



# **GENDER AND MEDIA CONNECT (GMC) CANDID TALK: WOMEN AT THE FRONTLINE OF ZIMBABWE JOURNALISM- CHALLENGES OF STAYING THE COURSE**

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**Friday December 2, 2016**

## Panelists

Name	Profession Prowess	Title at Event
Tendai Madondo	Managing Director, Hevoi FM	Moderator
Agnes Gwatiringa	Veteran Producer, Writer and Director	Panelist
Annie Mpalume	Chief Photographer , Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ)	Panelist
Patience Zirima	Media Monitors Director	Panelist
Susan Makore	CEO, AB Communications	Panelist
Faith Zaba	Zimbabwe Independent Newspaper, Deputy Editor	Panelist
Victoria Ruzvidzo	Managing Editor, Zimpapers	Panelist
Fungai Machirori	Blogger and New Media	Panelist

## Opening Remarks and Background

On Friday December 2, 2016 Gender and Media Connect in partnership with FOJO and the embassy of Sweden held a candid talk dubbed *Women at the frontline of Zimbabwe Journalism- Challenges of staying the course*. The event was held to commemorate 250 years of the Press Freedom Act. This candid talk also coincidentally fell during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. The event was attended by 54 people from the media houses (retired and practicing), media and other CSOs, freelance journalists, journalism and media students and lecturers and the donor communities.

The moderator; Tendai Madondo said the objective of the candid talk was to portrayal the role of women in the media in Zimbabwe their challenges and opportunities. The moderator explained that the seven panelists were women with varied expertise in the media ranging from activism, editorial, management, blogging and photography.

Opening remarks were given by Maria Selin, Deputy Head of Communications at the Embassy of Sweden who then gave a <sup>1</sup>brief account of the December 2 press freedom act commemorations. She alluded that although women in the media in Zimbabwe have increased the reality for male and female journalists is different in an environment of self / newsroom censorship and hindrances in exposing corruption, there is need to appreciate the work being done by the media and media CSOs such as GMC, VMCZ and MISA Zimbabwe.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2016/12/02/press-freedom-never-take-granted/>

### **Key Issues raised during the panel discussions**

- Sexual Harassment remains a problem in the most media houses and is affecting both female and male media personnel from within the media structures and from sources. It needs to be defined
- Challenges in juggling productive and reproductive responsibilities by female media practitioners
- Bottlenecks that hinder female professional progression e.g. (1) promotion is not viewed on merit by their male counterparts, (2) women pulling each other down (bullying), (3) motherhood and wifehood are seen as barriers to elevation.
- Remuneration disparities e.g. there is a pay gap between sexes, male have better negotiation skills and females get lateral promotions
- Identity issues for women in media management in terms of expectations and responsibilities
- Death of professionalism e.g. rules no longer clear and no standards, fluidity helps people get away with anything.
- Lack of institutional support for female journalists in newsrooms and female journalism and media students as interns in newsrooms.
- Media Houses are a boys zone/ brotherhood where women have to work extra hard than their male colleagues in order to be promoted within the newsroom structures.
- There is lack of sisterhood support structures within the media sector.
- Women are expected to volunteer and are not expected to negotiate their packages
- Lack of job orientation, males keep the secret of the trade to themselves.

### **Recommendations from the Candid Talk:**

#### **For Media Houses**

- Leveling the playing field for both women and men in the media so that they can both fully participate in sectorial issues.

- Address practical challenges that hinder female journalists executing their duties e.g. transport challenges after night assignments, safety, rape and abuse etc.
- Call those discriminating colleagues in the media to order.

### **For Female Journalists**

- Develop a good character and be a brand
- Learn to multi task in the event of unforeseen retrenchment (skills diversity)
- Invest in trainings/ further your studies (skills development)
- Buy professional equipment to use for part time consultancies / to supplement your income
- Seasoned journalists should not be intimidated by subordinates but offer mentorship.

### **For GMC**

Develop Gender Policies for media houses as an empowerment tool to address gender inequalities in the media.

Provide platforms for interface between journalism and media lecturers and women media practitioners

Strengthen women networking spaces e.g. media women networking platforms

Capacity building of female journalists so that they are as competitive as male journalists and want to stay in the newsrooms

Start a sexual harassment campaign

Train women journalists on online violence and safety measures

### **For Development Partners**

- Support wellness programmes for women