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# Women, Media, and Information/ Communication Technology\*

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**Strategic Objectives:**

- J1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication
- J2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media

Current news gathering has accelerated in pace due to technologies like CCTV cameras and so-called “citizen journalists” armed with a cellphone or video camera. Even before formal news reports could be verified, the “breaking” news has already gone viral. By the time it is aired and printed, it has become stale.

Fortunately for discerning audiences, traditional media (print and broadcast) are still looked upon as the more credible news, as facts are supposedly double checked. There are also reliable online magazines such as *Rappler* and credible bloggers who make up modern local media. Incidentally, most local broadsheets have online editions. In addition, foreign publications like *Time*, *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, CNN, BBC are all available on handheld phones.

Despite these changes, how women figure into mass media remains a challenge. On top of news, advertising, theater and arts including film, telenovelas, and TV shows—talk shows, variety and game shows, comedy and drama series and also fashion shows—are still observed to promote gender stereotypes, sexist, and even demeaning to women.

A recent study (Chemaly, 2014) of 120 films in ten most profitable film markets found that the global industry perpetuates discrimination against women: only 30.9% of speaking characters and 22.5% of fictional on-screen

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workforce are women. Further, female characters are more than twice as likely to be wearing sexy and sexualizing clothes, skinny and partially or fully naked. Although the Philippines was not included in the film study, American and foreign films greatly influence the culture and attitudes including gender biases of the Filipinos. In the Philippines, independent films are beginning to show promise giving women characters prominence, but there still needs to be a study on this.

This is the milieu against which we examine and review the strategic objectives for Women and the Media stated earlier. This report shows the current situation, gains and initiatives, gaps and recommendations on participation and access (strategic objective J1) and portrayal of women in the media (strategic objective J2) but not separately as compliance and initiatives address both objectives.

The best way to review any issue would be to have sex-disaggregated data. However, this is far from ideal in the Philippines. Fortunately we can cite the 2010 findings from the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) of the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), conducted for one day every five years in many countries since 1995.<sup>1</sup> In the Philippines, it was coordinated by Communications Foundation for Asia and implemented by Miriam College. Students monitored seven major newspapers, eight radio and nine TV networks. According to GMMP 2010 Philippine findings on news subjects, 31% are women and 69% are men, showing clear under representation of women in the media. Some 76% of stories reinforce stereotypes, while only 18% challenge stereotypes and only 8% highlight issues of gender inequality. (GMMP, 2010)

The GMMP global findings from 1995 showed slight "improvements" in women's coverage. From 2000 to 2010, for example, female news subjects increased globally by 6%. At the current rate, it will take more than 40 years to reach gender parity.

The International Women Media Foundation's (IWMF) Global Report on the Status of Women in the News and Media (2008–2010) showed that globally, 36% are women reporters and in Asia and Oceania, men outnumber women 4:1. The Philippine findings show that in middle management, half are women (senior editors), 34.5% are in top level management while 10.3% are board members (IWMF, 2010).

## **ONLINE MEDIA**

In 2010, GMMP included a new category—eight international and 76 national news websites.<sup>2</sup> Its global findings showed that 42% of online stories reinforce stereotypes with only 4% challenging stereotypes. This is re-

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<sup>1</sup> See WACC Website: [www.waccglobal.org](http://www.waccglobal.org)

<sup>2</sup> The Philippines was not included in the 16 countries in this category.

flective of global findings on traditional media where 46% of stories reinforce stereotypes, eight times higher than stories that challenge stereotypes; and only 6% of stories highlight gender equality (*Who Makes the News*, 2015).

Findings from the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study 4 (YAFS4) by the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) showed evidence of “low and declining appeal of traditional media,” a shift in the type of media preference to new forms. Six in 10 of young people in this age range are regular internet users; more than half have social network and email accounts and 78% have mobile phones. On average, they spend six hours a week online, some logging in as much as 35 hours of internet use. Females, the younger youth and those from economically better off regions show higher social media consumption than males, older youth and those coming from poorer regions. While females are more digitally wired than males, more males than females maintain virtual friends (Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. [DRDF], 2014).

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has been an instrumental enabler for the enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms. Women and women’s groups are using ICTs for their benefit. Internet for instance has provided many more ways in which women communicate and network with others, search for business and learning opportunities, do their advocacies, as well as exercise freedom of expression and participation.

However, the emergence of ICT comes with the rise of ICT-related violence that stigmatizes and targets women. The Internet has become a site to perpetrate violence against women in the form of pornography, harassment, threats, invasion of privacy and trafficking (*Report of the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and In Practice of the UN Human Rights Council*, 2013, para 66).

In the Philippines, the past years have seen the proliferation of nude images and sex videos being uploaded in the Internet without women’s consent. There may be no official statistics available; however, reports in the media abound on women unknowingly being photographed or videotaped then uploaded and distributed online.<sup>3</sup> The NGO Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA), in late 2012 came up with a crowd-sourced map, to encourage women and girls to report experiences and incidences of technology related VAW. To date, 63 cases have been reported in the site.

In some instances, women agreed to have their photos or videos to be taken but did not consent for these to be publicly distributed by any means.<sup>4</sup> With the spread of such images and videos, women’s bodily integrity, as well

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<sup>3</sup> The Foundation for Media Alternatives has mapped some cases of ICT-related VAW in the website [ph.takebackthetech.net](http://ph.takebackthetech.net). A total of 56 cases of technology-related VAW was reported in the said website from late 2012 to December 2013. The most common violation reported was online harassment, followed by the uploading of photos/videos without consent.

<sup>4</sup> There are even sites that feature top video scandals that rocked the Philippines.

as privacy, is violated; and with borderlessness and availability of multiple platforms afforded by the internet, such violation is multiplied many times over.

The Philippines has been dubbed as well as a “cybersex hub” with women performing sexual acts in front of web cameras and chat rooms in exchange for dollars. Located in poverty-stricken communities with limited or at times no source of income at all, women are forced to engage in cybersex or cyberpornography for their own survival.

It is interesting to note that the adult website *Pornhub* said that Filipinos ranked 26th in the daily globe traffic when it comes to watching pornography. Filipinos rank 15th when it comes to watching pornography using mobile devices (Lozada, 2014).

## **GAINS: LAWS AND MEDIA NGO INITIATIVES**

- A. **RA 9710 or The Magna Carta of Women** (MCW) provides for “non-discriminatory and non-derogatory portrayal of women in media and film.” Its Implementing rules and regulations called on the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) to form the Gender Equality Committee (GEC) composed of media-related government agencies like MTRCB and NGOs—Center for Media, Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) and the Women’s Feature Service (WFS). In this connection, WFS was commissioned to draft the Code of Ethics for Media, Gender Equality Guide and Guide to Protect Women from Discrimination in Media and Film based on RA 9710. Recommendations under the Beijing Platform for Action Sec. J 1 and 2 and provisions of MCW were included. The Code was reviewed and approved by the GEC in 2011–2012.

The MTRCB issued several memoranda advancing human rights and gender concerns:

1. MTRCB Chair Eugenio Villareal entered into an MOU with Ray Paolo Santiago, executive director of the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC), to provide resource persons and materials “on matters pertaining to the proper appreciation and understanding of human rights issues in movies and TV programs.”
2. MTRCB MOU on the Portrayal of Women in Media and Film, dated March 28, 2012, signed by several networks and entertainment outfits, provides that grantees of congressional broadcast franchise shall protect women against discrimination in media portrayal, develop positive images of women and men and eliminate stereotypes and discrimination, use gender sensitive language and images on TV programs and films.
3. MTRCB Memorandum Circular No. 04-2013 on Gender and Development (GAD) Program, calls on all TV networks, film producers, block timers

and other media content providers to submit their GAD programs; mainstream gender in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all areas and levels of the company; and appoint a decorum officer or gender focal person of senior management position, who will supervise the design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of GAD policies.

**B. Women’s Feature Service (WFS) Philippines:** Between 2009 and 2011, WFS initiated and organized The Working Group for Rights and Gender Education in Communication, an informal group composed of Deans and Heads of Journalism, Broadcast, and Mass Communication Departments from the University of the Philippines-Diliman, St. Scholastica’s College, Miriam College, and Lyceum College to put gender and human rights in the curriculum. Some of its activities were a forum for students and workshop for faculty; training male and female faculty from Ateneo de Manila University, St. Paul University, Far Eastern University, University of the East and Lyceum College on gender and media. In 2014, WFS piloted a Creative Non-fiction Workshop to improve the quality of women’s stories.

In 2011, WFS translated MCW brochures into six dialects for PCW and in 2013, WFS translated into Filipino and Cebuano a VAW desk manual for barangays also for PCW.

### ***Some WFS media campaigns 2010–2012:***

- Stories, discussions on “Justice and Healing for Survivors of Gender-based Violence” in local radio stations in 10 areas in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao
- Success stories on maternal health in the ARMM
- Radio discussions on local programs on the “Impact of Female Migration on Filipino Families and Strengthening Support Systems in the Community” with carers, teachers and children left behind, with local schools, NGOs and LGUs

### **Best Media Campaign Practices of Women’s Feature Service**

- Using existing radio and TV programs by packaging the program to feature a particular women’s human rights issue—guests (pro and con) including women experts from government and NGO and a woman affected by the issue.
- Linking the local NGO community with local media
- Travelling exhibits to highlight information such as CEDAW brought to malls, schools and government offices (The Philippine Commission on Women eventually printed the tarpaulins into a brochure in English and Filipino.)
- Multi-media campaigns like the Anti-VAW 18-day Campaign including billboards in the busiest MRT and LRT stations.
- Barangay fora and partnering with local governments and local NGOs

- C. **Foundation for Media Alternatives** has a campaign called "Take Back the Tech!" which encourages women and girls to take control of technology and use it for gender-based activism. It likewise conducts workshops on digital storytelling among women, as well as secure online communications to promote and protect women's rights in the digital sphere.
- D. Women and women's groups have utilized social media to protest the discriminatory and derogatory portrayal of women. Petitions were lodged at **Change.org**, to call the attention of the involved individuals and companies. A large department store in the country was also forced to pull out the stock of t-shirts it was selling, after a netizen posted a photo of the shirt it was selling that had a slogan comparing rape to, "a struggle with a snuggle."
- E. Starting in the second semester of school year 2014–2015, the **UP College of Mass Communication** offered a course called, "SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression) and Media" to undergraduate students. The Gender Committee of the College is also actively pushing to incorporate gender issues to other courses.

## REMAINING GAPS AND CHALLENGES

As explained by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ): Media ownership remains largely under the control of interest groups vested with both economic and political interests. Although a few corporate houses and families hold majority interests in the largest media agencies, there is no anti-trust legislation pertaining to the media in the Philippines. And passing one is not among the priorities of the government. There is also a growing and worrying tendency of politicians acquiring stakes in (local) media outlets. But the media itself do hardly any explicatory or analytical reporting on these trends and the emerging media monopolies.

The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world whose fundamental law upholds that ownership of mass media entities is the sole privilege of Filipino citizens and corporations. The effects this restriction has on the diversity of media outlets and the concentration of ownership is hardly discussed—and if so, controversially.

Women in the Philippines have more than 50% participation in media, in terms of roles as reporters, researchers, correspondents, and anchors; but fewer women get into the middle to top echelons of the newsrooms. In community media, men continue to dominate the beats and the newsrooms. However, it is important to note that there are regional differences; in Cebu, for instance, women dominate in the top newsroom positions.

But despite the advances of women in the media outlets their role as proponents of women's issues remains a challenge when in everyday reporting sensationalism wins over background coverage aiming at a fair representation of women's voices" PCIJ 2011, p. 3).



Below are further points of challenge for women and media:

- A. The Freedom of Information bill has not been passed yet. It was approved by the Senate last September 18, 2014 after more than a decade in the legislative mill. Dubbed as "The Transparency Bill," the FOI languished under the past four congresses. A consolidated version is up in the Lower House, who vowed to pass it this year. Rocked by allegations of corruption in the executive (DAP) and in the legislative branch (pork barrel or PDAF), the bill gives access to information and a monitoring system of government budgets and expenditure through open data systems. (Basu, 2014)
- B. Republic Act 10175 or the Cybercrime Prevention Act was passed in 2012. The law supposedly aims to protect the women, as well as children, from exploitation. It was met by opposition from many groups, which led to the issuance of a temporary restraining order (TRO) from the Supreme Court. In February 2014, the TRO was lifted and the law was declared not unconstitutional, although certain provisions pertaining to unsolicited commercial communications, real-time collection of traffic data, and restricting or blocking access to computer data were voted down.

However, the provisions on cyber libel and cybersex were retained. Women's groups are very much concerned over the cybersex provision<sup>5</sup> of the law which is problematic, considering its over-breadness and vagueness (Meruenas, 2013). The law also fails to consider the transnational nature of cybersex where operators of cybersex dens and buyers, who are mostly foreigners, are beyond the jurisdiction of the Philippines.

More harm is posed to women with the law as well, as they are the ones being arrested and put behind bars (Rendon, 2014).<sup>6</sup> In various years, raids and arrests all over the country were conducted: in Quezon City nine women including a minor were arrested in July 2007 (Andrade, 2007); in Taguig with nine women arrested in April 2011 (Alquitran, 2011); 38 were arrested mostly women in Bataan in January 2011 (Dacanay 2011); and, recently, the arrest of four persons including a minor girl in a raid in Iloilo in July 2014.

- C. The passage of laws such as RA 10175 and RA 9995 or the Anti-Voyeurism Act which punishes the uploading of immoral and offensive videos and photos including sharing them have not been deterrents to perpetrators of violence. There are still many reports coming from media and those reported to authorities about online violations

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<sup>5</sup>Section 4(c) (1) of RA 10175 defines cybersex as the "willful engagement, maintenance, control or operation, directly or indirectly, of any lascivious exhibition of sexual organs or sexual activity, with the aid of a computer system, for favor or consideration."

<sup>6</sup>NBI for the past years have been conducting raids against cyber sex dens

of rights, including the uploading of compromising photos or videos without consent. As women and girls continue to be subjected to online violence, there is a need to consider women's access to justice to ensure that their rights online are protected as well.

Despite efforts to address gender stereotyping, discrimination, and gender inequality, they still persist. In 2014, shows by some entertainers and clothing companies which were staged offline, but can be viewed online, showed a lack of understanding and utter insensitivity and disregard to women's rights and issues.<sup>7</sup> Women continue to be portrayed in derogatory roles. For instance, a popular actor was shown holding a leash with a woman attired in undergarments attached to it.

Studies done by students of Mass Communication at the University of the Philippines tell a similar story. Their content analysis of popular television programs showed that spaces have been opened for women's issues, and portrayals have seen some resistance against the traditional role and behavior of women. However, these are very minor when pitted against the majority of portrayals of women in television.

- While alternative media outfits such as *Kodao* portray women in poverty as active fighters for their political rights, mainstream documentaries of *I-Witness* showed poor women as passive and dependent (Miguel, 2013).
- Among the 228 news stories of State of the Nation Address (SONA) featured during a 15-day study period, only 26 stories were related to women. Among these 26, 10 were personality centered and 16 discussed women's issues. This is despite the program being led by women (Cordero, 2014).
- Teleseryes allow for female antagonists, who are sexually forward, but only to show the viewers that this kind of women are to be punished and damaged in the end, leaving them passive and helpless once more (Lagrosa, 2013).
- A study of soap operas from a 10-year period showed progress in the representation of working women. They are portrayed as economically and socially capable. They have non-traditional professions such as a journalist and an intelligence officer. Unfortunately, women have not been really freed from their confinement as housewife. Her career and family life cannot co-exist together, and one aspect must suffer for her to succeed in the other. (Genota, 2011)
- A number of lesbian portrayals in drama shows illustrated that there are now spaces for lesbians in mainstream television. The treatment of the stories, however, still subscribes to heterosexual norms. Lesbians mimic males

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<sup>7</sup> Examples are the shows of Vice Ganda that trivialized rape, and the show 'The Naked Truth' produced by Bench, that debased the status of women. A large department store was also forced to pull out stocks of a shirt it was selling, which gives a wrong impression about rape.



and are silenced by heterosexism and patriarchy (Queyqueo, 2012; Dogelio, 2013).

- Whitening lotion advertisements abound in television. While modern versions of these advertisements show women as empowered, their power can only come through consumption (Rolorata, 2012).
- D. The importance of ICTs, including the Internet cannot be understated. However, access remains low.<sup>8</sup> Access remains concentrated in the urban areas and to those who have the means, thus limiting the opportunities available for women. Women's knowledge of and skills in using ICTs should be improved to help in their development.
- E. In the Web Index 2014 Report, the Philippines' overall rank in the Web Index is 41 out of 86 countries. It ranked 52 in universal access, 43 in freedom and openness, 45 in relevant content and 39 in empowerment.
- F. Some news organizations have incorporated gender policies for their organizations, including principles for coverage. Even these organizations however do not have regular reviews that would insure practice according to set gender principles. Most organizations will not act on this issue unless there are complaints and not all complaints receive the appropriate attention. Public pressure is the best corrective for bad practice. But the public is not as pro-active and there is still no solidarity of public opinion on the issues of women and gender (CMFR, 2015).

From an informal online survey by WFS on women and the media, the following have been identified as urgent needs:

1. A critical audience, vocal about what they want to see or not want to see on broadcast and print, especially by their children;
2. Teachers and media practitioners aware of women's rights and conscious about not reinforcing stereotypes but changing patriarchal attitudes, particularly the low regard of women that can trigger violence against women and girls (sexual harassment, trafficking, rape, domestic violence) and neglect their reproductive health and rights;
3. A media gender monitoring system to check programs and portrayal of women and address gender issues in media; and
4. A local, comprehensive study/analysis of gender-based "hate" speech in social media where there is less restraint on negative "hate" expressions on issues of women and gender.

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<sup>8</sup> Internet penetration in the Philippines is at 33% of the population, or at about 35 million. There is no available sex disaggregated data on Internet usage in the country.

## KEY PRIORITIES FOR ACTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Media literacy among the general public in communities, including knowledge about the Magna Carta of Women, CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and MDGs—bringing these international treaties to the community and invoking the human rights of women.
2. Encouragement of digital literacy, not just in terms of being able to use and operate gadgets and hardware, but using ICTs for women's empowerment. Digital literacy should also be strategic, rights-based.<sup>9</sup>
3. Gender sensitivity training among faculty and media and advertising practitioners, starting from the student population to be conscious of the rights of women and media's crucial role in society. Campaign to have the Code of Ethics and Gender Equality Guide known to all media practitioners in private and government media and schools.
4. Community and school-based interventions concerning the above as well as in-house training for media. Continuing training and education of media on women and gender-related issues should be undertaken to insure its institutionalization in media/press practice. The initiatives taken after or related to the Beijing conference did not continue. The same should be incorporated in formal basic education programs (CMFR, 2015).
5. Mainstreaming gender equality in media awards (Magna Carta of Women, Sec. 42).
6. To conduct more research on how women are portrayed in alternative media, and explore ways of using alternative media to help us forward the empowerment agenda of the women's movement.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) has recommendations regarding the strategic objectives mentioned in the beginning of this review which have not yet been fulfilled. One is the creation of a directory of women experts.

This is crucial in ensuring the ease at which these women experts can be contacted and tapped.

In a survey of women in media and other sectors, the areas not covered by media were aging women, particularly age discrimination in jobs despite qualified skills and policy and advocacy programs and support services for aging women; more coverage on the Family Code to protect women and girls from exploitation within the family; women in science and technology; women and the justice system; women and armed conflict; and indigenous women.

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<sup>9</sup> This recommendation came from participants of the National Women's Summit 2014

The BPfA also recognizes the importance of media monitoring as a tool for change. It encourages NGOs and media professional associations to establish media watch groups. The schools of journalism and communication can make monitoring exercises for the students in a gender and media curriculum. There is need to dialogue about the GMMP findings and to mainstream gender responsive coverage.

### **Proposed Recommendations from the Women and Media Workshop at the Asia Pacific CSO Forum on Beijing+20 —November 15, 2014<sup>10</sup>**

- To address the digital and media divides there must be recognition and the will to address economic, social-cultural and political divides.
- Increased support for women-driven media that reaches different audiences with different needs.
- For governments to use gender audits such as the Global Media Monitoring project to conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis of content to be able to ensure that government communication and media strategies effectively promote their gender equality commitments.
- Ensure an increase in the number of women who are in key decision-making positions in all media institutions whether corporate or alternative (When speaking of corporate media, this needs to include social media such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc.).
- Both government owned and private media need to develop strategies to work with women's media groups to conduct trainings, address appropriate language and understand gender issues and be held accountable for their reporting. Internet governance and/or regulations need to incorporate a gender perspective where women need to be involved in formulating deliberations.
- Engage intermediaries to build safer online spaces: Internet and mobile phone service providers play a role in ensuring women's privacy and safety when using their services. And to develop corporate policies, practices and tools that respect women's rights is a critical part of responding to and preventing technology related forms of violence against women and ensure the participation of women in internet governance processes and in telecommunications regulatory policies.

At the global level, here are conclusions and recommendations from the Web Index:

We stand at a crossroads between a Web "*for everyone*"? one that enables all people around the world to improve their life chances and reduces inequalities

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<sup>10</sup> This portion was contributed by Lisa Garcia of FMA

both between and within countries? and a "winner takes all" Web that further concentrates wealth and political power in the hands of a few.

A "winner takes all" Web is not a pre-determined outcome. As this report has sought to demonstrate, much depends on the policy choices we make now. Will we take bold action to ensure the open Web belongs to all of us? Or will we allow billions to be shut out from reaping the benefits of the most powerful technology of the century?

It is time to recognise the Internet as a fundamental human right and take the following steps to make it a reality:

1. **Accelerate progress towards getting everyone online.** Poverty must not prevent anyone, anywhere from connecting. Universal access means everyone should be able to use all of the Web all of the time, safely, freely and privately.
2. **Level the playing field** by preventing price discrimination in Internet traffic, balancing the rights of copyright holders with those of Web users, and protecting online service providers from liability for content posted by third parties. We believe that governments must recognize the Internet's essential place in economic and social infrastructure and treat it like other public utilities.
3. **Invest in high-quality public education for all** to ensure that technological progress doesn't leave some groups behind.
4. **Promote participation in democracy and protect freedom of opinion.** Fight the growing "democratic deficit" by reversing the erosion of press freedom and civil liberties seen in almost all Web Index countries in recent years; use the Web to make government more transparent to citizens; and provide stronger protections for freedom of speech, freedom of association, and privacy, both offline and on.
5. **Create opportunities** for women and poor and marginalized groups by investing more in ICTs to overcome key barriers in health, education, agriculture and gender equity. Achieve scale and impact by involving stakeholders in identifying the specific problems that ICTs can help to solve and those it cannot, and designing properly resourced programs to address both.

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