



UNESCO HARARE
CLUSTER OFFICE



Media Briefing

Tuesday, 17 March 2009

Women Make the News Initiative 2009

Overview

UNESCO through its CI Sector convened a media briefing on the Women Make the News Initiative 2009 on 17 March 2009. The media briefing was held at the Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO in the 6th Floor Board room. A total of 15 people attended the briefing. These were drawn from the media, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, UN Gender Theme Group (GTG), Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO UNICEF and UNESCO Harare Cluster Office. The main purpose of the Women Make the News Initiative is to promote gender equity in newsrooms.

Background of the Women Make the New Initiative

Women Make the News is a global initiative which was introduced by UNESCO in 2000. Since then every year on 8 March (International Women's Day) UNESCO launches the Initiative with a view to promote gender equity in newsrooms. The Initiative calls on media organisations to participate through various activities every year ranging from sharing experiences by women media professionals, documenting best practices, encouraging to the handing over of editorial responsibility to women journalists. Participation in this Initiative is usually open for the whole month of March.

This year the Initiative is being celebrated under the theme 'Gender Equality Policies in Media Organizations'.

It was with this background that UNESCO Harare called for a media briefing to engage local players in the promotion of gender equality in the media.

Objectives of the Media Briefing

The objectives for the media briefing were:

- To introduce the UNESCO Women Make The News Initiative to the media, gender organisations, gender theme groups and other interested parties
- To encourage interested parties to participate in the Women Make the News Initiative by a) writing and producing stories on women and by women , and b) participating in UNESCO web forum on the initiative
- To initiate dialogue in the area of women working in the media and their prospects

Presentations

The briefing was opened by Mr Marima of the Zimbabwe National Commission for UNESCO. The main briefing was given by Mr Gervasio Kaliwo, CI Regional Adviser for Southern Africa. There was a discussion moderated by Mrs. Maggie Mzumara and Mr. Blessed Mufandaedza, an independent media practitioner before the vote of thanks was given by Mrs. Maggie Mzumara.

Discussion

A number of issues were raised in the discussion and these included the following:

- The limitations of women leadership in the media due to few numbers, low ranking positions and other factors
- The need for women journalists to be empowered through capacity development so as to enable them to be at the forefront of initiatives such as the one under discussion
- The need for sensitization of editors and media managers on the need for gender equality in the media
- The need for a study/assessment to determine factors inhibiting women presence and women leadership in the media
- The need to identify and establish allies in the promotion of gender equality in the media
- The need to compile profiles of media women who have made it to top positions
- Bran drain had contributed in the reduction of women working in the media

Observations

It was observed that while there was some interest in the promotion of gender equality in the media amongst those present, some influential media personnel such as editors and producers who could help facilitate and effect gender equality in newsrooms were absent. Some of the larger newspapers were not represented at the briefing. Neither was the public broadcaster.

Actions Points

It was agreed at the briefing that:

- With the leadership a participating editor Gettina Machingura from New Ziana (Zimbabwe Inter Africa News Agency) in collaboration with Maggie Mzumara of UNESCO, a minimum of ten stories profiling the best practise stories of women in the media would be compiled.
- Participants will form an online information- and experience-sharing network
- UNESCO will distribute the 'Getting the Balance Right' Gender Equality manual produced by UNESCO in collaboration with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
- Federation of African Media Women in Zimbabwe (FAMWZ) will distribute a directory of media women with UNESCO .
- In conclusion, it can be said that those present showed very keen interest in UNESCO led women and the media/communication issues. It was agreed that what UNESCO was doing was to hatch an idea in the media systems. This could take time as often attitudes do take time to change. The participants agreed that they wil need to have face to face discussions with thedir hierarchical officers to ensure that they start thinking about gender equality in media institutions.

I thank you..

Maggie Mzumara.

N/B: I gervasi o G. Kaliwo, the ACi in Southern Africa, certify that this report reflects adequately the discussions held at this meeting..

I thank you..

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