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Women's Media Watch membership is open to all people with a commitment to bring the voices, faces and issues of the least visible women and youth into the media. We monitor and respond to the current portrayal of women in the media and work towards access to channels of communication for all women.

membership

To help cover the cost of the production of the newsletters and keep the project running we are asking members who can, to pay annual membership fees. These may be paid monthly.

R240.00 per annum per organisation in South Africa
 R120.00 per individual in South Africa
 US \$50.00 for members in other parts of Africa
 US \$90.00 for members in Europe/USA etc

If you or your organisation cannot afford the fee but want to be active members, you will still be able to have full membership. The membership fees are not there to exclude anyone.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTRIBUTE ARTICLES, LETTERS, CARTOONS AND IDEAS TO OUR NEWSLETTER, OR COME INTO THE OFFICE AND BE INTERVIEWED ON YOUR VIEWS ON THE MEDIA.

Women's Media Watch acknowledges support from the IWDA and AUSAID

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editorial



The drawing by Eldbjerg Riebe is from the Women's calendar 2000, published by Fritant, 1999.

Too much reading interesting novels is one of the most harmful activities a young woman can devote herself to. It depraves soul and body."

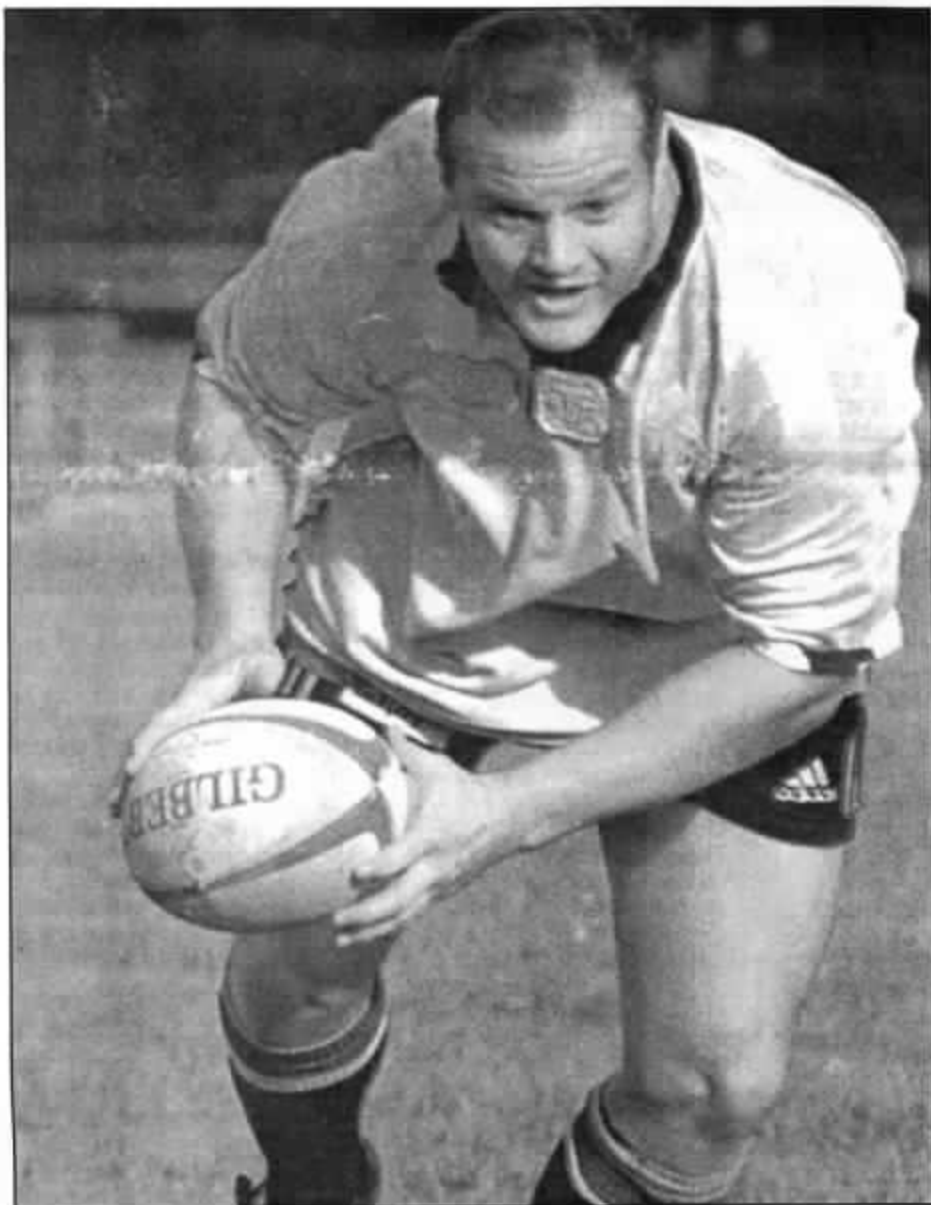
Welcome to the May edition of the Women's Media Watch newsletter. In May we saw the media dealing with violence by sportsmen against women in a stereotypical and discriminatory way. We saw rugby star Robbie Kempson accused of attempted rape by a 17-year-old high school student. The papers dealt with it by showing large colour pictures of him playing rugby and defended his reputation and character. While the accusation stood the boys club of the sports world closed around them and the media backed them up. No one defended the young woman, not even the school she was from although they were mentioned daily in the news. When we phoned the school and asked them if they didn't intend to defend their pupil's reputation the secretary sounded keen but the Principal didn't get back to us.

When the charges were dropped "for lack of sufficient evidence" the media immediately reported on "Kempson's five days of hell." Cape Talk's Martin Gillinham interviewed a lawyer from

the Cape Law Society on whether it wouldn't be possible to have rape charges kept secret until after the conviction so that sportsmen and public figures would not be embarrassed by "false accusations". When is the Cautionary Rule going to be taken off the books so that the unconstitutional discrimination against women who report rape can end? And when will the media stop making heroes out of abusers? Carol Bower, executive director of RAP-CAN comments further on this issue later in this newsletter.

In this edition we have a section that focuses on what is news? We cover issues like women in the Indian media and environmental issues. You will also find our regular pages: Report from the May meeting, Readers Letter's Page and National and International News and News Clippings.

Gabrielle Le Roux and Lene Øverland



Kempson presented as the hero people know him as, who would think he is also a rapist?

MAY'S MEMBERS MEETING

By Lene Øverland

Saturday 13th May we came together. Unfortunately some of our members had to send their apologies for not coming in. We hope to see you again for the next meeting. Marjorie Billings chaired the meetings. On our agenda we had several issues.

EVALUATION

We spent most of the meeting deciding on what is the important information to gather and how can we phrase our questions in order to get the needed information. What came out of the debate can be seen in the questionnaire that you will all receive by mail. Hopefully most of you will find time to fill in the form. If you experience any problems, or don't even receive the questionnaire, please feel free to contact Lene at 461 03 68.

THE GENDER AND COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME

The Gender and Communication programme can take 25 students and it is starting May the 25th. The cost of the course is R1500, but it is possible to apply for funding. As we all know Anthea Carolus, who used to run the course has left Media Works to take up a position at Bush radio, and she will no longer be running the course. This year Judith Smith will run the course. So people who are interested in attending the

course must contact her at Media Works.

FUNDRAISING TRIP

Because of the lack of funding and the need to get funds coming in for next year Gabrielle is now going to seriously try to establish the needed funds. As well as going to the +5 Beijing meeting in New York she is going to meet with funders from different countries. Hopefully she will secure funding for our important activities.

THE MISA WORKSHOP

Gabrielle informed us that she had been invited to facilitate a workshop on Gender for MISA, the Media Institute of Southern Africa. The workshop is taking place in Harare at the end of June. The participants will be board members, regional directors, and the secretariat. MISA wants to mainstream gender into all the 11 chapters (local branches) in all the regions of Southern Africa. It is good news for us that MISA, as a very powerful body in the region now has decided to mainstream gender.

Before we closed the meeting Marjorie Billings, invited us to attend the launch of Community Workers Forum June 3 in Salt River Road.



The frontpage of the Annual Misa Report

WHO ARE THE WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH

By Gabrielle Le Roux

The Women's Media Watch is a pressure group that works to transform the media by fighting for realistic and fair representation of women in and by the media.

The mission statement is: Women's Media Watch challenges sexism, classism, homophobia and racism in the media and creates access to the channels of communication for the least heard women. Sexism in the media is challenged in terms of the discriminatory stereotyping of women by the media. This includes the manner in which pertinent issues are either handled or ignored in the media and employment practices within the media that sideline women.

Women's Media Watch is based in Cape Town and has members



nationally, regionally and internationally. Members include community workers, domestic workers, Parliamentarians, women with disabilities, sex-workers, academics, researchers, journalists, gay rights activists, women working in crisis organisations, youth and women who have lived on the streets.

Increasingly the Women's Media Watch is a forum in which progressive journalists and independent media producers can meet women with interesting stories who are most silenced by the media. Out of this comes the collaborative production of alternative media - women-friendly articles and programmes that acknowledge, explore and celebrate the diversity of women. Currently we

have nearly 300 organisations that are members of the Women's Media Watch and we have connections with groups, universities and organisations locally and internationally. Membership is open to all people and organisations with a commitment to using the media to deepen democracy. In being members, people have a choice of being individual or organisational members - members of the Press, the various Commissions and Parliament, for example cannot be organisational members. Organisations that belong to Women's Media Watch are numerous, here are some examples: Sex Workers Education Advocacy Taskforce, Rape Crisis Cape Town, InTouch Gugulethu Lesbian Theatre Group, Women's Health Project, Mitchell's Plain Network Opposing Woman Abuse, Disabled People South Africa, Women and Human Rights Project, Gender Equity Unit of the University of the Western Cape, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Media Watch UK, NICRO Women's Support Centre, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and Children, Women's Legal Centre, Africa Women's Filmmaker's Trust, Gender Advocacy Programme, Network Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children, Delta Women's Training Centre, African Gender Institute.

Members are recruited in a wide variety of ways: Through reading of the monthly newsletter, in workshops, conferences and meetings, from reading of newspaper letters and after radio interviews, as well as via friends and family.

HISTORY

Gaby Cheminais started the Women's Media Watch in 1995 at what was at the time the Women's Media Project of Community Arts Project, CAP. CAP had existed since 1982 as an NGO that produced and trained the community in the production of graphic media. Many of the strong images used on anti-apartheid posters, banners, and

T-shirts during the struggle emanated from CAP. CAP went through a period of restructuring and metamorphosed into Media-works. Today the Women's Media Watch is part of Mediaworks, and two of the 7 Mediaworks board members are members of the Women's Media Works.

Today Gabrielle Le Roux is the co-coordinator, Judith Smith the administrator and Lene Overland the Newsletter co-editor with Gabrielle Le Roux. Several members volunteer their time to Women's Media Watch. At the moment two of our members carry out an extensive evaluation of the group, one distributes the newsletter and another takes photos for the newsletter, reports etc. Further members come in to contribute to policy development, they run workshops, write articles for the newsletter, produce logos and visuals, they plan creative protests and special arrangements, and produce books and folders etc.

WHAT DO WE DO?

Essentially all the work of the Women's Media Watch is advocacy work. Due to the different strategies employed and groups targeted the work has been divided into sections that feed into each other's work in a symbiotic way.

1) Advocacy and Activism

The Women's Media Watch has played a role in the past three years in joining forces with other powerful bodies to get complaints heard dealing with sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia in the media. The advocacy and activism section takes complaints from members or the public to the relevant authorities: the IBA, ASA, Press Ombudsman or BCCSA and makes recommendations about what course of action would help to avoid similar complaints in the future.

In the advocacy section the linking of interest groups from our members as well as contacting other organisations to add weight to a complaint has been a very useful strategy in

raising awareness about complaints. Most often the Commission on Gender Equality and the Network on Violence against Women are informed about complaints that are being taken up with the authorities. Sometimes, if the case merits it, then the Parliamentary Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women and Parliamentary Women's Caucus are also informed.

Monthly Media Watch meetings are part of the activism as they are the forums in which the actions of the group are decided and planned. Planning and carrying out creative protests is another task of this section. The Women's Media Watch responds to sexism and racism in the media in a variety of ways. Creative protests are held to protest about certain issues or advertisements. There is always an element of humour or play on words and images in our protests. The networking of this section extends to putting journalists in touch with appropriate people to speak to on a variety of topics.

Our first creative protest happened outside Newspaper House in Cape Town in response to the all-male Argus International Advisory Board. A newspaper article introducing them showed a picture of a group of middle-aged businessmen sitting around a plush boardroom table. In the article below they described themselves as a "broad cross-section of the community" and said that they were "shaping the trends of global media". We were outraged that there were no women on the board. The theme of our demonstration was the silencing of women by the media and we printed closed zips onto adhesive stickers and glued them across our mouths. We had a poster printed which showed the original picture of the Board with their full title - the new International Advisory Board of Argus Newspapers - in the background, and an angry young woman in the foregrounds saying "So what's new?" and the words: Men still control the News!

In 1997 there was a printed advertisement by SABC TV for their soap operas that claimed that their soaps



"were suitable for all skin types" and "kept whites whiter, colours brighter and blacks beautiful". Members of the group found the ad to be racially divisive as well as sexist. It was deemed sexist because it played on popular washing powder ads that always target women - perpetuating the view that they will be, are and should be the ones washing the clothes. We protested outside the SABC building in Sea Point. We printed posters with a graphic of a mop and bucket and writing on the wall next to it that read: "It will take more than soap to wash sexism and racism out of the media". We distributed little soaps in boxes to journalists, passersby and SABC employees. The front of the soapbox read: "Wash sexism and racism out of the media" and on the back were our contact details. Pamphlets with a copy of the offending ad and what we found offensive about it were also distributed.

2) Lobbying and Networking

The Women's Media Watch has strong ties with the Commission on Gender Equality, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Improvement of Life and Status of Women and the Parliamentary Women's Caucus. These contacts are very helpful in putting pressure on media producers to make changes that reflect the non-sexist and non-racist vision for South Africa stated in the Constitution.

Letters to the Editor and opinion pieces on certain issues have proven themselves to be good ways to use the spaces provided by the media to

get our voices heard. Not all letters and articles get printed but it is nevertheless an effective way to get information and opinions out and it has attracted many new members to the group.

Involvement opportunities for members evolve around activities such as:

Writing letters to the media, being interviewed on gender and media issues by media or researchers, helping organise workshops and meetings, doing administrative work, arrange video screenings, planning and carrying out creative protests, and debates in your communities and meeting with media authorities to encourage gender awareness. On need or request we also give training in: Writing press releases and press letters, interview skills, gender and media awareness training, how to take up complaints with the media authorities, how to use the video "Who's News?" to raise gender and media issues.

Building relationships with and between trustworthy and gender-sensitive journalists and NGO's and members of the public becomes progressively clearer as the best way to start influencing for the better what we see in the media. Not only do journalists have the inside information, which they are glad to share with us, about how decisions are made

about what gets printed and broadcast but they also really need the support from outside to encourage them in the good work they are doing. Increasingly the Women's Media Watch is a forum in which journalists get to meet women with interesting stories of the sort that are seldom heard in the media.

The booklet: "Violence against Women in South Africa. A Resource for Journalists" was produced in 1999 by the Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication in partnership with the National Network on Violence against Women, the Institute for the advancement of Journalism, the Commission on Gender Equality and Women's Media Watch. In an effort to help journalists and newsroom decision-makers, this booklet provides facts, figures and information on violence against women, identifies pitfalls in current coverage, and provides guidelines to help improve coverage.

3) Media Production

We put out a monthly newsletter, which goes to our members and associates in South Africa and abroad. The newsletter provides news of the group and is a voice for the members who can put in articles and information about what they are up to or reflects on burning issues.

Video production is an area that the Women's Media Watch has moved into, stimulated by the very positive



Zoleka, a member of Women's Media Watch involved with video production

response to our first video, "Who's News?" The video examines, through the member's own eyes the way some of the least heard women feel about the media. This video generated calls for more videos that explored the issues raised in more depth. Videos of this nature can be used in institutions where journalism is a subject, in workshops with journalists and editors, in schools, and organisations.

Women's Media Watch in collaboration with other NGO's produces occasional series of radio programmes on issues that the media is not fully covering or exploring. These are aired on community radio stations and uploaded onto the Internet for broad access locally and internationally. This section in collaboration with Mediaworks design studio also produces posters.

4) Consultancy and Education

The Women's Media Watch runs workshops for its members on the

Involvement opportunities for members: Contributing to newsletters and radio programmes, bringing video-making skills into the group, facilitating workshops on gender and media in community and creating and being part of a creative forum to develop our own self-expression through whatever forms of creativity we like. In this section we can provide training in the following areas: Writing skills, radio skills, video-making skills and facilitation skills in gender and media.

representation of women in the media, violence against women in the media and other topics as the need arises. We also respond to requests from other organisations to help them develop a media strategy, provide gender training to media producers and respond to invitations to speak publicly on the issues pertaining to gender and media. Women's Media Watch is

frequently asked to run workshops for editors or journalists, to visit newsrooms, to contribute to school textbooks and to contribute to policy on gender and education.

A further function of this section involves campaigns to get the media to play a larger role in educating people and particularly women about the changes in their rights, which criminalise much of the discrimination they continue to suffer. Using the media to deepen democracy and entrench gender equity is the theme of this work.

In this sections there are a wide variety of involvement options. Journalists can bring their gender awareness to other journalists, we can provide training for gender and media trainers, training in policy writing and training in campaigning and creative activism. Training offered includes an annual twenty weeks Gender and Communications Course, which trains community women's rights activists in media analysis and production, communication skills and gender awareness.

5) Media Monitoring and Research

In order to back up all the other sections and avoid being discounted as a fringe group who rely on opinion rather than facts, an ongoing media monitoring and research group has

In this sections our members can be trained as media monitors and get funds to do regular monitoring of gender in the media, members can contribute articles, information about what they hear in the media and also contribute ideas to rethinking monitoring.

been set up. It will function as a group of trained monitors being co-ordinated by a Monitoring Co-ordinator whose task it is to convene regular meetings of the group, see that raw data comes in on time, enter it into the database and draw up reports on the findings. Monitors will be employed free-lance, being commissioned to monitor particular topics or media at any one time, and monitoring methodology is at the moment being recreated.

Researchers can be drawn in as interns from institutions and can do the research as part of their own studies, the prerequisite is that a version of the results of the research needs to be produced in accessible language so that the debate generated is not limited to academia. There is an ongoing collection of data about how women from different interest groups feel about the way the media currently portrays women, what they feel is left out and what they would like to see. This data is used in different ways to sensitise media producers as well as to stimulate discussion more broadly and bring about more critical media consuming.



SEX WORKERS - LEGISLATION OR DECRIMINALISATION?

By Lene Øverland

On the 4th and 5th May The Women' Legal Centre and SWEAT (Sex Worker Education & Advocacy Taskforce) arranged a conference on adult commercial sex workers. The main aim of the conference was to discuss if sex work should be decriminalised or legalised. The conference took place at a very crucial time. In a few months time the South African Law Commission intends to release a discussion paper on adult prostitution.

The conference brought together more than 90 sex workers, service providers, legal specialists and policy makers in the field of health, justice, labour and gender. The focus of the conference was to consider alternatives to the ongoing criminalisation of adult commercial sex work, being decriminalized and/or legalisation thereof.

The main aims of the conference were to:

- Identify key issues regarding adult commercial sex work which need to be considered during a legal reform process; and
- Consider various models of legal reform and their suitability within the South African context.

Topics that were discussed:

- Health issues affecting sex workers
- Impact of criminalisation on adult commercial sex workers
- Feminism and sex work
- Decriminalisation of adult sex work; and
- legalisation of adult sex work

Adult commercial sex work is according to the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) 23 of 1957 a criminal activity. The fact that male clients are left relatively unchallenged is a cause for concern.

DECRIMINALISATION OR LEGISLATION

Alternatives to the criminalisation are:

- The decriminalisation thereof - the removal of all laws, which make adult commercial sex work a criminal activity and/or.
- The legalisation thereof-the introduction of new and specific legislation, which will restrict and regulate conditions under which sex work may legally operate.

Conclusions that were taken:

The conference did not adopt any resolutions as such, but several of the participating organisations presented statements to the press conference, among those were the statements from SWEAT and the Department of health as you will see them following this article. Among the participants there were a consensus on legal reform and decriminalisation. The conference also agreed that further action must be taken. SWEAT is now organizing a broad forum for further discussions.

In the next issues of the newsletter we are going to follow up this focus with an article on tourism and sex workers in and interview with Cheryl Ozinsky, director of the Western Cape board of tourism.

SWEAT'S POSITION ON LEGAL REFORM RELATING TO ADULT COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS

By Lene Øverland

SWEAT scene

Decriminalisation of adult commercial sex work

Since 1996, SWEAT has advocated for the complete decriminalization of adult commercial work. SWEAT reiterates here its position in favor of decriminalization at this conference and calls on other stakeholders to support this position.

In support of this position, SWEAT argues that the ongoing criminalisation of adult commercial sex work impacts severely on the lives of the women and men who work within the industry. In particular, such criminalisation:

- Restricts adult commercial sex workers' access to protection under the law;
- Enables the ongoing existence of exploitative labour practices within the industry; including activities of criminal syndicates;
- Increased sex workers' vulnerability to acts of violence;
- Denies sex workers' access to support and access to a range of services, including health, police, social welfare and the justice system, and;



Rachel giving input on how the criminalisation of sex work has affected her life, at the conference.

- Prevents the development of sex worker based activism for human and labour rights.

SWEAT locates its support for decriminalization of adult commercial sex work within the international sex workers rights movement, based on human rights perspective, which recognizes adult sex work as a legitimate form of work. In particular, SWEAT records here its endorsement of the World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights. We draw particular attention to our support for the following section of this charter, which calls for legal reform through the following acts.

- Decriminalise all aspects of adult prostitution resulting

from individual decision.

- Decriminalise prostitution and regulate third parties according to standard business codes. It must be noted that existing standard business codes allow abuse of prostitutes. Therefore, special attention must be included to prevent the abuse and stigmatization of prostitutes (self employed and others).
- Enforce existing criminal laws against fraud, coercion, violence child sexual abuse, child labour, rape and racism everywhere and across national boundaries, whether or not in the context of prostitution.
- Eradicate laws that can be

interpreted to deny freedom of association or freedom to travel to prostitutes within and between countries. Prostitutes have a right to a private life.

SWEAT places it on record at this conference that it recognises that many sex workers in South Africa are currently subject to exploitation by pimps, crime syndicates, the police, clients and other role players. We thus support efforts to curb all such forms of exploitation, including the trafficking in human beings, believing that decriminalization of adult commercial work will enable this to happen. However, we also place it on record here that we believe that women and men who choose to enter and work within the industry have the right to exercise freedom of choice in doing so. We thus do not support the position that all adult sex workers are victims as a result of their work per se. Rather it as a result of the criminalisation of their work that they are more likely to become victims of criminal activities and labour exploitation which infringe on their human and labour rights.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STATEMENT ON DECRIMINALISATION

The Department of health supports the decriminalisation of commercial sex work. The Department maintains that Commercial Sex Work is a human rights issue. Criminalisation has bridged sex worker's rights to equality and affronts their dignity. It also drives them into clandestine operations, which serves as a barrier to accessing health services.

Decriminalisation will eradicate the stigmatization and marginalising effects of criminalisation that allows for the exploitations and harassment of as well as discrimination against sex workers.

Decriminalisation will also afford them equal status and benefit in terms of accessing health services in a non-punitive environment and being treated with dignity and respect.

Department of Health is focusing on behavior and not persons. As a result programmes, which focuses on safe sex, will be encouraged. Intervention efforts will also focus on the broader aspects of their lives since their personal and sexual relationships have significant ramifications for the structuring of HIV/AIDS.

For the process of decriminalisation to be successful the Department of Health encourages partnership of all stakeholders at all times.

THE MEDIA IMAGE OF INDIAN WOMEN: SUPERWOMAN OR VICTIM?

By Kalpana Sharma

ILLUSTRATION INDIGO MAGAZINE



In 1998, a leading multinational cosmetics company in India sponsored International Women's Day, March 8. A foreign bank went a step further. It launched a special credit card for women. Indian feminists could not decide whether to rejoice or be angry. But the very fact that a day that marks women's long and ongoing struggle for justice and equality should be trivialised in this manner reveals how, above all, woman is now seen as a consumer, or a consumable, in the emerging global market of which India is a part.

The dominant images of women today are not just those projected by "Bollywood", India's equivalent of Hollywood which is based in Bombay (now Mumbai), where women are either vamps or long-suffering wives and mothers. In the explosion of advertising on television, women are portrayed variously as superwomen or victims, as glamorous dolls and wretched beggars. For the advertiser, women are shrewd and intelligent- if they can tell which brand of soap powder is better and more economical. They are decorative -if their bodies and looks can sell a car, a televi-

sion, or products for a man! And they are super-efficient - if they can handle home, office, husband, and children and still look manicured, immaculately made-up, fresh and beautiful!

But behind this confusing mix of images, who or what is the Indian woman? What are her concerns? Why are young brides harassed and killed for dowry? Why should poor and lower caste women live in perpetual fear of rape by the powerful men in their villages? You would rarely find an answer to any of these questions in the media.

Women become news either when they are rich and famous - wives of industrialists, politicians, beauty queens, film stars. Or if they are brutalised - raped, butchered - or if they do something really unusual. The first Indian woman to become an astronaut, for instance. But if they live their ordinary lives, overcoming tremendous odds, they go by unnoticed by the media and their voices are never heard.

It is, of course, the nature of the media to recognise only "events" as

news and not processes. But in a poor country, where many events are the consequence of processes no one recognises, this approach is particularly deficient in portraying reality. And the reality of women, in particular, is either skewed or ignored as a result.



ILLUSTRATION INDIGO MAGAZINE

In the 1980s, a period which this writer studied for media coverage of women's issues, many leading newspapers had columnists writing on women's issues or carried articles on the editorial pages on issues concerning women. Today, there are hardly any such columnists or articles.

This could be interpreted, of course, as the outcome of "mainstreaming". Women's issues are so integrated into general reporting that there is no need for a separate "women's" or "feminist" column. That sadly is not the entire truth.

The reasons for this are two-fold. One, writing on women was at its height when the contemporary women's movement was at its most vocal. The nature of its activities — demonstrations, campaigns, advocacy etc. - kept women's concern in the forefront of people's consciousness. In several instance, the issues raised by feminist groups became the subjects of political controversy. As a result, no self-respecting newspaper could afford to ignore these developments.

These campaigns also opened up spaces in the press for comment and discussion on the issues being debat-

ed in feminist circles. Thus, women columnists were able to edge in. A few women in senior positions were also successful in influencing editorial policy. For example, in at least one major newspaper, the women journalists succeeded in persuading the management to withdraw a particularly offensive advertisement for women's lingerie.

But in the 1980s, there were relatively few women in newspapers. Many of us had to fight hard to establish that we could write just as well as our male colleagues on politics, business or any other subjects. Today, few newspapers deliberately restrict women journalists to the desk or to features. As a result, there are outstanding women writing on politics, international affairs, business and sport. The latter two areas were virtually closed to women in the past.

But even as more women have physically captured space in the media - the electronic media, in particular, has attracted many women - the spaces for women's concerns, or any social concern, have shrunk. This is because commercial interests dictate the content of media - both print and electronic. The commitments of the past - born as a consequence of the participation of the press, in particular, in the Independence struggle - are now largely forgotten. Thus, at least one leading newspaper has laid down the norm that only "upbeat" stories for their upmarket readership in 500-word easily digestible nuggets will be accepted. Stories about poverty, misery, starvation death, torture, rape - the "events" that are part of millions of people's daily existence - are strictly a "no-no". But their pages are not available, as in the past, for any serious writing or discussion on the "real" situation of millions of rural and urban Indian women.

Why are there fewer women than men in India? Why are girl children still being killed in some parts of the country?

The result is that the mainstream media recognises women when it can adopt a celebrator mode - as on International Women's Day or when Indian women win international beauty contests.

Against this background, concerned women journalists are forced to be innovative in ways they had never thought of before. Against all odds, many of them - often quite new and inexperienced in the world of journalism - have successfully brought in social concerns in their reporting. They have learned how to use any occurrence - a drought, a flood, a building collapse, or a riot - to write about the other, and major, half of humanity that would otherwise remain hidden from the urban reader.

So in some ways, the difficulties have spawned greater commitment,



greater innovation and not a lessening of concern. Yet the shrinking spaces do pose a real danger. Over time, the urban, better-off media readership in India - which is the target not just for Indian companies but for global corporations vying for ever greater markets - will forget the existence of the real India, where the majority are poor, where women have no rights, where the glittering world of consumerism is not even a mirage.

WHAT IS NEWS? ARE ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES DIFFICULT TO SELL TO THE MEDIA?

By Dudley Moloy

What constitute environmental or ecological issues?

15 - 17 May the Heinrich Boll Foundation arranged a media conference. Several interesting papers were presented at the conference. We are going to share three of them with you in our newsletter. In the May edition we present Dudley Moloy's paper: Are environmental themes difficult to sell to the media? Next month we present Fiona Lloyd's paper: Media training for NGO's and in the July edition we present Charles Rukuni's paper: Whose Media for Whom? The Heinrich Boll will also publish the papers in their conference publication.

The environmental issue is largely about definitions and perspectives. Growing up in an urban setting like Alexandra township one is taught that the environment or "nature", as it is affectionately called, is something which is out there and far away from the drudgery of our everyday lives. I am sure that variations of this line of environmental education have been stuffed down most of our throat irrespective of our backgrounds. The conception of human beings as

existing outside nature is as absurd, and biologically incorrect as it is ecologically dangerous. It is from this kind of narrow-minded conception of environmental issues that the world's current environmental problems have their roots.

My favorite definition of ecology, which is somewhat interchangeable with the word environment, is one borrowed from the book *Ecology for beginners*. The book defines ecology as a tale of



everything and everyone. Because it reaffirms the connection and interdependence between people - the politics and economics - and the relationship between plants and animals, and other life forms the definition frees us from the often destructive tendency to pigeon-hole the complexity which is life on earth.

What then, is an appropriate conception of environmental or ecological issues?

The definition helps us question our actions and choices, both as individuals, multinational companies and as nations. These choices range from the products we consume to what industrial strategies we follow. Ecology is also about power and power relations between rich and poor, the light skinned and the dark skinned the affluent of the North and those of the South. It is all about self-interests.

Ecology is about everything and everything has been and is being covered in the media and there's a need to worry about whether envi-

ronmental themes could be sold to the media. The answer is that "real" environmental issues can't be sold to the media because they question the existing status quo.

The real issue is not only about the difficulty of selling environmental stories to the media but rather why it's difficult for the media, for corporate or mainstream media - as opposed to the often more responsive community or alternative media, to publish environmental stories.

It is more about the potentially revolutionary activities of millions of ordinary people who are often at receiving end of the decisions taken by powerful minority interests. I think instead of spending energy and resources worrying about seeing its name in the media, the environmental movement would do well if it concentrated on building a strong civil society environmental activism.

What's to be done?

- Building the alternative and community media
- Strengthen journalists associations or unions
- Strengthen civil society movements and encourage critical thoughts and voices

MEDIA PROCLAIM INNOCENCE - WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

By Carol Bower, Executive Director - RAPCAN

"We have noted with concern the manner in which the media has responded to the dropping of charges against the rugby player Kempson. Given that the Attorney General of the Western Cape felt that he could not proceed with a prosecution, and that the reasons for this are unknown, we are not commenting on Mr Kempson's alleged actions, or his guilt or otherwise. However, we note with concern that there had been no input in the media about, or questions asked about, or reporting on, how the young complainant in this case must be feeling. Whatever the reasons for the withdrawal of charges, this cannot fail to have had an effect on her. Something clearly did happen, or she would not have gone the route that she did. Having the charges dropped will have impacted negatively upon her in different ways, including her own belief in her interpretation of the events that led to her laying charges.

What the media has done has been to proclaim Mr Kempson's "innocence".

This is not helpful to the seventeen-year old complainant in this case, whose own self-esteem and view of the world will have been seriously knocked by being exposed to the media's version of events. It also obscures the point that the fact that charges could not be pressed does not mean that innocence is assumed. Indeed, the two (pressing charges and guilt) frequently have nothing whatsoever to do with each other. Charges are dropped (i.e. prosecution is declined) for a wide variety of reasons, including lack of evidence. This does not automatically mean innocence of the charges. The media would do well to remember this, and treat cases such as these with a greater sensitivity to the nuances.

ANNOUNCEMENT: CAN NEW LAWS CHANGE OLD THINGS? A struggle being waged globally

By Lene Øverland

"One is not born a woman: One becomes one." Simone de Beauvoir, 1949

"A Woman's Place" is a one-hour documentary that tells the intimate stories of women from three different countries. They are all fighting to balance the scales of power, so that a "man's world is also a woman's world." This documentary explores how women in different countries are using the law to transform their lives and change their environments.

A Woman's Place

This documentary takes us to rural South Africa, Middle America and to Bombay, India to women who put a face on the conflict between traditional changes. These three countries are three of the world's notable democracies - the USA is the oldest, India is the largest and South Africa one of the newest.

THE CHALLENGE OF PATRIARCHY

The three female lawyers we meet all work to raise consciousness and they critique the society in order to guaran-

In Bombay, India, two women overcome family opposition and challenge societal norms when they decide to end their abusive marriages.

In South Africa, a magistrate in rural Transkei uses the new Constitution to give women a right long denied them through custom - the right to inherit property.

In the American town of Duluth, a prosecutor uses the law to combat domestic violence, which kills or injures four million American women every year.

tee people their rights. They focus on the patriarchal state of societies, the organisation of societies, the basis of gender institutionalising the inferiority of women to men. According to hierarchy men create rules and control women. This control extends to all spheres including the economic, legal, political, sexual and personal. Throughout history, culture and custom have prescribed a woman's place, however in present times; laws have begun to challenge old belief systems. For more than a century activists have used law and legal reform as a tool in their struggle to win rights for women. Equality clauses in the constitution of 174 countries are a testimony to their successes. But does this fact insure equality? The documentary put the following question in focus: Will new laws change old ways?

The documentary explores the conflict of women who are using the legal system to ensure women's newly won rights. It reveals the courage and the ingenuity of women, who as well as changing their own lives are shaping new futures for their communities and their countries.

LAW AND CUSTOMS- AN AREA OF CONFLICT

There is a common misperception that the relationship between law and custom is one of a simple opposition. Custom is old and regressive - law is modern and progressive as an instrument for change. One can argue that

law has to be used as one part of a comprehensive strategy for social change. A woman's Place explores the complex interplay between custom and law to illustrate that changing the law does not, in itself guarantee social change. Rather the law has to be used as one part of a comprehensive strategy for social change. Law cannot be defined as a straightforward objective instrument for absolute change. According to this concept law and customs operate within the social, economic and political context of a society. Laws reflect the shifting aggregate values and balance of power in a society. Learning that law can be used as an instrument to emancipate women and redefine their place in society, but it can also be used to reinforce patriarchal values.

Laws establish rights and provide a potential framework for social change. But if laws only represent an ideal and are not relevant to social realities, they become meaningless. For instance women may have the right to vote, but they may vote for the candidate their husbands tell them to choose.

The lawyers in A Woman's Place demonstrate that law alone does not guarantee change. Social change is a process and law is only one among many elements that work to create this change. Along with law education, economic independence and social freedom to use the law is necessary empowerment.

THE POSITION OF THE MEDIA

A Woman's Place is a comprehensive project, which integrates community development and education with media. An intensive outreach and education program is underway in the United States, South Africa and in India. In addition the documentary and print resource materials will be distributed to universities and grassroots organisations around the world for use as a platform for wide-ranging discussions in women, law, custom and social change.

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For more information visit A Woman's Place online at:
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AN OPEN LETTER TO KELLOGG'S ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

Kellogg's

Dear Sir / Madam

As a woman, I find your Kellogg's Special K print campaign offensive and patronising, in particular the advertisements, which state "It gets pretty crowded on Sandy Bay, but then, I don't take up much room" and "My boyfriend likes me just as I am. These days so do I".

The messages re-enforces the ridiculous ego-bruising media stereotypes of ultra-slimness that women are expected to conform to or are at least compared to and judged against on a daily basis.

I was under the impression that Special K's emphasis and selling point was more geared towards the health factor than the skinny factor with its essential vitamins and minerals and low fat.

Please don't mistake me, I like your cereal. I discovered it in London in 1996 and was very pleased when it finally reached the South African market, but shouldn't you be targeting your female consumer's intelligence or appealing to their health consciousness instead of buying into societal pressure?

Have you actually even looked at your demographics? Although I haven't spent thousands on market research as you undoubtedly have, I can guess that Special K is targeted at LSM 7-8, high income consumers who work hard, play hard, are health conscious, go to gym and have a busy social life with all the toys. Moms probably buy into it too, but as you seem to be focusing on the young single females, how about an image of a busy, successful corporate exec who knows the importance of eating the right diet in her high stress job? Or, if you're really stuck on this body thing, a woman involved in some physical activity whether it's spinning at the gym or rock climbing an insane face - women who put more stock in being fit and healthy than slim and trim?

Your marketing ploy is pathetic and condescending. It also reminds me of an altercation I had with a friend lately, who hasn't eaten in three days (she's already reed thin) because her dickhead boyfriend told her she had "let herself go".

Dear Kellogg's Media Planner, you are that dickhead boyfriend.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND NEWS CLIPPING

WOMEN SOON TO BE BACK IN THE RING

Cape Argus 24 May 2000

A ban on women's boxing in South Africa will be overturned by legislation to be introduced later this year, says Sports minister Ngconde Balfour.

The ban, effected by 1964 law, was contrary to the post-apartheid constitution which rules against discrimination in all spheres of life, Mr Balfour said in Parliament May 23rd. He reiterated that his ministry was committed to combating lingering racism in South African sport. Once sport had been on the "forefront of transformation and integration in this society, (but) we have fallen behind in this regard", the minister said

WOMEN IN THE NEW CHILEAN GOVERNMENT

(LOLA press)

After the electoral campaign Ricardo Lagos defeated the candidate of the right wing forces and was elected president of Chile in January 2000. He is the second socialist president in office in Chile. The first one was Salvador Allende, who was deposed a military coup in 1973. Ricardo Lagos has committed itself to a policy of "equal opportunities" for Chilean women.

The new cabinet includes 5 women in key positions: as Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Education, Health, and Planning and for the national Office. Other women have been nominated as Deputy Ministers and officials in other public services.

PROTECT CHILDREN FROM BEING PROSTITUTED

The wealthy influential Ocean View businessman and ANC member, **Juio vd Horst** appeared on May 17th in court because of a charge of 12 charges under Section 14 of the Sexual Offence Act for having sex with children under the age of 16 years. Ebrahim Rasool and Lynne Brown from Molo Songolo lead an ANC delegation to the Wynberg Magistrates Court to allay public perceptions in Ocean View and elsewhere about the ANC's silence on child sexual abuse. The ANC delegation joined a public demonstration outside the Wynberg Magistrates Court in support of the child victims and the Community of Ocean View.

KENYAN PARLIAMENT VOTES FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

(United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2000)

Since 1998, UNIFEM has been supporting efforts by women's NGOs to engender the Kenyan constitution and lobby for an Affirmative Action clause to be enacted into constitutional provision. A motion to table the bill in Parliament was unanimously passed by the Kenyan Parliament on 19 April 2000. Support for this came from both the government and the opposition parties.

For more information, please contact:

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