

Media & Gender Monitor

Issue No.18 – March 2008

WACC



Front covers of the English, French and Spanish versions of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2005 reports. The texts may be downloaded from www.whomakesthenews.org.

From Media Monitoring to Training for Advocacy

For activists, research is not an end in itself but a means towards a greater goal.

For the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), that 'greater goal' is gender-balanced media, an intervention at the discursive level that can potentially contribute to stemming, indeed reversing, gender-based discrimination in practice.

Comparative analysis of the results of the GMMPs of 1995, 2000 and 2005 evidences little positive change in selected indicators of gender in media. In the context of news-making, in news content and in journalistic practice, gender bias and negative gender stereotyping have continued unabated.

Reading the static GMMP results with, as a starting point, the understanding that text and images in media also script our lives, and then the activist recognizes the need to take action. It is at this point that the imperative for advocacy takes root.

This is the rationale for WACC's series of regional capacity building workshops on gender and media advocacy.

First, the workshops are a platform to make known the extensive empirical GMMP data on the gender dimensions of media. The data are methodically presented and discussed collectively.

Second, the workshops equip participants with tools and skills for effective advocacy. The data are one

In this issue

- Highlights of the regional workshops on gender and media advocacy
- First instalment of 'tools for gender and media advocacy'
- Highlights from partner projects supported under WACC's 'Media and Gender Justice' Programme

'The portrayal of women in the mass media has got tremendous impact and influence on society. ... No matter how much at variance with reality it was initially [...] it literally becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy'.

**Gender & Media Reader.
Student Christian
Movement (India), 2007**

Editorial

Welcome to the 18th issue of Media & Gender Monitor (MGM)!

A lot has happened since the last issue was published in October, 2005.

The World Association for Christian Communication relocated from London, U.K. to its new global secretariat in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. WACC's Women's Programme also re-created itself under the name 'Media and Gender Justice' Programme, a re-naming intended to reflect more defined directions in our work.

Our focus on gender representation in the mass media following the guiding principles outlined in the 1994 Bangkok Declaration of the 'Women Empowering Communication' conference and Section J of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action has not changed. Rather, the shift has been in sharpening the focus in order to centre more deliberately on two key priority areas, namely media literacy from a gender perspective, and media reform from a gender perspective.

The first area is concerned with awareness-raising and empowerment of young female media consumers. The second pays particular attention to the development of gender-sensitive policy and journalistic codes of conduct. These two areas reflect the historic priorities of the WACC's Women's Programme while also addressing two important entry

points for change and two key change agents – media organisations themselves and media consumers – for the promotion of fair and balanced media.

This issue of MGM picks up from where Issue No. 17 left off. That is, what has transpired since the announcement of the campaign 'Who Makes the News?' Three Weeks of Global Action on Gender and the Media.

The campaign, held from February 16 to 8 March 2006, was a resounding success. It was marked by events across the globe, one of which was the launch of the report of the Third Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2005.

The events are documented on www.whomakesthenews.org. The English, French and Spanish versions of the GMMP (2005) report can also be downloaded in PDF format from the same website.

WACC's Media and Gender Justice Programme also began a series of regional training workshops on gender and media advocacy. Highlights from the workshops held so far are contained in this issue. The Programme as well continued to support partner projects across the Global South on gender responsive media. Highlights from selected projects are contained in the current issue.

The network of grassroots activists, researchers in academia and the wider civil society engaged in work towards gender-responsive media has continued to grow since the last GMMP in 2005. We hope that Media & Gender Monitor will continue to be an important tool for sharing knowledge and information to help us along what is without doubt a long and arduous journey. ♀



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... training for advocacy
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tool for evidence-based advocacy. A specialized instrument developed following GMMP is the WACC Gender and Media Advocacy Toolkit. (1)

Third, the workshops provide a rare networking and experience-sharing space for organisations working on gender and media in different countries within the regions. In fact, participants often express surprise at the similarity of their struggles. Participants come to view their struggles not as lone interventions with little relevance outside the local contexts in which they take place, but as part and parcel of a wider struggle rolling out across their continents and the globe.

The workshops have served to build new relationships and foment old ones. Participants have become part of the growing GMMP network of academic researchers, media practitioners and grassroots activists concerned with gender in and through media.

A sample of presentations and outcome statements from the workshops are captured in the current issue of Media & Gender Monitor. ♀

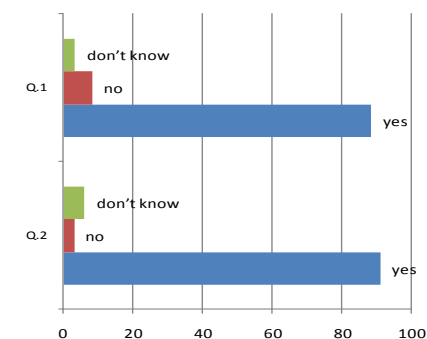
(1) Available for download from www.whomakesthenews.org.

Results of online poll at

www.whomakesthenews.org

Q1. Whether fair gender portrayal should be important in ethics of good journalism.

Q2. Whether gender portrayal in media and violence in society are linked.



GMMP 2005 Phase 2 Workshops: Overview

The regional 'gender and media advocacy' training workshops are a follow-up to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2005, the most extensive global research into gender in the media ever undertaken. The study mapped the representation of women and men in the news media in 76 countries. (www.whomakesthenews.org).

The results of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2005 show that women are dramatically under-represented in the news. Only 21% of news subjects are female and women's voices are rarely heard in the topics that dominate the news agenda.

In stories on government and politics, women make up only 14% of news subjects, and in economics and business news only 20%.

When women do make the news it is primarily as 'stars' or victims.

Unfair and imbalanced representation of women and men in the media perpetuates stereotypes about gender that form the basis of practices of exclusion and marginalization in everyday life situations.

The workshops are designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge to carry out gender and media advocacy work and to start dialogue with media in order to have more balanced gender policies and representation of women. They are an opportunity for groups working on gender and media issues to network and share their experiences with a view to working together in the future.

Workshop participants are nominated by women's non-governmental organisations and other civil society organisations interested in work on gender and media. ♀

tendientes a crear conciencia y a demostrar que, el lugar que ocupa la mujer en los medios de comunicación no es el que ella desea. Observatorios, veedurías y monitoreos conforman un conjunto cuyo objetivo es poner en cifras y hacer visible lo que parece no verse, aunque esté ahí: la mujer sigue siendo estereotipada en su rol de objeto sexual, o madre o esposa.

El monitoreo funciona como si se sacara una radiografía en un tiempo y un espacio determinado y brinda la posibilidad de compararlo con un momento anterior. Coloca en números la desigualdad y se transforma, de este modo, en una acción desde la que se puede incidir para que esos números cambien. A diferencia de los observatorios, que son un análisis permanente sobre los medios, los monitoreos funcionan como un corte y se pueden evaluar varias variables al mismo tiempo, como ser quiénes son protagonistas, cuál es la representación de la mujer en las noticias, cuál la imagen que asocian a ella, etc.

Monitoreo de Medios

Por Lic. Marcela Gabioud

Cuando se habla de género suele tomarse como referencia la situación de las mujeres en términos de desigualdad frente a los hombres. La cuestión de género se basa en la construcción histórica y social que asocia a un conjunto de roles y valores con uno y otro sexo, implicando cierta jerarquía entre ellos, determinando lo que la sociedad considera "femenino" y "masculino". Las relaciones de género pueden definirse entonces, en términos del juego entre prácticas históricas que se distinguen de acuerdo a lo femenino y lo masculino (teorías e ideologías, incluyendo creencias religiosas), prácticas institucionales (como el estado y el mercado), y condiciones materiales (la naturaleza y distribución de capacidades materiales a lo largo de líneas de género). (1)

En esta construcción social de lo femenino y lo masculino, los medios de comunicación tienen un rol

importante, ya que son los que dan significado a ciertas prácticas y las asocian a roles establecidos e instituidos por ellos. La Conferencia Mundial de Mujeres en Beijing (1995) consideró a los medios de comunicación como una de las 12 áreas de especial interés para conseguir el objetivo de lograr igualdad de oportunidades para varones y mujeres.

En marzo de 2006, la Asociación Mundial para la Comunicación Cristiana (WACC por sus cifras en inglés) publicó el Proyecto de Monitoreo Global de los Medios (2), que mide el impacto en las relaciones de género y la representación de mujeres y hombres en los medios noticiosos del mundo. El Proyecto de Monitoreo Global de Medios (GMMP) es la investigación de género en los medios más extensa que existe. Trece años después, camino al cuarto proyecto, queda mucho por hacer.

En los últimos años se han desarrollado diferentes herramientas

El uso de este tipo de metodología abre un abanico de posibilidades, brinda un espacio de discusión posterior sobre cuánto impactan los números y cuán grande sigue siendo la desigualdad. En cualquiera de los medios que usemos vemos mujeres y parece que no existe la diferencia, que hombres y mujeres comparten espacios por igual, pero el monitoreo deja en claro que esto no es así, rompe la construcción mediática de la igualdad y deja al descubierto la falacia.

Por esto es necesario desarrollar metodologías de análisis, modelos que puedan ser utilizadas como herramientas por los diferentes grupos que investigan y trabajan cuestiones de género y medios. Los números ayudan a poner en perspectiva cuán lejos estamos de los objetivos que se plantearon hace trece años y cuánto nos queda por hacer.

(1) Bedford, N y Strizzi, M, (2006). El mundo palpita. Editado por CLAI e ISEDET

(2) Ver más en www.whomakesthenews.org.

Pacific Region: Re-affirming media's role in the struggle for gender equality

Initiatives highlighted by participants included:

- Vois Blong Mere Solomon, a women's media NGO which evolved from a Pacific YWCA project, currently works across the Solomon Islands and produces two weekly radio programmes.
- Sistas Toktok in Vanuatu produces a weekly page for the Daily Post Newspaper.
- Tonga Women's Action for Change produces and disseminates regular media updates and alerts.
- HELP Centre Papua New Guinea - Health-Education-Livelihood-Participation (HELP) Resources, is one of the two most media-active NGOs in Papua New Guinea; HELP Resources produces programmes for radio (30 minutes fortnightly on NBC Radio East Sepik), press releases for newspapers, articles for regional and international development newsletters and journals, articles for posting on the internet, and videos (with technical expertise sourced from the Family Life Media Unit, Goroka). It also hopes to start a newsletter. HELP is available to provide commentary on local issues for news and current affairs programmes on Radio Australia.



Participants at the workshop in Suva, Fiji, 22-24 October 2007

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) co-organized the workshop with femLINKPACIFIC: media initiatives for women, in Fiji in October, 2007.

Established in 2000, femLINKPACIFIC develops and implements a range of women's media initiatives, such as taking a small mobile radio unit out to women and the communities, femLINKpacific offers a "safe space" for women to articulate and exchange their viewpoints.

The workshop brought together representatives of the National Councils of Women of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Samoa, as well as women's media practitioners from Bougainville, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga, Fiji Media Watch and the Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW).

According to femLINKPACIFIC Coordinator Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, this was the appropriate time to strengthen partnerships in order to realize the commitments of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) focusing on women and the media. Such a collective effort had become an imperative following

the successful incorporation of the Media and ICTs/Section J of the BPA into a revised Pacific Platform for Action, and the mobilization of Fiji Media Watch to participate in the 2005 GMMP.

In addition, the Pacific Plan's acknowledgement of the role of women's community media as a tool for the empowerment of rural and remote communities, as well as the formulation and adoption of the Pacific Women in Media Action Plan by representatives of Pacific media organizations, had boosted the need for forging coalitions and strengthening partnerships.

Advocacy and lobbying remain valuable tools in creating awareness and enhancing understanding about gender and media issues of concern to women's groups. Specifically, advocacy in the region would entail increasing awareness of the results of GMMP and highlighting why the quantity and quality of representation of women in the media matters. Results of the GMMP 2005 from the region indicated that women comprised only 26% of newsmakers whilst 74% of news subjects were men.

Community radio remains an important strategic tool in advancing commitments to gender equality and strengthening community empowerment efforts in the region. Nevertheless, whilst several Pacific women's and community media initiatives and NGOs have gradually been established, limited technical and financial resources, as well as organizational and institutional challenges remain a major constraint to their expansion.

An outcomes document adopted at the end of the workshop reaffirmed the need to improve and strengthen women's networks across the region. ♀

Statement of outcome, Pacific Region Workshop

Participants at the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) femLINKPACIFIC Gender and Media Advocacy Seminar for the Pacific staged in Suva, Fiji Islands (October 23 – 25, 2007) have reaffirmed that the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project (2005) and the Pacific Women in Media Action Plan have the potential to advance the commitments of gender equality in and through the media, including advancing the implementation of the UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as well as the revised Pacific Platform for Action (PPA) and national Women's Action Plans.

The Pacific Women in Media Action Plan, in particular, was a critical step forward in advancing Section J (Women and the Media) of the Beijing Platform for Action, especially as it is a commitment by Pacific Media Executives themselves.

This action plan was first adopted in September 2006 and reaffirmed by participants at a workshop on Advancing Gender Equality in the Pacific (Honiara, May 2007) acknowledges the potential of strategic coalitions with civil society groups to promote the issue of women's and children's rights as well as monitor governments on their progress towards implementing CEDAW, the revised PPA, the Millennium Development Goals and the Pacific Plan for Regional Cooperation.

The participants, who included representatives from the National Councils of Women of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Samoa, as well as women's media practitioners from Bougainville, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tonga, together with the Coordinator of Fiji Media Watch and a representative of the Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW) recognized that strategic and practical actions are needed to build on these advancements.

These activities will include:

Improving and strengthening women's networks across the region, through the publication of a Pacific Women Experts Directory, including profiles from civil society, academia, the private sector and government for use by Pacific Media and governments, as well as inter-government agencies, such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, commencing with the development of the directory;

At the regional level UNESCO and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) will be provided with the outcomes of the training seminar on Gender and Media Advocacy to encourage the inclusion of National Councils of Women and women's media practitioners, including those from community media networks, in the development of National Action Plans by media organizations – especially to ensure the Pacific Women in Media Action is adopted by the Pacific Islands News Association;

Monitoring the implementation of the Pacific Women in Media Action plan at national level by:

- Forging positive partnerships and coalitions with the media executives and organisations who adopted the action plan in September 2006 and May 2007 and presenting the results of the GMMP 2005 through a series of local seminars
- Informing the NCW membership and networks about GMMP 2005 – especially to sensitize the broader community to understand gender and the media and enable the establishment of media monitoring working groups to undertake ongoing and consistent media monitoring at national level
- Utilizing the existing expertise within the Pacific, which is Fiji Media Watch to undertake a regional media monitoring training programme and to then establish in-country training of media monitoring groups in the lead up to GMMP 2010
- Working with media councils and media associations to implement the action plan within their member organisations – using the results of national media monitoring as evidence
- Developing and staging ongoing gender and media training to promote media literacy from a gender perspective with a special focus on young women.

We affirm the role of women's media initiatives, such as community radio as a media strategy to advance commitments to gender equality as well as strengthen and support community empowerment efforts.

We look forward to ongoing support from WACC and other development partners to assist us achieve these goals. ♀

**Suva, Fiji Islands
October 25, 2007**

Gender and Media in Nigeria

By Theresa Nkem Fab-Ukozor,
Imo State University Owerri, Nigeria
Nairobi Workshop, December, 2007

An X-ray of media coverage of gender issues in Nigeria depicts an inglorious image of women's exclusion or marginalization.

Several non-governmental organizations have over the years joined efforts with the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) via the Global Monitoring Project (GMMP) to create awareness as it concerns the under representation of women in the news. However, women have continued to attract poor visibility to the point that they are most of the time excluded in coverage that affects their lives as individuals.

Undoubtedly, the marginalization and exclusion of women in the mass media is not unrelated to the patriarchal systems practiced in most societies.

Hence, the current emphasis on Gender and Development (GAD) approach as an outcome of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), no doubt, brings to bear the need for media practitioners to appreciate the plight of women by promoting gender balance in all media, including structures, policies and content.

In this vein it becomes pertinent to reason that gate-keepers of news



Above and bottom left: Participants at the workshop in Nairobi. 3-5 December 2007

themselves should begin to change their mindsets and attitudes in favour of women rights agenda before they can positively perform the task of shaping gender realities.

It was for this reason that the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Enugu State chapter, after having participated in the one-day seminar on "Media, Gender and National Development", held on February 23, 2006 as part of the activities to mark the "Who Makes the News Campaign in Nigeria" organized a week of activities in May 2006. The programme was targeted at sensitizing their members on the need to work harder and promote their image and credibility in order to attract more responsible positions in their work places and in the long run influence better media portrayal for women.

Nothing seems to have happened in terms of enhancing media images of women, although no one can say for sure until another empirical study is conducted. The point is that the awareness is already there and a few female journalists have since then attracted very important positions both at the state and national levels.

All studies conducted before now show that women are poorly represented in the mass media. For instance, a study I conducted "Women Political Empowerment and Mass Media: A critical content analytical study of selected Nigerian Newspapers" and published in the 2004 edition of the Nigerian Journal of Communications, supports the claim that the Nigerian press so far have not performed their role towards the struggle for women's political empowerment.

Results of the GMMP 2005 equally show that similar studies if conducted in other societies will give the same result. Rather than give fair and balanced reports of issues from women's and men's angles, the news media either exclude women's voices or portray them as objects that do not have an opinion, or worse still as objects that are only fit for advertising products. This trend does not only show symptoms of insensitivity, but poor media ethics. ♀



Nairobi Declaration on Gender and Media Advocacy

Nairobi, Kenya, 3-5 December 2007

Preamble

We the media practitioners, community based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trainers and media monitors from Southern, Eastern, Central and Western African countries attending the Gender and Media Advocacy Training Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya from December 3rd to 5th, 2007, are concerned with the gender imbalances and portrayal within news media reporting in Africa.

Noting that news media either exclude or objectify women which show insensitivity and poor media ethics.

Noting that the current emphasis on Gender and Development (GAD) as an outcome of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), brings to bear the need for media practitioners to recognise the agency and plight of women by promoting gender balance in all ramifications of the mass media, including structures, policies and contents.

Noting that during the 4th UN World Conference on Women, 53 countries recognised that to achieve development, gender equality was crucial and media was integral to the process. It is critical for the media to have a gender balance in the coverage of news sources in recognition of the integral role of women and men in national development.

Therefore, we call upon the media to exercise their responsibility to the public and apply the standards and practices of good governance and democracy in line with freedom of speech and expression.

We see many opportunities to address the problem and contribute to more gender balanced media reporting in partnership with editors, regulatory institutions, journalists' associations, government, communication and information officers, and civil society amongst others. We therefore propose as follows:

1. Gender and media sensitisation

- To sensitize the media on gender balanced reporting. This can be done by exposing practitioners and civil society to the GMMP 2005 findings; particularly on how best the media can respond to the critical observation that women still do not make news. To achieve this, we will engage the media in debates on the GMMP 2005 findings to address the issues raised in the report.
- To expose media to existing gender instruments which would guide gender responsive coverage.
- To target both the mainstream and community media through meetings, workshops and informal sessions.

2. Training of trainers

- To organise a regional training of trainers workshop on gender and media monitoring to build capacity in sub-Saharan Africa.
- To replicate the training of trainers nationally and facilitate expansion of GMMP 2010 into new countries.
- To develop a training manual for gender and media monitoring.

3. Regional Directory of Women Experts

- To create a regional on-line and print version of the directory of women experts covering diverse thematic areas.
- To partner with existing networks and contacts in the region to develop the directory.
- To distribute the directory to media in order to increase the ratio of women as news sources.

4. Media literacy training

- To raise critical gender and media awareness with consumers and encourage their active engagement with media.
- To create an interactive gender and media monitoring website for media users.
- To promote the use of traditional forms of communication, radio and short text messages (sms) to enhance critical media literacy.
- To establish annual gender media awards in recognition of best practices in this area.

5. Gender sensitive media codes of conduct

- To review existing media codes of ethics and communication policies in sub-Saharan Africa to establish whether or not they are gender sensitive.
- To propose amendments of the codes to make them more gender responsive.
- To advocate for the adoption, dissemination and enforcement of these codes.

3-5 December 2007, Nairobi, Kenya ♀

'L'état du genre dans les médias en République Démocratique du Congo'

Présenté par Françoise Mukuku, Radio OKAPI/ SI JEUNESSE SAVAIT, RDC
Dakar, décembre 2007



Photo de groupe: participants à l'atelier de Dakar. 17-19 décembre 2007

La République Démocratique du Congo (RDC) est un pays ayant un vaste potentiel médiatique, je dis bien potentiel car les chiffres que je vais vous donner vous montreront qu'ils y a encore d'avantage à tirer des medias présents.

Il y a environ 150 radios dans le pays. Parmi elles, une seule couvre tout le pays et ce n'est pas la radio nationale mais RADIO OKAPI où je travaille, un partenariat entre la mission des Nations-Unies au Congo (MONUC) et la Fondation Hironnelle en Suisse.

Cinq ou six couvrent plus de 3 provinces, parmi elles, la Radio Nationale Congolaise RTNC ; les 140 autres sont des radios communautaires qui ont toutes réuni moins de 1% de journalistes formées. Côté TV, nous avons il y a deux mois 35 TV privées et 2 nationales. Plus de 25 ont été suspendues d'émissions pour non-conformité à la loi ou manque de cahier de charge. Nous avons plus de 400 journaux et magazines qui ont obtenu une autorisation de parution.

Image des femmes dans les medias congolais (RDC): Parmi ceux qui se

conforment réellement ou qui font des efforts en élevant leur niveau de professionnalisme, (il y en a 7 à mon avis) tous ont une émission consacrée aux femmes (pour les audiovisuelles) ou une rubrique femmes. Certaines vont jusqu'à produire des suppléments femmes une fois par semaine.

Malheureusement même ces medias continuent à refléter les résultats négatifs de notre monitoring global de 2005 : seuls les sujets traditionnellement féminins tels que la santé, l'éducation, la beauté, la cuisine... sont couverts par les femmes ou sont représentés comme des sujets des nouvelles.

Tandis que les sujets « sérieux » ou traditionnellement masculins que sont la politique, l'économie, la gestion de la guerre, le maintien de la paix prennent les femmes comme expertes ou sujets des nouvelles.

Il existe quelques projets pour améliorer la représentation des femmes dans les medias. Je vais vous parler des deux projets auxquels j'ai participé mais je sais qu'il y en a beaucoup à travers le

pays.

1. Projet genre, medias et élections: c'est un projet pilote par le projet genre et élections du Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement (PNUD). Sur une base volontaire, des communicateurs des agences des Nations Unies, des principales radios et télévisions nationales ainsi que des radios communautaires ayant des représentations dans la capitale, se sont réunis une fois par semaine pendant 6 mois pour soutenir les femmes candidates aux premières élections véritablement démocratiques que le pays allait connaître après près de 40 ans de dictature.

2. Les points focaux des Nations Unies pour la mise en application de la résolution 1325 sur l'implication des femmes dans les processus de maintien de la paix.

Pour les journalistes, cette résolution a été l'occasion de donner la parole aux femmes sur des sujets sérieux tels que la guerre, la sécurité, le maintien de la paix. Le plus grand défi était aussi de donner la parole à la femme pour avoir son point de vue sur les questions de sécurité, paix et autres et de considérer cela comme responsabilité du journaliste dans la recherche de l'équilibre dans le traitement de l'information. ♀



Françoise Mukuku

Déclaration de Dakar sur le Plaidoyer Genre et Médias.

Dakar, Sénégal. 17- 19 Décembre 2007

Préambule

Nous, praticiens des Médias, Représentants des Organisations Communautaires de Base, des ONG et Formateurs des Médias des pays d'Afrique francophone de l'Ouest et du Centre, notamment du Bénin, Burundi, Cameroun, Congo, Guinée, Mali, Niger, Togo, République Démocratique du Congo et Sénégal, participant au séminaire régional africain de Formation en Plaidoyer Genre et Médias, tenu à Toubab Dialaw, Sénégal, du 17 au 19 décembre 2007, organisé par l'Association Mondiale pour la Communication Chrétienne (WACC) et le Réseau Inter- Africain pour les Femmes, Médias, Genre et Développement (FAMEDEV), sommes préoccupés par les déséquilibres du genre et descriptions stéréotypées dans les reportages effectués à travers l'Afrique.

Il est crucial pour les médias d'avoir un équilibre dans la couverture des sources des nouvelles en reconnaissance du rôle intégral des femmes et des hommes dans le développement national ;

En conséquence, nous appelons les médias à exercer leurs responsabilités face au public et à appliquer les standards et pratiques de la bonne gouvernance et démocratie dans le cadre de la liberté d'expression. Il est urgent d'aborder le problème et de contribuer à un meilleur équilibre entre les genres dans les médias en partenariat avec les éditeurs, les institutions de régulation des médias, les associations des journalistes, les instituts de formation, le gouvernement, les officiels de la communication et l'information et la société civile entre autres.

Nous proposons par conséquent les actions suivantes:

1. Sensibilisation des patrons de presse et institutions de formation au Genre et Médias-

- Renforcer les capacités des patrons de presse, directeurs de publication, directeurs généraux des Radios et TV, directeurs généraux de publication, rédacteurs en chef, directeurs de programmes et d'informations, les producteurs et animateurs sur les questions liées au genre, sur la nécessité de faire de leurs entreprises, des institutions respectueuses de l'équilibre de genre dans le traitement de l'information et offrant les mêmes opportunités de carrière aux hommes comme aux femmes professionnelles de médias.
- Encourager la création des modules « genre et médias » dans les écoles, centres et instituts de formation en journalisme, en formant les encadreurs et enseignants, en promouvant des études et des recherches sur le sujet pour produire des futures professionnelles des médias sensibles au genre.
- Organiser une formation régionale des formateurs en genre et monitoring des médias pour l'Afrique sous-Saharienne.
- Multiplier les formations de formateurs au niveau national et étendre l'exercice du prochain GMMP de 2010 à travers de nouveaux pays.
- Développer un manuel de formation sur le genre et monitoring des médias.

2. Promotion du leadership féminin dans les médias

- Sensibiliser les patrons des médias pour améliorer l'accès des femmes des médias à des postes de responsabilité ;
- Amener les femmes à occuper les postes de prise de décisions ;
- Favoriser la formation et le recyclage des femmes des médias
- Combattre les stéréotypes et l'image négative de la femme dans les médias ;

3. Adoption et application des lois sur la parité et les médias

- Favoriser l'adoption et l'application des textes législatifs et réglementaires sur la parité. Faire en sorte que les lacunes soient rectifiées.
- Influencer les politiques et les législations en matière de médias. Mener des actions pour renforcer les systèmes législatifs et réglementaires propices au développement des médias et à la promotion du genre dans les médias ;
- Etablir la collaboration entre les ONG qui travaillent sur le Genre et les Médias en matière de plaidoyer (lois sur les médias, lois sur la parité,...) ;

4. Monitoring sur le genre dans les médias :

- Outiller les professionnels des médias, associations, syndicats et ONG des médias pour une utilisation efficace et efficiente du plaidoyer ;
- Faire des recherches sur le genre dans les médias afin de disposer des statistiques et des éléments de référence (banques de données) ;
- Etablir un répertoire des femmes expertes dans tous les domaines du développement dans les deux sous régions (Afrique Occidentale et Afrique Centrale) en vue de mettre à la disposition des médias et autres utilisateurs, une base de données des expertises locales ;
- Vulgariser les outils de plaidoyer avec un accompagnement matériel, humain, financier et logistique.

Fait à Dakar le 19 décembre 2007 ♀

Solomon Islands

By Lisa Horiwapu, Vois Blong Mere Solomon, Solomons Island.

Vois Blong Mere Solomon is a women's media NGO established in 2001. Vois works to advance the status of women through radio programmes and radio campaigns, the publication of a newsletter and the dissemination of information through networks such the regional women's media network coordinated by femLINKPACIFIC on UNSC resolution 1325.

Radio remains the most popular and influential media in Solomon Islands and Vois Blong Mere has conducted radio campaigns on issues such as HIV/AIDS and the 16 days of activism on gender based violence especially on the national radio station – Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation.

These campaigns are a way to remind the government of its commitments to gender equality especially the implementation of CEDAW.

Radio campaigns are produced in collaboration with other NGOs, especially women's NGOs. This has created a broader awareness of the annual campaign, as well as a general acceptance of the issues raised in these campaigns. A critical challenge is outreach and feedback from the rural and the outlying islands and provinces.

The three most urgent issues for gender and the media in Solomon Islands are:

- The inclusion of women in decision making positions within the media, as well as broader society
- Access to scholarships for women's media professionals especially to enhance their capacity to advocate for women's issues
- The unfair representation of women's issues in the media – you see women's issues in the back

pages or relegated to the women's page unless it is promoting a government policy. Not much is being covered on women's issues unless it is controversial.

There are no standards defining codes of conduct and there are limited opportunities for women working within the media. From a civil society perspective, there is a greater need for in-depth discussion and informed commentary on developments. ♀

Cook Islands

By Nga Teao, National Council of Women (NCW) Cook Islands

The National Council of Women (NCW) serves as a voice for women in the country, representing women on a range of boards and committees.

Although the media are significant channels for disseminating information throughout the country, a critical concern is how to overcome the isolation felt by women living in outlying islands because of limited information and communication opportunities.

The Cook Island NCW has been using the media to promote their women in politics campaigns at national and local level, especially to help the candidates. This has included using talkback radio and TV interviews as well as the production of newsletters and posters to assist female candidates.

Despite the challenges faced by the campaigns, they achieved success at both the local and national levels. Today there are 2 women MPs, out of a total of 24, and 1 woman in Cabinet (out of 7).

The Cook Island's NCW's radio programme has been successful in addressing a range of social issues. However, a critical issue in the Cook Islands is that the media sector which is characterized by private ownership poses particular challenges for gender and media activists. ♀

Burundi

Par Laetitia NTAVYOHANYUMA
Journal Le Renouveau, Burundi

La plate-forme d'action de la Conférence Mondiale de Beijing sur les femmes a identifié les médias comme un des 12 domaines prioritaires d'action. Par le pouvoir immense qu'ils détiennent dans la circulation publique de l'information et la formation des opinions, des perceptions, des comportements et des attitudes les médias en général et ceux du Burundi en particulier constituent un enjeu des luttes pour le pouvoir et la transformation des sociétés.

Ils constituent également un instrument privilégié dans la promotion des droits humains. Des barrières entravent la réalisation des objectifs des femmes journalistes, d'autant plus que le paysage médiatique Burundais est dominé par les hommes, les femmes restent minoritaires au sein des rédactions, presque absentes dans les postes de direction.

Suite, page 10

"It is very difficult to get our issues and information heard. We have to pay for everything and while the government is trying their very best to legislate, government ownership, financing the radio programmes is one of (our) biggest obstacles."

Nga Teao, National Council of Women, Cook Islands.

Pour y remédier, il faudrait qu'il y ait plus de représentativité des femmes dans les rédactions, et en profiter pour améliorer l'image publique et la place politique et sociale de la femme burundaise en général et de la femme journaliste en particulier.

Les médias au Burundi

Le paysage médiatique comprend 12 radios dont 8 privées et une radio publique, 2 télévisions dont une privée et une nationale.

La presse écrite est composée de 2 journaux publics qui sont :

- Un quotidien gouvernemental *Le Renouveau*, édité en français, qui tire en 2500 exemplaires.
- Un hebdomadaire *Ubumwe*, édité en langue nationale « Kirundi », qui est un journal du peuple.
- Deux agences de presse dont une gouvernementale, Agence Burundaise de Presse (ABP) et une privée.

A côté de cela il faut ajouter 8 journaux privés et des bulletins spécialisés des entreprises afin de promouvoir leur visibilité.

Analyse de la situation des femmes journalistes au sein des médias

Les données fournies sont issues d'une enquête menée par l'Association des Femmes Journalistes (AFJO) en 2006, sur un échantillon de 9 organes de presse. Il s'agit de la Radio Télévision Nationale (RTNB), « Le Renouveau », la Radio Bonesha FM+, la Radio Publique Africaine (RPA), Radio Isanganiro, Radio Renaissance, l'Agence Burundaise de Presse (ABP), le journal Arc en Ciel et l'agence Net Press.

Répartition des femmes journalistes entre les différents secteurs médiatiques

Sur base de l'échantillon retenu, les femmes journalistes ne représentent que 31,5% des membres de la profession. La plus grande partie des femmes

journalistes (soit 32,1% des journalistes) opèrent dans le secteur public avec une prépondérance pour la presse audiovisuelle où on a une proportion de 32,7% de femmes. Au sein de la presse écrite privée, la proportion des femmes est de 0%, ailleurs dans les radios privées, l'unique radio publique et la presse écrite publique, une moyenne de 30% est atteinte. Il est intéressant de noter que depuis l'existence de la radio nationale et du quotidien public *le Renouveau* (avril 1978) une seule femme a été nommée directrice et rédacteur en chef du quotidien.

Les raisons avancées par les directeurs des publications des journaux privés est que la ligne éditoriale est purement politique et très peu de femmes oseraient s'aventurer sur ce terrain. Certains responsables confirment que les femmes manquent d'audace, d'endurance, de disponibilité notamment pour traiter les questions politiques qui font l'essentiel du contenu des journaux privés.

Pour d'autres, les femmes ne sont pas de vraies passionnées du journalisme. Elles font ce métier comme un gagne pain, c'est pour cela qu'elles postulent rarement dans les journaux privés.

Une raison concerne l'insuffisance du budget qui ne permet pas de recruter un personnel diversifié au sein de la presse écrite privée.

L'autre particularité est la sous représentativité des femmes dans les postes de direction et à la tête des rédactions, qui sont des organes de prise de décision où se gère l'information au quotidien. Il est normal que les femmes journalistes se retrouvent incapables d'influencer le traitement des informations notamment au niveau de l'équité des genres dans les sources, les thèmes et le contenu.

Cela résulte en partie du fait qu'il y a moins de femmes journalistes titulaires de diplômes d'études supérieures mais aussi du peu

d'intérêt que les responsables portent à l'équité des genres et à la diversité. Cette situation renforce les barrières psychologiques, car les femmes journalistes n'ayant pas de modèles ou références, elles ne cherchent pas l'excellence ou la perfection dans leur travail car elles manquent de motivation et d'ambition.

Le Renouveau a créé depuis 2003, une rubrique Genre qui est dirigée par une femme.

Des attentes

Sur le plan professionnel, les femmes journalistes se défendent, les prix décernés à l'une ou l'autre à l'occasion d'un concours au Burundi ou ailleurs en sont une preuve. Les femmes actives dans le métier souhaiteraient plus de postes de responsabilité au sein des médias. Le secteur public a donné le ton en nommant des femmes à la tête du quotidien et de l'Agence Burundaise de presse.

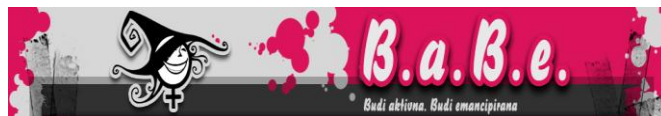
Il faudrait des efforts sensibles au niveau de l'audiovisuel et dans le secteur privé, où aucune femme n'est à la tête d'un organe de presse.

Les femmes journalistes souhaiteraient qu'elles soient associées dans les projets de formation pour leur permettre de se spécialiser et de bénéficier des expertises dans différents domaines pour rattraper le retard qui est manifeste.

La Société Civile voudrait que les femmes journalistes soient agressives, plus combattantes, qui anticipent et influencent les événements et les situations, en particulier ceux qui mettent en jeu les droits de la femme.

Les femmes journalistes devraient viser loin et penser en termes de devenir elles-mêmes propriétaires ou patrons d'entreprises de presse. C'est peut-être par leurs idées qu'elles vont changer leur pays et le monde entier de façon positive et objective. ♀

Gender and Media Advocacy Training Workshop for Central & Eastern Europe Sljeme, Croatia. 26-28 January, 2006



B.a.B.e. (Be active. Be emancipated), a Croatian group advocating for women's human rights hosted the WACC regional Gender and Media Advocacy Training Workshop in Sljeme from January 26th – 28th, 2006.

It was the first of its kind for B.a.B.e. which joined the WACC Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2005. The workshop which brought together 14 participants from Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kyrgyzstan, Estonia,

Hungary, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, was an opportunity for activists to share experiences and gain skills in running professional, low cost gender and media advocacy campaigns.

Workshop participants shared their experiences of how women are represented in the media in Central and Eastern Europe, discussed the work of their respective organizations and exchanged ideas on how to redress gender imbalances in the media.

Participants identified the prevalence of discrimination against women, domestic violence against women and media portrayals of women as common issues prevalent in their respective countries.

Other concerns identified by participants included media ownership structures, the use of gender blind language, and the continuing production and reproduction of stereotyped roles for men and women in the educational system.

The workshop focused on understanding the media (its structures and functioning), strategies for developing and implementing advocacy campaigns to promote gender equality, and using the media to raise awareness on women's issues and problems.

In 1996, B.a.b.e initiated a Women and Media programme and pioneered advocacy to enhance the visibility of women in the media in Croatia.

Following the workshop, B.a.B.e. launched Croatia's Three Weeks of Global Action on Gender and the Media in March 2006. The campaign organized to mark the first anniversary of the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Day, was marked in Croatia by awareness-raising activities. These included presentation of the GMMP 2005 results; B.a.B.e.'s regional media

project Equiwa (Equally Visible Women), WACC's gender and media toolkit, and research on women's audience reception of gender representation in mainstream media in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro.

A report on the Media Legal Framework from Gender Perspective (for the Republic of Croatia) was also presented at the launch event which was attended by women journalists, researchers, politicians and representatives of the government as well as international donor organizations and foreign embassies. ♀

Setting up a Regional Database of Women Experts for the Arab Region.

Follow-up to the Gender and Media Advocacy Training Workshop for the Middle East & North Africa Region Amman, Jordan. 12-14 December, 2006



Results from the three GMMPs have consistently indicated that women rarely feature in the news and that when they do; they are rarely cited as experts or people in positions of authority.

While men are frequently consulted to offer expert opinion, women repeatedly appear in a personal capacity as eye-witnesses, giving personal views or as representatives of popular opinion. Yet, there are a significant number of women professionals who can offer expert opinion in their fields of expertise.

Responding to concerns from activists regarding the absence of women in the news, journalists have frequently claimed that they do not know who women experts are and so are unable to reach and interview them.

To enhance the visibility of women in the media, participants at the WACC Middle East and North

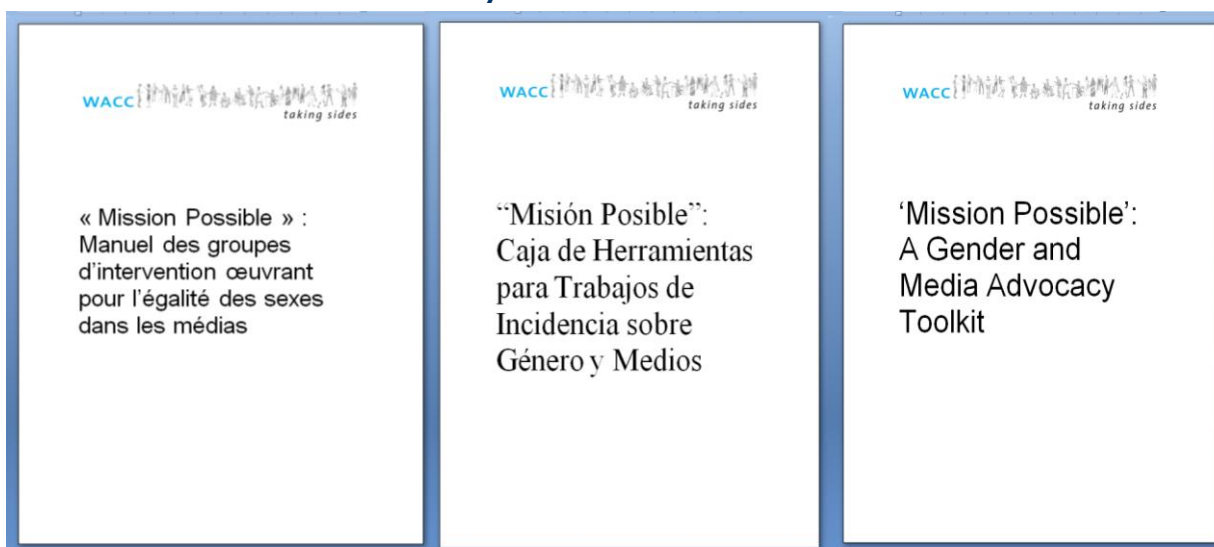
Africa region workshop in Amman, Jordan in December 2006, resolved to create a directory of Arab female specialists on all subjects who can be contacted by the media for comment or response. The workshop was undertaken in partnership with AmmanNet Radio in Jordan.

The online directory will contain contact information of women experts available for comment or response to journalists' questions. It will be organized by field or subject area.

The overall objective is to redress the erroneous assumption that professional expertise is male, and to promote a more balanced representation of women in the media.

Participants also agreed on future collaborative research focusing on the image of women in the Arab media.

Tools for Gender and Media Advocacy



Gender and media advocacy can sometimes appear to be a daunting task.

You have identified issues of concern which, among others, include the marginalisation and stereotyping of women in media portrayals in your local context, the use of violence against women to attract audiences, and the confining of women to lower positions in the newsroom.

Determined to challenge and improve these, you are at once faced with some tough questions: what to do, when to do it and more importantly how to conduct a consistent, sustainable and successful advocacy campaign.

Where do you begin? Following the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) of 2005, the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) developed 'Mission Impossible': A Gender and Media Advocacy Toolkit. The toolkit is a practical resource for information, guidelines and tips on how to approach and conduct advocacy on gender and the media.

Aimed primarily at activists and organisations concerned with gender in media, the toolkit covers a range of topics and offers concrete steps towards successful gender and media advocacy.

The toolkit draws on diverse experiences of successful gender activism aimed at the media, and highlights case studies of successful initiatives aimed at changing gender representation and portrayal in and through the media.

The toolkit is divided into two sections:

Section one defines the conceptual issues on gender and media advocacy. It examines why the media should be a focus of gender and feminist activism. It highlights the key issues for gender and media advocacy using the findings of the GMMP 2005. It also discusses the various target audiences significant to achieving change.

Section two provides the practical information on the steps, tools and strategies that can be helpful in gender and media advocacy. It offers handy tips and pointers on how to engage with the media and how to put gender on the news agenda.

A complete version of the toolkit can be downloaded from www.whomakesthenews.org, perhaps the only site on the internet currently entirely dedicated to gender and media.

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‘Gender & Media Advocacy’

From WACC’s ‘Mission Possible’: A Gender & Media Advocacy Toolkit,

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.

There are two angles to gender and media advocacy:

1. Media as target audience: Planned and consistent advocacy for gender equality in the media's workplace policies and conditions of service, as well as in editorial and advertising content.
2. Media as partner and tool for getting across messages on gender equality: The strategic use of the media as a tool for advancing gender equality in all sectors, especially public policy, and to bring gender justice to the public's attention.

At first glance, it may seem as if two different gender and media advocacy strategies are called for to address these two issues. But, by taking on the media as institutions within which the struggle for gender equality is situated, activists will create also the opportunities for priming the media to be a credible voice when it reports on and covers gender equality issues.

Often gender and media activists are tackling both of these angles at the same time. The media cannot be used as an effective and credible tool to advance messages on gender equality if the messages it sends daily through reports on events and issues are gender-blind or negative about women's roles and contribution in a society. Likewise, the media cannot challenge the lack of women in decision-making in governance structures, if there is a paucity of women in leadership positions within the media.

In targeting the media to bring about more gender sensitivity and awareness to the editorial content and to ensure equal opportunity and equal access for women in media work spaces, gender and media activists are at the same time opening the space to engage more effectively with the media in getting across messages on gender equality.

Approaches: Various strategies are in use throughout the world to promote gender equality in the media. No single approach will suffice given the complexity of the media and the national media landscapes with their own specificities.

To be at their most effective, gender and media activists should not be antagonistic towards the media and those working within.

Taking time to learn how the media works, how and why journalists choose the sources they do, how sub-editors do their jobs, and who are the key players in media decision-making (such as

chief editors and increasingly advertising executives and media owners), can provide activists with much needed insight into where opportunities for intervention and lobbying lie within the media.

Gender and media activists often use a combination of strategies. These include the following:

- The creation of gender and media networks and associations which push for change through dialogues, discussions, research and media monitoring. Examples include the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network (<http://www.gemsa.org.za>), Sur

Profesionales in Latin America (<http://www.sitiosur.cl/organizacion.asp>) and the Asian Network of Women in Communication, among others.

- Women have created alternative media in the form of newsletters, journals, radio, video productions, and now on-line publications.

One of the most important contributions of women's alternative media is to provide a space for serious reflection about the nature of women's exclusion from the mainstream.

Examples of women's alternative media include the Women's Feature Service (WFS) based in New Delhi (wfsnews.org/), FIRE radio in Latin America (www.fire.or.cr/) and the Africa Women and Child Feature Service, based in Nairobi (www.awcfs.org).

- Gender activists have developed tools to monitor the media on its coverage of violence against women, women in politics, women as sources, the portrayal of women, among other areas of concern.

These exercises provide specific data and analysis that could be presented to the media which highlight professional gaps in news and other forms of reporting, as well as examples of how the media violates its own principles of accuracy, fairness and balance. ♀

Highlights of Partner Projects

'Portrayal and participation of women in the media'

By Women's Media Centre (WMC), Cambodia



The project implemented in 2007 by the Women's Media Centre (WMC) in Cambodia was spurred by concerns about negative stereotyping and degrading depictions of women in print media.

It is indisputable that mainstream media worldwide show little concern for gender balanced reporting, as evidenced by the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2005. It was against this background and in view of similar patterns of reporting in Cambodian media that WMC embarked on the project.

The project aimed to use a combination of media monitoring, forum discussions with journalists and lobby dinners with editors, amongst others as approaches to improving the coverage of women in the Cambodian media. In summary, WMC monitored eight popular magazines, held media monitoring group meetings, ran an internship programme, organised forum discussions for media and civil society groups, hosted lobby dinners for media and welcomed student tours to their studio.

In the past, invitations to male journalists to participate in forum discussions on gender and the media had met with some resistance. Surprisingly, the two

discussion forums attracted 107 journalists from both the print and broadcast media. Participants included the heads of journalism associations in the country, the editor-in-chief of a popular newspaper, and the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Information.

The discussion forum provided an opportunity for journalists to share their experiences concerning the mainstreaming of gender in media. The meetings concluded with many participants resolving to enhance the representation of women in their media. The editor-in-chief of Kampuchea newspaper who also heads the Cambodian Club of Journalists appealed to journalists to desist from publishing pornographic images of women in their media.

Such was the success of the forum that it was widely covered by newspapers and television stations in Cambodia, ensuring that the organisation's message reached wider audiences.

The WMC's subsequent lobby dinner with editors-in-chief also resulted in the editor-in-chief of Apsara Television agreeing to broadcast WMC's programmes at no cost to WMC, whilst the editor of an entertainment magazine promised to gradually phase out pornographic images of women in

his magazine. Programmes produced by the WMC are currently broadcast on its Mobile Broadcasting Units as well as on some TV stations.

Perhaps the most impressive outcome of this multi-strategy project was the act by ordinary Cambodian women to directly challenge media on negative portrayals of women, in their record over 100 'letters to the editor', 44 of which were selected for publication in Raksmei Newspaper.

To increase the number of young women working in the media and enable young people to gain work experience, the centre selected three female students from universities to intern with the organisation and arranged a visit to the centre for 100 students from four high schools. The visits and internships allowed participants to gain insights into work undertaken by the Centre.

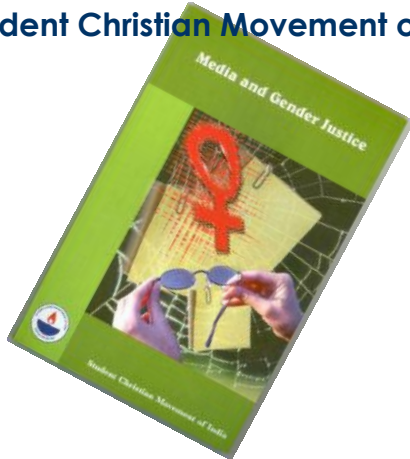
With sustained advocacy by the WMC using multiple strategies, the portrayal of women in the Cambodian media has slowly improved. The Centre instituted the Gender Equality Media Awards in 2004 to encourage more accurate and responsible representation of women in the Cambodian media.

While media owners still argue that a shift towards gender-responsive reportage is constrained by financial survival exigencies, what WMC has undoubtedly achieved is stirring debate on hitherto accepted as 'normal', biased gender representations in media. ♀

Depiction of women as victims of violence normalizes, indeed legitimizes, such violence and plays a role in the continuation of the cycle of violence.

Book Review

Media and Gender Justice (a Reader) Student Christian Movement of India. 2006.



The 'Media and Gender Justice' Reader was published by the Student Christian Movement (India) in the context of the WACC-supported project 'Christian youth initiative to re-read the media'.

The Reader neatly demystifies the gender dimensions of media in an easy-to-read yet comprehensive format.

The Reader is a compilation of short, thought-provoking, multi-dimensional essays on gender in and through media. Discussed are the pervasiveness of modern media, its power and reach, and its related impact on gender. The essays employ illustrative examples from the Indian news media to expose the nature and possible consequences of gender imbalances in media structures and content.

Citing analyses of ownership patterns, decision making and representation within the media, disparities in both caste and gender are documented.

For instance Hindu men occupy 71% of the top positions in the media even though they comprise just 8% of the population. By comparison, only 4% of Other Backward Castes (OBC) can be found in top level media jobs even though they make up 40% of the country's population. Women account for 32% of the top jobs within the English language

electronic media and 14% in Hindi print media respectively. However, no women from OBC are found in top level media positions in either electronic or print media. The potential consequence of such unequal gender presence within media organisations is not only the projection of men's views as the norm, but the invisibility of women's voices, the stereotyped portrayal of women in media content and a narrow definition of media audiences.

Whilst contending that the convergence of media technology has blurred the boundaries between 'old' and 'new' media, as well as of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' media, the Reader suggests that an increasing concentration of ownership and the globalization of media distribution systems has equally contributed to a homogeneity in media content.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 highlight multiple ways in which the portrayal of women in the media reproduce and reinforce particular stereotypes of women in India. For example: fair skinned, upper class, and upper caste women under 40-years old and fluent in English, are dominantly featured in Indian media news and advertisements. Much of the national news in India's mainstream media remains Delhi focused, leaving out the majority of the country's rural population.

The argument is made that audience judgment is essential in media consumption: "we need to be responsible in what is sent out, and have maturity and discrimination in believing and acting upon what is received" (p. 28).

The Reader concludes with a discussion at the ways in which citizens can critically engage the media as a means of checking against media bias. These include

the constitution of media watch groups, the continuous monitoring of media content and the systemic use of media spaces, amongst others.

The Reader will be a useful resource to gender and media literacy advocates who are interested in raising critical awareness among media audiences. ♀

Why Gender in Media Matters

'... it is essential to promote forms of communication that not only challenge the patriarchal nature of media but strive to decentralise and democratise them[...] media that reaffirm women's wisdom and knowledge, and that make people into subjects rather than objects or targets of communication.'

—The 'Bangkok Declaration'

Numerous regional and global agreements underscoring the need to include the media in interventions to counter gender-based discrimination have been developed since the landmark Bangkok Declaration was issued in 1994. The most important of these is perhaps the Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women (1995), Section 'J'.

As such, the symbiotic relationship between gender in media and gender relations in society has been acknowledged in multiple instances. Gender biases and stereotypes in media inform and are informed by practice, shaping a reality of pervasive gender-based inequalities.

The normative values underlying mainstream media content and journalistic practice reveal that these in fact serve to normalize inequitable power relations, one of which is 'gender'. Critical forms of communication become necessary as a strategy to trouble the relations of dominance and subordination so characteristic of our societies today. ♀