

Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of World Radio Day 13 February 2014

On World Radio Day, we celebrate a medium that remains a first choice for women and men across the world. Radio gives a voice to the voiceless, it helps educate the illiterate, and it saves lives during natural disasters. A force for freedom of expression and pluralism, radio is essential to building inclusive knowledge societies and to promoting respect and understanding between people. Radio is especially important for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. From pioneering executives in the early 20th century to those today reporting from conflict zones, women have played a key role in the growth of radio. As citizen journalists, reporters, producers, technicians and key decision-makers, women are working at every level of the broadcasting industry to ensure the free exchange of opinion, information and ideas over the airwaves. But there is still much work to do. Less than one quarter of radio stories are about women, and women represent less than one third of all top level management and governance positions in media. Without the voices of more than half the world's population, how can we understand the whole story?

UNESCO is committed to getting the balance right. To strengthen pluralism and freedom of expression in radio, women must have an equal part in news-making, decision-making and media ownership structures. This is why UNESCO is working across the world to develop radio as an independent and pluralistic media for both women and men, and to create a safer environment for all journalists, with special recognition of the threats to women journalists. This work includes the launch by UNESCO in 2013 of the Global Alliance on Media and Gender. Radio can carry any message to any place at any time – we need to fully harness this power for the benefit of all. In this spirit, I call today on all broadcasters -- from local community stations to international media outlets -- to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and men in and through radio. This is UNESCO's message on World Radio Day.

See more at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-radio-day-2014/messages/message-from-unesco-director-general/#sthash.nilKDuGj.dpuf>