

Arise

A Women's Development Magazine Published by ACFODE



EXCLUSION, MISREPRESENTATION & DISCRIMINATION – INSIGHTS ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

A News Story
Should Be
Like A Mini
Skirt On
A Pretty
Woman.
Long Enough
To Cover
The Subject
But Short
Enough To
Be Interesting

The Fresh Quotes

Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality

Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda

Core Purpose:

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

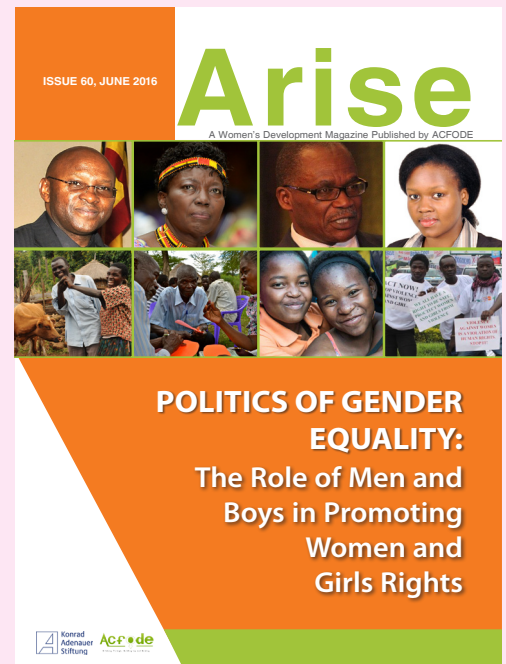
Thank you for Issue 60 of the Arise magazine. I was particularly impressed by the profiles of male gender activists in the article 'Experiences of Male Gender Equality Advocates'. It is good to know that there are men out there who realize the challenges that women face and devote time to seeking solutions to those challenges. Keep up the good work.

**Edward Sentubwe, ICT Student,
Makerere University**

Dear Editor,

Bob Kisiki's opinion 'Sorry women, your rights are unpleasant to us' was very funny in a way, but it exposes what some men might be thinking about women and the talk on gender equality and equity. It makes you think about these things and exposes the challenges that gender advocates still face, as well as the work that still needs to be done, particularly sensitization of people, both women and men.

**Scovia Khayiyi,
Marie Stopes International Uganda**



Editor In Chief

Sandra Nassali, arise@acfode.org

ACFODE Board of Directors

1. Florence Tayebwa Muhwezi - Chairperson
2. Perry Aritua - Treasurer
3. Josephine Kasaija - Member
4. Richard Makumbi - Member
5. Gertrude Ssekabira - Member
6. Sidonia Angom - Member
7. Hilda Akabwai - Member
8. Regina Bafaki - Secretary
9. Yossa Daisy - Staff Representative

Contributing to this issue

1. Tumusiime K. Deo
2. Brian Mutebi
3. Marlon Agaba
4. Sherinah Namata
5. Edward Ssentumbwe
6. Wobusobozi B. Ivan
7. Belinda Kyomuhendo
8. Onyait Odeke
9. Gillian Nantume
10. Carol Nambowa
11. LeSandra Kabegenyi

Editorial Team

1. Regina Bafaki
2. Hellen Twongyeirwe
3. Julius Ocwinyo

Contents



10



21



25



30



48



56

- 06 WOMEN IN THE MEDIA -**
A BATTLE TO WIN THE CURRENT
SITUATION OF WOMEN IN UGANDAN
- 09 MEDIA: GENERAL OVERVIEW**
- 10 REVERSING THE SITUATION:**
VIEWS FROM TOP MEDIA
MANAGERS
- 21 USING THE MEDIA TO
ADVANCE THE RIGHTS OF
GIRLS AND WOMEN:**
THE STORY OF A YOUNG MALE
JOURNALIST
- 23 ENHANCING GENDER
CONSCIENCE IN
UGANDAN MEDIA -23**
- 25 GENDER STEREOTYPES**
IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCELERATION
TO TOP MEDIA ECHELONS
- 28 CHALLENGING
DISCRIMINATION AND
STEREOTYPE: THE ROLE OF
NEW MEDIA IN MOBILISING
ATTENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO
WOMEN'S RIGHTS**
- 30 QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH
ROSEBELL KAGUMIRE ON
SOCIAL MEDIA, WOMEN AND
GIRLS' RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY**
- 32 THE SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION
OF WOMEN IN FASHION
MEDIA: A CONTEMPORARY
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**
- 36 #FEMVERTISING:**
HOW TO CREATE ADS THAT DON'T
STEREO-TYPE WOMEN
- 42 BOOK REVIEWS**
- 45 PHOTOSHOPPING:**
A DISTORTED PERCEPTION
OF WOMEN'S BEAUTY IN PRINT AND
ELECTRONIC MEDIA
- 48 MEDIA GOVERNORS AND
TRAINERS DISCUSS** HOW
UGANDAN MEDIA CAN UPHOLD THE
RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS
- 56 WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF
WOMEN IN THE MEDIA IN
UGANDA TODAY?**



FROM THE EDITOR

How are women portrayed in the media? What is the impact of women's efforts to shape media agendas as media practitioners, teachers and managers? And what formal and non-formal roles do women play in shaping these agendas? These are some of the concerns with which this issue of Arise magazine grapples. It gives a bird's eye view of the media; it also provides detailed discussions of what goes on in the print, electronic and social media.

One feature of this issue of Arise is the overview of women's representation in media organisations globally. In addition, the voices presented in the magazine are drawn from a wide range of realms. We hear from women's rights activists, social activists, political leaders, religious leaders, mass communications academics, media practitioners, media managers, and lawyers, among others – both male and female. There is general agreement that progress has been made in the portrayal of women in the media, in women's role in the media and women's representation in the upper echelons of media organisations. There is, however, agreement, too, that more can still be done to portray women positively and to increase coverage of their issues in the media; and that women's position needs to be strengthened further at the decision-making levels of media organisations. Particular names are mentioned to give the accounts and arguments a human touch; and specific media outlets are identified either for praise or condemnation.

Much as credit is given to social media for providing a space to express uncensored views, the lack of an information filter is decried. There is concern that some of the writing on social media is either deliberately skewed to achieve a certain effect, or that there are frequently inadvertent distortions of the truth.

Three important books related to gender are also reviewed: Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*, Carilli and Campbell's *Challenging Images of Women and the Media: Reinventing Women's Lives*, and Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*. The books provide important insights into the issues of gender. What projections does Arise make, then? There is still a lot to be done, by people on both sides of the gender divide, but there is hope. However, to ensure that the envisaged progress towards the realisation of unbiased media – which is crucial to the functioning of a healthy society – is achieved, would require concerted effort by everyone. That can – and should – be a goal that we should all aim to attain.

Enjoy the Magazine!

WOMEN IN THE MEDIA - A BATTLE TO WIN

TUMUSIIME K. DEO

There are obviously some males within the media world who truly appreciate women's efforts; these, too, ought to be deliberately co-opted into the struggle to achieve gender balance in the media.

Decades ago, the typical Ugandan woman was placed in the kitchen setting. She was a mother working extremely hard to sustain the life of both her children and her husband. She woke up early in the morning, prepared breakfast and readied the children for school; she picked up her hoe and went off to the garden; she returned in time to prepare lunch and wash clothes; and she planned for dinner. And this was the routine day after day. The male-dominated media paid scant attention to this Ugandan woman. Even the unmarried ones scarcely caught the attention of the media, for most stories were about men and men's achievements and escapades in society.

Fast forward to today. Not much seems to have changed in terms of male domination of the media. On the few occasions when women appear, it is usually for the wrong reasons, with the exception of a few in the elite class. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project of 2010, only 24% of people heard and read about in the media were women. This percentage is corroborated by a report published by the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA), which puts women's coverage in the media at below 25%. This reflection is a disservice to the several hundreds of women working so hard every day to guarantee a future for the entire nation in many different ways.

According to a study by UMWA, the bulk of coverage on women is found in the daily

tabloid, the Red Pepper (45%), the Daily Monitor (30%) and the New Vision (17%). This trend is not much different from that in the broadcast media, and all this despite the fact that women constitute more than 50% of the nation's population.

But is this a coincidence or it is by design? A few hypotheses may explain the situation of women in Ugandan media. First, the situation goes back to the historical bias against women in society overall, coupled with the preponderance of male-dominated/male-owned media houses; and secondly, it stems from the perception of women as sexual objects.

To extrapolate this issue, it would be of interest to ask ourselves what the sources of news are! Some of the sources of news could be schools or the church or top business empires, cultural institutions or key government ministries or the military, soccer, the armed forces, name it. Whichever way you look at it, the placement of women as news sources is still something far from what the media offers in its current set-up and this may not change except with deliberate effort to ensure equity. Much of society is still male-dominated. A case in point is a perpetually male Pope at the helm of the Catholic Church. From the perspective of bizarre news sources, it is mostly men who drive public transport vehicles involved in road carnage; it is men who are involved in human sacrifice and human trafficking; it is men breaking traf-



fic rules; it is men perpetrating terrorism acts – and these are the things that make news.

In such a situation, therefore, women must work extremely hard to turn the tides through performance that exceeds the norm; for example, when a certain Dorcus Inzikuru wins gold or a First Lady is appointed a minister in her husband's government or a lady from the opposition is offered a ministerial post or in cases such as those of Allen Kagina (UNRA CEO) and Jeniffer Musisi (KCCA ED), all of whom have been handpicked to serve in their respective positions. On the other hand, an ordinary Ugandan woman working very hard still has little chance to be the focus of any media for as long as society remains biased in favour of men.

Sadly, consistent with the media principle of dog bites man/man bites dog, women continue to be the focus for the media for the wrong reasons. For example, when a former vice president made a bid for the leadership of the African Union, focus quickly

shifted away from whatever positive things she may have achieved as the country's number two to her private relationships, with other people suggesting that a male candidate would have stood a better chance. And, who can forget Makerere University's Stella Nyanzi or the media fabled Bad Black or the land scandal involving MP Muhanga? This is not to say that there is nothing good about these individuals. However, the trend of news focuses on what the audience wants to hear and not what the audience deserves to hear. The stories that appear in the Red Pepper and other tabloids daily showcasing nude women involved in one scandal or the other point to this trend. These stories will always receive media attention because such sexual imagery appeals to especially male readers who purchase the media products with a particular interest in mind. Even in the bizarre incident where an MP's daughter, Doreen, was crushed by a truck on Entebbe Road, the poor young lady made headlines not for anything else but the fact that she was a 'pretty lady' – and that is what the media capitalised on.

So where are we headed with all this? One discreet way around this scenario of limited, unfair and unbalanced coverage of women in the media would be to have a bigger number of 'women foot soldiers' who clearly understand and appreciate the world of women and who are, therefore, able to take full advantage of women's extraordinary strong points to compete favourably against male newsmakers. These foot soldiers could be female journalists or female media owners or females in top media management. There are obviously some males within the media world who truly appreciate women's efforts; these, too, ought to be deliberately co-opted into the struggle to achieve gender balance in the media.

At the end of the day, the battle of the sexes remains a reality that transcends the present-day generations; but it is one that can be neutralized only if we consciously keep trying.

The writer is an independent writer and international communications consultant

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF WOMEN IN UGANDAN MEDIA: GENERAL OVERVIEW

BRIAN MUTEBI

Gender portrayal in the media is heavily skewed in favour of men. Gender awareness and sensitivity is yet to be built into news reporting requirements. (EAJA, 2008)

Out of the five major media houses (Monitor Publications Limited, NTV Uganda, Vision Group, NBS TV, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation) only one (NTV Uganda) is headed by a woman. (ACFODE, September, 2016)

Women in the print media: Overall, in print media news women are (20%), news writers (13%), photographers (15%), news anchors (24%), appearing in photographs (28%), and being quoted (20%).

Women are less likely to write about, appear in, or have their voices heard in 'hard' news stories such as politics, defence, spirituality and the economy. They are, however, more evident in 'soft' news areas such as education, health and agriculture, but more so in the arts, entertainment and relationships. (Uganda **Media Women's Association: Gender Dimensions in Uganda's Print Media: A Case for Engendering Practitioners 2014**)

The Nigerian film industry, largely referred to as Nollywood, mostly depicts women as gold-diggers, depending on witchcraft, being unrealistic, vulnerable and dependent on male figures for strength and survival, rather than on their own sense of empowerment. Media stereotyping of women as objects and helpless beings creates very low expecta-

tations for society's girls. (EASSI Policy Issue Paper No.9, 2010).

The global picture of women in the media

Eastern Africa: 20% of professional journalists are female, with 3% being on decision making organs. (EAJA, 2010).

Southern Africa: 41% per cent of women work in media houses, 28% sit on boards of directors, and women constitute 23% of top managers in media houses. (Glass Ceilings, 2010).

USA: Women are on camera only 32% of the time in evening broadcast news, and write 37% of print news stories. At the New York Times, more than 67% of bylines are male. (The Status of Women in U.S. Media 2014).

The percentage of women breaking through the glass ceiling to reach senior leadership positions was rising but at a slow pace in comparison with the overall number of women who joined media organisations. The reasons cited included lack of gender-responsive policies, skills and high professional standards, effective networking by women, and cultural factors and prejudice. (UN Department for Public Information: Beijing at 15; Online discussion on women and the media, February 2010).

Women represented only 33.3% of the full-time journalism workforce. 73% of the top management jobs are occupied by men compared to 27% by women. However, 41% of the newsgathering, editing and writing jobs are done by

women.

Americas: There is a persistent pattern of women's underrepresentation across the region. Only in Puerto Rico do women journalists slightly outnumber men. In the United States women are less than a fourth of top managers and only a third of those in governance functions.

Middle East and North Africa: Across the region, men earn three to five times as much as women in governance and top management positions.

Asia and Oceania: Men in the media outnumber women with a ratio of 4:1 across the Asia and Oceania region.

Eastern Europe: Women are in a particularly strong position in Russia, nearing parity in top management and holding around a third of governance positions.

Nordic Europe: About half of the companies surveyed have adopted gender equality and sexual harassment policies.

Western Europe: Women are nearing numerical parity with men. However, women's low representation is particularly acute in top management and governance levels, where women number only around a fourth. (IWMF: Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media)

25% of women and 75% of men provide popular opinion;

Eight per cent of women and 92% men are eyewitnesses;

Women are more likely to be heard in the news as persons narrating their personal experience (56%) as opposed to 44% for men.

24% of content in which a central focus was on women, 76% for men.

17% of stories highlighted issues of gender equality or inequality,

30% of stories reported by women are more likely to raise issues of gender equality or inequality as opposed to 27% of stories reported by men.

24% of women and 76% of men are spokespersons;

and 27% of women and 73% of men give opinions based on specialist knowledge or expertise.

Women formed 28% of the news subjects in the print media compared to 69% for males.

On television, women formed 25%, males 75%.

Women featured 13% as news subjects on radio while it was 87% for males. (Global Media Monitoring Project; Uganda National Report 2015)

Women's overall presence in the news is only 28% of news subjects.

politicians (men 74%, women 26%);

and public servants (men 75%, women 25%)

academic experts (men 87%, women 13%);

Occupations traditionally associated with power and leadership, such as the police and the military, are dominated by men (men 89%, women 11%);

STATISTICS FROM THE GLOBAL MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT: UGANDA NATIONAL REPORT 2015

On female and male news subjects:

56%

8%

25%

24%

27%

News medium:

28%

25%

13%

Centrality in the news:

24%

Gender equality:

17%

Who delivers the news:

52%

52% are female

48%

While 48% are male

On newsmakers:

26%

75%

13%

11%

71%

The ideal situation

For the media to accurately mirror our societies and to produce coverage that is complete and diverse, it is critical that the news reflect the world as seen through the eyes of women as well as men. (UNESCO, 2009)

A comprehensive East African regional gender-sensitive policy framework should be formulated which mainstreams gender into its structures, programmes and processes. (EASSI Policy Issue Paper No.9, 2010)

Participation of women in and access to expression and decision-making in and through all forms of the media and new technologies of communication should be increased. A balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in



There should be a shift from allocating gender-related topics to women in newsrooms. Women issues should not be confused with gender.

the media should be promoted. (Beijing Platform for Action)

There should be a shift from allocating gender-related topics to women in newsrooms. Women issues should not be confused with gender. Journalism

teachers need to give girls tough assignments that demand deeper research so that they can get out of their comfort zones. And because journalism can be a challenging field of work and male-dominated, female journalists should start out with self-confidence, think fast and be a little aggressive. (Dr Margaret Jjuuko, Ugandan Professor at the University of Rwanda, specialising in Journalism, Media and Communication)

The writer is a girls rights campaign and works with Education & Development Opportunity Uganda.

REVERSING THE SITUATION: VIEWS FROM TOP MEDIA MANAGERS

MEDIA HOUSES SHOULD BE DELIBERATE ABOUT WOMEN INCLUSION

– CAROL BEYANGA,
MANAGING EDITOR
(DIGITAL), DAILY
MONITOR



Though women are not excluded, it is not a very friendly environment. There are perhaps fewer women in sports and photography. This is for various reasons for example at university; women are made to think they write on features, women, education and health issues. It is true that women like those issues because, for instance concerning health, naturally women think about the people around them but that doesn't mean we are not interested in other areas. Yet you find that right from university, women are made to think certain areas such as politics and what is considered 'harder' areas are for men.

At Daily Monitor, we have a good number of women who report and edit different sections such as business, news and features. If a woman came here and wanted to write the opportunities are there, and if she is good, it is even better.

Sometimes the media doesn't favour women

There are promotions for women in the media but you find that the higher the promotion the fewer the women because people do not take into account the

dynamics of women like having children and maternity leave, which is all proper and fine. That is how it should be, yet she may be denied an opportunity because of that sort of thing. Companies do not tend to think that now that Carol has such responsibilities, how do we help her and make her grow in her career because at the end of the day what the company needs is my knowledge and skills? But they think she is married, she has children, she won't want to stay at work longer, which tends to make women excluded.

Yet if a woman was younger with no responsibilities of family and children it might be easier for them to get such opportunities. What should be done is to ensure she has her job, she is safe and protected because she can manage to combine family and work responsibilities.

Concerning women who are reported about, it depends on what is being reported, for you will find that if it is politics, it is the men who get most of the coverage – so, yes, there is some discrimination presumably because men make more ‘noise’ and the media would always want to pick someone who is making news. Today we cover Gen. Kayihura and Dr. Besigye, and you see, all the players there are men. We cover it because it is news. But I also know there are other things women do but are not reported about.

It’s got to be deliberate

Yes, there are women who are reported about in the news but it tends to be the same crop of women. My thinking is that as media houses, we should not only be looking out for people who make ‘noise’ but be deliberate about women inclusion. For example, one time we were on a board and were setting up a panel. I realised there was no woman. I said, ‘We should have a woman on the panel’. On another panel at a different occasion, it was the same thing, no woman. Then I said, ‘We should have a woman’. Then someone said, ‘Eeh Carol, you are all the time talking about women’. I said, ‘Yes, it has got to be deliberate, otherwise you will not think about it.’ Such women should have the qualification though.

The media should be going out to find the women doing something good. You can’t say they won’t say anything, no. It has got to be deliberate. It is good



Concerning women who are reported about, it depends on what is being reported, for you will find that if it is politics, it is the men who get most of the coverage – so, yes, there is some discrimination presumably because men make more ‘noise’ and the media would always want to pick someone who is making news. Today we cover Gen. Kayihura and Dr. Besigye, and you see, all the players there are men. We cover it because it is news. But I also know there are other things women do but are not reported about.

to report about Besigye, but aren’t there women in the FDC who as well have got something to say? They may not be out on the streets or criticising the police but they are there. Pick them and ask them what they think about the issue. It has got to be deliberate. But I have also noted that men are aggressive in getting in the media. He will follow up his (opinion) piece until it is published, unlike some women who may not have written a good piece but do not make follow up adequate.

Some women benefit from the media

There are women who have succeeded in the media for various reasons. Some have understood the media can work for them. She realises if that I’m in the media and can put across my point, get people to hear my point of view, it works for me; it gives me visibility in what I do, whether business or politics. Others find themselves in the media. It may not have been on plan but they either said something and the media, whether social or mainstream, picked it up.

Internally at Daily Monitor, I wouldn’t say it is the policy but the Managing Director has, for instance, said if we do interviews, let the best candidate win, but if we find two good candidates and either of them can get the job, we pick a woman. Yes, there are good attributes about men but there are also nice attributes about women we would want. We also ensure we put women in different informal positions internally here such as Ekimeeza (internal platform for employees to speak out and address issues affecting them).



**WOMEN SHOULD
EARN THEIR PLACE
IN THE MEDIA –**
ABBY MUKIIBI,
PROGRAMMES
MANAGER, CBS
RADIO

CBS is a company with the embodiment of culture. Part of our responsibility is to promote culture. We represent different interests of the kingdom and so we do not want to be misinterpreted or accused of being biased against women or men or a particular religion. We take into account aspects of gender balance. In fact, both our news and internal audit departments are led by ladies in addition to some of our programme managers being ladies, so we have a fair representation. I can say the ratio of women to men is 2:3.

We promote our culture but also women and gender. We give a platform to both so our audience can decide on the issues being debated. We do not allow instances where one demonises the other. Instead we create a platform for people not only to talk about these issues and see their relevance in each so we can make necessary adjustments or devise means of working together. Sometimes what is referred to as gender-insensitive language is when we want to provoke a debate. I can use a sarcastic statement just to provoke a debate. Such is not intended to demonise women but provoke debate so the issues at hand are understood.

The concept of gender equality has its own problems but there are issues we adhere to, for example, issues concerning women empowerment, for example. As a radio station, we really promote such because we believe, in many instances, women are the voice that is ignored, or not heard because of culture and other factors. So we give women a platform. That is why some

people say 89.2 FM is more of a young female-leaning station because of its programmes. We have women's health, rights and development programmes. We know women still go through a lot. I know of 'high-flying' corporate ladies who suffer beatings in their marital homes; ladies are treated like slaves. We expose things like that. We may hide the identity of persons involved but we know the problem is exposed.

We promote co-existence of modernity and culture. At CBS you cannot demonise ladies and get away with it. Our coverage of women is balanced. Generally the media should be credited for trying to promote a more positive image of women today because actually it is women, some women, who discredit themselves. Some still regard themselves as inferior. However, one or two media houses that portray women in a bad light should not be used against us all. Many media houses try to put women on a deserved platform. Apart from the tabloids which people feel ride on the women's card by discrediting them.

Having said that, I also feel some women could do better. They should earn their place in the media. We do not have to cover Justice Julia Sebutinde because she is woman. We give her coverage because she has excelled. I tell women if they have got to do something, they must go for it, do it. I do not believe in the saying "Mukazi kyakula sajjja" (masculine woman). There is nothing like that. It is about ability and whether you are able to perform well. We are not going to employ a woman just because she is a woman. If you say women should be treated fairly it throws away the equal opportunity aspect. Let good be good. Let something deemed good be covered. Let's not cover events because it is a woman, involved.



Every Time
We Liberate
A Woman
We Liberate
A Man.

The Fresh Quotes





JOURNALISM IS AN AWESOME PROFESSION, BUT THERE IS LACK OF PASSION AND ZEAL AMONG FEMALE JOURNALISTS –

CAROL NAKAZIBWE, SOCIETY MAGAZINE EDITOR AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, THE OBSERVER

The situation of women in the media today is worse than when I practised as a reporter not because the media is unkind to women but because several female journalists have decided they want the easy way out. Many female journalism students prefer doing public relations (PR) because it does not require them to come face-to-face with people. This is no surprise because even while in journalism school, PR was always easier than print. As a Public Relations Officer (PRO) one asks for a job, is hired and begins to earn a salary. In print journalism, whether female or male, one must prove oneself. When one comes out of journalism school and wants to write, we do not necessarily hire them based on their class of the degree. In journalism, from time memorial, one has to write as a freelancer and then it is their stories that open doors. Very few women today have the patience to go

through these stages.

Female journalists not daring enough

At present, The Observer has a total of 24 writers in the newsroom, both permanent and freelancers, but only four are women. Inclusive of the editors, The Observer has only five female journalists. It is not our policy to exclude women, but they are just not interested. Those that are given a chance are mediocre yet we prioritise hiring on merit rather than gender balance. It would be great to have gender balance but it just turns out that the women who make the cut are less. When hiring someone, we consider someone who is a good writer, creative, with commendable work ethics and can go out and get the story without having to sleep with sources or taking a bribe to get a story. We

follow the same criteria for female and male. Unfortunately, increasingly we do not see this among female journalists.

Involvement of women in the media has greatly declined over the years but this is not because they are being excluded. Today you will get a good journalist, and a few months down the road, she does not go out to collect stories but instead does weird things that give women a bad name. If there is exclusion of women from the media, I have not noticed it. From when I was a practising reporter and now as an editor, we do not have instances where we put gender before performance. As long as somebody feels they can do the story, they go ahead and do it. For example The Observer reporters that cover police and parliament are women. In the past, I have also covered riots and Ebola. We never refer to any story as too tough or too serious for a woman. At The Observer, women have written for nearly every section of the newspaper, including sports.

Teaching institutions should motivate journalism students

It is quite difficult having internal structures that favour women and at the same time maintain quality and standard journalism. It does not matter whether the person who brings quality is female or male. We have had discussions before on how to make the newsroom more gender-balanced but, honestly, it is not practical. You cannot force somebody to have passion for something. I have tried it, I have been very frustrated. Therefore you cannot have such policies in place when the people the policies target are not interested.

The only way to revive interest among females to practise journalism is to start at the journalism schools, otherwise newsrooms cannot do much. The newsroom works with what comes

to them. When I was at Makerere University doing journalism and mass communication, our department invited journalists from the BBC to talk to us. One of them was Elizabeth Ohene. At that time she was a Ghanaian journalist working with the BBC. She later became a government minister. I recall how she talked with passion about being a female journalist and how she usually wore shorts underneath her skirt so that nothing would stop her in case a story broke and she had to climb a tree to cover it. She truly inspired and made me realise that this is what I wanted to do. I do not know what I would have chosen if the university had not organised that talk. For me that was a life-changer but today the education system has changed and most people get a degree without much regard to what they pursue thereafter. Someone can do a mass communications degree and go to sell shoes in Kikuubo. What we need is teaching institutions to go back and motivate and inspire women to join the media actively, not to just be degree-holders.

Female and male journalists face the same challenges. The only difference is that women have the extra role of



We never refer to any story as too tough or too serious for a woman. At The Observer women have written for nearly every part of the newspaper, including sports.

being mothers yet journalists work long, unpredictable hours so I have always dreamt of a workplace not just in the media but a workplace that allows daycare centres. Our profession is quite strange. Sometimes you are away by 6 a.m. and you are still at work by 8 p.m. If that could be taken care of, it would reduce the number of women opting for other fields of work. I think the aspect of motherhood also greatly influences women's career choices. Most women want a job that allows them to leave at 5p.m.

Being a woman shouldn't hold anyone back

I never look at myself as a woman but as a journalist. One of my proudest moments in my journalism career was at the Daily Monitor. I was promoted from a retained reporter to full-time staff when I was in advanced pregnancy. For me that brought tears to my eyes. I was about eight months pregnant when my confirmation letter came. For an employer to confirm you as permanent staff when they know you are going to go away for some months of maternity leave was a boost. I thought I would not carry on with my work because of my pregnancy and that my bosses would think I would slack off. But I carried on working like everybody else and at no point did I say I could not work because I was pregnant. I never let being a woman hold me back. But what I see today is 'Oh my God, I am a woman let a man go'. That should not happen. It is not a handicap being a woman. I advise female journalists to find the passion in their work. It is the only way they are going to wait out the different phases that will lead to their promotion.



AGAINST SOCIETAL PERCEPTION THAT JOURNALISM IS FOR MEN; WOMEN ARE WELL REPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA – BAHATI REMMY, JOURNALIST AND POLITICAL TALK SHOW PRODUCER AT NBS TV

I am a journalist and a programme producer at NBS TV. I am a political reporter and producer of two political talk shows, The Frontline and Barometer. There are a number of opportunities for women in the media but I find it strange when female journalists do not want to embrace these opportunities. First, being a woman is an advantage. Sources, for example, like to talk to women. They are often cooperative. But there are some female journalists who don't embrace this. This is one of the major setbacks for female journalists. Others have intimate relationships with sources, which hinders their professional work as journalists.

At NBS, the majority of reporters and some editors are female. Women are included in the media. Women are well represented in the media because every time I go to a press conference, I find a significant number of female reporters. I

think we are doing well. There are still women who look at media as a profession for men though. There are those who anchor news and do not want to go to the field to get the stories and end up wallowing in self-pity about being women.

Challenges of female journalists

At NBS, there are no favours for men or women. We are all treated equally. Thriving entirely depends on your performance. Before you are sent to cover a big story, you are evaluated on what you can deliver and how you approach the story. One's ability is what sets them apart from the rest. Someone may say if media houses favoured women it would attract women to join the industry. But I do not believe in that. I believe in working hard to get to the top. Maybe to encourage women to join the media industry, women who are already in the media should be exemplary. They should portray the good the media industry is, showing that anyone can make it. Media houses, particularly TV stations, should have programmes that connect women better, influence women to join the media industry.

The challenges that come with being a female journalist are almost similar to those faced by male journalists. They are basically occupational hazards. I really got upset in March 2016 when I was arrested while on duty, but it was an occupational hazard. You go into the field knowing anything might happen to you. Another challenge is you might go to interview someone who has had a crush on you. You have to be prepared and ensure you stick to business. The presence of cameras also saves you from other challenges you would have encountered while doing the interview.

There are also male bosses with a bad attitude towards women. They think women cannot deliver at work. Some



At NBS, the majority of reporters and some editors are female. Women are included in the media. Women are well represented in the media because every time I go to a press conference, I find a significant number of female reporters. I think we are doing well. There are still women who look at media as a profession for men though.

companies have challenges employing women who get pregnant very often and thus spend more time on maternity leave than at work.

Focus and hard work are winning strategies

I believe that when a woman is focused and works hard, there is no room for failure. One has to know what they want and be very aggressive in getting it. Women ought to know things are not easy. For example, if you must get an exclusive interview from a government minister, you have got to be aggressive because his or her personal assistant can toss you around yet when you go straight to the minister, you are never turned away. If one thinks things will be very easy or someone will help them, the media is not a place for them. They should forget it.



**WE LOOK AT SKILL
AND TALENT
REGARDLESS
OF GENDER –
STEPHEN DUNSTAN
BUSUULWA, ACTING
GENERAL MANAGER,
TOP RADIO, FM J AND
TOP TV**



As Acting General Manager, I oversee the general operations of the stations, including programming, so I can say that, to some extent, women are excluded from the media. In some sections of society there is still the belief that women cannot do certain things, which also happens in the media where if someone is looking for a good reporter or presenter of a talk show, it is often the men that are sought after. In Kampala, for example, you may not find many women hosting political talk shows. But why? People think women cannot do it. Yet there are ladies who are very informed and can ably challenge or interview personalities in politics.

The problem is both from society and inside the media houses. On the part of society, there is a notion that when one tunes on a radio station and hears a woman's voice, they think it is an entertainment, lifestyle or children's show, so one will not listen to them but will switch to another station to listen to male political show hosts. They think politics must be handled by men.

Concerning the media, when a lady seeks to host a political talk show, they are not given a chance. It is true, therefore, that some media houses buy into the societal biases against women.

That is, however, different with me. For example, a lady came to me and said she could do a political talk show and I asked her to prove herself. She did it well and today she hosts a political talk show on Top TV. We do not have a policy per se. Our policy doesn't come out explicitly on gender mainstreaming but it was my personal initiative. It is upon the management team that makes the deployment decisions.

Yet the problem is not entirely with the media but women too. Some still have an inferiority complex. They fear to give interviews. You will rarely find a female MP calling Top TV for an interview. They fear to comment on controversial issues. Yet men do it. They run after us wanting to give interviews and comments about hot issues, say, debated on the floor of parliament. We have, for example, more than 100 female MPs but when you watch the news, you might find the same personalities giving comments every time. Where are the rest?

I should, however, note that the media should encourage women and seek interviews from the less known personalities. If one is able to give a comment of three words that is OK. She is gaining self-confidence and esteem. She can do better next time. Other than that the issue of inclusion and representation remains a challenge to

both the women and the media.

Ours is a Christian-based media house, and we know in biblical terms the man is the head of a woman but professionally there should be equality. We differentiate biblical from professional settings. For example, we have both men and women board members and top managers. Many of our programmes are run by women. So we look at skill and talent regardless of gender. Women should not fear taking on challenges. Winners do not fear to start. They start. Every great person you see, such as Jennifer Musisi (KCCA Executive Director) or Maggie Kigozi (businesswoman and former Uganda Investment Authority Executive Director) or other persons you have ever heard of, had a starting point. If you make mistakes along the way, it is okay. We learn from our mistakes. Woman, begin again or try something else, but never fear to do something. No one wins without doing something.



Ours is a Christian-based media house, and we know in biblical terms the man is the head of a woman but professionally there should be equality. We differentiate biblical from professional settings. For example, we have both men and women board members and top managers.

MEDIA REQUIRES CLARITY OF PURPOSE AND PASSION – PETER KAKURU, MANAGING DIRECTOR, POWER FM



Women's involvement in the media has been growing over the years. Women have not only become the face of the media as top radio personalities and talk show hosts, but also as News reporters. There are a number of women in the media who are competent, hardworking and competitive and knowledgeable. There are go-getters. There are women who definitely are doing a good job and are in such positions on merit.

At Power FM, although the policy is not written, we know that if a radio programme is to be hosted by two people, it is preferable that it is hosted by a man and a woman. It is not only Power FM doing this but other media houses as well. Also if you flipped through the newspapers, you will find there are increasingly more female personalities interviewed so there is no exclusion of women in the media.

At Power FM, for example, we do not have a gender policy so we do not hire basing on one's gender but character and competence. And, a lot of women have high levels of competence and are able to thrive in a competitive work environment. So management looks out for ability and passion to

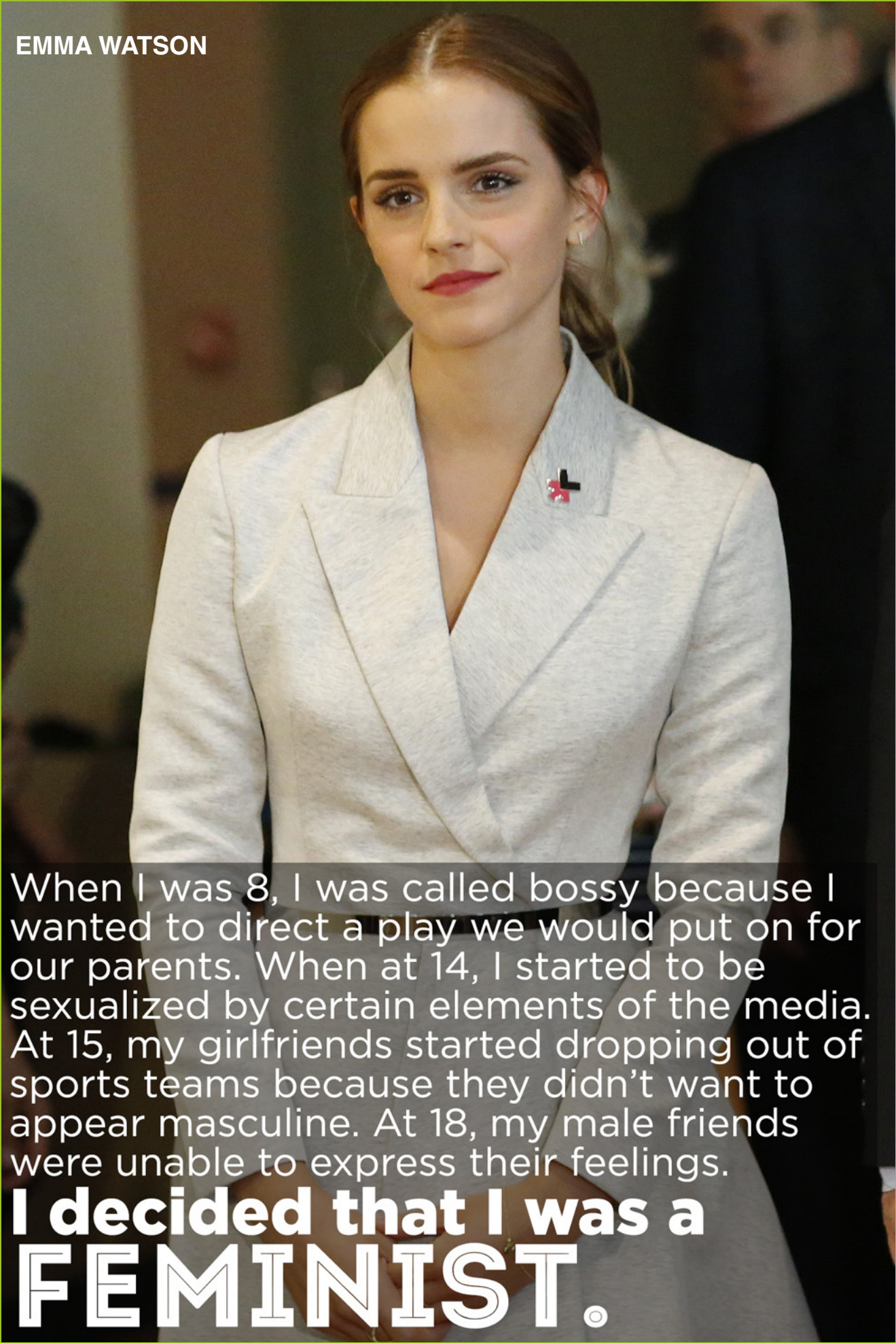
work, and only supports them by instituting a good work environment. We respect the law, for example we grant maternity leave, breastfeeding time and safety at work as is due.

The women who have succeeded in the media are those who have the character and zeal to succeed. They have thrived because they have the character and determination to succeed. They also constantly work at getting better, for anyone who has good character and the urge to continuously improve, always has room for growth. That is why it is very important that before one joins the media, one has to be very clear in their mind as to why they want this particular profession.

The media is one of the most critical industries in any country because it provides a voice that influences people's minds and choices. Therefore we need people who come into the media and work with responsibility and an understanding that their job is critical to the health of society. That is why there is need for clarity of purpose, vision and the passion. Otherwise if you come in with the wrong reasons, you will not only handle your role irresponsibly but will also not last long in the industry.



At Power FM, although the policy is not written, we know that if a radio programme is to be hosted by two people, it is preferable that it is hosted by a man and a woman. It is not only Power FM doing this but other media houses as well. If you flipped through the newspapers, you will find there are increasingly more female personalities interviewed.

A photograph of Emma Watson from the waist up, wearing a light-colored, textured blazer. She has her hair pulled back and is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. A small, colorful pin is visible on her left lapel. The background is blurred, showing other people in a social setting.

EMMA WATSON

When I was 8, I was called bossy because I wanted to direct a play we would put on for our parents. When at 14, I started to be sexualized by certain elements of the media. At 15, my girlfriends started dropping out of sports teams because they didn't want to appear masculine. At 18, my male friends were unable to express their feelings.

**I decided that I was a
FEMINIST.**



USING THE MEDIA TO ADVANCE THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN: **THE STORY OF A YOUNG MALE JOURNALIST**



Brian features on the Women Deliver global list of '15 journalists, 15 voices for girls and women' and is described by Women & Girls Hub as 'one of Africa's leading women rights crusaders'. He has extensively reported on and advocated for women's health and rights. He established the Brian Mutebi Dream Scholarship Fund, the first scholarship scheme in Africa for survivors of gender-based violence and teenage mothers. In 2015, he was named Commonwealth Young Achiever by the Commonwealth Youth Council UK. And for his comprehensive reporting on and advocacy for family planning and reproductive health, particularly concerning poor and vulnerable women like women living with disabilities and those in hard-to-reach areas, he won the 2016 '120 Under 40: New Generation of Family Planning Young Leaders' global contest organised by the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, U.S.A.

My name is Brian Mutebi. Mine is a story of a male champion for women's rights. I have devoted a significant part of my professional life promoting gender equality and women's health rights in Uganda. I am a women's rights campaigner who, through insightful and well-researched articles in the media, have brought to national and international attention issues affecting girls and women that would otherwise be ignored. These include women and girls' education, health, and violence against women.

My work began with a real-life experience. I grew up in a community where domestic violence against women was rampant and acceptable. I witnessed first-hand the struggles teenage mothers go through when my own cousin was rejected by her own family when she conceived at age 16. She was condemned and harshly treated. Sometimes she was denied food and instead her portion was given to us, the boys. But out of compassion, my other sister and I would secretly give her a portion of our food. I wished I had my own house where I could shelter her. But I was a little boy, about nine years old. There was not much I could do.

However, later in my professional practice as a journalist, I encountered a situation that reminded me of my cousin's experience. In September 2013, at the height of the armed conflict between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) forces and the M23 rebels, Uganda witnessed a big influx of Congolese refugees. As a journalist then working with the Daily Monitor newspaper, I was invited to Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Kamwenge district, Western Uganda, by UNFPA and UNHCR to report on the settlement activities. Of the 48,718 Congolese who had fled their country into Uganda, over 70%

My work began with a real-life experience. I grew up in a community where domestic violence against women was rampant and acceptable. I witnessed first-hand the struggles teenage mothers go through when my own cousin sister was rejected by her own family when she conceived at age 16. She was condemned and harshly treated.

of them were children, many of whom were teenage mothers. Instead of being children, many children were forced by circumstances to be mothers. Instead of books, they carried babies. I was moved.

This time, unlike when I was 9 and I helplessly watched on as my cousin sister suffered terrible consequences of becoming a teenage mother, as a journalist, I realised I could use the power of the pen to fight for their cause. First, on 26 October 2013, I published a Congolese refugee girl's letter to the UN Secretary General. In the letter, Zawadi Chantal, 13, called upon Mr Ban Ki Moon together with Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni and his Congolese counterpart, Joseph Kabila to work to bring about peace in the Congo. Then on 16th November the same year, I published a big feature story on the girls' struggles in an article, 'At Rwamwanja, girls struggle to remain girls'. I had started my advocacy for girls' and women's health and rights.

The article contributed to mounting pressure on the Congolese government to engage the M23 rebels in peace talks. This was after peace talks in Kampala had failed to yield substantial results. East African countries and UN agencies intensified efforts to bring about peace in the Congo. The UN Secretary General called on the Congolese government to engage in direct peace talks with the M23 rebels. In November, peace talks were held in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. The guns went silent.

This concretised my belief in the power of the pen, and how the media is such a powerful advocacy tool. I have since run successful advocacy campaigns in the media in Uganda highlighting the plight of women, girls and other vulnerable children. I travel to even the most remote and hostile places to pick a story I can write about if I am convinced my endeavours will bring visibility to a seemingly invisible problem. I have played a key role in highlighting issues around commemorative days like the International Day of the Girl Child, International Women's Day, Safe Motherhood Day and the International Day of the Midwife, among others. I have captured voices of women in refugee settlements; those affected by female genital mutilation, sexual violence, and between 2013 and 2015, I was at the forefront of reporting on 'Let Girls Be Girls', a campaign aimed at investing in preventing teenage pregnancy in Uganda. I have been on airwaves of over 10 radio stations, five TV stations and four newspapers in the country in addition to being active on social media. My vocation and calling is to use the pen to take up the case of girls' and women's rights.

ENHANCING GENDER CONSCIENCE IN UGANDAN MEDIA

MARLON AGABA

The power of the media in shaping public opinion through framing and agenda-setting makes it indispensable in the quest for gender parity. However, often what is produced in a patriarchal media only serves to entrench deep-seated stereotypes against women.

This underpins the need for women's representation at decision-making levels in media organisations. If the media is to portray women in a positive way, there have to be female

journalists out there at decision-making level, willing and able to fight for women's rights in a much more fundamental way.

The Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media (2011) revealed that women represent only a third (33.3%) of the full-time journalism workforce in the 522 companies surveyed. Men hold the vast majority of the seats on governing boards and in top management across seven regions, sub-Saharan Africa inclusive.

This is in consonance with a report by the European Institute of Gender Equality, which notes that despite the fact that women have made up nearly half the workforce within the media industry in the European Union and accounted for more than half of tertiary-level graduates for media-related careers for many years, the proportion of women involved in



top-level decision-making in media organisations remains low.

In Uganda, the situation is not any different. Women occupy only 30% of low-ranking jobs in media houses. At senior management level, women occupy a dismal 3%. In fact, the trends don't show any signs of improvement over the years.

This is way below targets set during the fourth World Conference on Women. The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 advocated increased women's participation in decision-making in media organisations. Women's representation in the media is one of the 12 critical areas of concern. The programme for action aimed at protecting and promoting women's rights as integral, inalienable and indivisible.

In Uganda, while enrolment levels in academic institutions shows a higher intake for women than men in journalism courses, employment trends in media houses show something different. In low-ranking media jobs such as writers, women are ably represented, but the numbers keep declining as you go up the hierarchy. Women are still struggling to climb up the media ladder.

Several reasons responsible for this unfortunate trend include biases against women, unfair promotion procedures, lack of gender policies in media houses and cultural stereotypes.

Some interventions have been implemented in Uganda to address the gender gap in media organisations, but all efforts have come to naught. The invisible glass ceiling continuously deters women from reaching the top in media organisations because women who possess the skills, training and experience are often hindered from progressing by cultural biases and institutional misogyny. Such prejudices often surface during

recruitment, assigning tasks, training and promotion.

It is impossible to tackle equality in decision-making in media organisations without addressing the low numbers of women in media organisations. Deep-seated biases against women and a patriarchal media still limit women's representation in the media and decision making in media organisations.

To advance gender conscience in the media, government should support women's education, training and employment in the media through legislation. Government should ensure women's access to all levels of the media. Government should also pioneer gender balance in the appointment of men and women to all regulatory and monitoring bodies of state media. Women should participate in the development and monitoring of media policies.

This should result in media houses introducing policies aimed at promoting and supporting women's participation in the media. Media editorial and human resource policies should enshrine women's rights to participation in media decision-making. Women's organisations should support female journalists to stay in the media, and progress there as well.

Civil society organisations should pilot initiatives on promoting gender parity in the media. Organisations like Uganda Women's Media Association (UMWA) should also regularly monitor gender equality in the media. Media organisations should improve gender equality in the media through regular training, mentorship programmes and sharing applicable practices from peer countries.

Development agencies should support women's mentoring programmes, including fellowships where female journalists can visit and acquire skills

from other countries. They should pilot and support awards targeting female reporters.

Regulatory agencies should also support and regularly monitor women's participation in decision-making in media organisations. Quotas for women in decision-making positions should be part of the licensing requirements.

Journalism is still a risky business in Uganda, as many scribes have been attacked during work. There is also no protection for journalists in Uganda. The other fact is that journalism is still a low-paying profession in Uganda. There is need for the protection of female journalists by their employers. This is possible through collective bargaining in unions and worker's associations. Female journalists should form associations that can negotiate for better terms of employment. Such associations can also advocate gender parity at all decision-making levels in media organisations.

Much as enacting policies is crucial to addressing the gender gap in the media, this alone will not stop the deep-seated biases against women in the media. This is premised on the fact the perception is stronger than any law, and legislation, without public will, can be defeated. There must be an attitude change if the gender gap is to be addressed. This paradigm shift can be hastened through empowering women in the media, sensitisation, affirmative action and through gender-sensitive policies.

Marlon Agaba is a media scholar specialising in children and women's rights
mrlnagaba@gmail.com



Nancy Kacungura is a Reporter for Africa on BBC TV, radio and online. She also recently won the Komla Pumor Award. There are a few female journalists that have such career breakthroughs in the media industry due to negative cultural norms and practices

GENDER STEREOTYPES IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCELERATION TO TOP MEDIA ECHELONS

ARISE REPORTER



Women's representation in the media has been a focus of media scholars and several world conferences on women's rights. This is partially in recognition of the media's indispensable roles of informing, educating and changing people's mindsets on gender parity.

Media liberalisation and the women's rights movement in Uganda came in tandem at the beginning of the 1990's. Women's rights were subsequently enshrined in the 1995 Constitution and other pieces of legislation. Article 21 provides for equality in all spheres of life, including employment.

Despite a robust legal framework that curtails discrimination against women, their representation in the media is still at a dismal 30% for lower- and middle-ranking jobs. The percentage is even lower (at 3%) when it comes to senior managerial jobs in media houses.

Women in media houses mainly occupy low-ranking positions, as writers, reporters and freelancers. Although a few have broken the ranks and reached top management, these isolated incidents don't represent the entire situation in the media. In the vast media houses existing today, only 2 women appear to have called the heights. Ms Aggie Konde (picture on left), who is CEO at NTV Uganda and Ms Barbara Kaija the Editor-in-Chief at The New Vision.

A 1998 report by Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) revealed that journalism was traditionally seen as a male job whereas women in the media are domestically stereotyped and assigned to leisure, beauty, fashion, education and health beats. Most of the shouting political stories and top investigations are assigned to men because of deep-seated biases against women.

One perspective not to forget is that women are increasingly participating in broadcast media rather than print media. This is mainly because men associate more with their voices and bodies than with what they have to offer in terms of substance. The increasing number of women on television, for instance, is often more a calculated business strategy than an approach to addressing gender imparity.

That the media mirrors society is an old journalistic maxim. This is true when it comes to women's representation in the media. Gender imbalances in the media partly reflect societal stereotypes against women. This perhaps, as some scholars have suggested, is reflective of women's position in society. In the Ugandan context, however, several engendered challenges impede women's representation in the media. Women have long been portrayed as sex objects at the work place. Anecdotal information reveals sexual harass-



ment at media houses, which affects the progression of female scribes.

Additionally, women in Uganda are increasingly performing double roles of being the breadwinners and at the same time the carers of their families. A female journalist will have to perform all these duties while a male journalist only concentrates on work. This partially explains why editors assign male reporters to late-night and far-away assignments.

Media policies have not been structured in a way that supports women's progression in the media. Furthermore, culture limits the extent to which women can go when sourcing stories. When sourcing for journalists to cover war, for instance, preference is given to men because they are perceived to be more up to the task.

Biases from editors and media owners also tend to discriminate against women and promote segregation and imbalanced promotion. Disparities in training limit women's chances to occupy management and leadership roles.

These biases and challenges often scare women away from practising journalism. In fact, research shows that at university level, the intake of women in journalism schools is often higher than that of men. However, as the course progresses towards specialisation, most women prefer public relations as compared to mainstream media. The patriarchal media as influenced by societal forces pushes women out of media houses.

It is sad to note that sometimes women's attitudes impede their progression in the media. Some successful female journalists have left active journalism for public relations, teaching and social work. Some have quit in order to

Women in media houses mainly occupy low-ranking positions, as writers, reporters and freelancers. Although a few have broken the ranks and reached top management, these isolated incidents don't represent the entire situation in the media. In the vast media houses existing today, only 2 women appear to have called the heights. Ms Aggie Konde (picture on left), who is CEO at NTV Uganda and Ms Barbara Kaija the Editor-in-Chief at The New Vision.

become full-time mothers. The level of perseverance is still low when compared to women in other fields who face possibly similar challenges.

This can also be partially blamed on stereotypes and discrimination. Women who remain in the media often stagnate in the same positions for a long time. Studies have shown that promotion in the media is often not based on merit but rather on personal relationships and connections. Often, women who survive in the media have to sacrifice their personal integrity for career progression. The positions women hold in media houses cannot enable them to make decisions that are favourable to them.

Affirmative action requiring statutory

institutions to have at least 30% women's representation at board level has increased women's representation at the oversight level. Statutory media houses such as Uganda Broadcasting Corporation are required to ensure that at least 30% of their boards are women. This, however, has not trickled down to senior and middle management levels since affirmative action doesn't apply there.

Women media organisations such as Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) should work with media houses to ensure that women are supported to work and stay in the media. Training opportunities and awards for women in the media should be pursued.

To improve women's representation in the media, media organisations must develop clear policies that promote fairness and transparency in the recruitment and promotion of journalists. Such policies should also address sexual harassment at the workplace.

The issue of gender-based biases is one that requires continuous education and sensitisation. Media houses, women's organisations and training institutions should work towards changing the mindset that women cannot be good journalists.

For women's representation in the media to be fully addressed, the question of ownership must be answered first. A male-dominated (read owned) media industry cannot effectively promote gender parity. This calls for holistic empowerment of women economically, socially and politically to own and run media houses. Affirmative action in the interim can be pursued.



CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPE: **THE ROLE OF NEW MEDIA IN MOBILISING ATTENTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

GILLIAN NANTUME

To break interesting cover stories, journalists report from conflict areas and sometimes at the risk of their own lives and/or at the mercy of the powerful in society. So in many newsrooms, such 'hardcore' journalism is left to the men while female journalists are relegated to writing compassionate and 'soft' feature stories. However, with the advent of new media platforms, women are increasingly turning to social media as a medium of communication.

Patricia Kahill, a social media content creator, marketer, blogger and owner of Kahill Insights, says the biggest contribution of social media to the world of communication is the evasion of censorship. 'Self-publishing (on social media) is easy because you share what you want and publish on a free tool without being censored,' she says.

The blogger has a huge following on social media: 11,296 followers on Twitter and 979 followers on Instagram. She has written extensively

about charity, business and entrepreneurship.

In 2015, Kahill was involved in the #EndTeenagePregnancy campaign by Straight Talk Foundation. She put together a team of writers and in two months they had written and published 270 blogs, stories about teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

How the new media works

There is a huge thirst for information among the public. Unfortunately, some information that is good for public consumption does not meet the editorial standards of established media houses or the news demands of the mass public. This is the niche that the social media bloggers are filling. Instead of waiting for approval from their supervisors about what stories are 'hot' and need to be written about, women, using social media, air their views, ideas, and the challenges they face in day-to-day life.

A few months ago, for example, a Makerere University research fellow, Dr Stella Nyanzi, undressed in public to express her discontent about her working conditions and harassment by her employer. While mainstream media ignored the build-up to the incident because, maybe, it was considered not newsworthy, the don took to social media, especially Facebook where she has a big following, to discuss her plight with the wider public. And with 6,226 followers on Twitter, Dr Nyanzi's video was within minutes all over the internet. All the mainstream media could do was follow the crowd.

The traditional news industry is largely run by men and so they control the direction of the news, the editorial policy and the finances. However, as traditional mainstream media continues to shrink, digital media platforms seem to be the new way to go.

'Young women need to engage more intensively on social media with knowledge and ideas that benefit all categories of people,' Kahill says, adding, 'that's the way to break the stereotypes.'

However, social media has its own shortfalls. There is plenty of informa-

tion available for the public but this comes with a very low chance of fact-checking. It is, therefore, important that social media activists keep an eye on giving the audience good content.

'Not all of us can pick up a camera to take a picture or a pen to write and run a blog,' says Amina Babirye, a sports photojournalist with Kawowo Sports Media Limited. 'It is therefore important that one learns a skill, there is just no excuse for not getting better and cutting a niche in this fast-moving digital world.'

Activists using ICT to create awareness

Last year 2015, during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence (GBV), Women of Uganda Network (WOUNGNET) ran an SMS campaign raising awareness on GBV.

Patricia Nyasuna, Programme Assistant, Gender and ICT, at WOUNGNET says they realised that most middle-class women are using social media on different platforms – Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp – and so utilised the social media platforms to reach more women. 'When a woman creates awareness about something, other women usually agree with her. It builds their confidence. Using the SMS platform, women got our message about knowing the signs of GBV and where to report.'

WOUNGNET got massive responses, especially from university students, among whom several GBV cases are reported. 'And because of that success, we are planning to have the same campaign to create awareness among women in rural areas,' says Nyasuna. WOUNGNET has 2,678 likes on Facebook and 3,144 followers and 782 likes on Twitter, which they believe will help reach women from far and wide.

The challenges of the new media

With social media, exposure to the mass public is instant, which is good but in a way limited as campaigns about women's empowerment on social media only help the middle-class woman who has a smart phone and access to the internet.

Social media activists also have to contend with unscrupulous readers who seek to silence them. 'Sometimes as the originator of the message you are not sure how the women will react. Some block us,' Nyasuna says.

There are many social barriers that still exist about the gender roles of women, and some readers believe that women have no authority to comment on issues regarded as men's issues, such as politics.

There is also a misconception of the message being delivered. When Dr Nyanzi, for instance, launched her protest, many came out to condemn her for using a 'lewd' avenue to express her grievances. They questioned her morals before trying to understand the issues that pushed her to this extreme course of action.

The main basis for using social media as a medium of communication is to engage the public so as to obtain views and a diversity of opinions on the subject of discussion. However, female social media activists have to deal with sexist comments and harassment from trolls, especially from male followers. Most of the comments focus on physical appearance and writing style, instead of the substance in the article or text in question.

QUESTION & ANSWER TIME
WITH **ROSEBELL KAGUMIRE**
ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND
WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS
ACCOUNTABILITY



ARISE: Are there stereotypes in the traditional media about the way female emancipation is presented?

RK: I think the commonest stereotype is education and equal empowerment. We rarely see pieces on ordinary women who are actually questioning social norms even when they are not educated. We relate emancipation only to formal education. We forget that for generations women defied the set rules and sought justice and equality.

Also often we do not relate men to female emancipation yet men have a big role they can play, whether positively or negatively, in empowerment. An empowered father who believes in equality will play a huge role in the life of his daughter.

ARISE: How has new media helped to challenge this status quo and how is it being used to fight for women's rights?

RK: First of all, if you pick up a newspaper tell me the ratio of male to female columnists or top report-

ers? When you go on social media you will see all these women's voices because the channels are available. More women take part in conversations that traditional media would not have interviewed them on. Women are talking politics and participating in top daily news than ever before.

Also, women online are free to share their stories as is. So online platforms have given room to women to express themselves in ways traditional media had never allowed. It is common to tune in to TVs and see all-male panels every morning or evening. We still have a problem with the way media provides opportunities to impart knowledge.

ARISE: Are we seeing more women reporting on online platforms about previously untouched subjects?

RK: Yes. I see tweets about sex, a subject that was long kept in designated spaces. Women are able to freely talk about sex and pleasure in a way they would not have done before. I see conversations about sexual harassment which rarely get space in traditional media. Women are able to speak about their experiences, whether anonymously or in person.

Also areas that were largely overlooked like homecare work, which is largely done by women, are being tackled on groups like Mama Tendo. Most women spend a good amount of time on this work.

ARISE: How has this new reporting helped to bring attention and accountability to women's rights?

RK: In terms of accountability, I think we still have a huge gap in women access to online spaces and ICTs. So really, except WhatsApp groups, other forums remain only for a few

Ugandans. I think online conversations help show us that we are not alone in our problems. We have to strategically use online spaces for accountability on women's rights but we are still really just getting started. It is important that women are organising online groups where people can share from various corners of the country.

ARISE: What new opportunities can young women take in these new platforms?

RK: I think we need to impart knowledge. Most fast-growing economies have ICT high up in their priorities. We still have many young people not connected. We have to promote more innovation using ICT, not only conversations. We need to see more effort to translate online conversations into real projects and interventions; and young people can be at the centre of this as we fight unemployment.

Unfortunately, with these opportunities come challenges. We see an increase in women's rights violations online, such as abuse, trolling and revenge pornography. We need to see more action in terms of the protection of women's rights.

Kagumire is a multimedia journalist, communication strategist, and public speaker and award-winning blogger. She has worked with various media organisations in Uganda and internationally and recently was Social Media Manager at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). She is experienced in journalism, new media, migration, women's rights, peace and security in Africa.



THE SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN FASHION MEDIA: A CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

NAMATA SHERINAH

Equality between women and men can never be achieved by legal change alone. How our society, our culture, our media, communities and individuals, view women and women's equality will make a huge difference. In other words, people – including women ourselves– have to believe in and support the idea that men and women are of equal value and worth. We need to see an end to tapered or downbeat attitudes about women and obsolete stereotypes that maintain inequality and limit both women and men.

One of the most popular influencers of such attitudes is media and popular culture; to be more specific, the fashion industry. The fashion industry is popular culture because it deals with trends and vogue. The fashion industry through media has forced an unrealistic image of women on society, worldwide. Fashion media is constantly widening the gender gap through use of sexualised images, promotion of skimpy clothing, beauty enhancers and publicising flesh revealing fashions through on vogue campaigns and as popular designs.

Fashion is a current trend or style or manner in which something is done or manifested. Fashion is generally favoured for its frolicsome manner, however if this manner is sexist, it triggers questions.

Media on the whole is TV, radio, the internet, advertisement and broadcast. This may also include narrow-casting medium such as newspapers, magazines, billboards, direct mail, telephone and the fax.

From the upshot of celebrity fashion culture and beauty, to advertising on young women's and girls' body images, to the stereotyped portrayal of rape victims, to a chronic under representation of female news subjects, society's attitudes are moulded by these media and wider cultural representations of women. Moreover, the leadership and therefore the shapers of media and cultural industry are still predominantly men.

When media portrays women in a manner that reveals their sexuality as a display commodity on sale, aren't women right to affirm that it is bigot. Especially because media at large gives platform for that form of display that not only objectifies women

as commodities but also as sex-awes and its norm. If fashion designers and fashion ads objectified men the way they do women, it could be a fair game. However, it's not the case. Moreover mainstream media always depicts this objectification of women at an alarmingly higher rate than it does men.

Society does not seem to see anything wrong with a half naked woman's body as the cover picture for a fashion magazine. Neither is it bothered when all women's on vogue fashions are flesh revealing and sexually arousing. It is cultural and normal. It is part of everyday life and an acceptable expedition- that's what media suggests.

This is confirmed by a one Isingoma (not real name) when asked about his take on the sexist fashion exploits in style today; "How else would women want to be portrayed and appreciated? Everyone knows that exposing a little bit of their flesh will send the public queuing for just a glimpse and a little more- and that's what fashion producers want."

The general fashion paradigm shift involves the wear of more revealing and permissive clothing. This cultural shift has often been presented as being "fashionable ". Arguably, the cultural shift has led to greater emphasis on a physical criterion for women's perceived self worth augmenting a marginalized and sexist perspective. Sexy is fashion. If it is not arousing and sexual, it's off vogue.

We should all understand that "Sexual objectification is objectification of a person." It occurs when a person is seen as a sexual object and when their sexual attributes and physical attractiveness are separated from the rest

of their personality and existence as an individual, and reduced to instruments of pleasure for another person.

Frivolous fashion culture advertises to women and girls a hurtful fiction that their value lies in how sexy they appear to others. Girls learn at a very young age that their sexuality is for others.

So if contemporary society is queuing up for a glimpse of the glistening thigh, the nipple, the sugar candy lips, rosy cheeks and shimmering bosoms, does it make it right? And is it the right portrayal of the woman? Does the woman in the picture, in the movie, in that skimpy dress along the red carpet think so of herself? Is that her personality? Do media and fashion designers and producers ever ask themselves these questions?

Magazine editors and their advertisers (fashion designers and producers as well as trend setters) have adopted a "technology of enchantment" as a means of exercising control over their audience i.e. society and consequently culture at large. Magazine and advertising language is imbued with "magical" power, and the structure of beauty advertisements closely parallels that of magical spells used in healing rituals. The efficacy of such enchantment is borne out by society in many aspects.

Take for example a perfume ad with a half naked woman all silky, greasy and sensationally leaning on (not against) a male counterpart, who on the other hand is bold and powerful and

built for strength! As a matter of fact, the woman here is weak and needs redemption from her strong male partner. The woman is desirable too and a seduction. It is ultimately saying that when you wear this perfume, the man will like you and remember you. Or that the perfume has a sensation and a scent which could draw a man to you.

The entire imagery portrays the woman's sexuality other than her mind or power or strength. It's as though her mind were detached from her body.

Other portrayals of women in fashion ads for instance normally present a woman touching self, caressing an object, lying on the floor, sitting on a bed or chair, eyes closed not alert confused, vulnerable, body contorted, dressed like a child, holding an object or a man for support, sexy and sexually available, seductive, playful, careless. These are positions of powerlessness and timidity. This can be clearly seen when women are shown lying on the floor as men are standing over them, literally depicting women as being beneath totally at the mercy of men. The female body – is always inevitably controlled by patriarchal norms and the commoditisation of the body through industries such as fashion and beauty that exhibit 'femaleness'.

Men on the other hand are often portrayed as alert and conscious of their surroundings: standing upright, eyes open and looking around, their bodies are controlled, mean expression on the face, gripping things tightly or, hands in pockets, seriously and physically active. Bravery, adventurousness, being able to think rationally, being strong and effective, for example, are all "manly" traits that are usually encouraged. So also is the

ability to think independently and take initiative. Fashion media images supporting these behaviours include the strong, silent man and military ads telling young men to be 'all they can.' But, you will rarely come across such a manifestation of women.

The excessively coercive nature of appeal to strong sexual instincts to sell fashions, products and trends or promote media downplays the woman's role and image in society and has permanent risks on and for women in general. For instance, young girls' understanding of the importance of appearance in society may translate to feelings of apprehension, humiliation, and aversion during the transition from girlhood to womanhood because they (girl-children) begin to sense that they are becoming more visible to society as sexual objects; It is a dreadfully disgusting feeling and very shaming for girls in this change-over to know that they are becoming more visible to society as sex points other than able contributors to their society.

Sexed-up culture not only objectifies women, but also encourages women to objectify themselves. Women self-objectify in terms of body watch by adopting a form of self-consciousness in which they habitually screen their own body's outward appearance and spend significant amounts of attention on how others may perceive their physical appearance. These in turn shade unrealistic expectations by men of how women should look or behave. The woman's stand in society then ceases to be about her herself but others, as well as pleasing society and established perceptions.

Increased ill air fashion manifestation of women, also increases the likelihood, acceptance and serious-

ness of sexual exploitation in our society. This is because each of the on vogue fashions has a sexual allusion to it and society knows it. Products like artificial bosoms and bust enhancers, anklets, extremely skimpy outfit and arousal make up shades connote that women are not serious enough for anything other than fronting sex.

Since fashion media is obsessed with skinny models, women and girls go to all miles to achieve the TV model fashionable size. Girls and women internalize all fashion trends' messages as what society deems beautiful and equate that with their self worth. The results are usually scaremongering. Among others are psychological disorders such as body dysmorphic (a mental disorder characterized by an obsessive preoccupation that some aspect of one's own appearance is severely flawed and warrants exceptional measures to hide or fix it), anorexia (an emotional disorder characterized by an obsessive desire to lose weight by refusing to eat) and bulimia (an emotional disorder involving distortion of body image and an obsessive desire to lose weight, in which bouts of extreme over-eating are followed by depression and self-induced vomiting, purging, or fasting).

Women were not created for that kind of manifestation and the 21st century woman has proved that her femininity is stronger and has a virtuous and yet impactful purpose. She is strong willed, independent, informed and on the go and capable of so much more and would love to be portrayed so. This image of a totally



Men on the other hand are often portrayed as alert and conscious of their surroundings: standing upright, eyes open and looking around, their bodies are controlled, mean expression on the face, gripping things tightly or, hands in pockets, seriously and physically active.

unrealistic woman, of women who are not allowed to be themselves is all a wrong.


Fashion media has given way to a new set of properties by which men are distinguished from women. This is through a new assemblage of the woman's body as some daft fashion display and inappropriate for any sober vocation. Rarely will the fashion celebrate the business like administrative hardworking woman manager, doctor, lawyer or worker at large. The representation of the latter will be either so metallic or ineffectual or rather as mere ridicule and this has got to stop.

The writer is a literature teacher at Ndejje Senior Secondary School



#FEMVERTISING: HOW TO CREATE ADS THAT DON'T STEREO-TYPE WOMEN

EDWARD SSENTUMBWE



A car advertisement: Slim, beautiful woman sits seductively on the bonnet of a sleek car, dressed in an above-the-knee skirt. A man walks in, slides his arm through her, and together they enter the car.

A washing detergent advertisement: Woman is busy at home, washing and hanging clothes out to dry on the wire. Her husband returns home from work with the children, and she rushes to the kitchen to make dinner for the family, finishing by washing the dishes with the sparkly washing detergent.

For years, advertising has portrayed women in roles that have created and grounded stereotypes about them – that they are sex objects, supposed to be slim and beautiful. The advertisements have portrayed scantily-clad females in alluring poses, most often advertising products used and loved by men.

Advertising has also portrayed women as homemakers, whose role is to take care of their husbands, children and homes, as opposed to getting a job and contributing directly to the family's economic welfare. For the few advertisements that have shown women at work, the women have generally been employees not bosses, followers rather than leaders.

This kind of portrayal has been criticized as stereotypical and exploitative. The exploitation of women in mass media is the use or portrayal of women in those media (such as television, film and advertising) to increase the appeal of media or a product to the detriment of, or without regard to, the interests of the women portrayed, or women in general. Feminists and other advocates of women's rights have criticized such exploitation.

Critics of the way women are portrayed

in advertising assert that this kind of (negative) portrayal has resulted, among others, into women becoming more and more obsessed with how their bodies look. The need to have the 'perfect body' is a result of various messages that society, both directly and indirectly, sends.

Additionally, the sexual objectification of women in advertisements has a detrimental effect on girls and young women. Research shows that when girls have extended exposure to content in which female super heroes are dressed in over-sexualized costumes, they become more aware of their own body competence. Seeing this sexual exploitation of women on TV and having the message that you have to be perfect physically has a very negative impact on how these girls see and feel about themselves.

At the end of the day, such adverts

contribute to unrealistic expectations by men of how women should look or behave, as well as an increase in the likelihood and acceptance of sexual violence.

During the 1990s, dramatic changes started occurring in the depiction of women in advertising. Advertisers were coming under severe scrutiny from feminist groups, women's organizations and students of mass communication. As the debate over women's images in advertising intensified, the US National Organization for Women, founded in 1966, sought to eliminate gender-based stereotypes in the mass media.

Women Against Pornography, a U.S. lobbying group, were concerned about the sexual images of women portrayed in advertising and the influence of such images on sexual violence against women. The group founded an annual awards program to applaud and censure ads on the basis of presence or absence of sexist overtones.

By the turn of the 21st century, many key positions in advertising were occupied by women, enabling them to exert a major influence on ad campaigns. Some critics of the portrayal of women in advertising hoped this situation would give rise to more positive images of women. Another factor that contributed to the change in the portrayal of women was the fact that women make a substantial amount of all purchases, and so it makes business sense if they are happy with how advertisers are portraying them.

The change in the portrayal of women, from negative to more positive, has led to the rise of what is being referred to as "femvertising" – a notion that has become extremely important in the world of advertising. "Femvertising" refers to the making of advertisements that aim to celebrate and empower women and girls, as opposed to those that objectify and sexualise them. It is advertising that

employs pro-female talent, messages and imagery to empower women and girls.

The fact is that the reality has also changed – more women are getting educated, getting employed and are therefore independent and can make major decisions. Women also know that it is not only their looks or body shapes that can enable them to advance in life. Advertising needs to reflect that reality. Advertising also reflects ideals in our society. Because advertising agencies are realizing the effects advertising has on men and women, companies are making greater efforts in representing women positively to change society's ideals.

Advertisers are now shifting towards a different portrayal of women – the independent woman who, although married, drives her own car, has a fulfilling job and participates in or makes major purchasing decisions. Women are being shown in distinctly non-traditional roles - fixing cars, etc. Women are no longer being featured in aprons and scarves covering their hair, but shown as confident, young women in tailored pantsuits pursuing traditionally male-oriented activities.

The advertisements being made these days are those that build awareness-generating, stereotype-busting messaging and images into ads that target women and girls.

A big theme for many of the femvertising spots has been encouraging young women and girls to be more confident, to grab opportunities, and not to worry about preconceptions. They are advertisements that aim to improve young girls and women's self-esteem. Femvertising is positively impacting the perception of women and breaking down negative stereotypes. They are effectively captivating audiences. The brands implementing these types of campaigns are favorable among different

consumer groups and are being not only noticed, but remembered.

Dove is an excellent example of the shift advertising needs in order to transform the way women are conveyed in advertising. Not only is the campaign highly successful, but it uses advertising to help society, teaching women that beauty extends to more than just thin, air-brushed quality. This iconic campaign has increased sales from \$2.5 billion to \$4 billion since it originally launched, but more importantly, it has been teaching women to love themselves.

In 2010, Nike launched their Make Yourself Campaign, focusing solely on women. The main objective of the campaign was to motivate women to be the best they can be and craft a better version of themselves. The campaign celebrated women and their active lifestyle, promoting fitness and healthy as beautiful, including the sweat and pain. The campaign composed of several female athletes, such as US Field and Track Olympian Allyson Felix and Chinese Tennis player Li Na, to highlight the idea of becoming the best version of yourself.

Marketing campaigns that empower women and girls rather than perpetuating stereotypes are proving to be hits with consumers and highly effective at generating sales, according to the US Advertising Week panel of industry leaders behind some of the past year's top female-focused campaigns. It is important for all advertisers to know that femvertising ads are empowering women — and making money for brands.

The writer is a volunteer at ACFODE.

A woman with long, dark, curly hair is dancing in a nightclub. She is wearing a white, short-sleeved, ribbed crop top and dark denim shorts. Her arms are raised, and she is wearing white gloves. The background is a vibrant purple and blue, with a large, glowing heart shape in the upper left. In the upper right, there is a small screen showing a red scene, possibly a stage performance. The overall atmosphere is energetic and modern.

**DIRTY DANCING:
HOW SOCIETY HAS ALLOWED
THE UGANDAN MUSIC
INDUSTRY TO PORTRAY
WOMEN IN A SOULLESS,
DEMEANING WAY**

WOBUSOBOZI B. IVAN



Uganda is famed for, among other things, being one of the most beautiful places in the world; even former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, famously referred to Uganda as the 'Pearl of Africa'. Also, over the last fifteen or so years, Uganda has been greatly appreciated, the world over, for a fairly successful anti- HIV/AIDS campaign, not forgetting the flattering but equally questionable claims, by both local and international media, about Ugandans being among the happiest people in the world. To some, these claims are debatable, yet regardless of which side of the divide one belongs, what is non-debatable is that Uganda is neither a perfect country nor are Ugandans perfect people. Regarding Uganda's socioeconomic growth and development, the remarkable success and progress in certain areas oftentimes easily mask the poor performance and slow or even stagnated growth in others. For instance, that Uganda is well endowed with a landscape to 'die for', a wide variety of flora and fauna, diverse cultures and traditions, and that Ugandans are very enterprising, is no secret. Just as it's no secret that Uganda still continues to grapple with serious issues like corruption, a poor human rights record, gender inequality, and unemployment, among other issues.

Yet in the past decade, a major social problem has subtly and rapidly crept into our society, mostly in the entertainment industry. Today, if you turn on your television, browse Ugandan music videos online or listen to the lyrics of local songs, you will not fail to notice a prevailing theme: the sexualisation of women. It is now common to see women barely dressed, with exposed breasts, thighs and buttocks, in the name of making 'cutting edge' music videos. Tragically, young girls haven't been spared either, so that even in kindergartens and primary schools, it is now normal during entertainment sessions at various school functions, to find girls performing sexually explicit 'dance moves' such as 'twerking', 'bending over', 'rubbing' against boys and each other, and miming songs with sexually explicit lyrics, while the parents and teachers actively cheer them on, totally oblivious to the negative effects on the children's physical, mental and spiritual development. Unfortunately, society, it seems, is moving on, blindly consuming the offensive music and hardly noticing its negative impact. Or maybe they notice but just don't care. This inappropriate portrayal of women as

sex objects, whose sexuality exists only to 'sell' entertainment and satisfy society's sexual appetites, not only continues to negatively affect women, but is also fuelling the prevailing misconceptions that society has about them. The prevailing levels of violence against women, sexual abuse and low self-esteem, among others, cannot be divorced from the culture of sexualising women. Literally speaking, to many Ugandans, women have no significant role to play in the process of national development, except to 'lie on their backs'. How did we get here? Why do Ugandans continue to let the abuse of women by musicians go unchallenged? Or are we too blind to see what's happening?

Simply put, we allowed ourselves to get here. And no! We are not blind. We see it, but we just don't care that much about women. In fact, largely, society doesn't really know how to care for women. Let me explain.

Mainstream media has greatly contributed to this predicament. Uganda's media coverage of the music industry thrives on ideals copied from global entertainment powerhouses like MTV, BET and Channel O, among others. All these global powerhouses have one thing in common – they sexualise women. Literally, all music shows, on all local television stations, such as Jam Agenda on WBS TV, Horizon Vibe on UBC and Exposed on NTV, among others, reflect the global media culture. It's no surprise then that in an attempt to 'measure up' to 'international standards', media coverage of our rapidly growing local music industry has, inadvertently, adopted this twisted narrative on women. Globally, most music reflects the world's perverted approach towards women's sexuality, with global superstars like Lil' Wayne,



Jay Z, Beyonce, and Africa's Koffi Olomide and P-Square, among others, all making music that portrays women as mere sex 'toys'. Thus, in attempting to 'measure up' to standards set by global superstars, to 'fit in' with current global trends and to make a lot of money, local artists have, over time, had to adjust from writing socially conscious music, to making music with hidden sexual innuendo or sexually explicit content, mostly about women.

Tough economic times have pushed some women to do unsavoury things to survive, though to the detriment of all womenfolk. As with prostitution and pornography, many women who take part in demeaning performances in music videos justify themselves by stressing the need to survive the harsh economic times, given the high levels of youth unemployment and the high cost of living. Genuine as they may be, they also inspire and lead a younger generation of girls in the wrong direction.

There is widespread ignorance about the value of women to Uganda's growth and development. As opposed to the thinking that women are weaklings who can't do much, but only cook for their men and get pregnant, they are actually not weaklings. They aren't any less important than men, and should never be confined to the kitchen and bedroom. I was taught from a very young age that men and women are equal and equally important

to national development. As a Christian who holds true to Bible teachings, I believe this. I know that Adam alone would never have overseen the advancement of human civilisation, without Eve. Women, too, can be competitive in every one of Uganda's spheres of influence: politics, business, education, sports, the military etc. A woman can't be a father, but can be a member of parliament, a speaker of parliament, a judge, the executive director of a parastatal and, definitely, the president of Uganda. You can't sexualise what you respect. Society should give the very same measure of respect and honour to women, as it does men.

Unfortunately, not only for women but also for society in general, sex actually sells. The world is greatly perverted and, as a result, these days everything seems to revolve around sex. Things like getting good grades at school or university, jobs, promotions, school fees, food etc., involve 'sex transactions'. Little wonder that in the advertising industry, sexuality is a vital component. Consider the majority of billboards in and around Kampala City and you will notice that, irrespective of the products being advertised, most of them have women posing seductively with specific body parts exposed, to generate some degree of sexual excitement and, ultimately, interest in the product,

whether it be soft drinks, car spare parts, steel products, dairy products, cosmetics etc.

Can anything be done to counter this deviance? Yes. A lot can and should be done. The media is powerful and economic times are tough, but parents are powerful and can be tough too. King Solomon of Israel once said, regarding parenting, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he's old, he'll not depart from it.' (Proverbs.22:6). The primary responsibility of parents is to teach and discipline children, in this respect girls, to accept and value who they are, not what the media determines for them, and to teach boys to respect women, and to treat women with brotherly love and not as 'sex toys'. Parents should create an environment that is conducive to discussing sexuality with their children. Failure to do this is the reason why many young people's minds are today perverted by musicians. Today's generation of parents largely seems to have abandoned the role of disciplining their children. Children shouldn't just watch whatever they want, listen to whatever music they desire, and attend whatever concerts they choose, without the guidance of parents or guardians. They are your children. Teach them. Discipline them. King Solomon also once intimated,

'Whoever does not discipline his son hates him. But whoever loves him is diligent to correct him.' Another version puts it this way, 'He that spares his rod hates his son. But he who loves him disciplines him promptly' (Proverbs.13:34)

If parents don't discipline their children, who will? Perverted musicians??

Educational institutions are a defensive line against the sexual perversion of young people, especially at primary, secondary and university levels. They should engage proper and effective sex education programmes, focused on culture, media and peer influences and how they shape a society's sexual behaviour.

Also, parents, educational institutions and civil the society need to join hands and vigorously engage the entertainers, the business community and the government. The business community and entertainment industry must be challenged and held accountable for their marketing and advertising concepts which demean women. Musicians need to be challenged to desist from making music that degrades women and start producing more women-friendly music. Why not come up with a Citizens' Compact on protecting and promoting the dignity of women in the entertainment



industry, just as was done with the Citizens' Manifesto prior to the 2016 general elections? What if we were to rally citizens, beginning with women, to stop consuming products of businesses which are known to promote musicians whose music degrades women, such as one who some time back produced a song insulting popular female television personality of Urban TV? What would happen if women stopped financing such artistes by shunning their concerts and music just like many consumers of local music shunned some local artistes after the 'Tubonga Nawe Fiasco'.

No offence intended, but if you women want your voices to be heard and taken seriously, then you must go beyond the 'nice' affirmative action speeches, women emancipation conferences and begging politicians to fight for your rights, and take a more active role. Now is your time to take this fight to these musicians and businesses which support them. Don't continue just barking! Now is the time for women to start biting hard. Take the lead and surely the rest of the country will hear you and, follow you.

The writer is an Assistant Pastor[Youth] at Redemption City Church, Kampala, wb.ivan@rocketmail.com



BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO

TITLE: BORN ON A TUESDAY

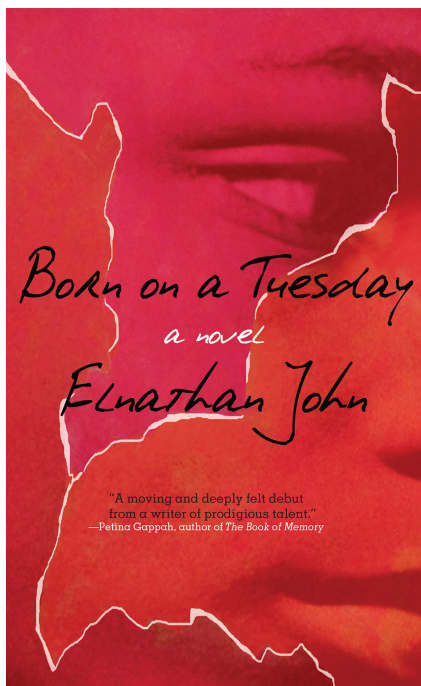
AUTHOR: ELNATHAN JOHN

From two-time Caine Prize finalist Elnathan John from Nigeria, *Born on a Tuesday* is a novel about a young boy struggling to find his place in a society that is fracturing along religious and political lines.

Dantala the protagonist, whose name translates as Born on a Tuesday, is sent away by his father to attend Qur'anic school. He falls in with a group of street boys. When they are hired by a political party to burn the headquarters of an opposition party, the police get involved and Dantala must flee to save his life. He ends up in Sokoto State, where an imam called Sheikh Jamal takes him under his wing. Here he finds some stability. But horrific things happen: prepubescent boys kill and commit atrocities for political ideologies they do not understand, and mothers depend on handouts to feed their children. Hypocrisy abounds; corruption is rife; young men are drawn to religious extremism; and there is tension between Shia and the Sunni Muslims, which threatens the life Dantala has found and the

people he has come to love.

The three people who influence his life the most at this point are perhaps the true triumph of this book. These are Sheikh Jamal, who is gentle and kind, perhaps naïve, and not in any way perfect; Malam Abdul-Nur, whose fervour in his adopted religion echoes the greatest villains in history. He is violent in his



personal life, and it translates into his religion, with his desire to punish all 'unbelievers' with violence. There is also Jubril, Abdul-Nur's brother, who becomes the greatest influence on Dantala. They help and teach each other and develop a close and admirable friendship.

This stage of Dantala's life is one many of us can identify with – learning, maturing, sexual curiosity, falling in love, and hope for the future. This book shocks from the very beginning, with the violence and the poverty, and yet the reader cannot help being moved to pity for these boys, the instruments of violence who don't know any other life. In another region, in another world, Dantala would have a chance to make something of himself, but on the lowest rung of society in northern Nigeria, everything conspires against him.

Elnathan John provides a fascinating insight into the culture of contemporary Nigeria and its religious and political upheavals through this coming-of-age story. While some portions are disturbing to read, it was well worth it. This book will stick with you long after you've finished it.

The writer works with ACFODE as a Programmes Assistant

BOOK

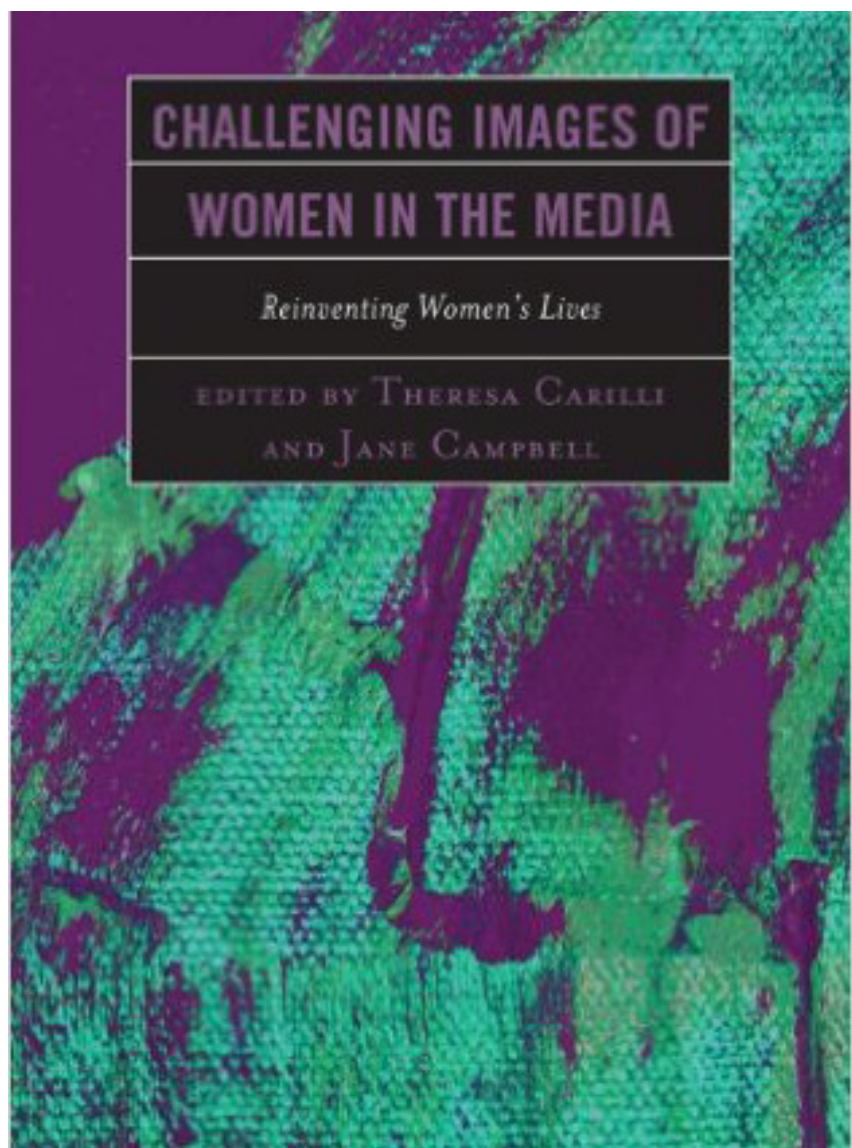
REVIEWS

CHALLENGING IMAGES OF WOMEN AND THE MEDIA: REINVENTING WOMEN'S LIVES,

CONTRIBUTOR(S): CARILLI, THERESA (EDITOR), CAMPBELL, JANE (EDITOR)

This book is a collection of fifteen articles addressing the status of women through an examination of depictions of women in the media. This in-depth study shows how mixed messages from the media mix-up attempts at breaking the 'glass screen', causing women to constantly question their role in global culture. With cake advertisements followed by diet commercials, the media's depiction of women is both confusing and contradictory.

While more and more women have begun to contribute to the media as respected anchors, talk show hosts and commentators, these portrayals are often counteracted by music videos and reality television shows such as Big Brother and Keeping up with the Kardashians. This collection seeks to analyse these depictions and their effects on women and culture. The contributors to this anthology come from such diverse locations as Japan, Australia, Pakistan, India, China, Bulgaria and the United States. With this global focus, *Challenging Images of Women in the Media* scrutinises issues of race, ethnicity, class and



sexuality through a study of gendered media portrayals. By challenging the status quo of media images, the contributors to this essential volume invite a dialogue about women's advancement.

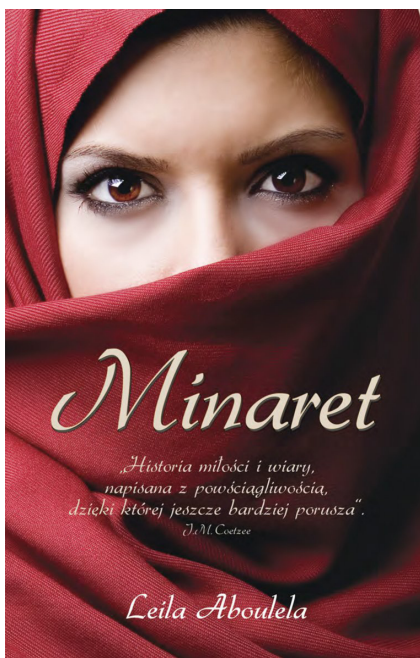
BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: MINARET

AUTHOR: LEILA ABOULELA

Leila Aboulela's second novel, *Minaret* is a story about Najwa, an upper-class and fairly westernised Sudanese woman who moves to London and ends up as working-class. Najwa's story begins in 1984 in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. She is the daughter of a government official close to the president, and her home is a grand house run by six servants. The family travel abroad and maintain a flat in London, but they know practically nothing about their own country outside Khartoum. Najwa studies at the university but the focus of her life is western clothes, pop music and parties. She is a Muslim, and has been brought up to follow the customary round of charitable practices, including visits to hospitals and children's homes and careful donations to the poor; but in Najwa's household only the servants actually pray.

At university she falls in love with Anwar, a fellow student. Anwar is a man of the future, a radical socialist who has nothing but disdain for the faith of the devout hijab-wearing students. When the inevitable coup occurs, Najwa's father is arrested and later executed, while the rest



of the family flee to the countryside.

In London Najwa's brother Omar becomes a drug addict, stabs a policeman in the course of an arrest and receives a long prison sentence. Her mother, the only link with her former existence, suffers a long illness and dies.

When Najwa is at her lowest ebb, another coup exiles Anwar to London. She begins an affair with him, initiating her first and only sexual experience, but realises eventually that Anwar has no

intention of marrying her. She finds the strength to give him up through her relationship with a group of women at the Regent's Park mosque, and as her disillusionment with Anwar increases, so does her reliance on her new-found faith. In the interim she has also been converted into a maid, a humble appendage to a series of Arab families.

Najwa journeys from pride and confusion to humility and peace. When she adopts the hijab she begins to see the world from a new perspective. 'These men Anwar condemned as narrow-minded and bigoted ... were tender and protective towards their wives. Anwar was clever but he would never be tender and protective.' Najwa's conversion is not an easy surrender to tradition. Instead it is a hard-won dedication to service, a kind of restitution for her former life.

Despite the complex issues she addresses, Aboulela's writing is easy and straightforward. This is a beautiful, challenging novel.



PHOTOSHOPPING:

A DISTORTED PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S BEAUTY IN PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA

ONYAIT ODEKE

While I was researching for this article, the lawyer in me wanted to write an academic thesis with citations and footnotes but I realised that apart from feeling good about my writing, I would probably not communicate. So I opted for a more conversational

narrative embedding my own thoughts with those of countless others around the world.

Give me a few minutes of your time as I narrate to you a story about how the media is distorting our perceptions about beauty and what we can do about it. In my research,

I read about social issues that people face. I also watched a couple of videos about social experiments that gauge people's perceptions about beauty.

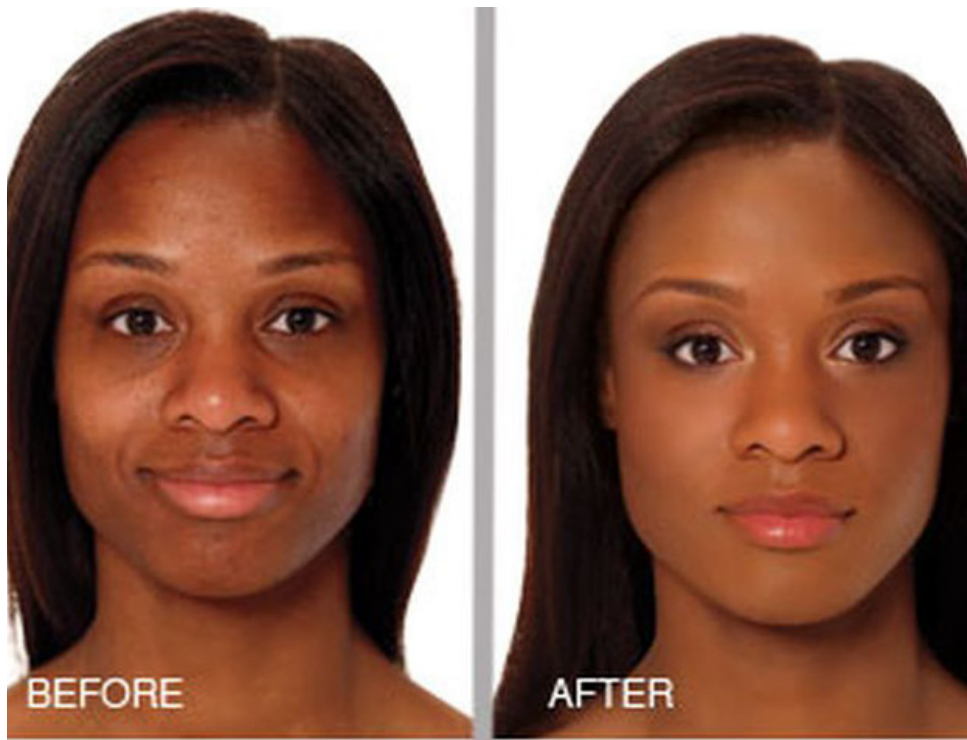
Media and the skewed perceptions of beauty today
Hollywood movies, the internet

and the print media, among others, have for long attempted to define beauty and create a standard for who is considered beautiful or ugly. Unfortunately, some of the perceptions portrayed in the media are that you are beautiful if you have a light complexion, an hourglass figure, long and straight western-like hair and fancy clothes. A beautiful woman is also portrayed as having huge pointy breasts, a large posterior and hips like Kim Kardashian or Nicky Minaj. You are beautiful and attractive if you wear body-revealing clothes that leave nothing to the imagination. These perceptions have had far-reaching implications for women.

According to the *Zambezi*, a Malawian daily, women in Malawi have taken to bleaching their skins so as to have a lighter complexion. Most of the reasons they give are centred on being more attractive to men since the men prefer lighter-skinned women to darker-skinned ones. This has seen the use of banned chemicals and substances to gain a lighter complexion at the risk of destroying one's own skin and being subject to a multitude of other issues, such as cancer. These perceptions not only undermine black people but they also portray white people as having the best hair and skin, which is not necessarily true.

Heavy marketing of the fashion and cosmetics industry

The process of growing up takes us through multiple changes. It's a time when we are discovering ourselves and we tend to be vulnerable. Accepting a lot of what we see in the media without much thought, we begin to wish for things we do not have because the media says



they are cool. Others wish for bigger breasts, a larger posterior, a pimple-free face, better teeth, thinner lips, a smaller nose, a certain height, a certain weight and the so many things that we are uncomfortable with or do not like about our bodies.

It is at this critical time that the media bombards our young minds with what they want us to believe

is cool. If you do not fit within the cool bracket, they offer you solutions to help you fit in. They tell you that if you do not like what you see, you can change it. If you are dark you can be lighter-skinned. If you don't like your hair, you can change it to whatever texture or colour you like. In the process many women undergo body-altering



surgeries to achieve a certain look, most times at a very heavy cost.

The Economist wrote that the global beauty industry made \$95bn in 2003 and most of that resulted from people being insecure about how they look and feel. But beauty doesn't reside in cosmetics, plastic surgery, designer clothes and a lavish lifestyle, as portrayed by the media. Beauty is much more than that.

Research and social experiments

Dove, the Unilever-owned personal care company known for antiperspirants/deodorants, body washes, beauty bars, lotions/moisturisers, hair care and facial care products, has been conducting beauty research for a while and the results are often shocking.

In one social experiment, there were two doors on a building. On one door, they put a clear banner with the words 'Average' and on the other door was a banner with the words 'Beautiful'. The majority of the women who accessed the

building decided to pass through the 'average' door rather than the 'beautiful' one. This was a clear indication of what they perceived themselves to be. When asked later about why they decided to go through the 'average' door, they confessed that it was what they felt about themselves.

Dove's global research highlights a universal issue that beauty-related pressure increases whilst body confidence decreases as girls and women grow older – stopping young girls from seeing their real beauty. The Real Truth about Beauty: Revisited, a recent study, highlights some key statistics:

Only 4% of women around the world consider themselves beautiful (up from 2% in 2004).

Only 11% of girls globally are comfortable describing themselves as 'beautiful'.

72% of girls feel tremendous pressure to be beautiful.

80% of women agree that every woman has something about her that is beautiful but do not see their own beauty.

More than half (54%) of women globally agree that when it comes to how they look, they are their own worst beauty critic.

Setting the record straight: the photoshop craze

The images of the people we see on TV, in magazines and on the internet aren't really what they seem. They are Photoshopped. These people do not really look like that in real life. They have hired lots of experts to make them look a certain way. It is okay for you to have a huge nose or pimples or a dark skin. It is okay for you to be short or not skinny like the models in Vogue magazine.

There's no global definition of beauty and there shouldn't be. We need to celebrate the unique beauty in each one of us. We all do not have to be like the models, actors and musicians we see on the internet. An Arab hijab is as beautiful as a Maasai tunic, and the Amazonians, Southern African San/Basarwa and Karimojong, who prefer no attire at all, are beautiful just the way they are.

We need to build the confidence of our children and let them know that beauty is not Photoshop and Instagram filters with duck faces. Beauty isn't makeup, Brazilian hair, skinny jeans and designer clothes. Beauty is not only in physical appearance but it is in our minds and in the value we perceive ourselves to have.

**The writer is a professional photographer
eristaus@gmail.com**

MEDIA GOVERNORS AND TRAINERS DISCUSS HOW UGANDAN MEDIA CAN UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Journalists often fail to adopt a comprehensive approach in reporting women's rights abuses. Even in the absence of such abuses, the media often fail to formulate their broadcast policy to incorporate exclusive women's rights programmes. The prioritisation of profit-making over societal wellbeing dominates media agenda. Many studies conducted on media and human rights mostly dwell on analysing the frequency of women's rights terms, especially in the print media, such as newspapers and magazines. None or few of them centre on an in-depth analysis of television broadcast programmes to find out the possibility of such programmes having an implicit or in-depth treatment of human rights issues. Thus in this article, media governors and trainers discuss what media needs to do as far as promoting and protecting women's rights is concerned.

JOURNALISTS SHOULD INFLUENCE SOCIETY PROGRESSIVELY – DR WILLIAM TAYEBWA, HEAD OF THE JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY



The exclusion of women in the media starts at the conceptual level. In all journalism schools in this country, traditionally the females have been more than the males, which is also true for staff members in journalism departments. At Makerere University, for example, the department is female-

dominated. The ratio of females to male students is often 52:48, maybe because in subjects like literature at high school, females tend to perform better so they are admitted for Mass Communication. So we graduate more females than males but when it comes to prac-

≡ Black women ≡
in
the MEDIA



tice, the dynamics change. It is at that level that the number of females who tend to go for mainstream journalism declines in favour of public relations work. It could be because when they get into newsrooms, the demands of mainstream journalism – running after news – is unfavourable for them.

Journalism depicted as being masculine

There are variations, however. In broadcast journalism, for example, the number of females tend to be equal to that of men. The big variations are in print journalism where there is a disproportionate representation of females compared to males because of cultural attributes and the demands of the profession. Journalism tends to be more masculine so most females who graduate in journalism leave active journalism, especially print journalism, and opt for public relations, corporate communication, advertising and other communication roles.

The trend is also evident at editorial level where there are more male editors than females. That is changing, though. More females are getting into editorial positions. For example, Daily Monitor and New Vision newspapers have women as some of their top editors. At teaching level, we are doing something about it. We have since introduced a course on gender in the media to encourage female students to take on journalism as a career as op-

posed to the 'soft' professions.

Cultural biases against women

I have seen studies showing that indeed females in mainstream media are depicted as weak or in their traditional roles as women who cook and look after children. When a woman comes out strong like, for example, (Hon. Miria) Matembe, some people will say that is not a woman. Or if it is a female engineer at work in the trenches, they will say that is not a woman's role. So we are still culturally fixated. There are still cultural biases and stereotypes. In advertising, for example, people seem mesmerised by the female body.



I have seen studies showing that indeed females in mainstream media are depicted as weak or in their traditional roles as women who cook and look after children. When a woman comes out strong like, for example, (Hon. Miria) Matembe, some people will say that is not a woman.

The females are sexualised. When it is a male being portrayed, it is about his muscles, but thighs for a female.

So social media blows up what is in the mainstream media. On social media, there is demeaning of the female body. Nobody seems to care about a man's nude pictures, but women's go viral. But why when actually in such cases, oftentimes a man is involved? Why is the focus on the woman alone?

Journalists should influence society progressively

One may say the problem is maybe with the journalists (who report the stories), but you must also remember journalists are socially situated individuals. A journalist is not so separate from the society where he or she belongs so if a society depicts women in a certain way, which may be ingrained in him, a journalist will do the same, sometimes without realising it. However, we have to be deliberate in our training to ensure we disaggregate these issues so that both men and women journalists are aware and avoid stereotyping women. Journalists have a big role of shaping the story. Journalists set the agenda so, though we come from society, we can influence society progressively. We can reverse the socio-cultural stereotypes.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA SHOULD BE A NATIONAL CONVERSATION –

DR PETER MWESIGE,
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, AFRICAN
CENTRE FOR MEDIA
EXCELLENCE (ACME)



There are two key angles to the question of women in the media: one, how they are covered (or not covered) and two, how they are represented in the industry. I believe women are still marginalised on both fronts. For instance, ACME's monitoring of media coverage of the 2016 elections persistently showed that women constituted only between 12 and 18% of the sources of political news. This is true in most other areas of public affairs. Also, women remain underrepresented in most of the country's newsrooms.

However I wouldn't say they are excluded. Rather they are underrepresented. It is difficult to prove women are excluded. You would have to do research on the representation of women in the media, for example on the front pages of the newspapers, in political and public affairs news. That is when you can with certainty state whether or not women are presented as authoritative sources or merely as victims. However, going by my gut feeling and anecdotal evidence,

I also think there has been some improvement on both fronts.

Should women, and should it be they only to complain about these issues (exclusion, misrepresentation or discrimination)? Well I think



Should women, and should it be they only to complain about these issues (exclusion, misrepresentation or discrimination)? Well I think all citizens must make the issue of voice and representation of women in the media part of the national conversation facilitated by both mainstream and social media.

all citizens must make the issue of voice and representation of women in the media part of the national conversation facilitated by both mainstream and social media. I think the Twitter hashtag #AllMalePanels, for instance, serves as a good reminder of the underrepresentation of women in formal public debate. This is because patriarchy is so deeply entrenched. Yes, there are women who actually are thriving in the media. Perhaps they are the exception.

For inclusion and proper representation of women in the media to take effect, the issue should remain part of the national conversation. All stakeholders should continue shining the torchlight on it.

SOMETIMES WHAT WE CRITIQUE IN THE MEDIA IS WHAT ACTUALLY WOMEN WANT – DR PATRICIA LITHO, BOARD CHAIR, UGANDA WOMEN’S MEDIA ASSOCIATION OF UGANDA



I do media research on how communication can be used to improve the livelihood and wellbeing of women. It is a challenging situation. It looks like everybody was against women from the start, so everything was done against women. Generally women are still represented in the media as weak and vulnerable, and victims whose hands we have to hold. The media needs to do more about the positive portrayal of women in a way that encourages women to develop the I-can-do-that-too mindset. We have a lot of women who have made it with or without affirmative action but we do not see them projected in that light. We have pullouts for women in newspapers but what do we see therein? Makeup, how to win him, make him happy, cook and things like that. Yes, women love those things but women know that already. Aren't there other things we need to profile?

Coverage, mindset issues

In the recent national elections, we had female candidates but we never profiled them (in the right way). We should mainstream and balance our coverage of women. Why should

coverage focus on the woman - the wife, or the daughter of so and so, her dress and appearance, yet it is never the same for men? Often it is about what he can offer, what comes out of his head, yet for a woman it is her appearance. Men's faults were downplayed yet for Kyalya (the female presidential candidate), hers were amplified and/or exaggerated.

There is, however, need to work on improving the mindset of women. It should go beyond legislation. There are cultures in society that are good but there are those which add no value and are rather derogatory in nature but you find women clinging to them as custodians. It is a mindset issue that the media needs to set an agenda on changing.

Do we know what actually women want?

However, one should also know that there are different kinds and mediums of media that cover issues differently. Take, for example, social media that presents what actually women want as opposed to what we think women want. Social media shows what we

think women do not want may actually be what they want. Some women use social media for lifestyle or business purposes. A woman may want to open a blog or Facebook account and use her body or nudity for business. She is like 'I will do this and be invited to an event, to usher or do something for business', in which regard it may not be as bad as we may want to believe.

It could also be that she wears her mini-skirt and appears in the media and people go up in arms, 'Eeh woman!' but she tells them, 'Hey it is okay.' That is how she wants to be portrayed. Look at the issues of nude videos in the media; a lot of them are deliberately aimed at making money. So a woman does it and pretends it was accidental when actually it was deliberate. Away from the nude videos, look at women's Facebook pages, the things we criticise in the media are the very things she may actually want to present herself. That is how she wants the world or her friends to look at her. There is no



It could also be that she wears her mini-skirt and appears in the media and people go up in arms, 'Eeh woman!' but she tells them, 'Hey it is okay.' That is how she wants to be portrayed. Look at the issues of nude videos in the media; a lot of them are deliberately aimed at making money. So a woman does it and pretends it was accidental when actually it was deliberate. Away from the nude videos, look at women's Facebook pages, the things we criticise in the media are the very things she may actually want to present herself. That is how she wants the world or her friends to look at her. There is no sameness in women. That may be a contradiction but that is what it is.

sameness in women. That may be a contradiction but that is what it is.

Both the media and the women have a problem. For the media, it is lack of capacity in gender issues. Our training doesn't prepare journalists to conceptualise gender and women's issues. There were fields like sports that were male-dominated and coverage was

biased in a way that if a woman won a rally, the headline would be something like 'woman wins a rally'. Why bring her down because she is a woman? Why not say something like 'One of the racers won' without tying it to her being a woman? That is the problem with the media that when a woman makes it, it is depicted as though it was almost accidental that she made it. How often do we bring issues of ratification of treaties that matter to women? We have a Ministry of Gender but having a gender desk is actually not gender mainstreaming. Women's issues are only covered on International Women's Day or those particular days. Can't we analyse these issues further? We don't teach these issues, so as teachers, we are at fault. But luckily after evaluation at Makerere University, we introduced a course on gender and the media to build capacity in gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive reporting in the media. It has been running for two years now.

Empower women, mainstream gender

The women are also at fault. Do we know what actually matters to us? There is a mindset issue. A lot of women are not mentally liberated. You remember the case when Dr Kazibwe (former vice president) came out and said she had been battered by her husband. How come it took her so long before she came out? She had economic power but mentally she must have kept; 'I am a woman; my husband can batter me'.

The situation has improved but a lot still needs to be done. There should be a deliberate policy on gender mainstreaming and the media. The responsibility goes back to the training institutions. Currently the course on gender and the media is optional but should be made mandatory. There is need for more sensitisation and understanding of these issues.

**THE MEDIA IS NOT
DISCRIMINATIVE BUT
INCONSIDERATE
TO WOMEN –
PROFESSOR
NASSANGA GORETTI
LINDA, MAKERERE
UNIVERSITY
JOURNALISM
LECTURER
AND FORMER
CHAIRPERSON OF
UGANDA MEDIA
COUNCIL**

The situation of women in the media in Uganda today is improving. I did two studies in 1994. One was a baseline study on the situation of women in the media commissioned by the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA). Then for my PhD in 2002, I did a study on gender access to information where I studied men and women's access to information, particularly in the rural areas and its implications for development. I had a paper on 'towards a gendered media world'. The situation then was really very pathetic. That is why I say today the situation is improving. Women then were mainly in the lower ranks, such as junior reporters and freelancers.

Few women in the newsroom

Today, however, women are trying



found that the women in the news were 28%. The number of female journalists had also remained the same in 2015 as that from the 2010 survey at 37%. For Uganda, in a 2011 survey conducted by the UMWA and the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), the number of female journalists was 16% (lower than half of the global average of 37%). The women representation is very low, given the fact that the population ratio of men to women is about 49:51.

The low presence of women in the media partially emanates from the kind of stories being reported about most – business and politics – where few women feature. While it is true that some women may be fearful about going out to comment on controversial issues, most times when journalists go out to look for sources, they tend to pick the male sources because it is the men who dominate those positions. If, for example, a journalist wanted to interview a permanent secretary, most likely this would be a man as most of them are men. Another factor is that women have oftentimes been misrepresented by the media. For example, if a woman makes a mistake, and a man makes the same mistake, the woman's mistake will be overblown or exaggerated, so some women tend to shy away from the media because of that fear.

While students are taught to use gender-inclusive communication, when they go out to practise, the environment is not receptive to the practice of the virtues they learnt. It is not easy to change traditional perceptions where in some societies people still think women are of a

to recapture their territory in the media. We have some success stories such as at New Vision and Daily Monitor where some of the top editorial managers are women. It has not been an easy journey, though. Other media houses are struggling. The encouraging trend is that at training level, we are having more women than men. But the problem is the women do not stay in the media because it is very demanding. They end up going for public relations and other communication roles. It is because of the pressure in the media. It is not, however, that women cannot stand pressure but it takes time to adjust and reconcile responsibilities, for example with young mothers who are not supported (at home) so end up failing. Not that the media discriminates against women but it does not take into account the woman's particular needs.

In the newsroom, when an editor sends

out a man or woman to the field, all they want is a story at the end of the day. While that should be so – there shouldn't be favouritism – one ought to take into account the gender roles. The male journalist has the time to look up information from the internet, beef up the story and presents to the editor a good story. A female journalist, on the other hand, has to check on the children at home, pick them from school so, at the end of the day, she may not have an equal amount of time to produce a good story. Not because female journalists do not have the same mental capability but because of the time factor and responsibilities.

The statistics are not impressive

The situation of women reported about in the media is very low, not only in Uganda but globally. The Global Media Monitoring Report that monitored 114 countries, including Uganda, in 2015,

lower status. Being in the news also has diverse angles. Women often appear in the media talking about 'the light side of life', not on major development issues.

Where does the solution lie?

Some journalists should, however, be commended for bringing out women's voices in the media. Journalists need to go the extra mile in looking out for authoritative women sources to comment on issues; otherwise the excuse usually given is failing to find a female expert to comment on the subject. It also demands that editors deliberately ask reporters to include female voices in their stories, to have gender-balanced viewpoints.

The Media Council cannot do much in this area except if there are cases of gender discrimination reported. Uganda being a liberalised economy, regulators give guidance basing on the media laws and policies in place, but it is difficult to enforce such rules in private businesses. For instance, admission to the training institutions is done by the institutions themselves and the recruitment of journalists is done by respective media houses.

Considering that media involves heavy investment, promoting women-owned media houses is not a viable solution to bring gender balance in the media. The basis of alternative solutions lies in economic empowerment of women and changing societal perceptions of women. Once economically empowered, women's voices would get into the media as women would be an integral part of the economic-political players, who form the bulk of the subjects of media coverage.



**WOMEN HAVE
BROKEN THE
GLASS CEILING IN
THE MEDIA – FRED
OTUNNU, DIRECTOR
CORPORATE
AFFAIRS, UGANDA
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION**

My assessment of the situation of women in the media is positive. Unlike in the past, where participation of women in the media was limited, there is steady progress of the positive outlook on women in the media. Women have acquired skills and have embraced the various opportunities in the media industry and they are actively involved at all levels. Women have ventured into photojournalism, war and investigative reporting which was previously a male domain. The women have earned what they have achieved.

The assertion that women are excluded in the media is not true. Today, a number of women in Uganda have broken through the glass ceiling to play various roles

in the media, including those that were previously male-dominated. Women are so proactive in driving various aspects of the media and their presence has tremendously gained credibility. In fact, most broadcasting programmes have both males and females as co-presenters, in anchoring, top management and even ownership of media houses in Uganda.

Women are not misrepresented in the media in Uganda today, not at all. The broadcasters are fully aware of the requirement of the Minimum Broadcasting Standards provided for in the Uganda Communications Act which prohibit any broadcast that is prejudicial and not balanced. There is no intentional or deliberate misrepresentation of women in the media today. The media industry has matured and, as such, fair and equally balanced reporting is being observed. The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) would not hesitate to evoke regulatory sanctions against any offending media house if such matter of breach is brought to its attention.

UCC derives its mandate to regulate the electronic media from the Uganda Communications Act 2013. Section 27 of the Act states that no person shall broadcast without a broadcasting licence issued by the Commission. Section 32 of the Act enjoins broadcasters to adhere to ethical broadcasting standards specified in the first schedule to the Press and Journalist Act. Under section 5 (x) of the Act, UCC is empowered to set standards, monitor and enforce compliance with regard to content. In general, the Commission has wide powers in regulating the electronic media.

There are regulations in place to ensure gender equality and mainstreaming in the media, and UCC is playing its regulatory role well. Article 33 (4) of the Constitution of Uganda provides that '[w]omen shall have the right to equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.' Accordingly, the media industry is enjoined by the constitution to mainstream gender equality.

I can say Uganda has been a frontrunner on women emancipation endeavours in the region and probably the continent. This is clearly manifested not only in the political sphere but in other social-economic arenas. In the media space, Uganda compares favourably in the region and beyond on all matters to do with gender equality. We may not have achieved our desired goal yet, but a lot has been realised and much more is to be attained. The 1995 Constitution as amended sets the tone and direction with regard to gender equality. In the media industry, a favourable environment that promotes inclusion and proper representation for women has been created.

There is, however, need for continuous capacity-building to enhance their capacities to harness the opportunities that exist. Enhanced career guidance and empowerment is required to show that the media industry provides an equal opportunity for growth to both men and women.



It could also be that she wears her mini-skirt and appears in the media and people go up in arms, 'Eeh woman!' but she tells them, 'Hey it is okay.' That is how she wants to be portrayed. Look at the issues of nude videos in the media; a lot of them are deliberately aimed at making money. So a woman does it and pretends it was accidental when actually it was deliberate. Away from the nude videos, look at women's Facebook pages, the things we criticise in the media are the very things she may actually want to present herself. That is how she wants the world or her friends to look at her. There is no sameness in women. That may be a contradiction but that is what it is.

WHAT IS THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA IN UGANDA TODAY?

CAROL NAMBOWA



Equal opportunity is needed in the media –Crispin Kaheru, civil activist

I don't think the media has done an excellent job when it comes to reporting women's issues as many a time, women are represented negatively. Uganda's media will, for example, famously report a family wrangle where women are involved, unlike when women are making inroads in politics. Take a look at this year's presidential election. We had only one woman presidential candidate and I expected her to get the biggest media coverage, but that was not the case. Instead, she received the least. And to me, this is not right; we should try to avoid male dominance in the media. Equal opportunities should be given to all genders.



Women are making strides in the media – Rev. Dr John Ssenyonyi, Vice Chancellor, Uganda Christian University

They are not equally represented like men but good enough there are measures that have been put in place purposely to elevate the position of women in the media. For example in New Vision, there is a pullout – 'Her Vision' – which entirely reports about women's issues. Another point to look at is when jobs are being advertised. They invite all applicants regardless of the gender. I don't remember the last time I saw a job advert inviting only men and leaving out women. There are also many women journalists in the media today and these have played a big role in encouraging balanced reporting. They are not well represented but neither are they doing that badly.



There is balanced reporting on women issues – Hon. Allan Ssewanyana, Member of Parliament, Makindye East

I strongly believe there is balanced reporting when it comes to women's issues. Many programmes on televisions and radios are hosted by women, and even in print media, there are quite a number of women editors, some of them in highly influential positions. For example, New Vision and NTV are led by women. There are also many women editors in the many media houses around the country. Such women have been at the forefront of seeing that women are not discriminated against, misrepresented and that their issues are given enough prominence.



Women have equal platform in the media – Prof. Mwebesa Ndebesa, history professor, Makerere University

Yes, there is some misrepresentation when reporting about women, but going by what I see, there is a lot of inclusion of women in the media. There are so many women journalists with many of them news anchors, reporters, writers, presenters and even editors. With such platforms availed to them, women have been able to put their issues to the fore. Personally, I think we are moving in the right direction.



Women are often misrepresented in the media – Miria Matembe, women and political activist

Women are always misquoted, misrepresented and misinterpreted by various media channels. For example, tabloids have made it a point to survive by publishing indecent and nude pictures which, in fact, could have been ignored to protect the dignity of women. Such practices have undermined the woman's position in the society. There are so many good things to write about women that can push them to the next level. Nevertheless, some media houses have tried to push for the woman's cause.



The mainstream media is doing well –Cecilia Ogwal, Woman Member of Parliament, Dokolo district

The mainstream media has no doubt given women almost an equal platform as men. When you read a newspaper like New Vision or Daily Monitor, you realise that their stories have some gender balance and sensitivity in them. The same goes for television stations like NTV and NBS. Unfortunately, however, other media houses, especially the tabloids, have proved to be a letdown. They constantly report about women in a negative way. Why does Red Pepper, for example, invest all their money in finding nude pictures for women rather than writing stories that matter to the nation? Can't they sell their news without undermining the position of women in the society? Even when they have the facts, they twist them, giving a very wrong picture to their readers. I can say there is a lot of misrepresentation of women issues in tabloids.



Media is biased against women – Monsignor Wynard Katende, spokesperson, Catholic Church, Kampala diocese.

It is not balanced. Though some media houses are doing well when it comes to reporting women's issues, there is equally a gross misrepresentation of the female gender in a bigger number of media houses. Tabloids, for example, mainly focus on women's nudity to sell their papers, leaving out crucial issues that matter to women like empowerment, development and even education. The bias is in the fact that even men have nude pictures spread all over social media platforms but how come they are never prominently featured in the tabloids? This biased writing signifies a misrepresentation of women's issues.

I am heartbroken that the same crusty attitudes the war generation brought to gender **equality** are still being used against my **daughters.**

Linda Scott
DP World Chair for Entrepreneurship
and Innovation
Saïd Business School



You were
born

Original...

Don't die

as a

Copy...



For More Information Contact:
The Executive Director
Action For Development
ACFODE House, Plot 623/624, Bukoto
P.O.Box 16729, Kampala – Uganda
Telephone: +256 414 531812
Email: info@acfode.org
Website: www.acfode.org
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ACFODE>
Twitter: [@acfode](https://twitter.com/acfode)