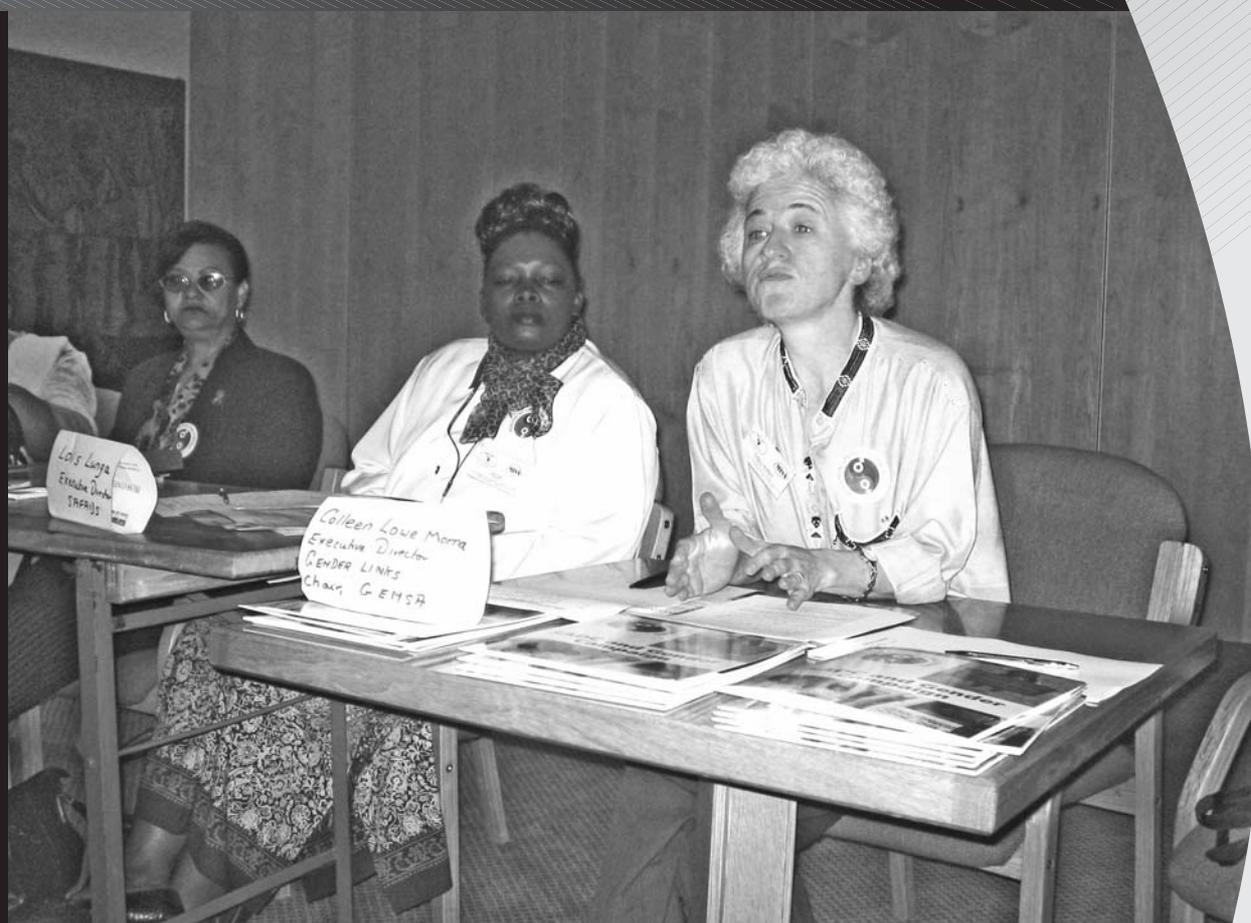


# Chapter

# 6

## Getting smart- Media, information and communication technologies



*Elsie Alexander, Lois Chingandu and Colleen Lowe Morna address a press briefing on the Protocol in Gaborone, Botswana at the 2005 Heads of State Summit. PHOTO: SUSAN TOLMAY*

As reflected in the previous chapter on the losses and gains made in the final Protocol, media was both an issue and a tool in the campaign. While the last chapter highlighted progressive provisions on gender and the media as one of the success areas in the final document, this chapter concerns the way that Alliance members used the media, including new media, to advance the campaign.

## Gender and the media: key issues



*Zambian journalist at a meeting of the Protocol Alliance in Lusaka, Zambia, August 2008.*  
PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

Some context is important. Gender disparities in the media remain among the most glaring of all. Across the globe, women are grossly under-represented in the decision-making structures of the media. The only news-making category in which women predominate is as TV producers. The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted by GL and GEMSA in 2003 showed that women constitute 17% of news sources in Southern Africa.

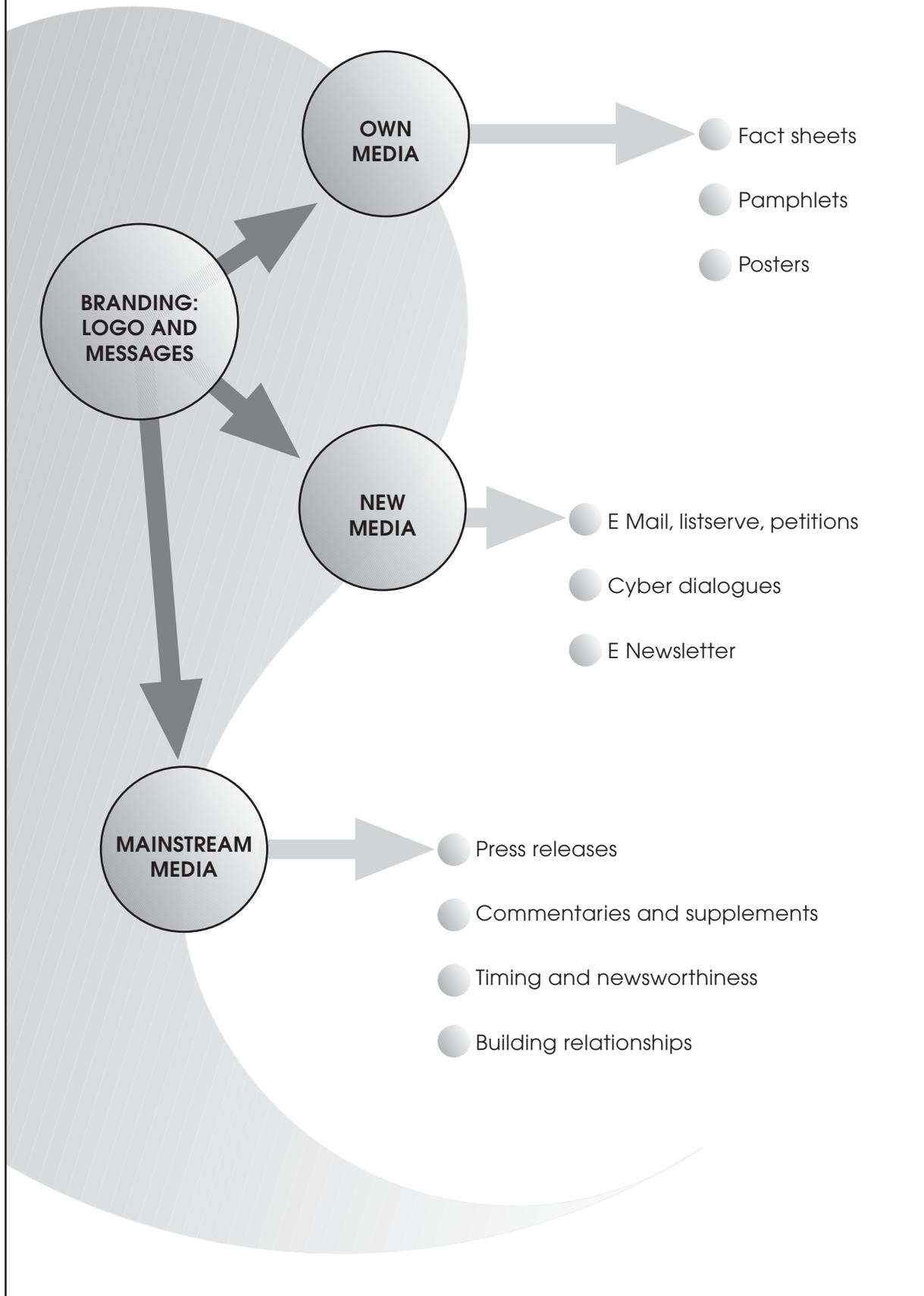
While women politicians in Southern Africa account for about 20% of news sources, they accounted for only 8% of the politicians whose voices were heard. The study found that women's voices are virtually absent in a range of mainstream areas including the economy, politics and sport and that older women are virtually missing from news pages. Women are most likely to be portrayed as homemakers, fashion models or as victims of violence, and rarely as citizens participating in the building of their nation. Given the importance of media to politics, it is clear that media's role stretches across gender equality issues.

## Putting advocacy centre stage

More and more, gender and other activists are refining their advocacy strategies to both make the media alive to the gender deficiencies of media coverage and to take greater advantage of media as an important tool in campaigns.

As illustrated in the diagram, the Alliance had a four prong strategy: branding the campaign; creating its own media; making use of new media as well as working with and through the mainstream media. In the modern era, giving any campaign or product a distinct identity is key. Materials such as posters and brochures were important coupled with using the media to reach and influence of a wide cross-section of stakeholders. Media coverage has the power to sway both public opinion and policy priorities. Activists who are able to engage with media, both in terms of producing content and encouraging journalists to be more aware of certain issues, are more likely to see their issues at the forefront of national, and international agendas. Engaging with media was central to the SADC Gender and Development Protocol Campaign, and included media capacity building for Alliance members, producing content, and sensitising and encouraging journalist to write on the campaign.

## ALLIANCE ADVOCACY STRATEGY



## Branding

In a campaign with a wide scope (as in the diverse provisions in the Protocol), many campaigners make the mistake of trying to diffuse too many messages. This can be confusing, and significantly lessen the impact of a campaign. It is important to identify a few key messages and symbols, and allow those diverse issues to come out as part of this key message. Of course, agreeing on symbols and messages relevant to the diverse country settings is a challenge.

The earlier and later version of the logo tell an interesting story about the evolution of the Alliance. In the early meetings, as the momentum grew and it became apparent that we needed a logo, Alliance members agreed on the use of the 50/50 logo (above left), a campaign that many members already belonged to. The Alliance also adopted the slogan “accelerating gender equality in SADC” as a tactic to affirm governments for progress made, but making it clear that the pressure would be mounting.



As the campaign progressed, further scrutiny of the logo led to some key changes. First, some members objected to the male symbol being above that of the woman. They wanted these symbols side by side. Second, members wanted greater urgency to be reflected in the slogan. They also wanted it to use simple and easy to remember words, as any good slogan should. Borrowing from the catchy slogan of the African National Congress in the South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994 (now is the time, the time is now) the Alliance chose the slogan: “Gender equality in SADC: the time is now.”

This slogan was reproduced on posters, t-shirts, badges, bags and an easy to use pamphlet.

## Making media

**Badges:** The badges were particularly powerful as many people asked what the badges meant and how they could get one!

**Fact sheets:** In order to provide a quick overview of key provisions, the Alliance produced a series of fact sheets outlining the context of the issue, what the Protocol says, the successes and challenges. These fact sheets have been very useful in communicating basic facts to media and others interested in the campaign.

**Brochures and posters:** GL, on behalf of the Alliance, produced brochures on key issues in the Protocol as well as posters, during the course of the year. These were an important information source on the significance of the Protocol process, widely distributed nationally and regionally.

## Video case study: Roadmap to equality:

The Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance produced a video case study on gender and governance in the Southern African region. Entitled *Roadmap to Equality*, a case study of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development adopted by Heads of State in August 2008, the video



shows how civil society organisations successfully lobbied for the adoption of the Protocol. The video also explores how this is being used to lobby for one of the targets, 50% representation of women in decision-making by 2015.

## Making IT work for gender justice

Although here is still a gender digital divide in Southern Africa, information technology (IT) provides a useful tool in supporting campaigns, especially the communication and media aspect. It can be a medium by which those actively involved in the campaign share and disseminate information, and part of the communication strategy to reaching diverse audiences.

**Website:** On behalf of the Alliance, Gender Links created and hosted a web page on their website dedicate to the campaign, housing such resources as drafts of the Protocol, produced materials for download, facts sheets, and photos of the campaign. This made the information easily available to Alliance members and other stakeholders in the campaign, as well as media and any

other interested person. The Protocol webpage contains regular updates regional and in country activities

**E-list:** Gender Links also maintains an electronic mailing list, which includes approximately 4000 subscribers. Throughout the campaign, key events, press releases, and commentaries were distributed via this list.

**Cyber dialogues:** The cyber dialogues are a flagship strategy of Gender Links, which was included in the Alliance campaign. Cyber dialogues are real time discussions that take place in an online chat facility. During the campaign, activists and interested people linked virtually at key times to discuss issues related to the Protocol. The cyber dialogues provide an opportunity to connect people to discuss a particular issue, at relatively low cost. The cyber dialogues provided an opportunity for people in country to connect with the regional HOS meetings and add their voices to the campaign. At other times the cyber dialogues have assisted in keeping members of the Alliance connected with each other.



*Edwidge Mutale and Luckson Chipare during the Alliance cyber dialogue at the 2005 HOS in Gaborone.*  
PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

## Working with the mainstream media

Yes it is a fact indeed! Media is the Fourth Estate in terms of democratic governance structures; others are the Executive, Legislation and the Judiciary. A true democracy can not be complete without participation of the media. Therefore, the "Fourth Estate" should not be seen as an "enemy" rather a complementing agent in development of any country. (Sarry Xoagus-Eises, Alliance Focal Point in Namibia)

**Press releases and commentaries:** Press releases at key moments of the campaign highlighted specific issues for action in the media. In August 2008, just before the signing of the Protocol, the GL Opinion and Commentary Service and Alliance produced a whole series of articles to help put pressure on the leaders to sign. Since the signing, attention since turned to continuing pressure on countries who did not sign, but also producing articles to keep the Protocol and its issues on the public agenda, with hopes of encouraging quick ratification, domestication, and implementation.

**Commentaries and Supplements:** Alliance members produced a news supplement *Lentsoe La Basali – Women's Voices* in time for the 2006 the HOS held in Lesotho in August. The only weekly paper in Lesotho,

*Public Eye* carried copies of the supplement. Copies of the supplement were also distributed to everyone at the HOS as a part of their of conference documentation for the day.

The Alliance produced a further issue of the supplement carried by one of the widest circulating newspapers in Zambia, the 2007 host country for the Summit, as well as to Summit delegates and other civil society groupings. It is also a flagship of the Alliance Protocol campaign, as it continued to be distributed to other countries after the Summit as an awareness-raising tool. In January 2008, Alliance members developed articles and opinion pieces for a news supplement for publication in April 2008 in time for the SADC Heads of State Poverty Summit in Mauritius.

**Newsorthy content:** The Protocol, most of the issues it covers, and gender in general are not usual topics for most media houses. By creating relationships with journalists and decision-makers, the Alliance was able to help media understand the issues as well as encourage editors to be more receptive to produced content and story leads about events and

key moments. Such relationships also allowed campaigners to learn form the media - the stories that interest them, the best times to approach editors or writers, and how to shape stories into useable articles.

The phrase 'producing sexy content' was used frequently during the campaign. The Protocol is meant to change women's every day lived experiences. A key



### Major step for gender rights on SADC agenda

Gender activists are lobbying for a legally binding protocol on gender and development at the upcoming annual SADC Heads of State Summit, writes **Pamela Mhlanga**



media strategy was to get women from across the region to tell their stories. First hand accounts of women who had experienced discrimination on the basis of gender inequality gave the media different perspectives. A story by

Edwidge Mutale from Zambia about how she had to fight to inherit her husband's estate after his death gave impetus to why laws relating to inheritance and widows needed to be changed.

### Putting issues on the agenda:

Media around the SADC Protocol often used the important issues that the document addresses as a launching point, both before and signing, raising discussions on these issues. Prior to signing, speaking on these topics helped to illustrate the importance of the document, and the real impact that it can have on gender equality in the region. One example is the issue of gender quality in governance, and the target outlined in the Protocol of 50/50 gender equality in decision-making.

Prior to signing the GL Service helped to keep this target on the agenda. For example, in "Mauritius preparing for more woman in 2010 election," published in July 2008, Loga Virahsawmy highlighted the need to plan ahead for government to ensure gender equality in the next elections. The article appeared in *L'Express* in Mauritius, the regional publication Southern Times, as well as the online new portal All Africa. This followed a previous article by Virahsawmy, "No democracy without women," which appeared in *L'Express*, Namibia's *Informante*, and Botswana's *The Mirror*. Although Mauritius did not sign the Protocol at the August Summit, it has nonetheless moved forward in paving the way for greater equality in governance.

More recently, a number of articles challenged governments to meet their commitments. For example, in "Where will the women vote in the next election?" by Kubi Rama in January 2009 and "Gender parity in politics is a far cry from equal rights for women," by Colleen Lowe Morna, both question how the government will live up to their gender equality commitments in the context of the elections. Both highlighted to South African readers the importance of holding governments accountable, the Rama's appearing in South Africa's *The Sowetan* and *Daily News*, and online news portal Women's Net and Citizen Journalism, and Lowe Morna's in *Sunday Independent* and *Cape Argus*.

Another example of keeping this issue on the agenda was "Malawi electoral commission K100,000 fee blow to women candidates," by Lowani Mtonga in January 2009. Mtonga pointed out the discrepancy between leaders' promises and actions, especially related to encouraging women in governance. "This past August, Southern African Development Community (SADC) leaders committed themselves to 50% women in decision-making when they signed the SADC Gender Protocol...According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union database, at 13% Malawi ranks 89th in the world when it comes to women's representation in Parliament. Thus, the decision of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) to hike the fee for parliamentary candidates from K 5,000 (about US\$ 35) to K100,000 (US\$ 705) comes as a great surprise."

Although it is difficult to say how much impact such media has had before conducting an in-depth evaluation of the campaign, the sustained issue-based coverage no doubt played significant role in helping to keep the Protocol and gender equality in the public spotlight. Without such a spotlight by the Alliance, it is unlikely that the Protocol would ever have become a reality.

**Knowing the media in country:** Alliance members recognised that creating relationships and tailoring media campaigns to individual countries would help encourage localised coverage relevant to the issues and needs in individual countries. SADC is a widespread area with many different circumstances and priorities. Knowing what media exist, and their likely interests, helps to ensure coverage. This also includes knowledge of the reach of different kinds of media, for example while community radio may be relevant to involve rural populations in the campaign, certain newspapers or a website will better target policy makers and organisations.

Prior to every HOS meeting a list of media for the relevant country was pulled together with assistance from local partners. Before

getting to the country a media brief was emailed to media practitioners. In 2005 in Botswana the need for gender Protocol became a key rallying point in the media. The extent of coverage may in part be attributed to the preparation and readily available materials that the Alliance was able to provide.

A very important strategy is to involve the media as partners. Inviting the media to participate in meetings and be part of the campaign was crucial to getting buy-in. The media is rightfully resentful that civil society organisations only contact them when they want coverage and do not involve them otherwise. The example below from Botswana shows why it is important to cultivate relationships with the media.

### Successful relations with the media



Keabonye Ntsabane. PHOTO: COLLEEN LOWE MORNA

The Botswana Council of NGOs (BOCONGO) Gender Protocol Sector in collaboration with GEMSA, BOMWA, Gender links and other civil society organisations held two seminars targeted at editors and reporters to solicit their involvement in lobbying and advocating for the signing of the Gender Protocol. Media professionals were also briefed on the critical issues of concern as well as articles in the protocol. The information pack on the protocol was availed to them and this gave them more knowledge on the Gender Protocol. Furthermore, the media came to understand the emerging issues in the protocol as well as the

need to lobby the government of Botswana to sign it. This resulted in the media playing a critical role in lobbying and advocating for the signing of the gender protocol even though Botswana is yet to append its signature.

The sensitisation seminar for reporters and editors included participants from the electronic and print media. The seminar ended with a statement of commitment by the media. The result was that in the print media free columns were made available for feature stories. Producers in the electronic media informed Gender activists about availability of programmes that could be utilised to disseminate information on the Gender Protocol. The publicity on the gender protocol was not as extensive as we had intended, but it was commendable overall all thanks to the commitment of the media. The media followed most of the events planned for publicising the gender protocol.

– Keabonye Ntsabane

**Keeping in touch:** Relationship building is key to a successful campaign. Knowing and being a reliable source for media professionals helps to attract good coverage. However, it is important that this not only hinge on special events, but that the media is a long-term strategy. For example, during the campaign, there was a significant amount of media coverage and materials produced around Heads of State Summits, but throughout the year the GL Opinion and Commentary Service also produced issue-based pieces covering the wide range of Protocol provisions.

All the media practitioners that the Alliance came into contact with were added to the GL contacts database. This ensured they received information regularly. Some of the journalists started writing for the GL Opinion and Commentary service.

**Making key people available:** In a shrinking media environment, providing journalists or editors with key information and key people to speak to can go a long way to seeing success in attracting media coverage. Making it easy for them makes you a more interesting source! During the Protocol campaign, key people were always available to media, and during special events, especially HOS Summits, media releases were distributed, various Alliance members interviewed on radio and television, and a media contact was always on hand.

One of the strengths of the Alliance is that it could provide voices from across Southern Africa. The media had access to a diversity of voices and views that enriched the content.

## The final push

Throughout the campaign, many of the advocacy activities were organised around key events. This was particularly important during the final push, leading up to the August 2008 Summit where Heads of State signed the SADC Protocol. In the days leading up to the event, the GL Service distributed several commentaries calling on leaders to commit to gender equality

by signing the Protocol, the Alliance distributed press releases to media, and a media liaison focused on answering queries and assisting with organising interviews. This was important as it provided media with relatively easy access to key people and information to be able to cover stories about the Protocol effectively. Since the Alliance organised a parallel meeting to the Summit, this also provided media with a wide range of regional guests and perspective on the subject.

The success of the communication strategy is evident in the amount of media coverage the campaign was able to attract. For example, just during the few days surrounding the 2008 Summit, the media coverage that GL was able to identify, included the following

In addition, Protocol Alliance members participated in radio interviews on Radio 2000 and the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation, as well as on television programmes about the Protocol on *Rendez-Vous* (South African Broadcasting Corporation) in South Africa and the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation

The campaign gained enormous momentum in the lead up to the signing in August 2008, with major involvement by the media, especially the public broadcasters in each country. Media monitoring has shown dramatic increases in both the quantity and quality of coverage during these campaigns. The table below provides examples of articles written and how these got picked up in newspapers around the region:

From August 2005 until June 2009, the GL Service commissioned and distributed 65 articles that referred to the SADC Protocol, covering a wide range of topics, from the Protocol itself through to economic empowerment, women in governance, health and HIV/ AIDS, gender budgeting, and many more. On average, each of these articles were published 3.2 times, that the Service was able to track, in mainstream media all across the region.

Article	Writer	Newspaper
Push for adoption of key protocol on gender	Pamela Mhlanga	Cape Times Southern Times The Star Daily News Pretoria News
Gender protocol vital	Arthur Mwansa	Daily Mail
Businesswomen Could Benefit From Media Coverage	Deborah Walter	Mmegi All Africa.com
Activists celebrate SADC Adoption of Gender protocol	Press Release	Citizen Journalism Botswana Gazette
Ground-breaking Gender Protocol Signed	Zahira Kharsany	IPS All Africa Africa Files Mail & Guardian Online
Zimbabwe: Heads of State Hailed for Adopting Protocol on Gender	Press Release	The Herald The Chronicle All Africa.com
What will SADC free trade mean for women?	Deborah Walter	All Africa.com The Namibian The Southern Times
SADC women soar to new heights	Colleen Lowe Morna	Sister Namibia Mail & Guardian
SADC Protocol - What's in it for media?	Gloria Ganyani	The Southern Times Southern Times Journalism.co.za

## Lessons learned



- It is important to include the media as partners.
- Gender activists must involve media professionals in the planning process and training plans.
- Civil society must understand how the media works, their schedules and what makes something newsworthy.
- Media will respond to produced content, if it is good quality and relevant to their consumers interests.
- Learning is two way – activists learn from media and media learn from activists.
- Multi-media is key to reach diverse audiences.
- Ensure a key message and slogan, but embrace diversity in the details.
- Be pro-active and organised, have media lists and keep them updated. Keep the media informed in between major events.
- Have media points-person and try to keep the person consistent so that the media knows that they can always contact a particular person.
- Make decision makers and people who provide first hand accounts available to the media.

- Have relevant pictures available and offer them to the media.
- Be strategic about when you have press conferences, it might sometimes be better to send a media brief and follow up with calls and set up interviews.

## Checklist



- ✓ How do you plan to brand your campaign?
- ✓ Do all members agree with the logo, slogan and messages?
- ✓ What sort of materials do you need to develop? To whom will these be distributed? How will the distribution be tracked? How will feedback be incorporated into your work?
- ✓ How can you use new media to leverage your work?
- ✓ What relationships have been developed with the mainstream media? How can these be improved?
- ✓ What materials can be developed to help improve media coverage?
- ✓ How do you plan to track media coverage? How can this assist in improving the quantity and quality of coverage.