

Partnerships for Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls in Southern Africa

South Africa: “Step It Up for Gender Equality in South African Media”

Confronting the Challenge

Research shows that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is generally widespread in South Africa, with rape, domestic violence and intimate-partner violence being particularly prevalent. According to South Africa’s 2016 Demographic and Health Survey, one in five women over the age of 18 has experienced physical violence at least once in her lifetime.

At the core of gender-based violence (GBV) and VAWG lie unequal power gender relations, patriarchal norms, homophobia, sexism and other harmful discriminatory beliefs and practices. The concept of inherited-violence from discriminatory systems of colonialism and apartheid is often cited as cause and driver of VAWG in South Africa.

During the last years, it has been increasingly recognized that the media and creative sector through various channels (e.g. TV, radio, print, social media, advertising) influences societies’ norms and perceptions around gender relations and violence as well as general knowledge of VAWG and forms of support.

There is generally a strong will from media and creative actors to use this influence to benefit society and have a more positive impact. Recognizing challenges relating to patriarchal structures, unequal gender dynamics as well as harassment and violence – also within the structures of the media – PfP has partnered with UN Women South Africa to work together with the South African media and creative sector.

Building Partnerships

The flagship project sets out to jointly with actors from government, civil society and industry shape and implement a

process of dialogue, self-reflection, support and voluntary commitment to a more sensitive, un-stereotyped content production as well as media portraying positive gender relations and contributing to prevent VAWG.

Flagship name	Step It Up for Gender Equality in South African Media
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	South Africa
Key stakeholders	Media and creative sector stakeholders from government, civil society and private sector
Duration	12/2017 – 11/2020



One concrete aim of the initiative is to formulate a voluntary ‘Statement of Commitment’ and gain support from a wide range of organisations and companies in the industry. The ‘Statement’ shall help organisations to better take on their roles and responsibilities when it comes to shaping gender stereotypes and perceptions of GBV in South Africa through their products (i.e. programmes, news reporting) as well as to formalize their efforts towards safe working conditions in the industry.

At the same time, the process towards this goal, motivating for and facilitating an inclusive dialogue and debate in the sector and the wider public, will be just as important as the actual ‘Statement’.

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To facilitate this dialogue the flagship project is implementing several key steps. Central to the project is the **multi-stakeholder Advisory Group** that was set up in 2018 to guide the project's activities. The Advisory Group brings together key actors from the media industry and the gender-in-media space, such as the Department of Arts and Culture, the Government Communications and Information Service, the National Film and Video Foundation, the SABC, Moja Love, Kaya FM, WITS Radio Academy, the South African National Editors Forum, the South African Guild of Actors and the NGOs Soul City, Sonke Gender Justice, Gender Links and Sisters Working in Film and Television.

Taking Action and Sharing Evidence

The Advisory Group also informs the research agenda around the flagship. **Research** both informs the activities of the flagship project and is an important tool to kick-start dialogue and discussions. The NGO Gender Links conducted an extensive **media monitoring study** for the project looking at 600 hours of television content in entertainment, news and children's programming of the top 5 South African stations. Results show that women constitute 39% of TV news sources while GBV as a topic constitutes 2% of news, 4% of entertainment and 2% of children's programming. Of particular concern is that prevention itself constitutes only 5% of GBV topic coverage in the news and 29% in children's programming, with very little information on where to get help.

The research is accompanied by **dialogue events, facilitation of international exchange and hosting of discussions sessions** on what could practically be done or changed in the industry to have a more positive effect on societal norms and perceptions. The flagship project has brought South African partner organisations such as SWIFT in contact with similar German and international initiatives. In addition, it is envisaged to support exchange between stakeholders in the Southern African region, where South African media is widely received.

The project convened a **sector-wide conference in August 2019**, bringing together key stakeholders to discuss how media can practically be supported to become more social impact driven. The discussions and findings of this conference feed into the commitments being developed as content of the 'Statement' and inform the development of a concrete support plan for the sector in 2020.

PfP's direct support to organisations that are committed to change constitutes the last component of the flagship project. It includes trainings for news rooms, community radio stations, government communicators and the creative entertainment industry. Furthermore, promising concepts to change financing schemes and regulatory frameworks are supported, for example the concept of a mandatory safety ombudsperson for the film and television industry.

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