The Impact Of (New) Information And Communication Technologies (NICTS) On The Media Professions And Media Content With Respect To Gender

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Introduction

'*Information is power*'. This saying has been so often repeated that it has almost become a cliché. Yet, like all clichés, it holds a truth. And because it holds a truth, the need to focus on the kinds of information available and the means by which information is produced, disseminated and received is of critical importance.

For this reason, ever-increasing attention has been paid to information and communication by the African women's movement.[1] Since the mid-1990s, this attention has tended to focus on naming, analyzing and attempting to address gender concerns in the so-called mass media.[2] In addition, efforts have been made by the African women's movement to communicate alternative information to that available from the media – if not always to the public, then at least within the African women's movement itself.

Worthy of mention here are three factors that have arguably both enabled and accelerated these efforts. First, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the ensuing movements towards political pluralism across Africa through the late 1980s and early 1990s. For these movements were in turn both a result of and a stimulus for increased independence and pluralism within the African media in general. Second, the holding of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995. For the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PfA) set out aspirations for gender equality in 12 sectors which have guided and informed advocacy efforts by the African women's movement to realise these aspirations in those 12 sectors, including the sector relevant to the African media.[3] Third, the advent and increased use of new information and communications technologies (NICTs) by the African women's movement ever since the mid-1990s. For the growing convergence of all media made possible by advances in NICTs and telecommunications has impacted on both the African media as well as the information and communications work done by the African women's movement.

This paper, based on experiences within Africa, therefore shall attempt to describe and analyze this impact, in a manner that is both theoretical and practical. Particular attention shall be paid to the gendered aspects of such impact in relation to convergence. And, in conclusion, recommendations to enhance and further the cause for gender equality within the African media shall also be made.

What the world said about gender and the media

Section J of the Beijing PFA addressed gender and the media. It highlighted universal concerns about both the content of the media in respect of women and the representation of women within the media.

Content concerns focused on the lack of gender-responsiveness of the media, as evidenced through persistent gender-based stereotyping, the reinforcement of women's traditional roles and the non-reflection of women's diverse lives and contributions. In the context of liberalization and privatization, the targeting of women as consumers and the use of women to promote consumerism by media advertising was noted. And the projection of negative images of

women (women as inferiors) as well as degrading images of women (women as sexual commodities) through pornographic or violent media representations was also remarked upon.

Concerns about representation focused on women's lack of participation in decision-making within the media itself, as well as in regulatory bodies responsible for the media.

Being both seen and heard

Almost eight years on from the elaboration of the Beijing PFA, little has changed with respect to gender and the African media. The coverage and representation of African women remains a priority concern.

African women's concerns are granted primarily `soft' coverage in the media. The coverage of women's concerns is therefore still marginalized in daily papers and on radio and television programmes, although there is some movement away from traditional women's sections and programmes – those that feature, for example, cooking recipes and fashion tips. There are now more modern women's sections and programmes – those that feature, for example, the difficulties of women's lives as working mothers, although the underlying and unquestioned assumption is still that women should choose between reproductive and productive labour in the best interests of their children and families.

However, African women still do not feature, except as aberrations (for example, as the lone female politician among a slew of male politicians) or as victims (for example, as the dumb and mute survivors of armed conflict and natural disasters) in the `hard' sections of the media. In addition, the media has apparently still not deconstructed the notion of the `general public' – a notion that ignores the fact that events impact on Africa's many publics – young and old, male and female, rural and urban, etc – differently. Basic data is not adequately desegregated. And media skills and policies to ensure that women's voices, interpretations and solutions are mainstreamed, are covered as part and parcel of the daily news, economic analyses, political analyses have yet to be evolved. Women are still covered as passive, rather than as active.

The persistence of gender concerns around the content of African media is perhaps not surprising given African women's representation within the media. Few women journalists have their own columns, tending to be relegated to basic reporting. Few women journalist host and produce news shows on radio and television. And even fewer women journalists have ascended to editorial and managerial positions. The figures are telling.

African media culture remains informal and male. The inability of many women journalists to socialise after hours due to their bearing primary responsibility for their children and families means that male cronyism continues to affect women's advancement and promotion within the media. This is especially so given the lack of clear, formal and gender-responsive internal media policies on maternity, on sexual harassment and on training and advancement. This lack therefore continues to mitigate against women's ability to compete effectively on a level playing field with their male counterparts.[4]

There is not, however, to imply that there has been no movement. There are now women's media associations in almost every African state. The Association of Media Women of Kenya (AMWK), the Ethiopian Media Women's Association (EMWA), the Tanzanian Media Women's Association (TAMWA) and the Ugandan Media Women's Association (UMWA) are a few examples. There are also a couple of regional women's media umbrellas, such as the African Women's Media Centre (AWMC) and the Federation of African Media Women (FAMW).

The focus of these associations has primarily been on how to improve the representation of African women within the mainstream (public and private) media. A secondary focus of these associations has been to improve the capacities of their members. Training sessions on a range of relevant issues has been held – nationally, sub-regionally and regionally. Such sessions can broadly be categorised as technically-oriented (for example, around the use of NICTs to improve reporting and editing) and content-oriented (for example, around specialised reporting on anything from economic and environmental reporting to reporting on gender, human rights and legal reporting).

Obviously, the two areas of focus have to go hand-in-hand. Without advocacy on achieving in-house gender policies and a conducive overall regulatory environment, African women so trained find themselves unable to utilise the skills learnt once they are back at their desks and microphones. And without the training, when advocacy efforts are successful, African women will find themselves not quite ready to step up to take their rightful place within the media.

The heart of the matter

But beyond the coverage and representation of African women in the media are gender concerns that are less obvious and less easy to address. The fundamental rights to freedom of expression and information are recognized at the international level in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and legally protected in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which most African governments are parties to. At the regional level, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights also legally protects these rights. And in October 2002, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which monitors the African Charter, elaborated on these rights in a Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa.

Most African states constitutionally protect these rights (with some, such as South Africa, going further to spell out these rights in subsidiary laws and policies). And through the advocacy for increased independence and pluralism of the African media in the 1990s, much attention has been paid to the ways in which these rights have been subtly hindered or expressly violated by various African states. However, little attention has been paid to the gendered nature of the realisation of these rights. For the majority of African women, the exercise of the fundamental freedom of expression and information is doubly constrained – by patriarchal law and practice (customary, religious and statutory) and by economic and political conflicts (masked as communal or `ethnic' conflict) whose impact is without doubt gendered.

How are African women to exercise the right to freedom of expression when still deemed the property of men? Many journalists, for example, continue to find themselves in situations where African women they wish to interview have to ask for the permission of male family members to speak)? And, of course, African women will not exercise their rights to freedom of expression and information when they are afraid for their bodies or their lives. For example, how many survivors of mass rape have been willing to speak out in conflict areas from Algeria to Rwanda, from Sierra Leone to Somalia?

Similarly, the right to freedom of information, around which an immense amount of advocacy is currently underway in Africa, must be understood from a gender perspective. If the right to freedom of information is understood as the right to public (and to a lesser extent in Africa, commercial/private information), there are two aspects to be taken into account. First, the nature of the information held by public bodies. For example, access to simple government data continues to be of concern to journalists and advocacy efforts around this have focused on simply ensuring access, rather than on ensuring that the data so accessed is also gender-desaggregated. And second, the nature of the public bodies holding the information. For example, as women are underrepresented within such bodies, then it follows that the difficulties of access experienced by journalists in general are compounded when the journalists happen to be women, sometimes forcing them into compromising situations upon risk of appearing unable to perform professionally within their respective media houses.

Thus, the absence of measures to address patriarchal law and practice (whether customary, religious or statutory) and gendered economic and political conflicts prevents the exercise of African women's rights to freedom of expression and information. The failure to understand and interpret these rights from a gendered perspective compounds the situation and also poses gender-based difficulties for female media practitioners in Africa.

Finally, although the right to communicate is not yet recognized at either the international or the regional levels, there is growing acknowledgement of the need for such recognition among development communications and media practitioners in Africa and elsewhere.[5]

What does communication mean to the majority of African women – those outside of urban areas, those either completely illiterate or illiterate in the colonial and/or national languages, those without any access to (let alone control over) the basic means of communication?

There has been talk around this issue in Africa ever since the independence period in the 1960s. And there have been a number of strategies put forth to address this issue, notably those that gave rise to the African rural press and decentralized public broadcasting services. Today, the rural press and decentralized public broadcasting services are deemed to have failed. Their failure was due to problems of distribution or reception, the timing of local language broadcasts and most importantly, the fact that these services essentially talked to local communities (and talked solely the language of the ruling parties of the day). In addition, African women did not feature in such strategies, except again as cultural performers in praise of the ruling party and the state or as the long-suffering mothers of the nation who deserved to be the recipients of externally-generated development solutions.

Public Service Broadcasting

There is some merit in (and a need to) revisiting the rural press and to decentralize public service broadcasting in a manner that holds such services accountable to the public (rather than to the ruling party).

This is particularly so with respect to radio broadcasting. For the value of print information to the majority of the region's populations is limited due to illiteracy. Almost all African are linguistically diverse and yet national newspapers adopt the national language for use nationally. In addition, the low print runs of even the largest national newspapers, their cost and their poor distribution, especially in rural areas, exacerbate the problem of accessing information through the print media. Television's reach is even more limited. Ownership of television receivers is restricted and the languages of television broadcasting are fewer. Radio thus has a far wider reach.

Until the late 1980s and early 1990s, broadcasting was the preserve of the state in Africa. Independent African states inherited and expanded colonial broadcast systems (including the national transmission infrastructure) and maintained a large reserve on the frequency spectrum for security purposes. As these national broadcasting and transmission systems were (and, but to a lesser extent, continue to be) funded with public money, they are referred to as public broadcasters. However, for reasons outlined below, over time, these national broadcasting and transmission systems have tended to function more as state (or even ruling party) broadcasters.

For obvious reasons, the focus of most independent African states was on developing a sense of national unity and promoting development. For public broadcasting content, this implied several things. Although the national public broadcasters included regional broadcasters which broadcast in local languages for at least some of the day, such local language broadcasts were usually a translation of national broadcasts, broadcasts from local administrators and extension workers and/or local cultural broadcasts. In addition, the audience for public broadcasting was typically seen as being composed of passive consumers who needed information (rather than had information to contribute) and efforts were made to use Africa's oral traditions to promote literacy and adult education through broadcasting. As explained above, little or no attention was paid to gender.

To a large extent, the state has been viewed as the owners of national public broadcasters. The national public broadcasters continue to be accountable to the government of the day (and, more specifically, to the ruling party of the day). This situation derives from and is reflected in the Acts establishing the national public broadcasters, which usually place the national public broadcasters directly under the Ministries of Information and/or Communication.

Implicit in these arrangements is the assumption that the government of the day (and, more specifically, the ruling party of the day) represents the public. These arrangements further assume that the public is homogenous. Thus, there have been few attempts to reflect age and gender differentiation in the management of the national public broadcasters, although some

attempts have been made for political reasons to reflect ethnic/regional and religious differentiation.

The result of these assumptions has been a decline in public confidence in the national public broadcasters, which various governments have been well aware of. For example, during times of political crises, security is always immediately increased at the national public broadcasters and international broadcasters (and, due to our colonial histories, notably the British Broadcasting Corporation and Radio France International) are viewed as more reliable sources of information on our own countries.

However, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed internal movements for political pluralism, linked with internal and external demands for economic liberalization and privatization intended to limit the potential for state corruption and improve efficiency in production through the introduction of competition. The resulting political and economic changes impacted on broadcasting. Private commercial broadcasters were established and entered the market. However, these have tended to be limited to national capitals, have high music to spoken word content ratios and broadcast primarily in non-African languages. In addition, community broadcasting – participatory broadcasting with a social development agenda – began across the continent. However, these have had difficulties with establishment, licensing and transmission (tending to serve underprivileged communities in rural areas), often lack a sufficient understanding of and/or training in participatory management and production processes and experience problems with sustainability.

The impact on national public broadcasting has been felt. They have experienced a decrease in public funding as African states seek to limit public expenditure and have therefore sought advertising revenues from a market in which they are forced to compete with private commercial broadcasters (and, in some instances, with successful community broadcasters). Most have done so by establishing wholly commercial broadcast services which may carry similar content to private commercial broadcasters, but target specific sections of the public (for example, the south Asian community in Kenya) to cross-subsidise the national public broadcast services. There have also been a few attempts at decentralization of the regional public broadcast services (for example, with the Dodoma and Lindi/Mtwara regional public broadcast services in Tanzania).

Therefore, on the one hand, the national public broadcasters have been forced to implicitly recognize the diversity of the public (as demonstrated by the Kenyan example. And, on the other hand, they have also been forced to implicitly acknowledge the need for public participation in public broadcasting (as illustrated by the Tanzanian example).

The contradiction between commercialization and the public service responsibility for the public broadcasters has not been sufficiently articulated. Sustaining the public service role of broadcasting requires political debates and decisions. But in most countries in the region, little attention has been paid to the question. In Uganda, government officials are now saying, unofficially, that the government will probably be satisfied if the public broadcasters can achieve 50 per cent financial self-sufficiency. In other words, the government accepts that some continued public support is necessary if broadcasting is to fulfil a developmental role. But in

other countries, governments are still apparently blind to the problem, even if the personnel within the public broadcasters are not.

Financial autonomy has not everywhere been accompanied by ownership, management and operational autonomy. Public broadcasting has to be paid for and accountable to the public, so it is essential that the public, as well as the media professions and policy-makers, debate the issues – from the broadest questions of the role of public broadcasting in democracies, through to ownership changes and down to details of operational management. Many beneficial changes could result from effective, autonomous public management of the public broadcasters. For example, it would enable creativity in utilising the public broadcasters' array of studio and transmission facilities for generating or supporting increased and diversified relevant local content production. Such local content, well done, would enable the public broadcasters to retain audiences in the face of competition from the private broadcasters, which in itself would legitimize the continuation of public funding support.

Related to this is the question of ownership and management of the public broadcasters' transmitters, transmission masts and sites. Renting out access to these could be a significant and as yet largely untapped source of revenue for the public broadcasters. Breaking the public broadcasters' monopolies over these facilities in a known and rational manner and on a scaled payment basis would generate money both from independent, private broadcasters which wish to transmit nationally and from local community broadcasters which wish to transmit within locations where these facilities are located. The establishment of public common carriers of this kind might also stimulate the establishment of new private and community broadcasters in hitherto under-served areas.

Public broadcasters need to be clearly de-linked from government under autonomous, publicly appointed and accountable bodies with clear public service mandates. These mandates, as well as the criteria and processes for public nomination and appointment, need to be publicly debated and agreed upon. The need for and modalities of establishing public common carriers for the independent distribution of broadcasting transmissions also require public debate and resolution as a matter of urgency. In this process, due attention needs to be paid to ensuring the gender-responsiveness of content on the public broadcasters as well as of the production, management and ownership structures evolved.

The African Charter on Broadcasting[6] and the African Commission's Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, both of which resulted from over five years of advocacy by development communications and media practitioners in the region, provide clear guidelines in this respect.[7]

Community Broadcasting

But today the emphasis is also on how to build participatory communications that is two-way (enabling the expression of local perspectives, interpretations and solutions to the national, regional and international level and a constructive engagement between all levels). With such an emphasis, African women are seen not as the passive recipients of externally devised development solutions. They are instead seen as holders of information and both experiential

and theoretical knowledge that the national, regional and international levels need in order to formulate policy decisions which are based on their own experiences, which make sense to them and which truly will make a difference to their lives.

In the process of building such participatory communications systems, legitimizing and validating the structures through which women have always spoken to each other is important. If women have spoken together in collective fuel or water collection practices, in self-help and income-generating groups, these practices and groups can be – and are being expanded – to formally incorporate communications components.

A range of community broadcast media have thus emerged. Community broadcast media are participatory, community-based and managed broadcast media with a clearly developmental agenda. In Kenya, an example is found with the Mang'elete Community Media Project in Ukambani, which was begun as a communications initiative of a local women's network and which has expanded into a community resource centre and radio station. Development Through Radio (DTR) in Zimbabwe links a series of rural women's listening and production groups with one another through the public broadcaster. In Mali, open media regulation has allowed for the formation of six women's community radio stations, similarly linked to exchange programmes and ideas. There are now women's community radio stations in Malawi, Senegal and South Africa. And most of the community radio stations not specifically managed by women have African women's representation and gender as key components of their mandate.

However, although community broadcasting initiatives are evolving throughout the region, but they are doing so in the absence of a regulatory framework which understands and explicitly supports them as distinct from private, commercial broadcasters and as complementary to the national public broadcasters. Broadcast regulation in Africa ranges from being extremely flexible and open (as in Mali, for example) to being highly structured (as in South Africa, for example). Both extremes are conducive to community broadcasting (Mali has over 80 community radio stations and South Africa over 60). But the bulk of African states fall somewhere in between.

This regulatory vacuum (allowing for private broadcasting, but without fundamental reform of the public broadcaster and without explicit support for community broadcasting) in the remaining states is a cause for concern. In such states, the community broadcasters which exist tend to be initiatives of either non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or, in some instances, of religious organizations, but are participatory in nature. The communities which are their audiences are also their producers and, in some cases, their managers. They also have a developmental and gender agenda. They have the potential to be important counterpoints to the location, distribution and programming of the private commercial broadcasters and important local level complements to the national public broadcasters. But their very nature makes their sustainability tenuous. Due to the important role they could play in assisting access to and dissemination of information, in particular for African women, regulatory intervention to address their sustainability is a critical concern. [8]

NICTs

The advent of NICTs has had an impact on the efforts to advance both communications initiatives of, from and for the African women's movement and gender mainstreaming within the African media.

National and regional networking to share experiences and strategies within the African women's media has become cheaper, easier and faster as a result of NICTs and thus has been intensified. Several African women's organizations and networks now make use of online alerts to inform their regional counterparts of alarming developments with respect to gender in their own states, allowing for regional intervention, as happened over the past year with Madagascar, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, for example. NICTs are also increasingly used for collective advocacy on issues of common concern across the region. For example, during the Beijing Plus Five Review Process, a partnership between the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) and the Association of Progressive Communicators (APC)-Africa Women led to the creation of Flamme. Flamme was an online network and interactive website of and for African women initiated to participate in, lobby at and advocate during and after the Beijing Plus Five Review Process both regionally and internationally.[9] More recently, many African women's organizations and networks have participated in advocacy-oriented discussions around the elaboration of the optional protocol on women's human rights to the African Charter and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Some African women's organizations and networks also produce more regular online bulletins and newsletters. These efforts have effectively provided the African media with accessible and alternative sources of content, both nationally and more importantly, regionally, thus mitigating somewhat against the situation described above.[10]

NICTs have also facilitated more consistent networking nationally and regionally among African women within the media, with some positive results. The increased availability of comparative regional information has advanced national-level advocacy work on the overall African media regulatory environment (laws and policies governing the media). Coalitions of media stakeholders (unions, development communication organizations, freedom of expression organizations and professional associations) have included key demands about representation and content around gender in many African states, basing their demands on the experiences of neighbouring or other regional states. A few media have adopted new in-house gender and sexual harassment policies. And the efforts of women within their respective media have lead to interesting and useful partnerships with women's organizations in civil society to improve coverage of gender-related issues.

The annual global campaign against violence against women, which takes place from November 25-December 10, for example, in several African states now has media support. Throughout the duration of the campaign, both advertising and editorial copy for the print media and many spoken-word slots for the electronic media dedicate time to coverage and analysis of the campaign events and issues.

In some states, the repeated campaign coverage over a period of two to three years enabled African women within the media to successfully lobby for the creation of new gender

sections and shows outside of the campaign period. These are (finally and thankfully) dramatically opposed to the traditional women's sections and shows which focused on cooking and housekeeping and child-raising and so on. These new gender sections and shows are dedicated to discussions of key gender discussions and debates – on harmful traditional practices, African women's constitutional and legal demands, African women and decision-making and so on. By including African men when relevant professionally in such sections and shows, it is clear that an important shift is being made – gender is being portrayed as being a key variable to all critical public policy debates, enabling the winning over of more public support for the cause.

To cater for the needs of African women in community radio, the Women's International Network (WIN) of the Africa section of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) has developed a programme aimed at building the content and technical capacities of these women. The training on content aims at introducing African women in community radio to gender analysis and mainstreaming tools. It seeks to link them with women's organizations in their respective communities and countries so as to enable a bottoms-up, local to national flow of information and improve advocacy on gender generally. The training on technologies is to use radio as a bridge to the Internet by the supply of tools to feed their productions into a community radio exchange across Africa. The potential of such a community-to-community exchange to articulate, legitimize and catalyze African women's mobilisation for change is obviously enormous.

However, challenges exist to the replication of these initiatives across the continent. The more obvious challenges include infrastructure and regulatory concerns such as poor telecommunications connections and distribution, laws and policies that hinder universal access and the costs of both hardware and software. In addition, gender-based challenges exist. Discrimination against girls in education (particularly in the maths, science and technology), persistent gender-based division of reproductive labour and women's limited access to and control over economic and technological resources further limit women's opportunities to engage with NICTs in ways that may enhance their lives. The lack of gender-responsive regulation (laws and policies) around NICTs and telecommunications even in the few African states where planning for universal access has taken place (such as in Senegal and South Africa) is a major hindrance to equitable access to NICTs on the continent. Here again, the need for representation by women in regulatory bodies addressing NICTs and telecommunications needs to be stressed to ensure gender is brought to bear in regulatory work. For the funding mechanisms for universal access, the design and implementation of the telecentres previously seen as a model strategy for achieving universal access need also to be gendered to be of use to African women.[11]

Given the situation outlined immediately above, the relative lack of information available on the Internet that is generated by African women is unsurprising. Supporting efforts by the African women's movement to add to the content of the Internet, particularly for the other major language groups on the continent (Arabophone, Francophone and Lusophone) is of critical importance. ENDA synfev, for example, works in increasing the availability of French information to francophone west African women. And supporting efforts to increase the reach of the information that is available online to those African women's organizations and networks not connected is also critical. Many African women's organizations and networks with access to NICTs thus regularly re-package information for broader dissemination through print and radio,

for example. Convergence enables the interface of radio with the Internet, as is being done, for example, through the AMARC-WIN project mentioned above.

Conclusion

Section J of the Beijing PfA outlined two initial and overarching strategies for improving the gender-responsiveness of the media. With respect to content in the media, the Beijing PfA urged the better portrayal of women through information, education and communication (IEC), gender training, the creation of codes of conduct and guidelines as well as the invocation of anti-discrimination laws and policies to address pornography and violence and media monitoring. It also urged the creation of alternative networks and sources of information, particularly those focusing on south/south and north/south dialogue.

With respect to representation, the Beijing PfA urged for the involvement of women in decision-making about the media through gender mainstreaming in all mechanisms, policies and programmes affecting the media. It focused on the need for governments to invest in the education and training of women for the media as well as research on the media and to maintain a gender balance in all advisory and regulatory bodies. It also noted the need for free, independent and pluralistic media (including traditional media) at the service of development and social change. And finally, it stressed the need for self-regulation by the media, with women's full participation in the development of codes of conduct and self-regulatory mechanisms.

As shown above, the two strategic objectives have been useful in terms of moving the work towards addressing gender through the media and gender mainstreaming within the media. They also remain relevant today. However, as also evident above, that there is now need for further elaboration.

Developing the infrastructure and regulation (in respect of broadcasting, NICTs and telecommunications) to reform public media and to actively support community media initiatives, paying due attention to gender, is a priority.

Ensuring the independence of public media is critical. Awareness about what community broadcasting is and what role it can play in development needs to be raised, at government, professional and general public levels. Supportive training and sustainability mechanisms need to be evolved to assist the community broadcasters which already exist and to ensure more are established in underserved areas. And regulatory frameworks which cover the public media and also define and address the concerns of community broadcasters need to be established. Such frameworks should explicitly acknowledge and support such community media and broadcasting initiatives (through scaled licensing fees, the reservation of a portion of the frequency spectrum for gendered rural access, cross-subsidisation from the private sector, for example).

With respect to NICTs, it must be noted that the economic benefits of the so-called Information Society derive not only from the consumption of NICTs, but from the production of NICTs. This point is particularly relevant to Africa, where advocacy efforts around NICTs have focused on ensuring access to NICTs, but not control of NICTs. Therefore, the need for

investment into education, research and training for women in the fields of math, science and technology noted earlier is even more important now.

In addition, telecommunications regulation should ensure that infrastructure rollout includes practical strategies for gendered universal access[12] (through universal access levies on private telecommunications providers, through credit schemes supporting infrastructure rollout through African women entrepreneurs, etc).

ENDNOTES

[1] The term is used here to refer to the range of women's organizations, both community-based and non-governmental, and networks, both national and regional, well as to the individual African women within academia, the media, the private sector and government who support the concept of and work towards gender equality.

[2] The term is used to refer to the print and electronic (both radio and television) media available to the public.

[3] Please see reports from the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November 1999.

[4] Please see reports and proposals put forth by a coalition of Kenyan media women, led by the Association of Media Women of Kenya (AMWK) and the Interlink Rural Information Service (IRIS).

[5] Please see the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC)'s Communications Charter, adopted in Milan, Italy in 1999.

[6] The African Charter on Broadcasting was adopted during the ten-year review of the Windhoek Declaration on a Free and Pluralistic Media in Africa, convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2001.

[7] For more information, please see Opuku-Mensah, Aida (ed) (1998) *Up in the Air: the state of broadcasting in southern Africa*. Harare: Panos Southern Africa and Wanyeki, Lynne Muthoni (ed) (2000*) Up in the Air: the state of broadcasting in eastern Africa*. Harare, Panos Southern Africa. Please also see publications by the World Radio and Television Council (WRTC) dealing with public service broadcasting.

[8] For more information, please see Opuku-Mensah, Aida (ed) (1998) *Up in the Air: the state of broadcasting in southern Africa*. Harare: Panos Southern Africa and Wanyeki, Lynne Muthoni (ed) (2000*) Up in the Air: the state of broadcasting in eastern Africa*. Harare, Panos Southern Africa.

[9] For more information, please see (2000) *Net Gains: African women take stock of ICTs*. Johannesburg: APC-Africa Women and FEMNET.

[10] The importance of alternative sources of gender-responsive content from the region is noted in light of the previous reliance of most African media on externally-owned news agencies for information even about other African states.

[11] For more information, please see *Engendering ICT Policy: guidelines for Action*. Johannesburg: Africa Information Society (AIS)-Gender Working Group (GWG).

[12] Universal access is a term developed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) as a standard to which all states must aspire. The term refers to the provision of a working telephone within a reasonable walking distance for all citizens. Universal access thus grounds advocacy for the provision of NICTs and telecommunications to all citizens.