



Initiative Africa

MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN

Using the Media to Promote Gender



Of the many influences on how we view men and women, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful. Woven throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their messages into our consciousness at every turn. All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions.

Three themes describe how media represent gender:



• 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. IA will try to support media organizations to address each of these themes in this project.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Underrepresentation of Women

A primary way in which media distort reality is in under-representing women. Whether it is prime-time television, in which there are three times as many men as women, or in which stories about men are included 10 times more often than ones about women, media misrepresent actual proportions of men and women in the population. This constant distortion tempts us to believe that there really are more men than women and, further, that men are the cultural standard.

Stereotypical portrayals of men

Television programming for all ages disproportionately depicts men as serious confident, competent, powerful, and in high-status 'positions. Equally interesting is how males are not presented – men are seldom shown doing housework. Boys and men are rarely presented caring for others.

Media's images of women also reflect cultural stereotypes that depart markedly from reality. Women are portrayed as significantly younger and fragile than women in the population as a whole, and most are depicted as passive, dependent on men, and enmeshed in relationships or housework.

Stereotypical Images of Relationships Between Men and Women

Given media's stereotypical portrayals of women and men, we shouldn't be surprised to find that relationships between women and men are similarly depicted in ways that reinforce stereotypes. Four themes demonstrate how media reflect and promote traditional arrangements between the sexes:

- (i) Women's dependence/men's independence
- (ii) Men's authority/women's incompetence
- (iii) Women as primary care givers/men as breadwinners;
- (iv) Women as victims and sex objects/men as aggressors.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES

- Conduct a gender audit of the organizations and identify opportunities and /or constraints for mainstreaming gender dimensions



- Identify the gender based constraints (GBCs) to delivery of equality of outcomes for men and women in each project, and based on socially or culturally defined gender roles elaborate of the gender mainstreaming strategy of the organization



- Produce a gender mainstreaming manual that will assist managers, project implementers in integrating gender equality in all media activities.



- Propose measurable gender related targets and gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring the progress of gender mainstreaming.

This project is Supported by: