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“Participation and access of women to the media,
and the impact of media on, and its use as an
instrument for the advancement
and empowerment of women”
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12 to 15 November 2002

**Report from the Online Discussion on
"Participation and access of women to the media
and their impact on and use as an instrument
for the advancement and empowerment of women."**

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** The views expressed in this paper, which has been reproduced as received, are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

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I. Introduction

A. Background and Context

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will convene its forty-seventh session from 3 to 14 March 2003 at UN Headquarters in New York. One of the thematic issues being taken up at the forty-seventh session is "Participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women." The outcome of the deliberations on this thematic issue will serve as an input to the World Summit on the Information Society which will be held in Switzerland in December 2003 and in Tunisia in 2005. To assist the Commission in its work, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the theme "participation and access of women to the media and its impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women" in Beirut, Lebanon from 12 to 15 November 2002.

The Platform for Action (PfA) adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 includes women and media among its 12 critical areas of concern, and notes that "everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater Contribution to the advancement of women" (PfA, para.234). The PfA recognizes the technological advances which have helped to create a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behavior. It notes the continuing under-representation of women in decision-making positions in the media, and the lack of gender sensitivity within media organizations (PfA, para.235). It also calls for the elimination of negative and degrading images of women in media communications in order to provide "a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and Contributions to society in a changing world" (PfA, para.236).

Among the achievements noted in the Secretary-General's report during the review, and appraisal of the implementation of the PfA in 2000, is an increase in the number of women's media organizations and programmes, a development that Contributed to the aims of promoting increased participation and diverse portrayals of women in the media. Progress has also been made by establishing professional guidelines and voluntary codes of conduct that encourage fair gender portrayal and the use of non-sexist language. Despite this however, bias against women remains in the media. The document draws special attention to the negative, violent, or degrading images of women, including pornography, which have increased in different forms, in some instances using new communication technologies. Questions concerning how to increase women's participation in communications and media, and how to achieve a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women have also been the subject of several regional and international meetings.

A further development is the growth of new information and communication technologies, and their impact on the mass media. This has many, sometimes conflicting, facets. The electronic highway systems created by satellite, cable and the Internet provide existing

media giants with vast global markets for their information and entertainment products and create a new communication and cultural environment. On the other hand, the arrival of digital media technologies provides the means for individuals, small groups and previously marginalized communities to come up with more alternative media productions and express their views. However, women are not the only constituency whose messages can be easily and widely distributed via these new channels of communication. The proliferation of pornographic, violent and other sexist materials in the new media is a cause of great concern and provokes considerable debate in terms of defining appropriate responses and approaches to regulation.

As part of the preparations for the Expert Group Meeting, the Division for the Advancement of Women conducted an online discussion on the theme “participation and access of women to the media and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women” from 26 August to 29 September 2002. The online discussion aimed to gather examples of good practice and useful experiences that could be widely applied, and at the same time to underline some of the emerging issues. It also hoped to identify the extent to which media policies, guidelines, or codes of conduct take account of gender perspectives, and to highlight any effective enforcement mechanisms. Ways of improving women's access to and employment in the media as well as the factors affecting media content and gender portrayal were likewise discussed. The discussion also tackled the impact of the growth of new communication and information technologies, including the Internet, on media professions and media content. This report provides an analysis and summary of this online discussion.

The online discussion which ran for five weeks had one theme per week and those were: Policy approaches as enabling frameworks (Week 1); Access, employment, and decision-making (Week 2); Representation and content issues (Week 3); Impact of the new technologies on media professions and media content (Week 4); and a wrap-up week (Week 5).

Invitations to participate in the online discussion were sent in advance to a wide variety of people including media practitioners, media activists and advocates, members of the academia, researchers, members of women's groups, and representatives of other civil society organizations working on the issue of women and media. Participation was open to anyone who registered and was made possible in two ways: through the web board and electronic mail. A total of 265 participants – 219 female and 15 male (31 participants did not provide gender information) registered and had the chance to participate in the discussions. The online discussion organizers were successful in gathering a diverse group of people who actively shared experiences, exchanged opinions, and debated on various issues on women and media as is evident in the 142 messages posted onto the web board and sent through e-mail.

This online discussion was one of the various efforts to address the many complex issues of women and media. It not only discussed the problems and challenges that women confront in the various mediums, but it also underscored the solutions to the problems undertaken by media organizations and professional associations, women's organizations and other civil society actors, and governments – in the process identifying examples of good practice. Consequently, the discussion highlighted the media's role as a tool for the promotion of women's advancement and gender equality.

B. Organization of the Report

This report provides a review of the online discussion and an analytical summary of the highlights of the discussion including examples of good practice and recommendations cited by the participants. The full report contains:

- I. Introduction including background and context of this online discussion organized by the UN-DAW and report organization
- II. Key issues arising from the discussions including examples of good practice that contribute to ensuring the use of media as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women
- III. Conclusions arising from the discussions
- IV. Online discussion structure
- V. Statistics and other details of participation in the online discussion
- VI. Resources and references shared in the course of the online discussion

The complete transcript of the discussion including weekly summaries and this final report may be accessed at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/media2002/online.html>.

II. Key issues arising from the discussions

Part II presents the diverse views and opinions and the broad range of experiences of the participants which reflect of the richness of the media landscape across the world – made even richer by the engagement of individual women and women’s organizations. Moreover, they also describe in no uncertain terms, the challenges facing women and all other individuals and groups concerned with the use of media as an instrument for women’s advancement and empowerment. It is organized into four topics based on how the online discussion was structured. While the online discussion focused on the topics “Policy approaches as enabling frameworks”; “Access, employment, and decision-making”; “Representation and content issues”; and “Impact of the new technologies on media professions and media content,” several other issues emerged in the course of the discussion. These are presented in the *Other Inputs* sections of this report.

A. Policy approaches in media as enabling frameworks

1. Gender provisions in media policies, guidelines and codes of conduct

The general observation was that there are no references to gender in existing media policies, guidelines and codes of conduct.

The experiences in countries like Fiji, Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Trinidad and Tobago, and other Pacific island nations, attest to this. There is no specific reference to gender sensitivity whether in news or general coverage. In cases that there are provisions for gender, these focus on morality, good taste, and decency, which are prone to subjective interpretation and further reinforce the traditional roles of women in many societies.

“I have researched all existing codes of conduct/ethics accepted by the associations of media professionals in Poland...There is no mention in any of them of gender-fair reporting. On the websites that instruct about codes of conduct/ethics for the Polish media professionals I found the Declaration of Rules of the International Federation of Journalists which mentions sex discrimination. It seems that in a sense it might be bounding and informative for the Polish media professionals as they are often members of this International Federation. It is quite astonishing that any of the Polish codes do not mention gender or the issue of discrimination on the basis of gender although they mention many other types of discrimination (on base of religion, race, etc.) They do not mention the discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation either.” [Contributed by Malgorzata Tarasiewicz, Network of East-West Women, Poland]

“Not only is there a dearth of Codes of Conduct/Ethics in the mainstream media that stipulate gender-fair reporting. But as indicated in the research and the regional Code of Conduct workshop that Isis International organized in February 2001, the ones that exist depend on the context of the country and further reinforce the traditional roles of women and reflect conservative values on morality, family, good taste and decency. For example in India, indecent representation is defined under the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 as “the depiction in any manner of the figure of a woman, her form or body... in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or derogatory to, or denigrating women, or is likely to deprave, corrupt, or injure the public morality or morals.” [Contributed by Rajjeli Nicole, Isis International-Manila, Philippines/Fiji].

As to the differences between the media i.e. television, radio, and the written press – in terms of taking gender into account in media codes, Paz H. Diaz from the Philippines stated that the Code of Ethics of Journalists being used in her country is mostly followed by print journalists. “TV, radio and film seem to be more loose and they want to follow the ‘self-policing’ policy.”

The other generalization that can be made for many countries is the trend toward self-regulation. The experiences in Australia, India, South Africa, and Switzerland bear out this trend.

“In India, media has been working on self regulatory measures which are not binding in nature. Some private media enterprises do have codes of conduct/ethics but most tend to view them as internal documents that they seem reluctant to share with "outsiders." Therefore, it is not clear how far and in what way the codes that do exist take account of gender. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 in India turned out to be a missed opportunity – conceptually flawed, vaguely worded and difficult to implement. The public television network, Doordarshan, adopted a code for commercial advertising in 1987 which improved upon the Act, taking into account broader concerns about the negative portrayal of women in the media, but did not cover programming (a major lacuna). The Central Board of Film Certification (a.k.a. the Censor Board) has its own set of guidelines although, judging from the majority of the movies emerging from India's enormous and powerful (commercial) film industry, they appear to be observed mainly in the breach..” [Contributed by Ammu Joseph, Network of Women in Media, India]

As to the new media, the regulations and rules concerning the Internet in Kenya are in the drafting stages. In the case of Poland, there are no publicly recognized codes of conduct/ethics that cover the new media. In instances where there are rules connected to the discussion on Internet forums run by major Polish portals, one would not find any reference to gender.

Bianca Miglioretto from Switzerland and Isabella Waterschoot from Trinidad and Tobago stressed the need to look at policy framework vis-à-vis ICTs and the Internet.

Examples of Good Practice -- provisions in Media Codes that take account of women and gender

(1) Associated Press Stylebook

- Women should receive the same treatment as men in all areas of coverage. Physical descriptions, sexist references, demeaning stereotypes and condescending phrases should not be used.
- Copy should not assume maleness when both sexes are involved, as in "Jackson told newsmen" or in "taxpayer ...he" when it can easily be said: "Jackson told reporters" or "taxpayers. . .they."
- Copy should not express surprise that an attractive woman can be professionally accomplished as in: "Mary Smith doesn't look the part, but she's an authority on..."
- Copy should not gratuitously mention family relationships when there is no relevance to the subject, as in: "Gold Meir, a doughty grandmother, told the Egyptians today..."
- Use the same standards for men and women in deciding whether to include specific mention of personal appearance or marital and family situation. [Contributed by Rita Henley Jensen, Women's E-news, U.S.A.]

(2) World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC)

- Community and Citizen Radio Charter of Latin America: "...to show a real and valuable image of women and take a gender perspective in all programming..."
- People's Communication Charter: "... Media should not ridicule, stigmatize, or demonize people on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation and physical or mental condition."

- Declaration of passionate radio and TV-broadcasters: "... presentation of a real and positive image of women on radio and TV, a larger number of programmes produced from a gender perspective and the promotion of women's communication media."
- African Charter on Broadcasting: "...avoiding one-sided reporting and programming in regard to religion, political belief, culture, race and gender." [Contributed by Bianca Miglioretto, AMARC, Switzerland].

2. Policies, codes, or guidelines that cover the representation of women and men in advertising

Emem J. Okon from Nigeria informed the discussion that there are no policies guiding the portrayal of women and men in advertising in Nigeria. In Switzerland, there existed a commission on fairness in advertising but it was "almost useless, because it does not have the power to take measures against sexist advertising" stressed Bianca Miglioretto.

In Kenya there is an advertising code of ethics that stipulates that all ads must conform to society norms and not offend public morality.

The Malaysian Advertising Code for Television and Radio, as cited by Raijeli Nicole from Isis International-Manila affirms the fact that media and advertising codes are formulated based on the socio-political and cultural context of the country and that some of them further reinforce the traditional roles of women "advertisements: (1) must project participation and Contribution of men and women in family life, in the economy, society and the development of the country; (2) must Contribute to formulation of positive values ... for family formation and family life and (3) must portray positive images of women and project their roles, Contributions, and rightful positions in all sectors of economy and society.

Examples of Good Practice – Provisions in Advertising Codes that take account of women and gender

The Australian Advertising Code of Ethics

- Advertisements shall not portray people in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability or political belief.
- Advertisements shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.
- Advertisements shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and, where appropriate, the relevant programme time zone." [Contributed by Nicola Joseph, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council of Australia]

3. Mechanisms that ensure the enforcement of existing policies, codes or guidelines including media policies and guidelines formulated by governments and other institutions

The discussants from Australia, Belgium and Fiji shared the initiatives of their governments in formulating mechanisms that address the issue of women/gender and media. They also underlined the strength and weaknesses of these initiatives.

In 1996 and 1997, a review of a research project entitled "Images of Women in the Media" was carried out in Europe. The review assessed research conducted by Member States of the European Union that looks at women's employment in European media, women and men as media "content," and women as media audience. Many of the findings provide indications for policy directions relative to all media, including "new media."

Another initiative is the European Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2000). Article 3.5 of this document, "Promoting Change of Gender Roles and Stereotypes" echoes the stipulations in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that underscore the need to change behaviour and attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society, through education, training, the media, arts, culture and science.

Among the actions listed as necessary to overcome (negative) gender stereotypes are:

- (a) Monitoring of the integration of a gender perspective into policies of particular relevance such as "education, training, culture, research, media and sport policies";
- (b) Discussion with existing national ethical committees as to the inclusion of a gender dimension in their remit as well as supporting the networking of National Ethical Committees (in the Member States);
- (c) Ensuring that EC departments take into account in their information policies "specific women's needs and perspectives"; and
- (d) Promotion of the exchange of views and good practices in the media and the creation of a group of media representatives to assist the Commission to implement the talks under this objective of the Framework Strategy. [Contributed by Jane Hailé, Genderworks (UK) Ltd., Belgium]

Nicola Joseph spoke about the introduction of a legislation covering the media industry in Australia. This is complemented by another legislation called the Sex Discrimination Act and Racial Vilification Act. The Australian Broadcasting Authority continues to be a government watchdog but has far less teeth as recent cases have shown. It now monitors media's self-regulation.

In Fiji, there is no national policy on women/gender and the media. NGOs have drawn attention to the fact that the Fiji Government's Women's Plan of Action (WPA) does not contain any reference to media. They also recommended the establishment of a Women and Media taskforce to the Ministry of Women to bring together the various stakeholders to address these issues. There is a regulatory unit within the Ministry of Information but this needs greater definition of what it is supposed to be regulating, because its initial mandate is to regulate frequencies and issue broadcasting licenses. There is, however, a complaint procedure that covers broadcasters' non-compliance with the license regulations.

The Fiji Government is considering the idea of reviewing media legislation which results in some gray areas over who is going to be responsible for what...especially since there is suggestion to form another media council. [Contributed by Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, fem'LINKpacific, Fiji]

Institutions like the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and the Council for Media Ethics in Poland criticize and publicize drastic cases of violating the codes of ethics by media.

There are Media Complaints Committee and Media Councils in different countries that have some guidelines but in some cases, the majority of the media workers are not aware of what those guidelines are.

4. Role of media advocacy groups and/or professional media associations and independent media producers in calling for policy frameworks that encourage fair gender representation in the media

A wide range of initiatives that include the conduct of training, provision of funding support, holding of dialogues and the formulation and enforcement of guidelines by media advocacy groups, NGOs, professional media associations and independent media producers were enumerated by the discussants.

The Independent Media Centers enforce a policy that no sexism is allowed in the online newswires, neither as an article, comment, nor, as a pop-up window. Within its networks, each local group tries to define sexism and how to deal with it. These policies are often bound to the diversity of the active group themselves (gender representation), present (local/global) issues and cultural differences. [Contributed by Sara Platon, Independent Media Centers/Gender Changer Academy, the Netherlands]

In Fiji, gender-sensitive media policies are only advocated for by women's NGOs and other concerned groups like Fiji Media Watch. Some members of the National Council of Women of Fiji influence policy through media mainstreaming initiatives that bring together women's groups, media organizations, and government partners in workshops and joint media productions. In addition, groups like fem'LINKpacific, Fiji Women's Rights Movement and Fiji Media Watch provide inputs to the review of the General Media Code of Ethics and Practice to highlight common concerns in relation to gender and racism.

The Arab Women in Media Center conducts conferences to address gender discrimination in media in the Arab World. It also facilitates training for its members.

Media trade unions in Switzerland organize conferences and conduct training on gender-fair portrayal.

The regional code of conduct dialogue (COCO) organized by Isis International-Manila helped to identify minimum standards in gender-fair reporting in the Asia-Pacific region. Some of the minimum guidelines for media organizations as identified at the COCO workshop are:

- (a) Not placing undue emphasis on gender;
- (b) Resisting, and not reinforcing, stereotyping based on gender, race, religion, ethnic, language, sexual orientation, age and class;
- (c) Ensuring that the portrayal, reporting and representation of women respect the dignity of women;
- (d) Recognizing the changing roles of women and men in society;
- (e) Finding a balance in employing women and men as news sources, experts, authorities and commentators on the range of issues covered in media;
- (f) Giving equal prominence to the achievements of women and men across the range of issues covered in media;
- (g) Excluding materials that condone, incite or misuse representation of violence against women;
- (h) Avoiding discussions of incidences of violence against women that over-emphasize and sensationalize the details; and
- (i) Including a comprehensive analysis of underlying issues in the portrayal, reporting and representation of women.

The Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) has promoted discussions on establishing codes of ethics that includes the formulation of provisions that take account of gender issues. After a long debate, the members from around the region decided codes were something each country should decide at a national level rather than having one regional code. This was because of the socio-political, economic, and cultural diversity of the Pacific region.

The Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women has an ongoing project entitled Gender Media Monitor (GeMM). Among its objectives are:

- (a) To advocate for change in the way in which women are depicted in the media;
- (b) To design and implement awareness training for media practitioners; and
- (c) To increase the media literacy and advocacy skills of the media monitor core group.

As part of Women's Media Watch-Jamaica's efforts to sensitize media, it provides practitioners with good story ideas, data on women's issues, and names of women who can be contacted as sources. Women's Media Watch also lobbied for a new Broadcasting Code for Children's Programming (sensitive to sex, violence, stereotyping) but broadcasters see it as 'onerous'. [Contributed by Hilary Nicholson, Women's Media Watch-Jamaica].

In China, the Network of Media Monitor for Women that was established in 1996, draws together media and advertising professionals, and other concerned groups and individuals to set up columns and special pages ("Look at media through women's eyes", "Media Watch") in the China Women's News. The Network members meet regularly to compare notes on representation of women in the media, and sends letters of complaint regarding particularly damaging items. They also conduct surveys on how the established newspapers, radio and television programmes portray women and men. In addition, the Network also conducts training to raise gender-awareness among journalists. [Contributed by Deng Zhiwei, Shanghai University, China]

Other Inputs

Marites Sison from the Philippines argued that there are still many professionals who do not see what the discussion on media codes is all about. She cited her experience of working with a daily newspaper wherein female editors were the ones responsible for putting photographs of scantily-clad stars in the front page. Marites stressed that there is a large gap that needs to be filled before we even begin to discuss what should be in the code of conduct. Media practitioners need to first understand "what the fuss is all about" and how changing the current situation will produce better journalism. Needless to say, there is also a need to determine if the media and the public at large do understand the need for these codes or the need even to change the way women are portrayed in media and advertising.

C.C. Reilly from the U.S.A. spoke about the agreement between the New York City Council and Time Warner Cable wherein the Council granted the company a contract to lay down cables in the streets of New York City in exchange for several channels for public use, free studios, equipment, and training. However, Mayor Rudy Giuliani found a loophole in the City's constitution and took the power to give out another contract to RCN with the specific proviso that, since public television was worthless junk, RCN could lay down their cables, start their service, and had no obligation to provide the public with anything. In terms of the public television that exists via Time Warner and other cable companies that had the same type of agreement all across the country, there is no censorship except for that provided by the Federal Communication Commission. That would include no use of certain lewd words and no pornography. Nothing gender specific, no ethics.

C.C. Reilly also discussed the pressure put onto media practitioners, artists, and independent media producers in public television to conform to standards set by what she refers to as right-wing administrations. An irony in a country that claims to promote and uphold freedom of the press.

Paz H. Diaz shared that in the Philippines today, the "lipstick" beat is somehow changing. Women's bylines are now seen on front cover news items, and in political and national stories. But many are still assigned to cover "soft" news and low priority beats. She also pointed out that the dominant women's images in the news are either that of a sex object or victim of crime. Guidelines on the coverage of women have been proposed but have largely been ignored in practice.

Many Indian women's organizations are initiating media monitoring groups to react and respond in times of necessity. [Contributed by Sathya, freelance journalist from India]

Many women media practitioners are now conscious of gender/media issues and often take the initiative to highlight them in different ways: through media activism, advocacy organizations (some of which include "lay persons") and/or professional associations and unions, through the mainstream media and/or through media journals/websites such as The Hoot (a relatively new Indian media-watch initiative: www.thehoot.org). [Contributed by Ammu Joseph, Network of Women in Media, India]

Recommendations

- (1) Any debate on gender and media has to take place in the context of full understanding amongst those debating the term.
- (2) Where they do not exist, develop specific codes of gender-sensitive conduct for advertising.
- (3) Address internal policies among media organizations/media enterprises at either management or executive board level with a realistic viewing that having women on board will only make a difference if the women themselves are committed to advocating gender-friendly policies.
- (4) Conduct continuing studies to pinpoint where the outright violations of media codes of conduct and other policies are and where the gaps are.
- (5) Policies on sexual harassment and work ethic codes should be strictly observed in the media industry to ensure the protection of women in the media profession.
- (6) Educate the public on the fact that they too are media stakeholders and as such, they have a role in determining what is and what is not news.
- (7) Continue the lobbying and training efforts aimed at non-gender sensitized males who happen to be the major decision-makers.

B. Access, employment, and decision-making

1. Obstacles to women's advancement within the media

There was a general observation among the discussants that there has been a considerable increase in the number of women entering the media profession in the recent years. In addition, experiences in India, Kenya, the Philippines, and a number of Pacific countries reveal that more women are now holding senior positions in print and in the broadcast media. However, there is also a general observation that a balance has not yet been reached. There is still a clear gender imbalance in senior decision-making and policy-making positions. Following are some of the obstacles to women's advancement identified in the discussion:

- Management's perception that women's productivity decreases when they take on reproductive roles;
- Traditional/cultural pressures from the home environment – an observation shared by Anjali Mathur from India, Miral Tawfik from Egypt, Nina Ratulele from the Pacific, Nkechi Nwankwo from Nigeria that women are expected to play their traditional roles as wives and mothers and not work the hours that come with working in the media. Such pressure is also exerted on young women who are not encouraged to accept work challenges such as traveling to take up foreign assignments. “We have several members in our Network of Women in Media, India, who still have to fight with their families to continue in journalism. The main objection is to the late hours and to the fact that the job necessarily involves a lot of interaction with men!” [Contributed by Anjali Mathur, Network of Women in Media, India].
- Some employers in media organizations/media enterprises are reluctant to provide benefits such as extended maternity leave and flexible time arrangements.
- Lack or absence of support system for women – whether from home or from the media organizations/media enterprises – that takes into account work and family balance;

- Pigeon-holing of women into covering only those "soft" beats that do not really count for the male decision-makers during promotion time;
- Strong influence of the old boys' network in the media;
- Lack of women role models or mentors;
- Lack of proactive support from government; Australia is one of only two developed countries without a national paid maternity leave scheme." [Contributed by Nicola Joseph, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council of Australia]
- Sexual harassment in the work place;
- Lack of access to information regarding opportunities for advancement to senior posts in media;
- Lack of confidence on the part of some women especially in taking on leadership positions in media organizations/media enterprises;
- Lack of or inadequate training or professional education of many women;
- Ownership of numerous media organizations by men;
- Women's lack of funds to invest in media businesses;
- Lack of government policies to indicate the percentage of men and women that should own or work in the media organizations; and
- The stereotyping based on race and ethnicity that extends to access and employment in the media.

Examples of Good Practice –Strategies and initiatives to overcome obstacles to women's advancement within the media

- (1) The experience of the Australian Women's Broadcasting Collective (AWBC) back in 1975 provides excellent examples of what can be achieved in establishing strong women's networks within the media. The AWBC lobbied for change within the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that resulted in the hiring and promotion of women to middle management level; establishment of a workplace childcare center; provision of radio and television training for women; and in changing the management culture of the organization. Another strategy that can be learned from the AWBC experience is the establishment of a mentoring system which includes participation in policy and management meetings, selection committees and interaction with other officers in the media organization. [Contributed by Nicola Joseph, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council of Australia].
- (2) The Women Working in Television Project in Australia, on the other hand, is a good example of what can be achieved by partnership and networking between women media practitioners and the government. Under this project, discussions and skills development workshops were organized for television producers and for women working in technical areas. Books that serve as practical references for women in media are also published. [Contributed by Leonie Morgan, Australian Film Commission].
- (3) The training on TV documentary production sponsored by UNESCO in Nigeria and the Pacific was also cited as a good strategy for promoting women's advancement within the media.

- (4) Radio Lora, a community radio in Switzerland established a 50% quota for women in all decision-making positions as a strategy. However, since community radio work is voluntary, the station encounters difficulties in filling all the positions because compared to 10 years ago women now need to work longer hours to earn their living.
- (5) The reservation of 50% of the slots for women in all mixed-gender training offered by AMARC is another good practice. This, along with organizing among its women members resulted in the election of a woman president and increase in the number of women representatives in the current AMARC International Board.
- (6) In Egypt, the government established a 'Gender Unit' in each of its ministries and government agencies. The aim of the unit is to ensure equal opportunities in the work place including the media.
- (7) The German Association of Women Journalists (JB) undertakes mentoring and gender training projects to address the perennial problem of negative, and stereotypical portrayal of women in the media. JB's other projects are the conduct of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of *Deutschland*, a government-published journal and a gender training for *Deutschland's* editorial staff. [Contributed by Ulrike Helwerth from Germany].
- (8) The Washington-based International Women's Media Foundation conducts leadership training for women.
- (9) The Media Management Center at Northwestern University – a dual programme of the Kellogg School of Management and Medill School of Journalism is another effort to teach women in middle management skills they may need to rise higher, such as negotiating techniques and marketing strategies.
- (10) The offering of courses on Social Communications has allowed more Argentine women to enter the media profession and has helped female journalists to reach middle or even senior decision-making positions. [Contributed by Dafne Sabanes Plou, Argentina].

2. Impact of media advocacy and lobbying actions on women's access to and employment in the media

Lobbying and pressure from women's groups have resulted in the setting up of gender equality offices in national television and radio networks in Switzerland. Women moved up to management level and into the news rooms – taking responsibility for hard news such as politics, economics, sports, etc. However, as may also be observed in the case of Australia, certain aspects of production have been privatized in recent times with the government giving the argument of budget constraints and that gender is now mainstreamed so that gender equality offices are no longer necessary. Moreover, the women at the management level who have left were replaced by men. Even the well-known women's programme *Lipstick* was abolished with management saying that the whole programme is now gender mainstreamed. [Contributed by Bianca Miglioretto, AMARC, Switzerland].

The lobbying and advocacy of the Australian Women's Broadcasting Collective resulted in the setting up of a significant freelance budget for the Women's Unit of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). The funds enabled the Women's Unit to offer women outside the organization the chance to produce programmes. Women from minority groups were able to come up with media productions because of this – a concrete way to overcome the barrier of getting into a mainstream media organization like the ABC. The Australian Film Commission, through its Indigenous Programme has supported the development and funding of several award-winning productions involving film makers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Recommendations

- (1) Incorporate gender justice and equity in all organizational policies of media organizations.
- (2) Protect all benefits and employment rights of women journalists.
- (3) Media organizations should implement directives on sexual harassment.
- (4) Media should increase coverage of gender and developmental issues.
- (5) Media organizations and journalists should evolve and observe an appropriate code of ethics.
- (6) Strengthen organizations that protect the rights of media workers and institutions that uphold the independence and integrity of the media.
- (7) Provide more assistance to women in management and decision-making positions including those in middle management in order for them to best develop managerial skills reflecting the values which women media practitioners are trying to promote – e.g., providing equal chance for women to reach senior positions.
- (8) Include gender issues in all management training for women and men in the media.
- (9) Support NGO initiatives in promoting women's advancement within the media particularly in their efforts to gender-sensitize journalism schools.
- (10) Provide continuing training in media production
- (11) Organize gender sensitivity workshops for women in decision-making positions in educational institutions, management schools and mass communication colleges as part of a regular training programme and not just on a one-off basis.
- (12) Monitor and ensure the representation of indigenous women and women from non-European backgrounds in management positions in the media. This, according to two discussants from Australia, is imperative in countries that are as culturally diverse as theirs.
- (13) Assist governments in addressing their current gaps which will entail the conduct of:
 - (a) basic women and media skills training focusing on the relationship of the two concepts; and
 - (b) resource generation to ensure that national machineries for women are able to develop, produce and disseminate information on issues relating to the implementation of international instruments that address women and media issues such as the Beijing Platform for Action.

3. Gender employment patterns in the newly emerging media

There has not been any meaningful change in the new media where women are concerned. In India, managerial and senior positions continue to be monopolized by men. In addition, the content is frivolous and shows even less sensitivity to gender than the traditional media. However, more opportunities have opened up for women, particularly younger women, since training in these new technologies is easily available (at least in Indian towns) and, if one can afford a personal computer, one can even work from home. [Contributed by Anjali Mathur, Network of Women in Media, India]

There is a gender disparity in the design and creation of the new information and communication technologies. It is mostly men who reap the lion's share of employment opportunities and financial rewards of this kind of work. [Contributed by Jane Hailé, Genderworks(UK) Ltd., Belgium].

In Switzerland, a trade union for ICT workers was formed recently and a big majority of the founding members were men. Bianca Miglioretto highlighted the fact that so far the industry leaders have not done anything to involve women of this sector.

Rajjeli Nicole from Isis-Manila supported observations that employment patterns in the new media would not be significantly different from women's employment in print, television and radio. She cited a research project that Isis coordinated as part of the Beijing+5 Review process which brought to the forefront economic status, geographic locations and ethnic identities – factors that affect women's participation in communication processes. Nicole also underscored the lack of women's access to the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and gender biases in their development.

Other Inputs

One interesting observation presented was the relationship between media ownership, recruitment policies, and employment in India. Recruitment policies in government-owned television and radio companies are non-discriminatory whereas in the privately-owned print media, employment and promotion for women is often arbitrary. [Contributed by Tanushree Gangopadhyay, India].

The Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) trains journalists and editors to be gender sensitive. "Our discussions have shown that lack of knowledge on women's issues makes some journalists gender-insensitive, thereby dismissing any issues about women – including gender equality in employment as unimportant." [Contributed by Pamela Mburia, Association of Media Women in Kenya].

The immense possibilities for gender advocacy and networking using the new media was cited. The Network of Women in Media in India in fact, plans to set up a website which will bring women journalists all over India in closer touch and help in mentoring, sharing of experiences and information, and in imparting professional skills.

In Nigeria, there is not much by the way of new media because the telecommunications system is still poorly developed and so e-business and e-media are still in their infancy stage.

A number of discussants including Pamela Mburia from Kenya, Nkechi Nwankwo from Nigeria and Sharon Bhagwan Rolls from Fiji stressed the importance of training women NGOs and other women's groups to claim their space as consumers of the media. The training that their respective organizations conduct provide women with skills on how to work with the media and how to package their information to make the news.

Jane Hailé from Belgium put forward a very significant point that highlights the need to explore new approaches in promoting audience activism. "I'd like to refer back to the larger issue of women's representation in the media, by referring to some European data which showed that increase of women's share of media jobs even at senior levels appeared to have little impact on gender representation in media content, and that "decisions about programme genres tend to be determined much more by financial necessity than by preference." The conclusion of this part of the study was that changes in the nature of media content (due to innovations in genre and/or economic transformations) will affect the number of women in media industries, rather than the reverse being the case."

Rita Henley Jensen from the United States presented a study that reveals that the actual number of women in media is decreasing. It may be accessed from the 21 May 2002 release of Women's Enews: (<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/915/context/archive>).

The community radio movement particularly in Latin America led by organizations like the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) has empowered women in rural and urban areas.

Sancharika Samuha (Women Communicators Forum) in Nepal conducts public outreach programmes, research, media monitoring and monitoring of the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). With these activities and programmes it has been able to play a catalytic role between the women's movement and the media that has resulted in a better understanding of each other's work and in bridging the differences that exist.

C. Representation and Content Issues

1. Steps that can be taken by media organizations/media enterprises to develop awareness among their own employees about the implications of gender stereotyping in media content, and to promote gender balance in the selection of sources, topics and approaches

The discussants provided the following suggestions – some of which are steps that they already are using in their respective media organizations:

- Include as many women as possible in the media organization's database of resource persons;

- Discuss issues from the women's point of view or from a gender perspective;
- Collect all available materials highlighting the implications of gender stereotyping and make these materials available to media practitioners;
- Conduct further research on gender stereotyping and its implications;
- Ensure gender sensitivity in all phases of production beginning with programme planning;
- Play all women's music in women's shows;
- Ensure gender balance in the recruitment of staff;
- Evaluate media contents objectively and take appropriate measures for improvement;
- Conduct audience analysis and provide feedback to media practitioners;
- Conduct gender awareness training; and
- Integrate gender issues in other training.

Examples of Good Practice to promote gender balance in the selection of sources, topics and approaches

The coverage of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa by community broadcasters is a good example of gender- and race- sensitive reportage. [Contributed by Nicola Joseph, National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council of Australia].

The Women's Feature Service (WFS) section in the Philippines organizes sessions wherein writers share experiences in doing their stories on women/gender. Through this process, the writers learn about the issues including those that they did not personally cover. [Contributed by Olive Tripon, WFS, Philippines].

The discussants also pointed to other efforts taken by institutions outside of the media. For instance, the government of Lebanon recently launched a campaign to promote gender balance in various fields including the media. While a balance has not been achieved, the campaign is still going on to change women's images in the media.

2. Repercussions from the shift to more privately-owned, commercial outlets that depend on advertising revenue, in relation to media content and gender portrayal; strategies in monitoring or regulating gender-fair portrayal

The commercialization and privatization of radio and television in Switzerland has resulted into the employment of more young women but this is because they accept lower salaries. Commercialization and privatization has worsened the coverage. Moreover, it is much harder to lobby for gender fair reporting in the media now than it was with public broadcasting corporation. [Contributed by Bianca Miglioretto, AMARC, Switzerland].

In Fiji, the concern about the availability of imported media in the form of "pay TV" has been more about programme formatting rather than programme content. However, there is also a concern over the conservative views propagated by foreign evangelical media and the fact that such views are not linked to the Fijian identity.

In India, the access to a large number of global channels has resulted in the deterioration of entertainment content in terms of social relevance. Doordarshan, the government-owned television channel used to produce good gender-sensitive and socially relevant serials and programmes, perhaps because of government guidelines to that effect. But now, the entertainment being spread indiscriminately by global and private TV channels, especially in local languages, is trashy and blatantly promotes stereotypes of both women and men. In terms of scope, the news coverage has improved. However, global stereotypes persist and women's voices are still not heard.

The 24-hour private satellite news channel has added to the sensationalization of women. To cite a few recent examples the abhorrent crime of Sati (where the widow of the deceased in certain communities, plunges on the funeral pyre or immolates herself) flashed on television, merely gave credence to the medieval practice and has been misused by fundamentalists to revive this medieval practice. [Contributed by Tanushree Gangopadhyay, India].

Anjali Mathur highlighted the role that big global business plays in distorting content. "Advertisers don't want their ads to appear next to articles about women living in poverty or being exploited. They prefer to project rich, famous women with extravagant lifestyles. Since it is advertising that runs the print and TV media, not the small amounts readers and viewers pay, management discourages serious articles or programmes on women's issues. This commercialization of the media has also meant that small, serious, independent publications cannot survive."

3. Monitoring and advocacy initiatives that have opened up dialogue between women's organizations, gender specialists and media professionals and advertisers; changes in media content due to such initiatives

In Switzerland, the media trade unions have employed gender equality desks.

In the Gambia, the Women's Bureau and women's organizations demand better conditions and treatment for women which has resulted in more coverage of women and women's issues.

The journalists' trade union in Buenos Aires has helped women journalists in their training and it has opened spaces for reflection and discussion on communications with a gender perspective.

A media monitoring project in Chile in 1987 aimed to promote a gender perspective in the media and address issues of representation and sensitivity. Dafne Sabanes Plou from Argentina informed the discussion about a study on Argentina, Chile and Uruguay that monitored women's representation in the media during the presidential campaigns that took place in each of these countries at the end of 1999. It was found out that women's participation in the political campaign was more linked to their role as voters than as political actors. The study also examined how media views the role that the presidential candidates' wives play in such a campaign. Analyzing the results of these campaigns, women found out that the media

have great difficulties in understanding women's true interests and that they very seldom consider women's concerns as political concerns.

In Nepal, Sancharika Samuha has been monitoring the media since 1998 to assess how issues related to women are being reported. From the year 2000, a quarterly media monitoring report has been published and interaction programmes with journalists to share the monitoring assessment and to sensitize them towards issues related to gender violence have been organized. This monitoring programme has helped raise awareness among journalists, and has influenced them to be more gender-sensitive in their reporting. It also helped to build a network in the media to combat gender discrimination.

In 2002, the monitoring assessment reports have indicated a visible improvement in the way women's issues are reported in the media. For example, previously, many papers would publish the name and even photographs of women victims. However, this trend is almost negligible now. The reportage of women's issues has increased and improved in terms of space allotment and the priority accorded to it. Editorials and front-page news on women's issues have become quite regular. [Contributed by Bandana Rana, Sancharika Samuha, Nepal]

4. Media education strategies that have been developed to make the general public aware of gender patterns in media content and advertising; results from implementing such strategies

The Equality Office of Zurich, Switzerland has carried out several advertisement campaigns in public transportation to break stereotypes. Some of these ads include teasers like: "Who would you prefer as pilot in your flight to New York?" "Who would you prefer to take care of your sick mother?" "Who would you rather employ as a cleaning person?" Or "To whom would you bring your car for repair?" Together with each of these questions are the faces of a woman and a man. Another campaign plays with words and statistics around the issue of who does more household work. It ended with a call for change by saying "to be continued..." Both campaigns lead to discussions among passengers and in the media.

Dialogues among women's rights groups, NGOs, and advertising professionals in Switzerland have also been held to discuss specific ads that have been found to be sexist. However, the advertising sector was not willing to see when commercials were sexist and neither were they ready to consider alternatives. [Contributed by Bianca Miglioretto, AMARC, Switzerland].

The Centro de Estudios de la Mujer (CEM) in Argentina with the support of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) gives awards to non-sexist advertisements in conjunction with the prestigious Iberoamerican Festival of Publicity. This has proven to be effective in changing stereotypes especially when complemented with other educational campaigns and teacher training. The members of the jury that selects the awardees include journalists, representatives of women/feminist organizations, educators, and publicity professionals from different countries of Latin America. CEM also organizes educational campaigns in five countries of Latin America such as electronic forums, and other networking and exchange activities. There are also plans of holding a contest of ads for young publicity

professionals. Another initiative is the Regional Campaign in Latin America called "Eyes that see, hearts that feel" conducted in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico and Nicaragua. Women's NGOs and schools in each country participated in the campaign. 2,500 students joined a school activity aimed to promote the "discovery" of gender and social stereotypes in publicity using a common methodology, discussion of the findings, and the proposal of new content and images to represent a gender-, class-, and ethnicity-fair publicity. [Contributed by Gloria Bonder, CEM, Argentina].

Sancharika Samuha in Nepal established the "Sancharika Equality Award" in April 2000. The award, which carries a cash prize and a commendation letter, is given out to a journalist who has written the most outstanding report on gender issues that year. This event has generated keen interest among journalists to write on gender issues. In addition, the organization set up an electronic network called MahilaWeb with the objective of informing and sharing information on women and gender in Nepal, locally and globally. [Contributed by Bandana Rana, Sancharika Samuha, Nepal].

Fatimata Seye Sylla from Senegal stressed that women are more inclined to participate when the trainers are women. She shared the results of a research conducted in Senegal that proved that women are capable of producing their own information. The findings led to the establishment of a women's radio station called Manore (Know-how) FM.

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls cited the media mainstreaming training which includes discussion of the Women and Media Section of the Beijing Platform for Action (Section J) and the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security conducted by the National Council of Women of Fiji (NCWF). These discussions among women NGOs, media, and government representatives were organized in the light of the post-conflict reconstruction stage in Fiji – an important strategy of linking the documents and issues together which resulted in actual media coverage. Similar discussions participated in by television management representatives have also been organized. Such meetings have given the NCWF opportunity to pursue their lobby against an ad of a whitening cream. Bhagwan Rolls observed that change is possible in advertising as some companies are using a social marketing approach. Another initiative in Fiji is the media education for teachers and the wider community through the conduct of workshops, and production of newsletters and video by the group SIGNIS.

In Chile, a collective study by the Working Group of the Southern Cone that quantitatively analyzed the presence of women in the media was conducted. The study aimed to provide a common framework and clear indicators for the implementation and evaluation of gender-sensitive communication. It also hoped to enable communicators, academics, and activists to formulate strategies for change. [Contributed by Uca Silva, Sur Profesionales, Chile]

Recommendations

- (1) Enforce sanctions against all advertisements and media productions that negatively portray women.
- (2) Start awareness-raising in the academia by enforcing rules against the use of sexist or gender-insensitive language in the classroom, in research papers and in discussions.

- These rules should cover all departments because media practitioners do not necessarily come solely from journalism and communications departments.
- (3) Include gender-sensitive reporting in courses on media coverage and reportage.
 - (4) Incorporate gender-sensitivity and gender-awareness into the entire education system beginning from the kindergarten level.
 - (5) Establish close links with journalists who would be open to promoting ideas on fair coverage by inviting them to forums and sending them materials for publication or broadcast. [Contributed by Divina Paredes].
 - (6) Encourage audiences to provide feedback to media practitioners. Such feedback can lead to positive changes in editorial policies.
 - (7) In all media training ensure that:
 - (a) there is a women's perspective in the development of training modules;
 - (b) at least half of the participants are women;
 - (c) there are women resource persons;
 - (d) half of all the examples are on women and women's issues;
 - (e) gender fair language is used; and
 - (f) examples of gender fair, non-stereotyped reporting are provided.
 - (8) Educate media professionals so that they will recognize that there is a gender dimension to virtually every event, process, institution and/or individual experience covered by the media.
 - (9) Organize women's training on technical areas of media production and employ women as trainers in such training. For those who are indifferent to gender issues, gradually mainstream gender in the conduct of training. [Contributed by Bianca Miglioretto, Switzerland].
 - (10) Examine media content, access and employment through not only a gender lens, but also by viewing the intersections between gender, race, caste, class, creed and ethnicity.
 - (11) Ensure clarity in the purpose, strategy and outcome of media education and advocacy efforts to avoid censorship, generalization, and over-expectation, and demonization – which are not only questionable in themselves (especially from a professional viewpoint) but may also be counter-productive in terms of the ultimate goal of encouraging more gender sensitivity in the media. [Contributed by Ammu Joseph]
 - (12) Educate and organize the public so that they will oppose the increasing hold of big business on the media.
 - (13) Pressure governments to address the issue of media's commercialization.

Other Inputs

Television channels in Egypt are now taking a more liberal approach in discussing various social and political concerns placing special focus on contemporary gender issues.

Jane Hailé from Belgium raised the point that men are also stereotyped in the media. “Men and masculinity have been treated as givens, as ‘norms’ against which women and femininity were compared,” she said. She cited studies in the United States that showed masculinity based on the traditional patriarchal white middle class norm wherein men are portrayed as successful, high status, initiators of action, autonomous and rational. Gay men, on the other hand, are defined by their “problem” and tend to be secondary or stooge characters.

Ammu Joseph from India supported Hailé's position and stressed the importance of paying more attention to the representation and portrayal of men in the media because the construction of masculinities impacts men, women and their relationships with each other.

Moira Richards from South Africa discussed the race and gender bias in programming at the radio station SAfm that is evident in the grossly disproportionate number of white men that the station invites as guests and commentators. This, despite the constitutional provision that the Independent Broadcasting Authority must ensure fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing South African society. Moira wrote to the South African Broadcasting Corporation and to the radio station to complain about such bias. "Most of the radio staff ignored my letter or replied discourteously. The SABC replied: "no interest/pressure group or individual has the right to compel a broadcaster to broadcast anything. This would amount to interference in the editorial integrity and independence of the media, which is protected by the Constitution." It also said "there is no conscious attempt by SAfm to choose male participants in programmes." However, SABC did not say whether there is any effort to include black women participants in greater numbers representative of their demographic."

In response, Lene Øverland from Women's Media Watch South Africa shared the memorandum that her organization handed over to the SABC to address the issue of representation. The memorandum is in the Resources Shared section of this report.

Vanessa von Struensee from the United States pointed out that media and political discourse frequently situates others in a "different place" from dominant groups, a place that can then be studied and improved from the outside. "Doing development on others contributes to specific political and structural effects through which target populations, such as women, indigenous people, senior citizens, gays, are made, rather than discovered. The practice of defining gender and ethnicity as characteristics of those other people and as problems of those other groups is not just an oversight on the part of journalists and politicians who are reluctant to submit themselves to labeling and adjustment. The separation and objectification of "them" in relation to "us", together with the contraposition of gender and ethnic politics and the distancing of both of these from class analysis, obscure our understanding of the relationship between recognition and redistribution."

"In keeping with global discourse, Bolivian newspapers and television announcers diligently repeat key markers of otherness that construe majority groups as inferior marginals. We frequently heard about Victor Hugo Cárdenas, "the Indigenous Vice President," or "the first Indian Vice President of Bolivia," while no one said "Goni, the White President." One of the few women legislators in Bolivia, María Lourdes Zabala, has been represented in the press as "la diputada mujer," or "la diputada feminista." Another female parliamentarian, Remedios Loza Alvarado, who wears ethnically marked clothing and was the presidential candidate for Conciencia de Patria (CONDEPA) in 1997, isn't even given a last name by the media – she has been dubbed, "la Chola Remedios" or "Comadre Remedios." At the same time, however, no self-respecting journalist would announce that "the European male Blattman" voted thus on given legislation, or refer to Tito Hoz de Vila as "the pro-masculine minister." These white men simply have names and political titles; their lack of ethnic and gender markers, crossed by a privileged

class position, leads us (and them) to believe that they have nothing to do with gender or ethnicity, let alone poverty.”

D. Impact of the new technologies on media professions and media content

1. Positive and negative aspects of the new information and communication and technologies; key issues that women need to address

The discussants identified the following positive aspects of the new ICTs:

- Allows for radio programme exchange with women from around the world at an affordable price;
- Allows for cheaper television production in the process enabling women to produce broadcast-quality programmes without having to go through the male-dominated hierarchy in most media organizations/media enterprises;
- Allows for the proliferation of special-interest channels, where women producers have a greater chance of selling their programmes as opposed to the old days where just a few channels existed and where the majority audience was always taken into consideration;
- Allows for the publication of globally accessible information cheaply and quickly;
- Enables women to quickly find information on people, projects, and funding;
- Provides easier access to studies for, by and about women;
- Enables women to share information and promote their organizations and their work;
- Enables women's groups to co-ordinate international campaigns effectively;
- Allows for the exchange of news, views, and experiences on a global scale;
- Allows for the use of videos and other media productions in promoting the peace agenda; and
- Facilitates distance education.

Examples of Good Practice in the use of the new ICTs to enhance the social value of the more established media

- (1) The Zimbabwe Media Monitoring project which updates the general public and the international media regularly
- (2) Women's Media Watch, South Africa which produces online training tools and media analysis
- (3) The Canadian Women's Media Watch which hosts a web page that provides examples of analysis and complaints about advertisements [Contributed by Lene Øverland, South Africa].
- (4) Corine Van Hellemont from Belgium cited the experience of the gender media watchdog at the Center of Women's Studies of the University of Antwerp where people can lodge complaints and/or express compliments concerning ads, newspaper or magazine articles, and radio or television programmes. These are discussed in an online discussion board, where media audiences and professionals participate. The gender media watchdog also maintains an online database of gender stereotypes in the media that is accessed by

educational institutions as a resource and a tool for sensitization and change. The group also gives awards to non-sexist advertisements.

- (5) Isis-WICCE in Uganda runs an Internet café for women and young girls. A number of young writers whose works have never been published before were able to submit their works to electronic magazines for publishing and guidance. This has encouraged other writers to use the technology. [Contributed by Juliet Were Oguttu]
- (6) The onsite programming by the Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE Radio) and Planeta Radio of AMARC are two more examples of how the new ICTs have been used to enhance the social value of radio.

Following are the negative aspects of ICTs identified by the participants:

- Information overload and the considerable amount of time to sift useful information;
- Most of the information is from patriarchal perspectives;
- Difficult to check the accuracy of the information and the source;
- High cost of the technology especially for small media producers in the South;
- ICTs can take up more time and frustrate work (like when viruses attack);
- Use of the new ICTs in pornography;
- Perpetuation of negative representations of women;
- There is a danger that the information loses some of its context, and becomes impersonal in the sense that it does not associate with the original source of the material such as the individual writer, artist, thinker; and
- Some journalists tend to download ready made first-world material and use it instead of writing or broadcasting original, culturally appropriate material.

The key issues women need to address are:

- Commercial interests are the ones which are now busy helping governments to formulate policies to control the new media. In India, one of the leading business houses was actively involved in the formulation of The Information Technology Act, and continues to lobby for rules and regulations favorable to its interests;
- Censorship is likely to be even more ineffective online than it is in print or on videos;
- Internet users have gotten so used to getting everything free on the Internet that it is not possible to generate even the small amounts required to keep the operation running;
- Once the global giants start occupying cyberspace, women will be crowded out in this medium as well;
- The digital divide at the global level is also seen within women's own NGOs. Members with Internet access are becoming much better informed, but grassroots members without access are left further behind;
- There is a danger to rely too much on the Internet, instead of seeking out the original source of information or opinion; and
- Women are often socialized into techno phobia.

Ammu Joseph from India notes that the rise of "infotainment" as the preferred mode in the mainstream commercial media militates against the improvement of media content through ICT access.

Recommendations

- (1) Start lobbying with governments if women want to have their interests incorporated into ICT policies.
- (2) Inspire more women to make use of new technologies by reaching out to those who have had limited exposure to the technology and explain these to them in simple terms that are applicable to their own context.
- (3) Be proactive and use whatever is possible to bring out the positive side of the new media.
- (4) Conduct continuing skills development.
- (5) Consider the digital divide including the lack or absence of necessary infrastructures when deciding what type of ICT to use for various purposes.
- (6) Conduct research to identify audience needs.
- (7) Tailor messages to reach the target audience.
- (8) Explore the establishment of rural telecentres that are useful to women.
- (9) Address other basic needs of women in the rural areas such as clean water, sanitation, roads.
- (10) Assist women's groups and other NGOs in the less developed countries in setting up community radio.
- (11) Campaign for the formulation and enforcement of appropriate regulatory laws in every country to prevent the use of new ICTs against women.
- (12) Produce more content that is relevant to women.
- (13) Create sites that serve as guides – meta-sites that sort content into categories, and with each entry under a category considered to be most useful and reliable on that particular topic.
- (14) Serve as information brokers for other women's organizations. As a broker, an organization becomes a hub, gathering the information and redistributing it to organizations that subscribe to them.
- (15) Ensure active information-sharing among media watch groups particularly around problematic ads or media content.

2. Steps to encourage media professionals to refer to online materials that will ensure greater diversity and fair gender balance in media output

The discussants identified the following steps to encourage media to use online materials that will promote gender balance:

- Promote and advertise websites of women's organizations as widely as possible – especially in the newsrooms;
- Regularly register women's websites with search engines;
- Ensure the user-friendliness of women's websites including having quality links;

- Make databases available online and package them into smaller modular pieces, that can be assembled for specific purposes such as media kits, sound bites that can be used for broadcast, and topical directories;
- Generate content constantly – information has to be new, fresh, relevant, and interactive;
- Content producers should exploit current controversial issues, not by following what the mainstream media is saying, but by being vocal in expressing alternative perspectives;
- Try out the emerging delivery technologies such as digital video, instant messaging, wireless applications;
- Train media professionals, especially women, in the use of new media technologies;
- Media organizations/media enterprises should be encouraged to acquire new technologies for their staff; and
- Lobby computer hardware and software companies so that they will support media associations and donate equipment.

3. Opportunities that the new ICTs offer to ‘alternative’ media producers, including women’s organizations and other media advocacy groups

Following are examples of the opportunities that the new ICTs offer to alternative media producers:

- Allows for greater exchange of information including broadcast materials and sharing of strategies that are useful for campaigns;
- Facilitates networking and sharing of training materials;
- In radio, ICTs allow women to participate in programmes without the boundaries set by time and space;
- Enables alternative media producers and women’s information organizations to tailor the information to the needs of individual women or specific women’s groups; and
- Enables NGOs to promote community-based radio and video, and Internet-based communication services that benefit rural communities and encourage women's participation.

4. The role of the new ICTs in facilitating networking, information exchange and media education among women’s media associations and media advocacy groups

The new ICTs, particularly e-mail, has helped the Network of Women in Media in India (NWMI) organize three regional workshops and one national workshop that brought together participants from different parts of the country. E-mail has allowed the members to keep in touch and organize occasional joint ventures. E-groups and listserves facilitate the sharing of information and resources, including information about scholarships, fellowships, jobs, and opportunities such as this online discussion. These have also generated debate on current topics, especially controversies relating to gender and/or the media. The soon-to-be-launched NWMI website is expected to further improve networking and learning across India as well as the world.

The Womenotes (e-mail group) in the Caribbean has started an NGO campaign in Jamaica entitled "Preventing Sexual Injustice." The email network has allowed them to quickly develop a Manifesto.

In this online discussion, some participants have started networking and discussing women and media issues – that were not directly related to the topics being discussed – on the side but nonetheless important.

Other inputs

In India, the introduction of the Simputer, an indigenous, relatively low-cost, hand-held computing device specifically designed to the ‘unreached’. One of its features is multi-language voice recognition for people who are not literate (nearly 50% of Indian women are still illiterate).

The Uganda Media Women Association (UMWA) has set up a radio station called “Mama FM” to provide an interactive, accessible medium for the underprivileged women in rural and semi urban communities.

Aileen Familara from the Philippines drew attention to the issue of Intellectual Property Rights. “Since this is a discussion on content, perhaps we should also be discussing intellectual property, whether we agree with IP laws that international organizations are starting to impose on the rest of the world.”

III. Conclusions arising from the discussions

The information gathered from this online discussion provides an up-to-date status report on the persistent issues as well as emerging challenges in promoting women’s participation and access to the media. In addition, the online discussion validated issues that women’s organizations, professional media associations and intergovernmental institutions have been raising for nearly three decades such as the negative and stereotypical portrayal of women in the media and the marginalization of women within media organizations and media enterprises.

In the light of such realities, the discussants generously shared their experiences, views, and analyses on how they have addressed both persistent issues and the emerging challenges. Examples of best practices at different levels – women’s organizations, NGOs, governments, the UN, and other intergovernmental bodies or collaborative efforts have likewise been highlighted by the participants.

The discussants also pointed out the general observation that there are no references to gender in existing media policies, guidelines and codes of conduct. As experiences in different countries indicate, the trend is toward self-regulation which makes it more difficult for the public monitor enforcement and compliance. This is because media organizations/media enterprises tend to regard the codes or policies as internal documents and therefore they are not compelled to share these with the public.

The impact of the shift to more privately-owned, commercial media outlets that depend on advertising revenue on media content and gender portrayal is another major concern for the participants. The discussants contend that this development reinforced the use of women as sex objects and has promoted global stereotypes in terms of race and gender.

Under the week 4 topic “Impact of the new technologies on media professions and media content,” the participants outlined the positive and negative aspects of the new information and communication and technologies and the key issues that women need to address. One concern that was underscored is the need for women’s organization and professional media associations to actively engage in all discussions that address the impact of the new ICTs on media. At present, commercial interests are the ones who are now busy negotiating and working with governments in the formulation of ICT policies.

This online discussion is one significant contribution to the ongoing global efforts to promote women’s participation and access to the media and the use of this social institution for women’s advancement and empowerment. The discussion draws attention to the various initiatives taking place at different levels in different parts of the world. The contributions in the wrap-up week highlighted the importance of the online discussion in terms of providing a venue for women’s organizations, media practitioners, media activists and advocates, academia, researchers, and representatives of other civil society organizations working on the issue of women and media to share experiences, views, and analyses on women and media issues.

IV. Online discussion structure

The following guide questions were proposed to the online discussion participants:

Week 1

26 August - 1 September 2002

Policy approaches as enabling frameworks

- (1) To what extent – if at all – do media policies, guidelines or codes of conduct in your country/region take account of gender?
- (2) Are there differences between the media – i.e. television and radio, and the written press – in this respect? Please provide examples of any media policy initiatives, codes or guidelines that have incorporated a gender perspective.
- (3) Are there any policies, codes or guidelines that cover the representation of women and men in advertising in your country/region? Please give examples.
- (4) Can you cite any examples of provisions in Internet laws in your country/region that address the representation of women and men?
- (5) What mechanisms exist to ensure that any existing policies, codes or guidelines are actually enforced? For example is policy enforcement assumed to be a matter for the media organizations/media enterprises themselves (i.e. self-regulation), or are there independent bodies that monitor implementation? Are there any sanctions for poor performance in relation to the policies, codes or guidelines? What role, if any, do government licensing and regulatory bodies play?
- (6) What is the role of media advocacy groups and/or professional media associations (e.g. journalists' associations, unions etc.) in calling for policy frameworks that encourage fair gender representation in the media? Please give examples.

Week 2
2 - 8 September 2002
Access, employment, decision-making

- (1) What has been the impact of media advocacy and lobbying actions-for example monitoring, conduct of gender-sensitivity workshops, and dialogues between media and civil society organizations – on women's access to and employment in the media? Please give specific examples where possible.
- (2) What recent initiatives have there been to ensure women's advancement within the media, for e.g., provision of women-friendly working conditions, equal chance at promotion, training and capacity-building, sensitization of media management, etc.? Which initiatives seem to have been most successful, and why?
- (3) In most countries, although women's share of junior and middle-level positions in the media has risen over the past twenty years, there is still a clear gender imbalance in senior decision-making and policy-making positions. What seem to be the main obstacles to women's advancement?
- (4) What strategies have been, or could be, successful in increasing women's access to senior positions within media organizations/media enterprises themselves? Within media policy-making and/or advisory bodies – for instance media councils, commissions, regulatory boards? Please give examples where possible.
- (5) Is there any evidence that gender employment patterns are more balanced in the newly emerging media industries-telecommunications, multi-media, e-media? Please refer to any available data or studies that you know of.

Week 3
9 -15 September 2002
Representation and content issues

- (1) What steps can be taken by media organizations/media enterprises to develop awareness among their own employees about the implications of gender stereotyping in media content, and to promote gender balance in the selection of sources, topics and approaches? Please provide any examples-for instance production guidelines, training materials, awareness-raising measures-that you are aware of.
- (2) The media systems of many countries are moving in the direction of more privately owned, commercial outlets that depend on advertising revenue. Satellite communication has introduced many television channels that originate outside national territories. Have you noticed any repercussions-whether positive or negative-from this shift, in relation to media content and gender portrayal? In terms of monitoring or regulating fair gender portrayal, what strategies can be used in commercially-based media systems? Please give examples where possible.
- (3) What examples exist in your country/region of monitoring and advocacy initiatives that have opened up dialogue between women's organizations, gender specialists and media professionals (including advertisers)? Have any of these initiatives resulted in changes in media content (including advertising)? Please provide examples.

- (4) Describe any media education strategies that have been developed to make the general public aware of gender patterns in media content (including advertising). What results have been achieved? Please provide examples.

Week 4

16 - 22 September 2002

Impact of the new technologies on media professions and media content

- (1) The growth of new communication and information technologies, including the Internet, means that a huge variety of information and content is now available to vast online audiences. In relation to gender, what are the positive aspects of this development? What are the negative aspects? What are the key issues that women need to address?
- (2) ICTs also increase the range of information available to journalists and other producers of media content. In this context, what steps can be taken to encourage media professionals to refer to sources, data and other materials that will ensure greater diversity and fair gender balance in media output? Please give specific examples where possible.
- (3) What opportunities do the new information and communication technologies offer to 'alternative' media producers, including women's organizations and other media advocacy groups-for instance in terms of access to audiences, media outreach, online training etc.? Please provide examples.
- (4) Please cite examples of how these technological advances have facilitated networking, information exchange and media education among women's media associations and media advocacy groups.

Week 5

23 - 29 September 2002

Wrap-up Week

V. Statistics and other details of participation in the online discussion

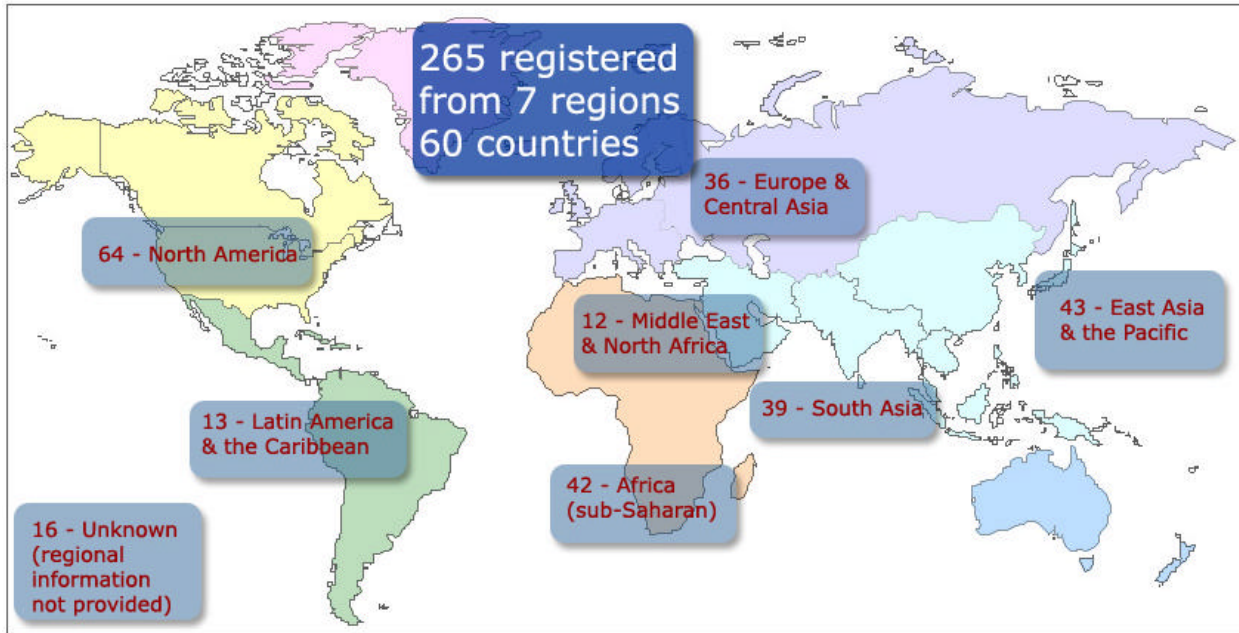


Figure 1 – Geographic distribution of registered participants



Figure 2 – Graph of the total number of participants showing percentage of active and listening participants and the number of women and men who actively participated

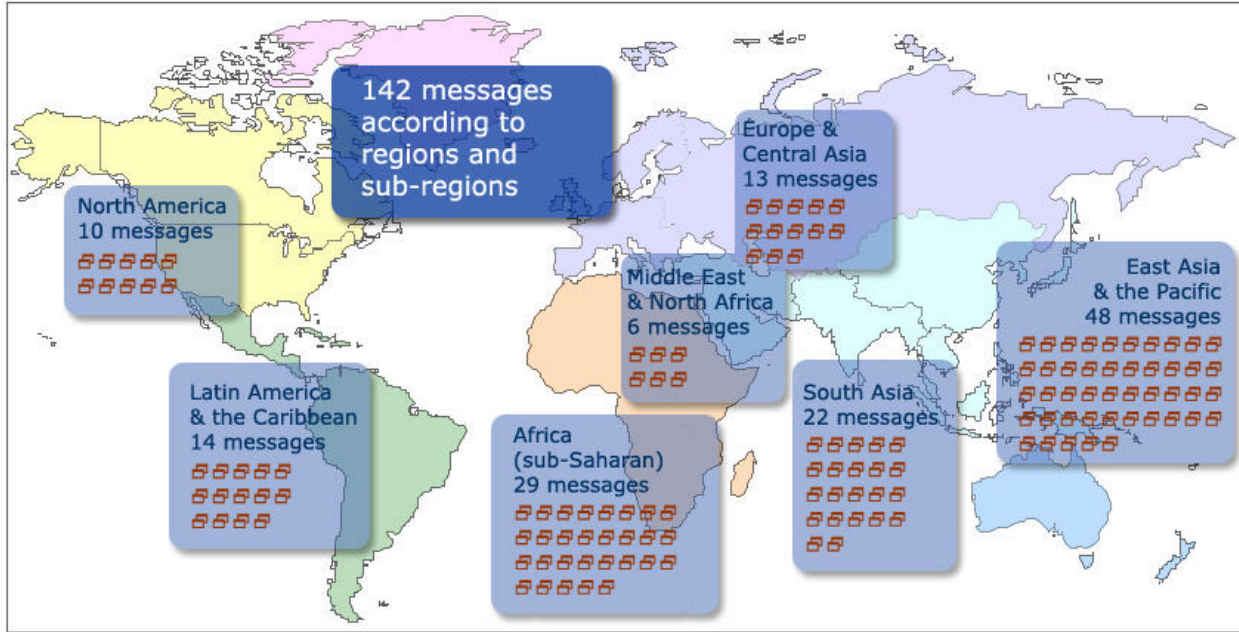


Figure 3 – Map of participation by region and subregion

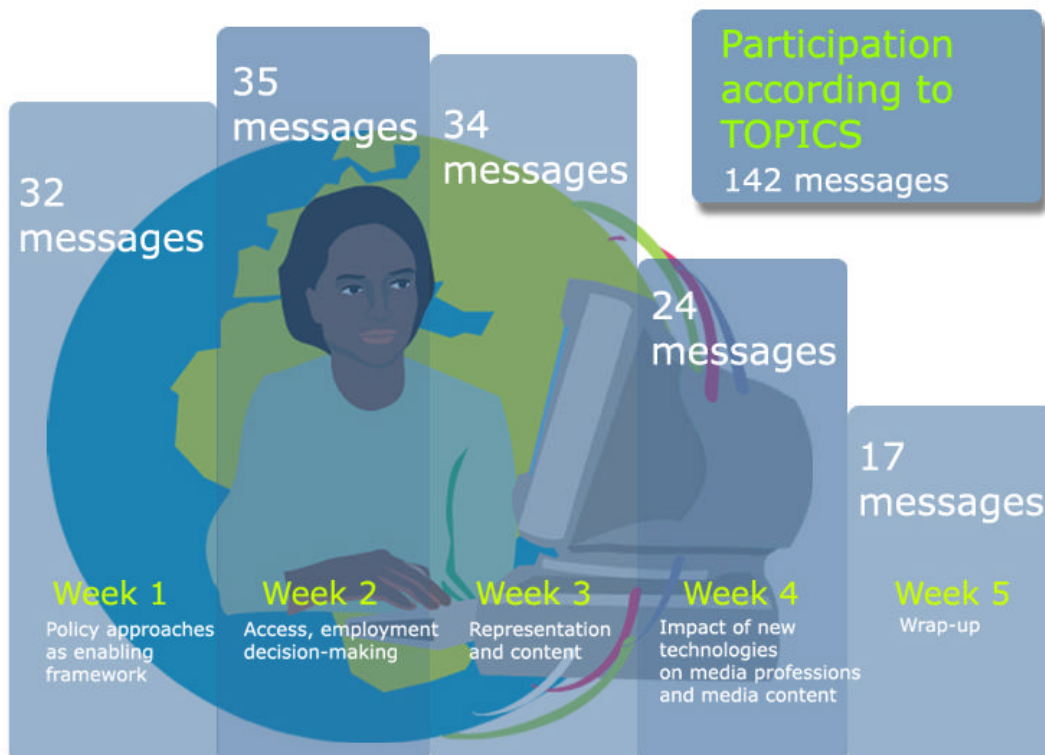


Figure 4 – Graph of participation level according to the topics of discussion
There were a total of 142 messages posted. The week 2 topic on “Access, employment and decision-making” drew the highest participation with 35 messages.

VI. Resources and references shared in the course of the online discussion

(1) Philippine Journalists' Code of Ethics

I. I shall scrupulously report and interpret the news, taking care neither to suppress essential facts nor to distort the truth by omission or improper emphasis. I recognize the duty to air the other side and the duty to correct substantive errors promptly.

II. I shall not violate confidential information on material given to me in the exercise of my calling.

III. I shall resort only to fair and honest methods in my effort to obtain news, photographs and/or documents, and shall properly identify myself as a representative of the press when obtaining any personal interview intended for publication.

IV. I shall refrain from writing reports which will adversely affect a private reputation unless the public interest justifies it. At the same time, I shall fight vigorously for public access to information, as provided for in the Constitution.

V. I shall not let personal motives or interests influence me in the performance of my duties; nor shall accept or offer any present, gift or other consideration of a nature which may cast doubt on my professional integrity.

VI. I shall not commit any act of plagiarism.

VII. I shall not in any manner ridicule, cast aspersions on, or degrade any person by reason of sex, creed, religious belief, political conviction, cultural, and ethnic origin.

VIII. I shall presume persons accused of crime of being innocent until proven otherwise. I shall exercise caution in publishing names of minors and women involved in criminal cases so that they may not unjustly lose their standing in society.

IX. I shall not take unfair advantage of a fellow journalist.

X. I shall accept only such tasks as are compatible with the integrity and dignity of my profession, invoking the 'conscience clause' when duties imposed on my conflict with the voice of my conscience.

(2) "Unlocking the Clubhouse: Women in Computing" by Jane Margolis and Allan Fisher

(3) Women's Media Watch South Africa's Memorandum to the SABC Board, Management, and Staff

Women's Media Watch is a membership-based human rights organization that strives towards the transformation of the media into a non-racist, non-sexist, non-classist and non-homophobic industry. We have taken this opportunity to join COSATU in urging the SABC to take their responsibility as a public broadcaster seriously, and to strive to promote the values of the South African Constitution and the creation of a free and open society. In particular we urge that the SABC avoid any type of bias in its news coverage, programming and advertising content across the board.

In general, the results of several media monitoring projects have revealed that women, blacks, the poor and rural communities in South Africa are either misrepresented, highly under represented and or almost invisible in media coverage. It is our contention that where a public broadcaster with public mandate is concerned, this is inexcusable.

Indeed, those who are highly visible and whose profiles the media in general and the SABC in particular, promote, are of the images that are the legacy that is left with us from Apartheid, a legacy that deemed the only social reality to be that of a South African, middle aged, white male. Clearly our post liberation condition dictates that the South African social, political, cultural and economic reality is otherwise.

Consequently, Women's Media Watch is of the opinion that the SABC as well as other media houses present a distorted and biased version of the South African reality. One of the ways in which that has occurred, either intentionally or unintentionally is through the use of a disproportionate amount of white males (as opposed to black females or males) as news sources, specialists, commentators and guests on particular news, features and actuality programmes.

As a result, an imbalance is created regarding the perceptions, values, attitudes and aspirations of the majority of South Africans. A wholly distorted and biased representation of the South African public and private imagination emerges, where the mandate of the public broadcaster should be promoting the values, attitudes, perceptions and aspirations of the majority. This has served to privilege the voices of the elite at the expense of the majority.

With regards to women, the most common roles they have been cast in or portrayed on radio or television are as entertainers, singers, musicians, and actors. The role of women as productive forces, career or profession oriented follows at a very distant second place, again distorting the real and productive role that women play in society. In reality women workers constitute one of the largest groups in society, but are seldom featured in the media.

With specific regard to news, actuality and features programming, women are mostly absent save for the few that are cast as presenters. Women are seldom quoted or interviewed as authorities. Instead they are most often portrayed as bystanders, victims

or relatives of those who generate featured news stories. Women are therefore constantly and ultimately cast on the periphery in passive and limiting roles, seldom or never in the mainstream.

Women's Media Watch is aware that the SABC has an existing gender policy. This policy however, we would argue, needs refinement with regard to internal structures of the SABC, particularly focusing on such matters as who holds decision-making position. We are of the opinion that a separate but no less important policy should apply beyond the administrative and management dimension and apply in the selection, production guidelines, programming and programme acquisition process related to guiding content and programming. Both of these would need vigorous implementation and vigilant oversight in its application.

In our quest to make a valuable Contribution to society and in an effort to co-operate and collaborate with the SABC, Women's Media Watch is ready to offer its facilities as a space where the media can actively engage with a wide range of women representing all walks of life.

Further suggestions for the SABC:

- (a) Monitoring of the integration of gender perspectives in programming, news, features and advertising content
 - (b) Evaluating media content objectively and taking appropriate measures for the improvement of the production quality of screened and aired items
 - (c) Conducting regular audience needs analysis and providing adequate feedback
 - (d) Avoiding reinforcing stereotypes and sensationalism in news coverage and reportage
 - (e) Recognize the changing role of women and men in the South African society
 - (f) Giving equal prominence to the achievements of women and men across the range of issues covered in the media
 - (g) Inclusion of comprehensive analysis underlying issues in the portrayal, reporting and representation of women
- (4) Sexuality in South African Glossy Magazines, a study conducted by Lene Øverland (a copy is available on the web board (<http://esaconf.un.org/~women-media/login>) or maybe requested from Lene Øverland (lene@womensmediawatch.org.za))
- (5) Useful Statistics in the Chinese Media
- Total Number of News Professionals: 87,000; Female: 28,000
Proportion of Female to Overall Population of Media Professionals: 32.9%
Distribution by Region (in relation to the regional economic power)
Most Developed Regions: 57.6%
Developed regions: 28.6%;

Less Developed Regions: 8.4%
Undeveloped Regions: 5.2%

In Shanghai, the gender proportion of news professionals is as high as 1.7:1 (M: F)

Women and Men in the Different Media

Women In Newspaper Offices: 42.5%
Women In Broadcasting and TV station: 56.2%
Men in Newspaper Offices: 52.1%
Men in Broadcasting and TV station: 46.3%

Salary/Income

Among low-income employees, there are more women than men; while among high-income employees, there are more men than women. But it must be noted that in the Chinese media's salary system, the principle of equal pay for equal work is observed. This means that regardless of sex, a person gets the same salary for the same position. The sex difference in income is actually caused by the distribution of the positions.

Women's and Men's Roles in the Media Profession

Women comprise 58.7% of the total number of journalists, editors and translators and 41.3% of the announcers. As journalists and editors, women make up over 25% of those who cover economics, social affairs, culture, and educational affairs. Of the field reporters, the ratio of women and men that cover economics is 1.32:1; politics 1.59:1; and sports 1.38:1. (based on 1995 Statistics)

The factors that motivate women news professionals are: the independent nature of the work, social support, good living conditions, personal promotion, human relations, and to some extent work pressure. However, there have been complaints with regard promotion. As many as 73.8% women news professionals are unsatisfied with the promotions which directly affect their income.

In terms of professional development, six indexes are being used. These are: business development, reward, personal capability building, evaluation of professional titles, access to decision-makers and improvement of living conditions. In a 2001 survey in Shanghai, the degree of satisfaction women derived from the publication of their personal works is 82%. As to the reward, personal capability building, and professional business titles evaluation, the degrees of satisfaction are 86.1%, 79.6% and 81.3% respectively.

In addition, a survey conducted in Shanghai in 2001, showed that the proportion of women with junior professional titles is only 49.3%; for middle-level titles 33.9%; and for senior titles only 19.3%. On the reward aspect, women who have received rewards are still a minority. Of the total number of winners of the Fan Changjiang News Prize - the highest prize in China, only 17.5% are women. As to decision-making positions, women comprise only 4.4% in the whole nation (according to the nationwide survey in 1995) and 10.4% in Shanghai (survey of 2001). 59.7% of the women think that there is a

very slim chance to be promoted if not none at all. [Contributed by Professor Chen Guilan, Shi Zhe, School of Journalism].

(6) Media journal/website – The Hoot <http://www.thehoot.org>

(7) Studies Show Women's Role in Media Shrinking by Nancy Cook Lauer
<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/915/context/archive>