

Proceeding of the Workshop on the Role of Media in Advancing Gender Equality in Ethiopia

Introduction

The Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council (ECSOC) in collaboration with Action Aid Ethiopia (AAE) has been undertaking a series of high-level dialogue on Gender Equality with a wide range of stakeholders.



One of the stakeholders identified was Media and Media Professionals. This proceeding presents the findings held on the role of media in promoting gender equality in Ethiopia. **More than 51 journalists, editors, media managers took part in the workshop**

OBJECTIVES

The core objective of the workshop is to enhance the role and contributions of media and media professionals in promoting gender equality and women empowerment in Ethiopia.

The specific objectives of the workshop are:

- Reflect on current efforts and endeavors aimed at promoting gender equality by the media in Ethiopia, both within the industry and outside.

- Sensitize the media sector, journalists and media professional regarding the interventions they could take to mainstream gender in their daily chores.
- Step up efforts of journalists and media in preparing and airing of programs aimed at increasing the ambitions of women and young girls.
- Create clarity on the challenges and mitigation strategies to foster media role in advancing gender equality.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The major expected outcome was to create clarity on existing initiatives, efforts and endeavors by the media and media sector in Ethiopia in promoting gender equality, as well as strengths and limitations of these. Others expectations included: Increased understanding about the role of media professionals and the sector in promoting gender equality; an increased understanding of existing challenges and mitigation strategies with regard to Media’s role in promoting gender equality; networking among media professionals and media houses in the country to advance gender equality and women empowerment in Ethiopia increased and inspiration and motivation to the preparation and casting of more gender focused broadcasting sessions and programs doubled.

Summary of Proceeding of the Workshop



In his opening remark, Kalewongel Minale (Ph.D.), Program and Development Advisor, the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Council, stressed the

important role of Media in altering the long-held patriarchal system in Ethiopia. He said media can advance gender equality by discharging its basic functions of information providing, socialization, education, opinion and agenda setting function. As it stands now, the potentials of media in promoting women's empowerment remains unexploited and there is a need to harness the power of media in promoting gender equality and supporting the national effort towards gender equality.

The Presentation by Journalist Tsega Tariku, was structured along three sections. The first section focused on the introduction of the concepts of gender equality and relevant stakeholders for promoting equality. The second section analyzed the current state of media reporting and gender equality.



The last section included recommendations about what media should do to advance its role o gender equality in Ethiopia. Accordingly, a wide range of actors including families, schools, government, CSOs, religious institutions are said to have roles in promoting gender equality in Ethiopia. The media role comes as one of the key stakeholders in promoting gender equality in Ethiopia. Despite of the encouraging improvements in print and broad cast media, there are still issues and problems in promoting the empowerment of women. According to her, some of the major problems discernable in media reporting relating to gender equality are:

- Reproduction of the gender stereo types and prejudices during media coverages
- Lack of inclusivity – often experts and analysts appearing in media are men and women often do not get the opportunity.
- Women's perspectives on current political and social affairs are neglected and not adequately represented.

- Media reports are not considerate of gender perspectives – there is a lack of gender mainstreaming in media reports and coverages.

Due to these, the representation of women in media remains distorted, insensitive and exclusionary. Besides, the number of women involved in the sector as journalists, editors and media managers remain low particularly compared to the number of men in the sector. In order to reverse this condition and improve women's state in the sector and harness the potentials of media in spearheading gender equality in society, the following were suggested:

- Creating Suitable Working Conditions for women working in media institutions
- Increasing the representation of women in the sector as Journalists, editors and Media managers
- Providing more training and capacity building on gender equality and the role of Media
- Mainstreaming gender in media reporting and coverage
- Enhancing the capacity of women journalists
- Setting up gender focal person and gender Departments in Media. Only Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation has a gender department.



The discussion that followed was active and animated. Participants raised a wide range of issues including, the need to socialize and educate the young generation with the theory and practice of gender equality and women empowerment, the need for more evidence-based knowledge production and dissemination. Participants also emphasized the key role of media in terms of

stimulating and deriving societal efforts of gender transformation.

The conference concluded with the closing remarks of Dr. Kalewongel who called on media to step up its efforts in promoting gender equality. The work of media should be informed by the recognized principles and practices of gender equality and in this regard the industry should avoid the reproduction of gender stereotypes and constructions and misrepresentation women in its programs. In addition, media should consolidate its function of information of providing, education and socialization to raise awareness on gender equality and stir socio-economic transformation which supports the positive development and empowerment of women.