

Introduction - A New Agenda for Who Makes the News?

*“We were in uncharted territory. And taking on the Jamaican media was close to being a “Mission: Impossible”. But what needed to be done was clear every time Jamaican women switched on their television sets, read newspapers or listened to the radio.”*¹

Women’s Media Watch Jamaica began in 1987 with only six volunteers. Its mission: to improve the representation of women in the media as one way of reducing violence against women.² Improving how women are seen, heard and listened to in the media continues to shape the organization’s work more than 15 years later. Its arsenal of activities include public education workshops, media monitoring and lobbying campaigns, research, as well as the production of audio-visual materials and teaching aids.

Taking on the media has become a mission not only for Women’s Media Watch Jamaica. Women (and men are joining in) engaged in various forms of political, social, cultural, economic and gender activism worldwide soon came to see the media as a key institution in the fight to achieve women’s equality and human rights.

It is often said that the media holds a mirror up to society. How often women are seen in the mirror and what they look like when they do appear or speak has been the focus of a growing movement focused on changing the stereotypical representations and portrayals of women and men in the news.

The United Nations first International Decade for Women (1975-1985) was a catalyst for women’s activism and research on the media which, since the 1970s, has revolved around:

- A critique of the ways in which media content projects women as objects, rather than as active subjects or participants in many diverse roles
- An analysis of the institutional and social structures of power through which women are systematically marginalized within media organizations³

Women working at the country and regional levels in the 1970s and 1980s developed their own tools to gauge the media’s discrimination against women in content and in the workplace. Their ongoing work received a significant boost in 1995 with the first Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which has become a global tool of analysis of gender representation in the media.

GMMP was one of the key resolutions of a 1994 conference on Women Empowering Communication, held in Bangkok, organized by the Women’s Program of the World

¹ Revisioning the Jamaican Media: The Experience of Women’s Media Watch 1987-1996 by Melody Walker and Hilary Nicholson in Women’s Experiences in Media, edited by Rina Jimenez David, Isis International-Manila and WACC, 1996

² Revisioning the Jamaican Media: The Experience of Women’s Media Watch 1987-1996 by Melody Walker and Hilary Nicholson in Women’s Experiences in Media, edited by Rina Jimenez David, Isis International-Manila and WACC, 1996

³ Gender Setting, New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy, Margaret Gallagher, ZED Books and WACC London, publishers, 2001

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Association for Christian Communication (WACC) in cooperation with Isis International and the International Women's Tribune Center (IWTC).

GMMP 1995 (which took place in 71 countries on January 18, 1995) and GMMP 2000 (which took place in 70 countries on February 1, 2000) have become important tools for gender media activists. The findings of both have been used to show the media the problems with the representations and portrayals of women and men in the news and to stimulate discussions on how these might be addressed.

Why this toolkit?

Working to bring about change in the media does not have to be a "mission impossible" as Women's Media Watch in Jamaica, as well as other groups, have learned. Approaching media owners, publishers, editors, advertisers, journalists, among others, with findings which reflect the mirror back onto the media itself, can open the door to change.

GMMP is an effective tool for gender activists to use in their work to change the media. For example, lobbying with the GMMP 2000 findings led to the Jamaican Broadcasting Commission developing its own guidelines for gender sensitive reporting. And in Malta, the Gender Advisory Committee of the Broadcasting Authority uses the GMMP2000 in its training program for media professionals.

The third Global Media Monitoring Project took place on 16th February 2005. Seventy-six countries took part. GMMP 2005 provides a unique opportunity to bring together the experiences of gender activism targeted at the media into a toolkit that seeks to build on these successes, among others. This toolkit seeks to de-mystify the media and gender and media advocacy by illustrating through concrete steps, case studies, pointers, tips and information, that we can all take action to change gender representation and portrayal in and through the media. From writing a letter to the editor to planning and implementing a year-long campaign focused on changing how the media portrays gender violence for example, there are many ways to engage the media in the ultimate journey of achieving gender equality.

Who is it for?

This toolkit is targeted primarily at:

- Organizations and individuals who participated in GMMP 2005
- Gender focused groups and media organizations (such as media councils, editors' forums, journalists' unions, media women's associations, among others) working with (or who wishing to begin working) with the media on gender and media issues

- WACC's constituencies and partner organizations in Latin America, the Caribbean and North America, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East and in Asia and the Pacific engaged in some form of media activism

How to use the toolkit?

This toolkit can be used in the following ways:

- To train activists on how to build gender and media campaigns using the findings of GMMP 2005
- To illustrate and train activists on the various approaches that can be taken to do gender and media advocacy
 - As an information tool on the media, and gender and media advocacy
- To learn how to work with and through the media to put gender on the news agenda.

While the primary audience for this toolkit are organizations outside of the media that target the media for their gender activism, the toolkit can also be of value to professionals within the media as a means of self-reflection and analysis on how the gender biases of those who work within and own the media can and do find their way into media content and workplace conditions and practices.

Structure of the toolkit

This toolkit is divided into two key sections.

Section One – defines the conceptual issues on gender and media advocacy; looks at why the media should be a focus of gender and feminist activism; highlights the key issues for gender and media advocacy using the findings of the GMMP 2005; and discusses the various target audiences key to achieve change.

Section Two – provides the tactical information on the steps, tools and strategies that are useful in gender and media advocacy; provides tips and pointers on how to engage with the media and how to put gender on the news agenda.

Information boxes, case studies and discussion points are provided in the various chapters.

At the end of each Section, the user will find a glossary of key terms used in the chapters, and a summary of the key pointers and issues that have emerged from the chapters.