

## **50/50 Initiative of the Making Change Happen Project**

This week Initiative Africa revealed to the press its 2019-20 project to promote gender equality in the media across Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, like many countries in the world, women and men do not enjoy the same professional opportunities, share equal pay and feel equally represented in the workplace. But like most industries, the media has a long way to go to address gender equality, in everything from creating news that is for and about women to promoting equal amounts of men and women to senior executive positions.

It is important to understand that creating gender equality is not just fulfilling a quota or being politically correct but it's actually good business. A UK Research found companies that reported the highest number of women in senior leadership roles financially outperformed those with lower rates of women, with a 35% higher return on equity. Similar data from McKinsey & Company showed that the 89 companies in Europe with the largest representation of women in senior roles came out with 10% higher return on equity and 48% higher earnings before interest and tax.

Ato YehualshetIn G/Michael, Senior Advisor at Initiative Africa says in addition to financial benefits, creating gender balance makes newsrooms more productive and innovative and can contribute to social stability in surrounding communities.

Here are the three ways media generally represent gender in Ethiopia:

- First, women are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible.
- Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender.
- Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women.

Through the project, entitled MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN Initiative Africa (IA) will support media organizations to address each of these issues. In particular, it will assist media organizations not just cover "women's issues", but make sure content is balanced across gender lines and respects the diversity that represents nearly 50% of the world's population. IA will also advise for a strong commitment from management and promote actions that ensure women occupy all roles in the newsroom, including senior positions.

With the project, IA will also organize training to ensure that women have the confidence and skills they need to move up the job ladder as part and parcel of creating gender equality in the media. While talent and on-the-job experience certainly helps, IA will introduce mentoring and development programs as a way for young female journalists to boost the careers.

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