

Media monitoring

Monitoring the media is an effective content analysis tool for gender and media advocacy. Media monitoring is one way to keep track of the media's performance on gender. The findings of monitoring can be used to raise awareness among journalists, editors and media managers, as well as advertisers, for the development of gender and media advocacy campaigns and for identifying areas where policy, codes and guidelines need to be developed.

Media monitoring is done occasionally, even though it is a systematic surveillance of media performance for the purpose of its description and critical evaluation. Mostly it generates knowledge about the media by focusing on content. By observing the content, patterns and practices that media professionals use become more accessible. Frequently media monitoring reveals isolation, exclusion and discrimination – human made inequalities as oppose to 'objective' reflection of the reality of the situation as it is.³⁰

The objectives of monitoring can differ. Analysis may be interpretative or quantitative; it may be a special 'case study'; it may focus on the language or narrative of news stories; the duration of analysis may be short or long; it can include one medium and single country or it may be comparative.³¹ Trends and changes, as well as media employment patterns also can be monitored.

Monitoring how often women are quoted as primary sources is an example of quantitative monitoring. Qualitative monitoring would analyze gender biases, stereotypes, the change of value judgment, perceptions and attitudes.

The findings of media monitoring can be documented in short reports and/or fact sheets which can be publicized in the media itself, and can be used to challenge the media to change practices which violate women's rights or foster gender disparities and discrimination.

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³⁰ Milivojevic, Media Monitoring Manual, Media Diversity Institute & Samizdat B92, 2003 ³¹ S. Milivojevic, Media Monitoring Manual, Media Diversity Institute & Samizdat B92, 2003

Tips on how to present media monitoring findings

- Present the findings to media management and media policymakers, the change agents within the media
- Write articles to the media supported by the findings
- Distribute the recommendations widely and adopt a strategic lobby campaign for the relevant media houses to implement them.
- Extend the discussion to some on the spot media monitoring(*use the newspaper or broadcast of the day to illustrate, for example, women as sources, absence or portrayal of women, etc.*) if the media interviews you about your gender and media issues of concern.

Source: Getting Smart – Strategic Communications for Gender Activists in Southern Africa, Colleen Lowe Morna and Lene Overland, editors, published by Gender Links and Women’s Media Watch, 2002

Here is one example of a tool that can be used for quantitative media monitoring. The GMMP tool (WACC London), also is available to gender and media activists on <http://www.whomakesthenews.org>

Quantitative Monitoring Tool

Use the day’s newspapers, or a video or tape recording of a recent news cast. Count the number of women and the number of men you see, and note what women and men are doing. Fill in the information in the table below and discuss.

Publication	%Images of women	Roles depicted	% Images of Men	Roles depicted

The same exercise can be done to determine women as sources. This is more detailed requiring for the print media, that you read each story and identify where possible the sex of the source (the person quoted directly or indirectly) in the story. You can also monitor the media to determine the sex of the sources on issues such as gender violence, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, etc.

Box Eleven: What to look for when monitoring media images

Images that appear in the media also can be monitored for gender, as well as other characteristics, that help activists to establish patterns on how women and men are portrayed in the media. When monitoring images, look for:

- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic group
- Location/Setting; rural, urban, inner-city

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- Physical appearances
- Activity
- Occupation
- Situation/Place/Context
- Family Role/Family Status
- Personality Traits

Source: Whose Perspective? A Guide to Gender-Sensitive Analysis of the Media, Women's Media Watch, Jamaica, 1998

Qualitative media monitoring

While quantitative monitoring helps activists to come up with the numerical evidence to show women's invisibility as sources, newsmakers and in images within the media, for example, **qualitative monitoring** helps to analyze the gender biases and prejudices that appear in the media also through value judgments, perceptions and attitudes that are communicated through the language, placement of stories, sources chosen, focus of the story, etc.

A combined approach of quantitative and qualitative monitoring sheds light on whether the media give fair and equal space and time to women's and men's voices; if women and men are consulted across the racial and class spectrum; if the reports carry adequate context and balance; and if the reporting is analytical³² (and more issue-based as opposed to reporting only on an event).

Qualitative monitoring also helps to reveal how the media portrays the power relations between women and men, i.e., the position of women and men in the division of resources and responsibilities, benefits and rights, power and privilege. The use of gender relations as an analytical category shifts the focus from viewing women in isolation from men.³³ A detailed set of questions to guide a more qualitative analysis of the media is provided in the Appendix to this section.

Activity! Key questions for spotting gender relations in the media's content

1. Are women seen in positions of power or are they seen in low status activities? 2. Are women and men seen actively asserting themselves in activities associated with power?
3. Who is seen more frequently providing information? Giving speeches? What is the media's role in perpetuating the low status given to women's activities? 4. Are the roles of women and men active or passive?
5. Are their activities traditional or non-traditional?

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³² Getting SMART, strategic communications for gender activists in Southern Africa, Colleen Lowe Morna and Lene Overland, editors, published by Gender Links and Women's Media Watch South Africa, 2002

³³ Whose Perspective? A guide to gender-sensitive analysis of the media, Women's Media Watch Jamaica, 1998

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6) What is the sex of the spokesperson or voice of authority?³⁴

Use newspaper articles or watch television news broadcasts and answer the questions above to see how gender power relations are represented in the media.

Content analysis

This is a type of research that is used to understand and accurately describe the actual content of different messages and images in the media. This form of analysis is concerned with how often certain messages occur in the media. For example, how many times women or men feature in political news stories, or how many times women of different ages appear in adverts?

A content analysis can be done on: advertisements, TV/print/radio news, films, videos, magazines, soap operas, music lyrics, music videos, TV series, etc. Content analysis can lend itself to a qualitative through the interpretation of the images portrayed and by the messages transmitted, both hidden and obvious.³⁵

How to do a content analysis?³⁶

- Select the sample to be examined (e.g. Newspaper or TV ads) •
Decide on content and features to be examined
- Decide on units (details of content, i.e. age, sex, etc.) to be examined •
Decide on time frame (i.e. period of time for analysis)
- Develop recording sheets (local media trainers and researchers can assist you with developing sheets and tools that are easy to use)

- Record your observations
- Analyze the data

The following are examined when doing a content analysis on some form of media:

- Roles and actions
- Physical features
- Psychological features (e.g. happy facial expression)³⁷

³⁴ Whose Perspective? A guide to gender-sensitive analysis of the media, Women's Media Watch Jamaica, 1998

³⁵ Whose Perspective? A guide to gender-sensitive analysis of the media, Women's Media Watch Jamaica, 1998

³⁶ Whose Perspective? A guide to gender-sensitive analysis of the media, Women's Media Watch Jamaica, 1998

³⁷ Whose Perspective? A guide to gender-sensitive analysis of the media, Women's Media Watch Jamaica, 1998

What does the audience think?

Audience research adds credibility to any form of media research as it adds the public's interpretation of media messages and provides insight on how women and men engage with the news. This is important because often one of the main reasons media professionals give when presented with examples of sensational articles that portray women as sex objects or which focus on women as victims of crime, for example, is the retort that 'this is what the public wants'.

Therefore, gender and media activists should not just rely on their own views as consumers of media, but should seek out the views and perspectives of others who are not activists to demonstrate to the media that these images and types of stories may not be what the public wants.

In many developing regions, media institutions have little capacity or resources to conduct audience surveys. Therefore, editors and journalists often produce editorial content based on the journalistic notions of what is news, which can be subjectively influenced. Again, using local expertise in media training institutions, universities, a questionnaire can be developed and audiences selected to gather information and views across age, sex, education, location, etc.

Box Twelve: My views on the news! The Southern African Gender and Media Audience Study

In 2004 and 2005, 12 countries in Southern Africa participated in a Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS), which was the sequel to the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) in 2002 and published in 2003.

Conducted by Gender Links (GL), a gender and media NGO, in partnership with universities and media advocacy organizations in the region, the audience researched focused on how women and men interact with the news, while the GMBS looked at gender in editorial content.

The specific research questions were:

What aspects of the news do women and men interact with?

Why do they interact with these aspects of the news (as opposed to other aspects)?

What impact do gendered representations have on these news preferences? What aspects of news are considered to be omitted or insufficiently included)?

The findings of the research will be used for gender and media advocacy with the media based on the assumption that the audience's voice is a strong motivator for media change.

For more information about the audience research and how it was done, see www.genderlinks.org.za.

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Another way to gather views from ordinary women and men who consume the media is through **focused group** discussions. These are carefully planned discussions to get people's views and perceptions on a defined area of interest. For example, if you want to focus a campaign around the media's coverage of gender violence, a focus group can be put together to explore their perceptions and views on how women and men are represented in news stories on gender violence.

The group can be comprised of 6 -10 people selected from the intended audience and sharing a common characteristic, such as age, sex, educational background, religion or something directly related to the topic (a total of about 200 well-selected people will be effective); moderators and note-takers.³⁸

Focused group discussions are used for:

- Probing into people's feelings, opinions, and perceptions of a topic or issue
- Indicating the range of a community's beliefs, ideas and opinions
- Gaining baseline information
- Verifying and obtaining more in-depth details about information collected for an advocacy program

- Designing question guides for individual interviews and questions for structured interview schedules
 - Solving specific problems
 - Evaluating programs³⁹
 - Testing campaign messages

There are many advantages to focused groups. They are often rich, produce information quickly, gather non-verbal reactions to specific items, allow for the participation of those who cannot read and write and they are flexible. However, results cannot be extended to a larger community and results might be biased due to group pressure or due to what is considered socially acceptable. Therefore the key to good focus groups is a good moderator and carefully selected participants.

Gender Audit of the Media

Using a checklist of key questions that look at work place practices and environment, content, language, visuals, packaging, advertising, the roles of government, regulators, training institutions, and even of gender activists, a wealth of information can be obtained to identify the gender opportunities and gaps. For example, a gender audit of media policies may show that a newsroom has instituted gender-sensitive language guidelines for editors and reporters to follow (opportunity), but there is no overall gender editorial policy in place (gap). The language guidelines therefore can be used as the entry point in a gender and media strategy for a gender editorial policy to be developed and implemented.

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³⁸Making a Difference, Strategic Communications to End Violence Against Women, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Jenny Drezin and Megan Lloyd-Laney, editors, 2003

³⁹Making a Difference, Strategic Communications to End Violence Against Women, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Jenny Drezin and Megan Lloyd-Laney, editors, 2003

This type of research is dependent upon a group taking the time to establish a trusted relationship with a media institution, whereby the media managers request or work with the gender and media advocacy group to gather information to change how they do their work.

Audits, methodical examinations and reviews using key questions and guidelines, can yield a wealth of information about the internal workings of a media institution and shed light on perhaps why gender biases, prejudices and stereotypes appear in editorial and advertising content. This form of research can best be translated into strategies for more one-on-one engagement with individual media houses that activists may want to target for change. Information obtained from an audit should not be translated into an open campaign to shame a media institution. But audits of several media houses, which would require time and human resources, could provide some general insight into how similar gaps exist within all media institutions despite size, ownership and media landscape which contribute to gender biases and stereotypes in the media.

An example of a gender and media audit checklist is provided in the Appendix to this section.