

**PRELIMINARY NARRATIVE REPORT OF THE
MEGEIN/WACC/FINBANK TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR
EDITORS AND SENIOR REPORTERS IN NIGERIA HELD AT
ABUJA, MADIUGURI AND SOKOTO FROM 12-20 DECEMBER
2008**

Quickened by the zeal to make a change in the abysmal situation of gender reporting in Nigeria, the Media and Gender Enlightenment Initiative (MEGEIN) in collaboration with WACC and FinBank Plc are presently organizing two-day workshops in each of the six geopolitical zones of the country including Abuja – the nation’s Federal Capital. The theme of the workshop is “gender perspective reporting. The north-central geopolitical zonal workshop was the first to kick off among the series of workshops planned to take place in the six geo-political zones of the country. It was held at the national press centre, Abuja and the date was 12th -13th December, 2008.

Many top Nigerian Journalists and other stakeholders from the Oil Industry were in attendance at the opening ceremony. The ceremony was chaired by Dr. Edna Matthews-Njoku, a volunteer staff of MEGEIN and an Associate Professor at Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria.

The Honourable Minister of Information and Communications in Nigeria, represented by the Head of Public Affairs in the Ministry, Mr Chinyere Obi declared the workshop open. In his keynote address, Mr Obi on behalf of the Minister, noted that the Ministry was happy to identify with the workshop because of the excellent Nigeria report of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) which MEGEIN had before now presented to them. He said that the report made him come to terms with the reality that women in Nigeria suffer from under-representation and misrepresentation in the media, among other stunning revelations. He therefore expressed the hope “that there is no doubt that the dynamic and vibrant academics who conducted the media monitoring already have an answer to the problem”.

In her welcome address, the Project Director of Media and Gender Enlightenment Initiative (MEGEIN), Nkem Fab-Ukozor, expressed her joy for the large turnout of participants and other stakeholders to the workshop.

She informed the audience that MEGEIN is a child of circumstance born out of grave concern arising from the findings of the 2005 global Media Monitoring Project in Nigeria. The project whose report was tagged “Who Makes The News” aimed at ascertaining the representation of men and women in the Nigerian news media. She said that contrary to the expectations that the media should exhibit fair and balanced reporting of issues affecting the interest of people in the society regardless of their sexes, the study revealed a sorry situation as the representation was highly favourable to men. Nkem who was also the national co-ordinator of GMMP in Nigeria explained that it was the findings of the project that gave birth to the formation of MEGEIN in 2008 to serve as a leading organ for media and gender sensitivity in Nigeria and beyond.

Moreso, the project manager Levi Chinaka Nwodu in his remark noted that the major objective of the workshop was to train top newsmen on the best practices in gender perspective reporting needed to address the existing imbalance, misrepresentations and stereotypes observed in Nigerian press. He pointed out that the underlying philosophy was that if editors and senior reporters understand and appreciate the principles of gender reporting and be able to apply those principles in their coverage of gender related issues, it would be easy to win the support of younger journalists who learn and receive instructions from their senior colleagues.

The project secretary, Mr. Ifeanyi Onah while proposing the vote of thanks expressed gratitude to both the sponsors of the workshop and the participants for what he described as a new dawn in media reporting in Nigeria.

The second session witnessed the actual training of participants drawn from various media houses in the north-central geo-political zone and Abuja. About sixty journalists participated in the workshop.

Apart from trying to equip the journalists with the essential skills and principles of gender perspective reporting, the workshop generally explored contemporary issues arising from culture, gender and media in Nigerian society, and analyzed the critical relationship between gender and development.

Making his presentations on ‘culture, gender and media’ Prof. Des Wilson, a member of MEGEIN’s advisory board said that inasmuch as the stereotyping of men and women according to their roles by the media are

largely influenced by culture, the practice of journalism should be guided by validated ethical principles of morality and responsibility.

Shifting gender patterns was also another highlight of the presentations. Dr. Edna Matthews-Njoku was quick to point out that culture is not static, but dynamic, and as that happens the roles played by both sexes continue to face redefinition by the society.

Tracing the shift in emphasis from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) approach, Nkem Fab-Ukozor explained that mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing implications for both women and men in any planned action. Gender mainstreaming therefore recognizes the following.

- Meaningful advancement of women
- More fundamental change in mainstream policies
- Resource allocation that reflects the views of women and men.
- Decisions that are taken with due consideration of their effects on women and men respectively.

The emphasis on GAD therefore;

- Guarantees fairness, justice and equality
- Guarantees sustainable and meaningful development
- Questions the media portrayal of gender related issues.
- Questions whether or not the press reinforces gender stereotypes.
- Challenges existing gender misconceptions.

In his exploration of gender perspective reporting, Mr Levi Chinaka Nwodu who itemized recipes for gender perspective reporting, charged journalists to avoid use of languages and words that tend to play up gender inequality in their reporting. Applying the skill calls for gender sensitivity in the choice of what to cover or report, how to cover or report, the choice of language of delivery and images to be associated with the coverage. In a nutshell, gender perspective reporting entails being sensitive to gender variations in the reportage of issues affecting the interest of males and females.

Similar workshops were equally held in Maiduguri and Sokoto respectively on the 16-17th December and on 19-20th December. The venue was the state's Ministry of Information and Communications in the afore-mentioned cities. About forty journalists were trained in each of the workshops.

Below is a summary of the participants' assessment of the workshop and recommendations.

- The workshop was very interactive, incisive and transformative.
- The workshop was highly educative, informative, motivating and thought provoking.
- The workshop provided fresh angle to what we think we know about gender.
- The organizers should next time involve junior reporters and also increase the number of participants.
- The wisdom and knowledge exhibited by the seasoned resource persons were impressive.
- More publicity should have been given to a workshop of this magnitude.
- This kind of workshop should be organized at least, twice a year and in many parts of the country.
- The organizers are in tune with media activities and the need for capacity building/training on gender perspective reporting.
- The workshop should in future involve traditional institutions and religions leaders.
- A media literacy workshop should be organized for female experts/professionals in Nigeria.