

Where are the Women?

Insights from across Asia on the barriers to including women as sources and journalists in environmental reporting

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Executive Summary

This report expands upon a pilot study the Earth Journalism Network conducted as part of Reflect Reality,¹ a methodology Internews launched in 2019 to increase women’s visibility in the news media.

Starting in December 2020, the Earth Journalism Network (EJN) worked with researchers to set up and conduct interviews with reporters in four countries – Pakistan, India, Indonesia and the Philippines. Reporters from other parts of South and Southeast Asia were also interviewed to determine if they share the challenges raised by peers in those four countries.

This report looks specifically at how journalists who’ve received grant support and mentorship from EJN include women in their reporting or fail to do so. It aims to identify how reporters think about gender, what potential barriers they face when seeking to include women’s voices in their stories and how social and cultural views of women create challenges to inclusion.

It also offers recommendations for how journalists can achieve a better gender balance in their stories and the types of training, resources and support that could be useful in raising awareness about the need for gender inclusion in the news.

Key Findings

1. Many journalists are aware of the importance of gender inclusion, but still don't make including women's voices and perspectives a priority in their reporting.

2. Women are often seen as "less credible" sources than men.

3. Socio-cultural norms influence how journalists think about women as sources and their limited representation in the media serves as a reflection of gender inequality more broadly.

4. Pressed for time and resources, journalists often don't put in the effort to seek out new sources, returning to the same male-dominated source lists instead of actively looking for women.

5. Women reporters face safety concerns that can make field reporting more challenging without support from their editors. This is a barrier in particular for environmental reporting.

6. Men still hold most leadership positions in newsrooms. This often leads to less awareness of the absence of women's voices or a lack of support that reporters need to include more women as sources.

7. Many journalists have difficulty gaining access to women sources. Particularly in rural areas, they may find it hard to approach women because cultural and societal norms make it awkward and uncomfortable for a woman to speak to a stranger, especially a man.

8. There remains a wide pay gap between men and women journalists, and this factors into the prevalence of women's voices in the media.

9. There are fewer prominent women experts, particularly in environmental fields or high-level government positions.

10. Many reporters have gained gender awareness through trainings and/or mentorship.

Recommendations

1. Create databases of women experts by country and field.

2. Support gender sensitivity/awareness trainings for reporters and editors as well as support for women in decision-making roles in newsrooms.

3. Support trainings for reporters and editors that demonstrate the value of including women in environmental stories and encourage reporters to seek out women sources.

4. Support media engagement trainings for men and women to improve the opportunities that women experts, community leaders and other potential sources have to speak with reporters.

5. Support media engagement trainings that focus on ways to make women sources feel more comfortable interacting with journalists. This could include reading their quotes back to them to allay any fears about being misrepresented, overcoming regional language barriers that may prevent women sources from communicating freely with journalists (for instance, utilizing a local translator) and conducting interviews in a way that builds trust (for instance, ensuring the presence of other women).

6. Conduct or support trainings for media outlets and journalists to understand the importance of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) when taking photos and videos of all sources, but especially women and their families.

7. Offer workshops or toolkits that help reporters engage better with women.

8. Support the creation of industry-wide policies that aim for gender equity.

9. Journalists seeking more gender balance or women's voices in their stories should not shy away from explicitly asking for female experts in fields that are traditionally male dominated. In rural settings, where it may be deemed inappropriate for women to talk to strangers, they can approach women's organizations to help find sources.

10. Focus should be on the demand side as well as the production side: Women should be encouraged to read more news, and all news consumers should be encouraged to request more women's voices.

11. When appropriate, journalists and media outlets should give more credence to traditional or generational wisdom, much of which is held by women, rather than ignoring it or dismissing it as folklore.

12. Emphasize the importance of including women's voices as a way to improve journalistic storytelling and present more accurate narratives of the impacts of environmental issues like climate change:

Women often have unique perspectives that can make stories more interesting, insightful and more appealing to broader audiences.

One of the main solutions identified for addressing global sustainability is empowering women, so journalists covering those topics and related issues should also prioritize women's voices.

Introduction

Only **14%** of sources quoted in online news stories in India were women, according to a 2020 report “[The Missing Perspectives of Women in the News](#)” by Luba Kassova. Although that was the lowest ratio among the six countries the report analyzed, the situation is not much better elsewhere. In the United Kingdom, which had the highest percentage of women sources quoted, it was just **29%**.



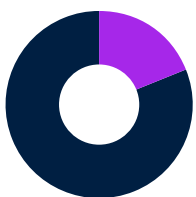
The research also found that top leadership in news organizations is dominated by men, yet even newsrooms that have achieved near gender parity exhibit male biases. “News is produced mainly by men, featuring more men and is consumed by more men,” the report stated.

“News is produced mainly by men, featuring more men and is consumed by more men.”

— The Missing Perspectives of Women in the News

In addition, a [2020 report](#) by the Global Media Monitoring Project, which measures the pace of change in women’s media representation, found that women made up only **24%** of experts featured in news stories globally, while only **40%** of stories were reported by women. The study shows that women are still far less represented than men as subjects and sources in the news – by about three to one – and they are even less visible in online stories related to Covid-19, especially in Latin America and Asia.

Other recent reports and studies from groups such as Reporters Without Borders, the Reuters Institute and the International Center for Journalists have also explored the ways in which women are under-represented in the media, whether in the coverage itself or in the working conditions faced by women journalists.



Women made up **24%** of experts in news stories



40% of news stories were reported by women



Women are represented less than men in the news by **three to one**

Background

The idea for this research stems from a pilot study EJN conducted as part of *Reflect Reality*, a methodology Internews launched in 2019 to increase women's visibility in the news media.

For that pilot, EJN selected stories from two of its projects – the Asia-Pacific and Bay of Bengal Resilience Reporting Initiative – to analyze how women are included as sources. The EJN team then designed a tracking spreadsheet to count the number of female sources in each story across a representative sample of each program's content.² By counting the number of women sources in each story, the team hoped to gather a collective picture of the gender gap in sourcing, and observe potential trend lines that could inform future outreach, training and support.



Figure 1. Journalists interview community members in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India during a 2018 training workshop for EJN's Bay of Bengal Resilience Reporting Initiative.

Much like the studies cited earlier, the tracker revealed that the voices and viewpoints of women are less represented than men, often severely so. Specifically,

- Only 30%, or 38 out of 126 total stories, had women as half or more of all sources;
- A quarter, or 32 stories, had zero women sources;
- When all the sources were totaled across all the stories analyzed, women accounted for 30% or less of all sources.

Learn more about *Reflect Reality* and the pilot study's findings [here](#).

Methodology

The four researchers commissioned for this report conducted interviews by phone and email between December 2020 and January 2021. They each spoke to between five and 12 reporters, most of whom had received support from EJM in the form of a grant and/or mentorship.

Journalists who did not receive EJM support were also contacted to provide perspectives on the media generally, to determine if their views on gender are different or similar to those of EJM-supported journalists and whether or to what extent that may have to do with exposure to values EJM adopts regarding gender balance and the importance of achieving representation for women in media coverage.



Figure 2. Ramesh Bhushal, EJM's South Asia Content Coordinator, meets with several journalist mentees in Nepal.

Finally, the researchers also spoke to gender experts, media trainers and news industry professionals. The interviews drew on 14 questions that EJM provided. Those questions can be seen in Appendix A.

The research also includes a desk review of the 126 stories in the gender tracker, broken down among the four researchers.

***Note:** We recognize that gender is a non-binary term and is broader than just men and women. However, exploring how the news media represents the LGBTQI+ community was beyond the scope of this research. As such, this report only refers to men and women. We also recognize the importance of intersectionality – the many different identities women and men embody, such as caste, class, ethnicity, race and more. But again, we were unable to explore the ways these factors are represented in news coverage, given the small scope of this research.*

India

By Sweta Daga, with contributions from Zofeen Ebrahim

Overview

This research is based on phone and email interviews with nine journalists – two men and seven women – one senior research associate and two women who created a source database for journalists with names and contact information for women working in the sciences. Eight of the reporters interviewed received grants and mentorship from EJM to produce environment-focused news stories.

Journalists

EJM-supported

- Athar Parvaz
- Sharada Balasubramanian
- Sibi Arasu
- Mahima Jain
- Jency Samuel
- Amrita Gupta
- Disha Shetty
- Sonali Prasad

Non-EJM supported

- Aparna Karthikeyan

Experts

- Rashee Mehra: senior research associate with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements
- Stella James and Arpitha Upendra: environmental journalists and co-founders of a database on women experts in the sciences

Media and Gender Context

Approximately 197 million households in India have televisions that provide them with regular access to news coverage. There are also around 17,000 newspaper titles with a total newspaper circulation of more than 400 million, about 30% of the total population.³

Increasingly, people in India get their news online, with 560 million internet users as of 2019.⁴ Facebook is the leading social network, with more than 250 million users as of 2020.

Within India's newsrooms, diversity remains a large problem, and while many reporters are women, many editors and decision-makers are not. According to "[The Missing Perspectives of Women in News](#)" report, just 14% of top management positions in India are held by women.⁵

There is also a wide pay gap between men and women journalists, making it difficult for women to make journalism their main career if they are not already financially secure. Socio-economic and cultural diversity is often lacking at media outlets as well.

"Entering journalism is not a problem, but newsrooms are very toxic. The management is upper caste, upper class and male. We don't value people or pay people, and only the privileged can afford to stay. There is a lot of job insecurity and it reflects in our coverage," said Disha Shetty, an EJN-supported freelance journalist who has been working on climate change and science for a decade.



Figure 3. Journalists interviewing community members during a workshop in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India during a 2018 training workshop for EJN's Bay of Bengal Resilience Reporting Initiative.

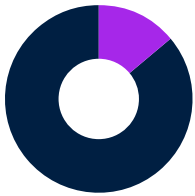
In assessing the ways in which women's voices and perspectives are represented in the media, a [2020 study by the Global Media Monitoring Project](#) found that men are quoted in online news about four times more frequently than women in India.⁶ Men feature as story protagonists four times more frequently than women.⁷

Some of the challenges are cultural. Women in communities in India are often more difficult to access when they remain within the confines of their home, or need permission to speak to reporters, journalists interviewed for this research said. If they do appear in stories, it is often as victims. Men, on the other hand, are more accessible to the media because they take on leadership roles in the community or have extra time to engage with journalists.

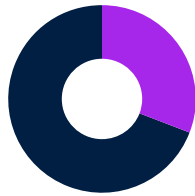
Some of the barriers may also be due to the absence of women at news-making events. According to [a 2019 study](#) that evaluated gender equity in India media, more than 53% of debates on seven English news channels featured all-male panels.⁸

A formal analysis of how women are represented in environmental reporting hasn't yet

been conducted, but according to data EJN collected through its gender tracking tool, out of 331 total sources from stories in India, only 103 sources were women, or 31.1%. Of the 46 stories produced from India, only 10 of them had women as 50% or more of the quoted sources. Those 10 stories were all written by women reporters.



14% of top management positions held by women



31% of sources from stories in India were women



Men are quoted in online news 4 times more frequently than women in India

Key Findings

Reporters are thinking about the need for women’s voices, but struggle with access

New Delhi-based independent journalist and researcher Sonali Prasad said not all the issues she reports on under the climate change umbrella are gender-specific, nor would she angle her story to make it fit a woman’s perspective.

[Her EJN-supported story](#) looked at how the women of the Dongria tribe in India were leading an initiative to revive heirloom seeds for health and climate security through their cultural rituals. Four of her nine sources for that piece were women.

“I strive to include all relevant voices — the Indigenous, the female, the under-represented.”

— Sonali Prasad, Journalist and Researcher

“There are other stories that I have done on dirty fossil fuel investments and disaster recovery efforts after a tsunami that call for diverse opinions, voices,” Prasad added. “In those cases, I strive to include all relevant voices — the Indigenous, the female, the under-represented.”

“For me what matters is who is the best person for the story, not necessarily the gender,” said reporter Sharada Balasubramanian.

She wrote three stories with EJN support about the challenges climate change is imposing on agriculture in the Andamans and how people there are working to overcome them. Of those three stories, only one had women sources. The other two stories, which focused on how farmers are working with scientists to develop climate-resilient agricultural

methods, included no women.

Balasubramanian acknowledged that there is an imbalance in the scientific community that means often the “best” source is a man by default. The voices of women researchers aren’t very powerful in scientific fields currently because they are so outnumbered by their male counterparts, she said.

“Male experts have also built a reputation for speaking to the media and may be easier to access for journalists trying to meet a deadline or find a well-established source to appease their editors,” she added.

Sibi Arasu, who has worked with large, established media outlets and as a freelance reporter, said he’s learned to think more about the gender of his sources from reading

how other journalists were confronting the issue (in stories like [this one](#) by Atlantic reporter Ed Yong) and talking with his peers. But it’s something he does mostly of his own accord.

“When I worked for mainstream publications, unless my editor was a woman, they didn’t really care about gender balance,” said Arasu, who received EJM support for a story on fisheries in the Indian state of Karnataka and has been covering climate-related issues for several years.

While he has a handful of “go-to women sources,” Arasu said most of his regular sources are upper caste and male.

“When I worked for mainstream publications, unless my editor was a woman, they didn’t really care about gender balance.”

— Sibi Arasu, Reporter

“I do try for gender balance, but I find it hard to find diversity in experts in climate science and environmental science,” Arasu said.

“Many times, I noticed women are not heads of departments, and are in much more junior



Figure 13. EJM grantee Sahana Ghosh on assignment in India.

positions and need permission to talk and are not encouraged to share their opinions,” he added.

Another challenge reporters face including a woman’s perspective in their stories, said Aparna Karthikeyan, a senior journalist who has not worked with EJN, is that the role women play in society is often undermined or made invisible so journalists may not even think to include it.

“The role of the woman is not highlighted or rewarded — if a man is doing the job, they are [an] expert but if a woman does it then it’s just ‘housework,’” said Karthikeyan, whose book *9 Rupees an Hour* highlights the invisible role women have played in rural economies.

“The role of the woman is not highlighted or rewarded — if a man is doing the job, they are [an] expert but if a woman does it then it’s just ‘housework.’”

— Aparna Karthikeyan, Journalist

“When I cover disasters, it can be difficult to find women in my ground reporting. In disaster-affected areas the men are more up and about,” said Mahima Jain, an EJN-supported journalist who wrote about how climate change has exacerbated disasters in Tamil Nadu and how those events have hit lower castes harder than others.

Jain, whose story had women as half of all sources, said she’s learned to go to places where women gather, such as rural childcare centers, to seek out interviews. But that requires time, effort and an awareness of the need for women’s voices.



Figure 14. Journalists speaking with local fishers in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, India during a 2018 training workshop for EJN’s Bay of Bengal Resilience Reporting Initiative.

Jency Samuel, an EJN-supported journalist who wrote about fishing communities in Tamil Nadu, said she only learned to apply a gender lens to her reporting about five or six years ago when she began doing her own research into gender issues.

Since she's become more conscious of including women's voices, she now actively seeks out women experts at seminars and conferences conducted by academic institutions, NGOs, research organizations and think-tanks.

"I note down the speakers' names and organizations. If possible, I collect their contact details, [or] else when I do a story, I contact them through their organization. Most organizations have websites. So these days it is easy to locate women experts," Samuel said.

The story she produced with EJN support about artificial reef construction featured two women, both expert sources.

Shetty said that often there are female experts in fields that are traditionally male-dominated, and that asking for suggestions for women sources can bring them to light.

"Sometimes, gender isn't always on the mind of mainstream male journalists/experts unless expressly brought to their attention," Shetty noted. "However, if you specifically ask a male expert to give you the name of a woman expert in the same field, they will oblige."

"Gender isn't always on the mind of mainstream male journalists/experts unless expressly brought to their attention."

— Disha Shetty, Journalist

Prasad, who attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) through a 2019-20 Knight Science Journalism Fellowship, recognized that marginalization occurs across many spectrums — gender, as well as class, caste and more. But she also acknowledged that she could improve the representation of women's voices in her storytelling.

"Over time, having deep discussions with peers on topics such as ethical practices in journalism and women's voices in media led me to introspect on my work," she said. "It has been a slow, incremental process. I am fortunate to have a core group of peers ever since MIT that provides me feedback on my work and helps me identify the gaps in my reporting."

Prasad now tries to have an open discussion with her editors during the pitching process to work out what voices are potentially needed on a particular issue and then plan her research accordingly.

"There is not a single climate change story that would not merit inclusion of women," she said. But remembering to include women is a skill that "needs to be cultivated," and

Prasad said having editors reinforce that in the pitching process could help.

“There is not a single climate change story that would not merit inclusion of women.”

— Sonali Prasad, Journalist and Researcher

Social, cultural norms keep women in the background

Athar Parvaz, who wrote an EJN-supported story about climate change impacts on farmers in Ladakh, said it can be difficult to find expert sources who are women due to cultural factors that have historically prevented women from getting higher education and employment in science and technology fields.

“I report mostly from Kashmir, and there are not many women scientists or experts who are from Kashmir or know about Kashmir,” said Parvaz, who was able to include one woman expert out of the five sources in his story.

“In India, historically, men have had more access to higher education than women, which means they tend to have more experience in their respective fields and may appear as the more knowledgeable resource,” he continued.

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— Athar Parvaz, Journalist

In her experience, Shetty said, she’s found that women are often either denied the chance to comment on a story or are later berated for giving a quote.

“Women do not often benefit from being in the limelight, and women scientists or experts usually need to ask permission from their male superiors before speaking with a journalist,” she said.

“Women scientists are usually not as high profile as their male counterparts, making it difficult to access or notice them, and this requires extra work on the part of journalists to find female sources,” Shetty continued.

Prasad has found that women experts are “hesitant of talking to the media” as “they fear being misinterpreted or are skeptical of how they will be portrayed.”

“The women are there, and they are contributing equally and significantly in their fields,”

Prasad said. “We need to do the preliminary work to close the chasm that exists when it comes to representing their voices in the media.”

Rashee Mehra, a senior research associate with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements in Bangalore, said a lot of self-promotion is needed for women researchers to make people, including journalists, aware of their work.

She’s researching the impact climate change has on low-income urban communities in India, with a particular focus on women. She said even when women do work in the sustainability or climate change sector, almost all of the policy work is done by men, except when the issue directly impacts women, such as domestic help.

Another structural barrier Mehra identified was that women senior government officials can be difficult to find because not many remain in their posts long enough to be promoted.

“Many of them leave when they get married because their in-laws or husbands will insist, and even if they stay after marriage, their superiors are slow to promote them because they think they will have babies and leave anyway. They don’t think a woman can work and manage her family at the same time,” Mehra said.

Reporters interviewed for this research said social norms that marginalize women can also serve as barriers to including women’s voices. When they’ve asked women to share their personal experience with an event or issue, such as environmental degradation, women often decline because they feel their families will not approve.

Even from a young age, “boys are more comfortable speaking with a stranger than girls,” said Amrita Gupta, an EJN-supported journalist whose three-part audio series went into detail about the challenges that farmers – many of them women – are facing in the state of Uttarakhand.

Although she was able to include several women in her stories, Gupta said men spoke to her with much more ease. “Especially in rural areas, women may prefer to converse in regional dialects that are unfamiliar to the journalist, whereas men tend to feel more comfortable expressing their views in English or ‘official languages,’” she said. “Unless we account for this in some way – by



Figure 4. EJN grantee Amrita Gupta on assignment in India.

working with local translators, for example – our stories will perpetuate the gender imbalance.”

Another major barrier the journalists identified is that only academics or government officials are considered experts by major media outlets, and traditional or generational wisdom, much of which is held by women, is ignored or reduced to folklore.

Several of the journalists said women carry knowledge, but many times it is informal know-how, so farmers or artisans who are also homemakers will only be known as homemakers, not acknowledged or paid for their other expertise.



Figure 5. EJN grantee Nidhi Jamwal on assignment in India.

Stella James and Arpitha Upendra are working to address these gaps in women sources by creating a database where women can self-identify as an expert in one of the STEM fields – science, technology, engineering or mathematics.

The idea came to them because they said they kept seeing the same handful of women cited in news stories, but they knew women were involved in environmental issues and participating in the conversation out of the public eye.

“We put out an open call through email and social media, asking women to fill out a Google form who self-identify as working in the sciences, and the response we got was far beyond what we expected. We had 180 women respond, some with over 30 years of expertise,” James said.

The database makes it hard to deny that women are out there doing environmental work, she added. “It’s no longer an excuse to say, ‘we don’t know where the women are.’”

Currently they are working on improving search functions, adding more names and finding ways to share it with people who don’t speak English or have access to the internet.

Women face safety concerns that make it more difficult for them to conduct field reporting.

Balasubramanian said there are specific safety concerns that women need to consider, but that shouldn’t prevent them from taking on investigative assignments, which are

needed for many environment-related stories.

“Sometimes, men look at you and think that you’re a young girl and sometimes they try to get too personal,” she explained.

Balasubramanian said she is also cautious when working on stories that expose the government or corporate sector for non-compliance with environmental laws or potential corruption since reporters have been known to face threats for confronting powerful players. She hasn’t faced any threats yet, but she said she strives for balance.

Karthikeyan said she’s also faced safety issues as a women reporter, but she acknowledged that there are social and cultural barriers that limit women from reporting stories in the same way a man would.

“I can’t sit in a bar like a man, I can’t walk into a panchayat [local government] meeting like a man,” Karthikeyan said.

“When I deal with men scientists, I get asked about marriage, or condescending questions like, how are you qualified for this,” said Shetty. “As a woman journalist there is a lot of patriarchy that I face and that my [female] sources face.”

On the other hand, women journalists do have an advantage to telling stories about women because they can often identify with the experiences of their sources better and are better received in spaces considered to be women’s domains.

Why women’s voices matter in environmental reporting

“I think that if a woman and man are doing the same job, most of the experiences are the same, but the woman will have a lot more to add, with additional complexity,” said Karthikeyan.

That is particularly important in environmental reporting, she added, since women often bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change, such as flooding and drought. They are also often the primary decision-makers about resource use and family planning practices, both of which are deeply affected by climate change and other environmental issues.

“Many women also farm, but mainstream outlets pay less attention or do not commission stories about climate change impacts or rural areas,” Karthikeyan continued. “And without more coverage on these issues, women’s voices are kept invisible.”

Women also have stories to tell of resilience that show how people or communities are responding to environmental challenges. Several of the reporters interviewed for this research recognized that those stories served as important a role in informing their audiences as ones about government failings.

Recommendations

The challenges journalists face including the voices of women in their stories range from ones of access to more structural barriers, such as cultural norms that sideline women, or newsroom leadership that lacks women who can mentor reporters or ask questions to help provoke ideas and thoughts around gender.

In addition, women scientists, researchers, or government officials are discouraged by cultural norms from speaking with journalists, usually deferring to a male colleague. And there are fewer platforms that women experts are invited to speak on, making it easier to find their male counterparts for interviews.

Since this report was completed in a short amount of time, there is more to be explored in the area of gender balance in journalism, however there are several ways that EJNI can take steps to support more women's voices in journalism.

- 1. Create toolkits or source lists** that contain contact information for female experts/sources in India. Build shared resources curated by journalists for journalists with questions they can ask in the field that can help bring gender issues and concerns to light. For example, if a woman says she's a homemaker, follow up by asking how she spends her time, since women often serve many roles in their homes and communities.
- 2. Increase gender sensitivity training** in newsrooms that involve reporters and editors, so leadership also gains awareness. Encourage support for women in decision-making roles. Gender should not only become a women's issue. Ensure women are on expert panels on climate change, biodiversity, science, etc., not just as moderators.
- 3. Continue to support learning opportunities** that match a senior journalist or EJNI editor with a younger journalist to discuss storyboarding and content. Gupta said it helped to get input from her EJNI mentor as she was doing research for her story so that she could get "an outside eye with a gender, privilege, rural/urban lens. Someone who says to interview 12 sources when you need four."
- 4. Encourage journalists to redefine or unlearn what defines an expert.** EJNI can pave a way for journalists to give more credibility to women who are not considered experts as traditionally defined.
- 5. Offer more grants with a specific focus on women** or an emphasis on gender balance. Workshops or discussions for lower caste journalists or a focus on lower caste communities and intersectional work, would also be of help, since the caste and class issue is linked to marginalization and vulnerability in the same way gender is.

Indonesia

By Okky Madasari

Introduction

This report compiles interviews with 12 sources consisting of 10 journalists from Indonesia, one media observer and one gender expert. Of the 10 journalists, 8 are women and 2 are men. 6 of the journalists received funding and mentorship from EJM for story production.

Journalists:

EJM-supported

- Elviza Diana
- Hartatik
- Nopri Ismi
- Isnawati
- Hairil Hiar
- Tessa Toumbourou

Non-EJM supported

- Ira Vera Tika
- Aisha Shaidra
- Febriana Firdaus
- Sapariah Saturi

Experts

- Abdul Khalik: former managing editor of the English-language *Jakarta Post* and former deputy editor-in-chief of the English daily *Jakarta Globe*
- Tunggal Pawestri: gender expert who helped co-found Women Unlimited, a website working to provide profiles and contact information for women experts

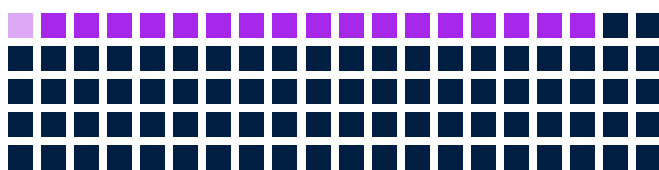
Gender and Media Context

The number of media outlets in Indonesia mushroomed in the years after authoritarian leader Suharto was forced to step down in 1998.

According to the Indonesian Press Council, there were 2,000 print media, 1,160 radio stations, 394 television channels and 43,300 online media outlets operating in the country in 2017 and more than 100,000 people employed as journalists – though as of 2019 only around 17,000 journalists were officially registered with the Press Council or any other member-based journalist organization.⁹

Despite the growth in media outlets, the majority of reporters identify as men. Data from Indonesia's Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), one of the country's largest journalist organizations, show that of its 1,846 active members across all media outlets in Indonesia as of 2020, only 344, or just over 18%, are women.¹⁰

That's no improvement over a survey AJI conducted in 2012 in seven cities – Medan, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Pontianak, Surabaya, Makassar and Jayapura – which showed that for every 10 journalists only two or three were women, depending on the city. Jayapura, in West Papua, had the lowest number of woman journalists at two out of every 10, while Jakarta, the capital, had the highest at three.¹¹



18% of reporters in Indonesia are women

6% of female reporters occupy positions in newsroom leadership



11% of sources quoted in Indonesia were women

Moreover, the latest data from AJI shows that only 6% of its 344 female members occupy positions in newsroom leadership, as an editor or higher, meaning women have very limited influence in editorial decision making.¹²

A 2018 survey by Tempo's Data and Analysis Center (PDAT) found that men are quoted as sources of information in the news almost 10 times more than women. Tempo, which operates TV, newspaper, magazine and online media, is one of the biggest and most respected media organizations in Indonesia. The survey, which analyzed who was quoted in political and economic news stories among Indonesia's 10 major media outlets (seven print and three digital) between August and September 2018, found that from a total of 22,900 sources, only 11% were women.¹³

Yet only around 17% of AJI's 1,846 journalist members said they had ever received some type of gender sensitivity or awareness training.¹⁴

Key Findings

Reporters are aware of what constitutes gender inclusion but don't make gender balance a priority

Regardless of their gender, all the Indonesian journalists interviewed said they think about gender when looking for sources for their stories. However, while they are aware of gender, they have priorities that make it difficult for them to include women as sources. The first priority is to meet their deadlines and the second is to find credible sources

quickly. But finding credible women sources can take time and effort, which makes it more difficult to include them.

Diana, Isnawati, and Hartatik – all women reporters – said that the main reason they included women as sources in their stories is that they wanted to seek a better balance and diversity of perspectives, and that if possible and available, they would prioritize women sources over men.

Diana, who received EJN support to write about Indigenous women’s efforts to protect their forestlands in Sumatra, explained that she prefers women as sources over men because often women are more honest, and when it comes to stories about the environment, women are the ones most affected, and thus, more relevant. One-third of the sources in her EJN-supported story were women.

Isnawati, who wrote about how tidal flooding was affecting women in Central Java and had women as the majority of sources in her story, said she always strives to achieve a gender balance, even when the story is not directly related to women’s issues or concerns.

Both Isnawati and Diana said they deliberately angled their stories to include more women after realizing that environmental damages and natural disasters, such as floods, greatly affected women.



Figure 6. Indigenous journalists in Indonesia participate in an EJN-supported training on video journalism.

“When [writing] about how environmental damages affect Indigenous ethnic groups in Sumatra, such as the Tulang Mamak, I interviewed more women after finding out that women were impacted more by disasters than men,” said Diana.

The two men journalists interviewed, Ismi and Hiar, said while they think about including women in their stories, they prioritize whoever is available and fits the story focus. Ismi said he rejected attempts to balance gender among his sources, arguing that he focuses on sources and data that are relevant to the stories.

“I prioritize angling a story on issues I think most impactful, and pick sources accordingly,” Hiar said.

His story on how the expansion of palm oil plantations in Halmahera, North Maluku, was leading to deforestation, quoted only one woman out of 12 sources, while Ismi's story about environmental threats posed by tin mining in Bangka Island had zero women sources.

Both reporters did acknowledge that they have difficulty finding woman sources, saying they relied on sources that are available through their existing database of contacts (most of which they inherited from senior reporters), and that finding woman sources could be time-consuming.

Shaidra and Tika, both women reporters based in Jakarta who work for bigger and more urban media – *Tempo* and *Pikiran Rakyat*, respectively – provided views on gender balance that differed from the EJN-supported women reporters.

While they didn't say directly whether they think about gender when seeking sources for their stories, they said they look for sources based on whoever best fits the needs of the story, much like the male reporters interviewed.



Figure 7. EJN grantee Aditya Heru Wardhana (center), an Indonesian journalist, attends a briefing during COP24 in Katowice, Poland.

Both Shaidra and Tika also revealed that including women as sources in their reporting is much less important than meeting demands from their editors to find sources that are well-known, publicly popular and credible.

It's worth noting here the different pressures facing journalists at larger, more urban media outlets versus those at smaller, more local media. In general, journalists working for national media in big cities need to write both hard news and feature stories, with daily and weekly production targets. This pressure can make it very difficult for reporters to break out of their routines and go the extra mile to find woman sources, said Abdul Khalik, former managing editor of the English-language *Jakarta Post* and former deputy editor-in-chief of the English daily *Jakarta Globe*.

Conversely, journalists in local regions usually have more time to pursue longer, more in-depth feature stories with more flexible deadlines that allow them to seek out women

sources, Khalik noted.

Interestingly, Tika admitted that she still does not understand how to apply the concept of gender balancing in her stories and said she did hope to learn more about it. Shaidra, meanwhile, said she prioritizes sources who are credible and competent regardless of whether they are men or women.

Hiar, Ismi, Tika and Shaidra all seemed to agree that as long as they meet their deadlines and angle their stories in line with what their editors are asking for, they have no problem not including more women.

“This is a trade-off ... while we are aware of getting more balanced sources, finishing stories comes first.”

Abdul Khalik, Former managing editor of the English-language Jakarta Post

Yet their answers reflected a major hurdle to increasing gender balance in the media: The mindset that including woman’s voices in news stories is not important.

This is particularly worth noting among environmental reporters since they are often asked to travel to remote areas, such as forests and isolated islands. In such places, finding sources is not a matter of choice because journalists, many of whom rely on a local fixer, tend to only be presented with men to interview.

If journalists are not inclined to think about including women’s voices, they may not think to look for women sources and would prioritize finishing the stories as quickly as possible, said Khalik. This situation also makes it harder for journalists on a deadline to take the time to seek out women to speak to.

“This is a trade-off,” Khalik noted. “While we are aware of getting more balanced sources, finishing stories comes first.”

Most of the journalists interviewed said they are aware that it’s a good thing to include women as sources in their stories, but even if they do, it’s more because they are exposed to suggestions from feminist or journalist friends and gender-focused organizations, not because they really understand why they should do it.

“Feminist thinking is growing in Indonesia, especially among urban and educated people, in which journalists are included,” said gender expert Tunggal Pawestri. “It becomes cool to be considered feminist, even among men. Journalists can feel the pressure to conform. In everyday conversation in social media, for instance, feminist values are often debated and talked about.”

Translating that hype in such a way that gets more women speaking in the news or more

women-related issues included in the media, however, requires reporters and news leadership to go beyond just talking about feminism, she added, to incorporating these values into their reporting.

Prioritization, support from newsroom leadership is needed to achieve gender balance

The lack of support from editors who focus on pushing reporters to churn out content is another barrier to including more women as sources, said the reporters interviewed for this research. They acknowledged that looking for woman sources often takes time, and if they fail to find woman sources quickly, they fall back on the sources in their established contact lists, which, they said, contain few to no women sources suitable for stories they write.

Editors also seldom see the importance of including women's voices and perspectives, said those interviewed, seeing the effort as neither increasing readership nor expanding the quality of the articles.

"For most editors, they have an indifferent attitude toward whether the stories have women as sources or not," Khalik said. "They are not convinced that [having] more women speaking in the stories will make them better in quality or make them more interesting and [thereby] boost readership. What they think [about] is getting more stories, not how many women [are quoted] in those stories."

As a former editor for two of Indonesia's major English-language media, he admits that in his own experience there was no attention on the part of editors, managing editors or even editors-in-chief to give more space to women's voices.

Editors spend their time either directing reporters to cover issues considered "sexy," with sources dominated by those who already have name recognition or editing stories their reporters have already filed rather than discussing whether or not to include women in the stories before they begin reporting, Khalik said.

In his opinion, it's equally, if not more crucial, to educate editors on the importance of sourcing women as they are the decision-makers within the newsroom and the ones who can make a difference in determining whether the media want to become more gender inclusive.

Most of the journalists interviewed for this research also proposed that newsrooms adopt pro-women policies and that direct intervention from editors requiring reporters to include women sources may be needed.

Reporters struggle to find relevant women sources

All the journalists interviewed for this research said they struggled to find woman experts or authorities to quote, especially when covering issues related to economics, politics, science, finance and the environment.

The journalists said they prefer to quote women if and when they can find relevant sources. The women journalists interviewed argued that women sources are more trusted and honest than men, while the men journalists acknowledged that often woman sources provide more details and explain things in way that is easier to understand.

The challenge, they said, is that it is very difficult and time consuming to find these qualified women.

Data from UNESCO, utilized by the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs, stated that in 2015, only 31% of all scientists across both social and natural sciences in Indonesia were women.

Khalik said the database of sources journalists keep are also not updated regularly, with reporters often relying on the same contacts over and over, thus preserving the male-dominated source list from generation to generation.



Figure 8. While attending COP23 in Bonn, Germany, EJN Fellows from Cambodia and Fiji visit Saerbeck, a town in Germany known for producing renewable energy.

Newer, more technical fields may also be less represented, which may explain why environmental journalists find it particularly difficult to find women sources in areas such as forestry, palm oil, carbon trading, green financing and renewable energy.

Pawestri said women are also often under-represented at seminars and symposiums covered by the media.

“Often, [when] we attend seminars, even about women, there are no woman speakers. So, the journalists will quote the available sources, who are men,” she said.

As part of her work with Hivos Southeast Asia, Pawestri helped found *Women Unlimited*, a website working to provide profiles and contact information for women experts from various fields in an effort to elevate their voices in the media and public discussions.

During the launch of that initiative in 2016, Luviana from AJI Jakarta said that requirements for women sources were different for print and broadcast media, with newspapers preferring well-known women figures who have broad knowledge and experience, and television looking for sources who are attractive or emotionally animated.¹⁵

Other reasons cited during that discussion and reported on by *Magdalene*, include women being reluctant to be interviewed or lacking trust that reporters will quote them accurately or in the right context.

While Women Unlimited is a good first step toward addressing the lack of women sources, however, it doesn't provide many details about the women's expertise and is not a list of scientists or authorities in specific fields. It has also not worked together with the media, universities, research organizations and government agencies to ensure the lists are useful for journalists.



Figure 9. Workshop participants interview some of the council of elders of Kaya Kauma before going into the forest

Social and cultural structures are detrimental to reporting on environmental issues

Several of the journalists interviewed cited social and cultural norms as one of the main stumbling blocks in their reporting, especially when they report on issues related to forestry, mining and environmental damages in villages and remote regions in Indonesia.

The journalists said they have difficulty finding women sources at the leadership level in towns and villages and often end up only interviewing women as victims.

Part of the challenge, said Toumbourou, is that very few women have formal positions at the village level, even though they may be the most credible source to speak on an issue.

“I know that women in the villages have a lot of experience and wisdom when it comes to dealing with environmental issues because they are the ones who face it every day,” Toumbourou said. “However, their voices are not heard because of the [patriarchal] structure [of society].”

This helped explain why women are not quoted enough in the news, she said.

“We have to stay long enough to know who to talk to and earn their trust to be able to get information from these women,” Toumbourou said.

Women journalists are themselves limited in reporting on environmental issues because in many regions in Indonesia women still face discrimination and harassment that keeps them from doing their work. The journalists interviewed for this research said they believe women journalists tend to include women’s voices in their stories, but when they are limited in their ability to report, so too are the chances that women’s voices will appear in their stories.

Firdaus, a freelance journalist focused on environmental issues in eastern Indonesia, said she’s faced both cultural challenges and safety concerns when covering stories.

“It is difficult and dangerous for us to continue the work, especially if we report a story in a remote place with no good internet. As a print journalist, I am always doing my reporting alone, by myself and I have to take my own risk,” she said.

“It is difficult and dangerous for us [women] to continue the work, especially if we report a story in a remote place with no good internet. As a print journalist, I am always doing my reporting alone, by myself and I have to take my own risk.”

— Febriana Firdaus, Journalist

When reporting on Indigenous communities in remote areas, she said she has also been excluded from certain activities because she is a woman.

“It happened when I reported about palm oil expansion in Merauke, Papua,” Firdaus said. “There was an all-male panel meeting between the elite Indigenous leaders, as if women did not exist. So, a female reporter like me could not join to listen.”

Saturi, a journalist with Mongabay, agreed that reporting on environmental issues was a high-risk job, particularly for journalists confronting powerful and rich parties and individuals, like those involved in illegal logging, forest destruction and illegal mining.

“They will try to cover up what they have done, threatening the lives of reporters,” said Saturi.

But journalists involved in those types of investigations face that same threat regardless of their gender, she added. Firdaus denied the suggestion that her editors discriminated against reporters based on gender and said her editor always keeps tabs on her safety.

“In general, my editors have never assigned a reporter because [they are] a man or woman. They treat us [as] equals,” she said.

Sometimes, however, there are situations where a woman reporter would be assigned to cover a story on a women’s issue, like the impact of palm oil expansion on women and children, Firdaus said.

Saturi believes that’s why woman journalists are badly needed in environmental reporting.

“Women sources can open up to woman journalists, resulting in more information and more women sources in the news, while they will be reluctant to talk to men,” she said.

Why women’s voices matter in environmental reporting

Data from Indonesia’s Natural Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) shows that women and children are 14 times more likely than men to become victims of natural disasters due to their traditional duty of protecting their families at the expense of their own safety.¹⁶ If their voices and stories are not made visible, then disaster management measures that could help protect them may be overlooked.

Data from Indonesia’s Natural Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) shows that women and children are 14 times more likely than men to become victims of natural disasters.

Similarly, if the news media fails to include the voices of women, then the public and policymakers will not gather a comprehensive picture of the problems they are facing, which could result in a failure to address those problems through policies and action.

Many women, particularly in disaster-prone areas, also have a deep and unique understanding of the environment and how to anticipate and respond to disasters, **writes Dr. Tuti Budirahayu**.¹⁷ If this knowledge, experience and skill are excluded from public narratives, national and local policies and plans will be incomplete and potentially flawed, Lidwina Inge Nurtjahyo, a law and gender studies lecturer at University of Indonesia, notes in **this article**.¹⁸

To illustrate the scope of the problem, during the first three weeks of January 2021, Indonesia experienced some 197 different natural disasters, according to data from the BNPB.¹⁹ That figure includes two earthquakes, 105 instances of flooding, 28 landslides, 15 weak tornadoes, and three large tidal waves. Together, they led to the deaths of 140 people and injured 800 others. BNPB estimates that half a million people were affected.

Environmental organizations were quick to place the blame for these disasters on human activity, saying the sudden, massive flooding in parts of Kalimantan was due to the opening

of natural forests there by palm oil plantation companies.²⁰

If the ways in which women are impacted by these disasters were made more public, including their warnings or advice about how to anticipate or even prevent future calamities, it could lead to better policymaking and mitigation measures, said Pawestri.

Recommendations

The interviews show that neither editors nor reporters are thinking with intention about including women as sources in their reporting and still believe men are more credible as sources of news, resulting in a lack of representation of women's voices in their stories, and in the Indonesian media in general. They also provide evidence that a gap exists between the awareness of the need for women's voice and the understanding of its importance.

Another main stumbling block for inclusion of more women's voices is the lack of a database or resource where reporters could quickly and easily find women to use as sources in their reporting. Specific fields related to the environment – energy, green financing, forestry and palm oil – are particularly difficult to find women experts or representatives. And when journalists fail to find women credible enough to be quoted, they will fall back on men as sources in order to meet deadlines and story quotas.

While the women journalists interviewed acknowledged that environment-related coverage can often be dangerous, they said as far as they were aware, their editors have not avoided assigning them to a story because they are women. Social and cultural structures, however, are yet another stumbling block for women in reporting environmental issues as, in addition to the threats faced by their male counterparts, they also face harassment and discrimination that prevents them from doing their job. In addition, very few women occupy high-level positions in regional administrations, making it harder to find women to interview for environment stories in these areas.

Here are some suggested ways to address these barriers:

1. Conduct trainings so that reporters, editors and other newsroom leaders are more aware of the importance of including women as a sources.

2. Engage editors and newsroom leaders so those making decisions about content and editorial policies are more aware of how women are represented in their coverage. EJNI could do this directly by visiting or reaching out to different newsrooms in Indonesia and starting a discussion about the value of gender inclusion in their coverage.

3. Support the creation of a database of women experts across a range of fields to make it easier for reporters to include more women in their stories. This effort should be done in partnership with institutions such as universities, research centers, government offices, think-tanks, media outlets and other environment NGOs, such as the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI), to create a more comprehensive list. Particular attention should be given to including women scientists and experts in environment-related fields, such as forestry, health, energy, green financing, palm oil and mining, maritime and fisheries issues and ecosystem services.

Pakistan

By Zofeen Ebrahim



Overview

This research is based on interviews with four journalists, one woman and three men, who either received direct support from EJN to produce environment-focused stories or whose stories were published on EJN's partner site *The Third Pole* between 2014 and 2020. It also includes interviews with three gender experts and/or media trainers.

Journalists

EJN-supported

- Arshed Rafiq
- Amar Guriro

Non-EJN supported

- Shabina Faraz
- Shahid Shah

Experts

- Sadaf Khan: co-founder of Media Matters for Democracy (MMD), a non-profit policy research organization
- Adnan Rehmat: media and rights activist
- Aurangzaib Khan: journalism trainer

Gender and Media Context

In recent years, Pakistan has made some progress on women's rights. But men still hold primary power in society and politics, putting social and cultural barriers in the way of women's advancement.

That imbalance is also reflected in the country's media industry, both in the deficit of women journalists and in the way in which women are represented or included in news stories.

Various studies have examined how Pakistani media portrays women, but few look at the skewed gender balance that exists within the industry and try to find the reasons for it.

According to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, women constitute no more than

5% of the country's 20,000 working journalists. Often they are paid lower wages than their male colleagues and hold fewer positions of authority, reflecting the patriarchal society in which the media operates.



5% of Pakistan's working journalists are women



28% of stories written were by women



18.3% of sources in Pakistan quoted were women

The study “[Missing in Action](#),” written and compiled by this researcher in 2019 with the help of students from Habib University, evaluated nearly 250 news stories to determine the proportion of women journalists with bylines and the proportion of women scientists, experts and politicians quoted in those stories. It found that 72%, or 179 stories, were written by men compared to 28%, or 69 stories, written by women, with 147 men quoted as sources in those stories versus only 33 women.

A study on Pakistan media found that 72%, or 179 stories, were written by men compared to 28%, or 69 stories, written by women, with 147 men quoted as sources in those stories versus only 33 women.

Sadaf Khan, co-founder of [Media Matters for Democracy](#) (MMD), a nonprofit policy research organization that works toward defending freedom of expression and media rights in Pakistan, sees a link between the lack of women reporters and women sources.

“Gender inclusive reporting and gender-friendly newsrooms go hand in hand,” she said.

Yet in most newsrooms in Pakistan, there is a significant pay gap between men and women, a lack of understanding of the challenges that women face and no consideration of policy measures, such as proper maternity leave and child-care solutions, required to make it possible for women to work as reporters, Khan said.

Media and rights activist Adnan Rehmat said there are too few women in both editorial and field positions to enable the media to give a more balanced gender outlook to the issues being covered. There is also a general lack of gender sensitivity training “for the overtly male crew populating the media,” he said.

The same biases and attitudes toward women in society also seep into the media, said journalism trainer Aurangzaib Khan. Media managers, who are mostly men, bring these attitudes into newsrooms, discouraging women from taking on the beats and field assignments that men routinely take up.

On top of that, women are more reluctant to venture out for field reporting because they don't feel comfortable or safe, Aurangzaib said.

That adds a layer of difficulty to environmental coverage, since field reporting is often necessary in order to include the voices of the women affected by climate change and environmental degradation.

In addition, environmental stories are not taken as seriously by editors, despite research that shows environmental harm and the impacts of climate change – droughts, floods, more extreme weather, increased incidences of disease, food and water insecurity – **disproportionately** affect the world's poor, many women and girls among them.

“There is no discussion on bigger stories; environmental assessment reports for mega projects for example, the expansion of cities closer to industrial areas,” said Khan. “In print, such stories are often given to men as they are supposed to have better access and better sources, especially when a story needs investigation.”

“In print, [bigger] stories are often given to men as they are supposed to have better access and better sources, especially when a story needs investigation.”

Sadaf Khan, co-founder of Media Matters for Democracy

Key Findings

Views on the need for gender inclusion are mixed; influenced by training

The one woman journalist from Pakistan who received EJM support and was interviewed for this research said it was only in recent years that she started to think about gender balance when reporting or seeking sources for a story.

“I think over time, I must have become gender sensitized,” said Shabina Faraz, an Urdu-language environmental journalist based in Karachi who said she now makes it a point to add a woman's voice in her reporting. The story she wrote for *The Third Pole* in August 2020 about how a new dam would drown ancient carvings was the only one among the seven from Pakistan in EJM's gender tracker that included a woman source, an expert on cultural heritage management.

“I think if we want women to bring about a change in our women, the media has to play a more active role in providing them a platform,” Faraz continued.

“I think if we want women to bring about a change in our women, the media has to play a more active role in providing them a platform.”

— Shabina Faraz, Environmental Journalist

For Faraz’s June 2020 *Third Pole* story on [glacier grafting](#), which she called a “very male-oriented subject,” she decided to look for a woman researcher, who, in turn, helped her engage with women in the community.

It was then that she realized how difficult it was for women in mountainous regions to fetch water, especially in the winter, when they often slip and get injured. In addition, Faraz found that many pregnant women have had miscarriages carrying water up to their homes.

Shahid Shah, a business reporter at *The News International* in Karachi, said he doesn’t make a conscious effort to give a story a women’s angle.

“I look for information from anyone and do not think a gender balance needs to be maintained,” he said. Nor does the story angle influence the gender of the sources, he added.

Shah conceded that his stories could include more women sources from the communities where he reports but said cultural hindrances are a big barrier that stop him from talking to women. In rural settings, in particular, he finds it difficult to approach women and difficult to ask men if he can speak to women in their families.

“Purdah stops me from insisting on talking to most women in the field,” Shah said, referring to the religious and social practice of female seclusion.

For Lahore-based Muhammad Arshed Rafiq, an environment and development consultant, the availability of experts is more important than actively striving to achieve a gender balance. He said his role is to “remain gender neutral” instead of trying to become “a



Figure 15. A photo taken by EJN grantee Amar Guriro while reporting on heat-waves in Karachi, Pakistan.

gender balancer.”

Like Shah, however, Rafiq also said his stories could do with more women’s perspectives.

“If the reporters are sensitized and they become more gender sensitive, the stories can be angled differently,” he noted.

Rafiq’s **EJN-supported story** about the environmental degradation of the pastures of the Bakarwal tribes, whose mainstay is livestock rearing, did not include any women’s perspectives, despite women being an essential part of the migratory community.

“I have mostly only written op-eds,” Rafiq said. “It never occurred to me to get another point of view.” He also pointed out that EJN never commented on the missing angle, despite the back and forth that happened for the story.

“I personally need training in this regard as I am a freelancer and not a regular journalist,” he said.

Amar Guriro, an environmental multimedia journalist for the *Independent Urdu* in Karachi, was the only male journalist interviewed who said he actively aimed to achieve a gender balance in his stories.

Part of the reason, he said, is due to training provided by top-notch editors and international exposure. Working as a fixer and observing how foreign journalists work also provided indirect training, allowing him to observe how the marginalized live and to learn what questions to ask and how to ask them.

Structural and cultural norms are barriers to accessing women sources

While it can be difficult to include women’s voices, Faraz said it’s not impossible.

As male journalists, however, both Shah and Guriro said they find it hard to approach women because cultural and societal norms make it awkward and uncomfortable for a woman to speak to a stranger, especially a man.

“When I get that feeling, I often do not insist on meeting with female members in that community,” Shah said.

“Accessing women in rural settings with all the taboos of talking to strange men is not easy for a Pakistani male reporter,” said Guriro.

Rafiq said that cultural and social barriers stopped him from approaching women in

low- and middle-income areas because these women and their families tend to be more conservative. His own views and experiences have also informed his approach — he said he’s been told to shut up when asking women for their phone numbers and wouldn’t want his wife to get calls from male colleagues after office hours.

“Accessing women in rural settings with all the taboos of talking to strange men is not easy for a Pakistani male reporter.”

— Amar Guriro, Environmental multimedia journalist

Rehmat, the media and rights activist, cited Pakistan’s religious and deeply conservative society as another barrier that prevents women’s voices from surfacing. Often if there are men around, most rural women will ask reporters to speak to the men in the family first.

If a camera is involved, women may be even more reluctant to talk to reporters, said Sadaf Khan.

Yet for women reporters, who may not experience the cultural or social barriers their male colleagues do, being a woman doesn’t mean reporters feel entitled to enter their potential sources’ homes and start asking questions.



Figure 10. E.J.N. grantee Amar Guriro during his travels in Pakistan.

“I still seek help from local sources for that,” said Faraz.

When Rafiq finds women unwilling or hesitant to speak, he asks for help from intermediaries like his colleagues, or he turns to researchers who may know an expert or organizations working in the field who can help access women sources.

Shah said local women’s organizations could play a role in breaking the barrier between community women and male journalists by prepping the former to accept the latter and talk to them.

Women experts are hard to find or reluctant to speak to reporters

The problem for Guriro is that in Pakistan there are just a handful of experts journalists can reach out to for stories on the environment, climate change, energy, water. “And almost all are men,” he said.

Faraz said most media outlets have contacts for male experts and when reporters are chasing deadlines, they end up talking to whoever is easily available.

“Finding women to include requires effort that reporters are unwilling to put in,” said Sadaf Khan.

Women experts in high positions may also be reluctant to speak to the media for fear that their words will be distorted or exaggerated, thereby jeopardizing their employment.

“Finding women to include requires effort that reporters are unwilling to put in.”

Sadaf Khan, Co-founder of Media Matters for Democracy

Khan said a lot of the women she engages with suffer from “imposter syndrome” and doubt their own expertise and ability. Culturally, women are also supposed to keep a low profile. They often try to stay away from the limelight to avoid getting uninvited commentary and attention, Khan explained.

Another challenge, she said, is the perception that women are experts only of the domestic sphere so that when women are brought in as experts, it’s on issues related to childcare, women’s rights, fashion or lifestyle.

“The stereotypes of what women know and what they are good for, affect the choice of sources,” Khan explained. “When looking for experts, [journalists] reflexively lean towards men and rarely give the same weight to a woman in the same position.”

There are regional differences, too, Faraz pointed out. For example, in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan, women observe purdah while working in single-gender groups in the fields but can show their faces or eyes. In the south, in the desert of Tharparkar, women observe purdah by completely covering their heads and faces from strangers and their own in-laws, regardless of gender. Reporters will need local women by their side to communicate with the women in this region, but they will consent to be interviewed if the men agree to it. Overall, purdah is practiced by both Muslim and Hindu women across the country.

All these barriers mean that journalists must put in a little more effort to prevent women’s voices from being pushed out, Khan noted.

Rafiq said he uses personal references to contact women or has a female intermediary make the connection.

Whatever way reporters use to make these connections, Khan said, it's important that the women who are being approached as sources are given a clear idea about what reporters expect from them and know what degree of control they can exercise over the content.

Why women's voices matter in environmental reporting

"Media is often used as a tool to build public pressure on rights violations and bad governance. If this pressure is being built largely from a male perspective, the solutions would leave the marginalized behind," said Sadaf Khan.

Women's perspectives are particularly critical in environmental news coverage because women are affected in different ways by environmental degradation and climate change, and not including women in stories about these issues can lead to policies that lack gender sensitivity or don't adequately cater to their needs, experts say.

For example, said Khan, in camps put up after widespread flooding in 2010, women came down with various skin diseases and infections because cultural norms didn't allow them to take baths in the communal areas provided. While men faced the same conditions, the impact and implications for women were different. Similarly, when food is rationed after these disasters, women and girls traditionally get the smaller share. So not including them is akin to missing a significant piece of the puzzle.

"Women are the most affected demographic in environmental degradation situations since these are often linked to livelihoods or management of home finances in women's hands," said Rehmat.

"[The] media cannot profess to be the guardian of public interest if it does not consciously, aggressively and proactively articulate and give due representation of women's interests in news," he noted.

And while there is no bar on men writing about the impact of the environment on women, this researcher has found that women journalists have the ability to understand the various dilemmas women face in society better, with some even having experienced them directly.

Taking on the environment as a beat requires going the extra mile, however, and that can be harder given the challenges women reporters face.

“[The] media cannot profess to be the guardian of public interest if it does not consciously, aggressively and proactively articulate and give due representation of women’s interests in news.”

Adnan Rehmat, Media and rights activist

Women journalists interviewed for the “[Missing in Action](#)” report cited earlier said some of the reasons they were reluctant to take up the topic of environmental reporting were fear of covering a science-based issue, which was intimidating and required deconstructing data that they did not feel they had the capacity to do; not wanting to put in the amount of time and legwork they believed the beat requires when they could do other stories more quickly; and not getting compensated adequately for the effort, since field work is not paid for.

Aurangzaib Khan said it’s up to the leadership at media outlets to encourage women to take up “hard” beats and assign stories that expose them to field-dynamics and challenges. There also need to be more women in both reporting and editing roles, he said.

Media houses will need to extend additional support to women reporters who may struggle with access and sources due to the prevalent societal attitudes towards women, said Sadaf Khan. “The advancement of women’s voices in the news, thus has to come through systematic change in the newsroom functions and attitudes,” she said.

Rehmat said it was important that women journalists are trained in environmental reporting so that they view stories through a climate lens.

Sadaf Khan recommended helping women identify stories that have an impact. Guiding them to produce high-quality stories and then acknowledging women’s work in the field could go a long way toward providing an incentive for women journalists as well as their editors to see the actual scope and importance of environmental reporting and thereby to invest in this, she pointed out.

“Women speaking, getting their voices heard and bringing to light things that have been brushed under the carpet pave the way for a discourse on solutions that are needed,” Khan said.

“Advancing women’s voices in media is a critical challenge facing the media today,” said Rehmat, but it will lead to a more responsive society, greater transparency and accountability by the government and could even start changing patriarchal mindsets.

Recommendations

1. Support a re-evaluation of newsroom leadership and policies: Work with newsrooms to discuss gender balance in decision-making roles and the value of promoting a more gender-balanced approach to news coverage. Facilitate gender-sensitivity training for all staff and senior management in newsrooms. Encourage them to review and/or update media outlets' codes of ethics so that it's not just content that aims to achieve a gender balance but the entire newsroom – from management to administration to reporters – that have an awareness of the need for gender sensitivity.

2. Encourage reporters to seek out interviews with women subject experts and those affected by environmental degradation: In cases where they cannot due to cultural obstacles, they should seek to speak to women through the men of the house to ensure their views are represented. Create guides for reporters to follow when approaching women as sources to help women feel more comfortable opening up and engaging in interviews. These guides should include what is and is not okay to say to a woman when seeking information. Train women in affected communities to help them better tell their stories and perspectives to reporters. Train women experts to engage more with the media.

3. Work with media organizations to devise industry-wide policies that aim for gender equity: Media industry associations include All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) and Digital Media Alliance of Pakistan (DMAP). These policies could include: Mandating women's perspectives in most news stories, hiring more women, consciously avoiding stereotyping or misogyny in media content and appointing an editorial ombudsperson to address complaints about misogyny and misrepresentation of women.

4. Provide incentives to encourage women journalists to focus on environmental stories that are under-covered or are given little space in the media: Incentives could include reporting grants for women journalists, nominating women reporters for awards, opportunities for men and women journalists to work together on stories to allow women greater access to field reporting. Help provide women with equipment – a car and driver, phones, etc – to ensure mobility and safety in the field. Offer safety and security tips and trainings to ensure that when they go out they feel protected.

Philippines



By Edz dela Cruz

Overview

This report draws on in-depth interviews with three women journalists from the Philippines. All reporters received support from EJM for reporting they produced. The researcher also reached out to two other journalists supported by EJM, including one man, but did not get any response.

In addition, the researcher received input and analysis from two gender experts from the Philippines.

EJM-Supported Journalists

- Leilani Chavez
- Mariejo Ramos
- Jhesset Enano

Experts

- Nathalie Africa Verceles: Executive Director of the Center for Women and Gender Studies, Philippines
- Cham Perez: Executive Director, Center for Women's Resources, Philippines

Gender and Media Context

The Philippines has, in recent years, significantly closed gender gaps in economic participation and opportunity, access to education and health, according to the [2019 Global Gender Gap report](#) by the World Economic Forum.²¹

But this progress has not translated into the incorporation of women's perspectives into male-dominated, often influential institutions in the country, and the inefficient implementation of laws and pervasiveness of various forms of discrimination and violence against women continue to impede substantive gender equality.

This imbalance is reflected in both the unfair and derogatory portrayal of women in the media and the shortage of women's perspectives in news stories and women reporters

in newsrooms.

During a public consultation in 2013 aimed at enhancing non-discriminatory regulations guiding women's portrayal in the media, Olivia Tripon, the then-executive director of all-woman media organization Women's Feature Service, said women's voices and stories only appeared in 30% of all news, with news stories seldom presenting women as credible sources of information.²²

In addition, inaccurate portrayals of femininity and the sexualization of women in the media continue, despite policies that aim to protect women from such treatment.

For example, the Philippines has the Magna Carta of Women, a comprehensive human rights law aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, and it has created the Media and Gender Equality Committee, which works to ensure the fair and non-discriminatory portrayal of women in media and film.

But the lack of women's perspectives in the news reveals that journalists and the media industry generally do not exist in a vacuum and their biases and prejudices are a reflection of society's views.

Key Findings

Expertise is the top priority in sourcing, but gender consciousness is growing

All the journalists interviewed cited expertise, not gender, as their top consideration when choosing sources for a story.

"The process for me is, I look for whoever the expert is," said Jhesset Enano. "It is the expertise and knowledge that you want. You can't sacrifice the [quality of the] story just because you are so intent on having more female voices."

"It is the expertise and knowledge that you want. You can't sacrifice the [quality of the] story just because you are so intent on having more female voices."

— Jhesset Enano, Journalist

Leilani Chavez said she typically applies this formula in her reporting: one government official, one academic expert or non-governmental representative, and two case studies that serve as narratives or examples.

All the journalists said achieving gender balance in story sourcing is about more than just including an equal number of male and female sources and they do not strictly consider equal representation of men and women among their sources when reporting.

Mariejo Ramos said she tries to look for sources who have a more well-rounded understanding of issues, regardless of their gender.

She also strives to achieve a gender balance in her stories “not so much by quantifying women sources, but by ensuring that the different gender perspectives are being represented with equal prominence or in a fair and just manner, such as in framing/angling of stories, story flow and choosing quotes,” she said.

Chavez had a similar view.

“It doesn’t matter if your source is male or female, for as long as they provide gender perspective your story can still be considered gender-sensitive,” she said.

Having women sources also does not necessarily mean that they will provide a gender perspective to a story, Chavez added. There are some women who are not gender-sensitive, she noted.

Ramos did acknowledge, however, that achieving some type of gender balance when writing a story is important, “because there are deeply entrenched prejudices and biased stereotypes in society that a journalist may reinforce if he or she is not careful.”

Enano said she now makes a more conscious effort to include women’s voices as much as she can. But it did not come to her naturally. Enano said that the trainings she has completed have helped her become more aware of how to tell women’s stories and how to determine whether a story has a particular gender angle worth pursuing. She now puts more effort into reaching out to female experts, she said.

“I had a realization that I had stories in the past that did not have any female voices, so I learned from that,” said Enano, who participated in “#HerStoryOurStory: Digital Storytelling on Women and Environment,”²³ a joint training by the Center for Women’s Resources and EJN in the Philippines in 2019.



Figure 16. EJN grantee Mariejo Ramos on assignment in the Philippines.

Women experts are difficult to find in male-dominated fields

According to the journalists interviewed, one of the main reasons women's voices are either absent or are very limited in environmental stories is the difficulty of finding women experts.

All the journalists said that they had difficulty finding women experts for environmental stories related to wildlife, finance, energy, governance, public health and environmental science.

“When I look at my roster of sources and experts in the field of wildlife trafficking, at least in the Philippines, it is male dominated,” said Enano. Interestingly, the primary wildlife law enforcement body in the Philippines is the Philippine Operations Group Ivory or POGI, which in Filipino means handsome. All four of the officers in that agency are men, Enano said.



Figure 17. EJN grantee Gaea Cabico interviews an Indigenous elder while on assignment in the Philippines.

The same is often true of top-level positions in local government units, said Chavez. In Bohol, for example, where she wrote [a series of stories](#) about the detrimental effects tourism was having on the environment, Chavez said, officials in fields ranging from solid waste management to coastal resource management to tourism to accounting are all men.

According to the Philippine Commission on Women, the percentage of women elected to public office in the Philippines is less than a quarter. And few women are appointed to fill key government positions, especially when the elected leaders are men.

Gaining access to women can be another barrier, said Chavez, who finds it easier to reach out to male sources since they respond to requests more quickly than women. And when bound by tight deadlines, she settles on whoever is available and qualified.

“If I reach out today, within the day [men] answer,” Chavez said. “Women sources have more clarifications and considerations before they agree to interviews. They want to make sure they are the right person to be quoted.”

“If I reach out today, within the day [men] answer. Women sources have more clarifications and considerations ... They want to make sure they are the right person to be quoted.”

— Leilani Chavez, Journalist

Gender experts say that while it is true that there are still fields that are dominated by men, it is false to assume that there are absolutely no women experts there.

“I don’t think an effort is made to capture women’s voices. That has to be deliberate. You really have to make sure that you are able to identify a woman who can be [a] source,” said Nathalie Verceles, executive director of the University of the Philippines Center for Women and Gender Studies.

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— Nathalie Verceles, executive director of the University of the Philippines Center for Women and Gender Studies.

She said journalists need to expend more effort to find women experts and they need to look for women outside their circles.

That’s something Enano said she has learned in the two years she has been covering the environment as a beat. “Sometimes you have to seek them out, not that they are hiding but because of how the institutions are set up they are not given the proper limelight,” she said.

Yet exerting the extra effort to find women sources can be hard for journalists working on tight deadlines, Enano added.

“The practice is whoever is at the tip of your fingertips, you call that source, regardless if that’s a woman or man,” she said.

Limited representation of women in media reflects gender inequality in society

At NGOs and in academia, women are more prevalent, said Enano.

One problem Chavez pointed out, however, is that some women experts tend to second guess themselves. Verceles said that self-doubt stems from cultural and social norms that have led women to believe they must stay in the background.

“Women are not visible in the public sphere; they are focused on the home and there is this bias against women in terms of being able to contribute to stories. Some women have internalized that [so] they doubt themselves, even if they are as competent and have the same qualifications as men.”

Ramos observed that disempowerment firsthand while reporting a series of stories on how a new eco-city in Tarlac Province would displace Aeta Indigenous communities. More than a third of the sources for those stories were women, but Ramos said that they saw themselves as powerless mothers and daughters, as well as second-class citizens.

“Sometimes it’s hard to amplify their voices when they do not feel empowered to make themselves heard in the first place,” she noted.



Figure 11. Members of the Aeta, an Indigenous group in the Philippines, speaking to EJN grantee Mariejo Ramos (not pictured) about nearby environmental damage.

“Sometimes it’s hard to amplify [women’s] voices when they do not feel empowered to make themselves heard in the first place.”

— Mariejo Ramos, reporter at The Philippine Daily Inquirer

One thing Enano believes could help is if women were given more opportunities to take on leadership roles and were valued more as experts, particularly in science fields.

But according to Cham Perez, executive director of the Center for Women’s Resources, the media reflects a culture of misogyny that is enabled and perpetuated by the government and other institutions, and that makes it challenging for journalists to deliver a narrative that is more sensitive to women and their gender-specific needs.

For example, Perez said, women’s limited economic and educational opportunities make it harder for them to pursue careers relevant to fields that relate to science, environment, and even the economy. And in that way, women’s absence or limited representation in environment stories is not a mere coincidence.

“I am often interviewed for stories related to beauty, as if that is the only issue that concerns women,” said Verceles. “But when it comes to social issues [governance, corruption, leadership], they [the journalists] don’t really listen to women.”

The absence of women’s voices in the news reflects a lack of gender champions in newsrooms

All the journalists interviewed for this report noted that gender is not a priority at their media organizations and that trainings related to gender issues are not offered through their offices.

Ramos and Enano, both reporters at *The Philippine Daily Inquirer*, said the lack of gender prioritization reflects the gender disparity among their newsroom leaders.

“There are women journalists in the Philippines, but traditional newsrooms are still very male-dominated,” Ramos said.

Enano said it can be difficult to get a story focused on women published if it’s not the priority of the editors. Take natural disaster coverage, she said. Editors often ask reporters to do stories on the impacts of disasters – deaths, casualties, damages – but more focused reports, like those that highlight how women or other marginalized groups are impacted, are often pushed to the sidelines.

“You literally have to fight for space,” said Enano. “Even if I submit stories that highlight women, if it’s not the priority, it will not be published. You will need to find allies or champions in the newsroom who understand the issue.”

Chavez, who has worked as a freelance journalist, said most editors want the general scope of an issue and don’t encourage reporters to pursue stories with a women’s focus.

Why women’s voices matter in environmental reporting

Ramos said she felt that sharing women’s perspectives is very important in environmental reporting as it gives emphasis to their experience and highlights the disproportionate environmental impacts they face.

“Women sources can best explain their plight and those of other women because they lived through them; it is also like giving them the agency to speak about their own problems, rights and goals,” Ramos said.



Figure 18. Filipino journalists participate in a virtual climate change reporting training from the Asian Center for Journalism at Ateneo de Manila University, an EJM grantee.

By not including a woman’s perspective, “you are not painting an accurate picture of reality,” said Verceles. And that makes it more difficult to address women’s gender-specific

needs and interests in relation to the environment, she continued.

Leaving out women's voices also does a disservice to readers and media consumers, Enano noted.

"If you don't have female voices, your readers will feel that there is not equal representation in the story, they will not be able to relate," she said.

"Women sources can best explain their plight and those of other women because they lived through them."

— Mariejo Ramos, reporter at The Philippine Daily Inquirer

Recommendations

1. Assist journalists in expanding their networks to include more women experts: The journalists interviewed here admitted that they need to expand their networks and go outside their usual circles to find women sources. Ramos said she has gradually built networks of women experts and leaders that she meets in the field, but having mentors provide some ideas or having EJN support the building of a source list could help.

2. Encourage journalists to challenge cultural norms and stereotypes: The media has a role to play in changing cultural norms and breaking stereotypes, and it therefore needs to challenge existing practices that are discriminatory to women, said Verceles. Enano found that having women sources from fields like science and the environment is important because they can serve as examples or role models for a younger generation. "When these young women or girls see women experts, they will feel that it is possible for them to get in the same position. That they have a seat on the table," she said.

3. Media organizations should be supported to institutionalize gender trainings: Both the journalists and gender experts interviewed suggested that there is a need for media organizations to institutionalize gender sensitivity trainings and support regular reporting of women issues. Such trainings would provide an ethical framework when covering sensitive gender issues and allow women journalists to put a spotlight on women leaders or initiatives, Ramos said. Enano said in-house gender trainings in newsrooms should be made available to both journalists and decision-makers, such as editors. She suggested that EJN could facilitate such trainings and also provide grants to newsrooms to pursue stories with a specific focus on women.

Other Regional Perspectives

By Sweta Daga, Okky Madasari, Zofeen Ebrahim, and Edz dela Cruz

As a point of comparison, each of the researchers also interviewed a journalist from outside their respective countries to determine if they faced similar barriers including women as sources in their stories. The reporter interviewed by the researcher from Pakistan was from India and has been included in the India report. The other three reporters, all women and all of whom received EJN support for story production, are as follows:

- Banani Mallick, *Bangladesh*²⁴
- Paritta Wangkiat, *Thailand*²⁶
- Le Quynh, *Vietnam*²⁵

Gender often an afterthought in sourcing

Much like several of the reporters interviewed across the other four countries, Le Quynh said she does think about gender when looking for sources for a story. But the most important aspect is that the sources fit the story angle and have credibility and expertise the story requires, regardless of gender, she said.

Of the four stories Le Quynh produced with EJN funding, only one had women sources accounting for just 33% of all those quoted in that story.

Paritta Wangkiat, who is now leading a data reporting project on the Mekong for EJN, said she actively makes an effort to ensure women are included in her reporting.

“I try to maintain 50-50 or even more when it comes to gender balance,” she said. “But it is not as easy as that because working in the field, you have very limited time.”

It was through trainings that she became more conscious of the need to include women’s voices in her stories, Wangkiat explained.



Figure 12. EJN Workshop participant Nidhi Jamwal interviews Climate Action Network South Asia Director Sanjay Vashist 2019

“I have been to some gender-related trainings and I studied feminist economy, so I started

to learn to include more female voices in my stories,” she said.

One trend Wangkiat has noticed in Thailand is that younger journalists appear more concerned about gender issues than older journalists after gender trainings. But so far that hasn't appeared to have much impact on increasing the number of environment stories that focus on women.

Women provide an important perspective, but can be hard to access

Wangkiat also noted that in Thailand it is difficult to find women in key positions in government, finance, public health and energy.

And if there are women experts, Wangkiat said, “they might not have the power to speak because of a hierarchy at their workplace.”

She has found, however, that most of the leaders in local communities are women. Women scientists are also easy to find and access since most of them are quite independent from their bosses, she added.

In Wangkiat's experience, women experts provide perspectives and angles that are more relatable and inclusive than men, which can prove particularly important in the context of the environment.

“When you talk to men, they mostly talk about numbers, growth, but when I talk to women, they mention about quality of life,” Wangkiat said.

“When you talk to men, they mostly talk about numbers, growth, but when I talk to women, they mention about quality of life.”

— Paritta Wangkiat, Journalist

Women reporters can help tell women's stories, but safety concerns act as a barrier

Banani Mallik, an EJN-supported journalist from Bangladesh, said that sometimes news managers at her media outlet, *The Daily Observer*, do not assign female journalists to stories that require in-depth field investigations.

“They are more comfortable to assign male reporters for any investigative reports because they think that it will be easier and safer for the man,” she said.

Yet women do have an advantage in being able to access other women more easily than men and often share their experiences or can identify when a story involving women and their connection to the environment isn't being told.

That was what Mallik experienced when writing about how women in Bangladesh are adapting to farming challenges by using techniques passed down through generations. In her story, which includes women as four out of seven sources, she drew on her own observations seeing women adapt to these climate-induced difficulties and also her desire to shed light on the often-overlooked role women play in Bangladeshi society.

“The women farmers’ contribution from my community was completely unpublished,” she said in an interview about her reporting [published by Nieman Reports](#). “Such success has made these women farmers financially solvent and empowered.”



Figure 19. EJN grantee Banani Mallick on assignment in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

This report set out to discover some of the main barriers journalists face including the voices of women in their reporting, and the challenges women journalists face reporting on environmental issues. It operated on the premise – based on findings from a pilot study and through the tracking of sources across more than 120 stories – that women are consistently underrepresented in news media.

We found, through our research, that barriers are myriad. They include social and cultural norms that undervalue women, preventing reporters from viewing them as credible sources or from even thinking to include them in a story in which they may not immediately seem relevant, such as industry-related news or developments. Often women are not included in stories because reporters find it difficult to access women sources. This could be because reporters in a rush to meet deadlines refer to source lists that are male dominated or because women defer to men rather than agree to interviews themselves. In some cases, cultural, social or religious structures prevent men from engaging with women.

A lack of female leadership in newsrooms or greater understanding and uptake of gender equity in media operations also serves as a barrier, not just to having women make up a greater percentage of sources in individual stories, but also to having more women work as reporters and editors.

These challenges all apply to environmental reporting broadly. But they are often even more acute since women are impacted in unique and many times greater ways by environmental degradation. The challenge to overcoming these obstacles will involve both education and awareness, as Kassova noted in her report.

“What makes any future advancement of gender equality in the news particularly difficult is the existence of gender blindness amongst the public in different countries. It is hard to fix something that is not seen as broken,” it stated.

It is our hope that these findings help increase awareness of the pervasive and systemic biases that exist across the countries assessed. Thankfully, this report also offers 12 recommendations to advance gender equality that EJV will consider as it builds future programming. Despite differences in cultures, economics and politics across regions, the barriers and solutions we discovered were often much the same, a finding that will inform the way we design gender-based trainings, tools and outreach.

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Appendix A:

Interview Questions

EJN came up with the following questions after an initial assessment of the gender tracker we developed that served as the foundation for this research. We provided our assessment, including these questions, to the researchers to consider in their interviews.

1. Do you think about gender when looking for sources for a story? (Yes/No)
2. If yes, how do you think about it? What aspects do you consider?
3. Do you strive to achieve a gender balance (an equal number of men and women) in your stories? Why or why not?
4. Does the story angle influence the gender of the sources you'll include?
5. Do you find cultural or social barriers to accessing women sources? (Yes/No)
6. If yes, please describe these barriers.
7. Do you run into other challenges when trying to include the voices of women in your stories? If yes, what are they?
8. Do you find it difficult to include women sources who are scientists, experts, officials or in leadership positions?
9. If yes, what are some reasons?
10. Are there certain subject areas (public health, environmental science, green financing, energy, governance) where you struggle to find women experts?
11. What tactics or tools do you use to find women scientists, experts, or leaders for your stories?
12. How did you choose the women you use as personal sources to tell a narrative or use for a profile?
13. Do you think your stories could or should include the voices of more women? If the story angle doesn't lend itself to women sources, for example, could it be angled differently to bring in women's perspectives?
14. What would help you include more women as sources in your reporting?

Appendix B: Resources

- Internews' [Reflect Reality methodology resource list](#)
- [The Missing Perspectives of Women in the News](#) – Authored by Luba Kassova with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- [Amplifying Women's Voices: A Gender Balance Guide for Media](#) – From the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)
- [The Gender and Social Inclusion Toolkit](#) – Produced by CIVICUS
- [The Life of Science](#)
- [101Reporters](#)
- [500WomenScientists database](#)
- GIJN's [landing page](#) with resources for women journalists
- [Find a woman journalist reporting on Covid-19](#)
- [SourceHer](#) from African Women in Media
- [Women+ Source List](#) for technology policy experts
- Women's Media Centre [SheSource](#)
- Columbia Journalism Review [database and submission form for women experts](#)

Endnotes

- 1 Internews. “Reflect Reality Handbook.” EJM pilot study starts on page 89.
- 2 “Reflect Reality” developed a sample tracking sheet that news teams and journalists can customize to suit their own needs. [Download a sample template here.](#)
- 3 According to [a profile of the Indian media by BBC News.](#)
- 4 According to figures cited by the Internet and Mobile Association of India.
- 5 Kassova, Luba. 2020. ‘The Missing Perspectives of Women in the News.’ (<https://www.iwfm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020.11.19-The-Missing-Perspectives-of-Women-in-News-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>).
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- 23 Disclosure: the researcher is the project coordinator of #HerStoryOurStory: Digital Storytelling on Women and Environment in 2019.
- 24 Interviewed by Sweta Daga.
- 25 Interviewed by Okky Madasari.
- 26 Interviewed by Edz dela Cruz.