



**Initiative Africa**

# **Gender Review of Print Media**

## **IN ETHIOPIA**

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## Acronym

BPFA -	Beijing Platform for Action
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
NA	Not applicable
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
VAW-	Violence Against Women
WDR-	World Development Report

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## 1. Introduction

The relationship between gender and the media has been recognized as a major area of concern for gender equality since this Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), which was adopted unanimously by 189 Member States of the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on women in 1995. One of the objectives was to promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.<sup>1</sup> However, since Beijing, little progress has also been observed in terms of advancing gender equality in the media. 20-year research from the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) on gender in news media content reveals that the rate of progress towards media gender parity has been very slow.<sup>2</sup>

Further, in 2003, at its 47th meeting, the Commission on the Status of Women highlighted the risk that gender "differences in representation, access and use of media and information technologies" have important implications for policy development at national, regional, and international levels. (CSW47 2003\_Final, par. 2)

Print media<sup>3</sup> is one of the oldest and basic forms of mass communication worldwide. Established in 1923, the first printing press, it is also one of the oldest mass communication in Ethiopia.<sup>4</sup> Taking into account the significant impact media has on society, through its power to construct public opinion, a fair and balanced portrayal of women in the media plays a vital role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. While the print press plays a role to meet people's need to access information, it creates a perception in the social mindset by setting the agenda with the news it chooses.

Ever since the first Gender Media Monitoring Project GMMP, it has been evident that women, as news subjects, are underrepresented in every country surveyed. The majorities of news stories are reported by men and are mostly about men. Only 24% of the people heard, seen, or read about in all news stories surveyed were women in 2015 and 2010, compared to 76% men.<sup>5</sup>

This lack of women's voices, concerns, opportunities, and space for women violates the SDGs principle of "leaving no one behind." The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women in the media can significantly distort the way women and girls view themselves, as they do not see themselves featured in the all-powerful media as being of equal importance. Though a huge role to play in this "liberation of the mind," the media has more often than not been part of the problem as opposed to being a solution.

Promoting gender equality in media is therefore very crucial for society to share a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women and men in the media. Journalists and other actors working in the media should always be gender-sensitive. While, (2009) explains that journalists and other actors working in the media can contribute to gender equality by assessing progress on gender equality, identify challenges, and contribute to debates and policy formulation.

The situation is not any different in Ethiopia, a recent attempt to conduct a gender audit of the Media houses by Initiative Africa, revealed that nearly all media houses have very minimal if not no

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<sup>1</sup>Section J on „women and the media”, Beijing Platform for Action, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> WACC (2018). Media Development. Gender and the Media

<sup>3</sup> including newspapers, magazines, brochures, poster, exhibition stands, billboards, corporate Merchandise and other forms of printed journals

<sup>4</sup> Biruk Belete et al. (2018). Ethiopian Journalism, the Regime's Mouthpiece: A Brief Review of Media History in Ethiopia, International Journal of Scientific Research and Reviews

<sup>5</sup>Nordic Co-operation (2017) "Women and men in the news", report on gender representation in Nordic news content and the Nordic media industry, Saga Mannila.

commitment for gender equality, which was manifested in recruitment, allocation of opportunities, in the occupation of positions in leadership and allocation of budget for gender-related issues.<sup>6</sup>

Cognizant of the above and having recognized the myriad of challenges advancing gender equality in the media including in Ethiopia, Initiative Africa, with the support of the Embassy of Sweden/SIDA has been implementing 'Gender Equality: Making Change Happen' project with a view to mainstream gender in media houses. To do so, Initiative Africa has in the recent past conducted a gender audit for Ethiopian Broadcast Media Houses that identified the gender gap and provided recommendations. In the same vein, this gender review of the print media, of selected newspapers, is also aimed at identifying the gender gap to recommend some entry points for gender mainstreaming.



## 2. Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the gender dimensions in the selected print media and propose a strategy for addressing observed gender imbalances.

## 3. Specific objective:

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To carry out a gendered analysis of selected newspapers to assess and analyze women's portrayal in the media and identify the gaps;
- Examine the coverage of women issues in the print media.
- Assess women's role, their level of participation, representation, and influence in selected print media.
- To suggest the way forward on how the print media can address the gap in gender equality, change the gender stereotypical narrative and promote women's empowerment.
- Proposing a strategy for advancing gender parity in the print media.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Scope of the study

The study was contextually limited to analyzing unequal gender coverage in the print media. The study is currently limited to newspapers, as similar studies on broadcast and other media will continue. The print, as opposed to other types of media, was also chosen due to the previous venture of Initiative Africa that has seen the conduct of gender Audit for Ethiopian Broadcasting Agencies that covered the broadcast media component. Geographically, the study was conducted in Addis Ababa city where most print media houses are based and where copies of the newspapers can easily be accessed.

### 4.2 Sample Size and Sample Selection

A total of four print media outlets/newspapers were selected for six months i.e. April/May-September/October 2020. While two of these newspapers i.e. Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald have their newspapers released every day, with the exception of Mondays for the Herald. Fortune, and Addis Admas have their newspapers released weekly, every Saturday. A random selection of two newspapers per week was done for Addis Zemen and The Ethiopian Herald,<sup>7</sup> totaling 8 issues per month, for each. Whereas all the weekly issues were selected for Fortune and Addis Admas about 4 issues per month, for each. Therefore, the total number of newspapers reviewed for the four media outlets, for 6 months, is Addis Zemen, 47, The Ethiopian Herald, 45, Fortune, 28, and Addis Admas, 26. The wider circulation of these newspapers was the key criteria for sampling them for the study.

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<sup>7</sup>Mondays and Wednesdays and Tuesdays and Thursdays interchangeably



Table 1: Newspaper issues analyzed per Newspaper

Count of Issue Type					
Row Labels	Addis Admas	Fortune	The Ethiopian Herald	Addis Zemen	Grand Total
Editorial	26	28	45	47	146
Interview	26	28	45	48	147
Main news page	26	28	45	48	147
Sport	25	-	-	48	99
Topic News	26	28	45	48	147
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>686</b>

### 4.3 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted using both primary and secondary data collection tools including document review of newspaper contents, texts, and photographs, by using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Selected interviews were also conducted with the sampled newspapers and relevant stakeholders which include Fortune, The Ethiopian Herald, Addis Admas, and Ethiopian Women's Media Association. A literature review of previous studies in the field of gender and the media was also carried out to identify the co-relation of findings and enrich the study.

### 4.4 Study Limitation

The limited-time allotted for the study, 20 working days, did not commensurate with the level of newspaper reviews carried out<sup>8</sup>, i.e. six months period, coupled with extensive literatures reviews conducted, inter alia. The study shows different performance of the four newspapers however the researcher is aware of the different sample size thence no comparative analysis is done. Extensive interviews were also not carried out beyond the sampled newspapers and few stakeholders due to the limited time provided compounded with the unavailability of some relevant actors (ex.UN Women); partly by the limited interactions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this was mitigated by literatures reviews carried out and by ensuring the sampled newspapers are interviewed. The gender reviews of the newspapers were done as per the criteria pre-identified as key content categories of newspapers i.e. editorial, interview, main news page, sport, and topic news. Nonetheless, some of the newspapers did not have some of these issues, for example sports, coming out during the review period, thereby limiting the findings on the specific field.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 The state of gender equality in the media: overview

The crucial role of the media in achieving gender equality has been recognized for the past two decades. Gender and the media is a strategic objective in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality. Nonetheless, in the 25 years that Beijing Declaration has been in force, there has been little to no progress on this strategic objective.”<sup>9</sup>The

<sup>8</sup> Even though research assistants were provided.

<sup>9</sup>Women in Media: Joint Statement to the Commission on the Status of Women 64on the crucial role of media in achieving gender equality (2020),Beijing.(Notes :The joint statement was submitted by Free Press Unlimited, The Carter Center,



joint statement made, by a global alliance of media groups, to the commission on the Status of Women 64 in 2020,<sup>10</sup> highlighted the rather gloomy picture on the state of gender equality in the media. According to the statement, “women only make up 24% of the people seen in, heard, and read about in newspapers, television, and radio. While 46% of news stories reinforce gender stereotypes, only 4% of stories challenge gender stereotypes. Of the experts interviewed by media, only 20% are women. Also 73% of the management jobs are occupied by men compared to 27% occupied by women. The data further showed that women are often portrayed in stereotypical and hyper-sexualized roles, with social implications for them.”<sup>11</sup>

It has been argued that the level of participation and influence of women in the media has implications for media content as “female professionals are more likely to reflect other women’s needs and perspectives than their male counterparts.” It’s worth acknowledging however that not all women working in the media will be gender-sensitive and inclined to cover women’s needs and perspectives; as it is not impossible for men to effectively cover gender issues,<sup>12</sup> as it is also reliant on their level of gender awareness sensitivity. Nevertheless, the presence of women in the media will provide positive role models for women and girls and raise the confidence of women as news sources, interviewees, reporters; which affects the portrayal of women in the media.

Indeed, media today, ranging from traditional to online media, enormously influence our perceptions and beliefs about women and girl's roles in society. What we have unfortunately observed to date is the fact that media tend to perpetuate gender inequality. Studies show how children are influenced, from a young age, by the gendered stereotypes that media present to them.<sup>13</sup>

On participation and influence of women in the media, researchers have identified that although the number of women working in the media has been increasing globally, women are still underrepresented and the top positions i.e. executives, producers, chief editors, and publishers, are still heavily male-dominated.<sup>14</sup> In the words of Myers(2009) as cited in GSDRC“ this disparity is particularly evident in Africa, where cultural impediments to women fulfilling the role of journalist remain i.e. travelling away from home, evening work and covering issues such as politics and sports which are considered to fall within the masculine domain).<sup>15</sup>

The same holds with the findings in this study, where the interviewed journalists in the sampled newspapers noted an increase in the number of women in their media houses while the top positions are still dominated by men. However, there are some exceptions, the case of Fortune Newspaper where women occupy some top positions, such as the chief editor, deputy editor, and assignment editor. Speaking of this progress made, a respondent from Fortune noted that ‘it’s accidental,’ merit-based not that any deliberate action was taken to attain gender parity at the leadership level.

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*FondationHirondelle, Global Alliance on Media and Gender, International Media Support, International Women’s Media Foundation, Media Diversity Institute, RNW Media, World Association for Christian Communication and WAN-IFRA)*  
[https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/freepressunlimited.org/files/csw64\\_joint\\_statement\\_on\\_gender\\_and\\_media.pdf](https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/freepressunlimited.org/files/csw64_joint_statement_on_gender_and_media.pdf)  
 f accessed 16.02.2021

<sup>10</sup>on the Crucial role of media in achieving gender equality

<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> Uganda Media Women’s Association and MAMA fm (2014), Report on Gender Dimensions In Uganda’s Print Media: A Case For Engendering Practitioners, Uganda.P.12

<sup>13</sup> International Media Support (2020), The crucial role of media in achieving gender equality. Copenhagen K / Denmark.pg1

<https://www.mediasupport.org/the-crucial-role-of-media-in-achieving-gender-equality>  
 accessed on 13.02.2021

<sup>14</sup> Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC); AU (2017). Media Portrayal of Women and Media Gender Gap in Africa Paper prepared by Gender Links for the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Information and Communications (STC- IC)

<sup>15</sup> ibid

The majority of the respondents interviewed also revealed that the media houses are not gender-sensitive and not conducive for women paired with the fact that it's still male-dominated. Sexual harassment is also rife, regardless of sexual harassment policies available in the media houses sampled.

Further, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), as cited in Uganda Media Women's Association (2014) reveals the fact that throughout the world, female journalists are more likely to be assigned "soft" subjects such as arts, family lifestyle, and fashion, while "hard" news beats such as politics, war, and the economy are more likely to be covered by men."<sup>16</sup> Consequently, men are more likely than women to cover substantive and catchy areas which in turn advance their career, while it could contribute to women's career stagnation in the media.<sup>17</sup>

This was also evident by the findings of this study that highlighted the fact that women journalists interviewed were relegated with soft issues, examples being fashion, arts, and social issues. In the words of one respondent "It's not because we always want to cover soft issues, they always want us to cover arts, etc., or encourage us to take women's column." The respondent lamented, "we are usually not either given the opportunity or provided with support."



Among the possible cause of differentials of news between women and men, as articulated by some studies<sup>18</sup>, is gender segregation in the allocation of tasks, especially investigative or the less routine assignments. The report noted that the majority of these stories are off-desk tasks or not assigned in the usual way as some of these stories usually break after official working hours, late in the evening, or at night during which time women are not expected to be on duty. This deprives them a chance to interact with after office or out of town news makers which eventually cuts off women journalists from breaking news.

In the news, male dominates "News making". As per the assessment done on Gender Dimensions In Uganda's Print Media, the majority of the newsmakers (78%) quoted were men while only 22% were women, out of the total of 6,295 persons quoted.<sup>19</sup> This could be attributed to the cultural and gender norms that do not encourage women to speak in public. Also, a majority of the speakers or experts that are to speak in specific fields happen to be men, as also affirmed during the interviews. Further, even if, at times, the available experts are both women and men, journalists, who oftentimes are gender blind, tend to be drawn to quoting or interviewing men, as also indicated in the interviews.

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<sup>16</sup> Uganda Media Women's Association and MAMA fm (2014), Report on Gender Dimensions In Uganda's Print Media: A Case For Engendering Practitioners, Uganda.pg 12

<http://www.umwamafm.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Report-on-Gender-Dimensions-in-Ugandas-Print-Media-September-2014.pdf>

accessed on 17.02.2021

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid; AU (2014)

<sup>19</sup> ibid

Parekh (2001) observes that the media often times either ignore important stories altogether, relegate reporting to obscure places in the newspaper, or sensationalize incidents without examining the underlying context or causes. The media tend to focus on women only when it comes to “women’s issues,” forgetting that women also have an equal stake in so-called “male concerns” such as the budget, economy, globalization, and agriculture and conflict resolution.”<sup>20</sup>

When it comes to page and location of stories in media, it is observed that some news stories do not do well. Parekh (2001) argues that when the subject is rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, divorce and maintenance, dowry deaths, laws on inheritance, lack of access to education and health services, police cruelty, and reproductive rights, it is often sensational “bad news” stories that generate interest.

In a research inquiry by Joshi et.al (2006) on Images of Women in Print Media, a very interesting finding emerged when the question regarding the imbalance of the projection of women’s atrocities and women’s achievements, in print was asked to the respondent. The high majority of the males expressed that we do cover the women’s achievement along with news on women’s atrocities. But “we have to write according to the demands of the society; moreover, we have to sell the newspaper so some sensational news is must”. One of the male respondents conveyed that our society is not so bold to boast loudly about women’s achievements.”<sup>21</sup>

The review of the newspapers as well as interviews findings resonates with the above findings i.e. women’s issues tend to only be covered by women’s column without taking into account the equal stake women have in other issues covered, be it budget, politics, or the economy. Further, violence against women (VAW) cases , if covered, are presented as sensational news. In the words of one respondent, “it has to be catchy,” “when it comes to newspapers, people are not interested to read details.” In view of this, not only that the causes and effects of VAW are missing in the discussion but also victim blaming is a commonplace.

## 2.2 Promoting gender equality in the media

The strategic objective in the 1995 Beijing Declaration aims to: “increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication’ and to ‘promote a balanced and non-stereo-typed portrayal of women in the media”<sup>22</sup>

Promotion of gender equality in media calls for several authentic and tangible activities. UNESCO (2012) lists them as evidence of gender consciousness in different types of editorial content e.g., reporting, editing, commentary, features, documentaries, interviews, talk shows, etc. and across the

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<sup>20</sup>Angana Parekh (2001), Nieman Reports 2001, WOMEN AND JOURNALISM: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES. Bringing Women’s Stories to a Reluctant Mainstream Press.pg 1  
<https://niemanreports.org/articles/bringing-womens-stories-to-a-reluctant-mainstream-press/>  
accessed on 14.02.2021

<sup>21</sup>Prof. Uma Joshi , DR. Anjali Pahad and MS. Avani Maniar (2006),Images of Women in Print Media — A Research Inquiry Indian Media Studies Journal .India.pg48

<sup>22</sup> Joint Statement to the Commission on the Status of Women 64 on the crucial role of media in achieving gender equality (2020), Amsterdam, The Netherlands

(Notes : The joint statement was submitted by Free Press Unlimited, The Carter Center, Fondation Hirondelle, Global Alliance on Media and Gender, International Media Support, International Women’s Media Foundation, Media Diversity Institute, RNW Media, World Association for Christian Communication and WAN-IFRA)  
[https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/freepressunlimited.org/files/csw64\\_joint\\_statement\\_on\\_gender\\_and\\_media.pdf](https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/freepressunlimited.org/files/csw64_joint_statement_on_gender_and_media.pdf)  
f accessed 16.02.2021

spectrum of subject-areas, politics and governance, economics, and business, science, and technology, etc., and content categories/sections e.g., news pages, edit/op-ed page, business section, sports section, etc.<sup>23</sup>

The World Development Report (WDR) (2012) defines gender as “socially constructed norms and ideologies which determine the behaviour and actions of men and women. Understanding these gender relations and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite for understanding individuals’ access to and distribution of resources, their ability to make decisions and the ways in which women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development.”<sup>24</sup>

Promoting gender equality in media is very crucial for society to share a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women and men in the media. Journalists and other actors working in the media should always be gender-sensitive. White (2009) explains that journalists and other actors working in the media can contribute to gender equality by assessing progress on gender equality, identify challenges, and contribute to debates and policy formulation. White urges those working in the media to do more to confront gender distortions in newsrooms and unions.<sup>25</sup>

Taking into account the significant impact media has on society, through its power to construct public opinion, Kara (2020) highlights the importance of media’s approach to gender equality. People need a print press to access information, and while the print press meets this need, it creates a perception in the social mindset by setting the agenda with the news it chooses.<sup>26</sup>

Emphasizing the roles media play in society, Ann et al. point out “they report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilize citizens concerning various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, and entertain.”<sup>27</sup> Thence, placing media as an actor in the promoting of gender equality and mobilizing societies for social change is pivotal.

UNESCO also notes that media, be it a newspaper, radio, television, and new technology are a part of culture and society. The fact that media are transmitters of culture and engines behind globalizing cultures is being widely recognized. Though to varying degrees, there is no aspect of society on which media have not had an impact especially in countries of high media density. “Media can also be framed as social actors in and of themselves, with the power to give impetus to social development”<sup>28</sup>.

The issue of gender in media is also highlighted in a guideline for Gender Responsive Media by Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority and UN Women (2020) that states “media are indispensable instruments of communication, learning, and socialization. The media can be used to create awareness and mobilize people for social changes and, most importantly, they can be gender-

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<sup>23</sup>UNESCO (2012), Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (Draft indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in Media operations and content, Paris.

[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/images/Themes/Freedom\\_of\\_expression/Safety\\_Report\\_by%20DG\\_2012.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/images/Themes/Freedom_of_expression/Safety_Report_by%20DG_2012.pdf) accessed 12.02.2021

<sup>24</sup> Ann et al. (2015), Gender and Media, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. <https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/gender/gender-and-media/>

<sup>25</sup>White, A. (2009). ‘Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism’, International Federation of Journalists, Brussels

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/getting-the-balance-right-gender-equality-in-journalism/> accessed on 14.02.2021

<sup>26</sup> Kara(2020) Gender and Print Media by Research Article,

[pg1https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341369016\\_Gender\\_and\\_Print\\_media](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341369016_Gender_and_Print_media) accessed 12.02.2021

<sup>27</sup> ibid

<sup>28</sup>UNESCO (2012), Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media. Draft framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content .pg4

responsive and promote the human rights of both men and women.”<sup>29</sup> It’s noted that media plays a role in reinforcing already existing social and cultural norms, as well as educating society by providing new information. “Through reinforcing already existing social norms, the media feeds information that the society already knows and deems right. This, in turn, sends a message to the audience that solidifies the norms society believes in whether they are right or wrong.”<sup>30</sup>

There is an ardent need for promoting gender in Media. Jacobsson (2016) as cited in a report on gender representation in Nordic news content and the Nordic media industry by the Nordic Council of Ministers (2017), says “raising gender awareness among staff and engaging in organizational measures promote change towards more equal gender representation in the news. There are good experiences of actions, such as measuring content and reviewing the working conditions of journalists that have had an impact, but newsrooms are often resistant to external initiatives and not aware of the international commitments related to gender equality and the media”<sup>31</sup>.

### 3. Findings

The review of the analysis of four sampled newspapers of editorial contents for a period of six months April/May- September/October 2020, totaling 146 newspapers, provided the following results. The findings are presented under the following sub-headings: women and men as story subjects; women as sources; photo representation of women; men and women as writers; and violence against women. In this research, gender portrayal frequency in the selected print media has been graded as: 5 as in Very high (very highly covered); 4 as High (highly covered); 3 as Average (average coverage); 2 as low (low coverage); NA (not applicable).

#### 3.1 Women and men as a story subject

Notwithstanding women make up half of the world population, they are underrepresented in today’s media coverage. This is further confirmed by the editorial content findings of the study below:

**The table below shows the proportion of women as news story subject by individual Newspapers (Frequency and percentage)**

	Addis Admas		Fortune		The Ethiopian Herald		Addis Zemen		Grand Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Average	3	0	6	1	8	1	207	30	224	33
High	1	0	0	0	0	0	21	3	22	3
Low	3	0	26	4	19	3	3	0	51	7
Not Applicable (NA)	9	1	27	4	0	0	9	2	45	7

<sup>29</sup> Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority and UN Women(2020), Guideline for Gender Responsive Media, Ethiopia Country Office.pg 12

<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/01/guideline-for-gender-responsive-media> accessed on 16.02.2021

<sup>30</sup>ibid

<sup>31</sup>Nordic Council of Ministers (2017). Women and Men in the News. Report on Gender Representation in Nordic News Content and Nordic Media Industry, Denmark. Pg.12

Very Low	113	16	79	11	153	22	0	0	345	50
Grand Total	129	19	138	20	180	26	240	35	687	100

The above table shows the very low content on women issues in the selected Newspapers reviewed. Out of the 240 Addis Zemen's articles reviewed, only 35%, discounting 1% NA, of articles were with women story subject while The Ethiopian Herald accounts for 26 % of the 180 articles reviewed. Addis Zemen is slightly ahead with the highest average of 30% compared to 1% of The Ethiopian Herald. The remaining newspapers, Fortune and Addis Admas feature similar low level of coverage. This implies that women are underrepresented and less likely to be featured in news stories, editorials, and the other categories of the newspapers and their issues and perspectives are less likely heard. The Percentage of stories focusing on women in news content is too low, a pattern similar to prior research findings on the underrepresentation of women in media coverage. However, given the limited scope of this study, the findings do not tell us which news stories women are likely to appear which warrants further investigation.

### 3.2 Women as sources

Studies have time and again found that few women are news sources. Men are more likely to be represented or mentioned as a news actor or source, directly or indirectly in Newspaper texts. This is further illustrated by the findings below:

**The table below shows the proportion in numbers of Women quoted/Interviewed by individual Newspapers (frequency and percentage)**

	Addis Admas		Fortune		The Ethiopian Herald		Addis Zemen		Grand Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Average	8	1	18	3	16	2	109	16	151	22
High	0	0	2	0	0	0	21	3	23	3
Low	4	1	38	6	17	2	52	8	111	16
NA	25	4	28	4	1	0	50	7	104	15
Very High	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0
Very Low	92	13	52	8	146	22	5	1	295	44
Grand Total	129	19	138	20	180	26	240	35	687	100

The table shows that the level of women quoted, interviewed, or used as news sources is low, in all selected newspapers, scoring below average. The comparative analysis between Addis Zemen and the Ethiopian Herald shows that Addis Zemen has (35%) of which NA is 7% while The Ethiopian Herald has (26%) used women as news sources. The remaining newspapers have also seen a lower representation of women as news makers with Fortune (20%) and Addis Admas (19%).

However, given that the sample sizes for the two newspapers are different, a comparison is made for Addis Zemen with The Ethiopian Herald and Addis Admas with Fortune respectively. As discussed in the previous section, the reasons behind this under-representation could be attributed to cultural norms and gender stereotypes. Further, in most cases, those who speak or get interviewed are mostly professionals in a certain field yet the number of women experts is generally lower than that of men. But it's also worth noting that this should not be the case in a country where women have advanced to the leadership ladder and almost 50% of the cabinet members are occupied by women.



### 3.3 Portrayal (Photo representation)

A similar pattern as above is reflected in photo representation in media. Spears et.al (2000)<sup>32</sup> notes that women are represented in the media, they are often portrayed in ways that are both inaccurate and unfair and they tend to be defined in terms of their physical appearance as opposed to their abilities. Women are most often shown as victims of violence and homemakers.<sup>33</sup> The findings below are also in conformity with previous studies.

**The table below shows proportion of photo representation of women by selected Newspapers (Frequency and percentage)**

	Addis Admas		Fortune		The Ethiopian Herald		Addis Zemen		Grand Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Average	9	1	31	5	13	2	114	17	167	24
High	1	0	2	0	3	0	31	5	37	5
Low	15	2	24	3	34	5	28	4	101	15
NA	34	5	55	8	0	0	56	8	145	21
Very High	0	0		0	0	0	6	1	6	1
Very Low	70	10	26	4	130	19	5	1	231	34
Grand Total	129	19	138	20	180	26	240	35	687	100

The table above shows a very low photo representation of women in terms of frequency and percentage coverage in selected Newspapers. The analysis made taking this into account the different sample sizes note that Addis Zemen has a better photo representation of women (35%) compared to The Ethiopian Harald (26) whereby 8% no photo representation was applied for Addis Zemen. Lower photo representation of women was also observed in both Fortune (20%) and Addis Admas(19%).

The findings also observed that women are being stereotypically portrayed in media despite development and progress in society. The majority of the photos reviewed depict women in their traditional feminine gender role, like fuelwood carrier, as a hairstylist, in fashion, and as refugees, thereby making them appear normal and inevitable while excluding other possible traits and functions for men and women in society. As Bhumika (2013) argues "limited significance is attributed to the life struggles of women at home and outside world. Media depiction of women is full of images and cliché about women and girls - the glamorous sex kitten, the sainted mother, the devious witch, and the hard-faced corporate; and political climber"<sup>34</sup>.

### 3.4 Men and women as writers

It should be noted that out of 146 newspapers analyzed, varying percentages of articles written by women were observed as in the table below:

<sup>32</sup>as cited Gender Links for the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Information and Communications (STC- IC) November (2017)

<sup>33</sup>Gender Links for the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Information and Communications (STC- IC)(2017)Media Portrayal of Women and Media Gender Gap in Africa , [https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/33025-wd-au\\_gender\\_and\\_media\\_paperfinaldraft\\_tncm\\_02112017.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/33025-wd-au_gender_and_media_paperfinaldraft_tncm_02112017.pdf) accessed on 20.02.2021

<sup>34</sup> Sharma, Bhumika, Image of Women in Media (August 26, 2013). [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2316183](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2316183) accessed on 23.02.2021



**The table shows the proportion of Women News Article Writers by the respective selected Newspaper (Frequency and percentage)**

	Addis Admas		Fortune		The Ethiopian Herald		Addis Zemen		Grand Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Average	16	2	27	4	2	0	142	21	187	27
High	9	1	60	9	0	0	26	4	95	14
Low	18	3	10	1	16	2	35	5	79	11
NA	9	1	27	4	2	0	14	2	52	8
Very High	1	0	11	2	0	0	7	1	19	3
Very Low	76	11	3	0	160	23	16	2	255	37
Grand Total	129	19	138	20	180	26	240	35	687	100

The table above shows that in 146 newspapers analyzed there was very low percentage of articles written by women. This is a replica of underrepresentation that continues with The Ethiopian Herald 23% of very low and Addis Zemen 21% of average and 2% of NA. Fortune has 4% average with 4% NA while Addis Admas has 11% very low with 9% NA. Fortune seems to have more female writers, 9% high, than the other sampled newspapers. The findings resonate with previous studies which show that despite an increasing number of women in the media, there has not been an increase in the number of women news writers. This could be attributed, as also indicated in the interviews, to cultural sanctions and impediments; sexual harassment; intimidation and abuse; underrating or snubbing of women's effort and achievements or editor's choice.

Other impediments, as noted by Uganda Women Media Association, relates to long working hours, long distances to work, the dilemma of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities; lack of access to decision making roles, and that of relevant technical skills; as well as intimidation and power play within a male dominated media houses.<sup>35</sup>



### 3.5 Violence against women

The table shows the proportional representation of coverage of Violence against women by selected Newspapers. (Frequency and percentage)

	Addis Admas		Fortune		The Ethiopian Herald		Addis Zemen		Grand Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Average	1	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	7	1
High		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Low	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0
NA	24	3	28	4	0	0	239	35	291	42
Very Low	102	15	107	16	176	26	0	0	385	56
Grand Total	129	19	138	20	180	26	240	35	687	100

The table above indicates that the issue of violence against women (VAW) has the highest not applicable, signifying not reported, across each newspaper. Bearing in mind that the review was made during the Covid-19 period where violence against women was highly reported and yet there was very low media coverage on VAW issues or not reported at all. For example, out of the 240 articles reviewed in Addis Zemen, 35% were NAs (not covered) while the Ethiopian Herald has 26% of very low coverage. A similar very low pattern is also demonstrated in Addis Admas and Fortune. Possible reasons for low coverage include lack of information on where to report violent incidents, lack of gender sensitivity and unwillingness of media houses covering gender-based violence-related news, and women's under representation in media houses. The findings also note that when VAW issues are reported it depicts women as victims as opposed to survivors; as also an instigator of VAW, through the way they dress, instead of blaming perpetrators. The interview also noted that when VAW issues are covered, it focuses on sensational issues to capture the reader's attention.

As aptly argued by Morna (2002),<sup>36</sup> "violence against women is either not reported at all because it is seen to take place in the private sphere, or reported in bizarre and sensationalist ways that invariably place the blame on the victim. The stories convey no sense of women's human rights being abused."

## 4. Conclusion and way forward

### 4.1 Conclusion

A comparative analysis of the 146 copies under study revealed that there are gross underrepresentation and low coverage of women in print media news in Ethiopia, in every aspect, be it women as story subject, women as sources, women as writers, photo representation and violence against women coverage. The findings also note that violence against women issues are either not reported or has very low coverage. This implies that women are underrepresented and less likely to be featured in news stories, editorials and the other categories of the newspapers, and their issues and perspectives are less likely heard. The Percentage of stories focusing on women in news content is too low, a pattern similar to other research findings on the underrepresentation of women in media coverage. However, given the limited scope of this study, the findings do not tell us which news stories women are likely to appear which warrants further investigation. The findings note that there is no sex-disaggregated analysis of news and current affairs content retrieved from media.

<sup>36</sup>as cited in Gender Links for the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Information and Communications (STC- IC) (2017). P.4

The findings also observed that women are being stereotypically portrayed in media despite development and progress in society. The majority of the photos reviewed depict women in their traditional feminine gender role, as fuelwood carriers, as hairstylists, in fashion, and as refugees, thereby making them appear normal and inevitable while excluding other possible traits and functions for men and women in society.

The findings are also in conformity with other studies which show that despite an increasing number of women in the media, there has not been a corresponding increase in the number of women news writers, which could be attributed to cultural sanctions and impediments; sexual harassment; intimidation and abuse; institutional sexism, incompatible work schedule with family life, underrating or snubbing of women's effort and achievements or editor's choice.

The study further revealed that the issue of violence against women has the highest not applicable signifying not reported across each newspaper and if reported in a very low manner depicting women as victims as opposed to survivors.

#### *4.2 Recommendations*

Given the findings, the following avenues are worth exploring by all stakeholders – media houses and media professionals, non-governmental organizations, government, and media professional Associations as well as advertisers:

##### Research and capacity building

1. Periodically conduct a Gender Audit to monitor and evaluate the Gender Program to identify gaps and achievements, and raise strategies for improvements.
2. Encourage and support the conduct of research into all aspects of Women and the Media
3. Compile a directory of women media experts who can form part of media training, research, and audit teams
4. Identify training needs of all journalists and tailor gender courses per their needs with a view to developing their analytical capacity in gender reporting
5. Promote the engagement of staff in gender sensitive policy development and the gender equity agenda

##### Recruitment, management, and leadership

6. Develop guidelines and codes of conduct, with the participation of women, to promote balanced and non-stereotyped portrayals of women by the media.
7. Incorporating clearly defined gender policies and programs in all print media houses by incorporating a Gender Agenda in their overall mission and vision.
8. Promote women journalists to leadership positions and Increase their representation in the newsroom
9. Increase women's participation in decision-making at all levels of the media and apply affirmative action as needed
10. Allocate resources for advancing gender parity in the print media to effectively address the Gender Agenda and to specifically address issues of conditions at the workplace
11. Ensure that sexual harassments policies are in place in media houses and are implemented

12. Ensure that there is strong commitment from management to pursue gender equality
13. Increase women representation in the newsroom, especially at senior level.

#### Information and stories sourcing

14. Ensure sex-disaggregated data in reporting
15. Development of women journalists' networking groups to serve as group monitoring forums and as a means for information dissemination, and exchange of views
16. Produce and disseminate media materials on women's roles, as leaders with many different life experiences including that of how they have reached where they are; balancing work and family responsibilities; as professionals; as managers and as entrepreneurs; to provide role models, particularly to young women.
17. Promote the dissemination of information about, and increase awareness of the human rights of women through the media including gender-based violence issues.
18. Ensure that there are diverse sources, including the voices of women, girls, and relevant minorities in all stories covered.
19. Increase efforts towards fair coverage of gender issues, which are important to women and which fairly present their experiences.
20. Include more news about women as well as mainstream gender in other issues covered.





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**Embassy of Sweden**  
Addis Abeba

Bole Medhanialem, Behind Edna Mall,  
Lucky Building, 5th Floor, R.no - 505, AA, ET

**Tel:** 251-11-662 2640/41 • **Fax:** 251-11-662 2642 • **P.O. Box:** 1123  
**Email:** [info@initiativeafrica.net](mailto:info@initiativeafrica.net) • **Website:** [www.initiativeafrica.net](http://www.initiativeafrica.net)