

Getting the balance right



Contents

Gender equality	3
In the Media	4
In the Unions	6
IFJ Gender Policies passed at Congress: Resolution to IFJ 24th World Congress, Korea 2001	8
Resolution on Gender Rights: IFJ Congress, Athens 2004	12
Pictures	14

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Gender equality

Gender equality goes far beyond the confines of our working lives, but in general it can be defined as equal treatment, regardless of sex. This means: **equal pay for equal work and equal access** to training, employment, pensions, health care, promotions and child care. It can also mean use of neutral and non-gender specific language, flexible work times, paid leave for maternity and paternity, equal representation of women in the media, work-place policies against harassment of all forms and equal access to unions and professional organizations and their decision making bodies.

It is essential to help create an overall equality throughout society that the media promote and protect gender equality, both within the working environment and in their representation of women. It is the responsibility of media to open debate and discussion of these issues to better inform society and to break down the limitations of gender stereotypes.

The International Federation of Journalists, the International Labour Organisation and the UN Charter on Human Rights all promote these principles, yet nowhere in the world so far has true and total gender equality been accomplished.

In the Media - Stereotypes

The media repeatedly use stereotypes (i.e., showing women only as care-takers of the family or as sexual objects). The stereotypes show up not only in photo captions of Western or Arabic female stars in which they describe them as “*addicted to beauty products*,” but also in television or radio “spots,” which exploit a woman’s image to better promote the featured product. The use of such stereotypes reflects a **mental block** not only in terms of what society may expect from women, but also—and this is much more serious—in terms of what we may expect from ourselves.

The structures of many societies have been based on assumptions of **sex-biased roles**, which are **entrenched in our use of language**. It is up to us, as women and men journalists, to break down these stereotypes whenever we have the opportunity and to work against them as often as possible in our everyday work. When gender-biased language is used (i.e. craftsman, businessman, fireman, policeman, etc), we support the destructive bias that the concepts these words describe are limited to the male arena – women are (understood to be) excluded or incapable.

Some general guidelines to avoid support of sexism in the media:

REFRAIN FROM USING DESCRIPTIONS OF WOMEN THAT INCLUDE: PHYSICAL, MARITAL AND/OR FAMILY STATUS, unless it is essential to the story. (A good check is to ask yourself if you would include the same information about a man.)

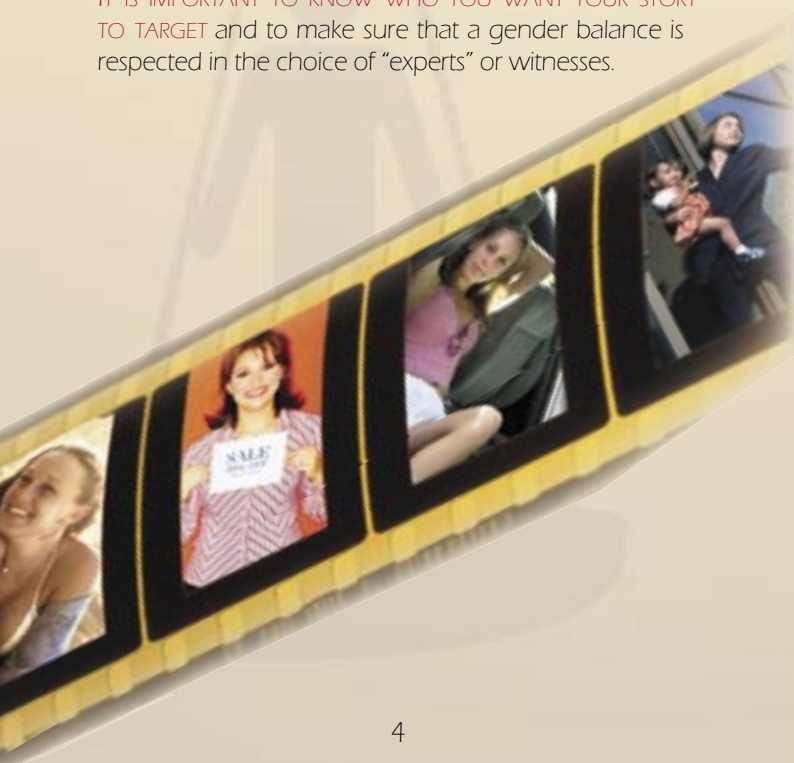
IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHO YOU WANT YOUR STORY TO TARGET and to make sure that a gender balance is respected in the choice of “experts” or witnesses.

BE SURE TO GIVE WOMEN THEIR OWN TITLE, NAME AND VOICE and not the “wife of Mr. Smith.”

AVOID USE OF DESCRIPTIONS THAT PANDER TO SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS OF WOMEN THAT ARE INHERENTLY LIMITING (“mother of six”) or in other ways trivialize, diminish, or exploit women. Be careful of assigning gender roles, which can pander to bias. Descriptions such as “male nurse” and “woman doctor” are inherently sexist because they suggest that it is not normal for a woman to attain the level of skill required to become a doctor, or that it is unusual for men to work as what is often portrayed as a caring (i.e. female) profession.

STRIVE TO REPRESENT BOTH SEXES AS WHOLE HUMAN BEINGS AND NOT LIMITED BY A SET OF PRE-DEFINED CHARACTERISTICS GENERALLY ACCEPTED WITHIN YOUR SOCIETY. In widening the debate in society as a whole and contributing to raising awareness of gender equality, it is essential to fight for equal coverage of real issues important to women in your area.

True gender equality should liberate both men and women from the limitations of pre-determined roles.



In the unions and associations

Working through the journalists unions and professional associations to achieve **equal rights** and **equal representation** at work, in the unions and their decision making-bodies and in the media is essential. There are several **basic concepts** that can, and should, be adapted to local circumstances.

Some of these are: knowing your rights, building solidarity, setting small, achievable goals and increasing the number of women in the unions and their decision making-bodies and in the profession and support of them. It is also extremely important to focus on: improving standards of work, pay and conditions; improving the standards of journalism, codes of conduct and workplace agreements to fight harassment; using international, national, local and public support to help achieve goals; and creating successful campaigns.

Perhaps the first and most important step is to take achieving equality seriously, because in many cases you will be attempting to change the status quo. It is an essential step in this process to research and know your rights. If your union or association is a member of the IFJ, they have agreed to several policy statements concerning gender equality that are printed on the back of this leaflet.

Also, in many cases, your union or association, government or labour organisations have created their own policy statements in reference to gender equality, but has not yet, or not yet fully implemented them. In working out a plan of action, it is important that you be willing to research and **use the power-pathways already existent in your own unions or associations**. For example, many unions are motion based and it will be important to put your ideas for furthering equality in this format or structure to be recognised. To use existent power-pathways shows not only that you take yourselves seriously, but that you ask those in decision-making bodies to do so too.

It is also essential to **build solidarity**. **Changing the social fabric of the unions** and **increasing representation of women** cannot occur without support. This can be achieved by a variety of methods such as: meetings of interested women journalists to increase numbers within the organisation; outreach programmes that include visits to workplaces and to universities; public campaigns to raise awareness; the setting of small achievable goals and communicating to potential members and the public when these have been met; within the unions setting clear and definable goals to increase the number



of women in decision-making bodies; and establishing a women's or an equality group that will be responsible for promoting and fostering equality within the union and the workplace.

Establishing women's groups within the unions themselves can serve many functions. Firstly, they help to define what are gender issues and how they impact the workplace and the unions. It will be essential to look beyond the stereotypical ideas of gender issues so that it is understood that women are working towards the same or similar goals (improving standards of work, pay and conditions; improving the standards of journalism, codes of conduct and workplace agreements to fight harassment; better family/work balance; etc.) of the union. It is simply that the impact on women may be different, or more severe.

It is **important not to allow "women's issues" to be stereotyped themselves**, but to stress the importance and impact of these issues on all members of the union. Women journalists want to be whole, contributing members of the profession and of the unions and their contribution is essential to improving work, pay and conditions for society as a whole.

IFJ Gender Policies passed at Congress

Resolution to IFJ 24th World Congress, Korea 2001

Mainstreaming Equality in Journalism

The 24th Congress of the IFJ, meeting in Seoul from June 11-15th, 2001

COMMENDS THE WORK of the Women's Working Party;

INSTRUCTS THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE to expand the activities of the working party (now called Gender Council), particularly through the regional structures of the IFJ and within its project programme.

ADOPTS the following Plan of Action:

Plan of Action

1. Women in Journalism

Action:

The Gender Council must prepare an overview of best practice examples used by unions to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in media. Such a survey should focus on best practice examples on equality provisions achieved in collective bargaining.

This should include best practice in collective agreements on:

- parental leave;
- Social protection;
- Working time;
- Models for reconciling work and family responsibilities;
- Promotion;
- Access to training.

The IFJ should support implementation of best practice examples through trade union training and other seminars. National unions should ensure that the best practice examples are being made into demands in their own national collective bargaining and report to the IFJ about implementation of the best practice examples. The Gender Council should develop a code of conduct for women media managers.

2. Women in the Union

There is no overall agreement among unions whether special structures for women, allocation of seats or quota systems are the way to improve representation and participation of women in the union.

Action:

The Gender Council should prepare a review of women's committees and systems setting targets for female representation explaining if and how these structures have contributed to improving participation of women in the union. National unions should use the survey to create women's committees and systems setting targets for female representation and report to the IFJ on the creation of these structures. The IFJ should sensitise women to take up leadership positions through special training programmes and activities.

Congress determines that the IFJ Executive Committee should prepare an Annual Plan directed to women journalists to promote principles and values of trades unionism.

3. Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value: An Issue for the Union and the IFJ

Action:

The Gender Council should initiate a campaign on equal pay. The campaign should be organised at regional and national level and should focus on achieving equal pay for women in practice. The IFJ should prepare a best practice survey on equal pay and circulate the information to member unions for action at national level.

Each region should nominate a campaign co-ordinator.

- Asia-Pacific: IFJ Project Office
- North America: TNG-CWA
- Latin America: IFJ Regional Office
- Africa: WAJA, EAJA, SAJA
- Europe: EFJ



The IFJ should co-ordinate the campaign with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (representing the trade union centres). Campaign targets should include regular salary reviews with employers; consultation rights for unions on payment grades and promoting best practice in collective agreements. The campaign should be supported by practical seminars and meetings.

The IFJ should assist unions to develop national strategies and campaigns that are tailored to the specific needs in the country. The campaign should aim to achieve implementation in practice of all key ILO conventions safeguarding women's rights.

4. Portrayal of Women in the Media

Action:

The Gender Council should co-operate with other groups working on portrayal of women in the media. An IFJ initiative will focus on collecting unions' experience with reporting guidelines and promoting the use of such guidelines in journalism training. The IFJ should prepare materials to assist unions to address the issue of portrayal in pursuit of fair and balanced reporting.

5. IFJ Women Network

An e-mail network of IFJ women exists but it must be expanded and it should be co-ordinated at regional level by the IFJ offices and regional federations.

Action:

The e-mail network should form the basis for the Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value Campaign. Each region should nominate a co-ordinator of the e-mail network. The Gender Council should be responsible for overall co-ordination of the e-mail network. The IFJ secretariat and regional offices should ensure that all information concerning IFJ events, activities and actions are circulated on the women network to ensure full participation of women.

6. Women in the IFJ

Action:

Congress calls on the IFJ unions to nominate female delegates for positions in the IFJ Executive Committee. Congress instructs the new Executive Committee to develop a strategy in co-operation with the Gender Council to ensure that women's issues will form an integral part in all IFJ activity. Equality must be included in all issues debated by Congress.

7. Access to Training

The IFJ Women Working Party should develop strategies for unions to improve access to training for women journalists. This should include access to initial journalism training, access to further training and access to specialised training. The IFJ should form alliances with universities, schools of journalism, training centres etc. to reach out to young women.



Resolution

IFJ 24th World Congress, Athens 2004

Gender rights

The XXV Congress of the International Federation of Journalists, meeting in Athens from May 25-30th 2004,

NOTING the report of the Gender Council and the Executive Committee,

WELCOMING the efforts that have been made to implement the Action Plan adopted by the Seoul Congress,

REITERATING our commitment equal representation of women in all areas of the work of the IFJ and its member unions,

BELIEVING that unions can do more to put into effect the aims and objectives of the action plan particularly by supporting the regional co-ordination of gender rights work

INSTRUCTS the Executive Committee

to continue to support the work of the Gender Council and to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Action Plan are properly reflected in the pursuit of IFJ activities and, in particular, in the development of project and regional work;

to make it a top priority of the IFJ to find funding for all regions that have not yet had a regional workshop to develop and define their own plans of action so that by 2007 all regions will have met;

to develop and define a guide for all member unions on the concept of "mainstreaming", how it works and can be applied, and to include an overview of specific examples of what gender related issues and problems are;

to inform/remind all member unions of their responsibilities and agreements concerning gender issues and to appoint at least one contact person who will be responsible for these issues;

to create and develop a system to encourage member unions to implement practical measures, to review those measures and to report to Congress on progress by member unions towards achieving IFJ policy on gender equality;

to ensure a small budget for Gender Council work not covered by specific projects but which are deemed essential by the Steering Committee to improve access to projects and programs of the Gender Council and its Steering Committee.

Author of the proposition: IFJ Executive Committee

Credits: compiled and edited by Mindy Ran, with thanks to: R v West (for background translations), and Jenny Lennox, Lena Calvert and Simon Pirani (NUJ, GB), Pamela Morinière, Bertrand Ginet, Rachel Cohen.



Photos



Gaza City, February 2004: Palestinian journalist Taghreed Al Khudari, of the Lebanese network LBC, wears a symbolic bandana over her mouth as she joins other colleagues at the Palestinian Legislative Council in a sit-in protest at a series of mysterious attacks on local news reporters. (AP Photo/Kevin Frayer)



Cairo, June 2005: Egyptian journalist Nawal Ali, who filed a complaint against the Cairo police chief and senior members of the ruling party for ordering an assault against her during May's referendum. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



Tehran, October 2003: While surrounded by journalists and a crowd of some thousands of supporters, the winner of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Shirin Ebadi speaks at the airport on her arrival in Tehran from Paris. (AP Photo/Hasan Sarbakhshian)



Bethlehem, September 1999: Photographers comfort Evelyn Hockstein a Reuters photographer who was hit in the head by a flying rock during a brief confrontation between Israeli soldiers and demonstrating Palestinians calling for the release of all Palestinians held in Israeli jails. (AP Photo/Nati Harnik)



Cairo, June 2005: Egyptian women activist flashes an Arabic slogan "We will not tolerate violation of our dignity" to protest the alleged harassment of women journalists and protesters during May's referendum vote. (AP Photo / Amr Nabil)



Beirut, April 2003: About 300 Lebanese journalists stage a sit-in outside the U.N. House, to protest the killing of a journalist and two cameramen in a shooting incident at a hotel in Baghdad. (AP Photo/Mahmoud Tawil)



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