

**Commission for Gender Equality
Gender and Media Seminar
24 November 2009**

Background

Media plays a vital role in society as a source of information, education and entertainment. Media is a powerful tool that influences people's understanding, perception, and views of the world.

In South Africa, the Constitution protects and provides for the freedom of the media, freedom of expression and access to information. This is further supported by a legislative framework giving effect to the Constitution, including the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) Act of 2002, Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) Act of 2000, Electronic Communications Act of 2005, Broadcasting Act of 1999, and the Access to Information Act of 2000, all supported by Chapter 9 of the Constitution which sets up state institutions to support democracy, including the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE).

As a result, the media operates in an environment free of oppression, persecution and the repressive legislation of the apartheid era which sought to restrict and control the media. Despite these freedoms and gains, however, it would appear that gender remains an untransformed arena both within media institutions themselves, and the broadcasts they issue. In 2006, the South African National Editor's Forum (SANEF) conducted a survey on women in the newsroom. This survey, which became known as the "Glass Ceiling" survey, was followed up with the "Glass Ceiling II" report in 2008, which Gender Links was commissioned to conduct. The report addresses gender discrimination in the media and in media institutions.

The Glass Ceiling I survey found that despite having a Constitution that entrenches equal rights, discriminatory practices, structural inequalities, cultural factors, prejudices, patriarchy and sexism are still alive and well in the South African newsrooms. These are clearly prohibiting South Africa's women journalists from realizing their potential.

The key findings from the both phases of Glass Ceiling reports reveal that women are still scarce in the upper echelons of media institutions, occupying less than 40% of Boards, 25% of top management positions and constitute one out of three senior managers in newsrooms. They comprise 48% of junior managers and almost 70% of all semi-skilled workers in the newsroom. Shockingly, not a single media institution in South Africa reflected parity in earnings between male and female employees.

While the study revealed that there are now nearly equal numbers of women and men in newsrooms, with women now comprising 50% compared to 33% in the 1995 study, findings also revealed that women are more likely to be employed in support departments, such as human resources, marketing, finance and administration. In addition, there is clear gender division of labour, with men assigned more "serious" issues to cover, such as science and technology, investigative reporting, conflict and agriculture, while women are assigned topics related to education, gender violence, health, HIV and AIDS, lifestyle and youth. Despite high level commitment to gender equality, media institutions did not present any comprehensive or systematic policies to address the gender gap.

Another study commissioned by MISA in 2002 found that women accounted for only 19% of known news sources in South Africa. The study found that the situation does vary between media, with the use of women as sources ranging between 29% and 8% across the 25 print and broadcast media surveyed. The same study indicated that black women as news sources were particularly lacking, constituting only 5% of news sources.

Likewise, gender coverage is paltry. A survey conducted by Media Monitoring Africa of all elections-related media in the build-up to the 2009 election revealed that less than 1% of all coverage addressed gender-related issues. In the main, men are allocated the platform to speak to national politics. Despite the national importance ascribed to gender equality, women's poverty and health, these issues are not adequately addressed in the media and their importance is therefore undermined.

Finally, gender insensitive reporting and media continues unabated, with coverage and images perpetuating gender stereotyped roles for men and women. We are still subjected to images of scantily-clad women in provocative poses, and housewives proud of their cooking, white washing or fluffy rice grains. There is a clear need for strengthened regulatory institutions with clear gender policies, and accessible complaints mechanisms, applicable to all forms of media. With the 2010 FIFA World Cup looming, stereotypical representation of women in the media is likely to prevail.

CGE Seminar

Against this background, the CGE seeks to convene a seminar to address women's representation in the media. In bringing together key stakeholders in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the CGE wishes to explore issues related to women's representation in newsrooms, gender media coverage and the portrayal of women in the media.

The seminar will seek to ascertain what progress has been made since the Glass Ceiling reports and other surveys, and to determine what policies and measures are being put in place by media institutions to transform their newsrooms and promote gender sensitive reporting. The CGE's interest is to ensure that the South African media is compliant with the provisions of the Constitution, and international instruments and conventions which South Africa has ratified.

This seminar follows on from a national seminar convened on 19 October 2009, Media Freedom Day, by the CGE, SAHRC, the MDDA, the SABC and ICASA. The seminar focus was on ownership, transformation and gender issues in the media. The seminar provided a platform for showcasing research, emerging issues and proposed recommendations for addressing the portrayal of women in the media, women's representation in newsrooms, the issues of transformation in ownership and control of the media and other related issues.

The CGE in wishes to bring deliberations on these issues to relevant stakeholders in KZN, to feed recommendations and any best practice emerging into the national task team and programme of action that emerged from the national seminar. Stakeholders from media, academic and advertising institutions will be joined by representatives from provincial government, civil society and Chapter 9 institutions to assess progress, identify obstacles to gender transformation and chart strategies to address these.

Seminar details

The seminar will be in the form of a breakfast seminar, from 8:00-10:30am on Tuesday, 24 November. The venue for the seminar will be ??? at SABC???

Provisional programme details are as follows:

8:00-8:30am	Arrival and registration
8:30-8:45am	Welcome and purpose <i>Makhosazana Nxumalo, CGE</i>
8:45-9:00am	Gender and the media <i>Media studies person TBC</i>
9:00-9:15am	The Constitution, gender and the media <i>Commissioner Janine Hicks, CGE</i>
9:15-9:30am	National transformation agenda <i>Manana Stone, MDDA</i>

9:30-10:15am	Deliberations and recommendations
10:15-10:30	Way forward <i>Commissioner Janine Hicks</i>
10:30	Breakfast

Please confirm your interest in attending this seminar with Dumo Ngcobo at dumo@cge.org.za, by 17 November 2009.