



## WOMEN IN POLITICS AND THE MEDIA WORKSHOP MANUAL



## BACKGROUND

The Gender and Media Baseline Study conducted in 2003 in twelve Southern African countries by Gender Links (GL) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) showed that women constitute, on average, 17 percent of news sources and that even where women are represented in occupations, their voices are not heard in equal proportion. In Malawi male politicians dominate the news as sources across print and electronic media at 28 percent compared to only two percent of women in the same occupation.

What this highlights is that women's political participation is one of the most problematic areas of reporting and that the views of these women are underrepresented and sometimes misrepresented in the media. The tension between women politicians and the media is also due, to a certain extent, to the fact that women have not had the same level of exposure as men and are often reluctant or wary in their dealings with the media.

In 2003, GL also undertook the first ever study on the impact of women in politics in the region: "Ringing up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics." This study showed that women make a marked difference to policy and law making where they are represented in sufficient numbers, work in an enabling environment and are empowered to operate effectively. The study highlighted understanding and being able to work with the media as a key tool for women politicians to leverage themselves more effectively. These findings were corroborated in a follow up study which focused specifically on women in local government "At the Coalface: Gender and Local Government in Southern Africa"

However, representation of women in decision-making positions is still low in Botswana. Botswana has not reached the minimum 30% representation in either the legislature (11%), or cabinet (25%) or local government (19%). This is below the target and set by the SADC Heads of State in 2005 and reiterated when they signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in August 2009, committing themselves to 50 percent women representation in decision making positions in the private and public sectors by 2015, as well as ensuring the equal participation of women and men.

## INTRODUCTION

The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is a key challenge for democratic processes and human rights movements in Africa. While African governments have taken steps to address women's lack of political, economic and social rights, the pace of movement towards achieving full equality is characterised by a series of 'stops' and 'starts', and there are often many mixed signals. For example, while the African Union and SADC region has committed itself to the target of 50% women in decision-making positions in all of its structures, the representation of women in government, parliament, local government and other political spaces in Africa is still low.

For example, women comprise only 17.3% of the members of parliament in Sub-Saharan Africa. The 15 countries that comprise the Southern African Development Community (SADC), on their own however, have an average of 21.9% women in parliaments, making SADC second in regional rankings across the globe, second only to the Nordic countries.

The African country of Rwanda with 48% women in its parliament has come closest to showing that parity can be achieved. Nineteen African countries went to the polls in 2007/2008, with many facing challenges to democratic processes. Elections are an opportunity to increase women's representation, raise issues of gender inequality and women's human rights violations and to press for building gender sensitivity into accountability systems.

Based on the outcome of primary elections at the beginning of the year, the prognosis for the 2009 elections is not good. In the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) three women out of the 66 women that contested the primary elections won as parliamentary candidates. In the case of the opposition Botswana Congress Party (BCP) four women have been nominated as parliamentary candidates. There are 57 parliamentary seats. Parties often field women candidates in seats that are not safe. In 2004 elections seven women stood for the ruling party and only four won.

Media essential to fifty percent women in leadership by 2015

By Susan Tolmay

So far, increasing women in governance has moved at a snail's pace. The recent signing of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development raises state commitment from the 30% agreed in 1997 to 50%, despite the fact that, 11 years on, only five countries in the region (Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and most recently, Angola) have attained the 30% target in parliament.

The picture is similar at the local government level, with only three countries having reached and exceeded the 30% target (Namibia, South Africa and Tanzania) and Lesotho having exceeded the 50% mark with 58% women in local government.

Over the next five years, Gender Links, a regional organisation which promotes equality and justice for women, is working in 14 SADC countries, where there will be national

and local elections, to build capacity and encourage interaction between women politicians and the media. Beginning with Malawi in the second week of November, and in Botswana and South Africa shortly after, this will provide a unique opportunity to campaign for the 50/50 target.

The new initiative is a replication of a programme in 2004 and 2005, in which GL embarked on gender and democracy training in seven SADC countries holding or expected to hold elections in those years. The purpose of the training with media practitioners, as well as politicians, was twofold; to engage with media to assist them in understanding how gender equality is integral to citizenship, democracy and freedom of expression, as well as train women politicians to build relations with the media and to empower them with practical skills to engage with the media.

The 2004/ 2005 training followed Gender Links' first ever study on the impact of women in politics in the region: "Ringling up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics." One of the findings of the qualitative study was that understanding and being able to work with the media is key for women politicians to leverage themselves more effectively.

While the long-term jury may still be out on the difference gender and democracy training for the media and women politicians makes, the 2004/ 2005 training created conversations between the two. According to Loga Virahsawmy, Chairperson of the Media Watch Organisation (MWO) in Mauritius, the training done with journalists and politicians in her country during the 2005 elections was one of the most important workshops on gender and democracy issues.

"The key to the workshop's success," Virahsawmy says, "is the participation of high level politicians especially the leaders of political parties, since they are the gatekeepers for women's entry into politics." In the 2005 elections in Mauritius the representation of women increased by just over 11% from 5.6 to 17%.

Women's political participation is a problematic area of reporting and media under-represents and sometimes misrepresents the views of these women in the media. According to Paula Fray, the Africa Regional Director of the Inter Press Service (IPS) global news agency, women politicians occupy a low profile in the media and there is often a hostile relationship with the media that is considered unfriendly to women.

IPS global news agency is also involved in training its Africa network of journalists and women politicians on how to engage the media in their From Polls to Polls programmes which is about strengthening the voices and visibility of women in elections. They train journalists to cover elections from a gender perspective with a broader focus on political processes and not merely elections as events.

According to Fray, an evaluation of this process takes place on a continuous basis as the agency's reporters receive on-line training and guidance daily from the IPS Africa Editor. A formal evaluation of the first formal training of journalists and women politicians conducted in November 2007 found participating women politicians showed a better understanding of the media and higher levels of confidence in dealing with them.

Journalists reported improved efforts to seek out the views of women and a better understanding of women politicians and the challenges that they face in the media. While politicians did see an increase in media's coverage, they believe that journalists still favour men and that the media needs to be transformed in a more holistic way.

Research points to the need for such training for media. The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted in 2003 in twelve Southern African countries by GL and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) showed that women in general constitute, on average, 17% of news sources. This increased by 2% to 19% for the Southern African region in the Global Media Monitoring (GMMP), coordinated by the World Association of Christian Communications (WACC), which took place in 2005.

And even where women are present in occupations, such as politicians, their voices are not heard in the same proportion as their representation. For example, in the GMBS, of all the politician sources, only 8% were women, and this figure doubled to 16% in the GMMP. However, neither of these figures reflects the strength of women in parliaments where the regional average has ranged from 19 to 21.9% between 2005 and 2008.

With the region currently undergoing so many changes in governments, it is time that this change includes ensuring that women are at the decision-making table. As a cornerstone of democracy, media is a vital part of this.

This article is part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service that provides fresh views on everyday news.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

- To identify issues of concern by women in politics in their dealings with the media and vice versa.
- To build relationships between women in politics and media decision-makers and practitioners.
- To empower women politicians with practical skills for dealing with the media.

## GENDER AND GOVERNANCE – KEY ISSUES

### 1) Botswana women participation in politics

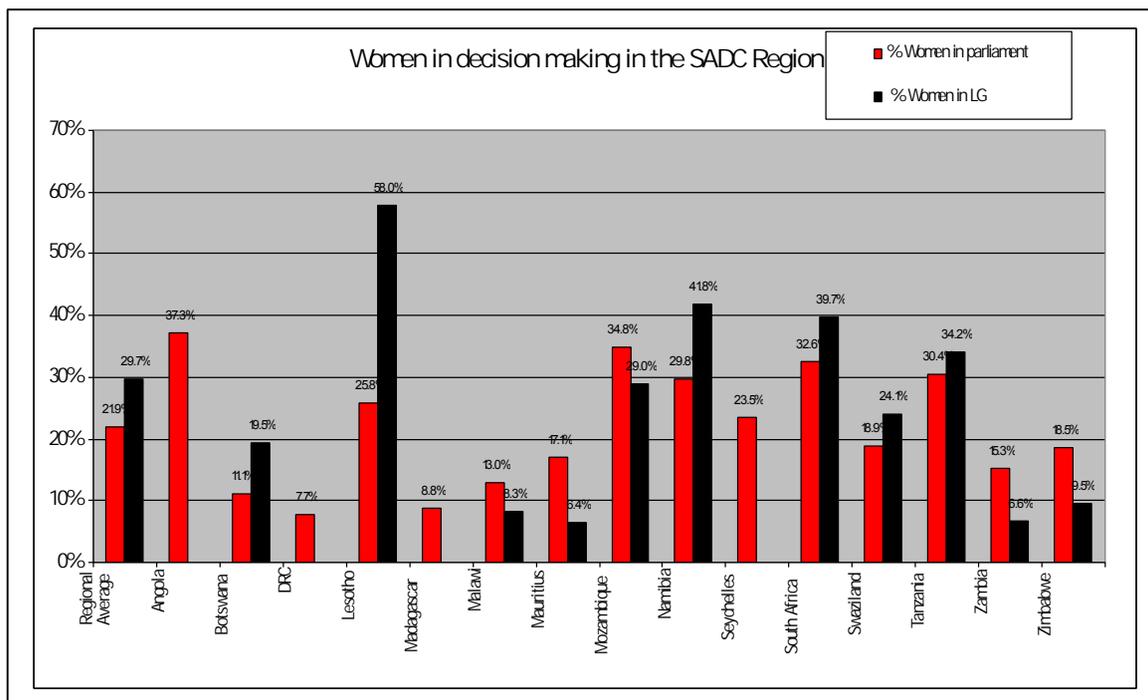
Table 1 below shows the participation of women in politics in the SADC region.



Answer the following questions?

- i) Where does Botswana rank?
- ii) Why is Botswana ranked low in women's participation in politics?

Table 1: Women in parliament and local government in Southern Africa



2) What are some of the challenges facing women in politics in Botswana today?

- Impact of money politics. The cost of engaging in electoral politics remains too high and leads to the exclusion of most women from the election processes. It is important to note that many women do not have access to their own funds, and they depend on their partners or relatives for raising money to participate in elections.
- Marginalization of women in political parties. Women are marginalized while being promoted to leadership positions within their parties, being nominated by a party, etc. For example, Botswana Congress Party (BCP) has 30% quota in either their constitutions or election manifestos. But the quota is not fulfilled. According to a study conducted by the International IDEA, political party leaders refuse to take female aspirants seriously and labelled them as cultural deviants.
- Patriarchal attitudes – although not directly in immediate families all the time, but certainly among men in political parties.
- Electoral systems which Unfriendly, electoral Failure to enforce existing legal norms and international agreements. For instance, the domestication of CEDAW has failed in Botswana and constitutional mandates have been ignored.

Can you identify more obstacles?

Exercise:



Challenges facing women are not confined to Botswana. Look at the picture below and explain the challenges women face in politics even outside Africa. Can journalists do something to help to change perceptions of women in politics?



## TIPS FOR POLITICIANS ON GETTING MEDIA COVERAGE

### 1. The role of the media

As one of the most powerful tools for politicians and for social awareness, the media is a critical factor in the efficacy of women in politics. All politicians have a love-hate relationship with the media. For women in politics, this relationship is that much more troubled. But, the media can be used as a catalyst for change and speak for the marginalised.

An IPU study found that only a bare majority of women (53 percent) said they had good relations with the media; ten percent had bad relationships and 22 percent expressed ambivalence.<sup>1</sup> The following are some observations from a roundtable convened by the Inter Parliamentary Union on the image of women politicians in the media chaired by Birgitta Dahl, the Speaker in Sweden:

- The media carries less coverage of women than of male politicians.
- The media are less open to the achievements of women politicians than to those of their male counterparts.
- Stories that purport to “sell” often perpetuate gender stereotypes. As much as women politicians need to learn to put their message across better, media need to understand that the integration of women into politics strengthens democracy.

## MOCK INTERVIEWS

As women politicians you will be frequently conducting meetings in your constituencies or you will be invited to attend functions at which you might be interviewed by a journalist. It is important to give an interview. How you conduct yourself during the interview will have an impact on the

### EXERCISE: Mock Interviews

Role-play and record an interview between a journalist and a politician on their campaign or any other pertinent issue. If possible record this on video or tape. Play these back and ask participants to comment.



**Tips:** The most common pitfall is long sentences and fuzzy answers. This is especially a problem for television, where time is at a premium. Repeat the process after the comments from the floor, and see if the playback and critique helps to improve the quality of the interview.

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<sup>1</sup> Inter Parliamentary Union (2003) “Politics, Women’s Insight.” IPU: page 166.

## WRITING YOUR PROFILE

When entering the political arena, women politicians should prepare a profile which can be given to the media as background material. This can be prepared with the help of a public relations firm, or a local journalist, and can be used in campaigning or other appropriate forums to help people know who you are, and what you have done that prepares you for the field of leadership and public service. The media will of course begin to write their own human interest stories and profiles about you as your recognition in the public space grows. But having your own profile prepared can ensure too that the media gets the basic facts correct and has some pointers on the areas of your life that you believe are important for the public to know. (IPS, A Handbook for Women Politicians and the Media, 2008: 62)



Exercise:

In small groups discuss the following questions

1. What do you understand a profile to be?
2. Why do you think that is important to write your profile?
3. What do you think are the components of a good profile?



Exercise: Different types of profiles

Read the two profiles that follow, note the differences between them and answer the following questions.

# Patricia de Lille unveiled

The forthright ID leader insists there is no contradictions in her life, only a deep passion for her country, writes **Colleen Lowe Morna**



Feeling more threatened by de Lille than by the NNP that has been deserted in droves by its supporters since it formed an electoral pact with the ANC, and given its own inability to make any inroads into the black community, the DA waged a blistering campaign against the ID which it characterised as a "one woman show".

According to Kristina Bentley, a political scientist with the Human Sciences Research Council, the DA "consciously played on the fact that all over the world, voters don't trust women candidates".

De Lille points out that, "every political party in South Africa is personality driven. Who do we know in the United Democratic Movement other than Bantu Holomisa? Why is he not called a one man show?"

But the DA's strategy backfired badly, with letters like one titled "Silly DA has sold me on De Lille" flooding the media. Although DA support rose from 9% in 1999 to 12.5% in 2004, it fell short of the 17% it had predicted.

The ID appears to have garnered most of its support from white liberals fed up with DA leader Tony Leon's arrogance and increasingly right wing leanings, as well as from De Lille's traditional support base among coloureds in the two Cape provinces.

She maintains, however, that one of the reasons for forming the ID is "exactly to challenge race-based politics with a message that is universal to South Africans".

De Lille predicts that ten years from now, with a new generation of voters not bogged down by the past, voting patterns will change.

According to her biographer Smith: "More than any other politician, I think that she has an all-embracing South African identity. She doesn't see us as colours or genders or quotas or sexual identities, she sees us as people to get on with. She is the founder member of the 'if you don't

like it, fix it' society."

Smith argues that being a woman has worked to De Lille's advantage.

"In a hugely sexist society, men admire strong women. They don't want to marry us, but they admire us for taking positions they would fear because of considerations such as jobs and status. Women are more likely to think, 'damn the status and job, I'm doing this because it's the right thing to do'."

But Smith is critical of De Lille for not actively wooing the women's vote. De Lille comes with plenty of first hand experience of what it means to be a woman in South Africa, including the "shame" of falling pregnant in high school, as well as the brutal rape and murder of her youngest sister.

She acknowledges that women did almost all the backroom work for her campaign. Although the party did not have a quota for women, three out of the seven ID MPs are women.

But De Lille concedes that she downplayed gender issues in her campaign because "I did not want to come across as pushing a feminist line".

Analysts say that the ID's weak stance on gender issues reflects the broader lack of a clear political platform.

As Bentley puts it: "It is clear what the ID does not stand for. What is not clear is what it stands for."

Describing the ID as "constitutionalists" De Lille argues that her party is driven "by issues, not by ideology".

University of Witwatersrand political analyst Sheila Meintjes says this is not enough.

"Every party must have an overarching theoretical perspective. For example, what principles guide the ID's macro-economic policies? You get the impression that De Lille makes up policies on the run."

While independent analysts are critical of the DA's sexist attacks on De Lille, they are also concerned about the extent to which the party built around her.

As Meintjes put it, "when you combine a personality cult with a party that does not have an ideology, that's a real problem".

A tough self-critic, De Lille concedes that these are areas she needs to work on.

"I am fiercely independent," she reflects. "I don't rely on anyone. I need to learn to delegate. Learning to delegate also means learning to trust people, and in the past I have been let down."

"But over the next five years, one of my priorities will be to work with the young people in my party, grooming them for leadership. This is something I have to do."

(Colleen Lowe Morna is director of Gender Links and editor of the study, *Ring up the Changes. Gender in Southern African Politics.*)



Patricia de Lille

Regarded as one of the most accessible and polite politicians, de Lille makes it a point to scroll down these messages each evening and answer as many as she can.

Her appeal undoubtedly stems from her straight shooting, no non-sense style: "As I have gone up and down the length and breadth of the country, I have found that there are many who live in fear of speaking up. My message is: Fear no one. Speak up," she says.

As a parliamentarian, de Lille catapulted to fame by being the first to

blow the whistle on irregularities in the multi-billion rand Government arms deal.

She has also been a consistent critic of President Thabo Mbeki's "quiet diplomacy" on Zimbabwe, an approach that she calls a "special invention to deal with a friend" at odds with South Africa's stance on human rights.

She also continually took the Government to task on its HIV-Aids policy. De Lille and her party officials publicly took Aids tests. She has adopted an Aids orphan.

# Poll Alert

## Some women are made of steel

Profile of Jean Kamphale shadow MCP MP for Blantyre Kabula

When alleged UDF thugs attacked Jean Kamphale's office on April 18 2004, they wanted to intimidate her into either throwing in the towel or chickening out of the race in Blantyre's Kabula Constituency. But, in the countdown to the March 18 polls, the race for the seat is getting hotter and Kamphale has proved that she is made of sterner stuff. **KELTON MASANGANO** writes on the resolve and dreams of this woman.

**J**EAN Kamphale, MCP shadow MP for Blantyre Kabula, is a woman who has gone through a lot in her short political life but, to her, 18 April 2004 stands out to be the saddest day.

On this day, about 100 young men brandishing pangas knives and believed to have been sent by her political rival, converged at her office along Chaleka road and started pelting stones at the gate and insulting her and threatening everybody in sight, including her husband. She says the alleged young democrats went on to disrupt her campaign rally in the populous Machinjiri township in the afternoon, seriously injuring two of her supporters in the process.

"My family and Rashid Gaffar's (UDF contestant) are friends and it is really sad that he is practising politics of violence. I would have loved it if we practised politics that is free of violence."

"But let me assure you that despite all this I will never relent. I am on my way towards grabbing the parliamentary seat in Kabula and nothing or anyone will frustrate me," Kamphale said, adding that she has a resolve of steel.

Looking at the road that she has travelled, Kamphale is indeed a woman destined for bigger things. She says that she admires women who have made it in the political world, powerful women like Margaret Thatcher, Madeline Albright and Condoleezza Rice. Thatcher, the woman famously known as the "Iron Lady", ruled the United Kingdom for 11 years and Rice, United States National Security Advisor, is one of the most powerful persons on today's world political arena.

Jean Kamphale is a woman who reached dizzy heights by no other formula except that of school and hard work, despite the fact that her family was comfortably provided for by her businessman father.

She was born in Blantyre on May 20, 1971 at what used to be Matenje village but now is the place where civic centre offices are built on. She started her primary school in 1976 at Chichir Primary School and, in

Community Secondary School where she graduated with a Malawi school Certificate of Education in 1989.

From Njamba she went to Central High School where she studied for the internationally acclaimed GSCE. After getting her GSCE, she pursued a secretarial course at Blantyre Commercial College and she was to graduate with a certificate in secretarial studies in 1991.

However, not satisfied with only a secretarial qualification, she enrolled for an accounting course at the same college in the same year. Her hard working spirit paid dividends as she got a diploma in accounting (stage 2) in 1993.

"After I finished my studies in 1993, I only worked for my father as an administrative secretary. My father had a car hire company and a number of motels."

Kamphale, who joined mainstream politics about two years ago says on the local scene she greatly admires Cecilia Kadzamura and Kate Kainja for their success in politics as well as staying power and dignity in public life.

"Kadzamura and Kainja are just some of the few figures in Malawi who have given hope for the women in politics. They have been at the seats of power and they are natural leaders. They are just a gift to this world", Kamphale said.

On the international political scene she says she draws her inspiration from the late Indra Gandhi, who was Prime Minister of India in the 80's.

"She was a woman who inspired me to join politics because of her good leadership skills, political ideology and charisma," Kamphale says of Gandhi.

Apart from the inspiration from Gandhi, Kamphale says her father also greatly played a part in her decision to join the Malawi Congress Party (MCP).

"My father was the first driver of the late Kamuzu Banda and he was a staunch supporter of MCP and that, among other things, compelled me to join MCP."

The tough-talking Kamphale



**KAMPHALE: I know that some people are losing sleep because of my very strong challenge against UDF's Gaffar**

political aspirants: "Do not feel threatened or intimidated. You have to be there amongst the men to be counted. Women gave birth to all these men, so why fear them?" she queries.

Tough talking indeed, maybe this proves why she is fast becoming a 'hard nut to crack' in the Kabula constituency where her challenger is not only male, UDF and a successful businessman but has the support of the whole state machinery behind him.

On her plans for the people once elected MP, she says the people can only expect more from her as already she has initiated many development projects in Kabsala like building bridges and looking at orphans.

"I can not tell you much on what I have done in my constituency. I am a down-to-earth person and I do not want to blow my own trumpet. Let my works speak for

Meonga village T/A Changata in Thyolo district. She is a married woman who has three children, two daughters and a son. She says that she is very fortunate to have an understanding and supportive family.

"My husband is very supportive of what I am doing and in fact he is the one who called Gaffar to my offices to come and disperse his boys who were insulting and harassing me."

Kamphale says she is confident of making it to parliament on May 18, as she has received massive support from the people of Kabula constituency.

"Some people are losing sleep because of me and that's why they are finding unorthodox means of frustrating me. I am very strong here and everybody knows that I will win," she declares confidently.

promises to build a hospital and school in Machinjiri and Chirimba areas. She also intends to establish a special fund that will provide loans to people to start small scale businesses as a means of alleviating poverty.

If she is elected into parliament on May 18, what's next for Mrs. Kamphale?

"I will not simply be satisfied by being in the MCP decision making team. I would like to be more than that and

aspire for the bigger and more challenging positions both in my party and government."

Does this mean her next port of call is that of Speaker of Parliament or a cabinet minister?

She shrugs her shoulders with indecision... "Well, who knows, you can never predict some of these things."

She is absolutely right, they say the only constant thing in life is change itself. For Kamphale, only time will tell.

### FACT FILE

<b>Born:</b>	1971 at Matenje village in Blantyre
<b>Marital Status:</b>	Married with three children
<b>Education:</b>	MSCE, GSCE, Certificate in secretarial studies, Diploma in Accounting, Businesswoman
<b>Profession:</b>	2002: Joined active politics
<b>Political career:</b>	



- 1) What are the differences between the two articles?
- 2) What did you learn from the articles?
- 3) How would you write them differently?

#### Tips

1. Understand your reasons for writing a profile. Your profile will turn out best if you write it simply because you want to and because you see it as an important way of promoting yourself.
2. Read profiles of other women politicians. The best way to get a feel for this type of writing is to read several good profiles.
3. Think about your audience. Your approach to writing will be a lot different depending on who your intended audience is. If you're just writing for the electorate you should pay attention to interest and readability, you should write with the following in mind
  - i. will it get attention - use descriptive words
  - ii. will people be interested
  - iii. make it relevant
4. Develop your theme. A story is generally more satisfying if it has a unifying theme or two. Rather than just reciting the events of your life like a timeline in a history book, think about what the main idea of your story -- the driving force of your life -- is.
  - i. What made you want to go into politics
  - ii. What have been your main achievements?
  - iii. What are your strengths
  - iv. Write from your own personal experience, form the heart.
  - v. Be honest
5. Plan your profile. Sometimes it easier to write in chronological order, it's a good idea to plan it out in an outline. You don't need to follow your outline when you start writing, but it can be a helpful guide.
6. Start writing. Sit in a comfortable place, relax, and take it one page at a time. Be yourself: you'll write faster and more naturally. Don't spend too much time thinking about style and grammar, just write. You are not trying to win any prizes, and even if you are, don't let the "art of writing" prevent you from telling your story. You can edit later.
7. Edit your completed work. Once you've written the first draft of your profile, let your profile sit for a week before proceeding to edit it. You may find it helpful to ask others to read your story and comment on it. Take out the extraneous details, tie up the loose ends, and make sure your writing is crisp and readable throughout.

8. Preserve your work. Ensure you have at least one copy in a place which is safe from fire, flood or other damage – you don't want such an important work to be lost. If your story is saved on your computer, make sure to **print** out a hard copy and save a **backup** copy.
9. Write legibly. If you are hand-writing your profile, make sure your writing is legible; you do want people to be able to read it. Consider having your written copy typed up when you finish it.
10. Vital statistics. It is often a good idea to include your vital statistics at the beginning.

#### Don'ts

1. Show, don't tell. At the same time, don't get bogged down in unimportant details. While you want your profile to be vivid, you don't want it to be boring.

Source: adapted from

<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-an-Autobiography>

## STRATEGIES FOR USING THE MEDIA EFFECTIVELY

### 1. Building relationships



#### Exercise

Draw out some of the ways in which Motswana politicians can build relationships with the media. Who would you target? In what way are you working with women media association?



**Tips:** Media practitioners are human beings! Communicating with journalists makes a difference.

The first step in establishing and maintaining good relationships with media professionals is to identify the proper person to make contact with, depending on what you wish to accomplish. In many SADC countries there are media women's associations, such as Malawi Media Women's Association, the Tanzania Media Women's Association, Zambia Media Women's Association. In Malawi there is the Gender and Media in Malawi (GEMMA) organisation. These are likely to give you a sympathetic ear and are a good entry point.

For effectively building and maintaining professional relations with media personnel:

- Be professional – be factual not rhetoric
- Be respectful – do not attack a journalist
- Be honest
- Show commitment
- Show confidence

## 2. Tips on pitching a story to the media

- Be creative, but keep your list of ideas short
- Know your organisation's priorities – what part of an event or issue do you want in the public eye?
- Use statistics wisely – data can be powerful ammunition to back up your arguments, but keep it simple and to the point
- Reporters and editors are always short on time – if you don't grab them in the first few moments of your pitch, you won't secure their interest.

## 3. How to get journalists to attend your event

- Identify what journalists to invite
- Make an innovative invitation
- Argue why your event is newsworthy
- Send out a short innovative press release
- Follow up invitation and press release with calls

## OTHER TYPES OF WRITING WHICH ARE USEFUL FOR WOMEN POLITICIANS

### 1. Opinion and commentary

#### TIPS for Writing Opinions and Commentaries

##### What editors look for?

- The argument or point of view should be right up front in the piece.
- The argument must be strong [passion].
- A strong news peg (i.e. a piece which is based on an event, issue or trend that is topical in the society, as well as forward looking; also can be a new perspective or new/fresh insight into an event or issue
- The argument should be informed – research, data, anecdotes( human interest), national laws, regional and international conventions and declarations (accountability)

##### Structure (writing the piece):

- What to avoid:
- Do not think that just because you write a piece, you are entitled to space. You must convince an editor why it is important to publish your piece. The piece must be compelling and informative.
- Do not write a piece that is too specialized which can be understood only by a small audience.
- Avoid inaccuracies in facts and data.
- Avoid one-side and unfair arguments. Be balance.
- Avoid a didactic/preachy/prescriptive tone in your piece.

##### How to pitch your piece:

- Call an opinion page editor, rather than sending unsolicited articles. Better tactic is to go and see the editor and be persistent.
- Have a 2-3 page brief with you when you pitch which outlines the article.
- Know the newspaper you want to publish your article in (know its values, editorial policy, its readers, etc); research the newspaper before you approach it.
- Be brave when pitching your opinion.
- Know the area you are writing about; show that you know the issues well.
- For dailies: allow three weeks lead time to pitch your piece. For weeklies: allow six weeks lead time.



##### Key points

- Brevity
- Clarity
- Keep the argument central

Below is an example of an opinion and commentary piece.

### More women's voices on political change

By Judith Mtsewu

Though times and stereotypes are changing, both men and women often consider this political domain a male one, assuming that men should like and excel at politics, much the same way that they should like and excel at sports and technology, for instance. Yet, more and more women, especially young women, are developing more interest in politics, and making their opinions known.

Ten countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) will have elections over the next three years. If women do not take an interest in politics, they miss opportunities to have a say in how governments run, which of course affects everyone.

In my circle of friends, along with my love for sports (with cricket topping the charts), my above-average interest (compared to that of an "ordinary" woman – whoever she is) in politics stands out as different. I often contend with comments, mostly from men, on how odd this interest is – "Wow, so you have an opinion on the United State's invasion of Iraq?" Yeah, I do and I stand by it.

Throughout most of my life, I have been selective with whom I talk to about politics, because many of my friends did not share this particular interest with me. As a result, I would find myself seeking male friends and any cab driver who would dare listen to me.

At the same time, I was fully aware that I was feeding and perpetuating the stereotype - that by virtue of being a man, the person must be interested and knowledgeable about these issues. Fortunately, as it turns out, my experience is testimony that this is not true.

In the recent past, I have noticed a change. There are more conversations about our political environment among my friends, male and female, and they, not me, are initiating these. There were two turning points.

The first was the election of Barack Obama. The second one, right here at home, was the creation of the splinter party largely from the African National Congress (ANC), which led to the formation of the Congress of the People (COPE). I am not suggesting that prior to these two events women in general had no interest in politics. However, I know that with my friends, it was certainly less visible.

I was not too surprised when, on a visit to a hair salon, I heard conversations about Obama's historic win and on a visit to a curios shop in Melville, I heard the Kenyans there claim him as their son, celebrating his win with a braai. When I went to a graduation party, I ended up being part of a discussion about COPE's youth movement as initiated by one of the guests at the party. The latter made the party much more interesting, especially for those who do not dance, cause talk we can.

More and more of the conversations around the dinner table, and during other activities we busy ourselves with, are about the political landscape that is taking shape in the world and in South Africa. I am hearing real questions asked about the potential changes that president Obama in the United States and COPE in South Africa might possibly bring to our lives, communities, and respective countries.

Most importantly, I am seeing more young women taking interest in how their own political decisions are responsible for the environment they work, live, and possibly raise children in, as well as the world they want to leave for future generations. Along with an opening up of dialogue, there seems to be increasing awareness that an individual has a stake in changing the course of a country and can reclaim some of the power handed over to politicians.

For me personally, the Obama and COPE moments have compelled me to act like the change agent I have always believed myself to be. I do want to be actively involved in creating the type of society I want to live in today and tomorrow, and raise children in.

Perhaps the lack of "struggle credentials," which still tend to command the most respect within our political system, have further marginalised young people from the political arena. As for me, I believe I am no less deserving of an opportunity to shape the place I call home. More significantly, I am hearing a lot more young people and women say this and own the moment.

We must encourage young people, women, and those who often shy away from engaging in politics, changing the face of politics in the process for good. And, of course once the conversations gets going, action is not far behind. And, that should make for very interesting times ahead indeed.

This article is part of the Gender Links Opinion and Commentary Service that provides fresh views on everyday news.

## 2. Press releases



### Exercise: Writing a press release

Use the press release, in the handout, or one more relevant to your immediate situation, to draw out what are the key features of a good press release.



### Tips

- Brief
- To the point
- Clear
- Complete
- Correct Facts
- Concise
- Considerate
- Include: What, Who, When, Where, Why and How

- List main points in order of importance
- Support data with quotes from spokes persons

Example of a press release

### SADC leaders urged to adopt gender protocol

5 August: The Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance urges heads of state to make history by adopting the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development at their summit in Lusaka, from 16-17 August.

As representatives of sixteen regional and national NGOs working to promote the rights of women in the region, we commend gender ministers for crafting one of the most far reaching instruments anywhere in the world for achieving gender equality, and justice ministers for approving this instrument at their recent meetings ahead of the heads of state summit.

The ball is now firmly in the court of our leaders. We trust that they will seize this historic moment to make a difference to the lives of women who constitute the majority of the politically, socially and economically marginalised in society despite their central role to the development of our region.

The draft Protocol is the culmination of a unique collaboration between governments and civil society that gained momentum in 2005 with an audit of progress in implementing the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development during the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The audit found that governments had failed to deliver on the one concrete target in the Declaration- achieving 30 percent women in decision-making; that women constitute the majority of the poor; the unemployed and the dispossessed; that gender violence in all countries is unacceptably high and that HIV and AIDS threatens to reverse the fragile gains made by women over the last decade.

What distinguishes the SADC Gender Protocol from all the existing international and regional commitments to gender equality is the number of concrete, time bound commitments to achieving key strategic objectives. Altogether the Protocol has twenty targets: six by 2010, and 14 by 2015.

These targets not only bring together but enhance existing commitments in such instruments as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Millennium Development Goals and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. For example, while all these make reference to women's participation in decision-making, only the SADC Protocol gives a bold time-frame of 2015 for achieving this.

The Protocol draws on and seeks to extend good practice in the region. For example, it requires that by 2015 all countries follow the example set by two countries in the region ( and ) by enshrining gender equality in their constitutions and giving this provision

primacy over customary law.

All countries will also be required by that year to have comprehensive legislation, services and specialised facilities for addressing gender violence as well as reduce current levels by 50 percent.

The Protocol breaks new ground by requiring that women participate equally in economic decision-making; be afforded access to credit; public procurement contracts and wage employment.

It further sets out targets for implementation, monitoring, evaluation and resource allocation with strong peer review and accountability mechanisms. A summary of the key provisions of the protocol is attached.

For more information call Susan Tolmay on 27 (0) 83 519 8959

### 3. Letters to editors

The letter to the editor can be seen as the public's opportunity to write in their own words on an issue of concern to them. Such a letter could:

- Air a grievance against the newspaper, an organisation, an individual, an institution or a story that has made headlines in the news. NB! Make your letter timely. If you are not addressing a specific article, editorial or letter that recently appeared in the paper you are writing to, then try to tie the issue you are writing about to a recent event.
- Stress a particular point of view.
- Draw the public's attention to certain facts or occurrences.
- Comment on general issues frequently covered in the media.

It is important to:

- Support your facts. If the topic you address is controversial, consider sending documentation along with your letter.
- Find others to write when possible. This will show that other individuals in the community are also concerned about the issue.

The Editor  
Monitor Newspaper  
14<sup>th</sup> June 2007

#### Cartoon demeans women aspiring for leadership positions

The Gender and Media in Southern Africa (GEMSA) Botswana Chapter and the Botswana Media Women Association (BOMWA) have noted with alarm the Cartoon that appeared in the Monitor Newspaper of May 28, 2007. The cartoon, titled BNF Congress, supposedly depicted the Botswana National Front aspirant for Party Presidency, Kathleen Letshabo, at its Congress being castrated and bleeding.

GEMSA and BOMWA are deeply disturbed by the cartoon, which it finds in bad taste, and more importantly, displays the insensitivity on the part of the cartoonist and Mmegi newspaper in which it is published. The message implied by the cartoon has the effect of degrading and ridiculing women who aspire for leadership positions in the political arena.

The depiction of the cartoon defeats the purpose of democracy that in every election, there are winners and losers, and Letshabo is not immune to a defeat of this nature. In Botswana, male candidates have lost in similar circumstances, but they have not been shown as 'bleeding bulls being castrated'. The cartoon did not only insult Letshabo but also showed little regard for all women that have ambitions to aspire for leadership positions in both the political realm and any sector of the economy. We wish to condemn this in the strongest terms.

In this regard, we call upon the leadership of Mmegi to respond to our concern, and in future display more sensitivity in their selection of what to publish. Such a gross

violation of the rights and dignity of women cannot be justified on the basis of humour or satire.

We further call upon all media organisations, human rights and gender - based organisations to strongly condemn such depiction of female leaders who have the desire to make a contribution to the leadership of the nation.

This letter is submitted by GEMSA Botswana. For further information contact the Botswana Gemsa Representative and BOMWA Chairperson, Keabonye Ntsabane on +267 71749644.

GEMSA is an umbrella organisation of individual and institutions that work to promote gender equality in and through the media. GEMSA has its roots in the historic Southern Africa Gender and Media Summit attended by 184 participants from around the region as well as international observers in September 2004.