

REPORT ON MEDIA OPINION AND COMMENTARY WORKSHOP HELD AT NENA LODGE IN LUSAKA- 25 JULY 2015

At 09 hours, the workshop was called to order and participants together with the facilitators, Madube Pasi Siyauya and Perpetual Sichikwenkwe introducing themselves and organizations they represented.

BACKGROUND

A brief background was given to participants about the essence of the workshop to put the participants in tune. Thereafter, the following were the expectations from participants which represented six media houses which are part of the Gender Links (GL) Media centers of excellence (CoEs) in the southern African region.

EXPECTATIONS

- Understand how opinion and commentary is related to gender and journalism
- Understand how gender can be good journalism
- Learn how to write gender opinions and commentaries
- How I can change my mind set as a journalist to make gender a priority
- Learn how I can write gender stories which can have an impact on readers
- Understand how the media can help to fight the gender sensitive issues
- Know more about the GL opinion and commentary services
- Learn about the SADC gender protocol provisions on gender
- I want to know how to write I stories and why they are important
- Learn how the media can highlight gender issues
- How to write more gender stories and how to make them interesting
- Improve gender reporting especially on the political side
- Find out whether the Zambian media has been doing enough in gender reporting
- Know what kind of gender stories can be published on GL website and how much they pay

Having outlined the above expectations from the participants, the following were presented as the objectives of the workshop

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise participants with the GL opinion and commentary service to which media practitioners contribute and for further dissemination with participating media houses
- Make journalists understand that gender is good journalism
- Remind participants about the stages of the media CoEs project
- Understand the role of the media in promoting gender
- Familiarise participants about GL opinion and commentary services and how they can contribute
- Identify some news ideas which journalists can pursue

REACTIONS

- From the onset, participants were of the view that gender stories do not make headlines because they are written in the same old fashion
- However, gender stories especially those on Gender Based Violence (GBV) involving high profile people such as politicians, musicians are now finding space in newspapers and news bulletins because of the drama usually associated with them
- Participants discussed a story which they felt was buried down. It involved an ex musician prisoner Dimba Kanene commonly known as General Kanene who was sentenced to 18 years for defiling a 14 year old girl but was pardoned by the President after serving about a year of his sentence. However, shortly after his pardon, he was reported of having battered one of his wives. The story of him battering the wife was not all that highlighted in the media and participants argued among other things, that media was scared of embarrassing the President while some felt that it was a speculative story as there was no one to confirm that the battery took place
- Some participants said they found it difficult to write gender stories because women who were the most affected people were not willing to speak out
- Gender stories are usually pushed aside because there is usually no information
- Participants discussed other GBV stories that are not covered by the media especially those on incest

INTRODUCTIONS

The presentation started with the background to the SADC protocol on gender and development and the various themes which the CoEs project in Zambia has so far covered. They were informed the reason why GL decided to come up with the Media CoEs project and that they were 10 stages involved in the project namely; buy-in, situation analysis, in-house, drafting policy, adoption of policy, M & E 1, M & E 2, Backstopping, Opinion and commentary, Summit

OPINION AND COMMENTARY

- It was explained it is one of the online services offered by GL- an innovative multi-media project
- Its main existence is to provide the media with fresh views and voices on current affairs in relation to gender
- It came about after the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS), which established that women's voices and gender issues are grossly under-represented in the media
- That it covers the SADC region and world beyond and that it is also in Portuguese and French
- **GENDER IS GOOD JOURNALISM**

After explaining the relevance of the opinion and commentary services, participants were taught about how gender can be good journalism. Obligations and ethics of journalists were emphasized during the presentation

REACTIONS

- Journalists nowadays do not consider issues of ethics because their loyalty goes to the pay master
- Journalists sometimes fail to tell the truth like in general Kanene's story because they fail to find someone tell them the truth (issues of sources)
- Media sometimes do not verify facts so they report and end up giving wrong information which sometimes lead to them being sued
- There was a reminder to journalists of not repeating the bad production for example of a woman caught committing adultery because it wrong and an infringement of someone's privacy
- Social media was identified as one of the fora where women and children's rights are violated

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

After the presentations which showed how women's voices were scarcely heard in the media, the following were the reactions;

REACTIONS

- Media has at-least reduced on publishing porno graphic pictures of women
- Social media has carried up the role of exposing women in a very negative way
- Still believed that women's bodies sell the newspaper
- Women still closed up for example musician general Kanene's wife who refused to comment or report to the police about her battery
- Perpetrators are also suffering by killing themselves after for example have battered their wives or children –they fear to be arrested
- Media should carry the message that both men and women perpetrate GBV even against fellow women
- On the use of women's bodies to sell products, one of the participants wondered why people were complaining when women were known to be " the flowers of this world"
- Happy that at-least most media have gender columns or programmes

EXERCISE

Participants were given a an article about a woman who was to attend a political conference and was to be welcomed by a driver who thought she was a man by virtue of her title (doctor)and the fact that she was going to attend a political meeting

REACTIONS

- There is still a feeling that high profile profession such as doctor, engineer, lawyer can only be held by men
- Believed that politics are issues to be addressed by men
- Women are supposed to be in their homes while men global trot
- There is need for media to change the perception by highlighting women who are educated and doing well in society. This can act as role model and encourage more girls to acquire education

EXERCISE

Another exercise on scanning the day's newspaper was given to participants to see who was speaking more in the news and counting the number of women pictures

REACTIONS

- A story was identified about Zimbabwean woman who produced a pant in parliament to find out why second hand pants were still sold in the country- participants felt that it was not right for the woman in the first place to demean women by exposing their underpants while others castigated her because she thought the pant she was displaying in the August house was actually hers
- However, others felt there was nothing wrong with her stance because she was fighting for women's health rights
- Another story which was on the positive side was identified both in the Zambia Daily Mail Newspaper and Times of Zambia about ZAF commander who was saying that the Air-force would soon start training and employing female fighter pilots in the service- this was good because Zambia has never had females in that field since independence
- Positive entertainment stories in the newspapers were also identified unlike what used to happen in the past where women's bodies were largely used to sell newspapers
- There were more images of men than women
- The poverty story which was carried in one of the newspapers depicted a woman- still sending a message that poverty carries the face of a woman

"I" STORIES

Participants were also taught about the "I" stories and shown examples on the GL website

After the exercise, participants were introduced to the GL opinion and commentary service online where a number of stories were viewed, read through to make them understand how stories were written. They were also given GL contact details of where to send stories in case they needed to send the stories

DEVELOPING OF NEWS IDEAS

The following were the news ideas which were identified

- Do a commentary on Gen Kanene (the pardoned convict) on why he defiled the girl, his life in prison and find out why he battered his wife few days after he was pardoned
- An "I" story on former Kasama Member of Parliament (MP) Geoffrey Mwamba who has become a GBV ambassador after he battered his wife
- Write an opinion on how defilement cases have continued to escalate despite melting out stiffer punishment
- A commentary on circumstacial children incarcerated for the sins of their mothers, meaning, women still have multiple roles even in prison
- A story on political manifesto –find out whether they still do not have quotas to adopt more women in the next 2016 general elections
- Find out from Zambia's vice president Inonge Wina on Zambia's progress towards achieving the SADC protocol and gender development/the way forward for Zambia
- Media perception on the role it has played in achieving the 2015 SADC protocol on gender and development

The workshop closed at 16: 30 hours with 19 participants in attendance from ZNBC, Times of Zambia, Zambia Daily Mail Newspaper, Radio Christian Voice, Yatsani Radio and New Vision Newspaper.

Ends/