

The logo features a solid red background. In the top left corner, the words "IMPACT REPORT" are written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font, enclosed within a dark red rectangular box. To the right of this box, the letters "IWMF" are displayed in a large, white, uppercase, sans-serif font. Below "IWMF", the words "AFRICAN", "GREAT LAKES", "REPORTING", and "INITIATIVE" are stacked vertically in the same large, white, uppercase, sans-serif font, with each word on a new line.

IMPACT REPORT IWMF

AFRICAN  
GREAT LAKES  
REPORTING  
INITIATIVE

## **Five years ago, the International Women's Media Foundation**

(IWMF) received an opportunity that shifted the course of the organization. With a deep commitment to gender equality and the power of the media, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation awarded the IWMF a transformative \$5 million grant to change the narrative in Africa's Great Lakes region. The IWMF began work across the continent decades ago, but never at this scale. We are still humbled by this show of faith in our team, our efforts and our mission.

What began in 2012 as a pilot project to bring journalists to Western Sahara grew into a five-year, six-country initiative taking us to Eastern Congo in 2014 and then to Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, North Kivu and other regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the following years of the program. This initiative took place against an incredible backdrop of world events that our program's fellows lived through and reported on every day. Despite wars, insurgencies, rigged elections, expired mandates, famines, a refugee crisis, pandemics and economic collapses, the

IWMF continued its work, empowering journalists with the skills and network to do better, more nuanced reporting on a complex and beautiful region. These IWMF fellows raised the bar on reporting from the Great Lakes region and scored a plethora of promotions and awards along the way, elevating the status of women in global news media.

The success of each reporting trip was hard won. Our team evaluated more than 2,000 applications. We brought hundreds of talented, badass and passionate women reporters into our network. We also lost two, Solange Lusiku and Kim Wall, whose storytelling and contagious laughter remain in our hearts.

We hired tremendous local staff to whom we could never express the extent of our gratitude and admiration. We navigated the complexities of the most logistically challenging and dangerous places in the world. We provided Hostile Environment and First Aid Trainings (HEFAT) for the first time in the region, which literally saved lives. We learned a lot about what worked, and more about what didn't.

After five incredible years working across East and Central Africa, the IWMF concluded its African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative in January 2019,

touching the lives of 130 local and 178 international journalists whose reporting landed on the front page of The New York Times twice, was featured on the CBS Evening News, received top prizes from UN Women, the Red Cross and the Media Challenge Initiative. Many of these women were promoted to bureau chiefs and correspondents across the continent. Collectively, these journalists published more than 450 stories that launched official investigations into UN peacekeepers' activities in CAR and DRC, held individuals accountable for rape and assault in Tanzania and helped fund a country's only female soccer team. Journalists researching pitches told us that this program changed the Google search results about the region by presenting a substantive body of high quality, nuanced reporting on complex and multifaceted issues.

According to statistics from the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), only about 28 percent of all news stories published quote a woman; 81 percent of stories produced through the IWMF's African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative quoted or featured at least one woman. Furthermore, the GMMP notes that only 10 percent of stories published focus on women or women's issues; within the IWMF

fellows' reporting, that number is closer to 36 percent. The GMMP also notes that just 37 percent of articles in general were authored by women in 2015; 100 percent of the IWMF stories carried a woman's byline.

This program is a call for more women in the industry, more women in leadership positions, more women winning awards, more women writers, more women photographers and more empowered women across all levels of the news media worldwide.

Our deepest thanks to the Howard G. Buffett Foundation for making all of this possible. Our thanks also go out to Paula Fray and the team at Fray Intermedia, Jina Moore, Caleb Kabanda, Adolphe Basengezi, Jean Pierre Sagahutu, Douce Namwezi, Nancy Cirino, Barbara Among, Solange Ayanone, Leah Mushi, Glendora Meikle and of course to the incredible team at the IWMF, who gave so much of themselves to make this program a success.



**Elisa Lees Muñoz**

Executive Director  
International Women's  
Media Foundation

THE HOWARD G.  
**BUFFETT**  
FOUNDATION



INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S MEDIA  
FOUNDATION

### About the IWMF

**IWMF is the only NGO that offers safety training, reporting trips, grants and byline opportunities tailored to women journalists—both established and up-and-coming. We exist to break barriers for female journalists, transforming the global news media.**

**We also recognize badass female journalists and photographers whose courage sets them apart. And we research the factors that allow journalism to remain dominated by men, while advocating for inclusive practices that help propel women and minorities into leadership.**

**Our vision is a world where consumers demand a diversity of voices, stories and perspectives in news media and regard this as a cornerstone of democracy and free expression.**



Zimbabwean videographer Nyasha Kadandara reported on the Way of the Cross Easter procession in Juba, South Sudan for Al Jazeera. During this procession on Good Friday, South Sudanese Christians take to the streets and re-enact Jesus Christ's crucifixion.





# INTRODUCTION

**A**frican stereotypes have plagued Western media as long as Westerners have written about the African continent. Too often, foreigners mold their view of “Africa” around an image of a starving child or angry men with machetes.

After five years of intensive reporting in six of the most undercovered countries in the continent, we’ve seen that violence and poverty are indeed a part of the reality. But as Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie famously said, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.”

The IWMF created the African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative to address some of the biggest problems facing today’s journalism industry: we wanted more, better and sustained coverage of an important region; we wanted to elevate women’s voices, both as storytellers and as sources; and, we wanted to ensure journalists’ safety as they worked in hazardous environments.

## About the Program

The IWMF’s African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative was created in 2014, building on the success of earlier IWMF

reporting initiatives in Western Sahara and eastern DRC, and our more than 20-year track record of implementing high-impact, in-country training programs across sub-Saharan Africa.

We designed this multiyear, \$5 million dollar program to support stories that expand the news media’s lens beyond narratives of political instability, armed conflicts and humanitarian crisis. Beginning in 2015, the IWMF brought teams of international women journalists to the Central African Republic, the DRC, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, and provided training and support for local journalists across the region. These efforts included security training for every program participant as part of our commitment to help journalists stay safe in the field.

The IWMF’s international reporting fellowships are unique—journalists pursue independent reporting while operating in a group and sharing resources. Each two-week trip includes a comprehensive HEFAT course and an orientation for the cadre of journalists. Fellows then depart for in-country reporting, where they network with other journalists, including local IWMF program participants; work independently as well as collaboratively with their peers; and, gain access to a

variety of sources and sites facilitated by fixers.

In an era of shrinking news budgets, the IWMF’s all-expenses-paid fellowships give female journalists from around the world—many of them freelancers—the benefits of reporting in a safe, structured environment from locations they may not be able to reach on their own.

They also give female reporters critical professional development opportunities, creating a network of international journalists well-versed in issues affecting the Great Lakes region, and have resulted in ambitious reporting on a wide range of underreported issues, including:

- Economic development
- Impact of aid
- Democracy and governance
- Agriculture, rural development and environment
- Food security and hunger
- Water
- Immigration

The IWMF fellows’ work has been published by leading media outlets around the world and resulted in hundreds of stories in outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Agence France Presse, The Los

Angeles Times, Al Jazeera, The New Yorker, NPR and CBS News.

## Report Methodology

This report summarizes the outcomes and accomplishments of the fellowship program across six countries as well as the impact of the local training initiative and the HEFAT courses.

For this report, we conducted in-depth interviews with 35 people with direct program knowledge, including fellows, trainers, fixers and journalists who participated in local programming. We surveyed the program’s alumni, which produced data and feedback from nearly 100 fellows, representing experiences in all six target countries. We also surveyed the participants of the local training programs and received responses from a majority of trainees in five of the six target countries.

We gathered data collected across four years in the IWMF Monitoring and Evaluation tracker, which kept records of all applicants and selected fellows. We also reviewed more than 350 stories produced during the program to analyze the gender breakdown in quotes, sources and overall content.

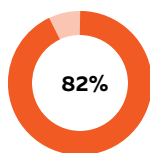
# BY THE NUMBERS

## Total number of people impacted

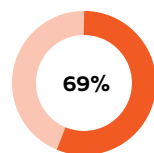
### SELF-REPORTED FINDINGS VIA SURVEY RESPONSES



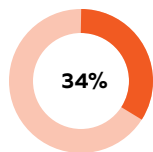
100% of respondents found the HEFAT useful



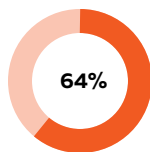
82% reported that the fellowship boosted their confidence as a journalist



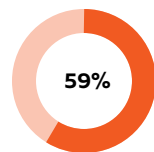
69% made note of the women-only environment as having significance for them



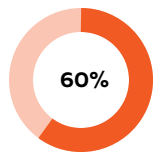
34% said they'd been in a situation where they'd applied the skills they learned in HEFAT



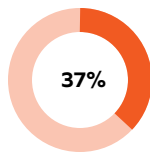
64% said the fellowship led to professional collaborations



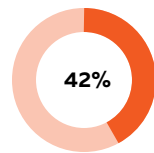
59% were motivated to continue reporting from Africa because of the fellowship



60% published 3 or more stories related to the fellowship reporting



37% were given the opportunity to report from Africa for the first time



42% were motivated to keep their fellowship country as a priority for their future reporting

### REPORTING TRIPS SNAPSHOT

	REPORTING TRIPS	STORIES PUBLISHED
Central African Republic	3	29
Democratic Republic of the Congo	7*	102
Rwanda	5	57
South Sudan	4*	76
Tanzania	4	52
Uganda	4*	94

\*includes cross border reporting trips



PHOTOGRAPH: IWMMF

▲ Journalists undergo a kidnapping scenario in Nairobi, Kenya, as part of the IWMMF's Hostile Environments and First-Aid Training (HEFAT). Before embarking on a reporting trip in the Great Lakes region, all journalists are required to complete the IWMMF's HEFAT.

### NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

182

Number of international Fellowships

100%

Percentage of Fellows who completed HEFAT

288

Total local and international Fellowships

326

Number of journalists who completed HEFAT

362

Number of stories produced by International Fellows

152

Number of local journalists who completed HEFAT

127

Number of outlets in which stories appeared

80

Journalists who received Safety Seminar

27

Total number of Reporting Trips (over 6 countries)



## SECTION I:

# COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

**"I can trace back all of my professional success to the IWMF trips I've done."**

**R**wanda. Uganda. Democratic Republic of the Congo. South Sudan. Tanzania. Central African Republic.

With these six countries come six unique national identities. But within them is a kinship—a regional identity—that is overlooked, misconstrued, simplified and reduced to harmful narratives.

The African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative was a five-year endeavor to see the Great Lakes region through new eyes.

As fellow Ryan Lenora Brown put

it, "Working in Western media in Africa can be a contest to see how tough you can be, how close you can get to a war, and if you don't do that, are you even a serious journalist?" To her, one of the biggest benefits of an IWMF trip is seeing real support put behind stories that go beyond the traditional narratives of war and conflict—and "not just as cute things for the feature page in the back."

This section offers a snapshot of the reporting with the greatest impact on each country and the journalists who told these stories.



# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



**"We changed Google search results for the Congo."**

**T**he Democratic Republic of the Congo made headlines in recent decades for violence, conflict and political instability. It is the second-largest geographic country in the continent, with the fourth-largest population. Our reporting trips in the Congo exceeded our expectations, contributing to new narratives outside of conflict, putting women's voices at the forefront and seeking out underreported stories across a million square miles and 80 million people.

The DRC is the country we returned to more than any other in the region, and the lessons we learned helped to elevate and organize our efforts in the other five countries. Our reporting trips focused on the North Kivu province but also took journalists to Beni, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and South Kivu.

When fellow Didem Tali traveled with us to the Congo in 2016, she

► **Pictured here is one of the few female taxi drivers in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2017, Lou Marillier published a video and article with Bustle, titled, "A day in the life of a female taxi driver in the Democratic Republic of Congo."**





## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

recalled research for her story pitches in advance of the trip, noticing a pattern on Google: not only did a large number of articles carry an IWMF credit line, but they adopted a different tone and incorporated new content, not the “death and destruction” articles she expected to see.

Stories by the IWMF’s fellows lifted the curtain on dozens of previously underreported aspects of the Congo: street fashion, youth activism, access to electricity and infrastructure, drone surveillance, tattoos, famine prevention, Chinese economic influence, women’s health care, volcano hiking, mineral conflicts, art and jewelry, dance and sport and numerous cultural activities.

The IWMF’s program in the DRC proved that finding a balance between difficult stories, optimistic stories and

► **ABOVE RIGHT: MONUSCO, the UN Mission in Goma, is the largest and most expensive UN project in the world developed to protect civilians. In June 2015, Washington Post staff writer (Foreign Policy staff writer at the time) Siobhan O’Grady interviews a family whose house was destroyed after a UN surveillance drone crashed into their land. The report led to an investigation on the UN’s drone use in the DRC. BELOW RIGHT: IWMF fellows get ready to fly out of Beni, DRC, one of the many locations across the Congo that reporting fellows visited.**

uncategorizable stories is not a burden when the goal is more and better coverage. By making room for variety, reporters don’t have to choose. Accuracy emerges in fullness.

Nina Storchlic was one of the first of the IWMF fellows who demonstrated a deep commitment to the Congo. She traveled on multiple fellowships over the tenure of the program, which enabled her to build regional expertise.

American journalist **Abigail Higgins** was an early fellowship recipient who appreciated the value of the IWMF’s thematic reporting trips.

“**Coverage of the continent is so often relegated to conflict reporting. I think we completely undervalue how important journalism is when it comes to decisions about foreign aid, foreign policy, what problems NGOs decide to tackle, what topics academics decide to study. Journalists are the ones making the first rough sketch of history.” It’s not perfect, she says, but it’s a driver of what problems we’ll choose to tackle tomorrow. When the understanding of a place and a people is skewed, we may find we’re studying the wrong problems. “These [Great Lakes] countries are so important for U.S. foreign policy and aid, and they’re also lynchpins for the rest of the region,” Higgins said. “If there wasn’t an organization like IWMF pushing for coverage, a lot of it would get lost.”**



PHOTOGRAPH: NADINE HOFFMAN/IWMF



PHOTOGRAPH: HANNAH STONEBRAKER/IWMF

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Though her newsrooms were in New York City and Washington, D.C., she returned to the Congo four times with the IWMF, and traveled to South Sudan and Uganda as well. She saw the fellowships as a holistic response to the frustrations of early-career journalists trying to break into foreign correspondence. "I can trace back all of my professional success to the IWMF trips I've done," she said. During the years, Nina reported on a broad array of topics—from marijuana-harvesting Pygmy communities to the under-rated importance of archivists in the world's youngest country to hiking up a volcano—for fun.

On her first trip to the Congo, 24-year-old Siobhán O'Grady never imagined that a story fragment she discovered would lead her to an exclusive investigation for Foreign Policy, ending with the UN providing financial compensation to Congolese citizens for damage caused in a drone crash. She collected testimony from the families involved—the downed drone had "burned their crops and their entire harvest was [ruined]"—and interviewed the UN official in charge at the nearby base. Within a few weeks the affected families received compensation and the last parts of the drone were hauled away. "Everyone ended up being happy," she said. "I'm confident none of that would have happened without my reporting."

Radio journalist Maeve Frances was living in Turkey at the time of her first fellowship with the IWMF, but knew that

"the Middle East wasn't quite the right fit." Her DRC fellowship—her first time in sub-Saharan Africa—pushed her to relocate to the region. "I made the move from Istanbul to Nairobi, and that was because of the Great Lakes program," she said. She traveled to the Congo three times as a fellow, and during the years she participated in trips to five of the six AGL countries in which the IWMF worked.

Julia Steers first participated in an IWMF fellowship to the DRC when she was on staff at CBS. She said the trip set her career on an entirely different trajectory from the one at CBS. The opportunity "reaffirmed that I wanted to be reporting in the field." Months after her fellowship, she made the transition to life as a freelancer in Nairobi. "It gave me the confidence to quit my staff job and move."

### **Tribute to Solange Lusiku, DRC Fellow, Trainer and Friend**

In October 2018, the IWMF lost a cherished colleague and friend. Solange Lusiku Nsimire, a 2014 IWMF Courage in Journalism Award winner, passed away from colon cancer. Her contribution to the AGL program was unmatched. As the media trainer for the DRC local training initiative, and an IWMF fellow herself, Solange's powered our actions in the region.

Solange was one of the bravest champions of press freedom in the Congo, and one of the country's very few publishers of an independent, investigative newspaper in Bukavu:



PHOTOGRAPH: HOLLY PICKETT

Le Souverain. She was unwavering in her commitment to hard-hitting journalism, and as a result, she faced years of death threats as well as physical attacks on her family's home.

When she won the Courage Award, she told NPR, "Asking me to stop being a journalist because I received threats would be like asking me to give up being myself. I am moved by this strong desire to inform people and to provide information that is true, verified and credible. I am conducting a fight that will be useful for future generations. I am writing, every day, the story of Eastern Congo, the story of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and I am contributing toward building our collective memory."



PHOTOGRAPH: IWMF

▲ **ABOVE:** American journalists Kristen Chick and Holly Pickett focused on women in politics and spoke with many candidates including Congolese Member of Parliament Eve Bazaiba seen here chatting with young women after speaking at the Maternity Hospital in Kitambo, Kinshasa. **BELLOW:** 2014 Courage in Journalism Awardee Lusiku Nsimire championed press freedom in Congo. She passed away October 13 after battling colon cancer.



# SOUTH SUDAN

"A difficult country to report from, especially if you live here."



**T**he world's youngest country came into being in 2011, when it separated from its northern neighbor, Sudan, after decades of civil conflict. Two years after independence, new clashes emerged between South Sudan's young leaders, deepened by ethnic tensions. The conflict continues today.

What does it mean to be a journalist in South Sudan? "The obstacles reporters face in doing their work—the stories behind their stories—can say just as much about a country's concerns and challenges as the articles they produce." This reflection is how IWMF fellow Ryan Lenora Brown began her 2018 story on Anna Nimiriano, South Sudan's only female newspaper editor.

► While South Sudan's government and rebel leaders gathered in Khartoum for peace talks, in Juba, the South Sudanese people work to rebuild and heal their communities. As part of a series on local entrepreneurship, August 2018 South Sudan fellow and American photographer and news anchor Sarah Jones profiled a kickboxing gym that hopes to help provide economic opportunities, but primarily, can bridge the gap between communities in the country and bring it a step closer to unity. Check out Jones' piece on kickboxing with KWQC.





## SOUTH SUDAN

Lenora continued, “Some days, that means bartering with soldiers to let Anna’s colleagues out of jail. On others, it means haggling over the price of petrol needed to keep the office generator running. Sometimes, her biggest fight is to drive home in the evening without being stopped by soldiers at roadblocks, who are sometimes swaying and smelling of alcohol. She must be a prostitute, they taunt—no good woman would be out so late on her own.”

South Sudan is an active conflict zone, making safety a large concern. During travel in and out of South Sudan, IWMM fellows were relegated to reporting from the capital city, Juba. A security advisor accompanied our teams during reporting trips, and we observed strict curfews.

The roadblocks facing both foreign journalists trying to enter the country and local journalists trying to persevere are overwhelming. During the program, journalists working in South Sudan (not affiliated with the IWMM) faced violent attacks as well as a major outbreak of fighting in Juba. Some were deported from the country and others were denied a visa for coverage deemed ‘too

► **TOP RIGHT: Juba, South Sudan, as seen from the inside of a reporting trip vehicle.**  
**BOTTOM RIGHT: Men gather in downtown Juba to pray on Eid al-Adha.**

critical’ of the government.

Zimbabwean journalist Tendai Marima reported extensively in Eastern and Southern Africa, but traveled to South Sudan for the first time as an IWMM fellow in 2018. Marima participated in one of the IWMM’s cross-border trips, and experienced the internally displaced persons camps in South Sudan and the refugee settlements across the border in Uganda. “I was far more on edge reporting in the IDP camps of Juba than I was when I was reporting from the refugee camps in northern Uganda.”

Sarah Jones, a 2018 fellow, told the stories of everyday citizens, those committed to keeping a kickboxing gym open or finding solar energy solutions to community infrastructure problems. “I tried to go to South Sudan for over three years,” she said. “I was finally able to report the stories I’ve been wanting to cover, and was also able to get stories out there that show a different side to South Sudan.” After her spots aired on

**“ In Juba there are technologies that the authorities have—phones are being tapped almost all the time.” Cirino says her own phone has been tapped and her Facebook account has been hacked. The threats to personal security are effective—journalists choose to self-censor and refrain from reporting negative findings or chasing stories that could get them into trouble. “In South Sudan, it’s not possible to do serious investigative journalism. Your life will be at risk. So, we don’t go into depth,” Cirino said.**



PHOTOGRAPH: JASMIN BAUOMY



PHOTOGRAPH: ESTHER RUTH MBABAZI



## SOUTH SUDAN

American broadcast station KWQC, Jones heard from viewers that her stories provoked their curiosity about “a country they didn’t know existed.” That kind of impact was why she applied for the fellowship.

When international journalists fly home, fixers and local journalists remain, mitigating the everyday risks of trying to report in their own country—one that is prone to lashing out at criticism.

### Photography

One of the challenges of reporting from South Sudan is an informal but highly enforced ban on photography in public spaces.

Despite the extreme censorship of photo and video in Juba, some of the program’s most stunning visuals were produced in South Sudan, shifting the country’s photographic landscape. In 2017, Sara Hylton’s photo essay in The New York Times, “What War Can’t Destroy,” appeared on the front page of the Sunday Style section. Hylton’s images captured a bold, distinct sense of fashion from everyday citizens. “She saw women in bright print dresses and

► **TOP RIGHT: New York Times journalist Kassie Bracken films in a Juba maternity ward.**  
**BOTTOM RIGHT: A China Aid rice donation ceremony in Juba.**

chunky brass jewelry; some wore purple hair extensions. Men sported bleached dreads and sharply cut suits. There was a fearless sense of style that the war had not managed to kill off.” She did her work quietly, behind the scenes. Her subjects were willing participants.

The following year another New York Times video and photojournalist, Kassie Bracken, partnered with staff editor Megan Specia on a series of multimedia reports from South Sudan and the Uganda–South Sudan border. They paired still images and video footage with text narration to report on a barely functioning neonatal clinic in Juba, and wrote up a Times Insider piece on their experience. “We were two journalists with four cameras, a microphone, a tripod and notebooks trying to be unobtrusive amid the fragility and life-and-death moments.” The pieces garnered feedback from readers wondering what they could do to help.

**“South Sudan is not an easy place to go for freelancers traveling on a shoestring budget,” she said. “I think Zimbabwe is a fairly tough place to work, but from what I could gather, working as a female journalist in South Sudan seems far harder. There are both social and political rules, plus restrictions imposed on the media... The strong presence of the security sector is something I’m used to seeing in Zimbabwe and other countries like Uganda and Kenya,” Marima said, “but conflict adds another dimension of difficulty for female journalists.”**



PHOTOGRAPH: MEGAN SPECIA



PHOTOGRAPH: LILY KUO

# RWANDA

"I learned how to be a better reporter from watching other women on the trip."



**T**he 1994 Rwandan genocide defined a nation of 11 million people for an entire generation. Some 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed within 100 days and the conflict still affects the region today. In the years since, the economy rebounded and President Paul Kagame invested money and resources to rebrand the country's image as clean, modern and progressive, despite tremendous challenges to press freedom.

Of our six working countries, the smallest nation by land mass proved to be one of the biggest by personality. Due to past headlines on the genocide, Rwanda was a fascinating destination for reporting: change occurred quickly, much of it shielded from international news coverage.

The IWMF's fellows found a high standard of living in Kigali, the capital city, in addition to strong, new infrastructure that enabled travel to the furthest reaches of the country.

With this modern environment came the risk of government surveillance, both digital and physical, which had an impact on the ways we operated (see side bar)

and the precautions we took when conducting interviews or discussing stories.

"Rwanda's soil is rich, so indeed the land is green," fellow Wana Udobang noted in a blog post during her 2018 trip. She applied for the agriculture-themed trip because it was different than her usual reporting, which focused more on culture and social issues. She realized that with the right approach, the two could enable human-centric storytelling. "I have never worked on a story on agriculture or climate change before, so visiting farms between the Kigali swamps and the Eastern province really gave me an intimate portrait of how integral the earth is connected to survival," she wrote. "From coffee to banana plantations, the land is responsible for the nation's economic growth, empowering communities and feeding its people."

In late 2018, The New York Times published a multimedia package on Rwandan women conquering the world

► **A woman stands on the shores of Lake Kivu in Rwanda while fishing boats come to shore and unload the morning's catch.**







PHOTOGRAPH: JESSICA BAL

of fishing, an industry dominated by men. The story melded the work of three IWMF fellows: Shannon Sims' words, Holly Pickett's photographs and Clàudia Prat's 360 view videos. "The intense physical work and danger that comes with fishing on Lake Kivu, along with reinforcement from traditional gender roles, kept women from fishing for generations, tending to backyard farms instead." But in post-genocide Rwanda—where the population was suddenly 70 percent female—change was necessary. "In rebuilding the country, the new government insisted on policies underpinned by the concept of equality, and the slogan 'We are all Rwandans.' That included women."

Reporting in Rwanda also allowed subtle programmatic impact to take shape. Journalists fell into pairs or small teams, spending long days in the car together or taking turns interviewing sources, one person taking notes and another snapping photos.

Udobang was experienced working in her native Nigeria, but was less confident about reporting elsewhere, especially as a freelancer who worked alone and lacked institutional support. "There was



PHOTOGRAPH: RUCHA CHITNIS

a [specific] learning experience that came from the group trip," she recalled of her fellowship to Rwanda. "It's great to be able to see how other people approach their work—people who are meticulous about framing questions and can bring something fresh and new to the way you work, maybe help you spot holes in your own process."

Udobang credits the all-women environment for the fellowship's

most important benefits. "There is so much we're talking about [on group trips] beyond the work itself that's so necessary," she said. "Journalism is a very peculiar industry. If you're with guys, you wouldn't feel comfortable [talking openly about certain issues]. You'd feel soft, you'd feel emotional. People are going through interesting life changes and everyone's sharing advice—mental and emotional health is just as important as

▲ **ABOVE LEFT:** 360 video journalist and IWMF reporting fellow Clau Prat shows motobike drivers video footage after reporting on Rwanda's motobike safety efforts. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Men dance outside a local community arts center outside of Kigali.

career health." She sums up a sentiment many fellows expressed: "We're used to having to put on certain faces." Without men nearby to judge, "it's nice to be able to breathe while we're working."





PHOTOGRAPH: HOLLY PICKETT



PHOTOGRAPH: HOLLY PICKETT

## WHAT'S IN MY BAG?

Adapted from Kristen van Schie's Tumblr post, December 2017

- 8 bags of coffee—7 raw beans, 1 ground
- 7 pairs of oversized cloth earrings, still not distributed to the friends who may or may not even want them
- 1 wax print skirt, disproportionately large in the right hip
- 1 pair of wax print trousers, about 12 sizes too small for the man they were bought for

It's December in Cape Town, a fairly horrific time of year for anybody who actually lives here. The tourists in their thousands crowd around market stalls and buy the kind of cheap knick-knacky junk they've decided passes as suitably "African." I roll my eyes and grind my teeth—and then remember that my own shopping list from my last day in Rwanda is almost comically *mzungu*. Knick-knacky junk, indeed.

The real souvenir is stashed in the box where a decade's worth of lanyards and press passes go to die.

When a fixer first handed the paper to me on day one, there was

a crispness to it, its edges smooth, its official stamp still bright. At the top of the page was the banner of the Media High Council; at the bottom, the signature of one Peacemaker Mbungiramihigo, granting me permission to do my job as a journalist in Rwanda.

Nearly a month later, the page is bent and twisted. Unfolded and re-folded. Shoved deep into the pockets of trousers and backpacks. Pulled out again and again. For a police officer. For an official in the mayor's office. For a street trader.

I've always carried a press card, but in just one week in Rwanda I presented my credentials more than I ever had. For any story. Ever. The gentlest hint that—for all its development, its recovery, its Silicon-Valley-meets-Singapore reputation—something is not quite right in Rwanda.

Now, I sit in Cape Town, surrounded by my mounds of Kigali coffee, trawling through my hours of interviews, and try to identify the unease. The discomfort.

I wonder what I can say. What I can't say. What will get me banned from ever going back. Would they do that? They've done it before. I unfold and refold the paper, and unfold it again, and get up to put the kettle on.

◀ **LEFT:** An exhibit at the Kigali Genocide Memorial displays photographs of victims killed during the 1994 genocide.



# CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



**"I'm African and work on the continent, but there are parts of it I just haven't had access to."**

**T**he Central African Republic (CAR), landlocked in the middle of the continent, ranks among the 10 poorest countries in the world, according to the International Monetary Fund. For the past seven years, violent clashes in the country have left thousands of civilians dead and one in four displaced; positioned the country in a de facto partition between north and south; and, most recently, led its people to the brink of famine, with more than half the population in need of humanitarian assistance. It was the toughest and most dangerous country for the IWMF to work in.

And yet, international news remains silent. It's one of the world's most devastating ongoing crises, but it's severely underreported.

Against the backdrop of a simmering conflict, how do people get reliable information?

In 2018, South African journalist Lynsey Chutel wrote a piece for Quartz that summarized a basic problem in

► **Reporting on schools in Bangui, Central African Republic.**



## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

CAR: "On many maps, the Central African Republic is a blank space in the middle of a continent that is already statistically under-represented. The data taken for granted in other countries are unavailable or simply unknown here. A civil war, successive coups, and near-constant violent instability have made data collection seem like an indulgence. Yet, for a country trying to rebuild, those numbers are desperately needed. Especially, when that rebuilding needs the help of international agencies standing in for basic public services. 'Can you imagine a country where nobody knows how many people are here?'"

Roughly half the adult population in CAR is illiterate. With little access to high-quality, accurate reporting, rumors fuel and amplify conflict. Without a strong and accountable news media, the press spreads messages of hate, echoing one of the most damaging tactics of the Rwandan genocide.

The country's World Press Freedom Index fell sharply as the current conflict emerged. Ranked 65th out of 180 countries in 2013, it fell 44 spots the following year and hasn't recovered. Reporters Without Borders notes that "the country's journalists have had no Maison de la Presse (Media Centre) in Bangui since December 2016, when it was closed and its equipment confiscated after a long conflict between journalists and former President Patassé's family."

CAR presented our team with high-stakes security risks. Journalists who



PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLE TUNG

reported from CAR during the civil war in 2013 and 2014 described the volatile situation on the ground: one minute things seemed calm, the next, everything turned to chaos.

During an advance trip in April 2015, violence erupted in Bangui's streets during national peace talks, makeshift barricades went up on the road to the airport and the city locked down. The IWMF spent the next 24 hours sitting

inside our compound, waiting for the airport to reopen.

How could we organize reporting trips during such uncertain conditions and keep everyone safe?

Armed with security protocols and evacuation contingency plans, we decided to try. We picked journalists with experience reporting in conflict environments; we added a second security consultant to the trips; and,

▲ Turkey-based journalist Nicole Tung photographs a woman in labor for a project on maternal health facilities in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic.

we monitored the shifting situation on the ground.

The next three years, we safely ran three group trips to Bangui, though two additional trips were cancelled after violence escalated. Journalists were



## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

present on several occasions to witness moments of spontaneous violence, and to report on them with context and clarity.

On a November 2017 trip, a concert meant to unify and promote peace ended in violence after a grenade attack. Rumors spread and retribution killings began, further fueling the short burst of violence in the calm capital, Bangui. The IWFM's team on the ground was able to report on the attack and bring it to the international public's attention.

Bloomberg Africa editor Pauline Bax reported on the attack and what it revealed about CAR's religious rift. Freelancers Julia Steers and Adrienne Surprenant developed an article for VICE on peacekeepers struggling to do their jobs and an article on accusations of peacekeepers raping and murdering citizens.

Photojournalist Nicole Tung realized that "much of what I read in the English-speaking media was either outdated or provided coverage only about

► **ABOVE RIGHT: A Central African soldier participates in a military training exercise near Bangui, CAR. BELOW RIGHT: Julia Steers, a Nairobi-based multimedia journalist embedded with a MINUSCA night patrol following a grenade attack at a concert.**

renewed violence rather than anything in depth." When she set foot in CAR in 2018, the picture was different. "I had initially set out to do stories on religious reconciliation, [but decided on] a more general picture about Bangui itself: a Bangui that was not constantly riddled with violence, but one in which people lived out their daily lives much as they do elsewhere in the world — got married, had parties, enjoyed nightlife, etc., all in the context of the tension that always seemed to hang over the city." She believed this quieter narrative would be "important to an audience who may not know the Central African Republic exists. It was also a narrative I thought was not being represented," as much of the visual language that portrayed CAR was centered on violence.

The lack of available data, a dismal press freedom record and the active conflict zone left many fellows unsure what to expect on arrival in CAR. **Pauline Bax** described her first impressions of the CAR in a post on the IWFM blog:

**“For all the news of fighting and humanitarian disaster, Bangui was strikingly pretty, with a huge brick church, green hills, colorful 1970s architecture and a navigable river that borders on the Democratic Republic of Congo. ... Even more surprising was how easy it was to meet people, from the Cardinal in his tidy riverside office lined with tropical plants, to dejected villagers who'd made the grueling road journey to Bangui to raise funds for relatives stuck in the countryside without food.”**



PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLE TUNG



PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIENNE SURPRENANT

# UGANDA

**"An amazing opportunity to learn from colleagues, both local and international."**



**Y**oweri Museveni came to power in Uganda in 1986 and never let go. Joseph Kony, whose Lord's Resistance Army provoked a years-long conflict, is also well-known in the modern world. To break these associations, the IWMF decided to forcefully broaden the scope of the country's international media coverage.

Much of the IWMF's time in Uganda was spent in refugee and internally displaced persons settlements, with fellows listening to stories of Ugandan and South Sudanese refugees forced from their homes weeks, months or even decades earlier; the number of refugees in the country was approaching the one million mark.

Reporting trips in Uganda took the IWMF cross-country, from Entebbe and Kampala, to Gulu, Adjumani, Yumbe and the Moyo District, where fellows reported on access to health and education services in refugee settlements, the impact of the United States' gag rule on reproductive and

► **Radio journalist Kimberly Adams reporting on tourism in Jinja, Uganda.**





## UGANDA

maternal health services, the 2016 presidential elections and the remnants of the Lord's Resistance Army's violence.

In Uganda we supported the work of fellow Kim Wall, whose 2017 murder in Denmark shocked the world. Her reporting, her curiosity and her reverence for her freelance colleagues left a legacy at the IWMF, exemplifying our hope for a global network of international female correspondents.

Wall looked for stories that held “the undercurrents of rebellion.” She was fascinated by normal people with off-beat outlooks, undertaking extraordinary measures to effect change.

In Uganda in 2016, Wall collaborated with fellow and Indian journalist Mansi Choksi. They published a piece on the Mukwano Mall, the site of massive investment by Chinese entrepreneurs in Africa, and Choksi recalled what it was like spending days with Wall while reporting the story: “We just spent the entire day lurking,” she remembered. “The more we hung around, the more uninteresting we became” to locals who

regarded them suspiciously at first.

Wall and Choksi spoke to shopkeepers in the open-air mall, Ugandans who had learned to cook Chinese food and workers at a potato chip factory (one Ugandan, one Chinese), which allowed them to look at race and society. “The infrastructure was so broken,” Choksi said. “Our aim was to understand why they made the choices they made.”

“I learned so much from Kim on that reporting trip,” Choksi said. “Mainly that you can have the most fun time doing serious, important and meaningful work.”

Wall was a steadfast believer in the power of the lifelong connections between women journalists. “This has been an amazing opportunity to learn from colleagues, both local and international, about everything from how to file taxes and staying safe to how to best cover a region as complex (and misunderstood!) as East Africa,” Wall wrote just after her fellowship.

“Most of all, this fellowship provided inspiration for me to get out in the field

and do stories that matter, as well as a rekindling of my love for the freelance lifestyle.”

The IWMF fellows’ reporting also produced tangible impact for the communities featured in their stories. Before she reported with Wall, Choksi participated in the IWMF’s inaugural reporting trip to Uganda, where she reported on sanitation and public health in Kampala.

“In Uganda, only 19 percent of the population has access to toilets that are not shared and that protect them from

direct contact with waste—conditions which pose a serious threat to women’s health and safety,” Choksi reported. Her visceral story for Vice caught the eye of an emerging nonprofit whose donors were ready for waterless toilets in this very region.

▼ Sheilah Nakabuye, a Ugandan TV journalist and fellow for the IWMF’s local training program in Uganda, takes a photo of a refugee settlement in Adjoumani. Barbara Among, a senior Ugandan journalist and trainer for the IWMF’s in-country training program.



PHOTOGRAPH: TAMARA RASAMNY/IWMF

The IWMFAGL fellows felt great impact on their careers as a result of the reporting trips. When **Kimberly Adams** was hired at Marketplace in 2015, she arrived with new stories ready for broadcast. She is quick to connect the dots:

“I know that the work I did for the IWMF in Uganda really played into getting my job at Marketplace. It worked to my credit that it was a fellowship I won and showed that I could step outside my comfort zone, could work with a team, and it gave me a bunch of stories” that were already reported, and just needed some editing and an outlet. “I was able to come to a new job with content.”

# TANZANIA

From health to sport to technology, women's stories find the spotlight.



**T**anzania and Zanzibar were hotbeds for reporting on climate, conservation and natural phenomena. These regions were also superior landscapes for elevating women's voices.

Jacqueline Alemany's primary occupation during her 2017 fellowship in Zanzibar was to shadow "the queen of the drone," a geospatial technology student named Khadija Abdulla Ali. "The Zanzibar Mapping Initiative is the world's most ambitious mapping project deploying small-scale drones," Alemany, who at the time was a correspondent for CBS News, reported. The project deployed \$20,000 lightweight drones, entrusted to a team of students from the State University, and produced hundreds of images. The goal was to publish the data online and make everything available to the public

► Independent farmers plant and harvest seaweed early one morning at low tide. Seaweed farming, threatened by climate change, is an important source of income for the Zanzibar's women. American journalists Jacqueline Alemany and Laylah Amatullah Barryn published a piece in October 2017 on an unconventional method in the fight against climate change—drones.





## TANZANIA

“with the hope of revolutionizing the policymaking capabilities of the Zanzibari government,” said Alemany.

Oluwabusayo Sotunde’s 2017 story on the installation of a solar power grid on a remote island in Lake Victoria amplified a population that rarely finds itself within news media. “Historically, Ukara’s most famous ‘export product’ has been its youthful laborers,” she wrote for the Nigerian outlet Rural Reporters. One man she profiled “works as a boda-boda driver, a farmer, a fisherman and an advocate of clean energy for [a local NGO], convincing his fellow villagers to subscribe to the use of solar energy to improve their social and economic status.” Like many rural communities, they feel left behind by the government, with climate change altering the ways they used to make a living.

In 2015, photojournalist Moa Karlberg published a widely viewed photo essay in *The New Yorker* featuring close-up, black-and-white images of women giving birth, some from her native Sweden and some from Tanzania. Her project nudged viewers to review similarities and disparities between labor and birth across continents. She titled the piece “Hundred Times the Difference,” a nod to the grim reality that “the risk of dying during childbirth in Tanzania is a hundred times higher than it is in Sweden.”

Rebecca Grant’s dispatch from Zanzibar in 2017 posed a harrowing question: “How do you get a woman to report to the police that she’s been

assaulted or abused if she doesn’t trust the police to take action?” The answer was found in the form of “gender desks,” an initiative by the island’s police to staff units with “dedicated, specially trained detectives to handle ‘sexually-based offenses’ like rape, sexual assault and domestic violence.” Grant featured women as the experts and problem-solvers, ensuring

they were more than victims.

In her feature for *World Policy Journal*, Lisa De Bode introduced readers to seaweed farming on Zanzibar, and disruptions caused by climate change—all from the viewpoint of women harvesters. “In Zanzibar’s conservative Islamic society, married women are traditionally confined to their homes, and to domestic labor,”

▲ BBC reporter Nicola Kelly gathers audio at a public exorcism for a documentary about mental health in Zanzibar.

she found. But seaweed farming, and the additional income that comes with it, “disrupted traditional gender roles.” “At the beach,” where seaweed grows in the island’s shallow shores, “women can work freely, earning money they spend



PHOTOGRAPH: GLENDORA MEIKLE



at their discretion,” De Bode wrote.

“I’ve never been attacked physically ... [b]ut they tell me and my family that they are not happy, and that I should not be playing soccer.” These are the words of a 23-year-old female soccer player from the Zanzibari women’s league. Shannon Sims’ story for The New York Times “was one of the most resonant stories for readers of any that I have written,” Sims said. “The instant it was published, my social media was on fire with people wanting to know how they could help the women. Filmmakers and TV stations also reached out to me, wanting to feature the reporting. In fact, I was able to connect the owner of a small sports equipment company with a documentary filmmaker in order to bring the supplies to the women in Zanzibar.”

The filmmaker happened to be famed Brazilian soccer player Pelé’s daughter. Sims notes that she did not pursue this line of reporting to change the women’s circumstances—she simply wanted to share their story. But the reaction by the public did have an impact, one that Sims is “grateful to have had the opportunity to orchestrate.”

### Elevating Women’s Voices in Bylines and Headlines

A 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) study entitled “Who Makes the News?” found that “only 24 percent of the people heard or read about in print, radio and television news are female.” It remained steady at 24 percent five years later. Both findings were an improvement from 1995—the first year

► **ABOVE RIGHT: “Doctor” Manyanyau, a witchdoctor who says many of his clients are Tanzanian politicians. BELOW RIGHT: Capturing 360 video footage on a game reserve in Tanzania.**

of the study—when the number was an abysmal 17 percent.

Within the past several years, the question of who makes the news—who’s charged with telling stories, and whose stories get told—garnered more attention. Other researchers have compiled compelling data on the subject, leading many publications to self-evaluate.

This reflection is forcing the industry to confront an uncomfortable but undeniable truth: women are still not being heard.

The GMMP study found that the overall proportion of stories focusing on women holding steady at 10 percent since 2000. By comparison, IWMF fellows featured women as a story’s primary source and/or focused on issues especially relevant to women in 36 percent of stories filed.

Finally, 100 percent of our stories from the Great Lakes region were authored by women, including in 2015 when the GMMP study found that overall the number was 37 percent (up from 28 percent in 1995).



PHOTOGRAPH: HANNAH MCNEISH



PHOTOGRAPH: IWMF



## SECTION II:

# SAFETY & SECURITY

**"I know for a fact that my survival was impacted directly by lessons I learned at the HEFAT training."**

**A**t the outset of the IWFM's programming in the African Great Lakes region, we knew that to operate effectively safety would need to be a priority. The nearly 300 local and foreign journalists who participated in AGL fellowships all came away with one thing in common: a foundation of safety and security training.

Hostile Environment and First Aid Training help journalists report safely in an increasingly complex world by improving their situational awareness, self-defense and first aid skills.

Each reporting trip in the African Great Lakes region began with a four-day HEFAT course led by in-house security director Jean-François "Jeff" Belzil and female security consultant Cath Mossom of RPS Partnership. The trainings are tailored to women, and certain modules are designed to address the specific reporting region.

Mossom observed that the IWFM's "all-female environment is unique—it gives fellows the safe environment to be able to discuss problems they've faced in the field or might face in the field."

The training includes classroom learning and active, realistic simulations with components on an array of relevant topics:

- Emergency first aid (for self and colleagues)
- Digital security
- Self-defense
- Situational awareness
- Hotel and personal security
- Civil unrest/demonstrations/road traffic accidents
- Kidnapping/navigating checkpoints/ reaction under gunfire
- Response to high-risk/stressful situations
- Emotional self-care

The goal of each training is to better prepare journalists to face safety threats and help them understand their own reactions so they can prepare for situations outside their comfort zones.

"We're living in a dangerous world, especially for journalists, more especially for women journalists," said Belzil. "I want to prove to them that I can empower

**"I was detained in Congo, and then [found myself] in a variety of live-fire situations in Burundi. During two of those situations I had to use my first-aid training on people who had been shot. [Another time] I was arrested and detained in Burundi. All these incidents were scenarios where I found the HEFAT useful, because I knew what my reaction probably would be in those scenarios." —JULIA STEERS**

them and that they're actually able to do it. We're giving them all new skills, but also the trust and confidence to do stuff they thought they couldn't do."

Sarah Jones took a previous security training but reported that the IWFM's HEFAT was carried out on a completely different level. "This course was much more in-depth and comprehensive—the fact that it was gender-specific made a huge difference," she said.

Many participants can't afford this training on their own. Kimberly Adams, who was a Cairo-based freelancer at

the time of her first IWFM trip, said that the HEFAT component was one of the most attractive parts of the fellowship. "I really appreciated the safety component," she said. "There was a lot I wanted to do that I didn't feel ready for because I hadn't had the HEFAT training. I was literally losing out on work for lack of training and experience." She noted that many news outlets require freelancers to have completed a HEFAT in order to take on assignments in certain regions, but they expect the freelancers to fund it themselves, to the tune of hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

"I've used a lot of the skills since then," said Adams. "It changed my digital security, and I actually used the training to develop a check-in procedure for local journalists in Egypt. Then one of the friends I did it with shared it with others at [Egyptian outlet] Mada Masr, and it's now instilled in the newsroom there."

**"I definitely took back things that I implement now in my reporting process—the way that I carry my bag, that I conduct myself in crowds and if I'm alone... I know to let people know where I am. You condition yourself to listen to that gut feeling. I now know it's not brave, just stupid, to try to forge ahead. Especially women, trying to prove other people wrong. We shouldn't second-guess our own instincts." —MANSI CHOKSI**

## SECTION III:

# TRAINING LOCAL JOURNALISTS

**"This program managed to unleash people's potential."**

**A** final component of the IWMF African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative was in-country training for local journalists, providing professional development, practical skills-building and an opportunity to strengthen independent reporting in the six target countries.

This training included year-long fellowships for selected participants, structured around a country-specific core curriculum and implemented by local trainers. Training modules included lessons on journalism ethics, the building blocks of a story, specialized reporting and media leadership, with a focus on practical knowledge and case studies.

"They're taught to report stories that will win them awards and put them out there in the public eye so that an

► In January 2019, a group of more than 80 journalists from across the African continent gathered to attend a bootcamp conference where journalists underwent trainings in one of the topics: podcasting, photography, mobile journalism, or data journalism. Journalists were asked to write one word describing what they hope to gain from this experience, to which they answered: mentorship, confidence, leadership, and growth, to name a few.





## TRAINING LOCAL JOURNALISTS

editor in New York won't have to fly out a journalist from NYC to do a story in Uganda," said Barbara Among, lead trainer for the Uganda program. "There are reporters here who are perfectly capable of doing it."

### Structural Overview

In-country training is enriched by a flexible curriculum that adjusts to the skill levels and specific realities of trainees in each program country. Local trainers took training-of-trainers courses with Fray Intermedia to raise their own level of classroom expertise, and all trainers came with a decade of professional journalism experience. Their lessons were tailored to country priorities, based on detailed needs assessments, and allowed for additional expert speakers from different sectors and one-on-one mentoring.

Fellows also collaborated with media outlets to ensure publication and airing of stories reported during the training—a mutual benefit for both the journalists and for overall media coverage in the target countries.

Approximately 20 trainees were selected in each country, all of whom were already working journalists. At minimum, 50 percent of the trainees were women, but the trainers also deliberately included men.

### Building Reporting Skills

In interviews with more than a dozen trainees in Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Rwanda, we learned that a common grievance was the lack of

#### ► Tanzanian journalists participate in HEFAT.

available professional training. "There's so much I don't know," Rwandan trainee Marie-Ange Mukaneza said. "I'm a self-taught journalist—what we study [in school] is different than what's needed in the field," she said.

Because of this skills gap, the IWFMF training curriculum started with the essentials. "Module one is the basics of journalism: what is news, what's the purpose, why be a journalist, understanding how the media operates," trainer Among said. "We progress to writing story proposals, talking about media laws in this country, writing for local and international publications, different styles of writing, different types of journalism."

Adapting the training was a way of ensuring relevance across modules. Challenges within the six countries could be basic but crippling (lack of power, lack of equipment) or systemic and deeply entrenched (gender discrimination, poor pay). Thus, each country incorporated sessions on press freedom with a local spin for context.

### "Building an army of professional journalists"

Tanzania trainer Leah Mushi found that small, tangible skills could spread quickly beyond the classroom, having a ripple effect on the media landscape. "Teach them to use all the small skills they have—even something like using their phone as a recorder, or other low-tech solutions. Editors have told me I



Being able to focus on feminist stories was important for Tanzanian trainee **Najjat Omar**.

**“When I saw the name of the organization, I thought this could help me tell the stories I want,” she said of IWFMF. “I was a little skeptical that it would be a foreigner coming to tell me about my own environment. So I called for information and it was Leah’s voice answering, ‘Mambo!’ And I realized I could work with this.”**

**“The media landscape is so bad right now,” trainer Leah Mushi said of Tanzania. “They know when they publish, the government will be on them. People from the revenue office will come and tell them they haven’t paid taxes, for example. Or they’ll come and say you didn’t show balance in your story, so we’re shutting down your radio station.”**



▲ In May 2017 (unsure of date), IWMF's in-country trainers met in Nairobi to go over expectations of their role as trainers and their training curriculum.

transformed their media house just by training one person."

Lack of fair pay exacerbates the problem of professionalism. "Many media houses are doing PR rather than journalism," said Tanzanian trainee Ahadi Mtweve. "And you have to, whether you like or not. The president will call the editor to tell them he needs a particular story covered."

Many participants noted how their colleagues started off in journalism and switched to communications, which pays better. In Uganda, journalism is not viewed as a career staffed with professionals. "Sometimes I think people don't take us seriously because others in the profession don't do it well," trainee Sheilah Nakabuye said. "They just think it's an entertainment industry."

Trainees in South Sudan faced a similar challenge. "Maybe 10 percent of the total media in the country is professional," said trainee Maura Ajak. "It's mostly citizen journalists."

### Gender at the Forefront

A related issue was gender discrimination, the depths of which can be shocking. Ugandan trainee Irene Otto said that editors are constantly second-guessing female reporters. "The last time I pitched something, the editors kept asking, 'Are you sure you really want to go to this place?' They don't believe you're serious. They think if you're in the newsroom, you've already slept with everyone, that's why you're in the room at all."

Trainer Nancy Cirino noted that there is only one outlet in all of South Sudan with a female editor. "Almost all media houses, directors, editors are male. There is a big challenge in that." Women are harassed but don't have anyone to report to. One of Cirino's students was pressured for sex by her editor and refused. When she turned him down, he started paying her in the local currency (while everyone else is paid in dollars), as a punishment.

Cirino spoke of editors and directors having beds in their offices. "No sexual harassment policies exist," she said. "There is nobody for female journalists to report to. Women must rely on themselves and their colleagues."

Even when women journalists aren't harassed, or concerned for physical safety, professional respect can remain out of reach. "Hard news" is rarely assigned to women. "Over 80 percent of editors are men. Fewer than 10 percent of all journalists are women," trainer Solange Ayanone said of Rwanda. "There are assumptions about what

## RECOGNITION AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

### UGANDA

- **Sheilah Nakabuye** was promoted to bureau chief at NBS TV.
- **Irene Abalo** was promoted to news editor for Favour FM Radio while **Caroline Aguyi** was promoted to news editor at Mighty Fire Radio.
- **Sylvia Kugonza** organized a press freedom group in Rwenzori region, establishing a solidarity network to share information on security incidents.
- **John Okot** had stories published with Reuters and CSM.
- **Sheila Ndhukire** is currently completing her Master's program in the U.K.

### RWANDA

- **4 participants** started their own media houses—50 percent are women.
- **Trainees** applied their investigative skills on elections, particularly focusing on female candidates.
- **20 trainees** went to 20 different districts to report live on the elections.

### TANZANIA

- **Najjat Omar** won the UN Summit Award (can't find the official name of this online) for her story on child sex abuse.
- **Merabu Birakashekwa** received an excellence in reporting award in Uganda for her story on refugees and internally displaced people in the country.

### SOUTH SUDAN

- **Theresa Bingo** and **Awadia Mahmoud** were awarded for their reporting.
- **Richard Jale** and **Maura Ajak** won best reporting by a civil society organization.

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

- **Magguy Kakule** was promoted to be the first female director at VBR Radio Station.
- **Isabelle Riba** was awarded by UCOFEM (The Congolese Women's Media Union) for her reporting and recognized as the best female journalist under 30.
- **Colette Salima** also received an award, while **Eric Mwisi** was awarded as the best reporter in Beni.



## TRAINING LOCAL JOURNALISTS

women can cover. 'You're not ready to cover the Economic Forum. Go cover the opening of a nursery.' So the IWFM builds capacity to improve confidence and standards," she said.

The training is making a difference in the minds of the male participants, too. "I see now how important it is to know how these things work so I can include the information or find new angles for stories that others don't realize exist," said Christophe Hitayezu, a male trainee

**“ This training is filling the two biggest gaps we have in Uganda: lack of practical skills at university, and no mentors,” trainer Among said. “If you go to their newsroom, [the participants’] editors will tell you they’re above everyone else. They learn to approach stories differently and open their eyes to so many things they took for granted before. [...] The beauty of this training and the reason I would love it to continue is that we’re building an army of professional journalists,” Among said. “And in a developing country with very little transparency, with no watchdog institutions, the journalists become the voice. So this program—they’re building that army of young professional journalists who can hold power to account.”**

in Rwanda trainee, on what he’s learned about considering gender in his stories. “As an editor, gender wasn’t among my criteria, to ask whether a story was balanced. I didn’t care. But due to this training, I’ve learned now to consider if gender is represented accurately and sourced properly.”

Otto added, “When you do a good job, they’re always surprised!” she said. “So it’s just acclimating them to the idea” that women are capable.

### Better representation for all citizens

Media coverage in the African Great Lakes region also faces problems related to diversity. There are often too many reporters concentrated in the capital cities, creating news deserts for rural populations. Coverage of those with less power, especially women, often lags.

The trainers took geography into account when selecting trainees. With around 70 percent of Tanzania’s population living in rural areas, this was important for Mushi: “I was very focused on geographical diversity—I selected almost no one from Dar, even though 90 percent of media houses are located there,” she said. “We’ve moved the training sessions to different locations around the country all year to make it easier for people to get there. It often takes some of the participants a full two days to get to a training session, sleeping overnight on a bus.”

Cirino knows that the country’s media hub was concentrated in Juba, but noted that a goal was to help participants realize the power of

## PARTICIPANTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS ...

**“ IWFM is like a college—the training and workshops and field trips. It transformed me from one step to the next step.”**—TANZANIAN TRAINEE ADELINA LWERAMULA

**“ [The training] gave me the courage to do the investigation that was right in my backyard. To face my sources, go into the community. Start telling the stories from the affected people, not just the officials. And my editors really started loving my work, because I was able to bring something different. I always suspected that sometimes what media is giving us is not the full story. So I went and pitched a tent for a week and reported the real story.”**—UGANDAN TRAINEE ABALO IRENE OTTO

**“ I had been told by an American professor about the opportunity when I was studying. So I knew it was knowledge coming from America, and I liked the idea of having access to the same information as my peers in America. Training in Tanzania is an opportunity—for earning money, for exposure ...”**—TANZANIAN TRAINEE AHADI MTWEVE

**“ When I wrapped up my courses at university, I thought I was very skilled and could be a real journalist. But when we go to the field, we see there is still a lot to learn. The skills from this training will help me be a professional.”**—RWANDAN TRAINEE ANATHALIE NYIRANGABO

collaboration in difficult environments. “A big goal was having all the journalists in the different states reporting one story,” she said. She used the example of a series on child marriage or the economy. “How is it in Juba? How is it in Rumbek? In Yambio? In Bor?” She urged the trainees to assemble a network for interstate reporting.

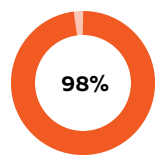
Encouraging collaboration was also

important in South Sudan because of the ethnic tensions fueling the country’s civil conflict. For Cirino, the mix of participants went beyond gender or geographic representation — she was careful to ensure the group included almost all the tribes in South Sudan. Cirino observed the unity that developed among the students and the change in attitude toward other tribes.

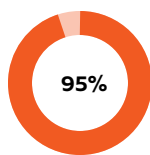
# BY THE NUMBERS

Enhancing Reporting by African Journalists across the Great Lakes Region

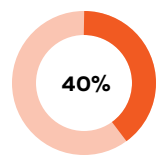
## SELF-REPORTED SURVEY RESPONSES



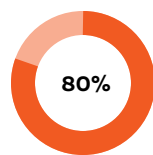
**98%** found the training useful, with **89%** deeming it either "very" or "extremely" useful



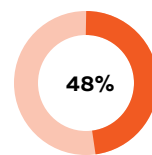
**95%** believe they are a better journalist than they were before the training



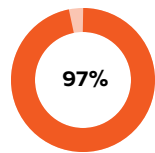
**40%** said their reporting had led to high-level discussions or been a catalyst for change in their communities



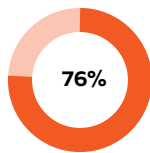
**80%** believe the training adequately addressed the challenges of being a working journalist



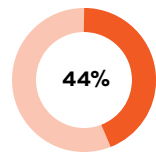
**48%** said the most relevant skill they learned was how to do reporting with impact



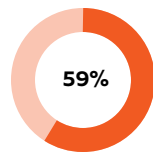
**97%** reported having received feedback from editors and colleagues recognizing an improvement in their work



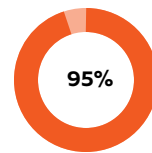
**76%** shared what they learned in the training with colleagues and newsrooms, increasing reach of training



**44%** cited lack of formal training as one of the biggest challenges to being a working journalist

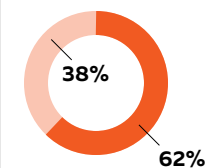


**59%** said the most relevant skill they learned was how to do investigative reporting

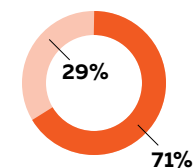


**95%** would recommend this training to colleagues or peers in the country

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE



**Gender Breakdown:**  
■ Women  
■ Men



**Urban/Rural Breakdown:**  
■ based in cities  
■ living in rural areas

**106**  
**Number of Fellows Trained** (more than 6 countries)

**8**  
**Reporting Awards Won:** At least 8 (informally reported)



## SECTION IV:

# PROGRAM CULMINATION

**"I have never been able to meet media professionals from more than a dozen countries at once before."**

**W**hen closing a program with the size and scope of the African Great Lakes Reporting Initiative, our goal was to equip participants with the confidence and skills to move their professional development forward. In January 2019, the IWMF completed four years of reporting with a series of workshops in Naivasha, Kenya, called the Women Media Leaders Bootcamp. In collaboration with the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)/Women in News (WIN), the IWMF joined 80 female journalists from across 13 countries for five days of skills-building and networking.

Participants chose among

podcasting, photography, data journalism and mobile storytelling and learned from African instructors and industry leaders in these four areas. We also offered specialty sessions, including a safety and security workshop, interactive seminars on trauma-sensitive reporting and sexual harassment, and time set aside for targeted mentoring.

The feedback was jubilant, and the word "practical" came up many times in the survey given to all participants on the final day of the conference: The "number of exercises we were given, and opportunities to ask as many questions as possible" made it especially useful, according to a participant from Rwanda.

Participants were also given the chance to expand on their responses, including the following comments:

**"It was easy for me to participate fully and ask questions or seek mentorship and guidance on what I did not understand. The skills I have learned will help me better my career, and I hope that the same program is rolled out to other countries to enrich the knowledge of many more women in the media."**

—UGANDAN PARTICIPANT

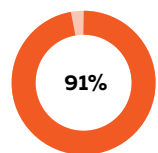
**"I felt safe and comfortable to speak on controversial topics."** —SOUTH AFRICAN PARTICIPANT

**"It was a very safe space to talk about anything. I loved being surrounded by so many inspiring, strong women, as what we do can be very isolating. I cannot even begin to express what a massive impact this experience has had on me. This was a life-changing experience for me and I'm amazed at how selflessly the IWMF and all organizations involved invested in all the women here."**—SOUTH AFRICAN PARTICIPANT

**"It was interactive and we had the chance to share experiences. We had practical sessions that were very helpful in understanding the material."**—UGANDAN PARTICIPANT

### SURVEY FEEDBACK

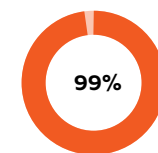
Nearly 100 percent of participants submitted feedback via an online survey on the final day of the workshop.



**91%** of participants gave the bootcamp the highest rating of "very useful"



**100%** said they were either "likely" or "very likely" to use new skills learned during the training in their workplace



**99%** reported establishing new professional networks as a result of the bootcamp





To conclude the African Great Lakes Program, a group of journalists from several countries from the African continent convened in Naivasha, Kenya, to conduct a four-day bootcamp training on different journalism tracks, like podcasting, digital journalism, photography, and mobile journalism. This conference was in partnership with Wan-IFRA, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers' Women in News program.



A fishing boat sits quietly on the shores of Lake Kivu in Rwanda.

