

The New York Declaration¹

Progress towards closing the gender gap in news media content has almost come to a standstill, according to the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project research. While women are 50% of the world population, they remain only 1 in 4 of the people seen, heard or read about in the news since 2010. Their underrepresentation as news reporters has not changed in 10 years: only 37% of stories are reported by women. The proportion of stories that clearly challenge gender stereotypes has hovered between 3% and 4% since 2005. Women's relative invisibility in traditional news media has crossed over into digital news delivery platforms.

Traditional and new electronic media are domains of male, patriarchal power and domination, replete with degrading, humiliating and pornographic contents regarding women.

Online media contents reproduce the exclusion and ghettoization of women, both within the media product and in the comments and responses of new interactive audiences that become co-authors of the process of promoting and legitimizing misogyny as public discourse; informational-communicational technologies themselves do not alter inequalities, but are positioned within social relations mapped by unequal and unjust economic, cultural and political power relationships of neoliberal, patriarchal and heteronormative domination.

Our position

We stand for equality, freedom for women, justice, equal access to media resources and against all kind of inequalities, capitalism and neoliberalism. We understand feminism as a struggle not only for women's rights, but as solidarity with all groups that are subjected to different kinds of oppression.

We acknowledge the work of women journalists who despite precarious working conditions and the risk of violence they face, still safeguard the human right to communication.

We are concerned about the tabloidization and relativization of social and political issues in the media contents that render them trivial, vulgar and unable to fulfil the primary media function of informing the public of the relevant issues. Censorship and self-censorship have grown, controlled by political and economic elites and directed against the freedom of press and information, as well as against the right of every individual to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to seek, receive and spread information.

We are concerned about the rise in religious fundamentalism, terrorism and fascism with their accompanying violence and suppression of women's voices.

We are concerned about media contribution to increasing and intensifying violence against women and girls.

We are concerned about the exploitation of girls and women in the sex industries. We are especially concerned about the use of media in general and the electronic media particularly as tools in these industries.

¹ Adopted on 11 March, 2017, by participants at the "Gender & media: challenges and opportunities in the Post 2015 era" consultation organized by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). This Declaration updates the Bangkok Declaration adopted in 1994 at the *Women Empowering Communication* Conference organised by WACC, the International Women's Tribune Centre, New York, and ISIS-Manila.

For these reasons, it is essential to promote forms of communication that not only challenge the patriarchal nature of media but strive to decentralize and democratize them: to create media that encourage dialogue and debate; media that advance women and creativity; media that reaffirm women's wisdom and knowledge, and that make people into subjects rather than objects or targets of communication. Media which are responsive to people's needs.

To address the aforementioned gaps we recommend the following:

- Strengthening media owned by women.
- Increasing opportunities for digital and technical training for women in the area of communications.
- Eliminating gender stereotypes and hate speech from public media, and continual promoting of gender equality in the media.
- Incorporation of gender-sensitivity, local history and cultural diversity in the education and training of professionals in the field of communications in order to increase gender sensitivity of reporting and to eliminate sexist and misogynic media content.
- Expansion of gender-specific media research and documentation.
- Ensuring freedom of expression for women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups.
- Promoting lobbies and campaigns directed at opinion makers and media consumers to raise public awareness on how issues of development affect women.
- Visibility of women from minority and marginalized groups, rural women, women with disabilities, migrants, refugees, displaced women, their equal access to media to be part of media content production, news making and speaking about their experiences.
- Promoting affirmative action and positive discrimination for the access of women and sexual minorities to mass media and to alternative media of their own.
- Decreasing sensationalist media reporting that justifies and normalizes violence against women, and introducing gender sensitive reporting on violence against women.
- Including the gender perspective as part of curricula in universities, communication training spaces, and media professional development courses.
- Developing and promoting media tools for gender sensitive reporting (gender sensitive language, databases of experts, journalist codes) but also continually monitoring their implementation in media content, in the community of journalists and their associations.
- Enhancing access to media for women rights defenders.
- Encouraging international cooperation agencies to include communication and gender as part of their agenda.
- Adoption and operationalization of gender-responsive communication policies by States, the media industry and relevant private sector.

CALL TO ACTION

A. All Governments to:-

- A.1. ensure the security and protection of women journalists, activists and other Human Rights defenders;
- A.2. release writers and journalists who are imprisoned for reasons related to freedom of expression.
- A.3. ensure internet security and protection;
- A.4. close the digital divide;
- A.5. ensure an accessible, available and affordable Internet for all persons in order that they fully benefit from its development potential and as an enabling space and resource for the realisation of all human rights, including the right to hold opinions without interference, the right to freedom of expression and information, the right to freedom of assembly and association, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- A.6. formulate and/or enforce policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the media. Affirmative action and positive discrimination should be applied where needed, in the public and private sectors;
- A.7. develop and implement nationwide campaigns on gender equality and women's empowerment, with mainstreaming gender in curricular as early as pre-school;
- A.8. with the participation of social, citizen and woman movements, develop communication public policies to promote gender equity and to avoid sexism, discrimination, objectification of women's bodies in all communication media.

B. The UN and other International Agencies to:-

- B.1. go beyond recognizing "Women and Media" as a critical action area for women's empowerment, but deliberately allocate substantial resources to this theme to the same measure as other gender equality thematic areas;
- B.2. stop treating "Women and Media" merely as a cross cutting issue, but recognize it as a standalone issue as well, which when given adequate attention, will trigger substantial success in other areas;
- B.3. support in developing and enhancing the capacities of women-led media associations;
- B.4. support efforts towards the formation and strengthening of women's media pursuing gender equality and inclusiveness, especially community radio stations;
- B.5. support efforts towards building and sharing knowledge on "Women and Media";
- B.6. support capacity building programs in promotion of women in the media at all levels, and also enhance the accessibility and effective utilization of the media by all women.

C. The New Emerging International or Regional Cooperation Agencies, and Multinational Agencies to:-

- C.1. include communication, women and gender as part of the development, policy and funding support agenda.

D. Media Houses to:-

- D.1. eliminate gender stereotypes and hate speech;
- D.2. develop and/or adopt and implement gender sensitive policies, staffing, content generation and reporting, among other areas;
- D.3. ensure freedom of expression, and visibility for women of all diversities, conditions or backgrounds;
- D.4. eliminate sensationalist media reporting that justifies and normalizes violence against women and girls;
- D.5. ensure easy access, and utilization of the media by human rights defenders.

E. Universities and other Communication Training Spaces to:

- E.1. mainstream gender in the training curricular, including local history and cultural diversity in the education and training of professionals in Communication Studies;
- E.2. develop and promote media tools for gender sensitive reporting (gender sensitive language, databases of experts, journalistic codes) and also continually monitor their implementation in media content in the community of journalists and the associations / networks;
- E.3. start or enhance the expansion of gender specific media research and documentation;
- E.4. increase opportunities for digital and technical training for women media practitioners or managers.

F. Media Women Associations / Activists and Lobbyists to:

- F.1. re-launch their gender equality and women's empowerment campaigns in the media with more vigour and deliberation given the new dynamics, for example:-
 - F.1.1. develop and implement campaigns directed at opinion makers and media consumers to raise public awareness on how issues of development affect women and how gender-sensitive media could re-shape this;
 - F.1.2. develop and implement capacity building sessions on selected themes for the empowerment of women in the media at all levels, including for those outside the media to effectively utilize it in self-expression or wider campaigns;
 - F.1.3. continuously conduct gender-focussed media monitoring and, regularly and strategically share with stakeholders for immediate redress;
 - F.1.4. work with the public and the private sector to pursue gender equality and women's empowerment in, and by the media;
 - F.1.5. develop the needed capacities to mount effective campaigns for gender equality and women's empowerment in the media.
- F.2. in their role as communicators, make visible the rights of sexual and gender minorities.

G. Men to:

- G.1. assume their role on their own liberation from patriarchy, possessive and violent masculinities that must be overcome for egalitarian and just human relationships.

H. Individual Female Journalists / Practitioners or Managers to:

- H.1. as individuals, or through professional associations, seek opportunities to enhance capacities to achieve and remain visible.

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