

United Nations

Nations Unies

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-

Gender and HIV/AIDS

These data from UNAIDS provide both the insight and the urgency for addressing HIV/AIDS issues through media and communication processes: “*Today, more than 30 years into the epidemic, women and girls represent 49% of all adults living with HIV.² A heightened burden of the HIV epidemic is faced by sub-Saharan African women, who constitute 58% of all people living with HIV in the region. Almost half of all new HIV infections occur among women, heightened by their vulnerability due to biological susceptibility and gender inequalities.³ Globally, young women aged 15-24 are particularly vulnerable, with global infection rates twice as high as in young men.⁴ Women and girls also bear a disproportionately larger burden of caregiving: 81% of community volunteer care givers are women and girls.*”⁵

It is not possible to isolate the most pressing HIV/AIDS issues from overall gender dynamics across societies, cultures, and countries. The fact that young women aged 15-24 experience infection rates twice as high as young men is not a social accident. Neither is the fact that 81% of community caregivers are women and girls.

HIV/AIDS is an issue that cuts across all major development concerns. Poverty, health structures, the political life of a country, economic development, human rights, and many other development concerns all impact the gender factors associated with HIV/AIDS. For an effective approach to HIV/AIDS, including gender-related aspects and dynamics related to shared responsibilities and caregiving, it will be vitally important to address these concerns at both the HIV/AIDS-specific and overall development levels.

Because the HIV/AIDS gender-related trends and responses are so interwoven with overall social and economic dynamics, the following review of gender equity and media trends since 2009 will be of a general nature.

Gender Equity, the Media, and Progress since 2009

This is such a huge subject! There are estimated to be 44,000 radio stations in the world⁶

and digital outlets may present a false picture.

But in 2009 – four long years ago in media terms – such substantive integration was not the case. We will commence with a look at gender equity developments since 2009 for the more traditional media.

There is no comprehensive data on some set of agreed-upon, standard indicators. As a result, there is no 2009 baseline. I have therefore sought insights and data related to the following key indicators:

- a. Media Decision-making - Is There a Gender Balance in High-

Morocco, for example, has just adopted a “National Charter for Ameliorating the Image of Women in the Media”.

The European Broadcasting has developed a Framework for Action for Gender Equality in the audiovisual sector that includes sections on gender portrayal and women in senior roles.¹³

The United Nations Trust Fund has supported a consortium of mainly Southern agencies – including Breakthrough (India), Soul City (Southern Africa), Puntos de Encuentro (Nicaragua), and Oxfam NOVIB – to accelerate entertainment-education-based strategies to significantly reduce violence against women.

In March 2013, Internews and its partners launched a report: **“From Counting Women to Making Women Count: Women-Focused Media Development”**.¹⁴

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is an effort to build the evidence base on how to change public institutions and policies to better foster gender equality, with an emphasis on media.¹⁵

c. Specific Programming Initiatives – Are We Seeing a Substantive Growth in Media, Gender, Equity, and HIV/AIDS Programming Initiatives?

There have also been a myriad of programme initiatives. A quick review of our own The Communication Initiative knowledge base (which includes 35,000 summaries of media and communication knowledge shared and accessed by a network of 90,000 people, with 1 million users per annum) finds that there was information on over 200 gender equity media initiatives submitted from 2009 to 2012 in the area of film/video alone (one small part of the media scene).¹⁶ Thousands of initiatives at local, national, regional, and international levels have been implemented around the world when all media are taken into account over the 2009-2013 period. 352 of these gender equity media initiatives are related to HIV/AIDS.¹⁷ This is now a very dynamic field.

To single out just a few examples from such a broad, sophisticated tapestry may be unhelpful. But to give some colour to the above statistics:

The film *Asmaa* gives HIV a human face in an effort to challenge stereotypes and prejudice in Egypt. 500,000 Egyptians attended screenings; 230 articles have been published in national, regional, and global media; and 34 top-rated television programmes debated related issues.¹⁸

Revelados is a national multimedia initiative with close on-the-ground local organisation engagement to spark debate on sexual health issues in

¹³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1111&furtherNews=yes>

¹⁴ <https://app.e2ma.net/app/view/CampaignPublic/id:1406122.13022889445/rid:99c6ba9c39f5ca61dda182fe1bdcd452>

¹⁵ <http://www.promundo.org.br/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Evolving-Men-IMAGES-1.pdf>

¹⁶ http://www.comminit.com/global/search/apachesolr_search/?filters=tid%3A36%20tid%3A36%20tid%3A253%20tid%3A62%20tid%3A250%20tid%3A96

¹⁷ http://www.comminit.com/global/search/apachesolr_search/?filters=tid%3A36%20tid%3A36%20tid%3A253%20tid%3A250%20tid%3A96%20tid%3A86

¹⁸ “UNAIDS Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV: Mid-Term Review - Final Report”, Dec. 2012, page 16.

http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/pcb/2012/20121206_Final_Report_Mid_Term%20Review_UNAIDS_Agenda_for_Women_and_Girls.pdf

Colombia from a gender perspective, with youth voices highlighted.¹⁹
Jasoos Vijay (India) was the centrepiece of a campaign reaching out to sexually active young men to explore HIV and AIDS awareness. The main

women is generally considered to be the biggest issue across the media industry along with a general paucity of female experts.”^{26, 27}

These are just a very few statistics. If you did not know these specific data, you will have known these general trends.

Qualities of Digital Media

The media landscape - how knowledge and news is produced, shared, and critiqued - has changed beyond recognition. This is a very different kind of media – people as media content providers, people with the ability to create and control their own media sources, people deciding which media knowledge is important for them, geographic distance becoming irrelevant, time considerations to access media dissolving, people being able to create their own networks on a very steep rise, and often the absence of “expert” and “editorial” filters now commonplace.

These qualities have very significant advantages for the struggles for greater gender equity. The ability and capacity, for example, of women and men who support that struggle to express their voice, share their analysis, and convene organised strategies and actions in ways that are not reliant on the mediating action of others (for example, newspaper editors or chairmen of local councils) are vastly expanded.

3. Platform development – trends in the numbers of women involved in building digital media processes.
4. Management – trends in the percentage of women making digital media development decisions.
5. Voice – trends in the levels of opinions, ideas, and analysis being voiced from the perspective of women and girls.
6. Portrayal/reflection – trends in the levels of digital content and access with gender equity as its essence.

Related to those indicators, what follows is some data on gender equity trends – with an emphasis on post-2009 where possible. These data are neither comprehensive nor solid. We are not yet at that stage. The figures are simply indicative.

The gender equity perspective on these data tells a positively excellent and a terribly worrying story.

From the “good and helpful” perspective, hundreds of millions of women and girls have embraced the freedom provided by digital technologies, including on HIV/AIDS- related issues, and, in so doing, have: become knowledge generators, network organisers, facilitators, and participants; learned from their peers; and found media that enable them to participate in the all-important national and local debate and dialogue. These were opportunities and processes not previously available.

From the “not so good and worryisome” perspective, women and girls are appropriating these digital technologies and their associated capacities at much slower rates than men and boys – particularly in the (so-called) “poorer” economic contexts.

Digital technologies are widening gender gaps related to media. Those gaps are broadening related to some of the most powerful communication technologies that the globe has seen – technologies that are designed at their very heart to be liberating.

Just a few examples:

Access:

There are 300 million fewer female mobile phone subscribers than male subscribers.³⁴

In low- and middle-income countries, a woman is 21% less likely to own a mobile phone than a man.³⁵

Lower- and middle-income countries have significantly less Facebook use by women. In Ghana, 69% of Facebook users are male; in Sri Lanka, the percentage is 68% (with 67% in Uganda and 72% in Oman). In the United States, 95% of women (85% of men) log into Facebook on a regular basis.³⁶

Lower- and middle-income countries have significantly fewer Twitter accounts by women. For example, in India, 85% are male users.³⁷

³⁴http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/GSMA_Women_and_Mobile-Global_Opportunity.pdf

³⁵http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/GSMA_Women_and_Mobile-Global_Opportunity.pdf

³⁶<http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/ghana>

³⁷<http://www.beevolve.com/twitter-statistics/#a1>

Knowledge Generation:

50% of Wikipedia users are women, but only 9 to 10% of the knowledge submitted to Wikipedia is from women and girls.

Though women and girls globally are 50% of Twitter accounts and use, their profiles highlight “Family” double the times that of men.³⁸

Platform Development

Women’s representation in the computing and information technology workforce fell from a peak of 38% in the mid-1980s down to 29.6% (2012).³⁹

The percentage of women software developers in the United States has declined from 42% in 1987 to less than 25% today.⁴⁰

Recall the very auspicious BBC gender and decision-making data above. This is not the case within the BBC for technology, where only 25% of people involved in technology and engineering roles are female - with no women at senior or high management roles.⁴¹

Portrayal/Reflection

82% of Pinterest users are women – arts, crafts, recipes, gift ideas, hobbies, design, fashion, etc.

From July 2009 to July 2010, about 13% of Web searches were for erotic content (pornography).⁴²

Voice

There is a growing range of online processes that seek to support people directly affected by a development issue in being able to share their voice and to connect with others of a similar persuasion to organise action, including on HIV/AIDS and gender-related issues. It is almost impossible at present to quantify these. Just a few examples:

Heartlines “For Good” marketplace.⁴³

UNAIDS’s Women Out Loud Initiative - the voices of some 30 women living with HIV who have given their personal insights into how the epidemic is affecting women.⁴⁴

The People Living with HIV Stigma Index - the beginnings of a tool that will measure and detect changing trends in relation to stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV.

Bring Voices in from the Margins Project – a communication rights programme designed to empower marginalised and vulnerable women in Zimbabwe