

IFJ Conference on Ethics and gender: equality in the newsroom

30-31st May 2009.



Report

Opening

What we Need for an Ethical Journalism

Mindy Ran, IFJ gender council chair

Jim Boumelha, IFJ President

Aidan White, IFJ General Secretary

Alton Grizzle, UNESCO

Jim Boumelha

Jim Boumelha, president of the IFJ (since 2007) explained IFJ's activities on gender equality since its Congress in Montreal in 1992. He stressed the importance of the IFJ Seoul Congress in 2001 which ended with the adoption of an action plan on gender equality. He said that the gender process needed "a serious examination" but acknowledged the progress made since the end of the nineties.

He referred to a world historical survey dated 1888- which addressed discrimination in the work place. He underlined a very important achievement in the UK: the Equal paid Act, 1907.

Looking back at the IFJ' history on gender equality, Jim Boumelha recalled that the issues women journalists grappled with 17 years ago when the first IFJ survey on "women in the news" was released were the same as those being experienced today. "Perhaps capitalism was in a better shape but the three core themes – the under-valuing of women's work, the employment penalty for mothers and the gender segregation are still with us today as they were two decades ago," he said. M. Boumelha encouraged all unions to centre their activities on gender programmes, underlining how in this period the situation is even worst, because the recent financial crisis led women at the bottom of society, both on a political and on an economical level.

Aidan White

IFJ General Secretary Aidan White referred to his latest publication "To tell you the truth" who forms part of the IFJ Ethical Journalism Initiative, a world initiative to promote ethical journalism to respond to the world media crisis.

"We need to challenge the fact that we do not enjoy equal rights as journalists", he said. "We need to revitalise journalism, take part in the democracy process and promote human rights". He referred to British journalist Thomas Paine and his fight for human rights.

He stressed the issue of equality and stereotypes and the fact that media were guilty.

"How do stereotypes emerge? Who makes this decision in the newsroom? How do we carry out our job?", he asked. He said that the gender movement should be everywhere: inside journalism, inside the Media, the newsrooms, the head of editors, inside the unions and the head of unions.

He referred to the place of women in leadership. "A big powerful debate: we should vote for women... and we should do more", he said.

He said that progress had been made in the last 10 years: more questions about equal journalism have been raised and many key problems have been confronted by the IFJ.

He concluded that every aspect of IFJ's activities should hold a gender dimension. "We also need to partner with other organisations", he added, "we are not an elite group".

Alton Grizzle

Alton Grizzle, programme Specialist in Communication and Information at UNESCO referred to UNESCO's works since 1945 in the process for gender equality. He referred to the internationally recognised value- equality of women and men working in media. He said that the IFJ and the International Women in Media Foundation (IWFM) shared common concerns in this field. He referred to existing gender sensitive reporting and guidelines and pointed at the main one: UNECE Annual Report 2007- Gender Issues.

He concluded that gender issues should be integrated in efficient programs and correctly communicated in Media.

Mindy Ran concluded the opening session by launching the IFJ booklet "Getting the balance right. Gender equality in journalism" published in close cooperation with UNESCO and LO.TCO. She referred to the main goal of the conference – adopting a common gender declaration.

Panel 1

Telling stories that respect equality

Lavinia Mohr, "Global Media Monitoring Project 2010", WACC

Mounia Belafia, "Ethics and Gender in the news", SNPM, Morocco

Stéphane Hoebeke, "Sexists stereotypes in the news", RTBF, Belgium

Moderator: Faranak Atif, Association of Iranian Journalists.

Lavinia Mohr

Lavinia Mohr, Deputy General Secretary and Director of Programmes of WACC (World Association for Christian Communication) introduced the "Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2010".

WACC prepares this report every 5 years and the next one will be in 2010. She gave a detailed description of the GMMP, the most extensive global research of gender in news media. The project was officially recognised by The United Nations during 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Since the first GMMP in 1995 WACC largely use volunteers, citizen' researchers, women's right organisations and church group to conduct the report.

Ms Mohr gave an overview of the 2005 results

1) News stories where women are central: Africa 10%, Asia 8%, Caribbean 15%, Europe 10%, Latin America 14%, Middle East 6%, North America 20%, Pacific 9%. All regions 10%.

2) Women are virtually invisible in news items: 21% of people in the news are women, men – 79 %. No clear change has been seen since the first review in 1995. The most visible progress took place in the last 5 years.

3) Ratio between the place of women in parliament and women in the news. In Sweden, women represent 46% of parliamentarians but only 28% of news items.

4) Women tend to be asked personal reactions while men provide expert comments

5) News stories where women are central (1 woman for 10 men)

6) News on gender equality is almost non-existent, (or only 4% and without- 96 %)

More details about these researches: www.whomakesthenews.org

Ms Mohr called on media organisations to reflect on this figures and implement in-house gender policies. She called on unions to join the Global Media Monitoring Project 2010 to help gather evidences, raise awareness, be co-sponsors and encourage senior management to adopt and implement gender equality policy.

Mounia Belafia

Mounia Belafia, Deputy General Secretary of the SNPM in Morocco spoke about "Ethics and Gender in the news". According to Ms Belafia media tend to use a professional deformation when portraying women. The usual image used for women is: wife of Mister X or mistress of one politician. "There is a mixture of public and private life and it influences a lot the carrier of woman", she said.

She said that the “improvement” of women portrayal in the news might not be the right term. Placing the debate on journalism ethics is better.

The problem of ethics and gender can be found in the culture of a country, such as proverbs about women and their use in the media.

She stressed that codes of practice in the Arab world should pay more attention to gender aspect.

Ms Belafia suggested revising journalists’ ethical codes and including gender provisions. She also pointed at the need to integrate the gender notion in all news subjects including culture and health and the role unions should play in this debate.

Stéphane Hoebeke

Stéphane Hoebeke is a lawyer at the Belgium public TV station RTBF. He introduced the conclusions of his latest book, “Sexists stereotypes in the news“.

According M. Hoebeke, there is no specific definition of sexist stereotypes in media. These terms are not enough clear and very general.

Women are portrayed differently in China, Europe or Morocco. Stereotypes can be sometimes contradictory. And the fact that there are women in the news doesn’t guaranty quality of information. Today’s media aren’t sexists. When addressing gender stereotypes it is important not to end up stereotyping the issue, he said. He stressed that stereotypes are inevitable everywhere, ether in Belgium or in Iraq and the vision of sex itself is very stereotyped (the nudity, the body etc).

Panel 2

Women in the Newsroom- Managing change

Colleen Morna, “Women in the Newsroom- Managing change in Southern Africa”,
Genderlinks.

Zuliana Lainez, “Women journalists and new media addressing gender in Latin America”, ANPP,
Union of journalists in Peru

Norila Mohd Daud, “Women, media and the glass ceiling in Malaysia”, Malaysian union of journalists

Moderator: Karen Cepeda, FECOLPER, Colombia

Collen Lowe Morna

Collen Lowe Morna, executive director of Genderlinks, talked about the position of women in newsrooms in Southern Africa, showing the result of a Genderlinks’ surveys: Glass Ceilings: Managing Change in the Southern Africa Media.

This thorough survey analysed gender mainstreamed in media policies, laws and training focusing, for instance, on the percentage of women and men in media houses or the percentage of black women in the newsrooms. 6% of black women hold leadership positions against 42% of white men. The survey on women in decision making shows that the typical thought in newsrooms is that women managers are accused of being emotional and incompetent and even vindictive if rumors about them circulate in media houses. For this reason, men prefer being managed by other men.

Zuliana Lainez

Zuliana Lainez, journalist, General Secretary of the National Association of Journalists in Peru analysed the gender situation in Latin America and the changes women journalists were confronted with.

She shared the history of gender portrayal, going over the foundation of the first important organizations for women, such as the Women’s Feature Service (WFS) or, specifically in Latin America, the National Network of Journalists in Mexico, in Central America and Caribbean.

She underlined that even if there are many women journalists (especially thanks to the Faculty of Journalism which is famous in Latin America) actually, there is not equality especially because they are not paid as much as men and they are not leading newsrooms.

She referred to new journalists' networks where gender issues are being addressed as well as new media which pay attention to gender equality such as CIMAC. She referred to 150 "informal media" in Latin America which are run by women and aim to address gender equality in the news.

She said that progress towards gender equality was slower in traditional media and that a need for rules was needed.

Norila Mohd

Norila Mohd, President of the National Union of Journalists of Malaysia and senior journalist working with the *Utusan Malaysia*, talked about women in decision making in Malaysian media. She referred to discriminations against women who do not have access to leadership positions in the media. Most heads of press are men. She said that most successful women journalists were single. She also focused the attention on the issue of maternity leave for journalists' women in Asia.

Panel 3

Unions and Gender ethics

Nadezhda Azhgikhina, "Women journalists and peace", Russian Union of Journalists

Khady Cisse, "Women in union leadership", Journalists union of Senegal

Analia Freund, "Gender mainstreaming in unions' structures in Argentina. Predefined spaces or empowering journalists' activists", Federation of media workers of Argentina

Marieke Koning, "Decent work decent life for women campaign", International Trade Union Confederation

Moderator: Beth Costa, FENAJ, Brazil

Nadezda Azhgikhina

Nadezda Azhgikhina, Russian journalist and member of the IFJ gender council, talked about the increase of women journalists covering wars and conflict areas, all around the world. She went over the achievements of the feminization of this kind of journalism, stressing the particular contribution that women can bring in those places, thanks to their sensitiveness. She underlined the importance of their work for the improvement of ethical journalism and she supported the idea to develop more stable and regular cooperation between media development organizations and human rights NGOs in post-conflict zones, and among them women's NGOs and women journalists. She said that a representative of the International Women's Media Foundation suggested that the IWWMF had such potential for future developments.

Khady Cisse

Ms Cisse spoke about her experience as head of the Senegalese union of journalists. She said that becoming a leader raised a number of challenges: gender discrimination (women are seen as wife and mothers rather than workers), competition, family demands that can make one feel guilty. Ms Cisse gave a few tips to future women union leaders: keep some time off to yourself (including turning off the mobile phone at the week end), redefine unions' functioning (meetings can take place during work hours), learn how to negotiate (a leader is never alone but works with a team).

Analia Freund

Analia Freund, Deputy Secretary in Neuquén, in the FATPREN (Argentinean Federation of Workers of the Press) talked about "Gender mainstreaming in unions", focusing the attention on changes within the Federation of media workers of Argentina, about the percentage of women journalists and their access to decision making positions. She said that very little had happened since the Beijing Platform for action adopted in 1995. She analysed the relationship between female journalism and activism in associations, looking at the structures and spaces for women in trade unions in Argentina.

Marieke Koning

Marieke Koning, Equality Officer at the ITUC Equality Department, introduced the campaign on “Decent Work, Decent Life for Women which focuses on gender inequality in the labour market, looking at the gender pay gap, the women’s position in the labour market, during the economic downturn, and violence against women. Statistics show that the global pay gap in 2008 was 16.5% and reached 22% in 2009.

She called on the need for new statistics and that trade unions must collaborate and support strong policies and actions on gender equality, at work and in the unions. She stressed that campaigns to organize women workers have shown benefits to trade unions’ membership.

Questions and Answers (general remarks)

Participants referred to the low salaries that lead many women to leave the profession. In Burkina Faso, the trend is to engage married women in leadership positions as these women are seen as “more stable”. The lack of security in some countries was raised. In Nepal for instance, it is impossible for a woman to work after midnight. Some participants raised the need for further training, including on the notion of “gender”. A proposal was made to launch targeted campaign to increase women recruitment in the unions. A call was made on the need to protect women journalists that are targeted in Latin America.

Brussels Gender Declaration

All the topics discussed during the Conference merged into a final declaration in which all countries condemned forms of violence, sexual harassment and bullying in the profession, gender stereotypes and all forms of discriminations that do not contribute to give women the same security and safety in the workplace as their male colleagues.

Additionally, each region called on specific needs:

African participants demanded for a promotion of gender equality not only in the media but, first of all, in the society. They asked unions to work more on the needs of women media professionals, even encouraging more gender sensitive media content.

In Asia, journalists are more concerned about job security, so the Asian participants asked for developing job security campaigns organised by unions to all journalists and supporting safety training for media workers working in conflict zones. They also expressed the desire to organise annual meetings on gender equality with IFJ affiliates in Asia.

Participants from Latin America based their gender fights on the principles of the Buenos Aires Declaration of August 30th, 2008. They asked for a study on the social-economic status of women workers and they call upon the IFJ regional group FEPALC to establish a Gender Secretary to work with all unions in the region to do concrete actions also to create a female leadership.

In Europe the financial crisis risks to remove the social attention from gender policies, so European participants demanded that the equality agenda is not marginalised and forgotten in crucial negotiations over the future.

In the Middle East there are many problems regarding the glass ceiling and participants from this region asked union leaders to establish gender structures in unions and to insist that all affiliates encourage women to play more of a role in leadership. According to them it is also important to defend human rights in conflict zone like Iran and Palestine where journalists are at risk.

Annexes

- 1. Brussels Declaration**
- 2. Brussels Statement on Latin America**
- 3. List of participants**

Brussels Declaration

We, the 60 participants from 45 countries around the globe attending the International Federation of Journalists' conference on *Ethics and Gender: Equality in the newsroom*, held in Brussels, on May 30-31st 2009,

Considering

- The International ILO conventions on equal treatment between men and women
- The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) 1993 Declaration on equal opportunities between men and women adopted in Harare
- The resolution and plan of action adopted at the IFJ Congress in Seoul, 2001 and the resolution on gender rights adopted at the IFJ World Congress in Athens, 2004

Believing

it is essential to hold strong to principles of ethical reporting to fight gender stereotypes, to combat aggressive behaviour, harassment, inequality in promotion, training and pay, and to stand up for dignity in our work as journalists and media professionals,

Noting

that in this time of global economic crisis which in most cases is affecting women more than men,

Insisting

that all media workers, journalists, and trade unionists should work together to improve ethical journalism, to respect the rights and dignity of all women, and to ensure that the images of women in media and society reflect the need to end all discrimination in social, economic, political and cultural life, we unequivocally

Condemn

all forms of violence, sexual harassment and bullying in our profession and declare our intention to reinforce our efforts to eliminate all these threats so that women may work in journalism in equal conditions of safety and security as their male colleagues.

The meeting agrees to demand that these issues are brought into the mainstream of core trade union work and underscored by training on equal rights and gender issues.

In **Africa**, journalists battle to promote gender equality not just within media but also in society as a whole. African participants call for the promotion of solidarity with all women in journalism and seek more action from unions to take account of the needs of women media professionals and to encourage more gender sensitive media content.

In **Asia**, where journalists are battling for job security and gender equality in the newsroom, Asian participants will a) promote gender sensitive programmes and training to unions targeting the workplace and involving journalists, editors in chief and media owners; b) develop job security campaigns organised by unions to all journalists; c) support safety training for media workers

working in conflict zones and d) organise annual meetings on gender equality with IFJ affiliates in Asia.

In **Latin America**, journalists strive to defend universal rights for women around the principles of the Buenos Aires Declaration of August 30th, 2008. Journalists in Latin America urge the IFJ, through its regional office to conduct a study on the social economic status of women workers and they call upon the IFJ regional group FEPALC to establish a Gender Secretary to assist and work with all unions in the region to establish concrete actions destined to creating gender strengthening and female leadership.

In **Europe**, the meeting notes how journalists battling to stem the effects of financial crisis face far-reaching changes involving convergence of different media platforms. Existing problems experienced by women are made worse as employers use the excuse of financial difficulties to exploit the already vulnerable position of women journalists.

In this time of crisis over jobs and lost contracts and declining working conditions unions must ensure that the equality agenda is not marginalised and forgotten in crucial negotiations over the future. The meeting asks the IFJ and its regional body, the European Federation of Journalists to vigorously promote equality rights as a negotiating element in union work, and to take practical actions to uphold them.

In the **Middle East**, the meeting notes how journalists are battling discrimination and the impact of a glass ceiling that excludes women from executive positions and career development within journalism. The meeting insists that the IFJ and its Gender Council encourage union leaders to establish gender structures in unions where they are lacking and to insist that all affiliates encourage women to play more of a role in leadership. There is a particular need to battle against journalists' rights violation in conflict areas such as Palestine and Iraq where journalists come under fire from all political sides. There must be freedom of movement and the freedom to work freely in journalism.

Finally, participants express thanks to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNESCO, International Media Support, LO/TCO Trade Union Development and the IFJ for making this event possible and they call on the IFJ and all of its members in all regions to adopt as a priority the actions and proposals arising from this meeting.

IFJ Conference on Ethics and Gender: Equality on newsroom. Statement on Latin America.

Brussels, 31st May 2009

The women and men representing press workers' unions around the world, in the frame of the World Conference on "Ethics and Gender", who met in Brussels on 30th and 31st of May:

Exhort, especially, the governments of Colombia and Mexico to guaranty the security, physical integrity and personal welfare of women journalists threatened to death, assaulted or harassed. They demand the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) to promote policies of urgent help to women journalists exiled, threatened, attacked, harassed and displaced colleagues.

They appeal to the Gender Council to pay special attention to the problems of women and their families in situation of exile.

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