

CHAPTER TWELVE

What is, what could be

Key issues

- How do we create images that picture our lives in all their diversity and complexity, and that challenge tired gender stereotypes?



Trevor Davies, right taking a photo of an HIV/AIDS activist.

The final section of this manual looks at how photojournalists can begin to take and make gender sensitive images and images that challenge stereotypes.

Exercise: The field trip

Divide into groups of 6, each taking on one of these areas:

- Decision-making.
- Work.
- Sports.
- Gender violence.
- HIV/AIDS.
- Sex work.

Step 1. Preparation: For each of these areas, look at examples of images that have been printed in the press. (These are included in handouts 45 to 50, or find others from your local publications.) Each group is asked to look at the images dealing with their specific area.

Identify the main stereotypes in these images. Are these images representative of real life? Consider the following questions:

- Identify processes where (biased or non-biased) choices were made in making the photographs (eg. choice of subject—what were the alternatives?)
- Identify points where bias may have come in.
- Identify possible sources of alternative visual imagery.

Practical preparations should include:

- Arranging with people you wish to photograph about venue, time, and who would be willing to be pictured.
- Making sure the correct equipment is available – including cameras, film and transport.
- Making sure that the pictures can be developed to discuss at the workshop. If you have access to digital cameras and computer technology, this becomes much easier.

For each of these areas, the group should talk about what kind of approach would result in more gender-sensitive images, asking where to go, and who they could photograph for alternative images. Groups may also try to identify image collections that might already have more representative photographs. For instance, a trade union may have a picture library that might focus on women working in factories.



Training tips:

Handout forty-six: Decision-making

Women in decision-making challenge gender stereotypes and this in turn poses a challenge to image-makers who are socialised to believe that women should only occupy private spaces. The pictures in the handouts are a refreshing challenge to usual pictures of women in politics who are portrayed either as “out to lunch” like Winnie Mandela or demure and knowing of their “rightful place”.

Handout forty-seven: Work

Gender stereotypes play themselves out at the workplace. Photos that depict women and men in non-traditional areas of work typically convey the message of being exceptional. The images in this handout, of women miners from Zambia, a woman working in a bicycle factory in Mozambique and a male hairdresser from Tanzania all convey the sense that this is quite natural- and so it should be.

Handout forty-eight: Sport

Compare the “dimpled thighs” story to the alternative images of women in sports, including the first woman linesperson in Zambia!

Handout forty-nine: Sex work

Because sex work is illegal in all Southern African countries this is a difficult area to illustrate. The *Sunday Times* in South Africa often uses the image in **Handout 47** with every story it runs on sex work. Clearly a set-up photo, this does at least show the man in the transaction-

commonly a missing feature in images of sex work. But notice how in his case power and wealth are emphasised (the two rings on the finger) and in her case the focus is all on the body. Compare this image with the first Australian brothel to list on the stock exchange. The woman pictured here is a businesswoman, not just a body.

Handout fifty: HIV/AIDS

Compare the fear and disaster image at the top with those of a male journalist touched by the plight of orphans whose parents have died as a result of HIV/AIDS. and

Handout fifty-one: Gender violence

Gender violence is one of the most difficult areas of gender to illustrate. This sequence shows possible photos to choose from in the story of the sixteen year-old girl who suffered serial abuse during her childhood. The editors struggled to find an appropriate image. They did not want to use the image of the young girl with her face on the table as this denoted powerlessness. The image of her turning her back seemed more appropriate. The image foregrounds the woman now giving her a helping hand, while conveying the distress that the young woman continues to suffer. Participants should think carefully about how they would react in a similar situation.

Step 2: Go out and take pictures. Remind participants that “getting the picture” includes getting sufficient information to label it correctly. The photographer may also want to negotiate with the layout artist or sub-editor on how it will be used.

Step 3. Debrief: Discuss the pictures taken on the field trip. Were they successful in getting alternative and gender-balanced images? What were the surprises? How can any problems be dealt with in future?



Training tips:

Some problems and issues with fieldwork:

- Some setting up almost always needs to be done in advance, preferably, several days in advance. This may be especially necessary where publicity is considered harmful or trust has been violated in the past—AIDS, gender violence, sex work, gay and lesbian issues are likely to be more sensitive.
- Alternative images often involve photographing people who are active in resisting oppressive conditions. This may provide an “in” to a promising photographic opportunity—especially where a major problem with “negative” photography has been imaging helpless and hopeless victims (most often women).

Consider well before time what equipment is necessary, from transport to cameras and film to developing.



handout forty-six

Women in decision-making



The Star, 19 April 2001



Zambian election campaign 2001



Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, South African minister
Photo by Margaret Waller

handout forty-seven

Work



Male hairdresser
Photo by Fatima Mwaasa



Factory worker
Photo by Rui Assubuji



Zambian women mineworkers
Sunday Post, 13 April 2003

handout forty-eight

Sport



HEAVY GOING: Martina Hingis, whose 'dimpled thighs' have sent Britain's tabloid newspapers into a feeding frenzy over the past fortnight

Sunday Times, 6 July 1997.



Sunday Post 4 May 2003



Zambian lineswoman



handout fifty

HIV/AIDS



HIV/AIDS

Saturday Star, 3 May 2003.

Kids give a lesson in life



NOTHING TO FEAR: Tendani Tsedu with one of the kids in the Harriet Shezi Children's Unit at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital – a visit that dispelled many preconceptions about HIV/AIDS
Sunday Times, 19 October 2002.



handout fifty-one

Gender violence- Namibia case study



Innocence betrayed

By Claudia Louis and Gaudensia Hausiku

REHOBOTH: On the face of it, Rosemary is just a shy 14-year-old kid. But the nervous twitching of her hands and the dazed look in her face belies a horror story whose long-term effects not even psychologists can begin to fathom.

One of seven young girls who were sexually abused by a shebeen harem in Kalkrand over several years. Rosemary (not her real name) tells the story of her life with the confidence of a young woman who has found hope, yet with wincing expressions that speak of inner bewilderment and pain.

At the age of ten, Rosemary joined her friend Sylvia (also not her real name) on visits to Jonas Vatlani's shebeen, Sylvia on the instructions of mother. Vatlani allowed them to watch television, gave them sweets, even the odd few dollars. One day, while on a walk in the veld, Vatlani ordered Rosemary to lie on the ground and proceeded to rape her. He raped Sylvia almost daily. At least once he raped the two young girls together. Every time, Sylvia took money home to her drunken mother. Rosemary did not understand

what was happening to her. One day, she told her grandmother, whom she was living with, what Oom Jonas had been doing. Shocked, her elderly grandmother told her it was wrong, yet seemed powerless to stop the violation. The school, the police, the church and community authorities all turned a blind eye, until in 1998, the case came to the attention of Women's Voice, a wing of the Namibia-wide Women's Action for Development (WAD).

As a result of WAD's activism, Vatlani was charged, tried and convicted for 35 years. Sylvia, whose mother had died, went into the care of Social Welfare in Mariental. Other children mock the young woman, calling her "Jonas' maid". Women's Voice Chairperson Rachel Kibete describes Sylvia as severely stunted for her age, "so messed up inside that the doctors say she will never be able to have children"; a "heartbreaking case" of innocence betrayed.

WAD helped Rosemary to move to Rehoboth and to the care of her mother. A tense relationship has gradually eased. Rosemary is back in school regaining her confidence, thanks to support from Anneli Arnold-Otner, WAD

coordinator for the Hardap region, whose warm relationship with the young woman glows through the painful recollections of the past.

Otner worries whether Rosemary will ever be able to have a "normal" relationship with a man. But as she watches Rosemary come regularly to the centre, that offers various training courses, the WAD official is hopeful of healing.

Down the road at the Rehoboth Old Age Home, it may be too late for Lena Ombili (not her real name) to put together the shattered pieces of her life.

Another of the many cases that WAD daily seeks to draw to the attention of the authorities, this 74 year old, wheelchair-bound grandmother was raped in December 2001 by a man known to the family, on the pretext that she failed to give him a meal when he demanded it.

Ombili's daughter came home to find the drunken man passed out and sprawled over her mother, who is paralysed, after he had raped her. When he came around, he begged the family not to lay charges against him, offering \$1000 and two goats as compensation. With WAD's assistance,



the family persisted. The man is in custody and the case will be heard in April.

There are more stories: for example, the woman who lives not far away, whose husband chained her to the bed, wrapped a cloth around his

penis and forced himself on her in a daily sadistic ritual that ended with him pouring cayenne pepper down her vagina and sealing it with clothes pegs. She too took up a case with the help of WAD and the man was jailed for four

years. The hair is growing back over the bald patches of her head where he literally pulled her hair out. She has found a new partner; and for the first time, true love. But for all these women and so many more, the unanswered question

Our Write: The Newspaper of the Namibian training workshop on gender violence 25 February 2002

