



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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AT THE

GENDER IN MEDIA EDUCATION REGIONAL CONFERENCE

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JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Professor Muna Ndulo, *Chair: Gender Links Board*

Esteemed Members of the Board of Gender Links

Ms. Colleen Lowe Morna, *Executive Director: Gender Links*

Ms. Kubi Rama, *Deputy Director: Gender Links*

Esteemed Staff of Gender Links

Distinguished Representatives of Academic Institutions

Members of the Media

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

What an honour and privilege it is for me to have been invited to present the keynote address at this regional conference organised by Gender Links, an organisation that has become known in the region for “firsts”. In this context, I can think of the rollout of gender-aware HIV/AIDS policies in media houses, the audit of women and men in media (part of the Glass Ceilings research), and the role Gender Links played in ensuring that the **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development** is adopted by Member States. Not only does this Protocol encourage all decision-making bodies in the region to achieve gender parity by 2015, it also calls for the mainstreaming of gender in all media laws, policies and training. Of significance, too, is that it urges media institutions to give equal voice to women and men, challenge gender stereotypes and, especially when covering gender violence, to do so in a balanced and sensitive manner. The question that needs to be asked is “are we debating the tenets of the Protocol sufficiently in order to ensure that it would receive the desired coverage and that both State and private entities would be moved to act on it?”

This conference covers an issue deeply rooted in all our cultures. As anecdotal evidence, although I don't entirely agree with him, let me quote from Steve Harvey's book “**Act like a Lady, Think like a Man**” (2009) He opens the first chapter, *What drives Men*, as follows:

“There is no truer statement: men are simple. Get this into your head first, and everything you learn about us in this book will begin to fall in place. One you get that down, you'll have to understand a few essential truths: men are driven by who they are, what they do, and how much they make. No matter if a man is a CEO, a CON, or both, everything he does is filtered through his title (who he is), how he gets that title (what he does), and the reward he gets for the effort (how much he makes). These three things make up the basic DNA of manhood – the three accomplishments every man must achieve before he feels like he's truly fulfilled his destiny as a man. And until he's achieved his goal in those three areas, the man you're dating, committed to, or married to will be too busy to focus on you.”

He goes on to underline the point:

“Think about it: from the moment a boy is born, the first thing everyone around him starts doing is telling him what he must do to be a real man. He is taught to be tough - to wrestle, climb, get up without crying, not let anyone push him around. He is taught to work hard – to do chores around the house, get the groceries out of the car, take out the trash, shovel the snow, cut the grass, and, as soon as he's old enough, get a job. He is taught to protect – to watch out for his mother and younger siblings, to watch over the house and the family's property. And he is especially encouraged to uphold his family name – make something of himself so that when he walks in a room, everybody is clear about who he is, what he does, and how much he makes. Each of those things is taught in preparation for one thing: manhood. The pursuit of manhood doesn't change once a boy is grown. In fact, it's only magnified.”

You see, there's a map behind every development, although at times a badly structured one. And there's a cause for every effect. Unfortunately, when we start to address the problem, normally the effect is where the focus lies. For good or ill, this is Plan B, and Plan B is not a good option, or is not an option. This trend tells us that humans tend to think linearly as the most logical way,

even in detrimental situations, rather than thinking in associatedly. The lesson is that we do need *'new thinkers'* in the 21st century, and Gender Links is on that track.

Surely, the solution to this gigantic problem lies beyond mainstreaming gender in journalism education. But that doesn't mean that we should give up or become complacent. If it weren't for the concerted, specific efforts targeted at mainstreaming gender in society in general, and in journalism curriculum in particular, human progress will be retarded and incomplete. Quoting one of my graduates from the ***Country Report: Audit of Gender in Media Education and Journalism Training at the Polytechnic of Namibia and the University of Namibia***, he states: *"women's issues are development issues and development issues are women's issues, because women suffer most when it comes to health, education, housing and other services."*

Moving on, **Namibia's Gender Policy** has been revised and is currently with Parliament for discussion and approval. Chapter 4 of the Policy, which focuses on 'Gender Balance in Education and Training', states in clause 4.13.1 that the government *"shall ensure that curricula, textbooks and all teaching/learning materials are free from gender-biased stereotype references and illustrations for all levels of education, including teacher training programmes"*. UNESCO - one of our development partners - has as one of the objectives for the 'Centres of Excellence in Journalism Project' that such Centres would *"become credible facilitators for media development"*. This objective speaks to how curricula are developed; staff training; the development of learning material; media monitoring and networking. Therefore, if we are striving after excellence and credibility, it goes without saying that gender has to be mainstreamed into media education. Why? For example, five SADC countries held national elections during 2009. In this region where women comprise more than 50% of the population and 20% of parliamentarians, they constituted only 14% of the politicians quoted (***Gender and Media Baseline Study***, 2003). Assuming our trainee journalists are

sufficiently aware of media laws and gender-related protocols, then most of our media would have featured the voices of both women and men in terms of leadership/governance-related issues; they would have given viewers, listeners and readers a breakdown of women and men represented on Political Party lists; and we would have seen a greater effort to use research findings to point out that women – as news sources – amounted to only 19%, still below the global average of 21% (**Media Monitoring Project**, 2005).

According to the **Election Observation Mission (EOM) Handbook**, the media analyst's core responsibility is to “*assess whether the media provide sufficient, balanced and diverse information to enable voters to make an informed choice*”. This responsibility speaks to how we train journalists and underscores the need for this Conference.

In an assessment of training needs in Southern Africa carried out by Colleen Lowe Morna and Zohra Khan (2001), the media's growing awareness of the need to incorporate gender into training, was documented. Editors interviewed during this Study agreed that reporting and editing were often gender biased, and that media practitioners needed training on gender issues. Such training has also been recommended in **Women and Men Make the News** and the **Southern Africa Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS)** (both conducted in 2003), as well as in the **Glass Ceilings** Study of 2008. Therefore, initiatives such as the Gender in Media Education Conference held in Windhoek in November last year, subsequent to the Gender in Media Education Audit, for which I too was interviewed, are necessary activities worthy of the support of training institutions striving after relevance, quality and excellence. Quality curricula ought to be responsive to the developments and significant changes in our society.

Therefore, the Polytechnic of Namibia appreciates the fact that we could be the 'experimental station' to provide the academic community in the region with the aforementioned watershed study on what could be, and should be,

the standards, and how to arrive at the noble goals of gender equality – in concept and practice. We profoundly thank Unesco, Gender Links and its Gender and Media Diversity Centre, and Patricia A. Made for an insightful study and report. In the same spirit, I assure you that we remain open to further collaboration and development, for the job must be done.

On the global scale, the year 2010 has, because of a major sport event to be hosted in the SADC region, necessitated an assessment of issues such as human trafficking. Governments have been proactive in terms of assessing the implications of such an event – especially for women and children – and in the region we've started to see a great deal more coverage of human trafficking and gender violence. Namibia, for example, is one of the countries to have ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, as well as the additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Humans, especially women and children, in 2003. Act No. 29 of 2004 – The Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) – which criminalises trafficking in persons, was also enacted. According to the ***Baseline Assessment of Human Trafficking in Namibia*** (Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, June 2009), limited reporting suggests Namibia may be a source and destination country for trafficked children. But, the magnitude of this problem is not known, even though it is suspected that most of the trafficking victims are children.

In a US Department of State Report entitled ***Trafficking in Persons*** (TIP) (June 2008), Namibia has been designated a “Special Case” because there is insufficient reliable information on the country's trafficking circumstances, even though a trafficking problem is suspected. In the Namibian Study, it is stated that many of the respondents in the Study were completely unaware of any existing legal framework to deal with human trafficking, although some knew of the Labour Act. When gender is effectively mainstreamed into journalism curricula, I believe we'll experience an increase in quality

journalism outputs in our region. It would be described as quality because the news content would be pertinent to women and men, it would link content to the appropriate Protocols/laws, and as such it would serve to hold governments and leaders accountable.

While only the third Millennium Development Goal addresses gender directly, gender applies to all the MDGs. In September 2000, Heads of State saw it fit to become signatories to the UN Millennium Declaration which sets out their development aspirations in a framework of action. Why is it not evident in our media coverage that we as signatory nations are committed to the targets as set out in the MDGs? I believe the answer to this question is linked to the role of journalism trainers and educators with regard to the mainstreaming of gender. Such training on gender mainstreaming would serve as the stimulus that would drive gender-aware reportage. If we look at it from this angle, our role seems to be huge, but do-able.

In the book ***Elements of Journalism: What News-people should know and the Public Should Expect***, by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2007), one passage seems to sum up what mainstreaming gender does for journalism, namely: *“Journalists should be aware of our basic dilemma as citizens: that we have a need for timely and deep knowledge of important issues and trends.... but we lack the time and means to access most of this crucial information. Thus, journalists should use their special access to put the material they gather into a context that will engage our attention and allow us to see trends and events in proportion to their true significance in our lives.”*

Finally, I would like to quote from the aforementioned **Gender in Media Education and Training Report**. At the Polytechnic, nine courses provide content on gender in the journalism/media discipline. Two Polytechnic students interviewed succinctly summed up the absolute need to mainstream gender in education and training. On the question of *'what part of your training impacted the most as relates to gender'*, the answers were telling.

One female student said: *“The photography course; before, I would look at pictures and not notice anything. A picture was just okay. But after the course I looked differently at photos and learned there is more to a picture. Most of those taking photos are men and most of the people photographed are women.”*

Another one said: *“We tend to think that gender is about women and we forget about males, male stereotypes and even violence against men. On the **Echoes** (student newspaper) field trips (2009), to gather stories from the communities, I learned about a man often left alone by his wife to take care of the children. When I tried to pursue this, I was told to look for the 'norm'. Seems we are more gender-sensitive when talking about women and when they are the victims.”* I need not say more!

Looking forward, may our deliberations over the next two days hold much scope in terms of identifying tangible ways to ensure that gender becomes central to our existing expertise and skills as media trainers.

I thank Gender Links for the gracious invitation and for your kind attention.

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