



# **The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Mass Media and Society**

## **International Women's Media Foundation**

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When journalism and other work in the media became true professions, women were essentially barred from participating. Although women began working in the media prior to the 1890s, structural misogyny restricted them to certain areas of the profession. Over time, the barriers were lowered, and women's participation increased. However, women have remained marginalized in media fields. The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) seeks to counteract this phenomenon by supporting and encouraging women in media. This entry discusses how the IWMF is organized and describes its programs and awards.

The IWMF is a nonprofit organization founded in 1990 in Washington, DC, that works toward the equal participation of women in the news media. The organization honors women journalists who have overcome hazards and oppression to report on global issues. Its programs offer women journalists guidance, assistance, and connections in the news industry. In 2010, the IWMF celebrated its 20th anniversary and conducted the International Conference of Women Media Leaders in March 2011 at George Washington University in celebration.

The board of directors of IWMF consists of journalists, media personalities, and business leaders. It also has an advisory board made up of former board members, including the IWMF founders. IWMF focuses on issues such as press freedom, women's leadership, entrepreneurship, and journalists' safety. In many countries, journalists are assaulted or even killed as a means of suppressing their reporting. IWMF offers training for female journalists in dealing with hostile environments and has an emergency fund that they can use for help with legal and medical bills.

IWMF has done research on issues affecting female journalists and has issued reports such as its *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*, published in 2011, and reports on violence and harassment against female journalists. For its report on the status of women in the news media, more than 150 researchers interviewed executives at more than 500 companies in 59 countries. The study found that in 20 of the countries studied, women faced glass ceilings in middle and senior management positions. Slightly more than half of the companies studied had a company-wide policy on gender equity.

## Training Programs

IWMF offers a variety of training and fellowship programs. Its Elizabeth Neuffer Fellowship program was created in memory of Elizabeth Neuffer, winner of the IWMF Courage in Journalism Award and a correspondent of *The Boston Globe*, who died while reporting in Iraq. The aim of the program is to foster Neuffer's objective of advancing social justice and human rights while allowing the fellows to strengthen their reporting skills. Fellows complete research and coursework at Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies and journalism internships at *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*.

Past programs of IWMF include the HIV/AIDS Reporting Fellowship, which was intended to change the ways in which HIV/AIDS reporting is conducted in South Africa. The program offered fellowships for advanced coaching and practice to generate investigative reporting on the complicated, unpublicized issues surrounding HIV/AIDS.

The IWMF has also offered grants to digital media entrepreneurs, fellowships on environmental reporting, and trips for journalists to research the economic development and culture of the Western Sahara. The Eastern DR Congo Reporting Fellowship program involved a series of trips to the Democratic Republic of Congo's North Kivu province to learn about governance and development policies in that area.

## Awards

The IWMF honors women journalists with the Courage in Journalism Award, Anja Niedringhaus Courage in Photojournalism Award, and Gwen Ifill Award. The Courage in Journalism Award is for those who exhibit extraordinary courage by confronting and enduring hazard to expose the truth. The Anja Niedringhaus Courage in Photojournalism Award was instituted to honor Anja Niedringhaus, an Associated Press photojournalist who was killed in Afghanistan in 2014. Niedringhaus was the 2005 IWMF Courage in Journalism Award winner and dedicated her life to war journalism, including recording the aftermath and the impacts on survivors. The Gwen Ifill Award was established in memory of the co-anchor of PBS NewsHour, who died in 2016. The award is for outstanding female journalists of color who exemplify values that include mentorship, leadership, and a commitment to diversity in journalism.

## Websites

International Women's Media Foundation. <https://www.iwmf.org/>

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- foundations
- journalists
- journalism

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## Further Readings

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