

Workshop: Women and the Media

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Saturday 19 October 2024, 11:15 – 12:45

Room: Dunant

## **Welcome & Introduction**

### Welcome

- Short introduction of Sallie & Claudia

### Topic introduction:

Women & the Media is one of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration.

### Definitions:

The **media** refers to channels transmitting information, news, and entertainment: newspapers, television, radio, magazines, social platforms, blogs, and podcasts. Media propagates power from its cumulative effect on audiences.

**Women in the media** refers to the representation, participation, and portrayal of women in television, film, radio, print, and digital platforms. In other words, this includes the news media as well as entertainment / fiction.

### Why is it so important?

Media shapes and colors our perceptions of women. It shapes the narratives around women and women's issues – and influences the perception/judgment of what is an issue worthy of attention at all.

When it comes to women – as well as to minorities or LGBTQ+ representation, all too often, it perpetuates stereotypes, reinforces gender roles and prejudices underpinning the continuing inequality and distorts our – that is to say – our societies' understanding of women's issues.

In this workshop, we focus on the news media, on women as journalists & new sources – due to time constraints.

The continuing lack of equality in media coverage of women, women as news sources, as well as online violence in social media and physical violence against women journalists all perpetuate existing distortions in how women and women's issues are perceived.

### What we would like to achieve in this workshop

- Raise awareness and highlight the importance of Women in the Media
- Network, exchange ideas & experiences (best practice examples, challenges?)
- Collaboratively identify advocacy tools, best practices & strategies that might be useful in the different contexts

### Introductions

Let each participant introduce themselves by answering the following 3 questions:

- Name & organisation
  - Media experience / field of expertise
  - Favourite movie/book character
- Most womxn named a strong female/diverse character, some name real role models, from Pippi Longstocking and Nancy Drew over Wonder Woman, Ripley (Aliens) or Princess/General Leia to Christina Amanpour ...

### Questions to start off:

- Where do you get your news from? What media do you consume?
- Most get their news from a mix of sources, ranging from conventional like newspapers, TV channels, journals, radio to social media (FB, Instagram etc.), substack, podcasts, e-mails ...
- Are there women's issues, women journalists, female experts present in these channels? Anything that strikes you about them/their portrayal?
- Especially in mainstream media, diversity is often lacking
- As experts, women are often invited to talk about specific topics that are in keeping with stereotypical gender roles (women's issues, culture, education, care).

- Who makes the media? What stories are picked up? Questions of power & ownership, funding -> editorial influence, click bait, ideological agendas ... accountability???

### Discussion (key words)

- Media as working environment, glass ceilings, importance of working conditions, unions/federations
- Problem of financing independent media, large media conglomerates owned by men with an ideological/political agenda
- Loss of local media, consolidation of large media empires -> plurality of voices is lost, local stories don't get picked up
- Lack of diversity in representation; danger of stereotypical representation
- Different – gendered – portrayal of women, f.ex. political commentaries, f.ex. interviews questions for experts/politicians/actors/etc.
- Stereotypes, gender roles also in entertainment, in education etc. -> pervasive, vicious cycles
- Backlash faced by women in media, f.ex. women journalist – especially in conflict situations – but also by female experts that don't conform to expectations (f.ex. female experts in space travel/engineering/...)
- Social media: chance to get voice out, chance to get a message out that might be overlooked by established media, but also danger of misinformation spreading, echo chambers, online harassment etc.  
-> accountability???

### Recommendations & how to take action

Discuss the three recommendations, collect ideas for concrete actions by organisations/individuals, suggestions for existing advocacy tools – or tools that would be helpful but might still need to be developed.

- Consume news with a critical mind, question stories, portrayals of women ... but also own perceptions
- Share articles/stories from reliable sources.
- What does a feminist perspective on media look like?

- Promote responsibility of social media platforms to moderate harmful content.
- Engage with news outlets, media: for example, write letters to the editor, flag/report harmful content on social media etc.
- Advocate for oversight mechanism, regulatory bodies, legislation AND their implementation to achieve better accountability (e.g. UK: Online Safety Act)
- Reach out to political representatives, demand action, accountability.
- Promote / support positive role models.
- Raise awareness about the gendered portrayal of women; if in media, try to counter it (codes of conduct, schooling?)
- Support public service media.
- Support (and help sustainably fund) independent media.
- Strengthen legislation to prevent media monopolies.
- Sanction media that promotes stereotypes or incites violence.
- Investigate gender bias / abuse in media organizations; institute penalties for abuse.
- Tell stories of women whose achievements are often overlooked, make women and their achievements visible ... e.g. by writing articles on Wikipedia, concert by women composers, exhibitions of women painters etc.
- Promote and support female leadership & ownership of media  
(Example: the Indian news outlet run by Dalit women “Khabar Lahariya” ... as well as other women-led news outlets around the world: f.e. Brazil’s [AzMina](#), Uganda’s [HerStory](#), Nigeria’s [BONews Service](#) and Nepal’s [Boju Bajai](#) )
- Media education; how to consume media intelligently?
- Strengthen journalists’ education
- Pay attention to/get active about images/ of women and other marginalised groups in educational material (get involved at local levels, school boards etc.)
- Fight stereotypes in representation (news media as well as entertainment).
- Develop incentives for fighting stereotypes.
- Support journalists’ unions, federations etc.
- Counter online & physical harassment & violence against women (and other) journalists, experts, etc.
- Strengthen regulatory bodies and increase penalties for abuse

- Regulate advertising
- Show solidarity for women journalists working in war-affected areas.
- Support diversity, a plurality of voices, strengthen/amplify voices of marginalised groups, womxn facing intersecting forms of discrimination

### Closing remarks

Stories matter! We make sense of the world through stories -> importance of representation, very wide field from news to books, movies, games, social media ... influences us from an early age (children's stories/books/movies!).

- Especially for girls: self-perception, self-confidence, role models etc.
- However: Important that boys, too, grow up with so-called "girls' stories": schooling empathy, normalising "strong women/girls" & gender equality, teaching that girls'/womxn's experiences are important, worthy of attention, too

Portrayal of women is not just a "problem issue", it can also be a "force for good" – depending on the voices we empower, the stories we/they tell, and who we/they tell them to.

### Thanks & group photo

## Addendum

Some useful resources:

- UNESCO und the International Federation of Journalists have published a good overview of the topic, which includes tools such as guidelines for reporting on violence against women, recommendations for campaigning, or links to useful websites and organisations:  
[https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef0000180707&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach\\_import\\_8073aa57-f8d9-465b-869a-895b662ffca4%3F%3D180707eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000180707/PDF/180707eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A83%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2Cnull%2Cnull%2C0%5D](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef0000180707&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_8073aa57-f8d9-465b-869a-895b662ffca4%3F%3D180707eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000180707/PDF/180707eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A83%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2Cnull%2Cnull%2C0%5D)
- The European Federation of Journalists has published a “Handbook on Gender Equality Best Practices in European Journalists’ Unions”:  
[https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/images/Gender/Gender\\_documents/Gender\\_Equality\\_Best\\_Practices\\_Handbook\\_-\\_English\\_version.pdf](https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/images/Gender/Gender_documents/Gender_Equality_Best_Practices_Handbook_-_English_version.pdf)
- The Brussels Binder (and the Brussels Binder Beyond) advocate for more diversity and inclusion in politics, but also the media. Includes expert lists and toolkits:  
<https://brusselsbinder.org/>  
<https://toolbox.brusselsbinder.org/>

The following tools/ campaigns were not necessarily developed for women in the media; however, they might still be useful to counter, for example, the online harassment that women and other marginalized persons encounter when working or appearing in the media:

- **Project: Stop Hate Speech (German & French)**  
The project is a collaboration between Alliance F and the ETH Zurich to counters hate and insults on the Internet in an innovative way. Among their tools are the algorithm “Bot Dog” trained to recognize hate speech on platforms like Twitter, or a toolbox on how to react when encountering hate speech online. <https://stophatespeech.ch/>
- **Campaign: #NotTheCost, and Safety Planning Tool: #think10**  
The #NotTheCost campaign was launched by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to stop violence against women in politics, declaring that violence should not be the cost of women’s political participation. It includes the safety planning tool #think10 which aims at providing women in politics guidance on how to enhance their personal security. #NotTheCost: <https://www.ndi.org/not-the-cost>  
#think10: <https://dem.tools/guides-and-tools/think10>
- **Campaign: #Toxic Hush, including Action Kit**  
Created by the Canadian NPO Informed Opinions in collaboration with a feminist

tech company to combat online hate directed at women and gender-diverse people.

<https://informedopinions.org/toxic-hush/>

- **NGO / Platform: #ShePersisted, including Tool Kit**

#ShePersisted influences strategic conversations on democracy, technology, and women's rights through research, events, webinars, and roundtables with global leaders in the field. It provides information as well as a tool kit to tackle gendered disinformation.

Organisation: <https://she-persisted.org/>

Tool Kit: [https://r2g26a.n3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ShePersisted\\_Digital\\_Resilience\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://r2g26a.n3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ShePersisted_Digital_Resilience_Toolkit.pdf)

- **AlgorithmWatch**

German/Swiss organization that looks at how AI can perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination. Different publications and recommendations on their website.

<https://algorithmwatch.org/en/>