

INTERNEWS & AI

A snapshot of how Internews is working to both 'cultivate the promise' and 'mitigate the peril' of AI.

In Internews' [2024-2026 strategy](#) we commit to 'cultivate the promise of technology (while mitigating the peril).' Since our founding, Internews has always worked on the cutting edge of information technology, pushing boundaries, widening access, and protecting human rights. As our strategy outlines:

"Our vision is that technological advances are rights-respecting and shaped by the communities who use them. We believe that technology should support freedom of expression, protect human rights, strengthen democratic engagement, and increase public and private sector accountability."

Our approach to AI is no different. In this document we provide a snapshot of how Internews is currently working to both 'cultivate the promise' of AI and to 'mitigate the peril'.

Around the world, media and civil society are actively exploring AI products and services, and this use is expanding at a rate that is difficult to keep pace with. While AI offers an exciting range of utilities and efficiencies, proliferation of the technology also presents challenges and harms, many of them complex and potentially severe. For better or worse, AI is already having profound impacts on global information ecosystems.

Within this context, Internews has a significant role to play. With our global reach and towards our mission impact, we are well situated to **provide expertise and guidance to our global partners, helping them ensure AI is deployed safely, equitably, to the best effect, and only when fit for purpose.** Internews also has a role within the wider information ecosystem, **supporting efforts to educate the public about AI, as well as working with partners to document harms impacting diverse communities, and to develop both policy and technical protections.**

We can divide Internews' AI related programming into work that supports the informed and responsible use of AI, and work that supports the wider mitigation of potential AI harms.

The first set of interventions primarily targets information providers and media practitioners who are using AI, providing them with direct support to identify appropriate use cases for AI, ensure information quality, and develop the skills and capacity required to operate safely and effectively.

The second set of interventions seeks to mitigate potential harms related to AI at an information ecosystemic level, promoting AI literacy, supporting AI accountability, and ensuring a range of global voices have input into AI policy and governance.

INFORMED & RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI

- 01 AI use cases
- 02 AI information quality & oversight
- 03 AI training & capacity building

MITIGATION OF POTENTIAL AI HARMS

- 01 AI literacy
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- 03 AI policy & governance

While work relating directly to the use of AI is likely to draw most of the focus, in practice all work that Internews engages in related to AI has elements of safety and harm mitigation. For this reason we can consider all programming that utilizes AI products and services to be a subset of programming that is designed to mitigate the potential harms of AI.



INFORMED & RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI

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01 AI use cases

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Internews' global partners and their networks are actively using AI for a wide range of purposes. Our interventions in this area support those who are already using AI and those who have an interest in doing so.

01 AI USE CASES

Due to its technical strengths and weaknesses AI is extremely effective at some tasks, and poorly suited to others. Internews seeks to ensure that we and our partners are using AI in ways that are safe, ethical and effective.

Since at least 2018, Internews has supported the use of AI and machine learning for data journalism, including investigations on topics such as [domestic violence](#) and propaganda, and piloting the [large scale analysis of civic spaces](#) for the use of predictive measures around closing environments. Internews also utilizes AI in projects like [Ads for News](#) and the [Media Viability Accelerator](#) to help researchers assess news quality at scale. While the power of AI is uniquely suited for this kind of data work, these remain highly specialist skills.

More recently, **rapid developments in technology and consumer access are now opening a much wider range of use cases for AI in newsrooms, primarily focussed on efficiency.** Internews partners are increasingly using AI powered products to assist with labour heavy tasks such as transcription or translation. Generative AI is being used to summarize research or

generate headlines. For tasks such as fact checking, or video analysis, the capacity of AI to analyse and compare data can help journalists work faster and more effectively. Services such as audio captioning and text-to-speech assist with accessibility. On the business operations side, AI products promise efficiencies ranging from search engine optimization to data management.

While many of the best equipped and most technically advanced newsrooms are still experimenting with these practices, it is those with the least resources that may have the most to gain from any efficiencies provided by AI. The right AI powered efficiencies can potentially free up resources for use elsewhere, resulting in an overall increase in the production of high-quality news and information. **These efficiencies are unlikely to be as revolutionary as the AI industry has promised, but they are meaningful enough to disadvantage those without equal access.**

Unfortunately, low resourced outlets are also less likely to have access to products and services tailored for their language and context, or the expertise and staff to ensure that adequate protections are in place for their use. It is low resourced newsrooms, operating in ['low resource' languages](#), that will need the most support to access any benefits offered by AI.

»» It is Internews' role to support these partners to identify strong use cases for AI, with real benefits to them and the wider information ecosystem. Internews does not promote specific products, but does provide support for partners





to assess AI tools and services for functionality, safety, and ethical suitability. With this support Internews' partners can have confidence in their decisions about their use of AI.

02 AI INFORMATION QUALITY & OVERSIGHT

Internews has placed the need for “quality news and information” at the core of our [mission](#). With current (and immediately foreseeable) technical limitations, **any content generated solely through GenAI, without strict parameters, oversight, and disclaimers, must be considered ‘low quality information’** and should not be taken at face value. **Any use of GenAI by media and civil society who provide important or trusted information must exercise great caution.**

Due to the underlying technology, which relies on statistical prediction rather than any innate understanding of a given topic, GenAI is prone to errors, including **‘hallucinations’ or outright inventions which occur in a statistically significant percentage of GenAI content.** Other problems including errors of omission, tone, and

interpretation, and replication of biases in training data, are increasingly likely the more that complexity, accuracy, or nuance is required, or when working in languages with less training data than English.

This is not to say that GenAI and related technologies cannot be used to support content production and business operations, so long as appropriate safeguards and quality controls are put in place. As [recognized by industry leaders](#), **these quality controls require rigorous policies and procedures.** For example, in almost all use cases for a newsroom, GenAI content must be checked by a human journalist or editor before it is published. Quotations from interviews transcribed using AI should be confirmed against the original audio. AI desk research must be fact-checked before it is relied upon. The list goes on and will continue to evolve along with the technology. **In many cases these practices will mitigate some of the efficiencies gained from the use of AI.** For any use case where information quality is a priority – which is to say, any newsroom – they remain essential.

»» Information quality is paramount to Internews' work, and we will work with partners across both the media and technology sectors to ensure that information integrity is prioritized and protected.

03 AI TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Research conducted by Internews in Zambia found that 60% of journalists were already using AI regularly in their work. However, of those surveyed journalists who said they were using AI professionally, just 26% said they had ever received any form of AI training. Less than 15% of Zambian newsrooms had policies and procedures in place for the use of AI, meaning that journalists are using AI products without any support or guidelines for their use. Internews is currently replicating this research in other global regions.



The Zambian example underlines a clear need for AI training among journalists and media practitioners. **AI is already being used. People need to know how to use it, both to realize any potential benefits, and to avoid any potential harms resulting from misuse.**

It is Internews' position **that all newsrooms should have detailed, written policies, procedures and guidance governing their use of AI.** These policies should be tailored to their individual needs and cover the use of AI for internal or business-related purposes, as well as content production. Ideally these policies should be public. Civil society organizations should also adopt this practice wherever possible.

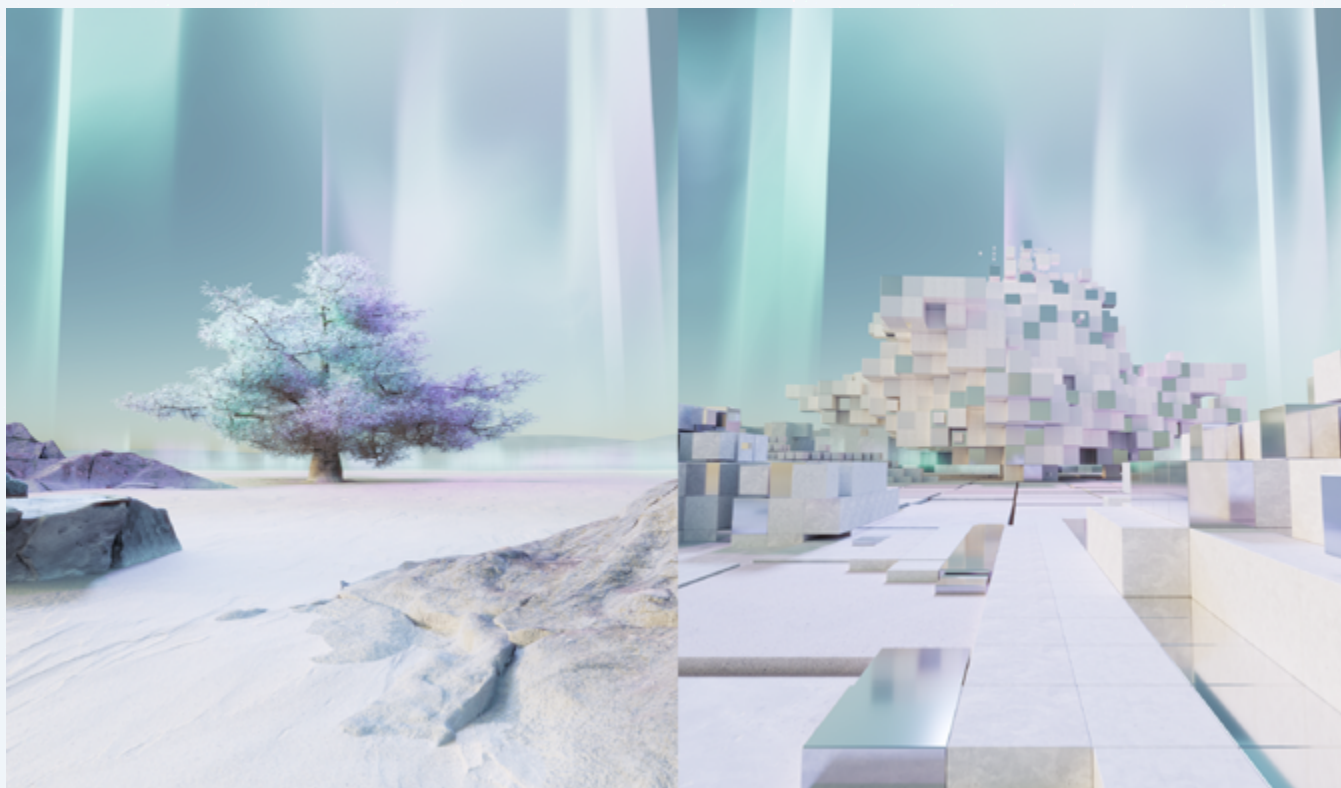
Policies and procedures are essential, but their impact will be limited without adequate training for journalists and media practitioners.

It is Internews' position that, just like digital and media literacy, **a basic level of AI literacy is now a requirement for all journalists and media**

practitioners. At minimum this is the case for any journalist who is using AI for their work in any capacity. This includes a basic understanding of the technical workings of AI, as well as knowledge of risks, limitations, ethics, and best practice. **Many media practitioners, including editors, managers and investigative reporters, will need specialist skills** to navigate the successful use of AI and serve the needs of their newsrooms and their audiences.

»» Providing training, resources and support for journalists and newsrooms around the world to understand and utilize AI is a mammoth undertaking. Without this global effort low resource and non-English speaking newsrooms will face the worst outcomes of any AI advances – both less likely to reap the benefits, and most at risk of harm.

With our history and global networks, Internews is uniquely placed to support this work, and we are prioritizing doing so.



Linus Zoll & Google DeepMind / Better Images of AI / Generative Image models / CC-BY 4.0



MITIGATION OF POTENTIAL AI HARMS

While the potential for harms related to AI must not be inflated, or used to dismiss the technology, there are genuine concerns, and genuine needs for mitigation. These harms are not confined to the media and civil society sectors, but the media and civil society do have a key role to play in documenting them and shaping how the public responds.

Different harms present different levels of likelihood, as well as different levels of potential impact, and require different approaches. Broadly, we can categorize potential AI harms into three groups: primary (direct), secondary (indirect), and tertiary (societal) harms. The below chart summarizes potential harms that AI may present to global information ecosystems, along with illustrative examples.

Primary Harms

Harms resulting directly from the use of AI products and services

Examples include: the use of AI generated media for deliberate disinformation and [election influence](#); technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) in the form of [GenAI non-consensual imagery](#); replication of [bias in AI training data resulting in discrimination](#); [copyright infringement](#) due to replication of materials included in training data; [misidentification](#) by facial recognition software; or the [provision of inaccurate health information](#) provided by an AI chatbot.

Secondary Harms

Harms resulting indirectly from the use of AI products and services

Examples include: loss of revenue for quality media outlets due loss of search engine traffic following [use of GenAI for information discovery](#); decreased utility of platforms such as [social media](#), [commerce platforms](#), [search engines](#), and [news aggregators](#) due to [high volumes](#) of AI 'slop' content; [overwhelming of systems that detect child sexual abuse material](#) (CSAM) due to massive quantities of GenAI content; or [decreased human accountability](#) for actions ranging from spreading misinformation to military targeting.

Tertiary Harms

Harms to the wider information ecosystem, resulting from primary and secondary AI harms

Examples include: negative changes to patterns of public trust and engagement with information providers due to [high levels of misleading and low quality content](#); lower volumes of original public interest journalism being produced due to business models prioritising cheaper AI generated content; negative impacts on democracy and [increased polarization](#) due to lack of agreement over what is real; or the erosion of human rights and [bolstering of authoritarian governments](#).



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01 AI literacy

02 AI accountability

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These complex and diverse challenges will require a tremendous effort over the years to come. Internews' interventions in this area prioritize the health of the wider information ecosystem.

01 AI LITERACY

AI literacy is now an essential element of media and digital literacy. Internews is committed to incorporate AI literacy into all media and digital literacy programming, including curricula for media and information professionals, as well as materials aimed at a wider audience.

As with these wider skillsets, different levels of expertise are required for different stakeholders, with a broad understanding necessary for the general-public, and in-depth knowledge an essential requirement for many information professionals, including those in the media and civil society. Broadly, being AI literate means having some understanding of how AI works, awareness of the risks involved, and being able to recognize when AI technologies are appropriate to use, as well as having the skills to use them safely and effectively.

»» Increasing AI literacy, both for information specialists and for the wider public, will help mitigate some of the harms associated with AI, making people more aware of issues such as bias and errors, and less likely to accept or propagate these harms.

02 AI POLICY & GOVERNANCE

As with any new technology, regulation of AI is lagging the pace of innovation and adoption. Given the variety of applications for AI, this impacts many different policy areas, such as copyright, privacy, discrimination, or TFGBV.

Internews has a strong history of internet and technology governance work, leading global projects such as the [Greater Internet Freedom](#) program. Many of Internews' established network of global digital rights partners are increasingly engaged in AI governance work. In support of these efforts Internews is convening regional discussions on AI issues, as well as facilitating discussions with relevant technical experts.

»» As with previous approaches, Internews' priority in the AI governance space is to ensure that



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a wide range of voices are heard, and that the concerns of Global Majority communities are centred. Rather than advocating directly for specific policy or regulatory measures, Internews plays a supporting role to global civil society partners, providing capacity building and other support to enable them to develop their own positions and advocate effectively with relevant policy makers.

03 AI ACCOUNTABILITY

As with other private sector companies, if AI products and services are to become essential to the functioning of global information ecosystems – which seems to be their intent – then they must be accountable to the people whose lives they are impacting.

Accountability in this case applies both to the technology itself, as well as to the companies who control the technology. The people impacted by an AI product should be able to understand why the technology produced the outputs that it did, and they have a right to know what protections have been put in place to prevent harmful outcomes. Both the media and civil society have a crucial role in providing this accountability.

Building on our history of ‘Platform Accountability’ work, Internews is developing an AI Accountability research agenda which documents the impacts of AI on information ecosystems, and prioritises the experiences of impacted communities in the Global Majority world, including women, linguistic minorities, and other marginalized groups. In

keeping with Internews’ wider tech sector strategy, Internews is proactively engaging directly with AI companies, as well as facilitating engagement between private sector and global civil society and media partners, to identify and push for concrete improvements.

»» Recognizing the crucial role of the media in AI Accountability, Internews is also working towards a specialist AI Accountability Journalism program to support media in the Global Majority world to document the impacts of AI for both local and global audiences, increasing public understanding in the process. It is critical that Global Majority voices are represented in this discourse, as the impacts felt by these communities can be vastly different than those in the US and Europe, and may require very different solutions. As well as providing public pressure, this accountability also provides an essential evidence base for regulators.

Internews has a clear role to play supporting global media and civil society to understand the benefits and risks of AI, and ensure that it is used effectively with adequate guardrails in place. As low-grade AI generated content proliferates, quality news and information will become even more of a premium, and clear and transparent practices around the use of AI will factor into this reputational currency.

ABOUT INTERNEWS

Internews is a nonprofit that supports independent media in 100 countries — from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyper-local news outlets, to filmmakers and technologists. Internews trains journalists and digital rights activists, tackles disinformation, and offers business expertise to help media outlets thrive financially. For 40 years, it has helped partners reach millions of people with trustworthy information that saves lives, improves livelihoods, and holds institutions accountable.

