

Who are the Target Audiences for Gender and Media Advocacy?

Successful advocacy depends on knowing the various audiences that are strategic for bringing about change. Some of these audiences will be able to affect change in a direct manner, while others may be those who can have a positive influence, or who can put pressure on those in positions to make change happen.

There are various audiences that should be targeted for gender and media advocacy, and the audiences and their roles may change depending on the issue raised or strategies used.

Key audiences are those who have the power to effect change (also called change agents), but who may need to be persuaded to act. These include media owners, managers, senior editors, advertisers, media governance structures (such as Boards of Directors), and legislators.

Primary audiences (also called beneficiaries) are those who will benefit from the changes being made. In gender and media advocacy these include women and at times men, both within and outside the media.

Secondary audiences (also called partners) are those whose support you can rally. These include media professional bodies such as editors' forums and journalists unions, media advocacy groups; legislators and independent regulators who are instrumental in developing guidelines for the media; the general public.

Significant others include target audiences within the media industry who might oppose the proposed changes. These include the journalists and other media professionals who will have to change their newsgathering and editorial practices to be more conscious of the gender biases and prejudices that influence how they do their work.

Good advocacy depends on taking the time to think through how you will work with and influence each of the audiences.

1. Who is Who in the Media?

As an industry, the media employs people in various capacities. Like many sectors, there are those employed in the administrative, financial, human resources and technical areas of the media operations, as well as those who work in the editorial operations. Advertising and marketing are considered part of the business side of media operations.

A large part of gender and media advocacy is targeted at those who work on the editorial side of media operations. Some of these people are as follows. This is not a detailed breakdown, but a general overview of some of the key positions within the media so that gender and media activists can ensure that they work with the right group on each issue. For example, it should not be assumed that by targeting the journalists for media advocacy, one will bring about a fundamental and sustainable change. Journalists take orders from editors who in turn are answerable to the media's management and governing structures.

Journalists/Reporters – Those who daily beat the path for stories. These are the women and men who often are the first target of gender and media advocacy, because journalists are viewed as those who have the power to decide which stories to cover, how to cover, who to interview as sources, and to decide on what will or will not be news. Journalists are key to bringing about a change in the media because they are the gatherers of news and often do have leeway to choose the type of stories they will report on, especially as they become more senior reporters who have paid their dues in to media trenches of general assignment reporting (usually covering whatever is assigned by an editor and not having the luxury to specialize on one topic or issue).

Editors – These are often referred to as the ‘gatekeepers’, because they are among the decision-makers and policymakers within the media. Editors assign news and issue based stories to journalists and reporters; they can decide what will be the top stories of the day to appear in the newspaper or in the broadcast line-up; they guide the reporters towards various sources and also help to shape the angle (focus) a story will take; and they are instrumental in the development of editorial guidelines, codes and policies. Editor is a broad term which covers a broad spectrum of people ranging from editors-in-chiefs, news editors, business editors to features and sports editors.

Sub-editors – This group is mentioned on its own, because these are the people who are responsible for the editing of news and other media stories to ensure that facts, spelling and grammar are correct, that the story is written in accordance with the media institution’s style guidelines, and it is the sub-editors who write headlines, captions for pictures and graphics (and they often decide what illustrations will go with what stories) and who are responsible for ensuring that stories fit within the space (newspapers and magazines) or time-slot (broadcast) available. This means that the sub-editors have the task of cutting stories to fit the required space or time available which gives them the power to decide what stays and what will be omitted.

Media managers – Many people fall within this group. And, overall they are the decision-makers within the media who are responsible for policy development, management issues; and, they are the ones who have the power to effect change through the development and implementation of policy, and they give the guidance and direction that can make a difference in how a media operates. General managers or chief executive officers, editors-in-chiefs, controllers of news, directors of human resources, advertising/marketing, finances, technical operations, all fall within this category. Although the media managers are not always directly involved in the day to day production of the editorial content(especially in large and medium-size media operations), they are the ones responsible for setting out the vision and for developing the policies that give direction to how those involved in editorial operations do their work.

Directorate/governance structures – These are the members of the Board of Directors or members of the highest governing structure of a media institution. These structures are not involved in the day-to-day work on the media, but do have a vested interest in seeing media survive, becoming more relevant to their audiences, and in ensuring that the bottom line is in order. These are often influential people within a community or country and may not be from the media sector. Media owners, those who invest funds into the running of a media operation or who start the medium from their own resources, are often part of the governance structure.

Box 10: Other Audiences Who Can Make a Difference

External policy makers – legislators, regulators, State and private sector administrators within the media and communications sector.

The general public – building media literacy among the media’s audiences is pivotal to successful and sustained engagement with the media on gender equality issues both within the media and in the media’s editorial agenda. **Media literacy** is the ability to understand the way the media works, to spot bias in the news and to recognize accurate and impartial news coverage.

The following chart illustrates how gender and media activists can begin to identify the various audiences for gender and media advocacy issues.

Chart 1: MAPPING AUDIENCES FOR GENDER AND MEDIA ADVOCACY

Issue	Key audience	Secondary audience	Primary audience	Significant others
Development of gender editorial policy and guidelines by media institutions	Media managers Directorate/governance structure Editors	Editors forums Women’s groups Media associations	Women within the media General female populace	Editors Journalists
Increasing the number of women who speak in the media as sources	Editors Journalists/reporters	Women journalists Women’s groups	Journalists editors	Journalists Editors
Improve coverage of gender violence in the media	Journalists Editors	Legislators Women’s groups Media councils	General populace Women survivors of gender violence	Journalists Editors

The chart illustrates how an issue for gender and media advocacy can be thought through in terms of audiences. Activists can use this as a model to begin to think of the various audiences and how they fit into gender and media advocacy.

Box Ten: Case study

Industry Ears goes for top guns

Industry Ears, a Washington D.C.-based media watch group, was started by women professionals within the music industry to lobby radio stations not to air hip-hop and rap music that contains misogynist lyrics.

The media watch group says its firing aim is at the media policy makers and not the artists who create the lyrics. "People go after the artists, but rarely do we hold to the fire the feet of executives who control when and how often we hear these songs," says Lisa Fager, co-founder of the group.

Last spring, Fager and other group members hit the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters annual gala, handing out fliers with the lyrics from the song they found offensive. Their strategy: to confront those at the top of the radio food chain. "We told them we expected more from them," Fager says.

Besides getting executives to face the music, Industry Ears also is empowering communities to take on the media. They recently worked to end an insidious practice at WMIB The Beat in Miami, Florida, and WQHT Hot 97 in New York: smack fests, where mostly young women of color pummel each other until someone gets injured or gives up.

After Industry Ears learned that in New York the contest violated state laws barring unlawful fighting competitions, the organization armed local activists with the information. That led officials to order the station to stop the contest and the state attorney general to launch a probe into it. Florida lawmakers are next on their list.

Source: Davey D, Going Straight to the Source, *Essence*, July 2005

Activity – Discussions Points!

1. What is the gender and media issue for Industry Ears?
2. Who is the key audience and why?
3. What other audience does Industry Ears target? Why?
4. What are Industry Ears strategies?
5. Is there a similar gender and media issue of concern in your country? If your answer is yes, what strategies have been used to bring this to the attention of the radio station(s)?
6. What new gender and media advocacy tips have you learnt from the Industry Ears story?

Section One Appendix: Definitions and Pointers

1. Glossary of Terms

Accuracy – Information that the media communicates to the public should not be false or misleading. The media must correct misrepresentations of facts and correct the mistakes and apologize to the persons/organizations.

Advocacy - The process of influencing people to generate a policy change.

Communications for advocacy – A means of sharing information ‘packaged’ in different ways and conveyed using media and messages customized for different audiences.

Culturally diverse output – The creation of an organization’s output that reflects the multi-cultural society in which it operates and which is reflective of its diverse stakeholders. But **diversity** for the media is about more than just the numbers alone. Diversifying newsrooms and issues of content, coverage and the media’s role in a pluralistic society are key issues.

Freedom of expression – The unrestricted and uncensored inclusion of views and opinions in organizations’ output enabling debate and dialogue.

Gender – Is the way in which society assigns characteristics and social roles to women and men. In all societies worldwide the roles, functions and characteristics attributed to men have been accorded greater value than those of women.

Gender and media advocacy - includes lobbying, campaigning, research, training, media monitoring, communication and alliance-building activities which seek to advance women’s rights and gender equality in and through the media.

Gender stereotypes – Socially constructed beliefs about women and men. They are constructed through sayings, songs, proverbs, the media, religion, custom, culture, education, drama, etc.

Impartial and balanced output – The production of fair, diverse, and unbiased media output which reflects and informs public opinion and dialogue supported by editorial policies, which are independent from ownership.

Informing public opinion – The delivery of high quality information, which provides the full range of views about an issue, and is reflective of the society in which it is disseminated, to inform rather than influence public debate.

Integrity of information – The provision of quality data, images and information, which is objective and accurate.

Listserv – A mailing list, similar in some ways to a conference, but where messages are sent to the list's address. A copy of the message is then sent to each member or subscriber to the list.

Media literacy – Consumers' understanding of the types of information and its availability, to enable an informed decision about the programming/article/music/image they listen to, view or read.

Sex – The biological differences between women and men.

Sources: The Media CSR Forum, KMPG, 2005; Whose News? Whose Views?, Gender Links, 2001; Gender in Media Training, A Southern African Toolkit, Gender Links and the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, 2002; Making A Difference Strategic Communications to End Violence Against Women, Jenny Drezin and Megan Lloyd Laney, UNIFEM, 2003; Getting Smart- strategic communications for gender activists in Southern Africa, Colleen Lowe Morna and Lene Overland, Gender Links and Women's Media Watch, 2002.

2. Key Points to Remember!

- News is a choice, an extraction process, saying that one event is more meaningful than another event.
- Understanding the media's various roles, its power and sphere of influence and the role it can play in bringing about change are essential for any type of advocacy that aims to change the media.
- The media do not just provide information, education and entertainment. By selecting the types of news stories, choice of words and language used, choice of people interviewed to give their views and perspectives, selection of images, etc., the media sends messages.
- Gender biases and prejudices in the media emerge through the 'choices' media managers, advertisers, and media professionals make each day. Decisions about who will be promoted; who will not; what will make news; what will not; who will be interviewed; who will not; etc are affected by media professionals' beliefs about where women and men 'should be' in a society.
- Good advocacy depends on taking the time to think through how you will work with and influence each of the audiences.
- Central to any approach taken for gender and media advocacy is the need for gender and media activists to engage the media, as oppose to taking an antagonist stance.

3. Gender, Media, Freedom of Expression and International Obligations

There are several international conventions and declarations that provide a rights-based framework for gender and media advocacy, as well as a basis for the role the media should and can play in promoting women's human rights and gender equality.

These declarations and instruments include:

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty, adopted by the United Nations and ratified by the United Nations, and ratified by over a hundred nations, to promote and protect women's right to equality. CEDAW requires that:

"State parties shall take all appropriate measures:... To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the ideas of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women."

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) identifies the media as a critical area of concern. In Section J on the Mass Media, the BPFA recognizes that the media has a vital role to play in addressing the issues of gender inequality, specifically, women's lack of access to media; the fact that women in the industry are generally not in decision making positions; and the portrayal of gender stereotypes.

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states:

- Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference
- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of choice

Both CEDAW and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights do not explicitly address women's rights to freedom of opinion and expression, but Article 19 read in conjunction with Article 7 of CEDAW affirm this right.

Article 7 of CEDAW which calls on State parties to ensure women, on equal terms with men, have the right to:

- Vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for elections to all publicly elected bodies
- To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and to perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.