



How our partners help **women in media** reach the top

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Even though women make up half the world's population, they occupy just over a quarter of top management jobs in media companies. Our partner organisations are working hard to bridge the gap. Here are three ways in which they are helping women in media get into leadership positions.

Motunrayo Alaka, Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism, Nigeria

Motunrayo Alaka, the coordinator of the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ), is on a mission to get more female editors-in-chief in Nigeria.

"A few years ago we had only two female editors in chief in the whole country," Alaka said. "Nobody in the room was saying female persons should not be leaders, but nobody was saying that there should be female persons in leadership either."

With support from Free Press Unlimited, WSCIJ launched the Female Reporters Leadership Programme. Cultural expectations for women in Nigeria to run the household can get in the way of leadership ambitions, Alaka explained. But in many cases, this ambition is lacking altogether: "It doesn't even occur to them. They take it for granted that they will be second fiddles. We are training women to be conscious of the fact that they can be leaders if they want to," she said.



In a six-month programme, women journalists receive training and mentorship. The fellows are expected to not just develop their leadership skills, but also excellence in reporting. "We're not just saying you're a female be there, we're saying you're a female be good. If you want to lead a newsroom you should be a great reporter," Alaka said.

She continued: "Women don't just give birth, have children and cook the meals. We lead organisations, we are change makers, we sustain lead in the oil sector, in aviation and in engineering. We're in the room and we should be confident."

Tidiani Togola, Tuwindi, Mali

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In Mali, women are barely visible in the media. Of all the people appearing in TV news bulletins and newspaper columns - as journalists, presenters, and experts and witness who are interviewed - only 14 percent is female. In leadership positions too, women are conspicuous in their absence.

The statistics shocked Tidiani Togola, the CEO of media development organisation Tuwindi, which carried out the study. With support from Free Press Unlimited, Tuwindi launched the Gender, Independence and Professionalism label (GIP label), a quality standard for media companies with a proven commitment to gender equality.



"For decades in Mali, people have been signing documents making commitments to improve gender balance, but they never fulfil these commitments. We decided to ask for proof from organisations that they are working on improving gender sensitivity," Togola said.

Obtaining the label does not come easily. Media organisations need to fulfil at least 21 of the 30 requirements. A number of them are aimed specifically at getting women into management. For instance, women must represent at least 30 percent of a media company's leadership. They also need to have the same income as men in similar positions.

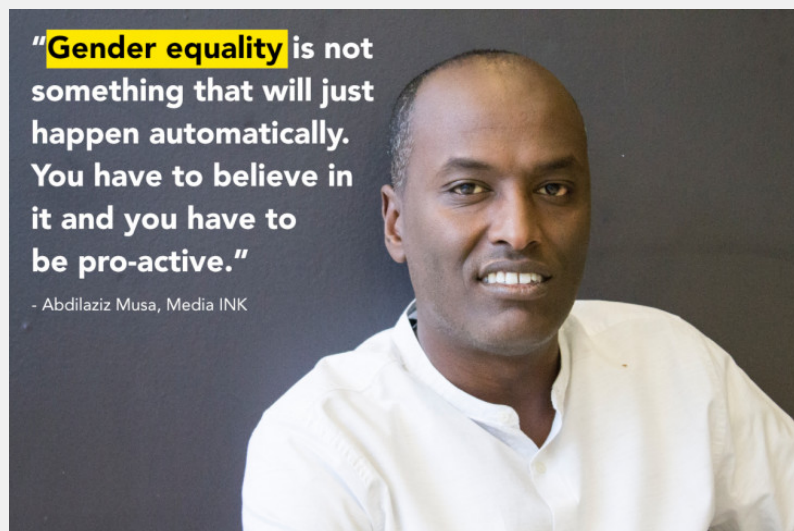
In January, the first batch of GIP labels was awarded to six media organisations who were among 14 initial participants. Each of the organisations had to make changes to get the label: Four had to first sign contracts with female employees. "In many cases women working somewhere don't get a contract, while the men do. This is such a shame," explained Togola. In two cases, women were promoted to leadership positions to fulfil the GIP obligations.

Togola is proud of these initial accomplishments, achieved in the first year of the label's existence. "For a decade, we've been talking about gender equality but nothing changed. GIP shows that change is not about talking about commitment, it's about proving commitment."

Abdilaziz Musa, [Media INK](#), Somalia

In Somalia and Somaliland, women also lack a voice in the media. "I see media as an instrument for social change. But in a country where 55 percent of the population is female, you don't read anything about the issues they face, like reproductive rights and issues to do with safety," said Abdilaziz Musa, the director of programmes at Somali media development organisation and Free Press Unlimited partner Media INK.

Media INK has years of experience training Somali journalists, but the organisation long struggled to attract ambitious, talented women to their programme. Many Somali see journalism as a "dirty job", making parents reluctant to let their daughters enter the field. Media companies themselves discriminate too: "They just don't get it, they'd rather hire a guy than for a woman," said Musa.



To get more women in journalism, Media INK took an unorthodox approach: "The one big incentive we have is the journalism training we offer. High quality, media organisations want to participate. So we told them, if you want to get a spot in our training, you're going to send a woman."

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man you send." It didn't stop there: to convince families to send their daughters to the training, Musa and Media INK's team in many cases had to personally guarantee their safety.

The plan worked. Today, 45 percent of Media INK's trainees are women. Some of them have gone on to become managers and editors. For Musa, it's proof that equality can be attained – but you have to work for it. "It really shows that gender equality is not something that will just happen automatically. You have to believe in it and you have to be pro-active," he said.

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