COMMUNICATING GENDER:

A CHALLENGE FOR CAMEROON'S MEDIA

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ANALYSIS OF THE CAMEROON WOMAN'S SITUATION

The improvement of the Cameroonian woman's status seems hypothetical as demonstrated by the problems she faces, especially with the new drive brought by globalization through its influence on the formulation of social policies. The specific difficulties of the Cameroonian woman are therefore noticeable mainly in the socio-cultural, legal, political and economic domains.

The past one hundred years or so have witnessed the emergence of revolutionary ideas that have changed the course of human civilization. One singular development that changed the agenda of governance has been the emergence of women as active players in nation building.

There is a need to recognize the global trend towards gender parity in all spheres of l1fe, a trend that is even more significant in parliamentary democracies.

Women have had to fight for every inch of ground in their encounter with power politics, the constraint of party discipline and sometimes disparaging media coverage is often a bitter experience. Women have to learn the rules of the game and the language of politics, while fully preserving their identity as women and avoiding the pitfall of demeaning imitation of their male counterparts.

Social and production organization, the crisis and restructuring of the economy, customary practices together with the problems linked to the unequal exploitation of land resources) the lack of water in some areas, the disappearance of forest cover and impoverishment of soils, the soil in the prices of cash crops, and today the increasing cost of food items, inaccessibility to inputs and the drop in labour productivity, comprise factors which penalize women.

Although in 1994 Cameron ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), obstacles of a social and cultural nature continue to hamper the endeavour to give women a sense of responsibility, particularly the subsistence of harmful traditional customs within certain ethnic groups.

In fact, some backward beliefs prevent the woman from participating fully in activities taking place outside the marital home. This situation confines her to her traditional roles of wife and mother, thereby reducing her chances of becoming useful and exercising all her potentialities.

The girl child is specifically affected by this situation which obstructs her harmonious development in society. In reality, discriminating socialization backed by socio-cultural practices such as excision, nutritional taboos, and early and/or forced marriages put the woman in an unfavourable situation. Moreover, difficulties relating to the current economic climate cause parents to abdicate their responsibilities for guidance thus expose the girl child to exploitation, prostitution, drug, assaults, rapes, incest and delinquency.

Relationships between men and women are characterized by ever-increasing inequalities. The woman already considered as an inferior being according to the patriarchal organization of society further subjects her workforce to the man and is more and more interested in areas of responsibilities considered as specifically reserved for the man such as education and health of the household and children.

To this phenomenon can be added the informal assumption of responsibilities for young unemployed people, "retrenched workers" and other jobless people who do not have access either to sources of production in the community. The responsibility of women who are family heads thus becomes more complex and heavy and at the same time their increasing activities promise changes in the social drive, which are not always geared to the improvement of the family well-being: relational problems between men and women, abdication by men of their responsibilities for children's education, extra activities for women.

This combination of factors exposes the Cameroonian woman to more violence, more poverty, and more vulnerability. Her vague inclination for independence becomes threatened. In a society which is evolving towards modernity, she finds herself in a sort of dilemma characterized on the one hand by independence, and on the other hand, by the respect for loyalties as determined by the traditional society for the preservation of social equilibrium maintained by relations of complementarily inherent in any patriarchal society.

All the same, the exercise of full citizenship comes up as a current problem both in daily life and in the formulation of policies concerning women. The same holds good for social rights which are mainly health, education and training.

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER
Definition of gender

Gender can be defined as the set of characteristics, roles and behaviour patterns that distinguish women from men. These characteristics are constructed not biologically but socially and culturally. The sex of an individual is biologically determined, whereas gender characteristics are socially constructed: a product of nurturing,

conditioning and socio-cultural norms and expectations. These characteristics change over time and vary from one culture to another. Gender also refers to the web of cultural symbols, normative concepts, institutional structures and internalized self-images which, through a process of social construction, define masculine and feminine roles and articulate these roles within power relationships.

Gender is therefore identified by patterns .of learned behaviaur that are considered appropriate either far women alone .or far men alone. Historically, most values and expectations far women's behaviaur have been articulated in relation to men, rather than independently in terms related to women as a group. In fact, it is frequently difficult for bath women and men to think .of women as being culturally distinct from men, or as having destinies and goals that go beyond those defined by men.

Much gender behaviour is compartmentalized into stereotyped roles, which are artificially polarized or contrived to be complementary to that of the other gender. In many vital respects women are segregated from the world of men, and women's delegated work and traditional responsibilities frequently confine them to the domestic sphere. When women walk outside of the home, the division .of labour in factories, corporations, and other .organizational settings show persistent patterns of segregation. Although some explanations of these trends give weight to the quality .of women's motivations, sociologists suggest that social structures, such as avenues .of access to resources, keep women in segregated and subordinate roles.

Even in scientific investigations about the nature of women's lives and cultural experiences, women and their characters are frequently defined through their sexual functions. However, recent social and cultural changes have created a wider consensus an possibilities for seeing women in a variety .of ways. The view that women have mare opportunities available to them than bearing and raising children is

increasingly accepted.)tis also increasingly acknowledged that women have distinctive values and priorities and that their moral decisions are based an criteria that are different from men's.

Emerging new patterns in gender relations may be thought of as a new stage in human evolution. Recent thinking about women may lead to behaviour that will not revert to former ways of doing things, although many established patterns in gender relations persist without interruption.

Women are frequently thought of and experienced by men as threats to men's status. However, statistics on physical and emotional violence and abuse between women and men show that women are overwhelmingly the victims in female-male conflicts and not the

oppressors

Women and men are beginning to recognize that women have their own kinds of sexual needs, and that they are entitled to aspire and exercise power. Research suggests that the more traditional, narrowly defined, polarized, gender-specific behaviour is unhealthy for both women and men, and that androgynous models of gender behaviour are more viable as ideals for the optimal functioning of women and men. On a social level, beliefs in a "right to be human" through equal sex roles are beginning to replace the traditional myths and fantasies that perpetuate and reinforce women's dependence on men and their resistance to becoming independent.

Established definitions of human nature need to be redefined by adding the accumulated new knowledge about women. Similarly, a deeper understanding of minority women's experiences must be used to challenge and reformulate assumptions about what constitutes women's experiences and behaviour.

In examining the interplay between women's awareness and the social order, new trends and precedents must be identified. When new knowledge about gender can be linked to the humanistic concern for equity, new principles will emerge. For example, equality will be

accepted by more people when the concept of the comparable worth of women and men is understood more fully. Women and men perform different economic and social roles in society, but in many respects parity between these contributions can be demonstrated.

Another area in which gender must be defined more equally is that of religion and spirituality. Women are beginning to experiment with their own religious needs, and to develop new forms and rituals of spirituality. As women's spirituality is developed, new views and ideas will necessarily emerge to influence, and perhaps contradict, established ways of doing things. In all the institutional orders of society, and perhaps especially in the area of religion and spirituality, gender perspectives have the potential for being bases or sources of formulations of new paradigms. These deeper and more accurate ways to understand gender experiences will serve to build more representative, meaningful, and reliable knowledge.

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

Kunczik, inspired by Max Weber, defines communication as "social action by means of symbols" or "the transmission of messages to one or more other persons by partners". To Kunczik, communication can only be possible where there is the intention to communicate: "the intention of conveying something is considered a prerequisite for the existence of communication." To him, for there to be communication: "At least one individual must seek to communicate with another individual", and lithe use of symbols must be intended". He stresses that lithe "correct" reception of the message by the recipient or recipients is not determinant for the existence of communication".   To him therefore, there is communication whether or not the recipient can decode the message.

Functions of Communication

According to UNESCO (1980: 14-16), communication, if considered in its broadest sense, not only as the exchange of news and messages but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmission and sharing of ideas, facts and data, has the following main functions in any social system:

1) *Information:* The collection, storage, processing and dissemination of news, data, pictures, facts and messages, opinions and comments required in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions, as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decisions.

2) *Socialization:* the provision of a common fund of knowledge which enables people to operate as effective members of the society in which they live and

which fosters social cohesion and awareness thereby permitting active involvement in public life.

3) _Motivation:_ the promotion of the immediate and ultimate aims of each society, and stimulation of personal choices, and aspirations; the fostering of individual or community activities, geared to the pursuit of agreed aims.

4) _Debate and discussion:_ the provision and exchange of facts needed to facilitate agreement or to clarify differing viewpoints on public issues; the supply of relevant evidence needed to foster greater popular interest and involvement in all local, national and international matters of common concern.

5) _Education:_ the transmission of knowledge so as to foster intellectual development, the formation of character and the acquisition of skills and capacities at all stages of life.

6) _Cultural promotion:_ the dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the heritage of the past; the development of culture by widening the individual's horizons, awakening his imagination and stimulating his aesthetic needs and creativity.

7) _Entertainment:_ the diffusion, through signs, symbols, sounds and images, of drama, dance, art, literature, music, comedy, sports, games, etc for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment.

8) _Interaction:_ the provision to all persons, groups and nations of access to the variety of messages which they need in order to know and understand each other and to appreciate others' living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations.

EXPLORATION OF MAJOR GENDER THEMES

Gender Equity and Gender Equality

Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

Gender equality means that women and men enjoy the same status. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results.

Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and differences between women and men, and the varying roles that they play.

Empowerment

A women's empowerment strategy emphasizes the importance of addressing years of discrimination 'against women by devising programmes and strategies that increase women's skills, capacities, rights, and opportunities. It addresses ways in which development cooperation initiatives help create the conditions whereby women can become the agents of their own development and empowerment. It thus emphasizes the transformatory potential of development initiatives - in terms of sustainability as well as ensuring that women feel that they have been the agents of the transformation, that they have won this new space for action themselves.

If empowerment is the ability to exercise power, then everyday forms of women's empowerment are the ability of women to exercise power in the social institutions that govern their daily lives: the household and extended family, local community councils and associations; local elite; local markets and local government. Women's advocates have emphasized that empowerment cannot be done from the outside, "it is something women need to do for themselves"

One aspect of empowerment is women's participation in formal political structures. This was recognized in one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action, 'women in power and decision-making.' However, it seeks "to identify power less in terms of domination over others (with its implicit assumption that a gain for women implies a loss for men), and more in terms of the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength."

As both a process and a goal, women's empowerment is fundamentally connected to democratization, human rights and the self determination of women and men.

Mass Media and Women's Empowerment

Karl (1981 :26) asserts that the mass media contributes in marginalising women and also notes that the mass media reinforces and maintains the traditional inferior social status of women. The

marginalization of women is blamed on the fact that the mass media and its institutions (television, radio, newspapers, periodicals and advertising) are solidly in the hands of, and controlled by men. The author showed that: women are virtually absent from important news of the world whether transmitted by the press, radio or television, very little attention is given to women's work, achievements, situation and needs, the media is responsible for perpetuating and disseminating traditional stereotypes of women.

An analysis of media programmes in relation to women reveals welfare oriented programmes. The content of messages deals mostly on breast feeding, pregnancy, family planning and human resources development. As a result, only women's special or practical needs or basic needs (fundamental to all human beings) are addressed. These are needs which are special for all women and arise from their sex roles. The main concern of women in development is not only to cater for such practical needs but to overcome the problems which arise from the interplay between women's concerns and gender or strategic needs. Most crucial for women's development is to address gender issues (arising from gender discrimination) and overcome gender inequalities which stand in the way of addressing women's empowerment and development in totality.

To address women's strategic gender needs on the other hand (common to all women) is to deal with women's subordination, lack of, or unequal resources and education; unequal legal rights; vulnerability to poverty and violence, etc. While programmes on beauty, morality,

health, etc might meet certain needs of women in total agreement with these types of messages Kindervatter (1979:70), asserts they "fail to equip women with an understanding of and control over social, economic and or political forces in order to improve their standing in society".

Gender Mainstreaming

A gender mainstreaming strategy emphasizes the importance of addressing the different impacts and opportunities that a particular programme or policy may have on women and men. The strategy focuses on making gender equality concerns central to policy formulation, legislation, resource allocations, and planning and monitoring of programmes. Using a gender mainstreaming strategy to

achieve gender equality requires changes in awareness and capacity of all personnel, and implies strong management commitment. A

knowledge base on the linkages between gender equality and the substantive issues and processes in organisational programmes needs to be developed, and practical analytical skills fostered. Methodologies and tools need to be developed and resource bases of more in-depth expertise in relevant areas established.

Given the high priority granted mainstreaming strategies in the Beijing Platform for Action, it is important to understand the challenges and the benefits of this approach.

Distinguishing means and ends: One way of understanding mainstreaming is to distinguish three different targets or areas for action. Support to gender mainstreaming can take place at the level of: (i) The country, e.g. through mainstreaming gender into its institutions, laws,

and government policies, (ii) The development cooperation programme either with partner governments or multilateral organisations; and (iii) The agency itself - its procedures and structures.

Challenging the development agenda: Effective gender mainstreaming calls for a complete transformation of the development agenda, so that the participation of women as decision makers influences development priorities and activities.

Specific initiatives to support equality objectives: A mainstreaming strategy does not rule out funding specific projects that empower women to work toward equality. The crucial prerequisite is that they are based on an analysis of the different situations of men and women and support gender equality.

Challenges - The way Forward.

The role of the media as an agent of change is pivotal to the development of a nation. The media is therefore critical to efforts at women development.

The Cameroonian media, being male-dominated, is not sufficiently sensitive to issues relating to women and as such requires re-education and re-orientation.

The capacity of institutions (ministries, parastatals, NGO's, etc) to incorporate an understanding of gender and women's empowerment in their work is a fundamental cornerstone of a gender equality strategy. Many multilateral, bilateral, government and non-governmental organisations have invested in training to

increase staff skills in gender analysis. Guidelines, checklists and gender action plans have been

developed to assist staff in programming.   Yet, experience has demonstrated that institutionalizing a commitment to and competence in programmes and policies that support gender equality remains a critical challenge.

Both women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming strategies are relevant to efforts to build internal institutional capacity to

support gender equality. Empowerment strategies may focus on providing leadership and skill training to ensure that women can take

advantage of opportunities to rise to senior positions.   Gender mainstreaming strategies may involve analyzing differential impacts of organisational policies on women staff members or ensuring that gender concerns are taken into account in programmes.

It is critical to recognize, however, that no single strategy can be used to build institutional capacity to support gender equality. Often, institutional leaders might think that simply achieving parity (SO/50) between women and men in decision-making positions, or having an

equality policy is enough. In fact, building institutional capacity for gender equality encompasses a wide range of initiatives, involving training, review of policies and programmes, incorporating gender accountable procedures into recruitment and performance evaluation

procedures, issuing guidelines and checklists, and many other activities.

Many experts in gender organisational change have raised questions about how gender relations influence the very constitution of institutions and how institutions continue to produce policies and

programmes that fail to recognize the needs of women. Gender equality can be achieved by organizations only (through)... changing inequitable power relations..." This implies a capacity-building approach that is comprehensive and attentive to both the overt (programme and policies) and covert (culture and human relations) process in organisations.

Capacity-building strategies can include any of the following, as well as others:

❖ Building institutional capacity to assess programmes, policies, performance, and procedures from a gender perspective.

❖ Providing general and thematic gender analysis training for programme staff.

  ❖ Undertaking organisational gender 'audits' to identify areas of good practice and obstacles to equality initiatives;

  ❖ Organising dialogues, roundtables and briefings for staff on gender issues that are relevant to their work.

  ❖ Developing guidelines and checklists that assist staff to determine if they are supporting women's empowerment and/or gender mainstreaming strategies

  ❖ Assisting those specifically assigned to advocate for gender equality - e.g. gender units and focal points - to develop skills in advocacy, negotiation and other necessary change agent qualities.

  ❖ Developing gender equality action plans at the departmental and organizational levels. . Publicizing all Gender and Development (GAD) activities. . Ensuring that women activities are reflected proportionately in the media.

  ❖ Designing publicity programmes for specific projects on women.

  ❖ Eliminating gender bias in media language.

  ❖ The media should facilitate effective partnership among governments, inter-governmental organizations and women-focused Non-Governmental Organisations.

  ❖ Through a carefully worked out programme of social mobilization and awareness generation, advocate for the abolition of those malpractices which encourage and institutionalize discrimination against women.

  ❖ Government information structures should facilitate the partnership of government with the individual press and alternative media practitioners all the way to the community level to promote women's development.

  ❖ Government and media shall, as a deliberate policy, encourage the entry and participation of women in the media and ensure their progression to the top.

  ❖ The media should endeavour to use gender-desegregated data to report.

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A PAPER PRESENTED BY MME ANNE MUNJONG AT A ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY NKONG HILL-TOP C.I.G FOR FEMALE MEDIA PROFESS ONALS IN THE SOUTH WEST PROVINCE ON FRIDAY APRIL 2008 IN FAKOSHIP CONFERENCE HALL – BUEA

This paper will focus on the Tasks and challenges faced by Female Media Professionals in the media world.

It will be discussed in four parts. First the introduction. second the difficulties and challenges faced by female media professionals. third. how can these obstacles and challenges be overcome and finally the conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Female Media Professionals allover the world are facing almost similar problems

in the discharge of their duties whether as Journalists. Camera-women. News presenters

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or Sound Technicians.

This is due to the fact that many people, still look at the female media Professional as one who has limitations in various areas of life.

Many women are in the majority of majors in colleges and schools of Journalism and Mass Communication for so many years but this has not been translated into comparable numbers for women on the career track years later. What could be the Impediment or standstill? These are some of the issues that we will try to discuss in this paper.

2. DIFFICULTIES AND CHALLENGES FACE **FEMALE MEDIA PROFESSIONALS**:

Female MEDIA Professionals encounter a lot of challenges which maybe said to be peculiar to them and 'one of the major-example is the rampant sexual Harassment of women in most places when they want to exercise their duties as Journalists or reporters.

Most of the sexual harassment occurs when they are out to seek for information to do their reporting or produce programmes.

One of the main challenges for women media professional In the discharge of their duties stems from gender in equality. This is due to the fact that in most African Countries. there exist this deep rooted social attitude that the role of women in society is more in domestic arena rather than regular employment such as in the media.

Decision making at all levels are therefore dominated by the men. Cultural norms portray women as subordinates to men and are most 'of the times referred to as the "Weaker *Sex".* Women are therefore not regarded as equal participants with men In the work places.

Training opportunities for women Media Professionals are limited because decision for such training are often made in the newsroom where top decision makers are men. It is very common that such men seek sexual favours to accord training opportunities for women.

From the point of view of media work, the commonly held attitude is that "women cannot survive the rigors of the Profession. This has led to self censorship by women themselves with the result that they have missed training opportunities.

The promotion of women media Professionals has been retarded most of the times by the male prejudice against women.

Some have been discriminated against when it, comes to promotion simply on the grounds of sex.

Advocacy for Professional's rights of Women Media Professional is wanting because it is widely claimed that Women Media Associations such as National Professional Media Women (NAPMEW) is week and ineffective.

The Women Media Professional is disadvantaged by family demands and responsibilities where for example, unlike her male counterpart; she cannot be assigned at times to perform certain tasks.

This is because of her involvement in child-bearing and even stop from undertaking some rigours journalistic tasks when expecting.

3. HOW CAN CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN THE   MEDIA BE OVER COMED?

. Granted that the challenges and constraints principally arise from gender inequality, which is in itself grounded on social norms, cultural stereotypes and some legal impediments at times, the treatment that meets this diagnosis Is a prescription that cures the illness of gender inequality and its identified causes.

. Changing people's attitudes towards roles of women in society will therefore require a more honest portrayal of women by the media...

Women should also be encouraged to seek senior positions In Media Organisations to Influence media presentation of women's .[ole in the society. Talking about change of .social norms this should continue through sensitization programmes which are also needed to break down the behavioural patterns that Stem from these attitudes.

. Education in our schools from early stages to foster a sense of gender equality among the youths and sustained women campaign among adults to acJ1leve a change of attitude on gender issues and eventually impart proper knowledge *on* and promote gender equality to pre-school going children at .home will be a useful investment and a powerfu1 tool in addressing gender inequality.

. Legal provisions should be put in place to regulate representation of Women in all decision making organs such as by quota.., as it is practiced In some countries of the world like India. In this way. the representation of women media Professionals in some organs should minimise gender inequality and thereby reduce the constraints in the discharge of their Professional duties brought abollt by the gender inequality.

This should improve their training opportunities and also Improve advocacy for their rights Le. women media professionals.

. Finally strengthening of Unions representing Media Women Professionals and procuring a fair representation of women in some associations such as Cameroon Union of Journalists. (C.U.J) Cameroon Association of English Speaking Journalists (CAMASEJ). and National Professional Media Women (NAPMEW) will go a long way In advocating for their rights.

4. CONCLUSION:

It is hoped that if change in social norms and legal Impediments which promote gender inequality is achieved. women generally and media women Professionals in particular will have a level playing ground with their male counterparts In their lives and professions. The task for change is a difficult but not an Impossible one. It requires conscious Government commitment to lay the foundation on which the edifice of gender equality will be erected.

Finally. I' will strongly recommend that editors of prints and audio-visual media houses should constantly publish articles. features and air programmes produced by female Media Professionals in order to spur them to do more.

Women should be allowed to do reports on stories considered challenging like covering crises and other hard news like politics. A lady like **Christiane Amapur of** CNN covered the gulf war for so many years and did it so well so women wake up from slumber and assert yourselves.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.

THE IMAGE OF A WOMAN AS PORTRAYED BV THE MEDIA

PRESENTED BY REV. ACHOWAH UMENEI.

WACC PRESIDENT AFRICA REGION

1. *The Creation Story*

- ❖ Man and woman created in the image of God, Genesis 1 :26-27
- ❖ Male and female of same substance, same dignity, same integrity, equality before God
- ❖ Woman not made inferior to man in any way so to say
- ❖ Man not endowed with more wisdom/intelligence than woman
- ❖ Physiological differences and different roles between woman and man
- ❖ Bible written in a male dominant culture & reflects Jewish subordination of women
- ❖ But Jesus in the New Testament gives women dignity and their rightful place

2. *Women in Employment*

- ❖ Government Statistics indicate more women than men in Cameroon
- ❖ Church figures show higher membership of women than men in congregations
- ❖ But look at the country's work force and you have more men than women
- ❖ Need someone to tell me which profession employs more women than men
- ❖ Teaching, nursing, secretariat work, catering, which one? I am not sure!
- ❖ Do we have more men than women in the job market? Perhaps no, maybe yes
- ❖ Assuming more men than women, what are some of the reasons?
- ❖ Male dominant society, women late to go to school, no qualified women in some fields . Some jobs openly discriminate against women
- ❖ Look at administration, media houses, companies, parastatals
- ❖ Very few women in positions and decision-making platforms

3. *Women in tilte News*

- ❖ Limit yourself to newspapers, radio and television though media is more than that
- ❖ Take one day in a week and log in any news in media about women

- ❖ That means women in all spheres-public, private sector, ordinary women at home
- ❖ Compare what is said about men and what is said about women
- ❖ What would be the percentages? 50/50? 25/75? 10/80? Or what percentage?
- ❖ It is possible to have all men's news and nothing about women in a day or week of news
- ❖ Granted you have some news about women, what kind will it be?
- ❖ News that is favourable, unfavourable, neutral, prejudiced news?
- ❖ What about the content of news bulletins, choice of words, length of the news equal to that of men?

4. *Women Reporting on Women*

- ❖ It is often said a woman's biggest enemy is a woman. True or false?
- ❖ How do female journalists cover stories where women are newsmakers?
- ❖ Favourably, unfavourably or same as they cover stories involving men?
- ❖ Are women broadcasters and journalists more friendly with women or with men?
- ❖ Do women in general and media women in particular prefer male bosses to female bosses? . Assuming the media portrays negative image of the woman, who does that?
- ❖ Is that done solely by male reporters or by male and female reporters alike?
- ❖ Do female bosses prefer to employ male or female workers and why?
- ❖ Who is more vocal against negative images of women in the media, men or women?
- ❖ Does your attitude towards a woman or man influence your story on that newsmaker?

5. *Media Take on Women*

- ❖ Newspapers, radio and television cover women in the news, in documentaries, films, etc
- ❖ Career women, business women, women in politics, religion, celebrities, ordinary women
- ❖ Media show women in their best and women in their worst, women in crime and in love
- ❖ They portray successful women in various walks of life, though fewer times than their malecounterparts. Generally media talk more about men and less about

women for obvious reasons-more men than women are controlling the media and making news

❖ Conventional stereotypes of women still common in new-papers and television

❖ Women as sex objects for promotions and advertisements because of profit motives

❖ Women still fixed to traditional roles of mother, cook, subsistent farmer, homemaker

❖ In war camps women are shown to be fetching water with children on their backs, trekking long distances for fire wood and gathering food for the family

❖ Watch the music clips on television and see semi-naked dancing bodies rolling left and right. Ask why and you hear because of money

❖ Magazine front pages show us women \\\/1th silicon-inflated breasts, objects that must stir erotic feelings wherever they appear

❖ Female sex workers and models dress in seductive attires to catch the eye and ignite sexual feelings Perhaps the media are pushed by moneymaking organizations to use women as things but they ought to lean on their media ethics and stop the commercial gurus.

❖ Entertainment media show demeaning images of women, women often trivialized and romanticized. Focus on female beauty with creamed bodies that lure some to strive to be like the women they see on television.

❖ How does a beautiful woman look like? Media make believe she is thin, is on diet, loses weight, has a perfect marriage, involved in great sex and stays young even at 65

❖ The media portray fat women in bad taste and seem to suggest that to be a woman you should have the skinny structure of a model

6. *Women's Reaction to Women's Images in the Media*

   ❖ Who reacts more aggressively to negative portrayal of women in the media?

   ❖ Is it men or women or it is not certain who does more than the other?

   ❖ If the images are triggered by the money motive, is that done mainly by men?

   ❖ Would it be different if women were controlling the media establishments?

   ❖ Do women involved in running brothels and pornographic industries treat women less decently than men in similar dirty businesses?

   ❖ When a naked woman is seen on a newspaper/magazine cover or on a television screen, who is more resentful, a man or a woman?

7. *Forget this Not Today or Tomorrow*

- ❖ The media portray women in good light today but many stereotypes still exist that need to be wiped out once and for good
- ❖ God created woman and man in His own image and that image should be treated at all times with respect, honour and dignity.
- ❖ That a woman was made out of a man's rib doesn't spell subordination but equality
- ❖ .Media and society to see woman as person of integrity and potential for services in all walks of life
- ❖ .All women irrespective of educational level or status in society to assert themselves, cultivate good self-image, self-respect and high self-esteem
- ❖ Women are women not because they have sex to offer but because they are full human beings created in the image of God
- ❖ Women in particular and society in general should regard women as precious and talented individuals that have much in their treasure tanks to offer society, not commodities that can be sold and bought directly or indirectly
- ❖ The display of body parts in order to ignite erotic feelings cuts off something from the dignity of a woman and makes common what is treasured because it is hidden
- ❖ .Need for the creation of forums, the formation of women's organizations and networks to articulate women's issues including image of women in the media
- ❖ Such can address memoranda to media practitioners and media practitioners to stop negative images of women in the media
- ❖ Women should not strive to have the kind of women bodies they see on magazines and television screens for these are not realities but illusions .
- ❖ Campaigns to boycott products of businesses that still use women as sex objects . Women to talk to women on the subject of misusing sex or allowing themselves to be used by business as seductive instruments for commercial purposes
- ❖ Time to sound clarion call that woman has talents, intellectual and physical abilities, potentials that can enable her excel if male dominance, prejudice, marginalization and stereotypes give way to objective assessment and merit.

Buea, Friday April 18, 2008

Rev. Achowah Umenei

Communication Secretary

Presbyterian Church in Cameroon & Station Manager CBS Radio