

The second Gender and Media Diversity Summit

Second GEM Summit at a glance

- A total of 72 presentations including key note addresses and parallel sessions.
- Radio footage from the Summit streamed through the GL website.
- A total of 187 entries to the second GEM Awards, 108 from women and 79 from men in 13 categories.
- Approximately 200 participants attended the Summit.

The second Gender and Media summit closed in Johannesburg in September 2006 with a call for greater media diversity in all areas - ownership, content and audiences. Held under the theme "Media Diversity: Good for Democracy, good for business" the summit highlighted a number of ways in which the media is failing in one of its core functions - giving voice to the voiceless.

The summit, convened by Gender Links (GL), the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), and the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network brought together 224 media practitioners, editors, media marketing executives, as well as gender activists. The two day programme featured 81 examples of good practice in diversifying sources, markets and ownership of the media. Some 55 of these have been published in the Media Diversity Journal.

These case studies included submissions to the Gender and Media Awards that attracted 187 entries in twelve categories. Winning pieces ranged from an article on challenges women face in accessing credit to a beauty queen who finds out she is HIV positive.



Rene Smith, a judge, and one of the award recipients

Objectives

The Summit aimed to:

- Take stock of progress made since the first Gender and Media Summit, as reflected in the recent Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) and related research.
- Affirm the progress that has been made through the holding of the second Gender and Media Awards that are expected to attract entries from across the region in the print, TV and radio categories.
- Share best practices in gender and the media in Southern Africa and globally.

- Provide an opportunity for the media, media trainers, gender activists, academic institutions, researchers and others to develop strategic partnerships.
- Strengthen and ensure the proper governance of GEMSA through the holding of elections; reports by the executive committee, secretariat and country chapters, adoption of a Plan for the next two years and expanding of the membership base.

The programme

The programme was organised by sub themes in six parallel sessions each day. Each day began with a key note address that was presented at a plenary session. The key note assisted in contextualizing the day's topics. Groups met from 9h00-15h00 on both days and had in depth discussions on the sub themes which led to the groups identifying key objectives and action points for each session. Each group reported back to the plenary session at the end of each day.

The sub themes were: Newsroom policies; Media sustainability; Gender and images; Gender and ICTs; Training and capacity building; Media management; Enabling environments; Research and monitoring; Media literacy; Media activism; Diversifying media markets and Media practice.

Several new pieces of research came under the spotlight at the summit. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) launched in March this year found that across the globe women constitute 21 percent of news sources (19 percent in Southern Africa). The HIV and AIDS and Gender Baseline Study launched on World Press Freedom Day on 3 May showed that HIV and AIDS constitutes less than four percent of media coverage and that People with HIV constitute less than three percent of sources on the topic.

The Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Kaya FM, the Times of Zambia, Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and Defi Plus from Mauritius gave case studies of how they have developed HIV and AIDS and Gender policies as part of the Media Action Plan on HIV AIDS and Gender coordinated by the Southern African Editors Forum (SAEF). The Times of Zambia reported that the death rate among staff as a result of AIDS-related illness dropped from 7 (out of 270 employees) in 2004 to two in 2005 after the policy (that includes providing ARV treatment) had been adopted.

With a strong emphasis on media marketing, the summit showcased the 13-country Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) that shows that women and men across the region would like to see women portrayed in a more diverse range of roles; that the kind of topics that interest women most (like education, HIV and AIDS and social issues) get short shrift in the news; and that

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women and men would like more local, human interest and positive news stories.

Media houses in Mauritius, Namibia and Malawi that have run the audience survey for themselves urged that more media marketing departments should start to actively seek feedback from their audiences. They emphasised that media audiences in the region need to be better educated about their rights as media consumers. Gender Links has piloted a gender and media literacy course for the public that is now being rolled out in the region through networks like GEMSA, MISA and the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre Network.

Outcomes

A key recommendation of the summit is the establishment of a Gender and Media Diversity Centre that will coordinate knowledge sharing and information, based on a feasibility study commissioned by GL. Other action points identified include:

Research and monitoring

- Do research on why women aren't forthcoming as sources; build the capacity of women to be more confident in their dealings with the media.
- Development of resource directories for journalists.
- Extend gender and media monitoring to areas such as soap operas and advertising.

Policies

- Launch HIV and AIDS and Gender policies being developed by about 80 media houses across the region as part of the Media Action Plan on HIV and AIDS on 1 December, World AIDS Day.

- In collaboration with UNAIDS, accredit media houses that have developed policies and journalists who undergo training on HIV and AIDS.
- Ensure that media NGOs also develop HIV and AIDS and gender policies before the next summit in two years time.
- Develop editorial codes of good practice on images.
- To do a baseline survey on the current status of ICT policies and their gender responsiveness in all 13 countries in the SADC region; use this to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed in ICT policies.

Media ownership and management

- Provide training in management and financial negotiation for women in media.
- Investigate the reason for 'drop-out' of women journalists at middle-management level.
- Conduct a study of emerging media enterprise models, and particular barriers faced by women in becoming media owners.

Audiences

- Devise simple tools for the media to interact more with its audiences, including simple audience questionnaires that can be administered by E Mail, SMS, poll questions on web-sites and questions on radio talk shows; encourage women to participate in these.
- Increase gender and media literacy in the SADC region; particularly people in the rural areas with a special focus on audio/radio literacy.

Next steps

- The Summit is a very valuable and important event in the sector and will be repeated in 2008. However, for cost reasons it may be necessary to scale down the size of the event.

Photo: Colleen Lowe-Morna



Loga Virahsawmy, Mauritius and Abigal Gambanga, Zimbabwe, at the GEMSA General Meeting.