

Title:
The Glass Ceiling and beyond –
The status of women and diversity in the South African news media

1. Project:

This project seeks to establish the status of women and of diversity in South African news media. This document, which has been approved in principle by the SANEF Council, is aimed at eliciting funding support for such a study. The final research proposal will include suggestions by all parties concerned.

2. Background:

SANEF committed itself to facilitate processes aimed at en-gendering the South African media at its AGM in Durban in June 2003.

This was triggered by research presented to the members at the AGM revealing that only 17% of views, images, and stories in the media in 12 Southern African countries reflected the voices/opinions of women, showing that an important section of news was in fact missing from our representation of issues and stories in society. Research was also presented on the issue of diversity, where representation of the disabled, very disadvantaged groups such as people living with AIDS, and others were underrepresented or missing both in newsrooms and in media stories.

It is clear that we need a much better understanding of the policies, attitudes and practices in newsrooms in relation to gender, diversity and disadvantaged groups in our society – both towards news staff and towards our audiences, if we are to do a better job of reporting society more holistically. This is also a crucial issue for media houses with the industry requirements of the Equity targets looming.

The aim of this study is also to assess the ability of news management to deal with the transformational challenges of media in South Africa today in terms of gender and diversity. “At issue are not just managerial improvements, but the quality of leadership and the perspective brought to the news” (Guy Berger, 2003).

Some weaknesses have been evident in the way in which gender as an issue has been personalized with articles and columns in some Sunday and tabloid press attacking gender activists as individuals and barely touching on the key issues of gender. There is an indication of a deep underlying lack of understanding of gender issues from the managers and editors in our news institutions. In a country where the media is quick to highlight racism, it participates in perpetuating the stereotyping of women and, in some instances, actively marginalizes gender activists. In such an atmosphere, women journalists will not be able to contribute and participate as they should, nor will they be promoted as they should.

[information to be inserted]

3. Aim:

The aim of this project thus is to establish

1. the number of women in news media institutions in South Africa [information to be inserted]
2. on which levels they operate
3. how long they have been on that level
4. how this compares with particular institution’s EE strategies

5. what the policies and strategies are in those institutions where there is progress
6. share, if possible, these best practices with other media institutions.

4. Central Research Question:

What is the status of women journalists in various news media institutions in South Africa? What is the status of disabled journalists? In terms of diversity, what first language background and region do they come from (men and women); rural or urban?

5. Questions the research should find answers to:

- Why are there so few women editors at a senior level across all media in SA?
- What are the actual figures/statistics regarding women? – this would cover heads of departments, senior editors, news editors, senior journalists, etc in relation to male statistics, as well as a breakdown in terms of race
- What are the obstacles in the way of women becoming senior editors?
- What are the gender policies in the newsrooms?
- Are there affirmative action policies in newsrooms concerning gender?
- If so, how are they monitored for progress against targets?
- What attitudes towards women in management are prevalent in newsrooms –positive and negative?
- What ‘gender sensitivity’ regarding the news exists among those women who are in senior positions in the industry?
- What ‘gender sensitivity’ regarding the news exists among senior men in the newsrooms, and how does this relate to their positions on women staffers and advancement?

6. Definitions:

Women journalists: all those employees of the female sex who are employed on a full time basis and that are involved in the gathering, processing and packaging of news, by news media in South Africa.

News media: all those institutions where news is gathered, processed and packaged for consumption by the general public, whether it is print (newspapers), electronic (TV and radio news) or new media (news websites).

Gender sensitivity: an awareness and understanding of the issues underlying engendering the media.

7. Project plan and methodology

The study will be done according to socio-scientific qualitative research methodology and will be executed as follows:

1. Establish which media/companies will participate;
2. Draw up a pilot questionnaire;
3. Finalise the questionnaire;
4. Draw up a pilot template in which to answer questions
5. The project co-ordinator will send the questionnaire/template to co-ordinators at specific news media
6. These will be completed and sent back to the central co-ordinator within a certain deadline
7. The survey data will be assembled and findings analysed
8. Present findings at next suitable meeting.

8. Time frame:

The project will be conducted over a [...] month period from [...] to [...] and will consist of the following components:

1.) *Drawing up of pilot questionnaire/template: Time:*

- Draw up pilot questionnaire
- Have it reviewed by identified role-players

2) *At the same time identify co-ordinators at news media institutions: Time:*

- Work organisations at media institutions to get detail of co-ordinator
- Proposed co-ordinators (SANEF to advise):

News Institution:	Co-ordinator:	e-mail contact:
*	*	*
*	*	*

3) *Finalise questionnaire/Template: Time*

- Send out questionnaire to co-ordinators with deadline

4) *Receive questionnaire/templates with information back: Time*

- Assemble information

5) *Distil findings: Time*

- Assemble document per institution
- Write concluding chapter of all the findings/recommendations.

7) *Distil recommendations/best practices from information: Time*

- Select recommendations/best practices from information

8) *Finalise paper to be presented at ...: Time*

- Researchers to finalise paper as a word document and as a power point presentation

9. Outputs

These will include:

- Institutional reports on the status of women
- A national report on the status of women, to be tabled at first suitable SANEF meeting
- Identification and possible sharing of best practices
- Follow-up studies to record progress should also be kept in mind.

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