



WORKSHOP REPORT

WORKSHOP ON OPINION AND COMMENTARY 24 – 25 MAY 2012 VICTORIA HOTEL BLANTYRE



Emma Mwasinga

Photo: Dalitso Nkunika

INTRODUCTION

This brief report gives an outline of the workshop on Opinion and Commentary conducted on 24th and 25th May 2012 at Victoria Hotel in Blantyre.

The training workshop which centered on stage 6 of the Centres of Excellence (COEs) gender mainstreaming process is a continuation towards mainstreaming gender in the media.

The general objectives of the workshop were:

- To sensitise journalists about the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.
- To understand and evaluate the context within which the media reports on gender issues.
- To enhance journalists' opinion and commentary writing skills, especially from a gender perspective.

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which was signed by SADC heads of State in August 2008 was used as the overarching framework for the course. The SADC protocol quiz was administered to the participants so as to gauge their knowledge levels.

The participants were drawn from various media houses under the COEs project. In total, the training attracted 21 participants.

At the end of the two day workshop everyone was able to critically analyse articles in the media. To cement the skills gained from the workshop, participants went away with an assignment to come up with a commentary piece to be forwarded to Gender Links commentary services.

A copy of the programme is attached at **Annex A**.

Outputs

- 19 commentary pieces to be submitted to GL commentary services
- 21 questionnaires to test knowledge, skills and attitude of participants on the SADC gender protocol and gender issues in general

Outcomes

- Participants appreciation of the role of media in forging ahead the SADC gender protocol
- Participants understanding gender representations in the media
- Participants able to write opinion and commentary pieces for the GL commentary service.

PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

The media houses in the Centres of Excellence (COEs) project from Blantyre who participated in the training included Transworld Radio Station (TWR), The Nation Publication, The Malawi Institute of Journalism, Radio Islam, Blantyre News Papers Limited and Joy Radio. On top of the media houses, there were also students from the Malawi Institute of Journalism who manage the online publication for students.

The training started off with some background information on gender issues, a discussion that was developed through the responses of knowledge, skills and attitude (KAS) survey. The KAS form was administered at the beginning and also at the end of the workshop. The aim of this exercise is to assess changes in participants' attitudes to gender issues, their knowledge as well as skills levels. The KAS questionnaire has a section on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. This training workshop provided a good platform for popularizing the Protocol.

The workshop was introduced with the participants watching the DVD on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. This motivated each participant to appreciate the gaps that are there in media and the role that the media can do to address the gaps.

Further to this was a discussion that stemmed from the role of the media in addressing gender disparities. The topic on key gender concepts proved to be quite enlightening to participants who were attending workshops on gender for the first time.

Methods of training included open discussions and buzz groups. The major problem identified during the training was lack of information and substantiated data on gender issues which made a number of participants to take time to appreciate the issue and how the media can intervene to address the same. However, as the training continued and after analysing articles from the local papers, they were able to appreciate the need for media to be gender aware in writing articles or producing programs.

CHALLENGES

Out of the 23 participants who were invited to attend the workshop, only 21 participants came for the training on the first day and two participants from Capital Radio did not come on the second day. Therefore only 19 participants were to write the commentary articles (**see Annex B for details**). A foreseeable challenge would be to make sure that articles have been submitted on the stated dates.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Comments from individual participants were included in the evaluation form. The general comments however indicated that the course was an eye opener to most participants if not all. Every individual admitted that it is through the media that change can be expected in addressing gender disparities. The media has a role to make people at policy level accountable

to the international or regional treaties that they have signed to and the media could even change the perception of the public on how they perceive women.

Some of the comments included;

1. The discussion on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. I feel I was very behind on the detailed data concerning this document but now I know as a journalist I will move from assumptions to substantiated information.
2. I think the initiative is quite a step and should be applauded. It is an eye opener in more ways than one. But I also think that there should be an emphasis on ways of improving the mindset not only in men but women themselves. They should stop playing victims all the time.
3. A discussion on key gender concepts was an eye opener as it has helped me to write articles with Gender in mind, being gender aware.
4. A session on opinion and commentary has equipped me with knowledge on how to come up with a better and well balanced opinion or commentary.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The training workshop was well conducted throughout the two days, the participants were very receptive and the discussions were very fruitful. Every participant was well engaged.

Workshops aiming at sharpening journalistic skills like this one on opinion and commentary writing should be open to all journalists other than just those journalists who are coming from media houses that are falling under the COEs project. It has been observed that most journalists move across media houses more often. In this case you end up with a new group of journalists who are not aware of the project. If it is also open to more journalists, then it will have more impact as more journalists will write about the issues.

Annex A: Opinion and Commentary Service Workshop Programme

DAY ONE	ACTIVITY	WHO
08:30 - 09:00	Registration, Media House Scorecards, Knowledge and Attitudes Quiz	Saeanna Chingamuka
09:00 - 09:30	Welcome and Objectives	Saeanna Chingamuka
09:30 - 10:00	SADC Protocol on Gender and Development DVD	ALL
10:00 - 10:30	Discussion	ALL
10:30 - 11:00	TEA BREAK	
11 :00 - 12:00	Key Gender Concepts	Saeanna Chingamuka
	GEM Classification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Aware • Gender Blind • Blatant Stereotypes • Subtle Stereotypes 	
	How Stereotypes are reinforced – Messages in songs, proverbs, soap operas and advertisements	
12 :00 – 12 :30	Group work	ALL
12 :30 – 13 :00	Report back	ALL
13 :00 – 14 :00	LUNCH	
14:00 - 14:20	Media Diversity and Change DVD	ALL
14:20 - 14:30	Discussion	ALL
14:30 - 14:45	Centres of Excellence for gender in the media concept	Dalitso Nkunika
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SADC Protocol media targets 	
14:45 – 15:00	Question and answer	
15:00 – 15:15	TEA BREAK	
15:15 - 15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GL Opinion and Commentary service: stage six of the COE process • What is an opinion and commentary? 	Saeanna Chingamuka

DAY ONE	ACTIVITY	WHO
15:30 – 16:00	Example of an opinion piece	
16:00 - 16:15	Writing an opinion and commentary piece <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to write a powerful and persuasive piece: structure • Choosing topical issues • Challenges that writers may face 	
16:15 – 16:30	Assignment allocation	
16:30 - 16:45	WRAP UP AND CLOSE	
DAY TWO: 25 MAY 2012		
08:30 – 08:45	Recapturing Day 1 proceedings	Participant
08:45 - 09:30	Analysis of an article from a newspaper	ALL
09:30 - 10:30	Presentations of assignment	
10:30-11:00	TEA	ALL
11:00 - 11:30	Continue presentations	ALL
11:30 - 12:45	Story ideas for opinion pieces and POA	ALL
12:45 - 12:55	Workshop evaluation	ALL
12:55 - 13:15	WRAP UP AND CLOSE	DN, SC

**ANNEX B: OPINION AND COMMENTARY ARTICLES TO BE DONE BY PARTICIPANTS
IDEAS FOR OPINION AND COMMENTARY.**

No.	NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR	STORY IDEA	SUBMISSION DATE
1	PETER CHIDOTHE	ELIMINATING GBV: IT BEGINS WITH YOU	8-Jun
2	ENOCK NAPHANZI	ZERO WOMEN COMMENTATORS	31-May
3	EVELYN PASANJE	HEALTH FOR ALL OR DEATH FOR ALL BY 2015	25-Jun
4	CASSIM AUBI	ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS	8-Jun
5	SIMEON MAGANGA	WHEN FOLKS PREFER RURAL WOMEN FOR WIFE	15-Jun
6	GLITTER NDHLOVIE	DYING FOR LOVE	15-Jun
7	GRACE CHIMWAZA	RIGHTS OF WOMEN ON SOCIETY	15-Jun
8	PATRICK MLEKANO	CHAMPIONING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DETERMINATION	15-Jun
9	WONDER MSISKA	GENDER EQUALITY WHERE IS THE LINE	1-Jun
10	EMMA MWASINGA	SHOOTING DOWN CONSCIOUS WITH K10,000	7-Jun
11	LLOYD KAISI PHIRI	PRESIDENT BANDA: "THE STORY OF DOING THE UNTHINKABLE BY OVERCOMING THE IMPOSSIBLE"	1-Jun
12	EDYTH KAMABALAME	MALE INVOLVEMENT IN REDUCING MATEENAL DEATHS	8-Jun
13	KONDWANI CHAMWALA	DENYING WOMEN A BIG PURSE	19-Jun
14	JAPHETH THOLE	A GAME OF WOMEN (FEMALE SPORTS PRESENTERS)	8-Jun
15	WILLIE KANTHENGA	WATER PROBLEM BREEDS GBV	8-Jun
16	CHIPILIRO SHAIBU	WOMEN'S COURAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM VITAL FOR HIV PREVENTION	15-Jun
17	CHEKAUKUTU NDEGE	EFFECTS OF POLYGAMY & ISLAM	1-Jun
18	EVELYN PANGANI	MEN MAKE LADIES ABORT PREGNANCIES	6-Jun
19	THOKOZANI CHIYAKA	PARLIAMENTARIANS AND SERVING THEIR MASTERS: DISABILITY ACT PASSED TIMELY	1-Jun

ANNEX C: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE WORKSHOP

No.	NAME OF PARTICIPANT	DAY 1	DAY 2
1	PETER CHIDOTHE	✓	✓
2	ENOCK NAPHANZI	✓	✓
3	EVELYN PASANJE	✓	✓
4	CASSIM AUBI	✓	✓
5	SIMEON MAGANGA	✓	✓
6	GLITTER NDHLOVIE	✓	✓
7	GRACE CHIMWAZA	✓	✓
8	PATRICK MLEKANO	✓	✓
9	WONDER MSISKA	✓	✓
10	EMMA MWASINGA	✓	✓
11	LLOYD KAISI PHIRI	✓	✓
12	EDYTH KAMABALAME	✓	✓
13	KONDWANI CHAMWALA	✓	✓
14	JAPHETH THOLE	✓	✓
15	WILLIE KANTHENGGA	✓	✓
16	CHIPILIRO SHAIBU	✓	✓
17	CHEKAUKUTU NDEGE	✓	✓
18	CECILIA KUYEWAWA	✓	X
19	CHARITY CHIMONGO PHIRI	✓	X

20	EVELYN PANGANI	✓	✓
21	THOKOZANI CHIYAKA	✓	✓