



ICFJ

***ICFJ Voices:
Testimonies from
Our Network***

It Takes a Journalist

In 2024, we celebrated 40 years of achievements by journalists in ICFJ's global network. Elections in 81 countries, the growing power of AI and rising authoritarianism were all reminders why journalism matters.

Throughout the year, our network of journalists generously shared their testimonies. They detailed their dreams, challenges and impacts — and how ICFJ supported them along the way.

At ICFJ, we know “it takes a journalist.” And that’s why we are so proud of the journalists in our vibrant global network — 177,000+ strong — and the impact they have had and continue to have. Thanks to our supporters, ICFJ has built skills, provided opportunities and fostered connections in support of their vital work for 40 years.



‘Kunle Adebajo

Head of Investigations, HumAngle Nigeria

Adebajo was introduced to ICFJ when he started writing for IJNet in 2020. Later, he spoke at an ICFJ-backed disinformation conference and completed a short-term internship at The Economist as a Michael Elliott Award recipient. These experiences have had a direct impact on programs and stories he’s now developing in his Nigerian newsroom.

“ Happy 40th anniversary to ICFJ! There’s a popular saying in Nigeria that suggests 40 to be a really defining number. ICFJ has certainly set a great trajectory for itself in that critical period and I wish the organization many more decades of impactful work. ”



Daniel Nardin

Founder, Amazônia Vox
ICFJ Knight Fellow
Brazil

Nardin started working with IJNet in 2021 and won two ICFJ grants in 2022. He launched Amazônia Vox in 2023 to create a network of Amazonian journalists. As a 2024 ICFJ Knight Fellow, he is working on producing an English version of his platform and increasing local training opportunities. ICFJ is vital in contemporary journalism, he said, and “[replaces] the word ‘competition’ with ‘collaboration.’”



“ I think ICFJ shows you to love journalism again, to remember how and why you decided to be a journalist. ”

Hadeel Arja

Founder & Executive Director, Tiny Hand
Syria/Turkey

Arja has participated in several ICFJ programs, including the IJNet Arabic Mentoring Center in 2020. The mentorship was instrumental in helping her professionalize her startup, Tiny Hand. With ICFJ's support, Tiny Hand also published a reporting guide for journalists covering children.



“ The knowledge and networks gained through ICFJ have been vital in executing complex projects and amplifying the reach and impact of my reporting. ”

Aimee Rinehart

Senior Product Manager AI Strategy,
Associated Press
United States

Through Leap: ICFJ's News Innovation Lab, Rinehart worked on developing a tool to address mis- and disinformation for the Associated Press. ICFJ helps her connect and work with journalists around the world — “whenever I need to know more about a country... oftentimes I'll go to the ICFJ website just to see who the fellows are,” she said.



“ I just learn how journalism operates in other parts of the world. And that's really crucial, to not just think of news through an American lens. ”

Tim Mak

Founder, The Counteroffensive
Ukraine/Canada

As a 2015 Bringing Home the World Fellow, Mak went to Djibouti to complete his first overseas assignment. He credits the fellowship as pivotal in his turn to foreign correspondence. Now, his Kyiv-based outlet is publishing deeply reported, human interest stories on the conflict and training young Ukrainian journalists to do the same.



“ [My fellowship with ICFJ] helped me build confidence and experience in foreign correspondence — something that I would not have had the opportunity to do otherwise. ”

Lin Shi

*Tsinghua University Alumna
China*

As a former teaching assistant at Tsinghua University, Shi also participated in its Global Business Journalism Program, a master's degree program that recruits journalism students from around the world. The GBJ program is a partnership between ICFJ, Bloomberg News and Tsinghua University — Shi said the diversity of the program and its students gives it strength.



“ I find [GBJ] really meaningful and powerful for a lot of independent journalists who want to seek more support out of their own country or [want] a span of global networks with other peer journalists. ”

Hannah Ajakaiye

*Founding Director, FactsMatterNG
Former ICFJ Knight Fellow
Nigeria*

As an ICFJ Knight Fellow, Ajakaiye built collaborations among journalists, fact checkers and social media influencers to combat misinformation in Nigeria. Her prior work with ICFJ led to her report on contaminated water — a story that prompted the government of Lagos state to revoke the licenses of water and wastewater treatment plants identified by Ajakaiye.



“ The connection with ICFJ enabled me to do one of the stories that I regard as one of the biggest stories of my career. ”

Anderson Meneses

*Business and Technology Director,
Agência Mural
Brazil*



Meneses was a student of former ICFJ Knight Fellow Bruno Garcez in 2010. Under Garcez's citizen journalism training, he met other journalists who would go on to help co-found the outlet Agência Mural. Since then, they have produced thousands of stories about underserved and underprivileged communities in Brazil. "I'm only where I am today because of ICFJ," Meneses said.

“ In a region where media professionals are often threatened and intimidated, ICFJ provides a safety net in the field, ensuring that we can continue our work effectively and safely. ”

Aistė Čiučiurkaitė

*Head of Video Production, 15min
Lithuania*

With the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania and the ICFJ Baltic Study Tour, Čiučiurkaitė covered the 2022 U.S. midterm elections for a Lithuanian audience. During the program, she conducted an exclusive interview and gained experience in video journalism, which led to later career success and job offers.



“ After returning from the tour and noticing what was needed in video journalism, I got an offer from Lithuania's second-largest media outlet to lead their video team. Now I work with AFP and Reuters; I know what they need when they ask for video from our region. ”

Beatrice Lauren Go

*Founder, Atleta Filipina
Philippines*



Go started her first-of-its-kind media platform through her 2023 News Corp Media Fellowship. The unique outlet focuses on Filipino women in sports and draws on Go's own expertise and interests "Through the data journalism and communication engagement methods taught to me by the ICFJ program and my mentor, Tom Meagher, I was able to identify the challenges and values of girls' participation in sports, which can transform lives and help build a nation," she said.

“ It is important to provide this kind of support to journalists in Southeast Asia. It gives a bigger platform for journalists who want to serve and inspire their respective nations. ”

Faisal Karimi

*Exiled Journalist
Afghanistan/United States*



"IJNet has been an essential platform in my professional growth," Karimi said. The resources helped him while completing his studies at Herat University in Afghanistan — and he later used IJNet to update his textbooks while teaching online journalism and social media at the same university. As a now exiled journalist, he recommends the IJNet Exiled Media Toolkit for exiled reporters tackling new challenges.

“ IJNet provides great and inspiring resources for exiled journalists as well to navigate with our new life, our new environment. ”

Branislava Lovre

*Co-Founder, Almpactful
Serbia*



Lovre started her platform, Media Inlet, with the 2022 Leap: ICFJ News Innovation Lab. The interactive program allows readers and viewers to communicate directly with newsrooms and journalists. Lovre described the process of developing the platform with her colleagues as "a lifetime adventure" and said ICFJ set a strong foundation in her day-to-day work.

“ [ICFJ and IJNet] have had the sort of transformative effect that has pushed my career forward in new and exciting directions. ”

Sheikha Aldosary

*Founder and Managing Director,
Saudi Women's Stories
Saudi Arabia*



Aldosary participated in IJNet Arabic's 2019 Mentoring Center, where she was paired with an expert mentor during a 10-month program. The training centered on best practices and tools to develop young media outlets — a focus that Aldosary said furthered her platform, which showcases women's stories in Saudi society.

“ With the help of IJNet mentors, I empowered more women and made my news outlet stronger financially. ”

Bharat Nayak

Communications Officer,
Health Care Without Harm
India



Nayak was a 2023 Stemming the Tide of Intolerance fellow; during the fellowship, he produced a report highlighting how the surge of disinformation actively contributed to a rise in mental health challenges among Muslims. The report was published on several prominent platforms, including The Wire and Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative.

“ [The ICFJ program] provided the foundational knowledge and motivation needed to tackle complex disinformation issues, particularly those that contribute to rising religious hatred. ”

Sarmad alJilane

Outreach and Advocacy Consultant
Syria/Germany



alJilane became involved with ICFJ through the IJNet Mentoring Center. He said the year-long training program helped his news outlet document and prepare evidence of human rights violations in Syria for the United Nations.

“ Participating in the Mentoring Center was one of the most beneficial experiences of my professional life. ”

Leon Lidigu

Health and Science Reporter,
Nation Media Group
Kenya



As a 2021 Global Nutrition and Food Security Reporting Fellow, Lidigu produced a multimedia investigative feature about children who lived in the Kibera slums of Kenya and attended school while hungry. The story won multiple awards — but the most important impact, Lidigu said, was on the children he featured. His story inspired readers in the United States to pledge to feed and support students from the school he covered.

“ For me, I go to bed very happy knowing those children don't go to bed hungry because of the story. ”

Lucas Maia

Technology Director, Agência Tatu
Brazil



Through an ICFJ initiative in Brazil, Maia's data journalism outlet revamped its brand identity and trained its team to create a cohesive look for their visualizations. Their outlet saw an over 100% increase in unique site users and views. “My career has undergone an immense change following the ICFJ program,” Maia said.

“ The aspects of understanding business and not only understanding journalism, but understanding the business aspects and the possibilities of revenue and income from journalism were fundamental. ”

Nasr ul Hadi

Co-Founder and Executive Director,
PROTO
Former ICFJ Knight Fellow
India



As an ICFJ Knight Fellow, Hadi helped transform the Hindustan Times, one of India's most respected print media outlets, into a leader for digital storytelling in the country. He also co-founded his outlet PROTO, a start-up focused on innovation, research and peer-to-peer learning for Indian journalists. He said ICFJ gives fellows like him the space and budgetary support to experiment.

“ I think ICFJ’s biggest role in helping fellows like me has essentially been allowing us to make transformational, incremental experiments. ”

María Paula Murcia Huertas

Analysis and Impact Editor, Mutante
Colombia



Through the 2022 Leap: ICFJ News Innovation Lab, Huertas' team developed a program that gathers comments on her outlet's social media posts and classifies them by topic. They use this to develop useful coverage and resources. Huertas says the program helped them achieve what they promised their audience: “a project that has participatory journalism as a maxim.”

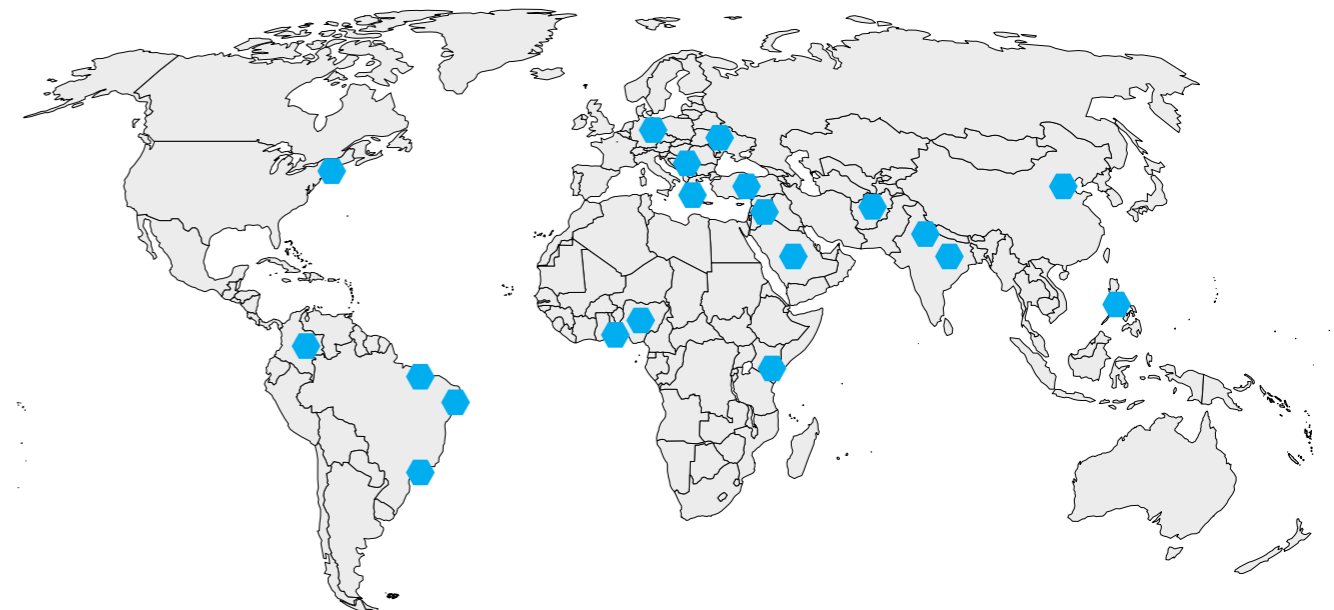
“ Rather than perpetuating colonizing logic in which organizations from the Global North impose their agendas and ideas on media outlets of the Global South, [ICFJ] supports our own ideas and solutions for the context that we live in. ”

The Strength of Our Network

The vital work of our global network strengthens democratic ideals and spurs change. The testimonies highlighted here represent just a small sample of our impact — over the past five years alone, we have operated in 125 countries and served more than 177,000 journalists.

ICFJ has a storied history of equipping news media to address challenges, building skills and fostering connections among journalists, fact checkers, researchers and other media professionals. As we reflect on our 40th anniversary, we look forward to many more years of enabling journalists to do their best work.

To learn more, visit icfj.org.



*Map represents testimonies from this pamphlet.