

### **Examples of ongoing gender and media advocacy projects:**

1. Media policy reviews to ensure gender balance in the media institution and media texts (for example researches by EAJA, Gender Links)
2. Regular media monitoring exercises (for example GMMP, GMBS). In addition the Media Monitoring Africa in Johannesburg developed a 'simplified' media monitoring toolkit (Media monitoring made easy package).
3. Audience researches (for example Gender Link's My views on the news, SAMGI's Who's news: women and the media documentary)
4. Media management researches (for example the Glass ceiling report by South African National Editors Forum)
5. Mainstreaming gender in journalism training curricula (e.g. the 'Gender Issues in Mass Communication' offered at postgraduate level at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka)<sup>9</sup>. Other initiatives are by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism, Gender Links, Polytechnic
6. Dialoguing with media houses and editors (MISA, the Editor's Guild in Kenya convened by AWC and other organisations). Some organisations like the Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP) trains rural media practitioners gender mainstreaming techniques.
7. Empowering women journalists (media associations in East Africa, Federation of African Media Women - Zimbabwe, African Women's Media Centre (AWMC) in Dakar)
8. Producing alternative media that accommodates women's voices (Publications by Agenda, newsletters by SAMGI, African Woman and Child Feature Service, MAMA FM in Uganda, Meridian FM in Ghana)
9. Developing materials to assist media houses to mainstream gender
10. Developing manuals for civil society organisations intending to organise gender and media advocacy campaigns (for example the Getting Smart manual by SAMGI, Mission Possible advocacy toolkit by WACC)
11. Awarding media houses and journalists with recognition prizes to those who show commitment to gender sensitive reporting (GEMSA, Media Monitoring Africa, SAMGI)
12. Carrying out media literacy projects with citizens to enable them to be responsive to the media content as well as assist them to create their own media.
13. Forming regional gender and media networks and alliances to jointly push for change in the media (for example GEMSA, FAMW-Southern Africa). In 2005, a collective of national and regional gender NGOs formed an alliance (Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance) to campaign for the ratification of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development by SADC heads of states.
14. Complaining to statutory bodies regarding sexist advertisements (in South Africa for example, activists successfully complained several times to the Advertising Association of South Africa regarding sexist advertisements).
15. Sharing of experiences (for example the Gender and Media Summit convened by GL and GEMSA)

One of the key arguments brought forth by activists in the struggle for gender equality in the media is that: gender justice in the media is a professional issue. Balanced reporting (one of the journalism ethics) can be lived up to by allowing both men and women to contribute to media content as equal citizens. 'Important keywords in this endeavour include: 'diversity', 'balance', 'pluralism', 'creativity', 'innovation' and 'quality'" (Gallagher 2002). More importantly, diversity of opinions and voices in the media is fundamental to the functioning of democracy. The Media Institute of Southern Africa argues that gender equality is a media freedom issue. In that context MISA incorporated gender justice in its programmes. Having noted some of the work is being done by NGOs, it is important to state that there have been small gains in the struggle for balanced representation of women in the media. According to the GMMP, between the three monitoring exercises (1995, 2000, 2005), the percentage of women news subjects has been on the increase (17%, 18% and 21%) respectively.

Despite this positive development, what has remained challenging for activists, however, is changing the mindsets of editors who have been socialised to not generally view women's rights to communicate as important in the broader society (Lowe Morna 2002). This means therefore that transformation of attitudes and beliefs needs to happen at different levels of

society. There is also need for the journalists and editors to understand the differences between sex and gender and the implications of stereotyping. Change can also take place if there is political will and commitment. This can practically translate into the development by and adherence to gender policies by media houses. In the EAJA report for instance, the lack of gender policies governing media operations in East Africa is conspicuous. The report also noted that there is an absence of editorial policies on the fair and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media content.

The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has led the way for media rights organisations by adopting a gender policy. Gender Links has 'worked with a number of media houses in the region to develop gender policies. These include the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), a public broadcaster; the Times of Zambia (a state owned newspaper) and Kaya FM, a commercial radio station in South Africa.'<sup>10</sup>

Most of the gender and media NGO led initiatives are funded by donors with a few receiving funds from other sources like government grants. The reliance on donor funding has in many instances negatively impacted on the sustainability of projects. When the funding cycle ends or when the donors pull out from funding projects, the projects usually fold. In a discussion convened by Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) at their 11th International Forum held in Cape Town in November 2008, NGOs noted that sometimes donors are reluctant to cover core costs of NGOs making it difficult to run the organisations. In the worst cases this has contributed to high staff turnover in NGOs. With a decreasing resource base, competition among NGOs for the scarce resources has increased.

Although it has been noted earlier on in the essay that NGOs are forming networks as a strategy to push for gender equality, it is important to note that there have been instances when the coordination has been difficult (for diverse reasons), resulting in duplication of efforts.

While the fact that gender and media work on the continent has largely focussed on the news media can be viewed as a strength, on the reverse side it can be pointed out that this emphasis has been at the exclusion of detailed research on other forms of media, like the entertainment media, in which information on gender representations is still scanty.