

VISION FOR THE WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH

2000 -2005

BACKGROUND

The Women's Media Watch is a membership-based pressure group, a project of Mediaworks, that works to transform the media by challenging sexism and racism, and to get access to channels of communication for the least heard women. It operates nationally and has members in all walks of life from community workers, women with disabilities and sexworkers to parliamentarians and journalists. Internationally it is seen as a unique model in the diversity of its members as well as its multi-pronged strategy to get women's voices heard.

It has gone from being a local pressure group at its inception to being a national body that is widely known and consulted on many issues effecting gender and communication policy and the production of media in this country.

The membership is increasing all the time as is the profile and clout of the group. Currently the mailing list is over 250 people and organisations. They in turn generate a larger amount of publicity as the information then forms part of their information dissemination strategy. This is particularly true of international member organisations.

Although the focus is on the representation of women in the media, men who are committed to this issue are welcome in the group and there are some male members.

1. AIM OF WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH

To challenge racism and sexism in the media and to get access to the channels of communication for the least heard women.

This document explores how these aims will be achieved during the first five years of the new millenium.

2. ACTIVITIES

- 1. Lobbying and Advocacy**
- 2. Monthly meetings and newsletter**
- 3. Active membership**
- 4. Research**
- 5. International activism**
- 6. Newspaper and radio slots**

7. Media monitoring
8. Media production, e.g radio, video and print
9. Regional and rural branches
10. Consultation re media and gender awareness for editors and journalists and the setting up of similar groups elsewhere in response to invitations
11. Possible eventual autonomous status of the group
12. Internet activism

2.1 LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

A large part of the work of the Women's Media Watch is its lobbying and advocacy function. Because of the complexity of the problems that underlie the poor representation of women in the media, this lobbying necessarily takes place at a number of levels and using different strategies.

The Women's Media Watch will continue to impact on gender and communication policy at a national level as a result of its close working relationship with the Commission on Gender Equality, The Women's Parliamentary Caucus, the Independent Newspapers Group Training and Transformation section, the South African National Editors Forum, the Network on Violence against Women etc.

Challenge negative stereotyping and misrepresentation of women in the media by writing letters of complaint as well as taking up issues and complaints with the media and Advertising Standards Authority, Independent Broadcasting Authorities and the Film and Publication board.

Creative protests to highlight issues around women and the media.

Making use of drama, masks, dance and songs around creative protests.

Developing drama, art or photography workshops that would develop basic skills and then use these skills in creative protests.

Developing new means of protesting based on international examples, e.g. Invisible Theatre of Augusto Boal and so forth.

Gender awareness raising campaigns around special days and international campaigns, e.g. 16 days of activism, Women's day.

Lobbying for media awareness in the school curriculum.

2.2 ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

To structure the membership into specific focal areas of interest, such as radio broadcasting, drama, newsletter/video production, community outreach, events organising and fundraising in order to keep the broad diversity of the group and impact effectively both in the community and nationally.

For example

1. The drama group is responsible for scripting and performing their own works for the community or as part of a schools' tour.

2. The radio broadcasting team is responsible for creating radio interviews, educational programmes and cassettes focusing on various issues or themes.
3. Community outreach group would focus on doing surveys and media and gender awareness workshops in the community.
4. Research responsible for collecting and collating data
5. Newsletter group would be responsible for production of the newsletter
6. The production team would be responsible for the conceptual process involved in making posters, pamphlets and flyers for special events in collaboration with the Mediaworks studio.
7. An events organising team responsible for the organising and control of events.
8. A fund-raising team could assist with fund-raising.

2.3 MONTHLY MEETINGS AND NEWSLETTER

Monthly meetings are held to disseminate information and discuss any pressing issues that have come up, plan protest strategies, discuss policy development - like the Gender Guidelines for Editors and issues that affect the membership in their organisations. Monthly meetings are also a meeting point creating a space for women from diverse groups to interact. In addition it provides a means of organising and responding to issues. Monthly newsletters include features on Media Watch activities, their members and other relevant information. It can also be used to advertise Mediaworks, N.G.O activities and the business sector. All projects and their students of Media works will also receive the newsletter as this will increase our profile. It is distributed to about local and international members as well all meetings, workshops and seminars attended.

The newsletter will include more membership contribution and empower the aspiring writers in the membership in basic writing skills to ensure a broader base of writers and languages.

2.4 RESEARCH

Research into media and gender issues undertaken by Media Watch and disseminated broadly. This could involve researchers in the membership on particular issues.

2.5 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISM

Maximising international activism with visits to and from similar groups abroad to exchange expertise and inspiration and create a stronger link with the global feminist media activism in the form of exchanges and training. International training offered is also important to ensure that we are kept abreast of the latest trends and information available.

2.6 NEWSPAPER AND RADIO SLOTS

Securing regular newspaper or radio slots in commercial or community media. A regular slot in the newspaper or radio will ensure a very powerful platform to raise important issues. Creating radio broadcasts that can be aired on commercial or community radio stations is also important.

2.7 MEDIA MONITORING

Monitoring issues and reporting trends in mainstream media.

Train a group of efficient media monitors to monitor the various media with a gender perspective on an ongoing basis and feed the results regularly to the media producers, concerned NGO's and public at large.

Having been instrumental in the drawing up of the Gender Guidelines for Media in conjunction with the Commission on Gender Equality, Women's Media Watch will also have a role in monitoring the implementation of those Guidelines.

2.8 MEDIA PRODUCTION

Creating educational videos around particular issues of gender and media which can be used by educators in a user friendly manner. Documenting the activities of Media Watch activities throughout the year for reporting purposes as well as its educational value. Making these cassettes or C.D's available to radio stations, schools and other C.B.O's.

2.9 REGIONAL AND RURAL BRANCHES OF WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH

As the project already operates nationally and internationally there is already a need to have branches in other provinces and in rural areas.

2.10 CONSULTATION FOR EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS

Consultation with editors and journalists with workshops on Gender and Diversity in Media and sharing of the Reporting Guidelines and issues involved in the transformation of the media. Invitations are received to provide training to other organisations based on the model of the Women's Media Watch.

2.11 POSSIBILITY OF EVENTUAL AUTONOMOUS STATUS OF THE GROUP

At its inception, in 1995, it was envisaged that the Women's Media Watch would eventually have autonomous status as most pressure groups of this nature do internationally. It could be that this would be desirable at some point in the new millenium if the funds could be raised for it by the group. It is not, however a priority as there is an excellent relationship between Mediaworks as a whole and the Women's Media Watch.

2.12 INCREASED INTERNET ACTIVISM

In line with information trends, to have an efficient system of internet research and information dissemination.