



CONTROL OR EDUCATION: WOMEN and MEDIA

The media can play a significant role in either perpetuating or challenging social norms, behaviours and stereotypes. Unfortunately, all too often, we see a media that is complicit in reinforcing negative and degrading images of women and girls, as well as an unbalanced picture of their diverse lives and contributions. As a result, we continue to see the objectification and hyper-sexualisation of women and girls, one-dimensional images and portrayals of women and girls and increasing rates of violence towards women and girls.

Justification:

Advances in information and communications technologies continue to transcend national boundaries. While the prevalence of the internet has arguably democratised access to knowledge, information and education, it has also produced new threats to women and girls. Virtual spaces are sometimes used for direct attacks on women and girls, ranging from cyber-bullying to postings of inappropriate images, putting women and girls at risk. According to an expert report to the Commission on the Status of Women, women have increasingly reported incidents of footage of them engaged in sexual activity, including rapes being posted on Internet sites without their consent. Spreading negative and degrading images and views about women affects that way in

which men and boys relate to women, thereby, negating steps towards a collaborative approach to equality.

There is a clear commitment to change the state of play regarding women and the media by the UN.

Background:

The United Nations Commission on Status of Women has systematically reviewed progress in the implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action at its annual sessions, and has adopted action-oriented recommendations, in the form of agreed conclusions, to facilitate increased implementation at all levels. Section J specifically refers to Women and the Media.

Through the strategic objectives J1 and J2, Beijing Platform for Action invites all relevant stakeholders to take measures for shaping a gender-equal world through the media. These objectives state:

Strategic objective J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.

Strategic objective J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

The UN is committed to meeting the above objectives. UN Women supports media monitoring studies of how women are depicted in the media. UN Women also engages with media professionals by raising awareness of gender inequality

and violence against women, including through special workshops and toolkits, to encourage gender-sensitive reporting.

See more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women/media#sthash.Rb1ofjTs.dpuf>

Moreover, UNESCO's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment is pursued through gender-specific programming and gender mainstreaming with action in all of its fields of competence. UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector has engaged globally in a wide range of gender-specific initiatives from two different perspectives:

1. Equality between women and men working in the media; and
2. Equality in the representation and news reporting of women and men.

Through their newest initiative, UNESCO's Global Alliance of Gender and Media (GAMAG), hopes to develop a strong regional presence whereby committed media professionals, researchers, NGOs, civil society and other organisations work together to meet the objectives of Section J. One of GAMAG's stated aims is equality in media by 2030.

Structure:

The ad-hoc initiative will be led by a committee of 5 members (one from each BPW region) and recruit the support of other members (if desired) to ensure that maximum momentum is achieved for shaping a gender-equal world through the media.

Goals:

- Encouraging the media and advertising agencies to develop specific programmes to raise awareness for gender equality;
- Encouraging gender-sensitive training for media professionals
- Encouraging the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media;
- Encouraging the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development;
- Lobbying to enact and/or implement legislation and policies against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.
- Lobbying to increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels of the media.
- Promoting extensive media campaigns to disseminate information about and increase awareness of the human rights of women;
- Developing initiatives to challenge gender stereotypes; and
- Engage in Media and Information Literacy initiatives to support the informed consumption of media.