post, Aug. 2019](#))

Even reporting on women, not just being a female reporter, can be deadly. Reporters Without Borders found that covering women's rights, whether the reporter is female or male, carries substantial risks. Its observed that "from 2012 to 2017, the rights of at least 90 journalists in around 20 countries were seriously violated because they dared to cover or talk about women's rights or gender issues. Several months of research yielded the following chilling breakdown of these cases: 11 of these journalists were murdered, 12 were imprisoned, at least 25 were physically attacked, and at least 40 others were or are still being threatened on social networks." ([Reporters Without Borders, Women's Rights: Forbidden Subject, 2018](#))

Cultural constraints

These are vast, implicit and often unrecognized. In Somalia, strict taboos exist restricting contact between unrelated males and females that limits who can be interviewed, and by whom. In Myanmar, religious arguments are used to justify the demands that women take submissive or subordinate roles, and families are reluctant to have their daughters traveling alone or after dark, thus limiting their ability to report.

Marriage, children, and lack of access to childcare

Media owners in developing countries are often frustrated that their investments in training female journalists are “wasted” because once they marry and/or have children, they leave the workforce. This is not wholly inaccurate. In many countries cultural norms place

great pressures on women to exist in traditional roles once they are married and have children. And media organizations seldom provide child or health care services that would support the continued advancement of women in the workforce.

Misogyny and sexual harassment

Examples of these are nearly boundless, exhaustive ... and exhausting. Practices range from the types of sexual predation that came to the fore in the Harvey Weinstein case in the U.S., but in countries with far fewer legal protections for the victims, to online harassment and social media flaming. These situations were addressed head-on in an open letter shared on the Niemen Lab site putting forth 14 principles of gender equality for the news industry. ([Barnathan, et.al., June 19 2018](#))

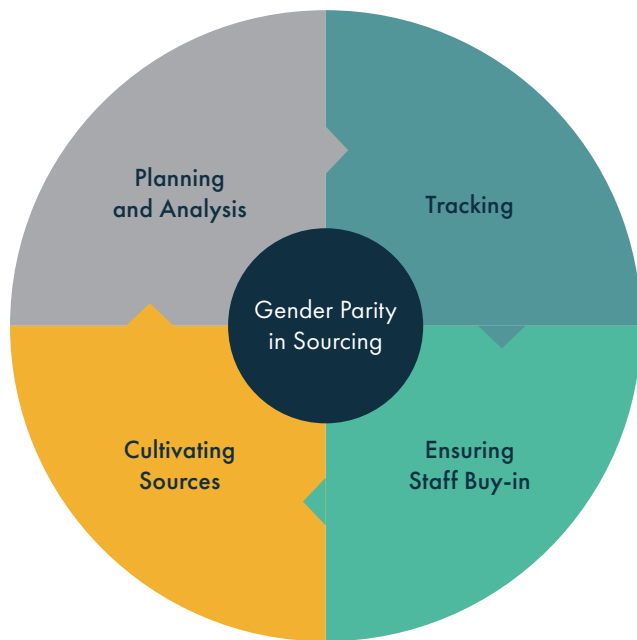


Internews established community radio stations in Chad – including training women journalists - to help refugees fleeing Darfur receive critical life-saving information. Photo credit: Internews



STRATEGIES

To source more women in the news



For News Producers

Achieving and maintaining gender parity in news sourcing require newsrooms and journalists to reconsider the way they work. One-off special initiatives have limited results if staff fall back on the same familiar processes and old habits. This section presents interventions newsroom leaders and journalists can introduce to sustainably change their workflow and transform their sourcing processes. The approaches are drawn from best practices developed by the [United for News coalition](#) and pilot project partners. Many of the strategies are also relevant for diversifying sources beyond gender.

Specific interventions fall within one of four strategy categories: **Planning and Analysis** for launching key interventions in the newsroom, **Tracking** the gender split of sources, **Ensuring Staff Buy-In** for the ongoing participation of the newsroom, and specific activities for **Cultivating Sources**.

The interventions in this handbook can be implemented together as part of a larger initiative. Alternatively, newsrooms can pick and choose the activities that work best for them. Bloomberg’s *New Voices* program is an example of a newsroom that has incorporated a broad set of activities to increase women as sources.

‘The more the newsrooms see value, the more it sticks’



Q&A with Laura Zelenko

Senior Executive Editor for talent, diversity, training and standards at Bloomberg

In her role as Senior Executive Editor for talent, diversity, and standards, Laura Zelenko leads [Bloomberg’s New Voices initiative](#) globally. Reflect Reality spoke with Zelenko in more detail about what has made the initiative such a success.

Bloomberg’s New Voices

In a major push to diversify its workforce and content globally, Bloomberg launched its New Voices initiative in early 2018. New Voices aims to address the deficit of women sources in their stories and on television. Bloomberg considers increasing diversity of all voices, particularly women’s voices, the key to ensuring balance and fairness in its reporting, and to building new audiences.

New Voices’ components include:

- **Tracking:** Tracking diversity in content across all platforms, including online, print, TV, radio, photography, and live events. Bloomberg enhanced its news story publishing software so that it could track any story that cites or quotes a female expert.
- **Expert Database:** Building a global database of more than 5,000 female sources for Bloomberg journalists to reference.
- **Training:** Funding media training for top women executives in business and finance in order to increase the number of women on-air at Bloomberg and other media outlets. In 2018 the training program launched in New York, San Francisco, Toronto and London. In 2019 it expanded to Dubai, Sydney, Hong Kong, and Mumbai.

Since rolling out New Voices, Bloomberg has consistently increased stories that quote or cite a woman and the number of women expert commentators on TV has increased from 10% to more than 21%. By the end of 2019 more than 150 senior female executives have received media training and in two years the global database of female sources has grown from 500 to 5,000 women.



Reflect Reality: It's clear that the changes Bloomberg has made under *New Voices* have paid off. How do you keep the momentum going?

Zelenko: In addition to tracking, it takes reporting out the progress regularly to the newsroom. On a day-to-day basis we show the results of our representation of people on TV and in stories. I do regular calls with bureau chiefs to talk about where we are. Our Editor in Chief puts out weekly notes and we organize events every month to talk about progress, remind people about the tracking tools, or to give examples of stories and interviews that have come out of this effort. We've done internal panels on sourcing to discuss ways in which reporters are finding new women as sources. So, it's keeping the messaging going. Now people have started sharing their success stories with me, instead of me reaching out.

The more that the newsroom and the bookers on TV see the value of diversifying their sources the more it sticks. In the beginning it took effort to get buy-in from everyone, and now I see enthusiasm from every level of the newsrooms. They see the fruits of what they are doing.

RR: In previous interviews you have talked about the importance of journalists and editors taking risks. Can you share examples?

Zelenko: One of the best examples of this relates to a woman who works at a [financial] firm that is small and not well known, yet she manages quite a lot of money and has an impressive career. She went through our media training program and started speaking on TV. It became clear she had a lot of smart points to make. She is now a regular commentator on Bloomberg. The TV bookers and producers told me that this is someone who had never been on their radar, and previously they

would not have taken the risk to put her on TV. Because she had been through the media training and the bookers were able to meet her and discuss what she could speak to, everyone felt more comfortable.

We are also seeing reporters be pushier when asking firms to put forward diverse sources. This would not have happened in the past. They are asking more questions about what women at various levels at a firm can speak to and looking not as much at the titles. In the past, it was considered riskier to source someone that didn't have the most senior title.

RR: Do you have recommendations for newsrooms that are struggling to identify interview ready sources, but may not have the resources to sponsor media training?

Zelenko: Part of this is really about the communication with the companies - talking to the firms more specifically about why it is important to the content. The firms themselves can also provide media training for their people, which we will hopefully see more of. It is important to make the case to women too about why they need to speak up. I was talking to a woman in London, who is head of a bond trading desk and also contributes to the women's initiative at a large bank. We were talking about this very issue of women expert commentators and I asked her if she had ever been on television. She said, "no no no, I would never do that." We were on the phone for about a half-hour and by the end she had agreed it was important to try and be that role model.

There are other things you can do, like bring in people [potential sources] to your newsroom to meet the anchors or the people organizing the programming. This puts people at ease. There needs to be a culture in the newsroom that encourages this.

Planning and Analysis - 8 Tips

Whether your newsroom is interested in launching a comprehensive initiative to diversify sources, or you as an individual are looking to increase the number of women sources in your own stories, start by looking at your current record on sourcing and what approaches may already be working.

1) BENCHMARK THE GENDER SPLIT OF SOURCES

Your first activity should be to audit a selection of news content to determine the current gender split of sources. Gather a robust sample – spanning a month or more at least. Carefully consider what you would like to measure.

- If you benchmark on behalf of an entire newsroom, it could be easier to go narrow and deep rather than try to be exhaustive. You may want to begin by focusing on distinct sections, such as local news, sports or business.
- There are options for how to count. You might count the ratio of male sources to female sources. Or you can simply measure the ratio of articles that include female sources to those that don't.

- You may want to track the gender split of the source's function – are they a public official, spokesperson or academic? If your initiative is to improve the diversity beyond gender, consider including these other variables in your count.
- Be sure to focus on tracking only the sources that are within your power to change. This way you collect data that can help assess behavior change in the newsroom. Certain sources, such as politicians or particular spokespersons, are sources you must cite. Exclude these sources from your count, or track them separately, as they do not represent an opportunity for change.
- The more detail you gather in your benchmarking exercise, the more insight you will have to help you identify where you have a voice gap and where you want to focus your efforts. It will also give you a better idea of how to design a tracking methodology to measure the gender split regularly. See our section on tracking for more tips.

2) IDENTIFY EXISTING EFFORTS

Chances are some newsroom staff are already aware of the gender disparity of their sources and have developed techniques to address it. Consult staff across the newsroom, from different departments, to gather their insights. Analyze what past efforts managers or journalists may have implemented. Ask what was successful and what fell flat. If there are existing practices that are working, you'll want to consider how you can celebrate and build upon those efforts. Consider starting with a staff survey, like the [example](#) presented from Earth Journalism Network.



3) DIVERSIFY STAFF

When focusing on diversity in news content sourcing, remember that gender and minority representation inside the newsroom is an important part of the equation. Only when the staff inside the newsroom represent women and a range of communities outside the newsroom will content truly be representative and authentic. While a diverse staff does not negate the possibility of bias in source selection, a diverse staff can help identify representation gaps, instances of stereotyping or content that mischaracterizes communities. Any effort to diversify sources will be more successful if paired with a plan for diverse hiring. As Toronto Star Editor Irene Gentle effectively sums up, without a diverse staff, “we don’t know what we don’t know.”

Also, make sure you pay attention to who’s in the room for story planning meetings so that diverse outlooks are involved in every step of a story’s production.

4) MAKE SURE YOU HAVE LEADERSHIP BACKING

The commitment to inclusion must come from the top. Ideally, it’s included as an official policy of the publisher and expressed in a clear announcement or communication to staff. To effect change, journalists and staff need to know that their leadership, not only at the masthead level but their editors and department managers, consider it a priority. With leadership backing, staff feels greater license to not only speak up about inclusion but allocate more energy to the goal.

As Matt Frehner, Head of Visual Journalism at The Globe and Mail explains, “A newsroom is like any other hierarchy. If David [Editor and Chief at the Globe and Mail] sends a note that says, ‘this is a thing we care about, and we are going to be paying attention...’ it brings up the discussion when planning stories.”

“People need to understand from leadership that gender parity in sourcing is part of their objective, as much as their objective is to be partial, balanced, or creative.”

— JULIANA IOOTY, HEAD OF ASIA REGION, BBC WORLD SERVICE



Internews, launch of ‘Our Voices’ program in Iraq. Media representatives from across Iraq gather in Erbil to share feedback on challenges limiting women’s voice in media. photo credit: Internews

5) RECRUIT CHAMPIONS

During your planning phase, identify individuals who care deeply about closing the gender gap and are excited about a change in the newsroom. Choose leaders and helpers who are well-respected in the newsroom and able to bring people together.

Engage the younger generations of staff who are adaptable and have come of age during an era in which inclusion is a chief concern. Consider forming a task force of such individuals, who can meet regularly to plan and maintain your efforts.

6) SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Start small and build on success: focus interventions on discrete sections of the newsroom or a certain news beat. Choose a modest percentage goal in terms of gender balance in sourcing – perhaps just a 10% or 15% increase. Once you reach this goal, share the progress with the newsroom and communicate the next goal, or bring in new sections of the newsroom.

By building on incremental success, you can build the newsroom’s confidence and momentum, and create a more sustainable shift in the workflow.

7) CONSIDER THE ROLE OF ALL STAFF AND DEPARTMENTS

In your planning phases, consider the role of each person in the newsroom and their impact on whose voices are ultimately included in stories. Achieving parity in sourcing is a newsroom-wide effort. For example, The Globe and Mail found that the visuals team was integral to their effort to increase women’s voices. As the visual team seeks to increase diversity in photos, they identify gender gaps in stories, and remind journalists to seek female and diverse voices.

The Toronto Star leverages its social media team to investigate new diverse communities and voices, and to pass leads on to reporters across the newsroom.

8) FOCUS ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONVERSATION

Examine your department workflow and look for opportunities to integrate discussions about inclusion that are organic and natural. Rather than setting strict rules and procedures for how stories should be produced, foster conditions that encourage teams to talk about inclusion strategies.

**“It should not be punitive.
It should spark a conversation.
No one is going to get their pay
docked for not doing this.”**

— LAURA ZELENKO, SENIOR
EXECUTIVE EDITOR, BLOOMBERG



Tracking - 3 Approaches

Successfully increasing the number and frequency of women sourced in news content often comes down to tracking the gender split of sources. The initial benchmarking reveals the true extent of the problem, while helping to correct your assumptions and misconceptions. But consistently counting is what keeps the issue top of mind – and that’s what newsrooms and journalists report as being a key driver of change.

Newsrooms implement tracking differently, depending on their goals and resources. While methods vary widely, there are three overarching approaches: manual tracking, semi-automated tracking, and automated tracking based on computer algorithms.

Bloomberg had previously tried to tackle the lack of women’s voices by building a database of female sources. The effort was successful in fits and starts until they started to collect and share data.

TRACKING BEST PRACTICES

Regardless of the tracking method you use, keep these best practices in mind:

Count what you can control: For some news stories you have little choice over who to source (i.e. stories about political candidates). Focus on tracking the gender of sources that are in your power to change.

Share the results: Be transparent with the newsroom. Regularly share the latest results of the tracking, so staff can see where there is progress and work still to be done.

Inspire friendly competition: Share results between journalists and news teams so staff can track how they are doing against their peers.

Use tracking to spark conversation: Use the results to engage staff and individual journalists in conversations about their workflow and process they use to identify sources.

Promote self-tracking: Tracking has the greatest impact when news teams and individual journalists track content.

1) Manual Tracking

Newsrooms report that counting the gender of sources by hand is the most accurate and impactful method. When journalists and news teams manually track content regularly, they are more likely to change their behavior on a day-to-day basis. Human oversight also ensures that nuances, such as type of source or the gender attached to a name, are captured. The prospect of manual tracking can be daunting to news producers, but it doesn’t have to be.

The 50:50 Project

The BBC’s [50:50 Project](#) has invented a remarkably successful methodology that only requires a few minutes each day to tally the ratio of female and male sources.

Originated by BBC news program, *Outside Source*, the 50:50 Project has helped hundreds of teams inside and outside the BBC reach gender parity in the sources they solicit for their stories

Reflect Reality's Tracking Template

Reflect Reality created a sample tracking sheet, which news teams and journalists can customize to suit their own needs. [See Resources section.](#)

2) Semi-Automated Tracking

A second option is to build tools into a newsroom content management system that allow editors or journalists to simply tally the gender of their sources as they file a story. The data feeds into a master database which stores the results by journalists/department. The act of tallying helps staff and reporters remember to include women as sources, and progress can easily be assessed across the newsroom.

Bloomberg developed a tracking tool which editors utilize every time they publish a story that quotes, cites or paraphrases at least one female expert. The tool adds a code that tracks progress by team, region or individual reporter. The Toronto Star is building a similar tool, which they refer to as a 'memory jog.' Reporters are asked to tag stories against a variety of metrics, adding one that relates to women's voices is not difficult.

3) Automated

Highly automated software tools that track the gender ratio of sources have also been developed. Algorithms use natural language processing or machine learning technology to scrape large quantities of news content instantly. For newsrooms that have the capacity, automated tools can provide the ongoing data that is needed to drive awareness, without having to rely on staff to count.

An example is a [bot](#) the Financial Times built that automatically warns journalists and editors when content is lacking female sources. Newsrooms with extensive resources will find such solutions alluring. For others, the financial investment and staff time needed to create effective algorithms that can reliably decipher the gender of pronouns may be a nonstarter.



BBC Newsroom, photo credit: BBC



'Once you look over the numbers, you understand the problem'



Q&A with Temur Durrani

Staff Reporter at the Toronto Star

As part of their [Mirrored in Media](#) initiative, Temur Durrani worked alongside reporters in the Toronto Star's radio room to tally the gender and diversity of sources every day, across all news articles produced by the Star the previous day.

Reflect Reality: Can you tell us a little about the radio room and what your job normally entails?

Durrani: The radio room is operated 24 hours a day by reporters. Within eight-hour shifts, we look over a scan of all forms of social media and twitter feeds to see if any breaking news is happening. It's essentially the breaking news desk. If something big is happening, we alert our editors and start writing the initial copy to get the story up and running.

RR: How were you involved in tracking the gender of sources?

Durrani: The Radio Room was asked to help do the count. Although we are generally quite busy, we manage to get the log done overnight when it is relatively slow. We go through the print paper [to tally the gender and diversity of sources]. If anyone has any questions such as whether a source is a person of color or not, they will contact the reporter. We will keep that in the unknown tab, and when the reporter has gotten back, we can update [the log]."

The big concern, in the beginning, was that it would cut into our work, and we would not be able to get our work done overnight, but we never had that struggle, and everyone enjoyed the opportunity to have the discussions and speak to reporters.

RR: What did you learn from doing the tracking?

Durrani: Oh wow, so much. It has helped our reporting. We all know this has been an issue, it is not new. But looking at the numbers has made us very aware. What we have started doing now, we've gone out of our way to search through the databases to find someone who may not be the cookie-cutter source that we need for something. That is the biggest thing I've found from my work and talking to everyone involved with this project, that our reporting has started reflecting this effort. You can take the extra step to find a person of color [as a source]. You don't need to think the first person is the right person.

One issue that we came across early on was the [representation] of indigenous people. Indigenous people do not always identify as people of color, so having a separate column would make sense. Tracking gender as binary is also problematic as sometimes sources do not identify as a woman or a man. But the advice I would give another newspaper is 'do it anyway.' Whatever the format is [for tracking], it doesn't matter. What matters is that at a glance you can see how many people you could have contacted. Once you look over the numbers, you start to understand the extent of the problem.

Another thing I learned is that reporters of color sometimes assume their reporting reflects that fact. That is not always the case. When we would ask them about sources [that were all white] they would say 'oh no, I didn't realize.' It is a subconscious bias. I spoke with one of our reporters about it and he said, "*It's funny, I often think that white people are the easiest to talk to.*" It is a question of how you try to actively combat that wherever you can.



Data as an Engine for Change – 50:50 Project Methodology



By Sarah Holmes

External Partners Manager, 50:50 Project

The [50:50 Project](#) started in January 2017 on one BBC News television programme, *Outside Source*. Its presenter, Ros Atkins, had two goals. *“I wanted better information on how we were doing on representing women and I wanted to embed this issue in our daily editorial processes. I realised that the two could go together. The data would be the engine for change.”*

By embedding data monitoring into their daily processes, within four months *Outside Source* saw the numbers of women contributors – those the team could choose – go from under 40% to over 50%. The programme has been consistently on track ever since.

In April, 500 BBC teams across all areas of content – from news to science, music, entertainment, and sports – participated in the *50:50 Project*. In the month of April 2019, 74% of teams implementing the methodology for 12 months or more reached 50% women contributors. ([See report](#))

THE BBC'S 50:50 PROJECT

Originated by BBC News programme, *Outside Source*, the 50:50 Project has helped hundreds of teams inside and outside the BBC reach gender parity in the sources they actively solicit for their stories.



So how does it work?

Teams self-monitor their content and use the resulting data to set benchmarks and monitor performance. The data is gathered as content is produced so it forms part of a team's regular editorial conversations. Teams share monthly data with the rest of the BBC in a spirit of positive competition and collaboration – this, in turn, increases engagement and motivation.

We measure the parts of BBC content that we control. In news, this means we do not count people who are central to the stories that we are covering on any given day. But we do count anyone who is helping us to report and analyse the news.

We've always been clear about one thing: this is not a quota system. The best contributor gets on air regardless of their gender. This is about diversifying our contacts to find excellent female and male contributors.

Miranda Holt, Assistant Editor for Live Political Programmes, says teams have quickly adapted their thinking.

"At the beginning, there was a concern we wouldn't cover the stories we wanted to if we couldn't find a female voice. Now output editors and producers don't question why at least half our guests should be women."

50:50 Project Best Practices

Use data to inform editorial decision making

Count what you control

The best contributor is always chosen

Diversify your pool of contacts



BBC, Ros Atkins, Host of Outside Source and originator of the 50:50 Project

The methodology is flexible so it can be applied to all types of content, across every platform – including the BBC's music programmes. 50:50 is also working to improve female representation in areas that are predominantly male dominated, such as sport. Helen Brown, Assistant Editor for TV Sports News, reflects on the impact: "We question our decisions more now, so as a result, we end up with more creative programmes that reflect our audience."

The 50:50 team has built an internal database with over 1,000 female experts to support colleagues working towards 50% women, and organises Open Days inviting potential women contributors to BBC studios to increase their confidence.

The 50:50 Project is expanding beyond the BBC and has created a global network of companies from Australia, the US, South Africa, and Europe who are applying the 50:50 methodology within their organisations. Among those signed-up are the Financial Times, MSNBC, and ABC News Australia. Heikki Valkama, Head of Content at Yle News, Current Affairs and Sports in Finland, says:

"With 50:50, Yle has finally moved from hoping and trying to actually doing. It has given us concrete tools to monitor the gender ratio and inspiration which comes from being a part of what has now become a global effort."

If you are interested in finding out how your organisation can become a 50:50 Partner, please get in touch at 5050project@bbc.co.uk



'Changing the way we do journalism'



Q&A with Juliana Iooty

Head of Asia Region, BBC World Service

As the Head of Asia Region, Juliana oversees the BBC's 16 language services in Southeast Asia, managing in-country editors and production team, and helping to transition the BBC's audience from traditional to digital platforms. Working with the [50:50 Project](#), Juliana increased female contributors across the Asian services – with some moving from as low as 17% to 50%.

Reflect Reality: How did you get started with the 50:50 Project?

Iooty: We are a public service broadcaster and as such we have the duty of serving people that need information, and women are a big part of this. In several Asian services and countries, our audience often skewed male, and we had to look at our content and ask whether it represented women's role in society. I decided we needed to jump into the 50:50 Project and try and look at the way we were doing journalism.

What makes the *50:50 Project* so effective is the commitment from leadership. The first thing was for me to understand what the project was about, that it was not a tokenistic approach. It called for a change in mentality and a change in the way we think about our stories. When I was sure I understood this, I called a meeting with my management team. Ros came and spoke with us. Our team had an entire away-day to look at how we would measure the results of the project, but mainly to talk about what it meant for our journalism. We invited BBC leaders to talk about how they changed their departments and had several layers of people from services – managers, editors, producers – included. We needed to get people's buy-in.



BBC Indian Services taking part in 50:50 Project.

Photo credit: BBC

RR: What challenges did you confront?

lootty: We are a multiplatform operation, with tv, radio and digital. We included programs from all three platforms. It was more challenging for some than others. The East Asian services are mostly digital, and that makes them a bit more avant-garde by nature. In the Indian market, for instance, there are around 800 TV channels, and countless radio channels and websites. To reach audiences we needed to be strong not only on our direct platforms but on social media and search engines. The 50:50 Project was easier with digital services because it was already a part of their day-to-day job to gauge the impact on the audience, to listen to what the audience was saying online. In other regions where services are radio heavy, the mentality was different: you put the content out there and you don't necessarily know what the audience is doing. We have people working here for 10 or 12 years in radio, and they are not used to audience feedback. This is the most difficult thing – to change the work culture.

RR: How was the content improved?

lootty: My concern, in the beginning, was that the message we were conveying to teams would be misinterpreted; that they would hear us saying that they need to do more stories that are relatable to women and that this would mean only stories about motherhood, or women's sexual health or sexual abuse, etc. I was afraid people would pigeonhole women's audiences, thinking they would only be interested in this kind of content. The main success of this project was for people to understand that women are not interested only in things like sanitary pads, or sexual violence or stories about health. Those are important stories, but surveys show us unequivocally that women are interested in politics and hard news as much as men are. The reason why we were not reaching women was because those stories were delivered by interviewing only male politicians or

listening mainly to male contributors, or simply because they were done in a non-engaging way. Women have less time than men. If you don't grab them, they are gone. For example, if we need to produce a story about Trump's policy on immigration, we would need to add context to it, telling people the 'things you need to know about how these changes will impact your life.' We made it more relatable. To me, that was the big success, that people started to understand that if you want to make a good story, you need to find an interesting angle, character, or a better headline.

Just today we had a meeting to talk about the engagement we have seen on stories. There was one example of a story on a new environmental law passed by the Thai parliament. We found a woman in Bangkok who opened a sweets shop that is environmentally friendly in the way she sources the product and does not use plastic bags. Her story, set within the context of the new law, had 45% engagement by women which is massive for a single story.



BBC East Asia Services, radio programmes taking part in the 50:50 Project. Photo credit: BBC



'Our perceptions turned out to be completely false'



Q&A with Sam Farah

Head of BBC News Arabic

Sam Farah oversees the 400+ staff that produce the BBC's output to Arabic speaking audiences around the world, across a large network of 24-hour news, current affairs and documentary programming transmitted via TV, radio and digital channels. After working diligently to increase the percentage of women contributors on a selection of Arabic programs from 10% to 30%, Farah successfully took on the [50:50 Project](#) challenge, to reach 50% representation of women contributors across some of their output.

Reflect Reality: What was it like to take on the 50:50 Challenge?

Farah: In July 2018, we joined the *50:50 Project*. We added digital video, and BBC.com/arabic, and started changing the methodology to allow for non-linear output to be measured. We started to see that what we had considered extremely difficult, the 30%, 40% and 50% levels of female contributors to programs, being achieved. I noticed that setting a target focuses the mind. When we reached those targets, it increased our confidence. We thought, 'if we can do this, who knows what we can do.'

RR: What did you learn as a result of working with the 50:50 Project?

Farah: We realized we were working under a perception that turned out to be false. We had underestimated the number of female experts and pundits, and people who were available to speak on all sorts of issues in the Arab-speaking world.

We began to ask ourselves, 'are there really not any excellent female experts on military matters in Syria?' We started realizing there are excellent women experts in all sorts of areas; aviation, security, etc. Our confidence increased. The number of people who said we can do this started increasing. The number of people who thought 'are we running the risk of putting women on air just to make up the numbers?' – that number decreased. Those people started to realize that the quality of the guests was still what mattered most, not the gender.

RR: How did your day-to-day work change?

Farah: When we started working with the *50:50 Project* teams we were told, 'this is no longer a nice thing to do, this is absolutely part of the job. If you are setting up an interview, you need to ask yourself, 'Is there a woman to speak on these matters?' If the answer was 'no,' we would ask, 'have you tried? Why is there not a woman who can speak to Iraq's internal security situation, why is there no one to speak on mass surveillance of governance of their people?' The questions made people think more, and the obstacles were removed.

RR: What challenges did you confront?

Farah: We faced cultural and logistical barriers. There were cultural sensitivities and misguided stereotypes about Arab women. That barrier existed not just in the societies we served, but internally. We had to believe these people [women experts] existed.

There was also a conversation that tended to repeat itself in the early days. It was about the difference between hard political programs and social stories. It is not a secret that some said we can reach those targets [40% and 50% gender parity] in certain topical areas because it is easy to get women to speak about human interest stories. A critical moment we got right, in the beginning, is when we said, 'absolutely not, we have to have gender diversity across all output, including, and in particular, hard politics and news about conflict areas.' At first, we were not sure we could get it. The result is that we can find excellent women speakers in all these areas.

There were also a few technical, logistical things we changed too. It proved to be slightly problematic for some women contributors to go to a studio, so we increased the use of Skype and video conferencing.

But if there is one point I keep going back to it is how wrong we were in our perceptions. How wrong we were in our stereotyping. A lot of our people come from Arabic-speaking societies, and we were all wrong. I am so pleased that our perceptions turned out to be completely false.

“The journalists know that it is not enough to find a good story, and a strong story, it is the diverse interviews in that story that make it. It is now a part of everything that we do, part of every editorial meeting.”

— SAM FARAH, HEAD
OF BBC NEWS ARABIC



Staff Buy-In - 8 Best Practices

Once you've completed a thorough analysis of your workflow and planned your interventions, consider how you can inspire staff participation. Keep in mind that some staff may have experienced diversity initiatives in the past, with varying degrees of success, and maybe skeptical about how new interventions will be different. Others may feel overwhelmed by the introduction of an additional priority, given current demands on their time and attention. Still, others may not immediately recognize why increasing women as sources should be a priority of their own. Keep the follow best practices in mind.

1) CHOOSE A GOOD NAME

Work with your headline writers to find a catchy name for the initiative. A clever title will make it easier to remind people about the effort and talk about the initiative in meetings without having to explain it repeatedly. It can also serve as a powerful call-to-action.

2) MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT

Once you know the interventions you want to introduce, send an impactful message to all staff. Keep in mind the potential for resistance. Some may feel cynical or think they are being asked to source by quota or being told what to write. Others may feel overwhelmed with existing deadlines and priorities. Take your time to construct your message to strike the right tone and avoid miscommunication, including seeking feedback from peers. Make sure the message communicates the reason for the effort, that leadership is making it a priority, and what resources are being put behind it.

"Give a good reason. Give a reason that makes sense to them in their day, because you know it is going to cause them a little more work. Explain why it matters to them individually and for the organization."

— Irene Gentle, Editor at the Toronto Star

#BreakingtheHabit #MirroredInMedia #ReflectReality



3) KEEP UP COMMUNICATION

To ensure staff participation, plan periodic communications with the newsroom to remind people about the goal and to regularly report out the progress the team is making. Invite staff to share challenges, approaches, resources, and instances where they have had success. In time, you'll find little planning is required to develop this messaging as staff contribute content.

"How you communicate with and reward people is very important. We had emails to congratulate people when they were successful and to help explain strategies to those that were struggling. It requires constant follow up. If you have a presentation and leave it like that, it's likely people will go back to their old ways, not because they are not committed, but because they have so much to do. We now have a 30-minute meeting on Fridays, standing up. We ask, 'what was a story with women that performed well this week? Why? How did you do it?' I made a point of getting the producers involved because if you just have the service editors it won't cascade down as well as you like. This created a bit of a collegiate atmosphere. People started saying, 'I never thought of that' or 'that is interesting, can I do it?'"

— Julianna Iooty, Head of Asia Region, BBC World Service

4) BUILD MOMENTUM FROM THE BOTTOM UP

While the commitment and support of a newsroom's top leadership is critical, success may be better achieved when participation in new activities is built gradually from the ground up. Introduce activities that are voluntary and start by engaging a small group of staff (your champions) who you think will inspire their colleagues.

Don't try to convince the nay-sayers or staff who are less enthusiastic. Instead focus on supporting and reporting out the progress of staff who bring their energy to the effort, and trust that others will catch on.

5) CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Staff are encouraged to take part when they can see their colleagues participating and having success. Showing that progress is possible is important to maintaining momentum.

During their [Breaking the Habit 2.0](#) initiative, the Globe and Mail sent a note around the newsroom highlighting a story by education reporter, Caroline Alphonso. After specifically asking the teacher's union to recommend a female teacher qualified to speak to the issue of class size, Caroline found a great lead source, and the story went A1.



6) REWARD STAFF

Look for ways to reward staff who make progress towards inclusion. Consider including diversity goals as part of performance evaluations in a way that rewards progress but isn't punitive. At the Globe and Mail, the visuals team has four key goals that they aspire to and include in performance evaluations.

In addition to a focus on impact journalism, subscription growth and understanding audience analytics, staff evaluations consider diversity of voices and persons in stories. Another approach is to prioritize stories that reflect women and diversity by giving them greater visibility in the publication.

7) HOST A SPEAKER SERIES

By inviting guest speakers into the newsroom to share strategies for inclusion and gender equality, you not only provide staff with professional development opportunities, you keep the conversation around inclusion fresh.

As **Kathy English**, Public Editor at the Toronto Star explains, *"People are grateful for anything that is a training exercise that makes you stop and think about your work, and how you do your work."*

As part of their [Mirrored in Media](#) initiative the Toronto Star organized a Brown Bag with Shari Graydon from [Informed Opinions](#). Shari presented strategies for cultivating women as sources, when women may express reluctance.



8) CONSIDER DEVELOPING A SOURCING PROTOCOL

Set clear guidelines for how staff are expected to include sources in their stories. Dedicate time to going over this protocol during a reporter's on-boarding or any newsroom specific training. This way staff will be more likely to see gender balance in sourcing as a core part of their job.

Shari Graydon, Founder of Informed Opinions provides tips for reporters at the Toronto Star to include more women as sources in their stories

Sourcing Diverse Voices



By Laxmi Parthasarathy

COO, Global Press

[Global Press](#) is an international media organization that trains and employs local female reporters to produce ethical, accurate journalism from the world's least-covered places. Laxmi Parthasarathy from Global Press Institute shares their standards for sourcing diverse voices in their stories.

Diversity in our staff and diversity in the sources we include in our stories lead to more accurate reporting. In addition to incorporating the voice of women, we make certain our reporters know that a story is not complete without a minimum of four source types:

- **Newsmaker** – a person who is doing something newsworthy in his or her community.
- **Stakeholder** – person, people or groups who are affected by or have a direct interest in an issue or situation.
- **Affiliate** – a person with a close tie to another source who can verify information and provide additional details about past actions, emotions or insights.
- **Verifier** – a person who is not affiliated with another source, but shares expertise on a topic and can independently verify data, impact or other information.

Other possible sources are also explored such as:

- **Expert** – a person with great proximity to or knowledge of a topic, issue or area.
- **Government Official** – a person who is employed by and recognized as a member of a government body, party or ministry. They do not have to be an elected official.
- **Opponent** – a person who offers a different and contradictory point of view to another source in the story.

This requirement is the first step to ensure stories are complete, balanced and accurate.

Cultivating Sources - 8 Tips for Journalists

Once newsrooms and reporters are motivated to increase the number of women as sources in their news stories, how do they go about finding and cultivating more female sources? In many cases, it simply means taking the extra effort to sidestep an existing go-to source to find a qualified source who is also a woman. In other cases, it's not that simple. While in many places in the world women are on par or outperforming men in academia, and rising in the ranks in the business world, identifying interview-ready female sources and spokespersons remains a challenge even for highly motivated reporters. Presented here are some strategies that may help.



1) SEARCH EXISTING EXPERT DATABASES

Search for female experts in public databases. Dozens of lists of female experts are maintained representing specific industries and regions around the world. Many have sophisticated search functionality to help reporters find the right expert for their story. Some provide a periodic newsletter highlighting experts that can speak to that week's top news stories.

Review Reflect Reality's inventory of the best women-centric expert databases around the world.

2) BUILD AN EXPERT DATABASE

Also consider building a custom database or list of female sources for your newsroom or for a particularly challenging news beat. Ask reporters to add to it as they find new female sources.

Learn how an online database of Thai female experts was created in Bangkok. Reflect Reality spoke with Misako Ito, who managed the development of [UNESCO's Women Make the News Thailand](#), an online database of female experts for journalists.

3) HOST AN OPEN HOUSE

Newsrooms and journalists note that new sources often express a level of discomfort being interviewed, particularly on TV. A successful approach for the BBC, Bloomberg, and others is hosting events for potential sources to familiarize them with the newsroom and interview process.

4) APPEAL TO THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENTS

A key strategy for sourcing women in the news is to reach out to an organization's public relations department and ask for women who are qualified to speak to the area of interest. You can also help educate staff from the organizations you go to for sources about the importance of fielding female spokespersons.

5) ADOPT AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

It's important to remember that when women's voices are included as sources, they often represent women of more privileged groups. To ensure you are also sourcing the voices of women from diverse backgrounds, Giulia Dessi at the [Media Diversity Institute](#) encourages newsrooms and journalists to take an intersectional approach when planning stories and sources.

6) COLLABORATE WITH WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

To build out your expert list, reach out to professional associations. Explain your goal. They are likely aware of the lack of women's voice in their industry and will be happy to make introductions to their members.

As part of their efforts to cultivate a database of female sources, Bloomberg worked closely with the [Hawthorne Club](#), an association for women executives in the energy industry. The Toronto Star is collaborating with [She Innovates Alberta](#), an initiative to support women innovators and entrepreneurs.

7) PLAN AHEAD

Get in the habit of cultivating sources ahead of time, so you have a list of potential options once the news cycle for that topic heats up. For instance, dedicate some time to identifying potential female sources ahead of an election period, to speak on specific hot-button election issues.

8) LEVERAGE THE SOCIAL MEDIA DEPARTMENT

Task social media staff to identify potential news sources. As they post content to relevant social media channels and communities, they can also look for leads. This has proven successful for the Toronto Star.

See our Q&A with Evelyn Kwong, Social and Audience Lead at the Toronto Star.

Try an intersectional approach

By **Giulia Dessì**, [Media Diversity Institute](#)

Efforts to increase gender parity in the media often focus on strategies to increase the presence of women. But considering that the experience of women is shaped profoundly by their other social identities such as race, class, and sexuality, could the term “women”, when used uncritically, obscure a range of different subject positions? To avoid this, one suggestion is to adopt an intersectional perspective, which pays attention to the ways women’s lives are shaped by overlapping identities. This point of view challenges the assumption of “sameness of experience” and opens new approaches to making women’s voices heard.

[Scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw proposed the concept of “intersectionality” in 1989.](#) Crenshaw [defines intersectionality](#) as “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects.” She says: “It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.” In other words, the oppression of women is not homogeneous and immutable, but it shifts in relation to other social categories. For example, a [report by The Women’s Media Center](#), reveals how women of color typically face different forms of discrimination compared to white women, as well as specific, systemic obstacles that deter and prevent their representation in media.



Members of Northern Power Women, an association of women in business, gather for an Open Day at the BBC’s MediaCityUK studios in Salford, June 17th, 2019. Photo credit: BBC

Beyond simply seeking out women to source in news stories, taking an intersectional approach to news gathering can be more transformative in terms of fostering diversity. In some cases, where journalism supports social movements, it also helps to rethink the principle of objectivity in media. For example, taking an intersectional approach could mean developing stories around socio-political projects, in which activists from marginalized groups work as journalists to provide a more nuanced and embedded perspective of an issue. Alternatively, media practitioners who are not activists could co-produce content and cultivate horizontal relationships with sources. Intersectionality is a valuable lens that makes visible the range of different subject positions that the term “women” encompasses and provides the foundations for more inclusive forms of journalism.

Why do women with demonstrated expertise decline media interviews? And how can you overcome their reluctance?



By Shari Graydon

Founder, Informed Opinions

For 10 years, the Canadian-based non-profit organization [Informed Opinions](#) has trained and motivated more than 2,500 women across sectors and fields to share their experience and education-informed insights with reporters, producers, and editors. Here's what we've learned about the sometimes elusive but often valuable woman expert:

1. She may be motivated more by impact than public profile.

Unlike some of her more readily available male colleagues, she may not crave the spotlight, but be more focused on ensuring she makes a difference on the ground.

SO: Make clear, if you can, the value of your story and her contribution to it. How many people are affected by this issue? How important is it that her insights are present to counter the "other side" or offer nuance and analysis that otherwise won't be there? How big an audience will your story reach? What opportunity does this give her to shift views on something she cares about?

2. She knows she'll be held to a higher standard of authority than her male colleagues.

(Watching how prominent female politicians are covered has taught her that.) Plus, even if she has a Ph.D. or 25 years of experience, she's often conscious of who else in her field might be better suited to address a specific topic, and may confess, "I'm not the best person."

SO: Tell her that in your experience, there often is no single "best person," that you need someone who can add value, and that – based on the knowledge she has – you believe she can provide insight that will help your audience better understand the issue.

INFORMED
OPINIONS



3. She may or may not be aware of how under-represented women's voices are, and the broader consequences of their absence.

SO: Tell her that you're working to bridge the **gender gap in your reporting** so that the news media – and the policies and priorities they influence – reflect and account for the differing needs of women, children and many of society's most vulnerable.

Remind her that news media have an extraordinary capacity to draw attention to an issue or cause, and to educate policymakers, to help bring about change. Let her know a media profile increases the likelihood that decision-makers or funders will return her phone calls, give money to her cause, and pass laws she supports.

4. She may be worried about being trolled online.

This is especially true if her area of expertise relates to partisan politics, controversial identity issues or hot-button issues like climate change and migration.

SO: Let her know the **comment policy of your site or publication**. Consider disabling anonymous comments on controversial identity issues. Acknowledge that she may be criticized for speaking up – especially if she's advocating for society's most vulnerable. But remind her that if women with the privileges of education and employment, safe housing and secure food are not prepared to step forward, what hope is there for those without?

5. She may be time-challenged.

Chances are she is as busy as the rest of us. She may have caregiving duties or community volunteer commitments on top of a demanding job. Her time is probably highly scheduled. As a result, agreeing to an interview may do serious collateral damage to the rest of her day.

SO: Ask how you can accommodate her participation. Offer to interview by phone or Skype. If she has children, invite her to bring them along, allowing them to sit in the greenroom. Can you shift the time and pre-tape the interview, or accommodate her schedule in some other way?

6. She may be intimidated by an unfamiliar world.

Most people who are unfamiliar with a newsroom or who have little experience interacting with reporters and may find the prospect of an interview daunting. She may feel poorly equipped to effectively negotiate what's required.

SO: Look for ways to **demystify the process** by offering tours of your studio or newsroom to viewers or readers – in person or online. Answer 'Frequently Asked Questions' on your site and provide the page link to prospective sources.

ALSO: Offer **professional tips**. Let her know if a TV clip will be edited, and that she can start again if she stumbles. Tell her in advance that concrete examples or analogies make an issue more interesting and relatable than theoretical descriptions. Tell her if she doesn't know the precise answer to a posed question but can bridge to something relevant, that's also useful.

7. She may believe that hours of preparation are necessary.

SO: Let her know if you **only have room in your story for one 30-word quote**. Tell her that reading the executive summary of the new study or report, versus all 12,000 words, will likely allow her to provide useful context. And if you need a longer on-air discussion, let her know where you want to take the conversation, so she has a chance to think of pertinent examples or look up relevant data points.

8. She may have had bad experiences with other reporters.

She may object to sensationalist headlines, irresponsible reporting, de-contextualized data or misleading quotes. And so she may resist risking her public reputation in what feels like a high stakes game where she has no control over the end product.

SO: Be **deliberate about building trust** by being clear about what your angle is if you have one, or your genuine curiosity and openness to being surprised if

you don't. If the interview is seeking context for a complex issue (vs. accountability from a person in power) offer to send questions in advance. This is likely to result in much better, clearer and more helpful responses. She can review the relevant research, note specific numbers, or identify an example that will help your audience understand the topic more easily. Alternatively, permit a source with complex or technical expertise to review her quotes before publication to ensure that you haven't inadvertently introduced errors.

Acknowledge the need to make the issues accessible to a lay audience but assure her of your commitment to doing so responsibly. Mention your ombudsperson or public editor, if you have one.

ALSO: Consider inviting her written input, if your format allows. Let her answer by email or commission written commentary in her own words if she has a demonstrated capacity to translate her knowledge into accessible and engaging prose. The opportunity to reflect and check facts, to control the emphasis, and to incorporate nuance is sometimes irresistible.

FINALLY: Avoid framing the issue in black and white. Debate style programs that position a complex issue in simplistic and polarizing terms are often unappealing to thoughtful women.

How to counter female source reluctance:

JOURNALIST: Could you comment on this new development?

SOURCE: It's not exactly my specialty.

JOURNALIST: I believe you have insights that will be new to my readers.

SOURCE: I'm really not the best person.

JOURNALIST: I'm certain your context and analysis will add value.

SOURCE: I don't really have time.

JOURNALIST: **Did you know that women's reluctance to comment is one of the reasons that men's perspectives appear in the media four times more often?**

SOURCE: (momentarily flummoxed)

JOURNALIST: Here's what I'd like to know...



Informed Opinions

9. She understands that television is a visual medium.

She knows that viewers often judge women based on their appearance. (And she's probably her own harshest critic.)

SO: Let her know if your studio has a make-up artist or suggest a location with lighting that won't add 30 years to her face. Let her know if her entire body will be in the frame, or just head and shoulders. If you're calling several days in advance, volunteer information about what clothing and colors to choose or avoid.



Informed Opinions, Media Training for Women Experts



'There are more stories to be told'



Q&A with Evelyn Kwong

Digital Producer, Social and Audience Lead at the Toronto Star

Reflect Reality: As Social and Audience Lead how have you been involved in the Toronto Star's effort to diversify sources?

Kwong: My goal here is to find new audiences. I spend a lot of time meeting with new groups and talking to them, making a connection, [in this way] they also might end up becoming sources. I consult on stories in the newsroom to find a human lens or diverse voice, whether it is a female voice or part of the LGBTQ community, for example, because I have built these communities. People working in social media spend a lot of time building relationships.

My role molded into something different. Social media, before, was just posting stuff. Because there is a wide audience on social media, I thought it would be cool to find new groups of people and new stories. It all works

in a positive way. There are more stories to be told, there are more voices to represent. Whereas if we just write the same story over and over, it's not good for the brand either.

Another part of my job with social is finding and putting out ideas for stories that I think would be more representative of people. Of course, there is [breaking news] that has to go out, but as much as I can I look to put diverse voices, opinions or contributors out there because those are the ones that will get hits.

RR: How do you cultivate these communities and find diverse sources?

Kwong: A huge amount of research. It takes a long time. Facebook groups are a good place to start. I do social media, so I see a lot of this stuff and a lot of influencers on twitter. You can find specific, different, tight-knit communities by searching actual cases like 'black women of Toronto,' and from there you can find an amazing source. It is weird to be so direct but at the same time, you can't find people without doing it. If I need to find a sci-fi women's group, I'll go find them. A lot of the stories we've done with women and sci-fi result from reaching out to their [Facebook] group.

Sometimes I write stories as well, and a lot of stories I've written are a result of talking to these different groups. My latest one was about the Raptors and how basketball unites everyone, regardless of race or gender. I had been looking for basketball groups in Toronto, going deep into Facebook to find people and groups that generally don't have a voice. We found a great Muslim all-female Hijabi ballers group. Now that we've built that relationship, they have been helping give us sources to other stories. I talk to them and give them my email and encourage them to contact me. I will often pass off the ideas and sources they send me [to others in the newsroom].

It is your duty as reporters to be curious and take that extra step. For me, reaching out and gaining trust, visiting a mosque, for instance, is a hard step. But that is how it should be if you are trying to represent a place like this [Toronto] properly. You must be curious and not just use [as sources] friends of friends you've spoken to before.

STRATEGIES

For Businesses

To source more women in the news

It is not the sole responsibility of journalists and newsrooms to increase the voice of women in the news. While news producers play a central role, the business world outside of media must also do their part. Private businesses, government organizations and NGOs, which often equip only a small cohort of individuals to engage with the media, need to consider the gender balance of their representatives. Jo Sheldon, Executive Director at Edelman, explains what companies need to do to ensure diverse representation, and how journalists can better approach businesses to connect with women sources.





Newsrooms can't do it alone



By Jo Sheldon

Executive Director, Edelman

Media organizations around the world are starting to adapt their behavior to enable better gender representation in their output, finding effective strategies to increase the frequency and number of women they interview as expert sources. Yet newsrooms cannot be expected to solve the representation gap all on their own. One needs to consider the supply side - the industries where those interviewees are coming from. Companies play a big role in deciding the voices that appear in news stories, and they have a responsibility to help ensure women are represented. Yet there are certain challenges organizations face internally when fielding media spokespeople.

As a global PR business, communicating an organization's activities and what they stand for is what Edelman does. An important part of that work is helping to identify and train the right spokespeople for a range of communications engagements, including media interviews.

Like media outlets themselves, many companies know that gender equality is important to their core business and that their public communications should reflect that diversity, for a whole range of reasons. We see a number of obstacles to making this happen – and are helping our clients find solutions.

FIRST: Companies are not monitoring or keeping track of the diversity of the spokespeople they put forward.

Without data, the real nature of the problem is never identified, goals are never set, and there is little urgency to change the status quo. We are currently working closely with several of our clients alongside the [BBC 50:50 Project](#) to see how its highly effective monitoring processes can be adapted by businesses.

SECONDLY: Internal politics can be an issue.

In some organizations, an individual or group of individuals will see media interviews as their role. This makes diversifying the mix of spokespersons, especially if it is to more junior members of staff, a tricky issue to navigate. Companies need to keep this in mind and plan ahead to ensure a diverse group of people are able to speak to the media. We are working with our clients to build this awareness.

THIRDLY: Speaking on behalf of a company is a responsibility and, in some cases, can have a massive impact.

Media training is important for companies to have confidence in their spokespersons and for spokespeople to feel at ease in an environment that many find nerve-racking at best. If a female employee has not been media-trained she is unlikely to either volunteer or be offered up as a spokesperson. Edelman is actively working with our clients to encourage media training for diverse cohorts of employees.

Given these challenges, we also see strategies media organizations and journalists can take when reaching out to companies and PR departments, to have better results in soliciting more female voices.

CONSIDER EXPERT SOURCES OTHER THAN THE CEO:

Media organizations can often be very hierarchical in their requests for spokespeople. I've often been told that "it has to be the CEO" even when there are clearly others well qualified within the organization. Given that there are more men called Steve and David leading UK FTSE 100 listed companies than women and ethnic minorities combined and only 32 of Fortune 500 CEOs are female, you are, at the outset, eliminating a lot of female voices. Edelman's own [Trust Barometer](#) data shows that peers (a person like myself) and experts (particularly technical or academic experts) are the most trusted sources of information, anyway, far outstripping the CEO.

MAKE YOUR INTENTIONS KNOWN:

If you are a media organization that is actively engaged in seeking a better gender mix make sure you say so. Communications teams are generally gatekeepers of all media appearances. Once they understand that fielding a female spokesperson can materially alter their chances of coverage, it will yield results.

IDENTIFY THE QUALIFIED FEMALE SOURCE:

At the same time, try to identify the qualified female source before reaching out to PR departments. Journalists, conscious of wanting to incorporate more women's voices, may ask explicitly if there are women that can speak to certain expertise. Identifying a particular person ahead of time, rather than merely asking for a 'woman' is likely to yield better results.

HOST AN OPEN HOUSE:

Some media organizations are starting to open their doors to organizations with 'familiarization' days. I know from speaking to our clients that these are very welcome particularly when it comes to broadcast interviews. A live television interview is the single most terrifying media engagement for almost everyone I've trained for media interviews so understanding the layout, the format and how these interviews work ahead of time goes a long way to building confidence among potential sources.



STRATEGIES

To source more women in the news

For Journalism Trainers

Reflect Reality is a resource for journalism trainers who work for universities, non-profits, or media development organizations to increase the capacity of media outlets around the world to produce high-quality news and information relevant to the communities they serve.

Gender parity in sourcing is an important element for any journalism curriculum. Whether a training seeks to teach journalists how to properly cover a political election or report on an environmental issue, taking measures to ensure women are represented as sources and subject matter experts is critical. Equitable representation of women produces good journalism, it builds trust with audiences, and it helps fight gender bias in our societies. If you are an instructor or trainer, consider incorporating components of this handbook into your training courses and work plans.

Single training

For single training exercises utilize the research and statistics presented in [The Problem](#), to help your trainees understand the deficit of women sources in the news. For additional resources and statistics on gender equality in news content around the world visit the [Global Media Monitoring Projects 2015 Report](#). Incorporate the arguments and testimonials in [Making the Case](#) and in [Challenges](#), to communicate why it matters and what obstacles are limiting women's voice.

Training series

For extended training series, in addition to the above, select activities from [Strategies for News Producers](#) to implement with trainees and media partners.

Long term programs

If you have 6 months or more, you can implement a more robust program incorporating activities and elements from each of the four strategy categories: [Planning and Analysis](#), [Tracking](#), [Ensuring Staff Buy-In](#) and [Cultivating Sources](#).

Overcoming Strict Taboos to Achieve Gender Balance



By Chuck Rice

**President/CEO,
Developing Radio Partners**

The first time I trained TV journalists in Somaliland in March 2018, I naively had not anticipated that some male reporters would be reluctant to interview women. It's a fairly strict cultural taboo. Men and women don't really mix – especially if they are not related or have not been properly introduced to one another.

This can create a problem when covering the news.

I encountered this issue during my first field training exercise with a TV news crew in Hargeisa doing a story about students launching a clean-up campaign in their neighborhood. The all-male news crew was only interviewing male students, although girls were actively involved in picking up the litter.

I suggested the crew interview several of the girls in order to give the story balance. No one said anything, but I could tell there was a level of discomfort among the crew. I pushed a bit more and then the senior producer walked over and asked one of the female students if she'd be willing to talk on camera about the campaign.

She happily agreed.

It felt as if once the male reporters had gotten 'permission' to do the interview everything was OK, and I noticed, too, that the senior producer recognized that having a female in the story added depth to the story. I encouraged the TV news team to make a conscious effort in future stories to include more female voices, and I approached it from a purely economic point of view: by having more women on camera, the station would be reaching a much bigger potential audience.

I also offered the station another solution if some male reporters were reluctant to interview women – hire and train more female reporters.

This was a message that I took to all three TV newsrooms where I conducted trainings over a one-year period that ended on February 2019.

In the one newsroom that had two female reporters, the stories were much more diverse. Instead of focusing on traditional female roles – such as sewing and cooking – these women were tackling important issues that male reporters said they had not even considered covering



as news stories. These women focused on poor working conditions for women in the two large markets in Hargeisa, the potential fire hazards at the downtown market, the lack of female bathrooms at the national university, and domestic violence and rape.

Another way to increase female voices in societies where strict taboos restrict male-female contact is to train female experts to be comfortable on television. In a workshop in Hargeisa in February 2019, a dozen or so female entrepreneurs came together to do just that – to practice for future television appearances. They included business owners, bankers, and farmers.

Male and female reporters were on hand to conduct the interviews. I was amazed at the comfort level these women had in front of the cameras. The male reporters seemed to notice, too.

As viewers begin to see more and more female sources on their TV screens and more stories that affect women – and they are going to take notice – it's those stations that recognize the audience potential that will most likely thrive.

*Chuck Rice worked on an International Media Support (IMS) project during his time in Somaliland helping to foster gender representation.



Chuck Rice

Women Make the News, Thailand



Q&A with Misako Ito

Advisor for Communication and Information, UNESCO Bangkok

Misako Ito managed the development of [UNESCO's Women Make the News Thailand](#), an online database of female experts for journalists.

Reflect Reality: Why did UNESCO elect to build an expert database in Thailand?

Ito: The case of Thailand is very particular, because the reality of the status of gender equality [overall] is not so bad. Thailand is one of six countries in the world that has the highest level of women in leadership positions in business. It also has as many women as men who are scientists. But if you look at the content disseminated by the media, most women are commonly depicted as family figures, victims or sexual objects. Therefore, we felt the need to address this issue in Thailand.

RR: What topics does the expert database cover, and how were they determined?

Ito: We sent a very simple Google survey to journalists in Thailand asking them which areas they feel women's voices and women's expertise were missing in news coverage. The three areas they highlighted were climate change and environment; culture and history; and media, ICT and innovation.

RR: What was the process and resources required to build the database?

Ito: We built the database internally, with a very small amount of resources. It took about a year to develop the concept, collect data, design the platform and collect about 250 experts' profiles, with which to launch it.

We developed a very simple template to highlight a women's profile and then working through a network of NGOs to reach out to female experts in Bangkok and six of the provinces in Thailand. I think we have half of the women experts coming from outside the city.





RR: What were some of the challenges you experienced and how did you overcome them?

Women [often] did not recognize themselves as being an expert, so we had to convince them. We had to explain we wanted all kinds of expertise, not only women who have a Ph.D. but also women who are in business and community leadership positions. We had to train them to speak with the media. The most difficult part of the project is helping them feel confident, convincing them to share their profile publicly, and have them agree to be contacted by the media at any time.

When we launched the database, we hosted an event for media partners. Thai PBS and other national media organizations received staff training on how to use the database. We had trouble getting in with the private media, but we had a lot of interest from public media.

RR: What recommendations do you have for others who would like to build a similar resource?

Ito: If we were to do the project again, we might try to do it differently. I think a much more institutional approach with the biggest media, in which they help identify areas for which they need more female voices, would have a bigger impact. It could be designed more specifically to adapt the tool to their needs. We'd also like the women to be able to update their profiles in the database themselves.

We also lacked resources to train women experts. We organized a series of three trainings, but we could only train 60 of the 280 experts. That was specifically requested by the women. I also think that beyond the virtual connections with the journalists, it works to create a space where the journalists can meet physically with the women experts and create networks.



Facilitating the Meeting of Journalists with Women Leaders



By Angela Nicoara

Internews Project Lead, Tanzania

Research in 19 newsrooms in Tanzania reveals that men dominate the media, including as sources: 76% are male, while 23% are female (Gender Links, 2019). Much work needs to be done to create a viable space for women to express their opinions, concerns, and aspirations.

By organizing issue-oriented meetings that bring together journalists with women experts in Tanzania, Internews has been successful in increasing the number of stories that cite women as prime sources. Events have been organized around newsworthy issues in local communities.

“When the media reports on the struggles and successes of a woman, in any field, then other women learn from this coverage: it’s like a road map for them to follow.”

— CLARA MATIMO,
MTANZANIA JOURNALIST

In Dar es Salaam, we hosted a roundtable attended by 75 members of the city’s Maasai community including local journalists, to hear a presentation on the detrimental effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by Mackrine Rumanyika, Executive Director of the grassroots health advocacy organization Health Integrated Multisectoral Development (HIMD). Mackrine illustrated how FGM has devastating effects on a girl’s reproductive health and psychological well-being, and how her organization seeks to eradicate it by convincing female practitioners to abandon their knives in exchange for sheep. This ‘swap’ allows them to earn a living in a different way and enhances their social status.

Journalists were able to record face-to-face interviews with Mackrine - a remarkable public speaker. The audio was later incorporated in emotionally charged broadcasts that stimulated timely dialogue among Maasai in the city and their families in remote rural regions. The coverage and excitement around Mack-



Nanginyi Nalepo and Elizabeth Jama Laizer, in traditional Maasai dress, speak with journalist Theodatus Muchunguzi, of Nipashe newspaper, at right, and Shifa Hassan from the Media Council of Tanzania, at the Internews roundtable in Dar es Salaam. photo credit: Internews

rine’s ingenious solution resulted in follow-on engagement in and by Maasai communities.

On the island of Zanzibar, we hosted several roundtables addressing challenges facing young mothers, all well-attended by local media stakeholders, CSO leaders, and government officials. As a result, in Pemba Internews was able to surface stories of successful female entrepreneurs, highlighting both their income-generating activities and the considerable challenges they have all faced. For example, when

[Zuwena Iddi Ali](#), chairperson of a women’s scuba diving cooperative appeared in local media, her story generated a mixed reaction in the local community: some people praised Zuwena as a role model bringing important change, while others asserted that men – not women – should take more responsibility to provide for their families. The takeaway, as ever, is that media coverage of such events promotes vital discussion.

Internews work in Tanzania is funded by USAID.

Lessons from 'Women in News'



By Melanie Walker

**Director of Women in News,
World Association of News Publishers**

Around the world news media are waking up to the critical importance of gender balance in the content they produce and stories they cover. So how do media development and journalism trainers leverage this increased awareness to help media drive forward their gender balance commitments? How do we keep gender a priority among the multiple urgent priorities facing media today? And crucially, how do we ensure that our interventions are sustainable?

Establishing local leadership, developing a strong community, and delivering a compelling argument for gender balance to top management have helped the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) establish true partnerships with the media its [Women in News \(WIN\)](#) program engages.

WOMEN IN NEWS (WIN)

A gender and media freedom strategy of the World Association of News Publishers

For nearly a decade WIN has partnered with media around the world to increase women's voices and leadership in the news industry:

- Active in 15 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, MENA and Southeast Asia, with 80 media companies as long-term partners;
- 500+ women journalist and editor participants in the WIN Leadership Accelerator, which combines career coaching, peer mentoring, and networking alongside media management and newsroom leadership training;
- 400+ aspiring journalists mentored and trained by WIN alumnae;
- 1,000+ media managers who have undergone training in managing diversity, sexual harassment and gender balance in news content.

WIN is almost entirely locally driven, with 95% of the project management team and an extended network of more than 70 steering committee members, coaches, trainers and mentors drawn from our 15 intervention countries.



Women in News Malawi cohort

Prioritize Local Leadership

A major building block of any media development program is identifying local champions to help create critical support structures and networks of expertise. This has been particularly true for *Women in News*, which relies on a Steering Committee made up of current and former senior media executives drawn from each country where we operate. These individuals are highly respected in the industry and play an important role as local champions and door openers in their national and regional markets. Their counsel has been fundamental to WIN's sustainability.

When addressing issues such as discrimination, unconscious bias and sexual harassment among local media, all of which require sensitivity and a solid sense of local culture and context, the input of the Steering Committee, alongside our local trainers and subject-matter experts, is critical. The ability of the Steering Committee members to reflect on their own challenges to promote greater gender balance in their news content, from bylines through to expert sources (along with those cases when they have been unable to do so), brings a personal and relatable element to the discussions. This helps set the tone with the audience and encourages a meaningful dialogue from the outset. It is no coincidence that WIN has seen the most success in markets with proactive and engaged Steering Committee members.

TIPS: Prior to launching any activities, establish a local committee of influencers to help advise on the ground, and to open the necessary doors with key stakeholders. If you convince this group of the value of your approach and intended results, you will be able to launch projects more quickly and effectively, and with greater credibility. Be sure to solicit and listen to the counsel and feedback of this group of advisors. If you lose their engagement, it can lead to a negative ripple effect amongst your target audience.

Build community

Societal and cultural pressures can exclude women from developing their professional networks as part of their overall career strategy. For example, women do not receive the same mentorship opportunities as their male counterparts, or their obligations at home and to family mean they do not have as much freedom or time to develop their career.

Women in News has observed the impact of strengthening professional networks on the sustainability of our work. WIN is built upon a pyramid type structure that enables and encourages graduated participants of its programs to remain engaged with peers long past their initial enrollment, providing multiple opportunities for formal and informal networking. A survey revealed that 85% of the women who progress through one particular WIN program have mentored or trained a peer within their news organization with the skills that they acquired during the program, and 82% report a higher motivation to stay in the industry as a result of WIN. Graduates of WIN's Leadership Accelerator in turn become media leaders, advisors and gender champions in their own right, perpetuating a positive cycle of change. They are also the greatest proponents of the program, creating further touch points with a broader audience.

TIPS: Ensure you build multiple opportunities for networking into your activities, recognizing that in some cases, guided exercises are necessary. Work to create a dynamic that encourages peer-to-peer mentoring between participants to help nurture the knowledge-sharing and support structures that are at the heart of any community. And provide the platform and impetus to encourage interaction – this can be virtual as well as in person without incurring significant expense; WhatsApp and Facebook are key tools for the WIN community.

Create a compelling case with facts

Bringing about the necessary change in organizational culture to embrace a concrete gender strategy unequivocally resides at the very top of the media organization. Without buy-in from top management, any gender strategy will fail, no matter the good intentions or the resources placed behind it. While your target audience may be newsroom staff, HR or middle managers, your outcomes will be greatly enhanced with buy-in from those in the C-suite and on the governance boards of the organizations you target.

WIN identified quite quickly that the surest way to secure buy-in from key influencers was to present the business argument for greater gender balance (and conversely the organizational risks associated with environments that did not support it), always backed up by concrete numbers and local statistics as a means to drive home the message. It is difficult to argue against hard facts. WIN prioritizes conducting individualized research and preparation as part of its engagement strategy. For example, when we present a module on gender balance in news content, we work with actual figures from the newspaper, having tracked their content. We begin each session asking the room for estimates on how well they think they are performing along the gender balance index, before revealing the results of our own content audit. Often, the perceived level is much higher than the actual performance.



Women in Media, Media Management Training, Cairo, Egypt in 2018

TIPS: Securing buy-in from top management takes time and authentic engagement. Leverage all resources, including your local advisory group to make these necessary in-roads, and accept that changing mindsets and garnering deep engagement is a long-game that requires consistent and patient pursuit. Securing this buy-in, however, will pay off in all subsequent engagements with media organizations. WIN dedicated some 18-24 months engaging with and building relationships with senior management of target media, and remains focused on changing the mindset of top management. Fact-driven arguments that rely on local data and speak directly to the target audience will not only enhance your prospects of engagement but also increase your chances of delivering sustainable impact.

There are of course many ways to approach the case for gender equality and media development. Don't be afraid to pivot if you realize that you are attempting to fulfill a need that turns out not to be a major priority. Do the groundwork, again listening to your trusted group of advisors as you collect local intel. And should you identify existing programs already active on the ground, make the effort to coordinate actions rather than duplicating efforts. There is more than enough work to be done and working in silos is not only a waste of time and resources but can put unnecessary pressure on local partners to manage competing priorities and interests.



PILOT PROJECTS

Reflecting reality around the world

The Reflect Reality team engaged with newsrooms over the course of 2019 to test various approaches to increasing women sources. Pilot projects were initiated in Toronto, Canada with the Toronto Star and The Globe and Mail; in Erbil, Iraq through Internews' collaboration with local media and *Our Voices* project; and with the global, digitally-based Earth Journalism Network.

CHOOSING NEWS TEAM PARTNERS

When choosing our pilots, we leveraged the networks of the United for News coalition and Internews' global footprint. To ensure we would generate learning relevant to a global audience, we considered the following criteria:

- Outlets that were committed to quality and in-depth engagement;
- A range of publishers, representing both traditional and virtual newsrooms;
- Representation from different regions of the world, including different socio-economic conditions;
- Newsrooms that exhibited existing interest or progress towards gender equality, were close enough to allow for in-person visits, and that could commit requisite time and resources.

PILOT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Each news team was asked to choose a handful of activities to pilot over the course of five months. Reflect Reality presented a roadmap of options, recommending that activities fall within one of four thematic areas:

1. **Making the case:** Making gender parity in the newsroom a priority for staff and managers.
2. **Benchmarking and tracking:** Establishing a methodology for tracking the gender-split of sources.
3. **Newsroom practices:** Performing a process analysis, and setting goals for accountability measures.
4. **Cultivating sources:** Working to identify and maintain a pool of new sources for the news team to draw on.

Each pilot project was designed to lend insights for how news teams can launch and maintain gender equality initiatives with the greatest potential for success. While it was difficult to measure progress against actual numbers (see more below), we learned an immense amount about effective approaches, levels of adoption and momentum among staff, and the self-reported ability of reporters to source more diverse voices.



The Earth Journalism Network's Reporter Amrita Gupta with women from the Mahila Umang Producers Company in Ranikhet, Almora Uttarakhand, in August 2018 / Credit: Shriram Raviraj

Reflecting Reality in Toronto, Canada

A close look at Canada's leading online news media reveals that the aggregate ratio of female and male sources is estimated to be 28% and 72% respectively.

([Informed Opinions Gender Gap Tracker](#))

Overview

Between March and July 2019, The Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star worked with Reflect Reality staff to test a suite of strategies to increase female expert sources, as well as the diversity of sources beyond gender. Both newsrooms are well positioned to share expertise given their ongoing commitment to both advancing representation in their coverage, and their experience implementing gender equality initiatives. Staff at both newsrooms indicated they felt the time was right for a renewed focus on diversity of voice.

In March, both newsrooms consulted extensively with Reflect Reality and members of the United for News coalition to identify existing best practices and activities to launch as part of their pilot initiatives. The activities launched in April and the project leaders from both newsrooms participated on regular check-in calls with the Reflect Reality team to share feedback on successes and challenges.



While both newsrooms focused on gender, they each had an additional focus on increasing diversity of sources more broadly, including ethnic and cultural diversity. Toronto is considered one of the most multi-cultural cities in the world with over half of its residents belonging to one of several dozen visible minority groups ([Canada, 2016 Census](#)). In Toronto the need for and commitment to equal representation of women in the news goes together with equal representation of ethnic and cultural diversity.

Key Learnings

In July, after the pilot activities had been underway for four months, the Reflect Reality team spent two days in Toronto visiting the newsrooms and meeting with staff across departments, including news, sports, obits, visuals, social media, editors, etc. Interviews were conducted with over a dozen staff to gather insights on the pilot activities and impact. There was remarkable congruity in their feedback.

Tracking is critical

Both The Globe and the Star engaged in benchmarking and tracking work during their pilots. Almost all the people we spoke with highlighted tracking as the key driver of change. Building diversity and meaningful longitudinal data is a process that inherently takes time. The power of tracking is that it serves as a daily reminder to newsroom staff to act.

“You achieve what you measure”

— EDWARD KEENEN, CITY COLUMNIST AT THE TORONTO STAR



Count only what you can control

The Toronto pilots confirmed that the key to measuring success is to track only the sources that are within your control to change. This is a core strategy developed by the [BBC's 50:50 Project](#). Because breaking news coverage of certain topics, such as elections, major political scandals or sports story, necessitate reporters go to specific sources (who are often men), tracking these instances complicates the measurement of progress. This was the case for both The Globe and the Toronto Star, which both tracked all voices – including sources that they could not change, such as politicians, public officials, or sports stars. The start and end numbers of their counts did not show a meaningful difference, as they were inclusive of news days dominated by male news makers out of their control. While this gave them a full picture of the gender balance of their content, it gave them little insight into the impact of their efforts. Thus, a key learning that resulted from both pilots was to count only the sources where the reporters can make a choice.

Be strategic when announcing the initiatives

Both newsrooms took their time developing the initial messaging to the newsroom announcing, [Breaking the Habit 2.0](#) and [Mirrored in Media](#). In launching an initiative, it's important to get staff buy-in, generate excitement, and address everything from skepticism to workload.

Be aware that some staff may have experienced failed efforts in the past or might misinterpret the effort as part of a quota system. Others may not immediately understand the reasons behind the initiative. After carefully drafting their messages, the pilot leaders at both newsrooms asked peers to weigh in on the language.

Leadership is key, but momentum is built from the bottom

Almost all staff indicated that for an effort to be successful the staff must understand that the newsroom leadership considers it a priority. When leadership makes it clear to staff that they are paying attention to diversity, it gives staff the license to dedicate more of their time.

At the same time, both The Globe and The Star were careful to make their activities voluntary. Participation in the activities grew as the few staff who were initially enthusiastic about the effort shared their experience and successes with each-other.

“Our goal was to have it bubble up from the bottom, rather than pushed down – that is when things are a success.”

— JULIE CARL, SENIOR EDITOR,
THE TORONTO STAR

Industry must promote women

Staff at both newsrooms point out that there's a disparity of women empowered to speak to the media in some industries. Reporters stressed that companies and their PR departments need to make a concerted effort to diversify their spokespeople.

Leverage the entire newsroom

A successful strategy observed at The Star and The Globe was the ability to incorporate a variety of staff and departments in the effort. Beyond individual reporters, a number of people in the newsroom ultimately influence which sources are used. At The Globe, the visuals team helped flag articles that lacked diverse sources. At the Star, staff in the social media department served as important conduits for finding diverse community voices.

“I wanted to do something the entire newsroom could participate in.”

— MELISSA STASIUK, DEPUTY HEAD
OF PROGRAMMING, THE GLOBE

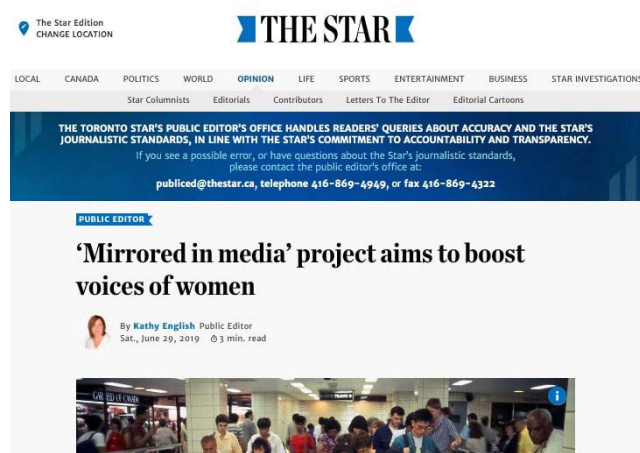
Mirrored in Media



The [Toronto Star](#), founded in 1892, is part of the Torstar Group's Daily News Brands, which includes six regional dailies across Ontario, Canada.

Overview

The Toronto Star staff has seen several diversity initiatives come and go over the years, with varying levels of success. Now, in the context of the #MeToo movement, the Star felt the time was ripe for an approach that would engage staff across the newsroom and keep the issue of diversity top of mind on a day-to-day basis. Senior Editor Julie Carl led *Mirrored in Media*, implementing the following activities.



Article by Kathy English, Public Editor at the Toronto Star

FORMATION OF A DIVERSITY TASK FORCE

To launch *Mirrored in Media*, Julie formed a special task force of staff, each with experience or an interest in diversity, to help design and evolve the project. To ensure genuine effort behind the initiative, participation on the task force was voluntary. An initial group of seven people helped outline the work the newsroom would engage in and communicate on a regular basis. As the initiative got underway and the staff began to interact with their colleagues and share ideas, participation on the task force grew to 13 members, representing most departments across the newsroom.

See the [article](#) about *Mirrored in Media* and the diversity task force published by the Star's Public Editor, Kathy English.

'LUNCH AND LEARN'

The task force elected to organize regular guest speakers on the topic of building diversity. These 'Lunch and Learn' sessions not only afforded staff the opportunity to learn new approaches and develop their skills as reporters, but the periodic brown bags helped maintain conversations about diversity in the newsroom.



“In everything I do now, I am aware of my personal accountability in helping to dismantle the systems of oppression and exclusion that have been built up all around us.”

— CATHERINE PHILLIPS, TEAM LEADER IN DATA, AND MEMBER OF THE DIVERSITY TASKFORCE, TORONTO STAR

SIX-WEEK AUDIT OF A1 PAGES

The task force started their work with an audit of the paper’s A1 pages to benchmark, and thus better understand, the Star’s current record on sourcing women and diverse voices. The numbers would tell the task force which areas of the newsroom and content required the greatest attention. They would also be used to announce the initiative to the larger newsroom and highlight the importance of the effort for editors. The audit was conducted manually each morning over the course of six weeks by Julie, and involved tallying the gender and diversity of sources and persons in photos. This audit showed that while the gender split in photos was balanced, only 24-26% of expert sources in stories were women.

Toronto Star, Star journalists brainstorm their reasons for diverse sourcing



“It is, quite simply, the morally correct thing to do. It is also the journalistically correct thing to do, in order to not have the same voices singing the same songs, time after time. Being predictable is a fatal flaw for any writer, and will eventually turn off readers.”

— JOSH RUBIN BUSINESS REPORTER, TORONTO STAR

As part of the pilot activities, the Toronto Star is pursuing two additional activities. One is to build a ‘Memory Jog,’ which is essentially a CMS widget that reminds reporters in the process of filing a story to include a female source. The second activity is to create a custom database of female experts, building off existing public resources and contacting women’s professional associations for industries in which sources are particularly needed.

ONGOING GENDER BALANCE TRACKING

After establishing the baseline, a key part of the project was to develop a tracking exercise to measure gender and diversity ratios daily. A core piece of the methodology was to signal opportunities for greater conversation between editors and reporters on the topic of diversity of voice.

The count was conducted nightly by the radio room reporters. Staff tracked the gender and diversity of sources in articles and of people in photos. Stories from all sections of the paper were included in the count, with tallies by section front, inside pages and by all sections combined. The percentage of men versus women for both photos and sources were entered in a digital spreadsheet with columns to delineate diversity as well, including the breakdown of women and men of color. Staff conducting the count reached out to reporters to verify gender and ethnicity when they had doubts, and the spreadsheet also included a column to tally unknowns.

Reflect Reality spoke with Toronto Star reporter Temur Durani, who took part in the tracking.



Breaking the Habit 2.0

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Founded in 1844, [The Globe and Mail](#) is one of Canada’s most widely read newspapers reaching 6.7 million readers every week across print or digital formats.

Overview

For their pilot, The Globe and Mail was excited to re-commit to an initiative they tried 3 years ago, called “Breaking the Habit.”

In 2016, The Globe challenged staff to increase the extent they sourced women in their stories. For six weeks – the length of time generally considered necessary to develop or break a habit – an email was sent each Monday sharing recommended strategies and followed up each Friday with a mini report card. The effort developed significant momentum within the newsroom, with the phrase “Breaking the Habit” becoming an enduring call-to-action.

Fast forward to April 2019, when The Globe and Mail relaunched *Breaking the Habit* version 2.0. This time led by Deputy Head of Programming Melissa Stasiuk. Melissa decided to focus on the following activities.

PUBLIC EDITOR

Let’s hear from more diverse voices



SYLVIA STEAD >
PUBLISHED MARCH 29, 2019

PUBLISHED MARCH 29, 2019

This article was published more than 6 months ago. Some information in it may no longer be current.

7 COMMENTS SHARE



Article by Sylvia Stead,
Public Editor at The Globe and Mail

BENCHMARKING THE GENDER-SPLIT OF SOURCES

Breaking the Habit 2.0 kicked off with an audit of The Globe’s current record on sourcing women and diverse sources. The results were used in an initial email announcement to build awareness with newsroom staff. The audit involved manually tallying the gender and diversity of bylines, writers, sources and persons in photos for all staff stories, in all sections of the print newspaper, for five weeks. The count was conducted daily by The Globe’s Public Editor, Sylvia Stead, requiring about 20 minutes of her time each morning. Sylvia found that just 28% of sources were women. Read her [article](#) sharing the results of her count.

The Globe had also previously developed an automated tool to track gender and diversity in photos. As part of the pilot project and to build on the success of their photo tracker, The Globe’s data science team began investigating the development of an algorithm to track the gender of sources.

“What we are trying to do is break people’s habits. The intention is there, it’s just that when we are busy, we do things the exact same ways as always.”

— ANGELA PACIENZA, MANAGING EDITOR, EXPERIENCE, THE GLOBE AND MAIL

NEWSROOM CHALLENGE

At the core of 2.0 was a challenge to reporters to never file a story that did not include at least one female source. The goal was to see how many days each person could go before breaking the streak, and then use that as an opportunity for conversations about challenges and potential solutions. The challenge was voluntary, and reporters were asked to keep track and report their progress periodically. The editing team assisted in keeping track of progress and flagged instances of articles that did not include a female voice as an opportunity for a discussion with the reporter.



A visual reminder is posted to the screen of The Globe and Mail reporter, James Bradshaw. He has cultivated a list of women sources in the male dominated banking sector, at the CEO, senior executive and board member levels.

“Knowledge is based on what you read and who you hear from. Narrowness of views, and so-called experts who hog the microphones, are often just selling their wares. We support this initiative because we need to think harder about who it is we want to amplify and equally important how we do it. If the same people share the same stage all the time, we reduce our debate at precisely the time our debate needs to be open and wide-ranging.”

— DAVID WALMSLEY, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AT THE GLOBE AND MAIL

FOSTER POSITIVE, ONGOING COMMUNICATION

For The Globe, a major focus of the pilot was to encourage ongoing conversation in which staff regularly shared both their challenges and successes towards building gender equality and diversity. The intention was not only for reporters to learn new tips and tricks, but for them to be inspired to action by their colleagues. To encourage these exchanges, Melissa sent out periodic newsletters providing resources and highlighting specific staff experiences, which she gathered by meeting one-on-one with participating reporters.



Aswatouna (Our Voices)



ASWATOUNA (OUR VOICES)

In 2019 Internews launched *Aswatouna (Our Voices)* a 3-year media program designed to help women participate equally as citizens and decision-makers in Erbil, Iraq. The program provides a holistic approach to increasing women's voices in news and information through: Providing training to journalists to produce gender-sensitive content and reporting that is relevant to the needs of women; Building leadership opportunities for women in media and strengthening their ability to cope with gender-based violence online; and educating Iraqi women on their political and economic rights and participation.

Overview

The project is joining with Reflect Reality to pilot an initiative in Iraq to increase the extent to which women are sourced as subject matter experts in the news.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Gender analysis of Iraqi media and information landscape: A baseline that highlights the project realistic necessity on both strategic and implementation level.
- A national database of women experts: Featuring Iraqi female subject matter experts from different industries, such as economics, politics, conflict, and science.
- Training of women experts in media and communications skills: To complement the database, a two-day intensive media training for select women experts will help ensure they feel comfortable and equipped to be interviewed by local and national media on and off-camera.
- Training journalists on gender sensitive reporting: A series of training will be provided throughout the project to raise the quality of Iraqi journalists' reporting on human rights and women issues content in media.

LAUNCH EVENT

Internews hosted a launch event to introduce the project and its goals to the media. Held in Erbil, Iraq, in June 2019, the event was a way to both highlight the importance of the gender gap in the media and to encourage broad participation of the media sector in future activities.

The TV, radio, newspaper and online news outlets that attended the event shared their experiences and challenges related to gender inequalities in the newsroom and the media, and highlighted key obstacles limiting women's voice and participation.



Internews, Our Voices Launch Event in Erbil, Iraq

Obstacles limiting women's voice in Iraqi media:

- Social norms that perpetuate the view that women's appropriate place is at home.
- A negative cultural perception of media as not suitable for families and women working in media, viewed as taboo or alarming.
- Harassment, mainly sexual, directed at female journalists in the newsroom.
- Lack of written policies or leadership mandate to advance women in management in the newsroom.
- Lack of social insurance or journalism laws that help protect women's right and ability to work.
- Limited participation of women in political and economic sectors.
- A patriarchal environment that provides more opportunity for men to grow and develop skills in the workplace.

Recommended interventions:

- Increase public debate on women's human rights and gender equality.
- Expand access for women to information, which they need to make informed decisions and choices and to actively participate in democratic and peace-building processes.
- Improve resilience of women against online and offline gender-based attacks.
- Build the capacity of Iraqi journalists to produce high quality inclusive content focused on women's rights and gender equality.
- Produce content that challenges legal codes and social norms that still prioritize male opinions, and content that highlights issues that negatively affect Iraqi women and girls, such as gender-based violence, sexual assault, and laws limiting women's independence.



Internews, Our Voices Launch Event in Erbil, Iraq

- Include more female writers and more women as sources.
- Engage media outlet managers and government stakeholders in dialogue about harassment in newsrooms and female journalists' safety in a broader sense.
- Increase leadership opportunities for women in the Iraqi media and information space.
- Create awareness raising programs for men and women on women's political and economic rights.
- Improve women's access to high quality content in Iraqi media outlets, raising underrepresented women's voices in Iraq.

- Advocate for Iraqi women's rights and their full social, political and economic inclusion and participation in democratic and peace building processes in Iraq.
- Engage men in the above efforts to help elevate women's voices.

In addition to advancing gender equality and women's voices in Iraqi media, learnings developed through the *Our Voices* activities related to sourcing women experts will further inform the strategies presented in *Reflect Reality*.

Our Voices is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).



Internews, Our Voices Launch Event in Erbil, Iraq

Reflecting Reality with Earth Journalism Network



The [Earth Journalism Network](#) (EJN), a project of Internews, is a fast-growing membership community of nearly 10,000 journalists reporting across approximately 130 countries, including countries particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate and environmental change. Since 2004, in addition to publishing news through its digital [media site](#), EJN has provided its members with the mentorship, training, knowledge sharing and networking opportunities they need to produce more extensive and impactful reporting.

Overview

Internews' Earth Journalism Network tapped around 1,500 environmental reporters from its global community to analyze how women are included as sources in stories in collaboration with Reflect Reality. EJN has long

prioritized the inclusion of diverse voices in the reporting it supports, recognizing that women and marginalized groups often suffer the greatest from the impacts of climate and environmental change, and have a crucial role to play in responding to those challenges. Including women's voices has been a particular goal for EJN's *Bay of Bengal* and *Asia-Pacific* projects. As part of their pilot initiative, EJN put in place a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system to track women's voices in stories produced for both projects. This included tracking whether women were featured as participants, experts or sources, and if the stories touched on gender related issues. By analyzing how and when women appeared as sources, EJN sought to better understand the extent to which they were delivering on that goal.

EJN's largest current project covers the Asia-Pacific, a biologically, politically and culturally diverse region facing severe threats from air and water pollution, warming oceans and increasingly severe weather, among other things.

Through its [Asia-Pacific Project](#), EJN offers media workshops, mentorship, and reporting grants to support story production specific to the environment and natural resource management, as well as resources to help journalists and media outlets enhance their ability to report on these issues. Similarly, the [Bay of Bengal Climate Resiliency Initiative](#) focuses on boosting climate justice and resilience by exploring new ways to bring environmental coverage to coastal communities across Eastern India and Bangladesh.

To begin the pilot project, Reflect Reality consulted with EJN's Managing Editor, Sara Schonhardt, to help lay out the objectives and design of the analysis. EJN's *Asia-Pacific* and *Bay of Bengal* projects were selected for assessment because they are currently the largest projects and have story grantees regularly producing stories. Two activities were selected to be carried out as part of the pilot.



BENCHMARKING

By counting the number of women sources in each story, EJN hoped to gather a collective picture of the gender gap in sourcing and observe potential trend lines that could inform future outreach and capacity building. For this exercise, Reflect Reality worked with the EJN team to custom design a tracking spreadsheet to count the number of female sources in each story, across a representative sample of each program's content. They also tracked other indicators, such as story premise and genre, gender of the author, and types of women sources (personal experience, eyewitness, expert/scientist, NGO/activist, and government/state official).



Journalist participants of the Center for Women's Resources' digital storytelling training on women and environment visit areas devastated by the 2009 tropical storm Ketsana (Ondoy) in the Philippines, to speak with women survivors. The training is part of the #HerStoryOurStory project supported by EJN at Internews. Photo credit: CWR



The Earth Journalism Network's Reporter Amrita Gupta with women from the Mahila Umang Producers Company in Ranikhet, Almora Uttarakhand, in August 2018 / Credit: Shriram Raviraj

MEMBER SURVEY

A [survey](#) was prepared and sent to a dedicated listserve of EJN member journalists, inquiring about their thoughts on gender equality in environmental reporting and what they might already be doing to source women in their stories. EJN plans to use feedback from the survey to develop future activities aimed at addressing some of the needs respondents outlined.

Key Learnings

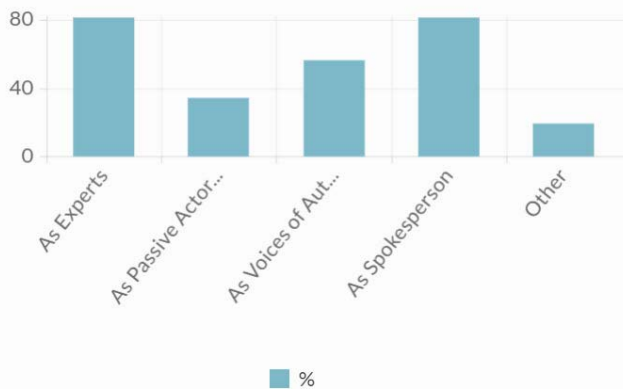
Key Learnings: Forty journalists from around the world responded to the survey with their thoughts on the current status of gender equality in environmental journalism. They also shared their own efforts to source women in their stories.

- Most respondents indicated that while they believe environmental journalism today includes the voices and viewpoints of women, women are less represented or severely less represented than men.
- More than 3 out of 4 respondents indicated that achieving gender balance in terms of the experts and voices sourced in stories is important, with nearly the same number indicating that they actively consider women's voices and sourcing

women in their stories. Several respondents indicated they use the expert database [500 Women Scientists](#).

- 62% of respondents said that it was difficult to find women experts to interview for stories. Yet when women did appear in stories, respondents overwhelmingly said they were represented as experts (82%) or spokespersons (82%) compared to passive actors, such as witnesses or personal opinions (35%). It's unclear why this disconnect occurred, though it may be because respondents felt their sources had agency, even if speaking about a personal experience.
- 3 in 4 respondents indicated that they have not received any gender-sensitivity training. Numerous respondents indicated they would appreciate more resources regarding gender balance in their reporting, including both training and access to expert databases.

When women do appear in your stories how are they represented?



Answered: 40 Skipped: 0 | Tracking Women Sources in our Stories

Is it more difficult to find women experts to interview for your stories?



Answered: 40 Skipped: 0 | Tracking Woman Sources in our Stories

Results and feedback from Benchmarking

While the benchmarking activity is still underway, at the time of this publication, Schonhardt, as EJN’s editor, had reviewed 54 of EJN’s stories from their Asia Pacific and Bay of Bengal projects published or broadcast over the last two years. Of those stories, approximately 35% of the sources were women. Among the female sources, 52% represented a source of personal experience (someone sharing how the issue at the heart of the story had impacted them), 25% represented a subject matter expert or government official, 16% represented an activist or NGO worker, and the remaining 7% represented an eyewitness.

The stories that had more than two-thirds of women as sources were predominantly written by female reporters, with most focused-on women’s role in farming, agriculture or land stewardship. In most cases, though not always, stories with high numbers of female sources were written by women reporters.

Through this initial benchmarking exercise, Schonhardt encountered a variety of challenges that may lead her to adapt the tracking spreadsheet and methodology going forward. One key challenge relates to the issue of a source’s agency, particularly for personal experience sources. Often the experiences told by women in these stories highlight their expertise in an area. While they did not have the background or credentials to be classified as an “expert”, Schonhardt felt that these women did exhibit a level of agency or authority that the classification ‘personal experience’ didn’t adequately encompass. For this reason, the results of the benchmarking exercise may not accurately reflect the level of authoritative female voices EJN’s content exhibits.

For example, in the article, “[Indian tribe revives heirloom seeds for health and climate security](#),” the role and agency the local women exhibit in adapting their crops to the changing climate, is a good example of how female characters who share their personal experience challenge who we consider to be an expert. The



Participants of the Center for Women’s Resources’ digital storytelling training on women and environment visit areas devastated by the 2009 tropical storm Ketsana (Ondoy) in the Philippines, to speak with women survivors. The training is part of the #HerStoryOurStory project supported by EJN at Internews. Photo credit: CWR

Reverend Lennox Yearwood, President and CEO of the Hip Hop Caucus, has referred to these experts as “Geniuses Outside the Academy.”

In another example from the article, “[Mekong coffee growers struggle with drought and a warming climate](#),” a female farmer who serves as a key source could be classified as an expert, but because she is sharing her personal experience with coffee farming she was counted in that category. Thus, classifying personal experience sources in this way doesn’t allow for an entirely accurate picture of the role women play in particular stories.

Another issue encountered with the chosen benchmarking methodology was the lack of a category for entrepreneurs or business owners. Nor was there a relevant category for women who were village heads (non-state officials) or a non-state authority.

The pilot project builds on other gender tracking methods EJN has used, including a regular content analysis, to determine areas for improvement. And while the survey didn’t draw a huge response, it did elicit several important insights, including a link to a study conducted by Zofeen Ebrahim, journalist and editor at the EJN-supported GeoJournalism site, The Third Pole. It analyzed gender balance in environmental coverage

in Pakistan and found that of 278 stories related to the environment, only 22.3% were written by women. There were also few women experts, scientists and politicians quoted, the report noted.

“My findings prove that generally women’s voices remain conspicuously missing – from the field, at the policy level and in government’s line departments,” Ebrahim said.

“When we come to writing on environment, because fewer women journalists are taking up these issues, we never find out how it affects them,” she added. “Their stories and their travails – or even stories of their resilience in the face of climate change – remain untold.”

Written Feedback from Survey Respondents

“People are keen to read the perspectives of women leaders in the environment and biodiversity sector. Communities respond more if stories have women leaders/groups.”

“[When women’s voices are included] their visibility increases, then others also start approaching them for opinions as experts...and as central figures in stories of impact, their perspective starts to gain credence in policymaking and also relief efforts.”

“For me experts are experts, and I did not experience any difference if I talk to a female or male expert. Every expert has her or his unique perspective. That makes reporting so thrilling.”

“Women are sometimes reluctant to share views and more reluctant to be quoted, especially if the stories are sensitive in nature.”

“This assumes there is a need for “gender balance” in reporting, which there is not. We need to cover affected people and those who are creating change. What difference does it matter what sex they are?”

EJN receives funding from a range of sources. It’s four-year Asia-Pacific project is supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and its three-year Bay of Bengal project gets support from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund.



EIJN reporter, Sahana Ghosh, with a group of women who created a resilience fund post Cyclone Fani in Odisha, India
Credit: Durga Dey of NGO Spandan

How to use the Sample Tracking Template

The template on the previous page has been designed for newsteams or journalists to adapt to their own needs, with built-in formulas to calculate monthly totals. While suggestions for categories are included in the template, each of the cells in row 3 can be adapted, depending on the type of content, voices and source functions being tracked. Additional fields are provided in columns T-W to track diverse voices beyond gender. Depending on the media market, it may be important to pay attention to the extent you are sourcing certain ethnic or gender non-binary communities.

Definitions of suggested source functions:

Expert or commentator: The person provides additional information, opinion or comment, based on specialist knowledge or expertise.

Spokesperson: The person represents or speaks on behalf of another person, a group or an organisation.

Government Representative: The person represents someone in office, a politician, campaign worker, or a government staff worker.

Subject of the story: The story is about this person, or about something the person has done or said.

Eyewitness: The person gives testimony or comment, based on direct observation (e.g. being present at an event).

Popular opinion: The person's opinion is assumed to reflect that of the 'ordinary citizen' (e.g., in a street interview, vox populi, etc.); it is implied that the person's point of view is shared by a wider group of people.

Personal experience: The person provides opinion or comment based on individual personal experience; the opinion is not necessarily meant to reflect the views of a wider group.

Victim: The person is quoted with regards to being the target of a particular assault or crime.

Tracking Best Practices

Count what you can control: For some news stories you have little choice over who to source (i.e. stories about political candidates). Focus on tracking the gender of sources that are in your power to change.

Evaluate at the end of the month: Reflect on results at the end of each month, for a more accurate account of your sourcing practice and gender balance.

Share the results: Be transparent with the newsroom. Regularly share the latest results of the tracking, so staff can see where there is progress and work still to be done.

Inspire friendly competition: Share results between journalists and news teams so staff can track how they are doing against their peers.

Use tracking to spark conversation: Use the results to engage staff and individual journalists in conversation about their workflow and process they use to identify sources.

Promote self-tracking: Tracking has the greatest impact when news teams and individual journalists track content.



Connect with Experts

Dozens of lists of female expert databases are maintained around the world representing specific industries and countries. Many have sophisticated search functionality to help reporters find the right expert for their story. Some provide a periodic newsletter highlighting experts that can speak to that week's top news stories.

Review Reflect Reality's inventory of the best women-centric expert databases by region.

Global

WOMEN ALSO KNOW STUFF

Global database of experts in Political Science. Search by country, research interest or university, and more.

Region: Global

Industry: Political Science

Website:

<https://womenalsoknowstuff.com/>

500 WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Robust database of women scientists, search by discipline, location, keyword and more

Region: Global

Industry: General Science

Website: <https://500womenscientists.org/request-a-scientist>

WOMEN ALSO KNOW HISTORY (inspired by Women Also Know Stuff)

An easily searchable database providing the credentials and areas of expertise for thousands of female historians.

Region: Global

Industry: History

Website:

<https://womenalsoknowhistory.com/search/>

WOMEN IN CHEMISTRY

Several hundred women scientists in theoretical/computational chemistry, material science, and biochemistry.

Region: Global

Industry: Chemistry

Website:

<http://iopenshell.usc.edu/wtc/directory.html>

WOMEN IN MACHINE LEARNING

Directory of several hundred women in machine learning.

Region: Global

Industry: Machine Learning

Website: https://wimlworkshop.org/sh_projects/directory/

ANNESLIST

Exhaustive list of women in neuroscience, broken down by areas of focus.

Region: Global

Industry: Neuroscience

Website: <https://anneslist.net/>

DIVERSE SOURCES

Searchable database of hundreds of under-represented experts in science, health and the environment, ready to be interviewed.

Region: Global

Industry: Science, Health and Environment

Website: <https://diversesources.org/>

ACADEMICNET

Global database of several hundred women leaders and scientists in academia, searchable by field.

Region: Global

Industry: General Science

Website: <http://www.academia-net.org/>

DIVERSIFY CHEMISTRY

Curated, searchable list of nearly 400 diverse academic chemists, searchable by gender.

Region: Global

Industry: Chemistry

Website: <https://diversifychemistry.com/entries/>

DIVERSIFY EEB

Thorough and searchable compilation of over 1,500 diverse and female ecologist and evolutionary biologists.

Region: Global

Industry: Ecologists/Evolutionary Biologists

Website: <https://diversifyeeb.com/entries/>

SCILINE

Free professional service that connects journalists on deadlines to experts in all scientific fields.

Region: Global

Industry: General Science

Website: <https://www.sciline.org/i-need-an-expert>



WOMEN IN MICROBIOLOGY

Curated Google doc, listing hundreds of women experts in Microbiology around the world.

Region: Global

Industry: Microbiology

Website: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xw6W2noEUrpc5AF-bLgkBGwR1KHIBnay2M9fT_bHaxqk/edit#gid=1169038979

WOMEN 4 OCEANS

Exhaustive database of women working across the world to save our oceans. Includes interactive world map.

Region: Global

Industry: Ocean Science

Website: <https://women4oceans.weebly.com/ocean-women.html>

WOMEN IN SOIL SCIENCE

Searchable database that connects journalists to members of the Soil Science Society of America

Region: Global

Industry: Soil Science

Website: <https://www.soils.org/expertise>

LIST OF WOMEN IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

Concise list of women both known and unknown, in the world of computer science.

Region: Global

Industry: Computer Science

Website: https://geekfeminism.wikia.org/wiki/List_of_women_in_Computer_Science

IOPENSHELL

Comprehensive directory of hundreds of women in theoretical/computational chemistry, material science and biochemistry.

Region: Global

Industry: Computational chemistry, material science, and biochemistry

Website: <http://iopenshell.usc.edu/wtc/directory.html>

WOMEN IN PROBABILITY

Global list of a few hundred women in probability-related research, grouped by geography

Region: Global

Industry: Probability

Website: <http://womeninprobability.org/People.html>

INTERVIEWHER

Comprehensive global database of women sources on peace and security, by local geography.

Region: Global

Industry: Conflict, Peace, and Security

Website: <https://interview-her.com/>

FOREIGN POLICY INTERRUPTED

Directory of foreign policy experts, searchable by topic or country of expertise, highlighting 'in the news' topic experts

Region: Global

Industry: Foreign Policy

Website:

<http://www.fpinterrupted.com/expert-lists/>

WILS DATABASE OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE

Searchable list of several hundred women in science.

Region: Global

Industry: General Science

Website: <http://www.embo.org/science-policy/women-in-science/wils-database-of-women-in-life-sciences>

WIKIPEDIAN: WOMEN COMPUTER SCIENTISTS BY NATIONALITY

Wikipedia page highlighting female computer scientists by nationality.

Region: Wikipedia (can search for women experts in...)

Industry: Computer Science

Website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Women_computer_scientists_by_nationality

TITWOMEN WAGING PEACE NETWORKLE

1,000 female negotiators, experts, advocates, policymakers from around the world, searchable by region and country.

Region: Global

Industry: Peace Negotiations

Website: <https://www.sandiego.edu/peace/institutes/ipj/programs/women-waging-peace-network.php>



North America

INFORMED OPINIONS EXPERT NETWORK

Searchable database providing detailed profiles on hundreds of female experts across disciplines.

Region: North America/Canada

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://informedopinions.org/find-experts/>

Newsletter: <https://informedopinions.org/sign-up/journalists-conference-planners-sign-up/>

SHE SOURCE EXPERT DATABASE

Professional database allowing users to search through thousands of female sources across a wide range of expertise.

Region: US / Global

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <http://www.womensmediacenter.com/shesource/>

Newsletter: <https://tools.shesource.org/page/s/journalist-sign-up/>

WOMEN AND COLOR

Easily searchable database for women of color across the tech industry.

Region: North America

Industry: Technology / Women in business

Website:

<https://www.womenandcolor.com/>

SOURCELIST

Easy to use database for qualified experts across a wide range of topics particularly technology policy.

Region: US

Industry: Tech Policy

Website: <https://womenplus.sourcelist.org/experts.html>

AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY

Searchable list of women physicists ready for speaking engagements.

Region: North America

Industry: Physics

Website: <https://www.aps.org/programs/women/speakers/index.cfm>

NPR

Highly curated database of diverse sources from many fields.

Region: US / Global

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://sources.npr.org/>

WOMEN OF COLOR ADVANCING PEACE AND SECURITY (WCAPS)

Peace, security and conflict specialist listed by area of expertise.

Region: North America, mostly US

Industry: Peace and Security

Website:

<https://www.wcaps.org/listserv-overview>

WOMEN, NONBINARY, AND POC MEDIA EXPERTS

Well-organized Google document containing over 100 women, non-binary, and people of color who are experts in the media industry.

Region: US / Global

Industry: Media

Website: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15rUHHE7aCH8eCrf-WewSyfrWpJkT1nTqRA2_NkrMINs0/edit#gid=16835773

WOMEN IN NUMBER THEORY

Female number theorists, listed by research speciality and region.

Region: US

Industry: Number Theory

Website: http://womeninnumbertheory.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=6&Itemid=13

WOMEN & NON-BINARY PEOPLE OF COLOUR IN SPORTS MEDIA

Google Document providing contact information for dozens of women and non-binary people who are experts in the field of sports media.

Region: US

Industry: Media / Sports

Website: https://docs.google.com/document/d/14-B8pM3ydFVQauv-hyL-prMP-PYyEyYNwGmNUecYsE_1/edit

WOMEN PLUS SOURCE LIST

Highly navigatable collection of experts from diverse fields, searchable by availability and location.

Region: US

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://womenplus.sourcelist.org/experts.html>



Africa

AFRICAN WOMEN EXPERTS

Database of women experts in Africa, searchable by region and expertise.

Region: Africa

Industry: General / Africa

Website:

<http://africanwomenexperts.com/lng/en/>

GENDER & MEDIA CONNECT

Comprehensive database of women experts in Africa, broken out by field and expertise.

Region: Africa/Zimbabwe

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website:

<http://gmc.org.zw/business-directory/>

SAYNOTOMANELS LIST KENYA

Google doc with over 200 women experts from many fields in Kenya ready and willing to participate in panels.

Region: Kenya

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cx4wn7k63UFPd5ildlxEqMigKe-b3UPZHnHU3KDffWWc/edit?ts=580cdb-Od#gid=1330537749>

WOMEN IN TECH AFRICA

Searchable list of several hundred women working in technology across Africa.

Region: Africa

Industry: Technology

Website: <http://www.womenintechafrica.com/amazing-women-in-tech/>

QUOTE THIS WOMAN

Highly professional, searchable database of women experts in many fields, in South Africa.

Region: South Africa/Regional

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://quotethiswoman.org.za>

Asia

UNESCO WOMEN MAKE THE NEWS

Searchable database provides contacts for female experts across disciplines, throughout Thailand.

Region: Thailand

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website:

<http://www.wmthailand.org/the-project/>

GENDER IN MYANMAR NEWS

Concise, searchable list of women experts across many fields of expertise in Myanmar.

Region: Myanmar

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://genderinmyanmarnews.org/en/female-expert>

POWERFUL PHILIPPINE WOMEN

Professional profiles on 25 powerful Filipina women ready to be highlighted by the media.

Region: Philippines

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://ph.asiatatler.com/society/power-women>

NUVOICES

Searchable database of nearly 500 women experts in China.

Region: China

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://nuvoices.com/home/>

FEMALE EXPERTS ON JAPAN AND THE KOREAS

Google Document with more than 200 female experts on Japan and the Koreas.

Region: Japan and the Koreas

Industry: Political Science

Website: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1U6IKI3YOqPTeASp0VX_AhJUusbdBiQl8GUVDKjrCkt8/edit#gid=0

BULBULA

Directory of female experts in and of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. Searchable by topic focus.

Region: MENA, South Asia

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <http://bulbula.co.uk/>



Middle East

BULBULA

Directory of female experts in and of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. Searchable by topic focus.

Region: MENA, South Asia
Industry: Assorted Industries
Website: <http://bulbula.co.uk/>

WHO IS SHE - EGYPT

Searchable database profiling Egyptian women experts across industries.

Region: Egypt
Industry: Assorted Industries
Website: <http://whoisshe.wmf.org.eg/>

THE EXPERT WOMAN LIST

Professional, easy to use database allowing users to search female experts across fields.

Region: MENA/UAE
Industry: Assorted Industries
Website: <http://wil.insightsme.net/the-expert-woman-list/>

Latin America

MULHERES TAMBEM SABEM

Database of women working in the social and applied sciences across Latin America and the world, in Portuguese.

Region: Latin America and Global
Industry: Sciences
Website: <https://www.mulher-estambemsabem.com/especialistas-por-reas>

WHO IS SHE - LEBANON

Searchable database that combines profiles of prominent Lebanese women experts.

Region: Lebanon
Industry: Assorted Industries
Website: <https://whoisshe.lau.edu.lb>

FEMINIST SCIENTISTS

List of female scientists in Brazil. In Portuguese.

Region: Brazil
Industry: Assorted Industries
Website: <https://cientistasfeministas.wordpress.com/as-minas/>

HAY MUJERES

Open an account to search the directory of female experts across Latin America. In Spanish.

Region: Latin America

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://www.haymujeres.cl/login/>

CONSTANTES Y VITALES - DATABASE OF FEMALE SCIENTISTS

Searchable database of female scientific experts in Latin America and around the world. In Spanish.

Region: Latin America / Global

Industry: Natural and Applied Sciences

Website: <https://compromiso.atresmedia.com/constantes-vitales/mujeres-cientificas/buscador/>

Europe

THE BRUSSELS BINDER

Easily searchable database of female experts covering European policy, ready to engage with media and on panels.

Region: Europe

Industry: Policy Making

Website:

<https://brusselsbinder.org/find-an-expert/>

PSA WOMEN POLITICS

Easy to read list of women political science experts on the EU.

Region: EU

Industry: Politics / General

Website: <https://psawomenpolitics.com/2016/05/13/a-list-of-women-eu-experts/>

CERCADOR D'EXPERTES

Searchable database of female experts across Spain for a wide variety of industries, in Spanish.

Region: Spain

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://expertes.dones.gencat.cat/cercador/>



AGENDA DE EXPERTES

Open an account to search for female experts across many industries. Filter by geography and specialization. In Catalan.

Region: Catalonia, Europe

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://agendadexpertes.es/>

EXPERTENDATABANK

Directory of female, transgender and other diverse experts, across disciplines. In Dutch.

Region: Europe / Global

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website:

<https://www.expertendatabank.be/nl>

SPEAKERINNEN LISTE

Highly professional, searchable list of over 2,500 women ready to be speakers and moderators at conferences.

Region: Germany / Europe

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://speakerinnen.org/>

VIDM

Diverse directory of female experts across many disciplines. In Dutch.

Region: Europe / Global

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <https://www.vidm.nl/index.php>

EKSPERTDATABASEN

Searchable database of female experts. In Danish.

Region: Europe

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/383/>

EXPERTISA

Directory of female academics, politicians, and civil servants, in Luxembourg and the Greater Region. In French.

Region: Luxembourg and Greater Region

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <http://expertisa.lu/>

KVINFO EKSPERT DATABASEN

Searchable expert database of women by industry. In Danish.

Region: Denmark

Industry: Assorted Industries

Website: <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/383/>

WOMEN ALSO KNOW BALKANS

Inquire with this Twitter community to find women experts in and concerning the Balkans.

Region: Balkans

Website: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/WomenAlsoKnowBalkans?src=hash>

the right microbes
learn from," Ver
She explained t
farm animals prog
lifetime. This prog
the immune system

