

Women in the News:

Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women
in the African Media's Coverage of Elections,
Politics and Governance



A Handbook for Women Politicians
and the Media



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Ghanaian MP Hon. Akua Sena Dansua is interviewed by the Media (Photo: Trevor Davis)

Voters queue during the 2008 Zimbabwean elections (Photo: Ephraim Nsingo)

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Written and compiled by Patricia A. Made



Foreword

Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women in Africa

It has been 60 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and therefore fitting that, in this year, Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa is able to partner with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to assist women in politics to strengthen their presence.

This toolkit is a product of the multi-faceted “Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women in Elections in Africa” project funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and administered by UNIFEM in Africa.

The toolkit is also a product of IPS’ long journey to ensure that the media takes gender coverage more seriously. It is a journey IPS embarked on as early as 1975 when, coinciding with the UN Decade for Women conference held in Mexico, the then Director General of IPS, Dr. Roberto Savio, made a commitment to improve the coverage of women in developing countries.

Three years later, IPS launched the first service that produced copy about women, written by women in Latin America.

In 1979, the African Women’s Feature Service was started and, in 1986, IPS combined its regional women’s services into the Women’s Feature Service (WFS), which is now an autonomous news agency still based in New Delhi, India today.

In 1994, the agency, with support from SIDA Sweden, UNIFEM and others began a three-year initiative to strengthen the gender perspective in all of IPS reporting. This included the development of gender editorial policies and checklists which continue to be used – even by organisations beyond IPS – today.

As part of the current programme on “Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women in Elections in Africa”, IPS Africa has developed a framework for training that forms the basis of this toolkit. The training is unique in that it targets women politicians and the journalists who cover them. The training is supported by independent news coverage as well as resources for women and journalists through the “From Polls to Polls” webpage on www.ipsnews.net/africa.

These resources include newsletters as well as an Editorial Checklist which forms the basis of ongoing coaching of IPS reporters covering elections.

IPS Africa continues to seek opportunities to build on the gender training that is intrinsic to our news agency operations and thank UNIFEM and UNDEF for this opportunity.

We hope that you will find this Toolkit useful and, more importantly, use it to help raise the voices of Africa’s many women working in public office.

Paula Fray
Inter Press Service
Regional Director: Africa

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of African Women in Elections, Politics and Governance

The principles of democracy and human rights are prominent in Africa's push to re-assess and re-define its political and economic development. African leaders have expressed their commitment to democracy and the maintenance of human rights principles, and the primary vehicles for these commitments are the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), including the African Peer Review Mechanism which is an unprecedented move by African governments to put in place a mechanism to hold governments' accountable.

Central to forming governance structures and systems based on the principles of democracy and human rights is women's participation in politics and public life - and, the guarantee and protection of women's human rights. Often in the push for democracy and human rights in Africa, these principles assume a gender neutral position. In other words, the terms 'democracy' and 'human rights' hide the reality that those who participate in politics and public life are predominantly men, who often craft governance and politics discourses that largely exclude the participation of women, who comprise more than half of African countries' citizens.

The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is a key challenge for the democratic processes and human rights movements in Africa. While on the one hand, African governments take steps to address women's lack of political, economic and social rights, the pace of movement towards achieving full equality is characterised by a series of 'stops' and 'starts', and there are often many mixed signals. For example, while the AU has committed itself to the target of 50% women in decision-making positions in all of its structures¹, the representation of women in government, parliament, local government and other political spaces in Africa is still low.

In Parliament, for example, women comprise only 17.3% of the members of parliament in Sub-Saharan Africa.² The 14 countries that comprise the Southern African Development Community (SADC), on their own however, have an average of 20% women in parliaments, making SADC third in the regionally ranking across the globe.³ The African country of Rwanda with 48% women in its parliament has come closest to showing that parity can be achieved.⁴

Nineteen African countries went to the polls in 2007/2008, with many facing challenges to democratic processes. Elections are an opportunity to increase women's representation, raise issues of gender inequality and women's human rights violations and to press for building gender sensitivity into accountability systems. In *No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, editors Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim argue that women's political effectiveness is increased when the capacity of existing accountability systems is improved to answer to women and to enforce sanctions against public sector actors who abuse women's rights.⁵

¹ The AU took this position at its inaugural session in Durban South Africa in July 2002.

² Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008, pg. 15

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union and Gender Links, cited in At the Coalface, Gender and Local Government in Southern Africa, edited by Colleen Lowe Morna and Susan Tolmay, Gender Links, 2007; The Nordic countries rank first with 40.8% women parliamentarians followed by the Americas with 21.6% women in parliaments

⁴ Ibid.

In practice, this calls for:

- ◆ Examining the internal democracy of civil society organisations and political parties, and the extent to which women have a voice within them
- ◆ Examining the extent to which opposition parties politicise gender inequalities in campaigns and in legislatures
- ◆ Examining the gender sensitivity of the legal system
- ◆ Examining the extent to which public sector budgeting and auditing exercises measure the impact of public spending (or mis-spending) on women
- ◆ Examining the extent to which performance measures in the bureaucracy reward gender-sensitive actions.⁶



Election posters during the 2008 Zimbabwean elections

Photo: Taurai Maduna

One of the key actors in ensuring accountability to women's right to participate in politics, public life, and governance processes are the media. Given their wide reach, their influence on policy makers, their watchdog function within society to monitor democratic processes, and their role as educators and providers of information for the general population, the media shoulder a major responsibility in ensuring that within their principles of a free and fair media, the rights of women as citizens are constantly brought to the fore of their coverage of the democratic and human rights agendas pushed throughout Africa.

Over the last decade women are increasingly becoming active in African politics, but often their voices and stories are missing in the media. Even where attempts are made by editors and journalist to mainstream women's voices and to use women as sources, women are sometimes reluctant to speak publicly for a host of reasons ranging from lack of confidence to a lack of trust or experience with the media.

During elections, as well as during the media's ongoing coverage of politics and governance issues, the media are presented with a not-to-be-missed opportunity to play a key role in informing voters and creating a context of accountability by ensuring that the advancement of women's human rights and the removal of gender inequalities are integral to the coverage of politics, elections and governance.

⁵ No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Phillip, Cape Town, 2003

⁶ Ibid

Background to the Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is twofold: to build the capacity of the media in Africa to analyse election and governance processes from a gender perspective; and to strengthen the ability of women in politics and public life to engage with the media and to communicate effectively through the media on politics and governance issues.

This handbook is one product in a larger project of Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa to strengthen the African media's capacity to report on women in elections. The project is based on a multi-pronged strategy that links journalists, female candidates and women's organisations to communicate effectively the gender dimensions of elections and governance processes in Africa. The IPS strategy focuses on:

- ◆ Training and mentoring the media to bring a strong gender lens to governance and electoral processes in Africa; and
- ◆ Training women politicians, aspiring female candidates and women's civil society groups to effectively use the media to get their messages across.

This handbook is directed at two audiences:

- ◆ The media (primarily journalists who are the foot soldiers in gathering the news)
- ◆ Women in public life (i.e. women politicians, aspiring female candidates, women in governance and political structures)

This handbook can be used with other materials for the training of the media and women politicians, or it can serve as a reference book for the media and women politicians who seek to build their own knowledge.



Angolan elections candidate Clarisse Kapute

Photo: Louise Redvers

There are six (6) chapters in this handbook, including the Introduction:

Chapter 2: Media and Rights – Why is Gender Equality an Issue for the Media?

The objective of this chapter is to lay a foundation for understanding some of the key gender and media issues. To report effectively on issues of democracy, equality and justice, the media must ensure that these principles guide their newsgathering and editorial content and their workplace operations. This chapter is for both the media and women politicians.

Chapter 3: Understanding why Gender Equality in Politics and Political Processes is integral to Democracy. This chapter aims to build the capacity of women politicians to speak on democracy and political processes, such as elections, from a gender perspective; and, to increase the media's understanding of why gender equality is central to informed and analytical reporting on elections and governance.

Chapter 4: Women, Politics and News. This chapter outlines for the media and women politicians some of the gender biases and prejudices that influence the media's coverage (or non-coverage) of women in politics and the public sphere. Awareness of how the media treats women politicians different from their male colleagues can help the media to take a step back and put in place editorial guidelines and policies that minimise these biases in coverage.

Chapter 5: Framing Issues from a Women's Rights and Gender Equality Perspective. While this chapter is aimed more at women politicians to help them to understand the important role they can play in framing all issues they speak on from a women's right and gender equality perspective, and how to do this, the chapter also seeks to help the media to understand how conflicting messages can be sent through their coverage on issues of democracy, justice and good governance if this coverage is often gender neutral or gender blind.

Chapter 6: Understanding How to Engage with the Media. The objective of this chapter is to build the knowledge of women politicians on how to work with the media, and to get their issues onto the media's agenda.

Editorial checklists are provided at the end of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 to provide some pointers to the media. There are text boxes throughout the chapters with discussion points and information that can be used to facilitate training sessions with the media, women politicians or both groups together. **Activities** that can be used in training are provided at the end of each chapter. A **list of resources** is provided to guide the media and women politicians towards other resources to develop further many of the issues raised in this handbook.

Chapter 2: Media and Rights

Why is Gender Equality an Issue for the Media?

The Media's Role in a 'democratic society'

The media's key roles in a democratic society are the same across the globe: to inform, to educate, to perform the 'watchdog' function of keeping the public, private and civic sectors accountable to the interests of the general populace, and to be an agent of change through informed, contextualised and accurate reporting on issues and events in a society. These are just some of the essential characteristics of a *free and independent media*.

But often because of ownership, stringent legal and policy environments, political interests and biases, gender biases and prejudices - among other external and internal influences - these roles may not be as dominant in a democratic society as they should be. Partisan, sexist and discriminatory media, for example, fall short of the media needed to safeguard the rights and interests of all citizens through fair and diverse reporting.

The media in any society also play a role as a shaper of a country's national vision. As U.S. legal and feminist scholar Patricia J. Williams of Columbia University's Law School says:

"The media do not merely represent; they also recreate themselves and their vision of the world... What they reproduce is chosen, not random, not neutral, not without consequences... The media, for better and frequently for worse, constitute one of the major forces in shaping our national vision, a chief architect of... a sense of identity."

The growth and development of a free, pluralistic and independent media is intrinsic to the growth of a democratic society. Two cornerstones of media freedom are:

- ◆ Freedom of opinion
- ◆ Freedom of expression, free speech

These freedoms are guaranteed through *Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

The rights of the media are most frequently cited when talking about freedom of opinion and expression.⁷ Discussions focus disproportionately at times on freedom of the press, the rights of journalists and the suppression of independent media – areas in which men remain in the majority and areas in which some media professionals think of themselves as "king-makers", determining who will and who will not have power.⁸

⁷ Jan Bauer, Only Silence will Protect You. Women, Freedom of Expression and the Language of Human Rights, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Canada, 1996

⁸ Ibid

This singled-focus interpretation of Article 19 on the media's right to free expression and opinion has left the door wide open for the media to become a site of harm when it comes to providing the space and access for women's freedom of expression and opinion, as well as space to a wide majority of the population in African countries who are not in positions of power or formal authority.

Talking Points! The Two Sides to Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression can be viewed as the right to communicate, to hold opinions and to state them; the right for all citizens to have a voice and to express that voice in and through the media; and

Freedom of expression can be used to sanction what is not pleasing; and in the production of ideas, images and cultural representations, freedom of expression can be used to selectively silence as it creates.⁹

Discuss with participants the two sides to freedom of expression. Then, discuss with the group the following question:

1. Which side of freedom of expression is used most by the media when reporting on issues of women's rights, gender equality and gender injustices? Why? [Ask participants to cite examples from the media in their own countries to illustrate their points; facilitator should use flipchart to record the key points from the discussion and place pointers on the wall to refer to later during other discussions relevant to this issue].



The media provides access to expression through those who are used as sources in the media's coverage of issues and news. Sources are people interviewed by journalists to give their views and perspectives on the news events and current issues of the day. Sources are chosen because of:

- ◆ Their specialist knowledge on the issue or event ('experts');
- ◆ If they are among those greatly affected by the event or issue (women and men living with HIV should be among those interviewed in stories on access to anti-retrovirals, for e.g.);
- ◆ If they are the 'subjects', or 'main actors' of an event or issue.

But, as the findings of the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)¹⁰ coordinated by the World Association of Christian Communications show:

Women's views and voices are marginalised in the world's news media. Women constitute 52% of the world's population, yet they make up only 21% of the people featured in the news. Women are most underrepresented in radio where they are only 17% of news subjects as compared with 22% in television and 21% in newspapers.

⁹ Patricia J. Williams, *The Rooster's Egg. On the Persistence of Prejudice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995

¹⁰ More than 70 media worldwide were monitored for one day.

Men's voices dominate in hard news. Men are the majority of the news subjects in all story topics. Even when women do feature in the news, they are more likely to be found in 'soft' stories such as celebrity and arts where they make up 28% of news subjects and least likely to be found in 'hard' news stories about politics and government (14%) and the economy (20%).

Men dominate as spokespersons and experts. Some 86% of all people featured in news stories as spokespersons are men. Men also make up 83% of all experts. Women are much less likely to be considered experts in media coverage. Instead they are more often present as voices expressing personal experience (31%) or popular opinion (34%).

The choices of sources, as well as other editorial choices the media make daily also shape the media's freedom and independence. While one of the fundamental principles of the media is to present fair, diverse and balance coverage of issues, the truth of the matter is that news is a process of selection. **The events and issues that become news each and every day, go through a process of selection which is not without its own imperfections. News is a choice.**



Talking Points! News is a choice

What will make news? What will not? Who will speak? Who will not? How will an individual or a group of individuals be portrayed or represented in the media? These are all issues of choice.

Discuss with participants the following, either in plenary, or divide them into groups to buzz around the questions and then present their answers. The facilitator should record the key points of this discussion on flip chart for future reference in discussions as the training proceeds:

1. Why are gender equality and women's rights not high on the media's choices of what will make news?
2. Why are males accessed by the media to speak on issues more than females? Are females accessed as sources by the media on some issues more than others? Which issues and why?
3. Are the reasons provided for questions 1 and 2 illustrative of biases within the media which keep them from reporting on gender equality and women's rights issues? Explain responses.
4. What can the media do to ensure that their choice of what will make news is not influenced by prejudices or biases of any kind?

If we look at the media, gender inequalities, biases and prejudices show themselves in the following ways, among others:

Opportunities in the workplace - Women often comprise the rank and file of journalists and presenters in the print and broadcast media and few are in the top leadership positions;

Who speaks in the media? - If we read, listen to and watch those who are speaking in the media – those who are quoted in stories on events of the day – the majority are men, although women and men live in the societies reported on and both have views on the events and issues. Women are made 'invisible' by the media's omission of their voices and images;

Gender stereotypes - When women do appear in the media, they most often are portrayed as sex objects, beauty objects, as homemakers, as victims (of violence, poverty, natural disasters, war and conflict, etc.); or they become front-page and headline (main story) news when they engage in activities which are not in line with society's prescription of what women 'should' and 'should not' do [E.g. *Mothers who kill or abuse their children are often portrayed as 'unnatural' women and these stories often are given lots of prominence in news pages and broadcasts*];

Equal professional opportunity: Women reporters are often assigned to health, education, and social issues, while men are given the political and economic assignments which are seen as part of the career path to senior editorial and media management positions.

What is considered newsworthy? News on the violations of women's human rights and discrimination against women are few and far between in the media. When the media does cover issues of concern to women such as violence, sexual and reproductive health, women in decision-making, these articles are often confined to special pages and segments in the media and tagged as 'women's issues', rather than being placed on the news pages as issues of concern to everyone.

Invisible women: Certain categories of women receive even less attention in the media, such as elderly women, and women from minority ethnicities and religious groups, the working class, and women with different sexual orientations.¹¹

¹¹ Shivas, M. 2000. Alternative Assessment of Women and Media based on NGO Reviews of Section J, Beijing Platform of Action, cited in *Whose News? Whose Views?*, Colleen Lowe Morna, 2001

Gender-aware Reporting

A gender analysis of editorial content by journalists and editors can assist reporters and gatekeepers in reflecting on:

- ◆ Is the editorial content biased or prejudiced towards a specific grouping and media audience?
- ◆ Are the media, who champion democracy, human rights and people's participation in governance "inclusive" or "exclusive" in their own representation of society through their editorial content?
- ◆ Does the editorial content portray men and women differently and why?
- ◆ Do the media reinforce women's human rights violations by not reporting on these violations with the same vigour that they report on the political and civil rights violations of opposition and other political groupings in society?

Gender aware reporting requires journalists and editors to ensure that the coverage of an event or issue is told through the voices of both women and men; and, gender aware reporting requires journalists and editors to use data, background information (context) and analysis through the perspectives of women and men to illustrate how the issue or policy reported on affects women and men in a society. Good research, in-depth reporting and analysis, a diversity of sources and perspectives bring about gender-aware reporting, and these characteristics are also the basis of good journalism.



Cameroon's Akono District Mayor Marie Héléne Ngoa, Ghanaian MP Hon. Akua Sena Dansua, Lesotho local councillor Mrs Rosemary Mathato Mants'o and Kenyan elections candidate Pamela Mburia attended the IPS Women and Elections Workshop

Photo: Trevor Davis

Several other specific characteristics of gender-aware reporting include:

- ◆ A focus on the gender inequalities in a society;
- ◆ A focus on the political, economic and social rights violations of women;
- ◆ Stories that seek to challenge gender stereotypes through a specific focus on women and men in non-traditional gender roles;
- ◆ Stories that challenge power imbalances in both the public and private spheres (an example of power imbalances in the private sphere is the prevalence of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women).

What is often not shouted as loudly as the cry for a free and independent media in Africa is the imperative that a free and independent media should also be responsible and accountable. A free and independent media also strives to be responsible to the professional standards and ethics of journalism and accountable to the interests of the public by ensuring that both in the workplace and in its editorial content, the media do not discriminate or perpetuate forms of discrimination against anyone based on race, sex, religion, and etcetera. The media as institutions within society must also abide by the laws and regulations that seek to address the gender inequalities that have been prevalent in both the public and private sectors. The media maintain their credibility by ensuring that the injustices that they write about in government, the private sector or even within civil society and other organisations are not commonplace in their own domains and editorial products.

The following two instruments speak to the media's role in ensuring that gender equality issues are integrated into workplace operations and editorial content and programming. These are not infringements of media freedom, nor are they intended to be interpreted as such. The goals of these instruments are to ensure that the media remain reflective on their role, and responsible and accountable in carrying out their critical role in democratic societies.

This document is the world blueprint on achieving gender equality that emanated from the 1995 UN World Conference on Women and Development held in Beijing, China. Section J of the Platform addresses the media and the media were among the 12 Critical Areas of Concern.

The BPFA calls for “increased participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new communication technologies”. Governments committed themselves to review media policies and increase the number of programmes for and by women and to promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women in the media.¹²

Governments also are urged in the BPFA to create legislation against the projection of violence against women and children in the media and to encourage training for women in using the media. The media are encouraged to establish professional guidelines and methods of self-regulation for the way women are presented, as well as to support and finance alternative media and all forms of communication that support the needs of women.¹³

Media Accountability: International and Regional Instruments on Gender and the Media

1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)

¹² Local Action, Global Change, UNIFEM and the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, 1999

¹³ Ibid

2008 SADC Gender and Development Protocol

At the August 2008 summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Heads of State signed the historic protocol on Gender and Development. The protocol becomes a binding document, unlike a declaration, of governments' commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. The Protocol has 23 targets governments should reach by 2015, and among its 32 Articles are articles that speak specifically to Media, Information and Communication (Articles 29, 30 and 31).

The media provisions in the Protocol set the following key actions for state parties:¹⁴

- ◆ Ensure gender is mainstreamed in all information, communication and media policies, programmes, laws and training in accordance with the Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport.
- ◆ Encourage the media and media-related bodies to mainstream gender in their codes of conduct, policies and procedures, and adopt and implement gender aware ethical principles, codes of practice and policies in accordance with the Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport.
- ◆ Take measures to promote the equal representation of women in the ownership of, and decision making structures of the media in accordance with Article 12.1 that provides for equal representation of women in decision making positions by 2015.
- ◆ Take measures to discourage the media from:
 - ◇ Promoting pornography and violence against all persons, especially women and children;
 - ◇ Depicting women as helpless victims of violence and abuse;
 - ◇ Degrading or exploiting women, especially in the area of entertainment and advertising, and undermining their role and position in society; and
 - ◇ Reinforcing gender oppression and stereotypes.
- ◆ Encourage the media to give equal voice to women and men in all areas of coverage, including increasing the number of programmes for, by and about women on gender specific topics and that challenge gender stereotypes.
- ◆ Take appropriate measures to encourage the media to play a constructive role in the eradication of gender based violence by adopting guidelines which ensure gender sensitive coverage.

¹⁴ Meeting the media targets in the SADC Gender Protocol, paper prepared by Colleen Lowe Morna for the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance Meeting, August 2008, Johannesburg, South Africa

When reporting on news events and issues, always seek to INCLUDE:

- ✓ More than one perspective
- ✓ More than just the views of men
- ✓ More than just the views of those in powerful positions, or those considered experts
- ✓ More than just the traditional gender identities
- ✓ More than just the views of adults

AVOID:

- ✗ Making generalisations
- ✗ Concentrating on sensational issues when reporting on women and gender inequalities
- ✗ Stereotyping women and men

Guidelines for the portrayal of women

INCLUDE:

- ✓ Portrayals of women that challenge existing stereotypes, such as women in leadership positions
- ✓ The voices of women who are usually “invisible” in the media, such as rural women, women with disabilities and women from marginalised ethnic and social groups
- ✓ Descriptions of women as individuals in their own right, not as, for example, “the wife of...”, “the daughter of...”
- ✓ Stories that show women and men co-operating to build a just society, rather than constantly portraying gender relations as a conflict between men and women.
- ✓ Analysis of why women are excluded from certain roles in society

AVOID:

- ✗ Treating successful women as ‘honorary men’ or as astonishing exceptions
- ✗ Concentrating on women’s physical appearance when it is not relevant to the story
- ✗ Sensationalised stories featuring women who have stepped outside of traditional roles and committed acts considered to be deviant (*For example, many women in African countries who have publicly pronounced themselves as ‘feminists’ and who pursue a feminist agenda in their area of professional expertise, are portrayed negatively in the media as ‘out-of-the-ordinary’*)

Inter Press Service (IPS) Gender Guidelines for the Media

Guidelines for Sourcing

INCLUDE:

- ✓ Ordinary women as sources. The opinion of the “man in the street” is often used as a news source. Do not assume that the woman on the street always shares the same opinion
- ✓ Women as experts. Experts quotes in stories are usually men, but there are often many qualified women to given an expert opinion, and who may also be able to give a different perspective
- ✓ Marginalised voices. The powerful elite are over-used as a source of information. In addition to the official version, find out how the issue affects the most marginalised members of society, such as working-class women and poor women and men

AVOID:

- ✗ Tokenism – relying on one sex for the majority of views, and then using a single, token quote from the other sex
- ✗ Assuming that one woman speaks for all women. Women are a diverse group.

Activity for Chapter 2

Activity One: Gender-aware Political Reporting

Facilitator: Make photocopies of the story, Healing Powers, by Joshua Hammer (NEWSWEEK) to hand out to the participants. The story can be found at <http://www.truthout.org/article/healing-powers-africas-new-female-leaders>.

This story can be used in a discussion to illustrate several issues:

- ◆ It is an example of gender-aware reporting.
- ◆ It illustrates that women in politics and governance is a news story, which when contextualised, adds a strong, new angle to the media's reporting on politics and governance.
- ◆ It illustrates the strength of news analysis and in-depth reporting on issues beyond the standard focus on news events.
- ◆ It can be used to illustrate various aspects of good reporting – sources, data, context and background, among others – and good writing skills.

Participants can be divided into three (3) groups, given time to read the article, and each group can be given one of the following questions to report back and lead a discussion on with everyone:

1. Is this an example of a story that focuses on women, or is it an example of gender aware reporting? Give reasons for the group's choice.
2. Is this an example of reporting on "gender issues" or is it an example of reporting on politics and governance? Why is it a newsworthy article? Give reasons for the group's choice.
3. What are the strengths of this article? What are the weaknesses? What journalistic lessons emerge from this article on how to report on issues from a gender perspective?

Chapter 3: Understanding Why Gender Equality in Politics and Political Processes is Integral to Democracy

Who are the majority?

When politicians hit the campaign trail to address the masses of voters, a fundamental message that comes through is “change”. Those in power promise to do better, while those contending for spaces in the State Houses, Parliaments and Local Government seats also centre their messages around making life better for the majority of the people. And, the media is front stage and centre in covering campaigns and elections from as many angles as possible.

But what politicians and the media omit in the political messages of a change, is that the majority of the people in African countries are women.

The greater prominence of gender equality issues on the international and African agenda over the past 20 years or more is fostered by the vast amount of research and literature that illustrate that the attainment of gender equality and the full participation of women in decision making are key indicators of democracy.¹⁵ And, it is also advocated that the involvement of women in all aspects of political life produces more equitable societies and delivers a stronger and more representative democracy.¹⁶



Voters wait to vote during Zimbabwe's 2008 elections

Photo: Ephraim Nsingo

While Africa's politicians have made many pronouncements in the African Union and regional groupings' ¹⁷ declarations on the links between gender equality and democracy, and a large majority of governments at the national level have constitutions that enshrine the principle of gender equality, gender inequalities remain the status quo across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Women politicians and the media can become allies in making gender inequalities and their impact on a country's development, a central component of elections and national discourses on governance and economic development.

The lack of women's participation in political decision-making and public life has important consequences for society:

- ◆ It deprives women of important rights as well as responsibilities as citizens
- ◆ It excludes their perspectives from policies and legislation
- ◆ It prevents their input into national budgets and resource allocation
- ◆ It deprives society of women's skills, knowledge and perspectives.¹⁸

¹⁵ Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008, pg. 5

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ One example is the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development that is currently in the process of being upgraded to the SADC Protocol on Gender

¹⁸ 'Women's Human Rights in Politics, Public Life and the Media' in Local Action, Global Change', Learning about the Human Rights of Women and Girls, published by UNIFEM and the Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1999

Talking Point: Access, Representation and Influence

Three (3) principles that should govern public discussions and media reporting on why women should be in politics and governance within Africa are:

Access

Representation

Influence

Talk to each point with respect to the situation within the country where the training is taking place.



If democracy is based on access (consultation, dialogue) and representation (presence)¹⁹, then women - by virtue of their being the majority of the citizens (in terms of population) in many African countries - are entitled to entry into the public space.

Most of the advocacy and to some extent, media coverage, has focused more on women's representation in governance structures, rather than on the issue of women's access (consultation, dialogue) in governance and political processes. The 'lone' woman in public spaces cannot make a difference. A 'critical mass' of women is essential to reconstructing this space so that it is more representative of the society. This 'critical mass' now, according to the African Heads of States of the African Union is 50%. Rwanda is the only country close to this target.²⁰ In the country's September 2008 elections, Rwanda became the first country with a majority of female parliamentarians with at least 55% of those voted into Parliament being women. Without a 'critical mass', 'power removes women's voices', because their accountability is often to the male leadership of political parties.

Women often do form a "critical mass" in the membership of political parties and as voters. But the power of their numbers is often leveraged by men to maintain power.

Access and Representation

Concept for discussion

The "**effectiveness**" of women in politics is defined as the capacity of women politicians to mobilise support in their parties and in civil society for their policy agendas.

Source: *No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Philip, Cape Town, 2003

¹⁹ *No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Phillip, Cape Town, 2003
²⁰ CEDAW, The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making. A manual for speeding the pace of change, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), December, 2004, pg. 7

Women can and do make a difference in the public space. While the transformation of institutional cultures is still a challenge, women bring different voices and perspectives to issues. For example, at the local government level, women take up issues of access to basic needs and development amenities which benefit both women and men in communities.²¹



Talking Point! Women's representation in local government vs. national government

Are there more women in local government than national government structures? Some research suggests that women's access into local government in Africa seems to be 'less threatening' than women's access and participation in national government structures. Why might this be the case?

Accountability

One of the major roles that emerging independent media have played in Africa's push towards democracy has been that of the 'watchdog', relentlessly keeping governments accountable to human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Ensuring that governments uphold their national Constitutions and that they do not misappropriate public funds also is central to the media's watchdog function.

The media is still weak however, in playing the watchdog role when it comes to governments' compliance with international and African instruments promoting gender justice and the respect and protection of women's human rights.

Another important way for women politicians and the media to view accountability is the ability of women and men politicians to raise issues of gender equality and gender equity in accordance with the international and regional instruments a country has signed and/or ratified, and whether they exercise concrete influence through policy change and new accountability measures which are responsive to women.²²

The media should hold both male and female politicians accountable for the use of public funds, how they perform their jobs and for how they use or misuse the governance structures entrusted to them. And, both male and female politicians should be held accountable to using their positions and influence to effect a change in the political, economic and social status of women.

'**Accountability**' has two dimensions: the notion of '**answerability**', where power holders are obliged to explain and justify their actions, and the notion of '**enforceability**', where power holders suffer sanctions for mistakes or illegal behavior.²³ The primary accountability relationship is that of the state to citizens

²¹ See *At The Coalface, Gender and Local Government in Southern Africa*, edited by Colleen Lowe Norma and Susan Tolmay, Gender Links, South Africa, 2007

²² *No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Phillip, Cape Town, 2003

²³ Anna Marie Goetz drawing on the work of A. Schedler, 1999, in her chapter on *Women's Political Effectiveness: A Conceptual Framework in No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Phillip, Cape Town, 2003

where politicians answer to citizens through the electoral process, and the work of civil society organisations in monitoring the actions of representatives, while the other accountability functions are carried out in the ways in which different parts of the state – the legislature, the judiciary, the audit office and the public administration – monitor and hold other parts answerable.²⁴ None of these accountability mechanisms have worked well for changing women's subordination.

Talking Point! Accountability

Do the media and the public hold women and men politicians to different standards of accountability?

Do the media and the public hold women and men politicians to different standards of accountability when it comes to issues of gender equality and gender equity?

Why have the accountability mechanisms discussed in this chapter failed to make the State answer for its commitments to gender equality and gender equity?



There are several reasons why women are underrepresented in politics and governance structures despite repeated international and national commitments to equality. These include both structural and cultural barriers.²⁵

Women's participation may also be hindered by poor educational opportunities, gender stereotypes about women's capabilities and even the "old boy" networks that pave the way for many male politicians.²⁶

The media, women politicians and women and human rights activists within countries should continuously highlight the factors that lead to the omission of a large segment of countries' populations from the political and governance arenas as part of the discourse on access to participation in governance and decision-making. A critical spotlight focused consistently on the barriers to everyone's equal access and representation in politics and governance helps to challenge and breakdown the belief systems that perpetuate few women in politics and governance as the norm.

Obstacles to Women's Representation in Politics and Governance

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ CEDAW, The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making, A Manual for Speeding the Pace of Change, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), New York, December 2004

²⁶ Ibid

Box One:

Factors that deter women and men from entering politics and governance structures

Men

- ◆ Lack of support from the electorate
- ◆ Lack of financial resources
- ◆ Lack of support from political parties
- ◆ Lack of experience of representative functions such as public speaking or constituency relations

Women

- ◆ Domestic/family responsibilities
- ◆ Cultural attitudes regarding women's roles in society
- ◆ Lack of support from family
- ◆ A perceived lack of confidence
- ◆ Prominence of patriarchal and hierarchical norms that confine women within the domestic sphere
- ◆ Lack of financial support
- ◆ Lack of support from political parties
- ◆ Lack of experience with representative functions

Source: *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, 2008*; CEDAW, *The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making, A manual for speeding the pace of change*, WEDO, New York, 2004

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action states that achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.²⁷



Talking Point! Obstacles to women's participation in politics and governance

What are the main barriers to women's participation in politics and governance in your country?

What measures, and/or processes have been put in place to remove these barriers?

Give examples of the media's reporting on the barriers or measures and processes to remove the barriers.

²⁷ Paragraph 181 of the Beijing Platform for Action quoted in CEDAW, *The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making, A Manual for Speeding the Pace of Change*, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), New York, December 2004

When reporting on elections, the media must be knowledgeable of the roles the country's electoral system and political parties play in ensuring that **representation** is a key principle underpinning the country's politics and governance structures.

It is not enough to state this principle in the national constitution or in policy documents, if the electoral systems and party systems are designed to keep out some segments of the population. Electoral and party systems have an important influence on women's chances of election.²⁸

Box Two:

Electoral Systems²⁹

Constituency or "First Past the Post" – In this system, citizens vote not just for the party, but they vote also for the candidate who represents the party in a geographically-defined constituency. In this system, "the winner takes all".

Proportional Representation (PR) – In this system, also known as the "list system", citizens vote for parties that are allocated seats in parliament according to the percentage of votes they receive. Individual candidates get in according to where they are placed on the list. In an open-list system, voters determine where candidates sit on the list. In a closed-system, the party determines where candidates sit on the list, usually based on democratic nomination processes within the party.

Women have tended to be elected in greater numbers in systems of proportional representation than in constituency-based systems, because proportional systems allow political parties to:

- ◆ Nominate a list of candidates rather than an individual candidate as is the case in majority/plurality systems
- ◆ Increase women's representation by introducing specific measures (e.g. A provision that states that a certain proportion of candidates on the party's electoral list should be women).³⁰

Evidence from the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and other sources, indicates that of the countries in the world with the highest percentage of women parliamentarians, the majority have embraced systems that include proportional representation, while those with the worst track record for women's representation, use the *First Past the Post* (majoritarian) system.

²⁸ Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008, pg. 21

²⁹ Ringing Up the Changes, Gender in Southern African Politics, Colleen Lowe Morna, Editor, Gender Links, South Africa, 2004, pg. 56

³⁰ Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008, pg. 21

Political parties' commitment to the advancement of women therefore is key to the PR's system effectiveness in creating more spaces for women to enter into Parliament. Political parties maintain firm control over the selection of candidates to contest elections, and they determine the ranking order of candidates on the electoral ballot.³¹ Given the various barriers to women's participation discussed earlier, especially gender biases and prevailing cultural attitudes about women's roles in society, they are particularly at a disadvantage in fighting for strategic spots on parties' lists. And, if the parties' rules and methods for selection of candidates are ambiguous, or the parties' elites, mainly men, decide, then women candidates are likely to be placed rather low on the lists.

Electoral Quotas and Other Measures

All the countries that have reached a critical mass of women in their parliaments or legislatures use the PR system plus some form of quota or special measure. There are several types of quotas that can be used. As of 2004, only three countries in Africa – Rwanda, Mozambique and South Africa - had 30% or more women in Parliament.

Box Three:

African countries with a critical mass of women in Parliament ³²

Country	Electoral System	Quota (Affirmative Action)	% Women
Rwanda	PR in the Lower House: Winner-take-all in the Upper House (mixed system)	Legal Quotas, Zipper-Style: Constitution guarantees 24 seats reserved for women in the National Assembly; 30% in the Senate	55 *
Mozambique	PR, List System	Party Quotas, Zipper-Style: 40% women in party lists	30.2
South Africa	PR, List System	Party Quotas, Zipper-Style: 30% women in party lists since 1994	29.8

* As of 2008

Once a quota is in place, it can be implemented in a variety of ways. The most effective approach is the “zipper” style system, which alternates equal numbers of men and women on party lists. This helps ensure that women are not left at the bottom of the list and end up being the least likely to secure a seat.³³

³¹ Ibid

³² CEDAW, The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making, A Manual for Speeding the Pace of Change, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), New York, December 2004

³³ Ibid

Box Four:

Types of Quotas ³⁴

Voluntary party candidate quotas – These are gender quotas for compiling party lists for elections which are introduced by political parties. Candidate quotas imply that a minimum, of say 30 or 40 percent, of the candidates for election must be women.

Legal quotas – These are quotas for a certain percentage of women candidates that are instituted through legislation or the Constitution. They are binding for all political parties, and legal sanctions or penalties for non-compliance can be enforced.

Reserved seat quotas – This system sets a fixed minimum number or percentage of women to be elected. Reserved seats come in many forms, but are all part and parcel of the electoral system. Some define a special electorate which will elect a certain number of women parliamentarians (Uganda and Rwanda); others give an additional vote to the voters for an all-women list (Morocco) or, reserve certain constituencies for women candidates (India at the local level).

Talking Point: Electoral System and Special Measures!

The facilitator should find out prior to the training what type of electoral system is used in the country, as well as the use of any special measures to increase women's participation in the political process.

Ask the journalists to explain the electoral system in their country. If journalists are not knowledgeable of the system, emphasise the importance of understanding the electoral system in order to report on political processes and its contribution to good journalism.

Ask the female politicians to explain any initiatives that have taken place within their parties or other forums in order to change the electoral system, or initiatives to put in place special measures to increase women's participation in political processes. What were the successes and/or failures with these initiatives and why.





Talking Point! Why equality in decision-making is important in a democracy

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action points out several reasons for the importance of equality in decision making:³⁵

Equality in decision-making performs a leverage function for the integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making

Women's participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women

Women's equal participation in decision-making is a demand for democracy and is a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account

Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved

Talk to each point with information and data from your country.



Photo: Trevor Davis

³⁵ Paragraph 181 of the Beijing Platform for Action quoted in CEDAW, The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making, A Manual for Speeding the Pace of Change, Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), New York, December 2004

The following are pointers for journalists to include their reports when writing on elections and governance processes:

DO...

- ✓ Include a brief explanation of the type of electoral system(s) used for presidential, parliamentary and local government elections.
- ✓ Explain how the electoral system(s) is/are an advantage or disadvantage for women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Highlight the factors that contribute to women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Provide a brief discussion on the trends of women in political office, using verifiable and accurate data.
- ✓ Include information on which political parties have fielded women candidates and which have not, and why.
- ✓ Explain briefly what the parties' manifestoes say about gender equality and women's rights.
- ✓ Go beyond the event and the numbers to explain what they mean and why.
- ✓ Hold the government accountable by citing the legal and international rights instruments it has signed. But remember, citing is not the same thing as quoting – and you should try to avoid quoting from national, regional or international instruments and policies in your story. Instead, analyse whether government is on target with adhering to these instruments. This is done through the use of data to how well authorities are meeting the targets or commitments agreed to, and through the voices of relevant sources.
- ✓ Look for up-to-date statistics on women in governance and political structures, the most recent data on voters, among other relevant figures, and source the data used in the stories.
- ✓ Use sex-disaggregated data to illustrate where women are in politics in comparison to men.
- ✓ Include data on women and men as voters.
- ✓ Use data in context to illustrate gender gaps, trends and to provide an analysis of the gendered nature of politics in the country.

DON'T...

- ✗ Submit stories that are not well researched.
- ✗ Provide simplistic analysis of the coverage issue by omitting information on the country's electoral system(s), trends of women in political office, and parties' stated positions and actions on women's entrance into political office, gender equality and women's rights.
- ✗ List the factors that contribute to or inhibit women's entrance into political office without an analysis of why the factors prevail within your country's context.
- ✗ Submit a story without any data.
- ✗ Present data that is not sourced.
- ✗ Use out-of-date data.

Inter Press Service (IPS) Guidelines for Coverage

Activities for Chapter 3

Activity One: Panel Discussion

Prior to the training session, arrange a panel of four politicians (two females and two males) from different parties to come and speak on the following: *‘What can politicians and the media do to create more dialogue on the link between gender equality and democracy?’*

This session can be scheduled into the workshop’s programme to follow the facilitated discussion on *‘Understanding why gender equality is integral to democracy’*. Encourage the participants to formulate questions for the panellists based on issues raised in the chapter along with data on the situation within the country.

Time: One hour

Activity Two: Finding New Angles

This is a good practical exercise to use in an afternoon session.

Arrange the participants into three groups. Ask each group to come up with at least three story ideas for the media that emerge from the issues discussed in Chapter 3. For each story idea the group should list the following:

What is the angle of the story to be reported on for the issue chosen?

Which media would be most effective for reporting the story? [Print, Television, Radio]

When is it most timely to print or air the story?

Who within the group will commit to doing the story for his or her media house?

Give 40 minutes for the groups to discuss and put their ideas on flip chart. Allow 30 minutes for the report-back of each group (10 minutes per group). Use 20 minutes to develop on a flipchart a coverage plan of stories to be done, by whom and when, and use this as a way to track use of training by some of the media after the workshop.

If a small newsletter or newspaper insert is being produced as part of the training, this exercise can result in story assignments. The facilitator should give editorial feedback to the groups on the story ideas, looking at pointers to make the ideas good copy for the media.

Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Activity Three: Gender Equality and Democracy

Put the following quotation on an overhead projector, power point or write on flip-chart or board for everyone to see:

“Conflicting interests based on gender – while they do not lead to civil wars like racial and ethnic conflict – do produce smouldering and socially corrosive injustices and violence that delay development and undermine any State’s claim to the status of democracy.”

[Source: *No shortcuts to power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Phillip, Cape Town, 2003]

Divide participants into groups, or choose two female politicians and two journalists to form a panel. The groups and/or the panel should take 10 minutes to make notes on several issues within the context of their country’s national development which illustrate the essence of the statement. Use 20 minutes for the groups and/or panel to present their points and for discussion. The facilitator should sum up the discussion highlighting how reporting on gender inequalities is intrinsic to reporting on democratic processes in a country.

Time: 40 minutes

Chapter 4: Women, Politics and the News

Politics is Big News

If the front pages of newspapers or the main news items in television and radio broadcasts are any measure to go by, politics is big news in Africa. The political news can take many different formats which include, among others:

- ◆ A political figure who makes a pronouncement on an issue or event;
- ◆ A corruption scandal involving political officials;
- ◆ A political figure opening an event;
- ◆ The occurrence of a country's national elections;
- ◆ The intricacies of political parties;
- ◆ Government policies and performance (or non-performance) often linked by the media in Africa to the 'politics' of the government in power.

Often, the media conflates issues of politics and governance, reporting on these issues as if they are one and the same. But **politics** is the act of engaging in political discussion or activity, while **governance** refers to a government's act or process of governing. Governance is often politicised (*To give a political tone or character to*) in the media and in the way that African governments conduct their day-to-day governance functions.

One of the most comprehensive baseline studies on Gender in the Media, '*Women and Men Make the News, The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS)*' carried out in 12 Southern Africa countries in 2002 and published in 2003, found that about a quarter of all the over 25,000 news items monitored during the one-month study, in the print and broadcast media, related to politics and economics.³⁶

News is defined by the media in Africa using the same criteria and selection as media worldwide. What makes news, and what does not, often is not as objective as the media would like for their audiences to believe:

"...What constitutes "news" is partly whatever editors or news directors decide and partly a hundred years of tradition that has defined women and their issues as "soft" news, while politics is "hard" news and a man's domain."³⁷

Stories on women, politics and governance do not present themselves as 'events'. These are the hidden stories; the stories underneath the media's political news coverage of elections and governance.

To find these stories, journalists must begin to ask different questions, questions that move beyond just the Four '*Ws*', *who, what, when and where*, to questions such as *why, how* and even, *why not?* Asking the right question (s) can be the distinguishing factor between a good story and a great story – a story that makes an impact, upsets the status quo or reveals the human successes and tragedies of fighting against gender inequalities and injustices.

³⁶ Women and Men Make News, Gender and Media Baseline Study, Southern African Regional Overview, published by Gender Links and the Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2003

³⁷ Witt, Paget and Matthews, 1994, 182-83 quoted in Postfeminist News Political Women in Media Culture, by Mary Douglas Vavrus, State University of New York Press, 2002

Some of the key questions that the media can use to guide their coverage of politics and governance include:³⁸

- ◆ What are the conditions favouring women's political effectiveness?
- ◆ How have women been able to make their way into public life in such large numbers in societies not otherwise noted for equality between the sexes?
- ◆ What difference has it (women's presence in public life) made to the character of local and national political competition?
- ◆ What difference has large numbers of women in politics made in terms of advancing women's interests in legislative and policy changes?
- ◆ Does the state have the capacity to enforce commitments to gender equality and gender equity? If not, why not, and what must be done?



Talking Point! Understanding Gender Biases

To get the discussion started and to assess where journalists' biases may lie, ask them to write on a card (names not to be given) one main reason for the following question: **'Why do women politicians not make news?'**

If the seminar includes both journalists and female politicians as participants, ask both groups to write a response to the question on a card, and to only label whether the answer is from a 'journalist' or a 'politician'.

Arrange the cards on a wall or flip chart and scan the answers given. Discuss the points that emerge from the responses given.

³⁸ Questions adapted from *No shortcuts to Power – African Women in Politics and Decision Making*, edited by Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, ZED Books, London and New York; David Philip, Cape Town, 2003

³⁹ *Beijing Betrayed*, published by the Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), New York, March 2005

The “Construction” of Women in Politics by the Media

In proportion to their population size in many Africa countries, and worldwide, women still remain under-represented in politics and governance. In the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which the majority of African countries are signatories to, governments promised equal access to women and full participation in power structures and decision making, and agreed to put in place measures to increase the number of women to 30 percent in all governmental and public administration positions. But by 2005, only 15 countries had achieved this target up from 10 in 2000. The world average of women in national parliaments in 2004 stood at 15.6 percent compared to 13.8 percent in 2000.³⁹ And, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the African Union (AU) has now raised the bar by setting a target of 50% women in all governmental and public administration positions.

Even though women’s overall representation in politics and decision-making bodies is on the rise, women politicians are seldom central actors in the news media. In the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in which 78 countries worldwide took part in a one-day monitoring of the news, only 8 percent of the stories on politics and government had women as the central focus of the story.

Not only are women politicians still not seen in proportion to their gains in representation in governance structures, the media also do not view them as sources of news on politics and governance issues.

In the 2005 GMMP coordinated by the World Association of Christian Communications (WACC) with the technical backstopping of world renowned gender and media researcher Margaret Gallagher, women constituted only 14 percent of the sources on politics and government compared to 86 percent men. In Southern Africa’s 2003 GMBS in 12 countries, although women constituted at the time of the study an average of 18 percent of the members of parliament in the region, they constituted only 8 percent of the news sources in the category politician. In countries where women’s representation in parliament and cabinet was high, they were still almost invisible in the media. For example in South Africa, where there was 31 percent women in parliament and a similar proportion in cabinet at the time of the study, women constituted only 8 percent of the politicians quoted in the media monitored.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Women and Men Makes the News, Gender and Media Baseline Study Southern Africa, published by Gender Links and the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), 2003



Talking Point! 'Earn Respect, Earn A Voice'

Read the following excerpt from an interview with South Africa's Minister for Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, which appeared in the July 2008 Inter Press Service (IPS), www.ipsnew.net/Africa newsletter, *From Polls to Polls*:

IPS: *Many female politicians find it difficult to have their voices heard for reasons ranging from lack of funds to society's attitude towards women. How do you ensure your voice is heard?*

GF-M: *I don't have a sexy answer to this question. You basically have to earn respect and earn a voice. It's not something you can "buy". The media is often guilty of stereotyping women. I am the first woman politician in this portfolio and from my own experience I was once interviewed by a journalist – whose name I shall not mention – who said 'you are terrorising the unions'. Why not say, 'you are considered to be firm'? The challenge that lies therein is that we need to build a different value system.*

Discuss:

1. Why do the media describe women politicians differently than men as illustrated in the quote from Minister Fraser-Moleketi? How can this be changed?
2. Do male politicians have to 'earn respect' to 'earn a voice' in the media? Why or why not?
3. Develop a list of five-six key standards that all politicians should adhere to regardless of their sex. Now discuss whether the media holds women politicians to these standards more rigidly than men, giving examples from the media.
4. How can the media play a greater role in giving women politicians a voice?

Women in politics and governance are constructed by the media as 'women who have stepped out of the gender norm of remaining in the private' and they become news when:

- ◆ They are involved in a controversy or scandal;
- ◆ When women are fighting each other;
- ◆ When they are identified with a 'man of power';
- ◆ When they do something that is 'out of the ordinary', often interpreted by the media as 'being tough' like men instead of 'soft'.

Women in the public space often are not portrayed in the same ways as their male counterparts. The portrayal of women in politics in and through the media often sends broader messages such as: 'politics is not for women'; or even the message that 'women who are in politics are not good women'. The language used in stories on women in politics is one clue of the underlying gender biases in the media. For example, look at the following two excerpts from stories published in the media:

Saturday Star, South Africa, June 30, 2007

If the Iron Lady mantle fits, wear it, Geraldine

Fraser-Moleketi proves she's no soft touch

Big-haired, bespectacled and with the hectoring style of a school-mistress, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi may be one of the youngest of South Africa's old leftie politicians, but her attempt to crush the public sector strike has invited comparisons between herself and a conservative icon, Britain's Margaret Thatcher.

Like Britain's Iron Lady who took on and beat – the might of the mineworkers, led by the National Union of Mineworkers

leader Arthur Scargill, our minister of public service and administration has faced down Cosatu leader Zwelinzima Vavi.

Back in 1995, when Fraser Moleketi was still a frilly-bloused communist, her wild locks and open face made her a media darling, a genuine *meisiekind*.

But today her hair has become a helmet, her clothing corporate, often favouring a twin-set-and-pearls look, and she long ago tip-toed away from the Communist Party to join the inner circle of power...

Petticoats in the mud bath

The 1999 Botswana Democratic primary elections saw scores of Botswana women throw their hats into the ring. However, in the week of the International Women's Day celebration, women activists had very little to celebrate about.

You are a woman politician whose husband had earlier lost Parliamentary elections in a bruising mud bath.

Since there are more women electorates than men, you believe you stand a better chance of making it to parliament....



Talking Point!

Photocopy the excerpts or put them on power point for discussion with the group. Highlight together the words and phrases in each of the excerpts that illustrate how language is used differently for women in politics than for men. What messages are sent through the words and phrases used?

Use the first example and ask participants to re-write the first four paragraphs without gender-insensitive language. Share their re-writes with everyone.

Another prominent image of women in politics in the African media is that of women as the “chanters, dancers and faithful party supporters”. This image is most prevalent in the visual media (television and news photographs) during elections and party rallies when it is most often women captured by the lens in party regalia dancing and singing to show their support. But the degree of organisation of women's structures within political parties is not often a story for media investigation until this structure either throws its political weight behind a specific candidate or there is turbulence within its own ranks. The viability of women's structures within political parties, their roles, their effectiveness to push issues that advance women's interests in political processes and in policy-making, and their influence in leveraging the power of women voters are media stories still largely untold stories.

Talking Point! The Media and Women – Uganda’s 2006 Elections

The February 23, 2006 elections in Uganda were significant because: (a) this was the first multiparty competition after a two decade freeze on party politics and (b) it was the first time in the country’s history that a woman, Miria Obote, was among the five presidential candidates. She was elected president for the UPC and led the party in the 2006 elections.

However, an analysis of the media’s coverage of the historic elections by the Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET), showed that the media gave prominence to the male presidential candidates, especially the incumbent; when there was coverage of women, the media focused on their weaknesses; the media concentrated on whether women candidates were beautiful, married or divorced; and one newspaper carried a supplement, “Marital Bliss” in which leading female politicians were asked to comment on the fact that “politics just does not seem to settle in well with marriage”.⁴¹

Discuss with participants:

1. What are the factors within the media that lead to the type of coverage of women in the political process found by UWONET in its analysis of the media’s coverage of that country’s 2006 elections?
2. What steps can the media take to shift this type of coverage of women in politics?



Photo: Trevor Davis

⁴¹ From Movement to Multiparty Politics: A Highlight of Women’s Voices on Uganda’s Transition Process, published by Uganda Women’s Network, Kampala, Uganda

Politics and Finance – The Seeds of a Good and Missing Story

When politics and money are mixed, this is most likely to make headlines. The focus by the media on money during elections is on the misappropriation of money or the use of money by candidates and parties to “buy votes” in the figurative and literal senses. But campaign financing is cited as one of the biggest obstacles to both women and men seeking political office.

Nearly a quarter of the 272 parliamentarians in 110 countries in every region of the world who responded to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) global survey of women and men parliamentarians, published in 2008 as *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, noted that they faced funding challenges in contesting and winning an election.⁴²

Women are at more of a disadvantage than men, because in addition to having access to less power and fewer resources than men, they have to prove themselves as worthy candidates, build name recognition, canvass and be selected.⁴³



Photo: Miriam Mannak

Various options have been proposed to level the playing field for both women and men political candidates such as limiting or capping campaign expenditure and implementing funding mechanisms to support women’s candidacies; and a report of an IPU parliamentary conference on financing for gender equality found that grants and loans can also be provided to assist women with prohibitive campaign costs, and a portion of the funding allocated to political parties could be earmarked for capacity-building programmes for women.⁴⁴

On the campaign and election trail, political reporting should focus too on the financing of campaigns and how this factor can be a major contributor to keeping women and other groupings out of the political processes, leading to governance structures that are not representative.

A story to follow in strengthening the voices and visibility of women in elections and political processes is the flow of resources into the political system. Is there a government funding mechanism? Who is benefiting? Is this in compliance with any existing regulations?⁴⁵ Remember as stated earlier in this chapter, ‘asking the right questions’ is critical to uncovering the hidden stories that need to be told, and one of the fundamental roles of the media is not to just report on what is seen, but to keep the spotlight on that which is hidden.

⁴² Julie Ballington, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, 2008, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, pg. 19

⁴³ Julie Ballington, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, 2008, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, pg. 20

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Questions adapted from CEDAW, *The Optional Protocol and Women in Decision-Making*, A manual for speeding the pace of change, published by the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), New York, December, 2004, pg. 28

Language

1. Does the story contain language that promotes sexism, gender bias or discrimination, or gender stereotypes.
2. Avoid language that promotes "ageism:" "...the 60-year-old woman candidate..." etc. There may well be stories where age has to be mentioned and analysed – an item on a by-election where all candidates are octogenarians, in defiance of national trends, for instance – but as a general rule writers need to be cautious about age.
3. Are there any specific adjectives used to describe the character or physical appearance of women politicians or candidates that convey bias?
4. Is the physical description of a female politician or candidate relevant to the story? Would you apply the use of physical description equally to men and women politicians or candidates.
5. Is the language used inclusive of women and men?

Do...

- ✓ Check carefully before submitting stories to ensure that no language, phrases or adjectives that perpetuate sexism and gender bias have been used.
- ✓ Use inclusive terms such as "women and men", "man and woman" – and pronouns such as "they" and "them" – to avoid the use of generic "he" and "man" for all people.
- ✓ Avoid words that exclude women, such as "chairman", "mankind", "manpower", "man-made", "man-to-man" and "gentleman's agreement", among others – or words that exclude men such as "housewife", among others.
- ✓ When using gender neutral terms such as "farmers", "traders", "entrepreneurs", "children", "detainees", "parents", "peasants", "professionals", the "poor" and "workers", among others, be sure to use sex disaggregated data in the story to show where women are located in these groupings.
- ✓ Use the 'IPS Gender and Development Glossary' (available in English and French) and other sources on sexist language to avoid perpetuating discrimination and stereotypes in reporting on women in politics.

DON'T...

- ✗ Describe women's physical appearance or the way they are dressed unless this is central to the feature. If you feel the need to describe what a female candidate is wearing, ensure that you do so in a way which does not discriminate against her (do not mention a woman's appearance while failing to describe that of the men she is competing with, for instance – and do not write about which woman is considered the "best dressed" of various female candidates, a categorisation not generally applied to men). In addition, guard against descriptions that simply endorse images which candidates are trying to put forward about themselves (a male candidate trying to appear "a son of the soil" through dressing casually, for example). Your job is to analyse campaign strategies – not further them..
- ✗ Use "he" or "man" as generic terms for all people.
- ✗ Use words that exclude women, such as "chairman", including the phrase "male domain" unless used in italics or quotes as stated by a source, among others.
- ✗ Use words that exclude men.
- ✗ Use the language that demonises or trivialises women politicians.
- ✗ Use language or phrases to describe women according to their marital or family status, while the same is not done to describe or label male politicians.

Inter Press Service (IPS) Guidelines for Coverage

Activities for Chapter 4

Activity One: The Portrayal of Women in Politics

Prior to the seminar/workshop, the facilitator should look for stories on women in politics in the country's media (both print and broadcast) that can be used for participants to read and discuss in line with several of the points outlined in the chapter on Women, Politics and the News. It is good to look for both weak and strong stories that illustrate 'what not to do', as well as 'good examples of how to tell the story of women in politics'.

Below are two stories from Inter Press Service News Agency. Divide participants into groups. Give each group one of the stories to read, and ask them to outline the strengths, weaknesses of the story (*the checklist Handouts should be used too in analyzing the stories*), and ask each group to give pointers on how they would do the story differently.

Caught Between Leaving the Kitchen and Putting Food on the Table

When Iyeshia Josiah told people last year that after the August 2007 general elections, she would stand before them as a new member of parliament for Sierra Leone, they thought she was joking.

A woman trying to step onto the political stage can generate surprise verging on condemnation in this West African country, even a woman as qualified as Josiah – an experienced women’s rights and literacy campaigner.

“I had the confidence to venture into this very rare area (for a woman) that is political participation, which has been referred to as men’s business,” said Josiah, exuding a calm determination.

Her bid for office was short-lived: she did not succeed in getting party support for her candidacy, allegedly because of fraud in the primaries. However, Josiah’s experience has highlighted the challenges that would-be female parliamentarians face ahead of the Aug. 11 ballot.

The presidential and legislative poll will be just the second in Sierra Leone since the end of a brutal, 11-year civil

war in 2002 – and the first since the 2005 withdrawal of United Nations peacekeepers who helped ensure that the country remained secure for the last general election, in 2002.

Not least amongst the obstacles confronting women are difficulties created by the return to a constituency-based electoral system earlier this year.

For the 2002 elections and a previous poll in 1996, Sierra Leone used a system of proportional representation which allocates seats to parties according to the share of the vote that they win. Political groupings, in turn, allocate seats to candidates who figure on party lists.

Proportional representation is widely held to be more effective in enabling women to win office: it is considered easier to get parties to take an en-lightened view of women’s participation in politics – and nominate female candidates to their lists – than to fight discrimination against women at the level of individual constituencies. In the 2002 polls, the number of seats in female hands tripled, and women now hold 14 percent of parliamentary posts.

The reintroduction of the constituency system has thus raised fears

that it will be harder for women to win seats in next month’s vote, says Nemata Eshun-Baiden, co-founder of the 50/50 Group – a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that aims to increase women’s political participation.

In addition, deeply-rooted beliefs that confine women to domestic roles continue to prevent them from participating more actively in politics.

“Sierra Leone is still grappling with how you have women in decision-making positions,” notes Valnora Edwin, coordinator of the Campaign for Good Governance – an NGO. “In the south...traditional leaders stated they would not allow women to participate in any politics...because they said the women don’t respect the men.”

While there are now three female cabinet ministers, and a woman at the head of the National Electoral Commission, none of Sierra Leone’s three main political parties has selected a woman as its presidential candidate.

Laws and policies entrench traditional beliefs: under customary law, which governs most of the country, a woman is considered her husband’s possession.

“The tradition here is patriarchy and therefore all of the decisions, all of the policies, have been done by men,” said Josiah. “Asking the men to revisit those policies and the decisions from some time ago has not been easy.”

Nonetheless, women’s groups are pushing for 30 percent of seats in parliament to be reserved for women, reflecting the widely-held view that female legislators need to control a third of seats to exercise influence in parliament.

Health Minister Abator Thomas is hopeful that legislation to introduce this quota will ultimately be passed. “Women and men have been sensitised that women are not just for the kitchen...As we say, we should be in parliament as well,” she says.

But while it’s true that women are not “just for the kitchen”, many are necessarily more concerned with what they are serving for dinner than serving in parliament – pervasive poverty being as effective a deterrent of political hopes as tradition.

Sarah Mansaray has been selling her goods at the Congo Town market in the capital, Freetown, for 13 years. Worrying daily about how to put food on the table, Mansaray’s only concern about the upcoming election is that it should bring her some relief. “If the

cost of living goes down, if our children go to school, and if hospital fees come down, I will be grateful,” she says.

According to the 2006 United Nations Human Development Report, about three-quarters of people in Sierra Leone live on less than two dollars a day. Widowed by the war, many women struggle to support children on their own.

At a recent workshop held by the Mano River Women’s Peace Network and the Sierra Leone Armed Forces Wives Co-operative Society, the agenda included discussing the importance of women’s participation in the election; but delegates soon started echoing the observations made by Mansaray, in Congo Town.

“We want water! We want lights! We want salary increases!” urged Sarah Conteh, one of the military wives, her voice rising in frustration. Conteh’s peers in the bustling military hall where the workshop was held chimed in with a chorus of agreement.

Poverty also conspires with tradition to deny women the education that is key to contesting polls.

Josiah says the law stipulates a certain level of schooling on the part of candidates. But, only one in every four women in Sierra Leone can read,

according to the 2006 United Nations Human Development Report. “So you see that if the bulk of women are illiterate, it is a small percentage that even qualifies for what we are talking about,” added Josiah.

Notes Edwin: “Look at the capacity of...women. How many have attended higher education that would enable them to occupy those (parliamentary) seats? Very few.”

In addition, a lack of finances could prove a hurdle under the return to constituency politics, as some claim that candidates will inevitably be forced to dip into their own pockets to gain victory in their constituencies – an expense that didn’t arise when seats were allocated according to party lists.

“You need a lot of money to win this election, and the women don’t have money,” says Eshun-Baiden, who fears the higher costs will discourage women from even running. To date, 64 women are in the parliamentary race; the total number of candidates is reportedly 572.

Still, Josiah believes that the people best suited to making the changes to benefit women are women themselves.

Her next step? “I’m about to train women political aspirants.”
(END/2007)

What have Eight Years of Democracy Done for Women Politicians?

“Men are the decision makers; women should be cooking in the kitchen while men play politics.” This is the type of comment that Dorothy Ukel Nyone’s male counterparts repeatedly made when she announced her intention to contest a seat in Nigeria’s state elections, which got underway Saturday.

Nyone, who wanted to represent the Gokana area in south-eastern Rivers State for the ruling People’s Democratic Party, was undaunted.

“I drew up a manifesto and went ahead with mobilising a lot of support, especially among my fellow women, and I was confident that I would win the party primaries,” she told IPS. But on the day of the primaries, held to elect candidates, Nyone learnt a head lesson about Nigerian politics.

Certain contestants came to the venue with armed thugs, and violence broke out even before the start of the vote. Chairs were thrown, then guns, knives and other weapons were used.

“A ward chairman was shot dead; all the women and most of the men fled the scene. My husband rushed there and quickly took me home. I was scared,” said Nyone. “Men who were

fully prepared for the violence were the only ones who remained behind to hand pick the various winners.”

Nyone’s case is not unique.

“Women in Nigeria face a lot of odds when they contest against men,” Princewill Akpakpan of the Civil Liberties Organisation, a non-governmental grouping based in the financial hub of Lagos, told IPS.

“Our politics has never been on merit or issues; rather it is about those who have all it takes to force their way into office,” he said. “The parties often want those who can match violence with violence, those who can coerce people to vote for them.” Men are widely held to be more prepared to engage in violence than women.

Since independent from Britain in 1960, no woman has been elected governor in any of Nigeria’s 36 states – and the West African country has never had a female president.

Emem Okon, executive director of the Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre – a non-governmental organisation based in Port Harcourt, south-eastern Nigeria – told IPS that meetings held with female aspirants had identified other problems confronting them.

“One of these is the lack of economic power to run for elected office,” she noted, saying men were generally better off than women, something that gave them a head start in financing campaigns.

Okon also pointed to the role played by so-called “god fathers” in Nigerian politics. These are persons who provide the financial and physical muscle for campaigns in return for political favours: god fathers are often accused of using their proxies to loot public funds.

“God fathers would rather invest their resources in men than women,” Okon said; the belief is that men stand a better chance of winning than women.

Notes Great Ogboru, a candidate for governor in Delta State, southern Nigeria: “Women are stifled because of greed and avarice, and something must be done to correct this.”

In addition, said Okon, men at the helm of affairs of political parties sometimes subject women seeking elected posts to sexual harassment.

Tradition, customs and religion also hamper women, as Nyone can attest. “In a male dominated society like Nigeria, female politicians are faced with the difficult task of convincing

their husbands, families and society that they are capable,” observed Okon.

The Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre is amongst groups trying to ensure that women get more representation. Okon says her organisation has a programme to assist women contesting the April elections –which also include next week’s poll for the presidency and national assembly.

“We are training female candidates in campaign strategies, and also giving them material assistance – for example, posters are being printed for some of them.”

But Nyone believes political violence will remain the strongest factor militating against female politicians; this marks a new hurdle to be overcome by Nigeria, which has just experienced eight years of civilian rule after 16 years

of military dictatorship.

“I am not ready to go through it again. I was in the field doing all the hard work in order to win the party primaries, but the men sat at home taking decisions as to who should be declared winner,” she said.

“Very few women have the courage to go through this kind of violence a second time.” (END/2007)



Photo: Miriam Mannak

Activity Two: Spotting gender relations in the coverage of women in politics by the media

Are women politicians seen in positions of power or are they seen in low status activities?

Are women politicians seen actively asserting themselves in activities associated with power?

Who is seen more frequently providing information, women or men politicians? Giving speeches?

Are the roles of women politicians active or passive?

Are their activities traditional or non-traditional?

What is the sex of those most often seen as political spokespersons or the voice of authority? ⁴⁶

Use newspaper articles or watch television news broadcasts and answer the questions above to see how gender power relations are represented in the media's coverage of politics and politicians.

Time: 45 minutes

⁴⁶ Adapted from Whose Perspective? A guide to gender-sensitive analysis of the media, Women's Media Watch Jamaica, 1998

Chapter 5: Framing Issue from a Women's Rights and Gender Equality Perspective

What are Frames?

Issues of gender equality and women's rights are not often framed by the media or politicians as "political issues" or as "issues of democracy and human rights".

One of the most important steps towards social change that needs to be made is for the media and for women and men politicians to bring the issues of gender equality, gender equity and women's human rights into the political discourse and political processes.

Frames, as University of California Berkeley Professor George Lakoff explains in his bestseller book, *don't think of an elephant! KNOW YOUR VALUES AND FRAME THE DEBATE*, are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions.⁴⁷

In politics our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out policies. To change our frames is to change all of this. Reframing is social change. Reframing is changing the way the public sees the world. It is changing what counts as common sense.⁴⁸

In Chapter 4 on *Women, Politics and the News* and in the editorial checklists provided in this handbook, much emphasis has been placed on language. This is primarily because language activates frames (in this case how we view women's place in the public sphere), and new language is required for new frames. Thinking differently requires speaking (and writing) differently.⁴⁹ Framing, as Lakoff says, is about getting language that fits your worldview.⁵⁰

If we look at how the media in Africa, for example, has framed African women's advocacy for equality, equity, democracy and justice in the public and private spheres, the dominate frame has been one of *women stepping out of their place to take power from men*. Therefore, some of the dominant messages have been:

- ◆ Women fighting men for power
- ◆ Women destroying culture
- ◆ Women reducing men to housewives
- ◆ Women trying to become men

Yet, at the same time in their reporting and public discussions on political processes, political rights and elections in many African countries, **the media and aspiring politicians promote the values of justice, equality, access, democracy and freedom for everyone**. But, there is more than enough research, data and information on the ground that shows that for the majority of African women, who comprise more than 50% of Africa's population, poverty, exclusion, violence and discrimination remain the biggest obstacles to these values being translated into their day-to-day lived realities.

⁴⁷ George Lakoff, *don't think of an elephant! KNOW YOUR VALUES AND FRAME THE DEBATE*, published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company, White River Junction, VT, USA, 2004, pg. xv

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ George Lakoff, *don't think of an elephant! KNOW YOUR VALUES AND FRAME THE DEBATE*, published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company, White River Junction, VT, USA, 2004, pg. 4

How the media and politicians understand and communicate on women's economic security, their participation in governance and political processes, violence and discrimination and on women's rights as human rights is therefore strategic to situating issues of gender equality, equity and justice into the mainstream of national development and the building of democratic societies in Africa.

Communications: This is a means of sharing information 'packaged' in different ways and conveyed using the media and messages customised for different audiences. Communications is a tool to influence and involve stakeholders, the general public and policy makers. It is one of the most important tools for advocacy efforts.

Source: *Making a Difference Strategic Communications to End Violence against Women*, UNIFEM, 2003

Talking Point!

Use the following question to prompt a discussion. List the answers that come from the group on flip chart or board, and analyse whether women's human rights and their political, social and economic status within a society are hidden in political parties 'progressive' discourse on rights.

When parties not in power challenge governments in power for not respecting human rights, 'Which human rights and whose human rights are they talking about?'



Talk facts, figures and impact

As noted earlier in Chapter One of this handbook, when the first baseline study on gender in editorial content (*Women and Men Make the News Gender and Media Baseline Study*) was conducted some six years ago in Southern Africa, the research confirmed what was already known: the media do not provide wide access to freedom of expression to women.

Women politicians, for example as stated earlier in this handbook, were only eight percent of the sources in the politician occupation category in the more than 100 media studied at a time when they constituted, for example, 18 percent of the members of parliament in the region.

When the findings were put to editors throughout the region, many did not deny the figures and had their own explanations for why women politicians did not get sound bites or voices in the media. One memorable defence of the low percentages of women politicians speaking in the media came from a then news editor in Zimbabwe who remarked that women members of parliament did not talk about the “hard issues” like land, agriculture and economics. What did they talk about? “Sanitary ware”.

At the time, women parliamentarians in that country had joined forces with women in civil society organisations and poor women and girls throughout the country to advocate for the reduction of the high tariffs on sanitary products to ensure that they were affordable and accessible. A clear economic issue – a high import tariff on a non-luxury item, in this case mainly used by females, to generate revenue - but media editors saw it more as a “soft” women and girls issue which had no place in parliamentary debates.

While it will take longer to change the media’s gender biases and prejudices that often dictate what does and what does not make news, as well as who will speak on what, women politicians should continue to build their knowledge and facts to speak to the issues pertinent to the constituencies they represent. The media too can miss the story. But women politicians can bring out the story for the media in the way that they frame an issue or event when speaking.

Engaging with the media at any time often will provide women politicians with the opportunity to put their particular spin on an issue or to make the issue news. True, this is an art which requires good communications skills. But the rough and tumble world of politics calls for women politicians to learn the art of good communications and when to speak to the media, both of which are critical to their success as politicians.

One of the best ways to gain confidence to do this is for women politicians to become reliable and authoritative experts on an issue. Whether it is violence against women, renewable energy or the need for economic strategies that promote both growth and development, it is always important to **talk facts, figures and impact**.

Talk facts: means that women politicians must constantly find ways to stay up-to-date and knowledgeable of issues and topics in order to competently place the gender dimensions at the centre of the issues they speak about on the campaign trail, in parliament, in Cabinet or at any forum. This can be done through reading research and other articles, as well as liaising with non-governmental organisations and academics who may be consistently working on these issues or topics. Waffling and talking off the top of one's head leads to speaking in generalities to hide one's lack of knowledge. If the media is given accurate facts, along with one's views, the issue will be better reported, and a different debate can be framed.

Talk figures: calls for an understanding of how numbers - especially data disaggregated by sex - can be just as significant in illustrating a problem or an achievement, as words. Data helps to magnify that an issue is a problem that should be taken seriously. It also helps to minimise hype – blowing issues and events out of context. Using data when speaking on an issue can help the media to see why issues of women's rights, among others, should be on the news agenda. And, like any information given to the media, the data should be as recent as it can be given the challenges of data collection in many African countries. The data should also be sourced – tell the media where the data comes from.

Talk impact: Someone is affected. Who are the people behind the numbers? What is the human angle to the issue? Again, when speaking in parliament or any forum, women politicians should bring the strength of the human perspective to the table. This can be done by finding out who is most affected by a policy, issue or event and taking time to talk to these people to hear their side of the story. These become the anecdotes that lift the fact and figures into real life.

Remember that the three principles above take time, planning and effort. But so does effective communications. By talking facts, figures and impact, women politicians can not only build their own knowledge and competency, but can also help to put substance back into political debates and discussions in African politics; and, also back into the news.



Talking Point!

In Tanzania, several civil society organisations have grouped together to provide on-the-job capacity building for women in parliament. The capacity building for women in governance dates back as far as 1999 with the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) providing aspiring women politicians with campaign skills. Women parliamentarians in the expanded training programme are given for example, debate skills, communications skills, knowledge of gender budgeting and other issues, and are provided with the opportunity to study how women parliamentarians are effective in other countries through study visits.⁵¹ This programme is one way to mentor women politicians who often are not mentored through the “old boys networks” that are accessible to new male politicians.

Discuss with women politicians:

What are their capacity building needs and how have these been met?

Where are the gaps?

Discuss with journalists:

How have they been trained to report on gender equality and women’s human rights issues?

Where are the gaps

Discuss with both groups:

What steps can women politicians and journalists take within their own countries to shape together a reframing of the public and political discourse on gender equality and women’s human rights?

⁵¹ Colleen Lowe Morna, editor, Ringing Up the Changes, Gender in Southern African Politics, published by Gender Links, South Africa, 2004, pg. 117-118

⁵² George Lakoff, don’t think of an elephant! KNOW YOUR VALUES AND FRAME THE DEBATE, published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company, White River Junction, VT, USA, 2004, pg. 33

Talk values

The values we hold are central to shaping our ideas and the language we used to express these ideas about the way we see, or want to see our societies. Lakoff argues that it is important to “*speak from your moral perspective at all times. Progressive policies follow from progressive values. Get clear on your values and use the language of values.*”⁵²

More often than not, the media and to a large extent many politicians in Africa have evoked **conservative values** on gender equality and women’s human rights issues **in the public discourse and the media’s reporting on these issues**, even though governments in Africa are signatories to international and regional declarations and rights instruments that promote **progressive values** on issues of gender equality and women’s human rights. The contradiction of this is not lost on the millions of African women who remain poor and excluded; nor should this contradiction be lost in the media’s reporting on a continent that despite an overall economic growth rate of 5.8% in 2007, has not seen this economic growth recovery translated into meaningful social development for poor and vulnerable groups, and which has had little or no impact on gender equality and the status and condition of women’s lives.⁵³

Therefore, the issues of values are strategic to reframing the discussion of gender equality and women’s human rights and to the situation of this discussion within political discussions and political reporting on the path to democracy in Africa. This is not to say that everyone will hold the same values on all issues, nor should they. What is important is to understand what values are shaping our views and the media’s reporting on issues, rather than continuing down the gender-blind or gender-neutral path of building democratic societies.

Talking Point!

What are the values that shape the advocacy for women’s equality and human rights?

What are the values that shape the way the media reports on women’s equality and human rights?

Are the values identified that inform the media’s reporting on women’s equality and human rights consistent with journalistic principles? Why or why not?

Discuss why the values shaping advocacy on gender equality and women’s human rights and the media’s reporting on these issues are different or the same?

Summarise the key points that emerge from the discussion.



⁵³ United Nations, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Draft 1 Concept Note/Issues Paper for the September 22, 2008 African Women’s Forum organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) during the UN’s High Level Meeting on Africa

Activities for Chapter 5

Activity One: What are the values of a democracy?

Split the participants into two to three groups. Give each group a flipchart and ask each group to describe the principles of a democratic society using the following questions as a guide:

How would you characterise citizen participation in a democracy?

What should be the concentration of political, corporate and media power?

How should elections be financed?

Whose role is it to provide education and health?

What type of economy?

What are rights? Are there limits to what is to count as “a right”? For example, is abortion a right? Is government assistance a right? Is it a right to know how all policy decisions are made by a government? Are there limits to who has rights? If so, why?

Each group should display and explain their principles of a democratic society. Discuss where the groups’ moral values begin to shape their answers.

Time: 45 minutes

Activity Two: Reframing Issues

In a workshop session, divide participants into two groups.

Ask Group One to:

Discuss the similarities and differences between: **Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence.**

Which one would they choose to reframe the public discussions, media reporting and policy decisions being made in countries, and why?

Ask Group Two to:

Discuss the similarities and differences between: **Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights.**

Which one would they choose to reframe the public discussions, media reporting and policy decisions being made in countries, and why?

The groups should prepare their feedback on flipcharts or on computers for power point presentation if facilities exist. Discuss together the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented by the two groups. The facilitator should be informed of the principles and differences of the issues in order to guide the participants towards understanding the different threads, values and principles that inform the issues given for the group work.

Time: One hour.

What is Media?

When asked to define their role in any society, media practitioners often state that their role is:

- ◆ To inform
- ◆ To educate
- ◆ To entertain
- ◆ To be a watchdog of government

But the media also can be a catalyst for change, a mirror of society that reinforces the status quo, or a conduit through which the voices, perspectives and lives of those who are vulnerable and on the margins are brought into the public sphere. The radio, TV and newspapers give us information through news, current affairs programmes, and talk shows. They also entertain through TV soaps, films, game shows, music and sitcoms. It is through advertisements on radio, TV and in the newspapers that we know about goods and services for sale.⁵⁴

The media do this by providing credible and reliable information that is collected and edited based on the media guiding principles of **accuracy, fairness, diverse views and balanced representation**.

The media's ability to carry out this role depends greatly on whether the media operate within political and legal environments which enable free speech, reasonably unfettered access to information, free media, and economic and political environments which encourage and promote the development of a plurality of media.

Because the process of collecting, editing and choosing what is news is not purely objective, media and communications researchers and analysts have identified several other key roles the media play in any society:

- ◆ Shape public opinion and attitudes
- ◆ Determine the public discourse and thereby shape our political, cultural and economic priorities
- ◆ Influence public policy through the news agenda
- ◆ Reinforce or challenge gender, racial and other stereotypes and norms
- ◆ Serve as the channel through which the public communicates to policy makers and through which policy makers communicate to the public.
- ◆ Media can act as catalysts for social change through coverage of injustices and the marginalisation of populations in society which often have little access to expression in the public sphere. In other words, the media can give a voice to those who often find their voices marginalised.

Box Five:

Types of media

There are three types of media that women politicians and women in the public sphere can use to advance their issues:

The form of media that reaches large audiences daily is what is known as **mainstream** or **mass media**. Newspapers, magazines and the broadcast mediums of television and radio fall into this category. Mass media is often general in its content in order to cater for a diverse audience. Mass media view audiences as both consumers of information and of goods and services. Advertising is essential to the sustainability of the mass media. Mass media can be owned and operated by the state (often in developing countries worldwide), public or private interests.

Community media, on the other hand, are limited to certain geographical areas and targeted at smaller groups of people. This media caters for people in towns, rural areas; close-knit communities which seek to keep themselves informed on issues of interest. Unlike in the mainstream media where the control of information and messages is vested in the hands of the media practitioners, there is more room for people within a local community to participate in the governance and editorial operations of this form of media.

New media is the term used to refer to the New Information and Communications Technologies (NICTs) which include web sites, web portals, e-mail, e-mail news alerts, listservs, and blogs. The new technology is used by those involved in mainstream media in that many of these media have web-based editions of their information and news products. But the information technology revolution also has opened the space for civil society, special interest groups, as well as individuals to create their own sites for disseminating information and viewpoints. Outside of the mainstream media sites, one of the major concerns surrounding the use of new media is the accuracy and credibility of the information provided.

Understanding the media's various roles, its power and sphere of influence and the role it can play in bringing about change are essential for women politicians to understand how to use the media as public officials. It is important for women politicians to gain knowledge of what media exists in their own countries, and it is strategic to know more details about them in order to strategize on which media to use at different points in time and to get messages to different audiences.

Box Six:

Gathering Information on the Media – What women Politicians Can Do

1. Make a list of the major media in your country. Divide them into print and broadcast media, mainstream and community (where appropriate). Find out from each media's marketing and circulation department, the numbers of readers, listeners and viewers so that you have an idea of the media's reach and influence in your community.
2. Who owns the various media?
3. Is there a public broadcaster? How is it funded?
4. How many community media exist? Who owns these media and how do they operate?

Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Media ⁵⁵

Type of Media	Advantages	Disadvantages
Newspapers and Magazines (Mass Media)	Reach large audiences Powerful Permanent Can explain issues in depth	Language and literacy May reach only those with access in urban areas May not be affordable for many people
Radio (Mass Media)	Reach large audiences Accessible (especially to those in the rural areas) Can be participatory and elicit immediate response (i.e. call in programmes)	Message may be transient May not be sure of audience number Can send mixed messages, i.e. station may promote different message
Television (Mass Media)	Potential to reach large audiences Dramatic and emotive Can be participatory and elicit immediate response Provides face recognition	Message may be transient May not be sure of audience number Can send mixed messages, i.e. station may promote different message
Community media (newspapers)	Reach rural communities Produced in local languages for wider reach Affordable for rural communities	Small staff with limited journalism skills Focus more on entertainment than feature or news stories
Community media (Radio)	Reach community audiences Produced in local languages Issues of local communities captured	Focus more on music and entertainment Programming often influenced by ownership (i.e. religious owned stations may focus on religious programming)
ICT (Email, Internet, blogs)	Global Efficient Interactive Outreach Cost effective	Expensive Language No rules Verification of information

⁵⁵ Adapted from Making a Difference, Strategic Communications to End Violence against Women, a toolkit from the UNIFEM Strategic Communications Workshop Series, Jenny Drezin and Megan Lloyd-Laney, editors, UNIFEM, New York, 2003

Audiences

Knowing the audience that you want to reach with your message is critical to choosing the media to approach. Politicians are often under the gaze of the national mass media, because politics and governance issues are the heartbeats of news. The media often interpret their information and watchdog roles as keeping the population informed of political and governance processes, issues and events, while at the same time, keeping an eye on the way governments and politicians carry out their work.

To reach larger audiences with messages and to make you visible, female politicians and women in the public space have to engage the mass mainstream media. Community media is best for local communities and rural areas and the new media of Internet and email can be used to connect to women politicians and parliamentarians regionally and internationally. The Internet also is a resource tool for women politicians and those in public office, because women can access information on various topics to build their knowledge base so that they can speak with facts and figures.

Who is who in the Media?

As an industry, the media employs people in various capacities. Like many sectors, there are those employed in the administrative, financial, human resources and technical areas of the media operations, as well as those who work in the editorial operations. Advertising and marketing are considered part of the business side of media operations.

Women in public office are able to engage the senior editorial management of the media within their countries, but often they do not cultivate a relationship with this group. Instead, they often move towards the ranks of journalists. Journalists are important players in getting the right messages and information out through the media, and they are the ones who decide on the primary sources for their coverage of issues.

But the source of influence and power in the media, and the primary gatekeepers of the flow of political and other news are the editors. Journalists take orders from editors who in turn are answerable to the media's management and governing structures. Women politicians in the public space should cultivate relations with editors, as well as journalists, to begin to have allies within the media.

This is not a detailed breakdown, but a general overview of some of the key positions within the media:

Journalists/Reporters – Those who beat the path for stories daily. Journalists are viewed as those who have the power to decide which stories to cover, how to cover, who to interview as sources, and to decide on what will or will not be news. Journalists are key to bringing about a change in the media, because they are the gatherers of news and often do have leeway to choose the type of stories

they will report on, especially as they become more senior reporters who have paid their dues in the media trenches of general assignment reporting (usually covering whatever is assigned to them by an editor and not having the luxury to specialise on one topic or issue).

Editors – These are the ‘gatekeepers’, because they are among the decision-makers and policymakers within the media. Editors assign news and issue-based stories to journalists and reporters; they can decide what will be the top stories of the day to appear in the newspaper or in the broadcast line-up; they guide the reporters towards various sources and also help to shape the angle (focus) a story will take; and they are instrumental in the development of editorial guidelines, codes and policies. Editor is a general term which covers a broad spectrum of people ranging from editors-in-chiefs, news editors, business editors to features editors.

Sub-editors – This group is mentioned on its own, because these are the people who are responsible for the editing of news and other media stories to ensure that facts, spelling and grammar are correct, that the story is written in accordance with the media institution’s style guidelines, and it is the sub-editors who write headlines, captions for pictures and graphics (and they often decide what illustrations will go with what stories) and who are responsible for ensuring that stories fit within the space (newspapers and magazines) or time-slot (broadcast) available. This means that the sub-editors have the task of cutting stories to fit the required space or time available which gives them the power to decide what stays and what will be omitted.

Media managers – Many people fall within this group. And, overall they are the decision-makers within the media who are responsible for policy development, management issues; and, they are the ones who have the power to effect change through the development and implementation of policy, and they give the guidance and direction that can make a difference in how a media operates. General managers or chief executive officers, editors-in-chiefs, controllers of news, directors of human resources, advertising/marketing, finances, technical operations, all fall within this category. Although the media managers are not always directly involved in the day to day production of the editorial content (especially in large and medium-size media operations), they are the ones responsible for setting out the vision and for developing the policies that give direction to how those involved in editorial operations do their work.

Directorate/governance structures – These are the members of the Board of Directors or members of the highest governing structure of a media institution. These structures are not involved in the day-to-day work on the media, but do have a vested interest in seeing media survive, becoming more relevant to their audiences, and in ensuring that the bottom line is in order. These are often influential people within a community or country and may not be from the media sector. Media owners, those who invest funds into the running of a media operation or who start the medium from their own resources, are often part of the governance structure.

Prominence, Scandals and Events...What is News?

The biggest component of the media's editorial content is news. News is events that are timely and new. But the media also uses a mixture of criteria in addition to what happens now, or timeliness, to decide what issues, people and events will be the subjects of the media's daily news agenda. These criteria include, among others:

- ◆ Prominence
- ◆ Proximity
- ◆ Corruption
- ◆ Crime
- ◆ Disasters and conflicts
- ◆ Out-of-the-ordinary

Throughout Africa, prominence is the main criteria used to propel politicians and those in the public sphere into the media's spotlight. And often prominence, mixed with corruption, scandals and conflict, has been the ingredients for big political news.

While it is true that politicians often are the main subjects of news, as stated throughout this handbook, this is not true for women in politics. They are still largely hidden in the media's coverage of political issues, and when they are covered, the portrayal and representation of their work is cast in a negative light.

Efforts to re-train the media to reflect on the gender biases and prejudices that influence women's access and expression in and through the media are ongoing by many media organisations, as well as by various civil society groups. But women politicians can also begin to take steps to engage the media and make news. Use your access as women in positions of power and influence to:

- ◆ Engage with the media
- ◆ Engage with civil society

Box Seven:

How to Make News!

Stage an event like a press conference on a key issue or work with civil society organisations to stage an event that puts an issue on the media's news agenda. Always prepare written material and/or press kits for the planned event. Ensure that you always have an up-to-date roster (list) of the key media in your country, including the names of journalists, editors, telephone, fax and e-mail details. Contact the media two to three days prior to the event and reconfirm attendance early on the day of the event.

Pegs: Use events like the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence (November 25-December 10), International Women's Day (March 8) or appropriate national holidays to peg gender equality and other issues on.

Get to know the media's deadlines: Check with your local media houses to find out their deadlines for news, features, opinion pieces or for arranging talk shows and current affairs discussions. Work to these deadlines when scheduling media events or planning to use the media to get out information.

Write Opinion and Commentary Pieces: The Gender and Media (GEM) Commentary Service is an excellent example of how women politicians can use a space in the mainstream media. Gender Links, a South African based non-governmental organisation that works on gender and media, gender and governance and gender justice issues has a Gender and Media (GEM) Opinion and Commentary Service. Go to www.genderlinks.org.za to find out more about the service, which can be replicated in other regions. Also write **Letters to the Editor** to highlight gender issues of concern in the media.

Be willing to be a source: Become a reliable and authoritative expert on issues and do not shy away from media interviews. Prepare for the interview and talk facts, figures and impact. Do not waffle.

It is important for women politicians to 'think news' when engaging the media, because this genre comprises the main focus of the mainstream media's information agenda, especially when the coverage is of politics and economics; news is given more value and prominence in most of the mainstream media in terms of placement – front page, headliners in broadcast; and a large percentage of the media's daily coverage is composed of news stories.

But there are other journalistic genres used by the media, which are useful for getting "issues" on the media's agenda, such as news analysis, features, profiles, talk shows and current affairs and radio programmes.

Becoming Media Savvy – Things You Can Do!

There are some simple steps that women politicians can take to build their media profile and to begin to get their voices and views heard. These include the following:

Prepare Your Profile: When entering the political arena, women politicians should prepare a profile which can be given to the media as background material. This can be prepared with the help of a public relations firm, or a local journalist, and can be used in campaigning or other appropriate forums to help people know who you are, and what you have done that prepares you for the field of leadership and public service. The media will of course begin to write their own human interest stories and profiles about you as your recognition in the public space grows. But having your own profile prepared can ensure too that the media gets the basic facts correct and has some pointers on the areas of your life that you believe are important for the public to know.

Think News: Remember, the media is always looking for **news** and a good story. “News is what is new, but this includes more than just what is happening now. What is new also can be a new interpretation of an event or issue”.

Build Relationships: Go and look for the journalists/editors to give them story ideas and information. Establish a relationship. Don't just go once, but twice, three times, as often as necessary to form a relationship with journalists and editors.

Plan for the media: It is important to try and find ways to have one person who works with you become responsible for media relations. This person keeps an up-to-date list of the key players in the media, especially senior editorial management; a list of journalists, talk show, current affairs and radio programme hosts; and who helps to prepare media materials, as well as to prepare you for interviews with the media.

PREPARE! PREPARE! PREPARE! Always be prepared when you talk to the media: Conducting mock interviews with staff, colleagues and/or friends is one way to build up confidence for engaging with the media on topics and issues. Keep media cuttings and files on the topical issues in your society and ensure that you have the latest data and information, as well as the views from women and men in your own constituency, so that you can talk facts, talk figures and talk impact.

Activity One: Understanding target audiences and how they impact on news

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, glue or some form of sticky material for pasting articles on the flipcharts, five to six copies of a mix of stories (include sport, entertainment, business news and general news; it would be important in this story mix to include articles on women in politics or public life) – about 12 stories, and cards with five to six variations of: Gender mix (male, female, male/female); age (16 – 24; 25 -34; 35 – 44; 16 – 34; 34 – 60 etc); geographic (rural, urban, national, city; provincial etc)

Break participants into three groups, and let each group take one card from gender, age, geographic stack without looking. Once they have a set of cards, they have their target audience.

Give each group a flipchart sheet, scissors, markers and a set of the 12 photocopied newspaper articles (they will also have the same basic set of stories).

Each group should discuss which of their stories will appeal to their target audience, and then select a minimum of five stories for their front page.

They must decide on a newspaper name and design a masthead.

Using the newspapers of the day as an example they must paste their five stories on the front page – clearly indicating their lead story, second lead story and so forth. They can add elements onto their front page such as plugs for inside stories, cross references, adverts, etc.

Give the group 45 to 60 minutes to discuss and compile their front page.

If necessary, you can add tension to the exercise by introducing a new story 15 minutes from deadline – a story related to some issue or event involving women in politics- (everyone must get the same story).

After an hour, each group should display their front pages and explain their story choices

The discussion should include explanations of why they chose their lead, what kinds of stories their readers would be interested in; as well as to get a sense of whether there are some news stories that the groups believe cross all audiences and why. Look for different newspaper styles, choices made, as well as stories not placed on the front page.

Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Activity Two: Writing Opinions and Commentaries

It is always good in a workshop setting to do some practical writing exercises with journalists and female politicians to provide them with some initial pointers which may help them sharpen their writing skills and look for other outlets and training initiatives to do so. The following can be an overnight exercise during a workshop which has been well-planned with computer facilities, or by asking participants in advance to bring their laptop computers to the seminar.

Give each participant a copy of the Handout below with pointers for writing opinion and commentary pieces. Examples of commentary pieces can be downloaded from www.genderlinks.org.za (GEM and OPINION COMMENTARY SERVICE) to illustrate different styles and topics.

Ask each person to take a few minutes to put on paper an idea for an opinion or commentary piece. The ideas should then be shared with the group to see if there may be people interested in working on the same topic and to help each person define the focus of their piece. Two persons may work on a piece together for this exercise, but no more than two.

Participants should write an opinion or commentary piece of no more than 600 words which should be handed in by the start of the next morning's session.

The facilitator should look through the pieces and make both general and specific comments in a session dedicated to feedback on the pieces before the end of the seminar.

Activity Three: Preparing for the Interview

In a training seminar that includes both the media and women politicians, a good exercise is to set up several mock interviews as part of the training session. Arrange prior to the workshop for a camera recorder, and include in the training, a trainer with knowledge of photojournalism and images.

Pair up journalists with female politicians. Brief journalists separately on a topic and hold one-on-one mock interviews which should be recorded and played back to the group for comments and feedback to both the journalists and female politicians on the quality of the questions, quality of responses, methods of inquiry by the journalist, body language and other communications techniques that can help both journalists and female politicians polish their skills.

Also set up a mock press conference in which all the journalists in the training question the female politicians in a press conference setting. Record the conference; play it back for the entire group, and provide feedback on issues that emerge.

These are good afternoon exercises and yield many practical tips which both journalists and female politicians find useful for application.

Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

TIPS for Writing Opinions and Commentaries

What editors look for?

- ◆ The argument of point of view should be right up front in the piece.
- ◆ The argument must be strong.
- ◆ A strong news peg (i.e. a piece which is based on an event, issue or trend that is topical in the society, as well as forward looking; also can be a new perspective or new/fresh insight into an event or issue).

How to pitch your piece:

- ◆ Call an opinion page editor, rather than sending unsolicited articles. Better tactic is to go and see the editor and be persistent.
- ◆ Have a 2-3 page brief with you when you pitch which outlines the article.
- ◆ Know the newspaper you want to publish your article in (know its values, editorial policy, its readers, etc); research the newspaper before you approach it.
- ◆ Be brave when pitching your opinion.
- ◆ Know the area you are writing about; show that you know the issues well.
- ◆ For dailies: allow three weeks lead time to pitch your piece. For weeklies: allow six weeks lead time.

Structure (writing the piece):

- ◆ Start with a case study, anecdote or explain a scenario to lead the reader into the issue.
- ◆ Put your point of view high in the piece.
- ◆ Use statistics when appropriate.
- ◆ Give the context (why the issue is important).
- ◆ Give the history/background to the issue (not in abundance, but enough to help explain the issue).
- ◆ Avoid jargon and when jargon is used, explain it.
- ◆ Avoid acronyms.
- ◆ Remember you are writing for general readers.
- ◆ Write to length (i.e. find out from the editor how many word your piece should be and stick to the length given).
- ◆ Acknowledge and understand the editing process (do a self-edit on your piece for style, clarity). You may ask to see a pre-publication piece to see how the piece has been edited by the newspaper.

What to avoid:

- ◆ Do not think that just because you write a piece, you are entitled to space. You must convince an editor why it is important to publish your piece. The piece must be compelling and informative.
- ◆ Do not write a piece that is too specialised which can be understood only by a small audience.
- ◆ Avoid inaccuracies in facts and data.
- ◆ Avoid one-side and unfair arguments. Be balance.
- ◆ Avoid a didactic/preachy/prescriptive tone in your piece.

For Women Politicians:

There are a wealth of resources that can provide women politicians with tips, pointers and information on how to work with the media, and many of these include checklists and pointers for preparing press releases, press conference, press kits and other information targeted directly at the media. This list is by no means exhaustive, but below are some that can be used in training women politicians on how to engage with the media, as well as by women politicians themselves who want to build their media skills.

Gender setting – *New agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy*. By Margaret Gallagher, published by WACC London and Zed Books, 2001. This book provides a good understanding of gender in the media worldwide, as well as the activism for change.

Getting Smart – *Strategic Communications for Gender Activists in Southern Africa*. edited by Colleen Lowe Morna and Lene Overland, published by Gender Links and Women's Media Watch, South Africa. This manual includes many tips of the art of communications, understanding and engaging with the media and tips on how to develop a media strategy.

Making a Difference, Strategic Communications to End Violence against Women, A Toolkit from the UNIFEM Strategic Communications Workshop Series. Jenny Drezin and Megan Lloyd-Laney, editors; published by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), New York, 2003. There is a chapter in this toolkit dedicated to 'Working with the Media' which has checklists and tips for press releases, press conferences and other media-related material and events. This toolkit also includes a good reference section to other tools. Two to note are:

Insider's Guide to Strategic Media Relations. Valerie Denney Communications.
www.vdcom.com/articles/uploads/vdc_brochure.pdf

Media Activist Kit. Women's Media Watch.
www.womensmediawatch.org.za/archives/products/kit.html

Resources on Gender and Media for Women Politicians and Journalists

Gender in Media Training, a Southern African Toolkit. Edited by Colleen Lowe Morna, published by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism and Gender Links, South Africa, 2002. This training manual has a chapter on Elections, Democracy and Governance.

Whose News? Whose Views? Southern Africa, Gender in Media Handbook. Edited by Colleen Lowe Morna, Gender Links, 2001. An overall look at gender in the media with some references to the media's coverage of women in politics.

Women and Men Make the News, Southern Africa Gender and Media Baseline Study. Published by Gender Links and the Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2003. This baseline study provides quantitative and qualitative data and analysis of gender in the media.

Gender and Media Training Manuals produced by IPS

Gender, HIV/AIDS and RIGHTS, Training Manual for the Media, 2002

Fighting Violence against Women: A Training Manual for Journalists, IPS and Gender Links, 2001

How to Report Culture, Religion and Gender: A Training Manual for Journalists, IPS Africa, 2001

Gender and Development Glossary, September 2000

Strengthening the Voice and Visibility of Women in Elections in Africa

Inter Press Service (IPS) Editorial Checklist

Editorial Checklist

The following checklist has been developed by IPS as part of a two-year project to improve coverage of women's participation in African elections -- both as candidates and voters -- and of the extent to which polls address issues related to gender. It is intended to help journalists become more effective in researching and writing stories on these matters.

CONTEXT

1. Does the story explain the type of electoral system the country uses?
2. Does it explain the advantages and disadvantages of the electoral system to women's entrance into political office?
3. Does the story highlight the factors that contribute to women's entrance into political office? For example, have parties set quotas or other special measures to ensure that women are candidates; or, are there special constitutional measures such as legislative quotas to open up more spaces for women in political offices as a way to bridge the inequality gaps? Are these factors operational within the country?
4. Does the story highlight the factors that inhibit women's entrance into political office?
5. If there are more women or fewer women standing for elections during the period of coverage, what factors have contributed to the increase or decrease?
6. Which political parties have fielded women candidates and which ones have not? Have certain political parties done better than others, and if so, why?
7. Do any of the parties' manifestoes or blueprints for action speak to the issues of gender equality and women's rights?
8. Is the story analytical? Does it go beyond the event and raise the underlying issues?
9. Does the story cite details on gender equality from the constitution and/or the government's signature to international conventions, declarations and platforms such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Optional Protocol on Women to the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, among others? [This is the watchdog function of the media. Is the government adhering to the conventions, declarations and commitments it makes through signature to such documents?]

DO...

- ✓ Include a brief explanation of the type of electoral system(s) used for presidential, parliamentary and local government elections.
- ✓ Explain how the electoral system(s) is/are an advantage or disadvantage for women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Highlight the factors that contribute to women's entrance into political office.
- ✓ Highlight the factors that inhibit women's entrance into political office.

-
- ✓ Provide a brief discussion on the trends of women in political office. [See 'Data']
 - ✓ Include information on which political parties have fielded women candidates and which have not, and why.
 - ✓ Explain briefly what the parties' manifestoes say about gender equality and women's rights.
 - ✓ Go beyond the event and the numbers to explain what they mean and why.
 - ✓ Hold the government accountable by citing the legal and international rights instruments it has signed. But remember, citing is not the same thing as quoting -- and you should try to avoid simply quoting from national, regional or international instruments and policies in your story. Instead, analyse whether government is on target with adhering to these instruments. This is done through the use of data to show how well authorities are meeting the targets or commitments agreed to, and through the voices of relevant sources. [See "Sources"]

DON'T...

- ✗ Submit stories that are not well-researched.
- ✗ Provide a simplistic analysis of the coverage issue by omitting information on the country's electoral system(s), trends of women in political office, and parties' stated positions and actions on women's entrance into political office, gender equality and women's rights.
- ✗ List the factors that contribute to or inhibit women's entrance into political office without an analysis of why the factors prevail within your country's context.

DATA

1. Does your story include data on the numbers of women in the following structures:
 - Cabinet positions
 - Parliament
 - Judiciary
 - Political parties' politburos or highest central organs
2. Is all the data sourced?
3. Is the data used in ways to illustrate trends in women's entrance into political office? For example, does a story on an upcoming poll also include data about women's performance in the last two elections and their entrance into offices, to show the reader whether there is improvement or a backlash?
4. Is sex-disaggregated data used to show the situation of women in politics in comparison to men?
5. Does the story include sex-disaggregated data on women and men as voters?
6. Does the story include data on women's and men's voting patterns, if available?

DO...

- ✓ Look for up-to-date statistics on women in governance and political structures, the most recent data on voters, among other relevant figures, and source the data used in the stories.
- ✓ Use sex-disaggregated data to illustrate where women are in politics in comparison to men.
- ✓ Include data on women and men as voters.
- ✓ Use data in context to illustrate gender gaps, trends and to provide an analysis of the gendered nature of politics in the country.

DON'T...

- ✗ Submit a story without any data.
- ✗ Present data that is not sourced.
- ✗ Use out-of-date data. Do your research to ensure that the numbers are correct and up-to-date.

LANGUAGE

1. Does the story contain language that promotes sexism, gender bias or discrimination, or gender stereotypes?
2. Avoid language that promotes "ageism": "...the 60-year-old woman candidate..." etc. There may well be stories where age has to be mentioned and analysed -- an item on a by-election where all candidates are octogenarians, in defiance of national trends, for instance -- but as a general rule writers need to be cautious about age.
3. Are there any specific adjectives used to describe the character or physical appearance of women politicians or candidates that convey bias?
4. Is the physical description of a female politician or candidate relevant to the story? Would you apply the use of physical description equally to men and women politicians or candidates?
5. Is the language used inclusive of women and men?

DO...

- ✓ Check carefully before submitting stories to ensure that no language, phrases or adjectives that perpetuate sexism and gender bias have been used.
- ✓ Use inclusive terms such as "women and men", "man and woman" -- and pronouns such as "they", "their" and "them" -- to avoid the use of the generic "he" and "man" for all people.
- ✓ Avoid words that exclude women, such as "chairman", "mankind", "manpower", "man-made", "man-to-man" and "gentleman's agreement", among others -- or words that exclude men such as "housewife" and "prostitute", among others.
- ✓ When using gender neutral terms such as "farmers", "traders", "entrepreneurs", "children", "detainees", "parents", "peasants", "professionals", the "poor" and "workers", among others, be sure to use sex disaggregated data in the story to show where women are located in these groupings.
- ✓ Use the 'IPS Gender and Development Glossary' (available in English and French) and other sources on sexist language to avoid perpetuating discrimination and stereotypes in reporting on women in politics

DON'T...

- ✗ Describe women's physical appearance or the way they are dressed unless this is central to the feature. If you feel the need to describe what a female candidate is wearing, ensure that you do so in a way which does not discriminate against her (do not mention a woman's appearance while failing to describe that of the men she is competing with, for instance -- and do not write about which woman is considered "the best dressed" of various female candidates, a categorisation not generally applied to men). In addition, guard against descriptions that simply endorse images which candidates are trying to put forward about themselves (a male candidate trying to appear "a son of the soil" through dressing casually, for example). Your job is to analyse campaign strategies -- not further them.

-
- ✗ Use “he” or “man” as generic terms for all people.
 - ✗ Use words that exclude women, such as “chairman”, including the phrase “male domain” unless used in italics or quotes as stated by a source, among others.
 - ✗ Use words that exclude men, such as “prostitute”, among others.
 - ✗ Use language that demonises or trivialises women politicians.
 - ✗ Use language or phrases to describe women according to their marital or family status, while the same is not done to describe or label male politicians.

SOURCES

1. Does the story include a balance of female and male sources? [One female and six male sources would not be considered a balance of voices and perspectives in terms of the sexes. As a guide: A story that includes three female and two male sources or three male sources and two female sources would be acceptable.]
2. Do the sources interviewed provide a diversity of views and perspectives on the coverage issue? [If all the sources hold the same views or, are putting forth the same arguments on the issue, then the story does not provide a balance of views, but ONLY ONE view told through different voices. It is not enough to have different voices; different views are also needed, because there is more than one side to any issue.]
3. Are all the sources from the same side of the political spectrum? [Reporters should interview female and male sources from various political parties.]
4. Does the story only include politicians and political analysts as sources? [Sources from civil society groups working on the coverage issue as well as female and male citizens should also be interviewed to provide a diversity of views and perspectives.]
5. Does the story only include the views and perspectives of women and men in one age group? [Reporters should endeavour to convey the voices and perspectives of the young, middle-aged and elderly. Women and men in all three age groups are voting citizens and may have varying views and perspectives that will enrich the coverage issue.]

DO....

- ✓ Interview both women and men to balance the voices of the sexes.
- ✓ Seek out women and men with varying views on the coverage issue.
- ✓ Women and men from different political parties and spectrums should be interviewed.
- ✓ In addition to female and male politicians and political analysts, women and men from civil society and citizens should be interviewed.
- ✓ Women and men across different age groups – young, middle-aged and elderly voters – should be interviewed.

DON'T.....

- ✗ Interview only men, or only women for the story.
- ✗ Present only one view or perspective on an issue in a story, even if this view is stated by many people.
- ✗ Become a mouthpiece for a party or grouping by interviewing only men and women from that organisation.
- ✗ Interview only male and female politicians and political analysts.
- ✗ Do not interview sources from one age group alone.

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