



WOMEN AND HUMANITARIAN MEDIA ROUNDTABLE OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

On International Women's Day, Humanitarian Advisory Group launched the **'Women's Voice in Humanitarian Media. No Surprises'** media analysis at a roundtable that brought together journalists, media experts and representatives from the humanitarian sector. The research paper, as part of the Diverse Humanitarian Leadership research project in the **Humanitarian Horizons Research Programme**, explores how women are represented in humanitarian media.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Building on our previous research on women in humanitarian leadership, which found that **women are underrepresented as leaders in the sector**, this paper explored how women are represented in humanitarian media. We took a brief snapshot of online media covering humanitarian topics from two media outlets over a four-week period. The data indicates that women are underrepresented in humanitarian

media—just 23% of officials and experts quoted were women. While this is no surprise—it reflects the underrepresentation of women in media more broadly—it is an issue that needs to be addressed. Why is this the case and how can humanitarian media reflect more gender diversity of views? While more data is needed as well as increased understanding of the impact of the underrepresentation of women, this paper seeks to raise awareness and support efforts towards gender parity in the humanitarian sector.



Sources quoted on stereotypical female issues

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION POINTS

The roundtable brought together various perspectives on gender and humanitarian media. The round table highlighted many positive stories. One NGO representative outlined her positive experience of being the primary media contact during Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015. The representative noted this was a result of her position in her organisation, and that she felt supported by her agency doing this. Others shared the

work being done within their agencies to nominate and support women, and women local to the context of the emergency, to represent their organisations to the media.

However, the discussion echoed the findings of the research that NGO designated media spokespersons are predominantly men. Participants noted the importance of the confidence gap between women and men to speak to the media, and how that impacts women's willingness to be media representatives for organisations. It was suggested that the different types of scrutiny women face in the media may also impact willingness and confidence.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The roundtable highlighted some key actions that can contribute to better representation of women in humanitarian media, many of which echoed the findings from the report.

- Support women to attain leadership positions, as staff in more senior positions are often media representatives for the organisation.
- Humanitarian organisations could proactively identify more female staff for media roles, and develop their skills and confidence to engage with media
- In particular during preparedness for crisis response, humanitarian organisations could include a media plan inclusive of local and international women, prepare talking points and opportunities to build confidence, and share contacts with the media
- Humanitarian organisations and journalists could work together to collate and share the names of female humanitarian workers and local spokeswomen during both preparedness and response
- Journalists can more actively review the gender balance of their list of contacts and request female media representatives where the gender balance is not initially provided
- Humanitarian organisations could partner female humanitarian workers with the experienced media representatives to help build skills and confidence
- Conduct research to better understand how women are represented in the media (what they are quoted on as much as how often they are quoted), and the impact of this representation.