FINAL DRAFT
Media Portrayal of Women and Media Gender Gap in Africa
Paper prepared by Gender Links for the African Union
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Synopsis

The importance of attaining gender equality in the media and ICTs is espoused in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) Section J. The BDPA encourages increase in the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication while also advocating for promoting a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.[1] Agenda 2063 highlights critical enablers for Africa's transformation" including "ownership of the African narrative and brand to ensure that it reflects continental realities, aspirations and priorities and Africa's position in the world". Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 encourages UN Member States to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.[2]

Key Issues

While women represent more than half of the population in many African countries they are underrepresented or misrepresented throughout all existing media whether online or offline, news media or entertainment. Their voices are not heard, they are likely to be portrayed in a stereotypical manner and they are less likely to hold influential positions in the media and ICT.. The 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project notes that in Africa women's relative presence in the news has increased from 19% in 2010 to merely 22% in 2015.[3] Women continue to enjoy less access to ICTs and the violence that women face offline is extending to online spheres. They still do not have access to this technology due to inadequate infrastructure, affordability and availability, language barriers, illiteracy and even discriminatory social norms. The struggles are derailing the potential of ICTs in the empowerment of women. Despite the existing gaps member states continue to have weak (or no) specific gender provisions in media laws and policies.

Key Recommendations

Research: Encouraging research[4] and media monitoring using public funds especially in public institutions of higher learning, offering journalism, communication and media studies to enable them to contribute to the body of knowledge on gender, media and ICTs. Research can focus on content, access, participation and use, online and offline violence and harassment against journalists, gender and media education so that there is good quality data that can used as reliable evidence in influencing advocacy efforts and change.[5] Governments need to partner with civil society and academia to evaluate the efforts or lack thereof by the media to change the narrative on women working in the media sector and most importantly their development role in line with changing the narrative of African.

Setting specific targets: Such as women sources reaching 30% of the total by 2020, and 50% by 2030 (in line with AU targets for women's representation in decision-making) and

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[1] Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

[2] SDG (5.b)

[3] World Association of Christian Communicators.2015. Global Media Monitoring Project. Toronto WACC

[4] East African Gender equality Bill 2016 encourages state parties to develop mechanisms for the collection and analysis of media and ICT disaggregated data on the basis of sex and gender

[5] BDPA Section J.1 Article 293 (b) urges governments to support research into all aspects of women and the media so as to define areas needing attention and action and review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective;

increasing programmes for and by women.[6] Governments have committed to empowering and investing in women through public and community media to create content that is relevant to them, in their own languages and that will respond to local information needs and influence knowledge of women's rights and informed decisions by women. As women produce and disseminate content this will give them active voices and roles especially. Although targets like this alone are not enough, they help to focus the mind, to mobilise and to conduct more effective monitoring and evaluation.

Training: Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in all publicly funded media training institutions, and encouraging privately funded media training institutions to follow suit. There is also need to take a fresh look at training curricula by mainstreaming gender in journalism communication and media studies curricula and teaching.[7] Improve enrolment of women in media training institutions in particular for programmes that are usually stereotyped such as sports, politics and economy reporting.[8]

Increase women's participation in media: Establishing quotas on the participation of women in the media industry that will increase the number of women in the media, including in leadership and decision-making roles and as media owners.[9]

Policy formulation: Ensuring that national gender policies and or strategies and action plans make specific reference the role of media and ICTs in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment agenda and commit to achieving targets on gender and media. They must also ensure the review of media and ICT laws, and policies and mainstream gender in them to eliminate gender stereotypes and biases in content to improve the access, use participation and the voices of women in the media. Enact laws that will protect women and girls against cyber based GBV.[10]

Regulation: Reviewing media and ICT laws, regulations and policies and mainstream gender in them to eliminate gender stereotypes and biases in content and improve access, participation and voices of women in the media. They should also ensure that national gender policies and or strategies and action plans make specific reference the role of media and ICTs in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment agenda and commit to achieving targets on gender and media. Governments pioneer gender balance in the appointment of men and women to all regulatory and monitoring bodies and encourage self-regulatory authorities, to do the same. This could include requiring gender balance and sensitivity in institutional structures as well as editorial content through licensing agreements, and annual progress reports.

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[6] SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Gender equality note member states shall encourage the media to give equal voice to women and men in all aspects of coverage, including increasing the number of programmes for, by and about women on gender specific topics and that challenge gender stereotypes

[7] SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Gender equality Member States shall ensure that equality of rights between men and women is taken into account in all media-related legislation, policies, programmes, training and recruitment. training centres take account of the principle of equality of rights between women and men

[8] SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Gender equality Encourage the development of educational and training programmes for women in order to produce information for the mass media, including funding of experimental efforts, and the use of the new technologies of communication, cybernetics space and satellite, whether public or private;

[9] SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Gender equality note Member States shall take all necessary measures to promote equal representation of women in media practice and in media-related decision-making structures and ownership

[10] East African Gender Equality bill encourage the elimination all stereotypes in all forms of contemporary and traditional media

ICTs: Ensuring that women have greater access participation and can use ICTs[11] and relevant content for their own empowerment that can enhance their lives and economic opportunities.[12] This should include support and resources for gender and media networks, especially their efforts to use ICTs in cost effective, dynamic ways that increase access and applications; contributing to better e-governance, citizenship participation and policy responsiveness, especially for and by women.

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[11] States Parties shall put in place ICT policies and laws in in order to ensure women's and girl's access to information and communication technology.

[12] Solemn Declaration on gender equality in Africa **recognized** of the digital divide between, men and women and the role of information telecommunication technologies (ICTS) in the advancement of the gender issues