

Press Statement

Attn: Media

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS NEEDED IN ENSURING A GENDER RESPONSIVE MEDIA AS GHANA HOSTS 3RD EDITION OF AFRICAN MEDIA CONVENTION.

The Aya Institute congratulates Ghana on the event of serving as host to the third edition of the African Media Convention slated for May 15th -17th in Accra. We congratulate Ghana on its place on the latest Global Press Freedom Ranking issued by the ‘Reporters Without Borders’, which saw Ghana move from the 62nd to 50th position. Although this represents an improvement over last year’s ranking, it carries with it an abiding thirst for more to be achieved. As a country touted as the beacon of democracy in Africa, one of its pillars is an independent and thriving media.

While appreciating the significant progress we have made over the years with the media, one critical area that is found wanting is intentionally working towards a gender responsive and sensitive media landscape.

A call for Gender Sensitive Panel, News Production and Programming

Currently, Africa’s media operates an overwhelming dominance of male speakers, drowning and overshadowing the expertise and voices of women. The Global Media Monitoring Project 2022 reported that 25% of news sources and 24% of expert voices are women across print, TV, radio, internet news and Twitter, which is woeful underrepresentation of women in news.

Similarly, in our world today, 24 percent of those read and heard are women, 76 percent of those in the news are men, and 69 percent of professional speakers globally are men, according to a worldwide study in 58 plus countries (World Economic Forum Report, 2019). This percentage of male global speakers have access, to at least one traditional media. In a world where women’s social and economic activities are turning global economies around, it is imperative that we actively seek their expertise in shaping our society. The optics are not good especially when globally, women are getting educated at higher and specialist levels, there can’t be a dearth of women experts for the increasing numbers of media establishments in Africa. We need to put to use for the greater good women's talents, expertise and achievements and the media must be seen as championing gender sensitive panels and programming across networks.

A call for Gender Parity in News Media Leadership

Again, according to prominent research only 22% of the 180 top editors across the 240 global brands are women (University of Oxford, 2021). We must be committed to addressing at the convention the underrepresentation of women at all levels of leadership in media management across African news networks. We must commit to more appointments of women in leadership roles in news media organisations which will go a long way to influence fairer and diverse editorial decisions on women and people of other social categories. These further position

women as active voices rather than passive voices. Gender parity in news media management must be of great concern to news managers at all levels. We must be interested in a media that is intentional about gender equality.

A call for Elimination of Harmful Gender Stereotypes in the Media Portrayal of Women

Harmful gender stereotypes affect editorial decisions and contribute to poor portrayals of the relationship between women and men. These stereotypes feed into how news is made, presented and communicated. Ultimately, this is consumed and the wheels of inequality keep turning. News is serious and impactful on society and so we must safeguard it by constantly reviewing its relationship to and portrayal of women. Thinking stereotypically will impact the frames you use for women and men, what you focus on, what gets discussed and how women and men get involved in participating in the media space. We should endeavour to clean the space by tracking and striking out harmful stereotypes.

In conclusion, we are delighted to know that one of the themes for discussions at the 2024 African Media Convention is media and democracy. This affords us the need to redefine in workable terms what true democracy is, which is providing opportunities for women to thrive in the media as active and equal participants of our democracy. True democracy lies with equality and we must be intentional at developing strategies, especially in our programmes and news production to make women more visible in our media spaces. We need to take a closer look at our news leadership, our portrayal of women as well as expanding their current pool of experts on panels and work towards a safe, friendly, diversified and welcoming media space for women.

We must go beyond the occasional highlight of women's achievements during International Women's Day celebrations. We must utilize the 3rd AMC as a post-pandemic opportunity to re-strategise as the pandemic has neutralized the already-made gains towards a gender responsive media in Africa, as some statistics show the deepening under representation and unfavourable portrayal of women globally.

End Note: The Aya Institute researches, trains and advises in the broad areas of Gender and Media along other themes. The Institute runs the **'She Knows Network'**, one of its flagship interventions aimed at promoting speaker and panel diversity through its database compiled to enable ready access to African women professionals and experts in all fields. **Gender Watch;** an initiative which monitors, tracks and highlights gender dynamics in media, politics and society. The Institute awards a **Gender and Media Fellowship** with partner Universities in Europe and conducts training for media professionals at all levels.

Our website, www.ayainstitute.org details all our research and interventions.

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