

# CHAPTER ONE

## Why this manual?

“ Research has shown that the average person is bombarded by about 10,000 media images everyday. Subliminal suggestion can be described as ‘visual messages received below the level of consciousness’. The process of subliminal suggestion has been proved in scientific experiments to be one of the most persuasive ways of shaping people’s attitudes in the short and long term. ”

Peter Mackenzie, South African freelance photographer, speaking at the Southern African Gender and Media Handbook workshop, February 2001.

### Key issues

- Photojournalism has generally not received its due attention in media training in Southern Africa.
- Images are one of the most powerful tools both for conveying and challenging gender stereotypes.
- There has been much discussion in Southern Africa recently about the under-representation and unfair portrayal of women in the media.
- This manual is the first in the region to focus on gender and photojournalism. It is targeted at practitioners, trainers, activists and media consumers.



Images such as these – of women adorning flashy cars – abound in the media.

## Introduction

Gender stereotypes in the media have been identified as a major source of unfair and unethical reporting. The gender stereotypes and power imbalances that characterise our society permeate news coverage and the images that go with it. Women are both under-represented and unfairly portrayed in limited roles: most commonly, either as victims of violence or as sex symbols.

Visual images – in photographs, television and film, on billboards and boxes, even in cartoons and graffiti – are part of our everyday experience. Rarely do we stop and think about how this bombardment of images affects our understanding and awareness of the world around us.

Photojournalism accounts for a relatively small number of this wealth of encountered images. But the images produced as photojournalism play a disproportionate role in our awareness of visual imagery, for it is these images that we are most likely to stop and interrogate, to compare to new and changing environments and social experiences and to place within the news. Photojournalism plays a critical role in our “reading” and “understanding” of visual images in general and in our understanding of the world around us.

How gender is constructed and portrayed in visual imagery, and particularly photojournalism, shapes how we understand gender in our lives.

As with any language, visual literacy is learned – from our society, experiences, knowledge, and understanding and (especially in this century and in Southern Africa) from a multitude of cultural and social forces. We learn to read images from our childhood. We read into images our experiences and our understanding, as well as absorb these images to create new understanding, and new experiences.

All communication – including visual communication in the news media – consists of interaction between four areas:

- The event or subject that will be reported on;
- The person making the story (whether visual or written);
- The editors (people who decide on what is reproduced and how); and
- The audience.

Each of these stages has gender dimensions as illustrated in the box below.

### Gender at every stage of image creation

- **Event being reported:** Are men and women differentially involved or affected? Are gender stereotypes (and discrimination) implicitly or explicitly reflected within the event?
- **Perspective of image-maker:** How does the maker of the image reflect/reinforce/interrogate/explore gender issues in the image?
- **Perspective of audience:** How does the audience pre-conceive and interpret gender messages in the image?
- **Perspective of intervening actors:** What is the perspective of others in the production process, such as editors and sub-editors? How is this reflected in the final image?

## How the manual came about

In 1999, SAMSO organised a regional workshop on Gender Imaging. The workshop brought together 16 women photographers with trainers in polytechnics to identify problems faced by women photographers in particular and the lack of gender-sensitive imaging in Southern African media in general.

Since that initial workshop the landscape has changed dramatically and the possibilities for linking with other organisations in this area of work and enriching the process for all is now much improved. The Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa (NIZA) Media Sector Plan has been developed, giving organisations the capacity to make these linkages and an ability within the framework of the plan to collaborate on problem identification and appropriate interventions to address problems.

The development of the Southern African Media Trainers Network (SAMTRAN) has given trainers the opportunity to work together. The “Media Training Needs Assessment of Southern Africa” commissioned by the NSJ Trust with support from NIZA has been valuable in our thinking.

The report specifically identifies a lack of gender-sensitive reporting in Southern African media as a problem and points out that training is an important strategic intervention for rectifying this. The Gender Imaging Project of SAMSO was an attempt to redress the findings as related to photojournalism. This can now move forward with new impetus gained from the changes currently underway in the region.

In 2000, Gender Links (GL) convened a group of gender activists and media practitioners to develop the first *Southern African Gender and Media Handbook* that has since been widely disseminated in the region, and used to assist media houses in developing gender policies. GL, in partnership with the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) has also developed a training of trainer’s manual called *Gender in Media Training*. The first training of trainers’ workshops using this manual took place in Tanzania in July 2002 in partnership with the NSJ Trust, and with the support of NIZA.

GL is undertaking gender mainstreaming pilot projects with the Zambian Institute of Mass Communication (ZAMCOM) and the Polytechnic of Namibia (PON) following its first such pilot project with the IAJ. GL has also conducted training, in partnership with media training institutions throughout the region, and working closely with SAMTRAN, on covering gender violence and on gender, media and HIV.

In partnership with the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and several partners in the region, GL has also undertaken the first gender and media baseline study of Southern Africa that has revealed the glaring gender gaps and biases in the media. The study is referred to extensively in this manual, and yielded much of the source material.

In all of this work, the need for more information and material on gender and images has become apparent. How, for instance, does one illustrate gender violence, or the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS in a way that is sensitive, yet conveys the gravity of the problem? What ethical rules pertain? There are countless examples of sensitive reporting on such issues that have all but been ruined by callous illustrations. Often, photographers and picture editors who have never been exposed to gender training are not even aware of the damage they may be causing.

As part of the preparatory phase, SAMSO and GL sent out a questionnaire to media training institutions in the region on potential uses of this manual and received responses from the following institutions:

## Response to questionnaire on gender and images

In service training	Polytechnics	Universities	Media houses	Media Networks	NGOs
ZAMCOM	Polytechnic of Namibia	University of Swaziland	The Voice	Sorvis Africa Media Network	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network
	Tanzania School of Journalism	National University of Science and Technology – Zimbabwe		Media Institute of Southern Africa	Media Watch – Mauritius
					Tanzania Media Women's Association
					Women's Media Watch

Important issues to emerge from the questionnaire included:

- All of these institutions have some form of photojournalism training, but this is generally weak;
- None currently integrate gender considerations into the training;
- There is little or no locally relevant material on the subject; and
- All are interested in playing an active role in developing the training manual.

Against this background, GL and SAMSO, working with the Rhodes University Media Studies Department and Judy Seidman came up with an initial framework and draft of the manual. With the support of NIZA, they then invited photojournalists and trainers from around the region to participate in a workshop to critique the draft and enrich it through shared examples and experiences during the workshop that took place in Johannesburg in May 2003.

As reflected in the biographies of participants in **Annex A** of the manual, the workshop brought together 20 photojournalists, photojournalism trainers, gender and media activists from 10 of the 14 Southern African countries, and covering three language groups (English, French and Portuguese). The workshop consisted of testing key exercises in this manual, sharing examples from the different countries, debating the content of the manual, and field exercises that yielded many of the photographs in this manual.

## Objectives

The manual aims to:

- Explore how issues of gender are expressed through photojournalism; particularly in creating and defining identities, norms, and stereotypes around gender;
- Identify gender bias and the promotion of gender inequality in current media imagery and photojournalism practice in Southern Africa and the global context in which this occurs;
- Establish the nature of, and the reasons for, gender bias in media imagery and in photojournalism as a profession; and
- Develop practices that challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality in photojournalism.

## Targets

The manual targets:

- Photojournalist trainers;
- Photojournalists;
- Photo-editors;
- Sub-editors and editors;
- NGOs that promote visual literacy and awareness; as well as
- Audiences – the people who receive images.

## Approach

A strong picture can twist your guts. A strong picture calls upon our most emotive, deep-felt responses – what we like and don't like, what we believe, what we care for. Thinking about these kinds of gender perceptions involves assessing bias within our personal attitudes and those of our society. Often, it involves remembering what we ourselves have gone through. This process can be difficult and painful, for both men and women.

This manual encourages readers, photojournalists, workshop participants, and people who are on the receiving end of visual images to dig into their personal experiences. These problems face us all, men and women. They also face us in our different roles as makers of photographs, users of photographs in news contexts, and interpreters of images as viewers in the media.

## Learning by doing

***“I hear,  
I forget,  
I see,  
I remember,  
I do, I learn”***

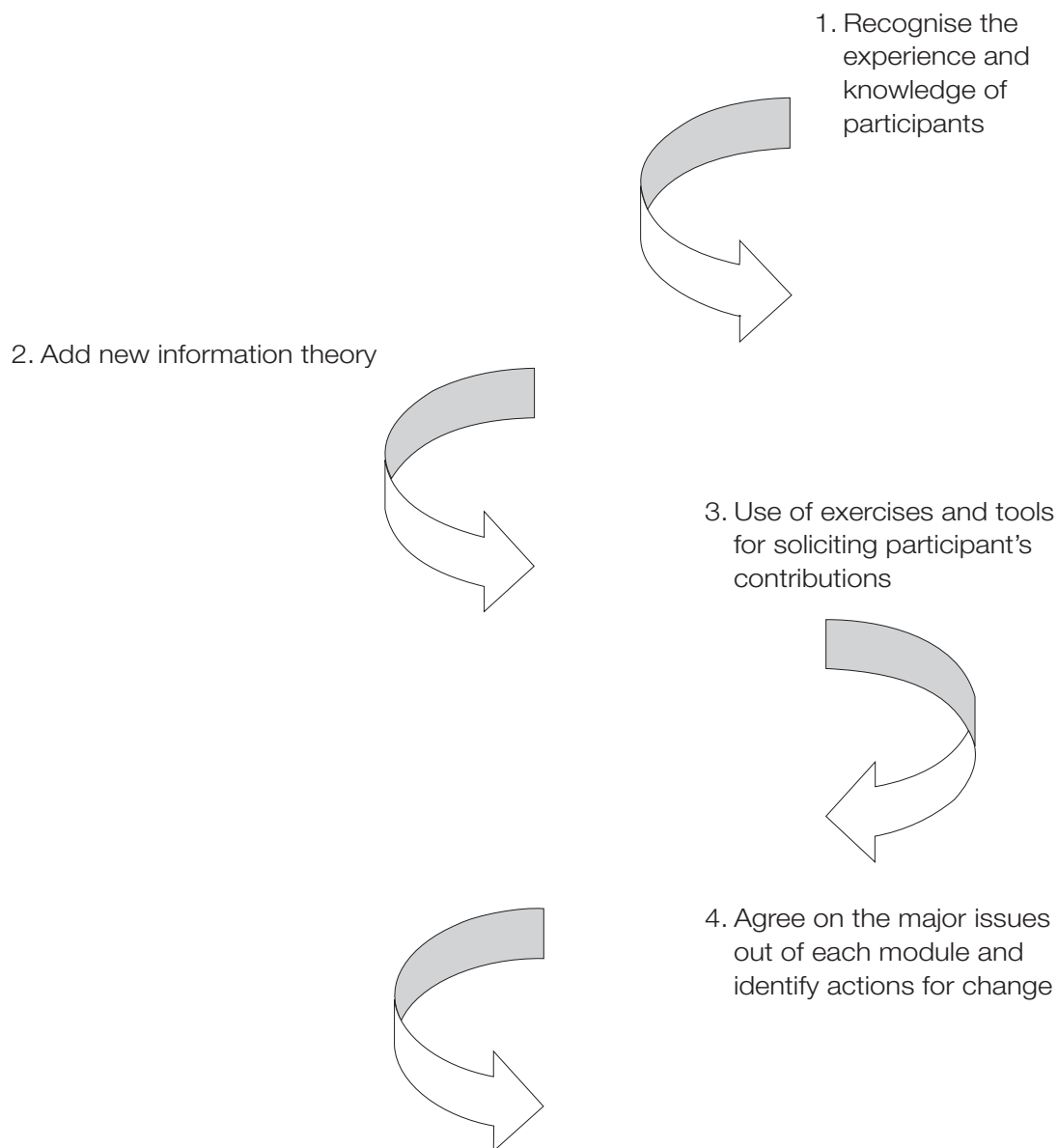
The approach to training in this manual works on the principles of **learning by doing**. Training starts from the premise that participants have valuable experiences and contributions to make. As adults, much of what we know we learn from each other or from our peers. The facilitator's role is to help us explore, exchange, and validate these experiences; as well as adding new information/theory to our understanding.

With this principle in mind, the facilitator needs to create an environment that draws upon the experiences and knowledge of all participants – “learners” and “facilitators”. We should learn and build experiences together, and learning should involve a high level of active participation by everyone.

Traditional lecturing assumes that the trainer spoon-feeds information to the learner. This assumes that the lecturer has all the answers, and is likely to be “right” if learners have any doubts or questions or additions to that information. Many of the teaching techniques that accompany this assume a “top-down” approach. The effective facilitator needs to rethink this whole range of “inherited” teaching mechanisms. The approach used in this manual is illustrated in the diagram overleaf:



Marcie Cook, Fletcher Gongga and Fatma Mwassa.



## Resources

The manual includes four resources:

- **Exercises and discussion points:** Each module provides a number of exercises to draw out participants' contributions and participation; and discussion guidelines to enhance their understanding of the concepts and key issues.
- **Background material:** Handouts and text provide factual material for participants and the facilitator.
- **Participant's experiences:** Facilitators should make notes of stories and experiences you can use in future training to help develop points and issues. Remember that knowledge, experience, and theory change and develop: we all bring grist to this process.
- **Additional examples:** The examples provided in the manual are intended to spark the imagination of the participants. Communications is a fast-moving field. It is alive and real. Where appropriate, you can substitute more relevant and recent examples.

## How to use this manual

Each chapter in this manual addresses aspects of gender imagery in the photojournalism of Southern Africa. Part one explores the key concepts of visual literacy, gender and images. Part two traces the historical context right up to the present era of globalisation and the commercial imperatives that drive

the media. Part three covers the realities of photojournalism on the ground. Part four suggests new approaches for achieving gender balance and fairness in photojournalism in the region.

Each chapter provides background theory; exercises aimed at generating contributions and “learning by doing” from participants as well as examples of imagery and tips for facilitators.

The exercises and discussion points presented in each chapter should be viewed as a “**shopping basket**” from which trainers can pick out the processes relevant to their learners’ needs, the time available, and the specific nature of the learning environment.

The tool kit also contains handouts and examples of images that can be used and/or adapted by trainers. These are in hard copy in the training manual, as well as on CD ROM, so that they can either be photocopied or printed for distribution to participants.

### **This manual is a beginning, not an end ...**

SAMSO and GL are aware of the many limitations of this first effort, but prefer to see these as challenges for future initiatives. Some of these include:

- **Broadening the regional base of the work and examples:** These examples are primarily intended as catalysts for media trainers to find more contextually relevant and updated examples. There remains tremendous scope for much more in-depth work on gender and the media in every Southern African country, and this is already the trend. Through GL’s Electronic Gender and Media (E-GEM) project, as well as SAMSO’s hands-on collaboration in gathering new case material, we hope to be able to establish a database of regularly updated case studies that can be exchanged between trainers and practitioners.
- **Other image-related disciplines:** This manual focuses on photojournalism. However, gender also plays a crucial role in cartoons, graphics, TV and moving images. Each of these has its own particularities and is an important area for further development of training materials.
- **Every theory should be a guide, not a dogma:** All of these ideas – about gender, about images and visual literacy, about how our media sees the world – are growing around us. The world around us changes; media changes; images change. Our understanding needs to grow with this.



Participants at the training workshop to test the manual.